

Confirmation Course: Study Guide

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A scrolling, searchable companion to the Confirmation Course slide deck — the same questions and answers, organized by topic for study between classes.

Foundations of the Faith

Who is God?

God is a pure Spirit, the Creator and Preserver of all things, with no beginning or end. He created time itself and so exists outside of it.

How do we know there is a God?

By human reason: the complexity and beauty of nature, the voice of conscience telling us right from wrong, and the universal ideas of goodness, love and truth all point to a Creator.

What is the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity?

That there is ONE God in three Persons — Father, Son and Holy Ghost — distinct yet of one substance. This is opposed to Unitarianism (one God, one Person) and Modalism (one God working through three masks or modes).

What is sin?

The common definition is transgression against the Law of God. But sin can also be understood as choosing the lesser good: every sin holds some pleasure or satisfaction, but that pleasure falls short of God's will.

What is the Original Sin?

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in Eden, sin entered the world and was passed down to their descendants. Whether or not there was a literal Adam and Eve, the story explains why humans are selfish, foolish and do what they know they ought not to do.

What are sins of commission and omission?

Commission is doing in thought, word or deed what we should not; omission is failing to do what we ought to do. Repeated small (venial) sins can breed complacency that leads to graver ones.

What is Grace?

The free, sanctifying power of love, mercy and undeserved help that God the Holy Ghost gives us so that we might become what He wants us to be. The Church strengthens us further with Sacramental Grace, given through the Sacraments.

What is Faith?

The Theological Virtue of belief in God and all He has revealed. Saint Paul calls it "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11).

What is Hope?

Trust in God, an act of the will (whereas Faith is an act of the mind). Its opposite is despair. Saint Paul writes, "in hope we were saved" (Romans 8.24).

What is Charity, and why is it the greatest Virtue?

Charity is God's love for us, our love for Him, and by extension our love for neighbor — the highest form of love. Saint Paul's hymn in 1 Corinthians 13 concludes: "now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

What is Penitence, Confession and Absolution?

Penitence is sorrow for sin, worked by Grace. Confession is acknowledging sin to God, publicly (General Confession) or privately to a priest (Auricular Confession). Absolution is the priest's pronouncement of God's forgiveness.

What is the difference between Auricular and General Confession?

Both convey real forgiveness when there is contrition. Auricular Confession lets a troubled conscience seek a priest's counsel and hear God's forgiveness pronounced personally; the Anglican rule is 'all may, some ought, none must.'

What is the Doctrine of the Incarnation?

That the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son, became human flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary, as the angel told her at the Annunciation (Luke 1).

What is the Atonement?

Christ's becoming 'at-one' with us: sin separates us from God, so God became one of us and substituted Himself for us in His suffering, death and Resurrection, atoning for every sin ever committed.

What does Propitiation mean, and how does it relate to the Atonement?

Propitiation is the turning away of God's just wrath by an offered sacrifice. Christ's one sacrifice on the Cross is the propitiation for our sins, satisfying what was due and reconciling us to God. Saint John writes that Christ "is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2.2).

Why does the Prayer Book call it 'the Holy Table' rather than 'the Altar'?

Cranmer's 1552 revision deliberately replaced stone altars with a wooden table, because an altar is for offering sacrifice while a table is for men to eat upon; the Reformers wanted to teach that Christ's one sacrifice was finished on the Cross, not repeated at each Communion. The 1662 and 1928 rubrics still say 'the Holy Table.' 'Altar' is the older, pre-Reformation term the Oxford Movement restored in the 19th century to reassert the Eucharist's sacrificial character.

Why do some Anglicans say 'Mass' or 'the Eucharist' instead of 'Holy Communion'?

'Eucharist' (Greek for thanksgiving) is actually the oldest name for the rite, used already by the second-century Fathers; 'Mass' became the standard medieval Western term. The English Reformers preferred the biblical, communal names 'the Lord's Supper' and 'Holy Communion' (1 Corinthians 10-11), to stress the people's shared reception over a priest's sacrificial action. The Oxford Movement revived 'Mass' and 'Eucharist' to reclaim that older, more sacrificial and priestly emphasis — which is why those terms are now especially associated with Anglo-Catholic usage.

The Church Year

What two calendars does the Church use?

A Lunar Calendar, which fixes Easter and the Sundays that depend on it, and the Solar (secular) Calendar, which fixes Holy Days such as Christmas and the Saints' Days.

What is a Seasonal Collect?

A Collect repeated every day through a season. Advent Sunday's Collect is said daily until Christmas Eve; Ash Wednesday's is said daily until Palm Sunday.

What is an Octave?

A feast with an Octave lasts eight days: the feast itself plus the following seven, as with Christmas (ending at the Circumcision) and Easter (ending at Low Sunday).

What are the traditional themes of Advent?

Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell — a penitential season of four weeks (violet, or Advent Blue, with Rose on Gaudete Sunday) preparing us for the coming of the Saviour.

Why are Sundays never counted as part of Lent's forty days?

Because every Sunday commemorates the Resurrection and so is never penitential; subtracting the six Sundays from Ash Wednesday to Easter Even yields the forty days of fasting.

What is the difference between fasting and abstinence?

Fasting means reducing the quantity of food (the weekdays of Lent); abstinence means reducing the quality of food, as on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays in Lent.

Why are Maundy Thursday and Good Friday called the Sacred Triduum with Easter Even?

They form the three sacred days: the Institution of the Eucharist and the washing of feet on Maundy Thursday, the Crucifixion on Good Friday, and Christ's body resting in the tomb on Easter Even.

What is the theological message of the Collect for Easter Even?

That as we are baptized into Christ's death, we are buried with Him through continual mortifying of our sinful nature, that we may pass through the grave to our joyful resurrection.

What does "Pasch" mean, and why does Eastertide use words built on it?

Pasch (from the Greek pascha, itself from the Hebrew pesach, "Passover") is an older English name for Easter itself. It is the root of "Paschal": the Paschal Candle, blessed at the Easter Vigil and burning through Eastertide, and the Paschal Lamb, naming Christ as the true Passover sacrifice who delivers us from sin and death as the first Passover lamb delivered Israel from Egypt.

Why is Whitsunday's (Pentecost's) color red?

Red recalls the tongues of fire that descended on the Apostles when the Holy Ghost fell upon them, marking the establishment (birthday) of the Church.

What determines Easter's date, and why does it matter for the rest of the year?

The First Council of Nicaea (325) set Easter as the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Vernal Equinox. Because so many Sundays and seasons (Gesimatide, Lent, Ascension, Trinitytide) are reckoned from it, Easter's date governs most of the Church Year.

Who Are We?

Who founded the Anglican Church?

Jesus Christ — not Henry VIII or Elizabeth I. Anglicans claim to be part of Christ's one true Church, not the whole of it.

If we are not the one true Church, what are we?

Think of Christ as a rock thrown into a pond: ripples spread outward from Him, growing fainter with distance. Churches closer to the center are closer to Christ than those further out.

What is the difference between heresy and schism?

Heresy is holding teaching in direct conflict with essential Church doctrine. Schism is division among groups that share essential doctrine but remain separated, often after a bitter dispute.

Can you summarize the Seven Œcumenical Councils?

Nicaea I (325) and Constantinople I (381) condemned Arianism and produced the Nicene Creed; Ephesus (431) condemned Nestorianism; Chalcedon (451) condemned Monophysitism; Constantinople III (680) condemned Monothelitism; Nicaea II (787) condemned Iconoclasm.

Why is Arianism a heresy and not merely a schism?

Because it denies that Christ is fully divine and fully human — doctrine the Church holds essential, since only a fully divine and fully human Saviour could offer the perfect sacrifice and share His victory over death with us.

What is the Council of Jerusalem, and why does it matter?

Recorded in Acts 15 (c. 50 A.D.), it decided that Gentile converts need not observe the Mosaic Law — the first Church Council, resolving the first major dispute among Christians.

How is a Continuing Anglican jurisdiction typically organized?

Into Parishes, Missions and Dioceses gathered into a Province. A Parish is self-supporting and may call a Rector; a Mission is smaller and is overseen by a Bishop's Committee; each Diocese is led by a Bishop Ordinary, and the Dioceses together form the Province under an Archbishop or Presiding Bishop.

Who governs a parish, and who leads a Diocese?

A Vestry governs a parish's temporal affairs under the Rector; a Diocese is governed by its Bishop Ordinary together with a Synod, which elects officers and a Standing Committee of advice.

The Reformation and Our Prayer Book

What was the Great Schism of 1054?

The mutual excommunication of the Pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople, dividing the Western and Eastern Churches — a schism, not a heresy, since both sides held the same essential doctrines.

What did Martin Luther protest, and what happened?

Corruption in the Church, especially the sale of Indulgences; his Ninety-Five Theses (1517) spread rapidly by the new printing press. He was excommunicated, and Lutheranism became the religion of about half of Germany's population.

How did John Calvin's Reformation differ from Luther's?

Calvin's was more radical: a strict Doctrine of Predestination, simplified worship, a stern moral code, and denial of Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist — unlike Luther, who retained it.

How did the English Reformation begin?

Henry VIII sought an annulment the Pope could not grant; his anger at Rome opened the door, but real theological change came under his successor Edward VI, whose reformers produced the first English Prayer Book.

What distinguishes the 1549, 1552 and 1559 Prayer Books?

1549 was Catholic in form; 1552 (more Calvinist) omitted the Epiclesis and denied the Real Presence in the Black Rubric; 1559, under Elizabeth I, dropped the Black Rubric and combined both sets of Words of Administration, crafting the Via Media.

What is the Epiclesis?

The Invocation: a prayer calling upon the Holy Ghost to come down and sanctify the bread and wine, that they may become the Body and Blood of Christ. The 1549 Book added it, adapting it from the Eastern liturgies; the 1552 Book cut it, and it was later restored.

What is meant by the Real Presence?

The belief that Christ is truly and really present in the consecrated Bread and Wine of Holy Communion, not present merely as a symbol or memorial of Him. The 1549 and 1928 rites affirm it; more radical Reformers such as Calvin denied it.

What was the Black Rubric?

A note added to the 1552 Prayer Book denying that kneeling to receive Communion implied adoration of, or Christ's bodily Real Presence in, the bread and wine. Elizabeth's 1559 Book dropped it, and it never appeared in the American Prayer Books.

What is the Ornaments Rubric?

Elizabeth I's decree that ministers use such ornaments (vestments) as were in use in the second year of King Edward VI — a foothold for traditional ceremonial within the reformed Church.

How did the American Church obtain its bishops?

Samuel Seabury of Connecticut, unable to swear allegiance to the English king, was consecrated by Scottish bishops in 1784; William White and others were consecrated in England in 1787 once English law changed. All American orders descend from these four.

Why is the 1789 Prayer Book called a compromise book?

Its Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer followed the 1662 English Book, but at Bishop Seabury's insistence its Communion Office followed the more Catholic Scottish Prayer Book.

What was the Declaration of St. Louis, and why does it matter?

Modernism had eroded traditional theology through the twentieth century, culminating for many in the Episcopal Church's 1976 approval of women's ordination and a revised Prayer Book. In 1977, concerned clergy and laity meeting in St. Louis adopted the Declaration of St. Louis, affirming the historic Faith, the Seven Sacraments and the 1928 Prayer Book; bishops were consecrated the following year to continue Apostolic Succession outside the Episcopal Church, founding what is now called the Continuing Anglican Movement, from which a number of separate jurisdictions descend.

The Old Testament

What do we mean by Divine Inspiration?

Not that God dictated the Bible word for word, but that God the Holy Ghost inspired human writers — often building on oral tradition — to record His revelation faithfully.

What is the Apocrypha, and how do Anglicans use it?

Jewish writings appended to the Old Testament, accepted as canonical by Rome and the Orthodox but not by Jews or most Protestants. Like Saint Jerome, Anglicans read it as a guide to godly living, without founding doctrine upon it.

What is the Torah, or Pentateuch?

The first five books of Moses — Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy — telling the story of the Hebrew people from Creation to the death of Moses, and containing the Mosaic Law.

Why is the Book of Exodus so important?

It records Israel's deliverance from slavery and the giving of the Law at Sinai; Christians read it as a type of the New Paschal Lamb saving humanity from sin, prefiguring the Eucharist at the Passover meal.

How does Christ's Priesthood relate to the Levitical Priesthood?

The Book of Hebrews contrasts the incomplete Levitical Priesthood — and its Day of Atonement — with Christ's perfect Priesthood and His atonement for all sin, once for all.

How do the Jewish feasts of the Second Temple relate to the Christian year?

Passover becomes Easter, Christ the true Paschal Lamb; Shavuot (the Feast of Weeks, fifty days after Passover) becomes Whitsunday, Pentecost being simply its Greek name, the giving of the Law at Sinai reread as the giving of the Holy Ghost; and the Day of Atonement is fulfilled, not repeated, in Christ's one perfect sacrifice. The Christian year did not abandon the Jewish calendar so much as read it as a foreshadowing of Christ, keeping the Old and New Testaments as one connected revelation.

What is the recurring cycle in the Book of Judges?

Sin, punishment, repentance, deliverance: the people fall into idolatry, are defeated by their enemies, cry out to Yahweh, and He raises up a Judge to deliver them — until the cycle repeats.

What question does the Book of Job address?

Whether misfortune or suffering is always divine punishment for wrongdoing. Job, though innocent, suffers terribly; God's answer is that it is not so, and Job's wealth and happiness are restored.

Name the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament.

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon — joined in the Apocrypha by the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus (Sirach).

What was the chief task of a Hebrew Prophet?

To call the people back to obedience to the Law of Moses — in effect, to say NO in the Name of Yahweh to idolatry and injustice — and, at times, to foretell what was to come.

Why is Isaiah called the Prophet of the Advent?

Though he could not have foreseen Christ's coming in its fullness, Isaiah's prophecies of a coming Messiah who would save the people from their sins point the way toward Him.

How does the Book of Jonah prefigure Easter?

Jesus himself compares his coming death and resurrection to Jonah's three days and nights in the great fish before being delivered safely to land (Matthew 12.40).

The New Testament

Into what five sections does the New Testament divide?

The Four Gospels; the Acts of the Apostles; the Fourteen Epistles of Saint Paul; the Seven General (Catholic) Epistles; and the Book of Revelation.

What is the Synoptic Problem?

Matthew, Mark and Luke share so much material that scholars think Matthew and Luke each drew on Mark and on a shared source of sayings called Q — hence 'synoptic,' meaning 'seeing with one eye.'

How does John's Gospel differ from the Synoptics?

John, written later by an aged Apostle, omits the parables and records only seven miracles; his concern is less what Jesus did than why He came, using long discourses to declare Jesus as God and Saviour.

Why did the Council of Jerusalem matter to the New Testament Church?

It decided (c. 50 A.D.) that Gentile converts need not keep the Mosaic Law, opening the Gospel fully to the non-Jewish world and shaping Paul's entire missionary theology.

Why is the Epistle to the Romans called the most important New Testament book?

Because in it Saint Paul explains God's whole plan of salvation: that all have sinned, but faith in Christ justifies us and grants peace and eternal life — 'the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.'

What is the point of First Corinthians 13?

Saint Paul's hymn to Charity: whatever gifts a Christian has, without Charity (self-giving love) they are nothing — 'the greatest of these is charity.'

Who were the Judaizers, and why were they dangerous?

False teachers who insisted new Gentile Christians keep the whole Mosaic Law; Paul warned in Galatians and Colossians that this endangered the very Gospel of salvation by faith in Christ.

Why are First and Second Timothy and Titus called the Pastoral Epistles?

Because, unlike Paul's other letters, they are addressed not to congregations but to two trusted fellow-pastors, Timothy and Titus, advising them on Church order and their own conduct.

What is the central argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews?

That Christ and His priesthood are superior to anything in the Law of Moses — Jesus is both the exalted Son of God and our great High Priest, mediating between God and humanity.

What is Docetism, and which Epistle refutes it?

The heresy that Jesus only seemed to have a real body and did not truly come in the flesh. First John refutes it, insisting on the reality of the Incarnation.

What is the Book of Revelation about?

The visions of a holy man, traditionally the Apostle John, comforting persecuted Christians and culminating in the Second Coming of Christ, when God rewards the faithful and destroys evil.

The Apostles' Creed

Why does the Creed begin 'I believe' rather than 'We believe'?

To emphasize that each person takes individual responsibility: 'I myself am responsible for my belief. I want to be confirmed.'

What did Gnosticism teach, and why did the Church guard against it in Baptism?

That Christ descended from a Supreme Being and united with the man Jesus, whose body was not true human flesh but supernatural substance. The Apostles' Creed protected catechumens from this error at their Baptism.

What do the names Jesus and Christ mean?

Jesus, from the Hebrew, means 'Yahweh delivers or saves'; Christ, from the Greek Christos, means 'Anointed One' — together naming Him the Messiah who leads His people to victory over sin and death.

Why did Jesus have to be both perfect God and perfect man?

Fully human, He could stand in the place of each of us; fully divine, He alone could be the perfect sacrifice offered to God the Father for our sins.

What does 'He descended into Hell' mean, and why?

Hell here means the Place of Departed Spirits. Saint Peter tells us Christ went and preached His Gospel there, offering salvation to all who had ever died (1 Peter 3.18-19).

Why does the Creed specify 'the third day'?

Three days were needed to show Christ had truly died — by then corruption would have set in — yet God raised His body incorrupt.

Was the Ascension a literal, physical event?

Yes and no: Jesus visibly departed from the disciples' sight, as they could understand it, but properly understood the Ascension is a passing out of time and space, not a journey to a place in the sky.

What are the Four Marks of the Church?

One, because it is one Body under one Head; Holy, because the Holy Spirit sanctifies its members; Catholic, because it is universal for all times and peoples; Apostolic, because it continues in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship.

What is the Communion of Saints?

The mystical union in Christ of all who are one in Him, whether among the living or the dead — 'the blessed company of all faithful people.'

How, in daily life, are our sins forgiven?

By Baptism, by Holy Absolution, and by our own forgiving of others.

The Nicene Creed

Where does our Nicene Creed come from?

The First Œcumenical Council at Nicaea (325) produced an earlier version; the Creed we say was finished at the Second Council, Constantinople (381), chiefly to refute Arianism and Macedonianism.

What did Arianism teach, and how does the Creed answer it?

That Christ was created by the Father and so not fully divine. The phrase 'begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father' directly refutes this: the Father caused the Son, as a father begets a child, rather than making Him as an artisan makes a statue.

Why do many people genuflect at the words 'and was made man'?

Because these words affirm the Incarnation itself — the moment God became man — the central mystery the whole Creed exists to defend.

Why is Pontius Pilate named in the Creed?

As a historical anchor, placing Christ's crucifixion at a specific, verifiable moment in history — answering those who claimed Christ's suffering was myth, not fact.

What phrase in the Creed refutes Deism?

'Whose kingdom shall have no end' — against the Deist idea of a Creator who winds up the universe like a clock and departs, leaving Christ's reign to have ceased.

What is the Filioque controversy?

Whether the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father alone, or from the Father 'and the Son' (Filioque), a Western addition made at the Third Council of Toledo (589) that the Orthodox have never accepted, since it was never approved by an Œcumenical Council.

Into what three parts can the Creed's account of Revelation be divided?

The Old Testament, recording God's covenant with His chosen people; the New Testament, recording the Son's earthly life; and the ongoing work of the Holy Ghost through the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

What does the Creed mean by 'one Baptism for the remission of sins'?

That Christian Baptism, unlike John's baptism of repentance, unites us to Christ's death and resurrection and truly regenerates us as new creatures — and that the Church can also forgive sins committed after Baptism.

What is the Creed's final assertion?

That we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come — death is not the end, but releases us from the bondage of time.

The Sacraments

Why are Confirmation, Penance, Matrimony, Orders and Unction still full Sacraments?

The Prayer Book calls them 'commonly called Sacraments,' a historic compromise with the Puritans, but they impart grace and rest on Scriptural and historical foundations exactly as Baptism and Holy Communion do.

What is the outward sign and inward grace of Holy Baptism?

The outward sign is water and the sign of the cross; the inward grace is death to sin and new life, being born again in Christ's Resurrection.

What are Baptism of Desire and Baptism of Blood?

Baptism of Desire is when one who cannot be baptized is baptized by faith and longing for it; Baptism of Blood is when an unbaptized martyr is baptized in the shedding of their own blood.

What is the outward sign and inward grace of Holy Absolution?

The outward sign is contrition, sorrow for sin; the inward grace is the comfort and assurance of God's forgiveness, restoring the relationship sin had broken.

What is the Anglican rule on private confession?

'All may, some ought, none must.' Both General and Auricular Confession give real absolution where there is true contrition.

Who is the regular minister of Confirmation, and what does it confer?

A Bishop, through the Laying on of Hands (and, secondarily, Holy Chrism), conveying the gifts of the Holy Ghost that seal the grace already given in Baptism.

What are the sevenfold Gifts of the Holy Ghost named in the Confirmation prayer?

The spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and ghostly strength, of knowledge and true godliness, and of holy fear.

What is Holy Unction, and how does it differ from Extreme Unction?

The Sacramental laying on of hands and/or anointing for healing of body, mind and soul. It includes the older Extreme Unction (preparing the dying) but is not limited to it — it may be sought at any time of sickness.

Who are the ministers of Holy Matrimony, and what is its form?

The bride and groom themselves minister the Sacrament to one another before a priest or bishop who blesses the union; the form is their mutual consent and vow of lifelong fidelity before witnesses and God.

What is the difference between an annulment and a divorce?

A divorce ends a marriage that truly existed; an annulment declares that, owing to some defect (such as deception or non-consummation), no valid marriage ever existed.

What is the primary role of a Deacon, and is he 'half a priest'?

A Deacon's chief function is to assist at the Eucharist — reading the Gospel, administering the Chalice, saying the Dismissal — but he is not 'half a priest'; he holds full Apostolic Orders in his own right.

What distinguishes a Rector from a Vicar?

A Rector serves a debt-free, self-supporting parish and holds liturgical tenure protected jointly by Bishop and Vestry; a Vicar serves a mission or indebted parish and has no such tenure.

What can only a Bishop do?

Consecrate other bishops, ordain priests, make deacons, and (except in extreme cases) confirm — since a bishop holds, in addition, all the functions of priest and deacon.

The Services of the Church

What are the two chief kinds of public worship the Prayer Book provides?

The Daily Office (Morning and Evening Prayer), meant to be said every day by clergy and laity alike, and the Holy Communion, the Church's central sacramental act. A parish's main Sunday service is only one part of a much larger, daily pattern of common prayer.

What is the Daily Office, and is it only for the clergy?

Morning and Evening Prayer, descended from the monastic 'hours' but compressed by Archbishop Cranmer into two services any Christian can pray daily, alone or together. It is meant to be the ordinary rhythm of lay prayer, not merely something read from the altar

before Communion.

What is the basic shape of Morning Prayer?

Opening Sentences of Scripture, an Exhortation, General Confession and Absolution, versicles and the Venite (Psalm 95), the Psalms appointed for the day, a Lesson from the Old Testament followed by a Canticle (the Te Deum or Benedicite), a Lesson from the New Testament followed by another Canticle (the Benedictus or Jubilate), the Apostles' Creed, prayers and Collects, ending with the Grace.

What is the basic shape of Evening Prayer, and which Canticles belong to it?

The same general pattern as Morning Prayer, but after the First Lesson it sings the Magnificat (the Song of Mary, Luke 1) or Cantate Domino, and after the Second Lesson the Nunc Dimittis (the Song of Simeon, Luke 2) or Deus Misereatur, closing with Collects proper to the evening.

How is the Psalter arranged for use at the Daily Office?

Divided across a thirty-day monthly cycle, so that the whole Book of Psalms is said or sung roughly twelve times a year at Morning and Evening Prayer.

What is the Litany, and when is it used?

A form of intercession said or sung in versicle and response (from the Greek for 'supplication'), historically prayed in procession. The Prayer Book appoints it for Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays, or at other times of special need.

Besides Sunday worship, what Occasional Offices does the Prayer Book provide?

Services for the great turning points of a Christian life: Holy Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Matrimony, the Visitation and Communion of the Sick, the Burial of the Dead, and the Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth — together with the Ordinal, for those called to Holy Orders.

What is the difference between the Ministry of the Word and the Ministry of the Sacrament at Holy Communion?

The Ministry of the Word (Collect for Purity through the Sermon) instructs, through the Law, the Collect, the Epistle and Gospel, the Creed and preaching; the Ministry of the Sacrament (the Offertory onward) offers and consecrates, through the Prayer for the Church, the Confession, the Sursum Corda and Preface, the Prayer of Consecration, and the Communion itself.

What is the Summary of the Law, and how does it relate to the Ten Commandments?

Christ's own condensation of the Decalogue of Exodus 20 (Matthew 22.37-40): to love God with all one's heart, and one's neighbor as oneself. The 1928 rubrics allow the Summary of the Law to be said in place of reciting the full Ten Commandments at Holy Communion.

What are the Comfortable Words?

Four short sentences of Scripture (Matthew 11.28, John 3.16, 1 Timothy 1.15, and 1 John 2.1-2) said after the Absolution at Holy Communion, assuring penitents of Christ's mercy toward sinners who truly turn to Him.

What does the Prayer of Humble Access teach?

That no one, however holy, is worthy in themselves to receive Communion: 'We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies.' Approach to the Sacrament rests on God's mercy, not human merit.

Why does the Prayer Book give fixed forms for worship rather than leaving it to each minister's own words?

So that sound doctrine is taught the same way everywhere, error is guarded against, and the whole Church — clergy and laity, parish to parish — prays together in one voice. 'Common Prayer' was itself one of the great achievements of the English Reformation, replacing many differing local uses with a single shared book.

Church Ornaments and Ceremonial (Anglo-Catholic Addendum)

Items below are marked General (ordinary 1928 BCP practice) or Anglo-Catholic (a ceremonial elaboration found in that tradition specifically).

What is the old three-part rule of ceremonial action? — General

We stand to sing, sit for instruction (except the Gospel, when we stand), and kneel to pray.

What is the difference between liturgical and non-liturgical worship? — General

Non-liturgical churches worship without set forms; liturgical churches, like ours, use carefully crafted, time-honored ceremonial services engaging all the senses.

What is the focal point of the church, and why? — General

The Altar, on which the Holy Communion — our central act of worship — is offered, recalling the ancient Jewish altars of sacrifice.

What does the Tabernacle house, and what does a lit Sanctuary Lamp mean? — *Anglo-Catholic*

The Tabernacle houses the Blessed Sacrament, recalling the Ark of the Covenant kept in the wilderness Tent; a lit Sanctuary Lamp tells worshippers the Sacrament is present within.

What is the difference between Eucharistic Lights and Office Lights? — *General*

Eucharistic Lights (two candles) are used for Mass; Office Lights (four or six) are used for sung Morning or Evening Prayer, and are removed when the Eucharistic Lights are lit.

What linens belong on an altar? — *General*

At least one Fair Linen; ideally three cloths — a waxed Cere Cloth at bottom, plain linen above it, and the Fair Linen on top.

What is the difference between a genuflection and a prostration? — *Anglo-Catholic*

A genuflection touches the ground lightly with the right knee before rising, made when the Blessed Sacrament is present or at the Incarnatus in the Creed. A prostration lays the whole body flat, showing complete submission. In a strict 1928 BCP parish, the priest bows rather than genuflects; the genuflection reflects Anglo-Catholic belief in the Real Presence reserved in the Tabernacle.

What does incense symbolize, and when is it used? — *Anglo-Catholic*

Prayers rising to heaven; it is used chiefly to bless — censuring the altar, the bread and wine, the ministers, the people, and the Blessed Sacrament at the Consecration.

What is the Triple Sign of the Cross, and when is it made? — *Anglo-Catholic*

Made with the thumb on the forehead, lips and heart at the announcement of the Gospel, often with the words, 'May the Lord be in my thoughts and on my lips and in my heart.'

When are bells rung during the Mass? — *Anglo-Catholic*

At the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy), just before the Words of Institution, softly at each set of Elevations, and just before the reception of Holy Communion.

What are we reminded of when we bless ourselves with Holy Water on entering church? — *Anglo-Catholic*

Our own Baptism.

Vestments, Colors and the Kalendar (Anglo-Catholic Addendum)

Items below are marked General (ordinary 1928 BCP practice) or Anglo-Catholic (a ceremonial elaboration found in that tradition specifically).

What are the four types of Mass? — Anglo-Catholic

A Low Mass (said, with or without hymns); a Sung Mass; a Missa Cantata (Sung Mass with incense); and a Solemn Mass, using Deacon and Sub-Deacon — the fullest expression.

What does the Credence Table hold? — General

Everything needed for the Mass: the veiled Chalice with Paten and Purificator, the Lavabo Bowl and towel, unconsecrated hosts, and the cruets of water and wine.

What is kept inside the Burse, and what is it used for? — General

The Corporal, the linen square on which the bread and wine are consecrated.

What is the basic garment of clergy and servers, and what is worn over it? — General

The Cassock is the basic garment; over it clergy and servers wear the white Cotta or Surplice, and clergy add a Stole to show sacramental authority.

How does a bishop's Stole differ from a priest's or a deacon's? — General

A bishop wears it uncrossed; a priest crosses it at the chest; a deacon wears it over the left shoulder, secured at the right waist.

Name four items of Episcopal vesture and what each is. — General

The Mitre (a bishop's traditional headdress); the Pectoral Cross (worn always, as a sign of office); the Episcopal Ring; and the Crozier, the symbol of jurisdiction limited to a Diocesan Bishop or Archbishop.

What are the five basic liturgical colors, and what does each symbolize? — General

White: purity and joy (feasts of Our Lord and non-martyred Saints). Red: the fire of the Holy Ghost and the blood of martyrs. Violet: humility and penitence (Advent, Lent). Green: nature, life and growth (Trinitytide). Black: death and mourning (Good Friday, Requiems).

If a parish could own only one, or only two, sets of vestments, what should they be? — General

White alone, since it is the color of the Resurrection; or white and violet together, violet symbolizing penitence.

The Church to 1600

Why did Christianity spread so quickly in the Roman world?

Four reasons stand out: its law of love gave honor to the lowly; it gave spiritual meaning to every act of life; it taught the equality of the sexes; and it promised eternal life to true believers.

How did the Church organize itself in its early centuries?

Around the diocese, governed by a bishop assisted by priests and deacons, all tracing their lineage back to the Apostles; bishops of larger cities gradually gained authority as archbishops, metropolitans and patriarchs.

What changed for Christians under Constantine?

The Edict of Milan (313) gave Christianity legal recognition after Diocletian's fierce persecution; Constantine himself called the First Œcumenical Council at Nicaea (325), which produced the first Nicene Creed and condemned Arianism.

What did Saint Jerome and Saint Augustine each contribute?

Jerome translated the Bible into Latin (the Vulgate) and attacked Pelagianism, which denied Original Sin's effect on human nature. Augustine harmonized Christianity with Greek thought, wrote The City of God, and developed the doctrine of Predestination.

How did Saint Patrick explain the Trinity?

By the shamrock: three leaves, yet one shamrock — three Persons, yet one God.

What was Saint Benedict's contribution to the Church?

He founded Western Monasticism at Monte Cassino (529), organizing communities under a Rule summed up as Ora et Labora, 'pray and work,' which became the chief means of spreading and preserving Christian life in pagan Europe.

What was the Great Schism of 1054?

The mutual excommunication of Pope and Patriarch of Constantinople, dividing the Western and Eastern Churches — a division that endures to this day.

What was Scholasticism, and who was its greatest figure?

A method using logic and argument (drawn from Aristotle) to harmonize Christian belief with Greek philosophy; Saint Thomas Aquinas, author of the Summa Theologica, was its greatest exponent.

What was the Avignon Papacy, and why was it called a Babylonian Captivity?

From 1305 to 1377 the pope resided at Avignon under French domination, echoing Israel's ancient exile in Babylon; a further Great Schism of the West followed, with rival popes, until the Council of Constance (1417) restored unity.

What sparked the Protestant Reformation?

Corruption in the Church, especially the sale of Indulgences that promised remission of punishment in Purgatory; Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses (1517) ignited a reform movement that spread rapidly through the new printing press.

How did Henry VIII's reformation differ from Luther's and Calvin's?

Luther's and Calvin's were theological reformations of doctrine and worship; Henry's began as a political dispute over his marriage annulment, and he made few doctrinal changes himself — real reform came under his successors.

How did Elizabeth I's Via Media resolve England's religious conflict?

Her 1559 Prayer Book steered a middle course between Roman Catholicism and Calvinism, retaining Catholic order and Apostolic Succession while simplifying ceremony — opposed by both Puritans and Roman Catholics, yet enduring.

The Church After 1600

What is Deism, and how did Blaise Pascal answer the age's skepticism?

Deism holds that God made the universe like a clockmaker, wound it, and left it to run on its own, denying ongoing divine revelation. Pascal's Wager argued that far more is gained by believing in God than by disbelieving.

What came out of the Hampton Court Conference of 1604?

King James I refused the Puritans' demand to make the Church of England Calvinist, remembered in his maxim 'No Bishop, No King'; the same king authorized the 1611 King James Bible.

What led to the English Civil War, and what followed it?

Charles I's Archbishop, William Laud, tried to impose the English Prayer Book on Presbyterian Scotland; war followed, Charles was executed, and Cromwell's Puritan government outlawed the Prayer Book until the Restoration of 1660.

Who were the Non-Jurors, and why do they matter?

Bishops, including Archbishop William Sancroft, who could not in conscience swear allegiance to William and Mary after the Glorious Revolution of 1688; they helped keep the Catholic (not Roman) party alive within the Church of England.

What was the First Great Awakening, and who was John Wesley?

A revival in the 1730s calling Christians to personal, emotional faith. Wesley, an Anglican priest, led a revivalist movement whose disciplined followers were nicknamed Methodists; the Methodist Church became a separate denomination only after his death.

How did the American Church obtain both bishops and a Prayer Book?

Samuel Seabury was consecrated by Scottish bishops in 1784, promising to introduce their Communion Office; William White and others were consecrated in England in 1787; the 1789 Prayer Book that resulted combined the English Offices with the more Catholic Scottish Eucharist.

What distinguishes the 1892 and 1928 American Prayer Books from 1789?

Both were conservative revisions, generally shortening services and giving ministers more freedom, with many collects updated or newly composed by skilled clergy; the 1928 Book also combined the baptism rites and reordered parts of the Communion Service.

What was the Oxford Movement, and what did it recover?

An 1830s revival from the High Church party, publishing Tracts for the Times to argue that the Anglican Church stood within the historic Catholic Church alongside Rome and the Orthodox — a catholic self-understanding that gradually reshaped Anglicanism on both sides of the Atlantic.

What is distinctive about Bishop Seabury's 1784 Communion Office for Connecticut?

It followed the shape of the 1549 Prayer Book, including an Epiclesis (Invocation of the Holy Spirit) and a Prayer for the Church with Commemoration of the Saints — features that shaped the American, and later the 1928, Communion Service.

Glossary of Terms

- **Absolution** — The priest's pronouncement, in Christ's Name, of God's forgiveness of sins that have been confessed.
- **Altar (Holy Table)** — The table on which the Eucharist is offered. The Prayer Book itself says 'the Holy Table'; 'Altar' is the older word Anglo-Catholics restored to stress the Eucharist's sacrificial character.

- **Apocrypha** — Jewish writings appended to the Old Testament; Anglicans read them for instruction in godly living but do not use them to establish doctrine.
- **Black Rubric** — A note added to the 1552 Prayer Book denying that kneeling at Communion implies worshipping the bread and wine; dropped after 1559 and never printed in the American Prayer Books.
- **Chancel** — The part of the church around the Altar, historically set apart from the nave (where the people sit) by a screen, rail or step.
- **Collect** — A short, structured prayer — address, reason, petition, purpose, and a plea through Christ — appointed for a particular day, season or occasion.
- **Credence (Table)** — A small table near the Altar holding everything needed for the Mass before it is used: the veiled Chalice, Paten and Purificator, the Lavabo bowl and towel, and the cruets of water and wine.
- **Comfortable Words** — Four sentences of Scripture, said at Holy Communion just after the Absolution, assuring penitent sinners of Christ's mercy.
- **Communion of Saints** — The mystical union in Christ of all the faithful, whether still living or already departed.
- **Epiclesis** — The Invocation: a prayer calling on the Holy Ghost to come down upon the bread and wine, that they may become the Body and Blood of Christ.
- **Filioque** — Latin for 'and the Son'; the Western addition to the Nicene Creed teaching that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, never accepted by the Eastern Church.
- **Kalendar** — The Church's yearly table of observances: the fixed Sanctorale (Saints' Days, tied to the civil calendar) alongside the moveable Temporale (the Church Year proper, reckoned from Easter).
- **Kyrie eleison** — Greek for 'Lord, have mercy'; a short petition said or sung near the beginning of Holy Communion.
- **Mass** — An older name for the Holy Communion, from the Latin dismissal *Ite, missa est* ('Go, it is the dismissal'); today especially associated with Anglo-Catholic usage.
- **Missal** — A book containing the full text, music and ceremonial directions for the Mass; some Anglo-Catholic parishes use an American or English Missal alongside the Prayer Book.
- **Ornaments Rubric** — Elizabeth I's decree that ministers use such ornaments (vestments) as were in use in the second year of King Edward VI — a legal foothold for traditional ceremonial within the reformed Church.

- **Prayer of Humble Access** — The prayer said just before Communion, confessing that no one, however holy, is worthy in themselves to receive it.
- **Propitiation** — The turning away of God's just wrath by an offered sacrifice; Christ's one sacrifice on the Cross is the propitiation for the sins of the world.
- **Real Presence** — The belief that Christ is truly and really present in the consecrated Bread and Wine, not present merely as a symbol or memorial.
- **Rood** — A large crucifix, traditionally set above the screen dividing the chancel from the nave (the 'rood screen').
- **Rubric** — A direction in a service book telling the minister what to do, traditionally printed in red (Latin *rubrica*, 'red earth' or 'red ochre').
- **Sacristy** — The room, usually near the chancel, where vestments, vessels and linens are kept and the clergy vest before a service.
- **Sanctus** — Latin for 'Holy'; the hymn ('Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts...') sung just before the Prayer of Consecration.
- **Sursum Corda** — Latin for 'Lift up your hearts'; the versicle and response that opens the Preface at Holy Communion.
- **Summary of the Law** — Christ's own condensation of the Ten Commandments: to love God with all one's heart, and one's neighbor as oneself.

Words That Have Changed Meaning

The Prayer Book's English is four centuries old. These are its most common 'false friends' — ordinary-looking words that no longer mean what they once did.

- **Charity** — Not almsgiving, but selfless love — the highest of the Theological Virtues: 'the greatest of these is charity' (1 Corinthians 13).
- **Comfortable / Comfort** — 'To strengthen greatly' (Latin *confortare*), not merely to soothe — as in the Comfortable Words.
- **Ghost / Ghostly** — 'Spirit; spiritual,' not an apparition — as in 'Holy Ghost' and 'ghostly counsel and advice.'
- **Holpen** — An old past participle of 'help,' as in the Magnificat: 'He hath holpen his servant Israel.'
- **Indifferently** — 'Impartially, without bias,' not 'apathetically' — as in praying that rulers may 'indifferently minister justice.'
- **Let** — 'To hinder or obstruct' — the opposite of its modern permissive sense, as in 'without let or hindrance.'

- **Militant** — Used of 'the Church Militant here in earth' — Christians still fighting the good fight of faith, as opposed to the Church Triumphant in Heaven.
- **Miserable** — 'Pitiable, deserving of mercy,' not simply 'unhappy' — as in 'we miserable sinners.'
- **Prevent** — 'To go before,' not 'to stop' — as in 'Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings.'
- **Quick / Quicken** — 'Living; to make alive,' not 'fast' — as in 'the quick and the dead' (Apostles' and Nicene Creeds).
- **Suffer** — 'To permit, to allow,' not only 'to endure pain' — as in 'Suffer the little children to come unto me.'
- **Vouchsafe** — 'To grant or condescend to give' — used in addressing God, as in 'Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.'
- **Worship (verb)** — 'To honor, to hold as worthy,' not only divine adoration — as in the old marriage vow, 'with my body I thee worship.'