

ANGLICAN ESSENTIALS

A course of Adult Catechesis in the Diocese of Alabama

Table of Contents

Forward: An Introduction to the Faith of our Church.....	p.3
Hospitality and Community Building.....	p.5
1. Church History: An Introduction.....	p.8
PART I. English Heritage	
Outline.....	p.9
Lesson Content	p.10
Interactive Discussion.....	p.12
PART II. The American Church	
Outline.....	p.13
Lesson Content.....	p.15
Interactive Discussion.....	p.18
2. Anglican Worship and The Book of Common Prayer, Liturgy and Piety	
Outline.....	p.19
Lesson Content.....	p.21
Interactive Discussion.....	pp.25-26
3. Sacramental Life	
PART I. Baptism and The Holy Eucharist	
Outline.....	p.27
Lesson Content.....	p.28
Interactive Discussion.....	p.31
PART II. Other Sacramental Rites	
Outline.....	p.32
Lesson Content.....	p.33
Interactive Discussion.....	p.39
4. The Authority of Scripture	
PART I. The Bible's Place in Anglican Theology	
Outline.....	p.40
Lesson Content.....	p.41
Interactive Discussion.....	p.43
PART II. The Bible's Authority from Five Perspectives	
Outline.....	p.44
Lesson Content.....	p.45
Interactive Discussion.....	p.51
5. Christian Life and Faith	
PART I. The Nicene Creed	
Outline.....	p.52
Lesson Content.....	p.53
Interactive Discussion.....	p.57

PART II. Baptismal Covenant	
Outline.....	p.58
Lesson Content.....	p.59
Interactive Discussion.....	p.68
PART III. Ministers of the Church	
Outline.....	p.69
Lesson Content.....	p.70
Interactive Discussion.....	p.74
PART IV. The Structure & Polity of the Church	
Outline.....	p.75
Lesson Content.....	p.76
Interactive Discussion.....	pp.83-84
PART V. Moral Decision Making	
Outline.....	p. 87
Lesson Content: Interactive Discussion.....	p.88
PART VI. Engaging the World	
Outline.....	p. 92
Lesson Content.....	p.93
Interactive Discussion.....	p.100

Epilogue: The Anglican Spirit.....	p.101
------------------------------------	-------

Glossary

Appendix I: Parts of a Church.....	p.103
Appendix II: At the Altar.....	p.104
Appendix III: Vestments.....	p.105
Appendix IV. The Church Year.....	p.106
Appendix V. Methods of Prayer.....	p.107

Bibliography

Index.....	p.110
A. Church History	p.111
B. Anglican Worship, The Book of Common Prayer, Liturgy and Piety.....	p.113
C. The Authority of Scripture.....	p.114
D. The Nicene Creed.....	p.118
E. Baptismal Covenant.....	p.119
F. Ministers of the Church.....	p.120
G.The Structure and Polity of the Church.....	p.121
H. Moral Decision Making.....	p.122
I. Engaging the World.....	p.123

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FAITH OF OUR CHURCH

The Episcopal Church in the United States is a true part of the one Church of Jesus Christ, which he established by his death and resurrection, empowered by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and through which God works for the redemption of all creation. Members of the Episcopal Church, like all Christians everywhere, follow Jesus Christ, confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share in his eternal priesthood.

The Episcopal Church is a daughter of the Church of England and, together with churches in other nations around the world which share that heritage, is a part of what is called the Anglican Communion. Each national Church within this fellowship is independent of the others in matters of local governance and discipline, but all share a common heritage, a common understanding of Christian tradition and worship, the same creeds, sacraments, and ministry. They look to the Archbishop of Canterbury as the spiritual head and symbol of unity for the entire Communion. Although the Archbishop has no governing authority beyond his own Church of England, his moral and spiritual authority is taken very seriously throughout the worldwide Communion.

Members of the Episcopal Church are generally called “Episcopalians.” Members of any Anglican Church, including Episcopalians, can be called “Anglicans”.

Anglican Christians accept the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as “containing all things necessary to salvation,” and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith. The apocryphal books of the Old Testament – which appear in the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, but not in the Hebrew Bible – are used and read in our churches, but are not used, as Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christians do, to establish any doctrine.

The Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed, ancient summaries of the Christian faith coming to us from the time of the undivided Catholic Church, are received as sufficient statements of the Christian faith. The Apostles’ Creed, used in the Church’s daily worship, is especially associated with the profession of faith made by candidates for Holy Baptism. The Nicene Creed, recited during the Eucharist on feast days, proclaims the Trinitarian faith of Christians throughout the world and throughout the ages.

The sacraments ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, are considered essential to Christian life and worship within our tradition. Holy Baptism can be administered at any age, and the sharing of the sacramental Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Communion takes place within the service of the Holy Eucharist, the Church’s chief act of worship on Sundays and Holy Days. Other sacramental rites are recognized and used in our Church, but are not considered necessary for all persons in the same way that Baptism and the Eucharist are.

The Episcopal Church considers all baptized persons to be ministers, with the duty and privilege of witnessing to Jesus Christ and to serving others in his name. Some Christians are called to the ordained ministries of bishops, priests, and deacons, to serve the Church by teaching, governing, celebrating the sacraments, providing pastoral care, and in servant ministry to the world. This threefold ministry preserves and continues the apostolic ministry empowered by Christ himself, and transmitted in unbroken succession from the time of the Apostles. It is the same ministry shared by the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and certain other bodies within Christ’s universal Church.

The Anglican Communion believes that all truth comes from God, and that new knowledge, if true, can only help our understanding of God, no matter whence it comes. We do not see conflict between “science” and “religion”. In the interpretation of Scripture, we believe that the eternal spiritual truths it presents are not compromised by confessing that sometimes its statements regarding such things as sickness or the nature of the universe were limited by the understanding of its human authors. We believe that the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the proper interpreter of Scripture, and that this process continues from generation to generation.

Our Church believes passionately that a living Christian faith must show itself in reaching out to others, particularly to those in any way disadvantaged or oppressed, sick, or in need. This is not an option for Christians, either individually or corporately. Therefore our Church has always been involved, locally and nationally, in issues which concern people's welfare. The civil rights movement has been such an issue in living memory. Local helping ministries engaged in by parishes, often in interdenominational cooperation, are numerous. All of us, as individuals, are urged and encouraged to share in some way in this kind of ministry.

The Anglican Communion possesses a deep and rich tradition of Christian spirituality, once again freely using resources from any part of the Christian Church, and inviting its members to grow in holiness within this tradition according to their individual spiritual personalities. One can find as deep and rigorous a Christian discipline among us as one can anywhere, but not a "one size fits all" mentality. Among us, discipline is not imposed, but offered, and each person, on his or her spiritual journey, often in consultation with another Christian acting as spiritual director, "lives into" whatever rule of life he or she may embrace.

Finally, Anglicans seek to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness". The liturgical worship using the Book of Common Prayer is enriched by architecture, art, music, and whatever things of beauty each local congregation may be able to supply. Beautiful and inspiring worship informs and empowers our service in the world, and that service, laid before the altar, in turn deepens our worship. In all things we seek to glorify God, and to serve Jesus Christ by serving his people in the world.

HOSPITALITY AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

The following list gives a variety of ideas/suggestions that could be included with an adult confirmation curriculum that would help to integrate newcomers into a parish and help them to feel welcome and needed in the ministry of the parish. It is hoped, these ideas will stimulate many more creative ones for those who teach these classes.

- I. Every week—Simple refreshments at the beginning of the class time encourage a mingling among the participants. If refreshments are hosted by different parishioners each week, this will give newcomers a chance to meet small numbers of regular members in a relaxed and informal setting. These parishioners could be encouraged and welcomed to remain for the class session as well. Especially with a large class, name tags for all would help both newcomers and parishioners to feel more comfortable in conversations.
- II. Tour the church—Early in the program, take class members on a tour of the church facilities and talk about the history of the parish, any artifacts and symbols, etc. and give them an opportunity to ask questions.
- III. When presenting the lesson on church history, ask class members and parish hosts to bring in a family picture to share, something of each one's personal history. If class is large, the sharing can be done in small groups of two to four. Pictures can then be displayed on a board along with parish history pictures. Or, members might be asked to share their spiritual genealogy, or a timeline of their spiritual journey.
- IV. The lesson on the sacramental life could begin with an activity and discussion of gifts, which might include distributing small gifts to each participant and discussing gifts they received in the past, what they meant to both giver and receiver, and the symbolic significance of the gifts. (See "The Sacramental Life" section.)
- V. Adult Sunday School Classes and Other Parish Groups —A representative of each adult class can attend a confirmation class meeting, describe what occurs in that class, and invite newcomers to attend.

A representative from groups such as ECW, men's club, altar guild, EFM, etc. could come to the confirmation class to talk about their activities and invite class members to attend. A personal follow-up invitation to each class member could also be extended. In large parishes, names of confirmands could be distributed to the various organizations so these newcomers could be invited.
- VI. Ministry Fair—During coffee-hour after church, tables could be set up for each parish ministry group to display and talk about their various ministries.
- VII. Letters of welcome—A parish group or individual might take on the ministry of sending a letter of welcome to each confirmand..
- VIII. Instructed Eucharist—After an instructed Eucharist, confirmation class members could be given a small loaf of homemade bread with a special welcoming tag/prayer. Or an instructed Eucharist could be followed by a parish dinner.
- IX. Parish Fellowship Dinner—Ask specific parishioners to personally invite a confirmation class attendee to come to a dinner, meet the guest at the door, and introduce him or her to several other parishioners.

- X. Foyer groups—Ask specific parishioners to invite confirmands to foyer groups or newcomers' groups. If the church does not have these, perhaps the vestry or several parishioners could have a special evening specifically for welcoming and getting to know confirmation class members.
- XI. Parish sponsors—Encourage parishioners to offer themselves as sponsors for confirmands, attending classes with them, being available to answer questions, inviting them to parish functions, etc.
- XII. Have an open invitation to all parishioners to attend inquirers' classes.

HOSPITALITY AND COMMUNITY BUILDING RESOURCES FOR INSTRUCTED EUCHARIST

Many sources are available on the internet by simply searching “Instructed Eucharist.”

Here are a few:

www.graceandstephens.org/inst_euch.html An actual instructed Eucharist, complete with readings and hymns, from Grace and St. Stephens Episcopal Church, Colorado Springs, CO. Both the traditional Rite I and contemporary Rite II versions are included.

www.kingofpeace.org/resources/index.html “An Annotated Eucharist,” an 8-page booklet, copyright 2001, is available at this site with permission to download and copy. It is very readable and attractive and could serve either to pass out to class members or as a guide for an instructed Eucharist, from King of Peace Episcopal Church in Kingsland, GA.

www.trinitysb.org/WorshipInstructedEucharist.html An instructed Eucharist from Trinity Church, Santa Barbara, CA, written by the Rev. Martha Siegel.

CHURCH HISTORY

An Introduction

Adult inquirers are likely to be familiar with the proposition that the Anglican way is a “via media” or middle way between Catholic and Protestant and to be aware that the Episcopal Church is a part of the Anglican Communion and stems from the Church of England. In two sessions devoted to church history, it is the aim of this curriculum to build on these understandings and to deepen them. Session One is on the English heritage and Session Two on the American Church. In both sessions, the emphasis is on what is distinctive about Anglicanism, not on what is held in common with all other Christians. The central lesson of both sessions is that the Anglican *via media* is not merely a compromise, but a distinctive approach to living the Christian life. Throughout these sessions, the recurring themes are those of balancing competing claims and living in the tension between opposites: English and Catholic, Protestant and Catholic, community and individual.

Anglican theology comes in many flavors: Anglo-Catholic, Evangelical, Liberal, and Broad Church are some of the terms that have been applied to these different perspectives. These different perspectives are all contained within Anglicanism but are mediated by and through common prayer. The first thematic principle for these classes is that for Anglicans prayer shapes belief: *lex orandi, lex credendi*. And Anglican prayer is common prayer. The Church for Anglicans is not held together by a common confessional statement or by the theology of a particular leader but by community in worship according to a *Book of Common Prayer* “in a language understood of the people.”

The second thematic principle to be seen throughout the history of the Church in England and America is its distinctive emphasis on incarnational theology, centered in the Christian belief that “the words was made flesh and dwelt among us.” This is expressed in the importance of the Sacraments in worship, but also in the Anglican view of nature as revelatory of God and in a positive understanding of the engagement of the Church in this world. Anglicans are not separatists seeking a community of the pure or the saved, but committed participants in the political and social struggles of a messy world that God loves and works to redeem. We are so because we see the world in sacramental terms.

Thirdly, Anglicans value history and historical continuity. Our theology emphasizes continuity with the teachings of the apostles, and our polity stresses the value of the historic episcopate as a symbol of that link down through the centuries. Anglicans do not regard the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation as the beginning of their Church, but see the Church of today as extending in a direct line back to Christ and His Apostles.

CHURCH HISTORY: PART I

ENGLISH HERITAGE

OUTLINE

Themes: Living with the Tension: English and Catholic, Community and Individual

I. Basis: The distinctively Anglican emphases on the following:

- A. Common Prayer:** Prayer shapes believing, “make no windows into men’s souls,” the Church is not held together by any confession other than the ancient creeds, worship is centered on a Book of Common Prayer.
- B. Incarnational Theology:** emphasis on the sacraments and the Church as the Body of Christ in the world rather than as a group of the elect.
- C. Apostolic Faith:** God in three persons, Jesus Christ as redeemer of the world, apostolic succession of bishops, the Scriptures of Old and New Testaments, the dominical sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, use of the ancient creeds.
- D. Moderation:** The *via media*, authority of Scripture, reason, and tradition. Scripture read as a whole and not in pieces as proof-text.

II. The *Ecclesia Anglicana* Before the Reformation

General theme: English Christianity existed as a distinctive synthesis of Celtic and Roman patterns with important additions of Benedictine spirituality. The Church in England was a distinct *Ecclesia Anglicana* long before the Reformation.

- A. Celtic roots of Christianity in the British Isles
- B. Augustine of Canterbury and the Council of Whitby
- C. Benedictine spirituality and monasticism
- D. *Ecclesia Anglicana* before Henry VIII

III. The English Reformation

General themes: The English Reformation was largely a political matter, and distinct from the Continental Reformation—neither Lutheran nor Calvinist though affected by both. Elizabeth I was more important to the Anglican *via media* than Henry VIII. Challenged from both Roman Catholic and Puritan sides, the Church of England was held together not by a common confession, but by a common English Bible and Prayer Book, a common national pattern of worship and spirituality.

- A. Henry VIII and the break with Rome
- B. Thomas Cranmer and *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1549
- C. From Catholic to Protestant and back again: Henry to Edward to Mary
- D. Elizabeth I and the Anglican Settlement, 1558-1603
- E. The English Bible from Wyclif to King James
- F. Richard Hooker: Scripture, Tradition, & Reason: the *via media*
- G. The 17th century: Puritan challenge and the English Civil War

CHURCH HISTORY: PART I

THE ENGLISH HERITAGE

I. Gathering

Hymn

- God is working his purpose out, *The Hymnal 1982* #534
- Singing songs of expectation, *The Hymnal 1982* #527

Collect for the Day

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your sson Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Invite the participants to share something of their own family history and what they know of the religious affiliations of their ancestors on both paternal and maternal sides. How did their family background relate to their own interest in Anglicanism?

II. Illumination

1. English Christianity existed as a distinctive branch of the trunk of the apostolic Church from the earliest times of the Christian era. It synthesized Celtic practices and Roman practices into a distinct *Ecclesia Anglicana* long before the Reformation.

2. The first British Christians were Romans, but with the withdrawal of the Romans from England in the Fifth century, Christianity survived in the Celtic areas of the west of England, Ireland, and Scotland. In the centuries during which Celtic Christianity was separated from Roman, the Celts developed a distinctive form of monasticism and church polity and a spirituality centered on creation and the cross.

3. In 597, when Pope Gregory the Great sent Augustine of Canterbury to evangelize the English, there was a centuries-old Celtic church flourishing in Ireland and Scotland. In 664 at the Council of Whitby, the King of Northumberland accepted the Roman date for Easter rather than the Celtic, and the two branches began to grow together in Great Britain. During the next centuries, monasteries adopted a characteristic Benedictine spirituality.

4. From the Norman conquest of 1066 to Henry II's controversies with his Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Becket a century later, to John's confrontation with Archbishop Stephen Langton that led to the Magna Carta, to Henry VIII's displeasure with his Chancellor Thomas More, the relationship of Crown to Church was never easy, but the distinctively English character of the Church was never in question.

5. The Sixteenth-Century Reformation in England was different in character from the Continental Reformation—neither Lutheran nor Calvinist, though affected by both. In England, the Reformation was a political event, expressive of an emerging English national feeling. The Parliament in 1534 passed the Act of Supremacy making the King the Head of the Church in England as the culmination of a series of laws rejecting various claims to entitlement of the Bishop of Rome.

6. Henry VIII did not favor Continental Protestant ideas, and did not start the Church of England; he considered himself an English Catholic. His Archbishop Thomas Cranmer was affected by Lutheran ideas, but during Henry's reign (1509-47) was able to persuade the King only to authorize the writing of the Great Litany in English and the placement of an English Bible in churches. The mass remained in Latin and priests remained celibate.

7. Lutheran and Calvinist ideas did have their day during the brief reign of Edward VI, Henry's son, and it was during this period the first English *Book of Common Prayer* (1549) was issued, making worship uniform throughout the realm. The Protestant direction of the Edwardian reform was halted with the accession in 1553 of Mary, who returned England to the Latin mass and allegiance to the Pope.

8. When Mary died and Elizabeth I inherited in 1558, the distinctively Anglican *via media* or middle way was an expression of her policy. Elizabeth maintained the continuity of apostolic succession through the consecration of her Archbishop Matthew Parker. A national English Church outside the authority of Rome or Geneva survived. The Anglican Settlement of Elizabeth is more important in shaping modern Anglicanism than anything done by Henry VIII.

9. One important religious and cultural monument of the Reformation that does owe a good deal to Continental Protestant influences was the translation into English of the Bible. From John Wyclif and William Tyndale to the various translators of the Reformation era, and finally to the Authorized Version or King James Bible of 1611, the English Bible emerged as a literary masterpiece and cherished national treasure of the English Church.

10. In the 1580's Richard Hooker offered the classical defense of the Anglican middle way in his work *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, holding that the English Church, continuous with the apostolic Church, was both Catholic and reformed and rejecting the claims both of Rome and of the increasingly influential Puritans. Hooker offered the English a way of understanding Church authority as based on Scripture, Tradition, and Reason.

11. Under the early Stuart kings James I and Charles I, Puritanism grew and increasingly challenged royal authority in ecclesiastical as well as legislative and financial affairs. The influence of Calvinism led the Puritans to understand the Church as a gathering of the elect and to reject episcopacy. These challenges culminated between 1642 and 1649 in a civil war between the Puritan-led Parliament and the forces of Charles I. For a time in the 1650s, the Puritans under Oliver Cromwell abolished the episcopate as well as the monarchy, substituting a Presbyterian form of government for the Church and a Commonwealth for the king. However with the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II in 1660, the historic episcopate and the Anglican settlement were restored as well.

12. Through these troubled times, the English Church moved back and forth in response to the political changes, but its continuity was never broken and the Elizabethan *via media* endured. Stemming from its multivalent past, a national Church of England held together faithful believers with many convictions ranging from Anglo-Catholic ("High Church") to Evangelical ("Low Church"), but an English national Church continued to govern itself through bishops and worship together according to the *Book of Common Prayer*.

CHURCH HISTORY: PART I ENGLISH HERITAGE

III. Engagement

1. What was distinctive about English Christianity before the Reformation?
2. How was the English Reformation different from that of the Continent in the sixteenth century?
3. Explore the shifting relationship between the Church of England and the institution of monarchy in the Reformation period and after.
4. How was the Church of England able to contain within itself such varied perspectives and pieties?

IV. Reflection

Preface to the First *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP 1979, pages 866-7)

Articles of Religion (BCP 1979, pages 867-76)

V. Looking forward

The Church in America grows out of the English colonial experience, undergoes a catastrophe during the American Revolution, and revives to become an important part of American religious life. But the American Church must adapt to the conditions of a republic, a moving frontier, and the emergence of a democratic society.

CHURCH HISTORY: PART II

THE AMERICAN CHURCH

OUTLINE

Themes: Living with the Tension: Anglican Heritage and American Democracy, a Church both Catholic and Protestant.

I. The Church in Colonial & Revolutionary America

General themes: The Church of England was established in some colonies, and Puritan churches in others. In the colonial era, there were no American bishops, and the Church appeared to many colonists to be a political tool of the monarchy. The American Revolution disestablished the Church and almost eliminated its clergy in many areas.

- A. Anglican Establishment in some Southern Colonies
- B. Puritanism in the New England colonies
- C. An Episcopal Church without Bishops for 270 years
- D. The Effects of the American Revolution on the Church

II. The Church Adapts to American Conditions

General themes: Maintaining apostolic succession, American Anglicans established an American episcopate at the conclusion of the Revolution and created for the first time an Anglican polity appropriate to a republic, with a bicameral General Convention, elected bishops and lay leaders. The Church lost much ground to other churches in the generation after the Revolution by maintaining an approach to parish life more appropriate to a settled stable society than a nation of pioneers and immigrants; however, a new generation of leaders after 1820 began to plant churches and move westward. Only briefly divided by the Civil War, Episcopalians were instrumental thereafter in turning the attention of Christians to the problems of a new industrial society. Different flavors of Episcopalian liturgy stressed the Catholic or Protestant heritage, but the Church remained bonded by its common worship.

- A. The Transmission of the Episcopate to America
- B. The Creation of the Protestant Episcopal Church: the Role of the Laity
- C. The Domestic Mission: westward movement and missionary bishops
- D. The Episcopal Church and the Civil War
- E. High Church and Low Church
- F. The Church and industrialism: the Social Gospel

III. The Church and the World

General themes: The Episcopal Church engaged in worldwide mission work in Latin America, China, the Philippines, and Africa. It took the lead in the promotion of the modern ecumenical movement and was important in the development of the Anglican Communion.

- A. Mission to African-Americans, Native Americans
- B. Foreign Missions
- C. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral and the Ecumenical Movement
- D. The Development of the Anglican Communion

IV. The Recent Past and Present Issues

General themes: In the turbulence of the Civil Rights Movement and the struggle for women's equality, the Episcopal Church was an important, if often controversial, player. Women were ordained to all three orders of the clergy by 1989. The liturgical movement recovered many features of the worship of the ancient church and integrated them with the new sensibilities and contemporary language in *The Book of Common Prayer* 1979. At present, the Church is struggling with issues of sexuality and sexual orientation, which are typically expressed in controversies over ordination and liturgy.

- A. The Church and the Civil Rights Movement
- B. The full inclusion of women and women's ordination
- C. The liturgical movement and *The Book of Common Prayer* 1979
- D. Issues of sexuality dividing the Church today.

CHURCH HISTORY: PART II THE AMERICAN CHURCH

I. Gathering

Hymn

- God is working his purpose out, *The Hymnal 1982* #534
- Singing songs of expectation, *The Hymnal 1982* #527.

Collect for the Day

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Introduction

Remind participants of the basic themes of the Anglican way as it had emerged by the 17th century: a national church, common prayer, apostolic faith, incarnational theology, and the via media. How will these inheritances from the English experience be challenged by and adapted to the conditions of a democratizing American society in a federal, republican polity?

The Church of England was never established in all the English colonies, and no bishop was ever consecrated for the colonial Church. The colonial Church experienced the separation from England as a disaster, losing its privileged position in some colonies and many of its clergy everywhere. In the years immediately after the American Revolution, the Church in America had to re-think what it meant to be an Anglican without being English, an Anglican in an American republic. It was slow to adapt to the conditions of a growing and democratizing nation moving westwards. It did not learn how to grapple with these new realities quickly, but a new generation of American bishops after the 1820's was able to establish a secure place for the Episcopal Church in the United States.

II. Illumination

1. The Church of England came to the English colonies in North America with the first settlers at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. Since the New England colonies were the creation of Puritans dissatisfied with the established Church at home, they were never Anglican, but the southern colonies gave a privileged position to the established Church of England.

2. During the two and a half centuries from 1607 to 1776, the English never consecrated a bishop for America, and even in the southern colonies there were many Anglicans who were not eager to see them appointed, since they were regarded as unwelcome extensions of royal authority. Laymen on vestries acquired much greater control over their clergy and parish affairs than in England.

3. The American Revolution was at first a disaster for the Church. Identified as it was with the mother country, having a clergy dependent upon episcopal oversight from London, worshipping according to a form that required prayers for the King at every service, it was the target of laws disestablishing it where it had been established and limiting it where it was not. Many clergy fled to England or Canada and left their congregations without pastors and without the sacraments.

4. At the end of the war, with British recognition of American independence, it was not clear how a Church of England could continue to exist in an American Republic. Samuel Seabury of Connecticut went to England to seek consecration as a bishop, but the English bishops were not legally able to lay hands upon anyone who could not pledge loyalty to the King of England. The answer was to turn to the Episcopal Church in Scotland, whose bishops consecrated Seabury in 1787.

5. Now that the historic episcopate had been brought to the United States, however, it was still not clear how the American Church would govern itself. William White of Philadelphia, soon consecrated a bishop himself, led the effort to design an American church suited to the new republic, and in 1789 the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. was created, with a governing structure based on the model of the Federal Constitution, combining lay and clerical leadership, with a Presiding Bishop and a General Convention made up of a House of Bishops and a House of Delegates.

6. The infant American Church existed in the doldrums as the new century opened. Its parish-level organization was suited for a stable society, but Americans were on the move. Protestant denominations with their circuit-riding preachers laid the foundations for large Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian Churches while the Episcopal Church remained small. Only with a new generation of leaders such as Bishops William Henry Hobart and Jackson Kemper did the domestic mission of the Church find proper expression.

7. Briefly divided by the Civil War, the Episcopal Church found it easier to reunite afterwards than many other denominations, because its unity came through common worship and prayer and the episcopacy. Even as Protestantism continued to give rise to new religious groups in America, the Episcopal Church remained largely intact. There were, however, multiple influences acting on the Episcopal Church from the Oxford movement to Liberal theology, the Broad Church movement, and the Social Gospel. The Catholic revival notably enriched the liturgy and led to a Gothic revival in church buildings. High Church and Low Church parties differed in their emphases but remained within the same Episcopal Church structure.

8. As America industrialized and large numbers of immigrants arrived from central and eastern European lands, and as slavery disappeared, to be replaced by racial segregation, the religious makeup of the nation changed quickly. At the same time, industrialism and racism presented new problems and opportunities for the American Church. Episcopalians were prominent in the Social Gospel movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and they struggled with the question of race relations and mission to African-Americans and Native Americans. In the late 19th century, American Episcopalians also began to play a significant role in foreign mission work in Latin America, the Caribbean, the Philippines, and China.

9. Having pioneered in the development of a non-English Anglicanism, American Episcopalians also played a role in the evolution of the Anglican Communion as other former colonies of Great Britain acquired self-government and looked to the American Church as a model of how to retain an Anglican identity outside a colonial relationship with England. Similarly, from the 1850s on, Episcopalians led in the emerging Ecumenical Movement, offering the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888 as a basis for church union.

10. In the twentieth century, the Church avoided the internal schisms that Protestant denominations often faced in the battle over a literal understanding of scripture and the issue of evolution. In the first half of the century, the Church was generally conservative, and its membership was largely middle and upper-class, but it promoted the social gospel and the ecumenical movement.

11. After World War II the Church experienced tremendous growth, reaching 3.4 million members by 1960. The controversies since that time have included the turbulence over racial and gender equality:

the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and the issue of Prayer Book revision. Typically for Anglicans, many of these issues have found expression as questions of liturgy and ordination. The 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* attempted both to modernize the language of the 1928 *BCP* and to return to many ancient practices of the Church. At present the Episcopal Church is struggling with issues of sexuality and sexual orientation which continue to find expression in typically Anglican form as questions of liturgy and ordination.

CHURCH HISTORY: PART II THE AMERICAN CHURCH

III. Engagement

1. How did the independence of the American republic create a crisis for Anglicanism?
2. How did American Anglicans solve the problem of creating a non-English form of Anglicanism?
3. Why was the Episcopal Church relatively slow in moving westward with the country?
4. How did Episcopalians avoid the permanent divisions that affected Protestant churches over issues of slavery, Civil War, and fundamentalism?
5. Why has the Episcopal Church been a leader in foreign missions and the ecumenical movement?
6. How has the Episcopal Church dealt with questions such as social justice, civil rights, and women's equality?

IV. Reflection

1. Preface to the *Book of Common Prayer* (1979), pages 9-11
2. Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (BCP 1979, pages 876-7)

**ANGLICAN WORSHIP
THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER
LITURGY AND PIETY**

OUTLINE

I. Introduction- Worship in the Anglican Tradition

- A. Worship is central to the identity of the Anglican tradition.
- B. From its beginnings in the Church of England worship united various factions into one church.
- C. Anglicanism is not confessional; beliefs are voiced through texts and actions of worship.

II. *The Book of Common Prayer* provides a framework.

- A. In 1549 the first English *Book of Common Prayer* united ancient materials with the theological understandings of that day and place.
- B. Each subsequent edition of the English *Book of Common Prayer* showed development of thought and practice.
- C. Daughter churches of the Church of England used the English *Book of Common Prayer* as their starting point for prayer books which reflected each of their unique situations.
- D. The foundation of a *Book of Common Prayer* allows for differences in styles of worship and ceremonial of worship while safeguarding the core beliefs of the Church.
- E. Differences in theological thought are present among the various prayer books of the member churches of the Anglican Communion.

III. Worship and Liturgy in the Anglican Tradition is rooted in many traditions.

- A. The Celtic tradition with its appreciation of nature and mystical experiences is an important foundation of the Anglican spiritual tradition.
- B. The form and structure of the Roman and Benedictine monastic traditions are also important.
- C. In worship we seek to encounter God in holy time and space.
- D. The activity of worship is to praise God and gain strength to be faithful witnesses for Christ; this is summed up in the General Thanksgiving.

IV. Worship involves the whole of life and the whole of each person.

- A. Anglican worship is incarnational, recognizing that all parts of our human self are heirs of the promise of salvation begun in Christ's incarnation; we use all parts of our being (body, mind, spirit) to worship God.

- B. The seasons of the Church liturgical calendar draw the faithful into the story of faith.
- C. Various sacramental rites bring God's presence and blessing into all areas of life.
- D. The use of sense, motion, and action in worship involves the whole person in worship.
- E. Our tradition embraces a myriad of opportunities to bring our lives and the life of God together.

V. Music in liturgy and worship

- A. Any portion of the rites in the *Book of Common Prayer* may be sung or said.
- B. Because we have no confessional statement to guard our beliefs, the texts of hymns, songs, and anthems must conform to the standard of worship (*The Book of Common Prayer*).
- C. The Rector of the congregation is the final authority for the conduct of worship and music in a parish.
- D. The clergy are bound by canonical requirements that prevent innovations inconsistent with our received practices and beliefs.

VI. *The Book of Common Prayer* and individual piety

- A. *The Book of Common Prayer* is as much a tool for private piety as it is for corporate worship.
- B. Forms, including schedules for Scripture readings, for daily prayers at Morning, Noonday, Evening, and Compline, as well as other devotions, are found in *The Book of Common Prayer*
- C. Other spiritual activities (such as rosaries, silent mediation, contemplative reading of holy texts) are also valued parts of the Anglican traditions of piety.

Conclusion

- A. Anglican worship is comprehensive in that it can hold within itself many different and divergent elements.
- B. Catholic and evangelical
- C. Ancient and modern
- D. Individual and corporate
- E. Anglican worship gives voice to our beliefs.

**ANGLICAN WORSHIP
THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER
LITURGY AND PIETY**

I. Gathering

Hymns

- King of glory king of peace, *The Hymnal 1982*, #382
- O worship the king, *The Hymnal 1982*, #388

Collect for the Day

O Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it the spirit of grace and of supplication: Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

II. Illumination

Worship is central to the life of the Episcopal Church and Anglican tradition. An experience of Anglican worship is what initially draws many people into the fellowship of this Church. As we shall see, from the beginnings of the Church in England as a distinctive ecclesiastical body, it was the activity of worship that united various beliefs into one Church. In large part worship still identifies who we are more than any other factor.

The Anglican tradition is not confessional. That is, we have no official systematic theology or officially defined set of beliefs other than those expressed in the Book of Common Prayer, which we voice through our common worship. For instance, one can say that Anglicans believe in one God who is a Trinity of persons not because we have an academic statement that says so but rather because when we worship we profess the Nicene or Apostles' Creed, both of which witness to the Holy Trinity. In another instance, we believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and regard as mystery how that is accomplished beyond what is indicated by Eucharistic prayers. Our beliefs are given voice by the content of our worship, which continues to re-enforce our beliefs. None of this is to say that all Anglicans have always worshipped in the same way any more than Anglicans have always believed exactly in the same way.

Worship in the Anglican tradition is grounded in the use of *The Book of Common Prayer* in its various national editions. The first English *Book of Common Prayer* was published in 1549. Its content was a mixture of ancient materials and the theological thoughts of that day and place. Its real genius was that it provided a common English text so that priest and people could both take an active role in the worship of the Church. The prayer of the Church was in common, including all persons. From the beginning, uniformity in thought and practice has been less a part of who we are than has been a high respect and tolerance for divergent views and beliefs. Subsequent editions of *The Book of Common Prayer* improved on that beginning. Some editions leaned more toward traditional Catholic doctrines; sometimes the movement was toward principles of the Reformation Churches. The intent of all of the books was simply to have the people of England, regardless of their individual religious persuasions, worship together as one people in one Church.

As the British colonial empire spread across the globe so did the Church of England. With the Church went *The Book of Common Prayer*. And while they were rooted in their mother Church's *Book of Common Prayer*, each daughter Church developed her own unique version of the prayer book. In the modern era various national editions of *The Book of Common Prayer* and even subsequent editions of each individual Church's prayer book can contain slight differences or shades of theology. From a historical perspective this is because some national

Churches were founded by more Catholic minded missionaries, some by more Evangelical minded missionaries. Then, too, the Church does not live away from the world. The Church is naturally influenced by the culture in which she lives. That can have an effect, for instance, on whether or not the prayer book of any one national Church accepts or does not accept the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopacy. Prayer Books historically have reflected such diverse perspectives.

So, then, the history of worship in the Anglican tradition has been grounded in a common source of prayer for the Church (the prayer book) and has used the activity of worship to gather up and hold together a wide variety of beliefs and practices.

The diversity of Anglican worship is experienced in many ways. The style of our worship can embrace the elaborate ceremonial of the Anglo-Catholic or “High Church” tradition or the elegant reserve of the Evangelical tradition, which is often referred to as “Low Church.” It can also reflect the enthusiastic energy of the Charismatic movement. Most often worship in the local parish tends to be a mixture of all of these.

Despite our English roots, worship of the Anglican Church in this day and age is done in many languages, including Spanish, French, Maori, Creole, African dialects, Portuguese, Japanese, Lakota Sioux, and Arabic to name a few. The Anglican Communion is a world-wide entity and our worship reflects that in musical styles, styles of liturgical vesture, and cultural accoutrements. The foundations though remain the same.

The roots of our worship drink from the ancient traditions of Celtic spirituality, with its appreciation for the Divine witness in the created world. Our system of daily devotions at morning, noon, evening, and night stems from the venerable Benedictine monastic tradition. Our liturgies, the set forms of our worship, draw from the ancient traditions of the undivided Church catholic as well as from Reformation principles. We value the presence of the Scriptures in all of our worship.

The essence of our liturgies is an encounter with the living God, during which we acknowledge and give thanks for all that God has done for us and seek God’s strengthening grace to continue in the holy fellowship of the Church and draw others into the community of faith. This sentiment is expressed very eloquently in what for many is a favorite prayer from the prayer book. In the General Thanksgiving we pray:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages.

In worship we encounter the God of our salvation through the Scriptures that are read and shared. In worship we remember Christ’s sacrifice on the cross for the reconciliation of the world and celebrate the gift of grace. Through sacramental acts such as Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, we are drawn into the Divine life of the Body of Christ which is the Church.

The Anglican tradition is deeply incarnational, that is to say we believe that by the Incarnation of Christ, all of our lives are blessed. Our physical selves, as well as our spiritual selves, are participants in the salvation Christ offers, and both to be open to God’s activity.

In worship, the times and seasons of all our lives are brought into the presence of God and Christ’s Church. The church calendar divides the year into seasons and days of special commemoration. Advent draws us into the mystery of the first and next coming of Christ into this world. Lent helps us to participate in the suffering and

passion of Christ. Easter lifts us to celebrate God's re-creation of the world through the death and resurrection of Christ. Days which commemorate events in the life of Christ and the Church, such as Pentecost, the Ascension, and the Epiphany of Our Lord, help us to grasp the fullness of the story of our faith. Saints' days and special commemorations give us concrete examples of lives lived in faithfulness to God and instill in us the hope that we, too, can live faithfully and even valiantly for Christ. Scripture lessons, prayers, and brief readings for every official commemoration are found in a book entitled *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*.

In the corporate worship of the rites of Marriage, Ordination, Setting Apart of Monastic Vocation, Laying on of Hands for Healing, Confirmation, Burial, Thanksgiving for the Birth or Adoption of a Child, we acknowledge that all of our life and all parts of our lives belong to God.

We also worship incarnationally. Our worship provides our bodies as well as our minds with the opportunity to be engaged in worship. We stand, sit, and kneel. We sometimes bow or genuflect. We may use the sign of the Cross. Our worship spaces are often beautifully adorned with fabrics and candles. Our ears and voices are engaged in worship by all kinds of music. In the laying on of hands or the washing of feet, the sense of touch conveys the grace of God. We can even use the sense of smell in worship by the use of incense or oil of chrism, or candle wax.

For the Anglican tradition, the whole world is part of God's holy creation. Our worship includes provisions for the Blessing of Homes, the Blessing of Fields, as well as the blessing of articles created to enhance the beauty of holiness in worship. Near the calendar date for the commemoration of St. Francis, it is not uncommon to find a service for the Blessing of Animals. Many of these services are found in a companion book to *The Book of Common Prayer* called *The Book of Occasional Services*.

In worship we assemble as the whole people of God. Young, old, rich, poor, male, female, lay, and clergy, all are made one by the spirit of the Risen Christ and all worship together. We are united by worship with the Church Universal as well, as our prayers and praises are joined with the prayers and praises of those who have gone before us in the faith, all those who will come after us, and with the angels whose delight it is always to worship God. We sing with them one hymn of praise.

This brings us to the role of music in our liturgy. *The Book of Common Prayer* instructs that anything that may be said in the liturgy may be sung (BCP p. 14). *The Book of Common Prayer* also points to the importance of the texts of hymns and anthems in our worship. Remembering that our theology is expressed primarily through worship, it makes sense that we do not allow just anything to be sung or said during worship. As *The Book of Common Prayer* instructs, "Hymns referred to in the rubrics of this Book are to be understood as those authorized by this Church. The words of anthems are to be from Holy Scripture, or from this Book, or from texts congruent with them" (BCP p. 14). Music, especially hymns, is how the theology of our tradition is made clear and immediate to the people. They have been called "the theological texts of the people." Care should be taken then that hymns and songs are never present just because we like to sing them, but because they serve to draw out the meaning of the scripture texts or commemorations of the day or to give us words to respond to them. By Canon Law the ultimate responsibility for the content and conduct of the worship of the parish Church rests exclusively with the Rector or Priest in Charge. Even then he or she is not free to make innovations or changes to the Church's liturgical forms. Canon Law requires that they must conform to the rubrics (instructions) of *The Book of Common Prayer*. By having this requirement, the Church safeguards the people from the whims and personal convictions of individual members of the clergy and insures that the breadth of our tradition is maintained from the largest cathedral to the smallest mission.

The worship of the Anglican tradition is obviously corporate and public but it is also private. We hesitate to divide one from the other because they are necessary to each other. Each Anglican is encouraged to have a

personal discipline of prayer and study called a Rule of Life. Here, too, *The Book of Common Prayer* is our guide. Author Martin Thornton has written:

*To the seventeenth-century layman the Prayer Book was not a shiny volume to be borrowed from the shelf on entering the church and carefully replaced on leaving. It was a beloved and battered personal possession, a lifelong companion and guide, to be carried from church to kitchen, to living room, to bedside table.*¹

The prayer book provides the guides for a detailed and systematic reading of Scripture in the Daily Office lectionary as well as the three year cycle of weekly readings for the Sunday Eucharist. It also provides numerous forms for devotions for families and individuals. It contains the Psalms which are some of the best devotional reading Christians can have. *The Book of Common Prayer* is to be used at home as well as in the Church.

The Book of Common Prayer, as important as it is to our tradition, is not the limit of our lives of prayer and devotion. From the foundation of corporate prayer and liturgy, Anglicans worldwide have always valued their own traditions of individual piety. Many Episcopalians pray the Rosary in either its traditional Marian form or in the newer tradition of Anglican Prayer Beads. Silent contemplative prayer, the use of *lectio divina* (contemplative reading of Scriptures and other sacred texts), walking the labyrinth, speaking in tongues, praying in the Spirit, pilgrimages, retreats, silent days, all have a place in our tradition. All have proved helpful as individuals work toward deepening their spiritual lives.

The Church's calendar of seasons, feasts, and commemorations can also be brought closer to the heart by observing religious traditions and customs in the home, thus making each home a chapel. This is especially helpful when there are young children in the home as it helps them understand that home is as much a part of religious life as is the church building. Examples of these home based liturgies might include using an Advent wreath, setting out cookies for St. Nicholas (on December 6th), flying a kite on the Feast of the Ascension, or celebrating each person's baptismal birthday with a cake and small religiously themed presents.[2] The limits to what we do and find helpful to us spiritually are bounded only by our imaginations and our willingness to experience new avenues of spiritual refreshment.

Worship in the Anglican tradition is comprehensive, that is to say that it encompasses many things. It can contain the Catholic tradition as well as the Evangelical. It is private and corporate. It is as unique as each worshipper and at the same time as universal as Christ's One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. It is grounded in the traditions of *The Book of Common Prayer* and grows from there. It is found in the meeting of the Church for the weekly Sunday celebration of the Resurrection and in the home liturgies that call God's presence into every moment of every day.

Our worship is made particular by the traditions of each local parish and at the same time witnesses to the universal Gospel of the Risen Christ. Worship is what tells others who we are. It is also how we tell ourselves and those who come into our community who we are and what we believe. We are, in the major part, defined by our worship and liturgy, as we have always been, and as we always shall be.

**ANGLICAN WORSHIP
THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER
LITURGY AND PIETY**

III. Engagement

1. Use the “*The Book of Common Prayer Scavenger Hunt*” which follows on page 25.
2. Using a set of Proper scripture readings for a future Sunday, a Hymnal, and *The Book of Common Prayer*, plan a Sunday Eucharist. See that the music you choose enhances and supports the Propers of the day.
3. Look through *The Book of Common Prayer* and find a liturgy that your parish has never done. Engage the Rector and see if you can find a way to include this liturgy in the life of your parish.
4. Ask your priest to see a *Book of Occasional Services* and see if you can think of ways to enrich the life of your local parish by what you find therein.

IV. Reflection

1. What styles or traditions of worship exist in your local parish?
2. How might some styles be more appropriate at times than others?
3. How does your life of private piety affect your role in corporate worship and how does our role in corporate worship affect you life of private piety?

BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

“SCAVENGER HUNT”

Find the answers:

1. By what other name is New Year's Day known in the Church calendar?
2. How many Eucharistic Prayers are there in *The Book of Common Prayer*?
3. Who should be notified when a person is near death? See BCP p. 462
4. How many Psalms are there?
5. On what date is Easter in the year 2044?
6. Where in the BCP is there a direction to give something that is metal? Hint: it is not a wedding ring.
7. What Gospel is to be read on Ascension Day in lectionary year B?
8. How many forms are there for the Reconciliation of a Penitent?
9. According to the Calendar what are the Days of Special Devotion?
10. *The Book of Common Prayer* recommends that Baptism be reserved to what five occasions?
11. Who may administer baptism in an emergency?
12. When must there be a period of silence during the celebration of the Eucharist?
13. What is The Supplication?
14. Where is the General Thanksgiving found?
15. What six areas must be covered in the Prayers of the People?

THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE: PART I BAPTISM AND HOLY EUCHARIST

OUTLINE

Explaining the role of Baptism and Holy Eucharist in the life of Anglican Christians.

I. Terms

- A. Sacrament
- B. Sign
- C. Grace
- D. Efficacious
- E. Sacrifice
- F. Real Presence

II. Introduction

- A. Sacramental symbols draw on our salvation history and reflect the role of the Church as a Sacrament of God's presence in the world.
- B. God performs the Sacraments with ministers as God's human agents.
- C. The Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist are grounded in scripture and essential for all Christians.
- D. Confirmation, marriage, ordination, penance, and unction are called sacramental rites and are not essential for all Christians, but impart strengthening grace for specific situations in life.
- E. Anglicanism draws from both the Protestant and Catholic traditions, holding that Sacraments confer the grace signified by their outward symbols and by holding *word* and *sacrament* in balance.
- F. The actions of the Sacraments confer grace to live sacramentally in the world.

III. Baptism

- A. Outline of the Faith—BCP pp. 858-859
- B. The liturgy of Baptism—BCP pp. 299-308
- C. The signs are water and the blessing in the name of the Trinity.
- D. Baptism signifies birth into the Christian community, forgiveness of sin, and new life in Christ.
- E. Infants become full members of Christ's family through Baptism.
- F. Parents, godparents, and sponsors make the baptismal promises on behalf of a child being baptized and promise to support the child's growth in faith.
- G. Baptism is performed only once for an individual.
- H. We live our Baptism by fulfilling the promises made on pp.304-305 of BCP.

IV. Holy Eucharist

- A. Outline of the Faith – BCP pp. 859-860
- B. The liturgy of Holy Eucharist – BCP pp. 355-366
- C. The signs are the bread and wine and the Great Thanksgiving prayer, including Christ's command.
- D. The Holy Eucharist signifies the Body and Blood of Christ, truly present in a way that we cannot explain.
- E. For Anglicans, the Holy Eucharist is not simply a memorial but a spiritual reliving of the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross.
- F. Through the Holy Eucharist, the Church is unified with Christ and becomes a sign to the world of Christ's redeeming sacrifice (Postcommunion Prayer, BCP p. 365).

SACRAMENTAL LIFE: PART I

BAPTISM & HOLY EUCHARIST

I. Gathering

Hymns

- We know that Christ is raised, *The Hymnal 1982*, #296
- Come, risen Lord, and deign to be our guest, *The Hymnal 1982*, # 306

Collect of the Day

Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen. (BCP p. 365)

II. Illumination

Introduction:

Symbols are integral to our understanding of the sacraments of the Church. Sacramental symbols date from the salvation history of Israel, when covenants between God and his chosen people were marked with physical signs. A rainbow marked God's promise to Noah; the tablets of stone and the Ark of the Covenant were signs of God's presence with Moses and the wandering tribes. Even now, the foods consumed at modern Passover meals are symbols of God's saving acts of deliverance from bondage in Egypt.

The early Christian Church inherited, continued, and deepened this sacramental understanding of our relationship with God. The Church itself, the Christian community, is an outward sign, a sacrament of God's presence among us. The symbols we use in our sacramental rituals are reminders of our salvation history, especially of events in the life of Christ. They also point forward to the fulfillment of God's eternal promises.

Early in church history, St. Augustine formulated the understanding that God performs the sacraments; the minister is merely the human agent. Thus the validity of the sacrament is not dependent upon the virtue or spiritual merit of the minister performing the physical action. By the time of St. Thomas Aquinas there were seven sacraments recognized by the Roman Catholic Church: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, ordination, marriage, penance, and unction. Luther held there were only three: baptism, Eucharist, and penance. When pressed he said that only two of these were real sacraments, because penance had no "sign." Calvin said there were only two, baptism and the Eucharist.

Anglicans regard Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist as grounded in scripture and essential for all Christians. The other five, often called Sacramental Rites, are not necessary for all Christians and have a more ambiguous scriptural warrant. Nevertheless, Anglicans have no trouble referring to all seven as sacraments. Our lesson on the sacraments will therefore be divided into two sessions, one for Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist, the other for the Sacramental Rites.

The understanding of sacramental efficacy is another point of striking difference between Protestants and Catholics. Protestants from Luther and Calvin onwards have defined the Church around the proclamation of the Word, understood as the preaching of the Word. The Catholic tradition has understood the Church much more as the sacrament of Christ and therefore as the community practicing the sacraments. Luther held that the sacraments impart no grace that is not also found in the preaching of the Word. Calvin understood them as secondary to the Word, merely confirming God's promises given in the Word. The Roman Church, on the other hand, developed and maintains an understanding of all seven sacraments as objectively **efficacious**; that is to

say, God uses them to confer the grace signified by the outward symbol. Taking Holy Baptism as an example, God uses the outward sign of water to confer the inward grace of new birth in Christ and forgiveness of sin. Another way to say this is that “the sign effects the thing signified.”

Anglicanism seeks a balance between word and sacraments. Historically it has veered from emphasis on one to emphasis on the other. The Oxford movement of the mid-19th century played a vital role in restoring the centrality of the sacraments in the Anglican Churches. Today Anglicanism attempts to hold together people who would stress one or the other. *Word* represents Christ in proclamation and in moral commitment; *Sacrament* represents Christ in communal action and through material objects. The word convinces us through our faculties of intellect and reason and may persuade us to acts of love and mercy. The sacraments persuade through motion and our five senses; they create our sense of belonging to a community reaching back in time to Christ and the apostles, and even to Abraham, and forward to the communion of saints.

In our Communion service, there are two times when the priest elevates something: the reading of the gospel and the consecration of the bread and wine: word and sacrament are lifted up. See the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:34-38): the eunuch hears the word, but then consents to be baptized. We need both; it is not enough to preach or to be convinced so that we may attain salvation; God wants a covenanted community in a sacramental world of rainbows, handshakes, rings given and exchanged, bread and wine blessed and broken and shared. Through the sacraments, God tells us that the world is more than it appears to be, that there is deeper meaning in our surroundings, in our relationships and in our lives.

The action of the sacraments is not limited to the space in which we celebrate them. God bestows upon us the grace to carry these actions out into the world. In the Holy Eucharist, for example, we recall, relive, and continue the Incarnation, carrying Christ out into the world with us. In the Rite of Reconciliation, we are reconciled in our own relationship to God but we are also renewed as reconciliation people, bringing that spirit from the pastor’s office into our communities. In these two lessons, we will look at each sacrament’s significance for sacramental living in the world.

HOLY BAPTISM

Matthew 3:13-17, The Baptism of Our Lord
An Outline of the Faith, Holy Baptism, BCP pp. 858-859
Holy Baptism, BCP pp. 299-308

In Holy Baptism, we see sacramental action in its most easily understood form. We can see, feel, and hear the water but we cannot see God’s grace; we cannot see repentance; we cannot see the community’s acceptance; we cannot see faith. Water symbolizes cleansing, drowning, and rebirth, dissolving (forgiving our sins), and the downpouring of God’s grace. Water is common but essential for life, a precious commodity in the often desert locations where the Church was born. Through the symbol of water, the Church looks back in salvation history to Noah and the cleansing flood, to Israel’s passage through the Red Sea, and to the baptism of Jesus by John.

Chrism, a consecrated oil, is used for anointing the newly baptized person with the sign of the cross at baptism. At this consignation, the bishop or priest says to each newly baptized person that “you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism and marked as Christ’s own for ever” (BCP, p. 308). Chrism must be consecrated by a bishop.

Even as infants, we are baptized by a community and are accepted into that community. Just as Jesus welcomed little children to come to him (Mark 10:14), the Christian family welcomes even the youngest into our household. Because infants and small children are unable to make a profession of faith or to affirm the baptismal promises, parents and godparents or sponsors make these affirmations for them and promise to do all they can to nurture and encourage the child’s growth in faith. At a later time, the young adult will be able to claim this faith and renew these promises for herself (see Confirmation).

Baptism by water and in the name of the Holy Spirit is full initiation into the Christian community and is an unrepeatable sacrament. Baptized persons of any age may participate fully in the life of the Church, including receiving Holy Communion. Although we are all sinners, even after baptism, there are opportunities for forgiveness and renewal in other rites of the Church. We have the opportunity to renew our baptismal promises whenever someone is baptized and in the Confirmation liturgy. At each General Confession and in the Rite of Reconciliation, we receive forgiveness of sin. In Confirmation, there is even an opportunity for a formal reaffirmation of faith with laying on of hands by the bishop.

Because each baptism is such an important part of the life of the Church family, baptisms properly take place during the major Sunday services rather than privately. The most appropriate occasions for Baptism are the feasts of the Baptism of Our Lord, the Easter Vigil, Pentecost, and All Saints or whenever a bishop is present. Through our baptism we are deputized to continue the work of Christ.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Mark 14:22-24 The Last Supper

The Holy Eucharist is a meal for the whole family of Christ, taken at the Lord's Table. As such, it looks backward to the Passover meal, eaten by the people of Israel as they were preparing for their liberation from slavery in Egypt. It looks backward to the Last Supper, in which Jesus took, blessed, broke, and gave bread to his disciples in preparation for his sacrifice on the cross when he liberated us from sin and death. The words of consecration are taken directly from Holy Scripture, in which Jesus commands us to "do this for the remembrance of me." Finally, it looks forward to the heavenly banquet.

We understand this remembrance as a *re-living* rather than as a commemoration. Christ's sacrifice on the cross took place in historical time but exists eternally. His sacrifice is not repeated but is celebrated in the Holy Eucharist in our own time. Christ is not sacrificed anew but, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church is present at his one sacrifice in a spiritual sense. The word *Eucharist* comes from the Greek for thanksgiving. In Holy Eucharist we give thanks for Christ's eternal sacrifice for us and we experience it anew.

Christ is truly present in the Holy Eucharist but the precise mechanism is a mystery. We call this doctrine the Real Presence. Here again, the Anglican tradition stands between the Protestant view, in which communion is sometimes seen as a memorial celebration, and the Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation in which the elements are believed to be materially transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. In the Real Presence, we believe Christ is present in the consecrated elements in a special but mysterious way. For this reason, we treat the consecrated bread and wine reverently, either consuming them immediately, reserving them for later consumption, or disposing of them directly into the earth.

The Holy Eucharist is a family meal. All baptized persons, of any age, of any denomination, are welcome at the Lord's Table. It is often called Holy Communion because we receive it as a community and through it we are united with Christ and with each other. Episcopal priests do not celebrate Holy Eucharist alone—at least one communicant must be present with the priest for Holy Communion.

In the Holy Eucharist, we not only remember the Incarnation and our Lord's sacrifice on the cross, but Jesus Christ becomes truly present among us. We are united with him individually and as a community; we continue the Incarnation as the Body of Christ. We are then charged to carry the Incarnation out into the world, to become the Real Presence of Christ in our relationships to God and our neighbor.

THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE: PART I BAPTISM AND HOLY EUCHARIST

III. Engagement

1. Symbols and gifts; signs and grace

Begin with an activity and discussion about gifts.

- Distribute small gifts to each participant and discuss
- Ask what is the best gift each has ever received and why
- Discuss symbolic significance of gifts

The facilitator should bring out that the gifts were freely given and unearned, that they were a sign of love, and point out any strengthening or equipping qualities of the gifts.

Then, read together *The Outline of the Faith* questions and answers on the sacraments on BCP pages 857-858. Discuss the following phrases in the second answer: “forgives our sins, enlightens our minds, stirs our hearts, and strengthens our wills.” These phrases indicate a link between the grace given in the sacraments and what we need to live the sacramental life every day.

2. What have we learned? What remains to be examined?

**SACRAMENTAL LIFE: PART II
OTHER SACRAMENTAL RITES**

OUTLINE

Sacrament:	Outward Sign	Inward Grace	Minister:	Scriptural Basis	Sacramental living
Baptism	Water, in the name of the Trinity	Union with Christ, birth into the Church, forgiveness of sins, new life	Baptized Christian – normally one in Holy Orders	Matt. 28: 19	Live out the baptismal promises
Eucharist	Bread-Wine	Body and Blood of Christ; forgiveness of sins, strengthening union with Christ, foretaste of heavenly banquet	Priest or Bishop	Luke 22: 19-20	Become the Body of Christ, God's sacrament, in the world
Confirmation	Laying hands	Strength from the Holy Spirit	Bishop	Acts 8: 14-17	Be a witness to Christ
Ordination	Laying hands	Strength to fulfill vows	Bishop	Matt. 28: 16-19	Serve Church in the Order
Matrimony	Joining Hands	Strength to fulfill vows	Man & Woman (blessing by priest or bishop)	John 20: 21-23	Form a life-long union; become outward sign of relationship between Christ and Church
				Matt. 19: 4-6;	
Reconciliation	Laying hands; pronouncing absolution	Absolution of sins	Priest or Bishop	John 20: 23	Live out reconciliation in the world
Unction	Laying hands with anointing	Strength and healing	Priest or Bishop	James 5: 14-16	Be an instrument of healing in the world

SACRAMENTAL LIFE: PART II OTHER SACRAMENTAL RITES

I. Gathering

Hymns

- The church's one foundation, *The Hymnal 1982* # 52
- Lord, you give the great commission, *The Hymnal 1982* #528

Collect of the Day

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world; Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshiped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*
(BCP p. 215)

Related Scriptures:

Acts 8: 14-17
Mark 19: 4-6
John 2: 1-11
John 20:19-23
James 5:14-16
Matthew 28: 16-19

II. Illumination BCP pp. 860-861

Introduction

As the Catechism points out, these other Sacramental Rites are means of grace, just as Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist are, but unlike the two great sacraments, they are not necessary for all persons. The Sacramental Rites are sometimes called Pastoral Rites because in them, God through the Church is addressing the needs people have in different life circumstances and passages.

(Note: these are presented in the order found in the Catechism.)

CONFIRMATION

BCP pp. 412-419

The Episcopal Church welcomes even infants and young children into the household of God by Holy Baptism. Because they are not yet able to enter into the Baptismal Covenant for themselves at that age, their parents and godparents make the promises and affirmation of faith on their behalf. Confirmation evolved so that those baptized at an early age could make a mature profession of faith and commitment to Christ. In this sacrament, we receive the laying on of hands by a bishop, linking us to the apostles in an unbroken chain. We receive strength from the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life according to our baptismal promises, reiterated in the confirmation liturgy.

Prerequisites for confirmation are Holy Baptism, instruction in the faith, and a mature intention to make a public profession of faith and commitment to Christian responsibility. Young people who were baptized as

infants are typically confirmed between the ages of 12 and 16. The Episcopal Church recommends that confirmation be deferred until age 14-15 or older in order to permit greater psychological maturity and independence for this important step. Some churches retain early Confirmation as a holdover from the older Prayer Books, in which Confirmation was a prerequisite for Holy Communion. In the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, Baptism is considered full Christian initiation, so that Confirmation is no longer required before one may receive Holy Communion.

People who are baptized as adults are expected to be confirmed if their baptism is not accompanied by the laying on of hands by a bishop. People who join the Episcopal Church as adults are also expected to be confirmed or received.

The liturgy of Confirmation also provides for *reaffirmation* (BCP p. 419). Confirmed Episcopalians may choose *reaffirmation* when they wish to rededicate their lives to Christ, typically, but not exclusively, after a period of disengagement from active life in the Church.

ORDINATION BCP pp. 510-555

The Church has recognized three distinct orders of ordained ministry since the time of the apostles. Bishops, priests, and deacons each have distinct leadership functions. Through a process of mutual discernment, the Church recognizes those who are called by God to ordained ministry and admits them to Holy Orders through prayer and laying on of hands by a bishop or bishops duly qualified to ordain and consecrate. The manner of ordination in the Episcopal Church is consistent with the customs of the early Church insofar as possible in order to affirm the continuity of these sacred orders in historical time and throughout the contemporary world.

1. THE ORDINATION OF A BISHOP (BCP pp. 511-523)

Bishops are ordained whenever possible on Sundays, feasts of Our Lord, or of the apostles or evangelists. The Presiding Bishop or designee presides and is chief consecrator, accompanied by at least two other bishops. Consecration by at least three bishops both symbolizes and assures that new bishops are part of a community of ordained overseers and chief pastors stretching back in history to the time of the apostles and linking around the globe with other bishops in the one, holy, catholic Church of today.

The ordination liturgy sets out our understanding of the ministry of a bishop:

- A bishop is called to be one with the apostles in proclaiming the resurrection and interpreting the Gospel;
- To testify to the sovereignty of Christ as “Lord of lords, King of kings;”
- To guard the faith, unity and discipline of the Church;
- To provide for the administration of the sacraments;
- To ordain priests and deacons and to join in ordaining bishops;
- To be a chief pastor, a “faithful and wholesome example;”
- To share with other bishops in the leadership of the Church;
- To encourage the gifts and ministries of all the baptized;
- To oversee the life and work of the Church;
- To sustain and counsel with the ordained;
- To defend the poor and disenfranchised.

Through prayer and laying on of hands by the consecrating bishops, God confers the power of the Spirit to build up, nurture, and oversee the life of the Church.

2. THE ORDINATION OF A PRIEST (BCP PP. 524-535)

A priest is ordained by a duly qualified bishop in the presence of at least two other priests. The ordination liturgy tells us that:

- A priest is a “pastor, priest, and teacher;”
- Exercises his or her office in community “with your bishop and fellow presbyters”;
- Proclaims by word and deed the Gospel, aligning his/her life with its teaching;
- Loves and cares for his/her people, no matter their status in life;
- Preaches, absolves, blesses, shares in Holy Baptism and Eucharist (i.e., with the bishop), and performs other ministrations as assigned by the bishop;
- Is obedient to his/her bishop;
- Studies scripture and has an active life of prayer;
- Administers the sacraments of the New Covenant;
- Is a pastor, teacher, and councilor in order to strengthen the family of God.

Through prayer and the laying on of hands by the bishop and other priests, God confers the grace and power to equip the new priest for his/or her duties.

3. THE ORDINATION OF A DEACON (BCP PP. 536-547)

Candidates for priesthood are first ordained as deacons, an order of ministry first mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as those chosen to serve the people of God and assure just treatment of the helpless while the apostles preached and taught (Acts 6:1-6). They were ordained by laying on of hands. Deacons who will later be ordained as priests are called “transitional deacons.” The diaconate is a special ministry of servant hood. The ordination liturgy tells us that:

- A deacon studies the Holy Scriptures for personal nourishment and for patterning his or her life and work on them;
- Serves all people--especially the poor, weak, sick, lonely;
- Makes Christ and his redemptive love known;
- Interprets the “needs, concerns, and hopes of the world” to the Church;
- Assists the bishop and priests in public worship and ministrations;
- Is guided by the leadership and pastoral direction of the bishop;
- Looks for Christ in all others, in order to embody Christ’s servant hood.

Through prayer and the laying on of hands by the bishop, God grants the ordained the grace and power to be “modest and humble, strong and constant,” so that this life of service may glorify God and bring many to Christ.

SUMMARY

Bishop: A Bishop serves the ministry of OVERSIGHT, *coordinating* and *propagating* the work of the Church in the present and into the future.

Priest: A Priest serves the ministry of PRESIDENCY, leading a community in its varied circumstances to *do* the work of the Church, feeding and forming the community as it does so.

Deacon: A Deacon serves the ministry of SERVICE, engaging the Church and its local communities in meeting the needs of those both inside and outside its fellowship.

HOLY MATRIMONY

BCP pp.422-438

The sacrament of matrimony is actually performed by the two persons being married, not by the celebrant. The celebrant pronounces the blessing of the marriage. It is a “solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God” (BCP p. 422). According to the *Constitution and Canons* of the Episcopal Church (“canon law”), prior to any marriage in the Church (not necessarily in a church building), a member of the clergy should ascertain:

- (a) That both parties have the right to contract a marriage according to the laws of the State.
- (b) That both parties understand that Holy Matrimony is a physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman, entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind, and will, and with intent that it be lifelong.
- (c) That both parties freely and knowingly consent to such marriage, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to identity of a partner, or mental reservation.
- (d) That at least one of the parties has received Holy Baptism.
- (e) That both parties have been instructed as to the nature, meaning, and purpose of Holy Matrimony by the Member of the Clergy, or that they have both received such instruction from persons known by the Member of the Clergy to be competent and responsible. (Canon I.18.2)

Clergy typically prepare a couple for marriage during several joint sessions during the weeks or months immediately preceding the wedding.

In cases where either party has been married before:

- (a) The Member of the Clergy shall be satisfied by appropriate evidence that the prior marriage has been annulled or dissolved by a final judgment or decree of a civil court of competent jurisdiction.
- (b) The Member of the Clergy shall have instructed the parties that continuing concern must be shown for the well-being of the former spouse, and of any children of the prior marriage.
- (c) The Member of the Clergy shall consult with and obtain the consent of the Bishop of the Diocese wherein the Member of the Clergy is canonically resident or the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Member of the Clergy is licensed to officiate prior to, and shall report to that Bishop, the solemnization of any marriage under this Section.
- (d) If the proposed marriage is to be solemnized in a jurisdiction other than the one in which the consent has been given, the consent shall be affirmed by the Bishop of that jurisdiction. (Canon I.19.3)

The canons further state that the consent of the Bishop in these instances shall be in writing and that diocesan records of these judgments shall be maintained.

All this is to ensure that any Christian marriage is undertaken lawfully, freely, and with proper intent on the part of both persons. As the celebrant says in the opening exhortation: “Therefore marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God” (BCP p. 423).

The liturgy of Holy Matrimony takes place in the context of the Liturgy of the Word and may be followed by Holy Communion. After the exhortation, the man and woman each give their *consent* to the marriage and the witnesses, including the congregation, promise to uphold the couple in their marriage. The actual *marriage*, or exchange of vows, comes after the scripture readings. The couple join hands as they exchange their vows to love, sustain, and support one another in success and in adversity until death. These words and the joining of hands are the outward sign of the grace given in marriage, the grace to live up to those vows. Although rings are commonly blessed and exchanged, they are not essential and are not the sacramental sign.

The marriage liturgy includes prayers for the couple (BCP p. 429-430). These prayers indicate our view of what marriage should be: “that each may be to the other a strength in need, a counselor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy.” We ask that they be granted the grace to forgive each other and to seek God’s forgiveness whenever they hurt each other.

We pray that the married couple may be a sign of Christ’s love for the world, in other words, that their relationship itself be a sacrament, a sign of unity, forgiveness, and joy, and that their affection would overflow into their community. The marriage concludes with a priestly blessing, asking God’s grace that they may live into their marriage covenant faithfully.

The Prayer Book makes other provisions for blessing and celebrating a marriage. Civil marriages may be blessed after the fact (BCP pp. 433-434) and there is a form for devising a unique marriage liturgy, although the vows are prescribed (BCP pp. 435-436).

RECONCILIATION OF A PENITENT (BCP pp. 446-452)

In the Episcopal Church, private confession is available but not required. The offices of Morning and Evening Prayer and the liturgies of Holy Eucharist contain general confessions and absolutions deemed efficacious and sufficient whenever we seek forgiveness from God with truly penitent hearts.

There are two forms of service for private confession, however, and they may be used whenever a penitent wishes. Private confession is frequently offered during a retreat or it may be sought during a time of crisis or great change, during a serious illness, during Lent, or when the penitent is greatly troubled and in need of pastoral care. The Rite of Reconciliation is by no means limited to these times, however.

The confessor may spend some time in pastoral conversation with the penitent in preparation for the Rite. A preparation exercise, such as Martin Smith’s book, *Reconciliation: Preparing for Confession in the Episcopal Church*, may be helpful. After the penitent confesses all serious sin, the confessor may offer “counsel, direction, and comfort” as well as assigning some prayer or action to be performed as a sign of contrition and thanksgiving. Only a bishop or a priest may then pronounce *absolution* in the service. If another Christian hears a confession, she may use the *declaration of forgiveness* provided on p. 448 and p. 452. The contents of the confession are a matter of absolute secrecy for the confessor (“the seal of the confessional”).

Each Christian has a ministry of reconciliation to the world, exercised through our care for others, our willingness to give and receive forgiveness to and from our neighbors, and our work for peace and justice. We live sacramentally when we embody Christ’s ministry of reconciliation in our daily relationships.

UNCTION (Ministration to the Sick) (BCP pp. 453-461)

The anointing of the sick with prayer for healing and laying on of hands is recommended in the Letter of James and has been practiced by the Church since earliest times. It became associated with the time of death, however, and was at one time called “Extreme Unction.” Now it is recognized that prayers and anointing for healing of body, mind, and spirit are appropriate at any time and even may be sought by one person on behalf of another or others.

The Ministration to the Sick is divided into three parts. Each may be used independently or two or more may be used together in the order found in the Prayer Book. Part I, the Ministry of the Word, may be led by a deacon or layperson and consists of scripture readings on the theme of divine healing and care. Confession and absolution may be offered at this time. Part II consists of laying on of hands, anointing, and prayers for healing. Part III is Holy Communion with a special post-communion prayer asking grace for healing, strength, and forgiveness of sins. The liturgy may be augmented by any of a variety of prayers for the sick found on pages 458-461. Further prayers and liturgical resources for healing may be found in the supplement to the Prayer Book, *Enriching Our Worship, Volume 2*.

The outward sign in this liturgy is the laying on of hands and anointing with blessed oil. The inward grace is the anointing with the Holy Spirit, granting forgiveness, release from suffering, and wholeness and strength.

We think of doctors, nurses, counselors, and other kinds of caregivers as having healing ministries and indeed, some Christians have specific and powerful healing gifts from the Holy Spirit. All Christians, however, are called to a sacramental life of healing, living in our broken world as a sign of Christ's healing ministry by visiting and caring for the sick, advocating for the disenfranchised, caring for our environment, honoring our own physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, and conducting our lives with reverence for the gift of creation.

SUMMARY - What is Sacramental living?

Each of the seven sacraments addresses the spiritual needs of Christians as individuals, but they also have implications for the way we bring the Kingdom of God into reality in the world. By fully living out these sacraments—keeping our baptismal covenant, embodying Christ, being witnesses, healers, and reconcilers—we ourselves become sacraments. As sacramental Christians we are outward, visible signs of God's grace, grace that is ever-present and abundantly available whenever we make ourselves open to it in faith.

SACRAMENTAL LIFE: PART II OTHER SACRAMENTAL RITES

III. ENGAGEMENT

1. How is my life one of witness, healing, and reconciliation?
2. How is marriage a mutual ministry?

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE IN ANGLICAN THEOLOGY: PART I

OUTLINE

Purpose: To delineate the role of Scripture in Anglican theology.

I. Illumination

PART I: Terms

- A. Holy Scripture
- B. Anglican theology
- C. Canon
- D. Authority

PART II: The Bible's Place in Anglican Theology

- A. Scripture is the first of three factors making up Anglican theology.
- B. Christian tradition and reason are the other two factors.
- C. The Bible is the Church's "adequate account of Jesus and of Israel's experience of God..."

II. Engagement

- 1. How does what you've learned conform to or differ from your current faith tradition?
- 2. How large a part does the Bible play in your own faith journey?
- 3. Is any part of the Anglican perspective troublesome, confusing, or especially illuminating?
- 4. What areas or aspect would you like to pursue in greater depth?

III. Reflection

- 1. The Bible is authoritative and foundational in Anglican theology.
- 2. Scripture is one of three factors of Anglican theology.
- 3. Scripture is the authoritative witness to the acts of Almighty God in our salvation history.
- 4. Scripture is essential in shaping our ethical behavior.
- 5. The Bible as canon has informed and shaped other canon and doctrine in our theology.
- 6. Regular, dedicated and critical study of the Bible is necessary to grasping the fullness of our theology.

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE IN ANGLICAN THEOLOGY: PART I

I. Gathering

Hymns

- We limit not the truth of God, *The Hymnal 1982*, #629
- Word of God, come down on earth, *The Hymnal 1982*, #633
- God has spoken to his people, *The Hymnal 1982*, #536

Collect for the Day

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Introduction

Throughout the long history of the Anglican Church, there have been many debates spanning the political, social and theological spectra. Frequently, these debates have called to question just how we regard the Holy Scriptures in our particular denomination. Do we take the Bible seriously and follow it? If we appear to deviate from what it says, why do we do so with seeming impunity?

These are reasonable and relevant questions for anyone contemplating the Anglican faith. As you study and live into our Episcopal approach to Christianity, you will discover that we live with various tensions in our Church, especially as we seek to embrace and minister to our diverse membership. This lesson will affirm and delineate the role of Scripture in our faith.

II. Illumination

PART I: Terms

- **Holy Scripture/Scripture:** The Bible
- **Anglican theology:** The theology to which we Episcopalians adhere.
- **Canon:** The texts of central importance to our faith.
- **Authority:** An entity's (i.e., the Bible's) rightful place or jurisdiction within a body (i.e., a church).

PART II: The Bible's Place in Anglican Theology

The very first question we want to address is where Holy Scripture sits in our doctrine. This is answered by saying that Scripture is the first and foundational of three factors that make up our theology; the other two are Christian tradition and reason.

For Anglicans, the Bible is authoritative for Christian belief because the Church of today is “in continuity with Israel and the early Church, and that is in essence the same community at a later period. This community’s classic and normative experience of Jesus and God in the history of Israel (as revealed in the Bible) still gives our faith its basic shape today” (Bennett & Edwards 283). The Bible’s authority will be discussed more fully later.

Christian tradition is the record of the church’s efforts to understand and convey the faith of the Bible “in terms of the view of reality current in every period of its history” (Bennett & Edwards 283). The more successful of these efforts “remain authoritative for us today as examples of the way biblical faith can be rephrased in the thought forms of a later age and also can be extended to comprehend situations and knowledge” not envisioned by biblical writers (Bennett & Edwards 283).

The application of reason in our theology is not meant to suggest that we plug into “some timeless logic.” Rather, it means that we express our Christian belief in terms of the understanding of reality and in the thought forms of our own times. “The task of theology is mediating between the historic faith of the church and society’s constantly revised construction of reality” (Bennett & Edwards 284).

To sum up, the Bible is the Church’s “adequate account of Jesus and of Israel’s experience of God, (and) ...furnishes the principles that are to be extended to fit new situations” (Bennett & Edwards 284). It is also the standard against which these extensions must be tested. Tradition is the history of the “apt extensions” that have been made through the centuries and also provides the models for making further “apt extensions.” Reason is our society’s construction of reality to which our biblical faith must be extended. All three are required to produce a theology adequate to meet Anglican standards (Bennett & Edwards 285).

Having identified the Bible as the first essential component of our Anglican theology, we will expand upon its authority from five perspectives: (1) as the Word of God; (2) as inspired by God; (3) as sufficient for leading us to salvation and nurturing our awareness of God; (4) as the primary source document of our faith; and (5) as canon within the Anglican Church. It is through these perspectives that we should see that the Bible truly serves as the anchor and guiding light of our faith. We will also take a look at the interpretation of scripture in the next lesson.

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE IN ANGLICAN THEOLOGY: PART I

II. ENGAGEMENT

1. How does what you've learned conform to or differ from your current faith tradition?
2. How large a part does the Bible play in your own faith journey?
3. Is any part of the Anglican perspective troublesome, confusing, or especially illuminating?
4. What areas or aspect would you like to pursue in greater depth?

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE IN ANGLICAN THEOLOGY : PART II

OUTLINE

Purpose: To delineate the role of Scripture in Anglican theology.

I. Illumination

PART I: Bible's Authority from Five Perspectives

- A. Scripture as the Word of God
- B. Scripture as Inspired by God
- C. The Sufficiency of Scripture
- D. The Primacy of Scripture
- E. The Bible as Canon

PART II: Biblical interpretation

- A. Rabbinic Interpreters
- B. The Early Church
- C. The Medieval Church
- D. The Reformers
- E. The Anglicans
- F. Our Reading of Scripture within the Community of Faith

II. Engagement

- A. How does what you've learned conform to or differ from your current faith tradition?
- B. How large a part does the Bible play in your own faith journey?
- C. Is any part of the Anglican perspective troublesome, confusing, or especially illuminating?
- D. What areas or aspect would you like to pursue in greater depth?

III. Reflection

- A. The Bible is authoritative and foundational in Anglican theology.
- B. Scripture is one of three factors of Anglican theology.
- C. Scripture is the authoritative witness to the acts of Almighty God in our salvation history.
- D. Scripture is essential in shaping our ethical behavior.
- E. The Bible as canon has informed and shaped other canon and doctrine in our theology.
- F. Regular, dedicated and critical study of the Bible is necessary to grasping the fullness of our theology.

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE IN ANGLICAN THEOLOGY: PART II

I. Gathering

Hymns

- We limit not the truth of God, The Hymnal 1982, #629
- Word of God, come down on earth, The Hymnal 1982, #633
- God has spoken to his people, The Hymnal 1982, #536

Collect for the Day

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

II. Illumination

PART I: The Bible's Authority from Five Perspectives

1. Scripture as the Word of God

For Anglicans, the Bible is considered the Word of God; but we do not view this in an inerrant, literalist sense. The Church of England never claimed the inerrancy of Scripture, even during the Reformation, and the more modern Anglican Church does not hold that the Bible is literally the “words” of God in every detail. As stated in the catechism, “We call them (the Holy Scriptures) the Word of God because God inspired their human authors and because God still speaks to us through the Bible” (BCP 853). The Bible is viewed as divinely inspired but a very human product, the work of numerous human authors, constructed over a thousand years or more, and conditioned by the cultural assumptions of their age. It is a highly pluralistic document, containing the personal views of different writers, and shaped by the particular situations in which they were written. Consider, for example, the seeming conflict between the Apostle Paul and James, Jesus’ brother, over the role of works in Christian doctrine; two different slants that, when studied carefully, richly inform our faith.

Essentially, then, the Bible contains the Word of God in the sense that it speaks to us of Jesus Christ, but does so as conveyed by God through human beings. Reginald Fuller says that this is something we should embrace. The Word of God expressed through human words is analogous to the doctrine of the Incarnation, wherein the eternal Word of God became incarnate as a first century Jew—Jesus. It is analogous to the sacraments, wherein “God uses the frail elements of water, bread, and wine to communicate the redemptive presence and action of his Word to us.” It is also analogous to the Church, a very human institution that is always in need of reform. In sum, with the Bible, as with all the other means God uses for our salvation, the same applies: “God in his wondrous condescension stoops to use human and earthly means to accomplish his saving purpose” (Fuller 80). “As the incarnate Word is the sacrament of God...so the Bible is the sacrament of God’s word, his offer of salvation through his eternal Son and Word” (Fuller 80).

2. Scripture as Inspired by God

The notion that Scripture is inspired by God is a belief inherited by the Christian Church from Judaism. While some have interpreted this to mean that God “guided the pens of the human writers or dictated

his words to their minds,” more indirectly it is viewed that God was the ultimate, not the immediate, cause behind the writing of Scripture. While it was human beings who wrote the Bible, God was the primary cause of its being written.

Some Anglican scholars have argued for the abandonment of the doctrine of inspiration, essentially because it is often associated with the notion of inerrancy. Others argue, however, that it should be retained. First, it is found in the Anglican Catechism (American Book of Common Prayer 853), which says that the Old and New Testaments were “written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.” Second, it doesn’t have to imply inerrancy—“the primary work of the Holy Spirit is not to guarantee inerrancy, but to produce an authentic witness to the salvation event in Jesus Christ. A sacramental understanding of the Bible as the word of God would seem to require the doctrine of inspiration...in the sense that the human words proclaim the Christ event with the power to evoke faith. To produce faith is precisely the work of the Holy Spirit” (Fuller 81).

Third, we share the doctrine of inspiration in our ecumenical dialogue with the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Lutheran Churches, all of which affirm the doctrine. This is important because it evidences our relationship with and commitment to the larger Church.

The claim to inspiration applies to both Old and New Testaments. Also, the inspiration of Scripture is not a once-for-all event. When read in church, the Holy Spirit uses Scripture “ever anew to proclaim the living word of salvation.” The work of the Holy Spirit is not restricted to the original writing, which produced the authoritative witness of the salvation event. “That witness has constantly to be rekindled in the community of the faithful, particularly in the context of the liturgy. The word of God is not a static, dead document: it constantly recurs as event, and has to be apprehended through the Spirit” (Fuller 82).

3. Sufficiency of Scripture

Next, let us consider the sufficiency of Scripture. Here the question is whether the Bible adequately contains what is necessary for obtaining salvation in Jesus Christ.

In the Anglican view, the Bible does contain all that is necessary for us to obtain salvation. Article VI of the Thirty Nine Articles states explicitly: “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation...”(BCP 868). As Fuller so effectively puts it: “No other book, however primitive or inspiring, can add anything to the witness of these acts of God, however much it may contribute to our understanding of them. This is because the saving acts of God took place once-for-all, and with the events there is also a once-for-all authoritative witness. This witness is the work either of those who had themselves directly witnessed those events...or of those who were in immediate contact with that witness, who...were “so completely created by apostolic witness and formed by apostolic obedience that they are veritably carried across into the company of the original disciples of Jesus and invested with the authority of their mission.” (Fuller 83)

4. The Primacy of Scripture

When talking about the primacy of Scripture, what we mean is that Holy Scripture is the norm of our faith; it is the norm by which the other norms of our Church (the creeds, tradition, confessions of faith) are judged (Fuller 83). In calling it the norm, we are not saying that the Bible is an absolute prescription for a ready-made theology; rather, it offers a model of procedure “whereby we too in our own day and age can move from the fundamental message...to our own problems and questions” (Fuller 84). Bear in mind that our faith is “primarily not the acceptance of a series of propositions but the acceptance of the gospel as the good news of the mighty acts of God for us and for our salvation” (Fuller 83-84). Theological propositions have only secondary importance and represent the attempt of the faith to understand itself.

Paul, for example, starts out with the apostolic message and “draws out its implications for controverted points of interpretation as in 1 Cor. 15 where he deals with the resurrection from the dead.” Paul’s doctrinal conclusions are influenced by and limited at times to the world view of his day. Thus, while not rigidly prescriptive, the Bible serves more like a series of guidelines from which we may proceed to formulate our doctrine (Fuller 84).

The Bible is also the norm for ethical behavior. Modern Anglicans do not see it as a code book of law, but “specific ethical commands of the Bible are illustrations of the kind of behavior God requires in specific situations. They are derived from what God has done for us in his saving acts” (Fuller 84). We encounter situations today not covered by specific edicts in the Bible, so we have to go beyond the confines of the canon. But we need to ask, “What kind of imperative does the indicative of the gospel imply?” (Fuller 84)

The Old Testament has also been a “characteristic source” regarding ethics for Anglicans, particularly as embodied in the teachings of the prophets, such as Amos and Isaiah. Anglican concern for and involvement in the cause of world hunger, for example, may be rightly claimed to be biblically based.

5. The Bible as Canon

Closely associated with the idea of Scripture as the norm of our faith is the idea of the canon: the list of books recognized as belonging to the normative writings of our faith. For Anglicans, all books of the New Testament are canonical and the Old Testament books of the Hebrew Bible are considered canonical. The additional books of the Greek Bible, called the Apocrypha, are valued and used in our modern day lectionaries. However, they occupy a secondary position in our theology and amplify rather than establish doctrine.

It is interesting to see how the New Testament canon has informed and shaped all Christian theology including our own Anglican theology. The structure of the New Testament canon is first, the Gospels, followed by Acts, then the Epistolary writings, and finally, Revelation. “The fact that four Gospels come first means that the incarnation together with the Trinity is, for Anglicanism, fundamental to the faith (and this ...involves faith in the God of the Old Testament, which precedes the New Testament in the canon). The structure of the Thirty-Nine Articles reflects this pattern, for the Articles begin with the Trinity and the incarnation” (Fuller 85). Paul’s letters to the Colossians and Ephesians place the doctrine of salvation in an “ecclesial perspective”: “The Colossian-Ephesian doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ of which he is the head is of particular significance to Anglicanism” (Fuller 86).

Other examples of where the Bible as canon has informed our Church doctrine include the Letter to the Hebrews, which has played a long and essential role in our theology, especially in the doctrine of the Eucharist. “It was Hebrews’ insistence on the once-for-all character of Christ’s sacrifice that gave Cramner the warrant for his exhortation to the Prayer of Consecration in the Communion Service of 1549-1552: ‘...who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world’ “(Fuller 86). This emphasis is repeated in Article XXXI. Fuller has a great deal more to say about this aspect of Scripture, which is worth exploring, but this brief treatment illustrates how richly the Biblical canon informs and is imbedded in the particular Anglican canon.

PART II: BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Introduction

Interpretation is a fundamental activity, not only in the communities of faith that were formed in response to Scripture, but also in the communities of faith that recorded and preserved the words of the Bible. The history of Christianity, the history of Judaism, the history of the formation of the Bible itself, is the history of interpretation. All our words about Scripture are acts of interpretation, without the status of revelation or authority. The text of the Bible itself is a response to fundamental encounters with the living God, and it is to this living God that the text bears witness. Through a process of interpretation, and ongoing encounters with this living God, the Bible took on its present form. And this whole is greater than the sum of its parts, enabling these words to address the human spirit in all its diverse cultural and personal expressions.

As Anglicans, we share this attentiveness to the words of Scripture, and this reverence for the God who speaks in Scripture—the God who continues to speak in all the world to all of humankind. We also share a reverence for tradition, the ongoing history of the reception of this word. We honor the history of new encounters with the living God who addresses us in Scripture and in our specific lives and in our specific circumstances. We are also particularly conscious of ourselves as both reasonable and fallible interpreters of scripture, and of the distinction between Scripture and our interpretation.

Rabbinic Interpreters

The older brother of the Church, the synagogue, had a profound reverence for the vitality of the word of the God who spoke—of the God who speaks in Scripture. Each Sabbath, in the setting of confession of faith, prayer, and praise, Scripture was read and heard—and interpreted to the worshippers. For the devout, there were other gatherings for the study and interpretation of Scripture. This study and interpretation was carried out in the context of the life of the community, and of the life of individuals. One term that has survived for these gatherings is the “house of midrash.” Midrash is a close examination—inquiry—of Scripture, led by a respected master of the tradition, and related to present issues or events that concern the community. Recent discussions of midrash have emphasized the authority of this “oral Torah” to transform the original meaning and even intent of the text. Violence in the text, for example, gives way to the kindness and ethical responsibility that undergirds the life of the community—the “requirement to be compassionate.” But behind this authority, midrash was always the ongoing dialogue about interpretation within the life of the present community. Though midrash often dramatically transformed the plain meaning of the text, midrash never had—or intended to have—the status of the “written Torah” that is its ongoing basis. The records preserve broad dialogues about the specific qualities of a righteous life—a life that is our proper honor to the God who made us and who calls us into fellowship in new and unexpected ways.

The Early Church

The path that led to modern Christianity was laid out by teachers whose interpretation began with the crucifixion and resurrection of the Messiah. Their treatment of Scripture bound the story of the crucified one into the ancient stories of God’s works among the people of God. At every point, in a variety of ways, they established connections between the words and stories in the Law and the Prophets and the new stories of the crucified one. Paul engages the discussion of the specific qualities of a righteous life in the light of the stories of the crucified one. The proclamation of Christ crucified was the proclamation of a theology of grace that made reconciliation with God the starting point, and not the result, of our efforts to be righteous. In the process, the plain meaning of the text was dramatically transformed. In the light of this proclamation, the story of the Jerusalem Council in Acts abolishes observances of the Torah that are fundamental to widespread definitions of righteousness according to the Torah. The

Gospels bring together the words and sayings of Jesus, in close dialogue with the stories in the Law and the Prophets, as new stories in the history of the work of God in the history of the people of God. In the light of this new proclamation of the risen Messiah, subtle themes in the book of Isaiah—the God who comes as a healer and the suffering servant who will come—become the foundation for a substantial rereading of Scripture.

The Medieval Church

The Church Fathers were educated teachers who read Scripture within the world of Hellenistic intellectual circles in the Roman Empire dominated by a new understanding of Plato. In these intellectual circles in Alexandria and Rome, the universe from top to bottom, from God to matter, is a unified whole. Everything in the universe finds its fulfillment in communion with God, and everything in the universe is striving toward communion with God. This reading of nature was extended to the reading of texts as material and verbal signs that communicate and mediate this divine reality. For these readers, the text had two levels of meaning. The *literal* sense described the events, with all the moral and intellectual dilemmas they present. The *spiritual* sense described the divine truth that they disclosed. Every text of Scripture was read in the light of the movement of the universe from bondage toward communion with God, now understood in terms of the crucified, resurrected, and exalted incarnation of God, Jesus Christ.

The Medieval Church intentionally preserved this repository of faith from the early Church, and read Scripture in dialogue with these traditional readings. Their literary readings substantially elaborated the “spiritual” readings from the earlier period. In a literal reading of the Exodus, the ancient Israelites left the land of Egypt in the time of Moses. In an *allegorical* reading, it refers to the redemption done by Christ. In a *moral* reading, it refers to the conversion of the soul from sin to grace. In an ultimate reading (*anagogic*), it refers to the final liberation of the soul from corruption to glory. This rich elaboration of the spiritual meaning of the text never displaced the literal (or historical) reading of the text, with all its untamed meanings and implications.

In many ways, Thomas Aquinas is the culmination of this tradition. He carried forward this tradition in the language of Aristotle, which provided a constructive emphasis on the material universe, drawn irresistibly toward God, the unmoved mover. This language also allowed a constructive dialogue with the scientific understanding of the natural world. Aquinas’ reading of Scripture had a corresponding emphasis on the literal meaning, with all its ambiguities and limitations—and all its qualifications of the carefully wrought spiritual meanings. In particular, Aquinas’ reading of Scripture was at its root an encounter with the living God that underlies and transcends all these words and texts, and not a pure exercise in textual authority.

The Reformers

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was, at one level, a reaction to the accommodation of the Church to the power and policies of the various European states—and the power and privilege that the Church shared with the rulers of these states. The gospel of the reformers in Germany and Switzerland was dominated by the Pauline proclamation of the grace of God. The grace of God is the beginning and the presupposition of our life in the presence of God, not the result of a life of virtue and piety i.e. we are “justified by grace through faith.” This proclamation of grace is entrusted to the Church, but it is not the property of the Church. Scripture is fundamentally a witness to the mystery of the grace of God, not a founding text for the prevailing political order undergirded by official doctrine. The mystery of the living God and the reality of the grace of God transcend the prevailing order and transform our understanding of the words in the text of Scripture. For Martin Luther, the word of God is “in-lettered” in the human voices we hear in Scripture, as God is incarnate in the human being Jesus Christ. For John Calvin, the words of Scripture are “mean and lowly words”—the rhetorical accommodation

of the divine word to the capacities of its human hearers. In their interpretation of Scripture, the reformers worked from the historical meaning of the text, rather than the traditional body of spiritual readings from the fathers and doctors of the Church. The emphasis on “scripture alone” was a rejection of the authority of this repository of faith, as well as a preference for a reading of the Bible as a whole. Under the rubric of “scripture interpreting scripture,” the reformers made the mystery of divine grace and its capacity to transform human life the central principle of interpretation.

The reformer’s emphasis on “scripture alone” never displaced their profound awareness of their confessional model for interpretation and of their own finitude as interpreters of the word.

The Anglicans

From the beginning of the Anglican tradition, the reading and hearing of Scripture has been integrally connected with our worship—“the rule of prayer is the rule of faith.” In a portent of the reformation of the Church of England, the Scripture lections in the Latin mass were read in English. For Richard Hooker, who articulated the spirit of the new Anglican tradition, the “medicine of grace” that comes through Jesus Christ is communicated in the Word and in the Eucharist. This is the context in which Scripture is read and interpreted. This emphasis on the grace of God in the life of the Church lay behind a tendency to avoid narrow definitions and overly precise formulations that created needless divisions. This tendency was dramatically expressed in the approach to Scripture in the official English translations. There is a dramatic typographic distinction between the text of the Scripture and the interpretive comments within the texts and in the margins. In addition, there are marginal notes that provide other possible translations, or a literal translation of the Greek or Hebrew original. This had the express purpose of discouraging the use of a particular translation of Scripture as a weapon in theological controversy.

In our reading of Scripture, as in our common prayer and worship, we are brought into the presence of a God who ever calls us into communion. This is the beginning and end of our interpretation of Scripture.

Our Reading of Scripture within the Community of Faith

Within the community shaped by our common worship, we also carry forward the old tradition of meeting for the purpose of reading and coming to terms with scripture. There we learn the power of the voices and the power of the stories within the text to address us directly at our deepest level. The voice that is heard in the text of scripture is the voice of the Living God that we worship. In all our worship and all our study, we bear witness to the God whose voice is heard in Scripture, whose voice is heard in the cloud of witnesses that preceded us, and whose voice is heard ever-fresh in our own life and circumstances.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, has summed it up. “The hearing of God at one point does not exhaust God’s speaking.... God names God in Scripture as the unconditioned and uncaptured, apprehended as such only in the upheavals and new beginnings of the history of those God encounters in grace and freedom.”

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE IN ANGLICAN THEOLOGY : PART II

III. ENGAGEMENT

To be sure, we have covered a lot of fairly dense material articulating and describing the authority of Holy Scripture in our Church's theology. We've seen the Bible's place as one of three factors governing our theology, and examined its authority from five perspectives. Let us now step back and reflect a bit on what we've covered. To begin our reflection, let us start by considering the following questions:

1. How does what you've learned about the Anglican perspective on the Bible conform or differ from your current faith tradition/from the faith tradition you've come from?
2. How big a part does the Bible play in your own faith journey?
3. Is there any part of the Anglican perspective on the Bible particularly troublesome, confusing or positively illuminating to you? (Here, the purpose is to help potential newcomers to our faith discern whether the Episcopal Church is genuinely a good fit for them, particularly at the fundamental doctrinal level.)
4. What areas or aspects of what we've covered would you wish to pursue in greater depth?

IV. REFLECTION

Through the foregoing we have learned the following:

1. Holy Scripture is indeed the authoritative and foundational source of our Anglican theology.
2. Holy Scripture comprises the first of three factors making up our theology, the others being Christian tradition and reason.
3. Holy Scripture provides the authoritative witness of the acts of Almighty God in our salvation history, and is essential to proclaiming the good news of our salvation in Jesus Christ.
4. Scripture is also essential in shaping the norms of our ethical behavior.
5. The Bible as canon has been instrumental in informing and shaping all other canon and doctrine of the Anglican faith.
6. Regular, dedicated and critical study of the Bible is necessary if one is to grasp the fullness of our Anglican theology.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART I

THE NICENE CREED

OUTLINE

One self-defining aspect of being and Anglican or an Episcopalian is affirmation of the Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith. This section explores creeds, what they are, how they developed, their place in our faith and history. Particular attention is paid to the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds.

I. Comparing the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds

The difference between the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds is seen from the first word of each: "I believe," begins the Apostles' Creed, while "We believe" is how the Nicene Creed begins. The former is a statement of a person who has affirmed his or her inclusion in the Body of Christ, the Church, through Baptism, and is thus properly an individual affirmation. The Nicene Creed, on the other hand, is the commonly held dogma of the Christian Church, and as we say it together, we both affirm the reality it describes, and prayerfully commit ourselves to the manifestation of this reality on earth.

II. The Nicene Creed speaks of the Trinity

The Jewish idea of monotheism was unique in the history of religious thought. Judaism arose in the context of Near Eastern religions that knew many gods, each of whom controlled aspects of the world around us, like rain, or the fertility of the crops or flocks. The Hebrew people themselves once shared such a religious view but came to understand that they worshipped not simply the greatest among a host of gods, but the only true and living God. Maintaining a monotheistic religion in the midst of the Canaanite peoples with their religions organized around many gods would have been daunting, in the least.

III. God the Father

The first section of the Nicene Creed acknowledges the fact that a single God, called both Father and Almighty, is the creator of all that is. It is the acknowledgement of Judaism's monotheism at the very outset of the Creed.

IV. God the Son

The Son and the Father each had genuine, distinct personhood, but were of the same substance with one another (and, again, with the Holy Spirit). The affirmation of the divinity of the Son, Jesus Christ, was revolutionary against the backdrop of Jewish monotheism, as true incarnation was against the backdrop of Hellenistic paganism.

V. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit was originally God's Power in the Hebrew Scriptures. As God's power, Holy Spirit was granted to God's servants and messengers, prominently the prophets. Wisdom has long been understood to be a name for the Holy Spirit, and so in this passage from Proverbs ("The LORD created me the beginning of his works, before all else that he made, long ago. Alone, I was fashioned in times long past, at the beginning, long before earth itself... Then I was at his side each day, his darling and delight, playing on the earth, when he had finished it, while my delight was in mankind.") we see one of the fountainheads of the thinking that led to the Church's recognition of a Third Person of God, thus completing the Trinity.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART I THE NICENE CREED

I. Gathering

Hymn

- Holy God we praise thy name, *The Hymnal 1982*, #366

Collect for the Day

Grant, Almighty God, that we, who have been redeemed from the old life of sin by our baptism into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, may be renewed in your Holy Spirit, and live in righteousness and true holiness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

II. Illumination

Immediately a difference between the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds is seen from the first word of each: "I believe," begins the Apostles' Creed, while "We believe" is how the Nicene Creed begins. The former is a statement of a person who has affirmed his or her inclusion in the Body of Christ, the Church, through Baptism, and is thus properly an individual affirmation. The Nicene Creed, on the other hand, is the commonly held dogma of the Christian Church, and as we say it together, we both affirm the reality it describes, and prayerfully commit ourselves to the manifestation of this reality on earth.

The Nicene Creed speaks of the Trinity. It is important to grasp that the doctrine of the Trinity flew in the face, seemingly, of the hard-won truth of Judaism, radical monotheism. "Hear, O Israel, the LORD your God is one" is the Shema, the defining proclamation of Judaism. To speak of a Triune God seems to be a complete departure from the central insight of Judaism, yet the theologians of the early Church claimed, finally, that it was not.

It might be well to consider how important the Jewish idea of monotheism was in the history of religious thought, and how hard won it was, before considering the Trinity. By so considering the Jewish theological base, it is easier to understand both how revolutionary the idea of the Trinity seemed to be, and how important it was to find a true connection between the two ideas.

Judaism arose in the context of Near Eastern religions that knew many gods, each of whom controlled aspects of the world around us, like rain, or the fertility of the crops or flocks. That the Hebrew people themselves once shared such a religious view is indicated in traces still to be found in the Bible, such as the Genesis creation statement, "Come, let us make humanity in our image." Rather than the royal we, this expression, found in the creation accounts of Genesis, is probably a trace of a time when the high god addressed the council of gods.

Gradually, however, the Hebrew people came to understand that they worshipped not simply the greatest among a host of gods, but the only true and living God. All the other so-called gods came to be as mindless forces anthropomorphized by humans, empty of person-hood.

It must have been hard enough for the understanding of monotheism to emerge within the Hebrew people (you can get an idea of this by learning about the emergence of the monotheistic Islam from the pantheism of the Arab people during the Seventh Century. See Karen Armstrong's fascinating biography of Muhammed for one portrayal.) To maintain a monotheistic religion in the midst of the Canaanite peoples with their religions organized around many gods would have been daunting, in the least. The thundering of the prophets against the Canaanite gods and the worship of them bears witness to this struggle.

Another aspect of Judaism's monotheism important in understanding the emergence of the doctrine of the Trinity is that the God of Israel was beyond human manipulation. While the Canaanite gods could be conjured, cajoled, or coaxed into helping humanity, the God of Israel was wholly other, and so beyond the reach of sympathetic magic.

Monotheism also gave gifts to humanity in terms of human consciousness. The concept of one God opens the door to the understanding of the human personality as whole and united in its parts. Jesus' famous summary of the law, and his identification of the heart of the Torah (Matthew 23), for instance, may be seen as an understanding shaped by the container of monotheistic thought. To love your neighbor as yourself would be to love the whole of one's self, and thus to be enabled to love the whole of the other person encountered in daily life. To love the whole of one's self is furthered by being immersed in a world where one must rigorously view the whole of creation as coming from the one single divine source, instead of proceeding from several divinities or powers. This example is given in order to show how important the idea of monotheism is, and how carefully the early Church had to work with the idea of Trinity. While the paganism of the Hellenistic world is the proximate, overwhelming backdrop to the struggles within the Church that eventually produce the Nicene Creed, it is the religious thought of Judaism in the Bible that had to be dealt with as the originating sacred texts of the young religion, Christianity.

The first section of the Nicene Creed, on God the Father, is the briefest, showing not that this section is unimportant, but rather acknowledging a tenet universally agreed upon: the fact that a single God, called both Father and Almighty, is the creator of all that is. It is the acknowledgement of Judaism's monotheism at the very outset of the Creed. Passing on, however, immediately we are in the realm of paradox, for we begin to affirm that the Second Person of the Trinity was begotten, not created by the Father God, and co-eternal with him, "God from God, light from light, begotten not made..." This compact statement is the compressed product of serious, sustained debate that involved both spiritual, intellectual and indeed physical struggle.

To summarize this in general, the followers of Arius maintained what seemed entirely reasonable and most probable, given the monotheistic background outlined above; that Jesus the Christ was created by the one Creator God. Arius' followers were willing to concede that the Messiah was the first, in terms of temporal sequence, and also in terms of importance, of all creatures, but was, nevertheless, a creature like all that is. The orthodox idea, that we take now to be given, that the Christ is the second person of the Trinity, co-equal with God the Father and with the Holy Spirit (more on the third person of the Trinity later), was seen as a shocking innovation, even as blasphemy.

We might pause in our exploration of the tenets of the Nicene Creed in order to say that not only were theologians, bishops, archbishops, priests, and deacons caught up in this struggle over the Trinity, but the laity too were passionately involved. We know from graffiti left in ancient bars that people slung slogans about the Second Person of the Trinity, partisans for either the Arian or what came to be the Orthodox positions, during drinking bouts. Then, as now, theological debate was embedded in private and public life, and connected to personal, national, and international politics. It is not that there was a time when people hungered for the religious and spiritual life more than now, or a time when the religious was something pure, unsullied by mundane concerns. Rather, as Reinhold Niebuhr explicated in his classic work, Christ and Culture, religious communities have historically displayed a range of responses with regard to the surrounding culture.

The Episcopal Church, which you are exploring in this Confirmation series, has historically taken the stance of what Niebuhr called "Christ transforming culture." This means that the Episcopal Church is in close, conscious connection with the culture, seeking to be agents of transformation in the service of Christ for that same culture. It also means that the Episcopal Church is vulnerable, we can find ourselves taken over by the culture rather than transforming it. It is a risky position in which to be, but it is where our church has felt called to stand.

It is also both interesting and useful to know that the effort to reach an understanding about the Trinity in the third and fourth century Church was not a dispassionate affair even for the clergy. When we read that the

Ecumenical Councils that produced the various historical creeds reached what they called “the mind of Christ” in their deliberations, we mustn’t think that this came peacefully. The proceedings were far more contentious than most of our strains in today’s Church. Protagonists were kidnapped, held prisoner, some were subjected to violence, and in the overall struggle many lives were lost.

So, should we conclude that the use of the term “the mind of Christ” was cynical or hypocritical? It is a fair question, and deserves some study and thought as we seek to be part of the Church, which is both a spiritual and irreducibly material reality. But for now, in this context, we may simply emphasize that, as was stated above, the Episcopal Church continues to work in the cultures of which it is a part, knowing that our “salt,” that is, our wisdom, may at times lose its saltiness, that is, become overtaken by values not of Christ. More positively put, you will find that the Episcopal Church takes seriously that Christianity is an embodied faith, a position deriving from biblical teachings that range from the creation accounts in Genesis to the birth narratives in the Gospels. We find in the Bible a broad affirmation of the goodness of creation, and God’s positive relatedness to it.

Finally, in this excursus on the very human, political process of the Nicene Creed’s creation, some consideration must be given to the role of the Emperor Constantine. Constantine’s “policy was to unite the Christian Church to the secular State by the closest possible ties.” (Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, p. 338) This preceding statement is simple and bald, and speaks an enormous and troubling truth about a long relationship between secular authorities and the Christian Church. It was Constantine himself who summoned the Council of Nicaea in 325, acceding to a request from contending parties around the Arian controversy. Constantine not only summoned the council, he presided over it, though as yet unbaptized himself.

Verna Dozier, in her potent little book, The Dream of God, identifies Constantine’s marrying of Church and State as one significant instance of God’s dream for creation being deferred. Again, as in the paragraphs above that outline the very messy, incarnational way the Nicene Creed came to be, there is possibility and risk in close engagement between the Church and the world. Given those tensions today, with debates on evolution, prayer in public settings, the Ten Commandments in public buildings, debates on abortion, etc., there is much to be learned from studying not only the content of the Creed, but also how it was made.

To return to the theological struggle that lies behind the formulation of the Nicene Creed, and particularly regarding the second person of the Trinity, the Son, against the backdrop of radical monotheism, the solution employed tools of classic Greek philosophy in order to hold that the Son and the Father each had genuine, distinct personhood, but were of the same substance with one another (and, again, with the Holy Spirit). The term “personhood” is very important in this formulation. It would be relatively easy to maintain the integrity of a monotheistic faith alongside a Trinitarian doctrine if one regarded the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as being modalities of being, mere masks of the one, undivided God. Or, similarly, if the three persons of the Trinity were not so much persons as functions (as in the recent formulation, “Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier,” which has the advantage of avoiding gender specific language concerning God, but reduces the persons to what they do, rather like saying you, in your complexity, could be adequately summed up by your job title.)

The resulting doctrine, that God is a Trinity of divine persons sharing one undivided substance is satisfactory at a formal level, and we say it as the gathered people of God during most celebrations of the Eucharist without a pause. It is, however, a formulation that hold in tension ideas that boggle the mind if we let ourselves think long enough about them. “Not confounding the persons nor dividing the substance,” as the Athanasian Creed has it, is akin to lying in a field an trying to number the stars; finite meets infinite and the human mind staggers.

This concept of maintaining the personhood of the God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit while still maintaining the essential unity of the substance, or the Godhead, is so daunting that it has regularly caused people to fall to one side or the other, and to thus be found to heretics. For instance, Eastern Orthodox theologians maintain that Western Christian mysticism has often strayed into heresy by saying, as Meister Eckhart (1260-1327) did, that behind the term “Father” lies a God who cannot be named. The Eastern Orthodox tend to see

such assertions as denials of the divine persons, and say in response that no matter how deeply one might be drawn into mystic union with God, one will always find the persons of God present in that mystic experience.

This Orthodox position might be humorously illustrated by an anecdote about the 19th Century English scientist, Thomas Huxley. Huxley was lecturing on Darwin's theories of evolution. An elderly woman in the audience said that she would like Huxley to respond to her conviction that the world is flat, and rests on the back of great turtle. As Huxley was about to respond, she interjected, "And I know what you are going to ask, Mr. Huxley, and the answer is, 'It's turtles all the way down.'"

Finally, the last section of the Nicene Creed deals mostly with the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was originally God's power, often imagined as wind or breath, in the Hebrew Scriptures. As God's power, Holy Spirit was granted to God's servants and messengers, prominently the prophets. A good place in the Bible to consider this aspect of Holy Spirit is in the story of Elijah and Elisha, at the end of the Elijah's ministry and life. Elisha asks his teacher and master to give him a gift from God of a double portion of the spirit that had been granted to Elijah. We must understand that this was not a request that had to do with ego or selfishness, but rather is a recognition in the narrative that the demands on Elisha as he contended with the prophets of Baal would be even those strenuous challenges Elijah had faced.

So, Holy Spirit as God's power for mission is one aspect of the person of the Trinity we call the Holy Spirit. As such, however, we recognize that if that is all the Holy Spirit is, it hardly qualifies for personhood. Other biblical sources, though, give us the emerging sense of personhood that the Church finally recognized as the Holy Spirit. In Proverbs, Wisdom is personified in this way: "The LORD created me the beginning of his works, before all else that he made, long ago. Alone, I was fashioned in times long past, at the beginning, long before earth itself... Then I was at his side each day, his darling and delight, playing on the earth, when he had finished it, while my delight was in mankind." Wisdom has long been understood to be a name for the Holy Spirit, and so in this passage we see one of the fountainheads of the thinking that led to the Church's recognition of a Third Person of God, thus completing the Trinity.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART I THE NICENE CREED

III. Engagement

1. Why is monotheism an essential concept?
2. What does it mean to call God both Father and Almighty?
3. The Episcopal Church is in close, conscious connection with the culture, seeking to be agents of transformation in the service of Christ. What are the dangers of this? When has transformation worked to the benefit of the culture?

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART II THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

OUTLINE

Christianity is about our relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

I. Illumination

- A. Faith and Action
- B. A new order: A new humanity
- C. Baptismal Covenant: Living our Faith
 - 1. The Apostle's Creed
 - 2. Defining our faith in Christ
 - a. Continue

“Will you continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship,
in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?”
 - b. Persevere

“Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin,
repent and return to the Lord?”
 - c. Proclaim

“Will you proclaim by word and example the good news
of God in Christ?”
 - d. Seek and Serve

“Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as
yourself?”
 - e. Strive

“Will you strive for justice and peace among all people
and respect the dignity of every human being?”

II. Engagement

- A. Which one of the 5 questions asked in the Baptismal Covenant is your greatest challenge? Why?
- B. How do you plan to live more fully into the promises of these five questions.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART II THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

I. Gathering

Hymn

- We know that Christ is raised, The Hymnal 1982, #296
- Go forth for God, The Hymnal 1982, #347

Collect of the Day

Almighty God, by our baptism into the death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, you turn us from the old life of sin: Grant that we, being reborn to new life in him, may live in righteousness and holiness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

II. Illumination

Christianity is about our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It is centered in faith in God and in living in personal relationship with God. We believe that God has bestowed upon us the gift of his grace in creation, in redemption in Christ, and in on-going sanctification by the Spirit. Faith is trusting in God's abundant love and saving grace in Jesus Christ.

At the same time Christian faith is about how we live our lives. It involves both faith and action. It is about believing in God and striving to live a godly life following Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Simply put, it is life lived in grace and in discipleship, following in the way of Christ.

None of us can do this alone. Our faith is not a solo spiritual journey. The Church is a community and we live our faith corporately. Anglican Christianity especially emphasizes the "we" of the faith, stressing that from the beginning of the biblical story it is evident that God calls a people to live in covenant with him. The Church is the continuing journey and witness of the people of God in history.

Paul wrote in II Corinthians 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new." With his usual passionate clarity the apostle is describing his faith that, in the Incarnation, cross, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, God has brought into being a new order and a new way of life. This new order is defined by the grace and love of God as we experience them in Jesus. God has manifested his unconditional love for all humanity and by the cross has reconciled us to God and to one another.

This saving, reconciling love makes us into a new humanity, a humanity renewed and reformed by God's love, mercy, and forgiveness. Regardless of race, nationality, ethnic heritage, gender, or language, all have been reconciled and made one through the cross and resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Church is meant to be the embodiment of this new humanity. In spite of our many imperfections, we are the new community where the love and reconciling grace of Christ are proclaimed and lived for the sake of the world.

Becoming this new humanity and new community of grace is a lifelong and ever unfinished process. We are always becoming what we are in Christ. Christian life is one of ongoing spiritual formation and continual transformation. As Paul wrote in Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect." Paul is not being other-worldly here or rejecting the world as God's good creation. He is describing the new value system of the Christian life, which is different from the value system of the world without God. To be formed by the love of Jesus Christ means that we must be continually converted from the world's often self-centered, materialistic way of living to a life centered in the compassion and mercy of God and in self-giving for others.

This is why Christian faith is a lifelong journey of formation in community. We need to share with each other in worship and study and prayer as we learn Christ and grow into the mind of Christ. We need to be in community as we reach out and minister the love of Christ for others. We require the vitality and encouragement of one another as we grow in the Spirit and embody the new humanity given to us in Christ.

In the Episcopal Church one of the best summaries of what Christian faith and action entail is the Baptismal Covenant in The Book of Common Prayer. It is found both in the liturgy for Holy Baptism and Confirmation, pages 304-5 and 416-17 respectively, as well as in the Easter Vigil at the center point of the Christian year. Its appearance three times in our Prayer Book shows how crucial the Baptismal Covenant is to our understanding of the Christian faith and life as Episcopalians. It gathers together the essentials of what we believe and how we are to live as Anglican Christians.

Some Episcopalians often read through the Baptismal Covenant in a time of meditation after receiving Holy Communion. It reminds us of us of our relationship with God and our commitments as Christian persons, serving as a kind of spiritual examination to help us remember what is really important and what we need to do.

The Baptismal Covenant has two major parts: the Apostles' Creed and five questions that summarize what the church community does to live this faith. A covenant in the scriptures refers to an agreement between two people or parties. Covenant defines a relationship and what the two parties promise to do. In the Bible, covenant is often used to describe the relationship between God and his people. God always initiates the covenant, as gift and loving invitation. Those who respond with an answering love, enter into a faith-covenant with God. This covenant means living in certain ways and being faithful to certain practices, as God has given them to his people.

In the Old Testament we have the story of the covenant God made with his people in several contexts, with Noah and the whole earth, with Abraham and Sarah and their descendants, with Moses and the Exodus community, and with David and his house. The Ten Commandments are a central example of the laws and practices that covenant involves. As Christians we are an integral part of the old covenant with the people of Israel.

With the incarnation, cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that God has made yet a new covenant with the world. This new covenant is founded not on law but on grace. God has given himself wholly for the world in the love and sacrifice of the cross and has initiated a new covenant relationship between him and those who believe. It is this that the Baptismal Covenant describes, emphasizing both the faith and practices of those who are in Christ.

Let us look at each of the Covenant's parts in some depth in order to find how they invite us to live our faith.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

The Apostles' Creed, our baptismal creed, is the most ancient summary of Christian faith. All churches in the catholic tradition hold to it, and it is considered a sufficient statement of Christian faith.

The creed summarizes the story and revelation of God in the Old and New Testaments. It describes our understanding of the one God as Trinity: Father/Creator, Son/Redeemer, and Holy Spirit/Sanctifier. God's being includes three persona, or persons, in one substance. The Latin word persona derives from the ancient theatre where actors wore masks called persona to show the part they were playing. Trinitarian theology holds that the three persons of the one God are the threefold essence of the divine being and the three ways that God is known to us.

The communion of the persons of the one God is the heart of all reality. God the Father is the creator and source of all that is, whose love and power are sovereign over all life. Jesus called God "abba," an Aramaic word that means "daddy" or loving parent.

God the Son is the second person of the Trinity, whom we know as the Word made incarnate in Jesus Christ. As the great prologue of the Gospel of John tells us, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...and [in Christ] the Word became flesh and lived among us...full of grace and truth.” In Jesus, the incarnate God, we see who God is and what God is like. By this revelation and by the Son’s sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection, we are forgiven, reconciled, and made whole. This is why we call Christ Savior and Redeemer.

God the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. The Spirit exists in threefold oneness with the Father and the Son. In Genesis I it was the Spirit who was the wind that moved (or “brooded”) over the water, in the beginning of creation. The Spirit is the “Lord and giver of life,” the Nicene Creed says, the energy of God giving life and vitality to creation. The Holy Spirit was revealed in a special and fresh way to the early Church on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after the first Easter. In the mysterious wind and fire and forgiveness of this experience, the Holy Spirit filled Christ’s disciples and gave them a unity, a joy, and a power they had not known before. The Spirit creates the Church and dwells within those who believe.

So the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the Trinitarian being of God and the ways that we know the God who reveals himself and acts in our life and human history. We say that they are “three in one, one in three,” each fully God and yet each distinct. They are communion itself, at the very heart of all that is. As one has said, the Trinity shows us “being as communion.”

St. Augustine classically said that the Trinity is expressive of the very nature of love. Love requires a lover, a beloved, and the love between and among them. This is the Father, lover, and the Son, the beloved, and the Spirit, the love that flows among them. This is a glimpse into the mystery of God, revealed to us in scripture and in creation itself as Trinitarian.

The Apostles’ Creed remembers the essentials of what we believe about God in God’s creating, redeeming, and sanctifying/life-giving work. It describes what God has done in creation and in the redeeming work of Jesus, and what God continues to do in the on-going action of the Spirit.

The word “credo” does not just mean “I believe” in an intellectual sense. It means “I set my heart.” When we say the creed, we set our hearts on God, Father, Son, and Spirit, as revealed in scripture and in the breaking of the bread.

When we set our hearts on God and commit to follow Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we engage ourselves to behave in certain ways and do certain things together as God’s Church. Faith is not just inward trust in God, though it always must begin there and be rooted there. Faith also involves outward practice. It is expressed “not only with our lips, but in our lives” (BCP, page 59). Furthermore, faith is expressed in community as we, the Church, together seek to grow in grace and in the love and service of God.

The second part of the Baptismal Covenant contains five questions and answers that express the behaviors, practices, and missional challenges that define what it is to live our faith in Christ. Where the first part of the Covenant, the Apostles’ Creed, describes our understanding of and relationship with God, this part describes what we do as those who believe in and are committed to Christ.

Appropriately, therefore, each question is centered in a verb, an action word. Each answer expresses a commitment of our wills: “I will, by God’s help.” These five questions and answers challenge us to remember St. Augustine’s words, “Without God, we cannot; without us, God will not.”

We cannot do the things to which the covenant calls us without God’s help. We are never saved by our good works, nor can we do anything good without the grace and Spirit of God working in us. Yet we are called to action, to step out and give ourselves and do our best for God. Faith, like love, is not a feeling but an act of the

will. Grace is a free gift; there is nothing we can do to earn or merit it. Yet there are things we must strive to do in response to God's grace, so that we may live more fully in grace and act in accord with God's will for us and the world.

As St. Paul expressed it in Philippians 2:12, "[W]ork out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Christian living is both unconditional acceptance by grace alone and also unconditional demand that we live a Christ-like life. These five questions seek to define how we are to will and work for God's pleasure and purpose. And they seek persistently, as we repeat them together in worship, to shape and form our lives in accordance with the life and love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us look at them one by one, focusing on the key verbs and the actions to which each calls us in our life of discipleship.

I. Continue

"Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?"

This first question and answer is about corporate worship and the community of the Church. It is drawn from Acts 2:42, which describes the practice of the early Church. This is what Christians have done from the beginning: gather to hear the teaching of Jesus Christ and to share in spiritual fellowship, to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, and to pray.

Corporate worship is at the center of life of the Episcopal Church. Our liturgy is the way we express our love for God and thanksgiving for the saving grace of Christ. Liturgy means "the work of the people." It is the corporate action of worship offered to God. We have many liturgical forms contained in The Book of Common Prayer, which guide our worship as Episcopal Christians. The Holy Eucharist is the center of our worship life, as in the breaking of the bread we remember Christ's death and resurrection for us and receive his life in the consecrated bread and wine. This is "communion," with the risen Christ and the Trinitarian God and with one another as the Body of Christ.

Woody Allen once said that 80% of life is just showing up! The strong verb "continue" here is about showing up, being active parts of the worship and community of the Church. This is a holy habit. Never underestimate the power of habits in our spiritual lives. Such habitual practices shape our minds and form who we are.

A vital part of worship is offering. We offer our money, our time and talent, our very selves in God's service. Stewardship—the giving of a portion of our money, with our time and talent—to God through the church each year is an essential aspect of our Christian life and worship.

This first question emphasizes the vital importance of Christian community. We are Christians together. Our faithful participation in the Church connects us with faithful people across the centuries who have read the Scriptures, broken bread together, and joined in the prayers and the communion of the Spirit. "Continuing" in such practice and community is deeply transforming. To share Holy Communion around the altar table is to be joined with the risen Christ. It is also to be joined with all humanity who are reconciled by the love of God, and with the whole eucharistic cosmos, as Teilhard de Chardin described it. To continue is to be nourished in Christ and shaped by divine love in the depths of our being.

Stephen Bayne, late Bishop of Olympia, once said that the heartbeat of our life is "what our Lord gave the church in the beginning – a comradeship, a flame and a table," and he wrote that "in the intense comradeship of the water and the Bread and Wine is still hidden the hope of the world."

When we say "I will, by God's help" to this question we commit ourselves to be living active member of the Body, that we may grow in grace and keep the flame of the Spirit burning brightly in our hearts.

II. Persevere

“Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?”

Christian life is not easy. It requires the discipline of perseverance and on-going repentance. We understand that there is a spiritual battle going on in the world and in the human heart, a struggle between good and evil. We who follow Christ are imperfect and tempted like all people, and we fail at times to choose what is good. So we must at once persevere in resisting evil and temptation and, when we stumble, be ready to repent and turn again to the way of God.

The Scripture describes the world God made as “very good.” God the creator filled all things with blessing and grace, and he created men and women in his own image. Anglicanism sees life and human nature as originally and essentially good. The world is “original blessing,” in the theologian Matthew Fox’s phrase.

The world and human nature, however, are “fallen” from perfection, and we are tragically flawed. This is what Genesis 2 describes and what the Church teaches as “original sin.” God gave us the gift of freedom, an essential aspect of being made in God’s image. We misused our freedom, choosing evil rather than the way of God. To be human is to be tempted constantly to fall into sin, to allow ourselves to give into things such as greed, hatred, pride and prejudice, injustice and selfishness, to name only a few. The Great Litany of The Book of Common Prayer is one of the best summaries we have of the perpetual evils and temptations of human existence.

As disciples of Christ we are to strive to say “no” to the sinful desires of the heart and to all the forces that hurt and destroy God’s good creation. This requires prayerful discernment, self-examination, and will power – all enlivened by grace, without which we cannot choose rightly. The Christian life involves what Annie Dillard, a contemporary author, calls “the heart’s hand turning, the heart’s slow learning where to love and whom.” The choices we make are crucial in this process of forming the heart.

We are to “persevere,” to hold fast in choosing good and resisting evil. Yet the reality is that we all choose wrongly at times. We do fall into sin, behavior and attitudes that separate us from God and one another. As the poet Rilke wrote,

*We all fall.
This hand here falls.
Look! It is everyone.
But there is One who holds this falling
Infinitely, gently in his hand.*

The compassion and mercy of God are infinite, as the Bible ceaselessly tells us. Jesus Christ poured himself out on the cross for our salvation and healing, that we might know that we are forgiven and reconciled. As Paul wrote in Romans 8, “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus... [and] if God be for us, who is against us?”

It is such grace that enables us to repent and return when we miss the mark. Repentance is what we must do when perseverance fails. The word “repent” has become distorted for many of us, carrying loads of guilt and threat. “Repent or else!” the sign on the mountain road tells us.

“Repent” is really a very positive word in the Bible. It comes from the Greek *metanoia*, which means to change your mind or change your course. It is about transformation, turning from our way to God’s way. William Temple said it very well once, “Repentance does not merely mean giving up a bad habit. What it is concerned with is the mind; get a new mind...[for] to repent is to adopt God’s viewpoint in place of your own. In itself, far from being sorrowful, it is the most joyful thing in the world, because when you have done it, you have adopted the viewpoint of truth itself, and you are in fellowship with God.”

The essential thing necessary for true repentance is the vision of God. It is when we see God as all love and goodness and joy that we deeply desire to walk in his ways rather than in the way of self and the world. This enables us to turn toward what is the good and walk in the way of peace.

To say, “I will, with God’s help” to this question means to strive for the good and to contend against evil. But it also means us to know that no one of us is perfect and that our spiritual journey is one of on-going repentance. We cannot make ourselves like Christ, but Christ can make us like himself, when we turn ourselves to him. Then as the old Shaker hymn says,

*“To turn, turn will be our delight
‘Til by turning, turning we come
round right.”*

III. Proclaim

“Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?”

This part of the Baptismal Covenant is about evangelism, sometimes called “the e-word.” It commits us to striving to be persons who communicate and show forth the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others. This is critically important both for us as individuals and for the mission of the Church. If the Gospel of grace is life-giving for us we must bear witness to it. As the old saying goes, “a joy that is not shared, dies young.”

A central part of the Church’s mission is to make the transforming love of Christ known. The way that the Good News must always be communicated is person to person. D.T. Niles once defined evangelism as “one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.” This memorable description eliminates any implication of superiority or salesmanship from the meaning of evangelism. It says that we are all equally in need of the bread of life and all need help finding it.

The story goes that Phillips Brooks, the great Nineteenth Century Episcopal preacher of Trinity Church, Boston, was asked late in life why he was a Christian. He replied that he believed that it was because of a woman who was a librarian in the small town of his childhood. Her kindness to him and her shining faith were a witness to the love of Christ that touched him deeply. It was because of her witness, the great preacher said, that he was a Christian!

Most of us can remember someone like that in our lives, whose witness and example were instrumental in our coming to know the love of God in our lives.

Proclaiming by word and example the Good News of Christ means simply sharing your enthusiasm and joy about the Christian faith with others so that they can discover it for themselves. The Good News is the life-transforming word that we are saved by grace through faith, a word the world desperately needs to hear. The saying goes “Christianity must be caught, not taught,” and I believe that is the truth. If the faith is to be caught we must be contagious Christians. Faith is caught from others who are passionate enough to share it with us, to invite us to church or to a Bible study, or to join in ministries which are showing forth the love of God. We catch it from those whose lives are animated by the grace and mercy of Christ and who live their faith in visible ways. We catch it from others whose joy in God shines forth.

Francis of Assisi is credited with saying, “In all things preach the Gospel; only if necessary use words.” Sometimes we Episcopalians are unsure about the words to use. We are not comfortable with simplistic formulas, preferring the mystery of liturgy and the practices of love. Undoubtedly we need to be less shy and reserved. Surely each of us needs words to be able at any moment to commend the faith that is in us. We must be able to speak of the power of God’s grace in our lives.

Nevertheless, the covenant stresses “in word and deed,” however, because our actions are always the key element in real evangelism. “Don’t talk of love; show me,” sang Eliza Doolittle emphatically in *My Fair Lady*. The most effective way to bring others to know Christ is by living our faith in the world and inviting others to come with us. This happens as we practice the love of Christ in our relationships, in our work, and in our daily living. This happens as we care about others enough to invite them to church with us and to share in ministries which are making a difference for good. It happens as we are good stewards of our gifts and the earth’s resources. It happens as we join in efforts for justice and compassion in our communities. “Come and see,” said Philip to Nathaniel in John 1:46, some of the first words of Christian evangelism. We are called to do the same.

How can your life more clearly proclaim the Gospel to others? To whom can you reach out and say “come and see”? How can your parish be more welcoming and open to newcomers and to your community? How can you more clearly articulate the power of Christ’s love in your life? Who is waiting for you to be the face of Christ for them? How can each of us be a more contagious Christian?

These are some of the challenges placed before us when to this question we say, “I will, with God’s help.”

IV. Seek and Serve

**“Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons,
loving your neighbor as yourself?”**

Christian living is expressed in active love for others. Our faith is not just about piety and study; it has to be lived. When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, he put together two parts of the Torah in Hebrew Scripture. “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37-40). Our “vertical” relationship with God is to be lived in our “horizontal” relationship with others. The two are like each other.

Our baptismal covenant in this question stresses the crucial importance of loving other people as Christ loves us. Such loving was a hallmark of Jesus’ earthly ministry. He constantly gave himself for others, so much so that Dietrich Bonhoeffer called Jesus “the man for others.” His parables, such as the Good Samaritan and the Last Judgment in Matthew 25, often pointed radically to compassion and love as the essential values of the kingdom of God. This is what faith in action looks like.

The commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves is a challenge to our human nature. Our natural tendency is to want to take and possess things for ourselves. William Blake’s famous drawing of Adam after he has been expelled from the Garden shows him saying, “I want. I want.” The suggestion is that our fallen nature is hung up on ourselves and our own needs. As Martin Luther said, we are “incurvatus in se,” turned in on ourselves.

When we are grasped by the love of God in Christ, we are turned around, focusing outwardly on God and others rather than just on ourselves. It is not in having, Jesus said, that we receive but in giving. This is the way of agape, the love that the New Testament says is God’s love. Agape is gift love: it cares more about others than about itself. This is “the love of God that has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Romans 5:5). Once we know the unconditional love of God for us in Christ, we are set free and empowered to love others in the same way.

This question goes even farther than this, however. It commits us to seeking and serving Christ in all persons. That is, we are to see Christ present in others and learn that when we serve them, we are serving Christ himself.

This remarkable challenge is rooted in the Parable of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25, where we are given a picture of the judgment of the nations at the end of time. The ones who are judged to be righteous by the Son of Man are so, he says, “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in

prison and you visited me.” When they are astonished by these words, he concludes, “as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family you did it to me.” In other words, the judgment will be based on our love of neighbors in need.

Here we are pointed to one of the deepest mysteries of Christian faith. The word of God was made flesh in Jesus Christ in the Incarnation, so that we could know God as a person. Matthew 25 and this question tell us that the Incarnation is extended as we come to see Christ in one another.

C.S. Lewis once wrote, “Next to the blessed sacrament itself the holiest object presented to our eyes is our neighbor. For, in almost the same way, in your neighbor Christ is truly present.”

This is why we must seek and serve Christ in all persons, not just our closest friends and family. Christ is present in the poor, the sick, the alone, the stranger, in those who may differ greatly from us. To see Christ in them is to be transformed and to be liberated to love them as we are loved.

Christians believe that such love in action is the meaning of life.

V. Strive

“Will you strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being?”

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not just about individual salvation. It is about the salvation and healing of the world. Our ministry as disciples involves us in the great struggles of humanity for justice and peace. This final question opens to the world around us and sends us out to make a difference in society and in human history.

The verb used here is “strive,” signifying that the struggles for peace and justice in human life are endless and ever incomplete. Perfect justice will not come until the end of history, when Christ comes once again to complete the work of salvation. Meanwhile, Christians must strive for the promises of God’s kingdom as we fight against injustice, poverty, war, and the “arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts.” In Christ we see what the kingdom of God is to be like. Our task is to work in partnership with God to build that kingdom here and now.

Christian history has always seen God’s people engaged in the tough issues of human life. Episcopalians have founded hospitals and orphanages, have started soup kitchens and clothing and food banks, have been involved in the struggles for civil rights and women’s rights, and have fought against slavery and oppression of many kinds. This we believe is an essential aspect of God’s work through his Church. God needs us to share with him in working for the healing of the world.

In order to be engaged with the world in such ways, we must do the second part of the question: respect the dignity of every human being. This means to see the image of God in all others, especially in those who may differ from us the most. Each human being has dignity and worth because each is made by God and loved by God equally. This is the Christian vision, which changes the way we see others and the world around us.

In their book Christian Believing, John Westerhoff and Urban T. Holmes draw an interesting contrast between what they call “religion of escape” and the “religion of involvement.” The first seductively invites us to find in God a way to get beyond the pain and difficulty of the world, promising—in one way or another—that God’s primary business is to make us happy. Religious cults often offer such religion, which is a distortion of Biblical faith. The faith of the Scriptures and of Christ involves us in the difficulty and struggles of the world, promising not easy answers but trust in the ultimate triumph of God over the brokenness of life. The religion of involvement sends us into the world to help the poor and work for justice and to confront boldly the powers and principalities that would destroy and oppress and exploit creation. This is part of what Jesus meant by “taking up the cross.”

Anglican Christians have always strived to engage the hard issues of human history in order to be faithful to God's vision for the world. Such a way of "worldly holiness," to use Bonhoeffer's term, is not easy. The peace that is promised is not that of spiritual tranquility but that of love's fire and compassion. For we are called to be servants of the dream of God, "doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God" in all our life.

The Southern writer, William Alexander Percy, wrote a hymn in our Hymnal which ends with this verse,

*The peace of God it is no peace
But strife sown in the sod.
Yet brothers pray for but one thing,
The marvelous peace of God.*

That is the challenge and the promise of this final question of our baptismal covenant, as we commit to striving for the peace and justice God intends for his beloved world, until Christ comes again and God shall be all in all.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART II

THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

III. Engagement

1. Illustrate or give an example of each of these five practices or actions in your personal experience.
2. Which one of the 5 questions asked in the Baptismal Covenant is your greatest challenge? Why?
 1. Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
 2. Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
 3. Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?
 4. Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
 5. Will you strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being?
3. How do you plan to live more fully into the promises of these five questions.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART III MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH

OUTLINE

Introduction

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.
Ephesians 4: 11-13

I. The Ministry

The call to each of us as Christians is to engage ourselves in the mission and ministry of the Church. As our catechism states:

Q. What is the mission of the Church?

A. The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

Q. Who are the ministers of the Church?

A. The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests and deacons.

Q. What is the ministry of the bishop?

A. The ministry of the bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the whole Church; to proclaim the Word of God; to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry.

Q. What is the ministry of a priest or presbyter?

A. The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

Q. What is the ministry of a deacon?

A. The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant to those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

Q. What is the ministry of the laity?

A. The ministry of the laity is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.

II. Conclusion

It is essential that we find ways to assist every person in his or her personal journey of discernment and then provide ways to nurture, equip, and support the ministry of each. After all, no one is useless or unusable.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH : PART III THE MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH

I. Gathering

Hymns

- Lord, you give the great commission, *The Hymnal 1982* #528
- Come, labor on, *The Hymnal 1982* #541

Collect of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

II. Illumination

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.
Ephesians 4:11-13

It is clear from scripture that God has equipped each of us with various gifts and abilities which are best used for the glory of God and the welfare of God's people. Examine the classic passages of Romans 12: 4-8; I Corinthians 12: 4-11, and Ephesians 4: 11-13, and you will find confirmation that God intends us to understand ourselves as gifted people with the responsibility of using those gifts to "build up the Church" into its full potential. The church is a community of diverse persons who are called to discern their own unique contributions, to grow in love and unity with each other, and to serve each other and the needs of the community with humility and honor.

The call to each of us as Christians is to engage ourselves in the mission and ministry of the Church. As our catechism states:

Q. What is the mission of the Church?

A. The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

We are Christ's ambassadors (II Corinthians 5:20) and in general our work is to respond both to God's claim on our lives and God's call to mission.

•Our common life as a community of faith begins at baptism. The Baptismal Covenant which is repeated at baptisms, confirmations and at the Easter Vigil reminds us of our role as ambassadors for Christ and outlines the shared responsibility we hold. Although many dispute the assertion that baptism can be viewed as the "ordination" of the laity, without question the statement of faith and promises made are formative in the lives of each individual and of utmost importance to the body. In Welcome to the Episcopal Church, Christopher Webber has said that the church finds itself again a missionary community in a basically pagan society and works hard to prepare its members for their role as witnesses to the risen Christ. We are ambassadors to the world, not just to a select group. Each week we are sent out into that world with a dismissal reminding us of this privilege and duty. But our ministry may take many forms as we live out the mission of the Church and it is to that we turn now.

• Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Life Together says, “A community which allows unemployed members to exist within it will perish because of them. It is well, therefore, if every member receives a definite task to perform for the community, that he may know in hours of doubt that he, too, is not useless and unusable.” This is as true for bishops as it is for all other members of the body of Christ. All of us are useful to God and usable in the life of the community. Our catechism is clear that while some are called to specific orders within the Church all share equally in our primary role.

Q. Who are the ministers of the Church?

A. The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests and deacons.

Q. What is the ministry of the laity?

A. The ministry of the laity is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.

Q. What is the ministry of the bishop?

A. The ministry of the bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the whole Church; to proclaim the Word of God; to act in Christ’s name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to ordain others to continue Christ’s ministry.

Q. What is the ministry of a priest or presbyter?

A. The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

Q. What is the ministry of a deacon?

A. The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant to those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

As an old rhyme goes:

*Men’s faces, voices, differ much;
Saints are not all one size;
Flow’rs in a garden various grow;
Let none monopolize.*

Indeed “saints are not all one size.” Each of us is called according to our specific gifts to ministry and all are needed. It may be well to examine the Baptismal Covenant (BCP, p. 304), the Ordination of a Bishop (BCP, p. 517-518); the Ordination of a Priest (BCP, p.531-532) and the Ordination of a Deacon (BCP, p.543-544) to see the specific duties and responsibilities called upon by each order. While the various orders are designed to carry out particular functions, all are mutually dependant on the other for support and encouragement. Webber asserts that it is clear in *The Book of Common Prayer* that lay ministry comes first and that the other three orders are there to support the laity in their work (Webber, 100). Whether you agree with this view or not, it must be acknowledged that the tasks of maintaining the body as well as equipping the members for mission are upheld together.

Each order has some peculiarities of interest which include but are not limited to these notes. Here are some things to know:

Bishops are selected by the diocese in which they preside. The man or woman chosen is elected by both clergy and laity to serve as “chief priest and pastor.” We say that the bishop is in “apostolic succession”

by which we mean they carry on the teaching and work of the twelve appointed by Jesus himself. They represent the continuity of the Church's understanding and authority as handed down generation to generation from the beginning. When chosen, a bishop must also be ratified by a majority of the other dioceses. When consecrated, at least three bishops are present to lay hands on the new bishop.

A bishop who is the head of a diocese is called a *Diocesan*. There may be one or more other bishops who share the ministry of episcopal oversight in a given diocese. They may be either a *Coadjutor* who succeeds the current bishop upon retirement or a *Suffragan* who does not or an *Assistant bishop* who is selected by the bishop and not elected by the body of lay persons and clergy in the diocese. All share fully in the duties and responsibilities of a bishop but may vary in the specific tasks assigned to them. All bishops share the overall governance of the Church alongside the clergy and laity elected to be representatives at General Convention every three years.

Priests generally serve the Church on a parish level although there are specialized ministries in which priests engage. Priests preside at the eucharist, baptize, preach, teach, bless, and support lay persons in their daily lives and ministry. Chosen by the Church at large in a number of diverse ways, normally educated in a three year seminary experience and called to ministry through the processes outlined in each diocese, priests are ordained by the bishop who is their pastor and to whom they are accountable for the up-building of the Church. They share in the governance of a diocese at annual conventions and may be elected to represent the diocese at General Convention.

Priests who serve a parish have a variety of roles and titles. The rector of a parish is responsible for the spiritual life of the faith community and works in conjunction with the vestry to secure the proper maintenance and growth of the parish. The rector may choose also to call other priests to serve the parish. Unlike the selection of a rector which involves the input and discernment of the leaders in the parish, assisting clergy may be chosen by the rector alone. The bishop has the authority to screen potential candidates for any role in ministry and all clergy are under episcopal supervision. Sometimes assisting clergy are named as Associates, or as Assistants to the rector or as *Curates* (see glossary). The head of a mission is called *vicar* not rector. Another name for priests in specialized fields such as college or school ministry or hospital work is *chaplains*.

Deacons are ordained ministers within the church. Their role is to represent the world to the Church and to represent the Church in the world. Their involvement among the "least of these" does not relieve the laity of their responsibility for seeing that justice prevails, but deacons remain vigilant in advocating for those who have no voice in the world or in the Church. Although each priest is ordained a deacon prior to ordination as a priest, this is a transitional role and should not be confused with the vocational ministry of the diaconate.

Selection, training, and deployment for deacons varies from diocese to diocese. In addition to the functions of servant ministry and advocacy, deacons have liturgical duties designed to remind the worshipping committee of its own responsibility in the world. Deacons typically read the gospel, lead the prayers of the people, set the table, and dismiss the congregation. They take their place in the ministry of a parish but are there by the specific assignment of the bishop to whom they report. These assignments are periodically evaluated and may be altered by the bishop's authority.

Laity of the Church provide invaluable resources for all ministry both to the Church and in the world. Lay persons are needed for "Church work" and the "work of the Church." A variety of tasks—from altar guild to teaching to pastoral care to fellowship to gardening to choir to cooking to cleaning to fund raising and on and on—depend entirely on the labor and skills of the members of the church. Both formally through election to the vestry and informally, the life and growth of the Church is maintained by the laity. The gifts of time, talent, and money are essential to keep the Church alive and are freely given by the lay members of every congregation, parish, diocese, and province. All give to the mission

and ministry of the Church which, as it has been said, is the only institution that exists primarily for those who do not belong to it!

The laity also contributes to the governance of the body. On the parish level, persons are elected at an annual meeting to serve on the vestry. The various duties of the vestry include the maintenance and management of the temporal matters of the parish as well as the calling of the rector. On the diocesan level, representatives chosen by the parish attend the annual convention of the diocese. The number of delegates will vary according to the size of the parish. All share in the legislative responsibilities of diocesan work.

The work of the diocese is coordinated by an annual convention that elects clergy and lay people to serve on Diocesan Council. The convention adopts a budget and program each year and the Council administers them. In addition, a bishop has a body called a Standing Committee that is elected in a similar fashion to serve as an executive advisory council. In these ways, the clergy of a diocese work with the bishop and the laity to insure the proper functioning of the mission and ministry of the Church on this level.

Every three years representatives will be chosen and sent to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church and will perform the same function on a national level. Clergy and lay representatives make up the House of Deputies and the bishops of the Church comprise the House of Bishops. They adopt a budget, choose the majority of the members of the Executive Council to administer the budget between conventions, adopt resolutions on matters of concern to church members, and take action on other matters ranging from the adoption of Prayer Book and Hymnal revisions to ecumenical relationships. Just as the convention on the diocesan level elects the bishop of each diocese, the delegates to General Convention elect the Presiding Bishop who serves in this capacity for twelve years. His duties include being the chief pastor and chief executive of the Church and speaking “God’s words to the Church and to the world, as the representative of this Church and its episcopate in its corporate capacity” (Canon I:2.4[a]).

It is clear that the Episcopal Church is a church supportive of and dependant on the full range of ministry. We call upon all the gifts of all the orders to build up the Body to its maturity and potential. Episcopal priest Lloyd Edwards points out in his book, Discerning Your Spiritual Gifts,

There is a major gap in Christian teaching. We have helped people to learn the lore of the faith. We have helped them practice moral living. We have helped them solve their problems of living, to pray, to nurture loving relationships. And yet we have not helped them find precisely what it is that God made them for, what it is that will give them the most profound joy imaginable. (Edwards, 3)

This is the challenge for all of us in the Church. It is essential that we find ways to assist every person in his or her personal journey of discernment and then provide ways to nurture, equip and support the ministry of each. After all, no one is useless or unusable.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART III MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH

III. Engagement

1. Have your priest or deacon come to the class and talk about her/his call to ordained ministry. How did she experience it? What process did it take? How does he feel about ministry now? What has been surprising? What has been most rewarding? Most challenging?
2. Invite leaders of different ministries of the parish to speak about the variety of needs and opportunities in the parish. Try to encourage specific information about skills, training, expectations, etc.
3. Host a Ministries Fair: Invite outreach and pastoral groups to set up booths with information displays regarding ministry opportunities in the community as well as in the parish.
4. Using a simplified Myers/Briggs inventory, engage the class in discovering their personality types. Talk about the implications for ministry. (For further exploration, you may use God's Gifted People: Discovering Your Personality as a Gift by Gary Harbaugh.)
5. Offer a Discovering Your Gifts For Ministry seminar for the parish. A format has been developed by The Reverend Deacon Mark LaGory at St. Luke's in Birmingham which can be done for several Sundays or a one-two day retreat. Also The Church at Willow Creek has a non-denominational program called *Network* which can be used in a similar fashion with small groups.

IV. Reflection

What have we learned? What remains to be examined?

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART IV

THE STRUCTURE AND POLITY OF THE CHURCH

OUTLINE

Introduction

The word “polity” when used in reference to a church has to do with its structure. Although it sounds like “politics” because it comes from the same root, the Greek word for city, we will be concerned in this section not with the politics of the church but with its organization and structure. There are some who say that they want to be Christian but not belong to an organized church. But the church, being incarnational, is made up of people and whenever two or more people join together, some sort of organization exists, even if it is just that one person is the listener while the other is the talker. When Christians join together to be the body of Christ in the world, they require organization, just as our bodies require organization of cells in order to function. All churches are in fact organized in some manner or another. We can classify the different kinds of church polities or structures.

I. Illumination

- A. Polity
- B. Different Types of Church Polity
- C. Diocese is Major Unit of Episcopal Church Organization
- D. Parishes are the Worshipping Communities
- E. National Level of the Church
- F. International Level of the Church

II. Engagement

- A. Role Play
- B. Episcopal Dictionary
- C. Parish Property
- D. Church Annual

III. Summary Handout

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART IV THE STRUCTURE AND POLITY OF THE CHURCH

I. Gathering

Hymn

- Christ is made the sure foundation, *The Hymnal 1982* #518
- The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord, *The Hymnal 1982* #525

Collect of the Day (*A collect for a Church Convention, BCP. 255*)

Almighty and everlasting Father, you have given the Holy Spirit to abide with us for ever: Bless, we pray, with his grace and presence, the bishops and the other clergy and the laity here (*or now or soon to be*) assembled in your Name, that your Church, being preserved in true faith and godly discipline, may fulfill all the mind of him who loved it and gave himself for it, you Son Jesus Christ your Savior; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever. *Amen.*

or

(*A collect for a Church Convention or meeting BCP p. 818*)

Almighty and everlasting God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with those who take counsel [in _____] for the renewal and mission of your Church. Teach us in all things to seek first your honor and glory. Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

II. Illumination:

Introduction

The word "polity" when used in reference to a church has to do with its structure. Although it sounds like "politics" because it comes from the same root, the Greek word for city, we will be concerned in this section not with the politics of the church but with its organization and structure. There are some who say that they want to be Christian but not belong to an organized church. But the church, being incarnational, is made up of people and whenever two or more people join together, some sort of organization exists, even if it is just that one person is the listener while the other is the talker. When Christians join together to be the body of Christ in the world, they require organization, just as our bodies require organization of cells in order to function. All churches are in fact organized in some manner or another. We can classify the different kinds of church polities or structures.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHURCH POLITY

There are several ways that churches are organized. Perhaps the most familiar organization for Protestant churches is "congregational." In congregational churches, decisions are made about the life of the church in each particular congregation. Each congregation may call its own ministers to be ordained, may buy property and erect buildings, may decide the requirements of membership and how decisions will be made among the members. The Episcopal Church is not a congregational church.

Another kind of church structure is "presbyterian." This word comes from the Greek word for priest. Presbyters meeting together constitute the main unit of organization and decision making in this structure.

Since we are known as the Episcopal Church it stands to reason that our polity is "episcopal," that is that we are governed by bishops, the Greek word for which is *episcopoi*. And that is a true statement, up to a point. A purely

episcopal polity would mean that bishops alone govern and administer the Church, as is the case in the Eastern Orthodox Churches. In the Episcopal Church tradition, diocesan bishops are the chief priests and pastors of their respective dioceses, and as such hold considerable authority and responsibility. Lay persons, priests, and deacons also share in the governance of the Church, each taking a rightful place in councils of the Church. This means that in addition to being episcopal in polity we are also *synodical*. Both clergy and lay persons come together in church councils called synods to chart the forward course of the Church. Bringing together these two types of Church polity allows for a healthy balance between purely episcopal polity and purely democratic polity.

It is worth noting that each member Church in the Anglican Communion is free to have her own polity structure. What is true for the American Episcopal Church might not necessarily be true for other Communion members' churches.

THE DIOCESE

The central unit of organization in the Episcopal Church is the diocese. The diocese is a geographic area in which one Bishop, the Diocesan, is charged with being the chief pastor, priest, church authority and executive officer. Each diocese elects its own bishop(s) and after the other dioceses have consented to that person's ordination, three bishops are required to lay hands upon the new bishop at the new bishop's ordination. The Diocesan Bishop, also called the Ordinary, may work with other bishops. A diocese may elect a Bishop Coadjutor who will become the Diocesan bishop when that position is vacated. A diocese may also elect a Bishop Suffragan, who works with a Diocesan Bishop but does not automatically become the Diocesan when that position is vacated. An Assisting Bishop is the only kind of bishop who is selected from outside the diocese to assist a Diocesan Bishop and frequently is retired from another diocese.

Only bishops confirm members of the Episcopal Church or receive members from another church that has an historic episcopacy (e.g. the Roman Catholic Church). The bishops of a diocese visit each parish, worshipping community, and mission usually at least once a year. At these visits they confirm, receive and baptize new members, preside at the Eucharist, preach, meet with the vestries and rectors, visit with the people of the parish and inspect the parish books. The annual Episcopal visit is a special celebratory occasion in the life of a parish.

The Diocese is made up of all the Episcopal parish churches, missions, ministries, and worshipping communities in a given geographical area. Sometimes the geographical area is a state, the Diocese of Maine, the Diocese of Colorado for example. Or the diocese may be part of the state, the Diocese of Atlanta, the Diocese of West Texas. Even when the diocese bears a state name, it does not necessarily encompass the whole state: the Diocese of Alabama, the Diocese of Texas for example. A diocese may also be composed of parts of more than one state: the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast. But in each of these areas the parishes, worshipping communities, and missions of the Episcopal Church are the members of the diocese, much like branch offices of a corporation. Dioceses are grouped into nine provinces of the Episcopal Church USA. These are cooperative geographical units but they do not have the governmental function of the individual dioceses or of our national church. It is helpful at this point to look at a map of dioceses and provinces in the Episcopal Church such as one found in the Episcopal Church Annual.

Every year a diocese meets in a convention to conduct the business of the church and to direct its mission. All the clergy of the diocese (priests, deacons and bishops) participate in this meeting. The laity of the congregations in the diocese participate by representation. Each individual parish sends representatives in proportion to its size. The diocese is a corporation under state law and the Diocesan Convention is its governing legislative body. In between annual Diocesan Conventions the Bishop is the diocese's chief executive officer and various bodies consisting of lay and ordained members of the Church provide the ongoing governing structure. This diocesan structure facilitates the work of the Church that takes place in the parishes, missions, and worshipping communities that make up the diocese.

If we think back to how congregational churches work, it is easy to see that a diocese in an Episcopal church does many of the things that a congregation does in a congregational structure. The diocese makes overall decisions about the mission and ministry of the church in a given area. The diocese, working with individuals, discerns calls to ordained ministry, fosters the growth and training of those individuals and orders them as deacons, priests and bishops. The diocese purchases or approves the purchase of land, approves mortgages by parishes, provides oversight and approval for the work of parishes in constructing new church buildings. The Diocese of Alabama holds legal title to land and church buildings in trust for its local parishes. Election of local parish vestry members is a matter of diocesan canon (church law). While local parishes call their new priests, they only do so in cooperation with the diocese, following a procedure put in place by the diocese and with the approval of the Diocesan Bishop.

At the diocesan level, the Episcopal Church looks much like governing organizations with which we are familiar. There are Departments, Committees, Task Forces, and Commissions. There is even a court called the Ecclesiastical Court to which the Diocesan Convention elects lay and ordained members who serve as judges. The Ecclesiastical Court uses procedures that are common in our civil courts and even uses an abbreviated version of the Federal Rules of Evidence! As you would expect when you see this kind of structure, each diocese has its own body of law that consists of a Diocesan Charter (or Constitution) and some Canons (church laws). (You can find the charter and canons for the Diocese of Alabama, as well as the actions for the last convention, including the Bishop's annual address, at the back of the annual diocesan journal.)

There are two very important interim bodies that help keep the Diocese functioning between conventions. The Diocesan Council does the work of convention between conventions. The Standing Committee serves to advise the Diocesan Bishop. The Standing Committee also must approve any purchases of land, mortgages or sales of land. And it must approve of all ordinations that take place in the diocese and consent to the ordination of a bishop in any other diocese of the Episcopal Church. In the absence of a bishop, the Standing Committee acts as the church authority for the diocese until a new bishop is installed.

All of these committees, task forces, commissions, and departments are peopled by laity and clergy throughout the diocese, many of whom have other primary employment. But the diocese also has a staff of lay people and clergy who carry out mission in various areas. For example, in Alabama diocesan staff members work in the areas of ministry development and clergy deployment, finance and administration, youth and Christian formation. There are chaplains for college campuses and staff for Hispanic ministry, for bookkeeping, for diaconate ministry, for the deaf, and there is a director and a whole staff for the diocesan camp, Wonderful, Wonderful Camp McDowell.

THE PARISH

This diocesan structure exists to unify and promote the work of the church that takes place primarily in parishes, worshipping communities, and missions of the Episcopal Church that are the members of a given diocese. (Some dioceses have missions. Missions are usually start-up churches that require special diocesan support. In Alabama there are no missions. A congregation is a "worshipping community" until it becomes a parish.) The parish church is the place where Episcopalians come together to worship, work, and give to the support of the Kingdom of God.

The members of the parish are all baptized persons whose baptisms are recorded in the record books of that parish. As a practical matter these baptisms are recorded for one of three reasons. One is that a baptism has taken place in the parish. The second is that while the baptism did not take place at the parish, a person has been confirmed or received at the parish. When the confirmation occurs, the baptism is also recorded. Finally there are occasions when a person has been both baptized and confirmed elsewhere and is attending a new parish. In that event the person is transferred from one Episcopal parish to another and recording of the transfer becomes the occasion for recording a baptism in the record books. This can get a bit confusing. The Episcopal Church

invites all baptized persons to participate in communion in any of its parishes. However, attending church and even taking communion does not make a person a member of that particular parish. It is necessary to have the baptism recorded in the records of the parish to be considered a member.

Infants who are baptized become members of Episcopal parish churches. But, obviously they can not cast a vote in a parish election. If you will, then, we have voting members and non-voting members. In the Diocese of Alabama, to vote in a parish election or to serve on a vestry (the governing body for the parish) a member must be age 16 or over, must have been confirmed by or received by a bishop of the Episcopal Church, must have received communion at that parish at least three times in the previous year and must be known to the rector (or priest-in-charge) and the parish treasurer as someone who has worked, prayed, and given for the mission of the church in that place. These requirements, a combination of diocesan and national canons, are designed to assure that those who govern the parish are committed to the Episcopal Church and the ministry of that particular parish.

The selection of vestry members is important because the vestry works with the clergy to govern the local parish and pursue the mission and ministry of that parish. Vestries in the Diocese of Alabama have at least 3 but not more than 30 members. Vestry members serve for no more than three years and the terms are staggered so that about 1/3 of the vestry will change every year. When there is no clergy person at the church, the vestry is the local church authority. And when the church is between clergy, the vestry works with the bishop, or a member of the bishop's staff, to select new clergy for the parish. Often when parishes are in transition, an interim priest will be called to help keep the parish functioning while the vestry does the work of selecting a new rector. During this time, the vestry appoints a search committee who then presents a name to the vestry for consideration. The final selection of a new rector is done by the vestry.

From its membership the vestry selects a Senior Warden and a Junior Warden. The Senior Warden works most closely with the clergy and the Junior Warden represents the needs of the church members. In many parishes the Junior Warden is also in charge of "buildings and grounds," but this is by tradition and is not necessarily always a Junior Warden's task. A clerk of the vestry will record its actions and the parish will have a treasurer, though it is not a requirement for either the clerk or the treasurer to be a vestry member.

The priest called by the vestry to be in charge of a local parish and installed by the bishop for that purpose is called a "rector." The rector has a double role because although he or she has been selected by that parish to serve there and to represent the parish to the diocese, this priest is also the representative of the bishop in the local parish. When a person is being ordained priest or deacon, the first question asked has to do with willingness to abide by the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Episcopal Church and willingness to be obedient to one's bishop. Because the bishop is the ecclesiastical authority in the diocese, parish priests may only take actions that their bishops permit. In troubled times, therefore, the role of the bishop serves to promote unity by providing clear boundaries. Episcopal clergy are not "free agents" who answer only to their own conscience or the demands of their local congregations.

In addition to the rector, there may be other clergy on staff in larger churches who serve under the immediate supervision of the rector. Although a rector may engage a committee for advice, the hiring and terms of employment for staff clergy is set by the rector, consistent with any guidelines set by the diocese, such as Alabama's minimum compensation guidelines. Unlike staff clergy, however, the rector serves indefinitely until such time as the rector and vestry decide together that it is appropriate to terminate the pastoral relationship. As a practical matter this usually happens when the rector is ready to retire, has become disabled, or has received a call to a new parish that the rector wishes to take. The unusual thing about this rector-vestry relationship is that there is no such thing as a rector "quitting" and no such thing as a vestry "firing" a rector. If there is serious difficulty between a rector and vestry, the diocese should be notified so that the bishop or the bishop's representative can work with the parish. When there are differences, parishes are expected to work toward reconciliation. If these efforts are unavailing, however, there is a procedure under the church canons for the bishop to decide whether and under what conditions the pastoral relationship between a vestry and its rector will continue or be terminated.

At an annual meeting of the parish, the vestry reports to the members about what it has done and its plans for the coming year. But between annual meetings the vestry makes decisions without seeking prior approval from the membership of the parish. Good vestries stay in close contact with the membership of the parish and communicate regularly by newsletters and other means. While parish vestries and clergy guide the work of the local church, the work is carried out by the parish members who are organized for these functions in a variety of ways. Small parishes may operate very informally and lay people may wear several different hats. In larger parishes there will be more committee structure and more concentration of effort. Lay members of the parish teach Sunday School, sing in the choir, engage in outreach for the parish, plan and prepare parish events, provide pastoral care to other members of the parish, engage in various liturgical ministries like reading the lessons, serving as an acolyte, assisting with administration of communion, and caring for the altar and all that must be prepared for the altar. The nature of this ministry and how it is organized varies from parish to parish. Typically individual members of a vestry assume responsibility for an area of the church's ministry and report to the vestry regarding that ministry. The rector and vestry identify, commission, and train lay leaders within the parish, who in turn may call upon others in the parish to assist. However, in Alabama, when a lay person serves as a Chalice Bearer or Lay Eucharistic Minister, a license is required from the bishop.

While the diocese has a set of canons (church laws) as does our church at the national level, at the parish level no more laws are needed. The canons of the church are sufficient to deal with most issues. Some parishes have enacted bylaws that may be needed to cover areas specific to a particular parish but these bylaws must be written in such a way as not to conflict with the canons of the diocese, and since diocesan canons can change, there are times when local church bylaws may create more problems than they solve.

The diocesan canons are a product of the diocese meeting in convention. Each parish is represented at convention by its rector and staff clergy and by a number of lay people who have been selected at the annual parish meeting (or by the vestry if the parish membership delegates that task). In turn, when the diocese meets in convention, the diocese selects representatives, both lay and clergy, who along with their bishops, will attend the General Convention of the Episcopal Church USA.

OUR CHURCH AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Once every three years lay and clergy representatives and the bishops of the Episcopal Church USA meet in a General Convention. Like the Diocesan Convention at the diocesan level, this is the legislative body of the church at the national level. The first General Convention was held in 1789 and some of the same persons who participated in the founding of our country also helped to draft our church's constitution. Not surprisingly our church structure bears a strong resemblance to that of our country. Like the Congress of the United States, the General Convention meets in two houses: the House of Bishops (composed of all living bishops) and the House of Deputies (composed of lay and clergy representatives elected by their local dioceses). General Conventions have adopted our national canons and authorized the various editions of our *Book of Common Prayer*, our hymnals, *Book of Occasional Services* and *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*.

Once every 9 (formerly 12) years the General Convention selects a new "Presiding Bishop" who will "preside" at meetings of the House of Bishops and at meetings of the Executive Council, and who will be the Chief Pastor and the "Primate" of the Episcopal Church. The House of Bishops elects the Presiding Bishop and the House of Deputies confirms this election. The Presiding Bishop speaks God's word both to the church and to the world. He or she is responsible for initiating and developing strategies for carrying out the church's mission at a national level. The House of Deputies elects a President who presides in meetings of that house. The President of the House of Deputies can be a lay person or a clergy person, but not a bishop. The President of the House of Deputies and the Presiding Bishop appoint an Executive Officer.

The General Convention chooses members of an Executive Council that meets regularly and is responsible for program and policy between conventions. And as with the diocese, there is a national church staff and a structure at the national level to carry out the work of the church. (There are charts in the *Episcopal Church*

Annual that show this structure.) The headquarters of our church at the national level is located in New York City at a place many Episcopalians call “815” for the street number of the church’s offices, where the Presiding Bishop both works and lives.

Through its many commissions and committees, and with the work of the national Church staff, the church carries out its ministries in a variety of areas, for example: education (including theological education), peace, evangelism, justice, stewardship, global ministry relationships, support of congregations, ecumenical relations, development of our liturgy and music, discussion of theology. As with the diocese, the national church also has a court system, but these are trial and review courts for matters involving a bishop. The Standing Liturgical Commission considers changes to liturgy, including even the introduction of a new *Book of Common Prayer*. This commission consists of bishops appointed by the Presiding Bishop and lay and clergy members appointed by the President of the House of Deputies. Because Episcopalians pray what they believe and are united by their liturgy, two sessions of General Convention are required to approve any change to the *Book of Common Prayer* and *Hymnal*. Two sessions are also required to make any changes to the constitution.

The Episcopal Church USA is a province in the world wide Anglican Communion. We turn now to that organization to learn about our church at the international level.

OUR CHURCH AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The Anglican Communion is a world wide organization made up of over 70 million members in every continent. The “provinces” in the Communion are the Anglican churches in a given country. These provinces share two characteristics: (1) They are recognized by the Archbishop of Canterbury to be the church province in communion with the see of Canterbury and (2) they worship according to a *Book of Common Prayer*. Early on the Anglican communion developed in countries that were once part of the British Empire, but today the communion is more widespread.

Note that at the national level, provinces are groups of dioceses. At the international level, however, a province is a national church, for example: The Philippine Episcopal Church, The Church of the Province of South Africa, The Anglican Church of Australia. Although there may be churches in the United States that use the name Episcopal, the Episcopal Church USA is the only province of the Anglican Communion in the United States. Each province has a “primate,” sometimes called an Archbishop. Our primate is the Presiding Bishop. Nobel Peace Prize winner, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, is the retired primate of The Church of the Province of South Africa.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, who is primate of the Church of England and successor to Augustine of Canterbury, is the recognized spiritual head of the Communion. He is considered “first among equals.” The Church of England is still an “established” church. The Archbishop is chosen by the ruling monarch of England and the Prime Minister from a very short list compiled through an elaborate nominating process in the Church of England. Archbishops of Canterbury are chosen from the most respected of church leaders.

Anglicans adhere to ordered worship using some form of a common prayer book, one of which is our own *Book of Common Prayer, 1979*. Prayer books include for example: South Africa’s *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*, *The New Zealand Prayer Book*, the official English *Book of Common Prayer, 1662* and the English *Alternative Service Book 1980*. Each province decides through its own processes which prayer books are authorized for general use in the province. The *Book of Common Prayer, 1979* is the only prayer book authorized for regular use at the primary service on Sunday mornings in the ECUSA. Use of other prayer books, for example the new alternative books that General Convention has authorized or the *Book of Common Prayer, 1928* requires permission from the bishop of the diocese where the books will be used.

With the exception of wartime, every ten years since 1867, the Archbishop of Canterbury has invited the Bishops of the Anglican Communion to meet together in England. The last of these gatherings occurred in

1998. Seventy-six bishops attended the first Lambeth Conference. Now there are about ten times that many bishops. Even though not all provinces ordain women to Holy Orders, the first women bishops were received at Lambeth 1998.

The Lambeth Conference was started to promote understanding among bishops from around the world and to cement communion. While the bishops meeting together do not constitute a decision making body and lack binding legal authority, they have considerable persuasive power with one another because of the strong desire to remain in community and the desire for unity. These bishops seek to preserve this unity that Archbishop Tutu referred to as “totally untidy, but very, very lovable” by respecting each other, being open to the experience of the other, worshipping and studying the scriptures together. When the Lambeth Conference passes resolutions, these resolutions may be adopted by the governing authority in the provinces, or they may not.

Unlike our church at the diocesan level and the national level, the Anglican Communion is not a governing body. It is instead a group of provincial churches in communion with each other. But the member provinces have no governing authority in each others’ jurisdictions, either individually or collectively.

There is no centralized authority in the Anglican Communion and the Archbishop of Canterbury is no pope. Between Lambeth Conferences, a body composed of both lay and clergy members, the Anglican Consultative Council, meets to carry on the work of the communion. Like our church at the diocesan and national levels, there is a staff that does the ongoing work of the communion at the Anglican Communion Office. Primates of the provinces also come together in the time between Lambeth Conferences. From time to time the Archbishop of Canterbury appoints a special commission to deal with issues before the whole communion. One such commission was originally established to study the relationship among the provinces and recommend ways to strengthen that relationship as women bishops emerged in some provinces, when most of the member provinces do not ordain women. Another commission released what is known as the Windsor Report to addresses differences among the provinces that had arisen around issues of human sexuality and ordination, specifically the blessing of same gender unions and the ordination of a bishop who is in a committed same gender relationship.

The Windsor report identifies four “instruments of unity” for the communion. They are the Anglican Consultative Council, the Lambeth Conference, the Primates Meeting, and the Anglican Communion Office. When His Grace Robert Runcie, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, addressed the Lambeth Conference of 1988, he noted some characteristics of Anglican unity: that Anglican unity “is opposed to centralism”; that Anglicans “speak of dispersed authority” and “have no intention of developing an alternative papacy”; and that “Anglican unity itself is most characteristically expressed in terms of worship.” Archbishop Runcie quoted T. S. Elliot who had spoken to the 1948 Lambeth Conference and said, “The Anglican Church washes its dirty linen in public; but at least it gets washed.” Summarizing his thoughts, Archbishop Runcie asked, “Do we actually need a world-wide communion?” and answered: “I believe we do, because Anglicans believe in the one holy catholic and apostolic Church of the creed. I believe we do, because we live in one world created and redeemed by God. I believe we do, because it is only by being in communion *together* that diversity and difference have value. Without relationship difference divides.” (Quotes are from Robert Runcie, The Unity We Seek, pages 3-10.)

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART IV THE STRUCTURE AND POLITY OF THE CHURCH

II. Engagement

1. **Role Play:** You are a vestry of a local parish. We will call it St. Swithens by the Swamp because that is the name used in seminary tests! St. Swithens has had a serious difficulty with its priest and has called the bishop's office for help. The bishop comes to visit and meets with the vestry. After listening respectfully as each vestry member speaks about the problem, the bishop says, "Here is what we will do to begin reconciling your relationship with your parish priest . . ." No sooner has the bishop begun speaking than one confused member of the vestry speaks up, respectfully but with genuine perplexity. He wonders, "Who are you to come here to our parish and tell us what to do about our problem with our priest?" Try role playing this situation. What answer might the bishop give? How might the other vestry members respond? With what assumptions might the questioning vestry member have come to this meeting?

2. Look up some words that confuse you in Armentrout and Slocum's An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church: A User-Friendly Reference for Episcopalians

3. What steps would you think might be necessary for a local parish to buy, sell or mortgage land?

4. Spend some time browsing though The Episcopal Church Annual. For example, notice the map of dioceses and provinces; look at the organizational charts; see some of the agencies, publications and organizations of the church; look up some information about a diocese; find out the names of bishops who have died; locate the Episcopal Religious Order for women nearest you, and then the one for men.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART IV
THE STRUCTURE AND POLITY OF THE CHURCH
(a handout)

III. Summary of the Structure and Polity of the Church

1. The word polity refers to the structure of a church and how it is organized.
2. Examples of different kinds of polity are congregational, presbyterian, episcopal.
3. The polity of the Episcopal Church USA is Anglican, a unique blend of representative government and the unity achieved through our common worship and the role of the historic episcopacy.
4. The major unit of organization in the Episcopal Church is the diocese. It is a geographical unit under the leadership of a bishop.
5. Some dioceses have more than one bishop. The Diocesan Bishop is the chief priest, pastor, ecclesiastical authority and executive officer.
6. Only bishops confirm members of the Episcopal Church (or receive members from another church that has an historic episcopacy).
7. The Diocese is made up of all the Episcopal parish churches, mission, ministries and worshipping communities in a given geographical area. A province is a group of dioceses. A map of the Episcopal Church, showing its dioceses and its nine provinces can be found in the most recent Episcopal Church Annual.
8. The annual Diocesan Convention is the governing legislative body for the diocese. There bishops, priests, deacons and lay people meet together to plan the work of the diocese.
9. Between Diocesan Conventions, the work of the diocese goes on in departments, committees, task forces and commissions and with the help of the diocesan staff.
10. Two important interim bodies are the Diocesan Council, which carries out the work of convention, and the Standing Committee, which advises the bishop and acts as ecclesiastical authority in the absence of a bishop.
11. The diocese has other ministries including college and other chaplaincies, Hispanic ministry, ministry to the deaf, and the diocesan camp.
12. The work of the diocesan structure unifies and promotes the work of the church that takes place primarily in parishes.
13. Members of parishes are all baptized persons whose baptisms are included in the record books of the church. This includes infants.
14. Adult (over 16) confirmed members in good standing, who are known to the rector and treasurer to regularly support the mission and ministry of a parish vote in parish elections and serve on vestries.

15. Vestries work with the rector to govern a local parish and pursue the mission and ministry of that parish. In the Diocese of Alabama vestries are composed of 3 to 30 members. When there is no clergy person at a parish church, the vestry serves as the local church authority.
16. Vestries select a Senior Warden and a Junior Warden, a clerk and a treasurer.
17. Vestries report to the members of the church on their work and plans for the future at least once a year at a meeting of the parish.
18. When the parish is between rectors, the vestry works with the diocese and calls a new priest to be rector.
19. The priest called by the vestry to be in charge of a local parish and installed by the bishop for that purpose is called a “rector.” In addition to the rector there may be other priests and deacons on staff at a parish.
20. Staff clergy may serve according to terms and conditions set by the rector. The rector and vestry enter a pastoral relationship on behalf of the parish that may not be terminated except by mutual agreement, or at the instruction of the bishop.
21. Parish vestries and clergy guide the work of the local church and parish members are organized in different size churches in different ways to accomplish the work of the church.
22. The diocese has a set of church laws (canons) and a charter or constitution under which the diocese and its parishes function. Our church also has a constitution and canons at the national level. Although some parishes have bylaws, it is not necessary for parishes to have another set of laws.
23. The diocese selects clergy and lay people to send with its bishops to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church USA.
24. The General Convention meets every 3 years and conducts the business of the church at the national level.
25. There are two houses at General Convention, the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops. The House of Deputies is presided over by a President and the House of Bishops by the Presiding Bishop.
26. The Presiding Bishop also presides over the Executive Council, which meets during the time between General Conventions. The Presiding Bishop is the Chief Pastor and the Primate of the Episcopal Church.
27. Our church at the national level does its work through committees and commissions and a national church staff in New York City.
28. The Standing Liturgical Commission is an example of a commission of the ECUSA. Among other things, this commission considers changes to the *Book of Common Prayer*. As with the church’s constitution, it takes two meetings of General Convention to make changes to the *Book of Common Prayer*.
29. The Episcopal Church USA is a province in the world wide Anglican Communion, which has over 70 million members.

30. Provinces of the Anglican Communion are recognized by the Archbishop of Canterbury as in communion with the see of Canterbury and use a Book of Common Prayer for worship.
31. The Episcopal Church USA is the only province of the Anglican Communion in the United States.
32. The Archbishop of Canterbury is the spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion but he is not a pope.
33. Every 10 years the Archbishop of Canterbury invites bishops throughout the Anglican Communion to his home at Lambeth Palace for a conference.
34. This conference seeks to promote understanding and unity in the communion.
35. Sometimes the conference passes resolutions but these are not binding upon the provinces.
36. Between Lambeth Conferences the “primates” (chief pastors in a province like our Presiding Bishop) meet together; the Anglican Consultative Council carries on the work of the communion, and the staff at the Anglican Communion Office work with the Archbishop of Canterbury to continue the work of the communion.
37. From time to time the Archbishop of Canterbury appoints a commission to address particular areas of concern. One such commission is the Lambeth Commission. Most recently the Lambeth Commission released a report called the Windsor Report.
38. Anglicans value staying together in relationship even when they disagree, and are united primarily by worship.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART V

MORAL DECISION MAKING

OUTLINE

I. Introduction

Religion draws humanity into closer relationship with the Divine. As humanity grows in understanding of God, the ways of God become more comprehensible, and human behavior accepts these ways as standards. We call such shaping standards religion's morals. In this section we will examine moral decision-making in the Anglican and Episcopal tradition.

II. Illumination

- A. Richard Hooker's The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity
- B. Scripture as the primary source
- C. Importance of reading in community
- D. The importance of tradition
- E. "Enlightened reason"

III. Reflection—Using "A Theological Reflection Method"

- A. Step I: Identifying clearly the subject for reflection
- B. Step II: Engaging the light of Scripture
- C. Step III: Engaging the light of Tradition
- D. Step IV: Engaging the light of prayer for discernment
- E. Step V: Living our theology in public life

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE: PART V

MORAL DECISION MAKING

I. Gathering

Hymn

- God who stretched the spangled heavens, *The Hymnal 1982* #580

Collect of the Day

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favor, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy Name, and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

II. Illumination

The influence of Richard Hooker looms large in moral decision making within the Anglican Communion. Common reference is made to Richard Hooker's "three-legged Stool" of Scripture, tradition, and reason as the sources for moral decision-making.

Hooker referenced these three sources of authority in his formative book, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. As some people have properly pointed out, nowhere does Hooker use the metaphor of the three-legged stool with respect to the relation between these elements of moral decision-making.

If, however, we do not have a ready metaphor to describe the interrelationships between Scripture, tradition, and reason, we must search for some model that effectively represents the reality, and in order to be of the most help to the individuals and communities seeking to make moral decisions within the Anglican Church, we must try to describe a process that would utilize these three sources of moral authority.

A. Scripture is the primary source, but not the sole source, in moral reasoning. The use of Scripture in moral reasoning asks that the reading of scripture be continuous, that is, that the reader is immersed in the scripture as part of daily life. Thus, moral reasoning is broadly and deeply informed by Scripture, and does not fall prey to contextualized interpretations.

B. It is also desirable that Scripture be read in community. Anglican decision making, including moral reasoning, is conciliar in shape. Additionally, the Anglican Church maintains the hopes of the early Reformers, such as Erasmus, that each Christian would have available in her own language the Scriptures to inform daily life. The availability of the scriptures in vernacular languages is a gift that was won by great effort and sacrifice; we of the current generation might respond to that gift by continued reading of scripture in community.

C. As part of the catholic Church, Anglicans understand the important role of tradition in moral reasoning. We recognize that the very Canon of the Bible is a product of the Church. The use of the Church's tradition in moral reasoning draws upon the idea of the Communion of Saints. As we read the history of the Church, we are looking not for pieces of literature that may sustain positions we have already chosen, but for understanding of sustained thought, embedded in the concrete lives of people who existed within a geography, a culture, a family, undoubtedly different from our own in any number of striking ways. Coming to understand these differences allows us to enter into a kind of relationship with those who came before us, and to be informed by them in our moral reasoning.

D. Our greatest effort is needed in understanding and using the kind of reasoning to which Richard Hooker referred in The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity. This is because scientific reasoning divorced from spiritual practice and understanding was nascent in Hooker's time, and ascendant, even universal, in ours. To help in this effort, it might be best to call Hooker's reason "enlightened reason." Though Hooker does not use the term, it is clear that he is continuing the thought of the Scholastics, who refer back to Augustine and Jerome on human nature. The Scholastics held that the Imago Dei was never fully erased from human nature by the effects of Original Sin, only marred. This divine spark in human nature was called "synderesis." Its presence in human nature enables humanity to recognize the presence of God, including the presence of God in the teachings of God, what we commonly call God's laws. We recognize these laws to be good because there is that within us of God, which is akin to these laws themselves, in that they and we have a common origin in God the Creator.

E. How might we integrate our reading of scripture, our understanding of Church tradition, and the understandings of enlightened reason to make moral decisions? One good approach is the theological reflection method used by the House of Bishops, a method practiced within community.

III. Reflection—Using “A Theological Reflection Method”

This exercise is an instrument with which groups can engage in critical thinking and theological reflection by holding up a particular issue or question into the light of God's life. Holy Scripture and the Tradition of the Christian faith serve both as sources and as lenses through which to discern the mind of Christ about our issues or questions. Seeing issues and questions in this way brings us to understand them more directly in terms of God's knowing and loving—that is, to catch a glimpse of how we think God understands them. This can be a gift of wisdom for the whole Church.

In the steps that follow, the word “subject” refers to the theological issue, question, or theme that has been selected for reflection.

STEP I: Identifying clearly the subject for reflection

1. In your groups, identify clearly the question, issue, or theme to be examined.
2. Articulate the subject and any sub-questions or issues in the most precise language that you can.

STEP II: Engaging the light of Scripture

1. As a group, begin by drawing on your reading of the Bible to set the subject in two or three biblical contexts. Think of scriptural passages that could become a lens for seeing the subject. Some may be directly related to the subject, but others may offer a fruitful metaphor or analogy.
2. As you talk over possible biblical frameworks, settle on one or two that seem most illuminating.
 - What do these help you notice about the subject?
 - Do the passages clarify or modify your usual ways of thought?
 - What does God seem to be saying to you in each passage?
 - How has the Tradition understood or used these passages?

STEP III: Engaging the light of the Tradition

In light of the biblical contexts explored in Step II,

1. What doctrines come to mind around the subject (for example: the Trinity, creation, grace, etc.)? What theologians or theological works come to mind?
2. What is the teaching or doctrine of the Church on the subject and how has it developed? What is your understanding of these doctrines or teachings?
3. What Christian doctrine(s) or teaching(s) seem most illuminating for your thinking?
4. Among the doctrinal lenses that your group identifies, settle on the one or two that seem best for viewing the subject at hand.
5. Now let the doctrines begin to shed light on the subject.
 - What new aspects of the subject do you notice?
 - How might the theology of this doctrine re-shape your own thinking? More general popular thinking?
 - What effect do these new aspects have on your understanding?
 - How do you now see the subject in relation to God?

STEP IV: Engaging the light of prayer for discernment

This step begins with each member working individually and then returning to the small group. Having prepared your minds through the reflections of the previous steps you are invited to draw your theological work more immediately into prayer.

1. First, take at least ten minutes to do something pleasant and peaceful go for a walk, gaze at a tree, read a poem or look at a painting.
2. Now find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed and give yourself 15-20 minutes of silence in the presence of God. Do not read over any notes you have made. Simply hold your theological exercise before God and ask for divine companionship and wisdom in your work. Wait peacefully and patiently, without any sense of urgency or anxiety. Allow God to be present with you, and allow yourself to be present to God. Listen with the ears of your heart.
3. Bring your focused time with God to a close and return to your group. Reflecting on the following questions, each person is asked to say what new sense of the subject may have begun to emerge from the contemplative period:

Give each person time to speak. Hold your responses and comments until all have spoken.

- Are there fresh insights? Are there newly perceived restraints for theology or for our *praxis*?
- Pay particular attention to any sense of divine generosity or invitation.
- Where in your reflections about the subject do you sense a possibility of deeper freedom or joy?
- Are there any additional biblical or doctrinal contexts you would like to explore now?
- Is there any sense of being invited to ask new questions?
- How does God seem to be present to you now in relation to the subject?

STEP V: Living our Theology in Public Life

Continuing our work as a group, the focus now shifts to thinking about the public aspect of theology, Episcopal ministry, and the ministry of the Church.

1. How do Scripture and your theological reflection and prayer help you think about the subject in terms of public life (life in the world, your community, your diocese)? How is the subject related to important issues of our day?
2. If you take seriously Scripture and the beliefs, teachings, and doctrines discussed as you go to work, school, a rock concert, sports event, or the movies, where would they come to play? How might they conflict with the operative values, habits, goals, or behaviors of daily life?
3. What new opportunities, constraints, and practices arise from your (new) theological insights or vantage points.?
4. How does this critical thinking and theological reflection inform and shape your ministry? How does it shape our work together, to bring forth and nurture the life of the Church?

NOTE: *See Appendix #5 for further reflection on prayer*

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART VI ENGAGING THE WORLD

OUTLINE

I. Introduction

I. How the catechism describes the mission of the Church

II. Identifying with the Church's mission

Perspective 1: Mission as the work of the heart	Luke 10:25-37
Perspective 2: Mission as the work of the hands	I Corinthians 12:4-31
Perspective 3: Mission as the work of change	Luke 14:17-23
Perspective 4: Mission as the work of the Trinity	Matthew 28:16-20

II. Engagement

Any of the following questions may be offered for discussion

1. At the beginning of each of the four perspectives on mission a related passage of Scripture or liturgy was offered. Choose one of these selections and read it. What does this passage say to you about your place as the Church and the world?
2. Can you recall a time when you were aware that something (whether you were able to identify its source as God at the time or not) was working to help you to love the "unlovable"? What was that like for you?
3. What is your greatest gladness? What do you think is the world's deepest hunger?
4. Mission as the work of change often begins with the insight that we enjoy privileges that are not necessarily extended to others? Does that make you uncomfortable? What might you do with that insight?
5. Identify an "outreach mission" that is ongoing in your parish. Who is doing it? Who is receiving it? How does this mission reflect some of the mission perspectives offered in this class?

III. Reflection

1. Re-read the promises contained in the baptismal covenant (BCP 304-305). Do you understand them any differently now that you have studied the Church's mission?
2. How important is it that you are asked to respond, "I will, with God's help?"

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART VI ENGAGING THE WORLD

Introduction:

This chapter is unique in that the topic lends itself to an interactive discussion with participants as opposed to a lecture format followed by engaging questions. Therefore, you should note that this chapter is designed to engage the participant as it relates to their own personal spiritual journey.

I. Gathering

Hymn

- O holy city, *The Hymnal 1982* #583
- Where cross the crowded, *The Hymnal 1982* # 609

Collect of the Day *(One of the following collects for mission may be used)*

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach to those who are far off and those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit on all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

or

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. *Amen.*

or

O God of all nations of the earth: Remember the multitudes who have been created in your image, but have not known the redeeming work of our Savior Jesus Christ; and grant that, by the prayers and labors of your holy Church, they may be brought to know and worship you as you have been revealed in your Son; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. *Amen.*

“If angels could talk, they would tell us Bible stories all the time. Then they would tell you why God made you, if you could stay awake for it.”

from What Children Know About Angels

Have you ever noticed that children seem to know a lot more than adults about listening to what God is saying to the church? Sometimes adults forget that we are living actors in the Christ-centered drama of reconciliation. We forget to remind ourselves why God has made us. We invent ways to sleep through the good news of salvation. Or as one poster put it:

*Most people don't know that there are angels
whose only job is to make sure you don't get
too comfortable & fall asleep & miss your life.*

Without a clear sense of its mission the Church will also miss the fullness of its life. Some people run away from the idea of mission because it makes them uncomfortable. Some are afraid that if they believed they had the power to change things, it would be an overwhelming burden to bear. But, until we live into the promises of the Gospel in our everyday lives, we miss what it is to be truly alive to the Spirit of God.

Theologian and author Howard Thurman observed that awareness of the Spirit of God is the unifying principle of all life. It is the most crucial experience that any human being can encounter. He compared this awareness to a door that leads immediately into the lives of all other beings. And once that door is open we must go through. He wrote:

God is making room in my heart for compassion: the awareness that where my life begins is where your life begins: the awareness that the sensitiveness to your needs cannot be separated from the sensitiveness to my needs; the awareness that the joys of my heart are never mine alone— nor are my sorrows.... God is at work enlarging the boundaries of my heart.... I struggle against the work of God.... I want to be let alone. I want my boundaries to remain fixed, that I may be at rest. But, even now as I turn to Him in the quietness, His work in me is ever the same.

This short essay is offered as a door opening into awareness of compassion. It is an invitation that welcomes you to explore how God is also working to enlarge the boundaries of your heart for mission.

II. Illumination

I. A good place to ground our understanding of the mission of the Church is to review the words of the catechism (BCP. p. 855)

- The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and with each other in Christ.
- The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love.
- The Church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members.

II. The work of restoring all people to unity begins when members of the Church identify with the mission of the Church and begin to act as missionaries wherever they are. In this chapter, four perspectives on mission are offered as points of engagement. These perspectives all act together as God's love is shown forth in the world. They are:

1. mission as the work of the heart
2. mission as the work of the hands
3. mission as the work of change
4. mission as the work of the Trinity

Perspective 1: Mission as the work of the heart (Luke 10:25-37) Good Samaritan

The ethical code of the Old Testament tempers judgment with compassion. God is portrayed as a jealous deity who demands to be loved. At the same time, God's people are expected to show hospitality to those who cannot fend for themselves. This includes not only the poor (especially widows and orphans), but also those who are wayfarers and strangers in the land. God's people are often reminded that they themselves were once wanderers and strangers. Now, they have been brought together as Yahweh's people. Their covenant with God calls them to see with God's eyes and to have compassion on those who are vulnerable and powerless. Spiritual awareness is always connected to inclusion and outreach. It begins the work of the heart.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus takes this awareness one step farther. As the story begins, a lawyer asks Jesus for clarification about what he can do to inherit eternal life. (Perhaps he suspected that he had gotten too comfortable and had fallen asleep!) Jesus' answer refers him back to core of Jewish code, one that required love for both God and one's neighbor. But the man, still convinced that he may not have heard Jesus correctly, pushes the point by asking, "And who is my neighbor?" It is then that Jesus tells the story about the Samaritan. This parable brings us face to face with all that it takes to live a compassionate life. It is not a story about good people versus bad people or wicked people versus saved people. Instead, it is a story about the kind of awareness needed for a person to enlarge the boundaries of his or her heart. The enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans would have been well known to Jesus' audience. Notice, even at the end of the story the lawyer still cannot bring himself to say the word "Samaritan" when Jesus asks him. Instead, he continues to distance himself, referring to the man as "the one who showed him pity." We also choose to distance ourselves from people that we don't know or don't like.

The way that Jesus fleshes out the parable challenges us to see that the pain we claim as ours is always connected to pain that is our neighbors'. We are intended to identify both with the wounded Jew and the compassionate Samaritan. When we do this, we see that the work of the heart discourages us from thinking about "my mission" or "your mission". Instead, we can begin to focus on God's mission. Coming to this way of thinking is not always easy. We may continue to struggle against the work of God in us. Nevertheless, the call to mission always invites us to enlarge the boundaries of our hearts as well as the boundaries of our concern.

1. What does this passage say to you about your place as the church and the world?
2. Can you recall a time when you were aware that something (whether you called it God at the time or not) was working to help you to love the "unlovable"? What was that like for you?

Perspective 2: Mission as the work of the hands (1 Corinthians 12:4-31)

Mission is doing God's work in a broken world. St. Teresa of Avila wrote that we are Christ's earthly hands, offering blessing to the world. Like the hands of the resurrected Christ, our hands may also be wounded by what life has brought us. But those hands are ours and that will have to be enough. Jesus has called us to join with others as His living disciples, to go where He has gone and to love as He loves.

St. Paul described this organic dimension of spiritual awareness by referring to the church as a body. Today, our knowledge of molecular biology may make this analogy seem simplistic. We might feel more comfortable referring to the Church as an "open system" that relies for its life the input of grace and the output of works. Or, we might use the word "synergy" to describe the experience of teams of Christians working together. St. Paul uses the word "body" to offer two important insights about the work of mission. First, the mission of the church is a single mission. No matter how many mission trips we sign up for or how many outreach projects we support we never act on our own. The work of mission is nourished by one Spirit. Each of us responds to the call of the same God.

Second, each of us has different gifts for mission. We are, as St. Paul describes it, different organs playing different roles within a single body. As we discover our place in the body, we begin to become as fully alive as we can be—in other words, we start to become our vocation. Frederick Buechner has given us a simple definition of vocation: "*It is the place where your great gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.*" Some people seem to know immediately where that place is. Others remain clueless until something seems to "knock them upside the head," releasing in them previously undiscovered joy. For some reason, our true vocation often comes to us as a complete surprise. C.S. Lewis captured this idea in the title of his biography, Surprised by Joy.

Once, going through a particularly tough time in life, a wise friend said, "Remember, God never makes in order to mock." She meant that God is not some kind of prankster who dangles impossible vocations in front of us. The work of mission uses all skills and talents that we are willing to offer. In fellowship with Christ we will

never encounter a sign that says “no vacancy” or “need not apply.” Instead, we receive full acceptance and welcome.

This brings us to the most important insight about mission as the work of the hands. When we lump our mission programs under a single category called “outreach,” we place the focus on **our** hands reaching **out**. We understand mission as something we **do** for someone else (and we may even hear ourselves bragging that “we got as much or more out of it as they did”). Do we ever think that the central issue in mission is to allow people to discover their vocations and become fully alive in Christ? If we do not think this way, we may be guilty of becoming too comfortable and falling asleep and missing our lives. The following are two stories that provided awakenings. Strangely enough, both of them are related to Christmas:

There was a musical Christmas program at a day care center for older adults. As the performer sang the familiar hymns, ones that evoke such powerful memories, one woman with advanced dementia did not seem to be listening. Asked if she was okay, she smiled brightly and said, “Oh honey, I can’t do the words anymore, but at least I can tap my foot.” Sure enough, her foot had been tapping to the music.

A certain church collects money at Christmas to purchase presents for a needy family. Over the course of several years, as the children had grown older, this outreach project had gotten to be more and more of a chore. Finally, one year, a “last minute” decision was made to give cash to the family (against the outreach committee’s better judgment). The next time they saw the mother, she was beaming. She said, “The best thing I got this year was being able to pick out what I wanted to buy for my kids, not what the committee wanted to give me. Thank you! Thank you. Merry Christmas.”

God’s mission will not permit us to treat people as outsiders. As we use our hearts and hands for mission, we cannot ignore the foot that taps or the mother who craves the dignity of buying her own Christmas gifts. When we understand that this radical inclusiveness is truly God’s mission, we begin to guard against using “outreach” as a way of keeping people out. We change it to a way of bringing people in. It is our vocation to use the work of our hands to heal and to bless. We cannot not do this without clasping the hand that reaches back to touch our own.

1. What is your greatest gladness?
2. What do you think is the world’s deepest hunger?

Perspective 3: Mission as the Work of Change (Luke 14:7-23)

One of the images for God’s kingdom that Jesus preferred is the image of the banquet. Because we live in a world of fast food and potluck suppers, the power of this image may be lost on us at first. The communal sharing of food in an agrarian economy was a privilege that only certain people enjoyed. Women were not invited and were kept apart. Widows (who had the least social status) collected their own food from what was left over in the fields after the crops were picked.

At dinner there was clearly a pecking order that determined one’s place at table. To be invited to the table meant that you had access not only to food, but also to networks of power and influence. You were privy to insider information. Those who ate together were those who shared similar social status, a bit like corporate America.

Jesus gave a different rule. When someone who was eating at table with Jesus bragged that those who eat the feast in the kingdom of God will truly be blessed, Jesus gave a startling answer. He recounted the story of a great dinner party where the invited guests had refused to attend. So, the host instructed his servant to round up the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame, and travelers from the roads and country lanes. These people seem at first to be a strange choice because they appear to have the least to offer to conversations of power. Nevertheless, Jesus says that these are the very ones whose place at God’s table will be assured.

If we are to become fully alive as Jesus' disciples in this world, we must take His image of the banquet to heart. This is not to imply that we should give up our efforts at relief work on behalf of those who are ill, impoverished, or oppressed. Rather, it says that relief work is only the tip of the iceberg. Our sense of mission must evolve so that we use our influence to mold our current social order into one that seeks change through a real commitment to truth and justice. In short, we must make it our business to build a just society by becoming instruments of reconciliation in a world that is broken by suffering and violence.

The root of the word "religion" means to bind together. Too often, we allow ourselves to be bound into groups with people who are just like us—Episcopalians, twenty-somethings, suburbanites, Alabama fans etc. But when we limit the power of religion to that of linking us only with "the like-minded," we cut ourselves off from other people. This cutting does violence to those we exclude—Muslims, senior adults, city-dwellers, Auburn fans etc. We put up signs that say "no vacancy" or "need not apply." We maintain our comfort level by forming our own networks and being sure to safeguard our own privileged position within them. We use our power to bring about good for the people that we serve, but we fall short of using our power at the service of social change.

Titus Pressler recounts the following story about mission. After nearly forty years as missionaries in Liberia, Judy and John Gay realized that, while the relief work they were doing was indispensable, they themselves were dispensable. They had created a comfortable niche where they carried out the work of God successfully, but they had done little to change the conditions of poverty and injustice that gave their work meaning. The Gay's story could be repeated again and again by missionaries from Nigeria, Honduras, South Dakota, Palestine, Haiti, and all the other places where the Church struggles to invite the poor, the lame, the blind, and the dispossessed to the table. Even when the church recognizes the difference between paternalism and partnership, it labors to discern how to move forward, acknowledging that power differentials exist not only within a single society, but also globally.

We who make it our priority to engage in the work of justice and reconciliation often feel that our abilities to effect permanent global change are very limited. This does not mean that the church should give up trying. It means instead that we must move forward in the assurance that Christ's love has indeed made all things new. Just as Jesus overcame death and the grave, we too can overcome our impatience, discouragement, and short-sightedness to find renewed commitment to the task that He began. As Christians we believe that Jesus' suffering and death were not the end; instead, they signaled the first stage of our redemption. And Jesus died not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world.

1. The work of change begins with the insight that we enjoy privileges that are not necessarily extended to other. Does that make you uncomfortable?
2. What might you do with that insight?

Perspective 4: Mission as the work of the Trinity (Matthew 28:16-20) The Great Commission

Across the ages, the church has come to understand that mission originates not the work of just one person (Jesus), but in the Trinity. Martin Smith writes that when we are drawn into prayer for mission, this very act of prayer "...draws us into the love which flows between the persons of the Trinity." Thus, the deep roots of our sense of mission are nourished by lively communion with a God who is Three in One.

Educator and author Jean Vanier describes communion as mutual trust and mutual belonging. He writes:

"... it is the to-and-fro movement of love between two people where each one gives and each one receives. Communion is not a fixed state, it is an ever-growing and deepening reality....Community is mutual vulnerability and mutual openness one to the other. It is liberation for both, indeed, where both

are allowed to be themselves, where both are called to grow in greater freedom and openness to others and to the universe.”

This type of communion with the Trinity is foundational to mission. We may believe that we are answering the call to mission when we act on the words of Jesus’ Great Commission: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” Gradually, we come to see that this kind of obedience is only one dimension of mission. We begin to realize that we are engaged in *co-mission* where, in communion with God, we experience the to-and-fro movement of love. Over time, we know that our partnership is with the all three persons of the Trinity. Just as the Trinity is a community-in-the-making, so we come to rely on the Trinity as we ourselves become community-makers.

How often are we drawn to pray for people who are the victims of war, disease, or natural disaster? It may seem to us that the desire to intercede for these unfortunate people originates with ourselves. But, this is not true. Prayer that intercedes for others has its origin in a God who continually tugs on our hearts. The desire to find and be found by God originates with God, not with us. So, when we find ourselves praying for the mission of the Church, we are merely re-directing our focus to the problems that God already knows. By enlarging our hearts in ways that draw us ever closer, God makes us co-missioners in the kingdom.

We have a model for this intimate relationship to God in the person of Jesus. Through His life and work we can see what it means to be totally God-centered. Jesus is a person whose whole life is shaped by the working of God’s Spirit. We believe that He was conceived by God’s Spirit, baptized in God’s Spirit, and brought to full life through God’s Spirit. Jesus is the antithesis of the one who “falls asleep and misses his life.” Moreover, the ministry of Jesus gives preferential treatment to those who are victimized, dispirited, disinherited, and oppressed. It is to these people that He brings new life. Jesus becomes the model through which we, His disciples, become fully alive, not just to our own lives, but to the life of the world.

The life of Jesus links us to the Spirit of God. From this Spirit we receive a desire to move toward goodness and wholeness. We receive a guide who helps us grow in ways that allow us to give and receive love. And we are strengthened and sustained for the hard work of reconciliation. Therefore, the church’s true mission never originates in our desire to change the world, however good our motives may be. Mission is not a program initiated of the Church to increase its influence in underdeveloped parts of the globe. Mission is not the service projects that we plan. Instead, mission is about realizing that the Great Commission asks us to sign on as *co-missioners* in a plan for saving the world. This plan is relatively simple. God sends the Son, the Son sends the church equipped with the power of the Spirit.

Anglican educator Grant LeMarquand describes it this way:

“Mission ... is about God: about God’s love and forgiveness proclaimed, about God’s sending Jesus as the promise of the spirit’s presence as the task is continued by the church....Mission has its origins, and it’s continuing, and it’s fulfillment in the life of the Trinity.”

Often salvation is proclaimed as a “come to Jesus” moment.

1. Does the Anglican view of mission-in-the-Trinity presented here change your perspective on salvation?
- 2.If so, how?

Conclusion:

“If angels could talk, they would tell us Bible stories all the time. Then they would tell you why God made you, if you could stay awake for it.”

from What Children Know About Angels

When, through baptism, we become part of a Spirit-led community that responds openly and joyfully to Jesus' Great Commission, we are truly alive. The door of our spiritual awareness swings wide open. We begin living in ways that heed the call of the angels to listen to why God made us.

This new life in the Spirit immerses us in pain and joy. We have the pain of knowing that we must "go." We will need to leave our old securities behind in order to become a *co-missioner* in God's new creation. We will need to open ourselves to work and love in a world where poverty, intolerance, and injustice often do violence to God's plan for redemption. We may find that our effectiveness as agents of change is hindered by "do-goodism", misunderstanding, and by open hostility. This is what it is like to walk where Jesus walked. All of the prophets and saints have known this. We are in good company.

Even so, we know that we are filled with grace, even when we are poor in love. We respond in joyful obedience to a God who is always enlarging the boundaries of our hearts, helping us to live in ways that demonstrate God's love of all creation. We are sustained by knowing that we have not slept through, but, rather we have danced through the Bible stories that the angels tell. We have come to a place where the world's deep hunger has become the wellspring for our surprising joy. Thanks be to God.

1. Identify an "outreach mission" that is ongoing in your parish. Who is doing it?
2. Who is receiving it?
3. How does this mission reflect some of the mission perspectives offered in this class?

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART VI ENGAGING THE WORLD

III. Engagement

1. Re-read the promises contained in the baptismal covenant (BCP 304-305). Do you understand them any differently now that you have studied the Church's mission? How important is it that you are asked to respond, "I will, with God's help?"

2. Has this class challenged you to live more fully into your baptismal covenant? What did you think about this covenant before? What do you think about it now?

THE ANGLICAN SPIRIT

EPILOGUE

During this study you have been introduced to some of the essentials of the Episcopal Church and Anglican tradition. You have found the Episcopal Church to be a community of worship and the service in the name of the Trinitarian God whom we know most fully in Jesus Christ. As a part of the worldwide Anglican Communion we share in what has been called “the Anglican spirit.” It is a way of being Christian in the world.

The Anglican spirit is rooted in the Holy Scriptures, in the belief and ancient liturgies of the Catholic tradition, as reformed during the Reformation period, and in the mission of God in the world. We are a church that shares both in the great Catholic tradition of the Church and in the insights and energies of Protestantism, as well as in the spirit of the Enlightenment that values reason as a means for God’s speaking to us. Our life is centered in worship and service, and in the on-going discernment of God’s truth through Scripture, tradition, and reason.

Anglicans are inclined to be joyful Christians, celebrating the original blessing of creation and the divine gift of salvation through Christ. We affirm that human beings are made in the image of God, an image that endures in spite of the corruption of sin. We are also deeply aware that we are broken and imperfect people, living in a fallen world that needs healing and redeeming. In the Incarnation of Christ and his saving work in the crucifixion and resurrection and giving of the Spirit, we believe that God has come to be with us in our brokenness and struggle and is healing us through the grace and mercy of Christ.

In our devotion to the Incarnate Christ, we are passionate about the reality that all things have been made holy by the coming of God into the world in Jesus. We are a sacramental people who find our way to God through the blessing of earthly things, such as bread and wine, water, beautiful vestments, and holy ceremony.

In our devotion to the cross, we believe that God has reconciled all things in Christ and brought into being the beginning of a new creation. We are a forgiven people who rejoice in God’s mercy and compassion. We believe that, as an ancient prayer says, in Christ “things which had been cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and all things are being brought to their perfection through whom all things were made, your son Jesus Christ....”

In our devotion to the Spirit, we rejoice in “the love of God that has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit that has been given us.” Life in the Spirit celebrates the reconciliation and unity of all things in God. It affirms that through Baptism and Confirmation each of us has been given the gifts of the Spirit for ministry, and that the Church is a community of the Spirit empowered to do Christ’s work in the world.

In our devotion to worship according to The Book of Common Prayer, we affirm that it is through worship and prayer that we grow in our knowledge and love of God and both find and express our faith. The Book of Common Prayer gives us a uniform repository of our common belief and common worship, which binds us together as one in the midst of many diversities and differences. We are not a confessional church. Our accent is on reverent worship and mystery and wonder. One of our favorite ancient sayings is *lex orandi, lex credendi*, the law of prayer is the law of believing. The Prayer Book is where we find our oneness of belief and prayer, in the communion of the Spirit and of the saints in every time and place. There has been a succession of English Prayer Books, 1549, 1552, 1662, 1789, 1893, 1928, and 1979, each continuing the Anglican tradition of worship in the context of the changes in the English language and our understanding.

In our devotion to the Church we understand that we are the family of God, a community of faith, worship, and service where all the people of the earth can find a home in the love of God. We value what the New Testament calls *koinonia*, the communion of the Holy Spirit where all things are reconciled and made one. We are the

Church of the “Via Media,” where we value the golden mean, the middle way, between extremes. Deeply centered in Christ, we are resolute in holding together things which differ, for the sake of the Church’s wholeness. The Via Media requires patience and restraint, a sense of humility and balance, and, above all, the conviction that only God has all the truth. It leads us to be a tolerant community, where diverse people can worship side by side and be one in mission.

“Comprehensiveness” is a good word for the Anglican spirit. Our way of being Christian, as one put it, is not about “compromise for the sake of peace but comprehension for the sake of truth.” Comprehensiveness means containing in one tradition all of the truth of God that we are able to contain, with some of the inevitable tensions that this involves. We tend to be “both/and” people rather than “either/or” people, trying to live in the spirit of I Corinthians 13. This attitude of heart has given the Episcopal Church and Anglican tradition an openness of mind and gentleness of spirit, which embraces diverse viewpoints within the broad whole of the catholic faith. This has enabled us to be a church in which the evangelical, catholic, and liberal traditions are held together in one body, at our best, with grace, patience, and generosity of spirit.

By encountering the mystery of God that surrounds us, we continually learn that before the Creator we are dependent creatures, before the judge we are sinners, and before the redeemer we are forgiven and reconciled. In our continual encounter with God’s Word and Sacrament we are drawn to a life of repentance, that is to a reorientation of ourselves to God and his purposes for life. This is possible because we know the grace-filled mystery of God the Trinity and the love of God in Christ from which nothing can separate us.

We hope that this curriculum has enabled you to catch a glimpse of the faith of the Episcopal Church and of the Anglican spirit. We hope that you will help us continue to build God’s holy Church and make a difference in the world for Christ’s sake. May we all continue to study to understand the essentials of our faith and practice them in our common worship and service to the glory of God.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you always.

APPENDIX 1: PARTS OF A CHURCH

Aisle: the central walkway along the main axis of the nave leading up to the altar.

Altar: the holy table on which the Eucharist is celebrated.

Ambo: a raised pulpit or reading stand.

Apse: the area behind the altar, often semicircular in shape and with a domed roof.

Chancel: the area in front of the sanctuary and altar, often with seats for the officiating ministers.

Choir: Used to mean both the singers and the part of the church building in which they are seated, which may be near the chancel or in a balcony.

Epistle side: the right side of the church facing the altar.

Font: the container for the water used in Baptism.

Gospel side: the left side of the church facing the altar.

Lectern: the place, often raised, from which the Scripture lessons are read.

Narthex: the foyer or entrance area of the building.

Nave: the main seating area of the sanctuary.

Pulpit: the place, often raised, from which the sermon is preached.

Reredos: a more or less elaborate backdrop behind the altar.

Sacristy: the work room of the altar guild, a room attached to the sanctuary in which altar cloths and unconsecrated bread and wine are kept, flowers may be prepared, etc.

Sanctuary: the space of the church building immediately around the altar.

Transept: the aisle perpendicular to the main axis of the church building.

APPENDIX 2: AT THE ALTAR

Ambry: a container or compartment in the wall near the altar in which the consecrated elements are kept; also commonly called a tabernacle.

Burse: two stiffened cloths forming a pocket for extra purificators, placed on top of the veil.

Chalice: the cup in which the wine is consecrated and from which the communicants drink.

Celebrant: the presiding clergyperson at the Eucharist, a bishop or priest.

Ciborium: a container for the bread or host.

Corporal: a square linen cloth in the center of the Fair Linen on the altar, on which the Eucharistic vessels are set.

Credence: the table on which the Eucharistic elements are kept before being brought to the altar for consecration.

Cruet: a vessel containing unconsecrated wine or water to be used during the Eucharist.

Daily Office: Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer.

Elements of consecration: the bread and the wine.

Fair Linen: a white linen cloth set on top of the altar for the Eucharist.

Frontal: a hanging cloth on the front of the altar, its color corresponding to that of the season of the church year.

Host: the bread of the Eucharist when in the form of small wafers rather than a loaf.

Lavabo: a bowl used in the ceremonial washing of the celebrant's hands before the prayer of consecration in the Eucharist.

Office: a rite, especially the Daily Office, i.e., Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer.

Officiant: the leader, clergy or lay, of the Daily Office.

Pall: a stiff cloth-covered board put on top of the chalice. A Funeral Pall is a vestment for the casket or the urn containing the ashes of the deceased.

Paten: the plate on which the host is consecrated and from which it is distributed to the communicants.

Purificator: a small white linen cloth used to wipe the chalice after each communicant has received wine.

Tabernacle: the ambry.

Thurible: the container in which incense is burned.

Veil (or Chalice Veil): a cloth, usually silk or damask, and colored corresponding to the season of the church year, covering the chalice and the paten when they are on the altar.

APPENDIX 3: VESTMENTS

Alb: a long white linen robe, often tied at the waist by a cincture.

Amice: an oblong linen cloth tied around the torso with strings.

Cassock: a long close-fitting vestment, usually black, often worn under a surplice.

Chimere: a sleeveless cape worn by a bishop.

Cincture: a cloth rope-like belt.

Chasuble: a large oval sleeveless outer garment worn by the priest in the Eucharist, removed for the sermon.

Cope: a large cape-like outer vestment worn by a priest or bishop

Cotta: a short surplice.

Crozier: the pastoral staff of a bishop, shaped like a shepherd's crook.

Dalmatic: a loose tunic with open sides worn by a deacon.

Mace: the staff carried by a Verger.

Miter: a bishop's hat with peaks in front and back, symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

Rochet: a robe with narrow sleeves worn by a bishop.

Stole: a long strip of cloth, often decorated, worn like a scarf. A priest's stole goes around the neck and hangs down from both shoulders, and a deacon's stole is worn over the left shoulder.

Surplice: a loose white vestment, often worn over a cassock.

Tippet: a long scarf, often black, worn around the neck by a priest.

APPENDIX 4: THE CHURCH YEAR

Seasons of the Church Year, their themes, and the colors used for vestments and church hangings:

Advent: a season of penitence and expectation. Purple or Blue

Christmas: a season of joy in Our Lord's birth. White

Epiphany: a season of proclamation, growth, and mission. Green

Lent: a season of fasting and repentance. Purple or sackcloth brown.

Holy Week: a week of remembrance of Our Lord's passion and of preparation for his Resurrection. Red

Good Friday: a day of deep fasting in memory of Our Lord's death on the Cross. Black

Easter: a season of joy in the Resurrection. White

Pentecost: a season of growth and mission. Green

The **Calendar** of the Church Year is in The Book of Common Prayer on pages 15-33.

Fixed and Movable Feasts

“The Church Year consists of two cycles of feasts and holy days: one is dependent upon the movable date of the Sunday of the Resurrection or Easter Day; the other, upon the fixed date of December 25, the Feast of Our Lord's Nativity, or Christmas Day.” (BCP, page 15)

Advent is the start of the Church Year, and always begins four (4) Sundays before Christmas Day. The Christmas season begins with the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, December 25, and is twelve (12) days long. The Feast of the Epiphany begins the season of Epiphany and is always January 6.

Easter Sunday is always the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox, the date changing from year to year, but always between March 22 and April 25. The season of Lent begins forty (40) days before Easter Sunday, which is always a Wednesday, called Ash Wednesday. The season of Pentecost begins with the Feast of Pentecost, fifty (50) days after Easter, which is always a Thursday.

The seasons of **Epiphany** and **Pentecost** are the only ones that are of variable length because they lie between the fixed part of the Church Year based on Christmas Day and the variable part of the Church Year based on Easter Sunday.

Principal Feasts take precedence over any other observance on that day. The Principal Feasts observed are: Easter Day, Ascension Day, the Day of Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, All Saints' Day, Christmas Day, and the Day of the Epiphany.

Red Letter days: Major Feasts of Our Lord, Apostles, Evangelists, and certain other feast days and national holidays are celebrated, and the color for these is red regardless of the color of the season in which they occur.

APPENDIX 5: THE METHOD OF PRAYER

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

We may think of prayer as thoughts or feelings expressed in words. But this is only one expression. In the Christian tradition Contemplative Prayer is considered to be the pure gift of God. It is the opening of mind and heart - our whole being - to God, the Ultimate Mystery, beyond thoughts, words, and emotions. Through grace we open our awareness to God whom we know by faith is within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than choosing - closer than consciousness itself.

CENTERING PRAYER

Centering Prayer is a method designed to facilitate the development of Contemplative Prayer by preparing our faculties to receive this gift. It is an attempt to present the teaching of earlier times in an updated form. Centering Prayer is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer: rather it casts a new light and depth of meaning on them. It is at the same time a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship. This method of prayer is a movement beyond conversation with Christ to communion with Him.

THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The source of Centering Prayer, as in all methods leading to Contemplative Prayer, is the indwelling Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The focus of Centering Prayer is the deepening of our relationship with the living Christ. It tends to build communities of faith and bond the members together in mutual friendship and love. “Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE

Listening to the word of God in Scripture (Lectio Divina) is a traditional way of cultivating friendship with Christ. It is a way of listening to the texts of Scripture as if we were in conversation with Christ and He were suggesting the topics of conversation. The daily encounter with Christ and reflection on His word leads beyond mere acquaintanceship to an attitude of friendship, trust, and love. Conversation simplifies and gives way to communing. Gregory the Great (6th century) in summarizing the Christian contemplative tradition expressed it as “resting in God.” This was the classical meaning of Contemplative Prayer in the Christian tradition for the first sixteen centuries.

WISDOM SAYING OF JESUS

Centering Prayer is based on the wisdom saying of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount:

“...But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret, will repay you.” Matthew 6.6 (New American Bible)

It is also inspired by writings of major contributors to the Christian contemplative heritage including John Cassian, the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Francis de Sales, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, and Thomas Merton.

CENTERING PRAYER GUIDELINES

- I. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God’s presence and action within.
 1. The sacred word expresses our intention to consent to God’s presence and action within.
 2. The sacred word is chosen during a brief period of prayer asking the Holy Spirit to inspire us with one that is especially suitable for us.
 - a. Examples: God, Jesus, Abba, Father, Mother, Mary, Amen.
 - b. Other possibilities: Love, Peace, Mercy, Listen, Let Go, Silence, Stillness, Faith, Trust, Yes.
 3. Instead of a sacred word a simple inward glance toward the Divine Presence or noticing one’s breath may be more suitable for some persons. The same guidelines apply to these symbols as to the sacred word.

4. The sacred word is sacred not because of its inherent meaning but because of the meaning we give it as the expression of our intention and consent.
 5. Having chosen a sacred word, we do not change it during the prayer period because that would be to start thinking again.
- II. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.
1. "Sitting comfortably" means relatively comfortably so as not to encourage sleep during the time of prayer.
 2. Whatever sitting position we choose, we keep the back straight.
 3. We close our eyes as a symbol of letting go of what is going on around and within us.
 4. We introduce the sacred word inwardly as gently as laying a feather on a piece of absorbent cotton.
 5. Should we fall asleep upon awakening we continue the prayer.
- III. When engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.
1. "Thoughts" is an umbrella term for every perception, including sense perceptions, feelings, images, memories, plans, reflections, concepts, commentaries, and spiritual experiences.
 2. Thoughts are an inevitable, integral and normal part of Centering Prayer.
 3. By "returning ever-so-gently to the sacred word" a minimum of effort is indicated. This is the only activity we initiate during the time of Centering Prayer.
 4. During the course of Centering Prayer, the sacred word may become vague or disappear.
- IV. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.
1. The additional 2 minutes enables us to bring the atmosphere of silence into everyday life.
 2. If this prayer is done in a group, the leader may slowly recite a prayer such as the Lord's Prayer while the others listen.

THE GUIDELINES

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.
3. When engaged with your thoughts*, return ever-so gently to the sacred word.
*Thoughts include body sensations, feelings, images, and reflections.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. The minimum time for this prayer is 20 minutes. Two periods are recommended each day, one first thing in the morning and the other in the afternoon or early evening. With practice the time may be extended to 30 minutes or longer.
2. The end of the prayer period can be indicated by a timer which does not have an audible tick or loud sound when it goes off.

POINTS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

1. During the prayer period, various kinds of thoughts may arise.
 - a. Ordinary wanderings of the imagination or memory.
 - b. Thoughts and feelings that give rise to attractions or aversions.
 - c. Insights and psychological breakthroughs.
 - d. Self-reflections such as, "How am I doing?" or, "This peace is just great!"
 - e. Thoughts and feelings that arise from the unloading of the unconscious.
 - f. When engaged with any of these thoughts return ever-so-gently to your sacred word.
2. During this prayer we avoid analyzing our experience, harboring expectations, or aiming at some specific goal such as:
 - a. Repeating the sacred word continuously.

- b. Having no thoughts.
- c. Making the mind a blank.
- d. Feeling peaceful or consoled.
- e. Achieving a spiritual experience.

WAYS TO DEEPEN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

1. Practice two 20-30 minute periods of Centering Prayer daily.
2. Listen to the Word of God in Scripture and study Open Mind, Open Heart.
3. Select one or two of the specific practices for everyday life as suggested in Open Mind, Open Heart, chap. 12.
4. Join a weekly Centering Prayer Group.
 - a. It encourages the members of the group to persevere in their individual practices.
 - b. It provides an opportunity for further input on a regular basis through tapes, readings, and discussion.
 - c. It offers an opportunity to support and share the spiritual journey.

WHAT CENTERING PRAYER IS AND IS NOT

1. It is not a technique but a way of cultivating a relationship with God.
2. It is not a relaxation exercise but it may be refreshing.
3. It is not a form of self-hypnosis but a way to quiet the mind while maintaining its alertness.
4. It is not a charismatic gift but a path of transformation.
5. It is not a para-psychological experience but an exercise of faith, hope and selfless love.
6. It is not limited to the “felt” presence of God but is rather a deepening of faith in God’s abiding presence.
7. It is not reflective or spontaneous prayer, but simply resting in God.

For information and resources contact:

Contemplative Outreach, Ltd.

10 Park Place - P.O. Box 737

Butler, NJ 07405

Tel: (973) 838-3384 / Fax: (973) 492-5795 Email: office@coutreach.org

**ANGLICAN ESSENTIALS
BIBLIOGRAPHY INDEX**

A. CHURCH HISTORY: PART I AND II

B. ANGLICAN WORSHIP AND THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, LITURGY, AND PIETY

C. THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

D. THE NICENE CREED

E. BAPTISMAL COVENANT

F. MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH

G. THE STRUCTURE AND POLITY OF THE CHURCH

H.. MORAL DECISION MAKING

I. ENGAGING THE WORLD

CHURCH HISTORY PART I AND II

PART I

- Gibbs, Lee W. *The Middle Way: Voices of Anglicanism*. Forward Movement, 1991. [brief biographies of leading Anglicans from Richard Hooker to William Temple]
- Giles, Richard. *How to Be an Anglican*. Canterbury Press, 2003.
- Quinn, Frederick. *To Be a Pilgrim: The Anglican Ethos in History*. Crossroad, 2001.
- Ramsey, Michael. *The Anglican Spirit*. Cowley Publications, 1991.
- The Story of Anglicanism*. Videos. Part I: *Ancient & Medieval Foundations*. Pt. II: *Reformation & its Consequences*. Pt. III: *Creating a Global Family*. Episcopal Media Foundation.
- Sykes, Stephen, John Booty, & Jonathan Knight. *The Study of Anglicanism*. revised ed.; SPCK/Fortress Press, 1998. Part I.
- Thompsett, Fredrica Harris. *Living With History*. Cowley Publications, 1999. (New Church's Teaching Series, v. 5)
- Westerhoff, John. *The Anglican Way of Life* [55 min. Video.] Episcopal Media Center.

PART II

- Booty, John E. *What Makes Us Episcopalians?* Morehouse Publishing, 1982.
- Griffiss, James E. *The Anglican Vision*. Cowley Publications, 1997. Church's Teaching Series, v. 1), Part I.
- Hein, David & Gardiner Shattuck, Jr. *The Episcopalians*. Praeger, 2004.
- Holmes, David L. *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church*. Trinity Press International, 1993.
- Holmes, Urban T. *What is Anglicanism?* Morehouse Publishing, 2002.
- In the Steps of Samuel Seabury*. 30 min. Video. Episcopal Radio-TV Foundation.
- Prichard, Robert. *A History of the Episcopal Church*. Morehouse Publishing, 1991.
- Shattuck, Gardiner H. *Episcopalians and Race: Civil War to Civil Rights*. University of Kentucky Press, 2000.

The Story of the Episcopal Church. [Videos] Pt. I: *From Jamestown to Revolution.* Pt. II: *The Call to Mission.*

Sydnor, William D. *A Look at the Episcopal Church.* Morehouse Publishing, 1980. Part II.

Webber, Christopher L. *Welcome to the Episcopal Church.* Morehouse, 1999.

**ANGLICAN WORSHIP
THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER
LITURGY AND PIETY**

Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission
<http://www.associatedparishes.org>

(The) Book of Occasional Services. Church Publishing

Booty, John, and Stephen Sykes. *The Study of Anglicanism.*

Hatchett, Marion. *Commentary of the American Prayer Book.*

Lesser Feasts and Fasts. Church Publishing Co.

Liturgy for Living. Charles P. Price

Online Daily Morning Prayer
<http://www.missionstclare.com/english/>

Online Evensong from Grace Cathedral, San Francisco
<http://www.gracecom.org/av/>

Opening the Prayer Book. Geoffrey D. Lee

Stulman, Byron D. *Prayer Book Rubrics Expanded.*

[1] “Episcopal Worship: Can We Count the Ways” in *Episcopal Life*.
<http://gc2003.episcopalchurch.org/episcopal-life/WaysWor.html>

[2] For additional ideas see *To Dance with God: Family Ritual and Community Celebration* by Gertrud Mueller Nelson. Paulist Press, 1986.

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE IN ANGLICAN THEOLOGY

Bennett, R.A. and O.C. Edwards. *The Bible for Today's Church*. New York: Seabury Press, 1979.

Bryan, Christopher. *And God Spoke*. Cowley Publications, 2002.

Ferlo, Roger. *Opening the Bible, Vol. II*. Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 1997.

This is a particularly useful book for learning how the Bible was constructed and for learning how to read and study it to get the most from its rich content.

Fuller, Reginald H. "1. Scripture." *The Study of Anglicanism*. 79-90. This essay is useful for providing greater detail on the various aspects of the Bible that we could only briefly touch on in the lesson. His bibliography is also useful for those wishing further details.

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Barton, John and John Halliburton. "Story and Liturgy." *Believing in the Church*. 79-107.

Chadwick, Henry. "Epilogue. Reflections on Tradition in Fact and Belief.", Richard Bauckham and Benjamin Drewery, eds. *Scripture, Tradition and Reason: A Study in the Criteria of Christian Doctrine. Essays in Honour of Richard P. C. Hanson*. London: T&T Clark, 1998. 288-297.

Church of England. *Believing in the Church: The corporate nature of faith*. A report by the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England. London: SPCK / Wilton, Conn.: Morehouse-Barlow / Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1981.

Harvey, Anthony. "Attending to Scripture." *Believing in the Church*, 25-44.

Neusner, Jacob. "Judaism," *Sacred Texts and Authority*, ed. Jacob Neusner, The Pilgrim Library of World Religions. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1998. 1-30.

Price, Charles P. and Louis Weil. "The Word of God and the Bible" and "The Word of God in the Liturgy." *Liturgy for Living*. Revised ed. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Press, 2000. 90-100, 101-109.

"Where Shall Doctrine Be Found?" *Believing in the Church*, 108-158, especially the historical survey in N. Thomas Wright, "Doctrine Declared," 108-141.

Williams, Rowan, "Historical Criticism and Sacred Text." Stanton, Graham and David F. Ford, eds. *Reading Texts, Seeking Wisdom: Scripture and Theology*. Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 2004.

These articles in the American Bible Dictionary (ABD) are a good basic orientation for the discussion leader.

Brueggemann, Walter. "Biblical Authority in the Post-Critical Period," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. V, 1049b-1056b.

Fogarty, Gerald.. "Biblical Authority in Roman Catholicism," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. V, 1023b-1026b.

Goshen-Gottstein, Moshe. "Biblical Authority in Judaism," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. V, 1017a-1021b.

McKim, Donald K. "Biblical Authority and the Protestant Reformation." *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. V, 1032a-1035a.

Reventlow, Henning Graf. "Biblical Authority in the Wake of the Enlightenment," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. V, 1035a-1049b. (See the discussion of England, 1037a-1042a).

"Scriptural Authority." *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Ed. David Noel Freedman. New York: Doubleday, 1992. Vol. V, 1017a-1056b:

Stylianopoulos, Theodore. "Biblical Authority in Eastern Orthodoxy," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. V, 1021b-1023b.

Van Engen, John. "Biblical Authority in the Medieval Church," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. V, 1028b-1032a.

These are good surveys, with more detail.

Grant, Robert McQueen. *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*. Robert Grant with David Tracy. 2nd ed., rev. and enl. London: SCM Press, 1984.

Jasper, David. *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004.

More information on Rabbinic and Patristic Interpretation:

Aquinas, Thomas. "Humbly, I adore thee." The Hymnal, 1982, 314.

Buber, Martin. "Toward a New German Translation of the Scriptures." Supplement to the Buber-Rosenzweig Translation of the *Five Books of Instruction*. Tr. Alan J. Swensen, Ed. Steven Kepnes in *The Return to Scripture in Judaism and Christianity. Essays in Postcritical Scriptural Interpretation*, ed. Peter Ochs. Theological Inquiries. New York: Paulist Press, 1993. 334-355.

Copeland, Rita. "Medieval Theory and Criticism", *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*. Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth, eds. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Greer, Rowan A. "Biblical Authority in the Early Church." *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. V, 1026b-1028b.

Kugel, James L., Rowan A. Greer. *Early Biblical Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986.

Montag, James SJ, "Revelation. The false legacy of Suárez." *Radical Orthodoxy. A New Theology*. Ed John Milbank et al. London: Routledge, 1999. 38-63. Good discussion of Aquinas.

Old, Hughes Oliphant. *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*. Vol. 1. *The Biblical Period*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Old, Hughes Oliphant. *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*. Vol. 2. *The Patristic Age*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

These surveys concentrate on the development of 18th-19th century critical methods. Some of them have brief surveys of pre-critical approaches. Some of them, particularly Reventlow and Rogerson, have discussions of the British scene:

Kuemmel, Werner Georg. *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems*. Tr. S. MacLean Gilmour and Howard Clark Kee. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972. Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 1970.

Reventlow, Henning Graf. *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*. Tr. John Bowden. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980.

Rogerson, John. *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany*. n. p.: Fortress, 1985. London: SPCK, 1984.

Sanders, James A. *Torah and Canon*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972.

Fragments on Anglican Approaches:

Richard H. Schmidt, *Glorious Companions*. Five Centuries of Anglican Spirituality. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002, xiv-xxi, has an accessible discussion of scripture, reason, and tradition. Consider putting this in the hands of lay participants.

McGrath, Alister E., ed. *The SPCK Handbook of Anglican Theologians*. Part Two. "A Survey of Anglican Theologians". London: SPCK Press, 1998, pp. 71-233. See particularly "Thomas Cranmer," pp. 106-108, "Richard Hooker," pp. 141-144, "Lancelot Andrewes," pp. 74-78.

Booty, John. *Reflections on the Theology of Richard Hooker*. An Elizabethan Addresses Modern Anglicanism. Anglican Studies and Texts. Sewanee: The University of the South Press, 1998. Note "The Dynamic Word: Angels Descending, Angels Ascending," pp. 87-107,

Miles Smith, Prebendary of Hereford Cathedral. "The Translators to the Reader", Preface to *The Holy Bible*, 1611.

This is rarely printed in modern editions of the King James Version, and is not an easy read, but it maintains a fine Calvinist distinction between holy scripture and human interpretation. It is discussed briefly in: Alistair E. McGrath, *In the Beginning*. The Story of the King James Bible and How it Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture. New York: Doubleday, 2001, pp. 188-196.

Rogerson, John. *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century*. Profiles of F. D. Maurice and William Robertson Smith.

Weil, Louis, "Proclamation of Faith in the Eucharist," *Time and Community*. In Honor of Thomas Julian Talley. Ed. J. Neil Alexander, NPM Studies in Church Music and Liturgy. Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1990, pp. 279-290.

Alexander, J. Neil, "In Time and Community: Individualism and the Body of Christ," *Time and Community*. In Honor of Thomas Julian Talley. Ed. J. Neil Alexander, NPM Studies in Church Music and Liturgy. Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1990, pp. 291-303.

Good general background for the English scene

Mursell, Gordon. *English Spirituality*. From Earliest Times to 1700. London: SPCK / Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Mursell, Gordon. *English Spirituality. From 1700 to the Present Day*. London: SPCK / Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

A recent statement:

The Lambeth Commission on Communion. *The Windsor Report 2004*. London: The Anglican Communion Office, 2004, 53-56, 57-62.¹

It might be interesting to note the ongoing dialogue documented in the transformations of the original proposal by William Reed Huntingdon: “The Holy Scriptures as the Word of God” (*The Church Idea*, 1870) into “The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the revealed Word of God” (House of Bishops, Chicago, 1886) and finally into “The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as ‘containing all things necessary to salvation and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith’” (Resolution 11, Lambeth Conference, 1888). All such “denominational” statements were vigorously attacked in the first article of the nascent fundamentalism of the “Bible Conferences” (1878-1895): “The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures in the original manuscripts.” Note the shift of emphasis from God to Scripture.

NOTE: There is a discrepancy between “Resolution 11 of the Lambeth Conference, 1888” as it is cited in Appendix Three/1 and as it is cited in the Book of Common Prayer, 877-878. What is cited in the Windsor Report agrees with a memorial adopted by the American House of Bishops two years earlier (BCP, 877)

– note the historical discussion in Marion J. Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book [HarperSanFrancisco, 1995], p. 588). Professor Hatchett could confirm or disconfirm that the “Quadrilateral” affirmed by our House of Deputies in 1892 and 1895 was the Lambeth version, rather than the Chicago version.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART I THE NICENE CREED

- Borg, Marcus, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith*. San Francisco, California: Harper, 2003.
- Cross, F. L., and E. A. Livingstone, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Day, Gardiner M., *The Apostles' Creed: An Interpretation for Today*. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1963.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy, *The Creed: What Christians Believe and Why It Matters*. New York: Doubleday, 2003.
- Kelly, J.N.D., *Early Christian Creeds*. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1972.
- Leith, John H., *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1963.
- Micks, Marianne H., *Loving the Questions: An Exploration of the Nicene Creed*. Boston: Cowley Publications, 1993.
- Richardson, Alan, *Creeds in the Making: A short introduction to the history of Christian doctrine*. Great Britain: The Macmillan Company, 1969.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART II BAPTISMAL COVENANT

Fenhagen, James, *Ministry and Solitude*, New York: Seabury Press 1981

Fenhagen, James, *Invitation to Holiness*, Harper & Row, San Francisco 1985

Fenhagen, James, *Mutual Ministry*, Seabury Press New York, 1977

Lewis, C.S., *Mere Christianity*, McMillan New York, 1943

Nouwen, Henri J.M., *Making All Things New*, Harper & Row, San Francisco 1981

Nouwen, Henri J.M., *The Wounded Healer*, Doubleday New York 1979

O'Connor, Elizabeth, *Journey Inward, Journey Outward*, Harper & Row, San Francisco 1968

Sims, Bennett J., *Servanthood*, Cowley, Boston 1997

Smith, Martin, *Reconciliation. Preparing for Confession in the Episcopal Church*, Cowley, Boston 1985

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART III MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH

Edwards, Lloyd. *Discerning Your Spiritual Gifts*. Cowley Publications, 1988.

Harbaugh, Gary. *God's Gifted People: Discovering Your Personality as a Gift*.

O'Connor, Elizabeth. *Eighth Day of Creation: Discovering Your Gifts and Using Them*. Word Books, 1971.

Spiritual gifts inventory link from Evangelical Lutheran Church

http://www.elca.org/dcm/evangelism/assessments/assess4int_spiritgifts.html

Webber, Christopher. *Welcome to the Episcopal Church: An Introduction to Its History, Faith and Worship*. Morehouse Publishing, 1999.

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART IV THE STRUCTURE AND POLITY OF THE CHURCH

Armentrout and Slocum, *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church: A User-Friendly Reference for Episcopalians*.

Charter and Canons of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Alabama.

Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church USA

Episcopal Church Annual. Latest copy available.

Report of the latest Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama.

Runcie, Robert, *The Unity We Seek*.

Webber, Christopher L. *Welcome to the Episcopal Church*, (Chapter 6).

Westerhoff, John H. *A People Called Episcopalians*, (Chapter 6).

The Windsor Report (especially the various appendices).

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART V
MORAL DECISION MAKING

Theological Reflection Method prepared by, the Theological Committee of the House of Bishops, 2002

Method of Prayer, Contemplative Outreach Ltd

office@outreach.org

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND FAITH: PART VI
ENGAGING THE WORLD

Hauser, Richard. *In His Spirit: A Guide to Today's Spirituality*. Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982.

LeMarquand, Grant. *From Creation to New Creation*, pp. 9-34 in *Waging Reconciliation: God's Mission in a Time of Global Crisis*. New York: Church Publishing, 2002.

Nouwen, Henri J.M. *Ministry and Spirituality*. New York: Continuum Publishing, 1996.

Presler, Titus (2001). *Horizons of Mission*. Boston: Cowley Publications, 2001.

Schreier, Robert. *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003.

Smith, Martin. *The Word is Very Near You*. Boston: Cowley Publications, 1989.

Smith, Martin. *A Season for the Spirit*. Boston: Cowley Publications, 1991.

Thurman, Howard. *Meditations of the Heart*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1953.

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1976.

Vanier, Jean. *Becoming Human*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998.

PREFACE

Forming Christian lives is one of the most important tasks of the church. Christian formation is more than simply education. It is about our hearts as well as our minds, our living as well as our thinking. Formation means having our lives shaped and directed by the grace and love of God made known to us in Jesus Christ.

Preparation for Holy Baptism and for adult affirmation of faith in Confirmation, Reception, or Re-affirmation should be among the most important formation experiences in our spiritual journey. It is a time to learn the faith and practice of the church more deeply, and an opportunity to claim our ministry as living members of Christ's Body. For us as Episcopal/Anglican Christians, these are invaluable occasions to enrich our knowledge of the Anglican tradition and of God's mission through this living branch of the universal church.

We call this resource "Anglican Essentials" because it attempts to introduce us to the essential aspects of Christian faith and life as expressed in the Anglican tradition. We offer it as a source of enlightenment and encouragement for our spiritual journey in Anglican Christianity. May it, in the words of Richard of Chichester, help us to see Christ more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly, day by day.

I am very grateful to the talented and dedicated members of our diocese whose hard work has made *Anglican Essentials* possible. It was a blessing to undertake this work for our diocese and we hope that it will be a blessing to all who use it.

To God be the glory.

The Rt. Rev. Henry N. Parsley Jr.
Bishop of Alabama

For Leaders of Adult Confirmation Classes

A Brief Guide to the Use of this Book

Most of the components of the five major segments of this curriculum begin with an outline of the content of that section. These outlines, at the discretion of the leader, may be used as handouts either at the beginning, as a guide to the class activity, whether lecture, discussion, or otherwise, or at the end of the session as a summary.

Each session ideally should begin with some kind of “gathering” material to focus the participants on the specific topic for that class. Here we offer appropriate hymn choices for those who choose to begin with music, and a relevant collect or collects from the Book of Common Prayer.

Next, the “Illumination” sections present material for the leader(s) to use in preparing for that aspect of the curriculum. It is not necessarily intended as lecture material, though in some cases it could be used as such, but rather as background for the leaders.

The “Engagement” sections for each session offer a variety of approaches to presenting the main idea, or, if a lecture were used, questions to stimulate class discussion, all ways to engage the class with the session’s content. In some cases, “Engagement” suggestions might be appropriate as after-the-session individual or group responses to the presentation.

Each session ends with a “Reflection” aspect, questions or resources which may be used to summarize or focus the participants’ thoughts about the session’s topic.

An “Anglican Essentials Glossary” is included as a quick reference for leaders for terms and words that might be new to class participants.

A bibliography of additional resources is also included for those leaders and/or participants who desire more depth of study.

We have tried to include in the major segments those aspects of the Anglican faith that we consider essential to those considering adult confirmation. There is much more that leaders may wish to add. We have also tried to give leaders of inquirers’ classes enough background material to enhance their confidence in being presenters and to eliminate the need to spend extra time searching for resources. Moreover, we have included a variety of approaches to accommodate a range of learning and teaching styles.

We realize that there is far more included for each session than time will allow, so there is no expectation that all of these suggestions will or should be used. Let the Holy Spirit lead you and be blessed as you lead others into a deeper understanding of our christian faith and appreciation of the Anglican Spirit.

AUTHORS OF THE CURRICULUM

The Rt. Rev. Henry N. Parsley, Jr.
The Rt. Rev. Mark Andrus
Mrs. Janice Glor
The Rev. Earl Gossett
The Rev. Jerrilee Lewellan
The Rev. Brent Norris
The Rev. Deacon Tom Osborne
The Rev. Margaret Scalise
The Rev. Susan Sloan
Mr. Nelson Smith
The Rev. Deacon Louise Thibodaux
The Rev. Roy Wells
The Rev. Hoyt Winslett

EDITING, FORMAT AND DESIGN

Mrs. Billie James



ANGLICAN ESSENTIALS

**A Course of Adult Catechesis
in the Diocese of Alabama**

ANGLICAN ESSENTIALS

**A Course of Adult Catechesis
in the Diocese of Alabama**