

TASK FORCE ON FORMATION & MINISTRY OF THE BAPTIZED

Membership

Dr. Lisa Kimball, <i>Chair</i>	Washington, III	2021
The Rt. Rev. J. Russell Kendrick, <i>Vice-Chair</i>	Central Gulf Coast, IV	2021
The Rev. Paul Aparicio	Fond du Lac, V	2021
Ms. Lisa Brown	Pittsburgh, III	2021
The Rev. Canon Lydia Kelsey Bucklin	Northern Michigan, V	2021
The Rev. Heather Erickson	Los Angeles, VIII	2021
The Rt. Rev. Carol Gallagher	Massachusetts, I	2021
The Rev. Canon Timothy Hodapp	Connecticut, I	2021
Ms. Demi Prentiss	Dallas, VII	2021
Ms. Melissa Rau	Southwest Florida, IV	2021
The Hon. Byron Rushing	Massachusetts, I	2021
The Rev. Peter Wong	Central Gulf Coast, IV	2021
The Rt. Rev. Robert Wright	Atlanta, IV	2021
The Most Rev. Michael Curry, <i>Ex Officio</i>	North Carolina, IV	
The Rev. Gay Clark Jennings, <i>Ex Officio</i>	Ohio, V	

Changes in Membership

The Rev. Dr. Susanna Singer (Chair) resigned in January 2019 due to family demands, and Dr. Lisa Kimball agreed to assume the responsibility of Chair. The Rev. Heather Erickson was then appointed to join the Task Force to maintain its original size.

Mandate

2018-Co05 Appoint Task Force to Study Implementation of Canon III.1

Resolved, that the 79th General Convention direct the President of the House of Deputies and the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church to appoint a Task Force on Formation and Ministry of the Baptized including members experienced in Christian formation and education, and consisting of a minimum of two bishops, five (5) priests and/or deacons and five (5) lay persons, who represent the diversity of the Church; and be it further

Resolved, that this task force identify or develop curricula, practices, and strategies that can be used by dioceses and congregations to encourage and engage all the baptized in the work of building up the church by identifying their gifts for ministry, employing their gifts for ministry, and focusing on full engagement of their ministries in daily life, work, and leisure; and be it further

Resolved, that this task force report to the 80th General Convention with recommended strategies for the affirmation, development, and exercise of ministry by all baptized persons in the areas of gifts discernment, education and training for ministry, and leadership development; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$60,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

Summary of Work

As the Task Force on Formation and Ministry of the Baptized we have come to believe, and we submit this report as our heartfelt brief, that our beloved Episcopal Church is confronting an existential hinge point. This critical moment has overtaken us gradually and then suddenly, accelerated by the twin catalysts of the global pandemic and long overdue racial reckoning. Most certainly, as we emerge from these times of testing, “we shall all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51). Our future as “the Episcopal branch of the Jesus movement” will depend on engaging the whole church -- all the baptized, especially the 99.2% who identify as laity.

To create the vital corporate life that is the hallmark of God at work, we believe the Episcopal Church must act decisively, with energy, focus, and intention. We must commit the resources of the Episcopal Church to

1. Support and develop connections among existing initiatives and networks that prioritize baptismal theology; and
2. Form every baptized member as a practitioner of Jesus’ Way of Love, proclaiming baptismal ministry as their calling through our intentional, daily engagement with the entire People of God.

We offer this report and the resolutions contained herein as the articulation of our case, and as our bid for your commitment to address this besetting issue which challenges us to do justice in our own house.

What is our mission?

The creation of this Task Force at the 79th General Convention acknowledges the Episcopal Church’s failure to implement the stipulation of Title 3, CANON 1: *each diocese shall provide resources for the formation and ministry of all the baptized.*

In response to the Task Force’s expansive mandate to “identify or develop curricula, practices, and strategies that encourage and engage all the baptized and help them to identify and employ their gifts for ministry in daily life, work, and leisure,” the Task Force determined early that developing new curricula would not be prudent. We chose to focus on identifying resources and strategies that effectively align Episcopal congregational practice with the baptismal theology of The Book of Common Prayer 1979.

We discerned a three-fold path for our work:

- Use Episcopal baptismal theology
- to examine the formation practices and needs of the Church, in order to
- commend practices, resources, and institutional supports to equip and sustain Christian disciples and a thriving Church.

What does baptismal theology mean for the Episcopal Church?

To begin our process, we examined the baptismal theology embedded in the BCP 1979. We discerned that the “Prayer Over the Newly Baptized” (BCP 308) describes well both the profile of a fully-flourishing baptized person, and the focal point of our response to our mandate:

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon these your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised them to the new life of grace. Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. (“Prayer Over the Newly Baptized,” The Book of Common Prayer)

We drew inspiration for understanding “ministry in daily life” as a Biblical mandate from Jesus’s own witness in the Gospel of John. As Episcopalians, our faith in the Triune God requires us to incarnate both our dependence on God alone and our responsibility to love our neighbors.

You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. (John 13:13-15, NRSV)

The Iona Community “Prayer for Friday” elegantly clarifies the Task Force’s operative distinction between formation for daily baptismal living (discipleship) and formation for membership in an institutional church:

O Christ, you are within each of us.

It is not just the interior of these walls:

It is our own inner being you have renewed.

We are your temple not made with hands.

We are your body.

If every wall should crumble, and every church decay,
We are your habitation.
Nearer are you than breathing,
Closer than hands and feet.
Ours are the eyes with which you in the mystery,
Look out with compassion on the world.
Yet we bless you for this place,
For your directing of us, your redeeming of us,
And your indwelling.
Take us outside, O Christ, outside holiness,
Out to where soldiers curse and nations clash
At the crossroads of the world.
So shall this building continue to be justified.
We ask it for your own name's sake.
AMEN.

How does baptismal theology inform our work?

We articulated two foundational principles on which we focused our research and fashioned our recommendations:

All who are baptized are empowered to minister the Gospel, in all places and at all times.

- In baptism, we are claimed by God and consecrated as citizens of God's reign;
- In baptism, we are equipped to join Jesus and change the world through prayer and action, motivated by love and justice;
- In baptism, we are shaped by the Spirit as disciples and sent by that same Spirit as apostolic ministers into every place where we live and work, play and pray; and,
- In baptism, we join the living Body of Christ and the great movement of saints throughout time to participate in God's mission and to build the Beloved Community.

All the baptized are called into discipleship, shaped by the Baptismal Covenant, to engage lifelong learning and ministry, by:

- Participating in expressions of faithful Christian community;
- Exercising theological imagination;
- Discerning gifts for ministry;

- Developing a rule of life rooted in spiritual practices; and
- Joining in God’s mission by applying these gifts within the individual’s particular context and life.

This sacred practice of lifelong learning is to be encouraged, nurtured, celebrated, and accompanied at the local level, where each baptized member’s formation is embodied within a specific worshiping context and culture. A thriving church shares in God’s mission by supporting all the baptized in their vocational journeys with Christ.

What is the current condition of baptismal identity and formation across the Episcopal Church?

In January 2020 we worked with the GCO office to administer—in Spanish, French, and English—a church-wide survey on formation resources and practices for all Episcopalians.

Our goal was to ascertain:

- How baptismal identity shapes ministry in church, daily life, work, and leisure;
- What curricula, practices, and strategies already exist and are being used widely and effectively by individuals and communities across the Episcopal church; and
- What barriers prevent people from growing into their full identity as baptized Christians.

We intentionally promoted the survey via social media, at church gatherings including Rooted in Jesus and the CEEP 2020 conference, and among historically underrepresented communities. We received 687 completed surveys, 55% from laity, 8% from self-identified ethnic/racial minorities, and 57% from those not raised in the Episcopal Church. Regrettably, only 25% were under the age of 50, reflecting both the aging demographic of our denomination and the difficulty reaching younger generations, who tend to be less closely affiliated with the governance of our Church.

Our findings were illustrative and clear.

As documented by previous church-wide bodies with similar mandates, and as experienced by church leaders committed to deep Christian formation, we discovered that while rich baptismal theology exists, a significant gap remains between what we believe and how we form individuals to live as Christians in the world. There is an urgent need to ground Episcopal Church practice and Episcopal identity in vows made and witnessed at the font. While we as a church who share these vows are called to declare our support with a resounding “We will,” far too often we have not.

Respondents affirmed that the Christian life is a journey with God in community, where discipleship as a follower of Jesus is learned through enculturation in worship, study, service, and genuine fellowship. Yet, disappointingly, there was a pervasive tone of “I’m on my own” across the survey responses.

When mentioning the various practices, programs, and circumstances that were most conducive to spiritual growth and formation, the underlying assumption and common thread was that they occurred in relationship to other Christians. For survey respondents, spiritual growth is fostered by utilizing spiritual gift assessments in group contexts; through discernment and clearness committees; via spiritual direction with a mentor; in time spent together in an intentional community, often on retreat or at camp; and through regular engagement with others at Bible studies and adult formation offerings. Regardless of curriculum or program, the transformational catalyst that ultimately led to spiritual growth and formation was the intentional collaborative engagement and deep relational connections formed in community.

Respondents also emphasized a need to empower the laity in order to reduce clericalism. They recognized that this crucial shift requires prioritizing opportunities for lay-led faith-sharing experiences and spiritual mentoring. Survey responses clearly indicated that no program, course of study, or particular body of knowledge is enough to form confident Christians. The “magic sauce” is healthy relationships that support ongoing--God willing, life-long--theological reflection and vocational discernment.

A significant majority of respondents (over 70%) yearned for a fundamental culture shift in congregations, a re-prioritizing of resources. They longed for intentional faith formation to foster continuous discernment and discipleship in community. They hungered for a recognition of the essentials of incarnation: by virtue of being human, we are wired for relationship; by virtue of our baptism, we are equipped for ministry.

What’s the problem? Why isn’t the church’s approach to formation “working”?

There are rich church-wide programs, resources, networks, and well-established processes to grow Christians, but our data suggests that while a core group of Episcopalians is over-resourced, many more congregations do not access or utilize what is available or they limit Christian formation to models of expert-centered instruction over experiential communal practices.

Despite the increased visibility of the Presiding Bishop and his emphasis on the Way of Love, the Beloved Community, and Embracing Evangelism, all of which are richly resourced initiatives, many of our respondents describe congregations with very limited imagination for discipleship or ministry in daily life. Respondents’ formation experiences were confined to specific programs, usually “at church” and developed locally. Ministry was most often understood as acts of service in or on behalf of the congregation.

(It should be noted that after our survey was administered, the great accelerator effect of COVID-19 has pressed congregations to rethink their formation ministries. To the extent time and resources have been committed to formation-under-pandemic, programming has moved online and there is evidence of growing appreciation for the importance of faith practices in the home.)

What are the challenges we face?

The episodic nature of Christian formation at the local level is ubiquitous. The survey confirmed our own experience. By far a majority of congregations represented in the data offer a menu of Advent and Lent programming, an adult forum on Sunday mornings September through May, one weekly Bible study, and as much children's and youth formation shaped by demand and the personnel to provide it. Preparation for baptism, confirmation, and marriage most often falls to the clergy, and is offered when there is need. A culture of coherent, continuous and holistic formation from birth to death, altar to kitchen table, and Advent to Christ the King Sunday, rooted in ongoing relationships and practices, is an unrealized, distant ideal. Instead, respondents described their formation as scattershot, occasional, accidental, seasonal, heavily cognitive, and leader-dependent.

Respondents emphasized the need for and power of mentorship and good modeling. Most cited a shortage of identified Christian mentors, which places unrealistic expectations on clergy, stifles spiritual growth, and forces individuals to look beyond their local congregations for quality catechesis and theological education. Sadly, many clergy feel unprepared to teach, particularly to children and youth.

What we renounce and what we affirm in the process of ongoing conversion as Christians matters deeply; yet few respondents were able to articulate why baptism matters in daily life. It is clear there is much room to improve the teaching and practice of baptismal theology which must include regular opportunities for communal discernment of gifts and equipping for ministry in daily life. The church cries out for an increased emphasis on forming and nurturing deep relationships among fellow Christians.

Finally, maturing in faith seems to be conflated with active involvement, and is recognized almost exclusively by opportunities to serve inside the Episcopal Church at the parish, diocesan, or church-wide level, or by ordination. God's clear call to vocation in the world seems to escape the church's notice. Very few people referred explicitly to either their baptism or the Baptismal Covenant as a roadmap for daily living, with the exception of their commitment to social justice which was frequently supported by "Love your neighbor as yourself" and "Respect the dignity of every human being."

In light of all this, where is the hope?

The Episcopal tradition is well equipped to form disciples for ministry in daily life. The pattern exists theologically and liturgically, particularly in the rhythms of the daily office; the catechumenate (Book of Occasional Services 2018); the renunciations, affirmations and covenant language in Holy Baptism; and in "An Outline of the Faith" (Catechism, BCP 845).

Around the Church today, many dioceses, schools of theology, worshiping communities, networks, and publishing houses are engaged in this critical work of formation oriented toward daily life. In our survey we found good examples of existing resources and practices, and evidence of the resilience,

creativity, and hunger of baptized Episcopalians to be equipped for daily life ministry in a world that is changing under our feet.

We offer the following story as an example of transformation that often goes unnoticed outside a small circle, and that kindles hope among all who are touched by it.

JO'S STORY

Josephine (Jo) is a 32-year-old wife, mother of three small children, and nutrition coach who works on the executive staff of a nationwide weight-loss and personalized meal-planning organization. "I wanted something more," she began, explaining her on-again, off-again relationship to the Episcopal Church in which she was baptized as an infant. "Sure, once my husband and I started having kids, church became important again. Passing along something of what I knew as a kid with church school and camp felt like something we should do."

When Jo's rector asked for volunteers who might be interested in learning some spiritual practices together, she signed up. "We basically learned how to listen. Who knew? And how to listen deeply, for God's voice in scripture and for God to show me what He wanted me to notice whenever I was out and about... home, neighborhood, the office, school." Then, with enthusiasm, she spoke of her small community of companions who were learning these practices together. "It took a bit of time to feel comfortable. Here I was sharing stories of my life and God and family with people who weren't close friends. And in no time, we became a small community of companions who were listening to each other's stories of where God is showing up in our lives. And then, we began to discern what these practices might mean for our parish." Then COVID-19 hit "and the world tipped." In the months following the onslaught of the pandemic, the small group continues to gather, dwelling in God's word and listening, discerning, what God may be inviting the group to see. "This whole pandemic means something different to me because of what I've learned with this group," Jo said. "I trust my peeps with these stories of my life. And they trust me. Also, in some small significant ways, I'm meeting Jesus out there in the eyes of the girl in the produce aisle, online with my colleagues in endless meetings, and with parishioners on Sundays, in my husband and my kids. For the first time in my life I feel like I'm meeting Jesus everywhere. He's alongside me and we're engaged in a way I never knew was possible."

Jo's story sheds light on the stunning potential for any of us to receive a deepening experience of our baptismal covenant. It is possible to engage theological imagination at the parish level. It is possible that those who yearn to deepen their understanding of faith can be surprised, joyful, and encouraged as they reflect on what God might be up to. It is possible that God is transforming us within every aspect of our lives and within the communities and relationships where we live and move.

Jo's story, and many more that we heard through our research, confirm what we suspected. God is continually inviting all baptized people to lives of meaning and purpose, using their gifts for a greater good. There are wonderful stories of conversion, transformation, and Christian vocation. There are deep relational connections--such as those formed by members of our Task Force--that exist among

practitioners and transcend geographic and institutional boundaries. There are rich resources and ancient practices to feed the people of God, but sadly, our institutional structures have not focused on encouraging baptismal formation or deepening relationships among the baptized.

The time is right for the Episcopal Church to dedicate financial resources to better align formation priorities for baptismal living with existing resources through improved churchwide communication and access.

What can the Church do now?

Simply put, the Task Force has oriented our work toward a strategy for a renewed Church in the 21st century, moving from a notion of “church as membership” to “church as the living Body of Christ”; re-orienting from ecclesio-centric ministries to missio-centric practices for parishes and worshipping communities; shifting from the vocation of the professionally trained “few” to the vocation of the locally trained “all”; turning from simply worshipping on Sunday (what I do) to bearing witness to the gospel 24/7 (who I am); and, growing from baptism as a mere social event that confers redemption to baptism that obliges the church to engage every citizen of God’s reign in life-long formation.

It is time for the Episcopal Church to “walk its talk” on baptismal theology.

- General Convention must authorize the establishment of a Standing Commission on Formation and Ministry Development as an outward and visible sign of our commitment to the ongoing work of making baptized disciples who make disciples for God’s mission in the world.
- Churchwide digital access is needed to existing resources and practices for baptismal ministry in daily life, and to establish systems of mutual accountability for congregations, Commissions on Ministry, theological education programs and seminaries. It is time to expect more of our local congregations as faith-forming communities.
- We have participated in the development of *A Christian Life of Faith: Signs and Thresholds Along The Way*, and now commend it to the Church as a roadmap for intentional discipleship in daily life. (See Supplemental Materials)

Why does it matter more than ever?

The raging of dual pandemics-- racism and COVID-19 -- has made our Task Force work more urgent and more relevant. As churches were forced to close their buildings, scramble online, and re-imagine ministry, congregations were challenged to define what it means to be a faithful Christian and an active Episcopalian. As infection and death rates soared, quarantine and isolation prevented regular contact with people we love, social distancing and mask wearing became essential life-saving acts, and people found themselves immersed in racial reckoning. Suddenly, what we renounce and what we affirm at baptism has taken on new significance.

The focus of the work of God’s people did not change with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the urgent struggle against racism, white supremacy, and anti-Black bias. In fact, the work of love and justice became all the more pressing, especially as the pandemic disproportionately devastated Black, brown, and indigenous communities. If baptism is our response to God’s invitation to life, then our “yes” is embodied within each of us, shaping and forming us in The Way of Love, ordering and re-ordering our lives, and binding us to the truth that all are born of the one God and deserving of respect.

Our Task Force has been charged with developing resources for “building up the church.” The most important resource for that renewal is the commitment by each congregation, lay person, deacon, priest, and bishop to activate baptism. We can choose to live as if we actually believe “the church carries out its ministry by the ministry of [ALL of] its members” (BCP 855), recognizing our membership is born at the font. Our covenant holds us--and you, our siblings in Christ--accountable to making and living that stunning, egalitarian promise.

How did we come to these conclusions?

Our Task Force was very active and established strong, sustaining relationships with one another as we conducted our work. We met in person twice: March 20-22, 2019 at the Hyatt Regency, O’Hare, Chicago, and October 1-3, 2019 at Virginia Seminary. In between and through 2020, the Task Force met most months via Zoom, with two active working groups: Resources, and Theological Foundation & Contextual Rationale.

In addition, Task Force members leveraged our relationships across the Church and collaborated with formation networks and bodies including Forma, the General Convention Task Force on Theological Networking, Commissions on Ministry, Living Stones/Total Ministry, and Baptized for Life. Two members served on the development team for A Christian Life of Faith: Signs and Thresholds Along the Way, a resource to guide lifelong faith and ministry development for baptized Episcopalians (see Resolution ___ below). One member participated in the creation of materials for the Embracing Evangelism series. Each Task Force member served as an ethnographer, gathering descriptive data on the condition of formation for baptismal ministry in their ministry context. Given that our membership includes all orders of ministry, members who range in age from mid-thirties to mid-seventies, and individuals resident in seven Provinces, we represent the broad Church. These objective demographic realities, added to our lived experience of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and theology guaranteed passionate discussions in our meetings!

What’s Next, January 2020 - July 2022

While our official status as a Task Force ends with the submission of this report, members have committed themselves to continue the work begun here in preparation for General Convention 2022. We look forward to being available to work with members of the GC Committees to which our Resolutions are assigned, thus laying a foundation for the resolutions offered here.

To the extent our time allows, we will be working to:

Promote connection and resource exchange among existing initiatives and networks that prioritize baptismal theology (as described in our foundational principles) in order to build momentum toward improved coordination and impact. Examples include:

- Embracing Evangelism⁽¹⁾
- Becoming Beloved Community⁽²⁾
- Way of Love⁽³⁾
- Baptized for Life⁽⁴⁾
- Total Ministry for Today's Missional Church⁽⁵⁾
- Journey to Baptismal Living⁽⁶⁾
- Forma⁽⁷⁾
- Select Commissions on Ministry

Promote examples of existing resources and proven practices for forming baptismal ministry as the calling of every baptized member. In particular, tools for gifts discernment and selection of contextually-appropriate curriculum will be elevated. Two excellent examples:

- A Christian Life of Faith: Signs and Thresholds Along the Way⁽⁸⁾
- How to choose a curriculum?⁽⁹⁾

Our research (survey, interviews, resource mapping) revealed THREE TASKS OF A THRIVING CHURCH

1. Discern - ongoing support for all the baptized to identify their gifts for ministry
2. Practice - resources and opportunities to equip the baptized to employ their gifts for ministry
3. Accompany - affirm and support the baptized for the full engagement of ministry in daily life

The following affirmation and resolutions are crafted toward a vision of thriving congregations that fulfill these tasks such that all baptized persons are encouraged to discern their gifts for ministry and exercise them with confidence.

End Notes

- (1) <https://episcopalchurch.org/embracing-evangelism/series>
- (2) <https://episcopalchurch.org/beloved-community>
- (3) <https://episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love>
- (4) <https://baptizedforlife.org/>
- (5) <https://www.facebook.com/groups/931342414039535>
- (6) <https://journeytobaptism.org/>
- (7) <https://www.forma.church/>
- (8) https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eNoyGd_F2ozst2LpQQB2nL6aycKyj4xD/view
- (9) <https://buildfaith.org/choosing-curriculum/>

Affirmation of Resolution to Establish a Standing Commission on Formation and Ministry Development

We strongly support Resolution A037 submitted to the 80th General Convention by the Standing Commission on Structure, Governance, Constitution and Canons to amend Canon I.1.2.n to Establish a Standing Commission on Formation and Ministry Development.

“A Standing Commission on Formation and Ministry Development. The Commission shall coordinate and encourage the development of all orders of ministry, encouraging and engaging all the baptized in the work of building up the church and developing best practices to ensure all churches benefit from the diversity of leadership gifts God has given us.”

EXPLANATION

Restoring a single Standing Commission to focus on ministry and formation would sustain the significant work that is needed in areas of Title III as they impact the 99.2% of the Episcopal Church that is not ordained. It would demonstrate the Church’s commitment to its baptismal theology and its accountability for the ongoing formation of Christian disciples across the life course, by prioritizing resources and offering structural oversight.

Proposed resolutions

A103 Describing a Christian Life of Faith in the Episcopal Tradition

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 80th General Convention commend to each diocese A Christian Life of Faith: Signs and Thresholds Along The Way as a discernment tool and formation guide for baptized Episcopalians, directing it particularly to Commissions on Ministry as a resource to fulfill Title III: Canon 1: Of the Ministry of All Baptized Persons which states, “Each Diocese shall make provision for the affirmation and development of the ministry of all baptized persons”; and be it further

Resolved, that Executive Council appoint a liaison to the “Christian Life of Faith” writing group for the purposes of regular communication and mutual accountability.

EXPLANATION

A Christian Life of Faith: Signs and Thresholds Along The Way is designed to encourage and engage all the baptized in the work of building up the church by identifying their gifts for ministry, employing their gifts for ministry, and focusing on full engagement of their ministries in daily life, work, and leisure. Fortunately, there are recognizable signs of maturing in our relationship with God. They are

marks of our deepening knowledge and understanding, the shaping of our values and attitudes, as well as the honing of our practices and skills. As we more fully embrace our identity as disciples and members of the Body of Christ, there also are thresholds that we can cross — Claiming, Engaging, Sustaining, and Cultivating / Catalyzing. Each threshold marks accepting increased responsibility to proclaim God’s loving, liberating, life-giving Good News (evangelism) and to help others to find their paths as we pass on our faith (faith formation).

The document identifies these signs and thresholds as markers of maturation during a faith-filled journey. The first part of the document is primarily for individuals who may want to wonder, widen, and deepen their understanding of themselves and of God. For these individuals, the signs and thresholds are a type of discernment or self-assessment tool to prompt reflection upon where they are in their personal faith and ministry development. The hope is that individuals will find descriptions that affirm their strengths and capacities, as well as indicate areas where they may want to stretch and search for resources that enhance spiritual growth and leadership.

The second part of the document is primarily intended for those responsible for passing on the teachings of the church (Commissions on Ministry, faith formation leaders, spiritual directors, clergy, vestry members, chaplains, diocesan directors, etc.). This section compiles the signs and thresholds into a grid for comparison across thresholds. The grid is designed to help facilitators, companions, and/or teachers to see the scope and sequence of how the stages relate and guide their adaptation of educational and formational resources for local contexts. The hope is that the signs and thresholds will promote deeper faith and ministry development in a congregation, intentional community, or diocese as, together, we move ever closer to the dream of God.

A104 Creation of a Digital Hub for Formation Resources (in English, Spanish, and French)

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 80th General Convention instruct Executive Council to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Formation and Ministry of the Baptized and the Task Force on Theological Networking to develop a plan for a sustainable digital hub for Episcopalians to access formation resources for lay and ordained vocations; and be it further

Resolved, that Executive Council present a report with the plan (to include recommended structure, content, staffing, timeline, and budget) to the 81st General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, that \$30,000 be budgeted for the work of developing this plan over the next triennium.

EXPLANATION

Most church-wide funding for formation is currently committed to the discernment, preparation and practice of ordained ministry, while 99.2% of our Church is baptized lay members. The most recent projections of Episcopal Church membership are dire. No amount of restructuring or reimagining

local ministry will grow a vibrant church without a consistent commitment to lifelong Christian formation, the making of disciples who make disciples.

As our research over this past triennium has demonstrated, the Episcopal Church is blessed with formation resources (curriculum and proven practices), gifted Christian educators, writers, artists, videographers, publishers, and networks dedicated to formation, evangelism, discipleship, camps and conference ministries, chaplaincies and more, but, tragically, efforts are siloed. Local congregations are often unaware of all that is available, have difficulty accessing quality resources for their context, and/or do not have clergy or lay leaders trained to teach the faith well.

There is an urgent need for easily accessed, open source formation resources from discernment practices through preparation for ministry in daily life, including ordination. As a denomination, we must move from a free market system of resource distribution toward a collaborative clearinghouse that curates and promotes theologically and pedagogically robust resources for use in diverse cultural contexts. We need a denominational portal for individuals, congregations, schools, chaplaincies and camps, Commissions on Ministry, seminaries, diocesan schools, and Episcopal leaders to access resources to grow faith and live our baptismal theology with confidence.

Such an undertaking is ambitious and requires leadership at the church-wide level to emphasize the urgency, increase visibility, and establish accountability. The Anglican Communion has set a good example with its Season of Intentional Discipleship

(<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/intentional-discipleship.aspx>).

Other denominations in the U.S. have made similar commitments, for example the United Methodist Church (UMC)'s e-learning discipleship platform <https://discipleship-ministries.teachable.com/> and ResourceUMC, the online destination for Methodist leaders <https://www.resourceumc.org/>.

Continuance recommendation

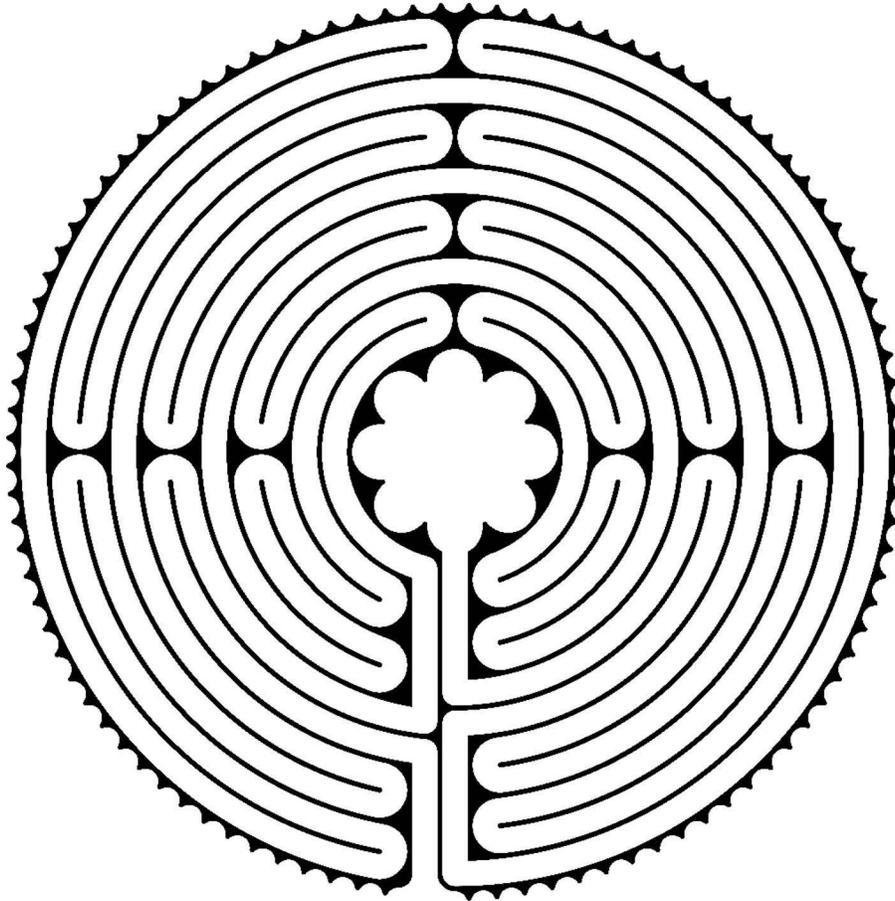
It is essential that a General Convention-appointed, church-wide body continue to dedicate itself to the Formation and Ministry of the Baptized. Rather than recommend a continuance of this Task Force we enthusiastically support the Resolution from the Standing Commission on Structure, Governance, Constitution and Canons to amend Canon I.1.2.n to Establish a Standing Commission on Formation and Ministry Development. In the event such a Standing Commission is not established, we recommend continuance of this Task Force.

Supplemental Materials

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1. [A Christian Life of Faith](#)

A Christian Life of Faith: Signs and Thresholds along The Way



I AM
A BAPTIZED CHRISTIAN
WHO WONDERS...

How can I participate in and practice a Christian life of faith as a baptized Episcopalian, conforming to Christ's way of life and continually being transformed on my lifelong journey of faith?

FOLLOWING THE WAY

A Christian life of faith is premised on being in relationship with God and with God's people. We have assurances from those who have come before us that God wants us to have life and have it in abundance. We claim this fullness of life as we travel with God on a journey that has three dimensions:

- ***It is lifelong***—unfolding chronologically across one's life;
- ***It is life-wide***—integrating formative events and experiences from across one's contexts; and
- ***It is life-deep***—making meaning influenced by culture, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, ideologies and values.

As we meander through life's labyrinth, individually and in community, we gain insights and make connections between and across our experiences of faith in the church and in the world. Through them we glean a glimpse of the dream God offers. Sometimes the path to reach it is clear; other times it seems illusive. Fortunately for those of us who want help navigating our way, there are recognizable signs of maturing in our relationship with God. They are marks of our deepening knowledge and understanding, the shaping of our values and attitudes, as well as the honing of our practices and skills. As we more fully embrace our identity as disciples and members of the Body of Christ, there also are thresholds that we can cross. These steps mark accepting increased responsibility to proclaim God's loving, liberating, life-giving Good News (evangelism) and to help others to find their path as we pass on our faith (faith formation).

This document is our attempt to identify the signs and thresholds of a faith-filled journey. It is designed in two parts which reflect the ways two groups likely will use it. Both parts of this booklet include the same signs and thresholds; the signs and thresholds are just presented differently. The first part is primarily for individuals who may want to wonder, widen, and deepen their understanding of themselves and of God. For them, the signs and thresholds are a type of discernment or self-assessment tool to prompt reflection upon where they are in their personal faith and ministry development. This section identifies four thresholds—Claiming, Engaging, Sustaining, and Cultivating/ Catalyzing—and uses each "stage" or "phase" to organize the typical focus, questions, and signs of someone in this space. The hope is that individuals using this part will find descriptions that resonate and affirm their strengths and capacities as well as indicate areas where they may want to stretch and search for resources that enhance spiritual growth and leadership. The second part is primarily intended for those responsible for passing on the teachings of the church (such as Vestry members, Commissions on Ministry, faith formation leaders, spiritual directors, clergy, chaplains, diocesan directors, etc.). This section compiles the signs and thresholds into a grid for comparison across thresholds. This design should help facilitators, companions, and/or teachers to see the scope and sequence of how the stages relate and guide their adaptation of educational and formational resources for local contexts. The hope is that the signs and thresholds promote deeper faith and ministry development in a congregation, intentional community, or diocese. Regardless of the form you use, we hope you find it useful.

The seeds of this document were planted in the summer of 2019 when colleagues in faith formation and ministry development circles embraced God’s invitation and committed to produce this guide. It is our gift to the church. Recognizing that it is only a starting point, we want (and need) to hear your reactions to it, especially as you use it in your context. Tell us what is missing and how can it be improved and refined. Send your feedback and recommendations to Julie Lytle at jlytle@bexleyseabury.edu. We offer our thanks and blessings for your journey!

Ellen Bruckner, Kate Gillooly, Lisa Kimball, Julie Lytle, Deborah Bressoud Parker, Sharon Ely Pearson, Tina Pickering, Melissa Rau, Amy Cook, Vicki Garvey, Alexizendria Link, James McKim (November 18, 2020)

GUIDELINES FOR USING PART I AND PART II

While linear in its presentation and format, we caution against a prescriptive use of these signs and thresholds. The way in which each of us grows in our relationship with God and lives a Christian life of faith is unique. Some of us travel more direct paths while others take a more circuitous path. To avoid the potential slip to use these signs and thresholds for assessment, we offer these **guidelines of use** to the different groups that may want to use them:

General guidelines for individuals and groups:

- Much like walking a labyrinth, a life of faith is full of twists and turns.
- Enter the discernment from any of the sections. There is no prescribed order or direction.
- Take your time.
- Read each description.
- Celebrate strengths and embrace areas of growth.
- Reflect upon what the signs say about personal faith and ministry possibilities.
- Allow space for silence.
- Listen for what God is up to and where nudges are being felt.
- Journaling may be helpful.
- Talking with a spiritual director or trusted friend may be helpful.
- Recognize and celebrate a current path; consider future directions.
- Consider the questions as guides for reflection, not as assignments to complete.
- Remember, this is intended as a support, not a burden.

For **LOCAL CONGREGATIONS** guiding personal and communal discernment:

- Local discernment teams might use these signs and thresholds as well as the discernment questions with anyone in the congregation who may be interested in life direction.
- Search committees might incorporate discernment questions into their interview times.
- Some of the questions might be helpful in Identifying lay leaders in a congregation.
- Vestries/Bishop's committees might find the signs and thresholds useful as they help to identify those who may be called to ordained ministry.

For **COMMISSIONS ON MINISTRY** guiding personal discernment:

- Grid and discernment questions might be helpful in interviews.
- COM liaisons might use discernment questions with persons in the process toward ordination.
- COMs might find this useful in their work as advisors on lay ministries throughout the diocese.

PART I: SIGNS & THRESHOLDS FOR INDIVIDUALS

This document is for individuals who want to wonder, widen, and deepen your understanding of yourself and of God. You are encouraged to use these pages to identify where you feel confident and capable as well as where you feel unsure. The four thresholds—Claiming, Engaging, Sustaining, and Cultivating/Catalyzing—are offered as indicators of a maturing Christian life. They are designed to prompt reflection upon where you are in your personal faith and ministry development and suggest the knowledge, skills, and practices needed to follow Jesus at significant points in a faith journey. Together, the signs and thresholds are intended as a tool to aid discernment or self-assessment and are not an inventory for evaluation or judgment. Instead, the thresholds are simply containers that you use to get a sense of where you may be and where you may want to explore during your faith journey. The format for each of the thresholds is the same; they start with a brief description of typical characteristics of someone at this point in their faith journey and then list signs that we hope they can confidently express within the faith community and in the world. We encourage you to read each description, reflect upon what the signs say about your personal faith and ministry development, recognize your strengths, and identify where you want to grow. They are offered with blessings for the journey.

THRESHOLD I: CLAIMING

I have been baptized and am beginning to claim a new faith as I come to know God’s Story

Characteristics: curious, seeks understanding, desires affiliation and sense of belonging

Focus: Energies, primarily self-introspective, to gain grounding and become rooted in a new faith

- Who am I as a Christian?
- How do I hear and discover what being a Christian means for me?
- How do I hear and discover what being an Episcopalian means for me?

Pedagogical Stage: BLOOM’s TAXONOMY: Remembering, Understanding

SIGNS WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY (Formation)

I feel confident and competent in and am able to:

Scripture

- Hear and claim the Christian Story as my own.
- Know that the Bible is the foundational text of the Christian faith.

Episcopal Tradition

- Recognize that the Episcopal way values scripture, tradition, and reason as its foundation.
- Understand Episcopal identity as defined by the Book of Common Prayer (BCP), the liturgical calendar, and particularly the Baptismal Covenant.
- Participate in my faith community.
- Recognize the various roles that help make a faith community.
- Learn to pray as a means of being in relationship with God.
- Try worshipful experiences.

Theology

- Claim my belovedness in God.
- Appreciate the limits of my humanity and welcome the grace that God offers.
- Understand that baptism is the beginning of a journey, confirmation involves a personal decision to continue that journey, and the journey changes with life and as one's faith matures.
- Recognizes that Theology is the systematic study of human experience of God.
- Aware that the Baptismal Covenant, Book of Common Prayer, and scripture are foundational sources of inspiration and formation.

Representing Christ

- Wonder about the meaning of life.
- Recognize my gifts given to me by God.
- Question who I am.
- Desire a relationship with God.
- Understand prayer as a spiritual conversation.
- Seek others to share spiritual conversations.

SIGNS IN THE WORLD (Evangelization)

I feel confident and competent in and am able to:

Scripture

- Recognize scripture and God's story in the world.
- Hear how others make connections between My Story and God's Story.
- Curious about how scripture speaks to current circumstances and global concerns.

Episcopal Tradition

- Recognize holiness in life's patterns, practices, and rituals.
- Identify the patterns, practices and rituals that inform my living as a faithful and ethical person.
- Learn about how the Episcopal church responds to issues of social justice and stewardship.

Theology

- Recognize and explore the interrelationship between faith and other disciplines.
- Wonder how God is incarnate in all of life's big questions and the world's great challenges.
- Acknowledge the existence of evil.
- Explore turning to God in times of challenge and uncertainty.

Representing Christ

- See God in all people.
- See the world through the life and teachings of Jesus.
- Think differently about decision-making because of my faith.
- Listen and participate respectfully when various perspectives are presented respectfully.
- Recognize responsibility to vulnerable people and places.

THRESHOLD II: A STORY OF ENGAGING

I meet others who know God's Story and engage with them in communion.

Characteristics: seeking, connecting, exploring

Focus: Energies primarily oriented to engaging in community

- What gifts do I bring to the community?
- What value do I add? How/What am I contributing?
- How do my relationships help me understand God more fully?

Pedagogical Stage: BLOOM'S TAXONOMY: Applying

SIGNS WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY (Formation)

I feel confident and competent in and am able to:

Scripture

- Find self in the Christian Story (biblical and beyond).
- Familiar with the foundational Scriptural stories that form the story of Salvation.

Episcopal Tradition

- Appropriate scripture, tradition, and reason (with experience) to inform life and use as the basis of my theological reflection.
- Identify as an Episcopalian which includes familiarity with the Baptism, Eucharist, sacramental rites, creeds, and Book of Common Prayer (BCP).
- Understand Episcopal polity, its historic relationship with the Anglican Communion and the relation of parish, diocesan, provincial and church-wide structures.
- Understand the nature of ministry and honor different roles within the whole Body of Christ and recognize connections between church history, liturgy, ethics and social action.
- Commit to a discipline of corporate and individual prayer and worship.
- Understand the history and practice of Episcopal worship.

Theology

- Practice ways of helping others recognize and claim their belovedness.
- Confront sin in myself and in the world and recognize the power of forgiveness.
- Understand and value being a member of the body of Christ.
- Deepen relationship with God through critical engagement with scripture and traditions of Christian thought.
- The Baptismal Covenant and the Book of Common Prayer, and scripture inform my life/worldview.

Representing Christ

- Recognize the joys and obligations of Christian commitment.
- Appreciate the gifts of others.
- Engage in ongoing self-reflection about difference to understand historical inequities and suffering caused by religion and indifference.
- Participate in spiritual growth opportunities in my faith community.
- Participate in community worship, and miss it when I am absent
- Develop important relationships in my faith community.

SIGNS IN THE WORLD (Evangelization)

I feel confident and competent in and am able to:

Scripture

- Hear God's Story from multiple perspectives.
- Articulate how to Integrate God's Story in my life.
- Embrace the Biblical imperatives to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Episcopal Tradition

- Understand the rituals of my faith tradition as part of larger interfaith/global tradition.
- Articulate what I believe about my faith with others & what distinguishes it from other faith traditions/ denominations.
- Understand that the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion give public witness to contemporary challenges.

Theology

- Commit to loving God and my neighbor.
- See God's radical love in everyday life.
- Recognize my responsibility for all of God's creation.
- Acknowledge the imperative to join God's Mission for the world.

Representing Christ

- Strive to love others regardless of our differences or perceived differences.
- Engage my neighbor in response to my faith.
- Apply my faith when addressing issues.
- Participate in conversations that raise spiritual questions with people who do not share my faith tradition.
- Participate with my church to address needs in my community.

THRESHOLD III: A STORY OF SUSTAINING

I “wrestle” with God and God’s Story and share my gifts to sustain my community and God’s Mission

Characteristics: committed, consistent, confident, capable, competent, healthy questioning

Focus: Commitment to faith community – locally and/or church-wide

- What helps me go deeper?
- How can/do I deepen my faith?
- What feeds me?
- Who are my models and inspiration?

Pedagogical Stage: BLOOM’S TAXONOMY: Analyzing

SIGNS WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY (Formation)

I feel confident and competent in and am able to:

Scripture

- Explore my personal story, my faith community’s story and my wider community’s story in light of the Christian Story to make decisions.
- Study scripture with a working knowledge of how to interpret and use scripture in a range of different contexts.
- Lead Bible reflection confidently with a studied approach.

Episcopal Tradition

- Articulate the impact of personal faith (Apostles’ Creed), the faith of the church (Nicene Creed), and ethical questions.
- Regularly participate in and practice my faith with others an Episcopal context.
- Exercise authority to engage resources and structures of The Episcopal Church (TEC).
- Actively engage in ministerial roles in my community and missional networks beyond the local level.
- Confidently pray and talk about prayer with others.
- Actively participate in Episcopal Worship as participant and leader.

Theology

- Theologically reflect upon the structure/systems that limit our embrace of our Belovedness in God.
- Adapt my actions to honor difference (diversity) with and among cultural and religious groups.

- Articulate my sense of vocation and be able to navigate possible tension between the personal and ecclesial aspects of ministry.
- Understand the ways in which Christian beliefs and practices have developed over time and are developing in varying contexts.
- Discuss the theology of the Baptismal Covenant, the BCP and scripture and their implications for personal and corporate decision-making with others.

Representing Christ

- Live by a Rule of Life.
- Share my gifts in my faith community.
- Risk asking tough questions of my faith community at any level, especially to acknowledge difference and dismantle oppression.
- Participate in a community of practice and/or seek spiritual direction (enrichment) from a director, faith mentor or leader of faith.
- Embrace liturgical roles and lead worship.
- Embrace leadership roles within my faith community.

SIGNS IN THE WORLD (Evangelization)

I feel confident and competent in and am able to:

Scripture

- Make decisions informed by God's Story.
- Share the Good News utilizing theologically sound resources for biblical literacy.
- Reflect theologically on specific scriptural passages and different interpretations to choose how I respond to current events and global concerns.

Episcopal Tradition

- Participate in rituals inspired by my faith in my public community.
- Engage in dialogue about faithful living with others from different denominations/faiths.
- Represent my denomination in civic and interfaith circles.

Theology

- Point to and name God's action in the world.
- Join God in action in the world as a follower of Christ.
- Discuss the things I see as evil in my world with others.
- Engage in deeper reflections of God's mission and our role in that mission with other communities.

Representing Christ

- Intentionally seek the face of Christ in others.
- Admit my faults and seek forgiveness; I forgive.
- Strive for justice and peace as a witness of my faith.
- Connect my actions to God’s mission of love, liberation and life for all of creation.
- Share my time, talent, and financial resources sacrificially.

THRESHOLD IV: A STORY OF CULTIVATING-CATALYZING

I help others “wrestle” with God and God’s Story cultivating their faith and catalyzing their engagement in God’s Mission.

Characteristics: confident in leading, called & calling, capacity building, courageous, co-create

Focus: Cultivate OTHER’s maturing in faith and catalyze their engagement in God’s Mission

- How am I called to companion others?
- How can I invite others into discipleship?
- How can/do I pass on faith to others?
- How do I spark other’s engagement in God’s Mission?

Pedagogical Stage: BLOOM’S TAXONOMY: Evaluating, Creating

SIGNS WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY (Formation)

I feel confident and competent in and am able to:

Scripture

- Facilitate others’ exploration of the connections between our Individual Stories, our collective stories, and God’s Story from multiple perspectives.
- Teach others how to engage theological resources for personal and communal reflection and response.

Episcopal Tradition

- Lead opportunities to learn about the Episcopal Way and its foundational elements and their role in life choices.
- Lead the development and implementation of ideas/ programming to incorporate growth, reflection, and continued practice that leads to deepening of Episcopal Identities.

- Encourage ministry collaborations that utilize the gifts of the laity in partnership with deacons, priests and bishops.
- Guide others' discernment of ways to use their gifts in the faith community.
- Assist others with their prayer life.
- Train liturgical leaders.

Theology

- Create opportunities to restore unity with God and others in Christ and develop processes/practices to dismantle barriers for individuals and community members to claim their belovedness in God.
- Teach the community to understand sin and grace.
- Call my faith community to deeper reflection on its role in God's Mission and mentor others in recognizing God's invitation to them as members of the Body of Christ.
- Create opportunities for community members to critically engage and systematically study our human experience of God and deepen our relationship with God.
- Teach the interconnections of history, theology, and moral decision-making based in Scripture, the Baptismal Covenant, the Book of Common Prayer.

Representing Christ

- Equip others for their discernment and gifts appreciation.
- Recognize and cultivate the gift/s of others.
- Seek ways to empower my faith community to understand historical inequities and suffering caused by religion and indifference.
- Invite and inspire others to claim their place in God's Mission.
- Prepare members for participation and leadership in worship.
- Prepare others for leadership roles.

SIGNS IN THE WORLD (Evangelization)

I feel confident and competent in and am able to:

Scripture

- Share the Christian Story while equipping others' learning and questioning.
- Equip others to share God's story in a variety of ways.
- Lead communal reflections on contemporary circumstances, issues and concerns, and facilitates communal responses to them.

Episcopal Tradition

- Create and lead rituals inspired by my faith in my public community.
- Create environments where life's questions can be engaged in faith-filled ways from lots of perspectives.
- Host gracious and brave conversations with guidelines for sharing that honor all perspectives.

Theology

- Teach others how to listen to voices from the margins and develop justice-seeking responses that address systemic injustice.
- Embrace diversities with and among cultural and religious groups.
- Risk asking and leading dialogue of unspoken questions.
- Facilitate the creation of opportunities to join God's Mission with others.

Representing Christ

- Inspire others to right relationships with God, self, others and all creation.
- Create space for healing and reconciling.
- Seek ways to empower my wider community to understand historical inequities and suffering caused by religion and indifference.
- Engage in ongoing collaboration with the wider community to speak truth to power.
- Monitor coherence between what I/we say and what I/we do.

PART II: SIGNS & THRESHOLDS FOR THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR PASSING ON THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH

PREAMBLE: Lifelong, Life-wide, and Life-deep Faith and Ministry Development for all Baptized Episcopalians¹

In the Episcopal Church, the **Baptismal Covenant** articulates the relationship God establishes with us in Holy Baptism and defines who we are as Christians and Episcopalians. It offers questions that explore how we know God: Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). It also highlights the work God has given us to do:

- to continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers;
- to resist evil and repent when we fall into sin;
- to proclaim the Good News of God in Christ through word and example;
- to seek and serve Christ in all people; and
- to strive for justice and peace and respect the dignity of every human being.²

How we each experience God, grow in faith, and discern our response to God's invitation is unique. What we share—sometimes more individually and sometimes more collectively—is a **lifelong, life-wide, and life-deep³** journey through which we develop the skills to respond to God's invitation to be the body of Christ both within our faith communities and within the world.

This document is primarily intended for members of a faith community at the local or diocesan level (such as Vestry members, Commissions on Ministry, faith formation leaders, spiritual directors, clergy, chaplains, and those responsible for passing on the teachings of the church, etc.) **who serve formally or informally as catalyzers and cultivators of other adults' faith journeys.** The document is designed to help these facilitators, guides, and/or teachers to adapt resources to local contexts in order to promote deeper faith and ministry development in a congregation, intentional community, or diocese. It is created to be a resource to generate opportunities for fellow travelers to wonder, widen, and deepen their understanding of themselves and of God as well as to gain confidence in their grasp of the

¹ This document was developed by a working group with guidance from the Task Force for Faith Formation and Ministry of the Baptized. Writing Team members include Ellen Bruckner, Kate Gillooly, Lisa Kimball, Julie Lytle, Deborah Bressoud Parker, Sharon Ely Pearson, Tina Pickering, and Melissa Rau with additional support from Amy Cook, Vicki Garvey, Alexizendria Link, and James McKim.

² The Book of Common Prayer, pp 304–305.

³ Lifelong reminds that a journey of faith unfolds chronologically across one's life. Life-wide reminds that a journey of faith integrates formative events and experiences from across one's contexts. Life-deep reminds that the meaning-making that occurs while on a journey of is influenced by culture, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, ideologies and values.

knowledge, skills, and practices needed to follow Jesus. This is not meant to be a static document but flexible; local leadership is encouraged to adapt and adjust to fit their own contexts and needs.

While designed primarily for catalyzers and cultivators of faith, it is important to be clear—faith and ministry development are the work of *all baptized people*, not just those who may consider themselves leaders or potential leaders in the church. All baptized Christians are ministers and are called to join God’s mission both in the church and in the world. Thus, individuals also may use this document as a discernment or self-assessment tool (See Part I of this document) to reflect upon where they are in their personal faith and ministry development – recognizing strengths and prompting the search for additional resources for growth in spirituality and leadership. While linear in its presentation and format, it can also be visualized as a labyrinth, entering at a certain point and following a path that has twists and turns, with new perspectives gained along the way.

To that end, this document is offered as both a **map and a set of map-making elements**. As a map, without presuming a particular entry point or sequence,⁴ the document attempts to identify recognizable signs and thresholds of one’s faith journey through a four-phased continuum. The continuum encompasses recognizable signs of maturing in our relationship with God that mark deepening knowledge and understanding, the shaping of values and attitudes, as well as the honing of practices and skills. There are also thresholds to cross as an identity as disciples and members of the Body of Christ is more fully embraced. Decisions are then made to accept increased responsibility to proclaim God’s loving, liberating, life-giving Good News (evangelism) and to help others to find their path as we pass on our faith (faith formation). These threshold crossings can be described as “movements” between four “stages” which are experienced differently by each person:⁵

- **Claiming—starting to grow in Christian faith as an Episcopal expression;**
- **Emerging—deepening individual faith through connection to a community of faith;**
- **Sustaining—engaging in faithful service, consistent spiritual practices, and participation in various aspects of life and leadership within the church and within the world; and**
- **Cultivating and Catalyzing—inspiring, supporting and passing on the faith to others on their lifelong faith journey.**⁵

⁴ New, as well as “established” Christians may find themselves traversing these thresholds during their faith journey. For example, one may be well versed in scripture (Sustaining), but lack an Episcopal lens for reading and theological reflection (Emerging). Some may be following a call to serve in the community (Cultivating/Catalyzing) long before connecting their ministry to their faith (Claiming, Emerging).

⁵ In 1956, Benjamin Bloom and four collaborators published a framework for categorizing educational goals using a cognitive progression which presumes lower order thinking is necessary to the development of higher order thinking, familiarly known as Bloom’s Taxonomy. It was revised as Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (BRT) in 2001. The writing team used BRT and its six levels to differentiate learning outcomes in each of the four phases: Claiming includes the BRT’s remembering and understanding; Emerging concentrates on BRT’s applying; Sustaining focuses on BRT’s analyzing and evaluating; and Cultivating/Catalyzing highlights BRT’s creating.

As a set of **map-making elements** (the significant sites, potential routes, and legends for interpretation), this document highlights four areas that capture the breadth of what it means to follow Jesus within an Episcopal context:

- **Scripture,**
- **Episcopal Tradition** (including history and liturgy),
- **Theology,** and
- **Representing Christ** (including ethics and moral theology).

Together, these elements chart demonstrable competencies we express as we follow the call to discipleship more fully. They also provide a critical foundation for consistently engaging in practices of reconciliation—confronting sins that limit human dignity such as racism, sexism, ableism, and clericalism.

The authors of this document understand “competencies” as active elements that demonstrate we are growing and getting better at something throughout the course of our lives—that we are living as disciples. Beyond a transcript that outlines content with which we have engaged, competencies also describe attitudes and practices we claim as we grow through phases of faith and ministry development. We like to think of **competencies as “confidences—feelings or consciousness of one's powers.”** Each time we deepen our knowledge, sharpen our skills, embrace Christ-like attitudes and respond in faith, we show how we are gaining confidence as we strive to follow Jesus more nearly, deepen our relationship with God, and respond to God’s presence in our lives.

Background of this Document

*The Anglican Primates initiated the creation of similar maps and map-making elements in 2003 when they established a task force on Theological Education for the Anglican Communion (TEAC). TEAC’s aim is to help all Anglican Christians to be theologically alert and sensitive to the call of God. TEAC focused on an “Outcomes Based” model for education and encouraged a shift from “What does a person know?” to “What competencies does the learner need to gain in order to be able to fulfil this or that task/job/vocation?”⁶ TEAC offered a set of “ministry grids” for bishops, priests, deacons, licensed lay ministers, and lay people with the hope that each of the Anglican Communion Provinces would adapt them for local use. Within the Episcopal Church, the Association for Episcopal Deacons published competencies for diaconal formation in 2017 and updated them in 2018. The writing group offers this document, **A Christian Life of Faith: Signs and Thresholds along The Way**, for your use and adaptation.⁷*

⁶ TEAC offers more information about the philosophy of ‘Outcomes Based’ education as it applies in the context of South Africa here: <https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2006/01/teac-meeting-ends-with-pledge-to-help-renew-theological-education.aspx>. Theological Education for the Anglican Communion (TEAC), <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/theology/theological-education/ministry-grids.aspx>, January 5, 2020.

⁷ Please comment! Does this document appropriately and adequately capture the knowledge, attitudes and skills of all the baptized as we grow in faith and develop our ministries. Send comments to jlytle@bexleyseabury.edu.

A CHRISTIAN LIFE OF FAITH: SIGNS AND THRESHOLDS ALONG THE WAY

I am a baptized Christian who wonders what my journey of faith is in relationship with God, myself, my neighbor, and all of creation.

Living my faith within the faith community asks “How am I growing in faith within an expanding circle of believers?” The focus is **formation**.

Living my faith in the world asks “How am I sharing my faith beyond my faith community? The focus is **evangelization**.

THRESHOLDS	CLAIMING <i>I have been baptized and am beginning to claim a new faith as I come to know God’s Story.</i>	ENGAGING <i>I meet others who know God’s Story and engage with them in communion.</i>	SUSTAINING <i>I “wrestle” with God and God’s Story and share my gifts to sustain my community and God’s Mission.</i>	CULTIVATING-CATALYZING <i>I help others “wrestle” with God and God’s Story cultivating their faith and catalyzing their engagement in God’s Mission.</i>
Characteristics	<p>SELF-CONSCIOUS as beginning a Christian Life of Faith</p> <p>curious, seeks understanding, desires affiliation and belonging</p> <p><i>(BLOOM: remembering, Understanding)</i></p>	<p>BECOMING ACTIVE in a faith community and Engaging Faith</p> <p>seeking, connecting, exploring</p> <p><i>(BLOOM: Applying)</i></p>	<p>FAITHFUL SERVICE IN THE CHURCH locally and/or church-wide</p> <p>committed, consistent, confident, capable, healthy questioning</p> <p><i>(BLOOM: Analyzing)</i></p>	<p>OTHER-ORIENTED— responsible for teaching and passing on faith</p> <p>confident in leading, called & calling, capacity building, courageous, co-create</p> <p><i>(BLOOM: Evaluating, Creating)</i></p>
General Discernment Questions	<p>Who am I as a Christian?</p> <p>How do I hear and discover what being a Christian means for me?</p> <p>How do I hear and discover what being an Episcopalian means for me?</p>	<p>What gifts do I bring to the community?</p> <p>What value do I add? How/What am I contributing?</p> <p>How do my relationships help me understand God more fully?</p>	<p>What helps me go deeper?</p> <p>How can/do I deepen my faith?</p> <p>What feeds me?</p> <p>Who are my models and inspiration?</p>	<p>How am I called to companion others?</p> <p>How can I invite others into discipleship?</p> <p>How can/do I pass on faith to others?</p> <p>What difference can I make?</p>

DESIRED CONFIDENCE—Formation In particular KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ATTITUDES, BEHAVIORS				
Discernment Questions about Scripture	<p>How do I understand the Christian story for myself?</p> <p>Where is my comfort level in reading scripture for myself?</p> <p>Tell a story about a time when loving God and loving my neighbor became real.</p>	<p>Where do I find myself in the Christian story?</p> <p>What Bible stories mean the most to me?</p> <p>How do I understand the Salvation story from scripture?</p> <p>How do I make room in my religious thinking for expanding my understanding?</p>	<p>Where do I notice the Christian story affecting my life?</p> <p>How am I using Bible tools for insight and interpretation?</p> <p>How do I use scripture to support/enhance my prayer/meditation experiences?</p>	<p>Where do I notice the Christian story affecting my life?</p> <p>How am I using Bible tools for insight and interpretation?</p> <p>How do I use scripture to support/enhance my prayer/meditation experiences?</p>
Discernment Questions about Theology	<p>How do I experience my baptismal vows in my life?</p> <p>What parts of the Book of Common Prayer do I turn to in prayer and why?</p> <p>How do I understand the creeds?</p> <p>When do I find myself turning to God in prayer and silence?</p>	<p>How do I explain the importance of being part of a faith community?</p> <p>Where am I being drawn to help in caring for creation?</p> <p>How do I understand my own world view? How is faith informing how I see and understand this world view?</p> <p>How have I examined the theological statements I grew up with?</p>	<p>Where do my experiences with forgiveness fit in the scripture story?</p> <p>What kinds of confession do I find most complete and meaningful to me?</p> <p>How do I clarify and stay focused on my call amidst the many demands of my life?</p> <p>What is the examined theology/honor in my life?</p>	<p>Where in my life have I noticed a broadening/deepening of my practices of living with diversity?</p> <p>How have I challenged myself to explore the faith questions that arise in me?</p> <p>In what ways do I engage others in reflecting on their faith?</p> <p>How am I connecting with the Episcopal Church's framework Building Beloved Community?</p>

DESIRED CONFIDENCE—Formation In particular KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ATTITUDES, BEHAVIORS				
Discernment Questions about Episcopal Tradition	<p>Why did I choose the Episcopal Church?</p> <p>What is the element of the Episcopal Church that speaks the most to my life?</p>	<p>How is the Episcopal community important in my life?</p> <p>How am I claiming and living out my Episcopal identity?</p>	<p>What are some of the practices I've found helpful in growing my faith?</p> <p>How am I involved in my local faith community?</p> <p>What ways have I found to connect my life in my faith community with engagement in the larger neighborhood and beyond?</p> <p>How does my faith inform my civic life?</p>	<p>In what ways have I mentored others in their faith?</p> <p>How am I a role model to lead others in expressing faith in action?</p> <p>Where have I opened the space for conversation with others?</p> <p>How do I understand my leadership in my local church?</p>
Discernment Questions about Representing Christ	<p>How do I seek and serve Christ in all people, respecting the dignity of every person?</p> <p>How would I describe my relationship with God?</p> <p>What in worship feeds me for the rest of my week?</p> <p>How does my faith inform my decision-making?</p> <p>How does being part of a faith community strengthen my life?</p>	<p>How has being part of a faith community clarified and/or deepened my spiritual life?</p> <p>How does my participation in my faith community strengthen the faith community?</p> <p>How does being part of a faith community strengthen the wider communities?</p> <p>What or where are the ministries I have said "yes" to in my church?</p> <p>Who are the people I'm drawn to help outside of the church?</p> <p>What do I notice about myself when I engage with people who think and believe differently than I do?</p>	<p>How do I experience the space within my faith community for me and others to have doubts?</p> <p>How do I articulate my Rule of Life and how it developed?</p> <p>As I reflect on my participation in my faith community, where do I identify the areas of growth spiritually for myself and for my life in the wider community?</p> <p>What have I experienced as my more difficult areas of forgiveness?</p> <p>How do I experience the alignment of my actions and my beliefs?</p> <p>How do I understand myself as an agent of reconciliation in the world?</p>	<p>How do I make room for compassion and curiosity when others around me express doubts about faith? How do I respond?</p> <p>What methods/tools have I found effective in engaging others in conversations dealing with reconciliation?</p> <p>How has my faith grown as I work to empower others to use their gifts to serve the community?</p> <p>What are the actions I am taking to disrupt systemic racism in our church and the world?</p>

REPORTS TO THE 80th GENERAL CONVENTION

		CLAIMING	ENGAGING	SUSTAINING	CULTIVATING-CATALYZING
SCRIPTURE	Signs of Living my faith within the faith community (forming)	Hear and claim the Christian Story as my own.	Find self in the Christian Story (biblical and beyond).	Explore my personal story, my faith community's story and my wider community's story in light of the Christian Story to make decisions.	Facilitate others' exploration of the connections between Our Individual Stories, Our Collective Stories, and God's Story from multiple perspectives.
		Know that the Bible is the foundational text of the Christian faith.	Familiar with the foundational scriptural stories that form the story of Salvation.	Study the Bible with a working knowledge of how to interpret and use scripture in a range of different contexts. Confidently lead Bible reflection with a studied approach.	Teach others how to engage theological resources for personal and communal reflection and response.
		S.1	S.2	S.3	S.4
	Signs of Living my faith in the world (Evangelizing)	Recognize scripture and God's Story in the world.	Hear God's Story from multiple perspective.	Make decisions informed by God's Story.	Share the Christian Story while equipping others' learning and questioning.
		Hear how others make connections between My Story and God's Story.	Articulate how to integrate God's Story in my life.	Share the Good News utilizing theologically sound resources for biblical literacy.	Equip others to share God's Story in a variety of ways.
		Curious about how scripture speaks to current circumstances and global concerns.	Embraces the Biblical imperatives to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves.	Reflect theologically on specific scriptural passages and different interpretations to choose how I respond to current events and global concerns.	Leads communal reflections on contemporary circumstances, issues and concerns and facilitates communal responses to them.
		S.5	S.6	S.7	S.8

		CLAIMING	ENGAGING	SUSTAINING	CULTIVATING-CATALYZING
Signs of Living my faith within the faith community (forming)	Recognize that the Episcopal way values scripture, tradition, and reason as its foundation.	Appropriate scripture, tradition, and reason (with experience) to inform life and use as the basis of my theological reflection.	Articulate the impact of personal faith (Apostles' Creed), the faith of the church (Nicene Creed), and ethical questions.	Lead opportunities to learn about the Episcopal Way and its foundational elements and their role in life choices.	
	Understand Episcopal identity as defined by the Book of Common Prayer (BCP), the liturgical calendar, and particularly the Baptismal Covenant.	Identify as an Episcopalian which includes familiarity with the Baptism, Eucharist, sacramental rites, creeds, and Book of Common Prayer (BCP).	Regularly participate in and practice my faith with others in an Episcopal context.	Lead the development and implementation of ideas/programming to incorporate growth, reflection, and continued practice that leads to deepening of Episcopal Identities.	

REPORTS TO THE 80th GENERAL CONVENTION

	CLAIMING	ENGAGING	SUSTAINING	CULTIVATING-CATALYZING
	Participate in my faith community.	Understand Episcopal polity, its historic relationship with the Anglican Communion, and relation of parish, diocesan, provincial, and church-wide structures.	Exercise authority to engage resources and structures of The Episcopal Church (TEC).	Encourage ministry collaborations that utilize the gifts of the laity in partnership with deacons, priests and bishops.
	Recognize the various roles that help make a faith community.	Understand the nature of ministry, honor different roles within the whole Body of Christ, and recognize connections between church history, liturgy, ethics and social action.	Actively engage in ministerial roles in my community and missional networks beyond the local level.	Guide others' discernment of ways to use their gifts in the faith community.
	Learn to pray as a means of being in relationship with God.	Commit to a discipline of corporate and individual prayer and worship.	Confidently pray and talk about prayer with others.	Assist others with their prayer life.
	Try worshipful experiences.	Understand the history and practice of Episcopal worship.	Actively participate in Episcopal Worship as participant and leader.	Train liturgical leaders.
	ET.1	ET.2	ET.3	ET.4
Signs of Living my faith in the world (Evangelizing)	Recognize holiness in life's patterns, practices, and rituals.	Understand the rituals of my faith tradition as part of larger interfaith/global tradition.	Participate in rituals inspired by my faith in my public community.	Create and lead rituals inspired by my faith in my public community.
	Identify the patterns, practices and rituals that inform my living as a faithful and ethical person.	Articulate what I believe about my faith with others and what distinguishes it from other faith traditions/denominations.	Engage in dialogue about faithful living with others from different denominations/faiths.	Create environments where life's questions can be engaged in faith-filled ways from lots of perspectives.
	Learn about how the Episcopal church responds to issues of social justice and stewardship.	Understand that the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion give public witness to contemporary challenges.	Represent my denomination in civic and interfaith circles.	Host gracious and brave conversations with guidelines for sharing that honor all perspectives.
	ET.5	ET.6	ET.7	ET.8

REPORTS TO THE 80th GENERAL CONVENTION

	CLAIMING	ENGAGING	SUSTAINING	CULTIVATING-CATALYZING
Signs of Living my faith within the faith community (forming)	Claim my belovedness in God.	Practice ways of helping others recognize and claim their belovedness.	Theologically reflect upon the structure/systems that limit our embrace of our Belovedness in God.	Create opportunities to restore unity w/God and others in Christ and develop practices to dismantle barriers for community members to claim their belovedness in God.
	Appreciate the limits of my humanity and welcome the grace that God offers.	Confront sin in myself and in the world and recognize the power of forgiveness.	Adapt my actions to honor difference/diversity with and among cultural and religious groups.	Teach the community to understand sin and grace.
	Understand baptism as a journey beginning, confirmation involves a personal decision to continue onward, and journey changes with life and faith maturity.	Understand and value being a member of the body of Christ.	Articulate my sense of vocation and able to navigate possible tension between the personal and ecclesial aspects of ministry.	Call my faith community to deeper reflection on its role in God's Mission and mentors others in recognizing God's invitation to them as members of the Body of Christ.
	Recognizes that Theology is the systematic study of human experience of God.	Deepen relationship with God through critical engagement with scripture and traditions of Christian thought.	Understand the ways in which Christian beliefs and practices have developed over time and are developing in varying contexts.	Create opportunities for community members to critically engage and systematically study our human experience of God and deepen our relationship with God.
	Aware that the Baptismal Covenant, Book of Common Prayer, and scripture are foundational sources of inspiration and formation.	The Baptismal Covenant, the Book of Common Prayer, and scripture inform my life/worldview.	Discuss the theology of the Baptismal Covenant, the BCP and scripture and their implications for personal and corporate decision-making with others.	Teach the interconnections of history, theology, and moral decision making based in scripture, the Baptismal Covenant, The Book of Common Prayer.
	T.1	T.2	T.3	T.4

REPORTS TO THE 80th GENERAL CONVENTION

	CLAIMING	ENGAGING	SUSTAINING	CULTIVATING-CATALYZING
Signs of Living my faith in the world (Evangelizing)	Recognize and explore the interrelationship between faith and other disciplines.	Commit to loving God and my neighbor.	Point to and name God's action in the world.	Teach others how to listen to voices from the margins and develop justice-seeking responses that address systemic injustice.
	Wonder how God is incarnate in all of life's big questions and the world's great challenges.	See God's radical love in everyday life.	Join God in action in the world as a follower of Christ.	Embrace diversities with and among cultural and religious groups.
	Acknowledge the existence of evil.	Recognize my responsibility for all of God's creation.	Discuss the things I see as evil in my world with others.	Risk asking and leading dialogue of unspoken questions.
	Explore turning to God in times of challenge and uncertainty.	Acknowledge the imperative to join God's Mission for the world.	Engage in deeper reflections of God's mission and our role in that mission with other communities.	Facilitate the creation of opportunities to join God's Mission with others.
	T.5	T.6	T.7	T.8

	CLAIMING	ENGAGING	SUSTAINING	CULTIVATING-CATALYZING
Signs of Living my faith within the faith community (forming)	Wonder about the meaning of life.	Recognize the joys and obligations of Christian commitment.	Live by a Rule of Life.	Equip others for their discernment and gifts appreciation.
	Recognize my gifts given to me by God.	Appreciate the gifts of others.	Share my gifts in my faith community.	Recognize and cultivate the gifts of others.
	Question who I am.	Engage in ongoing self-reflection about difference to understand historical inequities and suffering caused by religion and indifference.	Risk asking tough questions of my faith community at any level, especially to acknowledge difference and dismantle oppression.	Seek ways to empower my faith community to understand historical inequities and suffering caused by religion and indifference.

REPORTS TO THE 80th GENERAL CONVENTION

	CLAIMING	ENGAGING	SUSTAINING	CULTIVATING-CATALYZING
	Desire a relationship with God.	Participate in spiritual growth opportunities in my faith community.	Participate in a community of practice and/or seek spiritual direction/enrichment with a director, faith mentor or leader.	Invite and inspire others to claim their place in God's Mission.
	Understand prayer as a spiritual conversation.	Participate in community worship, and miss it when I don't.	Embrace liturgical roles and lead worship.	Prepare members for participation and leadership in worship.
	Seek others to share spiritual conversations.	Develop important relationships in my faith community.	Embrace leadership roles within my faith community.	Prepare others for leadership roles.
	RC.1	RC.2	RC.3	RC.4
Signs of Living my faith in the world (Evangelizing)	See God in all people.	Strive to love others regardless of our differences.	Intentionally seek the face of Christ in others and celebrate their uniqueness.	Inspire others to right relationships with God, self, others and all creation.
	See the world through the life and teachings of Jesus.	Engage my neighbor in response to my faith.	Admit my faults and seek forgiveness; I forgive.	Create space for healing and reconciling.
	Think differently about decision-making because of my faith.	Apply my faith when addressing issues.	Strive for justice and peace and witness my faith.	Seek ways to empower my wider community to understand historical inequities and suffering caused by religion and indifference.
	Listen and participate respectfully when various perspectives are presented respectfully.	Participate in conversations that raise spiritual questions with people who do not share my faith tradition.	Connect my actions to God's mission of love, liberation and life for all of creation.	Engage in ongoing collaboration with the wider community to speak truth to power.
	Recognize responsibility to vulnerable people and places.	Participate with my church to address needs in my community.	Share my time, talent, and financial resources sacrificially.	Monitor coherence between what I/we say and what I/we do.
	RC.5	RC.6	RC.7	RC.8