

UNITY IN MISSION:
a paper on common mission
and the challenge posed by division
by the Rt. Rev. C. Andrew Doyle



STUDY GUIDE



WHAT THIS IS

This study guide is intended to promote understanding and fruitful discussion of the monograph *Unity in Mission: A Paper on Common Mission and the Challenge Posed by Division* by the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, C. Andrew Doyle. The Bishop completed the paper in the Spring of 2012 in order to chart a course for the diocese, given the likely approval of rites for the blessing of same-gender relationships by the General Convention that summer. Although the Bishop's plan is included in the closing chapter, the bulk of his paper takes up broader biblical, theological, historical and sociological concerns which have shaped his thinking around this specific issue—such as trends in our denomination since 1970, the role of the bishop, the Church's mission, distinctive marks of Anglicanism, the sacrament of marriage, and the issue of divorce and remarriage. You may download a copy of *Unity in Mission* online in its entirety from:

www.epicenter.org/mediafiles/unity-in-mission.pdf

This paper and this study guide are available at www.epicenter.org/unity/

As priests of the Diocese of Texas, we write and offer this study in support of the mission of the Episcopal Church and the plan put forward by our bishop. We are not attempting to promote a particular point of view in regard to the new rite of blessing covenants.

FOR THE FACILITATOR

Unity in Mission is a rich and engaging work, so this guide assumes that the study group will read the paper outside class over the course of nine meetings. The study guide need not be printed out for the participants, although it could be. Alternately, you may choose simply to create handouts from week to week which include the opening and closing devotions, the getting on board question, and the discussion questions. Additionally, the handout should include the questions for the upcoming session and, if the class is using it, the optional supplementary reading with its questions for that session.

Initial publicity for the class could include a handout with a course description, the URL for *Unity in Mission* (unless you decide to print copies) and the discussion questions for the first session.

THE FORMAT OF EACH SESSION

The format is basically the same for each meeting. Following the time guidelines will complete each session in 45 minutes (50 minutes, if you discuss the optional supplementary material.) Let's consider each component in turn.

THE APPROACH begins the session with prayer and with a silent reflection on a passage of scripture related to the topic. Our hope for the outset of each gathering is to create an opening for the Holy Spirit to be the teacher.

THE GETTING ON BOARD QUESTION is intended to “break the ice,” to help the participants get to know each other and to connect them personally to the subject at hand.

THE INTRODUCTION may be read aloud by the facilitator or presented in his or her own words, perhaps with additional comments.

THE DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY QUESTIONS forms the heart of the session. You’ll find that in most sessions, we provide more questions than you probably need or will have time to use, so you may select the ones you think most interesting and fruitful. The italicized comments which follow each question are not answers, as you might find in the teacher’s edition of a textbook. They simply indicate the direction the authors had in mind when framing this question and offer their opinions.

THE OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL Each group may decide whether or not to use this material. If its discussion is to have any hope of staying within the 5 minute limit, then the reading needs to be done beforehand outside of class. The optional reading for Session Two provides the only opportunity in this course to examine the new rite of blessing directly.

THE CONCLUSION brings the session to a close with a suitable scripture reading, free intercessions, the Lord’s Prayer and a closing prayer.

LAST THINGS

Just a note on the use of the word “Anglican.” Despite the adoption of this term by groups which have separated from The Episcopal Church and use it to distinguish themselves, we use Anglican in its traditional sense to mean Churches which have their roots in the Church of England and are a part of the Anglican Communion.

You may find the rite “The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant” along with the theological background and a discussion guide provided by the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music at this website:

https://www.ctepiscopal.org/images/customer-files/I_Will_Bless_You_Corrected.pdf

We are very interested to know who might be using this study guide. If you are, then please e-mail the Rev. John Newton at jnewton@epicenter.org. We would welcome your feedback as well.

We wish to give thanks to Bishop Doyle for his clear leadership and his encouragement of this project, to Carol Barnwell for her help with publishing and to Judy Armstrong for her careful editing.

Preparing this work together has been enjoyable and we hope that “the aim of such instruction” might in some degree be furthered. That aim is the “love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith.”¹

The Rev. Andrew Parker, St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church, Lake Jackson

The Rev. Mark Cranford, St. Luke’s Episcopal Hospital, Houston

The Rev. Canon John Newton, Episcopal Diocese of Texas, Houston

1 I Timothy 1.5



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“page” numbers refer to the original Unity in Mission document at www.epicenter.org/unity

I. INTRODUCTION—2 minutes

This group study is designed for people interested in reading, pondering and discussing *Unity in Mission: A Paper on Common Mission and the Challenge Posed by Division* written by the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, the Right Rev. C. Andrew Doyle. The paper ultimately addresses the issue of the blessing of same-gender relationships, as enacted by General Convention in Indianapolis in 2012. However, Bishop Doyle spends a good deal of time (as will we) considering more fundamental questions like the mission of the Church, the role of bishops, marks of the Anglican tradition, the interpretation of scripture and the nature of Christian marriage.

We plan to meet nine times to discuss a portion of the paper which we'll have read in advance. Discussion questions for the next week's reading will also be distributed in advance, as they were for today's meeting. That we may be open to the influence of God's Word and the Holy Spirit, we will begin and end in a brief scripture reading and prayer. Following the opening prayer, we'll spend a little time responding to a Getting On Board question, in order to initiate our engagement with the topic and to help deepen our friendship. Each session provides a supplementary reading, which this group may elect to do or not do.

The intent of the study as a whole is not only to encounter some new ideas and insights, but also to take part in the "divine training that comes by faith" which St. Paul commended to Timothy. In this way we may grow together in love. Let's approach our training, and the Holy One who inspires it, with the reading and prayer printed on your handout.

II. APPROACH—5 minutes

Leader: Let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts

People: be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer.

Psalm 19:14

Reader: A reading from the First Letter of Paul to Timothy.

I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine, and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith. But the aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith.

I Timothy 1:3-5

Silence for reflection

Leader: Let us pray

O God, you first taught the faithful by the light of your Holy Spirit. Grant that we may receive the divine training through the same Spirit, to grow in love and heartfulness, in conscience and in sincerity of faith. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

III. GETTING ON BOARD QUESTION—7 minutes

Tell the group your name, why you came to this study group and what you hope to gain from it.

IV. DISCUSSION OF STUDY QUESTIONS—25 minutes

The reading for today includes the preliminary portions of *Unity in Mission*. These are the Foreword by Secretary James Baker and the Preface by Bishop Doyle which explain how the paper came to be written. We've also assigned and will discuss Chapter Five: Our Response because the "Conversation Covenant" it describes can serve as a model for our own discussions.

Q1. What in the reading assigned for this first session strikes or impresses you, either positively or negatively?

A. CONSIDERING THE OPENING MATERIAL

Q2. Review Charles Swindoll's definitions of union, uniformity, unanimity and unity on p. 1. What would be some examples of each of these four versions of commonality?

Union—the United States, stockholders in a corporation

Uniformity—a street gang, certain companies with a strong corporate culture, certain cliques

Unanimity—a unanimous vote or judicial opinion

Unity—many non-profit organizations, such as The Heifer Project, The Nature Conservancy

Which of these versions of commonality does The Episcopal Church exhibit, if any? How about your congregation?

Q3. Why do you think the issue of same-sex relations is so divisive, as Secretary James Baker III and Bishop Doyle both assert?

Sexuality is so intimate for us and is tied to some of our deepest needs and fears. We all have some kind of personal issue with it.

Q4. Secretary Baker mentions on p. 4 “the Church’s long history of allowing for decision making at the local levels.” To which Church is he referring ?

He most likely means the Anglican Church, although he may mean the Church as a whole. Certainly some other denominations allow more local decision making than we do; for example, the Congregational and Baptist Churches and the Churches of Christ. However, the Anglican Church certainly allows more local decision making than certain others, like the Roman Catholic Church.

Q5. Bishop Doyle holds that at least parts of The Episcopal Church have “suffered, because of the belief that we should all agree on the matter of same-gender blessings; and that those who disagree should leave.” (p. 6) Have you or your congregation suffered in this regard or do you know of anyone who has? Tell what has happened.

Responding to this question may have a wholesome effect for some participants. Walter Breuggemann, the Old Testament scholar, has said that healing may take place when pain can come to speech.

Q6. Bishop Doyle cites Romans 14.1 “quarreling over opinions” as poor stewardship of our time and energy. The longer passage is worth our reading. Here’s *Romans 14.1-7*:

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves.

How might these disputes concerning diet and the calendar apply to the issue of blessing same-sex unions, or do they?

These verses introduce the key concept of “adiaphora,” which Bishop Doyle will explore in Chapter IV. The ancient theological term *adiaphora* refers to “matters regarded as non-essential, issues about which one can disagree without dividing the Church.”² Most strong traditionalists and strong progressives would claim that the blessing of same-sex relationships is not *adiaphora*—traditionalists saying the practice cannot be tolerated, progressives that it must be embraced. Bishop Doyle will point out that “within our Church there are a growing number of individuals who would indeed say that our uniformity on the sacrament of marriage is indeed *adiaphora*.” (p. 89)

St. Paul makes the point that, even in matters of “indifference,” we make our choices not simply to please ourselves.

Q7. Secretary Baker impressed the bishop by his insistence that being a leader entails taking stands which some people may not like. Would you agree? Have you ever exhibited this sort of leadership or seen it demonstrated in others?

Q8. What is Bishop Doyle’s objective in writing *Unity in Mission*?

He writes on p. 8: “I am seeking in this short text to answer the questions: How do people with differing views on sexuality and blessing of same-gender relationships stay together for the sake of the Gospel? How is it that we are able to remain one church?”

Q9. The Bishop confesses on p. 11 that the people of his diocese make him want to be a better bishop. This recalls the pivotal moment in the movie *As Good As It Gets* when Helen Hunt on a dinner date with the scurrilous Jack Nicholson insists that he give her a compliment. He fumbles, but says finally, “You make me want to be a better man.”

More than one person has said, “Bishop Doyle makes me want to be a better priest.” Who or what makes you want to be a better Christian?

B. CONSIDERING CHAPTER V: OUR RESPONSE

Q11. Do you believe that trustful conversation can lead to “our common and communal transformation” (p. 104) or are such hopes in conversation misplaced?

The expectation that this conversation may lead us to communal transformation in the power of the Spirit underlies the reason for Christian formation and for encouraging such study groups as these. As Martin Buber said, “All real living is meeting.”

Q12. How can “this moment of deep conflict and divide” possibly be a “sacred moment?” (p. 106 ¶4)

Because the moment offers us the possibility of overcoming the divide and remaining steadfast in our commitments. Reconciliation is the sacred work which Christ Jesus gives us, potentially to “light a fire” and bear witness to the Church and to the world.

Q13. What ideas or phrases from chapter five would you like to adopt for this study group?

We suggest writing these on newsprint or a whiteboard.

Q14. What other agreements might the group make to strengthen your participation in and experience here?

Participants might suggest confidentiality; a balance of sharing and listening; not giving unsolicited advice; arriving, starting and ending on time; doing the assigned readings. These should be added to the list on the newsprint and an agreement reached.

V. OPTIONAL MATERIAL—5 minutes

Because our text *Unity in Mission* is fundamentally about mission and because Bishop Doyle is fundamentally about mission, let’s take a broader look at just what the Bishop understands our mission to be. The following reading is taken from his book *Unabashedly Episcopalian*.

THE HEART OF HOW THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH PROCLAIMS THE GOOD NEWS

Several themes are at the heart of this uniquely Episcopal proclamation of the good news, and we share these convictions globally with other Anglicans. They are captured in the bedrock of our Baptismal Covenant. They guide our living of the gospel message:

1. Our Episcopal faith is supported by our continued reflection on Scripture, the apostles’ teachings, communal prayer, and life lived in connection with the sacraments.
2. Mission is the work of God, who was sent into the world and sends us into the world. When we enact the gospel, we make Jesus Christ incarnate in the world. Mission and outreach are about Jesus: first, last and always.
3. Mission and outreach are holistic. We seek to meet the needs of the whole person, spiritual and physical.

4. We proclaim in voice and in action the good news of the reign of God.
5. We teach, baptize and nurture believers.
6. We respond to human need by serving others.
7. We transform the unjust structures of society.
8. We seek sustainable and renewing initiatives that redeem not only humanity but the creation in which we live.
9. Our outreach and mission are always rooted in Scripture, tradition and reason.
10. We make a greater witness to the world around us when we join hands with one another beyond differences of theology, ideology, and identity, in order to meet the human needs around us.
11. We are changed by serving and walking with others. We are incomplete without the poor, voiceless, and oppressed by our side.
12. We are saved and given power to serve and act only by God's grace.

This is the unique story of our faith. It is the rock upon which my life rests. It is the particular story which gives meaning to the chaos of a world ruled by powers and principalities. It is what we have been given by Jesus of Nazareth and what we have to offer the world.³

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand to be the Church's mission?
2. Do any of Bishop Doyle's 12 points especially speak to you? Are there any you think should not be included? Are there any you would add?
3. You might wish to consider how these points arise out of the Baptismal Covenant in *The Book of Common Prayer* on pp. 304-305.

³ Andrew Doyle, *Unabashedly Episcopalian* (Morehouse Publishing, 2012), pp. 87-88.

VI. CONCLUSION—5 minutes

Reader: A reading from the Gospel according to John:

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. *John 17:20-23*

Free intercessions and thanksgivings

The Lord's Prayer

Leader: Let us pray together:

All: O Father, grant that our inner being may be strengthened through your Spirit and that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, as we are rooted and grounded in love. May we have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth and know the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge, so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. To you who, working within us, are able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine—to you be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

adapted from Ephesians 3:15-20

AFTER SESSION ONE:

The facilitator should type up the list of shared agreement and distribute copies at the next session.

I. APPROACH—5 minutes

Leader: Blessed are the peacemakers,

People: for they will be called children of God. *Matthew 5:9*

Reader: A reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation....So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18, 20

Silence for reflection

Leader: Let us pray

O God unto whom all hearts lie open unto whom desire is eloquent and from whom no secret thing is hidden; purify the thoughts of our hearts by the outpouring of your Spirit that we may love you with a perfect love and praise you as you deserve. Amen.

adapted from the opening prayer of *The Cloud of Unknowing*

II. GETTING ON BOARD QUESTION—7 minutes

What has been one of the hardest changes for you to undergo in your life?
How have you managed to come through it?

III. INTRODUCTION—2 minutes

The facilitator should begin by distributing copies of the guidelines which the group arrived at during the last session. Participants should have the opportunity to ask questions, to offer changes and, finally, to commit to the guidelines.

Bishop Doyle in this Introduction summarizes the decline in membership in the Episcopal Church since 1970 and considers its possible causes. He calls on sociological findings regarding change, the dynamics of conflict, and the culture wars. Finally, he quickly surveys the history of the Episcopal bishops of the Diocese of Texas, which probably parallels many other Episcopal dioceses. His purpose is to see how the bishops' approach to the conflicts of their day may inform church leaders today.

The optional supplementary material consists of portions of the new rite of blessing same-gender relationships, officially entitled "The Witnessing and

Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant.” This is the only opportunity in this course to engage the rite directly. (The Episcopal Church has published a document “Liturgical Resources 1: I Will Bless you, and You Will Be a Blessing: Resources for Blessing Same-Gender Relationships,” which includes the rite in full and a study course for congregations.)

IV. DISCUSSION OF STUDY QUESTIONS—25 minutes

Q1. What in this introductory chapter strikes or impresses you, either positively or negatively?

Q2. Bishop Doyle cites a lot of statistics regarding the decline in the number of members in the Episcopal Church since 1970. To what does he attribute this decline? Do you agree? Do you see the numerical decline as a problem?

He attributes the slide to our conflicts concerning sexuality. The quotation from Russell Levenson mentions other conflicts, such as women’s ordination, prayer book revision, and civil rights. But Levenson also adds that the huge loss between 1970 and 1975 took place before the fiercest conflict over women and the prayer book.

One could point to broader cultural trends at the time which led to declining membership in mainline Protestant churches generally. This shift is often associated with a loss of trust in traditional institutions and is typically connected with such developments as the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal.

Of course the numerical decline of the Episcopal Church is a problem for us.

Q3. What action does the Bishop recommend for reversing the decline? Do you agree?

He recommends that Episcopalians maintain their unity and friendship despite their disagreements (p. 20). He also recommends planting new churches, pro-active newcomer ministry and taking the Gospel to those outside our churches (p. 12 ¶3).

Q4. How might Philip Wylie’s two principles:

- 1) human nature does not change, and
- 2) fashion and trends change

offer insight toward resolving our disputes over sexuality?

Wylie’s principles underscore the importance of process over content. Given human nature, disagreements and conflicts are inevitable. The task is as

much to address the underlying dynamics of control, inclusion and affection as to address the current trend.

Q5. Consider the graph at the bottom of page 14. What does the vertical axis running to from 0 to 12 measure?

The intensity of conflict.

Have you ever experienced or witnessed people moving into “incapacity” as their conflict mounts?

Q6. What evidence do you see that we do or do not live in a “culture of indictment” in the United States at this time? A related question: What issues have stoked the culture wars and is the fight still continuing?

The term “culture wars” came into currency with the publication in 1991 of the book *Culture Wars: A Struggle to Define America* by James Davison Hunter. This author believes that America since the 1960’s has become polarized between the “orthodox” and “progressive” views regarding abortion, homosexuality, education, laws, censorship and the arts.

Q7. What common theme does Bishop Doyle seem to find running through the history of the Episcopal bishops of Texas?

The importance of mission and overcoming our disagreements and divisions.

Q8. As you look back on the history of your congregation (or your diocese, or both) what common theme stands out for you?

Q9. What terms or ideas presented by the Bishop would you like to know more about?

Facilitator might suggest the individual follow up and bring the findings to the next class, something most people can easily do with the Internet.

V. OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL—5 minutes

Before going any further in this course, we should move out of abstractions and look at the actual rite of Blessing which the General Convention adopted in 2012 and which lies at the heart of the controversy. Here key portions of the rite are aligned alongside the parallel portions in the rite of Holy Matrimony.

THE CELEBRATION AND BLESSING OF A MARRIAGE
THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER (1979)

THE COLLECT

O gracious and everliving God,
you have created us male and female in your image:
Look mercifully upon this man and this woman
who come to you seeking your blessing,
and assist them with your grace,
that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor
and keep the promises and vows they make...

THE MARRIAGE

In the name of God,
I, N., take you, N.,
to be my wife (husband),
to have and to hold from this day forward
for better for worse, for richer for poorer,
in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish,
until we are parted by death.
This is my solemn vow.

*The Priest may ask God's blessing on a ring or rings
as follows:*

Bless, O Lord, these rings to be signs of the vows by
which this man and this woman have bound themselves
to each other through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*The giver places the ring on the ring-finger of the other's
hand and says:*

N., I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow,
and with all that I am, and all that I have,
I honor you, in the Name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

*Then the Celebrant joins the right hand of husband
and wife and says:*

Now that N. and N. have given
themselves to each other by solemn vows, with the
joining of hands and the giving and receiving of rings,
I pronounce that they are husband and wife, in the
Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the

**THE WITNESSING AND BLESSING OF
A LIFELONG COVENANT (2012)**

THE COLLECT

Gracious and everliving God:
assist by your grace N. and N.,
whose lifelong commitment of love
and fidelity we witness this day.
Grant them your blessing,
that with firm resolve they may honor
and keep the covenant they make...

COMMITMENT

In the name of God, I, N., give myself to you, N.
I will support and care for you by the grace of God:
enduring all things, bearing all things.
I will hold and cherish you in the love of Christ.
I will honor and keep you with the Spirit's help, forsak-
ing all others, as long as we both shall live.
This is my solemn vow.

*If rings are to be exchanged, they are brought before the Presider,
who prays using the following words*

Bless, O God, these rings as enduring signs of the cov-
enant N. and N. have made with other, through Jesus
Christ our Lord.

*The two people place the rings on the fingers of one another, first
the one, then the other, saying:*

N., receive this ring as a symbol of my abiding love.

The Presider says:

Inasmuch as N. and N. have exchanged vows of love
and fidelity in the presence of God and the Church, I
now pronounce that they are bound to one another in a
holy covenant, as long as they both shall live.

Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder.

The Blessing of the Marriage

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favor look upon you, and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace; you may faithfully live together in this life and in the age to come have life everlasting.

The Blessing of the Couple

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve and keep you, and mercifully grant you rich and boundless grace, that you may please God in body and that soul. God make you a sign of the loving-kindness and steadfast fidelity manifest in the life, death and resurrection of our Savior, and bring you at last to the heavenly banquet, where he lives and reigns for ever and ever.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What similarities and what differences do you notice between the two rites?

The structure and wording are very similar. However, the new rite avoids any gender specific language, whereas the traditional rite is very gender specific.

2. Does “The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant” use any of the terminology of Holy Matrimony or indicate that an actual marriage is taking place?

In fact, the new rite does not mention the words “marriage” or “matrimony.” You might consider why this is the case. Most people will have an opinion on whether this is a good thing or a bad one.

3. Does any part of the new rite indicate that the participants are two men or two women?

The rite chooses not to draw attention to the fact that the participants are the same sex. Again people will have varying opinions on whether this is best.

VI. CONCLUSION—5 minutes

Reader: A reading from the Letter of James.

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures. ...Therefore welcome with meekness the implanted word which has power to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers. *James 1:17-18, 21b-22*

Free intercessions and thanksgivings

The Lord's Prayer

Leader: Let us pray together:

All: Thou, O Father

Thou, O Son

Thou, O Spirit

only one.

Amend our minds, O Father.

Our bodies tend, O Son.

Align our spirits, Spirit.

Make us one.⁴

Andrew Parker

⁴ This prayer is rooted in the idea developed by St. Augustine of Hippo that every human being is tripartite, reflecting the image of the Trinity. The prayer may be modified for individual use by changing the plural forms to the singular, as in "Amend my mind, O Father..."

I. APPROACH—5 minutes

Leader: Send out your light and your truth that they may lead me

People: and bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling. *Psalm 43:3*

Reader: A reading from the Letter of Paul to Titus

For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able to both preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it. *Titus 1:7-9*

Silence for reflection

Leader: Let us pray

To you, O Father, all hearts are open; fill, we pray, the hearts of all your servants whom you have chosen to be bishops in your Church, with such love of you and of all the people, that they may feed and tend the flock of Christ, serving before you day and night in the ministry of reconciliation, declaring pardon in your Name, offering the holy gifts, and wisely overseeing the life and work of the Church. May we, with them, present before you the acceptable offering of a pure, and gentle, and holy life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. adapted from the BCP p.521

II. GETTING ON BOARD QUESTION—8 minutes

What has been your personal experience of bishops? More specifically, have you had a favorite bishop? What did you appreciate about him or her?

III. INTRODUCTION—2 minutes

In this first chapter proper, Bishop Doyle explores and articulates the Anglican understanding of the role of bishop. He does so in order to make clear right up front his theological and historical reasons for writing and for taking on such a controversial, complex topic. The chapter introduces a number of themes which will inform the paper as a whole and will lead toward the "Plan" found in chapter six. Examples are the missionary church, reconciliation, distinguishing essentials from the nonessentials, the issue of divorce, enculturation and catholicity.

Before going further, we should consider the meaning of the term catholic, a word Bishop Doyle favors but which is used so variously. We can distinguish at least three senses, moving from broad to narrower meanings:

(1) Catholic is derived from the Greek word *katholikos* which means “whole,” “general” or “universal.” This use describes “the universal Church as distinct from local Christian communities. It is applied thus to the faith of the whole Church.”⁵

(2) Catholic may designate “the Church before the great schism between East and West, or any Church standing in historical continuity with it,”⁶ such as the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Anglican Churches. These branches acknowledge the authority of the church councils prior to the great schism and preserve the apostolic succession of bishops and many components of the ancient liturgy.

(3) “Since the Reformation, the Roman Catholics have come to use the term of themselves exclusively.”⁷

Bishop Doyle tends to use catholic in the second sense.

IV. DISCUSSION OF STUDY QUESTIONS—25 minutes

Q1. What in this chapter strikes or impresses you, either positively or negatively?

Q2. In the chapter’s opening paragraph, Bishop Doyle states that he is a bishop of the Diocese of Texas, a bishop in the Episcopal Church and a bishop within the Anglican Communion, in that order. He adds: “In our common life we may think that we reverse this hierarchy, but in reality I am rooted in my place of ministry.”

Why do you think Bishop Doyle chooses to rank the hierarchy from local to global? Would you agree?

Consider the power of the particular, the specific and the local. Many writers will tell you that “you cannot write from anywhere unless you write from somewhere” or, as Billy Collins puts it, “You cannot start in Oz. You have to start in Kansas.”

Similarly, one of the pioneers of psychotherapy, Carl Rogers, said “that which is most personal is most universal.”

5 The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 254.

6 The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993), p. 354.

7 The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 254.

In the twelfth chapter of the book of Genesis, the Lord turned from saving humanity in general to calling and saving a specific people, the Jews. The Son of God was incarnated as a particular human being at a particular time and place.

Q3. “We cannot use dogma, which we believe is essential, to bludgeon our fellow Christians or those who seek a living Christ. We must be faithful to the Gospel, but we cannot condemn the mission field we wish to convert or condemn one another.” (p.23 ¶3)

What is dogma, actually? Why is it essential? Has someone ever “bludgeoned” you with dogma?

The word dogma comes from a Greek word meaning “to seem good” or “an opinion.” Thus a dogma is a belief or doctrine which an authoritative council has considered and declared “good.” For example, the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation were defined by the first four general councils of the Church and given the status of dogma, meaning they are definitive and normative for the Church.

Dogma gives shape to our faith and provides a given place on which we may stand. Dogma helps to distinguish the essential from the non-essential.

Q4. An Inter-Anglican Theological Commission describes *koinonia* as “the intimate communion of God” and asserts that “the challenge for bishops is how to harness conflicts so that through this process a deeper *koinonia* in the Gospel emerges.” (p. 26 ¶1)

Have you had any experiences of *koinonia*?

Has your *koinonia* with another person, or a group of people, ever deepened as a result of working through a conflict?

Koinonia is sometimes translated “fellowship” and describes the communion we have with one another through God.

Frequently, couples in a marriage or a romantic relationship find that their relationship is deepened by working through a conflict.

Q5. “Diversity is not a core value of our faith—catholicity is.” (p. 26 ¶3)
What do you see as the difference between the concepts of “diversity” and “catholicity”?

Catholicity presupposes an underlying unity and common ground...referenced by the TSEO as the “fullness of the one faith.” (p.27) The local expression differs, but the substance is held in common. (One could draw an analogy with the Trinity, in which Father, Son and Holy Spirit all “express” the same substance.)

Q6. In addition to catholicity, what other values are also “core” for Bishop Doyle? How would you agree or disagree?

Some of the prominent core values in this chapter are unity, mission, reconciliation, proclamation and evangelism, “every person’s deeply cherished experience of God and nearness to God” (p.24), the “theological legacy of scripture, tradition and reason” (p.24) and the history and heritage of the Diocese of Texas.

Q7. A related question: What various vocations (or roles) does Bishop Doyle wish to live out?

He touches on these vocations throughout the chapter and they are conveniently summarized on p. 29: “This is my vocation as bishop—to be: chief liturgist, an evangelist, an apostolic teacher and binder of our faith, a partner with clergy and laity alike, a mediator of God’s grace, an encourager of reconciliation, catholic and a colleague with my brother and sister bishops.”

Q8. What are your vocations in life? How are your vocations shaped by your identity as a Christian? Have you ever found yourself doing your work “without these vocations in the forefront” of your mind? (p. 29)

Q9. Bishop Doyle includes on p.27 an extended quote from an Inter-Anglican theological document on the subject of enculturation.

What is meant by enculturation? How does this concept bear upon the “challenge posed by division” and the blessing of same-sex relationships? To use Bishop Doyle’s words, enculturation “translates locally what is received from abroad.” All Anglicans have “received” the catholic faith and, with it, the Christian understanding of marriage. How this is “translated” will vary from culture to culture, nation to nation, possibly even from congregation to congregation.

Q10. Have you ever experienced “the stumbling blocks that diversity brings” either in the church or another setting? How was it resolved, if at all?

Q11. Do you agree that “we hide from our catholicity with words like conservatives or traditionalists and liberals or progressives?” (p.28 ¶3) Why do we adopt these words?

Such words help us define our identity.

Q12. To what negative experiences of Church might Bishop Doyle be responding in this chapter?

People using dogma like a bludgeon. Bishops (or other Episcopalians) deprecating their bonds with each other.

Q13. How does the Bishop’s “stand” described in the final paragraph of the chapter strike you?

Participants might choose words such as “heroic,” “pompous,” “obedient,” “authentic,” “conscientious” or “courageous.” The facilitator doesn’t need to argue for or against any of these.

Why does he feel the necessity to take a stand?

He feels this is his responsibility as Bishop Diocesan. Secretary James Baker told him: “We need you to be our bishop. No, not everyone will like what you are proposing, but this is what it means to be a leader.” (p.7) The Secretary also advised him: “Bishop, you have to decide where you are on this issue. Then people can decide where they are, in relation to you.”

Q14. What major point(s) do you believe Bishop Doyle is trying to get across in this first chapter?

Two of these major points:

1. Bishop Doyle has undertaken this Paper and Plan in the midst of our crisis because of his understanding of his role as leader and bishop of the diocese.
2. As bishop, his vocation is to be: “chief liturgist, an evangelist, an apostolic teacher and binder of our faith, a partner with clergy and laity alike, a mediator of God’s grace, an encourager of reconciliation, catholic and a colleague with my brother and sister bishops.”

Q15. What terms or ideas presented by the Bishop would you like to know more about?

Facilitator might again suggest the individual follow up and bring the findings to the next class.

V. OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL: ENCULTURATION—5 minutes

Evangelism and the Wholeness of Mission

by the Rt Revd Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester, England⁸

Kerygma means the core belief, the bare bones of Christian faith and of course kerygma is related to proclamation. It is in the proclamation, in the preaching, that you discover what the core is. You don't sit down somewhere and write a tome of systematic theology to discover what the bare bones of the Christian faith are. You discover that in the preaching itself. That is pretty basic. The difficulty of course is that evangelists are preaching in different contexts. They are not preaching in a mono-cultural situation. Certainly in the United Kingdom now, even in a parish the situation is not mono-cultural. People of different cultures, different world views, different value systems are living cheek by jowl. So how is the preaching to be done and the bare bones of the faith to be discerned? The point is that it is done in context.

In the New Testament already we find that when the preaching is given to the Jewish people, as in the great kerygmatic speeches in the Acts of the Apostles, the whole of salvation history is rehearsed; how God has been working among those people and now how he is bringing them back to a fulfilment of the story of Jesus. But when the Gospel has to be preached to those who have no such Jewish background, then the evangelists take a different line. Can you think of any examples in the New Testament of where that happens?You mention Athens. Paul is left alone in Athens, but as a good Jew his spirit rebels against the idolatry that he sees all around. Yet, when he comes to his speech in the Areopagus he begins with the native religious sense of the Athenians and he tries to connect with them, not only with the reference to the unknown God but the quotations which he uses from the Greek poems. "In him we live and move and have our being". That was not said by a Jew. It is not in the Old Testament. So this is what St. Paul means I suppose when he says to the Jew I became a Jew, to the Gentile I became a Gentile (I Corinthians 9). You see it is not just an external thing that you proclaim the Gospel to people in one way but you believe it in another way yourself. That is not authentic enculturation or contextualization. You know, when missionaries came to Pakistan, they were told they mustn't place the Bible on the floor, because that is a cultural value. But as soon as they returned home, they put the Bible back on the floor - I mean they have not learned anything! So proclamation necessarily leads us to ask the question to whom is the Gospel being proclaimed....

⁸ a selection from a much longer address to the Inter Anglican Provincial Mission and Evangelism Co-ordinators Consultation in Nairobi, Kenya in May 2002, lightly edited for this curriculum. The original address may be found in full here: www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/resources/papers/paper2.cfm

Now when we try to relate the Gospel to culture....we still have to ask what are the limits to enculturation. The Pope in an Encyclical written some years ago said that there were two: The nature of the Gospel itself is a limit. You can't compromise that. And the fellowship between believers is another limit, so that I should not do anything in my preaching and living the gospel that compromises you. This is for the Anglican tradition a first order question—that we must recognise and respect the gospel in one another and make sure that we are not a stumbling block for our brother or sister in another context.

I used to feel this when working on the Indian border. I was Bishop of Raiwind, almost on the Indian border, and at that time we could cross over into India to spend the day. As soon as you crossed the border, you could see the difference, but not only do you see the difference in life generally, but also in how people worship, how they handle the scriptures. In Pakistan, people are, of necessity influenced by their Islamic environment, they want to be Christians in an Islamic environment, worship is therefore simple, Bible centred, preaching orientated and so forth. You cross over into India and there is incense and candles and flowers and colour and all sorts of things. And I used to ask myself the question: When would Christians in Pakistan cease to see the faith in their brothers and sisters in India, because the expression of the faith has become so different. That must be a concern with us all the time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your understanding of enculturation?
2. How might the insistence of the Anglican reformers that public worship be “in a tongue understood of the people” be an example of enculturation?
3. What are the limits to enculturation, according to the address?
(1) The nature of the gospel and (2) the fellowship between the believers.
4. How do these limits apply to our controversy regarding the blessing of same-sex relationships?

First, we must discern whether blessing these relationships is universally excluded by the “kerygma,” the core faith. If not, then we must consider how the implementation of the blessing may best be done without offending the consciences of others or impairing our fellowship.

VI. CONCLUSION—5 minutes

Reader: A reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

You are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Corinthians 3:3-6

Free intercessions and thanksgivings

The Lord's Prayer

Leader: Let us pray together:

All: O God of truth and peace, you raise up your servants in days of bitter controversy to defend with sound reasoning and great charity the catholic and reformed religion: Grant that we may maintain that middle way, not as a compromise for the sake of peace, but as a comprehension for the sake of truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

adapted from the Collect for Richard Hooker, LFF p. 427

I. APPROACH—5 minutes

Leader: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet;

People: And a light unto my path.

Psalm 119:105

Reader: A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.

Ephesians 2: 19-22

Silence for reflection

Leader:

Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

BCP 230, Collect for Proper 8

II. GETTING ON BOARD QUESTION—8 minutes

Bishop Doyle writes, “As a congregation or as a diocese it is our responsibility to engage the scripture.” (p. 41 ¶2) How have you taken responsibility for engaging scripture in your own life?

III. INTRODUCTION—2 minutes

In chapter two Bishop Doyle turns his attention to the question, “What unites us as Episcopalians and as Anglicans if not our stance on human sexuality?” Bishop Doyle identifies four “marks” that unify us as Episcopalians and Anglicans. These marks are the basis of our unity and are (1) scripture, (2) worship, (3) our particular orders of communion and our (4) mission. In the first half of chapter two, Bishop Doyle lays the groundwork for the conversation and then turns his attention to the first mark of our unity, which is scripture.

Episcopalians, Bishop Doyle argues, are united by the studying of the scriptures. It is God’s living and active word and the primary basis for “our churches’ decision making.” As Anglicans we read the scriptures not just privately but in the context of community. Context matters greatly for how

Episcopalians interpret scripture. The study of the scripture is “at the center of our unity.” We hold it to be “authoritative.”

However, the authority of scripture is defined uniquely by Anglicans as “the authority of the triune God, exercised through scripture” (The Windsor Report). We define authority in this way for two reasons. First, scripture itself states that all authority belongs to Him (Matt 28:18). Jesus alone is “God’s ultimate and personal self-expression” (TWR). Second, as Bishop Doyle states, “It is this understanding that keeps Anglicans and Episcopalians from becoming narrow in their reading of the text.” In other words, Episcopalians are hesitant to take a text and apply it universally. Rather, we see an Anglican reading of scripture as a dynamic, revelatory practice, which happens as we read the Bible both privately and in community.

The study of scripture is the responsibility of the Episcopalian. We are called to “read, mark and inwardly digest” the scriptures. We have made a vow before God and the church to continue in the apostles’ teaching (Baptismal Covenant). Such is why for the Episcopalians scripture is an “essential guidepost” and a mark of our unity.

IV. DISCUSSION OF STUDY QUESTIONS—25 minutes

Q1. What in this chapter strikes or impresses you, either positively or negatively?

Q2. Bishop Doyle references our “sinful want to fight rather than to engage in mission.” (p. 32 ¶1) Do you believe fighting is often “easier” than in engaging in the difficult work of mission? Why or why not?

Fighting is often the way we try and protect our fragile ego. We want to be “right” and it makes us feel “safe.” Mission, on the other hand, is a call to take up our cross daily and to lose our life, serving others, for the sake of the Gospel. It is inherently “unsafe.”

Q3. Bishop Doyle quotes St. Paul in arguing that we are called to be “in full accord and one mind.” How can we be of “one mind” and still disagree on important theological issues?

The “mind” Paul is referencing in Philippians 2 is the “mind of Christ,” expressed most fully in a willingness to go to the cross for the other. Fighting and bickering is utterly opposed to this “mind.” Two people may disagree on the presenting issue of the day, but if they have Jesus’ mind they can unite for the sake of mission.

Q4. Bishop Doyle suggests that the most appropriate way to be in relationship with others is to “empty ourselves in order to be filled with grace?” (p. 34 ¶1) What does this look like in practice? Can you offer any example?

I am reminded of John the Baptist’s words with respect to Jesus: “He must increase, I must decrease” (John 3:30). Jesus’ parable of the great banquet also comes to mind. The one who takes the lowest place is told, “Friend, come up higher!” (Lk 14:10)

Q5. We have a collect that calls us to “read, mark and inwardly digest the scriptures.” What does this look like in practice? How do you live this out in your own life?

Here would be a good place to be reminded of Peterson’s quote, i.e., that “reading scripture constitutes an act of crisis” as it “brings us into a world that is totally at odds” with the world we encounter. (p. 39 ¶2) We cannot live in this world and not “inwardly digest” its beliefs, values and assumptions. When we read scripture we “take in” the beliefs, values and assumptions of a “new world” Jesus called the Kingdom of God. Perhaps the goal of scripture is for Jesus’ world to become more real to us than the one we’re sold by the media, and for that to change how we live in our world as a result.

Q6. What does the term “authority of scripture” mean for an Anglican? Why can this term be misleading?

This is a shorthand term for “God’s authority exercised through scripture.” All authority belongs to God and the Bible is the primary way God exercises that authority. As a result it must be read in its context, and always in community. Even though the Bible is without error, it is only without error with respect to the purposes God has in mind for it. In other words, the Bible, as a means of exercising God’s authority is infallible, but when we use it for our purposes we most certainly are fallible.

V. OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Excerpt from “How Can the Bible be Authoritative?”

The Rt. Rev. N.T. Wright

Full article: http://ntwrightpage.com/Wright_Bible_Authoritative.htm

THE BIBLE AND BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

How in the Bible does God exercise his authority?

Then, we have to ask, if we are to get to the authority of scripture, how does God exercise that authority? Again and again, in the biblical story itself we see that he does so *through human agents anointed and equipped by the Holy Spirit*. And this is itself an expression of his love, because he does not will, simply to come into the world in a blinding flash of light and obliterate all opposition. He wants to reveal himself meaningfully within the space/time universe not just passing it by tangentially; to reveal himself in judgment and in mercy in a way which will save people. So, we get the prophets. We get obedient writers in the Old Testament, not only prophets but those who wrote the psalms and so on. As the climax of the story we get Jesus himself as the great prophet, but how much more than a prophet. And, we then get Jesus’ people as the anointed ones. And within that sequence there is a very significant passage, namely 1 Kings 22. Micaiah, the son of Imlah (one of the great prophets who didn’t leave any writing behind him but who certainly knew what his business was) stands up against the wicked king, Ahab. The false prophets of Israel at the time were saying to Ahab, ‘Go up against Ramoth-gilead and fight and you will triumph. Yahweh will give it into your hand’. This is especially interesting, because the false prophets appear to have everything going for them. They are quoting Deuteronomy 33—one of them makes horns and puts them on his head and says, ‘with these you will crush the enemy until they are overthrown’. They had scripture on their side, so it seemed. They had tradition on their side; after all, Yahweh was the God of Battles and he would fight for Israel. They had reason on their side; Israel and Judah together can beat these northern enemies quite easily. But they didn’t have God on their side. Micaiah had stood in the council of the Lord and in that private, strange, secret meeting he had learned that even the apparent scriptural authority which these prophets had, and the apparent tradition and reason, wasn’t good enough; God wanted to judge Ahab and so save Israel. And so God delegated his authority to the prophet Micaiah who, inspired by the Spirit, stood humbly in the council of God and then stood boldly in the councils of men. He put his life and liberty on the line, like Daniel and so many others. That is how God brought his authority to bear on Israel: not by revealing to them a set of timeless truths, but by delegating his authority to obedient men through whose words he brought judgment and salvation to Israel and the world.

And how much more must we say of Jesus. Jesus the great prophet; Jesus who rules from the cross in judgment and love; Jesus who says: all authority is given to me, so you go and get on with the job. I hope the irony of that has not escaped you. So too in Acts 1, we find: God has all authority . . . so that you will receive power. Again, the irony. How can we resolve that irony? By holding firmly to what the New Testament gives us, which is the strong theology of the authoritative Holy Spirit. Jesus' people are to be the anointed ones through whom God still works authoritatively. And then, in order that the church may be the church—may be the people of God for the world—God, by that same Holy Spirit, equips men in the first generation to write the new covenant documentation. This is to be the new covenant documentation which gives the foundation charter and the characteristic direction and identity to the people of God, who are to be the people of God for the world. It is common to say in some scholarly circles that the evangelists, for instance, didn't know they were writing scripture. One of the gains of modern scholarship is that we now see that to be a mistake. Redaction criticism has shown that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were writing what they were writing in order that it might be the foundation documentation for the church of their day and might bear God's authority in doing so. And a book which carries God's authority to be the foundation of the church for the world is what I mean by scripture. I think they knew what they were doing.

Thus it is that through the spoken and written authority of anointed human beings God brings his authority to bear on his people and his world. Thus far, we have looked at what the Bible says about how God exercises his judging and saving authority. And it includes (the point with which in fact we began) the delegation of his authority, in some sense, to certain writings. But this leads us to more questions.

HOW DOES GOD EXERCISE HIS AUTHORITY THROUGH THE BIBLE?

When we turn the question round, however, and ask it the other way about, we discover just what a rich concept of authority we are going to need if we are to do justice to this book. The writings written by these people, thus led by the Spirit, are not for the most part, as we saw, the sort of things we would think of as 'authoritative'. They are mostly narrative; and we have already run up against the problem how can a story, a narrative, be authoritative? Somehow, the authority which God has invested in this book is an authority that is wielded and exercised through the people of God telling and retelling their story as the story of the world, telling the covenant story as the true story of creation. Somehow, this authority is also wielded through his people singing psalms. Somehow, it is wielded (it seems) in particular through God's people telling the story of Jesus. We must look, then, at the question of stories. What sort of authority might they possess?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Is the Bible the only way God exercises His authority? How else might God exercise His authority, or “speak,” to us?
2. Would the Bible have any authority if there were no one to read it? Why or why not?

VI. CONCLUSION—5 minutes

Reader: A reading from the Second Letter of Paul to Timothy.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3: 14-17

Free intercessions and thanksgivings

The Lord’s Prayer

Leader:

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, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

BCP 236, Collect for Proper 28

I. APPROACH—5 minutes

Leader: The Lord is in his holy temple;

People: let all the earth keep silence before him.

Habakkuk 2:20

Reader: A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, ‘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 obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’

Matthew 28: 16-20

Silence for reflection

Leader

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BCP 100, a Collect for Mission

II. GETTING ON BOARD QUESTION—8 minutes

Have you experienced worship in more than one Episcopal Church? In what ways did the worship experiences differ? In what ways were they similar?

III. INTRODUCTION—2 minutes

In chapter two Bishop Doyle turns his attention to the question, “What unites us as Episcopalians and as Anglicans if not our stance on human sexuality?” Bishop Doyle identifies four “marks” that unify us as Episcopalians and Anglicans. These marks are the basis of our unity and are (1) scripture, (2) worship, (3) our particular orders of communion and our (4) mission. In the second half of chapter two, Bishop Doyle turns his attention to marks 2-4: worship, how the Episcopal Church is uniquely ordered for communion and mission.

Bishop Doyle explains that worship is the second mark of our unity as Anglicans. He quotes Augustine to highlight our universal human need to

praise God. It is primarily in the context of Episcopal worship, as we act on that instinct, that God challenges “us towards greater unity.” (p. 44 ¶1) In worship we receive our common identity and are reminded that we belong to God.

The third aspect of our unity as Episcopalians is found in the particular way we are ordered for communion. Particular emphasis is given to the role of bishops, whose primary function is to symbolize and safeguard the unity of the Church. “Those with ordered lives,” Bishop Doyle says, “are called to support the baptized in their own ministries.” (p. 45 ¶2) As bishops engage one another formally and informally geographical divides are bridged.

“The fourth way we share a common journey with Episcopalians and Anglicans is through a common mission.” (p. 46 ¶5) Our “chief” work is to proclaim the Gospel of Salvation in word and deed. Bishop Doyle emphasizes the Anglican spirit of doing mission with context in mind. This is important to remember because ours is a context where we “differ on the presenting issues of the day” (i.e., human sexuality). (p. 56 ¶2) Bishop Doyle asks us to acknowledge that at times our mission had been driven by abuse, self-interest and domination. His hope is that our motives in today’s context will be different. He reminds us that our primary mission is to serve the weak and the poor.

It is these four marks of unity that make us distinct from the world around us and challenge us “to be about bringing into reality the Kingdom of God today.” (p. 49 ¶5) After discussing these four marks at length, Bishop Doyle gives special attention to the two Gospel Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, and how they differ from the other five sacraments with a little “s.” His hope is to put marriage in its proper context, thereby putting the debate on human sexuality in its proper context.

Bishop Doyle closes this chapter by being clear about the hierarchy of elements that unify us. Bishop Doyle places “the creeds, historic councils, the three-fold order of ministry, and prayer book worship as primary and of the utmost concern to all in the communion. Entwined and linked to every one of these elements are the two Sacraments of the Anglican Church: Baptism and Eucharist.” (p. 54 ¶2) Bishop Doyle says that only when this hierarchy is respected can we work for interdependence, rather than seeking a faithless form of independence. Bishop Doyle closes the chapter by reminding the reader, “I will work to preserve and hand on this faith as I have received it.” (p. 56 ¶2)

IV. DISCUSSION OF STUDY QUESTIONS—25 minutes

Q1. What in this chapter strikes or impresses you, either positively or negatively?

Q2. Bishop Doyle quotes Augustine's famous line, "our hearts are restless until they find their rest in [God]." (p. 43 ¶4) Does this quote ring true in your own life? Where else are we tempted to find "rest" apart from God? The leader might consider being vulnerable by disclosing his/her own restlessness and the many places he/she is tempted to find "rest" (security, well-being, significance) apart from God. Examples may include money, power, prestige, respect, their spouse/children, or reputation. We are reminded of Bishop Doyle's words that "our worship tells us who we are" and "whose we are." (p. 44 ¶3) Idolatry is our human tendency to "find rest" or an identity in something other than God. Many people in the church seek "rest" and security in doctrinal correctness on the issue of human sexuality. We are reminded that Jesus's call to "repent" is a life-giving call to turn from our idols and find rest, yet again, in God alone.

Q3. Bishop Doyle says that the particular way we are ordered – bishops, priests, deacons and the laity – are a mark of unity in the Episcopal Church. How do you understand the role of ordained clergy? In what way is their vocation similar to that of the laity, and how is it different?

It will be helpful to recall Bishop Doyle's words that "those with ordered lives ... are called to support the baptized in their own ministries." (p. 45 ¶2) It is also good to be reminded that lay persons are listed first among the ministers of the church in our catechism, and that lay and ordained alike share a common vocation to "represent Christ and his Church." (BCP, 855)

Q4. "One of the unique hallmarks of our work as a church in mission is that we believe we do our mission in context." (p. 47 ¶1) In what ways might the cultural context change the way the church engages in mission? In what ways is the church's mission the same across all cultural contexts?

The consistent mission of the church is to form disciples of Jesus Christ and to teach them to obey everything that Jesus commands (Matthew 28: 16-20). What makes this difficult is that a disciple's job is to know Jesus's heart, so that he/she might do, through the power of the Spirit, what Jesus would do in any given context. Thus we see that the same action might be right in one context and wrong in another. Thus Paul can say in 1 Corinthians 8 that it is perfectly acceptable to eat meat offered to idols in one context, but against the Lord's will in another (i.e., if it causes a believer to "stumble"). Therefore our common mission is to know and obey Jesus Christ no matter what the context. But because we are an "incarnational people," the obedient thing in one context might displease the Lord in another context. Such is why the

Spirit's work is to "renew our mind" so that we might know the Lord's will in all circumstances. (Rom 12:2) Faithfulness, therefore, doesn't just require prayer, but good and hard "thinking" as well.

Q5. "We promise to work for justice, peace, and the dignity of every human being." (p. 47 ¶3) In your own life, how would you rate your faithfulness at living into this baptismal promise? In what areas of your life might you do better, and what stops you from succeeding 100% of the time?

Hopefully no one gives themselves a grade of 100% faithfulness. It might be helpful for the leader to ask them how they are doing with members of their own family. It seems that the people that trigger our defensiveness routines most frequently are the ones we love the most. Thus, it is good to be reminded, in a chapter about what unites us, that what doesn't unite us is our own goodness or faithfulness. We all "miss the mark." The reasons for this are numerous. We are lazy, overwhelmed and we have an instinctual drive to first and foremost protect our own sense of peace and dignity. Far too often "the other" is a casualty in our self-protective quest.

Q6. "We believe that living as mere consumers can create disordered lives out of proportion with the wider needs of the world around us." (p. 49 ¶4) How has this "consumer mentality" crept into the life of the church?

People often speak of "church shopping," or say things like the "rector's sermons don't feed me." Youth ministry, we now believe, needs to be entertaining and grumbles often abound if the worship "service" exceeds an hour. People who pledge expect a certain amount of "services to be rendered" in return. But increasingly the call to lose our lives for Jesus is absent from our conversations. There is no one to blame for this. It is just a current reality for the twenty-first century church. It will be helpful to direct the conversation in a way that encourages brainstorming on how we might address the challenge, rather than blaming those who we imagine created it, and begin reimagining what it might mean to live more faithfully.

Q7. "In the Episcopal Church there are two Gospel Sacraments: one is the Eucharist and one is Baptism." (p. 50 ¶5) In what ways have these two Sacraments shaped your own formation as an Episcopalian?

The leader might ask people about their experience of Baptism and Confirmation and their particular belief on the merits of infant baptism versus adult baptism. Also, special attention might be given to the parallels between what happens to the Eucharistic bread and what we are "signing up for" when we receive it – namely, that like the bread, God's gathered people are "taken and blessed" to be "broken and given" to the world as THE Body of

Christ. Such is why Holy Communion is not for “solace only” but also “for strength” and not for “pardon only” but also “renewal.” Eucharist is our strength and means of renewal to be sent out into the world on mission.

Q8. Bishop Doyle closes this chapter by challenging us to embrace a call to interdependence, as opposed to independence. Do you agree that interdependence is better than independence? If so what might this mean for the Church?

This is where it is good to be reminded that independence is a Western illusion. The Church is a Body of many parts. We are interdependent and when one part suffers we all do. Thus, the choice for interdependence is always a choice to align ourselves with reality itself. God, by definition, is Interdependent. There is no Father apart from the Father’s love for His Son, and no love is made manifest apart from God’s Spirit. To say that like God we are both one and many means that we are interdependent.

V. OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL: The Ministry and Sacraments
Excerpt from Catechism, *The Book of Common Prayer*
See pages 855-858

THE MINISTRY

Q. Who are the ministers of the Church?

A. The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests and deacons.

Q. What is the ministry of the laity?

A. The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.

Q. What is the ministry of a bishop?

A. 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.

Q. What is the ministry of a priest or presbyter?

A. The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly

as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

Q. What is the ministry of a deacon?

A. The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

Q. What is the duty of all Christians?

A. 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.

THE SACRAMENTS

Q. What are the sacraments?

A. The sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace.

Q. What is grace?

A. Grace is God's favor toward us, unearned and underserved, by grace God forgives our sins, enlightens our minds, stirs our hearts and strengthens our wills.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Would you rank the five sacraments with a little "s" as inferior to Baptism and Eucharist? Why or why not?
2. Grace is opposed to earning. Does that mean that grace is also opposed to effort? In other words, if grace is about God's work in us, what part do we play?
3. Lay and ordained alike share a common vocation to "represent Christ and His Church." What does that mean?

VI. CONCLUSION—5 minutes

Reader: A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one

Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body’, that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body.

1 Corinthians 12: 12-20

Free intercessions and thanksgivings

The Lord’s Prayer

Leader

O God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Savior, the Prince of Peace: Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions; take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatever else may hinder us from godly union and concord; that, as there is but one Body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism,

one God and Father of us all, so we may be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. BCP 818, A Collect for the Unity of the Church

I. APPROACH – 5 minutes

Leader: You send forth your Spirit, and they are created;

People: and so you renew the face of the earth. *Psalm 104:31*

Reader: A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians:

Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. *Ephesians 5:25-32*

Silent Reflection

Leader: Let us pray

O gracious and ever living God, you have created us male and female in your image: look mercifully upon each man and woman who come to you seeking your blessing, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep the promises and vows they make; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

adapted from the Collect for Marriage, BCP p. 425

II. GETTING ON BOARD QUESTION – 8 minutes

What has been your experience of marriage and family life?

III. INTRODUCTION – 2 minutes

This session will look at the origins of marriage in both the Old and New Testaments. The covenant of marriage developed over time as practices varied throughout biblical times. Polygamy was often practiced both by pa-

triarchs and kings. Monogamy emerged as the norm during the first century in both Hebrew and Roman cultures, although there was always a variety of sexual practices and relationships.

Chapter III includes thoughts about the foundations of marriage. Bishop Doyle quotes Charles Price and Louis Weil from their book, *Liturgy for Living*:

The story of creation in the first chapter of Genesis puts an extraordinarily high value on human sexuality. We read, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). Sexual union is created to be one means by which human beings realize and participate in the image of God. (It is not the only one, to be sure. Marriage is not necessary to salvation). Sexuality is therefore a matter of greatest concern of the Christian faith.

On the other hand, what is designated to be a great good is often, in sin-ridden human life, a source of evil and distortion. The corruption of the best is the worst, as a familiar proverb puts it. Our sexuality is no exception. It brings soaring joy. It can also bring frustration and bitterness. In the biblical understanding of the conditions of human existence after the Fall, the relationship between man and woman comes under the curse, which affects all things. What was designed as a blessing and as expression of deepest human mutuality becomes time and time again, a frustration and an opportunity for one partner to dominate the other. “...Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you,” the Genesis account reads (3:16).

Under these circumstances, the understanding of marriage in Israel grew with the developing knowledge of God’s ways with his people. It came to be recognized that the sexual bond between husband and wife was most secure, satisfying and fulfilling when it was maintained in the context of a relationship marked by the kind of loyalty and faithfulness which God showed to Israel.

Liturgy for Living pp. 250-251

IV. DISCUSSION OF STUDY QUESTIONS – 25 minutes

Q1. Bishop Doyle outlines six essential points about marriage (pp.60-61). What do you think distinguishes Christian marriage from other marriages?

Marriages may be conducted outside the church without a blessing. These marriages are recognized by the church as valid.

Q2. In what ways do you believe Christian marriage is an icon of God’s hesed or steadfast love for his people?

“Hesed” is the Hebrew word for steadfast love. Paul uses the word “agape” when he speaks of divine love.

Q3. In your opinion how does Genesis set a pattern for marriage?

Both Paul (in Ephesians) and Jesus (in Mark) quote Genesis 2:24, “Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.”

Q4. How does secular marriage today depart from your understanding of marriage?

Our understanding of marriage as a life-long covenant between one man and one woman is being challenged today.

Q5. How do you understand Paul’s teaching that the sacred bond of marriage reflects the relationship between Christ and the church?

See Ephesians 5:32: “This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church.”

V. OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer* defines marriage as a sacramental rite.

Q. What is Holy Matrimony?

A. Holy Matrimony is Christian marriage, in which the woman and man enter into a life-long union, make their vows before God and the Church, and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows.

BCP, p. 861

Marion Hatchett provides a historical background to the development of the sacrament of marriage in his *Commentary on the American Prayer Book*.

In most societies, when persons approach marriage, a series of rites separates them from their peers (the unmarried men and women of the community), prepares them for marriage, and integrates them into the life, responsibilities, and customs of married couples in the community.

Among the Jews the rites of marriage involved a ceremony of betrothal, some time prior to the wedding, in which the father of the bride gave his consent to the union. The wedding itself was preceded by a procession

of the bridegroom and friends to the bride's home. She was richly dressed, wearing a veil, which she would not remove until her entry into the bridal chamber. The ceremony included vows and a written contract ("covenant"), and a blessing over a cup of wine. During the ceremony the bride and groom stood under a canopy in the presence of at least ten witnesses (the "minyan," a minimum number necessary for a synagogue service). Following the ceremony the wedding company went in procession to the bridegroom's home while the witness sang songs (see Psalm 45 and the Song of Songs); there was dancing and a feast that lasted from seven to fourteen days.

There is no hint concerning a Christian marriage rite in the New Testament, although it does provide teachings concerning the duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, and married couples within the community. Probably the rites of Judaism were followed with little modification since they were a part of ancient and familiar custom.

Among the pagan Romans wedding rites began with a betrothal at the home of the bride, where a contract was signed before witnesses. The man gave a betrothal present, kissed the bride, and placed a ring on the fourth finger on her left hand as a symbol of possession. The hands of the two were joined. A banquet followed. Sometime later, on the day of the wedding, the bride was arrayed in her wedding garments, which included a cincture (a symbol of virginity), a yellow dress, flame colored veil, and floral gown. The bride and groom made a solemn declaration before witnesses after which the pronuba ([a married woman] representing Juno, the goddess of marriage, domesticity, and childbearing) joined their hands. The couple offered a sacrifice at the family altar to propitiate the lares [household gods], and the auspex nuptiarum (priest of the marriage rite) recited a prayer which the couple repeated as they processed around the altar. At some point the veil or pall was held over the couple. A banquet followed, lasting until nightfall when the bride was led to her new home, accompanied by virgins and young unmarried men singing wedding songs, and was carried over the threshold by her husband. They lit the hearth fire together and she was sprinkled with water, a symbol of fertility among other things. The pronuba prepared the marriage bed as the couple went through the rites of loosening the marriage cincture and praying to the gods of marriage. On the following day the bride received her new relatives and sacrificed to the gods of her new home.

Incidental references to marriage in the writings of the church fathers indicate that the rites were not radically different among early Christians,

except for evidence of the consent and possibly the attendance of the bishop who participated in some marriages. Christian prayers and blessings were, of course, substituted for pagan ones, and a Eucharist replaced the pagan sacrifices *Commentary on the American Prayer Book*, pp. 427-8

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the differences and similarities to marriage today with those in the ancient world?
2. How have you experienced weddings that you and your family have attended?

V. CONCLUSION – 5 minutes

Reader: A reading from the Letter to the Colossians.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. *Colossians 3:12-15*

Free intercessions and thanksgivings

The Lord's Prayer

Leader: Let us pray together

Eternal God, author of harmony and happiness, we thank you for the gift of marriage in which men and women seek fulfillment, companionship, and the blessing of family life. Give patience to those who look forward to marriage. Give courage to those who face trials within their marriage. Give comfort to

those whose marriages are broken. Give gratitude to those whose marriages are successful and fruitful, and let their lives reflect your love and your glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Michael Saward, *Contemporary Parish Prayers*, p. 227

I. APPROACH – 5 Minutes

Leader: Bless the Lord, O my soul;

People: O Lord my God, how excellent is your greatness! You are clothed with majesty and splendor. --Psalm 104:1

Reader: A reading from the Gospel of Mark:

But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he (Moses) wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” --Mark 10:5-9

Silence for reflection

Leader: Let us pray

We thank you, O Lord our God, that the life which we now live in Christ is part of the life eternal, and the fellowship which we have in him unites your whole Church on earth and in heaven; and we pray that as we journey through the years we may know the joys which are without end, and at last come to that abiding city where you live and reign for evermore. Amen.

II. GETTING ON BOARD QUESTION—8 minutes

In the reading above, Jesus responded to a question about divorce posed by the Pharisees. What do you believe he was saying about the purpose and sanctity of marriage?

III. INTRODUCTION—2 minutes

In this section of Chapter III, Bishop Doyle discusses the lifelong commitment of marriage. However, divorce is a reality that goes back to Jesus’ day. Divorce and remarriage are common today. The paper includes a section on “Remarriage – Making Room for the Pastoral in the Midst of Reality.”

In 1973 the General Convention removed the canonical prohibition against the remarriage of members of the Church whose former spouse was still living, and whose prior marriage was valid from its inception. The provision that most of us take for granted today was a long, painful development. It

took over 177 years for the Church to make up its mind about the nature of remarriage and how it would deal with an emerging growth in divorces among its members. These were not only discussion and division on canon law.

We as a Church came to an understanding that when individuals in a marriage no longer embrace the whole other person through a mutual love, or recognize their partners as God's creation, or treat one another with dignity, or as fully human, or through the appreciation of each other's beauty, or by living out symbolically the nature of the Trinity, such marriages are dissolved (p. 82).

IV. DISCUSSION OF STUDY QUESTIONS—25 minutes

Bishop Doyle concludes this section of his paper with the following thoughts.

Today marriage and remarriage are regular parts of our life as a church. The Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Texas did 101 remarriages in 2011 alone. That is a lot in my opinion. In point of fact, a number of those were third marriages.

Because it is a part of our common life today, we may forget that in the Scriptures Jesus speaks particularly against this, as do the Epistles. In fact, there is more in the New Testament Scripture against remarriage than there is on other sexual exploits. I say this because we all have our own canon of scripture. I mean by this that we typically, in an ever-human way, seek to make our argument out of scripture that we know. We should be aware that the Church has changed its mind on divorce and remarriage considerably since the time of Jesus. Yet, I would offer we did so out of pastoral concern and desire to offer redeeming grace to those who sought relief from marriages they believed failed and an ever-new opportunity for transformation through the gift of marriage. We as a church have come to believe that remarriage (though clearly against scripture) mirrors God's own unconditional love (p.83).

Q1. How do you grapple with divorce and remarriage in light of Jesus' teaching?

In Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18, Jesus states that divorce and remarriage is adulterous, with no exception. In Matthew 5:32 one exception is made in the case of "unchastity."

Q2. Under what circumstances do you believe divorce is permissible?

There are several grounds for divorce such as: abandonment, cruelty, insanity and others. Many speak of the death of the relationship or that the marriage is irretrievably broken down.

Q3. How would you respond to someone who wants to remarry after a divorce?

The church allows for remarriage after one or both parties are divorced. A period of time for healing and counseling is recommended before we permit marriages to receive the blessing of the church.

Q4. How can your congregation be an instrument of healing for adults and children experiencing divorce?

Marriages are contracted within the community of the church. Consider how we can be supportive of couples and families going through divorce.

Q5. How does “remarriage offer hope for a renewed commitment and covenant between two people who have let go of a previous life commitment?” (See page 79).

V. OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

John Stott writes on marriage and divorce in *Issues Facing Christians Today*:

The higher our concept of God’s original ideal for marriage and the family, the more devastating the experience of divorce is bound to be. A marriage which began with tender love and rich expectations now lies in ruins. Marital breakdown is always a tragedy. It contradicts God’s will, frustrates his purpose, brings to husband and wife the acute pains of alienation, disillusion, recrimination and guilt, and precipitates in any children of the marriage a crisis of bewilderment, insecurity and often anger (p. 259).

He continues with a section on the Covenant Principle:

There is much in the covenant model of marriage which is compelling. To begin with, it is a thoroughly biblical notion. It also emphasizes the great solemnity both of covenant making and of covenant breaking—in the former case emphasizing love, commitment, public recognition, exclusive faithfulness and sacrifice, and in the latter the sin of going back on promises and rupturing a relationship of love. I confess, however, that my problem is how to fuse the two concepts of covenant loyalty and matrimo-

nial offence. I can understand reasons for not wanting to build permission to divorce on two offences. But if Scripture regards the marriage covenant of being broken in several ways, how shall we explain the single offence mentioned in our Lord's exceptive clause? Certainly the covenant relationship envisaged in marriage (the 'one flesh union') is far deeper than other covenants, whether a suzerainty treaty, a business deal or even a friendship. May it not be, therefore, that nothing less than a violation (by sexual infidelity) of this fundamental relationship can break the marriage covenant?

It seems to me that we must allow these perspectives of God's covenant to shape our understanding of the marriage covenant. The marriage covenant is not an ordinary human contract which, if one party to it reneges, may be renounced by the other. It is more like God's covenant with his people (p. 274).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This is a challenging perspective on the Covenant of Marriage. Do you agree that Jesus was calling us to take seriously the covenant principle in marriage?
2. What is your perspective on the Covenant of Marriage?

VI. CONCLUSION—5 minutes

Reader: A reading from the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13: 8-13

Free intercessions and thanksgivings

The Lord's Prayer

Leader: Let us pray together:

All: O God of peace, you have taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength; by the might of

your Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. BCP, p. 832

I. APPROACH—5 minutes

Leader: Oh, how good and pleasant it is;

People: when brethren live together in unity!

Psalm 133:1

Reader: A reading from Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2: 5-11

Silence for reflection

Leader:

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, “Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you.” Regard not our sins, but the faith of your Church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly City, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, now and forever. Amen.

BCP 395, a Collect for Peace

II. GETTING ON BOARD QUESTION—8 minutes

Has your experience of the debate over human sexuality in the Episcopal Church been mostly positive or negative? Why or why not?

III. INTRODUCTION—2 minutes

In chapter eight Bishop Doyle looks at the two primary and opposing views of human sexuality that are active in our church. This chapter offers a concise summary of each view. Bishop Doyle ends this chapter by offering some thoughts of his own. He then charges us to find unity in the midst of our differences.

Bishop Doyle's first assertion is that the church has been fighting since its inception, a fact he says that few of us seem to grasp. He notes that we are a nostalgic church with “a false sense of our past and our present.” (p. 85 ¶1) It is in this context that Bishop Doyle introduces the concept of adiaphora,

which refers to “things that do not make a difference, matters regarded as non-essential, issues about which one can disagree without dividing the Church.” (p. 85 ¶2) He then quotes The Windsor Report at length to expand on the concept of adiaphora, and its close cousin, the concept of subsidiarity, “the principle that matters in the Church should be decided as close to the local level as possible.” (p. 88 ¶1) He says that the more the concept of adiaphora applies to an issue, the more the concept of subsidiarity should also apply. Put differently, issues that are not central to the church’s mission should be dealt with at the local level. Bishop Doyle’s purpose in introducing the concepts of adiaphora and subsidiarity is to frame the debate over human sexuality in the church. Our problem is that both sides of the human sexuality debate deem the issue to not be adiaphora – they just take different sides! Bishop Doyle then takes his stand by reasserting his position behind this paper. “A shared unanimity by all individual members of the Church is neither possible nor necessary for unity in mission.” (p. 91 ¶1)

Bishop Doyle then turns his attention to summarizing two papers written by various theological camps in the House of Bishops. One paper summarizes the traditionalist stance on marriage. The second paper summarizes the more liberal perspective on same gender blessings. Bishop Doyle first summarizes the traditionalist paper, which asserts that same gender relationships are not part of God’s intent in creation. The traditionalists assert that the approval of same gender covenants comes “more from assimilation to modern culture than from following Jesus in learning how better to understand and live by the Scriptures.” (p. 94 ¶3)

The progressive paper is much different. They argue that marriage is primarily a discipline whereby God dispenses grace to sinners. Since the mission of the church is “to offer grace to sinful people and inspire virtue through a covenant with one another and with God,” gays and lesbians must be included in that process. (p. 96 ¶2) Furthermore, the progressives reference many instances in the New Testament whereby the Spirit leads God’s people to do something “new” that many opposed at the time on the basis of how they read scripture, such as the inclusion of Gentiles, abolishing circumcision and the Old Testament dietary laws. The progressives do not call for an end to disagreement, however, “for that is part of the labor of our common baptism into God’s mission.” (p. 99 ¶5)

Bishop Doyle closes chapter four by offering his thoughts on the two arguments. His primary conclusion is that “they are very different and run almost on different rails of the Anglican tradition.” (p. 100 ¶1) Bishop Doyle goes as far as to say that the two sides are having separate conversations altogether. Bishop Doyle does this not to criticize, but to be clear that “the two

divergent sides will not meet in the middle.” (p.100 ¶1) This chasm in the conversation is the essence of our struggle. Our response must be to “find a Christian unity beyond this difference and continue our missionary work of proclaiming the Gospel in spite of our difference and the gulf that appears before our beloved Church.” (p. 102 ¶1)

IV. DISCUSSION OF STUDY QUESTIONS—25 minutes

Q1. What in this chapter strikes or impresses you, either positively or negatively?

Q2. Bishop Doyle asserts that “we have a nostalgic sense that somehow we have never really fought over things before, or that somehow we were unified up until just recently.” (p. 85 ¶1) Do you agree with his assessment?

The leader might remind the group that much of the New Testament was written to respond to conflicts that emerged in the early church. Furthermore, differing views on many matters were tolerated and encouraged. To quote St. Paul, “Let each be convinced in his own mind.” (Rom 14:5) Interesting New Testament examples of conflict might be cited, such as Paul’s showdown with Peter in Galatians 2, or the fight that broke out when Hellenistic widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food in Acts 6. Many credit that fight in particular with the development of the diaconate, which might lend itself to the viewpoint that God can use conflict to develop and strengthen the Church.

Q3. Bishop Doyle introduces the term *adiaphora* to refer to issues of doctrine or practice that we can disagree on because they do not make a difference to being faithful to the Gospel. Can you name one aspect of church life (other than human sexuality) that you deem to be *adiaphora*, and one that you do not?

It will be good for the leader to have many examples handy. Non-*adiaphora* items might include reading scripture in the context of worship. *Adiaphora* items might include the color of the altar hangings or whether contemporary or traditional music is used in the context of worship. The leader might also remind the group that our struggle in the church is that both sides of the human sexuality debate deem marriage to not be adiaphora. If we all thought it was *adiaphora*, we wouldn’t have a problem in the first place.

Q4. Which of the following would you consider *adiaphora*?
military service, the resurrection of the body, human trafficking, recycling

Most Episcopalians would consider the decision to serve in the military, or

to register for the draft, an instance of adiaphora. Though a weighty issue, both sides are within the Christian, and even within the Anglican, tent. The resurrection of the body is not adiaphora because the belief is an article in the Creeds. Human trafficking is not adiaphora because it violates the Ten Commandments and the Baptismal Covenant and is dehumanizing. Like most Christians, Anglicans regard recycling as good and could find for it biblical or theological justifications but they would not feel the need to break communion or “disfellowship” someone who does not recycle. Therefore, it too is adiaphora.

Q5. “It is important to listen to the views of our neighbor if we are to understand where we are as a church and to understand where others stand.” (p. 91 ¶2) Why is it so hard to listen to the view of our neighbor, especially when her view differs from our own?

Our brains are hard-wired to respond to “threats.” Even though we would never admit that someone thinking differently than us is a real threat to our wellbeing, our habitual ways of acting signal our brain to (mistakenly) believe that differing views pose a threat to us. As a result, most of us craft responses while we listen to other people. Our goal in listening is not to understand but to win, or at least not lose; to look good, or at least not look bad. The effect of this is that we rarely listen at all. Real listening is a skill that takes work and practice. We must believe that listening matters and that St. Paul was correct in saying “we see only in part” (1 Cor 13:12). But listening well is an important skill to develop. “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Mark 4:23)

Q6. What is your best understanding of the traditionalist perspective? In what ways did their argument surprise you?

The leader might remind the group that their argument is more nuanced than “the Bible says being gay is a sin.” Their primary argument is that Jesus interpreted the Torah in terms of God’s intention for humanity in creation. Jesus is stricter on divorce than the Old Testament, for example, because Moses allowed divorce as a concession for people’s hardness of heart. What may surprise readers is that the traditionalists invite people to look for genuine errors in their thinking. (p. 92 ¶3) They also remind their readers that both sides are inflating the role of marriage in the grand scheme of God’s vast redemption purposes.

Q7. What is your best understanding of the liberal perspective? In what ways did their argument surprise you?

The leader might highlight that the liberals, more so than the traditionalists, are emphasizing our common sinfulness. Their argument depends upon all of us being sinful as marriage is a means whereby God offers sinful people grace, which is the mission of the church. It is also worth noting that the expansionist view does not call for an end to disagreement, but celebrates our disagreement on this issue as evidence of the strong bonds of our common baptism.

Q8. Bishop Doyle says that finding some middle ground between these two arguments is impossible because two different conversations are taking place. Do you find the church's gridlock discouraging or encouraging?

It is obvious that most, at first, will be discouraged. But, gridlock is our reality and this paper is a response to our gridlock on this issue. Furthermore, Bishop Doyle's purpose in writing is to encourage us. The leader might find it helpful to highlight that both arguments are faithful to the Anglican tradition, which is a testament to the depth and vastness of our tradition. This is something to celebrate. In addition, telling the truth about the impossibility of meeting in the middle is a necessary step to moving forward.

Q9. "You and I must find a Christian unity beyond this difference and continue our missionary work of proclaiming the Gospel in spite of our differences and the gulf that appears before our beloved Church." (p. 102 ¶1) How might this exhortation be lived out in your own life, or in the life of your congregation?

There are many answers to this subjective question. But some good answers might include fostering a greater respect for people who see marriage differently, or learning to celebrate the vastness of our Anglican heritage, or perhaps redirecting our focus from sexuality to mission.

V. OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Excerpt from Thomas Merton's writing *New Seeds of Contemplation*, Ch. 10 "A Body of Broken Bones"

In the whole world, throughout the whole history, even among religious men and among saints, Christ suffers dismemberment.

All over the face of the earth the avarice and lust of men breed unceas-

ing divisions among them, and the wounds that tear men from union with one another widen and open out into huge wars. Murder, massacres, revolution, hatred, the slaughter and torture of the bodies and souls of men, the destruction of cities by fire, the starvation of millions, the annihilation of populations and finally the cosmic inhumanity of atomic war: Christ is massacred in His members, torn limb from limb; God is murdered in men.

The history of the world, with the material destruction of cities and nations and people, expressed the interior division that tyrannizes the souls of all men, and even of the saints.

Even the innocent, even those in whom Christ lives by charity, even those who want with their whole heart to love one another, remain divided and separate. Although they are already one in Him, their union is hidden from them, because it still only possesses the secret substance of their souls.

But their minds and their judgments and their desires, their human characters and faculties, their appetites and their ideals are all imprisoned in the slag of an inescapable egotism which pure love has not yet been able to refine.

As long as we are on earth, the love that unites us will bring us suffering by our very contact with one another, because this love is the resetting of a Body of broken bones. Even saints cannot live with saints on this earth without some anguish, without some pain at the differences that come between them.

There are two things which men can do about the pain of disunion with other men. They can love or they can hate.

Discussion Questions:

1. Merton uses strong language in saying, “God is murdered in men.” What do you think he means by that?
2. “Love,” Merton says, “is the resetting of broken bones.” How does this statement speak to the gridlock we currently are experiencing over issues of human sexuality?
3. Merton suggests that we can only choose love or hate and that there isn’t an in-between. Do you agree? What does it mean to choose love?

VI. CONCLUSION—5 minutes

Reader: A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, ‘I belong to Paul’, or ‘I belong to Apollos’, or ‘I belong to Cephas’, or ‘I belong to Christ.’ Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? *1 Corinthians 1: 10-13*

Free intercessions and thanksgivings

The Lord’s Prayer

Leader: Let us pray together

All Almighty and everlasting God, you have given to us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of your divine Majesty to worship the Unity: Keep us steadfast in this faith and worship, and bring us at last to see you in your one and eternal glory, O Father; who with the Son and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

BCP 228, A Collect for Trinity Sunday

I. APPROACH—5 minutes

Leader: Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your Name give glory;
People: because of your love and because of your faithfulness. *Psalm 115: 1*

Reader: A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in all. *Ephesians 4:1-6*

Silence for reflection

Leader: Let us pray

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us to do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
BCP p. 832, A Prayer for Guidance

II. GETTING ON BOARD QUESTION—8 minutes

Tell about a time when you were responsible for negotiating a difficult settlement between opposing people or parties.

III. INTRODUCTION—2 minutes

Chapter VI details a strategy for the bishop to authorize the Blessing of Same Gender Couples as well as provides traditional options for parishes which do not wish to bless relationships outside marriage.

By way of further introduction, Bishop Doyle made these comments in a press release at the time Unity in Mission was published:

“I hold our work for the Lord Jesus Christ to be paramount in who we are and in everything we do. Our mission and ministry have been dogged by our disagreements and conflict over the blessing of same-gender couples for too long at the expense of the mission of the gospel. I pray that this plan will help to guide us beyond conflict and give us the ability to refocus our atten-

tion on the hurting world around us. I am hopeful that we will learn from one another and deepen our respect and love for one another through this process.”

IV. DISCUSSION OF STUDY QUESTIONS—25 minutes

Q1. Bishop Doyle claims on p. 109 that his plan “is not a move towards congregationalism.” What is congregationalism? How can he make this claim? Do you agree?

Congregationalism is a system of church governance that leaves legislative and disciplinary functions to the individual congregations. The Bishop is simply allowing congregations on this particular issue to choose among options which he has clearly defined, in accord with the canons and resolutions of The Episcopal Church.

Q2. The Bishop writes that “this strategy does not ask for further debate or require our diocesan council to approve my leadership on this issue. I have not asked for people to change their positions or even to like the plan that I am setting before us.” (p.111)

What is your reaction to these words? How can the Bishop not seek the approval of the diocese for his plan?

Some people may feel slightly offended by these words, but others may feel that the Bishop is being respectful of their position by not seeking to change them. An effective leader does not make decisions in order to be liked.

The resolution passed at General Convention 2012 requires that congregations using the rite receive the approval of the diocesan bishop, so the bishop is given the power whether or not to allow the blessings to take place.

Q3. How does the plan safeguard the position of traditional congregations within the Episcopal Church, as the Bishop asserts on p. 117.

Traditional congregations are allowed to pass resolutions or change their by-laws to affirm their position. The Bishop is also willing to offer these congregations “alternative pastoral oversight.”

Alternately, a traditional congregation may hold to its present course simply by choosing to take no action.

Q4. How do the laws of the State of Texas define marriage?

The paper outlines the laws for the State of Texas in footnote 113 on page 115.

Q5. Note the following comment by Bishop Doyle:

The solution to this impasse shall be my reliance on our polity, canons and structure, which already make room for clergy to have local liturgical freedom and parishes to self-differentiate given their local mission contexts (page 109).

What approach is being taken in your congregation regarding the blessing of same-gender relationships? Do you believe that this is the appropriate approach for your people?

Q6. Appendix B “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)” contains a list of numerous situations in congregations. Read the list carefully and discuss which pertains to your context of mission and ministry.

Q7. What have you and your group gained from this study? What is important to you as you reflect on this study?

V. OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

You may read the word of Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music and the Resolution passed at General Convention – 2012 on the following website: <http://www.episcopalarchives.org/SCLM>

To watch a video of how one congregation discussed whether or not to celebrate same-gender blessing go to:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIw2BCDA2Yw>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF TEXAS
1225 TEXAS ST.
HOUSTON, TX 77002
WWW.EPICENTER.ORG
@TEXASDIOCESE
800.318.4452