



**Anglican Church in North America
and
North American Lutheran Church
Ecumenical Consultation:**

Four Pastoral and Educational Affirmations

October 2017



October 2017

Dear friends,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

We bring you greetings on behalf of the participants of the ecumenical consultation of the Anglican Church in North America and the North American Lutheran Church. This group held its first meeting March 27, 2012, at Trinity School for Ministry, Ambridge, PA and has held semi-annual meetings since then. As a result of the formation of the new Anglican province in 2009 and the NALC in 2010, the decision was made to engage in intentional, ongoing study and conversation, with representatives of each church body committing to Bible study and theological and confessional reflection, while at the same time developing relationships based on faithfulness to the truth and authority of God's Word, respecting the histories and traditions of both the ACNA and the NALC. The goal of these meetings has been, from the start, finding ways that the two bodies could cooperate in critically important areas of common concern in our modern context in North America. At the same time, we have realized that developing relationships at the local and regional "grass-roots" level would bring greater glory to God, manifest the unity for which our Lord prays at the Last Supper, and strengthen our common commitment and witness to God's Holy Word, unchanged and unchanging.

In the press release following the first meeting, NALC Bishop John Bradosky and ACNA Archbishop Robert Duncan affirmed: "that it is our mutual commitment to pursue the development of ecumenical relationships between the ACNA and the NALC on the basis of Holy Scripture. Jesus' prayer 'that they all may be one... so that the world may believe' (John 17:21) calls us to give expression to our unity in Him as a vital part of our witness to the world and an expression of the power of the Gospel. It is further our commitment to pursue this relationship on the basis of strengthening the capacity of both church bodies for mission and ministry; strengthening both pastoral leadership and congregational outreach."

Since that first meeting, the participants have engaged in serious, in-depth study of foundational aspects of common Christian faith. The conversations have resulted in significant consensus. However, we have desired, from the start, to have our discussion reach further than the rooms in which we have met. Ecumenical consultations serve little purpose for the Body of Christ if they do not touch and impact everyday Christians in their everyday lives in the local congregations where they are nourished and strengthened for mission and ministry in the world. For this reason, a decision was made to develop four pastoral and educational affirmations, addressing "Jesus Christ, the Gospel and Justification," "Holy Baptism," "Holy Communion," and "Holy Scripture," with four study guides aimed at and involving local lay people of all ages in learning, reflection and conversation. In an increasingly secular age, when even members of our churches have not been regularly and faithfully taught, mentored and encouraged in ways that grow disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is apparent that catechesis — clear, direct teaching of the Faith — is required.

As catechesis is much needed in both church bodies, the members of the ACNA/NALC consultation offer the four affirmations to our Churches, together with appropriate study guides on each topic. They are included in this booklet, which may be accessed online, printed in hard copy, or provided by each judicatory.

How may these affirmations be profitably used? Certainly, they may be used for study, reflection and discussion within congregations, families, small groups or other activities within parishes of the ACNA and the NALC.

However, it is the hope of the consultation participants that neighboring ACNA and NALC parishes will seek out each other and develop opportunities for Anglicans and Lutherans to study these four affirmations together. What is the goal of such joint study?

- ✠ To strengthen faith and discipleship in our Churches as we go deeply into the Word of God;
- ✠ To live out our shared commitment to the Great Commission, as disciples are made, and challenged to make disciples, teaching all that our Lord has commanded (Matthew 28:19-20);
- ✠ To provide opportunity for Lutherans and Anglicans to meet and get to know each other, gathered around our one Lord, Jesus Christ;
- ✠ To encourage local parishes/congregations to study, reflect upon and discuss essentials of our Christian faith;
- ✠ To embody and celebrate the unity that exists, already, between ACNA and NALC leaders, clergy and faithful;
- ✠ To develop relationships at the local and regional (Dioceses and Mission Districts) levels to support, enable and strengthen mission, outreach, church planting and furtherance of the Kingdom of God throughout North America.

What might this joint study look like at the local level?

- ✠ A Lutheran and an Anglican congregation might meet for a Saturday workshop, with initial introductions to the ACNA and NALC, followed by reading of each affirmation statement and small-group table discussions using the study questions provided.
- ✠ An NALC and ACNA pastor/priest might facilitate four evening home gatherings, reading and studying the four affirmations.
- ✠ An NALC Mission District and ACNA Diocese might meet for annual judicatory assembly/convocations, with joint meeting times devoted to study of the four affirmation statements, with discussion.
- ✠ Small groups of ACNA/NALC folks might meet in homes for reading of affirmations and discussion.
- ✠ Be creative and develop your own unique way to use the affirmation statements in a Lutheran/Anglican gathering!

We request that you engage in such conversation and study during autumn/winter/spring 2017-18. Then, complete and return the Four Affirmations Participant Response Form to us **no later than Pentecost Sunday, May 20, 2018**. You may email your response form to Maddie Benson at mbenson@thenalc.org or mail it to us at ACNA/NALC Consultation, C/O North American Lutheran Church, 3500 Mill Run Drive, Hilliard OH 43026-7770.

Our prayer is that, through these pastoral and educational affirmations and our common mission and ministry, the Triune God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — will be glorified, our churches strengthened, and the Gospel proclaimed anew through our church bodies in our day. To this end, please join us in prayer as you receive and make use of these materials.

In service to Christ our Lord,

The participants of the ACNA/NALC Ecumenical Consultation



Anglican Church in North America and North American Lutheran Church: Four Pastoral and Educational Affirmations

Response Form

Name(s) and affiliation(s) of participating congregation(s)/parish(es):

_____	<input type="checkbox"/> ACNA	<input type="checkbox"/> NALC
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> ACNA	<input type="checkbox"/> NALC
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> ACNA	<input type="checkbox"/> NALC
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> ACNA	<input type="checkbox"/> NALC
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> ACNA	<input type="checkbox"/> NALC
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> ACNA	<input type="checkbox"/> NALC

1. In what setting did you study the affirmations? (circle all that apply.)
 - a. Family — in the home
 - b. Small group in the home
 - c. Small groups at the church
 - d. Large group class or forum setting at church
 - e. Just ACNA participants
 - f. Just NALC participants
 - g. Combined participants from ACNA/NALC
 - h. Other _____

2. Having completed the study... (circle all that apply.)
 - a. We have a deeper understanding of Jesus, Baptism, Holy Communion, and Scripture.
 - b. We learned new information about the topics.
 - c. We grew as disciples and followers of Jesus.
 - d. We learned much about each other (ACNA/NALC) we didn't know before.
 - e. We grew in our self-understanding as Lutherans and Anglicans.

3. If your group was a joint study of ACNA/NALC participants...
 - a. Did you know each other before?
 - b. Meet each other for the first time in this study opportunity?
 - c. Discover new ways to cooperate and serve in your local context?
 - d. Make definite plans to further your relationship in the future?
 - e. Discover for the first time that there is an ACNA/NALC Ecumenical Consultation?

4. Are you aware that ACNA/NALC share a commitment to the Great Commission, and the Lord's instruction to go, baptize, make disciples, and teach?
 - a. Yes, I am fully aware of this shared commitment.
 - b. No, this is the first I've heard.
 - c. My congregation/parish is fully involved in creating a disciple-making culture.
 - d. My congregation/parish is working toward creating a disciple-making culture.
 - e. My congregation/parish is not involved in creating a disciple-making culture.

5. What other biblical, theological, practical topics would you like to see our consultation/ church bodies address in the future?

6. Was this study helpful for you?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.

Comments:

7. What else would you like to communicate with the ACNA/NALC consultation participants?

Holy Baptism

A Pastoral and Educational Affirmation prepared by the Ecumenical Consultation of The Anglican Church in North America and the North American Lutheran Church

Introduction and history

1. All Christian baptisms are by water into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).
2. We believe there is “one baptism for the remission of sins” (Nicene Creed; Acts 2:38). Baptism is never to be repeated, since it is an objective event that marks and seals a person for life.
3. Baptism has its roots in the baptism of converts to Judaism and in circumcision, the sign of the covenant in the Old Testament (Romans 4:9-12). Paul tells us that Baptism is “a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith” (Colossians 2:11-12).

What is it?

4. Baptism is one of the two Sacraments explicitly commanded by our Lord. It is participation in the new creation that Christ has inaugurated. By Baptism, “one is born of water and the Spirit” and “enters the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). In Baptism, God the Father adopts sinners into his family (Galatians 3:27; 4:5) and makes them his children (John 1:12).

Why baptize?

5. We baptize because Christ commanded his disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).
6. Obedience to this command and use of this Trinitarian formula have always been the practice of the historic Church. No other names or formulas may be used.

Who should be baptized?

7. All those who profess faith in Jesus Christ should be baptized by the Church: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16).
8. Children also are baptized. This includes infants. Just as infants were circumcised, infants are baptized. Peter proclaimed, “The promise is for you and your children” (Acts 2:39). The households of Lydia, the Philippian jailer, Stephanas, and Cornelius were baptized. Households included infants and children (Acts 16:15, 33; 1 Corinthians 1:16; Acts 10:1-2, 46-48).

What does God do in Baptism?

9. Baptism is a washing (1 Corinthians 6:11) that cleanses from sin: “Be baptized and wash away your sins” (Acts 22:16).
10. Baptism unites us with Christ in his death and resurrection. “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4). “...having been buried with him in baptism... you were also raised with him through faith” (Colossians 2:12).
11. Thus, Baptism joins us to Christ: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:27).
12. Our life in Christ as a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) begins by being “born of water and the Spirit” at Baptism (John 3:6), and will be fulfilled in union with the Triune God in the new heaven and the new earth where all things are made new (Revelation 21:5).

Faith

13. Baptism is God’s regenerative work, to be received by faith and faithfulness, through life in Christ. For those who do not live life in Christ, baptism does not guarantee final salvation. “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16). “For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers... were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea... Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness” (1 Corinthians 10:1-5). Simon Magus was baptized, but “had neither part nor lot in this matter” of salvation (Acts 8:21).
14. Without faith in Christ, baptism remains an unclaimed promise. God never revokes his promise, but unbelief causes people to withdraw from the benefits of the promise. They are like Esau, who “despised” the birthright that was promised to him (Genesis 25:34) and branches that were grafted in, but later broken off (Romans 11:17-24).

The Holy Spirit

15. In Baptism, we are “sealed” with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30), and “in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13). This is the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, when the Spirit first joins a person to the Body of Christ. When “the Holy Spirit fell on” Cornelius and his household, Peter “remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 11:15-16).

New Life in Christ

16. Baptism is immersion (the literal meaning of “baptism”) into a life of catechesis (instruction in the faith) and discipleship (following Christ). While baptism forgives sin through faith in Jesus Christ, it is also a call to repeated repentance and conversion. It begins a life of costly discipleship, living as the faithful spouse of Christ (Ephesians 5:31-32), participating in “the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).
17. The baptized grow in faith through the means of grace, Word and Sacrament, and through prayer, service, study, fasting, and other spiritual disciplines. “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children” (Ephesians 4:11-14a).
18. Being baptized into Christ is to be incorporated into the community of Christ, with responsibility and accountability to the body as a whole, lived in fulfillment of our vocation as children of God, disciples of Christ.
19. The parents and sponsors (godparents) of a baptized infant should understand their commitment to raise the child in the faith, ensuring their participation in weekly worship and Christian education. They should teach them the Scriptures, the Ten Commandments, Lord’s Prayer and creeds.
20. Confirmation is the ideal occasion for baptized children to affirm for themselves the vows that were made on their behalf when they were infants.

The Church

21. Through Baptism we are made members of the “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church” (Nicene Creed), which is the “Body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:22-23). Therefore, we live in true but imperfect fellowship with all those who believe and are baptized. Baptism also unites us with the Church Triumphant in heaven. “You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn, who are enrolled in heaven” (Hebrews 12:22-23a).

22. As members of the Church, we are given gifts for “building up the Body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). We are called to use those gifts with joy, sharing in Christian ministry and mission. Therefore, baptized Christians are not to be spectators, but fully engaged in the life and ministry of the Church.
23. Since Baptism joins the baptized to the Church, the Sacrament should be administered when the Christian community is gathered for worship.
24. Because Baptism makes all the baptized one, the Church’s many divisions are a scandal to our Christian witness. Therefore, we pledge ourselves to work toward the visible unity of the one Church of Jesus Christ. We hope that our two churches will jointly bear witness to the Baptism which unites us.

April 20, 2017

Study Questions

Introduction and history

1. Are you familiar with the Anabaptist tradition regarding Baptism? How does it differ from the Anglican and Lutheran traditions?

What is it?

2. Why is water necessary for Baptism? How much water is required?

Why baptize?

3. Why should someone be baptized?

Who should be baptized?

4. Who should be baptized? What are the requirements?
5. Why should infants be baptized?

What does God do in Baptism?

6. What happens in Baptism? What is our part? What is God's part?
7. How does Baptism demonstrate the free grace of God?
8. What is the biblical basis for seeing Baptism as something God does and not just something we do?

Faith

9. Point #14 says that "Without faith in Christ, baptism remains an unclaimed promise." What does that mean?

The Holy Spirit

10. What does it mean to you to be "sealed" by the Holy Spirit in Holy Baptism?

New Life in Christ

11. How is your life changed by being baptized? How should your life change?
12. How is Baptism a call to the life of discipleship?
13. What comfort does Baptism bring?
14. If an infant or a child is baptized, what are the responsibilities of the parents and/or godparents?
15. What is the purpose of confirmation? How is it different from Baptism?

The Church

16. Why are baptisms not generally held outside of a Christian worship service?
17. What are your responsibilities as a baptized member of your local congregation? Of Christ's Church?

Holy Communion

A Pastoral and Educational Affirmation prepared by the Ecumenical Consultation of The Anglican Church in North America and the North American Lutheran Church

What is Holy Communion?

1. We believe that at the heart of the Gospel is the person of Jesus Christ, in the totality of his incarnation, death, and resurrection. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).
2. As the Word, Jesus Christ is the principal subject of Scripture, and now speaks through Scripture. As the Word, he gives his flesh and blood to us, broken and poured out in the Lord’s Supper (Matthew 26:28; Acts 2:42).
3. We believe that Word and Sacrament are the source and summit of our life together as the Church — the Body of Christ in the world. In the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper Christ grants communion with himself in his body and blood. Together, Word and Sacrament constitute the central act of the Church’s worship.
4. The Lord’s Supper is also known as the Sacrament of the Altar, Holy Communion, the divine liturgy, the Mass, the Sacred Mysteries, the Holy Supper, the Eucharist, “food for souls,” “the medicine of immortality,” “the breaking of bread,” “the heavenly banquet,” and the “bread of heaven.”

Biblical foundations

5. Jesus, himself, instituted the Lord’s Supper as a meal offering the people of God forgiveness (Matthew 26:28), inner renewal (Luke 24:35), and eternal life (John 6:51-58) — a foretaste of the heavenly banquet (Revelation 19:9; 19:7). Jesus is the host and presider at every Eucharistic celebration (Hebrews 2:17; 4:14). Those who may receive are those who have been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20).
6. The biblical foundations for the Lord’s Supper are Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:13-20; and 1 Corinthians 10:16-22; 11:23-24.

7. The Lord's Supper has its roots in Jewish Passover history and worship. However, in the Lord's Supper, Jesus instituted a new Testament, a new Covenant, received by faith in his words "this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (i.e., given) for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24).
8. Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper carries a command: "Do this for the remembrance of me." The word for "remembrance," *anamnesis*, means the past becoming real in the present, which happens by the promise of Christ in the Sacrament.

The presence of Christ in Holy Communion

9. We take Jesus at his word when he said, "This is my body.... This is my blood" (Matthew 26:26-28). St. Paul affirms this when he states, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16)
10. Jesus Christ is present in both his divinity and humanity in the Sacrament. By Christ's promise and the power of the Holy Spirit, the body and blood of Jesus are present in the earthly elements of bread and wine.
11. The Holy Supper provides the sacramental presence of the crucified, risen, and glorified Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper has elements of mystery, which the human mind is not able to comprehend fully. We do not presume to understand nor are we able to explain how Christ gives himself to us in the bread and wine.

Who should receive the Lord's Body and Blood?

12. While Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper is properly received by faith, Christ's body and blood through the Sacrament is always a divine gift and not the result of a human work. Should the unbaptized or the unbelieving receive the Sacrament, they eat and drink to their detriment. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Corinthians 11:29).
13. While the Lord's Supper may be restricted for reasons of church discipline, it should not be restricted on the basis of perceptions regarding a person's faith or the individual's ability to articulate the faith according to an arbitrary standard. Reception of the Lord's Supper does not depend upon a certain level of intellectual understanding.
14. We agree that while reception of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper is personal, it is never private. The Lord's Supper is the meal of unity for the baptized people of God, who are united with the Lord and with one another as they receive his body and blood. They receive him by faith, with joy and thanksgiving.

15. When Christians commune, they are united with the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant, already one in the kingdom of God, not yet fully realized. In this sense, the Lord's Supper is truly a foretaste of the feast to come. The Church communes in hope, yearning and praying for that day when the redeemed gather at the marriage feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9).
16. As the community of believers communes they are making a public witness to the world, and to the faith of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

April 20, 2017

Study Questions

What is Holy Communion?

1. Point #3 says that Word and Sacrament are “the central act of the Church’s worship.” What happens during each of these two parts of the worship service? How is Jesus revealed to us in each of these?
2. Why is Holy Communion such an important part of our worship service?

Biblical foundations

3. Where do we see Jesus sharing bread and wine with others in the Gospels?
4. Why did Jesus want us to remember him in this way?
5. What does the word “anamnesis” mean (see point #8)? How is this different from just remembering something in the usual sense of that word?

The presence of Christ in Holy Communion

6. How do the bread and the wine become Jesus’ body and blood?
7. In the Anglican liturgy, during the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest says, “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” How is Holy Communion related to the Passover celebration?
8. In John 6, Jesus said, “I am the bread of life” and talks about the importance of eating his flesh and drinking his blood (John 6:54-56). Talk about what this means to you.
9. Why do you think Jesus chose bread and wine for this purpose?
10. Points #9-11 speak to the presence of Christ in Holy Communion. How do you understand Christ’s presence in the Sacrament?
11. As a Sacrament¹ in the Church, how does Holy Communion draw you closer to Jesus?

Who should receive the Lord’s Body and Blood?

12. What are the requirements for receiving Holy Communion? How do we prepare ourselves to receive communion?
13. What are the benefits of receiving Holy Communion? What do we gain from participating?
14. According to point #12, why would it be detrimental to receive Holy Communion if you are not baptized?
15. According to point #14, we are not allowed to receive Holy Communion in private. How is this “private” communion different from a sick person receiving communion in their home or in the hospital?
16. Point #16 states that Holy Communion is “a public witness to the world.” What does that mean?

¹ A sacrament is “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace” in the Anglican tradition. In the Lutheran tradition, a sacrament is instituted by Christ and connects the physical elements with God’s Word of promise.

Holy Scripture

A Pastoral and Educational Affirmation prepared by the Ecumenical Consultation of The Anglican Church in North America and the North American Lutheran Church

What is the Bible?

1. The Bible is God's written Word, given by the Holy Spirit through prophets and apostles as the revelation of the triune God in all his fullness. "All scripture is breathed out by God..." (2 Timothy 3:16).*
2. The Bible is a divine-human book. While it was written by humans in their various cultural contexts, God's Spirit sovereignly inspired the writers so that what they wrote testifies faithfully to God's eternal truth (Psalm 119:160). God intends for Holy Scripture to speak authoritatively to people of every time, culture and context.

What is in the Bible?

3. The Bible consists of two "Testaments," an old English word for covenants or agreements between God and his people. The Old Testament, which makes up three-fourths of the Bible, contains 39 books from Genesis to Malachi. The New Testament has 27 books, running from Matthew to Revelation.
4. The Apocrypha was written in the inter-testamental era, the four centuries before Christ. Readings from them are in both our Lutheran and Anglican lectionaries, but we use them for edification rather than doctrine.

The Old Testament

5. The whole Old Testament points to Jesus and is fulfilled by Jesus. He said those Scriptures "bear witness about me" (John 5:39). To the disciples on the road to Emmaus he proclaimed that "all" the Old Testament Scriptures contain "things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus insisted that he did not "come to abolish the Law or the Prophets" but "to fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17). He promised that "not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matthew 5:18).
6. The Old Testament is truly the Word of God. Luther taught that it is full of Christ and the Gospel. It both prepares for and proclaims the coming of a Messiah for all the nations.

The New Testament

7. The New Testament is God's revelation of salvation through Jesus Christ, who is God's incarnate Son and the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).
8. The Gospels present the Son of God in his actions, teachings, passion, death, resurrection and glorification. In Acts and the epistles we see the giving and work of the Holy Spirit creating, empowering and sanctifying the Church, the Body of Christ, until Jesus returns in power and glory. In Revelation we have Christ's prophetic vision of Last Things and the new heaven and new earth.

What is the relationship between the Old and New Testaments?

9. Holy Scripture is comprised of many kinds of literature written over many centuries. Yet, it is one book revealing one divine "plan for the fullness of time" (Ephesians 1:10). The unity of the Testaments can be seen by reading the Old Testament in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus.
10. The New Testament should be read in the light of the Old, just as the Old makes best sense when read through the lens of the New. Each Testament sheds light on the other because both are the true Word of God. As Augustine taught, "The New Testament lies hidden in the Old, and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New."

What is the relationship between the Word of God Written and the Word of God as Jesus Christ?

11. The Son of God is the divine Word from all eternity: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1-2). This divine Word, "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).
12. The Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of the Son (Galatians 4:6) and therefore the Spirit of the eternal Word, inspired the writers of the Old Testament and the New Testament (2 Peter 1:21, John 14:26).

How were the Books of the Bible chosen?

13. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Church, from its earliest days, was recognizing what was never in doubt, the books of the Old and New Testaments.
14. The 27 books of the New Testament were recognized as authoritative and accepted as Scripture in the earliest centuries of the Church.
15. The early church, led by the Holy Spirit, adopted the books of the Old Testament because Jesus and the apostles treated them as Scripture (Luke 4:21; Romans 3:2).

16. “Canon” is the standard measure and criterion by which something is judged. This is why we call these Scriptures “the Canon.”

Who wrote the books of the Bible?

17. God’s Holy Spirit inspired humans to write the books of the Bible. He made full use of the faculties and powers of the human authors, giving them the words and supervising the writing so that the words are “not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).
18. As God took on human flesh in Jesus and became a man in the Incarnation, so God uses the human words of the Bible to reveal himself. The human authors were “carried along” by the Holy Spirit and spoke from God (2 Peter 1:21).
19. This is what we mean when we say the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit.
20. Therefore the Bible is like no other book in the history of the world. Like the union of God and man in Jesus Christ, the Holy Scriptures are the union of human and divine speaking. This is why they are utterly truthful and reliable (John 17:17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

Why is the Bible authoritative?

21. The Bible has authority over us because it is God’s Word. Scripture only commands what God commands. Because God loves us and has made us his children, we respond by loving him, obeying him and submitting to him (Psalm 19:7-11). Because we love and obey him, we love and obey his Word. “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house... on a rock” (Luke 6:46-48). Scripture is authoritative for both belief and life.
22. Scripture only promises what God promises. We hold firmly to the Word because it is the only Word of life: “that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life...” (Philippians 2:15-16). Jesus came to give us life abundantly and eternally (John 6:68; John 10:10).

What is the central message of the Bible?

23. The Bible teaches God’s purpose for his creation. It tells us that we are not accidental products of time and chance. We have been created by God to live in a relationship with him and to glorify him forever (Acts 17:28, 1 Corinthians 1:9).
24. This relationship is broken because of our sin. We live in a “fallen” world in which humanity has rejected God’s loving purposes for creation (Romans 1). We are estranged

from God and need to be reconciled to him (2 Corinthians 5:20-21). This reconciliation God has effected through the saving death of Jesus Christ on the cross (Romans 5:5-11).

25. The whole Bible testifies that we are in bondage to sin, death and the devil — helpless to free ourselves.
26. In and through Jesus Christ, God's kingdom has come into the world to free us from our bondage. Through repentance from our sin and faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are reconciled to God. As reconciled sinners, we are freed to live under the loving and just rule of Jesus our King. We are called to lives of discipleship, following the Son of God and obeying his commands by the power of the Spirit.
27. There is a common theme running through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Among Lutherans, this theme is called "Law and Gospel." The law teaches holiness, and therefore shows us how unholy we are. In this way, it reveals the sin and brokenness of the world. We stand condemned, but "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). The gospel reveals all that God has done to heal the brokenness of the world, through Jesus Christ crucified and risen. It is the story of a holy and loving God who, through the offering of his own Son on the cross, overcomes the forces of sin, death and the Devil which separate us from him and lead to condemnation. This is the central message of the Bible.
28. Jesus is the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 36). Jesus is the embodiment of God's kingdom. He came to defeat the devil, and bring new life: "In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:4-5).

What are the types of literature in the Bible?

29. The books of the Bible contain different kinds of writing: history, prophecy, parable, poetry, epistle, wisdom, and others.
30. Each kind of writing calls for an appropriate reading for the sake of understanding the truth it contains. For example, a poem is read and understood differently than a historical narrative or a parable.

How should we interpret the Bible?

31. The basic message of salvation in the Bible is clear. Other parts of the Bible are not always plain in themselves, or clear to all. Peter wrote, for example, "There are some things in them [Paul's epistles] that are hard to understand (2 Peter 3:16).
32. There are several principles of faithful, orthodox interpretation. First, consider the type of literature being used and allow the text to determine how it is to be understood.

33. Second, we should remember the unity of the Bible and God's plan of redemption (Ephesians 1:10), understanding so that no one part of Scripture should ever be thought to contradict another. Scripture interprets Scripture, the clear parts helping to resolve those parts less clear.
34. Third, we should read the Scriptures within the orthodox tradition of the whole Church. We stand on the shoulders of the great Fathers and Reformers of the Church in order to see further and know the God of Scripture more fully.
35. Fourth, the three great creeds (Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian), amplified by our Reformation confessions and Articles and liturgies, should guide our understanding as they are rooted and established in Holy Scripture.

How does the Holy Spirit use Scripture in the Church?

36. The whole counsel of God concerning everything necessary for faith and life is provided in Holy Scripture. The Church's doctrine, theological traditions and liturgies spring from the faithful use of Scripture.
37. Scripture is the final rule and norm for faith and practice in the Church. Through the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit protects the church protects against heresy, guides godly living, and sustains reverent worship.
38. All faithful theologians, pastors, and teachers in the Church — in fact all Christians — must subordinate themselves to the authority of Sacred Scripture. The Holy Spirit leads all to be witnesses, disciples and confessors of Scripture. Paul urged Christian leaders, “stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter” (2 Thessalonians 2:15).
39. The Scriptures are to be read systematically and preached at least weekly in the Church. The Holy Spirit works through the Word to confirm faith, guide life, and sanctify believers. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

How does the Holy Spirit use Scripture in daily life?

40. The Bible gives us its own portrait of its role in our daily lives: “Blessed is the man... [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers” (Psalm 1:1-3).
41. All those in the Body of Christ evangelize and make disciples, following the example of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. “So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’” (Acts 8:30-31; see also Romans 10:14, 17).

42. The Word of God is food for the soul, strength for faith, wisdom for living, and a pure font of spiritual life. Every believer should eat this food daily. In the words of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, we should “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” Holy Scripture. The Holy Spirit uses this food to nourish us and help us to come to know God more deeply. The Church Father Jerome (345-420 A.D.) wrote, “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.”
43. God’s Word is a powerful weapon, “the sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17). It continues to speak and change the hearts and minds of people, transforming those held captive by sin into those conformed to Christ. The Word is “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). Abiding in Scripture, we are sustained, healed, empowered, and “transformed into the same [Christ’s] image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18, John 8:31-32).

We diligently and carefully study the Word of God in our churches and homes through our private devotional lives, family and group studies. As Mary the Mother of our Lord “treasured” all the things God did and said to her, “pondering them in her heart,” so too we should treasure God’s Word and ponder it constantly in our hearts (Luke 2:19).

July 7, 2017

Study Questions

What is the Bible?

1. Why do words written for people thousands of years ago still apply to us today?
2. Does the Church have the authority to reinterpret the way that we understand Scripture?

What is in the Bible?

3. What is the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament? How does this relate to the Old Covenant and the New Covenant?
4. Why are the books of the Apocrypha not canonical (used only “for edification rather than doctrine”)?

The Old Testament

5. What are some examples of how the Old Testament points to Jesus?
6. Some people think that the God of the Old Testament is different from the God of the New Testament (the heresy of Marcionism). Why would they think that? Why has the Church rejected that false teaching?

The New Testament

7. What are the synoptic Gospels? What are the distinctions between the four Gospels?
8. What kind of literature is the Book of Acts? What is its significance for the Church today?
9. What is an epistle? Who wrote the epistles in the New Testament? How is an epistle different from a Gospel?
10. What kind of literature is the Book of Revelation? Why is the Book of Revelation a difficult book for so many people to read and understand?

What is the relationship between the Old and New Testaments?

11. What does it mean that John says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (Genesis 1 and John 1:1-5)?
12. Find several examples of Christ in the Psalms?
13. What does it mean that “salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22)?
14. Read the “Servant Songs” in Isaiah and discuss them in light of the life and ministry of Jesus. (Isaiah 42:1–9; Isaiah 49:1–13; Isaiah 50:4–11; and Isaiah 52:13—53:12.)

What is the relationship between the Word of God Written and the Word of God as Jesus Christ?

15. Why do most Lutherans and Anglicans stand for the reading for the Gospel during our worship services?
16. Discuss why there is no contradiction between Jesus Christ, the Living Word, and the written Word of God?

17. In our Lutheran and Anglican worship services, we have both Word and Sacrament. How is Holy Communion a manifestation of the relationship between the written Word and the Living Word?

How were the Books of the Bible chosen?

18. What were the criteria used to select the books of the Bible?
19. Why have there been no more books added to the Bible?

Who wrote the Books of the Bible?

20. Look up the following scriptures – how do they relate to the inspiration of the Bible?
 - a. John 10:35; 16:13, 14; 17:17;
 - b. 2 Peter 1:16-21; 3:15-16
21. In your study group, do a little Internet research into the four evangelists. Who were they? Who was their audience? What was their reason for writing?

Why is the Bible authoritative?

22. We live in a culture that questions any idea of absolute truth. How would you respond to someone who questions the Bible as Truth?
23. Discuss the two following quotes:
 - c. “If there were any word of God beside the Scripture, we could never be certain of God’s word; and if we be uncertain of God’s word, the devil might bring in among us a new word, a new doctrine, a new faith, a new church, a new god, yea himself to be a god. If the Church and the Christian faith did not stay itself upon the Word of God certain, as upon a sure and strong foundation, no man could know whether he had a right faith, and whether he were in the true Church of Christ, or in the synagogue of Satan.” (Archbishop Thomas Cramner)
 - d. “Wiles and evasions for the distorting of the Scriptures, St. Paul, in Ephesians IV, calls in Greek *kybia* and *panurgia*, that is, ‘sleight of hand,’ ‘jugglers’ tricks,’ ‘gamesters’ tricks,’ because they toss the words of God to and fro, as the gamesters throw their dice; and because, like the jugglers who give things new noses and change the whole appearance of them, they take from the Scriptures their single, simple, constant sense, and blind our eyes, so that we waver to and fro, hold fast to no sure interpretation, and are like men whom they have bewitched or tricked, while they play with us as gamblers with their dice.” (Martin Luther)

What is the central message of the Bible?

24. How do Luke 24:27 and Genesis 3:15 apply to the place of Christ in all Scripture and his work of salvation?
25. The central proclamation of Jesus was that the Kingdom of God has come. Read Mark 10:17-27, Acts 17:24-31, 1 Corinthians 4:20 and Matthew 6:7-15. What are some of the distinct signs of God’s Kingdom? How have you experienced God’s Kingdom in your own life?
26. Discuss how God’s Word as both Law and Gospel has been at work in your life?
27. What are the types of literature in the Bible?

28. Discuss the differences between different types of literature found in the Bible – for example, between wisdom literature and narrative, or poetic and historical sections. How do the different kinds of literature affect our interpretation?
29. What type of literature in the Bible speaks to you the most? Why? Has this changed for you over the course of your life and why?

How should we interpret the Bible?

30. What does it mean that Scripture should interpret Scripture?
31. How do the ecumenical creeds help us understand Scripture?
32. Discuss the different meanings of the word “orthodox” and the word “catholic”. How do these relate to our interpretation of Scripture?

How does the Holy Spirit use Scripture in the Church?

33. What is the purpose of preaching in the life of the Church? What role does the Holy Spirit play in preaching?
34. Look up Acts 17:10-12. What is the responsibility of the preacher and what is the responsibility of the hearers of the Word?
35. What is the lectionary and what is its purpose?
36. What does it mean that we submit our lives to Christ and to Scripture?

How does the Holy Spirit use Scripture in daily life?

37. How is the Bible part of your daily life? Read Colossians 3:16 and Hebrews 10:23-25. How does the Word of God “dwell richly” within you day by day?
38. How do you experience the Holy Spirit working through the Word, confirming your faith, guiding your life and sanctifying you and making you holy?

Jesus Christ, Gospel, and Justification

A Pastoral and Educational Affirmation prepared by the Ecumenical Consultation of The Anglican Church in North America and the North American Lutheran Church

Jesus Christ

1. The Anglican Church in North America and the North American Lutheran Church confess faith in God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. We share the confession of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church as we affirm this faith in the historic Nicene and Apostles' Creeds. Central to this confession of faith is the person of Jesus Christ. Sent from the Father and anointed by the Spirit, he is our hope, our life, and our salvation (John 20:21; Acts 1:8). *
2. Jesus Christ's mission was to "save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). The first epistle of John tells us that "sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). It is a choice (Proverbs 1:29; John 3:19) and a disposition of the will (Ephesians 2:3; 1 Peter 4:3), which blinds our perception (Ephesians 4:18) and makes us slaves (Romans 6:6).
3. The result of sin is alienation from God, our neighbors, and the creation (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23; 8:20). Without Christ who saves us from sin, we are guilty, lost, and walking in darkness on the way of death (2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 2:13; Matthew 7:13). The wrath of God rests on us (John 3:36). Apart from him we have no hope and are without God in the world (Ephesians 2:12).
4. In fellowship with the Church of the ages, and in joyful obedience to the Holy Scriptures, we confess that Jesus Christ is the light of the world and the only Savior from sin, death, and the devil. Although we were once dead in our trespasses, God made us alive together with Christ and brings us back to himself by the blood of Christ (Colossians 2:13). He has become our peace with both God and our neighbors, reconciling us "to God... through the cross, thereby killing the hostility" (Ephesians 2:16) between Jews and Gentiles and all sinners, one with another. Jesus Christ is the only way to God.
5. At the same time, Jesus Christ is God's way to us. He is the incarnation of God's truth, and the new life that has been given to us (John 14:6). "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (Colossians 1:15). He is the victor over all the powers that would oppress us, by triumphing over them in the cross (Colossians 2:15). Foreshadowed in the law and the prophets, he came in the fullness of time as God's gift to undeserving sinners (Matthew 5:17; Galatians 4:4). Through him all that was lost by sin is being restored: We are renewed in the image of God, our relationships with one another are healed, and the whole earth will eventually be renewed.

Gospel

6. The word “Gospel” means “good news.” The “bad news” is that we deserve judgment and death because we have sinned against God, disobeying his law. By contrast, the good news is that God is gracious and forgiving in Christ, bringing us forgiveness, healing and salvation apart from our own merits and works, through the suffering, death and resurrection of his only Son, Jesus Christ.
7. The Gospel is good news in another way: It announces that the Kingdom of God, proclaimed by the prophets in the life of ancient Israel, has now come in Jesus the Christ (Mark 1:14-15).
8. Jesus said that the way we receive the Gospel and enter his Kingdom is to “repent and believe” in his message (Mark 1:15).
9. The blessings of the Kingdom are forgiveness (Colossians 1:14); restoration to right relationship with God and others; adoption as heirs (Romans 4:11, 16; Galatians 4:5); members of the body of Christ (Ephesians 2:12, 16, 19); freedom from guilt and shame (John 8:11; Romans 8:1).
10. Along with forgiveness and adoption, the Kingdom of God brings “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17). This comes from being united to Christ’s death and resurrection by Baptism (Romans 6:3-5), living each day as those who have been brought from death to life (Romans 6:13), as we look forward to seeing him face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12).
11. The peace and joy given us by the Gospel lead and empower us to lives of service and holiness. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).
12. The Gospel is received, known and experienced in and through the Church (2 Corinthians 6:16). In its proclamation of the Word of God and administration of the Sacraments, and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Church follows its Lord’s commandment to lead his people into ever-deeper discipleship to Jesus Christ, “the founder and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2). In the Church’s sacraments, the Gospel is enacted. Through the waters of Baptism, God joins us to himself by giving us a share in his Son’s death and resurrection (Romans 6:1-4). In the bread and wine of Holy Communion, Jesus gives us his body and blood for our forgiveness and renewal (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
13. In sum, the Gospel is God’s good news of salvation and healing. Through it Jesus Christ “became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,” (1 Corinthians 1:30). In him, and in him alone, we hear the voice of a gracious God, as the Spirit leads us to newness of life in him, and the restoration of all creation.

Justification and our response

14. Together, we proclaim the Biblical truth that we are justified by grace, through faith, on account of Christ: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).
15. Justification is a legal term for the exoneration of a convicted criminal. In the New Testament, it means that God has accepted sinners by removing their guilt and punishment for sin and declaring them righteous, because of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We who were “ungodly” (Romans 5:6) have been declared righteous because of the righteousness given to us by Christ.
16. Justification brings reconciliation and restoration to our relationships to God and the world. “In Christ was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor. 5:19).
17. To say that God justifies by grace means that God gives repentant sinners a gift they do not deserve. “God shows his love for us in that while we still were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Our justification is not because of anything we have done, but solely because of God’s love. “He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy” (Titus 3:5).
18. God does not justify us *because* we have faith, but delivers us the gift of salvation *through* our faith, which is “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is trust in Christ as Savior and Redeemer. This trust, which is putting our confidence in the Father’s promise to save through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, is a gift of the Holy Spirit. “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3).
19. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, his baptized followers are set free for lives of obedience, discipleship and service. In response to the gift of justification through faith in Jesus Christ, Christians are called to lives of obedience and sanctity (“...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” Matthew 5:16), but are also given a new commandment, to “love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12) and to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:19).
20. In the present day, all Christians are called to be worthy disciples of Christ (Ephesians 4:1). We are summoned by Jesus to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16) in our daily lives, not conforming to the world’s expectations and understandings but being transformed into the likeness of Christ (Romans 12:1-2).
21. The Church faces a challenging task as it carries out its mission today. Our culture is beset by secularism, consumerism, relativism, as well as antinomianism (dismissal of God’s Law), idolatry, universalism (assertion that all, even unbelievers, will be saved), an increasing acceptance of marriage as other than a holy estate ordained by God as between one man and one woman, an unwillingness to value the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death.

22. Because we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, we share a common mission in the world today. In response to the challenge to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed, we seek to call all people to repentance, baptism and a living faith in Jesus Christ. Heeding the command to love one another, we seek to care for the poor, the needy, the imprisoned and the oppressed. Taking seriously the commission to make disciples and to be the Lord's witnesses, we seek to be the Body of Christ in the world today, being the presence of the Incarnate Christ for those who have not yet come to know him who is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6).
23. As members of the Anglican Church in North America and the North American Lutheran Church, we give thanks to God the Father for the gift of his only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, made real for us through the power and work of the Holy Spirit, and we commit ourselves to upholding and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and that we are justified by grace through faith as a gift. We also commit ourselves to growing in our mission, together, addressing the challenges we face as faithful followers and disciples of Jesus Christ in our day. In this, we ask God to help and guide us.

April 20, 2017

Study Questions

Jesus Christ

1. How does the statement in point #2 describe sin and its results? What effects of sin do you see in the world around you? What have been some of the effects of sin in your own life?
2. Point #3 says that the wrath of God rests on us due to sin. We also know that God is, in his essence, love. How do we reconcile these two truths about God?
3. Why is Jesus' death necessary for our justification?
4. Point #4 declares that "Jesus Christ is the only way to God." Why do you think some people struggle with this exclusive claim?
5. Point #5 describes Jesus as "the victor over all the powers that would oppress us, by triumphing over them in the cross." In what ways have you experienced this victory in your own life? Why or why not?

Gospel

6. According to the section on the Gospel, what all does the good news mean?
7. The central theme of Jesus' preaching was the Kingdom of God. According to this statement, what is the Kingdom of God and how do we enter into it?
8. Point #12 states that "In the Church's sacraments, the Gospel is enacted." How do you personally experience the Good News in the sacraments?
9. How would you state the Gospel in one sentence?

Justification and our response

10. Based on the third section, "Justification and Our Response," how would you define the terms justification, grace and faith to a fourth grader?
11. Point #17 quotes Titus 3:5 in stating that we are saved by grace and not by anything we have done. Surveys over the last six decades have shown that the overwhelming majority of Lutherans and Episcopalians/Anglicans in North America believe that we are saved by our good works. Why is what Scripture states about our salvation so hard to accept?
12. Point #19 talks about discipleship as our response to justification; that as Christians we are called "to lives of obedience and sanctity." Describe what being a disciple meant for the twelve who followed Jesus. What does being a disciple mean today for us in our: work, families, relationships, citizenship, and in our churches?
13. Point # 21 presents major challenges that are facing the Church. How do you encounter these difficulties in your daily walk with Christ? As a Christian, what resources do you have to assist you?