



ASIAMERICA
MINISTRIES



Being Episcopalian

*Questions and Answers
About the Episcopal Church*

By Winfred Vergara
with Foreword by Stephanie Spellers

THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	4
Introduction.....	6
I. History.....	12
II. Theology.....	17
III. Mission.....	21
IV. Worship.....	28
V. Scriptures.....	33
VI. Governance.....	41
VII. Church Center.....	46
VIII. Ethnic Ministries.....	50
IX. Become Episcopalian.....	54

FOREWORD

I live in New York City, where it is quite possible to sit on a subway for at least thirty minutes and have a couple of rich, in-depth conversations about faith with perfect strangers. I also inhabit multiple communities where few people know how the word “Episcopalian” is pronounced, much less what it means. (A family member recently remarked, “You’re Episcopalian? Sounds like ‘a pissed off alien.’”) And I know I am not alone.

In a moment when our neighbors are unlikely to have much knowledge about Christianity, and even less about the Episcopal way of following Jesus, we need simple tools that capture and share the basics with ease and grace. We need help doing the work of translation, so the hidden jewels of our tradition can shine brightly regardless of the context.

The Rev. Canon Dr. Winfred (Fred) Vergara has given us all that and more with **Being Episcopalian**. Don’t let the size of this tidy volume fool you. Father Fred has created and now updated a readable, fact-filled classic, based on his decades of vibrant ministry in diverse contexts and drawing on everything from the Catechism and Scripture to contemporary statements of Episcopal identity.

Clergy and seasoned lay leaders may keep it on hand for help explaining our structures and traditions in simple, clear language. Newcomers and confirmands may want to keep it in their back pocket, in case they’re surrounded by cradle members slipping into Episcopal-speak. Episcopalians who move in ecumenical or interfaith circles should set a few copies on the shelf, to share with colleagues who wonder, “What do you Episcopalians do...and why?”

The days when Episcopal faith occupied a privileged place at the center of American life – and the days when America was the sole center of Episcopal life – are officially over. Maybe that’s a good thing. When we can’t take anything for granted, we may all become more conscious bearers of the story wherever we go. **Being Episcopalian** is a fine and timely primer on how this Church came to be, how it works, and what makes it special.

The Reverend Canon Stephanie Spellers
Canon to the Presiding Bishop for Evangelism,
Reconciliation and Creation Care
New York, New York

INTRODUCTION

There are two persons who motivated me to write this booklet: Angela, my wife; and Genevieve Rivera, a young adult member of St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church in Seaford, New York.

In 2010, after years of mulling it over, Angie decided to become a U.S. citizen. She was given a booklet with 100 citizenship questions and answers and, after reading it, she said to me, “Why don’t you write a booklet with questions and answers about The Episcopal Church similar to this citizenship booklet?” On that same day, Gen asked me, “Father, what are the basic beliefs and practices of The Episcopal Church that make us unique or distinct from other religions or other Christian denominations?”

Being sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit expressed through these two ladies, I decided then and there to write this booklet. I want it to be simple, readable, and understandable like the citizenship questions and answers booklet. I want it to be user-friendly, both as an easy tool for church members to use as informational material and as an evangelistic tract and basic guide for people seeking Christian baptism and confirmation or reception into The Episcopal Church.

The Episcopal Church does not teach that we are the only true Church. We do not teach that outside our church there is no salvation. However, we claim that we are part of the one, undivided, universal Church of Jesus Christ. We are an integral part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

We’re also a constituent member of the worldwide Anglican Communion, the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches. Alongside other mainline churches, we participate in the work of saving the lost, freeing the oppressed and reconciling the world to God in Christ. We are committed to ecumenism and interfaith dialogs. We are engaged in transforming unjust structures in society and working for a truly free, humane and reconciled world. We care for God’s creation.

Therefore, instead of claiming to be unique, we claim commonality with Christians all over the world. Our prayer book is called the **Book of Common Prayer** because of the prayers we share in common with the universal Church in the language of the people. Our liturgy is our gift to the world. We are often called a bridge church because of our tendency to be both/ and rather than either/or. We are both catholic and protestant, both ancient and modern, both conservative and liberal – always trying to be

balanced, fair, and just – even as we remain faithful to the essence of the Christian faith.

Our theology is often called via media or middle ground or middle way. We are an inclusive Church, welcoming all people and seeking to love everyone unconditionally. Our churches are houses of prayer for all people as expressed by our sign, “The Episcopal Church Welcomes You!”

Many of the questions and answers that follow are based on the Episcopal Catechism, or Outline of the Faith, which can be found on pages 843-862 of the **Book of Common Prayer**. (Church Hymnal Corporation, 1979) Please note that the **Book of Common Prayer** (BCP) states that the catechism “is a commentary on the creeds, but is not meant to be a complete statement of beliefs and practices; rather, it is a point of departure for the teacher.” (BCP, p. 844) It is in that same spirit that I present the responses to the questions that follow. They are not offered as definitive answers, but rather as general background information on the traditions and customs of The Episcopal Church, meant to encourage further discussion.

I am not a lifelong Episcopalian but rather one who has come full circle in tasting many and diverse denominational flavors. After my ordination in Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI), I served as a priest in the Philippines from 1978-1980. Then I served as missionary priest in the

Anglican Church of Singapore (1980-1986). After doctoral study in the United States, I served with the Presbyterian Church from 1986-1988. From 1988 to 1990, I served in the Episcopal Church on loan from the IFI until, in 1991, I was canonically received in the Episcopal Church through the Diocese of El Camino Real (California South Coast). In my own religious and spiritual travelogue, I come to appreciate Christianity as a diamond with many facets. Every facet glitters but no one facet can fully express the height, depth, width and breath of Christianity. I decided to commit to the facet of the Episcopal Church.

I believe that as Episcopalians, we must be ready at all times to justify our existence and presence in the world today. If people inquire about what we believe, we must be ready to give them the basic answers of the tenets of our faith. Christianity is a living religion because it interacts with the contemporary world and continually answers the basic questions people of every generation are asking.

As a visible symbol of the Christian faith, the Church is a living organism and must engage all sorts and conditions of people from all walks of life. Faith seeks understanding and we must endeavor to teach the faith handed down to us into the context in which people find themselves. If they ask what good would it do for them should

they join the Episcopal Church, we must be ready to share our story and give an account of the hope that is in us.

We are no longer living in a Christian world. Some say we are in a post-Christian world; others say we are back to the pre-Christian world. Many young people in this generation claim to be spiritual but not religious. They believe in God but do not want to get involved in organized religions. They think of churches as dysfunctional families, tainted by traditions that have been overused, misused, and abused. Many of them see churches as jaded institutions which have outlived their usefulness. Others see the church through the lens of disillusionment, consumerism and secularization.

I believe that this booklet can help you “read, mark, learn and inwardly digest” what being Episcopalian is all about. Like an appetizer to the main dish, I hope this booklet can whet your appetite and inspire you to study more about the Bible, the Christian Faith, The Episcopal Church, and its teachings.

I have expressed gratitude to certain people in the first and second editions of this booklet. For this third Edition, I am grateful to the Rev. Gay Clark Jennings and the Rev. Canon Michael Barlowe

for their help in updating certain portions. The Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers, Canon to the Presiding Bishop on Evangelism, Reconciliation and Creation Care, has been gracious enough to write a Foreword. I am also thankful to Pamela Grenfell Smith for doing the final editing and proofreading. To God be the glory!

The Reverend Canon

Dr. Winfred B. Vergara

Missioner for Asiamerica Ministries

The Episcopal Church

January 27, 2018

I. HISTORY

What is The Episcopal Church?

The Episcopal Church is a “constituent member of the Anglican Communion, a Fellowship within the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted Dioceses, Provinces, and regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer.” (Constitution and Canons, 2006)

Is The Episcopal Church known by any other name?

Since the adoption of the United States Constitution in 1787, Episcopalians in America have called ourselves in our Constitution as “The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.” In the 1960’s, there was a movement (which actually began as early as the 1920’s) to expunge the word “Protestant.” In response, the General Convention adopted a resolution adding a Preamble to the Constitution that declared the PECUSA “otherwise known as The Episcopal Church.” It is important to note that the term “The Episcopal Church” is not a shortened

version but an alternate expression of the official name. We are an international Church present in seventeen countries, so it is appropriate to use the alternative name of The Episcopal Church.

In what seventeen countries is The Episcopal Church visibly present?

The Episcopal Church is visibly present in the United States of America including Puerto Rico, Guam and the Mariana Islands (the Church in Micronesia); Taiwan; Micronesia; Honduras; Ecuador; Colombia; Venezuela; Curacao; Haiti; Dominican Republic; British and US Virgin Islands; Austria; Belgium; France; Germany; Italy; and Switzerland. In other countries such as Mexico and the Philippines, former missionary districts of The Episcopal Church have become autonomous Provinces in the Anglican Communion.

What is the legal and corporate name of The Episcopal Church?

The “Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America” (DFMS) is the legally incorporated entity. The DFMS acts as the public, corporate arm of the church, allowing the Church to hold property and carry out missionary work

in other countries or in places where it must be a registered entity. The first Constitution of the DFMS was adopted in 1821 and its legal incorporation was completed in 1846.

Where did The Episcopal Church originate?

Early English settlers established the Church of England in some of the original colonies of the United States. In 1789, after the American Revolution, an assembly met in Philadelphia to unify all Anglicans in the United States into a single national church. A constitution was adopted along with a set of canonical laws, and the English Book of Common Prayer of 1662 was revised, principally by removing the prayer for the English monarch. Samuel Seabury was ordained in Scotland as the first American bishop. The Episcopal Church became the first Anglican Province outside the British Isles.

Why was the name ‘The Episcopal Church’ chosen?

The Greek word episcopos means ‘bishop’ or ‘overseer.’ The Episcopal Church is governed by bishops in partnership with laity and clergy.

Who is the head of The Episcopal Church?

The General Convention, comprised of the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops, is the governing and legislative body of The Episcopal Church. A meeting of General Convention is held every three years. The Presiding Bishop is the Chief Pastor and Primate of the Church. The current Presiding Bishop is the Most Rev. Michael Bruce Curry, the first African American to hold this position. His predecessor was The Most Rev. Dr. Katharine Jefferts Schori, the first woman Presiding Bishop and primate in the worldwide Anglican Communion.

What is a primate?

A primate is the chief bishop or archbishop of one of the thirty-eight Provinces of the Anglican Communion.

What is the Anglican Communion?

The Anglican Communion is an international association composed of over 80 million people in 44 regional or national churches, all in full communion with the Church of England and with the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Who is the current Archbishop of Canterbury?

The current Archbishop of Canterbury is the Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. Justin Welby. He was appointed in January of 2013 and enthroned as the 105th Archbishop of Canterbury in March of 2013. Formerly the Bishop of Durham, he now shares the primacy of the Church of England with the Archbishop of York and is considered the symbolic head of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

What are the four Instruments of Communion in the Anglican Communion?

There are four bodies involved in providing leadership across the Anglican Communion: the Anglican Consultative Council, the Primates Meeting, the Lambeth Conference, and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church where the Pope is the solitary authority, in the Anglican Communion the Archbishop of Canterbury is only a symbolic head and the first among equals with the other Primates of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

II. THEOLOGY

What does ‘theology’ mean?

The word comes from *theologia*, a combination of two Greek words: *Theos*, meaning God, and *logia*, meaning utterances, studies, or discourses. So theology literally means the discourse or study about God or, more simply, ‘God-talk’.

What do you mean by the ‘three-legged stool’ of faith-understanding in The Episcopal Church?

Scripture, Tradition, and Reason are the three dynamic legs that provide a balanced way of discerning the will of God. This metaphor is generally attributed to the Rev. Richard Hooker (1554-1600), an Oxford University scholar who wrote: “What Scripture doth plainly deliver, to that the first place both of credit and obedience are due; the next whereunto, is what any man can necessarily conclude by force of Reason; after this, the voice of the church succeedeth.”

What do you mean by ‘Scriptures’?

The Holy Scriptures, commonly called the Bible, are the books of the Old and New Testaments. Other books, called the Apocrypha, are also included in the Bible. (BCP, p. 853)

What do you mean by ‘Tradition’?

The Episcopal Church has inherited ancient traditions from apostolic times, as well as historical customs, laws, practices, and values that have become part of the common life of the church.

What do we mean by ‘reason’?

Reason is both the intellect and the experience of God, illuminating scriptures and tradition as they relate together to our common lives, ministries, and contemporary situations. Jesus said, “love the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind.” (Mark 12:30)

What are the Four Marks of the Christian Church?

The four marks of the Church as affirmed in the Nicene Creed are “one, holy, catholic and apostolic.” (BCP, p. 358) The Church’s **oneness** is a gift from God. Regardless of human divisions and disagreements, Jesus Christ is the Head of God’s church and the Holy Spirit dwells in all those who believe. The Church is **holy** because she lives in unity with Christ and, through the Holy Spirit, leads others to holiness. We also say the Church is holy because she is set apart for God. The Church is **catholic** or **universal** because all baptized persons are parts of the Church and the universal Church is sent to proclaim Christ to the entire human race in the whole world. The Church is **apostolic** because she traces her history, tradition and culture from the apostles of Jesus Christ.

What does ‘via media’ mean?

Via media is Latin for ‘middle way’ and describes the tendency of Anglican theology to strike a middle ground between reformed Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. The Anglican theology is therefore known for its comprehensiveness, tolerance, and inclusion.

What are the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed?

These two creeds state The Episcopal Church's basic beliefs about God. The Apostles' Creed (BCP, p. 96) is the ancient creed of baptism and is often used in the church's daily worship to recall our Baptismal Covenant. The Nicene Creed (BCP, p. 358) is the creed of the universal church and is often used at the Eucharist.

What is the Holy Trinity?

The Holy Trinity is one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (BCP, p. 852)

You mean the Holy Spirit is a Person?

Yes, the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity revealed in Scriptures as "the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and together with the Father and the Son, He is worshiped and glorified; He has spoken through the prophets."
(The Nicene Creed, BCP, p. 359)

III. MISSION

What is the biblical mandate known in Christian circles as 'The Great Commission'?

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus said to the apostles, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded. And lo, I will be with you even unto the close of the age."

What are the Five Anglican Marks of Mission?

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom;
2. To teach, baptize, and nurture new believers;
3. To respond to human need by loving service;
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation;
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

What is the mission statement of The Episcopal Church?

“The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.”
(BCP, p. 855)

How does the Church pursue its mission and who will do that?

“The Church pursues her mission as she prays and worships, proclaims the gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love. The Church carries out her mission through the ministry of all her members.” (Adapted from BCP, p. 855)

What are the orders of ministry in The Episcopal Church?

Many Episcopalians would say there are three orders of ministry, namely: bishops, priests and deacons. Those who put emphasis on baptism as the foundation of ministry, however would affirm lay ministers as the fourth order. ‘Bishop’ is from the Greek word episcopos, or ‘overseer’; ‘priest’ is from the Greek word presbyteros, or ‘elder’; ‘deacon’ is from the Greek word diakonos, or ‘servant’; and ‘lay’ comes from the Greek word laos, which means ‘people.’ Baptized Christians are called the people of God.

What is ‘the priesthood of all believers’?

The priesthood of all believers refers to the theology that all baptized Christians have been given direct access to God, that God is equally accessible to all the faithful, and that every Christian has equal potential to minister for God. This is based in part on the First Letter of Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” Access to God and a life of lively ministry and personal holiness are available directly to all Christians, not only to ordained clergy.

What is the duty of all Christians?

The duty of all Christians is to follow Christ; to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray, and give for the spread of the kingdom of God. (BCP, p. 856)

What are the spiritual gifts given by God, through the Holy Spirit?

There are varieties of gifts and services that come from the Holy Spirit. St. Paul teaches in First Corinthians 12: 7-11 that the Holy Spirit's gifts include wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. In Romans 12:6-8, St. Paul writes that the Holy Spirit's gifts include prophecy, faith, service, teaching, encouragement, generosity, and leadership. In Ephesians 4:11-12, St. Paul reminds us that "Christ chose some to be apostles, prophets, missionaries, pastors, and teachers, so that his people would learn to serve and his Body would grow strong."

What are the nine virtues that St. Paul called the 'fruit of the Spirit'?

They are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Why did St. Paul describe the Church as the 'Body of Christ'?

St. Paul was referring to the way in which all members of the church are united with Christ and with one another despite its diversity. This unity in diversity is the ideal way in which members of the Church should operate in lives they lead and the relationships they create. With Christ as Head, the Body parts function creatively and harmoniously. Thus, "if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together." (First Corinthians 12:12-26)

What is the Great Commandment that undergirds the mission of the Church?

Jesus said, "The first commandment is this: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:29-31 and BCP, p. 351)

What is the ‘Jesus Movement’?

The Jesus Movement is the description for the educational, missional and leadership programs which Presiding Bishop Michael V. Curry enunciated right after his installation as the 27th Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church on November 1, 2015 in the National Cathedral in Washington DC. Bishop Curry summoned the Episcopal Church to a fresh way of following Jesus, the “Way, the Truth and the Life.” (John 14:6) In his message, Bishop Curry challenged Episcopalians to the task of being the Episcopal Branch of the Jesus Movement, urging us to “go into the world, let the world know that there is a God who loves us, a God who will not let us go, and that love can set us all free.”

What are the values of this Jesus Movement?

Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry summarized the following values of the Jesus Movement: “esteem, engage and excel.” **To esteem** means we treat each other as a children of God; we appreciate each other’s gifts, styles, approaches and ideas; and we strive to encourage one another. **To engage** is to tell the truth in love; to wrestle with the issue, problem, idea and not the person; to actively seek feedback; to involve others in the decision-making; and to find healthy ways of dealing with conflicts and disagreements. **To excel**

means to commit to doing our best; to maintain personal integrity; to seek continuous learning and professional development; and to dare being creative in all we think, say and do.

What are the qualities of the relationships that build up the Jesus Movement?

Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry summarized a healthy relationship as “loving, liberating and life-giving.”

In the context of the United States and the world, what areas of our common life and witness will the Jesus Movement impact?

The Jesus Movement will impact how we do mission and ministry especially in the areas of spiritual renewal, evangelism, church planting, social witness, racial healing, and humane care for the whole of God’s creation.

IV. WORSHIP

What is The Episcopal Church's main guide to worship?

The Book of Common Prayer (BCP) is the official book of worship of The Episcopal Church. The BCP provides liturgical forms, prayers, and instructions so that all members and orders of The Episcopal Church may appropriately share in common worship.

What are the major gestures or actions in Episcopal worship?

1. Standing to praise God. This is also an appropriate posture for prayer, alternately with kneeling.
2. Sitting to listen to God's Word.
3. Kneeling or standing to pray for the church and the world.
4. Bowing in reverence before God.
5. Lifting hands in prayer, or orans.
6. Making a sign of the cross, usually with the right thumb on the forehead or with the right hand on the forehead, chest and left and then right shoulders.
7. Genuflecting, or bending the knee in reverence before God.
8. Giving and receiving a kiss of peace, a hug, or a handshake as a sign of greeting and reconciliation.

9. Elevating the bread and wine during the Eucharist, offering them to God or showing them to the people.
10. Extending hands in greeting, for example, when the priest says, "The Lord be with you."
11. Laying on of hands or extending them over people as a sign of blessing at Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, ordination, marriage, healing, and other liturgical rites.

What is the chief worship service in The Episcopal Church?

The chief worship service is the Holy Eucharist, also known as the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, the Mass, Divine Liturgy, or the Great Offering. (BCP, p. 859)

What is meant by 'liturgy'?

Liturgy is the standardized or customary order of public worship. It comes from the ancient Greek word leitourgia or 'work of the people.' As a liturgical church, The Episcopal Church follows a historic pattern of worship that moves through such practices as reading, singing, listening and responding to the invocations, exhortations and prayers.

What are the liturgical seasons in the Christian Calendar?

The Christian calendar divides the year into six liturgical seasons: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. Every season has a customary color, which is displayed on clergy vestments and other worship furnishings during that season.

What do these liturgical colors signify?

White signifies purity and joy and is used during Christmas, Easter, All Saints' Day and other joyous occasions such as weddings. White is also used during funerals because death is viewed in relation to Christ's resurrection. Purple signifies penitence and patient waiting and is used during Advent and Lent. Others use blue instead of purple to emphasize the color of royalty because at Advent, we await the return of Jesus Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Red symbolizes the fire of the Holy Spirit and is used on Pentecost Sunday and for the ordination of bishops, priests, and deacons. Red also signifies the blood of Christ and therefore is used during the festival of martyrs. Green suggests hope and growth and is used during the weeks after Epiphany and the Sundays following Trinity Sunday, described as the Sundays After Pentecost.

What is prayer?

Prayer is responding to God, by thought and by deeds, with or without words. Christian prayer is "response to God the Father, through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit." (BCP, p. 856) In simpler terms, prayer is communicating with God--listening and speaking with God.

What is the Lord's Prayer?

In Matthew 6:9b-13 and Luke 11:2-4 Jesus taught his disciples to pray. That prayer came to be called the Lord's Prayer and it says:

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

(BCP, p. 364)

What are the four kinds of prayer?

According to the **Book of Common Prayer**, the four principal kinds of prayer are Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. (BCP, p. 856) Adoration means praising God for who God is and for what God has done. Confession is expressing sorrow for sins and asking God's forgiveness, mercy, and pardon. Thanksgiving is thanking God for all the blessings received and giving thanks to God in all circumstances. Supplication is asking God to provide for our needs and for the needs of the world. The word ACTS is a handy way to remember these four kinds of prayer.

How often and how long should I pray?

How often do you wish to listen and speak with God? Aside from Sunday public worship, some people set a time every day to be their quiet time with God. Others treat it like 'flextime' and fit prayer into the other responsibilities of their day. First Thessalonians 5:16-18 says, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God for you, in Christ Jesus."

V. SCRIPTURES

What is meant by the lectionary?

Pericope is a Greek word for 'cutting-out' and means a set of verses or texts 'cut out' from one book or many books and combined to form one coherent unit or thought. A lectionary is a table of pericopes, a set of readings from the Holy Scriptures appointed to be read at public worship, making provisions for the liturgical year with its pattern of observances of festivals and seasons. Since the first Book of Common Prayer in 1549, Anglican and Episcopal prayerbooks have included a lectionary. The several lectionaries in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer are for different uses, like the Daily Office, the Sundays of the three-year cycles (A, B, C), feast days, and other commemorations. The Revised Common Lectionary was officially adopted by The Episcopal Church General Convention in 2006 and will appear in future printings of the Book of Common Prayer.

What is the Revised Common Lectionary?

The Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), publicly released in 1994, was produced through collaborative work between two ecumenical bodies, the North American Consultation on Common Texts and the International Language Liturgical Consultation. It was preceded by the Common Lectionary of 1983, which was itself preceded by the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) lectionary, derived from various lectionaries used by member denominations. The RCL is currently used by many churches including Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal churches. Sharing a lectionary means that these faith communities can more easily share Bible study, music, liturgical texts, Christian formation materials, preaching, and worship.

Why are the books of the Bible called the Old and New Testaments?

The Old Testament consists of books written by the people of the Old Covenant, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to show God at work in nature and history. (BCP, p. 853) The New Testament consists of books written by the people of the New Covenant, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to set forth the life and teachings

of Jesus and to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom for all people. (BCP, p. 853)

Why do we call the Bible the Word of God?

We call the Bible the Word of God because God inspired its human authors and because God still speaks to us through the Holy Scriptures in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

How many books are in the Bible?

The Bible is a book of books. Protestant churches traditionally have recognized 66 books in total, including 39 books of the Hebrew Scriptures or the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament. The Roman Catholic Church accepts several more books in the Old Testament, called the Apocrypha. The Episcopal Church also commends the Apocrypha for private study and sometimes uses them in public liturgy.

What is the Pentateuch?

The Pentateuch is the name for the five books of the Bible attributed to Moses. These are the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

What are historical books in the Old Testament?

The historical books are Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, Second Kings, First Chronicles, Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.

What are the Major Prophets and Minor Prophets?

Yes, what and not who; the distinction refers to the length of the book, not the value of the prophet. The terms Major Prophets and Minor Prophets are simply a way to divide the Old Testament prophetic books; the major being longer than the minor. The five Major Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The twelve Minor Prophets are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

What are the Ten Commandments given by God in the Old Testament?

The Ten Commandments are a list of laws that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai for the People of Israel. (Exodus 20:1-17) The **Book of Common Prayer** calls them The Decalogue and

lists them in both traditional (BCP, p. 317-318) and contemporary (BCP, p. 350) language. The contemporary version reads:

1. Hear the commandments of God to his people: I am the Lord your God who brought you out of bondage. You shall not have other gods but me.
2. You shall not make for yourself any idol.
3. You shall not invoke with malice the Name of the Lord your God.
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not commit murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not be a false witness.
10. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

How did Jesus summarize the Ten Commandments?

In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.”

What are the four Gospel books in the New Testament?

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

What is the 'New Commandment' Jesus gave to His disciples in the New Testament?

In John 13:34-35, Jesus said, “ A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all (people) will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

What is the Bible verse often called 'the Golden Rule'?

In Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31, Jesus said: “Do unto others what you want them do unto you.” This maxim also occurs in nearly every major religion and ethical tradition. In the Christian circle, it was the Anglican theologians and preachers, particularly Charles Gibbon and Thomas Jackson of Great Britain, who first popularized the term ‘Golden Rule’ or “‘Golden Law’ in 1604.

What is the greatest love poem in the Bible?

In 1 Corinthians 13, St. Paul wrote: “If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

“Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now, we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to

face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

Does the Bible contain all things necessary for salvation?

St. Paul teaches in Second 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the people of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

VI. GOVERNANCE

What are the three levels of governance in The Episcopal Church?

The three levels of governance are the parish, the diocese, and the General Convention.

Who is responsible for the work of the church at the parish level?

The parishioners are responsible for the work of the parish, through the shared leadership of their rector and vestry and under the oversight of their diocesan bishop.

What is a vestry?

A vestry is a group of church leaders, comprised of wardens, a clerk, and members elected by the parishioners at the annual parish meeting, as governed by The Episcopal Church, diocesan canons, and the bylaws of the parish.

What is a diocese?

A diocese is a geographical grouping of parishes under the oversight of a diocesan bishop.

What is the ministry of a bishop?

The ministry of a Bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity and discipline of the whole Church; 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; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry.
(BCP, p. 855)

What other rites do bishops perform?

Episcopal rites specifically performed by bishops include the ordination and consecration of bishops, ordination of priests, ordination of deacons, celebration of new ministries, and the consecration of churches or chapels. Bishops also preside at services of confirmation and reception of lay members, as well as blessings and consecrations of buildings, church bells, and other church furnishings.

What is a bishop coadjutor?

In The Episcopal Church, when a diocesan bishop announces his or her retirement, a special diocesan convention is held to elect a successor. When that new bishop is elected to serve for up to three years

before the incumbent retires, this new bishop is called the coadjutor. When the diocesan bishop retires, the coadjutor becomes the diocesan bishop.

What is a bishop suffragan?

A bishop suffragan is elected by the diocese and acts as an assistant under the direction of the diocesan bishop.

What is the General Convention?

The General Convention is the highest governing body and the temporal authority of The Episcopal Church. It meets every three years and is comprised of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies. The House of Bishops meets concurrently with the House of Deputies during General Convention and also holds interim meetings between conventions. The Presiding Bishop presides at meetings of the House of Bishops and at joint sessions of the two Houses. The President of the House of Deputies presides at meetings of the House of Deputies. Deputies to General Convention, consisting of clergy and lay deputies in equal numbers, are elected by the dioceses of the Church.

How does legislation get adopted in the General Convention?

The House of Bishops and the House of Deputies meet and act separately, and both must concur in identical language to adopt legislation. The General Convention alone has authority to amend the Book of Common Prayer, to amend the church's Constitution and Canons, and to determine the program and budget of the General Convention, including the missionary, educational, and social programs it authorizes.

Who is the president of the House of Deputies of the General Convention?

The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings was elected president of the House of Deputies in the General Convention of 2012. She is the first female priest to hold the post of presidency, although two lay women had served in that position, Pamela Pauly Chinnis (1991-2000) and Bonnie Anderson (2006-2012). As leader of the House of Deputies, Jennings presides over about 900 deputies and alternates from 110 dioceses in 17 countries.

What is the Executive Council?

The Executive Council meets several times each year to carry out the policies and programs adopted by General Convention between its triennial meetings. The General Convention elects twenty-two of the forty members of the Executive Council; the others being elected by their respective provinces.

VII. CHURCH CENTER

What is The Episcopal Church Center and where is it located?

The Episcopal Church Center (ECC) is the general headquarters of The Episcopal Church. This building, located at 815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017, holds the office of the Presiding Bishop and the offices and staff of the Mission, Communication, Finance, and Operations departments, as well as General Convention staff. In addition, because The Episcopal Church is an international church, there are missionaries and staff officers working at satellite offices nationwide and beyond. For example, we have staff offices in Paris, France; Panama City, Panama; Yauco, Puerto Rico; Accra, Ghana; and Edinburgh, Scotland. The website for The Episcopal Church, however remains the same for all, www.episcopalchurch.org and the telephone toll free number remains the same for all, 1(800) 334-7626. ECC staff also use many modern communications tools including webinars, teleconferencing and virtual meetings via Zoom, Webex, and Skype. The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS), explained earlier in this booklet, is the official and business name of The Episcopal Church

Is there a chapel in the Episcopal Church Center in New York City and is it open to all?

Yes, the Chapel of Christ the Lord is located on the first floor of the ten-story ECC building at 815 Second Avenue in New York City, at the corner of 43rd Street and close to the UN Building. Religious services include Morning Prayer at 8:45 AM and Holy Eucharist at 12:10 PM. All are welcome.

Does The Episcopal Church minister to ethnic groups?

The Episcopal Church ministers to all people in all their racial, ethnic, cultural, gender, and generational diversity. The Episcopal Church Center has Missioners for Asiamerica Ministries, Black Ministries, Latino/Hispanic Ministries, and Indigenous Ministries. With regards to international relationships, there are partnership officers working in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Pacific with networks within the worldwide Anglican Communion, ecumenical churches, and interfaith relations.

In addition to the worldwide Anglican Communion, with what other church bodies is The Episcopal Church in full communion?

Churches declare that they are in full communion after a long process of shared conversation, discernment, study, and prayer. The Episcopal Church is in full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA); the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht; the Philippine Independent Church (Iglesia Filipina Independiente); the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, India; the Church of South India, the Church of North India, the Church of Pakistan, the Church of Bangladesh; and the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church.

Is the Episcopal Church a member of any ecumenical councils?

The Episcopal Church belongs to the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, and Christian Churches Together. Many Episcopal dioceses and parishes are also members of regional and local councils of churches.

Where is the National Cathedral of the Episcopal Church?

The Cathedral Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in the City and Diocese of Washington, commonly known as “Washington National Cathedral” of the Episcopal Church located in Washington D.C., the capital of the United States. The National Cathedral is the seat of both the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church and the Bishop of the Diocese of Washington. It is often and traditionally used as a venue for ecumenical services during the inauguration of the President of the United States.

VIII: ETHNIC MINISTRIES

Why Ethnic Ministries?

The Episcopal Church has an office and staff for Ethnic Ministries because Jesus commissioned us to make disciples of all nations (Greek: *pan ta ethne*); because of the influx and growth of immigrant groups in America; and because of our striving for peace and harmony in our neighborhood, in our nation, and in the world.

What is the ‘New Community’?

Episcopalians use the phrase New Community as a celebration of the wider circle of friendships and fellowships in the Episcopal Church as we are increasingly becoming a racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse Church.

What is meant by ‘people of color’?

In the Episcopal Church, people of color are those who come from the four major ethnic groupings: Asian; Black; Indigenous; and Latino/Hispanic communities. In the General Convention, we designate meetings for deputies of color; in ministry formation and theological training, we offer conferences for young adults

of color, seminarians of color, and for the New Community. The Ethnic Ministries office and staff at the ECC are often involved in organizing and promoting these activities.

Why is it important that we reach out in this way to people of color?

In his 2003 Report to the Executive Council, former Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold wrote: “In a church that is free of the sin of racism and other ‘isms,’ there would be no need for a focus upon particular ethnic groups and identities because the church, in all its variations, would reflect the fullness of Christ and the face of Christ, and be transformed by the multiplicity of languages, races, and cultural particularities incarnate in the members of Christ’s risen body. But we have not yet become who we are called to be. Given that, it has become clear that our best energies be focused to serve...African-American, Asian-American, Hispanic-American, and Native-American ministries.” Presiding Bishops after him – Katharine Jefferts Schori and Michael Bruce Curry – have affirmed their support of Ethnic Ministries.

Who carries out the works of Ethnic Ministries?

The clergy and lay people in congregational, parish and diocesan levels of the Episcopal Church. In the Episcopal Church Center, there is a Department of Ethnic Ministries composed of Asiamerican and Pacific Islanders; Black; Indigenous, and Latino/Hispanic Ministries.

What is the role of the Ethnic Missioners?

The Asiamerican, Black, Indigenous, and Latino/Hispanic Missioners coordinate the evangelistic, pastoral, missionary, and advocacy work of ethnic ministries at the church-wide level and create programs to equip, empower, and inspire the inclusion and growth of ethnic communities in the Episcopal Church. They work to familiarize the mainstream church with the cultural distinctiveness of the ethnic ministries they represent. They also bear witness to their ethnic constituencies about the Episcopal Church's cultural diversity, comprehensiveness, and respect for the dignity of every human being.

Other than English, are there languages used in the Episcopal Church life and worship?

Yes, we have translations of the Book of Common Prayer in Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Hmong, Sudanese, and various Native American and other languages. We offer opportunities for ethnic peoples to speak to God in the language of their hearts. Many English hymns have been translated into other languages and hymns from other languages have been translated into English.

What should a new Ethnic family do to become a member of the Episcopal Church?

Former Presiding Bishop Edmund Browning once said, "In this Episcopal Church of ours, there will be no outcasts." Most of our churches bear the sign, 'The Episcopal Church Welcomes You.' There are also many ethnic clergy serving in predominantly Anglo-European parishes. And of course, our current Presiding Bishop and Primate, the Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, is the first person of color to hold the position of Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church. Any person, family and community of color may check out a nearby Episcopal Church and inquire about membership.

IX: BECOME EPISCOPALIAN

Am I welcome in The Episcopal Church?

All are welcome. Anyone can join an Episcopal parish or congregation. Check out one in your neighborhood, attend a Sunday Eucharist, and discern if this is the right one for you. If you are not yet baptized, inquire from a priest or lay member of the parish.

What is required of me before I get baptized?

It is required that you renounce evil (Satan), repent of your sins and accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. (BCP, p. 858) Some parishes have inquirers' classes or catechism classes by which you may learn about the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Baptism is usually administered within the Eucharist as the chief service on a Sunday or other feast day by a bishop or priest. Water is poured on the forehead by the officiating priest along with the words, "I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

What is Confirmation and who can be confirmed?

A diocesan bishop may confirm those who have been baptized by laying on of hands and praying: "Strengthen, O Lord, your servant with your Holy Spirit; empower him/her for your service; and sustain him/her all the days of his/her life." (BCP, p. 418) Usually parishes have Confirmation classes by which you may learn beforehand the doctrines of the Church and your part in the Body of Christ.

What is the Service of Reception by a bishop?

Baptized persons who are confirmed members of some other churches, including Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Church of South India, Church of North India, Moravian, and other churches in communion with the Episcopal Church, and who wish to be affiliated with The Episcopal Church, may make a public affirmation of their faith and commitment in the presence of a bishop. The bishop then lays hands on each candidate for reception and says, "We recognize you as a member of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, and we receive you into the fellowship of this Communion." (BCP, p. 418)

Can an Episcopalian who has not been to church for many years return to the Episcopal Church?

Yes, the person will be welcomed in any parish or mission and can become active again in sharing the life and mission of The Episcopal Church. She may choose to renew or reaffirm her baptismal vows and the bishop would lay hands over her forehead and say, “May the Holy Spirit, who has begun a good work in you, direct and uphold you in the service of Christ and his kingdom.” (BCP, p. 419)

What is the Baptismal Covenant?

The Baptismal Covenant is a set of vows or promises made by people being baptized, along with the members of the already-baptized congregation. The promises include believing in God, the Father Almighty; Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and in God, the Holy Spirit. It includes promises “to continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers; to persevere in resisting evil and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord; to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ; to seek and serve Christ in all persons loving your neighbor as

yourself; to strive for justice and peace among all people; and to respect the dignity of every human being.” (BCP, pp. 304-305)

When can I partake of the Holy Communion (the bread and wine in the Eucharist)?

Once you are baptized you have full access to the sacramental rites of the Church and you can partake of the Holy Communion. Your Christian ministry also begins at baptism.

Where can I find a nearby Episcopal Church?

There are thousands of Episcopal parishes or missions in the United States. You may look in www.episcopalchurch.org or in Google Maps to find an Episcopal Church near you.

Contact the author:

The Rev. Dr. Winfred B. Vergara
The Episcopal Church Center
815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017
1-800-334-7626 (Ext. 5344) or 212-922-5344

Email: wvergara@episcopalchurch.org
Website: episcopalchurch.org/asain.htm

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



The Rev. Canon Dr. Winfred B. Vergara is Missioner for Asiamerica Ministries in the Episcopal Church. He has lived, studied, and served in three denominations and in three countries.

In the Philippines, Vergara studied at Trinity University of Asia and St. Andrew's Theological Seminary. He was ordained in the Iglesia Filipina Independiente in 1978 and served in Dagupan City, Pangasinan and Pasay City, Metro-Manila. In Singapore, he studied in Southeast Asia Graduate School of Theology and served at St. Andrew's Anglican Cathedral. In the United States, he studied at San Francisco Theological Seminary and served as Canon Missioner for Asian Cultures in the Episcopal Diocese of El Camino Real. He was appointed national Asiamerica Missioner in 2004 and received an honorary doctorate at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CDSP) in 2007.

Vergara is author of *Milkfish in Brackish Water: Filipino Ministry in American Context* (1990); *Mainstreaming Asian Americans in the Episcopal Church* (2006); *Mission and Evangelism in the Age of Globalization* (2009); *Catholicity and Brief History of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines* (2010); and *Let God's Light Shine* (2015).

Vergara currently lives with his wife, Angela in New York, New York.

Being Episcopalian is written as a tool for evangelism, for baptism and confirmation classes, and as a pocket-size handout information about The Episcopal Church.

This booklet and other resources about The Episcopal Church can be found at forwardmovement.org

