



Confirmation Workbook
2004

Part III
Our Common Tradition

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Basic Books for Further Reading

Anglican Traditions & The Episcopal Church

David Holmes, *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church* (Trinity Press Int'l).

Sykes, Booty & Knight, *The Study of Anglicanism* (SPCK/ Fortress Press).

Paul Zahl, *The Protestant Face of Anglicanism* (Eerdmans).

Geoffrey Rowell, *English Religious Tradition and the Genius of Anglicanism* (Abingdon).

Prayer

Eugene Peterson, *Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer* (HarperCollins).

James Houston, *The Transforming Power of Prayer* (NavPress).

Dallas Willard, *Hearing God* (Inter-Varsity Press).

Healing

Mark Pearson, *Christian Healing* (Chosen Books/ Baker Books).

Dale Mathews, *The Faith Factor* (Viking Press).

Francis McNutt, *Healing* (Ave Maria Press).

Church Symbols

John Bradner, *Symbols of Church Seasons and Days* (Morehouse).

Caroll Whitemore, *Symbols of the Church* (Abingdon).

What should motivate our offering of ourselves, our time, talents and money: guilt or grace?

If you do not already have a plan for sharing God's blessings with his people you might want to begin by designating a percentage of income for a weekly, monthly or annual offering. If the Old Testament standard of 10% is too much for your budget, consider starting at 3-5% and gradually increasing it every year. Someday you might discover God has enabled you to give beyond 10%.

Anglican Traditions and the Episcopal Church

Episcopalians are part of a worldwide communion of churches that are linked by a common history and tradition of worship with the English church beginning in the sixteenth century. England could not bypass the dramatic religious and political changes of the sixteenth-century Europe. In his unsuccessful attempts to win an annulment, King Henry VIII unintentionally established the groundwork for sweeping changes to the English church. The establishment of the king as the head of the Church in England effectively ended the Bishop of Rome's authority. Though his own religious attitudes remained largely unchanged, Henry's friend, Thomas Cranmer, whom he appointed Archbishop, brought many of the religious reforms on the continent to England during the reign of Henry's son, Edward VI. The most significant of these reforms included an English translation of the scriptures and a common English Prayer Book that expressed many of the beliefs of the Reformers in its worship. However, the many changes in worship and church law were reversed by Edward VI's sister, Mary, who returned authority of the church to the pope. This was overturned by Mary's sister, Elizabeth I, who reestablished the earlier reforms including the Prayer Book.

The expansion of the English empire during the reign of Elizabeth I began the spread of Anglican worship throughout the world. In the New World of the Americas, Anglican communities were established in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia and gradually extended throughout the colonies. However, these communities were without a local bishop who could confirm members and ordain new ministers. The American Revolution divided many Anglicans who swore obedience to the king as the head of the church. This led to a mass migration of loyalists into Canada. In 1789, the patriots who remained established a national church that adapted the English Prayer Book to their new political situation while remaining faithful to the forms of worship, church government and teaching of its past.

Today, the worldwide communion of Anglican Christians includes a diverse range of people from many cultures. Though Anglicans are often portrayed as a "middle way" between the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches which melts together the two traditions without their extreme elements, it is more accurate to say that three different traditions co-exist in a common life of worship. The Evangelical reforms of the sixteenth-century established the Anglican Church and its Prayer Book as a Protestant movement that wanted to reform what they believed was

clouded by the Medieval Church. It was not a break from the Church's tradition but a back-to-basics emphasis upon biblical message of trusting God's grace available in Christ alone which was shared by the early Fathers of the Church. During the nineteenth century, however, a movement (called the Oxford Movement) began with the belief that the Protestant Reformers went too far. These Anglo-Catholics influenced an extensive recovery of many the forms of medieval worship including the elaborate vestments, stained glass, candles and crosses which were largely abandoned by the Reformers. This caused considerable debate between the Anglo-Catholics who focused upon the Eucharist and the Evangelicals who stressed the preaching of the Christian message. During the twentieth century, many felt that these theological differences only divided people and, instead, thought they could rise above the dispute with rational thinking that was accessible to everyone. This led to the critical investigation and questioning of key Christian beliefs such as the incarnation and bodily resurrection of Jesus which seem strange the modern mind.

These three movements show how all Christians struggle with Scripture, Tradition and Reason. The strength of Evangelicals is their emphasis upon the biblical message of personal trust in a gracious God. Anglo-Catholics remind us of the importance of the Church and its rich traditions. The very best of the Liberal movement is its open willingness to scratch below the surface and examine our beliefs. However, each of these strengths can often be an Achilles' heel that weakens the contribution of each. Sometimes the Evangelical emphasis upon personal trust can confuse their faith in Christ with faith in their personal experience as the most important feature of Christianity. The Anglo-Catholic emphasis upon the Church can risk putting faith in the Church not Christ. The Liberal emphasis upon Reason can become an unquestioned faith in the tradition of Enlightenment rationalism which selectively filters the claims of the faith. Together, all three show our need to be a thoughtful and active worshipping community that engages its message and history with openness of heart as well as mind.

and every unseen flower in the meadow everyday. When we appreciate this we freely offer back a portion of all that God has given. It is an offering of thanks for all God's blessings. And it is given with the intent of sharing those blessings with others—the poor, the sick, the foreign missionary, the local church staff.

In his letter to the Corinthian church, the Apostle Paul shared his understanding Christian ministry writing, "Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our sphere of action among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may proclaim the good news in lands beyond you" (2 Cor 10:15-16). Today, we are the beneficiaries of the efforts countless believers expanding back almost two thousand years. Known and unknown, these disciples picked up their crosses to follow One whose own cross is the source of life itself. And as our faith in God continues to grow, it will overflow to many others in many practical ways that cannot be numbered.

For Reflection & Discussion

What are some of the benefits of weekly church attendance? What is most important to you?

In what capacity do you share in Christ's ministry to the world through your local church?

List as many ministries you can think of in your local church. List those of the diocese. Pray for them.

The Duty of All Christians

The duty of all Christians is to follow Christ; to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray and give for the spread of the kingdom of God.

BCP, 856.

As Jesus put it, discipleship is a matter of taking up a cross to follow Him. We are called to be devoted to him more than anyone or anything, even life itself, in order that we might freely share in His life with His family. According to Jesus, the discovery of genuine living is only found in a willingness to die to all our ideas of our own self-importance and what we think is best for ourselves and others. We are asked to loosen our grip on these notions to trust Him and follow where He leads. Jesus turns our attention from ourselves to a spectacular vision of God's kingdom and invites us to join in.

For centuries, Christians have gathered to join in thankful praise and hopeful expectation of God's deliverance in the Messiah Jesus. Every week, we are reminded that we are not alone in this universe. With unflinching love, God has reached out to us in even the most desperate situations to forgive, heal, liberate and transform his creatures. In response to such wonderful news, we offer up our cares and concerns for ourselves and others, both near and far, as well as confess our need for God's transforming presence in our lives. Finally, we are assured of God's peace won by Christ's death and strengthened by His communion with us through the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Through our worship, Christians are refreshed every week in order to live out our faith in the many places we are scattered. Whether we serve as laypeople or clergy, all believers are priests called to serve in the priesthood of our High Priest Jesus. With our words and works we share with others what God has done in our lives. In addition, we offer our prayers, time, talents and money to support the spread of a message that has impacted our lives.

Sadly, however, the matter of financial offering has often been equally abused by both greedy clergy and stingy church members alike since the very beginning of the Church. Both cases demonstrate a colossal failure to appreciate God's overwhelming generosity to his creatures. We quickly forget that we are called to entrust ourselves and our cares to a Heavenly Father praying, "Give us *this* day our daily bread." As Jesus described it, most of us worry constantly about our financial affairs without a thought about God who cares for the smallest bird in the sky

For Reflection & Discussion

As a group, watch and discuss the following videos:

"The Story of Anglicanism, Part 2: Reformation and Consequences"

"The Story of the Episcopal Church, Part 1: From Jamestown to Revolution"

[available at www.episcopalmediacenter.org]

What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the three Anglican traditions?

Of the three traditions in the Anglican Communion, which makes you most comfortable and why?

Prayer and the Book of Common Prayer

Christians pray because they believe God has already spoken to them. We believe God created us for companionship and, like any relationship, communion with God is only maintained by personal communication. Previously, God spoke to his people through his prophets and heavenly messengers but, in Jesus, God himself meets humanity in the flesh. In Jesus, God has linked himself to our humanity, our needs and concerns. Because of this, we are linked to God in Jesus and his concern for the world. This is significant because the Holy Spirit draws our attention to the Son who has revealed the heart of our Heavenly Father. In addition to this, the Spirit graciously indwells his people and prays with us and for us. During prayer, we are ushered by Christ's Spirit into the very presence of the Father and the Son who also prays on our behalf.

Whether we pray privately or in the company of others we share our greatest joys and deepest concerns with the Creator of the universe. And, because He is the Creator and Deliverer of the universe, Christian prayer does not try to escape the problems of life. Instead, we engage them by calling upon our Father and praying, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven."

Every healthy relationship thrives on open and honest communication. There are four basic kinds of prayer which help maintain a healthy and balanced spiritual life. First, *adoration* is an exclamation of love and praise for who God is and all that He means to us. Related to adoration is *thanksgiving* which expresses our gratitude for all our blessings in the many areas of our lives. Third, *confession* is made in the safety of a relationship where we are free to acknowledge our all we have done wrong—including what we could have done and should have done but did not. Finally, we offer our *petitions* to God as we share our heart's desires for ourselves, our families, Christ's Church, our communities and the world. The more we are mindful of God's presence in our lives, the more we confide our concerns and openly ask for God to respond to the needs of his creatures.

In a similar way, adoration, thanksgiving, confession and petition all have tremendous relevance for our human relationships: our *praise* of others keeps us mindful of them as God's creatures; by being *thankful* we acknowledge our need of them; with *confession* we clear the air and discover healing with those we hurt; in the openness of love we *petition* our concerns and requests without shame, fear of rejection or resorting to silent manipulation.

Maintaining Community

Vestry
Building & Grounds Committees
Stewardship Campaign Committee

Missionary Outreach

Pastoral Visitation to Newcomers and Sick
Foreign Missionary Support
Social Outreach (e.g. Soup Kitchen, Food Bank)
Inter-denominational Council Involvement
Seeker Church Services

Which ministries are strong in your church?

What more do you think your church could be doing? List possible ministries below.

What gifts has God given you to contribute to Christ's ministry to the Church and world?

Local Church Ministries

[NOTE: The following activity will require other leaders to meet and introduce the church's many ministries]

We have all benefited from the service of others in the Church. It is also exciting to realize what God-given abilities we ourselves have and to discover the enjoyment using them to contribute to the lives of God's people. This exercise will help you discover your interests and abilities as well as the many opportunities to use your gifts and talents in the life of your local church.

For Reflection & Discussion

Under the headings listed below, identify the many ministries of your local church (Many may not be listed).

Worship

- Liturgy Committee
- Choir
- Music Leadership
- Altar Guild
- Acolytes
- Lectors and Chalicists
- Lay Eucharistic Ministers and Visitors

Education and Strengthening

- Childcare
- Children's Sunday School
- Adult Education (small group studies or Sunday School)
- Youth Ministry
- College Ministry
- Men's & Women's Groups
- Prayer Groups
- Support Groups (e.g. Grief Groups, Alcohol and Substance Abuse Group)

On-again-off-again relationships with insincere folk are, in the end, unstable and unsatisfying. It is equally true with God. Our prayers need to be consistent, frequent and genuine. And if we can open up to the Creator of the universe, we might, in His transforming love, learn to open up to others.

The prayers of Anglicans worldwide are guided by *The Book of Common Prayer*. It was both written and compiled (from other ancient forms of prayer and worship) to serve as a manual for public worship that would be (1) faithful to scripture and (2) written in the language of those who used it. Over time, it has been adapted to address many Christians in different nations all over the world and their different modes of worship while maintaining its commitment to God as he is revealed in scripture. For example, the American Revolution created a need for worship which met the new political situation that could no longer offer prayers for an English king and queen.

The Book of Common Prayer also acts as a guide for all occasions including personal, social and national events. From baptism to burial, it touches upon every major stage of life and makes us aware of God's constant presence and grace. Also, the daily prayers of individual believers are enhanced by the Daily Office which guides Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Evening Prayer, Compline (which refers to prayers offered at the *completion* of the day) as well as Family Devotions. When used consistently, the Daily Office will enrich the lives of Christians as they grow in their relationship to God through the daily lessons from scripture, the reading of the Psalms and the prayers of praise, confession, petition and thanksgiving.

Whether our prayers are short or long, formal or informal, recorded in a journal, spoken spontaneously or read from a prayer book, they are essential for a healthy relationship with God and his creatures.

For Reflection & Discussion

Jesus taught his disciples a prayer just as other rabbis taught their students prayers to be memorized and repeated (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). It also serves a model for our own prayers. With a church leader, discuss the meaning of each section of the prayer. Note where you find adoration, confession, and petition.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed by your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.

Memorize the Lord's Prayer.

For the next week, designate a quiet place and time to pray the Daily Office each day. Alternate between Morning, Noonday and Evening Prayers as well as Compline. What did you realize from this exercise?

Scan the Collects (BCP 211-261) and note the prayers for different occasions. Which prayers interested you most?

In a small notebook, keep a list of praises and concerns for your prayers. As they are answered (and unanswered) you will be mindful of God's presence. This will nurture your adoration and thanksgiving to God.

Our next Diocesan Convention will take place at: _____

My Bishop: _____

My Bishop Suffragan: _____

My Deanery & Dean: _____

My Province number: ____

My Presiding Bishop: _____

Our next General Convention will take place at: _____

The Archbishop of Canterbury: _____

How often does your vestry meet?

How many members on your vestry?

Interview a present or past member of the vestry to discover:

- When did they serve and how long?
- What issues are most discussed/ decided?
- What was the most enjoyable part about serving on the vestry?
- Currently, what are the greatest challenges facing the parish?

The Bishop Diocesan is the leader of a diocese and serves with other bishops to lead, as a body, the entire Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion (though, in most cases, no bishop has jurisdiction in another diocese). The Diocesan Convention, which is made up of clergy and laity, elects the bishop who is often assisted by a Bishop Suffragan and/or an Archdeacon. Every year, the Diocesan Convention meets for one to three days to issue and amend the constitution and canons of the diocese as well as establish budgets and programs that affect the entire diocese. When the Diocesan Convention is not in session an elected Diocesan Council convenes to represent the Convention. Parishes within a diocese are united into regional deaneries or convocations that meet periodically to share the common concerns of a geographical area.

Every year, the local parish elects laypeople to an executive committee called a vestry that is headed by a warden. The vestry elects a rector, that is, an ordained priest who serves as the leader of the church (upon approval of the bishop). The rector and vestry usually meet once a month to establish parish programs, laws and financial matters. A deacon is ordained by the bishop to assist the rector in serving the members of the parish as they seek to be faithful disciples of Jesus.

The Diocese of Albany regards each parish as a missionary outpost which strives to make disciples through S.W.E.E.P.S.:

- Service: Missionary work at the local and global levels
- Worship: Engaging worship that is biblical and sacramental
- Evangelism: Spreading the message of Jesus
- Education: Developing the intellectual, spiritual and moral lives of believers
- Pastoral Care: Compassionate people and programs that bring healing
- Stewardship: Faithful giving for the growth of God's kingdom

For Reflection and Discussion

Name the following:

My Parish: _____

My Rector: _____

My Parish Warden: _____

My Diocese: _____

Reconciliation of a Penitent

The great Christian psychiatrist Karl Menninger wrote a book, *Whatever Became of Sin*, in which he pointed out that most modern people tend to categorize behaviors as either criminal (so send them to jail) or mental (so hospitalize them). He maintained that confession should include recognition of the aggression of the sins committed:

So long as a person lives under the shadow of real, unacknowledged and unexpiated guilt, he will continue to hate himself and to suffer the inevitable consequence of self-hatred. But the moment he begins to accept his guilt and sinfulness, the possibility of radical reformation opens up and a new freedom of self-respect and peace (p. 195).

It is no wonder that the fourth and fifth steps of the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous explicitly calls for the examination of conscience and acknowledgement of the exact nature of wrongdoing. Such human experience of guilt confirms the Christian practice of Reconciliation.

The earliest Christians thought that Jesus would return in their lifetime but, as time passed, it became obvious that Christians needed to decide how to handle events like the defection of believers from the Church or sins like adultery and murder. Initially, such people were excluded from Holy Communion (*excommunicated*) and were restored after they publicly demonstrated their repentance by actions like fasting. Eventually, they would be absolved and re-admitted to Holy Communion.

The Irish Church developed a system whereby a repenting person would privately confess their sins to a monk and offer a prayer or fast before returning to communion. This approach became popular throughout Western Europe. Even during the Reformation, Reformers like Archbishop Cranmer in England and Martin Luther in Germany kept the practice of private confession but made it a voluntary exercise. Today, the most common attitude about confession is, *All may, none must, some should.*

The Book of Common Prayer contains a format for *Reconciliation of a Penitent* (p. 446). It is intended for those who need “help and counsel...to receive the benefit of absolution, and spiritual advice; to the removal of scruple and doubt, the assurance of pardon, and the strengthening of...faith (BCP, 317). Priests assist especially with a first confession. It is a solid source of growth in the Christian life and especially helpful for leaders.

The content and secrecy of a confession is morally absolute which means that the priest cannot, under any circumstances, reveal its contents to anyone. Priests throughout history died rather than reveal a confession. In the United States, this priest-penitent relationship is also enshrined in civil law.

Reconciliation is particularly useful for (1) Christians who have distanced themselves from God for a long period and (2) those entering a new stage of life such as marriage or holy orders as well as (3) those preparing to receive Confirmation.

The public liturgy of the church also provides opportunity for general confession and absolution. This is true for the Eucharist as well as the Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer.

For Reflection & Discussion

Guilt is a terrible barrier to our relationships with the ones we love and those who love us. Clearing the air in confession and experiencing the power of reconciliation are life-changing events. Have you ever had such an experience with a loved one? With God?

Have you ever considered making a confession? Why or why not?

What would be the benefits of practicing confession?

What fears might a person have that would prevent them from confession?

Episcopal Church Government

The word 'Episcopal' comes from the Greek word for bishop who acted as an 'overseer' or 'supervisor' of a flock of sheep or community of people. Church leadership by a bishop is distinct from other Christian traditions that are governed by a body of elders or 'presbyters' (as in Presbyterian churches) or the congregation of a local church (as in Congregationalist and Baptist churches). In the Episcopal Church, laypeople, deacons, priests and bishops serve together as ministers in Christ's one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. This lesson will briefly examine the political relationships of the Episcopal Church at the international, national, diocesan and parish levels.

The Episcopal Church in the United States of America (ECUSA) is a self-governing church that is part of an international community of churches rooted in the Anglican tradition known as the Anglican Communion. Today, the worldwide branches of this communion have the English Archbishop of Canterbury as its spiritual leader. Every ten years, bishops from all over the Anglican Communion meet at Lambeth Palace in Canterbury to discuss the issues facing the Church.

The American Revolution influenced the democratic style of government of ECUSA. Because it could no longer be loyal to the British king as its leader, the American church adopted an election process to determine its leaders and decisions at all three major levels of government: (1) national, (2) diocesan and (3) parish.

At the national level, the Presiding Bishop is elected by the General Convention of the church. The General Convention meets every three years for two weeks to issue and amend the Constitution and canon laws as well as make financial and liturgical decisions which affect the entire Episcopal Church. It has two legislative branches: the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies which is made of priests and laypeople. Outside of the General Convention, the Presiding Bishop serves the church from its primary administrative offices which are located in New York, NY.

Dioceses of the Episcopal Church are united into nine provinces, each having a Provincial Synod that addresses the particular concerns shared by dioceses in a particular region. These synods are made up of two chambers: one for bishops and another that is shared by priests and laypeople.

Rooted in the catholic structures of Anglicanism

1. The catholic structures of the Anglican Church are the practices that are universally the same no matter where Anglicans worship in the world. These include *The Book of Common Prayer*, the creeds, the two sacraments, bishops and the use of scripture in worship. Which of these structures mean the most to you and why?

2. Which of these structures are most and least emphasized in your parish?

Equipping every disciple to make disciples

1. Read 2 Timothy 2:1-2 & 1 Peter 3:15. Summarize the messages of the writers.

2. What activities does this parish do to encourage disciples to make disciples?

Memorize and pray the following Diocesan Theme Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love 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.

Preparation for Reconciliation of a Penitent

Jesus said, "The first commandment is this: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength."

1. Do I love God with my whole heart, soul, mind and strength?
2. Do I pray each morning and evening?
3. Do I keep God's holy day?
4. What gods do I worship: money, power, things, position?

Jesus said, "The second commandment is this: Love your neighbor as yourself."

1. Do I show love and patience and respect for others?
2. How do I behave as a parent, spouse, child or sibling?
3. Do I provide for my family spiritually as well as materially?
4. Have I led others to sin?
5. Am I a racist or look down on the poor or helpless?
6. Do I share with the poor and do acts of mercy and charity?
7. Have I invited an unchurched person to come with me?
8. Do I obey the laws of society?
9. Do I abuse my authority over others?
10. Am I willing to forgive those who hurt me?

Jesus said, 'I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit because apart from me you can do nothing.'

1. Have I tried to grow in my Christian life with prayer, daily reading of God's word, upholding my Baptismal Covenant?
2. Have I gone against my conscience to please others?
3. Have I honored my body as the temple of the Holy Spirit by being sexually chaste?
4. Do I tithe or work toward it?
5. Do I give my time to the Lord's work?
6. Am I really sorry for my sins?

Healing

The pages of the New Testament are filled with accounts of healing: physical, spiritual and emotional. Jesus healed and he sent his disciples to heal in God's empowering presence. It is no surprise, then, that the Christian Church was the first institution to establish hospitals. Today, clinical studies are considering the connections between the two streams of healing, namely, medicine and faith.

Healing became a characteristic of the Christian community from the beginning. Hands were laid on the sick and oil was often anointed for their healing. In his first letter to the Corinthian Christians, Saint Paul speaks of the gift of healing which indicates that this was a regular aspect of the ministry of the early Church which not restricted to the clergy.

In a world without antibiotics or surgery, the healing ministry was striking in its importance. Later, healing became associated with particular places or people. For example, the nearby shrine of St. Joseph in Montreal contains approximately ten thousand crutches left by those who were healed there.

During the Middle Ages, healing shrunk in prominence as the fear of death by the plague pushed such prayer to the end of one's life. This developed into what is often called *the last rites*. However, the practice of healing in the Episcopal Church has been restored. The *Prayer Book* now contains prayers for healing and anointing. Even public services of healing have become common in today's parishes. Many churches offer healing prayers as a normal part of Sunday services with clergy and laity offering prayer for the sick. This commonly occurs after people receive Communion or at the rail before the Peace.

Individual Christians can pray for one another as they turn to Jesus, The Great Healer, asking him to honor their prayers for the sick. Some parishes offer short courses on healing prayer with instruction on how to administer such prayer and the boundaries of praying together.

Historically, the Holy Eucharist as seen as the major sacrament of healing. The sick are encouraged to receive Communion as frequently as possible by going to the Eucharist or, for the homebound, through Communion which can be administered privately by a priest, deacon or lay Eucharistic minister. Closely connected with such healing is the rite of Reconciliation of a Penitent when, in cases of serious illness, the priest should be called for healing prayer and communion as well as the opportunity for confession.

2. What do you think it means to love your neighbor as yourself?
3. How does your parish and diocese try to live this out?

The Great Commission: Read Matthew 28:18-20

1. How might you become involved in making disciples of all nations?
2. What are we to teach others to observe as Jesus commanded us?
3. How does your parish and diocese try to live this out?

Moving from membership to discipleship

1. How does one become a member of the Church? This parish?
2. What are the responsibilities of parish members?
3. How do people in this parish move from membership to discipleship?
4. How do the bishops and diocesan staff help members to become disciples?

Disciples Making Disciples: The Diocesan Vision

When Jesus sent his apostles out he did not envision his Church as a country club, a giant flea market, a community fundraiser or a therapy center. He instructed them, “God and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you” (Matt. 28). The Church exists to show Jesus Christ in such a way that people everywhere might come to love and serve him in the fellowship of the Church. We are a missionary church that reaches out to others as God has reached out to us.

The vision of the Episcopal Diocese of Albany is that all parishes and their members live out this vision that was expressed by Bishop Daniel Herzog on June 2, 2002 as follows:

The Diocese of Albany is One Church: organized around the Great Commandment and the Great Commission; moving from membership to discipleship; rooted in the catholic structures of Anglicanism; equipping every disciple to make disciples.

Simply summarized as “Disciples making Disciples,” the core values of the diocesan vision of making disciples includes making all (1) biblically literate, (2) united in prayer and (3) involved in the local parish as an institution of ‘Higher’ (that is, *Heavenly*) learning.

The Diocese of Albany is made up of about one hundred and thirty parishes that stretch over most of northeastern New York State. These parishes are visualized as *missionary outposts* that work together to reach the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Together, they serve, support and pray for each other and the diocesan staff that coordinates their many ministries.

For Reflection & Discussion

The Diocese of Albany is One Church:

Organized around the Great Commandment and the Great Commission

The Great Commandment: Read Mark 12:28-31

1. What do you think it means to love God above all else?

Whether privately or publicly, the healing presence of God among his people is an important occasion for deepening our worship God and strengthening our witness in the world.

For Reflection & Discussion

Have you received the ministry of healing prayer? If yes, when and why?

Have you ever laid hands on someone and prayed for their healing?

Would you be willing to be part of a healing team in your parish?

Christian Marriage

Christian marriage is a permanent covenant relationship between a man and a woman who are formally bound to one another exclusively in God's presence and before his people. In this covenant, both husband and wife freely vow themselves to one another "to have and to hold...for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until...parted by death" (BCP, 427). It is a covenant that was established by God in creation and reaffirmed by Jesus whose own union to the Church is likened to the union of a groom to his bride. Therefore, the vows of marriage are every bit as serious as those made at one's baptism and can be kept only by the presence and power of a gracious God who has bound a couple together.

As the Prayer Book service instructs, "The union of husband and wife in heart, body and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord" (BCP, 423). Husbands and wives are called to love and serve one another in every circumstance of life. This can only be done with God's unfailing love to assist couples to give help and comfort in the midst of the bliss and stress of life: career, debt, children, miscarriage, in-laws, annoying habits, short fuses and aging bodies.

Sexual activity is not merely for the procreation of children but is an aspect of God's good creation that is to be mutually enjoyed within the freedom of a committed, life-long and monogamous marital relationship. However, sex (premarital or extramarital, heterosexual or homosexual) outside the context of marriage is a counterfeit experience that violates God's purposes as well as the bodies, hearts and minds of his people. Still, like all others, they can experience God's forgiveness in their lives and their marriages.

The Church seeks to assist long, healthy marriages in many ways. Before marriage, a couple should first approach their pastor to consider the privileges and responsibilities of marriage as well to determine if the couple is prepared for a life-long commitment. Several sessions of counseling might be required for the couple's benefit, especially if there has been a previous marriage or if there are children from a previous relationship. Once married, couples that, at some point, need help and direction can find helpful resources from their pastor. For example, parishes and the diocese will often sponsor a marriage retreat with professionally trained pastors and counselors for couples who want to

Chalice
Paten
Cruet (why wine and water?)
Censer
Paschal Candle
Tabernacle of Reserved Sacrament
Sacristy

Vestments and Paraments

With a church leader, identify and discuss the following:

Parament
Vestment
Alb
Cassock
Surplice
Chasuble
Stole/ Deacon's Stole
Cope
Mitre
Skull Cap

Symbols of Action

With a church leader, discuss the following:

Bowing: Why, When and How
Sign of the Cross: Why, When and How
Standing, Kneeling & Sitting: Why and When

Ordinary Time
Shrove Tuesday & Ash Wednesday
Lent
Holy Week
 Maundy Thursday
 Good Friday
 Holy Saturday
Easter
Pentecost
Trinity Sunday
Ordinary Time

Historic Christian Symbols

Identify and discuss the symbols of your local church building. For example,

Episcopal Church Flag, Stained Glass, Fleur-de-lis, Pelican, Different shapes of the Cross, Fire, Dove, Lilies, Anchor, Symbols of the Gospels, Stations of the Cross

The Church Building and Furniture

With a church leader, walk through your church building to identify the following:

Narthex
Nave
Chapel
Columbarium
Chancel
Sanctuary
Sanctuary Lamp
Rail
Table/ Altar
Pulpit
Fount
Lectern

strengthen their marriage and deepen their relationship to one another and to God. Even after a divorce, parishes might provide divorce recovery programs to offer healing to spouses and children who have been deeply hurt by the breakup of a marriage.

Not all are called to marriage. Many, like Jesus, live out equally fulfilling lives with as many challenges and difficulties as those who marry. Above all else, the Church is called to live faithful relationships—whether married or single—to one another and to our Heavenly Father who lovingly binds his children together as one family.

For Reflection and Discussion

Read Genesis 2:18-25 and Mark 10:2-9 and consider their implications for marriage. Specifically:

- Leaving mother and father to become one flesh as a new and distinct family
- Marriage as a divine joining of a man and woman in a permanent relationship
- Marriage that is dissolved by death and divorce. What is Jesus' attitude towards adultery and divorce?

Read Ephesians 5:15-6:4 and consider the implications for husband and wives, mothers and fathers.

- Submission as mutual giving of one's self to the concerns of the other person. What might that mean for family decisions concerning, for example, family finances or raising children?
- Love as active self-sacrifice for the benefit of another, not simply as romantic emotion. Give a life example of the difference.

- Discipline of children as caring instruction and guidance not violent forcefulness. Give examples of good and bad discipline.

Read the marriage vows (BCP, 427) and write your thoughts about the meaning of the following phrases:

- “to have and to hold”
- “for better for worse”
- “for richer for poorer”
- “in sickness and in health”
- “to love and to cherish”
- “until we are parted by death”

Have you, a loved one or friend experienced a divorce? What effect has that experience had on your own view of marriage and divorce? How might your church better help those in troubled marriages and those hurt by a divorce?

The Church Calendar and Symbols

Worship involves the whole person, body and soul. We hear the Word of the Lord. We sing hymns of praise to God. We speak words of thanksgiving and confession. We greet one another with the peace of the Lord. We taste wine and bread during the Eucharist. With candles lit, crosses carried and incense burning, all our senses are engaged in communion with God and his people. Liturgy is (quite literally) work that involves all God’s people.

Whether your local church is ‘high’ or ‘low’ (that is, of more or less formal ritual) in its worship, many symbols may be peculiar to newcomers and familiar to longtime church members without grasping their meaning. This lesson will introduce the some of these symbols and their meanings.

The Church Year

The God we worship is the Ruler of space and time. So, wherever we worship, Episcopalians (and many other Christian groups) follow a yearly calendar to commemorate God’s acts in time and space. The calendar is borrowed from the Jewish cycle of annual festivals that commemorate God’s remarkable deliverance of his people. The Christian calendar is centered around two events in the life of Jesus: Christmas and Easter. Christmas is preceded by Advent and followed by Epiphany. Easter is preceded by Lent/ Holy Week and followed by Pentecost. The rest of the year is called Ordinary Time which means the ‘time counted’ after Epiphany or Pentecost (for example, First Sunday after Pentecost). When seen as a whole, the Christian Year brings us from Advent, with its sense of longing for God’s presence (as we sing, ‘O Come, O Come Immanuel’), to the realization of the Triune God of grace (on Trinity Sunday) and, finally, our response as his people in words and works of love. All of these periods and holy days are commemorated with different colors—purple/ blue, white/ gold, red, green and black.

With a church leader, discuss the significance of the following and the colors used for each:

Advent & Advent Season
 Christmas and the Twelve Days of Christmas
 Epiphany