



# ***The Episcopal Way***

*with Eric Law & Stephanie Spellers*

## ***Facilitator's Guide***

Tips for Leading Small Groups

# Welcome

## ***A Blessed Ministry***

So you've been asked to lead the group...

Thank you for taking on the role of facilitator for this course. We hope this class will help you and your small group in your journey of faith. Your role as a small group leader is very important – but it's also something you don't do alone. You have the blessing and privilege of working alongside the Holy Spirit to help people grow. This is not to be underestimated. You will find that the Spirit wants us to draw near to God more than we do – and in taking on the responsibility to lead, you open yourself up to growth as well, often in unexpected ways.

And you don't have to be an expert. It doesn't take an advanced degree or an ordination certificate to run a successful small group. Willingness to lead and learn is all that's required.

We at ChurchNext are delighted to share this Facilitator's Guide with you; we've designed it for clergy and laypeople. We've written it to help familiarize you with the topic and to give you some ideas as to how you would like your small group to gather.

In the pages that follow we will offer you some pointers regarding group facilitation and conversation-starting. Feel free to make them your own. These are suggestions and are meant to be molded, adapted, or tossed out, depending on your context.

Thanks for learning with us,

The ChurchNext Team

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# Facilitating

Begin your meeting by welcoming participants. Try to create an environment of warmth and hospitality. Successful small groups offer safe spaces for authenticity and depth, where people are not uncomfortable exploring personal convictions and intimate ideas. After all, we all long for genuine connection and camaraderie in our spiritual journeys. The entire group benefits when honesty and candor are welcome.

You may want to approach your meeting by dividing your time together into three equal or unequal segments. The first should be spent connecting – greeting, catching up. You may want to offer refreshments. The second segment should be devoted to covering the material in the course, and the third should include a time of prayer.

Lead the class as a sojourner, not an expert. Facilitators lead by example. So when you are open, enthusiastic, and interested in learning, your group will join you.

A typical meeting outline may include: Welcoming, Music, Prayer, Course Material and Discussion, Closing Prayer. We've included some prayers at the end of this guide.

Depending on the topic, your learning goals, and the comfort level of your group, you may want to make the following materials available:

- Copies of the Participant Guides
- Bibles
- Prayer Books
- Paper or notebooks
- Pens or pencils
- Prayers
- Song sheets, Hymnals, music, and music player
- Refreshments

# Asking Questions

Perhaps the most important role a facilitator plays is in posing questions and facilitating conversations. Here are some tips:

The key role in leading your small group is to help members engage in meaningful dialogue with one another. It will allow them to uncover deeper truths for themselves and others.

You can use a variety of questions to spark discussion (we've included some at the end of this guide), but we can't encourage you enough to come up with your own. Open-ended questions are best, but yes/no questions followed up with a simple "Why" can yield great reflection. Questions can be categorized like this:

*Launching Questions* – These are designed to get the discussion going by focusing on the topic. Launching Questions should allow everyone in the group to share personal experiences and connect them with the topic, i.e., *What one thing was the instructor trying to get across? Name an experience that came to mind as you heard the lecture.*

*Observation Questions* – These are questions which arise from consideration of the subject – how, why, and what do you think? They seek to make meaning of the lesson, i.e., *Why do you think this point is important? What did the lecturer mean by raising that point?*

*Reflection Questions* – These are transition questions that take us from the information presented to our own lives, i.e., *What does this have to do with me? How does the lecturer's main point resonate with me?*

*Application Questions* – These are questions that ask us to consider the course material in light of our day-to-day lives, i.e., *What is this new material asking of me? In what ways is my life changed because of what I'm learning?*

# The Episcopal Way

*This step is designed to give you some background on the course.*

Openness, acceptance, reason, and beautiful liturgy are just a few reasons why people are attracted to the Episcopal Church.

Every few decades, the Church publishes a series of books that outline the core principals at work behind one of the world's most attractive ways of being Christian. The Rev. Eric Law and the Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers are curating this series and have published an engaging kick off to a multi-book project called *The Episcopal Way*.

This course offers an insightful overview of their work that is accessible, relevant, and engaging. It includes four video presentations:

An Introduction – Overview and Definitions  
Being Church in a Changing World Part I  
Being Church in a Changing World Part II  
Redeeming Church in a Secular World

This course is suitable to newcomers and explorers of the Episcopal Church, as well as veterans who are looking for an updated overview of the faith.

*Eric H. F. Law, an Episcopalian priest, is the founder and executive director of the Kaleidoscope Institute, the mission of which is to create inclusive and sustainable churches and communities. For more than 20 years, he has provided transformative and comprehensive training and resources for churches and ministries in all the major church denominations in the United States and Canada. He writes a weekly blog called *The Sustainist: Spirituality for Sustainable Communities in a Networked World*.*

*The Reverend Canon Stephanie Spellers is a popular speaker and consultant on reimagining the mainline church and embracing new mission contexts. The author of numerous books -- including *Radical Welcome: Embracing God, The Other and the Transforming Power of the Spirit and Ancient Faith*, *Future Mission: Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Traditions* -- Stephanie is an Episcopal priest and serves as Director of Mission and Reconciliation at General Theological Seminary in New York City and as Canon for Missional Vitality in the Diocese of Long Island. She is one of two Chaplains to the Episcopal House of Bishops and recently chaired the Episcopal Commission on Mission and Evangelism. From 2005 to 2012, she served as founding priest for *The Crossing*, an emergent congregation based at St. Paul's Cathedral in Boston.*

# Discussion Questions

## *Lesson One: An Introduction*

### Is It Either/Or?

How do you live deep faith and probing questions, or discipline and freedom, or reason and mystery, at the same time? Share your experiences and discuss.

### The Episcopal Way?

What do you understand by the term "Episcopal Way"? How would you define it? Is it important to you that there be an "Episcopal Way"? Why or why not?

### The Both/And?

Define the "both/and" Christianity as you have experienced it. Or if you haven't, what would that look like?

## *Lesson Two: Being a Church in a Changing World Part 1*

### Busy Days, Restless Nights

Do your days feel rushed and busy? Are you restless? How do you center yourself in this multi-media age?

### Your Way Or The Episcopal Way?

The Episcopal Way encourages us to look at what is problematic and challenge it, and what is good and catch it. Think of similar situations/issues personal to you or relevant to your church community; are they being handled the Episcopal Way? How does it help, or not? Discuss.

### The Incarnation

What does the incarnation mean to you? Share your ideas and how this has shaped your spiritual journey.

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## Discussion Questions (cont'd)

### *Lesson Three: Being a Church in a Changing World Part 2*

#### Your Voice, Your Vote

What do you know of the church's governance, both local and national? Do you feel that your voice or your vote is/can be heard? What would you change, if anything?

#### Reason

The Episcopal Way allow us to celebrate reason. Discuss what this means to you. Is this important to you? How does this fit into your spiritual life?

#### Can We All Get Along?

"I think all groups, religious, aesthetic, or agnostic have enough common ground to be able to live together in harmony under secular systems of law, governance, welfare, education, etc." What do you think?

### *Lesson Four: Redeeming Church*

#### Why?

There is a lot that God leads us to that makes no sense to us. Why do you follow? How does the Episcopal Way help you?

#### Are You Privileged?

How do you feel about the Episcopal Church's status and/or image as a privileged church? Does this hurt or help your relationship with Christ? Does it conflict with Christ's teachings? Discuss.

#### Whom Do You Worship?

The question was asked, "Are we worshipping God or worshipping worship?" Does this ever cross your mind as you go through the liturgy during the worship service, or wrestle with a fellow pew member on whether to kneel or stand during prayers? Share.

# Prayers

Finally, you will find that opening and closing your time together in prayer is an effective way of inviting the Holy Spirit into your midst, as well as building connection and an atmosphere of openness. While spontaneous prayers are often the most touching and effective, written prayers offer a richness of their own. Here are some from *The Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church:

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. (For Self-Dedication, pg 832)

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (For the Human Family, pg 815)

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us to do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (For Guidance, pg 832)

O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (For Quiet Confidence, pg 832)

O Lord, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen. (In the Evening, pg 833)