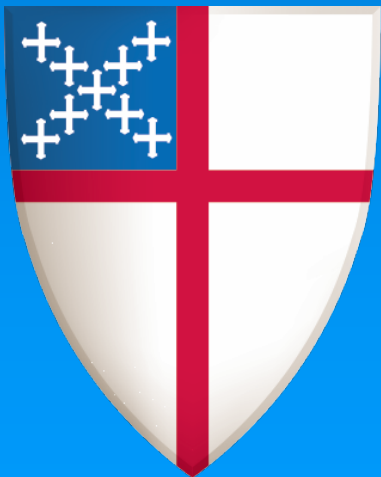


What Makes Us the Episcopal Church?



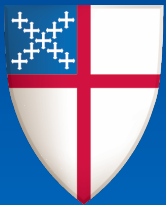
Session #2: Beliefs and
Practices



Distinguishing Characteristics:

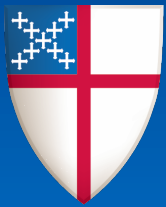
(Not a definitive list)

- We are a Church which believes that creeds are authoritative.
- We emphasize the tradition of the early, undivided Church.
- We emphasize creation and the Incarnation over sin and redemption.
- We are a Church of Word and Sacrament.
- We are a liturgical Church.
- We have bishops, who symbolize the Church's unity.
- We emphasize both the individual and the communal experience of faith.



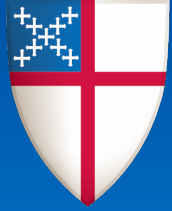
What is a “Creedal Church?”

- A creed is an authoritative statement of doctrinal belief.
- Creeds are part of Tradition, the “deposit of faith.”
- Since the Reformation, the issue is one of authority of Creeds compared to the Scriptures.
 - “Sola Scriptura”: The Bible is the sole source of authoritative teaching and sole authoritative rule of practice.
- Anglicanism’s “three-legged stool” of Scripture, Tradition and Reason
 - All three given equal weight.
- TEC is a creedal church, BUT...creeds are neither comprehensive nor definitive. Reinterpretation with respect to Tradition and reason. Ex.: the Nicene Creed uses 3rd c. language and concepts.



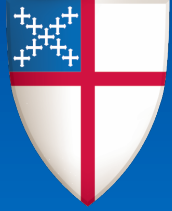
Early Christian Tradition

- Anglicanism upholds “That which has been believed everywhere, always and by all.” (Vincent of Lerins, 5th Century.)
- Consequently, Anglicanism relies on the witness and teaching of the undivided Church:
 - Councils of the Church (Nicene Creed)
 - Writings of the “Church Fathers.”
- The Nicene Creed primarily affirms the Trinity and the Incarnation.



Emphasis on Creation and the Incarnation

- There is not a divide between the material and spiritual worlds. God pronounces creation “very good.”
- Celtic consciousness found the divine in nature; Anglican Christianity has an emphasis on the presence of God in nature and a more intuitive approach to questions of faith.
- The Incarnation affirms the Celtic approach; Jesus enfleshes a presence that has always been.
- Anglican emphasis on beauty, particularly in worship.
- Less emphasis on sin and a need to “be saved.”
- Less emphasis on atonement theology.



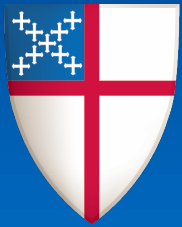
We Are a Church of Word and Sacrament

- The Word = Scripture. Tradition of Scriptural interpretation is contextual, not literal.
- Emphasis on scholarship and study to place Scripture in the proper context.
- Sacraments illustrate the Incarnational Principle:
 - God is present in creation so the material world communicates and mediates the spiritual world.



What is a Sacrament?

- A symbolic sign that points to a greater reality.
 - Metaphorical: asserts is/is not simultaneously.
- Outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace.
 - Grace is God's favor towards us. Cannot be earned, given freely.
- Two "Sacraments of the Gospel": Baptism, Holy Eucharist.
- Five "sacramental rites:" Confirmation, Ordination, Holy Matrimony, Reconciliation of a Penitent, and Unction (Anointing of the Sick or Dying).
- Sacraments are communal celebrations, mediated by a priest.
- Sacraments bring "life in abundance" to the person and the community of faith that celebrate them.
- Sacraments, particularly Holy Eucharist, were a source of division in the Reformation.
 - "Sola fide": by faith alone; works cannot bring us salvation.
 - Sacrament seen as a "work."



The “Via Media” at Work, Sacraments Edition

From Eucharistic Prayer B, BCP, p. 369:

We pray you gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and the Blood of the new Covenant.

From Communion Rite, BCP, p. 364-5:

Facing the people, the Celebrant says the following invitation

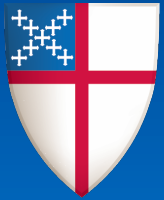
The Gifts of God for the People of God

and may add

Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Post Communion Prayer, BCP, p. 365:

...and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.



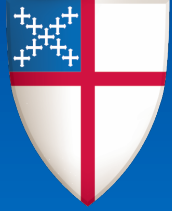
We Are Liturgical

- All worship, however it is done, is liturgical. However...
- A “liturgical church” means one which follows a fixed order of worship.
- We follow a fixed order of Scripture readings:
 - A three-year cycle, meant to give greater exposure to Scripture.
- We follow a liturgical calendar:
 - A cycle of seasons, based on the life of Jesus Christ.
- This locates us in the “Catholic/Orthodox” area of the spectrum, rather than Reform.



A Church That Has Bishops

- Bishops (episcopoi) are mentioned in Christian Scriptures and early church writings. Means “overseer” but not ruler.
- Ministry of a bishop is “to represent Christ and his Church...to guard the faith...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.” (BCP, 855)
- The episcopate is a sign of Church unity:
 - Relationship with one another is paramount.
 - Several bodies in TEC to bring bishops together.
- The bishop is the spiritual leader of the diocese.
 - The ministry of a priest is derived from the bishop.
 - Priests vow obedience to a bishop at ordination.



Individual and Communal Dimensions of Faith

- Need for personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- However, being a Christian is not just about “Jesus and me.”
- All are members in the Body of Christ, and all share in Christ’s mission.
- Care for all humanity, particularly the poor and marginalized.