

Sealed and Sent Forth



A curriculum for adults and older youth

**Confirmation
Reception
Reaffirmation
New Members**

Developed by Julia Bates Toone
with the Anglican Academy of the Diocese of East Carolina

INTRODUCTION

The Bishop's Charge

In February 2002, in his address to the 119th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina, Bishop Clifton Daniel called for the creation of a confirmation curriculum to be used throughout the diocese. "The purpose of this curriculum," he said, "will be both to describe and explore the Christian Faith, and specifically to impart a working body of knowledge about the Episcopal Church to each candidate for Confirmation or Reception."

He outlined the reasons for developing and publishing such a curriculum. The question, he said was "how we form and shape our identity and self-understanding as Episcopalians in the lives of our youth and adults who wish to become part of the Episcopal way of being a Christian." He continued, "While this happens in many informal and organic ways in parish life, it must happen most intentionally and consciously in two places in parish life: the first is Christian Education for youth and adults, and the second is in Confirmation or Inquirers' classes. *We cannot depend on osmosis to form and shape our youth and newcomers in the ways and traditions and identity of the Episcopal Church.* To hope that new members will just 'catch on' to what it means to be an Episcopalian does a double disservice: to the young person or newcomer and to the church itself." [Author's italics]

Essentially, the bishop described a process of Christian formation, a life-long process that begins with Baptism and continues to the grave. This process is not a new thing in Christian education and is now recognized in the Canons of the Episcopal Church in the latest revision:

Sec.1. Each Diocese shall make provision for the affirmation and development of the ministry of all baptized persons, including:

(a) Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to minister in Christ's name, to identify their gifts with the help of the Church and to serve Christ's mission at all times and in all places.

(b) Assistance in understanding that *all baptized persons are called to sustain their ministries through commitment to life-long Christian formation.* [Author's italics]

Bishop Daniel charged the Anglican Academy of the diocese with developing the proposed curriculum. The Dean of the Academy, Dr. David Crean, immediately convened a task force to carry out this mandate. This task force consisted of lay and clerical members, male and female, all experienced workers in Christian formation both at the adult and youth levels. Sixteen people formed the original task force, of which seven had to resign because of time and other commitments.

Developing the Curriculum

After an organizational meeting, the task force met with the bishop in March, 2002 to seek some clarification regarding his expectations. Thereafter, the task force met monthly. The first five meetings focused on the outline of the curriculum, the nature of the audience and other details. The general concept, that the curriculum be formative in nature rather than didactic, quickly developed. The overall theme of relationship also soon fell into place and the curriculum was envisaged as comprising three broad areas – relationship with God, with others, and with self.

A major question that had to be addressed was the length of the curriculum. Originally envisaged as encompassing some six weeks, it soon became apparent that the material to be covered would require a longer period of time. Eventually, a curriculum covering thirteen sessions (later enlarged to fourteen) emerged. The task force makes no apologies for this. In the early Church, candidates spent an entire year as catechumens. Today, inhabiting a largely secular culture analogous to that of the early Church, we can no longer take for granted that young people and newcomers are familiar with the basic elements of the Christian faith. Theologian Ellen Charry presents the dilemma in a nutshell:

“Intentional Christian nurture is necessary because our culture shapes children for a world shorn of God. Christians see power in the crucified Jesus; popular culture defines power as winning in athletic or commercial combat. A Christian learns about hope from the resurrection; our culture sees hope in a new-car showroom.”

During the early discussions, the motif of the curriculum as a journey toward God began to emerge. This has been a common theme in Christian literature (one thinks, for example, of Dante’s “Divine Comedy”) and has been incorporated into the titles of a number of Christian formation most notably, “The Journey to Adulthood,” a popular course for teens. A working title, “Deepening the Journey,” was adopted for its relationship to “The Journey to Adulthood.” In fact, this curriculum fills a gap that was missing in that program (and frequently demanded by many leaders): a formal confirmation preparation curriculum. Ultimately, the publisher recommended “Sealed and Sent Forth” to avoid the over-use of the journey title (LeaderResources already has several) and to focus on the aspect of being sent forth .

It has not escaped the attention of the task force that the curriculum has potentially a wider use than simply for use in Confirmation and Inquirers’ classes. Not only could it form the basis for general adult education classes but could also become a step toward the stated canonical injunction: “Each Diocese shall make provision for the affirmation and development of the ministry of all baptized persons, including ... assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to minister in Christ’s name, to identify their gifts with the help of the Church and to serve Christ’s mission at all times and in all places.”

Authorship

The task force realized that once the outline had been developed, the Leader’s Guide needed to be written by one person for it to speak with a consistent voice. While the task force was casting about for such a person, that person emerged in the form of Ms. Bates Toone, who had recently retired to the diocese. She had been Christian education director in the dioceses of Tennessee and Kentucky for several decades and brought this unprecedented experience to the task. We are deeply indebted to Ms. Toone for her competence coupled with the insight that emerges from a deep spirituality. (The sole session that was not authored by Ms. Toone was Session 10 – The History of the Church, which was written by Dr. David Crean assisted by the Rev. Robert MacSwain, with questions provided by Ms. Toone.)

We were equally blessed in the two talented people who developed the participants’ manuals from the material written by Ms. Toone and passed by the task force. The youth manual was written under the direction of Ms. Carol Taylor, Youth Director of the Diocese of East Carolina. That for adults was developed by the Rev. Charles T. Dupree, assistant to the rector at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Greenville, and Chaplain to the Episcopal campus ministry at East Carolina University.

While these individuals were the principal authors, the whole task force bears responsibility for drafting the curriculum. The process that was followed was for the task force to read each piece as it was completed and make suggestions for revisions, usually of a minor nature, in the text. We also received suggestions from outside sources from time to time.

Acknowledgments

Particular thanks are due to the task force members for their devoted service without which this curriculum would not have come to fruition: Ms. Anne Bustard, The Rev. Charlie Dupree, The Rev. Rob MacSwain, Ms. Lena Poitier, Ms. Vicki Peterson, Ms. Liz Stroff, Ms. Carol Taylor, The Rev. Dr. Patricia Thomas, and Ms. Bates Toone.

Thanks are also due to those who provided many valuable insights in the initial stages of the curriculum development Dr. Linda Allred, The Rev. Bill Brake, Ms. Nancy Craig, The Rev. Canon Phil Craig, The Rev. Timothy Dols, and Ms. Catherine Pollard. Two seminarians from Virginia Theological Seminary, Philip Harris and Sonny Browne, who were summer interns at St. Paul's, Greenville, also participated in the work of the task force.

Several congregations in the Diocese of East Carolina kindly "field tested" the curriculum: St. Paul's, Clinton (The Rev. John Pollock); Christ Church, Elizabeth City (The Rev. Rickie Steenstra, Ms. Melanie Reuter); St. Augustine's, Kinston (The Rev. Bonnie Clarke, Ms. Lena Poitier); St. Peter's, Washington (The Rev. Bill Bradbury, Ms. Lynn Davenport); and St. Andrew's-on-the-Sound, Wilmington (The Rev. Richard Elliott, Ms. Laura Wells).

The Rev. Canon Matthew Stockard provided some helpful discussion and was always there to give advice when needed, especially when one portion of the curriculum was presented at the 2003 Diocesan Convention. The Rev. Joe Cooper skillfully incorporated this into the Convention worship.

Finally, Bishop Clifton Daniel gave the task force constant support and encouragement. We are indebted to him for his vision in calling for its creation.

David. E. Crean, Ph.D.
Dean, The Anglican Academy
Chair, Curriculum Task Force

The Feast of St. Edmund the Martyr, 2003

SEALED AND SENT FORTH

A Confirmation Curriculum for Adults and Older Youth

PURPOSE

To provide a learning experience for adults and older youth in order that each may decide on and affirm commitment to the Christian faith and grow in the knowledge of what is unique and essential to being an Episcopalian.

GOALS

1. To understand the basics of the Christian faith.
2. To become familiar with basic Anglican resources and knowledge:
 - a) Bible
 - b) The Book of Common Prayer
 - c) The Hymnal
 - d) Anglican Worship
 - e) Church History
 - f) Anglican Theology
3. To provide a curriculum with content that includes experiential learning and connection to everyday life.
4. To provide an experience of a supportive, worshiping community.
5. To see this curriculum as part of a life-long journey of Christian formation.

THREE QUESTIONS

- What does being a Christian mean to me?
- What does being an Episcopalian mean to me?
- What does being a member of this community mean to me?

Using the Curriculum

The curriculum may be completed in 15 weekly two-hour sessions over a three-month period. This is a lengthy time commitment for both leaders and participants and one that some congregations may not be able to handle. There are some alternatives:

- Select various sessions to be done in a given period of time – six weeks, eight weeks, or whatever suits the particular congregation. The task force does not recommend this; we feel that the information in each session is vital to the formation of each individual as a Christian and an Episcopalian.
- Go with four-week periods with a break between each period. This would take longer overall, but may have the advantage of allowing the participants (and leader) to “take a break.” The disadvantage is that community would have to be re-formed each time which means that it will generally take longer to cover the same amount of material.

- Ask participants to commit themselves to four whole Saturdays. Meet for an expended time (say, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. with a lunch break). The material could be covered in this space of time. The advantage is that it gets the whole thing over quickly; the disadvantage is that if anyone misses a Saturday, he or she would be missing a large piece of the curriculum, one that might be hard to “make up.”

Whatever scheme is decided upon, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of the first session, which is devoted to community building. It is critical that this be done thoroughly.

Young People and Confirmation

One question that the task force wrestled with early on was whether young people and adults should study together or whether they should gather separately. We recommend that teenagers and adults gather separately. There are two cogent reasons for this. Teenagers generally feel inhibited by the presence of adults and therefore do not express themselves freely. Also, as one member of the task force, a college student, pointed out, teens and adults have totally different life experiences.

This leads to another consideration: What age should young people be to get the full benefit from this curriculum? The task force recommends that a young person be fifteen or sixteen years of age. This is in line with many if not most of the dioceses of the Episcopal Church. It is true that, historically, since the 13th century, young people were confirmed at twelve in the Anglican Communion, and many parents insist that this practice be continued. (This is still the practice in the Church of England, where Confirmation remains a pre-requisite to receiving Communion.)

The liturgical revision that led to the 1979 Book of Common Prayer rightly emphasized Baptism as the sole criterion for membership in the Church: “Holy Baptism is full initiation into Christ’s Body the Church” (BCP, 298). Children who have been baptized may receive Communion. What then of Confirmation? Is it now redundant? By no means. Confirmation has an important part to play in the life of the Church: “... those baptized at an early age are expected, *when they are ready and have been duly prepared*, to make a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism ...” (BCP, 412; author’s italics and underlining). The point is that Confirmation is a mature, individual decision, best made at a later age, rather than a form of Christian inoculation. “Sealed and Sent Forth” reflects this understanding.

THE ROLE OF THE LEADER

The Leader is responsible for:

- Committing to be present for all sessions of the group.
- Being prepared for each session.
- Providing a comfortable meeting space and helping the participants relate to one another in a trusting and open environment.
- Setting group standards of time and confidentiality in consultation with the participants.
- Structuring the meetings and offering input and resources for discussion.
- Arranging for worship and/or Bible study at each meeting.
- Facilitating open discussions and an atmosphere where questions are welcomed.
- Understanding that questions from group members outside the meeting time or that you do not wish to answer should be referred to the clergy.

- Understanding that as the group's leader you part of an on-going journey in the Christian faith.

THE ROLE OF PARTICIPANTS

- To commit to regular and on-time participation in the sessions.
- To keep an open and inquiring mind.
- To interacting with honesty in discussions and to support other group members in their journey.
- To be responsible for any assignments or readings required of the group.
- To share in worship both as a leader and as a participant.

THE SESSIONS

TIME: The course is conceived of as 15 two-hour sessions. Each session will include worship, thematic content, discussion and reflection, and a time for the enhancement of group life and community.

SIZE: Six to eleven persons is an ideal number for a group. Larger groups should be divided into groups of 6 to 8 for discussions. In churches where you might have only one or two persons for a class you are encouraged to invite other congregational members to join as a re-commitment to the faith; or to seek a nearby congregation that could combine with your group.

SPACE: The leader should give careful thought to the meeting space. If possible, the room should have comfortable seating arranged in a circle. Good lighting is a necessity.

MATERIALS: Each participant should have access to pencils, paper, Prayer Books, Bibles and Hymnals. The leader will also need newsprint, markers and masking tape. For at least the first few meetings, the leader should provide nametags. The leader might discuss with the group if they desire refreshments and if so, the group should take turns providing these.

Note: The first meeting may be scheduled as an afternoon or evening meeting of 4 hours covering sessions one and two, perhaps including a light meal; or you may prefer to divide it into two two-hour sessions.

RESOURCES

The primary resources for this course of study are: the Bible, preferably the New Revised Standard Version (The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha is particularly recommended) and The 1979 Book of Common Prayer. The Hymnal 1982 is also recommended.

There are numerous other books that might prove helpful including:

1. *The Book of Occasional Services 1994*, Church Publishing
2. Marion J. Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book*, HarperCollins
3. *A New Zealand Prayer Book*, HarperCollins
4. Urban T. Holmes III, *What is Anglicanism?*, Morehouse Group
5. Lois Sibley, Ed. *Called to Teach and Learn, A Catechetical guide for the Episcopal Church: Session I*, PECUSA
6. *Enriching Our Worship 1*, 1998, Church Publishing

It may also be helpful to have access to The New Church's Teaching Series (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1997-2003):

1. James E. Griffiss, *The Anglican Vision*, Cowley Publications
2. Roger Ferlo, *Opening the Bible*, Cowley Publications
3. Michael Johnston, *Engaging the Word*, Cowley Publications
4. Margaret Guenther, *The Practice of Prayer*, Cowley Publications
5. Fredrica Harris Thompsett, *Living With History*, Cowley Publications
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11. Titus Presler, *Horizons of Mission*, Cowley Publications
12. Louis Weil, *A Theology of Worship*, Cowley Publications
13. Martin L. Smith, SSJE, *Christian Wholeness*, Cowley Publications
14. Linda L. Grenz, *A Guide to The New Church's Teaching Series*, Cowley Publications

SESSION III – GOD REACHES OUT TO US, PART 2

Revelation and Covenant: The Holy Scriptures

WAYS TO BEGIN:

As usual, welcome your group. Briefly, let the group informally chat with one another. Then open with the following prayer:

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; that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, O God, for ever and ever. *Amen* (Proper 28, BCP 236).

PROCEDURE:

1. Check to see if there are any questions left over from the last session.
2. Introduce this session. Explain to your group that this session continues the theme of God reaching out to us. Last week we looked at God's action in creation. With this session we will begin to look at God reaching out to us through the Bible and covenanting with God's people.
3. Make sure everyone has a Bible.
4. Pass out Handout #10 – The Authority of Scripture. Ask the group to read it carefully.

Handout #10 – The Authority of Scripture

5. Discuss:
 - Are there any questions, comments?
 - Is this your position concerning scripture or do you see it differently? If so, how do you understand the authority of scripture? Can we find a common ground of agreement or a willingness to accept and respect our differences?
 - Why do you think the reading of scripture ends with the reader saying, "The Word of the Lord"? What does that mean to you?
6. Distribute Handout #11 – The Divine Drama

Handout #11 – The Divine Drama

Allow time for the group to look over the handout. Check to see if there are any questions.

CONTENT, PART 1: THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

PROCEDURE:

1. Leader gives a brief overview of major events recorded in the Old Testament.
 - "The Fall" (Genesis 3)
 - The Call of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-4; 17:1-22)
 - The Story of Isaac (Genesis 22)
 - The Story of Jacob (Genesis 25:19-34; 28:1-2,10-22; 29:1-30:24; 32-3)

- The Story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50)
- The Call of Moses and the Exodus (Exodus 2-15; 19:1-20:24)

It would be helpful if the class has read these chapters during the previous week or read the passages for the Easter Vigil (BCP 288-91).

2. *Divide the class into pairs and ask each pair to take one of these stories to read carefully and offer back to the class in the form of a short story.*

Youth Tip: *Have each pair act out the story calling on other pairs if you need more people.*

(If time permits, you might ask the class to brainstorm their 20 “most important” Old Testament stories.)

3. Questions for Discussion:

- How would you describe God’s reaching out to us in these ancient stories? Give examples.
- A writer once said that the Ten Commandments list all the ways people go back to Egypt, (i.e. Slavery) and represent God’s gift to the people to set them free. How do the Ten Commandments represent freedom to you? What are the things that the Ten Commandments rule against that represent personal slavery?

BREAK

CONTENT, PART 2: THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT - KINGS AND PROPHETS

PROCEDURE:

1. Hand out copies of Old Testament Chronological Chart, Handout #12.

Handout #12 – Old Testament Chronological Chart

2. *Give a brief overview of the events listed on the handout, mentioning:*

- *The arrival at the **Promised Land**,*
- *The period of **Judges**,*
- *The establishment of a **Kingdom**,*
- *The divided Kingdom,*
- *The **Exile**,*
- *The return and re-building of the **Temple**, and*
- *The **Maccabean Rebellion**.*

3. *Review themes and event in the Prophetic literature.*

- Explain that the **Prophets** represent God's word to the people attempting to call them back into covenant.
- Themes of **justice, mercy and faithfulness** on the part of God prevail.
- The book of **Jonah** raises the question of inclusiveness versus exclusiveness.
- **Isaiah**, among others, promises the coming of a **Messiah** or Savior.

4. *Questions for discussion:*

- What kind of God is represented in these accounts? How would you describe the people?
- How do these ancient writings and their stories affect our world today?
- The people of God had many ideas about a messiah: a new Moses (lawgiver), a new David (king and ruler), a new Judas Maccabeus (a military hero), or from the book of Isaiah, a Suffering Servant. As you look at our world today, what kind of Savior do you believe most people want?

ENDING THE SESSION:

Suggest to the group that an additional help in understanding this session is the part of the Catechism found on p. 846-849 in the Prayer Book. The sections to read are God the Father, The Old Covenant, The Ten Commandments, and Sin and Redemption.

LOOKING AHEAD:

Explain that next week we will be looking at the New Testament and early church history including the historic creeds.

➤ Ask the group to read Mark's Gospel during the coming week and the Book of Acts.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSING WORSHIP:

The Decalogue (II) and Penitential Office, Rite 2 pp. 350-355, BCP ending with the following prayers and final blessing:

The Lord's Prayer

O God, you manifest in your servants the signs of your presence: Send forth upon us the Spirit of love, that in companionship with one another your abounding grace may increase among us: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: Let us bless the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God.

Leader: May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Handout #10
THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

As Understood in the Episcopal Church
A paper derived, in part, from “In Dialogue With Scripture”

SOME ASSERTIONS

- First, as Anglicans, we believe Holy Scriptures are the Word of God; that is, they contain the revelation of God. God inspired human authors and God still speaks through them. The Holy Spirit guides us to understand their meanings.
- Furthermore, we believe scripture provides the church with the primary criteria for its teaching and the chief source of guidance, in terms of principles and norms for its life. As Anglicans we do not believe scripture has ultimate authority in all matters, nor do we assert that everything found in scripture is binding on us. Scripture does not speak to every moral or theological issue, but does contain all things necessary to know for salvation.
- As Anglicans, we worship a person, Jesus Christ, not a book. Special authority is given to the Gospels.
- In the Scriptures we recognize great diversity of opinion. Each and every statement is subject to historical conditions and is context-specific. Therefore, scripture is subject to critical examination and interpretation.
- The Scriptures emerged from the experience of a community who believed God had been present and active in their midst. Scripture began as oral tradition. The Church gathered this tradition and decided what was to be canon (rule)...what is now the Bible.
- This canon, however, we believe needs to be continually interpreted and reinterpreted over and over again in light of contemporary knowledge and experience (tradition and reason) within a believing and worshipping community open to the Spirit. No one individual can decide alone what is true.

Compiled by Bates Toone

For further reference see Catechism, (BCP 853-54); also Ordination vows (BCP 526)

Handout #11

THE DIVINE DRAMA

Act I – God is presented in the role of **Creator**
Action: The world is created GOOD.

The Fall takes place in which humans, symbolized by Adam and Eve, exercise their God-given FREE WILL by disobeying God. They are cast out from Eden, but still beloved by God.

Act II – God is presented in the role of **Law Giver/Covenant Maker**
Action: The Ten Commandments and other laws are given.

Humans realize that they cannot keep the laws and are sinner in need of salvation; they cannot save themselves by their own efforts.

Act III – God is presented in the role of **Seeker/Co-Worker**
Action: God anoints prophets and kings.

Prophets and Kings call the people back to Covenant; this action ultimately fails as humankind fails to keep the Covenant.

Act IV – God is presented in the role of **Redeemer**
Action: God sends Jesus to live as one of us.

Jesus comes to teach and to heal, and ultimately to be put to death; the CROSS brings about RECONCILIATION and ATONEMENT; we become redeemed sinners or persistent rebels.

Act V – God is presented in the role of **Sanctifier**
Action: The Church is born.

The COMING of the Holy Spirit empowers us to become co-workers with God as we choose.

Act VI – God is presented in the role of **Judge, King and Host**
Action: God calls us into new life.

The HEAVENLY COMMONWEALTH whereby all find a PLACE at GOD'S TABLE or choose death and send ourselves to Hell.

This Drama is always going on in everyone's life whether one is conscious of it or not, and we are all participants at each stage of the drama.

Handout #12

OLD TESTAMENT CHRONOLOGICAL CHART

From B.J. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*

BC 1800-1700

Abraham (Code of Hammurabi developed in Sumeria)

BC 1700-1600

Jacob's clan migrates into Egypt

BC 1300-1200

c. 1290 **The Exodus** (Rameses II is Pharaoh in Egypt)
The Israelite conquest of Canaan

BC 1200-1100

1200 to 1020 Period of the **Judges**

BC 1120-1000

Samuel and Saul

BC 1000-900

The Kingdom – David (c. 1000-961)
Solomon (c. 961-922)
Death of Solomon; **The Divided Kingdom** (c. 922)
Judah (Rehoboam) **Israel** (Jeroboam)

BC 900-850

Jehoshaphat, King of Judah
Ahab, King of Israel **Elijah**

BC 850-750

Uzziah, King of Judah (c. 783-742)
Jeroboam II, King of Israel **Amos, Hosea, Zechariah**

BC 750-700

Isaiah (c. 742-700) Foundation of Rome (c. 753)
Micah (before 722-c. 701)
Fall of Samaria (722-721)

BC 700-600

Rise of Babylonia
Zephaniah (c. 628-622)
Jeremiah (c. 626-587)
King Josiah's **Deuteronomic Reforms** (621)
Habakkuk (c. 605) Nebuchadnezzar (605-562)

BC 600-500

Babylonian Exile

Ezekiel (c. 593-573)

2nd Isaiah (c. 540)

Return of the Exiles

Haggai and Zechariah

Rebuilding of the Temple (520-515)

BC 500-400

Malachi (c. 500-450)

Nehemiah and Ezra

Rebuilding of Jerusalem

BC 400-200

Egyptian control of Palestine

Empire of Alexander the Great (336-323)

BC 200-100

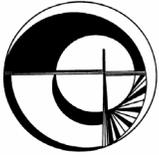
Syrian Conquest of Palestine

Maccabean Revolt (168)

BC 100-1

Roman Conquest

Capture of Jerusalem (63)



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