Abstract

"Toward More Effective Catechesis: Models of Discipleship at Galilee Episcopal Church"
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The demands of parish ministry on clergy often preclude considered and well-planned approaches to parish-wide catechesis. Additionally, a muddled understanding of confirmation (in our prayer book tradition, the ecumenical scene, and our national canons) leaves confirmation open for competing theologies. Laity and clergy often view confirmation as an opportunity for catechesis, but because the rite is derivative of baptism it cannot be that opportunity and should instead be a celebration of the lifelong formation that has already occurred, as well as a communal affirmation that the Holy Spirit will continue to bless and sustain the confirmands in their unfolding journey. This project details how Galilee Church in Virginia Beach has engaged in a comprehensive formation program for children, and how this program supersedes and replaces a traditional confirmation class. It further details the importance of attending to a variety of factors in order to create an environment for successful catechesis. Finally, it considers opportunities from with both the Prayer Book tradition and the historical Catechumenate for future development of adult formation in the parish setting.

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Toward More Effective Catechesis: Models of Discipleship at Galilee Episcopal Church

By

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“Believe me Monseigneur, the Church of God will never be preserved without catechesis.”

John Calvin

I. Introduction

The Problem

Every Episcopal parish should enjoy a strategic plan of Christian formation for children, adolescents and adults. Yet many parishes lack plans for deliberate and lifelong formation. A quick glance at parish profiles in search for a new rector confirms this lacuna: When reading about “what we want from our new rector,” many congregations desire vision and direction for their Christian formation programs. New rectors no doubt have the best intentions when they begin a fresh ministry. Yet (understandably) formation often moves to the bottom of the to-do list, as rectors with limited resources have myriad tasks that appear more pressing.

Consequently, either because they are busy or a dearth of resources, rectors frequently shoot from the hip with formation: They select pre-packaged Sunday school and VBS curricula that may meet a need for their children, but do not follow a coherent vision for catechesis; they use J2A as a confirmation program for teens, even though it was never intended as such; they leave adult members to limp along with a potpourri of ‘Rector’s Forums’, small groups and book studies that do not coagulate around a plan. Sometimes dioceses push programs from the top down: In 1985 Bishop Roger White of Milwaukee asked his diocese to trial-run the catechumenate, and nearly half a dozen parishes made the effort.

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2 In this project, I use ‘formation’ and ‘catechesis’ interchangeably.

Virginia is presently exploring a program from England called “Fresh Expressions” and the
diocese of Wyoming is pressing this approach as a model for all parishes. However, these top-
down initiatives last only as long as the sitting bishop’s tenure; further, these initiatives often
fail to take into account the barriers listed below, particularly when it comes to outcomes and
goals. Put another way, whether at the parish or diocesan level, lack of strategy, unclear goals,
and uneven catechesis is the norm for spiritual formation plans in parishes, dioceses and our
denomination. While the traditional instruments of catechesis within our tradition (i.e.
confirmation class, Sunday school, youth group, VBS, small groups) are perhaps adequate,
clergy rarely fit them together in a complementary whole that results in mature Christians.
Lack of time and resources are often cited as the cause of deficient catechetical planning, but
there are other significant barriers to overcome.

The Barriers

First, excellent spiritual formation never occurs in a vacuum but within a matrix of
relationships, vision, competent administration and excellence in worship and preaching. It is
not enough merely to have (and execute on) a clear vision for Christian formation. Excellence
in Christian formation flourishes where there is excellence in other areas of parish life.
Christian formation will struggle in a parish where there is: No clear path to membership; lack
of process for integrating new members into the community; marginalization of children in
worship and service opportunities; and no effort to create cross-generational interactions. If a
parish wants effective formation, parish leadership must also address this constellation of
concerns. I will detail in Part VIII how I have worked in my present parish to create a milieu

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4 The Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming, accessed on 20 March 2019: https://www.diowy.org/Ministry/fresh-expressions.html
of excellence for successful catechesis.

Second, spiritual formation depends (not whole but in part) on the community, most particularly the parents. Deuteronomy 6 commands parents to teach their children from sunrise to sunset, but how many Christian households might this describe today? For many families, Christian formation is an extra-curricular event. So a parish must not only have a plan for catechizing children, but also adults.

Third, excellent spiritual formation begins with the end in mind. This of course is habit #7 recommended by Stephen Covey. 5 No formation program can be effective without considering: What outcome do we want? Why do these outcomes matter? Toward what purpose are we striving? What (for example) should an 18 year old look like after 12 years of spiritual formation? Without asking these questions, spiritual formation is like throwing a dart blindfolded and hoping to hit the bull’s-eye. I will share in Part V below how we’ve answered these questions at Galilee for our teens.

A fourth barrier is less obvious, but real: Some clergy confuse catechesis with denominational education, social gospel education or the sharing of obscure theological scholarship. Such confusion manifests when classes are done under the heading of formation, but are really about information: e.g “being an Episcopalian,” classes on how to use the lectionary, how to do a self-exam for breast cancer and testicular cancer,6 how to use the church seasons and liturgy, the needs of homeless shelters and food pantries, and classes about the theology of the Cappadocians. These sorts of classes have value, but they are not catechesis.

5 Covey, Stephen R. The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic. [Rev. ed.] (New York: Free Press, 2004). 95

6 Done (not at my parish, but) at another Episcopal parish in Connecticut as part of a Lenten series in 1998, during my time in Simsbury, Connecticut. The result was that two families transferred out to my parish.
Aidan Kavanagh remarks, “Catechesis is fundamentally conversion therapy. It is not education in a ecclesiastical data.” For Kavanagh catechesis is: 1. Reassembling one’s life around a new center of gravity in Jesus and 2. Instructing the convert in basic discipline for living the Christian life. At Galilee we have worked hard to center our formation programs around converting souls to the Christian worldview and its practical implications.

The fifth barrier, intangible but real, is that clergy rarely articulate to their staff and vestry a clear theology for catechesis. I will share in Part II the biblical principles I inculcate in my staff and vestry about why we prioritize formation/catechesis.

The Price for Failure

Clergy underestimate the price we pay for perpetually inchoate catechesis in our parishes, but there are three weighty impacts on the church when it fails to form its people well. The first and most obvious cost is a decrease in the church attendance and membership. Proverbs comments that “without a vision the people perish.” Motivational speakers often misuse this proverb to argue that every business needs a mission/vision statement, or the business will die. But the Biblical meaning is different: “Vision” means a ‘revelation’ or ‘prophetic word from God.’ People need a word from God; they receive that word through catechesis (heard in community, in Scripture, through the Holy Spirit), and when they don’t receive it they and their parishes wither. I have been to ten years of diocesan conventions featuring speakers with theses for how we can turn around our denominational decline. Suggestions have ranged from “more outreach” to “waiting it out until the millennials discover

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8 Proverbs 28.19
that what they really want is liturgy.” No one has yet suggested better catechesis, and yet this is what the Scriptures prescribe (see Part 2). It is trite but true that the church is only one generation away from extinction. The problem is only too obvious in the Episcopal Church where the average age of membership annually increases, and our national and diocesan ASA decreases.

The second impact is that if clergy do not catechize their people, then someone or something else will. Recent research by Nielsen reveals that the average American spends “more than 11 hours per day watching, reading, listening to or simply interacting with media.”9 Those numbers should terrify the parish priest, who (apart from any other form of catechesis on Sunday morning or during the week) has only 10-20 minutes per week to influence the congregation through a sermon. Americans are getting catechized for hours each day, but not by the church.

Third, our catechetical deficits hurt the church when an adult gets serious about his/her faith, and parishes/clergy do not know what to do with them, except send them to seminary and ordain them. Rather than usher them into a lifelong process of growth, rooted in the parish setting, we put a collar around their necks. Aidan Kavanagh comments, “When [in a parish] a real catechumen does show up… one whose life has been upended by the grace of conversion… we do not know what to do or how to do it. Sensing this, such a person goes, or is sent off, to seminary. I suspect that about half our divinity students at Yale are, if truth be known, functional catechumens rather than people of settled faith consciously preparing for ministry.”10 The loss for the wider church is double: We gain clergy without a legitimate call


10 The Baptismal Mystery and the Catechumenate, p. 37
to ordained ministry, and we lose parishioners of convicted faith who could become powerhouses of lay leadership and ministry within the local church.

*The goal of my project and its context*

**The Goal**

Although my interest in catechesis is *across* the generations (and I will detail below in Part VII some of how I’m addressing that at Galilee), my project has focused mainly on adolescent formation and the confirmation process: Ages 5-18. I am particularly troubled by our uneven denominational theology of confirmation and the consequent inconstant preparation across parishes. So a large part of my project in the past few years has focused on reforming the confirmation process. I will look in Part IV at the history of confirmation because there is within the Episcopal Church considerable theological confusion about confirmation and its present place in our life and worship. The confusion ranges from the most biblically illiterate laity to our well-educated House of Bishops. Many clergy use confirmation as an occasion for catechesis, and many parents view confirmation as a puberty rite. Part IV will necessarily be somewhat granular and in-depth because I take a substantially different approach to confirmation than most parish priests, and I need to establish the reason why. My approach to confirmation is not to view it as an occasion for catechesis, but as a celebration of the lifelong formation that has already occurred, as well as a communal affirmation that the Holy Spirit will continue to bless and sustain the confirmands in their unfolding journey.

My doctoral project is set at Galilee Church in Virginia Beach, describing not an endpoint, but the journey so far. The following is a brief history of the parish prior to my
arrival, including some metrics to give a sense of where things were, and where they are at the beginning of 2019. I begin the history of the parish with 2006, three years prior to my arrival as rector.

Galilee Episcopal Church: A micro-history

In 2006 Galilee Episcopal Church had an average Sunday attendance (ASA) of 780. They averaged 100 children in the Sunday school program, over 75 teens at youth group on Sunday night, and plate and pledge of 2.4 million. When questions over human sexuality and marriage emerged in force in the mid-2000s, the Galilee leadership chose to focus on those issues. The focus on sexuality required substantial energy to maintain, and disrupted meaningful catechesis. Sexuality and ecclesiastical polity became regular topics in Sunday sermons, weekly adult forums and vestry meetings. The life of the parish quickly shifted to these issues but, as research demonstrates, parish conflict eventuates in diminishing parishes. March of 2007 saw a congregational split: 400 members departed to found a non-denominational parish five blocks away. Eight of twelve vestry members departed, the three associate priests resigned, and three months later the rector resigned. Twelve years later, and having heard from hundreds of people about their perspective on what happened, it seems that while the sexuality issue was divisive, it also revealed pre-existing problems among the staff and clergy (viz. autocratic leadership from the rector, unhealthy boundaries among staff, and a shift away from thoughtful and consistent spiritual formation).

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11 Episcopalians founded Galilee in 1888 as an inter-denominational worship space, with the Episcopalians owning the building and grounds. The other churches eventually moved out. It is one of 8 Episcopal parishes currently active in Virginia Beach and is the largest parish in the Diocese of Southern Virginia.
The diocese stepped quickly into the diminished Galilee, providing both a consultant and two interim clergy. Nevertheless, the parish went into a financial and membership free-fall: Some transferred to other Episcopal churches in the area, never to return. Others stopped attending Galilee, waiting on the sidelines until things stabilized. Many stopped or reduced their pledges. By mid-2009 ASA dropped below 300 and pledges decreased (from a 2007 high of $2,400,000) to $800,000. Additionally, Galilee owns and operates a Montessori School and due to poor leadership it was also running a small deficit. Finally, after the split the vestry chose to permit a $250,000 annual deficit in the ministry budget to avoid firing essential staff prior to the arrival of the new rector. They invaded the endowment in order to fund the planned deficit.

Not all was bad during the interim. In previous years the rector had hired professional staff to handle many of the ministry needs. But with a budget reduced by over 1.6 million and a smaller staff the parish now had to call on members to create small groups, lead adult education, and serve in the children’s ministry. This was a positive step forward for the parish family. A number of parishioners also committed to start small groups during this time.

Nevertheless Galilee declined on many levels during the interim, and upon my arrival in September of 2009 I found a diminished and tired parish with no established vision for formation. The Sunday morning children’s program had less than 15 in attendance. The youth group had dwindled to no more than 5 on a ‘good’ Sunday evening, and ASA during my first month hovered around 270. I inherited the $250,000 deficit spending and a depleted endowment; further, it was clear on my first day that several staff needed to be replaced.

It was also evident that the congregation’s priority was surviving, not thriving. To wit: One month before my arrival I was diagnosed with Lyme Disease, which caused paralysis in the left side of my face. Although the antibiotics quickly treated the Lyme, it took several months
for the palsy to disappear, causing a temporary slur of speech. When I worried out loud to a member of the Galilee search committee that I might have to delay my arrival as the new rector, he said, “Get here. It doesn’t matter whether or not you can speak from the pulpit. Right now, the congregation just needs a warm body up there.” In other words, stability and surviving was paramount to the Galilee parish family; thriving could come later.

Looking back over the last nine years, I have much for which to be grateful. In 2018 our pledge and plate was just over 1.6 million. Innovation in our Montessori school has doubled its income—making our total expected revenue in 2019 around 2.7 million. Between the school and ministry staff, we have 51 employees. Our Sunday school program in 2018 averaged over 50 children during the school year.

Demand for our vacation bible school has exceeded our capacity and we have capped registration at 150 children for two years running. Youth group attendance has averaged over 40 each Sunday. And ASA for 2018 was 512, marking our tenth consecutive year of growth. It has been a grand adventure, and in many ways the attendance trends tell the story that catechesis is having its intended effect of stabilizing and growing the church.

How did we move forward? There are layers to the answer, but the short answer is that from 2009-2012 I focused on healing the parish and bringing stability. However at our 2013 annual retreat the vestry and I recognized that the time had come to establish a fresh vision for the future. So in 2013 I unrolled that vision and began to hire staff and recruit lay leaders to help execute it. In 2013 I also commenced the D.Min. program at Sewanee, which provided
focus and fresh ideas for much of what follows in this project.

I began with a new mission statement. The previous mission statement was framed in a dozen places around the parish—but it was one page long, with three paragraphs, in size 10 font. No one could remember the mission statement because of its length and detail. So I reduced the mission statement to one phrase—almost one word: Renewal: Renewal of souls. Renewal of the city. Renewal of the world. I based this on a number of passages: Revelation 21.5 and Romans 12.2 chief among them. Romans 12.2 was deliberate, reflecting my intent to lead renewal through catechesis, “renewal of the mind.” I began preaching on this mission often (it wasn’t long before most parishioners could tell me the mission statement of the parish), and I teach the mission every year at both our vestry retreat and our annual meeting.

Then I began to work out three biblical principles for formation/catechesis to inculcate in my staff and vestry. We have since aimed to create and encourage programming and events that match these principles.

II. Biblical Principles for Spiritual Formation

Principle #1: Formation should be intentional, multisensory, constant, intergenerational and leave a lasting impression.

Prior to crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land, God instructs the Children of Israel about how to continue to walk in God’s blessing on the other side. The Hebrews are not only to keep the commandments, but teach them to the next generation: These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children.

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12 “Behold, I make all things new.”

13 “Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by a renewing of your mind.”
Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.\(^{14}\)

While the command applies to the adults, the command is given to bless the children, the next generation. The Israelites are to teach their children about both God’s redemption and God’s laws, not only to reinforce the stories but also to shape those who had not been eyewitnesses of the Exodus.

But this is not meant to be mere occasional storytelling about the laws and the Exodus. Scholars notice that the semantic range for the Hebrew word ‘impress’\(^{15}\) includes “whet/sharpen,” suggesting a style of teaching that makes a deep impression.\(^{16}\) Further, Moses commands this ‘impressive’ teaching is to be intentional, multisensory and constant. It is not to be done once a week, only on the evening of the Sabbath, but daily from sunrise to sunset. The stories are not a mere noetic exercise in remembering and telling, but the stories are something to wear, something to touch, something to feel on your forehead and hands, something to taste in the Passover and Shabbat meals. No mere conveyance of information—this sharing of stories should leave a perduing impression; and God promises blessings to Israel’s descendants if they keep this command. I have asked my children and youth ministry staff to keep this in mind as they plan formation. Appendix C is a Sunday School plan from ‘stewardship Sunday’ in 2018, and is one example of how my Children’s Ministry Director has worked with me to make formation intentional, impressive, and multisensory.

\(^{14}\) Deuteronomy 6.6-9

\(^{15}\) shanan שִׁנַּנְתָּה

\(^{16}\) Packer and Parrett. pp. 34-37 offers a lucid discussion of the scholarship around this passage.
Principle #2: Catechesis from birth onward

By the book of Judges we see the consequence of not following God’s command in Deuteronomy 6. Further on in the book of Joshua, Joshua famously challenges the families of Israel to “choose this day whom you will serve”\(^{17}\) and, while his generation agrees to serve the Lord, they subsequently fail to teach their children. Thus in Judges 2 a new generation arises and the outlook is grim: \textit{There arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Ba’als. And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt.}\(^{18}\)

Catechesis is requisite for each generation, and Judges 2 paints the picture of what happens to God’s people when they abandon their catechetical vocation. Without catechesis the stories are forgotten, corporate identities are lost, relationship with the Lord is diminished, and people follow their own inclinations. Why does faith fade so quickly in-between generations? Proverbs avers that every human begins life as a fool: \textit{Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child.}\(^{19}\) None of us like to think of ourselves that way, but this is the bald statement of Scripture. Proverbs further suggests that every day we are either growing in wisdom or growing in foolishness.\(^{20}\) There is no spiritual stasis for humans and therefore

\(^{17}\) Joshua 24.15

\(^{18}\) Judges 2.10-12

\(^{19}\) Proverbs 22.15

\(^{20}\) Proverbs 14.18: The simple acquire folly…
ongoing catechesis and formation is necessary, else the faith of our ancestors is always one
generation from extinction.

Appendix B contains a message from my Children’s Ministry Director to the parents. She sends a message like this every Saturday to about 70 families, explaining to them what their children will learn the next day in Sunday School, and also any special directions for the day. We know it’s important to keep the children coming for formation, and regular communication is part of encouraging that process. We also have changed our Confirmation requirements (see Part V) to ensure that parents and their children come to church together for at least two years prior to confirmation.

Principle #3: Catechesis should impart the content of the faith found in the Scriptures.

The New Testament uses several Greek words for instruction or teaching\(^\text{21}\), including the Greek word from which we derive ‘catechesis’. While katacesij carries the general meaning of ‘impacting information’ or ‘teaching,’ it has a strict meaning of “sound down against, make the ears ring.” In other words, it carries similar freight to the Hebrew word שִׁנַּנְת (shanon) used in Deuteronomy 6.\(^\text{22}\)

Paul always uses katacesij when instructing others about the content of the faith. In 1 Corinthians 14.19 Paul says that although he speaks in tongues more than any of the Corinthian Christians, “in a church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct\(^\text{23}\) others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.”

\(^{21}\) Didaskw εἴμεταδότος (1 Tim. 6:18 BGT) παραγγέλθης (1 Tim. 1:3 BGT) συμβιβάσσα (1 Cor. 2:16 BGT)


\(^{23}\) κατηχήσω
Luke uses katacesij only four times and, on two occasions, the word indicates technical instruction of the faith: He writes to Theophilus so that he might “have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.” Luke later writes about a new believer named Apollos, who “had been instructed in the way of the Lord.”

Thus katacesij conveys a strong sense of deliberate and intentional teaching about the content of the faith. But it is not the only word used in the New Testament for teaching and grounding believers in the faith. Acts 2.42 uses didach to describe the Apostles’ instruction to the new converts. Paul uses paradosij in 2 Thessalonians 2.15 (“So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter”) and 3.6 (“Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.”) Paul also uses the related word paradidwmi to discuss the tradition handed down regarding the breaking of the bread. So, regardless of the word used, catechesis is never about fact sharing, it is intentional training of others in the content of the faith. At Galilee, we only have programs that help us form people in the content of the faith. If it doesn’t shape people in and for Christ, we don’t do it because it’s not catechesis. Given that

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24 Lk. 1:4 ἵνα ἐπιγνῶς περὶ δόν κατηχήθης λόγων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν.

25 Acts 18:25 οὗτος ἦν κατηχημένος τὴν ὀδὸν τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ζέων τῷ πνεύματι ἐλάληκα καὶ ἐδίδασκεν ἀκριβῶς τὰ περὶ τοῦ Ίησοῦ, ἐπιστάμενος μόνον τὸ βάπτισμα Ἰωάννου; see also Acts 21:21, 24; Romans 2.18; Galatians 6.6

26 “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

27 Paradosis can carry negative connotations, cf. Mark 7.13, Colossians 2.8. But the same word has positive import in 2 Thessalonians 2.15, 3.6

28 1 Corinthians 11.2, 23
the Scriptures are clear on catechesis as a central act of the faith community, how has the Church responded over the centuries and what can we learn from it?

III. Selected history of catechesis

Despite clear scriptural commands to catechize, the Church’s efforts have waxed and waned over the centuries and it has taken different forms, but the early Christians spoke often about formation. In the 2nd century, 2 Clement could speak of a commitment to catechize: “Let us repent, therefore, with our whole heart, lest any of us should perish needlessly. For if we have orders that we should make it our business to tear men away from idols and to instruct them, how much more wrong is it that a soul that already knows God should perish?”

Although patterns of formation (like the catechumenate) were embryonic in the time of 2nd Clement, by the fourth century we know that the process of the catechumenate was well established.

The Catechumenate

While the evidence shows that the basic form of catechumenate was understood and used by many, it varied from place to place and from person to person. We have wide and varied evidence of the practice from sermons and lectures in the Didache, Irenaeus, Harmless, William, Augustine and the Catechumenate. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Pueblo Publishing, 1995), 39-73 presents an excellent survey of the 4th century catechumenate.
The basic idea of the catechumenate is that of a journey and lifelong process. One began as an inquirer, having motives and lifestyle examined. With the help of a sponsor one moved to the catechumen stage, becoming a “hearer of the Word” and being dismissed prior to the community Eucharist. This stage could last as long as three years. In the final phase, one of several title might be applied: electi, illummine, competentes, or photozomenoi. Over time, this final phase was scheduled to correspond with the season of Lent. The Creed was “handed over” to these students, rehearsed and memorized. The Great Vigil brought the preparation to its climax, and the period of mystagogy followed with baptism, Eucharist and remaining for the entire worship service. Cyril (along with others) stressed the importance of secrecy surrounding the mystagogical phase. William Harmless explains Cyril’s convictions: “Cyril believed that the discipline of secrecy simply enshrined a good pedagogical principle: that in matters of mystery, experience must precede explanation. Cyril trusted that being stripped naked, dunked, then oiled from head to foot was itself splendid catechesis. Only after his initiates had drunk in and savored the rich, elusive power of such symbols did instruction assume its proper place.”

Looking back, the Catechumenate was an appropriate and sensible response to the post-Constantinian era in which a flood of “converts” sought entrance to the Christian community. After all, one had to have some way to synthesize the new converts into the community of faith. It was an era when becoming Christian was more fashionable than not, and advantageous

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32 Packer and Parrett, 53
33 Harmless, 69 (emphasis mine)
to one’s career rather than deleterious. Although the catechumenate fell into disuse over the centuries, a revival of the practice followed on the heels of the late 19th and 20th century liturgical renewal movement. The footprint of the Catechumenate remains in our Book of Occasional Services although it now appears to be rarely used or understood by laity and clergy alike. I will detail below some of the ways in which Galilee is beginning to appropriate elements of the catechumenate but, for now, we can detail three reasons that the catechumenate has continuing value for the church.

First, the catechumenate took seriously a deliberate concern for the spiritual readiness and ongoing development of Christians. It understood faith to be a journey and process, never with a terminal point, and that being a Christian meant a radical reorientation of life. Second, with its preparatory and mystagogical phases the catechumenate embodied biblical principle number one articulated above from Deuteronomy, that faith formation should be intentional, multisensory, constant, intergenerational and leave a lasting impression. Third, the ritual moments at each stage were not mere rites of passage but were catechetical in themselves (so, Cyril’s comments above).

Throughout modern literature on the Catechumenate, scholars sound notes of both optimism and caution. Many see in the catechumenate a loose framework for modern catechesis. Some warn that we should neither romanticize the Catechumenate as a “cure-all” for declining attendance, nor slavishly reproduce the catechumenate in our parishes. Harmless notices that in the “fourth century, as in the third, neither the rigor of the process not the quality of catechesis guaranteed results. Thus we find Chrysostom complaining, ‘I see many after their
baptism living more carelessly than the uninitiated, having nothing in particular to distinguish them in their way of life.”

Others note that the catechumenate requires both evangelism and catechesis, hand in hand, to be successful. They warn that catechesis without evangelization, or evangelization without catechesis, yields little return on investment. A church that does one or the other, but not both, will engage in an exercise of futility. Kavanagh states baldly that unless we “evangelize, evangelize, evangelize” and “catechize, catechize, catechize” we will “all just be standing around barren fonts at the Easter Vigil, holding hands and renewing our own baptismal vows like crazy in an orgy of liturgical auto-eroticism.” This is where Alpha has been so helpful in my congregation as it provides both evangelization and initial catechesis (see below, Part VII, for more on Alpha at Galilee).

_Catechesis, from the Reformation to today_

After a period of catechetical neglect during the Middle Ages, the Reformers brought attention once again to the need for catechesis and formation. It took many forms, but two men stand out: Calvin in _The Institutes_ and Luther in his catechisms both sounded calls to return to roots, not just Scriptural but also the teaching of the early Christians. Indeed scholars have noticed that Luther’s catechisms are patterned after the efforts of the early church. Similar to the _Didache_ Luther lays out the foundational teaching of the church using the Lord’s Prayer, Creed and Sacraments (but unlike the _Didache_ Luther includes the 10 Commandments).

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34 Harmless, 74

35 *Baptismal Mystery and the Catechumenate*, 48
After the Reformation catechesis again fell out of favor. Richard Baxter designed an intensive “all age catechesis” within the Puritan movement, but it was short lived and catechesis fell into disuse in the early 20th century. Packer and Parrett argue several reasons for the decline of catechesis in the modern era, chief among them: 1. The rise of the early 20th century Sunday school movement, which took catechesis out of the hands of clergy and into the hands of untrained laity. (Making things worse in the modern era is that curriculum companies supply the catechetical materials.) 2. The tendency toward particularism in catechesis, i.e. as denominations splinter, catechisms began to focus less on the teaching the content of the faith and more on teaching the content of the denomination.36

Despite the famine of catechetical vision in parishes, the church enjoys a plenitude of literature on spiritual formation; no rock seems unturned in the last decade as writers articulate visions for catechesis. In the late 1970s and early 80s, Christian educators began to notice that the foundations for catechesis had eroded. We could no longer assume that people would attend church, read their bible, or bring their children to Sunday School and youth group. Further, schools began to separate out church from state, removing any kind of religious instruction or reinforcement from schools.37

This is the cultural setting for Thomas Groome’s magisterial text *Christian Religious Education*. In it he argues a principle of “shared praxis”—the idea is that linear time (chronos) should give way in Christian formation to experience of kairos in the present: “the present of things present, the present of things past, and the present of things future” is where true learning take place. If that sounds too abstract, Groome summarizes it in this way: "Christian religious

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36 Packer and Parrett, 66-73

37 Foster, 47-73 argues that when schools pulled out of reinforcing Christian values and faith, the wider church failed to adapt.
education by shared praxis can be described as a group of Christians sharing in dialogue their critical reflection on present action in light of the Christian Story and its Vision toward the end of lived Christian faith.”

But I would summarize Groome in this way: *People’s stories matter, and you cannot share the Christian story without hearing their story.* Groome therefore writes about “socialization”—knowing God and ourselves in community—as critical to our becoming spiritual creatures. He repeatedly describes Christians as “pilgrims in time”, weaving together our past (who we were) and the future (who we will become in Christ) with who we are in the present. So “shared praxis” is the process of hearing others’ stories, and then (as the teacher and at the appropriate time) “reminding them of a broader [Christian] Story and Vision.”

I highlight Groome because he started a conversation; perhaps much of it is not new, but a flood of literature washed forth after Groome: From an analysis of the catechumenate under Clement of Alexandria to Montessori-inspired Sunday School to the need for intergenerational formation, the wider church now has substantial resources available to

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38 Groome, 184

39 Groome, 109ff.

40 Groome, 135-139

41 Clement of Alexandria, *Paidagogia The Instructor.* (Aeterna Press, 2016). Clement is particular that the instructor’s task is “practical, not theoretical… to improve the soul, not to teach… to train it up to be virtuous, not to an intellectual life.” (p. 79) The text breathes practicality in catechesis, as opposed to a noetic exercise.


43 Allen, Holly Catterton and Christine Lawton Ross. *Intergenerational Christian Formation.* (Downer’s Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2012). This book focuses mainly on the problem within non-denominational settings (e.g. pp. 29-74). However, there were some interesting ideas that I want to consider at Galilee—for example, “Worship Stations”—setting up different places within the church for different kinds of worship (e.g. a meditation, something with food, something with water for cleansing, something with light.) See p. 201ff.
stimulate excellence in the local parish. Therefore, any accounting of the history of spiritual formation in the modern era must leave out a great deal, because a great deal has recently been published. One text however merits comment in this short history, because it describes a new area of research in spiritual formation: *Neuroscience and Christian Formation*.44

The last two decades have witnessed an explosion of neurological research on every level, including the brain’s development, how the brain’s health affects one’s identity, and spiritual formation. This new field has been dubbed “Neurotheology.” Recognizing that the brain and the soul are intertwined, researchers are probing what we can learn about how brain function and health affect faith development. As neurologists laboriously scale the cliffs, it’s interesting to watch them pull over the top of the cliff and realize that theologians have been sitting there for centuries. Following are three (of many) insights from the book, relevant to catechesis.

*Environment:* Consonant with Deuteronomy’s exhortation to “impress” children with the biblical stories, studies suggest that having a faith environment in the family is critical for children. One study asked children (ages 3-10) to draw pictures of God. Regardless of their religious environment at home, children between the ages of 3 and 10 drew faces and people to image God. It did not matter whether the children lived in a Christian or an atheist home—they all drew faces and people when asked to draw God.

However, by age 16, 90% of children from Christian families were able to move from concrete images for God (faces) to abstract symbols (e.g. a cross, the sun, hearts, light). In contrast, 80% of children from non-Christian homes continued to draw faces and people even

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by age 16. The study suggests that, “growing up in a Christian environment influences the
development, and possibly maturity, of our concept of God.”

This insight is packed with layers of relevance. For example: A) In the parish we see a
substantial uptick in the spiritual growth of children whose parents pray, read the bible and
discuss faith with them—as opposed to parents who do not do these things. So, excellence in
a children’s formation program is important—but parishes need to invest in parents as well.
Without the parents on board, this study suggests that children will not show meaningful
spiritual growth. B) Not all children who come to Church programs have the same faith
environment in the home—but most Christian formation programs treat children as though
they do. We cannot therefore assume that one size fits all for children’s spiritual education,
because children will have different starting points depending on their home environment.

A second insight from Neurotheology is related to *identity and the parietal lobe.*
Neuroscience tells us that the parietal lobe is the part of the brain that creates a sense of
self/identity. In one study researchers scanned participants’ brains while they meditated
(apophatic prayer). During that time they noticed a significant decrease of activity in the
parietal lobe. So meditation *suppresses* a sense of self. In contrast, when they scanned the same
subjects while they were engaged in active (kataphatic) prayer, the parietal lobe became
active—suggesting that active prayer *increases* one’s sense of self.46 Extropolating out to
children, we can suppose that meditative and contemplative prayer activities are less helpful
for their formation, given that children and youth are still forming their identities well into
college. In contrast, teaching them how to engage in active prayer is probably more helpful in

46 Maddix, 27
securing a sense of identity in God. It makes sense, for example, to engage children and teens in praying with manipulatives (what Godly Play does so well\textsuperscript{47}), praying with song and praying out loud. It would not make sense to ask them to engage in Lectio Divina, contemplative prayer, or adoration of the sacrament.\textsuperscript{48}

A third insight from Neurotheology is in regard to learning interference. In our age of multitasking and technology, there is a general assumption that use of technology (e.g. projection, websites, iPads) accents learning. However, neurological research suggests the opposite. “We do not learn as well when distracted by texting, email, surfing the Internet….” Behaviors like surfing the Internet lead to shorter attention spans and decreased ability to make connections between concepts.” With our shortened attention spans, neuroscientist Champion-Jones suggests that most people have difficulty “following deductive sermons as directives for living a Spirit-filled life.” Instead, congregations who are distracted by technology do better with inductive sermons that “engage the congregant in discovery of meaning.”\textsuperscript{49}

\textit{Confirmation}

We’re nearly done with our short history of catechesis; in this project I’m particularly concerned with the question of confirmation. It has its own history within the story of catechesis, and offers unique challenges and opportunities. In Part IV below I detail the history of the rite, and its attendant challenges within our denominational history; in Part V I will show

\textsuperscript{47} See \textit{The Religious Potential of the Child}, by Sofia Cavaletti for her observations on how this manifests, particularly chapters 1 and 3.

\textsuperscript{48} And yet, a parish near mine recently attempted to teach Centering Prayer techniques to 8 year olds, with (predictably) nugatory results.

\textsuperscript{49} Maddix, 27
how I have worked to remedy those challenges at Galilee. Part IV will at times take us into the weeds of history, looking across the centuries at the development of the rite of confirmation, because we can only apply remedies when we understand how it developed into its present form for Episcopalians in the 1979 BCP.

IV. Confirmation

Liturgical scholarship on the rite of confirmation often contains one of two adages: Some comment that confirmation is a ‘rite in search of a theology’ while others jest that it is a rite ‘with too many theologies.’ Indeed, a recent book by Sharon Ely Pearson is entitled Signed, Sealed, Delivered, with the subtitle: Theologies of Confirmation for the 21st Century. The subtitle makes the point: Rather than hoping to deliver a ‘theology’ of confirmation, the book admits straightaway the impossibility of anything but multiple theologies. Any parish priest trying to explain confirmation to a parishioner has been caught in the crosshairs of the competing theologies that comprise this rite of initiation as it now stands in The Book of Common Prayer and also in popular lay piety.

Historical origins of the problem

Following on the norm of baptism for believers (and their families) in Acts, it was not long before baptism in the early church took on formalization and complexity. The formal catechumenate developed with probation, limited membership, and baptisms occurring at Easter. Eventually, consignation and prayer for the anointing of the Holy Spirit (by the bishop)
was added to the baptismal rite. By the third century, postbaptismal anointing by the bishop was part of initiation rites in all extant sources except those from Syria.

As the Christian movement grew and as the number of believers expanded, it was not possible for the bishop to be present for every baptism in every place. Therefore, “the initiatory rite in its unity was left as the prerogative of the local priest.” Nevertheless, the Church of Rome was conservative in maintaining the bishop’s privilege of administering the post-baptismal anointing. In practice this meant that an individual might first be baptized by the priest, and then later anointed by the bishop. So as soon as the “baptized child and the bishop could be brought together, the bishop ‘perfected’ the baptism.” Put differently, the bishop finished at the anointing what the priest had begun with the water bath.

“[This] Roman pattern in which one post-baptismal anointing was reserved to the bishop, became the root of confirmation [and]… confirmation was quite separate from baptism in most of the West by the eighth and ninth centuries.” By the 13th century, the age of 7 was considered the minimum for confirmation, which meant that the gap between baptism and the anointing could now amount to years rather than months.

As the divided rite became the customary practice, theologians created rationales to justify the division. Aquinas taught that while baptism made one a member of the Church, confirmation offered an “increase of grace” by providing the gifts of the Spirit.

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51 Stevick, 15


53 Stevick, 17
“confirmation is to baptism what growth is to birth.” This view perdured into the Roman Catholic medieval understanding of the rite.

The European Reformers, on the other hand, had a visceral reaction against the rite. Baptism was sufficient in itself and confirmation “was attacked with wonderful rhetorical vigor.” In their view confirmation not only lacked Scriptural support, it also smacked of Roman Catholicism since the bishop administered the rite. Further, the European Reformers reacted negatively to worship of material things—and in the case of confirmation, the chrism caused offense. Yet the Reformers also recognized the practical and pastoral need for what John Calvin called, “a catechetical exercise, in which children or youths would deliver an account of their faith in the presence of the church.” In other words, they desired mature ratification of one’s infant baptism.

Meanwhile in England, the Church kept the “two-stage” medieval pattern of Christian initiation: Baptism at birth, and confirmation administered at a later stage by the bishop (with only the confirmed receiving Holy Communion). Cranmer’s first prayer book in 1549 included a post-baptismal anointing by the priest (which did not speak of the gifts of the Holy Spirit); however, under the influence of Bucer, that anointing disappeared in the 1552 BCP, and was replaced in subsequent books by the same consignation that the 1549 had used as a pre-baptismal ceremony. With the passage of time both the Evangelical and Oxford Movements took confirmation seriously: The Evangelicals because it stressed “teaching and inward

54 Stevick, 18
55 Stevick, 18
56 Turrell, 14; see also Stevick, 20-22
experience” and the Tractarians because it “represented the ancient ministry of the bishop and prepared for Holy Eucharist.”

In the colonies confirmation presented a problem: Not having bishops, the American colonies could not confirm, and therefore they faced the practical question of admittance to Holy Communion. In the absence of confirmation, “desire for communion” on behalf of the baptized sufficed for admittance. In the 19th century, Bishop John Henry Hobart enthusiastically confirmed large numbers of people, although evidence is spare regarding what he taught about the rite.

Stevick concludes that the rites of initiation have shown flexibility over the centuries, but in Anglicanism the two primary understandings (the bishop’s postbaptismal blessing (signifying the Holy Spirit), and the confirmand’s renewal of baptismal promises (signifying acceptance of adult responsibility)) are brought together. They sit in tension side by side, and require us to say of confirmation that there are two parties who are “confirming”—viz. the bishop (confirming an individual’s faith) and the individual (confirming her faith).

The Liturgical Renewal Movement and the Ecumenical Conversation on Confirmation

Stevick comments, “Confirmation has no independent meanings. All meanings ascribed to it are drawn from baptism.” Therefore any reflection on confirmation entails reflection on baptism.

57 Stevick, 24
58 Stevick, 63
59 Stevick, 72
Rita Ferrone argues that prior to the Liturgical Renewal Movement, baptism in the Roman Catholic Church “more or less focused on the removal of original sin and... the avoidance of limbo... Lost to popular awareness was the New Testament sense of the baptized as a ‘new creation’ in Christ... sharing in the dignity of the risen Lord.”\textsuperscript{60} While baptism may have made one a member in the Church, it was not as a fully participating member.

By 1963 the ground was laid for radical change. In \textit{Sacrosanctum Conciliarum} the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy recognized that baptism brought one fully into the church. In a strong move, \textit{SC} established that Christ is present \textit{not} only in the Sacraments and the Word, but also in the community/assembly gathered together. Liturgy therefore began to shift from vertical to horizontal, and the body of Christ became apparent in new ways.\textsuperscript{61}

\textit{SC} further recognized that confirmation had become removed from the initiatory rite of baptism, and called for revision so that confirmation was more obviously a renewal of baptismal promises.\textsuperscript{62} The document understands that confirmation is derivative of baptism. Meanwhile by Lambeth X in 1968, Anglicanism was also working through renewal of the rites of initiation. Holeton notes that this was a bumpy process: “the question of confirmation and the renewal of baptismal faith is where Lambeth 1968 began the present process of renewal, and, it often seems, it is on this issue that patterns for renewal often falter.” He identifies several reasons for breakdowns: “biblical, historical, theological and what can perhaps best be called the \textit{pompa episcoporum}.”\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{60} Ferrone, Rita, \textit{Liturgy}, (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2007), 32

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Sacrosanctum Conciliarum}, 1.7

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{SC}, 71

\textsuperscript{63} Holeton, David R., \textit{Growing in Newness of Life} (Anglican Book Centre, Toronto, Ontario: 1993), 24-25
Thus by 1974 in the Episcopal Church, the Liturgical Commission was heading toward confrontation with the bishops: the Commission wanted confirmation to be repeatable, and to untie the rite from the bishop’s ministry. The bishops said no. So they compromised by creating a new rite of ‘reaffirmation of one’s faith.’ Nevertheless, future commissions and Lambeth Conferences pressed further. Lambeth 1978 recommended, “that each province of the Anglican Communion re-examine the theology and practice of initiation with particular reference to the bishop’s role.” Despite this encouragement, the Anglican world has continued to tie the rite of confirmation to the bishop’s ministry—a custom practiced only among Anglicans.

In 1982, The World Council of Churches Faith and Order document, *Baptism Eucharist and Ministry* appeared, and it urged all churches to re-examine their theology and practice of Christian initiation. *BEM* identifies “baptismal unity” as central to the ecumenical task. While it affirms adult baptism as the norm (also affirmed in the 1979 BCP and *SC*), it admits to the possibility of paedo baptism. *BEM* attempts to dull the edges of division when it avers that both ‘paedo’ and believers’ baptism “embody God’s own initiative in Christ and express a response of faith made within the believing community”—and therefore both forms of baptism require a responsible attitude toward Christian nurture. *BEM* encourages both sides of the divide to “reconsider certain aspects of their practices.” Those who practice “believers baptism” need to emphasize more that children are under the protective grace of God—and (speaking to confirmation) *BEM* enjoins those who practice baptism at any age to take more seriously the need for mature affirmation of faith, and attendant formation in the faith.

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65 World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, IV.A.11, p. 4

66 *BEM*, IV.B.12, p. 5
Put differently, *BEM* does not offer an explicate definition of or rationale for confirmation, but it does acknowledge that the rite has a place within Christian communities as a stepping-stone to further spiritual growth: whether to pray for the anointing and strengthening of the Holy Spirit, and/or to celebrate a mature affirmation of faith.

Despite forward movement in renewing the rites of initiation among Christian denominations, a variety of views mark the last 100 years of ecumenical conversation. There are, for example, no uniform practices in regard to consignation, baptism and confirmation. The American Lutherans provide for optional consignation with prayers for the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit; they allow for confirmation, but the literature is clear that it is an “occasion for remembering and affirming one’s baptism.”\(^67\) The Presbyterian Church in the USA also provides for an optional post-baptismal anointing with the same prayer, but they are also quick to note that baptism is complete initiation in and of itself.\(^68\) Confirmation is simply a pastoral rite for mature affirmation.

Even from the Roman Catholic perspective, we see variety. Aidan Kavanaugh propounds a theory that the laying on of the episcopal hand in modern confirmation is in fact the ancient “coming to the bishop’s hand” of the newly baptized—followed by the dismissal sending of the newly baptized to the table for communion.\(^69\) But this (as Colin Buchanan notes) comes dangerously close to the ‘two-stage’ theory of the “Mason-Dix line” in the Anglican world.\(^70\) Mason and later Dix held that confirmation was the second and completing half of the

\(^{67}\) Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Last accessed, 19 March 2019: [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/What_are_the_practices_for_remembering_and_affirming_baptism.pdf?_ga=1.121189633.829485473.1475106877](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/What_are_the_practices_for_remembering_and_affirming_baptism.pdf?_ga=1.121189633.829485473.1475106877)

\(^{68}\) *Growing in Newness*, (Leonel Mitchell), 152ff


\(^{70}\) *Growing in Newness of Life*, p. 122
full sacrament of initiation. Distinguishing between baptism of water and baptism of the Spirit, Dix insisted that the Spirit was active not in baptism but in confirmation. In contrast, Geoffrey Lampe in 1951 published *The Seal of the Spirit* in which he argued that confirmation was a post-apostolic rite for strengthening those baptized in infancy with the Holy Spirit. He also averred that confirmation should be administered as close to baptism as possible.71

It is therefore into very muddled ecumenical and Anglican waters that the 1979 BCP arrived, and it is no surprise that the 1979 BCP waffles on the two positions. On the one hand, “Confirmation is the renewal of the baptismal covenant, not its completion.”72 On the other hand the rubrics of the BCP state that those baptized at an early age are expected to make a mature public affirmation of their faith and receive the laying on of hands by the bishop—and that sounds a great deal like a two-stage baptismal rite. Meanwhile, the peculiar view of Anglicans that only bishops can preside at confirmation continues to affirm the two-stage understandings of sacramental initiation (i.e. the priest starts the process in baptism, and the bishop finishes it in confirmation). This understanding has eventuated, as Colin Buchanan notes, in ecumenical problems: “Christians in denominations which do not practice episcopal confirmation have been viewed by Anglicans as only half-initiated.”73 Until 2009 when canonical changes were made in the Episcopal Church, we asked protestant Christians entering the Episcopal Church to undergo confirmation, thereby enabling what J.A.T. Robinson called a “disciplinary use of confirmation.”74


73 *Growing in Newness*, 111

Finally, in terms of liturgical renewal and within Anglicanism, the Toronto Document reaffirmed baptism as full incorporation into the body of Christ, yet notes that while confirmation has pastoral value it nevertheless lends itself to “theological overvaluation and misinterpretation.” The bottom line is that now “confirmation stands as a pastoral rite in its own right, and not as a part of the initiatory process.”  

The state of the question in the Episcopal Church

The 1979 Book of Common Prayer tersely states that baptism is “full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body and the Church.” While this change was a welcome alteration from centuries of Anglican theology in which “baptism was only the first stage of initiation,” it also presents a stark question: If baptism is “full initiation” then why have confirmation? Indeed, it’s difficult to see confirmation as a primary rite, for the current rite is “derivative of baptism… the sacrament in which its promises were originally made.” SC appears to share this view when listing confirmation as one of several “sacramentals.”

In most Episcopal parishes clergy seize upon confirmation as an opportunity for teenage catechesis, but the length and content of the catechesis varies broadly from parish to parish. One priest I know has a two-year program that essentially replicates seminary introductory classes. Another settles for a six-week catechesis on Episcopal trivia (e.g. What is a diocese? Who is the bishop? Why are we Episcopalians? Where did the BCP come from?).

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75 Growing in Newness of Life, 233
76 Turrell, 7
77 Turrell, 23
78 SC, 60
But Turrell argues that the way the present rite is constructed does not make confirmation the natural end of catechizing. Put differently (and cohering with the renewal movement), Turrell states that the point of the rite is the renewal of baptismal vows, not catechesis. Confirmation as it is construed, “remains, at its core, the renewal of baptismal promises, a secondary rite. Baptism is primary, full and complete in itself.” That is why the 1979 BCP restored to the baptismal rite the seven-fold prayer for the Holy Spirit (previously found in the confirmation rite in the 1928 BCP).

Nevertheless, the rite continues to be clouded with too many theologies. For decades confirmation was used both to generate membership in the Episcopal Church and also as a means to reception of Holy Communion. Layered on top of those two approaches is the popular piety that confirmation is a puberty rite and the completion of baptism, and we have theological cacophony.

Turrell also notes that the canons cloud the question of who (coming from another denomination) might be confirmed and why. Stevick wrote an incisive essay on the question of whether to confirm or to receive those from another denomination. He offers a corrective and insists that the commitment of the baptized is adequate. The question gets messy when one considers the variety of approaches in other traditions (e.g. the Orthodox do not have confirmation but post-baptismal chrismation. Therefore, most orthodox that come to the Episcopal Church have not been confirmed. Likewise, we have Roman Catholics who have been confirmed but perhaps by a priest). Ruth Meyers echoes this concern: that the

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79 Turrell, 25

80 Turrell, 26

81 To Confirm or To Receive?

82 Meyers, Ruth, Baptism and Ministry (New York: Church Hymnal Corp., 1994), 64-66
muddiness of the canons presents a stumbling block rather than a stepping-stone for those joining the Episcopal Church from other denominations.\textsuperscript{83} Turrell is generous to parish clergy advising them to follow the norms of their diocese and “to hope for future prayer book revision to resolve the confusion.”\textsuperscript{84} For what revision might we hope?

First, there is the question of the rite’s relationship to the bishop: Is confirmation an episcopal rite, or a pastoral rite? The history and theology rehearsed above, as well as the influence of the renewal movement, argue that confirmation is a pastoral rite and, that while the bishop is welcome to preside, a presbyter can administer the rite. Bishops argued during the 1979 BCP revisions that confirmation was a primary means by which they maintained pastoral relationship with the parish. But Stevick reminds us that this is a peculiarly Western debate and located only within Anglicanism. Roman bishops permit priests to be extraordinary ministers of the rite, and within Lutheranism and other “mainline” denominations, pastors preside as the ordinary ministers of the rite.\textsuperscript{85} In the 1979 BCP, confirmation \textit{already} resides in the pastoral and not episcopal section, which is perhaps a foreshadowing of where the rite is headed.

Second, we can hope that revision will cause confirmation to become a rite with just one theology—rather than a rite in search of a theology or a rite with too many theologies. If baptism is full initiation, the future prayer book must summarily squash the 2-stage conception of the rite. So Turrell: \textit{The forthright assertions of the prayer book that baptism is full initiation


\textsuperscript{84} Turrell, 37

\textsuperscript{85} Stevick, 86
negate all attempts to carve out a bigger role for confirmation. It remains, at its core, the renewal of baptismal promises, a secondary rite.\textsuperscript{86}

Third, prayer book revision and the canons need to come into agreement—not only about the meaning of confirmation, but whether and how confirmation is ever used in the context of membership; future canons and prayer book revision should also clarify that the rite does not serve as the point of admittance to Holy Communion.

Fourth, if a future prayer book teaches that baptism is full initiation into the church and that confirmation is a pastoral rite wherein the candidate makes a mature affirmation of faith, then the new prayer book should offer guidance about what constitutes an appropriate liminal age at which the rite may occur. Parishioners have their opinions: Those who think of confirmation sacramentally prefer a younger age, and those who think of it as mature declaration of faith favor a later age.

A great deal of ink has been spilt over the appropriate age. Turrell argues for 18,\textsuperscript{87} but psychological studies suggest that the adult brain does not complete development until around age 25. While 25 may be a bridge too far, prayer book revision should do more than use the word “mature”—it should offer a terminus ad quo age from which confirmation may occur. The burden is too heavy on parish clergy who are frequently told: That’s not the age they used in my last diocese, last parish, by my last priest, etc. Let the prayer book and the canons bear that burden instead.

Fifth, and following closely on point four above, we should reconsider and approve Stevick’s argument that confirmation should be voluntary, “a sign of one’s growing awareness

\textsuperscript{86} Turrell, 26

\textsuperscript{87} Turrell, 32-33
in matters of faith and church responsibilities.” 88 In other words, we should remove the expectation in the BCP that those baptized as infants will one day be confirmed.

Sixth, prayer book revision should consider the use of a different anointing prayer. The evidence is that the early Christians anointed in abundance not only with the chrism, but with their words. Bryan Spinks argues that our present prayers are anything but vivid. Leonel Mitchell comments that it was by their anointing that the early Christians knew themselves to be united with Christ (the anointed one) as Christians. 89 Spinks recommends something like what is used in the ecumenical chapel at Churchill College, Cambridge: Jesus the Anointed One anoints you with grace, and signs you as one of his flock. You are a member of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people. May the Holy Spirit which is poured out upon you sanctify and preserve you. N., you are signed with the oil of Anointing in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Even if one does not like the aesthetics of that prayer, it’s hard to see our current consignation prayer as anything but anemic by comparison.

Seventh, the next revision will no doubt wrestle with the question of flexibility in the rite. Ruth Meyers makes such an argument, suggesting that we should offer it as a “pastoral response to significant turning points in Christian life”—ranging from young children to older adults. 90 Such turning point might include reaffirmation of baptismal vows, or reception into the Episcopal Church. Either way, she suggests offering it as a response to growth in faith, and

88 To Confirm or to Receive? p. 80.
89 Growing in Newness of Life, 161
90 Pearson, Sharon Ely, 50
she implies repeatability. I hope that future revisions take caution with this approach, as flexibility and repeatability would likely further muddy the waters.

V. The path forward at Galilee

Again, the history above is necessarily granular, in order to see clearly the difficulties surrounding preparation for confirmation. The manner in which clergy prepare students for confirmation will reflect what they think confirmation represents (the two-stage understanding is popular among many clergy). Clergy do not agree on what it means, our canons and prayer book have different articulations of what it means—so we shouldn’t be surprised by the multiplicity of lay views on confirmation preparation. Turrell succinctly captures the problem in the 1979 BCP: *No longer truly initiatory and bearing neither a unique gift of the Spirit nor a meal ticket for communion, confirmation has changed. It is now a ‘pastoral rite’ that publicly marks the mature affirmation of faith made in the presence of a bishop. Because confirmation is still with us ... parish clergy and bishops must make the best of a muddled situation.*

When I began the doctoral program at Sewanee in 2013, I began to reflect on where I’d had the most success with catechesis and where I felt I’d made the least impact. Confirmation preparation was without question the area where I felt least effective. For over a decade I had put tremendous energy into confirmation classes, meeting with teens and encouraging mentors, but there seemed to be little return on investment. My experience, as with many other clergy, was that teens and their families could be induced to attend church and confirmation programs—but the confirmation service was often the last time I saw them at Sunday worship.

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91 Turrell, 22-23
Nevertheless, often because parents feel guilty that they haven’t “done their job” when it comes to religious formation—or because parents want their children to experience what they experienced, clergy are expected to have a confirmation class. Some clergy use J2A. However, as Turrell notes, neither J2A nor “Rite 13” was intended as a catechetical preparation for confirmation, and given the reality that 13 year olds do not fall within the category of “mature” it cannot fulfill that function.92 J2A functions more as an extended puberty rite—something that Christianity “historically, in the New Testament, the early church, the Eastern churches and the medieval West” has never had, and which confirmation most certainly is not.93

Turrell argues for a revival of the catechumenate. But Christianity (as Turrell elsewhere admits) is not a course, it is a Way. The Christian journey is lifelong—and for some the catechumenate can potentially convey a message of “do this, jump this hurdle, and you’re done.” To the degree the catechumenate inculcates a lifelong pattern of learning, discipleship—that is the degree to which it would be successful, or not. Indeed, the literature on the catechumenate is replete with the words “process” and “journey”—that the catechumenate is a way, and not an endpoint. But I suspect that it would be treated as an endpoint anyway. So what have we done at Galilee?

_Cessation of Confirmation Class_

Three years ago, after exploring the history of confirmation in my doctoral studies, I decided to stop having confirmation classes. Previously we had held a one-year class, with

92 Turrell, 29
93 Stevick, 79
meetings every Sunday morning after church. The students and sponsors also attended several evening classes with me as the lecturer. It was a huge investment of time and energy.

I stopped having confirmation class because they create at least two problems. First, confirmation classes perpetuate the two-stage theology of baptism/confirmation: “My baby was baptized and now needs to ‘own’ his baptism—and this confirmation class is the means by which it will happen.” Confirmation classes also perpetuate the idea of confirmation as a puberty rite: i.e. *Come to this class and we will get you ready for your coming of age ceremony.*

Second, and equally important, confirmation classes are duplicative of what ought to have already happened in the life of a child over the course of years. In a parish where the rector has thought carefully about spiritual formation, from the cradle to age 18—a confirmation class ought to be unnecessary. *If* a child has attended Sunday School, VBS, bible studies, mission trips, outreach projects, youth group—and *if* the parent has done their job as spiritual custodians of their child, teaching her to pray, to read the bible, to walk with God (as those parents promised in the baptismal vows)—then there is nothing more to be taught in a confirmation class. By offering a confirmation class, what we often do (unintentionally) is telegraph a message to parents that they can skip Sunday worship, skip childhood spiritual formation, and when the child is old enough they can bring her to church and we’ll subject her to a class that will “get her religion”—not too much, but a little. And then the child is confirmed and we never see the family again, until the next child in their family comes of age. This cycle is depressing and a waste of the church’s resources. It also sets the bar too low and allows uncommitted families to do an end run around discipleship.

Although I stopped confirmation class, I still needed to articulate standards by which students could be presented for confirmation. It seemed right (as noted above) to begin with *the end in mind.* In other words, what does a well-formed 18-year-old look like at the end of
their Christian formation process at Galilee? My staff and I spent considerable time formulating this, and the conclusion we reached was simple: Our goal was to produce high school graduates who stayed in the process of formation after high-school graduation. This would mean that: a) they continued to attend church after leaving home, b) were able to make a defense for the faith that is in them, c) had confidence in the reliability of the Scriptures, and d) had a basic understanding of the essential stories in the Scriptures. Once we identified our goal, the requirements were easy.

**New Requirements**

Fortunately the research on Christian formation over the last thirty years is extensive, and the research shows that a child is far more likely to become an lifelong Christian if four key things are in place: 1. The children regularly attend church with their families, 2. Serve regularly in some capacity in their church, 3. Receive some kind of spiritual formation outside of Sunday morning, and 4. Have a significant relationship with at least one (non-family member) adult within the congregation. As my staff and I reflected on this anecdotally, we felt that the research rang true.94

So I wrote a letter to all parents of children from sixth grade through twelfth grade and shared that there would no longer be a confirmation class. Instead, children would be welcome to stand in front of the bishop and confirm their faith if they: 1. Had attended church regularly with their families or an adult sponsor for at least two years. 2. Served in some capacity in the church during that time (e.g. acolyte, food pantry, Sunday school assistant, altar guild). 3. Had

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94 See, for example, the book *Sticky Faith*, which summarizes much of the research, particularly 69-122. Powell, Kara Eckmann, and Chap Clark, *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan: 2011)
some kind of spiritual formation apart from Sunday worship (e.g. youth group, Young Life, bible study at home). 4. Obtained a sponsor to walk them through 14 Bible passages that I identified as ‘core’ passages that tell the story of redemption.

I knew it would be difficult to stop confirmation classes; Episcopalians are used to them and parents expect them for their children. So I first brought my staff into the vision—then my vestry—and then I shared it with parents. The reaction was two-fold. Some parents said, “I don’t get it… we already go to church, our child serves, they attend youth group and no problem on the sponsor. That’s really all we have to do?” A smaller group of parents said, “I don’t get it. We have to come to church? Our child has to serve, attend youth group and have a sponsor? That sounds like too much.” The first year I had over a dozen conversations with concerned parents; fortunately, I have built trust with the congregation, and the families agreed to give it a try.

The most difficult conversations I had were last year, with two families who were visibly upset by the new system, particularly since they had children who had been confirmed under the old system. They felt strongly that a class was needed. But I gently insisted. The happy result is that both of their children got involved in the church, love helping with Sunday school and serving as acolytes—and, most recently when one of our teens suffered a traumatic brain injury in an auto accident, these two families both used the words “blown away” to describe how their sons responded to the accident and got involved with their friends from church to help the family. Overall, while I continue to receive occasional expressions of anxiety over the lack of a class, the parents and staff report positive feelings.

One of the best outcomes has been with our Sunday school. Last year after confirmation, we asked our newly confirmed students to transition immediately into ministry: Serving in our K-5 Sunday School. All but one of the 15 confirmands agreed to serve in this
way. It has only been positive: Instead of disappearing from the parish after confirmation, these teens enthusiastically committed to help teach our younger children. One benefit is that as the teens taught the children, the teens relearned things they’d forgotten. So catechesis continued after confirmation, by way of ministry. This also created an intergenerational experience (see Part VIII below for why that matters), and we bolstered the ranks of our children’s ministry team. Those same teens went on to serve in Vacation Bible School, and many of them returned this year to help again in the Sunday school.

We also asked every teen to obtain an adult sponsor from within the congregation. The sponsor meets 14 times with the student to review a passage from the Scriptures. They discuss the passage, how it fits into the overall story of the Bible, and why it matters. The sponsor prays for the student, and shares appropriate stories from their own life about how they’ve been challenged in their faith. We might have decided on any number of passages, but these seemed to us to have potential for understanding the metanarrative as well as offering applicability for the sponsor and student:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Passage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 12:1-8, 15:1-6</td>
<td>God’s Promise to Abram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 22:1-19</td>
<td>Abraham offers Isaac as a Sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exodus 12:1-28</td>
<td>The Promise of Passover</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exodus 20:1-21</td>
<td>The Ten Commandments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isaiah 53</td>
<td>Isaiah Foreshadows the Coming Promise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 3:1-21</td>
<td>Jesus and Nicodemus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 5:17-26</td>
<td>Jesus Forgives and Heals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 4:35-41</td>
<td>Jesus Calms the Storm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 26:26-30</td>
<td>The First Lord’s Supper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 18:1-19:16</td>
<td>Jesus is Betrayed and Condemned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 23:32-56</td>
<td>Jesus is Crucified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 24:1-35</td>
<td>Jesus Conquers Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 24:36-53</td>
<td>Jesus Appears and Ascends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, the clergy meet separately with the teens, parents and sponsors on two evening events to discuss: 1. How the Scriptures came to be, and why they are trustworthy. 2. Faith and Science, with a glance at Genesis 1-2. After the two clergy classes, the confirmation candidates are required to prepare a statement of faith, in consultation with their sponsors and youth leaders. We save it, giving a copy to the bishop prior to his arrival at confirmation, and we also send it to them the following year in a “college-care” packet along with a lot of food. This way, they get a reminder their freshman year of college about what they said mattered to them the previous year.

Finally, we incorporated some elements of the catechumenate into our confirmation process. In early October we ask the students to come to the front of the church with their sponsor, and we used a modified version of the Admission of Catachumens;95 I’m not certain how the teens felt, but the response from many adults was, “Wow, I wish I’d had that when I was confirmed.” We are also using the Prayers for Catachumens once a month, asking the confirmands to stand up in worship so we can pray for them. We expect to use some of the other prayers in a yet to be designed liturgy on the week prior to their confirmation.

In order to keep the confirmands in front of the congregation, we put the photos of the teens in the bulletin, put the photos on the bulletin board outside the nave, and put the photos in the newsletter. We also ask the teens to participate in the Triduum: washing feet, getting their feet washed, reading the lessons, acolyting, serving as thurifer, carrying the cross down the aisle during the anthems on Good Friday, etc.

It is too early to evaluate whether or not we will reach our goal: to produce students who keep going to church, can defend their faith, and know the Scriptures, but so far the

process feels different. First, instead of a terminal ‘confirmation class’ we now have a process, a journey, into which we’re inviting the teens. This is in the spirit of the catechumenate. Second, families are not disappearing after confirmation, teens are continuing to engage in ministry after confirmation, and they are beginning to get involved in areas of ministry where we had not seen them before: e.g. chalice bearing, healing prayer teams, and musical leadership.

In closing this section of the project, I want to note that because Galilee is a well-resourced parish, we have more activity than what I’ve described above. For example, we have two full time youth ministers; we have Sunday programs for middle school and senior high, and two separate youth groups on Sunday night. I currently allow the youth ministers to develop their own formation plan for Sunday morning and Sunday evening, but the goal for the spring of 2019 is to bring the formation in line with the direction offered both by the lectionary and also the church seasons. That is something we’ve already done with our Children’s Ministry.

VI. Children’s Ministry at Galilee

In 2013 we decided to ditch the use of pre-packaged curriculum for our grades K-5 Sunday school. Part of what made this possible was the hiring of a competent young woman with degrees in both art and childhood education. She not only understood children, but she understood education. I asked her to write a curriculum for each Sunday that reflected the Gospel passage in the lections. She also created a chapel service for the younger children that reflected the theme. Although there are lectionary Sunday School packages available on the open market, they are deficient either because they are too high-level, or too simplistic.
Additionally, three years ago, we decided not to use pre-packaged Vacation Bible School curriculums anymore—and began to write our own curricula.

This has been a work intensive effort: It requires us to sit down each summer and map out the year, with anticipated sermon topics; it requires me to read through her proposed curricula and make needed theological corrections. But the outcome has been worth it. Any parent can now sit down with their child during Sunday lunch and say, “Here’s what I learned from the sermon. What did you learn today?” And they can have a conversation from two different angles about the same passage.

Part of its effectiveness results from adopting three Montessori techniques (found in Godly Play) of 1. Teaching the same topic at slightly more advanced levels each year; 2. Using “manipulatives” (i.e. objects, craft projects) to help children make a haptic connection to the topic. 3. Making use of a holy space to create a feel of ‘mini-church’ in which the children can find their way. Although this approach makes me theologically uncomfortable at times (e.g. on the First Sunday after Epiphany, the children don stoles and practice baptizing baby dolls)—it has the desired effect of engaging the children and the adult teachers in what Don Saliers calls “eschatological imagination.” It also fits with the principle embodied in Deuteronomy 6.

Other examples (see Appendix A) are less uncomfortable for me, e.g. using Skittles to build a church. Regardless, the outcome has resulted in children dragging their parents to church, learning to pray and learning the content of the faith.

We have also placed a significant focus on what many in my parish call “First Communion Class” but which we call “The Bread and Wine” class. Aware that baptism is sufficient as an initiatory rite into the church and its sacraments and that there is no reason to delay reception

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of communion, we teach parents in our baptismal class that their children may begin receiving communion immediately after baptism. However, we know that many parents prefer for their children to wait until they are older, and so we have artificially set an age of 8 for our “Bread and Wine” class. We typically have 15 to 30 children participate annually in this five week class, and have found that it’s a great re-entry point for families who have fallen away from attending.

In appendix C below I’ve included the short booklet we give to our children for the class. The booklet does not reflect the entirety of the class; for the class also includes a great number of manipulatives, with the parents and children acting out the Exodus, practicing on each other the seven sacraments, etc. The class is very much a Montessori/Godly Play experience. What’s fascinating, pedagogically, is that for those children who have attended Sunday School regularly, the class is a review of what they’ve already learned. For children who have not been attending church, it is often the first time they learn the Lord’s Prayer, hear about confessing sins, or memorize a Bible verse. Finally, key to the preparation is that we provide the children with a copy of *The Action Bible*. We also keep copies of this Bible in our pews. *The Action Bible* is a comic book version of the Old and New Testaments, and we find that adults and children have a hard time putting it down. Much of the credit for Galilee children knowing the Scriptures goes to *The Action Bible*.

In summary, the purpose of our K-5 formation is to have children in a place where by age 10 they are already prepared for confirmation. You might say that I did not get rid of the confirmation class, I merely stretched it out across five years of formation in K-5. As we work in 2019 on our middle school catechesis (grades 6-8), we will find ways to help those students reinforce at a deeper level what they’ve learned in the K-5 program.
VII. Adult Formation at Galilee

As noted in the introduction, catechesis is a lifelong process and not terminal. Although it is beyond the scope of this project, adult catechesis must also be considered. It is easier with children and teens to “begin with the end in mind” since their graduation from high school usually marks the time at which they leave the parish and begin their adult journey somewhere else. It is harder to decide how things should look for an adult who is a permanent member of the parish community—there is no end, per se. Additionally, different adults come with different backgrounds, and what is right for one person’s formation is not necessarily right for another. Mary Birmingham, a Roman Catholic educator and proponent of the catechumenate, comments that with adult formation it is “impossible to do a one-size fits all model—in other words, what do you do with ‘John, the unbaptized, uncatechized inquirer, and Sally, the fully catechized, baptized, active Lutheran’?”97 What might be right for Sally may be wrong for John. There is a need for flexibility with the content, form and entry points for formation.

Rather than define an endpoint for adult formation, at Galilee we instead emphasize the journey/process and create options in both the content and the means of entry. Some may feel that what I’m about to describe can only be done in a resource sized congregation. However, I did all these same things in my previous congregation in Connecticut, a modest program-sized parish (ASA 190).

Alpha. When someone attends our membership class, we ask them to do four things: 1. Commit to attend. 2. Commit to get involved (and we provide ministry suggestions). 3. Commit with a pledge. 4. Attend Alpha.

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97 Birmingham, Mary, *Year-Round Catechumenate*, (Archdiocese of Chicago, Liturgy Training Publications: Chicago, IL), 2003. 2
Although it has a mixed reputation, we have found Alpha useful for evangelization and catechesis (exactly what Aidan Kavanagh recommends). We run Alpha once every 12-18 months, and usually newer members of the congregation attend. We have a strict policy of no-repeat attenders, unless they help in a leadership capacity. Our average attendance over the last nine years has been 50-60 guests per course. Guests have included Jews, Muslims and atheists but (again) it is mostly new members of the congregation. Attrition holds steady at 30%. If 50 people attend the first night, we are reasonably sure that we’ll have 35 guests at the end. I have led over 30 Alpha courses.

Many of my clergy colleagues have a visceral negative reaction to the content of the course. Alpha has its flaws (it is a tad too reformed for my taste), with pneumatology that often frightens those of a progressive bent, but my experience is that the benefits outweigh the flaws. Here are the benefits we’ve experienced:

1. I have the opportunity to deliver 14 talks over 10 meetings, which cover the content of the faith: Who is Jesus? How do we read the Bible? How do I pray? What about evil? Does healing still happen today? Why did Jesus die? Who is the Holy Spirit? Through these talks people get exposed to basic doctrine. They also sit for one hour after the talk with a small group for an hour to unpack what I’ve said. This builds community within their group, and reinforces the content of the talk.

2. I get to eat dinner with all the guests over 10 meetings. This gives me an opportunity to get to know the new members of the congregation in a
relaxed setting. Frankly, this is invaluable as it builds the relationships needed for effective catechesis in the future.98

3. We invite the guests on the current Alpha to serve as leaders on the next Alpha. This guarantees that they will be plugged into ministry, and also that they will hear all the basic talks a second time, thus reinforcing the catechesis they’ve already received.

Alpha stands at the center of my congregation’s catechetical formation for adults, and is the most common entry point to formation for the majority of our members. What makes Alpha so powerful is that the model is not “believing leads to belonging” but “belonging leads to believing.” As they get a sense of belonging to the church, they are more apt to believe and commit.

There is no direct follow-up to Alpha. Instead people travel down various paths to further commitment. Some simply deepen their commitment to Christ and the Galilee family, while others ask to continue their growth in a small group, or join a ministry.

Small Groups. We have been entirely unsuccessful with creating long-term small group Bible Studies. In nine years, I’m aware of only one small group Bible study starting and lasting—and it had nothing to do with me or my vision for catechesis. It simply happened. Despite having read dozens of books on small group ministry, we continue to be frustrated by this, but we also recognize that in our busy culture the Lent Group model may simply be the more effective method as it represents a discrete and manageable time commitment. Part of

98 Foster, Charles R., From Generation to Generation. (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2012). Foster’s basic thesis is that the relational dynamic trumps institutional and ideological realities or programs—and that dependence on ideology has not served the church well. But this is where Alpha is so strong—it focuses on the basics, reinforcing those basics through relationships.
our failure lies in parishioner reluctance to commit for the long-term to a small group, and that is why we developed Lent Groups.

*Lent Groups.* Four years ago I was determined to get every single member of my congregation into a small group, if only for the six weeks of Lent. So we created a couple of small group bible studies, recruited leaders, and I pleaded with the congregation to sign up. The first year we had about 150 parishioners get involved. The second year we had 216. The third year we had 250. That third year represented just over half of the congregation joining a six-week bible study. We took a break from Lent Groups last year, but are prepping for Lent Groups again this year. This year I have recorded video teachings on the last week of Jesus’ life, and groups will watch them in their homes on their television sets. It is an opportunity to expose the adults to Scripture study and small group learning, but also allows me to come into their homes via the television and lead them in a study. Relationships are built, prayers are said, homes are opened, meals are shared and the Bible is studied. We have found that 4-6 weeks seems manageble for people to commit to a study. Historically, none of the Lent groups continue as long-term small groups. One of our efforts this year is to create multi-generational groups so that catechesis crosses the generations.

*Parish Trips.* Much to my surprise, I found myself in 2013 on a trip to Israel. I’d never wanted to go, and I didn’t think I’d ever encourage anyone else to go. Of course, I experienced what so many others have: Seeing the topography of the Bible in front of me was captivating and engaging. I have since led two parish trips to Israel, and one parish trip to the United Kingdom (focusing on Anglican Christianity and the Reformation), and one trip to D.C. to the National Cathedral and the Museum of the Bible. Each of these trips has been preceded by significant preparation. For the U.K. trip, we spent nine months of Sunday adult forums walking 100 parishioners through the history of the church. We are presently planning two
future trips: One entitled “From Rome to Reformation”, beginning in Italy and heading north to Geneva (2020) and the other will be a third trip to Israel, for families (2021). Each of these trips will be preceded by learning opportunities for the travelers.

*Sunday Forum.* One of my most successful entry points for catechesis has been the Sunday forum. After the 9 am service I invite people to attend the forum and to “push back, ask questions, tell me what they wished I’d said in the sermon”—and they do. We are currently trending at 115 people in attendance; participation is high. I can rarely call on everyone who wishes to share. The forum makes me a better preacher, since it pushes me to over-prepare each Sunday; it has also created a space for genuine homiletics—i.e. conversation about the Scriptures, rather than lecture time.

All these are examples of areas where our goal is to create points of entry and options for content. They are not exhaustive: We also hold a 6 week Marriage Course, seasonal parenting classes, a weekly lay-led women’s Bible study with 60-70 women, a men’s prayer breakfast, twice yearly courses on healing prayer (covering five different ‘levels’ of prayer), etc. The goal in every case is catechesis: delivering the content of the faith. We hope and plan for our entry points to be fun, engaging and practical—but they are always intended to form people in Christ. Having said that and, as noted in the introduction, one cannot have strong formation without attending to excellence in other areas of the parish life. In the final section I will share about how I’ve worked with the vestry and staff to bring younger people into the congregation. The motive is not merely to get a younger group in church—rather, it is absolutely vital to have cross-generational experiences as a part of Christian formation.

VIII. *Growing Young: 6 Principles*

Strong formation and catechesis cannot happen in a parish not tending to its young
people. Sensing that we needed help in growing our younger population, I began to look for resources. Published in 2016, Growing Young was the resource I found. Written by several clergy/researchers connected to Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, they looked at parishes of all sizes and all denominations across the United States that were growing younger, rather than growing older. The book helpfully dismisses myths about growing congregations younger. They note that size, location, denomination, cool factor, modern buildings, budget size, and contemporary worship—all these are not deciding factors in whether or not a congregation “grows young.” Rather, they distilled six transferable principles that any congregation can implement to position the parish to grow younger. I read the book and felt that it had much to offer, so I bought 16 copies for my ministry staff and 12 copies for my vestry. I asked the staff to read one chapter a month, and the vestry to read one chapter a month. With acute discussion/reflection questions at the end of every chapter, we held up a magnifying glass to our congregation and leadership, and assessed to what degree we were living into these six principles. While not everything applied, we have made a number of changes over the last year in reaction to these principles.

**Principle 1: Unlock Keychain Leadership**

The principle here is to share power with the right people, at the right time. If someone has the keys to the building, they have a degree of authority. So share authority in appropriate ways with the younger population. Entrust young people with opportunities to lead and contribute.

My staff and vestry took this to heart. We looked at our lectors, chalice bearers, greeters and ushers and observed with embarrassment that there was no one under 50. We

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changed this quickly. At our two largest liturgical events (Easter and Christmas, each bringing 1,200 to 1,400 worshipers through the door) we now choose a parishioner under 30 to welcome those congregations and pray an opening prayer. Last summer we established a summer intern program where, for six weeks, we bring a young seminarian in to assist and receive mentoring from the clergy team.

Principle 2: Empathize with today’s young people

This is “sitting on the curb of a young person’s life, celebrating their dreams and grieving over their despair.” My staff and vestry found this the most difficult principle to apply—perhaps because the 20s are well in the rear-view mirror of many of my staff and vestry. It’s difficult to remember that there was a time when most of us were asking, “who am I?” and “what difference do I make?” and “where do I fit?” Even more challenging was the book’s argument that today’s young people have a “later finish line to adulthood.” That is, while my parents told me that “at 22 you graduate from college, get a job, and get your own place to live” today’s young adults are stretching out their undergraduate years, coming home to live after college, and marrying later. Conversely there is an “earlier starting line” for the journey into adulthood, with people like my daughter (13 years old) getting exposed to ideas (both good and troubling) that I didn’t discover until my late teens. As a child I was thrilled to get a box of Cracker Jacks and find a toy inside, but my children are bored by entertainment. The book observes that in a research study of 500 high school seniors, asking what they wanted more of in youth group, the top answer was “more time for deep conversation.” Second was mission trips. Third was service projects. Last was games.

After considering this principle, one of our reactions was to revamp our youth space.

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100 Growing Young, 92.
Galilee is fortunate to have two large adjacent youth rooms. One is a play area (2 pool tables, ping pong, fooz-ball tables, X-Box). The other room is a worship space. The vestry committed to spending $20,000 to upgrade this 15-year-old space—creating more conversation spaces, and a coffee/dessert bar. We invested in a snow cone maker, a hot chocolate maker and a coffee maker. The result was immediate. Shifting the focus from a game room to a hangout room (that happens to have games) began to draw more kids. The space is used now whenever we have a parish event—the teens know that they can go down there anytime to hang out and share life.

Our other initiative is to turn the former nursery into a coffee/hangout space for our young adults, and for parents who drop their kids at youth group but don’t want to drive home, only to have to turn around and come back to pick up their kids. We expect to execute on this later in 2019. Our hope is that they will feel like they have a home at the parish where they can let down their hair.

We have also worked hard as a staff to know the names of our teenagers and young adults. ACS now has an app for the iPhone and Android that allows you to look at photos of parishioners. We’ve found this a great assist in learning names, particularly in a congregation that has 500+ each Sunday.

Principle 3: Take Jesus’ message seriously

Teens and young adults do not need the message watered down, but straight up. For example, in youth groups the Christian message is often reduced to the “golden rule”—do unto others, as you would have them do unto you. But the researchers of Growing Young noticed, “the golden rule is toxic to faith.”101 Teens who articulate their faith in terms of the golden rule read their bibles less, attend worship less often, talk less with other about their faith questions

101 Growing Young, 133
and struggles, and respond less to social issues in light of faith. “The passion generated by the Golden Rule is lukewarm at best.” In contrast, churches that grow young teach an unapologetic gospel about Christ died, risen and coming again. The researchers encourage these three shifts:

1. Less talk about abstract belief and more talk about Jesus. 2. Less tied to formulas (i.e. a “sinner’s prayer”) and more focused on a redemption narrative. 3. Less about heaven later and more about life here and now.¹⁰²

What has this meant for Galilee? One of the changes this encouraged (as noted above) is that we identified 14 key stories in the bible that every student should know, in order to understand the narrative arc of redemption. We made it the responsibility of the sponsors to meet with their confirmation candidates and read through and discuss these stories and how they fit together. We are also doing more in church in the way of personal testimonies. Every vestry meeting now ends with one of the vestry members sharing their story of faith—how they came to faith, or how their faith is growing today.

The researchers also suggest that we “lean into the power of rituals.” We have made changes (noted above) by having confirmands participate in Holy Week; but we have also encouraged our newly married young couples to come in for “blessings of a pregnancy”—we’ve encouraged new homeowners (often young members) to have the clergy over for a house blessing. We’ve been surprised by how quickly these rituals have become a staple of the parish life.

**Principle 4: Fuel a Warm Community**

Structure is not enough to grow young; young people are drawn to communities that they describe as “welcoming, accepting, belonging, authentic, hospitable and caring.”¹⁰³ The

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¹⁰² *Growing Young*, 136

¹⁰³ *Growing Young*, 166
researchers found that a church didn’t need a “cool factor” or contemporary worship to make this happen. Surprisingly they discovered that warm communities were most frequently found where intergenerational experiences were encouraged.

I was surprised at how eager my vestry was to adopt this principle. We have worked hard over the last two years to create intergenerational leadership team for Vacation Bible School. Last summer (2018) we had 150 children (ages 5-10) attend our VBS. That required nearly the same amount of volunteers. We focused on pairing 11 year olds and up with adults of different ages—and the result was fantastic: Older adults got to know the names of teens and young adults in our congregation. Teens got to know the adults on a first-name basis. They prayed together, and took turns explaining the bible passages to the children. A natural mentoring occurred, and a feeling of “we are a family” was fostered.

One of the difficulties we’ve faced in being a larger congregation is that we have three different Sunday services, with three different congregations. So we’ve put in place 2 Sundays a year when we have only one service and we gather for a meal afterward. The first Sunday is after our annual meeting. We budget for 400 people, with fried chicken, oysters and BBQ. The turnout is remarkable—and people linger and talk for an hour and a half after the meeting has ended. The other event is our fall “Rally Day”—basically a ministry fair, with lots of food. It provides an opportunity for new members to see what we’re all about—and another opportunity for warm relationships to grow.

Principle 5: Prioritize Young People and Families Everywhere

Perhaps the most distressing comment I hear about teens is when one of the older members of the congregation says, “I see that the leaves need raking outside. That would be a
good project for the young people.” Separation between the young and the older is epidemic in congregations, and it is not healthy. So at Galilee we’ve responded to this principle by recruiting children and parents, children and grandparents, to serve together as ushers. During each week of the summer we now ask one or more teens to play their musical instrument at the offertory. We have licensed all our teen acolytes to serve as chalice bearers, using them at 2 out of our 3 Sunday services. The teenagers also work with an adult team in making the pancakes for Shrove Tuesday—and one of our parishioners takes a group of adults down to the boardwalk on the beach to offer prayer for anyone who wants it—and she brings several teens along as well.

The researchers put it this way: “Young people must play a load-bearing role.” If we offer them trivial roles (raking leaves) that no one else wants to do, they will know it. But if we give them the blood of Christ and put them in front of the congregation, if we have them read the word of God, if they are greeting people, collecting the offering, offering music and sharing their testimony in worship—then they are bearing the load of worship with the adults.

The researchers also offered two other ideas that Galilee seized for our use. First, ask for “participants” and not “volunteers.” A participant is a member of a team, a valued contributor to an effort. A volunteer is someone to be used up, and spit out. Across the board (in vestry minutes, advertisements, announcements, newsletter, website, ministry communications) we stopped using the word volunteer. We now talk about “participants” and “team members”—I’m not sure what the long-term effect is, or whether parishioners noticed, but our communications feel different and more celebratory simply by making the change. The

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104 Growing Young, 208
105 Growing Young, 227
second idea was to “ditch Youth Sunday.” In other words, instead of choosing one Sunday a year when the children lead the service, give the sermon, sing a song—prioritize the youth so that they are involved every Sunday. Make every Sunday “youth Sunday.” This principle has served us very well in the last two years. Many adults comment on how wonderful it is to have children, teens and young adults involved in the service. Further, their involvement is almost like a magnet, bringing more children and young adults to our congregation. Remarkably, the researchers noticed that in parishes that prioritize young people everywhere, there is no need for an age-specific ministry (e.g. a ministry for 23-34 year olds).

**Principle 6: Be the best neighbors**

In this last principle, the researchers note what has already been demonstrated many times over in the literature: Young people want to be part of an organization that is making a difference in their community.

After the split at Galilee in 2007, outreach was not forgotten but it was significantly diminished. The desire for my first four years at Galilee was for “in-reach”—i.e. “let’s take care of ourselves, and get better.” In 2013 it was clear to the vestry and to me that we needed to shift toward being good neighbors in our community. So I developed a three-fold plan:

*Prevent people from falling through the cracks, starting with kids.* We began a ministry to a local school that specializes in helping kids who are at risk of dropping out. We sent parishioners in as mentors, teachers of English as a second language, etc.

*Help those who are falling through the cracks.* Although Galilee had for decades maintained a small food pantry in concert with the local social services department, we were only open one week a month. We felt we could do more for those who were making the choice between eating and filling up their car with gas so they could get to work. Two years ago we closed our food pantry and put our resources behind a neighboring Episcopal church that has a food pantry
open nearly every day of the year. Enthusiasm for the pantry has grown—we provide 20 volunteers and several thousand dollars of support each year.

*Help those who have fallen through the cracks.* In the 1970s Galilee was instrumental in forming a local agency designed to get homeless people off the streets, retrained for work, and into a living situation. Although we’ve never stopped supporting this organization, we have in the last few years increased our participation. We’ve also gotten involved in a separate organization designed for male teenagers who are on the edge of going to prison. We support them financially and our teens lead a summer camp there each year.

Every year we highlight these programs for our congregation and invite participation, so that they know we are being good neighbors and we can show them how to be part of good neighboring. Most of our participants are retirees, but we have seen a small shift in the last two years of younger people getting involved as we share about these opportunities.

**IX. Conclusion**

Although in my project proposal I declared my intent to measure the success of this catechetical endeavor, I have realized that it is not yet feasible to complete a full-blown evaluative process: The primary scope of the project has been on the adolescent aspect of formation and most of the children in my parish who have experienced our catechetical program are still in the adolescent phase. However, I have touched throughout this paper on both moments of success and glimmers of progress. A full evaluation is future endeavor when the adolescents have continued on to adulthood. Below I will limn several observations in closing that may serve as transferable principles for parishes of any size.

Lesslie Newbigin observed in 1989 that we live in a culture where the majority of the population no longer knows the Christian story (both as told in the Scriptures and also as lived
in the community of the faithful), and people cannot live into the story if they do not know the story. Catechesis is delivering the content of faith to people, and shaping their lives with it. The challenge of delivering meaningful and effective catechesis is not new but dates back to the first centuries of the faith. Origen preached with ire on the immature faith of his parishioners resulting from poor formation: “Why do I reproach you…? Why do I complain about your absences? Even when you are present and in Church, you don’t pay attention, but waste your time….” Yet the challenge of effective formation is not insurmountable. This project has described my efforts, spurred on through my studies at Sewanee, to create effective multi-generational catechesis in a parish setting. Almost everything I’ve described at Galilee is the result of the reading and coursework in the D.Min. program, and there are many positives to report.

Clergy in smaller parishes may feel that successful catechesis requires too much work, or that they don’t have the financial or staffing resources to pull it off. While money and staffing help, they are secondary to vision. Congregations respond to clear direction (even if it’s the wrong direction), but will also stagnate if the leader offers no guidance. As a case in point, in my previous parish of 200 ASA I used pre-packaged VBS programs and Sunday School materials with great success, with 100 parishioners attending Lent programs, Alpha courses, etc. How? I repeatedly cast the vision, in preaching and teaching, that formation matters. Here are three principles that any Episcopal parish can embrace when considering catechesis.


First, vision matters more than the catechetical materials. My observation is that catechesis routinely fails when clergy “shoot from the hip” and select catechetical materials without an encompassing vision. When the rector selects a VBS curriculum from this company, a Sunday School curriculum from that company, a book study over here and a speaker series over there—this is a recipe for incoherence, and the congregation will know it. While I’ve found Alpha helpful in forming faith in parishioners, I use it because it fits with the larger vision: We encourage people in our newcomer classes to take Alpha as a way of integrating into the parish, and at the end of Alpha we encourage them into ministry. It is a stepping-stone on the journey.

Second, the environment of the parish matters. I spent space above detailing how we’ve attempted to “grow young” because those efforts have created an environment of intentionality. Catechesis of children is always less successful without corresponding catechesis of adults. This is why bringing the generations together in ministry is so critical. As they minister together, they also catechize each other.

Third, clergy need broad support to help the parish adopt the vision. I have used vestry retreats, staff meetings, Sunday sermons and meetings with parents to further the vision—but it is the vestry, in the end, who have been most supportive throughout my decade at Galilee. As Jesus worked with his 12, I work with my 12—and as they catch the vision they share it with others. Vestry members are usually involved in other areas of the parish life, so their support is critical not only organizationally, but also organically.

Despite our progress, work at Galilee has only just begun. We are entering a new era of sensitivity to learning disabilities, including children who are on the autism spectrum. At Galilee we have 9 children with a variety of needs, from autism to severe developmental concerns. We have 4 active adults with Down Syndrome. To what degree is catechesis
possible, and how might that look? We are early in the process, but Galilee recently retained a specialist in spectrum disorders to help us assess how we can better serve families with children on the spectrum.\footnote{The early suggestion is to create a space within the main classrooms where that child has a folder with a plan for what he/she is to do each Sunday.} There will no doubt be increasing literature on this topic in the coming years. Additionally, the confirmation process will continue to require modifications, and I have much work to do to make the middle school and high school programs congruent with the vision of our K-5 age groups; further, we remain stymied by the difficulty of starting new long-term small groups and we have more work to do to create cross-generational mentoring. However, I am encouraged by how far we’ve come and I look forward to the challenges of the next few years as we push forward to craft excellent catechesis at Galilee Church.

As a final note, and as a learning by-product of this project, I acknowledge that I have not yet fully explored all the ways in which the theological principles I discussed in Part II might blossom into reality at Galilee for adults. If we want our formation of children to be intentional, multisensory, constant, intergenerational and leave a lasting impression—we should ask no less of our adult formation.

I believe that further exploration of the Catechumenate will prove fruitful for adult formation at Galilee, because so much of the Catechumenate is intentional, multisensory, and leaves a lasting impression. Three examples will illustrate: 1. Although the Ephephtha Rite is purposed for catechumens prior to baptism, I wonder whether it might prove useful as part of the preparatory process for adult confirmands, or those renewing their faith before the bishop? 2. Should we perhaps make better use of the ocean, two blocks from the parish, for immersion baptisms? As Harmless comments, “[Baptism] is to resemble what it in fact is: a bath, a plunge
into enough water that one can taste and feel water’s death-dealing and life-giving power.”

3. How can we involve adult parishioners in the formation journey of new adult believers, not just as bible-study leaders, Alpha leaders, etc., but also travelling alongside the new believers liturgically? The rites of the Catechumenate may prove helpful here, in how they bring more mature adults alongside less mature adults. Aidan Kavanagh comments, “One learns how to fast, pray, repent, celebrate, and serve the good of one’s neighbors less by being lectured on these matters than by close association with people who do these things with regular ease and flair.” Put differently, there is a degree to which the faith is caught, not taught.

Future growth of Galilee’s adult formation will also flow from the Book of Common Prayer. As I listened to liturgical professors at Sewanee during my D.Min. studies, a common refrain was “we have not yet lived into the fullness of the 1979 BCP.” It’s true that opportunities remain to teach parishioners to pray with the Daily Office, use the lectionary, and discover the prayers for all occasions in the back of the book. I plan to develop such a class for the coming year as a follow-up to Alpha.

Finally, there also remains a distance to travel in teaching the meaning of baptism and its covenant promises, and not just teach them, but live them liturgically. William Willimon comments, “A few years ago… I noted our almost studied efforts to trivialize baptism. Here is power, in water and the word. But what we have up in the chancel is triviality, an affair of cooing babies, grinning parents, droplets from rosebuds, rosy-faced preachers pecking the little darling on the cheek rather than slapping the defiant pagan on the rear.” While adult baptism is the norm, infant baptism is normal, and it can trivialize formation right at the beginning of

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109 Harmless, 8
the journey. Although I spend significant time working with parents when baptizing their infants, I suspect that (again) the catechumenate may prove a helpful addition by bringing mature parishioners alongside these young parents, both in formation and in the journey of catechesis.
Appendix A: Example of weekly email from Children’s Ministry Director

Each week we send emails and texts to parents of children in our Sunday school programs. We presently communicate with parishioners in 8 different ways throughout the month. We find that this email is effective in getting kids/parents to be in church on Sunday. Although I don’t write the emails, they are part of the plan I initiated a couple of years ago. The email serves two purposes: 1. To inform parents. 2. To excite the children.

Hello Team!

Please note that our Cherub Choir (grades k-2) will sing at the 9am service tomorrow morning.

Children performing in the choir need to arrive by 8:45am so they can have time to get robed and warm up their voices! If you have a child interested in joining the choir (especially after they see them sing tomorrow) please find me after the service and I will be happy to get them signed up. Choirs rehearse each Sunday during the 9:00am service, returning in time for Holy Communion with their families. Both Cherub and Carol (grades 3-5) sing for the congregation approximately once a month throughout the year. They also participate in extra choral events like our Christmas Lesson & Carols concert each December. Children are welcome to join any time throughout the year. We know how some children can take longer to warm up to new things.

We will continue our learning about what it means to be a good steward during our Children’s Program. Last Sunday, children were given 100 skittles and gave 10 back to help ‘build’ something to spread God’s love. Some children opted to give even more of their skittles back! When they come upstairs tomorrow they will get to see what was built from their generous giving.

Also make sure you star next Sunday on your calendars! We will have our annual ‘Shine a Light for Jesus’ pumpkin carving activity. Our high school Student Leaders will be upstairs assisting so children will be divided into small groups to carve pumpkins with our youth friends.

Enjoy the rest of this rainy fall Saturday & I look forward to seeing you all in the morning!

Lillie
Appendix B: Email sent to Sunday school teachers each Saturday

This is a cover letter, sent weekly to all teachers and assistants to prep them for their Sunday lesson. My Children’s Ministry Director breaks down the lessons into two levels (K-2, 3-5) which allows us to deliver a basic lesson for the younger children and a more complex lesson for the older kids.

Happy rainy fall day!

Tomorrow our lesson will be on Stewardship Part 2. Yes...I glue gunned a ginormous skittle church this week in our den with Rick loudly exclaiming what in the world was I doing?! I mean who doesn't want to construct a church out of skittles?!! It will be on display in the Holy Space. When you take your class to the Holy Space make sure to remind them that they helped build the church with the giving back of their skittles.

We are also starting something tomorrow that I have brainstormed about for some time! The children will begin making their own 'Creeds & Prayers' book to take home towards the end of the year. This is something they will work on throughout the year. Each child will get their own 'book' (Dollar Tree photo albums). The focus of these books is when we are good stewards we share our beliefs through actions with others to spread God's love. In order to do this we have to have a clear understanding of what our beliefs are.

Grades K-2 will discuss what the word creed means and make a title page, make their first page which has the words 'I believe...', make their second page which is the definition of the creed, and then their third page which says 'The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart. Love other people as yourself.' which is from their story about creeds they will hear tomorrow. Snack will be graham crackers that have the words 'believe' and 'creed' written on them in icing.

Grades 3-5th will discuss what the words creed means and make a title page, make their first page which has the words 'I believe...', make their second page which has a collage of many names for Jesus (they will have previously brainstormed names for Jesus), third page is the definition of a creed, and the fourth page is the entire Apostles Creed. The Apostles Creed is the first creed they are going to focus on learning. They will find it in the Book of Common Prayer (page 96:) and read it together as a class. For the next month each Sunday they will spend about 15 minutes doing some type of Apostles Creed activity to help learn it from memory and to start grasping what it means when they say it. 5th grade will most likely move along at a faster pace than 3rd and 4th grade. Since the Creed books will stay at Galilee there is an additional handout with the Apostles Creed for them to take home to practice throughout the week. For snack each student will get a ziploc bag of graham crackers with a mixed up ‘I
believe’ statement from the Apostles Creed. Either 'I believe in God, the Father almighty.' 'I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.' 'I believe in the Holy Spirit.'

Once they put them in order they may eat them!

Next Sunday is our annual 'Shine the light of Jesus' pumpkin carving activity. Great news ~ many of our Student Leaders that are currently in confirmation will be upstairs helping for this activity! My goal is to divide one to two teens with about 3 - 5 children and have them carve pumpkins together in groups. This is one of my favorite lessons!

Thank you for being so agreeable with all the adjusting, changing, and energized children each week. You are making SUCH a difference in little lives!!

See you in the morning,

Lillie
Appendix C: Example of a K-2, 3-5 Lessons from Stewardship Sunday

The Lesson is designed to be haptic (involving touch) and visual. It also involves (as with Godly Play) use of a Holy Place. The teachers are encouraged to read through the lesson and use their own words. But little is left to chance, and we offer a complete guide for the entire lesson. I include the 3-5 lesson also, because it goes to a slightly higher level, including work on the Creed.

K-2nd grade
October 21, 2018
Stewardship Part 2
Luke 12:48

“To whom much has been given, from them much will be expected.” Luke 12:48

Introduction

Say: “Good morning. Welcome! My name is ______________ and we are going to learn about the meaning of the words ‘to whom much is given, much is expected.’

Icebreaker: Things I Am Good At
Have children look through the bin of different skills and add things to the board that they think they are really good at. Do this for about 5 minutes.

Say: “Wow! Let’s all stop for a minute and look at all things each of us can do really well. God gave each of us special gifts. It is important for us to remember to share our gifts with others!”

Hold up the picture of skittles.

Say: “Last Sunday we did an activity with skittles. Is there anyone who can explain to our friends that were not here last Sunday what we did with the skittles?” Let some children explain the best they can.

Ask: “How many skittles did we start off with in our bags? 100

How many skittles did we tithe or give back to the church? 10

Did we still have skittles left over after we gave some away Yes - still had a lot!
Could we have given away MORE than 10 skittles?  *Yes and some of us did because we were excited to see what might be built.*

What happens when we give something to the church like skittles, or money, or even our time, or share our gifts?  What does the church do with it?  *The church uses it to build something to help spread God’s love to others.*

“Does God love you more if you give more to the church?”  *No God does not love people who give more than people who give less.  God loves ALL of us equally but wants us to be cheerful happy givers to help spread His love to others.*

All the skittles you gave to the church last week have been used to build something that can help spread God’s love to others in the community.  Let’s go look at our Holy Space to see what was built.”

**Holy Space**

“Wow who can tell what our skittles built?  Our skittles built the church!  That is because when we give our time, talent, or treasure to the church we help to build and spread God’s love to everyone.  Look right next to our church we have a sign that explains how we can be God’s steward.  It says ‘Serve God.  Serve Others.  I Am God’s Steward.  Time. Talent. Treasure.’  Can anyone see what it says on the hands?  There is a heart on each hand that says ‘love’ because when we share our time, talents, and treasures with the church and others we are helping to spread God’s love.”

“Who remembers why our Holy Space tablecloth is green?  We also have a green plant.  Why do we have a green tablecloth and green plant?”  *Bc it’s Ordinary Time on the church calendar and that color on the calendar is green.*

“What does the color green mean when we are at church?  Look at our stuffie of Jesus.  The color green has something to do with Him.”  *The color green symbolizes growing with Jesus*

“Did anyone pay attention to Father Andy this morning?  Did anyone notice what color he had around his neck?”  *Green –*

“Father Andy had on green because that is the color of Ordinary Time.  The green he was wearing around his neck is called a stole or a vestment.  You will start to notice as we change seasons in the church calendar, the color of Father Andy’s vestments will change as well.”

“Does anyone know what we call Father Andy, Father Patrick, Father Nigel, and Reverend Kate?  We call them the clergy.  If you look at our Holy Space you can see that we have our clergy right under our Galilee Church picture that says ‘All Are Welcome Here’ because Jesus taught us to love others no matter if they are different or the same as us.”

**Walk back to the room.**

Ask:  “Who can tell me what does God want us to do with our talents and gifts?”  *Share them with others.*
Say: “The title of our book is called ‘Sharing God’s Love: A Jesus Creed. Before I start does anyone know what a creed is? That might be a word not everyone has heard before. If you go to children’s chapel we do say a creed every time to start. Does anyone know or want to take a guess about what the word creed means?”

“The word creed means the words ‘I believe’. It is a way to say you have faith in the church with one word. So when you hear the word creed think to yourself ‘I believe’.

Read Sharing God’s Love: A Jesus Creed Lesson
Ask: “Who can tell me what was the creed the children learned in our book?” The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart. Love other people as yourself.
Say: “Jesus said that for us to love others and to love God is the most important commandment. As Christians we believe that we SHOULD love God and love other people. This is our creed as Christians.”
Say: “We say two big creeds every Sunday in church. Does anyone know what they are called?”
“The two big creeds are the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed. We will learn more about them on another Sunday. Today we are going to focus on our Jesus Creed.”

Activity Part 1
Hold up example of Creed Book.
Say: “Today you are each going to make your own creed book. We will work on filling our creed book so you will know some creeds or beliefs that you can take with you to remember at the end of the year.”

“Today we are going to decorate our covers. Each of you will get a slip of paper that already has the word ‘My Creeds’ on it. You will color in these letters to decorate it. Then you may pick from our bright colored paper pile to tape on your title ‘My Creeds’. Once that is taped on you can use stickers and markers to decorate your title page. Make sure you add your name. Once you have finished decorating the title page you will slide under the plastic on the cover. You might need help with that part. Let’s make our title pages first. Any questions?”

Work on title pages.

Activity Part 2
Say: “The first page of book is going to have two words on it. Does anyone know what these two words say? I believe. Why would want the words ‘I believe’ to be at the front of our Creeds book?” Because creeds are our beliefs ~ creeds are what we believe as Christians.
“I am coming around with ‘I believe’ pages for you to color and then add as your first page.”
Work on ‘I believe’ pages.

Activity Part 3
Say: “In the last part of our Creed Book today we are going to add in the Creed we learned from our story. We believe that...The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart. Love other people as yourself. I am coming around with your first creed page for you to decorate and then add to your book.”
Work on assembling books.

Snack.
Graham crackers that have the words ‘Creed’ or ‘I believe’ to eat :)

Each child must leave their Creed book HERE. Please hand them The Apostle Creed handout to take home if they want to practice.

3rd-5th grade
October 21, 2018
Stewardship Part 2
Luke 12:48

“To whom much has been given, from them much will be expected.”

Luke 12:48

Introduction
Say: “Good morning. Welcome! My name is ______________ and we are going to learn about what the words ‘to much is given, much is expected’ mean.”

Icebreaker: Things I Am Good At
Have children fill in the ‘Whose Has Gifts?’ sheet (where they go around and find a person for each choice. Allow about 5 minutes for this.

Say: “God gave each of us special gifts. It is important for us to remember to share our gifts with others!”

Hold up the picture of skittles.

Say: “Last Sunday we did an activity with skittles. Is there anyone who can explain to our friends that were not here last Sunday what we did with the skittles?” Let some children explain the best they can.

Ask: “How many skittles did we start off with in our bags? 100

How many skittles did we tithe or give back to the church? 10

Did we still have skittles left over after we gave some away Yes - still had a lot!

Could we have given away MORE than 10 skittles? Yes and some of us did because we were excited to see what might be built.

What happens when we give something to the church like skittles, or money, or even our time, or share our gifts? What does the church do with it? The church uses it to build something to help spread God’s love to others.

“Does God love you more if you give more to the church?” No God does not love people who give more than people who give less. God loves ALL of us equally but wants us to be cheerful happy givers to help spread His love to others.
All the skittles you gave to the church last week have been used to build something that can help spread God’s love to others in the community. Let’s go look at our Holy Space to see what was built.”

Walk outside to the Holy Space.

**Holy Space**

“Wow who can tell what our skittles built? Our skittles built the church! That is because when we give our time, talent, or treasure to the church we help to build and spread God’s love to everyone. Look right next to our church we have a sign that explains how we can be God’s steward. It says ‘Serve God. Serve Others. I Am God’s Steward. Time. Talent. Treasure.’ Can anyone see what it says on the hands? There is a heart on each hand that says ‘love’ because when we share our time, talents, and treasures with the church and others we are helping to spread God’s love.”

“Who remembers why our Holy Space tablecloth is green? We also have a green plant. Why do we have a green tablecloth and green plant?” *Bc it’s Ordinary Time on the church calendar and that color on the calendar is green.*

“What does the number 22 mean on top of the little flame fire?” *We are in the 22nd week after Pentecost. 22 weeks is almost 6 months so the season of Ordinary Time will be coming to an end soon for this year.*

“What does the color green mean when we are at church? Look at our stuffie of Jesus. The color green has something to do with Him.” *The color green symbolizes growing with Jesus*

“Did anyone pay attention to Father Andy this morning? Did anyone notice what color he had around his neck?” *Green –*

“Father Andy had on green because that is the color of Ordinary Time. The green he was wearing around his neck is called a stole or a vestment. You will start to notice as we change seasons in the church calendar, the color of Father Andy’s vestments will change as well.”

“Does anyone know what we call Father Andy, Father Patrick, Father Nigel, and Reverend Kate? We call them the clergy. If you look at our Holy Space you can see that we have our clergy right under our Galilee Church picture that says ‘All Are Welcome Here’ because Jesus taught us to love others no matter if they are different or the same as us.”

*Walk back to the room.*

**Lesson:**

**Say:** “Today we are going to talk about a word we hear in church. We are going to talk about the word ‘creed’. Does anyone know or want to take a guess about what the word creed means?”

*Hold up the sign that says Creed (with the definition)*
“The word creed means the words ‘I believe’. It is a way to say you have faith in the church with one word. So when you hear the word creed think to yourself ‘I believe’. Who can tell me something that you believe in?”

Say: “As Christians we believe in God and His Son, our Savior. Who is that? Jesus. Who can tell me some other titles for Jesus? Have about three children share. We are going to break up into groups and try to brainstorm how many titles you can come up with for Jesus. You can use the Bible to help you. You will have about 7 minutes.”

Divide into groups. Pass out the Bibles, paper, and pencils.

“On your mark, get set, go! How many names can you think of for Jesus?”

Come back together as a group and discuss & write the brainstormed names for Jesus of banner paper. Here is a list to help :)  

Christ; Lord; Savior; Messiah; Prince of Peace; Son of God; Emmanuel; Lamb of God; Son of Man, Bridegroom, Good Shepherd, Son of Mary, King of kings; Cornerstone; Mighty God; Lion of Judah; Root of David; King of Israel; I Am; the Word; the Way, Truth, and Life; Alpha & Omega; Teacher; Risen One

Say: “We say two big creeds every Sunday in church. Does anyone know what they are called?”

“The two big creeds are the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed. Both of these creeds are very old. Both of these creeds are ways we can say what we believe aloud in our Christian community. We say the Apostles Creed during worship to show our faith in the Holy Trinity. The three parts of the Trinity are God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. We also say the Apostles Creed during the rite of Baptism. This a creed from the early Roman Church, all the way back to the 2nd century. The other creed we say before Communion. This is the Nicene Creed which dates back to the 4th century.”

“This year we are going to work on memorizing BOTH of these creeds. Today we are going to work on the Apostles Creed.”

“Does anyone know where we can find the Apostles Creed? Is it in the Bible? No.”

“The Apostles Creed is found in the Book of Common Prayer. That is one thing really special about being Episcopalian. In the Episcopal Church we have the Book of Common Prayer. In this book you can find our liturgies, prayers, creeds, and many other parts of worship that we have been saying together as a church since the year 1549.”

“I am going to pass out a prayer book to each of you now and I want you to turn to page 96 so we can read the Apostles Creed together. While you turn to page 96 I am going to put up our big chart of the Apostles Creed.”
Once everyone has found page 96 read aloud the Apostles Creed altogether. Most of the children should be familiar with it.

The Apostles' Creed
I believe in God, the Father almighty,
    creator of heaven and earth;
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
    He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
    and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
    was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
    and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
    the holy catholic Church,
    the communion of saints,
    the forgiveness of sins
    the resurrection of the body,
    and the life everlasting. Amen.

Take out the wikki sticks.

Ask: “Who can tell me what the word creed means? What was the meaning of the Latin word? I Believe Nice job! You may come and underline with a wikki stick the three times we see the words ‘I believe’ in the Apostles Creed.”

“I believe in God, the Father almighty, I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. I believe in the Holy Spirit. The Apostles Creed is when we share aloud as a Christian community that these are our beliefs.”

Note: Sometimes children have questions why we say we believe in the ‘holy catholic apostolic church’ when we are not Catholic. Explain that the word ‘catholic’ means ‘universal’ and until the Reformation in the 1500’s, the Roman Catholic church was the ONLY Christian church in western Europe (America wasn’t a country yet). In the Apostles Creed ‘catholic’ is lowercase to show that it means the word ‘universal’.

Activity Part 1
Hold up an example of the My Creeds & Prayers Book.

Say: “Today you are each going to make your own creed and prayer book. We will work on filling this book so you will know some creeds and prayers that you can take with you to remember at the end of the year.”
“We are going to begin by decorating our covers. Each of you will get a slip of paper that already has the word ‘My Creeds & Prayers’ on it. You will color in these letters to decorate it. Then you may pick from our bright colored paper pile to tape on your title ‘My Creeds & Prayers’. Once that is taped on you can use stickers and markers to decorate your title page. Make sure you add your name. Once you have finished decorating the title page you will slide under the plastic on the cover. Any questions?”

Say: “The first page of book is going to have two words on it. Does anyone know what these two words say? *I believe*. Why would want the words ‘I believe’ to be at the front of our Creeds and Prayers book?” *Because creeds are our beliefs ~ creeds are what we believe as Christians.*

Say: “The 2nd page is a list of many of the names for Jesus. These are always good to know so this will be a great page for you to try to memorize.”

Say: “The third page is the definition of a creed. We will be learning creeds first to fill in our book.”

Say: “The fourth page is the ENTIRE Apostles Creed.”

“I am coming around with your pages for you to color and add to your book. Don’t forget to write your names on the cover.”

Snack.

*Each student will get a ziploc bag of graham crackers with a mixed up ‘I believe’ statement from the Apostles Creed.*

*I believe in God, the Father almighty.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit.*

*Once they put them in order they may eat them :)*

Each child must leave their Creed book HERE. Please hand them The Apostle Creed handout to take home if they want to practice.
Appendix D: The Bread and the Wine: Understanding Holy Communion

Although baptism brings full inclusion into the body of Christ, Episcopalians generally expect “First Communion” classes at some point during the elementary years. Recognizing that many parents choose not to allow their children to receive Holy Communion until their later elementary years, we have created a class for “understanding Holy Communion” at which all elementary age children are invited to participate. We encourage children to attend regardless of whether they have not yet received Holy Communion, or whether they’re already participating. (Note: We already teach about Holy Communion in age-appropriate ways in our Sunday School classes; so this class would not be the first exposure to teaching on Holy Communion for any of the children who attend Sunday School.)

From experience, we suggest the age of 8 as a good starting point for the class, since the images and theology are too advanced for younger children. For example, I use only a few of the 10+ Biblical images for baptism (cleansing, new birth, freedom and adoption) and, even then, I don’t actually name all four images with those words. The course includes five classes:

1. God’s Family
   Helping the children understand that we have two families: The family into which we’re born, and God’s family. One is entered naturally, the other supernaturally.

2. Sacraments
   Two goals to this lesson: a) Introduce word sacrament and a basic definition: A visible sign of something invisible. b) Introduce the seven sacraments with basic explanations.

3. The Red Sea: Retell the story of how God rescues the Children of Israel

4. Baptism: How we enter into God’s Family

5. Holy Communion: How we grow into the Family

These five classes culminate in “Celebration Sunday,” usually held on Mother’s Day, subtly shifting the focus from a Hallmark holiday to a sacred celebration. On that Sunday I alter the assigned lections to Exodus 12, Matthew 26.26ff, 1 Corinthians 11.23ff. I also offer a brief (4
minute) adult reflection on Holy Communion. Then I ask the children to stand up front along
the chancel steps, and we quiz them on what they’ve learned. Every child has an opportunity
to answer the questions. After the children have successfully answered all the questions, recited
their memory verses, etc. I anoint them with holy oil, and remind them that they are the aroma
of Christ in the world. (An explanation of anointing is included in this catechesis.)

On that day the children are the first from the congregation to receive Eucharist, with their
families and (if possible) their godparents. After the service ends we have cake and gifts for
them in the parish hall, to emphasize the communal importance of this sacrament in their lives.
I regard this class as one of several opportunities (along with Vacation Bible School, regular
Sunday School, Confirmation Class, mission trips, small groups) to catechize not only the
children but also their parents.

For Bible readings we assign *The Action Bible*. This is the Scripture narrative in comic book
form, from Genesis to Revelation. Children and teens find it approachable and memorable.
One video is employed to reinforce the primary salvation stories, and some of the stories are
acted out in class.

Four final notes: 1. Rubrics for the teachers are indicated in red. These rubrics are only in the
teacher’s copy of the class book. Each week the teacher walks the children through the
material, but will add in the rubrical narrative as appropriate. 2. I have not used gender-neutral
language for God in this project. The congregation I serve is traditional and conservative. 3. I
require parents to attend, in part because they will then know what they need to reinforce at
home—but also because I find that so many parents are Biblically illiterate and this is an opportunity for me to disciple them.
The Bread and the Wine

Learning more about Holy Communion

Name_________________________
Dear ________________,

This book will help you understand the meaning of Holy Communion.

Please take it home and study it with your parents after each class. If you have any questions, ask your Mom or Dad, or bring your questions to the next class.

For this class you’ll need a copy of *The Action Bible*. If you don’t own one already, they can be purchased through the Women of Galilee gift shop, or on Amazon.com

I pray that *every* time you receive Holy Communion you will rediscover that God loves you and stays with you as you leave the church building.

In Christ,

Fr. Buchanan+
Class Schedule

We will have five classes together before our Celebration Sunday.

God’s Family

Sacraments

The Red Sea—God saves the Children of Israel

Baptism: My entrance into God’s Family

Holy Communion: Growing in Faith
Lesson 1

God's Family

Your Family

Every family is different: Some have two parents, some have one. Sometimes there is just one child, sometimes there are many. But everyone is born into a family.

Can you share about your family? How many brothers or sisters do you have? Do you ever fight with your brothers and sisters?

When we do things to make each other angry, are we still a family? Of course we are!

And when we hurt our parents, brothers or sisters, do they still love us? Yes!

God’s Family

Every Christian belongs to another very big family: God’s family. We often call this family “the Church.” It includes everyone who believes in Jesus.
God’s family is like your family:

*God shows us how to live*

*God loves us when we’re good*

*God loves us when we’re bad*

Your family does all those things too—they show you how to live, love you when you’re good, and when you’re not so good.

Just as your parents are the head of your family—God is the head of His family.

Although we can’t see God, we know some things about Him: God is three Persons, but just one God. Your teacher will share about how we can understand how God is three and one at the same time.

**God the Father (Genesis 1)**

We see the Father when the world was made. The Father welcomes into the family anyone who trusts His Son, Jesus.

**God the Son (Matthew 3)**

We see the Son in Jesus. Even when we do things that are wrong, we know God forgives us through Jesus.
**God the Holy Spirit (Acts 2)**

We experience the Holy Spirit today; the Holy Spirit is like the wind: We can’t see the wind, but we know it’s there (Acts 2.1-4). The Holy Spirit helps us to know God.

*The Prayer of God’s Family*

Jesus gave his friends a prayer to pray. We often call it “The Lord’s Prayer”:

*Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory. Forever and ever, Amen.*
Homework for next week

1. In your *Action Bible*, look up and read these three bible passages with your parents. Look for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Where or how do you see them? What makes them different? Be ready to share next week.

   Genesis 1.1-31

   Matthew 3.13-17

   Acts 2.1-4

2. Memorize the Lord’s Prayer

3. Memorize John 3.16: *God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him will not die but will live forever.*
Lesson 2

Sacraments

In your family, you show your love for each other in many ways: Birthday parties, Christmas presents, hugs and kisses, and so on. What are some of your favorite gifts you’ve received? You knew you were loved, didn’t you?

This happens in God’s family. God’s greatest way of showing us love is through his Son Jesus.

But when Jesus left the earth to go to heaven, he also left us gifts—signs of his love. We call them Sacraments. We’re giving you a “sacrament wheel” for this class that you can take home. It will help you learn about these seven gifts.

Teacher distributes the sacrament wheels (available from Oriental Traders). The wheel spins around and reveals each of the sacraments and a corresponding definition.

What is a Sacrament?
A sacrament is a visible sign of God’s invisible love

Visible—means something you can see, hear or feel

Invisible—means something you can’t see, hear or feel

Tell me some things that are visible around us… Tell me some things that are invisible.

THERE ARE SEVEN SACRAMENTS:

Baptism, Holy Communion, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Marriage, Holy Orders, Holy Unction

Each sacrament has a part you can see (the visible part) and a part you can’t see (the invisible part).

BAPTISM
The visible part: You see the **water** and hear the **words:** *I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

The Invisible part: 1. Baptism brings us into God’s family (just like adoption); 2. Baptism gives us a place in heaven; 3. Baptism promises us that God forgives our sins (just like water cleans us up, baptism cleans us up from our wrong doings).

How many of you remember your baptism? If you were baptized as a baby, then you don’t remember. Today we’ve placed blessed water in the font, which is where babies are baptized. *Invite the children to the font and have them put some on their foreheads to remember their baptism.*

*Tell the children that we’ll talk more about baptism in a few weeks.*

HOLY COMMUNION
The visible part: Bread and Wine and the words: “This is my body” and “This is my blood”

The invisible part:
We remember Jesus’ death
We receive Jesus into our lives

CONFIRMATION

The visible part: Bishop lays hands on your head

The invisible part: God fills you with the Holy Spirit.
MARRIAGE

The visible part: Exchange of rings and promises

The invisible part: Two people become One

RECONCILIATION

The visible part: Your words where you admit what you did wrong and the words spoken by priest when he tells you you’re forgiven.

The invisible part: You’re really forgiven.

HOLY ORDERS
Let me show you another way to think about sacraments. (Teacher brings a wrapped present to the class and holds it up: *What is this?*) Yes, it’s a birthday or Christmas present. “What if
you could open this present now instead of waiting for your birthday or Christmas Day? It would be like experiencing your birthday or Christmas… before it actually happens. That’s what receiving a sacrament is… God has a lot of good things for you in the future—but with a sacrament you receive some of them now.” (Let the children open the present and find something for everyone (e.g. Skittles or M&Ms))

Homework for next week:

1. Memorize the names of the seven sacraments. Learn what the invisible/visible parts are for Baptism, Holy Communion and Marriage.

2. Prepare for next week by watching Dreamwork’s *Prince of Egypt*. Available on Netflix, Amazon Prime—or come to our pizza part on Friday night and watch it there with friends!

3. With your parents, read Exodus 1-12 in your *Action Bible*. 
Lesson 3

The Red Sea

Knowing the story of Moses, and how he left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea with the children of Israel, helps us understand two of the sacraments: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion.

How do you use water? Washing up for dinner, drinking when you’re thirsty. It cleans you up, and keeps you alive. God uses water in the bible for those same two things: to clean people up on the inside, and keep them alive.

By now you’ve read through the Bible story of Moses, and you’ve seen Prince of Egypt. Let’s remember the story of Moses… (teacher now leads them through the story with the following questions):

Were the Children of Israel happy as Pharaoh’s slaves?

Moses was born… and then what happened?

Who was his actual family?

Why did he have to leave Egypt?

Where did he go after that?
What happened to him while feeding his sheep one day?

What did God ask Moses to do?

When Moses went to Pharaoh and said “Let my people go!” did Pharaoh say yes or no?

What did God do after Pharaoh said no?

Do you remember the ten plagues?

What was the tenth plague? How did God say that the people could save their sons?

After the tenth plague, Pharaoh told them to leave Egypt. They did, but they ran into an obstacle. The Red Sea.

Then Pharaoh changed his mind and went after them with chariots. Caught between the Red Sea and Pharaoh’s army, what did God tell Moses to do?

*Have the parents line up two by two down the center nave aisle. The parents are The Red Sea.*
Choose half the children to be “the Children of Israel” and the other half to be Pharaoh’s chariots. Line them up at the chancel steps, Children of Israel and then Pharaoh’s chariots.

First, send the Children of Israel into the Red Sea. The parents will step apart and let them pass through, all the way to the other side. Once the Children of Israel are all the way through, send Pharaoh’s chariots in. When the last chariot has entered, have the “waters” close in on them.

Gather the children around the font. Pour water into it.

Ask the children about the uses for water: Cleansing, sustaining life.

The water of baptism is like the water of the Red Sea. On this side of the Red Sea, were the people of Israel free or slaves? What were they on the other side?

It’s the same with baptism. On this side of the font, we can’t be sure that God has forgiven us for the things we do wrong. But on the other side, when we’ve gone through the water of baptism, we are sure. We’ll look more at baptism next week.

Homework for next week:

With your parents, read Matthew 28 in your Action Bible. Fill out the information on the Day of your Baptism for next week’s lesson. What does it have to do with baptism?
Lesson Four

Baptism

Before you were born, you began to grow inside your mom. You mom and dad knew you were growing inside, but they didn’t know what you looked like until the day you arrived.

*On the day you were born,* you belonged to your family. From that day on, people could see you, touch you, talk to you, smile at you, listen to you cry, feed you, change your diapers, and teach you how to live.

*On the day you were baptized,* you belonged to God’s family. You were welcomed into the church and your parents and godparents promised to teach you how to live in God’s family and help you to live the Christian life.

Remember what this is called? A font… whether we baptize a baby or adult, we put water into it.

When you were baptized, your parents (and godparents, if you had them) promised certain things…

a) That they would bring you to church, Sunday school, first communion class.

b) That they would show you how a Christian lives.

c) That they would pray for you.
Let’s look at what happened on the day of your baptism…

THE DAY OF MY BAPTISM

I was baptized on ________________________

I was baptized at _________________________

In this town ____________________________

I was baptized by the Reverend _____________

My godparents are _________________________

(If you don’t know these answers, ask your mom or dad)

When I was baptized, the minister said:

______________________________, I baptize you

    In the name of the Father,

    And of the Son,

    And of the Holy Spirit.
At that moment, I became a member of God’s family, and I received three things from God:

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

(If you aren’t sure of the three answers, look back at last week’s lesson about the “invisible” things that happen when you’re baptized.)

When you were baptized, the priest also put oil on your head. In the Bible, when someone gets oil put on them it means that they’re a different person—they’ve become royalty in God’s eyes.

Have any of you seen the Queen of England? Why do people want to be near her, and see her? Because she’s the queen and people think she’s special. When we put oil on your head at your baptism we were telling the world that you are special to God. Oil says that you’re a prince or a princess, even a minister.

Come up to the font and let’s put some oil on your head now. (Scented oil should be used.) This is the same oil that was put on your head when you were baptized.
Do you smell anything? Does the oil smell good? There’s a reason for that smell. It’s a reminder that when people look at us, when they’re around us, they should notice a difference because we belong to Jesus. We’ll put this oil on your head on First Communion Sunday to remind you that you’re special to God…. And also that you are different when you’re a Christian.

Memorize

*Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God.* 2 Corinthians 2.15

The oil reminds us that people should notice our faith, just like you notice the fragrance of the oil.

You’re learning a lot in this course on First Holy Communion—but there’s one very important thing to remember: *Jesus doesn’t need us to know a lot... so much as he wants us to know him a lot.* The bible verse below is telling us that knowing him is more important than knowing a lot about him.

Memorize

*And they were bringing children to Jesus... and He said, ‘Let the little children come to me, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you that whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child shall not enter it.’ And he took them into his arms and blessed them.* (Mark 10.13-16)
We’re now over halfway through the first communion class! By class four, here’s what you should be able to say out loud (without looking at your book):

**The Lord’s Prayer**

*Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory. Forever and ever, Amen.*

**John 3.16**

*God loved the world so much that he gave his only son, so that whoever believes in him will not die but will live forever.*

**The Sacraments**

*Baptism, Holy Communion, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Holy Matrimony, Holy Orders,*

*Holy Unction*

**Definition of a Sacrament**

*A visible sign of God’s invisible love.*

*2 Corinthians 2.15*
Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God.

Mark 10.13-16

And they were bringing children to Jesus, that he might touch them; and the disciples tried to keep the children away from Jesus, but when he saw this he was angry. He said, ‘Let the little children come to me, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you that whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child shall not enter it.’ And he took them into his arms and blessed them.

Lesson Five

Holy Communion

In our human families, we have special meals to celebrate and remember important things. For example: Thanksgiving dinner, birthday parties and weddings.

In God’s family, there are also special meals. Do you remember the 10 plagues God sent on Egypt? Does anyone remember what the 10th plague/judgment was called? Remember what happened? (Teacher should retell the story of the Passover if needed.)

PASSOVER
God freed the people of Israel from slavery and told them to remember that event by eating a Passover meal (Exodus 12.1-14). Every year for hundreds of years God’s people ate a Passover meal to remember what God did.

And many hundreds of years later, on the night before he died, Jesus gathered with his disciples and had a Passover meal. But he changed some parts of the meal.

He broke the bread and said: *This is my body, given for you.* Then he took the wine and said: *This is my blood, poured out so your sins can be forgiven.* Jesus was talking about what was going to happen the next day, when he died on the cross. His body was broken, and his blood was spilled on the cross.

So now, every Sunday in church, we remember Jesus’ death by having Holy Communion.
Each week the priest holds the bread and says the words Jesus said: *This is my body, given for you.* And then we say Jesus’ words over the wine: *This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

Jesus gave his body and blood on the cross so that we could get close to God. Every week, when we eat the bread and the wine, we remember what he did on the cross.

But Jesus didn’t just die. Who remembers what happened three days after he died? He was resurrected. What does that mean?

*Resurrection* means that someone who has died has come back to life. Do you know anyone who has died and come back to life? Of course not.

This is what happened to Jesus after he died on the cross. He came back to life: he was *resurrected.*

So the bread and the wine reminds us not only of his death, but also his coming back to life. Every week when we eat and drink we remember both his death and resurrection.

Here are three things that we do when we receive Holy Communion:

**Memorize:** *We remember Jesus’ death; receive his forgiveness; receive his life.*
**Getting ready to receive Holy Communion**

Every family meal has some preparation. Someone has to buy the food, cook the food; we wash our hands, we set the table, and someone has to say grace!

There is also preparation for God’s meal of Holy Communion.

We prepare…

a) Confession: Admit to God what we’ve done wrong in the last few days.

b) Receive forgiveness: Ask God’s to forgive us those things that we’ve done wrong.

c) Promise Jesus that we’ll do our best not to do those things again

**Growing in Faith**

How can you hear Jesus’ voice? As you keep reading your *Action Bible* you’ll learn more about Jesus. And when you pray, you’ll be able to listen better to what God is saying to you.

**Rehearsal**

If Celebration Sunday is the *first time* that you’re receiving communion, then today we want to give you the opportunity to practice before the real thing. Your teacher
will show you two different ways to receive the wine, and talk about how to hold your hands when the priest puts the bread there.
Final Review

Things to know for Celebration Sunday

The Lord’s Prayer

*Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory. Forever and ever, Amen.*

John 3.16

*God loved the world so much that he gave his only son, so that whoever believes in him will not die but will live forever.*

The Sacraments

*Baptism, Holy Communion, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Holy Matrimony, Holy Orders, Holy Unction*

Definition of a Sacrament

*A visible sign of an invisible grace.*

Know the visible and invisible parts of Baptism, Marriage and Holy Communion.
2 Corinthians 2.15

*Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God.*

Mark 10.13-16

*And they were bringing children to Jesus, that he might touch them; and the disciples tried to keep the children away from Jesus, but when he saw this he was angry. He said, ‘Let the little children come to me, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you that whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child shall not enter it.’ And he took them into his arms and blessed them.*

When we receive Holy Communion we: Remember Jesus’ death; receive his forgiveness; receive his life
Bibliography


*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*


