

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



I AM

A BAPTIZED CHRISTIAN

WHO WONDERS...

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

## Following The Way

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

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

As we meander through life's labyrinth, individually and in community, we gain insights and make connections between and across our experiences of faith in the church and in the world.

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



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

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

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## GUIDELINES FOR USING PART I AND PART II

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

**General guidelines** for individuals and groups:

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

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

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

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

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

# PART I: SIGNS & THRESHOLDS FOR INDIVIDUALS

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

## THRESHOLD I: CLAIMING

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

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

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

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

**Pedagogical Stage:** BLOOM's TAXONOMY: Remembering, Understanding

### SIGNS WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY (Formation)

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**I feel confident and competent in and am able to:**

#### Scripture

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

#### Episcopal Tradition

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

#### Theology

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

#### Representing Christ

- Wonder about the meaning of life.
- Recognize my gifts given to me by God.
- Question who I am.

- Desire a relationship with God.
- Understand prayer as a spiritual conversation.
- Seek others to share spiritual conversations.

## **SIGNS IN THE WORLD (Evangelization)**

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**I feel confident and competent in and am able to:**

### **Scripture**

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

### **Episcopal Tradition**

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

### **Theology**

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

### **Representing Christ**

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

## **THRESHOLD II: A STORY OF ENGAGING**

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

**Characteristics:** seeking, connecting, exploring

**Focus:** Energies primarily oriented to engaging in community

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

**Pedagogical Stage:** BLOOM’S TAXONOMY: Applying

## **SIGNS WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY (Formation)**

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**I feel confident and competent in and am able to:**

### **Scripture**

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

### **Episcopal Tradition**

- Appropriate scripture, tradition, and reason (with experience) to inform life and use as the basis of my theological reflection.
- Identify as an Episcopalian which includes familiarity with the Baptism, Eucharist, sacramental rites, creeds, and Book of Common Prayer (BCP).
- Understand Episcopal polity, its historic relationship with the Anglican Communion and the relation of parish, diocesan, provincial and church-wide structures.

- Understand the nature of ministry and honor different roles within the whole Body of Christ and recognize connections between church history, liturgy, ethics and social action.
- Commit to a discipline of corporate and individual prayer and worship.
- Understand the history and practice of Episcopal worship.

#### **Theology**

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

#### **Representing Christ**

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

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### **SIGNS IN THE WORLD (Evangelization)**

#### **I feel confident and competent in and am able to:**

##### **Scripture**

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

##### **Episcopal Tradition**

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

##### **Theology**

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

##### **Representing Christ**

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

## THRESHOLD III: A STORY OF SUSTAINING

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

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

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

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

**Pedagogical Stage:** BLOOM’S TAXONOMY: Analyzing

### SIGNS WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY (Formation)

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I feel confident and competent in and am able to:

#### Scripture

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

#### Episcopal Tradition

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

#### Theology

- Theologically reflect upon the structure/systems that limit our embrace of our Belovedness in God.
- Adapt my actions to honor difference (diversity) with and among cultural and religious groups.
- Articulate my sense of vocation and be able to navigate possible tension between the personal and ecclesial aspects of ministry.
- Understand the ways in which Christian beliefs and practices have developed over time and are developing in varying contexts.
- Discuss the theology of the Baptismal Covenant, the BCP and scripture and their implications for personal and corporate decision-making with others.

#### Representing Christ

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

### SIGNS IN THE WORLD (Evangelization)

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I feel confident and competent in and am able to:

#### Scripture

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

**Episcopal Tradition**

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

**Theology**

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

**Representing Christ**

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

## **THRESHOLD IV: A STORY OF CULTIVATING-CATALYZING**

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

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

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

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

**Pedagogical Stage:** BLOOM’S TAXONOMY: Evaluating, Creating

### **SIGNS WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY (Formation)**

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**I feel confident and competent in and am able to:**

**Scripture**

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

**Episcopal Tradition**

- Lead opportunities to learn about the Episcopal Way and its foundational elements and their role in life choices.
- Lead the development and implementation of ideas/ programming to incorporate growth, reflection, and continued practice that leads to deepening of Episcopal Identities.
- Encourage ministry collaborations that utilize the gifts of the laity in partnership with deacons, priests and bishops.
- Guide others’ discernment of ways to use their gifts in the faith community.
- Assist others with their prayer life.
- Train liturgical leaders.

## **Theology**

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

## **Representing Christ**

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

## **SIGNS IN THE WORLD (Evangelization)**

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### **I feel confident and competent in and am able to:**

#### **Scripture**

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

#### **Episcopal Tradition**

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

#### **Theology**

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

#### **Representing Christ**

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

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

### **PREAMBLE: Lifelong, Life-wide, and Life-deep Faith and Ministry Development for all Baptized Episcopalians<sup>1</sup>**

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

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

How we each experience God, grow in faith, and discern our response to God's invitation is unique. What we share—sometimes more individually and sometimes more collectively—is a **lifelong, life-wide, and life-deep**<sup>3</sup> journey through which we develop the skills to respond to God's invitation to be the body of Christ both within our faith communities and within the world.

**This document is primarily intended for members of a faith community at the local or diocesan level** (such as Vestry members, Commissions on Ministry, faith formation leaders, spiritual directors, clergy, chaplains, and those responsible for passing on the teachings of the church, etc.) **who serve formally or informally as catalyzers and cultivators of other adults' faith journeys.** The document is designed to help these facilitators, guides, and/or teachers to adapt resources to local contexts in order to promote deeper faith and ministry development in a congregation, intentional community, or diocese. It is created to be a resource to generate opportunities for fellow travelers to wonder, widen, and deepen their understanding of themselves and of God as well as to gain confidence in their grasp of the knowledge, skills, and practices needed to follow Jesus. This is not meant to be a static document but flexible; local leadership is encouraged to adapt and adjust to fit their own contexts and needs.

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

To that end, this document is offered as both a **map and a set of map-making elements.** As a map, without presuming a particular entry point or sequence,<sup>4</sup> the document attempts to identify recognizable signs and thresholds of one's faith journey through a four-phased continuum. The continuum encompasses

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

<sup>2</sup> The Book of Common Prayer, pp 304–305.

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

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

recognizable signs of maturing in our relationship with God that mark deepening knowledge and understanding, the shaping of values and attitudes, as well as the honing of practices and skills. There are also thresholds to cross as an identity as disciples and members of the Body of Christ is more fully embraced.

Decisions are then made to accept increased responsibility to proclaim God's loving, liberating, life-giving Good News (evangelism) and to help others to find their path as we pass on our faith (faith formation). These threshold crossings can be described as "movements" between four "stages" which are experienced differently by each person:<sup>5</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

### **Background of this Document**

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

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

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

<sup>7</sup> Please comment! Does this document appropriately and adequately capture the knowledge, attitudes and skills of all the baptized as we grow in faith and develop our ministries. Send comments to [jllytle@bexleyseabury.edu](mailto:jllytle@bexleyseabury.edu).

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

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

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

THRESHOLDS	<b>CLAIMING</b> <i>I have been baptized and am beginning to claim a new faith as I come to know God’s Story.</i>	<b>ENGAGING</b> <i>I meet others who know God’s Story and engage with them in communion.</i>	<b>SUSTAINING</b> <i>I “wrestle” with God and God’s Story and share my gifts to sustain my community and God’s Mission.</i>	<b>CULTIVATING-CATALYZING</b> <i>I help others “wrestle” with God and God’s Story cultivating their faith and catalyzing their engagement in God’s Mission.</i>
<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>SELF-CONSCIOUS as beginning a Christian life of Faith</b> curious, seeks understanding, desires affiliation and belonging <i>(BLOOM: Remembering, Understanding)</i>	<b>BECOMING ACTIVE in a faith community and Engaging Faith</b> seeking, connecting, exploring <i>(BLOOM: Applying)</i>	<b>FAITHFUL SERVICE IN THE CHURCH</b> locally and/or church-wide committed, consistent, confident, capable, healthy questioning <i>(BLOOM: Analyzing)</i>	<b>OTHER-ORIENTED—responsible for teaching and passing on faith</b> confident in leading, called & calling, capacity building, courageous, co-create <i>(BLOOM: Evaluating, Creating)</i>
<b>General Discernment Questions</b>	Who am I as a Christian? How do I hear and discover what being a Christian means for me? How do I hear and discover what being an Episcopalian means for me?	What gifts do I bring to the community? What value do I add? How/What am I contributing? How do my relationships help me understand God more fully?	What helps me go deeper? How can/do I deepen my faith? What feeds me? Who are my models and inspiration?	How am I called to companion others? How can I invite others into discipleship? How can/do I pass on faith to others? What difference can I make?
<b>DESIRED CONFIDENCE—Formation In particular KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ATTITUDES, BEHAVIORS</b>				
<b>Discernment Questions about Scripture</b>	How do I understand the Christian story for myself? Where is my comfort level in reading scripture for myself? Tell a story about a time when loving God and loving my neighbor became real.	Where do I find myself in the Christian story? What Bible stories mean the most to me? How do I understand the Salvation story from scripture? How do I make room in my religious thinking for expanding my understanding?	Where do I notice the Christian story affecting my life? How am I using Bible tools for insight and interpretation? How do I use scripture to support/enhance my prayer/meditation experiences?	Where do I notice the Christian story affecting my life? How am I using Bible tools for insight and interpretation? How do I use scripture to support/enhance my prayer/meditation experiences?
<b>Discernment Questions about Theology</b>	How do I experience my baptismal vows in my life? What parts of the Book of Common Prayer do I turn to in prayer and why? How do I understand the creeds? When do I find myself turning to God in prayer and silence?	How do I explain the importance of being part of a faith community? Where am I being drawn to help in caring for creation? How do I understand my own world view? How is faith informing how I see and understand this world view? How have I examined the theological statements I grew up with?	Where do my experiences with forgiveness fit in the scripture story? What kinds of confession do I find most complete and meaningful to me? How do I clarify and stay focused on my call amidst the many demands of my life? What is the examined theology/honor in my life?	Where in my life have I noticed a broadening/deepening of my practices of living with diversity? How have I challenged myself to explore the faith questions that arise in me? In what ways do I engage others in reflecting on their faith? How am I connecting with the Episcopal Church’s framework Building Beloved Community?
<b>Discernment Questions about</b>	Why did I choose the Episcopal Church? What is the element of the Episcopal Church that speaks the most to my life?	How is the Episcopal community important in my life? How am I claiming and living out my Episcopal identity?	What are some of the practices I’ve found helpful in growing my faith? How am I involved in my local faith community?	In what ways have I mentored others in their faith? How am I a role model to lead others in expressing faith in action?

<b>Episcopal Tradition</b>			What ways have I found to connect my life in my faith community with engagement in the larger neighborhood and beyond? How does my faith inform my civic life?	Where have I opened the space for conversation with others? How do I understand my leadership in my local church?
<b>Discernment Questions about Representing Christ</b>	How do I seek and serve Christ in all people, respecting the dignity of every person? How would I describe my relationship with God? What in worship feeds me for the rest of my week? How does my faith inform my decision-making? How does being part of a faith community strengthen my life?	How has being part of a faith community clarified and/or deepened my spiritual life? How does my participation in my faith community strengthen the faith community? How does being part of a faith community strengthen the wider communities? What or where are the ministries I have said “yes” to in my church? Who are the people I’m drawn to help outside of the church? What do I notice about myself when I engage with people who think and believe differently than I do?	How do I experience the space within my faith community for me and others to have doubts? How do I articulate my Rule of Life and how it developed? As I reflect on my participation in my faith community, where do I identify the areas of growth spiritually for myself and for my life in the wider community? What have I experienced as my more difficult areas of forgiveness? How do I experience the alignment of my actions and my beliefs? How do I understand myself as an agent of reconciliation in the world?	How do I make room for compassion and curiosity when others around me express doubts about faith? How do I respond? What methods/tools have I found effective in engaging others in conversations dealing with reconciliation? How has my faith grown as I work to empower others to use their gifts to serve the community? What are the actions I am taking to disrupt systemic racism in our church and the world?
<b>THRESHOLDS</b>	<b>CLAIMING</b>	<b>ENGAGING</b>	<b>SUSTAINING</b>	<b>CULTIVATING-CATALYZING</b>
<b>Signs of Living my faith within the faith community</b>	Hear and claim the Christian Story as my own.	Find self in the Christian Story (biblical and beyond).	Explore my personal story, my faith community’s story and my wider community’s story in light of the Christian Story to make decisions.	Facilitate others’ exploration of the connections between Our Individual Stories, Our Collective Stories, and God’s Story from multiple perspectives.
<b>S faith</b>	Know that the Bible is the foundational text of the Christian faith.	Familiar with the foundational scriptural stories that form the story of Salvation.	Study the Bible with a working knowledge of how to interpret and use scripture in a range of different contexts. Confidently lead Bible reflection with a studied approach.	Teach others how to engage theological resources for personal and communal reflection and response.
<b>C community (forming)</b>				
<b>P I</b>				
<b>T U</b>	S.1	S.2	S.3	S.4
<b>R E</b>	Recognize scripture and God’s Story in the world.	Hear God’s Story from multiple perspective.	Make decisions informed by God’s Story.	Share the Christian Story while equipping others’ learning and questioning.
<b>E</b>	Hear how others make connections between My Story and God’s Story.	Articulate how to integrate God’s Story in my life.	Share the Good News utilizing theologically sound resources for biblical literacy.	Equip others to share God’s Story in a variety of ways.
<b>World faith in the (Evangelizing)</b>				

THRESHOLDS		CLAIMING	ENGAGING	SUSTAINING	CULTIVATING-CATALYZING
		S.5	S.6	S.7	S.8
	Curious about how scripture speaks to current circumstances and global concerns.	Embraces the Biblical imperatives to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves.	Reflect theologically on specific scriptural passages and different interpretations to choose how I respond to current events and global concerns.	Leads communal reflections on contemporary circumstances, issues and concerns and facilitates communal responses to them.	
<b>Signs of Living my faith within the faith community (forming)</b>	Recognize that the Episcopal way values scripture, tradition, and reason as its foundation.	Appropriate scripture, tradition, and reason (with experience) to inform life and use as the basis of my theological reflection.	Articulate the impact of personal faith (Apostles' Creed), the faith of the church (Nicene Creed), and ethical questions.	Lead opportunities to learn about the Episcopal Way and its foundational elements and their role in life choices.	
	Understand Episcopal identity as defined by the Book of Common Prayer (BCP), the liturgical calendar, and particularly the Baptismal Covenant.	Identify as an Episcopalian which includes familiarity with the Baptism, Eucharist, sacramental rites, creeds, and Book of Common Prayer (BCP).	Regularly participate in and practice my faith with others in an Episcopal context.	Lead the development and implementation of ideas/programming to incorporate growth, reflection, and continued practice that leads to deepening of Episcopal identities.	
	Participate in my faith community.	Understand Episcopal polity, its historic relationship with the Anglican Communion, and relation of parish, diocesan, provincial, and church-wide structures.	Exercise authority to engage resources and structures of The Episcopal Church (TEC).	Encourage ministry collaborations that utilize the gifts of the laity in partnership with deacons, priests and bishops.	
	Recognize the various roles that help make a faith community.	Understand the nature of ministry, honor different roles within the whole Body of Christ, and recognize connections between church history, liturgy, ethics and social action.	Actively engage in ministerial roles in my community and missional networks beyond the local level.	Guide others' discernment of ways to use their gifts in the faith community.	
<b>TRADITIONAL</b>	Learn to pray as a means of being in relationship with God.	Commit to a discipline of corporate and individual prayer and worship.	Confidently pray and talk about prayer with others.	Assist others with their prayer life.	
	Try worshipful experiences.	Understand the history and practice of Episcopal worship.	Actively participate in Episcopal Worship as participant and leader.	Train liturgical leaders.	
	ET.1	ET.2	ET.3	ET.4	
	Recognize holiness in life's patterns, practices, and rituals.	Understand the rituals of my faith tradition as part of larger interfaith/global tradition.	Participate in rituals inspired by my faith in my public community.	Create and lead rituals inspired by my faith in my public community.	
<b>TRANSFORMATION (Evangelizing)</b>	Identify the patterns, practices and rituals that inform my living as a faithful and ethical person.	Articulate what I believe about my faith with others and what distinguishes it from other faith traditions/denominations.	Engage in dialogue about faithful living with others from different denominations/faiths.	Create environments where life's questions can be engaged in faith-filled ways from lots of perspectives.	

	Learn about how the Episcopal church responds to issues of social justice and stewardship.	Understand that the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion give public witness to contemporary challenges.	Represent my denomination in civic and interfaith circles.	Host gracious and brave conversations with guidelines for sharing that honor all perspectives.
	ET.5	ET.6	ET.7	ET.8
<b>THRESHOLDS</b>	<b>CLAIMING</b>	<b>ENGAGING</b>	<b>SUSTAINING</b>	<b>CULTIVATING-CATALYZING</b>
<b>Signs of Living my faith within the faith community (forming)</b>	Claim my belovedness in God.	Practice ways of helping others recognize and claim their belovedness.	Theologically reflect upon the structure/systems that limit our embrace of our Belovedness in God.	Create opportunities to restore unity w/God and others in Christ and develop practices to dismantle barriers for community members to claim their belovedness in God.
	Appreciate the limits of my humanity and welcome the grace that God offers.	Confront sin in myself and in the world and recognize the power of forgiveness.	Adapt my actions to honor difference/diversity with and among cultural and religious groups.	Teach the community to understand sin and grace.
	Understand baptism as a journey beginning, confirmation involves a personal decision to continue onward, and journey changes with life and faith maturity.	Understand and value being a member of the body of Christ.	Articulate my sense of vocation and able to navigate possible tension between the personal and ecclesial aspects of ministry.	Call my faith community to deeper reflection on its role in God's Mission and mentors others in recognizing God's invitation to them as members of the Body of Christ.
	Recognizes that Theology is the systematic study of human experience of God.	Deepen relationship with God through critical engagement with scripture and traditions of Christian thought.	Understand the ways in which Christian beliefs and practices have developed over time and are developing in varying contexts.	Create opportunities for community members to critically engage and systematically study our human experience of God and deepen our relationship with God.
<b>T H E O L O G Y</b>	Aware that the Baptismal Covenant, Book of Common Prayer, and scripture are foundational sources of inspiration and formation.	The Baptismal Covenant, the Book of Common Prayer, and scripture inform my life/worldview.	Discuss the theology of the Baptismal Covenant, the BCP and scripture and their implications for personal and corporate decision-making with others.	Teach the interconnections of history, theology, and moral decision making based in scripture, the Baptismal Covenant, The Book of Common Prayer.
	T.1	T.2	T.3	T.4
	Recognize and explore the interrelationship between faith and other disciplines.	Commit to loving God and my neighbor.	Point to and name God's action in the world.	Teach others how to listen to voices from the margins and develop justice-seeking responses that address systemic injustice.
	Wonder how God is incarnate in all of life's big questions and the world's great challenges.	See God's radical love in everyday life.	Join God in action in the world as a follower of Christ.	Embrace diversities with and among cultural and religious groups.
<b>Signs of Living my faith in the world (Evangelizing)</b>	Acknowledge the existence of evil.	Recognize my responsibility for all of God's creation.	Discuss the things I see as evil in my world with others.	Risk asking and leading dialogue of unspoken questions.

THRESHOLDS	CLAIMING	ENGAGING	SUSTAINING	CULTIVATING-CATALYZING
	Explore turning to God in times of challenge and uncertainty.	Acknowledge the imperative to join God's Mission for the world.	Engage in deeper reflections of God's mission and our role in that mission with other communities.	Facilitate the creation of opportunities to join God's Mission with others.
<b>Signs of Living my faith within the faith community (forming)</b>	Wonder about the meaning of life.	Recognize the joys and obligations of Christian commitment.	Live by a Rule of Life.	Equip others for their discernment and gifts appreciation.
	Recognize my gifts given to me by God.	Appreciate the gifts of others.	Share my gifts in my faith community.	Recognize and cultivate the gifts of others.
	Question who I am.	Engage in ongoing self-reflection about difference to understand historical inequities and suffering caused by religion and indifference.	Risk asking tough questions of my faith community at any level, especially to acknowledge difference and dismantle oppression.	Seek ways to empower my faith community to understand historical inequities and suffering caused by religion and indifference.
	Desire a relationship with God.	Participate in spiritual growth opportunities in my faith community.	Participate in a community of practice and/or seek spiritual direction/enrichment with a director, faith mentor or leader.	Invite and inspire others to claim their place in God's Mission.
	Understand prayer as a spiritual conversation.	Participate in community worship, and miss it when I don't.	Embrace liturgical roles and lead worship.	Prepare members for participation and leadership in worship.
	Seek others to share spiritual conversations.	Develop important relationships in my faith community.	Embrace leadership roles within my faith community.	Prepare others for leadership roles.
	RC.1	RC.2	RC.3	RC.4
	See God in all people.	Strive to love others regardless of our differences.	Intentionally seek the face of Christ in others and celebrate their uniqueness.	Inspire others to right relationships with God, self, others and all creation.
	See the world through the life and teachings of Jesus.	Engage my neighbor in response to my faith.	Admit my faults and seek forgiveness; I forgive.	Create space for healing and reconciling.
	Think differently about decision-making because of my faith.	Apply my faith when addressing issues.	Strive for justice and peace and witness my faith.	Seek ways to empower my wider community to understand historical inequities and suffering caused by religion and indifference.
Listen and participate respectfully when various perspectives are presented respectfully.	Participate in conversations that raise spiritual questions with people who do not share my faith tradition.	Connect my actions to God's mission of love, liberation and life for all of creation.	Engage in ongoing collaboration with the wider community to speak truth to power.	
Recognize responsibility to vulnerable people and places.	Participate with my church to address needs in my community.	Share my time, talent, and financial resources sacrificially.	Monitor coherence between what I/we say and what I/we do.	
RC.5	RC.6	RC.7	RC.8	