

## **Welcome to the Book of Common Prayer – Discussion Questions**

### **Discovering the Book of Common Prayer**

1. What has been your experience of the Book of Common Prayer in your life? Is the prayer book entirely new to you? Do you own and use a prayer book at home? What revision is it?
2. Locate a 1979 prayer book and turn to the table of contents. Do you recognize services you have attended in an Episcopal Church? What words or services are unfamiliar to you? What sections or services would you like to learn more about? Turn to one or two of them and read through them.
3. Again in the 1979 prayer book, read the Preface included from the 1789 prayer book (BCP 9–11). What insights into the process of revising liturgical prayer do you glean from it? What in the Preface surprises you? Confuses you? Is particularly meaningful to you?

### **Becoming Christian: Holy Baptism**

1. If you have been baptized, what was your experience of that sacrament? Were you an infant? Child? Teenager? Adult? What memories do you have of the event, or what stories have you been told by those who were there? What significance does your baptism hold for you today?
2. What initiatory rites have you undergone in your life? What significance did they have for you at the time? How have they changed your life today?
3. Have you participated in the baptism of another person? What was your role? How did your participation in the sacrament affect your understanding of your own baptism or life of faith?

### **Sharing a Common Meal: The Holy Eucharist**

1. Do you remember the first time you received Holy Communion? What was it like? What meanings has the Eucharist held for you since then?
2. In what ways are the meals you have shared among family and friends similar to a Christian Eucharist? Are there family gatherings that particularly stand out for you as occasions of thanksgiving and remembrance?
3. Turn to the various eucharistic prayers in the prayer book (BCP 333–36, 340–43, 361–63, 367–75). What common words or images do you see in all of the prayers? How do the prayers differ?

### **Praying Throughout the Day: The Daily Office**

1. In what formal and informal ways do you pray daily? When do you pray regularly during the day? Do you usually pray alone or with others?
2. Have you tried praying the Daily Office or keeping a fixed time of daily prayer? If so, how did it fit into your normal schedule? What changes did you need to make to maintain the practice? How long did you stay with it? If you no longer are praying daily, what prompted you to stop?
3. If you are not currently praying the Daily Office regularly, would you like to give it a try? How can you envision incorporating one or more of the offices into your daily life? Try praying one of the offices daily for a week, and then reflect on how this commitment affected your understanding of prayer.

### **Making the Seasons: The Church Year**

1. What holiday traditions do you remember keeping in your childhood? What celebrations or commemorations do you keep in your family today? What meaning do these traditions have in your family? In what ways are the liturgical services of the church involved in these traditions, if at all?
2. What liturgies in the church that mark feasts or seasons in the church year have you attended, or are particularly memorable to you? What were your lasting impressions? How was your faith changed by them? What did they teach you about the Christian faith?
3. Read the Exsultet (BCP 286–87). What phrases or images stand out to you? Which words have particular meaning? Which are confusing or strange?

### **Making Vows: Confirmation, Marriage and Ordination**

1. What vows have you made in your life? How well have you kept them? What or who helped you sustain and nurture your vows over the years?
2. In what ways has the church been a part of the vows you have made? How has the church provided help in the keeping of those vows? How could the church have been more helpful?
3. If you have made vows that could not endure the test of time, what encouraged you to end the covenant you made? Was the church part of that ending? How has the ending of the vow affected your life? Your faith?

### **Praying in the Midst of Life: The Pastoral Offices**

1. If you have children, in what ways have the prayers and liturgies of the church touched your experience of giving birth to, adopting, or raising them? What was most helpful? What was missing?
2. What is your view and experience of private confession? If you decide you would like to participate in the rite of reconciliation, what steps would you need to take?
3. What has been your experience of the church at times of illness and death? How have those experiences affected your faith as a Christian? When you have been ill, have you ever asked for prayer? If so, in what ways were those prayers helpful, or not? Have you attended funerals in an Episcopal church? What did you learn from participating in the burial office?

### **Tools for Prayer and Study: The Lectionary, Prayers, Catechism and Historical Documents**

1. What are some of the methods you have used to study the Bible? Which methods were most effective for you? Why?
2. Turn to the Outline of the Faith in the prayer book, and survey some of the questions. Which ones echo similar questions you have asked, though perhaps in different words? How have your answers differed or resembled the answers given in the catechism?
3. Select one of the Historical Documents to read carefully. What can you learn from this document? What do you find confusing or inconsistent with your own understanding of the faith?