

The Bible

"Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them" (Book of Common Prayer, p. 236).

It is our foundation, understood through tradition and reason, containing all things necessary for salvation. Our worship is filled with Scripture from beginning to end. Approximately 70% of the Book of Common Prayer comes directly from the Bible, and Episcopalians read more Holy Scripture in Sunday worship than almost any other denomination in Christianity.

Book of Common Prayer

"It is a most invaluable part of that blessed 'liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,' that in his worship different forms and usages may without offence be allowed, provided the substance of the Faith be kept entire" (Book of Common Prayer, p. 9).

The Book of Common Prayer is a treasure chest full of devotional and teaching resources for individuals and our congregation; it is our connection and primary symbol of our unity with the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. We, who are many and diverse, come together in Christ through our worship, our common prayer.

The Catechism

"It is a commentary on the creeds, but is not meant to be a complete statement of belief and practices; rather, it is a point of departure for the teacher" (Book of Common Prayer, p. 844).

Offered in a question-and-answer format, the Catechism found in the back of the Book of Common Prayer (pp. 845-862) helps teach the foundational truths of the Christian faith.

Christ-Focused

"In him you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life" (Book of Common Prayer, p. 368).

As Episcopalians, we are followers of Jesus Christ, and both our worship and our mission are in Christ's name. In Jesus, we find that the nature of God is love, and through baptism, we share in his victory over sin and death.

The Creeds

"The Creeds are statements of our basic beliefs about God" (Book of Common Prayer, p. 851).

The two foundational statements of faith that we used as the foundation of our faith are the Apostles' Creed used at baptism, and the Nicene Creed used at communion. We join Christians

throughout the ages in affirming our faith in the one God who created us, redeemed us, and sanctifies us.

The Sacraments

“Sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace” (Book of Common Prayer, p. 857).

Besides baptism and the Eucharist (Holy Communion), the church recognizes other spiritual markers in our journey of faith. These include: Confirmation (the adult affirmation of our baptismal vows), pp. 413-419, Book of Common Prayer;

Reconciliation of a Penitent (private confession), pp. 447-452, Book of Common Prayer;

Matrimony (Christian marriage), pp. 422-438, Book of Common Prayer;

Orders (ordination to deacon, priest, or bishop), pp. 510-555, Book of Common Prayer;

Unction (anointing with oil those who are sick or dying) pp. 453-467, Book of Common Prayer.

These help us to be a sacramental people, seeing God always at work around us.

Holy Baptism

“Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body, the Church” (Book of Common Prayer, p. 298).

In the waters of baptism we are reminded that we belong to God and nothing can separate us from the love of God. We also find ourselves part of an extended family, one with Christians throughout the ages and across the world, what we call the *“one, holy, catholic [meaning 'universal'], and apostolic Church.”*

The Rite of Holy Baptism can be found on pp. 297-308 of the Book of Common Prayer.

Baptismal Covenant

“Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil and renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?” (Book of Common Prayer, p. 292)

A mini catechism used at baptisms and on Easter and other special occasions, the Baptismal Covenant opens with a question-and-answer version of the statement of faith that is the Apostles’ Creed and adds five questions regarding how we, as Christians, are called to live out our faith.

Holy Communion

"We thank you ... for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom" (Book of Common Prayer, p. 366).

It goes by several names: Holy Communion, the Eucharist (which literally means "thanksgiving"), mass. This, for Christians, is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. All are invited into this extended family that is the Church, and are welcomed to be nourished at God's table.

Spiritual Growth

"Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love" (Book of Common Prayer, p. 833).

The promises we make in our Baptismal Covenant are reminders that we are not yet perfect, that we are called to move deeper in our faith and make a difference in our world. We do so together as the church, always professing that we will indeed live into our baptismal vows as followers of Christ, but always "with God's help."

Adapted from The Public Affairs Office of the Episcopal Church.