

## Discussion Questions

### *Lesson One: The Anglican Way of Christianity*

1. What is your favorite prayer, and why is it your favorite?
2. Do certain lines from prayers come to mind during your daily life? What are they, and when do you think about them?
3. How might the idea of a middle way be relevant to the Episcopal Church's approach to faith today?

### *Lesson Two: The New Life of Grace*

1. Some people are baptized as infants and others as adults. What are some of the gifts of each of these experiences of Holy Baptism?
2. Which of the baptismal promises is most difficult for you to live out in your practice of the Christian faith?
3. What is your favorite moment of the baptismal liturgy and why?

### *Lesson Three: A Wonderful Sacrament*

1. Do you believe that children and infants should receive Eucharist, even if they don't understand it well? Please explain your answer.
2. Have you ever attended Holy Eucharist in a different country, denomination, or church tradition? If so, what was the same? What was different? How did the experience compare with worship in your church?
3. What are some of the liturgical connections between gathering on Sunday to be nourished by Christ in the sacraments and the experience of doing God's work in the world throughout the week?

### *Lesson Four: Grow in Grace*

1. If you have been confirmed: At what age were you confirmed? What impact has being confirmed had on your life? If you have not been confirmed: Do you wish to be? Why or why not?
2. Confession is perhaps the least understood and practiced sacrament in the Episcopal Church. What are some of the reasons that people might be resistant to it? What are some of the benefits that a person who receives the sacrament might experience?
3. Healing doesn't always look like full, perfect restoration to bodily health. Why do we see unction as a sacrament? What are some of the other forms that healing can take?

## The Takeaway

### *Lesson One: The Anglican Way of Christianity*

Christianity: Followers of Jesus Christ. Anglican: Comes from "English" and means that we can trace our tradition back to Christianity in England. The Episcopal Church is the Episcopal expression of the Anglican Church. "Episcopal" means bishops and has to do with the way we're governed, but it's really about our particular approach to faith. One important Anglican Christian idea: *Lex orandi, lex credendi* – the law of prayer is the law of belief (and vice versa). It means that how we pray shapes what we believe. Another phrase you often hear in relation to the Anglican communion: *via media*: the middle way. This comes from the time when the English church was seen as the middle way between the excesses of Catholicism on one side and those of continental Protestantism on the other – a system that incorporated parts of both. One way to define what an Anglican/Episcopal Church is: we worship according to The Book of Common Prayer. The first BCP was written in 1549, put together by Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer. Anglican Churches around the world worship according to the BCP. The publishing of a book for common prayer in 1549 was a radical idea; in the Catholic Church up until that time only the clergy had control of/access to the liturgy. The BCP is held in common; all of us use it and claim it together. It contains prayers for all times and situations in life. It's the way that we pray; our community prayer. That's what it means to be part of this particular church.

### *Lesson Two: The New Life of Grace*

Sacraments are sure and certain means of grace. Jesus taught them as ways we know we're receiving God's grace. They are not the only place that we can experience God's grace, but we do know for sure that we receive God's grace in the sacraments. Most Christians who talk about sacraments agree that there are 7 sacraments: Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, Ordination, Marriage, Unction, and Reconciliation. In the Episcopal Church, technically, according to the BCP, there are only 2 sacraments: baptism and Eucharist. The other 5 are called "sacramental rites," but in practice, most Episcopalians refer to 7 sacraments. Baptism, the first sacrament of the Church. In the BCP catechism, we see what our church teaches about baptism.

1. Holy Baptism brings us into union with Christ in his death and resurrection.
2. Baptism brings people into the family of God.
3. Baptism is about forgiveness of sins. We don't always choose rightly; we participate in broken systems. We all need to seek forgiveness of sin, and baptism is how we do that through the church.
4. Baptism is new life in the Holy Spirit. It makes us entirely new, inspired to follow God closely and live out our faith.

The baptism service has several parts.

1. The candidate for baptism is asked several questions – 3 about what we are renouncing and 3 about what we're choosing (Jesus, new life of grace).
2. The baptismal covenant: The Apostles Creed and Questions about how we'll all live our lives as Christians together.
3. The baptism itself. The priest consecrates the water, performs the baptism. Only 2 things are needed for baptism: water (even a little) and a priest saying "X, I baptize you in the name of the father, son, and holy spirit."
4. After baptism, priest makes sign of the cross on the forehead of the newly baptized and says they are sealed into the household of Christ.

Who can be baptized? Anyone, including infants – parents and godparents can make these promises on behalf of infants. This is partly because anyone can be welcomed and partly because nobody really understands what we're promising – it's too big.

## The Takeaway (Continued)

### *Lesson Three: A Wonderful Sacrament*

In the Episcopal Church, all baptized people can receive Eucharist. This sacrament is the touchstone of our worship together. "Eucharist" comes from "Thanksgiving." It's a giving of thanks to God, sharing a meal around a table. We can learn about it by considering the terms we use to talk about it:

**The Lords' Supper**, a reference to Jesus' last supper with his disciples. We relive the moment when Jesus shared this meal with his disciples.

**Holy Communion**. Eucharist is a sacrament of unity. We join with God and with one another as a community – with Christians through time and space. We are brought together as people of God.

**The Mass**. "Mass" isn't just a Roman Catholic term for the Eucharist. It comes from the word for "sending" and means being sent forth. We are the people who are sent forth each week to do God's work in the world. The dismissal in the Episcopal church nails down the idea that the service is a mass.

**The Divine Liturgy**: Reminds us that God is the focus of Holy Eucharist; thanks, gratitude, and service to God.

**The Great Offering**. In the Eucharist, we remember Jesus' great sacrificial offering. We offer ourselves to be a living sacrifice to God. When we present the bread and wine and money for consecration, we present ourselves as a living sacrifice to serve God in the world.

### *Lesson Four: Grow in Grace*

The 5 sacramental rites:

**Confirmation** – a sacrament through which people make a mature confession of faith. People who were baptized as babies can claim this choice.

**Marriage** – the wedding is the beginning of the sacrament of marriage; it isn't the whole thing. Two people give themselves to each other sacramentally, expressing generous, selfless love that God has for us – therefore it bears witness to God's love for us.

**Unction** – A sacrament by which a priest prays for God's healing grace. IT doesn't mean that the person will always become medically well, but that God's healing presence will be with people who suffer with ill health.

**Confession** – a person says their sins out loud to a priest, who hears them privately and announces God's forgiveness. This is different from the general confession because it happens on an individual and specific level – you say your [articulate] sins aloud and then the priest tells you that God forgives you. The priest is never allowed to disclose the subject of a confession.

**Ordination** – sacraments by which the church sets apart some people for particular ministries in the church. All of us are ministers in the church – lay people are the most important ministers in the church. But there are specific people who minister in the church – bishops, priests, and deacons (servants who offer hospitality during Eucharist, who proclaim the gospel, and whose job is to proclaim the gospel in the world. They bridge the gap between the church and the world.

# Walk in Love One: The Sacramental Journey Participant's Guide

Welcome!

Looking for a concise, accessible explanation of Episcopal faith and beliefs?

The Revs. Scott Gunn and Melody Shobe have given us an incredible resource. In this course these veteran Episcopal clerics unpack the basic beliefs and practices of their tradition. This is the first of five courses and takes us for a survey of the Sacramental life. Here are the titles of their four video presentations:

- 1) The Anglican Way of Christianity
- 2) The New Life of Grace
- 3) A Wonderful Sacrament
- 4) Grow in Grace

This course is based on the companion book *Walk in Love* and completion of all five courses makes students eligible for a ChurchNext Certificate in Episcopal Basics.

CHURCHNext