



LIVING DISCIPLESHIP

PRACTICING OUR FAITH

Adult Facilitator Guide

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Introduction

In the midst of Paul's letter to the Ephesians is nestled one of the most beautiful prayers in the Christian tradition. Paul is writing to his disciples, his students, those who have joined him on the path of following Jesus and who are learning how to live in the light of Christ's love. To these early Christians, Paul writes, "I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power" (Ephesians 1:17-19).

This prayer, written nearly 2,000 years ago, resonates through the ages. Now, perhaps more than ever, what individual Christians need, what the Church needs, is to know "the hope to which God has called us...the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints...the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe." These three things represent the content of the Christian faith: the hope of God proclaimed to us in the Bible, the witness of the saints from ages past, and the great power God offers to each of us to live out our lives of faith here and now. These ideas cannot be grasped in a single moment but must be learned and absorbed and made real through a lifetime of discipleship. They are not facts to memorize but realities to encounter and experience.

We can, as a Church and as individuals, live more deeply into the reality for which Paul so fervently prays. Spiritual formation for all ages—adults, youth, and children—is one way we can seek the spirit of wisdom and revelation that God offers.

Living Discipleship is an all-ages curriculum designed to help individuals and communities know more fully the very things that Paul prayed for the Ephesians to find: the God revealed in Christ Jesus. **Living Discipleship** is structured in three years: one year on **Exploring the Bible**, one year on **Celebrating the Saints**, and one year on **Practicing our Faith**.

Living Discipleship: Exploring the Bible takes participants on a journey through the scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation. One of the main ways that we know and understand the hope to which God has called us is the gift of God's Word, the Bible. By focusing on the vast narrative of the scriptures, we can see the great story of God's love from the beginning of creation, through the life of Jesus Christ, and in our own time, guided by the Holy Spirit. Through the stories of scripture, we can learn that the hope God offered to the faithful in ages past is the very same hope to which God is calling us today.

Living Discipleship: Celebrating the Saints is an exploration of the riches of God's glorious inheritance made real in the lives of the saints who have gone before us. The saints witness to us what the life of faith looks like, lived out in real time, and they challenge us to live out our own discipleship more fully and fearlessly. In our journey with the saints, we also learn something of our history as we look at monks, missionaries, prophets, doctors, evangelists, and more, and learn how dozens of different people in different places and times, with different gifts and backgrounds, have taken their place in proclaiming the kingdom of God.

Living Discipleship: Practicing Our Faith offers a survey of the basic beliefs and practices of the Episcopal Church, focused especially on **The Book of Common Prayer** and our liturgical and sacramental traditions. These beliefs and practices remind us that we are the inheritors of the immeasurable greatness of God's power that transforms each of us and strengthens us to serve the world in Christ's name. In practicing our faith, we learn how to live as disciples, not merely one day a week but every day of the week.

Living Discipleship is a tool for churches and leaders who have the same prayer for their communities that Paul prayed so many years ago. It is, we hope, a resource for helping Christians come to know more fully God in Christ: the hope, the glorious inheritance, and the immeasurable power.

Overview

Welcome to *Living Discipleship: Practicing Our Faith!*

Nearly all Christians wrestle with the relationship between belief and behavior. Is faith predominately a matter of belief? Can I simply say the right prayers and believe the right things in my heart in order to get my ticket to heaven, regardless of how I act or what I do on a daily basis? Or is faith predominantly a matter of behavior? If I am a "good person," if I do the right things, then does it really matter what I think in my head or feel in my heart?

The truth is, of course, that the answer is "both." Belief and behavior are intimately and inextricably connected. Again and again in the Bible, God calls us to a life of belief and behavior; not either/or. The things we believe about God and about ourselves shape, in a deep and powerful way, how we behave on a daily basis. Our prayers, the expression of our deepest beliefs, inform our practices, the way that we act in the world. And what we do in the world—who we encounter, how we behave, and where we go—in turn informs what we pray for and even the words that we use to pray!

As a parent, I have seen the way that words shape children; I am frequently surprised to hear my own words coming out of my children's mouths. They use some of my pet phrases and often copy my intonation. Again and again, my children repeat the words that they hear me say (even when I think they're not listening!). And the words I use shape how my children see themselves and the world. If you have read or seen the movie *The Help*, you know what I mean. In that story, a little girl hears only criticism from her mother; her mother is constantly pointing out her failures, only speaking words of scorn or correction. But the little girl's nanny, who spends more time with her than her mother, tells her over and over again every day: "You is kind, you is smart, you is important." Those words become her inner narrative, which the littler girl repeats to herself over and over again, even after the nanny is long gone.

Further, the words that we say shape how we behave. When we spend time talking about gratitude, we become more grateful people. When we spend most of our time talking about money or success, we become people who value money and success above all else, and we put those pursuits first in our lives.

As a priest, I have seen this interplay of belief and practice mirrored in the lives of congregations—the words that we say in our prayers, week in and week out, shape how we see the world and ourselves. And the words that we say (and the actions that we take) in our worship shape how we behave in the world. Belief and behavior are interconnected; prayer and practice are two sides of the same coin.

This curriculum, *Practicing Our Faith*, is a course about prayer, beliefs, and practices, and about the intimate relationship between those three things. It is grounded in *The Book of Common Prayer*, because these are the prayers of the Episcopal Church, the prayers that both shape and reflect what we believe. It is amplified by the liturgies of *The Book of Common Prayer*, which help articulate what we Episcopalians believe about life and death, about sin and grace, about ourselves and about God.

The Episcopal Church's great charism, or gift, is its *Book of Common Prayer*. Our prayer book grows out of the belief that all of our prayers should be held "in common," available to both princes and peasants, clergy and commoners. The reason that we have set forms for liturgies in our church, with carefully and beautifully crafted prayers that follow a structure, is because our prayers are meant to be repeated over and over until we know them by heart, until they root in us so deeply that they shape all that we say and all that we do.

Even though we pray the words of *The Book of Common Prayer* each week, many of us don't know where these prayers come from, what they mean, or how they call us to live on a daily basis. *Living Discipleship: Practicing Our Faith walks, step by step, through the prayer book. Each week, participants gather to hear a short lecture on one section of The Book of Common Prayer*, exploring what each liturgy says and how it is typically used in our communities. Then the

class explores together the connections between the words of our prayers, our beliefs, and the daily practice of faith, exploring questions such as: "What does the burial liturgy have to teach us about what Episcopalians believe about death?" Or "How does the Daily Office teach us to integrate prayer into our daily lives?" Through *Living Discipleship: Practicing Our Faith*, participants receive an introduction to *The Book of Common Prayer*, exploring the rich variety contained within its pages and finding strength and encouragement for the daily practice of faith.

This curriculum contains twenty-six sessions designed for use in weekly formation time, with each session approximately an hour long. With twenty-six sessions, this means that *Practicing Our Faith* is intended to function as the formation curriculum in a church for an entire program year. Thus it can be used as the Sunday School curriculum or on whatever day of the week your community offers its weekly formation programs.

Practicing Our Faith is offered as an all-ages curriculum, with corresponding lessons for adults and children on the same topics each week. The curriculum is also designed to be used with youth, and some suggestions on adapting the adult curriculum are included in the appendix. This all-ages format allows families to come to church and learn about the same general topic, each in their own class, and have a shared starting point from which to go home and talk, discuss, and debate about what they learned. The hope is that this engagement will form and foster intergenerational relationships, both within families and between church members.

Practicing Our Faith is available as a free download to all Episcopal congregations. Note: The readings come from the companion book, *Walk in Love: Episcopal Beliefs & Practices*, which is available for purchase at www.fowardmovement.org, or through Amazon or other booksellers.

Through *Living Discipleship: Practicing Our Faith*, you will discover anew the riches of *The Book of Common Prayer*, learning about parts of the prayer book you may have never seen before or finding deeper meaning in the sections you pray every day or every week. In this exploration, our hope is that you will realize the connections between prayers and practices and find fresh ways of engaging both in your own life. Praying, learning, and discussing together as a community the content of our prayers, the tenets of our faith, and the power in our daily practices enriches all of us so that we grow more deeply in the knowledge and love of the Lord our God and follow more closely in the footsteps of Jesus, our Savior.

Format and Materials:

There are at least three ways to use the *Practicing Our Faith* course (and probably many more that we haven't thought of!).

One way to use *Practicing Our Faith* is to offer a lecture-based class during weekly formation time. In this case, you will need a leader who can deliver the weekly lectures and serve as the facilitator for the class discussion time. This person can be a clergy person or a well-formed lay person who is willing to spend time each week carefully preparing by reading the chapter in *Walk in Love* and the lecture outline notes, available as a free download. The outline provided is then used as a guideline for the lecture, which the leader can fill in with additional personal stories as needed.

The second possibility for the *Practicing Our Faith* course is to offer a book study in which every participant reads the chapter in *Walk in Love* each week, and the facilitator leads a discussion on the reflection questions in the book. In this case, each participant in the class will need a copy of the book, *Walk in Love*. In this scenario, there is no class lecture, and the leader simply serves as the facilitator of the book discussion group and does not need any extra preparation, beyond reading the chapter along with other participants.

The third possibility is a hybrid of the above approaches. You might have everyone read the chapter from *Walk in Love* and then use the engagement activity provided in the free download to expand upon what you read at home. With this approach, the group benefits from a summary of the highlights of the chapter at the beginning of the session, allowing those gathered to help add in details but without the need for a formal lecture.

Each approach has benefits and challenges: the lecture-based approach requires the leader to be more carefully prepared and have proficient knowledge of the subjects being discussed, whereas the discussion-based approach requires each participant to read at home. Our hope is that the flexibility allows congregations to decide what works best in their context and use the curriculum in a way that is helpful to them. If you come up with other ways to use or adapt this resource, we hope that you will share them with us!

Class overview

With the exception of the first and final sessions, each class of this curriculum follows a similar structure:

Opening Collect (2 minutes)

- Each class includes an opening collect, so that the session can begin with prayer.

Encounter (15-20 minutes)

- The encounter section of the class is a brief lecture in order to orient everyone to the topic at hand. The leader should read over the lecture outline carefully in preparation and be ready to deliver the material with confidence and clarity. (If your group has been reading the book *Walk in Love*, then you can simply have the group recap this week's chapter.)

Engage (15-20 minutes)

- Each week's session includes an optional engagement activity to explore one portion of the week's topic in greater depth. This might include looking more closely at a certain prayer or part of the liturgy, reading a portion of the Bible that applies to the topic at hand, or learning about a spiritual practice that relates to the liturgy. You can omit this activity or encourage participants to do it at home, if your class has time constraints. We recommend omitting the engagement activity if your class time is 45 minutes or less.

Explore (15-20 minutes)

- This is a time to explore the connections between prayer, belief, and practice with some reflection and discussion questions. A list of reflection and discussion questions is included for each week. These questions are designed so that the class can discuss them all together or break up into small groups for discussion, whatever best suits your church context.

Concluding Collect (2 minutes)

- At the close of each class, pray the opening collect once again, so that the session both begins and ends with prayer.

Additional Resources

This curriculum is designed so that it can be led, with careful preparation, using the provided resources. All that is needed is the free curriculum download, copies of *The Book of Common Prayer*, and *Walk in Love: Episcopal Beliefs & Practices*. Unless noted, all of the page numbers refer to *The Book of Common Prayer*.

If the person leading the class would like some further information, the following resources may be helpful:

Commentary on the American Prayer Book by Marion Hatchett (HarperOne, 1995)

Praying Shapes Believing: A Theological Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer
by Leonel Mitchell (Morehouse Publishing, 1991)

Inwardly Digest by Derek Olsen (Forward Movement, 2016)

Why Sacraments? by Andrew Davison (Cascade Books, 2013)

The Liturgy Explained by James Farwell (Morehouse Publishing, 2013)

Liturgical Sense: The Logic of Rite by Louis Weil (Seabury Books, 2013)

The Episcopal Handbook (Morehouse Publishing, 2015)





CHAPTER I

Not Only With Our Lips, But in Our Lives

Beliefs and Practices

PREPARATION

- In preparation for class, read the “Introduction” and “Chapter One: Not Only With Our Lips” of *Walk in Love: Episcopal Beliefs & Practices*.
- Read over the outline for today’s presentation multiple times, until it becomes familiar and you are comfortable with the material.
- Gather the necessary class materials in advance.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Encounter Lecture outline for this session’s presentation
- Sufficient copies of *The Book of Common Prayer* for participants to share
- Copies of the book *Walk in Love: Episcopal Beliefs & Practices* for each participant



OPENING (and Concluding) PRAYER

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful; and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end. *Amen.* (58-59)

ENCOUNTER

- The encounter section of the class is a brief lecture in order to orient everyone to the topic at hand. The leader should read over the lecture outline carefully in preparation and be ready to deliver the material with confidence and clarity. Feel free to add personal stories or anecdotes to enhance the outline but be careful not to allow the stories to overwhelm or distract from the material being presented.
- The outline provided is extremely detailed, so that you can present from it easily. If you would like to shorten or adapt the outline to suit your context, you are free to do so.
- If your group has been reading the book *Walk in Love*, then you can simply have the group summarize the chapter and encourage those gathered to chime in and add salient details. You can prompt the conversation with leading questions such as:
 - What was most surprising to you about this chapter?
 - What rang true for you in today's chapter?
 - What was the most important thing from this chapter?
 - If you had to summarize this chapter in a sentence (or a tweet) what would you say?

ENGAGE

Option A: *Book of Common Prayer* Exploration

- Distribute copies of *The Book of Common Prayer* to each participant (or encourage participants to bring their own *Book of Common Prayer* to class each session!)
- On a flip chart or board, write the following questions:
 - What do you notice or what surprises you?
 - What do you wonder about or what questions do you have?
 - What might this challenge you to be or to do?
- Ask each person to think of a number between 1-1000. Ask them to open their copy of *The Book of Common Prayer* to the page corresponding to the number in their minds. (No cheating! Even if your number corresponds to a page with only lists of readings or dates in the calendar, keep that page!)
- Allow five to seven minutes for people to read the page and then reflect on the questions written on the board. They might want to flip a few pages forward or backward to understand the context of their page, but they should answer the questions based only on the page number they selected.
- Next, encourage people to get into groups of three or four people and discuss their pages together.

- o Have each member of the group share the page number.
- o Each person should briefly summarize their responses to the question, and invite reflections from other members of the group.
- o Then move to the next member of the group, until everyone has shared.

Option B: Explore The General Thanksgiving

- Introduce this option by saying:
 - o Today's session is framed by the prayer "The General Thanksgiving."
 - o This beautiful prayer has a great deal to say to us about how we live and move as Christians and, more specifically, as Episcopalians.
 - o So today we'll spend some time diving more deeply into this fundamental prayer.
- Encourage people to get into groups of four or five people and discuss together The General Thanksgiving. In their groups, have participants engage in the following process:
 - o Encourage one person to read The General Thanksgiving aloud, while the others listen carefully.
 - o As the prayer is read, each person should listen for the word or phrase that stands out to them.
 - o After the prayer has been read aloud, each person in the group shares the word or phrase that struck them, without any explanation or commentary.
 - o Next, a different person in the group reads The General Thanksgiving aloud, while the others listen carefully.
 - As the prayer is read, each person should listen for the way the prayer touches their life today.
 - After the prayer has been read aloud, each person in the group shares the way that the prayer touches their life today.
 - o Finally, a different person reads The General Thanksgiving a third time, while the others listen carefully.
 - As the prayer is read, each person should listen for what God is calling them to be or to do in response to this prayer.
 - After the prayer has been read aloud, each person in the group shares how they are being called to change or to act in response to this prayer.
 - o To conclude the session, encourage each group to pray The General Thanksgiving together in unison.

EXPLORE

Guide a discussion of the whole gathering on the following questions:

- What is your favorite prayer, and why is it your favorite?
- Do certain lines from prayers come to mind during your daily life? What are they and when do you think about them?
- What does the baptismal promise “to continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers” mean to you? How have you lived up to that promise in your life? How could you do better?
- What are some of the gifts of scripted, common prayer like that of *The Book of Common Prayer*? What are some of the difficulties with this kind of prayer?

PREVIEW

- End the class by giving a quick preview of what you will talk about in the next session.
- Begin by saying, “Today we looked at the way the prayers that we say in our liturgies reflect what we believe and inform how we live as Christians. Today we started a journey that will continue for the next twenty-five sessions as we walk step-by-step through *The Book of Common Prayer*.”
- Then say, “Next session, we will begin to explore the sacrament of Holy Baptism, the great starting point of our Christian journey. Come join us as we learn more about how to walk in love!”

EXPAND

Faithful Questions: Exploring the Way with Jesus by Scott Gunn and Melody Wilson Shobe (Forward Movement, 2015)

Praying Shapes Believing: A Theological Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer by Leonel Mitchell (Morehouse Publishing, 1991)

Inwardly Digest by Derek Olsen (Forward Movement, 2016)

The Liturgy Explained by James Farwell (Morehouse Publishing, 2013)

ENCOUNTER LECTURE OUTLINE

OUR LIPS AND OUR LIVES

- *The Book of Common Prayer's* Rite I Morning Prayer includes this prayer, called The General Thanksgiving:
 - Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful; and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen. (58-59)
 - Did you notice this line: "...that we may show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives..." This line in the prayer is a reminder of a basic tenet of our faith: We are called to offer God praise, not simply in what we say, but also with what we do. God doesn't want lip service; God wants life service. And there is an intimate, unbreakable connection between the words that we say in prayer and the things that we do in our daily lives.

LEX ORANDI, LEX CREDENDI

- This line from the General Thanksgiving articulates a foundational principle of the Episcopal Church; *Lex orandi, lex credendi*.
 - This Latin phrase can be loosely translated as "the law of prayer is the law of belief."
 - Or, said another way, "you are what you pray." In the Episcopal Church, prayer, belief, and action are intimately tied together.
- The more we pray something, the more deeply it becomes a part of us. We are shaped by the prayers that we pray, as both the act of prayer and the content of those prayers inform how we think about ourselves and the world. And even more than shaping our beliefs, our prayers shape our actions, pushing us to live out in our daily lives the things we have said with our lips.
- Our prayers demand that we ask ourselves some difficult questions:
 - How does what we say on Sunday inform how we think on Thursday?
 - And what do our prayers and beliefs call us to *do* on Monday and Tuesday and every other day?
- As we pray, we are shaped by our prayers, so that over time, with God's help, we become the very things for which we pray. In this way, *The Book of Common Prayer* is the source, not only of the prayers that the Episcopal Church uses regularly but also of the content of our beliefs and the guideline for how we practice our faith.

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

- The Episcopal Church is defined by how we worship, which is guided by *The Book of Common Prayer*.
- What binds the Anglican Communion together—the worldwide communion of which our Episcopal Church is a part—is the way that we pray. Our pattern of prayer is both ancient and modern, drawing on the tradition of the church through the centuries and responding to the needs and concerns of faithful Christians in this day and age.
- *The Book of Common Prayer* was first published in 1549 under the direction of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. The book was the result of an extraordinary idea: The prayers that we say in worship should be held in common, that they should be available to all people in their native language.
- Prior to the publication of *The Book of Common Prayer*, books of liturgy were mostly reserved for clergy (bishops, priests, and deacons) and monastics (monks and nuns).
 - These books also were largely written in Latin, a language spoken by only the educated elite.
 - In the wake of the Reformation, Cranmer and others believed that prayer, like scripture, should be available to all people, clergy and laity alike, and that people should be able to read and understand the prayers of the church in their own language.
- Some of the prayers in *The Book of Common Prayer* were written by Cranmer himself. For many other prayers, Cranmer relied on centuries of tradition, painstakingly translating into English prayers that had been passed down through the generations, reaching back to the earliest celebrations of Holy Eucharist and creating a living connection with our ancestors.
- In writing that first *Book of Common Prayer*, Cranmer also sought to find a *via media*, a middle way, between Catholic and Protestant sensibilities.
- The church was being rocked by the waves of the Protestant Reformation.
 - In response to the criticisms levied against the Roman Catholic Church, many were willing to throw the baby out with the bathwater, changing their practice of prayer radically so as to sever any connection with the practices of the Roman Catholic Church.
 - Cranmer and others sought to find a middle ground, keeping some aspects of Catholic thought and practice while being informed by the best of Protestant theology.
- *The Book of Common Prayer* has been edited and revised a number of times, each iteration trying to balance the ancient with the modern, seeking a middle way between extremes.
 - The Church of England still uses the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, which bears a great resemblance to the original 1549 edition.
 - The Episcopal Church in the United States of America adopted its first *Book of Common Prayer* in 1789; that first prayer book was deeply informed by both the original one and the Scottish Episcopal Church's *Book of Common Prayer*.
 - *The Book of Common Prayer* currently authorized for use in the Episcopal Church was last revised in 1979. All of the churches across the Episcopal Church worship according to the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*.

PRAYING AS A COMMUNITY

- When we come together each week and pray according to the *Book of Common Prayer*, we pray as a community.
 - Our liturgy is not about “each man for himself,” or about how “I like to pray.”
 - Instead, we keep a tradition of worship that stretches through time and is shaped by a tradition of prayer that has been passed down from generation to generation.
- Our prayers connect us not only through time but also through space to all those other members of the Anglican Communion, a worldwide body bound together by a shared history and shared worship.
 - While Anglican churches across the globe have varying beliefs and practices, Anglican Communion churches are all connected, in some way, to the Church of England, and each has a prayer book that has been influenced and informed by *The Book of Common Prayer*.
 - If you visit an Anglican church anywhere in the world, you will have a basic idea of what is going on. Even if you can't understand a word of the language being spoken, the order of service and the actions will be very familiar.
- At baptism, and again at confirmation, every Episcopalian promises “to continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.”
 - Note that it doesn't say prayer but rather but in the prayers. In baptism and confirmation, we commit to more than a general idea of prayer; we promise to pray like this and in community.
 - *The Book of Common Prayer* contains the prayers that we promise to be faithful to—the prayers that mark us both as Christians and as Episcopalians.

BREADTH AND OPPORTUNITY

- Now, a person might hear begin to think that *The Book of Common Prayer* is a straitjacket, limiting and restricting how we can interact with God. But nothing could be further from the truth. *The Book of Common Prayer* offers great opportunity for creativity and diversity!
 - The prayer book includes an incredible variety of liturgies.
 - There are liturgies for eucharist and baptism, marriage and burial, confirmation and ordination.
 - There are also forms for daily prayer; including Daily Devotions and the Daily Office, an ordered routine of praying at different times throughout the day.
 - There are prayers for those who are sick and for grace at meals, for victims of addiction, for schools and colleges, for rain and for travelers, and many more.
 - Within most liturgies, there are forms of prayer for Rite I and Rite II—essentially two versions of the prayer espousing the same principles.
 - Rite I is full of thees and thous, the more formal and traditional language that echoes the earliest prayer books. It is a language of beauty, poetry, and mystery.

- Rite II is more contemporary, changing thee and thou to you and translating some of the more complex words and concepts to be easier to understand, while still holding on to the beauty and tradition.
 - Even within the language of a certain rite, there is a great deal of variety.
 - In Rite II Holy Eucharist, for example, there are four different options for eucharistic prayers: A, B, C, and D. Each eucharistic prayer uses different phrases and images to draw us into the mystery of Holy Eucharist.
 - ◆ Eucharistic Prayer D is connected to some of the oldest eucharistic prayers, grounding us in ancient tradition.
 - ◆ Eucharistic Prayer C talks about outer space, reminding us of our modern context.
 - ◆ The different prayers emphasize different aspects of our understanding of God, in order to help us have a greater appreciation for what happens when we come together for Holy Communion.
 - Throughout the liturgies, there are different options for the different seasons of the church year: (Advent, Lent, Easter, etc.)
- And, while *The Book of Common Prayer* has some requirements, much is left unwritten as well. This allows for a great variety of practice, so individual communities can choose:
 - Vestments that people wear
 - The decorations on the altar
 - The colors of the seasons
 - The hymns, anthems, and instrumental music.
 - And many other things!
- Worship according to *The Book of Common Prayer* offers unity in the midst of diversity, allowing individual congregations to have both variety and constancy. Many aspects of prayer and worship will be the same across all Episcopal churches, no matter where they are located; other components will differ from one community to the next.

PRAYING WITH OUR BODIES

- Prayer is a full-contact sport. It is meant to involve every part of ourselves. We live out that reality in worship, by the different actions we use when we pray.
 - *The Book of Common Prayer* sometimes directs us to sit, sometimes to stand, sometimes to kneel. Sometimes we are told to speak, sometimes to remain silent, other times to sing.
 - Some people even include different manual acts: crossing themselves at certain moments, bowing their heads at the name of Jesus and genuflecting (dropping to one knee in reverence) before the altar.

- All the different actions can make it seem like we aren't engaged in prayer; we're engaged in Episcopal aerobics! But the truth is, all these different actions, all these different postures of prayer, are a way that help us to engage our whole selves in worship. They are ways of living out the truth that we praise God "not only with our lips, but in our lives."
- By actively engaging our bodies in prayer, we are saying that prayer demands more than just our words. We proclaim in our actions that God wants all of us and that we are offering all of ourselves to God.
- Our worship also involves all of the senses.
 - We see light and darkness as candles flicker.
 - We see the variety of colors in changing vestments, church hangings, and stained glass windows.
 - We hear music sung or played, words spoken and chanted, and the silence that tells its own story.
 - We smell the beeswax of burning candles, the holy perfume of incense, the beautiful scent of anointing oil.
 - We taste the bread and wine.
 - And we touch: the smooth surface of altar rails, the thin pages of prayer books and hymnals, the hands of our neighbors and strangers as we share the peace.
- Our worship engages all of our selves: our bodies and souls, our mouths and our movements. And it engages all of our senses: sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. Our prayer is embodied action.
- And this is not only true of our worship on Sunday. We involve our bodies in worship everyday, by living in our lives what our lips profess in prayer.
- Prayer changes us, in deep and meaningful ways.
 - Take, for example, the experience of praying with someone who suffers from dementia or Alzheimer's or a person who is non-responsive, who doesn't seem aware of what is going on.
 - Often, if you begin to pray the Lord's Prayer, even someone mostly non-verbal will begin praying along. The words might be mumbled or difficult to decipher.
 - They might be a few beats behind or say only certain phrases. But even if they've forgotten nearly everything else, they often remember the Lord's Prayer.
 - Prayers that we pray often and repeatedly become so much a part of us that we remember them on an instinctive, visceral level.
 - When we spend our time in prayer focused on gratitude, we become more grateful people. When we pray for peace, we begin to act more peacefully.
 - Our prayers become a deep and meaningful part of us, words that are truly learned "by heart," being taken into ourselves and shaping us.