

## 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.

*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?

### **Whom Do You Worship?**

The question was asked, "Are we worshipping God or worshipping worship?" Discuss.

## The Takeaway

### **An Introduction**

About every 20 years, the Episcopal Church rearticulates what it means to be Episcopalian and what it has meant. To articulate what we believe and figure out how to share that, wherever and wherever we are. *Via media*: the Episcopal way is a "both/and" path, hosting complexity and seeming contradiction without losing its hold on faith and truth. This balanced approach to life is totally relevant today. The Episcopal Way is a combinations of practices, attitudes, and approaches to God that have been nurtured by the Episcopal Way. We follow Jesus with our souls, minds, and arms open wide, ready to love God, our neighbors, and the world. Jesus was and is "both/and" and we hope to be "both/and" Christians, drawing together and embracing ancient tradition and the wisdom just over the horizon. Drawing together reason and mystery, beauty and justice, the Catholic and the Protestant, discipline and freedom, body and spirit, deep faith and probing questions, the Cross and the Resurrection. A lot of the things we've thought of as opposites don't have to be, within that "both/and" mindset. We've been presented with a lot of false choices but it's time to bring them together in a new way.

### **Being Church in a Changing World Part 1**

Things are changing at warp speed. How do we live as Christians in a world changing this fast and this much? Media has become an extension of our lives. This is part of the world as it is now, often over-stimulating. The Episcopal Way can help us anchor ourselves in this kind of world. The Incarnation: God came to dwell among us in the flesh, all of this stuff in the world matters; Jesus was the original media and God has been working with media forever to share God's word in the world. Media can be used not to separate us but to focus and unite us, to find Jesus in all these ways. 2000 years ago, Jesus started a network and taught us to share and spread that network. We can use media to connect, empower, create community, and nurture networks that do good work.

### **Being Church in a Changing World Part 2**

Martin Luther King once said that the arc of the universe bends toward justice. We can see this consistent movement in the world toward democracy and flattened or shared authority. You get a lot of voices, flatten the hierarchies, and see extraordinary results. Democracy and shared authority are in the Episcopal DNA. Secularism – more and more Americans identify as "none" when it comes to religion. The Episcopal Way introduces another face for religion because it values reason, which is one of the legs in our "3-legged stool." We also love mystery; it's a gift to stop and let it rest for awhile, to celebrate our brains but also their limits. Humility is required to embrace the mystery.

### **Redeeming Church**

Sometimes we fall away from our calling, and when that happens we need redemption. We can get "particular" or "prissy" about our liturgy; maybe we don't have to cling to those particular, beautiful things so tightly. We have to be careful not to slip into arrogance. The beauty of the liturgy, at its best, should help us honor those in need. Historically, the Episcopal Church has been a privileged one. How can we use that privilege to connect with the not-so-privileged? Reason is a blessing and a curse; when we get too smart for our own good, we start telling God what to do or take God out altogether.

## Share Your Learning

We believe the Holy Spirit joined you in this class and would not be surprised if you learned a couple of things that inspired you and may inspire others.

So here's the assignment: Simply write down something that touched you in a sentence or two. Here are some examples: Clare from Texas took the course "Introducing Christian Stewardship with Kristine Miller" and writes, "*God doesn't want our money, God just wants us to want it less.*" Robert from North Carolina took "Introducing the Book of Common Prayer with Roger Ferlo" and writes, "*I learned that 70% of the Book of Common Prayer is directly quoted or paraphrased from the Bible, no wonder I like it so much!*"

If you want to add an image, that works too. Now simply post it to your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, or Google+ account with the hashtag: #churchnext

Not only will you inspire your friends, but your post will show up on the [churchnext.tv](http://churchnext.tv) home page for the whole community to see. Thanks for sharing your learning!

## Notes

# The Episcopal Way

with

**Eric Law & Stephanie Spellers**

*Participant's Guide*

Welcome!

The Episcopal Church is built on a "three-legged stool:" scripture, reason and tradition. Approximately every 20 years, the Church re-articulates its practices, attitudes and approaches to God. Over the last few years, society has started to move at warp speed and the attention span of the typical person has become shorter. How does the church keep with tradition while moving forward in an ever-changing world?

In this course, the Reverend Eric Law and the Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers help us begin to think about what it means to be an Episcopalian in this day and age, and how we might use our "three-legged stool" -- our commitment to the *via media* -- to serve a world in need. They offer a definition of the Episcopal Way for our use as we articulate and understand our church. They suggest that the Episcopal Way is uniquely relevant to the times in which we live.

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