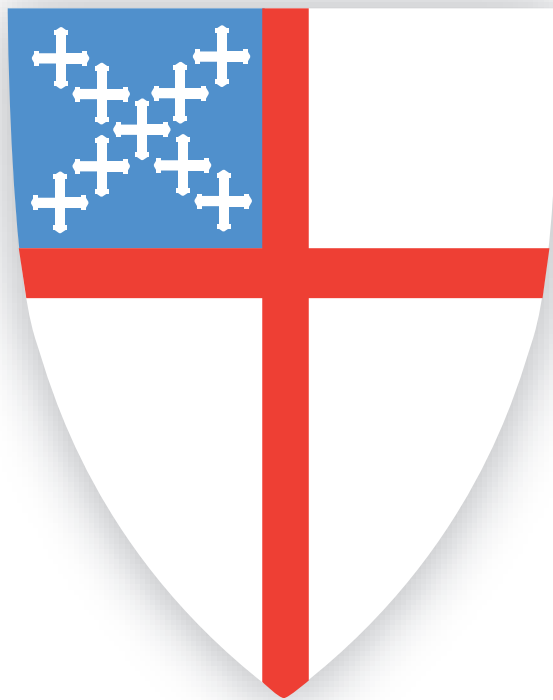


Around *One* Table

Exploring Episcopal Identity



EXPANDED VERSION

The Rev. Dr. David T. Gortner, Primary Author

With contributions by
Dr. Mathew L. Sheep, Dr. Elaine C. Hollensbe, Dr. Glen E. Kreiner

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Around One Table: Exploring Episcopal Identity

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Introduction

The health and well-being of organizations and their members – as well as their capacity to engage in God’s mission – depend on clear and shared understandings of identity.¹ Yet, an organization’s identity can be as elusive as that of an individual’s identity, because it is both dynamic and multiple. In other words, it is always changing and embodies many diverse aspects.

To explore identity more fully, *Around One Table* draws on a study called the *Episcopal Identity Project (EIP)*. The study is being conducted by researchers from the University of Cincinnati, Pennsylvania State University, and Illinois State University (see Appendices A and B), and is funded in part by CREDO

Institute, Inc. and the College for Bishops. **The EIP explores Episcopalians’ perceptions about the *organizational identity* of the Church – that is, the most central, enduring and distinctive features of the Episcopal Church. These qualities mark what it means to be an Episcopalian.**

The researchers designed and carried out the EIP as an extensive, multi-method study, using data collected from 2004 through 2008. EIP data are broadly representative of the population of the Episcopal Church in both demographic and geographic diversity. The data include 2,569 surveys and 75 interviews of Episcopalians from across the Church – presiding bishops (former and current), bishops, General Convention

Identity

“Who are we?” What does it mean to be an Episcopalian? What are our core values? How are we differentiated from other Christian faith traditions? What are our strengths and weaknesses? Where are our opportunities?

We cannot be leaders within our church nor in the global community if we are unsure who we are or where God is calling us to go. Criticisms that we need to be more proactive (suggesting that we have allowed outsiders

to set our agenda and dictate our identity), or that we are aggressively reactive (that is, we have been defending our polity to the extreme), both relate to our understanding and embrace of God’s kingdom and the Salvation we are offered in Jesus Christ – or to our lack of such understanding and engagement.

From the Interim Report of the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church, 11/2007

¹ Please see p. 12 and the box insert on this page for a fuller explanation of organizational identity.

deputies (lay and clerical), seminary deans, active and retired clergy, lay and ordained leaders representing various groups and positions, and members of congregations. Dr. David T. Gortner, primary author of *Around One Table*, analyzed the *EIP* data to produce this report. Dr. Gortner, formerly of Church Divinity School of the Pacific, is now at Virginia Theological Seminary. The three *EIP* researchers also provided support for and contributions to the report. *Around One Table* thus provides the Episcopal Church a powerful mirror, since results from surveys and interviews reflect back to Episcopalians how they view their Church.

Purpose and Organization

The major purpose of *Around One Table* is to provide the reader ample opportunities for reflection and conversation about Episcopal identity, based upon the analysis and interpretation of the *EIP* research data.

Around One Table introduces general questions, such as: What is identity? How complex are identities? What roles do they play in peoples' lives? Then, based on analysis of the *EIP* data, this report addresses more specific questions, such as: What, in the words and thoughts of Episcopalians themselves, does it mean to be the Episcopal Church? What do leaders and members of the Episcopal Church consider the core of who they are as a collective body?

Content and Methodology

As with many organizations, identity for the Episcopal Church is complex, multifaceted, and

dynamic. To sort out the complexities of identity, this report focuses on 23 identity "themes." They emerged from interviews with various Episcopalians, who offered their own individual narratives of Episcopal identity. Each of these identity themes was then measured in surveys for accuracy and importance. That is:

- How *accurate* survey respondents believed each theme to be in describing actual Episcopal identity, and
- How *important* or central to Episcopal identity survey respondents believed each theme to be (relative to the other themes).

From these responses, the researchers used an analytic technique known as "cluster analysis." This technique grouped the 23 identity themes according to: (1) how similarly people rated certain themes in relation to each other, or "clustered" them together, and (2) how strongly people rated the themes in terms of how "central" they were to Episcopal identity in general. Using cluster analysis as a statistical procedure, the researchers found a consistent underlying structure of Episcopal identity and how Episcopalians perceive and understand it. In the analysis, the 23 themes were clustered as follows into four classifications²:

- *Core Episcopal identity* (most tightly related and central themes): Christ as Central, Sacramental, Book of Common Prayer, Incarnational, Scriptural, and Pastoral.
- *Secondary Episcopal identity* (somewhat related and central themes): Reason, Inclusive, Tradition, Common Liturgy, Ceremonial, Experience, and Responsiveness to Societal Change.

² The category labels "core," "secondary," "tertiary" and "stand-alone" correspond with the relationship among themes noted in the cluster analysis technique used for this report.

- *Tertiary Episcopal identity* (less related and less central themes): Middle Way, Diverse Theological Positions, Ecumenical, Diverse in Christian Practices, Prophetic, Source of Societal Change, and Dispersed Authority.
- *Stand-Alone Episcopal identity* (themes not related or central): Elite, Source of Salvation, and A-confessional.

These identity clusters illustrate how Episcopalians group certain themes of the Church's identity together, and how respondents rated the themes in terms of centrality, i.e., importance. *Around One Table* presents the 23 identity themes in detail, comparing and contrasting how the identity themes were viewed by the various groups surveyed (bishops, priests, deputies to General Convention, retired clergy, and congregation members). The report provides descriptive discussions of each identity theme, including excerpts from *EIP* interviews that elaborate on the themes. Survey results rating the themes on importance and accuracy are also included. Each identity theme section concludes with reflection questions. Scriptural and theological sources relevant to each theme are contained in Appendix G.

A summary and discussion of the findings from the cluster analyses can be found in Appendix E, page 122.

Other Research Topics

There are many more stories to be told, both from the interviews and from survey data. The identity themes reported here can also be explored in relationship to many other phenomena studied in the *Episcopal Identity Project*. Other aspects of study not included in this report but which may be reported in the

future, include:

- *Identification*: How Episcopal identity perceptions influence leaders' and members' self-definitions, as well as their personal connections with and investment in the Church.
- *Communication*: How Episcopal leaders, groups, and members use language to construct, debate, and deconstruct identity.
- *Emotion*: How individual and group emotions toward the Church and its decisions shape and are shaped by perceptions of Episcopal identity.
- *Leadership*: How similarities between perceptions of Episcopal identity by diocesan and/or congregational leaders and perceptions by Church members influence attitudes and actions of each group.
- *Group Differences*: How Episcopal identity perceptions vary among groups in the Church (e.g., groups defined by gender, age, tenure, race, order of ministry, and degree of identification with Episcopal identity). Also, how these variations affect beliefs and behaviors.

Summary

The purpose of this report and the *Episcopal Identity Project* in general is neither to define nor to prescribe the character of Episcopal identity. Rather, this report draws from the *Episcopal Identity Project* to describe the perceptions of people in the Church. The authors hope all readers will find something both practical and inspirational, both affirming and challenging. Most of all, they hope their work will serve as a valuable resource to see the Episcopal Church through the eyes of its members and guide them in conversations and engagement with the findings, gathered "around one table."

Chapter Organization of *Around One Table*:

A Four-Tiered Classification of Episcopal Identity Themes³

Chapter 2: *Core* Identity Themes

Christ as Central – Sacramental – BCP – Incarnational – Scriptural – Pastoral

Chapter 3: *Secondary* Identity Themes

Reason – Inclusive – Tradition – Common Liturgy – Ceremonial – Experience – Responsiveness to Social Change

Chapter 4: *Tertiary* Identity Themes

Middle Way – Diverse Theological Positions – Ecumenical – Diverse Spiritual Practices – Prophetic – Source of Societal Change – Dispersed Authority

Chapter 5: *Stand-Alone* Identity Themes

Elite – Source of Salvation – A-confessional

³ Identity themes are listed in order of how survey respondents rated them in terms of importance and accuracy. Please see footnote 13 and Appendices D and E for a fuller description of data analytic methods and results.

Prologue

It hath been the wisdom of the Church of England, ever since the first compiling of her publick Liturgy, to keep the mean between the two extremes, of too much stiffness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting any variation from it ... Our general aim therefore in this undertaking was, not to gratify this or that party in any of their unreasonable demands; but to do that, which to our best understandings we conceived might most tend to the preservation of Peace and Unity in the Church ... (Preface, 1662 Book of Common Prayer).

Episcopalians believe that a fundamental way to discover one another, and themselves, is around a common Table. At table for Eucharist, they share in receiving Christ's presence, are knit together as Christ's body, and witness Christ in one another. At table in each other's homes, they share the warmth of Godly hospitality and learn of each other's lives. Gathered at one table for vestries, councils, and ministries, they discuss, argue, decide, and assess. In doing so, they bring their passions, gifts, and fallibilities to bear on the life and work of the Church.

At a common table, people come face to face with themselves as well as each other. Enmity is set aside in the hopes of finding common peace, one accord, and shared purpose. In this way, Episcopalians are like other Anglicans around the world, gathering at one table for a common feast in expression of gratitude for God's

plenitude of grace. Episcopalians see this table fellowship as part of a deeper ethic that favors maintaining bonds of mutual affection above the discord and quarrel that is a part of human life.

The "Anglican comprehensiveness" described above is a unique solution to controversy and conflict, one that involves more than simple compromise. It demands mutual tolerance and, as much as possible, reconciliation.

At this time in history, Episcopalians are not entirely at peace with one another. As in other times of discord, it can be extremely challenging for people to gather around one table with each other, in the face of perceived extreme differences and a growing uncertainty about what is shared. Yet, at times like this, it becomes even more important to engage in the trusting exercise of sharing the feast that is, ultimately, God's.

This type of *dis-ease* can seriously impede table fellowship for any organization, and for Episcopalians, it goes further, challenging the shared sense of identity that is the very heart of the Church.

Members of the Episcopal Church, then, find themselves facing a fundamental question: Who are we, collectively, as the Episcopal Church? It is a question of identity – not individual identity, but organizational identity, the identity we share, literally, as a body (*corpus*). It is a question this Church, and any church or

organization, faces each time there is significant change or new direction that emerges in the Church or in the society it inhabits.

The Episcopal Church is no stranger to questions of identity. They are part of its history. Shaped by Elizabethan and American Church experience, Episcopalians have identified themselves as “fully catholic, and fully reformed,” which means they strive to inhabit the challenging space between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, drawing from both for theological insight and expression of faith. Questions continued with its struggles and conflicts during the Civil War, and through its westward expansion. Questions of identity have persisted through debates over baptismal regeneration, gender and racial equity, and every revision of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Each change in the Church and in society at large has raised new questions for Episcopalians. Each time they are forced to come to terms with the implications the change brings to treasured images and conceptions of identity. And each time of “identity crisis” brings a persistent challenge for Episcopalians: How do they continue in the intensive fellowship of conversation, shared work, and communion with Episcopalians who hold opinions and values different from their own? Yet maintaining this level of discourse and exchange is an essential safeguard against distortion and delusion.

Around One Table addresses these questions of identity. In basing its work on the *Episcopal Identity Project*, it features the voices and perspectives of Episcopal leaders and members who are framing and leading the discussion of identity. As you will see, Episcopal identity has a distinctive shape and character shared across groups of people.

Key Questions

With its explicit attention to listening to people from widely divergent positions and perspectives, the *Episcopal Identity Project* has sought to explore:

- What Episcopalians believe it means to be the Episcopal Church
- How Episcopalians feel about the Episcopal Church
- How strongly members and leaders identify or dis-identify with the Episcopal Church
- How Episcopalians talk with one another and about one another
- How Episcopalians respond to challenging issues in their feelings, attachments, words, and actions

Primary Focus

Around One Table focuses primarily on the first question: **What, in the words and thoughts of Episcopalians themselves, does it mean to be the Episcopal Church? What do leaders and members of the Episcopal Church consider the core of who they are as a collective body? What do they regard as most central, distinctive and enduring to their shared identity as a church? What distinguishes the Episcopal Church from other denominations and faiths in terms of its identity, sense of purpose, and values?**

As you will find in this report, Episcopalians use multiple themes and images to describe the identity of their Church. But in the midst of these multiple voices, a clear structure of Episcopal identity emerges, with certain themes and ideas that are most central to all groups of Episcopalians, and with certain themes and ideas that are more peripheral.

These themes are rich with meaning, and invite conversation, prayer, and theological exploration at all levels of the Church. Such conversation is important, as there are notable distances between people who are more “sold” on the identity of the Episcopal Church as a whole and those who are less convinced. Conversation is particularly important when there’s a difference between what people say an aspect of the Church’s identity should be and what they say it actually is (e.g., an aspect that is important but not accurate).

Intense reflection on the Church’s identity is timely, given the current climate of controversy and challenge. In the past several years, Episcopalians have found their Church in the public eye, for better or for worse. Other churches, religions, and social institutions are watching to see what becomes of the Episcopal Church’s current disagreements, with its pending divisions, shifting alliances and differing expressions of Christian life and witness. Sociologists, psychologists, and political scientists, too, are watching Anglicanism as a case study of global shifts and realignments, to see just how much any organizational body can hold and affirm multiple and widely differing identities. How will the Episcopal Church move through these controversies and challenges? The outcome could be shaped by how well its members recall and reflect on the Church’s organizational identity.

Anglican Comprehension

An undergirding theme of organizational identity that came up repeatedly in *Episcopal Identity Project* interviews was that of Anglican

comprehensiveness. Episcopalians find themselves responding in different ways to this identity of comprehensiveness, for a variety of reasons. They are wrestling with a fundamental question: How broad a scope can a church have, how “roomy” can the Church be, without losing or diminishing other central parts of its identity? Some Episcopalians welcome the increasing focus on inclusion and breadth of perspectives. Others find themselves skeptical or even shocked by changes that call into question what they see as fundamental elements of Episcopal identity.

The following interview quotations reveal how Episcopalians are engaging the issue of comprehensiveness in the Church:

I think there’s always been the strain between those who believe the gospel means “We need to be out in the world working with the poor, the voiceless, the powerless,” you know, doing those really radical things like feeding the hungry, and clothe the naked and things like that – and those who believe church is the safe place they go to worship with people just like them ... And when that vision of the Church is disturbed, it’s very bothersome to people (Representative stakeholder⁴).

Some parts of the Church are more conservative theologically. Interpretations of the Bible and the use of scripture can vary. But what binds us together, it seems, is common language in the prayer book and being able to identify ourselves as Episcopalians through that heritage, maybe not always agreeing on theological or

⁴ A representative stakeholder refers to a lay or ordained leader who represents a particular organization or concern with the Episcopal Church.

biblical issues, but being able to live in the tension of mutual affection. I love that [phrase]. When we talk about the Anglican Communion, there is only one thing that binds us together ... We meet and have historically met in bonds of mutual affection, not because of a hierarchy that binds us together ... and that's what is threatened in our Church today. The mutual affection has broken down (Representative stakeholder).

Episcopalians are generally capable of poking fun at themselves and their Church, but they are also deeply aware of distress and strained relationships. Current tensions can tug people toward polarized theological positions. The most controversial positions today are those used to support or oppose the access of openly gay and lesbian people to the sacramental rites of ordination and marriage.

These polarized positions over sexuality are not new. They have been part of ongoing Episcopal and Anglican dialogue for more than 25 years. Lately, conflicts and challenges over these positions have brought, for some people, a loss of “mutual affection,” which has eroded respect and forbearance and ultimately caused pain, anger, and grief in the Church. People find themselves facing their own personal questions of Christian identity, including, “How much mutual affection can I stand with all these people?”

Table fellowship becomes challenging today, when Episcopalians have such a wide array of feelings about the Church and about each other – sadness, frustration, disbelief, resignation, new energy, excitement. They use strong language to describe what they see happening in the Church, terms such as disarray, crisis, crossroads, chaos, and new day. These feelings and words are directly related to Episcopalians’ sense of collective identity: Who are we as a body of people under the identifying banner “The Episcopal Church”? Who are we not?

Identity matters. People’s sense of identity can affect personal well-being, relationships with one another, sense of belonging, speech, and behavior. When some of us withdraw from table fellowship with others, it affects individual and collective well-being.

Organizational Identity

A significant decision can call into question an organization’s identity, and when that happens, it challenges the notion of whether or not everyone’s different ideas about who they are as the Church can fit around one table. When feelings and perceptions relating to this issue become intensified, relationships may break down and discourse may fracture, possibly jeopardizing the common good and shared work. Yet, Episcopalians tend to see their Church as spacious, welcoming people with many varying ideals, concerns, and perspectives to find a home in the name of Christ.

For people questioning who they are as a Church, recent decisions in the 2003, 2006 and 2009 General Conventions have become galvanizing moments. One deputy quite eloquently described the range of identities at play in the Episcopal Church, and the polarized positions that are currently most intensified:

I think that many people are attracted to church, and the Episcopal Church is no exception, out of the sense of personal salvation. Something has happened in their life, and they have turned to God and to religion. They see God and religion as the source of their salvation through something that was extremely difficult and credit the changes in their life – they credit the Church – as being an important factor in the changes they brought forth in their life. Other people are attracted to the Church because it challenges society's preconceptions about what's right and wrong. You know, it challenges the powers of principalities; it's on the cutting edge of social change; it's trying to end the war in Central America and they credit the Church as one of the agents of that sort of change. I think there is a place in the Church for all of that, but we get into conflicts with one another when we insist that one priority has to be more important for everyone than another priority ... For many people, the issue of including gay and lesbian people in decision making, in the power structure of the Church, is absolutely an important example of justice and the appropriate rules of the Church to take, while other people believe that homosexuality is something they need to be saved from, and they credit the Church with intervening to save people from homosexuality ... And those definitely come into conflict (Lay deputy).

One way to overcome differing views is through direct and intentional conversation with people who represent a position different from one's own, with an aim to understand the differences. Episcopalians made such an effort at the past four General Conventions of the Episcopal Church. While the spirit of table fellowship at these conventions did not solve the challenges of deep conflict and division, it did introduce a different tone to the discourse and put people face to face with their own choices about how much they really listened to other positions.

A lot of organizational health comes down to a focused and harmonious answer to the question, "Who do we say that we are?" *Around One Table* does not prescribe an answer to that question, but offers evidence of a way Episcopalians can move forward together, focusing on core elements of shared identity, their meanings and their implications for mission even in the midst of differences.

The Rev. David T. Gortner, Ph.D.
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Thoughts on the Relationship of Identity to Wellness

The ancient Greek admonition to “know thyself” is a wellspring of strength and wellness for those who have taken the pains to do so, and an exigency for those who have not. In its best sense, far from being a self-indulgent proposition, “know thyself” is a call to strengthen one’s self so one can enhance the lives of others through service, leadership, counsel, and so on. Of course, there are critics of that position. For example, André Gide says: “Whoever studies himself arrests his own development. A caterpillar who seeks to know himself would never become a butterfly.” Such wisdom applies only if one is addicted to the superficial logic of online quotation databases (which is where I found this one – brainyquote.com – and just for the record, I’m not addicted). However, upon further scrutiny, one might just as well argue that, for the caterpillar to “know herself” very well at all, she must also know that she possesses all of the potential to become her future self – the butterfly. The caterpillar does not know her identity adequately for current circumstances unless she also knows something of the future state she will become, barring any unforeseen cocoon mishaps.

As it is increasingly recognized in the scholarly literature of identity studies, the individual level of identity can often apply very well as an analogy at the organizational level⁵. That is,

organizations not only *have* identities, but those identities are also constructed on a collective level in ways that resemble individual identity construction (i.e., identity construction is a negotiation at both levels). As with individuals, organizations that collectively share a clear understanding of the key components of their identity (even if those components are multiple and diverse) can interact more effectively in their specific contexts to engage in mission. In short, clearly shared conceptions of identity can foster both individual and organizational health.

Healthy individuals/organizations can navigate change, weather storms, and serve others more effectively than those who are less healthy. It all comes down to a focused and harmonious answer to the question, “Who do we say that we are?” It is no coincidence that this question resembles that of Jesus to Peter: “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” (Matthew 16:13). **Regardless of its theological implications, the very asking of the question is remarkable in that it acknowledges identity as not simply an internal state but a communicated message.** It is both sent and received – a phenomenon that is constructed (whether as intended or not) in and through interaction with others. “Who I am” as well as “who we are” must be received, attended to, and

⁵ Whetten, D.A. (2006). Albert and Whetten revisited: Strengthening the concept of organizational identity. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 15, 219-234.

acted upon by others for identity to be enacted in the world as a social reality.

For example, at a meeting of *Episcopal Identity Project* Research Associates at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, CA, Dr. Matthew Price (Church Pension Group, Director of Analytic Research) opened one of our discussions with a call to reflect upon the “grand narratives” of which our lives are a part. One narrative that immediately occurred to me (though perhaps a less grand and more personal one) was my direct experience of local ministry in a congregation that did not hold a clear perception of its identity – its central, distinctive, and relatively enduring characteristics. The relatively large (for the time and place) congregation had at one time seemed to share such a collective understanding, but its external environment (cultural context) had changed dramatically in the intervening years. Consequently, members of longer and shorter tenure, older and younger ages, or progressive/contemporary/conservative/traditionalist orientations, had developed divergent rather than convergent perceptions of the organization’s identity.

Surprisingly, whether the organization’s identity was considered to be monolithic or to embed multiple, diverse aspects of identity, was not really the issue. Instead, the congregation was hindered from being as effective as it could have been in its mission (mission as an interaction with and relation to its environment) largely due to lack of perceptual clarity in any widely-shared sense among its members.

An analogy at the individual level would be a person who, for whatever reason, simply does not know himself or herself very well. The individual may know the basics of identity like name, gender, occupation, and associations with larger groups (social identity); however, he or she is not aware of the aspects of identity that help or hinder effective interaction with and action in the world – aspects such as personal strengths, core values, limitations – and yes, the narratives (grand or otherwise) of which one is a part.

For example, one’s attempt to lead others without some degree of self-knowledge can be a doomed enterprise from its inception, that is, if one does not have knowledge of one’s own capacities, one’s leadership styles, decision-making competencies, and perseverance to lead in certain contexts. Expedition members who climb Everest, troops in perilous combat, employees of innovative technology firms, members in any kind of organization navigating the whitewater of change – they are all dependent on leaders who have a clear knowledge of self-identity and what that identity will withstand when pressure is applied.

Thus, if to act effectively in the world on a personal (or group) mission depends on an honest examination/assessment of self, then identity is a *crucial*, perhaps the foundational component, of wellness. “Who am I? What are my strengths and the approximate limits/boundaries of my capacities and competencies? What am I becoming?” How one approaches and then reflects upon answers to such

questions influences one's own perceptions of well-being and mental/emotional wellness. In other words, if I have a clear sense of who I am (what I am, what I am not – yet), then I can be more effective in my interactions in the world and the accomplishment of goals. That is not to say that I cannot stretch and grow, but it is to acknowledge where unacceptable risks lie and where successful accomplishment may occur. As a likely result, I will derive more *satisfaction* from my relatedness with “other(s)” and have a more healthy conception of self (e.g., in terms of self-efficacy, self-esteem, and reduced relational/occupational stress).

Again, *healthy individuals/organizations can navigate change, weather storms, and serve others more effectively than those who are less healthy.*

It all comes down to a focused and harmonious answer to the question, “Who do we say that we are?” Neither *Around One Table* nor the *Episcopal Identity Project* attempts to prescribe an answer to that question, but instead describes how that question is answered, and with what outcomes, by a diverse array of Episcopalians.

Mathew L. Sheep, Ph.D.

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Gathering Around One Table: Charting the Multiple Themes of Episcopal Identity

This chapter introduces the complex, multi-faceted nature of Episcopal identity. After an overview of the complexities of Episcopal identity throughout the Church’s history and a short introduction to what is meant by “identity,” the chapter summarizes results from survey questions about Episcopal identity. This chapter also provides questions at various points for reflection and discussion.⁶

At the heart of current conflicts in the Episcopal Church are new questions that pull its members back to these central questions: Who are we as a church? How do we as a church understand and share our identity as a Christian people? What do we as a faithful people hold in common? What are our points of disagreement?

Many decisions and actions in its early history have left lasting marks on the identity – that is, the multiple identities – of the Episcopal Church. Fierce independence and intense commitment to the historic Church, autonomy

and submission, responsiveness to new situations and faithfulness to ancient patterns and traditions, passion in public engagement and polite reserve in expression of faith – these aspects of identity have all been present in the Episcopal Church from its beginnings.

The Episcopal Church also has borne, sometimes with pride and sometimes with embarrassment, other identities: a strong preference for reason over emotion, wealth and social power, high education, and withdrawal from any new public commitments to social and evangelistic mission. Early choices in Episcopal Church history continue to shape internal and external perceptions. Identity for the Episcopal Church is indeed complex, multifaceted, and dynamic.

... I always point to something I learned in seminary. You know, we’re always taught that the Book of Common Prayer is our identity. It’s our central identity ... I always point to the four Eucharistic prayers as sort

⁶ Reflection questions raised throughout this report are intended to help guide Episcopalians in their continuing conversations around one table. To engage these questions as openly and richly as possible, here are some suggested ground rules for conversation:

- Observe a common ethic in discourse, and recognize the temptations of careless speech.
- Begin with common ground and areas for common work.
- Tell one another core stories of faith and encounters with God.
- Find fruitful ways to engage disagreement.

Please see the Epilogue for a fuller discussion of these points.

of emblematic of the different components of our identity ... And within those four Eucharistic prayers, one can see ... the different components of the identity of the Episcopal Church: clearly Anglican, clearly catholic – with a small-c, but understanding that we have a lot of Rome with us – evangelical, and orthodox. And all of those identities are both compatible as well as conflicting at times. They have places sort of on their outer borders, where they complement, overlap, and conflict. And that's the juice, that's the pulse, the energy, the excitement for me, of being an Episcopalian. It's in that "stuff" (Representative stakeholder).

As this quotation suggests, there is something central and distinctive for many Episcopalians about the Church being comprised of multiple identities. Episcopalians often cite the sense of breadth and comprehensiveness of the Christian tradition, which they feel is uniquely embraced in the Episcopal Church. They, in fact, treasure this aspect of identity, with all its resulting tensions. This comprehensiveness encompasses for Episcopalians different theological traditions and spiritual expressions found in Christianity.⁷

Our Church is, and has always been, the most comprehensive of Christian families, because we have sought to embrace theological and cultural diversity of the kind that has sometimes fractured other Protestant churches (Bishop).

For me, what's distinctive about the Episcopal Church is our roots in classic Anglicanism. I believe we have a unique ability to not just tolerate but embrace diversity. I would trace those roots back to the Elizabethan Settlement, the fact that we started out as a church willing to live in the tension of being both Catholic and Protestant in a time when that was inconceivable (Representative stakeholder).

While breadth or comprehensiveness has advantages, they can also threaten distinctiveness. A fundamental question arising from the *Episcopal Identity Project* has been that of elasticity: How many identities can an organization have, and how divergent can they be? That is, if an organization is like a rubber band, how far can it "stretch" to accommodate different identities?

Similar to the time of the Elizabethan Settlement, there are currently some voices and perspectives that stretch Episcopal comprehensiveness beyond what some people are willing to consider or engage. (It is interesting to observe how people from opposing points of view say their "opponents" are the ones stretching Episcopal identity too far.)

What is "Identity?"

Identity is, simply, a sense of self: The self that remains steady and is identifiable across a variety of circumstances and situations. Identity emerges from a collection of perceptions of

⁷ It should be noted that this internal perspective of breadth is far from unique. Social psychologists for decades have documented how groups of all kinds typically make strong in-group / out-group distinctions and one of the key distinctions is the breadth or range of diversity people see within their own group versus the similarity and limited range of diversity they see in people from another group.

oneself, both by oneself and by others, that point to enduring characteristics and qualities.

People then use these images, ideas, and stories to describe themselves, both to themselves and to others, as beings with some continuity in actions, thoughts, intentions, and ways of being over the course of a lifetime.⁸ People do not construct identities as soloists; they bring in experiences, relationships, cultures, and traditions, all of which shape identity profoundly. Christians would add that people's true identities are given by God.

Identity is not just about individuals. Groups also have identities. Organizations, churches, nations, and peoples have identities. In recent decades, there has been an explosion of different group identities: gender identity, sexual identity, political identity, racial or ethnic identity, and generational identity, to name a few that have come into discussions of identity. Organizational identity is another form of shared identity. Various organizations develop a shared "self-image," both supported by their members and recognized (at least partially) by outsiders. For organizations and groups, "identity strength" is related to the clarity and intensity with which members recognize what is most central, distinctive, and enduring about the body to which they belong.⁹

How Complex Are Individual or Group Identities?

Most people and groups have complex identities. While people do show consistency across different settings and circumstances, they also change, adjust, and vary what they present as themselves to meet the unique demands and needs of each situation. It is quite possible, and often helpful, for organizations to have multiple identities. These various facets of overall identity can coexist peacefully or can conflict. Likewise, individuals have "multiple selves" and not just a singular self that is uniform across all contexts.

What Role Does Identity Play in People's Lives?

Identities are not simply collections of observations of an individual or group. They are also collections of an individual's or a group's aspirations, intentions, hopes, and ideals. Over a century ago, William James suggested that our overall sense of well-being is directly affected by the relationship between our perceptions of how well we are actually doing at something and our aspirations of how important we understand that something to be.¹⁰ What we view as important bespeaks our most central aspirations and ideals. These images represent not absolute ideals, but what we have *internalized* as hopes, aspirations, and ideals to live up to. They are

8 Dan McAdams, 1993. *The Stories We Live by: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self*. New York: Guilford; Susan Harter, 1999. *The Construction of the Self: A Developmental Perspective*. New York: Guilford.

9 Researcher Mathew Sheep summarized the importance of this concept in the following way: "As with individuals, organizations that collectively share a clear understanding of the key components of their identity (even if those components are multiple and diverse) can interact more effectively in their specific contexts to engage in mission. In short, clearly shared conceptions of identity can foster both individual and organizational health" (see p. 12).

10 William James, 1892. *Psychology: The Briefer Course*. New York: Henry Holt.

images of an “idealized self” which give added weight to, but are not always in harmony with, perceptions of a “realized self.”

Both individuals and groups make real distinctions between ideal or aspirational images and actual lived expressions of identity. What is intended or hoped often differs from what is actually achieved and expressed, and this disparity helps guide people to action.¹¹ If people perceive that their group is currently not measuring up to what it aspires to be, then they work hard to help the group adjust course appropriately and close the gap. If people perceive their group is becoming something not in keeping with its strongest aspirations – or if they sense that the group is becoming what it specifically did not intend – then they help the group modify its focus.

When Episcopalians talk about who they are collectively as a church, they speak in both ideal and actual terms about identity, values and purpose. These distinctions help focus their energies and efforts – celebrating and continuing strong investment in those aspects of identity in which they perceive the greatest harmony between the ideal and the actual – and focusing prayers and efforts in areas of identity where they sense the strongest disparities.

Here are some examples of how interview respondents differentiated between ideal and actual identities. In some cases, they spoke of vast gaps between ideal and actual identities. In other cases, they spoke of smaller differences. In all cases, the respondents used the language of distinction between ideal and actual identities as one way to express their critique.

Interviewee: Do you mean how it purports to be? Or how it really is (laughing)? ... Well, I mean, it [The Church] purports to be a bridge church between the best of Protestantism and the best of Roman Catholicism. That it's a thinking person's church ... and to find a balanced form of community that has both spiritual depth and intellectual integrity in the modern world. That's the ostensible presentation. The reality is that it is a deeply upper middle class, deeply white, deeply Western, deeply, increasingly secularized denomination, that is elitist in its outlook and out of touch with not only its own grass roots but with much of the rest of the world. The other thing is that the Episcopal Church during this period that we've been talking about claims to be this vibrant, you know, growing [church]. And we're talking about a period of time when membership peaked in the late, mid-1960s at 3.6 million and is now 2.3 million (laughing). And at one point we were 3% of the U.S. population and now we're much less than 1% of the U.S. population. So again, what we claim to be and what we in fact are, are very different things, unfortunately (Representative stakeholder).

I think, I continue to be committed to the vocation of the Episcopal Church as I understand its “ought” rather than as its “is.” I think that's terribly important. Because the Episcopal Church has been swallowed up by American culture and cultural norms, which are varied in some ways but the dynamics of which are held in common among different religious groups, even different places on the ideological spectrum. The Episcopal Church

11 Helen Markus and P. Nurius, 1986. “Possible Selves.” *American Psychologist*, 41, 954-969.

has been swallowed up by it, and I think it's worth trying to resist them in certain ways. And that's a noble vocation in a world in which too much of the American, if you will, "cultural" approach to religion is incorporating the globe (Ordained deputy).

Clearly, individuals have differing ideas about the distances between "ought" and "is." These ideas are human perceptions, themselves limited and fallible but also insightful. As such,

individuals' perceptions of distance between what *accurately* describes a group at the current moment and what the group deems *important* can create positive movement. However, these perceptions can also become sources of harsh judgment, both of the group and of other individuals in the group. *How* people reflect on shared identity can affect their spiritual and emotional health, their wholeness in relationships with one another, and their behavioral choices in words and deeds.

Reflection Questions

- What are the stories, images, and ideas you use to describe yourself? What about you speaks most centrally to who you are? Do your aspirations and hopes match your assessments of who you are currently?
- What stories, images, and concepts describe your congregation? Is your congregation clear about who you are as a community? Do your aspirational identity and your realized identity match, or are there significant gaps? Do people outside the Church recognize your congregation in the same way as people on the inside?
- Have you belonged to any organization or group that had significant clarity of identity, purpose, and values? What was it like to be part of such a group?
- Have you belonged to any organization or group that could not agree on its core identity, had competing identities, or had no clarity at all about its identity? What was it like to be part of such a group?

Asking about Episcopal Identity

Episcopalians who were interviewed shared a wide variety of ideas about the central identity, values, and purpose of the Episcopal Church. Drawing directly from analysis of these interviews, the research team initially identified a set of 20 commonly discussed themes of “Episcopal identity.” (This number subsequently grew to 23.) They then designed a survey of Episcopal identity focused on these themes. For each theme, respondents answered two questions: First, how *accurately* does the word or phrase describe the identity of the Episcopal Church (i.e., something that is central, enduring, and distinctive about it)? Second, how *important* is the word or phrase in describing the Episcopal Church’s identity (that is, how central, enduring, and distinctive should it be)?

To be clear: **The aim of this report is not to produce the most exhaustive, comprehensive list of words or phrases to describe every theme or facet of Episcopal identity. Instead, the aim is to construct a list of themes most frequently identified by Episcopalians themselves as central, enduring, and distinctive characteristics of their Church at this time.** As you proceed through these pages, it will be worth noting not only what is present in people’s responses, but also what is absent. What themes of Episcopal identity were you surprised not to find among the 23 listed here?

Appendices D and E contain considerable detail on (1) the differences in how respondents framed importance as opposed to accuracy and (2) the groupings of these identity themes by order of ministry. Here, however, we focus on a composite view of respondents’ opinions. Specifically, the chart on the next page brings these different perspectives together by multiplying together the ratings for accuracy and importance. This treats these ratings equally while accentuating when they are rated similarly.¹²

Judging from these composite scores for bishops and clergy, the identity themes regarded as most central, distinctive, and enduring about the Episcopal Church were *a sacramental view of Christian life, the Book of Common Prayer, an incarnational view of Christian life, and Christ as central* (composite scores of 4.3 to 4.6). Other identity themes with high composite scores were *scripture, a pastoral approach to ministry, diverse theological positions, inclusion, and reason* (composite scores of 4.0 to 4.2).

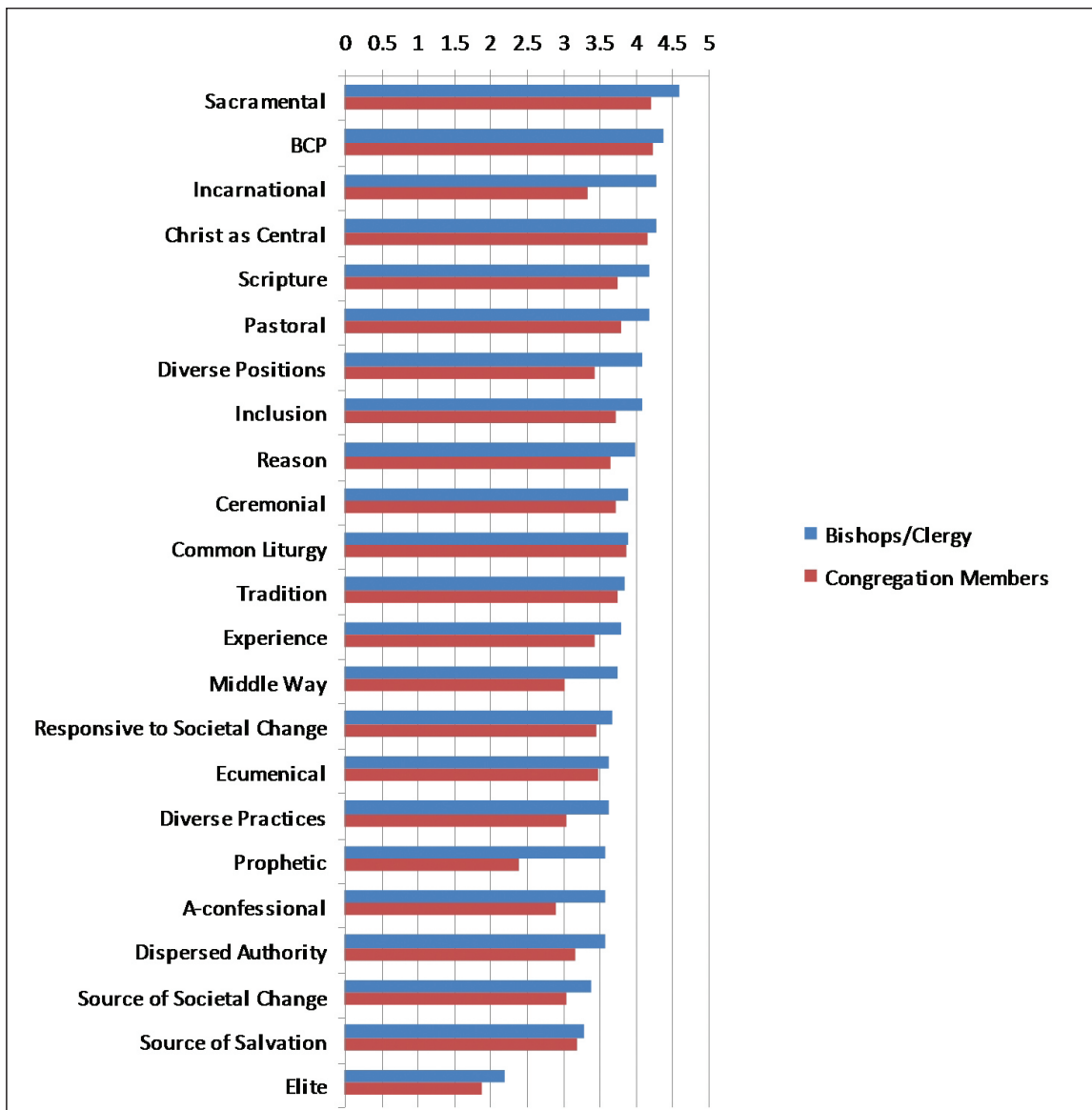
Episcopal identity themes with much lower scores were *being an elite church, being a source of personal salvation, and being a source of societal change* (composite scores below 3.3). Also relatively low were themes of *dispersed authority, an a-confessional faith, prophetic witness, diverse spiritual practices, and ecumenism* (composite scores of 3.5 to 3.7). Most of the themes in the latter category have to do with breadth of boundaries and authority.

¹² For each respondent, ratings for accuracy and importance were multiplied together, and then the square root of that score was calculated ($\sqrt{A \times B}$). Multiplying takes into account the individual ratings of importance and accuracy, and the congruence between them. For instance, ratings of 4 and 4 are high and congruent ($4 \times 4 = 16$); but for ratings of 5 and 3, only one is high, and they are somewhat disparate ($5 \times 3 = 15$). Taking the square root simply brings the scores back into the original range from 1 to 5, making the results easier to compare to other charts.

It is worth noting Episcopalians' ratings of scripture, reason, and tradition. These are Richard Hooker's three critical components of how we construct and evaluate the Church, its life, and its mission in the world – the so-called “three-legged stool” of Anglicanism. The frequency with which interviewees men-

tioned it indicates how deeply internalized this concept of Christian thought and practice is in the hearts of Episcopalians. But more intriguing, the ordering of Church leaders' ratings of these three aspects of Episcopal identity: (1) scripture, (2) reason, and (3) tradition, adheres to the prioritization Richard Hooker himself outlined.

Overall Identity of the Episcopal Church Accuracy and Importance Combined ($\sqrt{A \times I}$)



Note: Deputies are excluded in this chart, because they only received and rated questions about accuracy.

Episcopal Identity Themes: What Is Missing?

Another question is worth serious consideration: What is missing from these themes of Episcopal identity, values, and purpose? What ideals or hopes were not represented in these already widely varied descriptions of who we are or hope to be? And what does it mean when certain themes are not represented?

One might consider the absence of terms like “mission-oriented” or “evangelistic,” and what that suggests about our sense of purpose as proclaimers of the Gospel (“mission-focused” was added later, appearing only on surveys for congregation members). One might ponder the absence of themes like “contemplative,” and whether or not the Benedictine sensibility that shapes a life of common prayer should be present in our core sense of who we are. One might note that words like “catholic,” “reformed,” and “apostolic” are not among the 23 themes, interesting for a church that has self-identified in the past as “fully catholic and fully reformed,” and for which the episcopacy is one of the four key considerations in developing full ecumenical relations with other churches. One might wonder, from a the list of 23 themes, which points to the unique ways in which Episcopalians, and Anglicans in general, construe belonging to a community that extends well beyond the boundaries of each parish.

This echoes a pattern in the interviews. There was a tendency of interviewees to put all three – scripture, tradition, and reason – together as equally weighted. Indeed, some saw an equivalent balance as another example of comprehensiveness, an allowance of room for individuals to favor scripture or tradition or reason. Other interviewees lamented what they perceived as a “new” and overly strong emphasis given to reason over tradition.

... the three legs of the stool – of scripture, tradition, and reason – being equal in how we determine doctrine, which does leave places for everybody ... (Representative stakeholder).

Many interviewees also spoke of the importance of taking human experience into account. This is another category for theological reflection and Church action, showing an enduring influence of John Wesley and other revivalists of the Great Awakening. However, compared with scripture, reason, and tradition, experience is placed clearly in a fourth position of importance, thus showing an enduring influence of Hooker’s core components of Christian thought and practice, as well as a possible continuation of our Enlightenment inheritance – the elevation of mind and thought.

It is important to remember that the themes discussed in this study were drawn from interviews with 75 individuals with various vantage points on the Church – lay and ordained – and are the most common themes mentioned in those interviews. The fact interviewees did not focus on other themes does not mean that they

consider those other themes as unimportant. They were simply asked to discuss the themes most prominently on their minds regarding Episcopal identity. From the context of their discussion in the interviews, what was on their minds was partially shaped by the discussions and events in the Episcopal Church leading up

to, including, and following General Conventions in 2003 and 2006. As such, this study offers a snapshot of what is foremost in the minds of Church leaders and members now as descriptions of Episcopal identity at the beginning of the 21st century.

Reflection Questions

- What are the most central and distinctive aspects of Episcopal identity? How might we strengthen these together?
- What are the least central aspects of Episcopal identity? What do we agree is less distinctive or central? How might we address these together?
- What surprises you in terms of the emphasis or lack of emphasis of certain identities in the graph above? How can we work on adjusting things that seem to be under- or over-emphasized?
- What strikes you as missing from the themes of Episcopal identity in this study?

What Is the Underlying Structure of Episcopal Identity?

With so many facets to identity in the Episcopal Church, one might wonder if all of these multiple identities fit together. If they do fit together, then how? How might these varied identities be located under a greater overarching vision? Certain themes seem to hang together naturally. But do they really “hang together”? What facets of Episcopal identity are most closely bound together, and what facets of Episcopal identity are more distant from each other?

Without realizing it, people across the Church revealed in their surveys the identity themes they believed belonged together.¹³ One could view Episcopal identity as a fruit tree: The core Episcopal identity themes like fruit tightly clustered on one branch; secondary identities clustered together, but not as tightly, on another large branch; tertiary identity themes together loosely on a third; and each stand-alone identity theme on its own separate offshoot from the trunk. A series of concentric circles might also be used to show this concept graphically. The most closely related, or core, themes

are bunched together tightly in the center. The secondary identities form a concentric circle around the core. While they are closely grouped, they are not as compact as the core identities. The tertiary themes form the next circle. They are related, but not as closely as the secondary themes. Lastly, the stand-alone themes are located on the outside of the circles, not grouped together at all.

For details on the differences in clustering found for priests, congregation members and bishops, see Appendix D of this report.

How Do Groups Perceive Identity Differently?

How do Episcopalians comprising various groups differ from one another in beliefs about the identity, purpose, and values of the Episcopal Church? Obviously, not everyone perceives or believes the same way about the Church. More important than all the general patterns are the differences between various groups in how they perceived the identity, values, and purposes of the Episcopal Church.

¹³ The statistical procedure used to find the underlying structure of Episcopal identity is called cluster analysis. Cluster analysis was first created to help make sense of patterns in archeological sites, which are divided into small measured partitions. Findings in a site are catalogued by the partition in which they are found, and then categorized. Cluster analysis helped archeologists look at patterns of object locations in different partitions of a site – what objects are closest or furthest from one another. Cluster analysis helped answer these questions, giving clues to archeologists about how a community or household was structured, how people organized their lives, and what “rules of life” people followed. Cluster analysis has since been used to help understand how certain behaviors, beliefs, and values go together among different communities, cultures, or societies. It helps simplify and organize multiple points of information, and can help uncover deeper, “latent” concepts that unify related themes. To yield the richest possible information from the survey, combined accuracy and importance scores were used. Because different sets of survey respondents had different numbers of themes to rate, separate cluster analyses were run for priests (active and retired combined), congregation members, and bishops. Deputies were not included here, as they only completed accuracy ratings and thus had no combined scores. All cluster analyses were conducted using SPSS analytical software, using “Ward’s Method,” to demonstrate similarities and differences between identity themes.

Most of us would acknowledge that there is not one uniform identity for Christians. We bring our own humanity into conversation with our faith. Our humanity includes other identities, themselves shaped by multiple historical, cultural and familial forces. For each of us, there are multiple group sources of identity, including gender, race, age group, education, class, geographic region, and sexual orientation.¹⁴ These multiple sources of identity influence our judgments of an organization's identity and can become quite salient when our own organization faces certain issues that touch on important matters of identity.

In this section, we will examine similarities and differences in perceptions of Episcopal identity by order of ministry.

Among the bishops, active priests, retired priests, General Convention deputies, and congregation members surveyed, there are some consistent differences. Deputies gave universally higher accuracy ratings than all other groups for identity themes, and on most identity themes, congregation members' ratings were lower than the ratings of clergy and deputies.¹⁵ Further differences are discussed below. As stated earlier, the general patterns are quite consistent across groups. (See detailed charts in Appendices D and E.)

14 Initial investigations revealed few differences by race, age or years in ministry. Moderate gender differences show women rating most identity themes as somewhat more important and accurate. Geographic differences have not yet been examined. No questions about personal sexual orientation were asked on the surveys.

15 Unlike the full sampling of diocesan bishops, retired priests, and deputies, and the random sampling of active priests, the congregation members' sample is a "snowball sample" (where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances). In this case, active priests who responded to the survey were asked to invite their congregants to participate in the congregation members' survey online.

Importance of Identity Themes by Survey Groups

Importance in Rank Order	Groups Surveyed			
	Bishops	Active Priests	Retired Priests	Congregation Members
Highest	Sacramental	Christ as Central*	Christ as Central*	Christ as Central*
	Incarnational	Sacramental	Sacramental	Sacramental
	Scripture	Incarnational	Incarnational	BCP
	Pastoral	BCP	Scripture	Pastoral
	BCP	Scripture	Pastoral	Scripture
	Inclusion	Pastoral	BCP	Diverse Positions
	Middle Way	Reason	Reason	Common Liturgy
	Tradition	Middle Way	Inclusion	Inclusion
	Diverse Positions	Inclusion	Prophetic	Reason
	Reason	Diverse Positions	Diverse Practices	Mission-Focused**
	Common Liturgy	Prophetic	Tradition	Tradition
	Prophetic	Tradition	Common Liturgy	Ecumenical*
	A-confessional	Common Liturgy	Experience	Ceremonial
	Source of Salvation	Experience	Middle Way	Incarnational
	Diverse Practices	Responsive*	Diverse Positions	Source of Salvation
	Dispersed Authority	Ecumenical*	Ecumenical*	Experience
	Societal Change	Societal Change	Responsive*	Responsive*
	Experience	Ceremonial	Societal Change	Dispersed Authority
	Ceremonial	Diverse Practices	Source of Salvation	Societal Change
	Elite	Dispersed Authority	Dispersed Authority	Middle Way
		Source of Salvation	Ceremonial	Diverse Practices
		A-confessional	A-confessional	A-confessional
		Elite	Elite	Prophetic
Lowest				Elite

* Three themes were not on the original survey for bishops: Christ as Central; Responsive; and Ecumenical

** Mission-Focused was an emergent theme added later in the research phase. It appeared only on the surveys of congregation members and is, therefore, not discussed as a separate theme in this document. The theme of mission, however, weaves throughout many of the other identity themes, and is often associated in the qualitative data with the theme Christ as Central.

On ratings of importance, congregation members gave lower ratings almost uniformly for the identity themes. Bishops and priests were similar on most items, but there were

some significant differences. For example, bishops gave higher importance ratings for salvation and an a-confessional faith.

Accuracy of Identity Themes by Survey Groups

Groups Surveyed					
Accuracy in Rank Order	Bishops	Active Priests	Retired Priests	Deputies	Congregation Members
	Sacramental	Sacramental	Sacramental	BCP	BCP
	BCP	BCP	BCP	Sacramental	Sacramental
	Pastoral	Diverse Positions	Ceremonial	Christ Central*	Diverse Positions
	Incarnational	Ceremonial	Diverse Positions	Ceremonial	Ceremonial
	Diverse Positions	Incarnational	Incarnational	Diverse Positions	Common Liturgy
	Ceremonial	Common Liturgy	Experience	Incarnational	Christ Central*
	Experience	Experience	Common Liturgy	Inclusion	Tradition
	Inclusion	Tradition	Inclusion	Common Liturgy	Inclusion
	A-confessional	Reason	Responsive*	Scripture	Pastoral
	Dispersed Authority	Inclusion	Pastoral	Reason	Reason
	Reason	Christ Central*	Reason	Experience	Responsive*
	Diverse Practices	Pastoral	Christ Central*	Tradition	Scripture
	Common Liturgy	Responsive*	Diverse Practices	Responsive*	Experience
	Scripture	Diverse Practices	Tradition	Diverse Practices	Ecumenical*
	Tradition	Scripture	Scripture	Pastoral	Incarnational
	Middle Way	Middle Way	A-confessional	Middle Way	Diverse Practices
	Prophetic	A-confessional	Dispersed Authority	Ecumenical*	Mission-Focused**
	Societal Change	Ecumenical*	Ecumenical*	A-confessional	Dispersed Authority
	Salvation	Dispersed Authority	Middle Way	Dispersed Authority	Middle Way
	Elite	Elite	Elite	Prophetic	Source of Salvation
	Prophetic	Prophetic	Societal Change	A-confessional	
	Societal Change	Societal Change	Salvation	Societal Change	
	Salvation	Salvation	Elite	Elite	
Lowest				Prophetic	

* Three themes were not on the original survey for bishops: Christ as Central; Responsive; and Ecumenical

** Mission-Focused was an emergent theme added later in the research phase. It appeared only on the surveys of congregation members and is, therefore, not discussed as a separate theme in this document. The theme of mission, however, weaves throughout many of the other identity themes, and is often associated in the qualitative data with the theme Christ as Central.

There were significant differences in accuracy ratings, with deputies most frequently rating items higher, followed by bishops, then active priests, then retired priests, and congregation members typically rating items lower. Deputies

gave significantly higher accuracy ratings to inclusion, scripture, ceremonial, prophetic, common liturgy, tradition, middle way, reason, societal change. Active priests tended to give lower ratings to the Church being a source of

salvation, but higher ratings to being ceremonial, having a sacramental theology, and the *BCP*. Bishops tended to give lower accuracy ratings to tradition, but higher ratings to dispersed authority. Retired priests gave lower

ratings to being ceremonial and following the middle way. In rank order, some of the core identity themes were universally recognized as most accurate, while others were placed differently by different groups.

Reflection Questions

- To what degree does experience as an “insider” shape how people understand a group’s or community’s identity?
- What are the “insider experiences” of bishops that set them apart from priests in how they think about Episcopal identity?
- What about deputies to General Convention?
- What does this mean for congregation members, who themselves are on the inside, but not necessarily involved or invested in “the councils of the Church”?

Table Talk: Episcopalians Discussing *Core* Identity Themes

This chapter contains descriptions and discussions of the core themes of Episcopal identity that were most common in *EIP* interviews with Episcopalians. The themes are presented in order of importance to survey respondents, starting with the ones they rated as most important. For each theme:

- (1) Quotations from interviews offer diverse perspectives;
- (2) Two charts summarize leaders' and congregation members' survey responses for the theme's importance and accuracy; and
- (3) Reflection questions offer readers an opportunity to explore the meaning, strengths, and challenges of that theme for Episcopal identity.

Historical notes, by chapter, are provided in Appendix F and theological notes, including scriptural quotations, are provided in Appendix G to spark further reflection and conversation. Chapters 3-5 of this report follow the same format.

Christ as Central

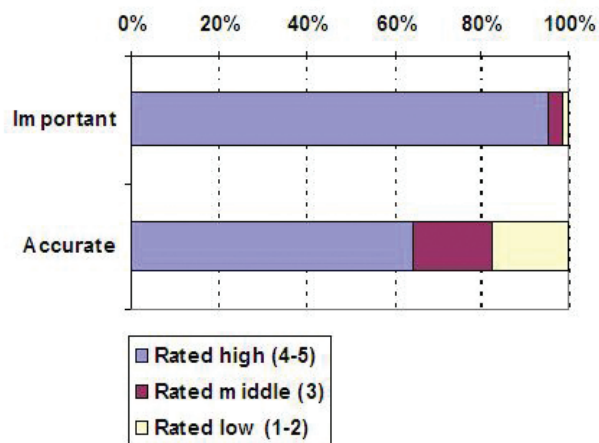
My understanding of feeling and well-being is rooted in scripture and in theology and in Jesus Christ and in God. That's our identity. It's not just an ad campaign (Deputy).

We have admirable, strong, Christ-centric clergy (Lay survey).

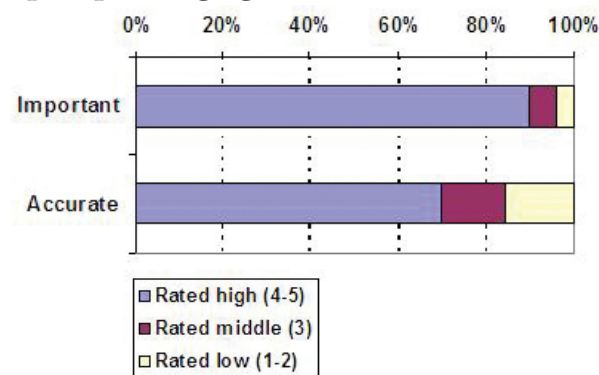
The most important theme for nearly all leaders and members of the Episcopal Church was a sense of identity rooted in and focused on Christ. In terms of how Episcopalians think the Church should be, a Christ-centered identity was first and foremost. Of course, all Christian churches hold this characteristic as important to their identity, so for each denomination it becomes important to express with some clarity how it uniquely or distinctly focuses on Christ.

God is the center of the Church. And while all churches have that, we don't want to not say that is not the most important in our Church, too. We don't have exclusive rights on God, but God is at the center of our Church. If God isn't, we should go out of business (Representative stakeholder).

Episcopal Church Leaders
(Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



That's what [is] important to me in the midst of all this: That the Church care for its people, that the Church pray for and proclaim Christ in the midst of its people (Representative stakeholder).

We really are held together by our common belief that we're trying to follow Jesus Christ and that we share communion together (Representative stakeholder).

The *how* of an Episcopal focus on Christ is often expressed in terms of sacrament, care for one another, prayer, and proclamation. This focus was also increasingly discussed in terms of *mission*, although mission still remains a

concept that does not rise automatically to the surface in people's descriptions of Episcopal identity.

A gap remains for Episcopalians between how strongly they believe the Episcopal Church *aspires* to Christ-centeredness and how much they believe the Episcopal Church *actually does* demonstrate a Christ-centered identity. While more than 62% of respondents saw Christ-centered as a highly *accurate* description of Episcopal identity (and Christ-centered was one of the highest-rated themes in terms of both accuracy and importance), many also saw a wide gap between how strongly the Episcopal Church *aspires* to being Christ-centered and how much it *actually is* Christ-centered. For example, one lay survey respondent asked, "Does ECUSA worship at the altar of Christ or political correctness?" One might expect leaders and members in any Christian denomination to acknowledge a gap between *should* and *is* when it comes to their centeredness in Christ; after all, such an acknowledgment demonstrates an awareness of how humans fall short. This gap between *should* and *is*, then, also becomes a place for focused discipleship and pastoral leadership. How do Episcopalians experience this gap, what contributes to it, and what might help our Church come closer to our highest hope?

Episcopalians describe Christ-centeredness with three distinct emphases. For some the emphasis falls upon communion; others emphasize inclusion; and still others stress holiness of life. Those who emphasize communion speak in terms of the fellowship of sharing the Holy Eucharist, or in the sense of connection and mutual recognition shared across the Anglican Communion. Persons emphasizing inclusion view Christ-centeredness as the

Church embracing the fullest range of the human family, directly reflecting Jesus' extensive reach to those who otherwise were regarded as outcasts. For a third group of persons, to be Christ-centered refers to how the Church, organizationally as well as individually, seeks to live a Godly life and make vivid and public its commitment to Christ.

These three understandings of what Christ-centeredness means may well be integrally related. But what is most striking is the broad consensus that Christ-centeredness is the key identity theme among Episcopalians.

[There was] this big report that came out in '98, accepted by Lambeth, called the Virginia Report, that was based on "What does it mean to live in communion?" and it located the whole reality in the very center of God as communion and Trinity. You know, very essential ways of defining our ecclesial reality ... (Clerical deputy).

I think that what is central and enduring is the spirit of Jesus' inclusiveness: ... Jesus getting in trouble because he had the reputation of eating with tax collectors and sinners. And that's the enduring spirit of it. Always make sure that the body of Christ represents Jesus. The Episcopal Church, in this instance, has always got people at the table that the culture considers to be outcasts and sinners (Representative stakeholder).

Reflection Questions

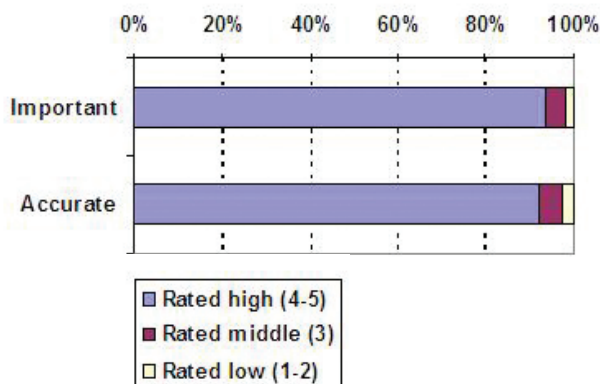
- To what degree can we ever attain our highest hope of being centered in Christ? What might that mean in our lives?
- Can we fully pursue one expression of Christ-centeredness without diminishing other expressions?
- What about focusing exclusively on communion (i.e., unity)? Is it all right even when it might restrict fuller Godly expressions of inclusion or righteousness?
- Is it all right to focus exclusively on Christ's welcome and inclusion, even when it might impede unity or expressions of righteousness?
- Is it all right to focus exclusively on righteousness (i.e., holiness of life), even when that understanding of righteousness threatens unity or limits the Church's inclusive embrace?

Sacramental

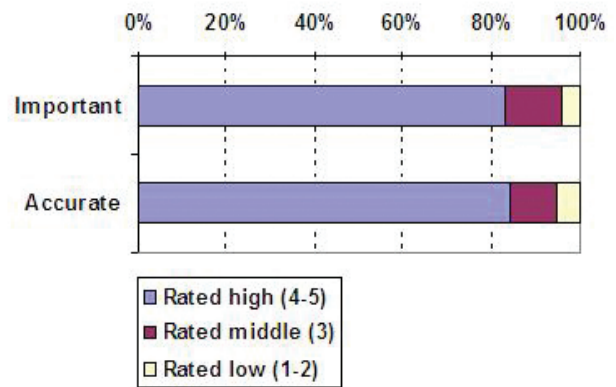
A survey a few years ago ... said that for 98% of the people who responded to the survey, the principal tenet of Episcopal identity is the Eucharist: that Episcopal churches are places where the Eucharist is celebrated. That means that they understand that worship and that a particular kind of sacramental worship is central to the life of the Episcopal Church (Representative stakeholder).

Similar in importance to Christ-centeredness – and perhaps one of the Episcopal Church’s most distinctive ideals and actual expressions in its focus on Christ – is Episcopal identity as a sacramental church. Episcopal leaders and members almost unanimously rated sacramental as absolutely central, distinctive, and enduring to Episcopal identity. Furthermore, they saw a sacramental orientation toward Christian faith and life as equally important and accurate. It is one of the few aspects of Episcopal identity where *should* and *is* met and were seen as equally pre-eminent.

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



The language of sacrament is rich in the Episcopal Christian tradition. It extends back to the language regarding the two great sacraments, Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, to which Church of England clergy agreed in the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. Sacrament as “sure and certain means” of grace has to do with how Episcopalians regard God’s action in human life through physical means. For Episcopalians, grace is God’s gift, offered not merely as a matter of the heart but through physical forms of water, bread, and wine. Thus, sacramental Christianity is a radical affirmation of God’s action on us, often in spite of our own mental or emotional state. Episcopalians speak of “the Real Presence” of Christ in the Eucharist, allowing a breadth of interpretation that echoes theological sentiments expressed throughout the history of the Church of England. Yet, at the same time it avoids overly analytical definitions of how Christ is present. This is a particularly unique approach among Christian denominations.

Episcopalians also speak of the community of faith itself as the Body of Christ, bearing Christ’s presence to the world in an embodied manner just like the Body and Blood of Christ was received in bread and wine. These actions, tak-

en in faith, invite people into a life of faith that steps beyond words and cognitive affirmations.

... Praying the Eucharistic prayers is a very, very different experience. Receiving the body and blood of Christ every week as the central act of your worship is a very different spiritual experience than Morning Prayer. It includes a level of welcoming in mystery into your life that isn't there with Morning Prayer. Welcoming in transformative power ... [and] symbolism and metaphor into your life in a way that isn't there in Morning Prayer. And I think those are the elements ... that I think helped to profoundly change the Episcopal Church ...
(Representative stakeholder).

For many Episcopalians, sacramental language offers a full expression of a vividly incarnational theology (see Incarnational identity theme below), imbuing their understanding of how they are to be with one another and with God. The language of mystery is common in describing God's presence in the Church and the world.

The quotation above draws attention to a dramatic shift in the sacramental practices of the Episcopal Church, particularly in relation to Holy Communion. The liturgical renewal movement led to the adoption of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, with its central focus on Holy Eucharist, and led to the establishment of Holy Eucharist as the norm for Sunday worship in most Episcopal congregations. Similarly significant shifts occurred with the practice of Holy Baptism, with most congregations moving from private to public baptisms. For some Episcopalians, these changes strike at the heart of the current issues that have surfaced in the Church.

Some Episcopalians regard this sacramental focus as juxtaposed against a confessional faith that emphasizes correct beliefs held in common (see A-confessional identity theme in Chapter 5). The emphasis on encountering God in actions and physical forms, combined with a commitment to that original Anglican "comprehensiveness," is experienced by some as inviting and rich but by others as fuzzy and uncertain.

I would say that our center is worship, not dogma. That we come together to worship God and what we believe personally is interesting, but not the main point (Clerical deputy).

Regarding the shift in the sacramental practices of the Episcopal Church, some have raised intriguing pragmatic concerns – for example, the challenge of providing enough ordained leaders to administer the sacraments on a regular basis in all congregations.

... Something that began more in the 60s and 70s is that we're becoming a much more Eucharist-centered church at the same time that clergy are, more and more, less affordable. So, places like [this diocese] have this impact of congregations expecting to get the Eucharist every Sunday but having to share priests (Lay deputy).

Others have shared concerns that an exclusively sacramental focus can end up placing the responsibility for Christian formation and evangelism on the liturgy itself, so that Episcopalians expect the words and actions of worship to bear the weight of transformation of souls.

Reflection Questions

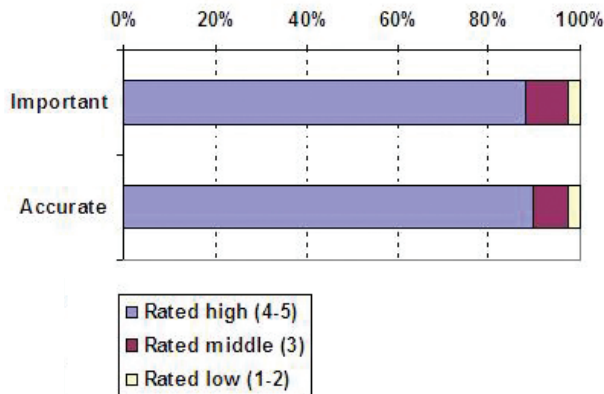
- How effectively do Episcopalians communicate about their sacramental Christianity, both with each other and with people outside the Church?
- In the balance of Word and Sacraments, how does a strong emphasis on one affect a congregation's presentation of the other? What is gained, and what is lost, as a result of how a community strikes that balance?
- In the 16th century, the Elizabethan Settlement enabled people to worship together despite a passionate divide over the nature of Christ's presence in the Holy Communion. How can that experience be a model for similarly divisive theological arguments today?
- What is the relationship between sacramental experience and belief?

Book of Common Prayer

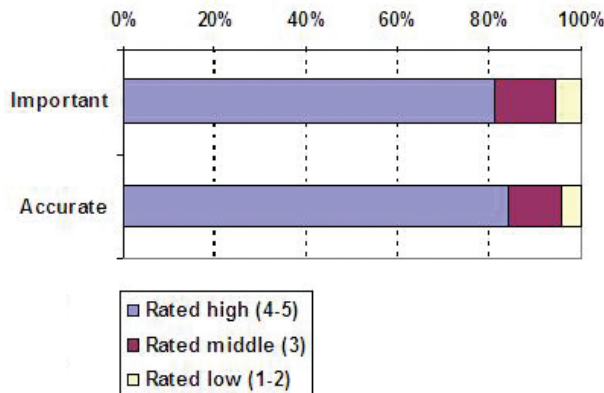
One of the things at the heart of our identity is our common prayer and the Book of Common Prayer and the authorized prayer – I mean, I'm not talking about just the physical volume. There are also authorized texts beyond that, but I think we are joined by common worship, and that has been true since our inception and I think it's what marks us. In fact, when our House of Bishops met with the Lutherans and we each had a day to talk about identity, we talked about the Book of Common Prayer. They talked about the Augsburg Confession. And I think that makes us unique (Bishop).

Another Episcopal identity theme nearly universally endorsed as both highly important and highly accurate was the *Book of Common Prayer (BCP)*. The *BCP* is a central, enduring, and distinctive image of what it means to be an Episcopalian, as well as a source of pride. This is true for congregation members as well as Church leaders. Like earlier English and American prayer books, and the other prayer books used in the Anglican Communion, the *BCP* is rooted in and based on scripture and a careful reading of Christian traditions. For many, it embodies an Episcopal theology: Continuous but changing, unique and comprehensive.

Episcopal Church Leaders
(Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



The *BCP* provides a unique but broad-sweeping theological center that frames Episcopalians' approach to and understanding of scripture and of Christian tradition. The *BCP*, like scripture, is cited directly by all the various "parties" in current debates and conflicts in the Episcopal Church. Some will cite prayers and rubrics from the various rites contained in the *BCP*. Others will cite excerpts from the Outline of Faith. Still others will cite historical documents.

I would say the theology that is included both in the liturgy and in the articles of religion in the back of the book [is most central]. In 1572, for the sake of the unity in the Church and the gospel, the articles were passed as binding on the clergy. When we got away from them, our theology became

increasingly susceptible to the culture drift ... (Representative stakeholder).

The totality of the *BCP*, including the catechism and historical documents it contains, provides a compendium of the many dialogues, debates, and theological expressions that shape the Episcopal Church, a church that strives to cast itself as catholic, universal, and comprehensive. For Episcopalians, the lectionaries contained in the *BCP* frame a particular way of reading scripture within the context of praise and worship, and with readings chosen as much as possible to be in relation to one another. The lectionary for the Daily Offices provides opportunity for Episcopalians to read almost the entire scripture over the course of two years. The Eucharistic lectionaries weave together scripture readings week by week, following the Church seasons, to tell the Christian story in the midst of worship.

Because the *BCP* functions as such a compendium of Episcopal theology expressed in rites of worship, conflict is inevitable with any revision of the Prayer Book. Many recognize the changes introduced in the 1979 *BCP* as quite significant, both theologically and liturgically.

If you want to know what's brought us to this point in time, it's the 1979 Prayer Book. And the 1928 Prayer Book Society was absolutely right, when they said, "You know, if you institute these changes, everything in the Church will change." They were absolutely right ... even the sort of nod to italicizing the pronouns sent a very strong and clear message of inclusion; turning the priest, you know, from facing the wall to facing the people; and bringing people and welcoming everyone into the body of Christ – changed us (Representative stakeholder).

Reflection Questions

- What makes the BCP unique among Christian traditions?
- Can you imagine an Episcopal Church without a Book of Common Prayer?
- How are the BCP and various supplements used in your congregation and diocese? What does this say about your community's theology?
- How does the BCP both reflect and challenge the American experience?

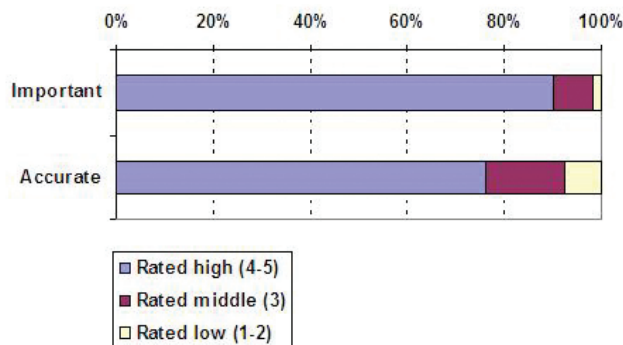
Incarnational

I would say that the Episcopal Church, and the Anglican Communion in broad strokes, brings to the table a high doctrine of the incarnation; that is, that God and the Holy Spirit work through enfleshed relationships – over time, sometimes mysteriously, often mysteriously, but always in concrete and real situations – to bring about movement toward the Kingdom, movement toward reconciliation (Representative stakeholder).

Episcopalians point to a particularly strong emphasis on the incarnation of Christ. In this, Episcopalians are somewhat unique among Protestants and find closer kinship with Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox in their understanding that in Christ, God and humanity have been joined inseparably. Much of Episcopal hymnody and Eucharistic theology celebrates the incarnation of Christ as redemptive, the embracing of human flesh by God as a profound blessing and sanctifying of human nature.

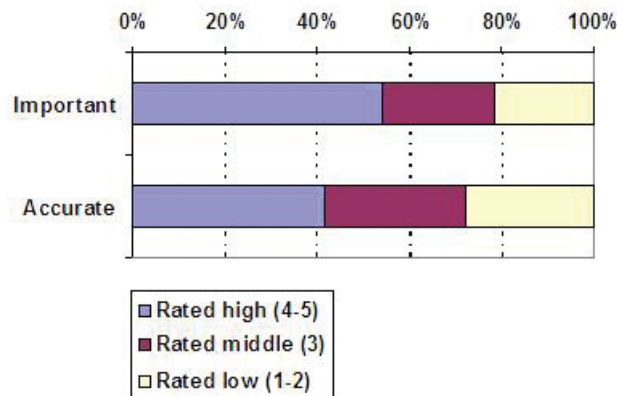
More than 90% of Episcopal Church leaders regarded incarnational as highly important to Episcopal identity (that is, what the Church *aspires to*) and 76% regarded it as highly accurate (that is, what the Church *currently is*). Among Episcopal leaders, the emphasis on an incarnational faith is one of the highest-rated themes for both importance and accuracy, but there is also a moderately large gap between importance and accuracy. This gap may signal room for growth in how Episcopalians actually live and practice this aspect of their faith.

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



However, Episcopal congregation members (laity in congregations) did not regard incarnational as a core Episcopal identity theme. Only 54% of congregation members regarded it as highly important to Episcopal identity, and only 42% regarded incarnational as highly accurate. They saw this theme as unrelated to almost all other themes. It is worth noting that a higher percentage of congregation members than usual did not even answer this question, suggesting that they did not have a ready understanding of the word incarnational.

Episcopal Congregation Members



An incarnational focus tracks easily with the Episcopal Church’s sacramental theology and is a particular expression of holding Christ as central. Incarnational and sacramental orientations, in turn, can lead people to consider the faithful community as the continuing enfleshed presence of Christ in the world. At an extreme, the word “incarnational” can indicate a belief that actions of a particular individual or community directly embody the living Christ. Just as with any language used to describe Christ and the action of God in the world, there

is a danger of over-stating God’s incarnate work in specific persons, actions or events. Yet the language of incarnation is powerful. It is also clearly not grasped or embraced fully by congregation members. A theological question to consider is whether or not the use of the word “incarnational” to describe the Church’s or any individual’s work diminishes the unique Christian theology of God’s incarnation in Jesus. A pragmatic question is how to help people more fully embrace the wonder of the incarnation.

I think this was a real wake-up call to the Episcopal Church, that we are on this journey together, that we are progressing together, this is what all of this rhetoric means. Here – it’s embodied here – it’s incarnate. It’s always the incarnation. The incarnation has always gotten us into trouble. As soon as Herod knew that the baby Jesus was here ... he sent out people to try to kill him, you know? And I think that’s the same dynamic as we’re seeing here ... You [are] either in awe, like the shepherds were, or you try to kill it. I think that’s where we are. It’s the power of the incarnation (Representative stakeholder).

Incarnational theology is a particular form of relational theology, reflecting God’s intimate embrace of humanity and of the physical matter of which human beings are made. As the quotation above suggests, the incarnation implies risk. But its tone evokes not so much images of Christ’s self-emptying in order to become human but rather images of intimate, mysterious closeness to and presence in humanity and creation.

I think [the Episcopal Church's] distinctive quality is its wonderful English heritage ... What I mean by that is a comfortableness, [an] English kind of Celtic heritage, its comfortableness with issues of incarnation and its comfortableness with mystery and paradox. ... Another way of saying it, I think, is its poetic nature.

Interviewer: Could you kind of elaborate on what comfortableness with incarnation is referring to? Does that mean incarnational theologically?

Yeah, incarnational theology: that the material is the means by which the spiritual is given. That's what I mean: comfortableness with the natural order (Bishop).

An emphasis on the incarnation has implications for how Episcopalians understand the centrality of Christ in their Christian identity. An incarnate God meets and “pitches tent” within human culture, is concerned with physical existence, touches all people in all social stations, shows people how to live, and both gives and receives in human reality.

Communion is God's gift. It is present and we are called to make it real (Incarnation) (Bishop survey response).

Reflection Questions

- What do Episcopalians mean when they say “incarnational”?
- What does Christian theology gain from the distinctly Anglican and Episcopalian focus on the incarnation of Christ?
- What implications, if any, does the high importance of incarnational theology have for Episcopalians when they discuss the matters of conflict now facing the Church?
- Does a strong focus on the incarnation of Christ detract in any way from a focus on crucifixion / resurrection? Does it amplify, expand, or shift our understanding of the crucifixion / resurrection?
- What does it really mean to be the “Body of Christ,” as individuals and communities?

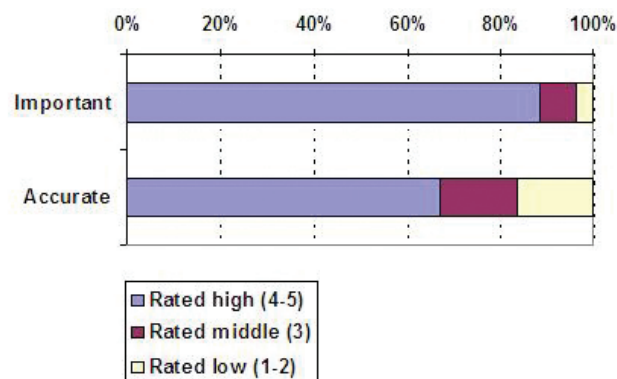
Scriptural

We're a Church that finds its unity in the Scriptures, not in any particular confessional statement, recognizing that the Scriptures are interpreted differently, and therefore, we're a tradition that has to live with a fair amount of diversity in the midst of unity centered in Christ and the Word of God (Bishop).

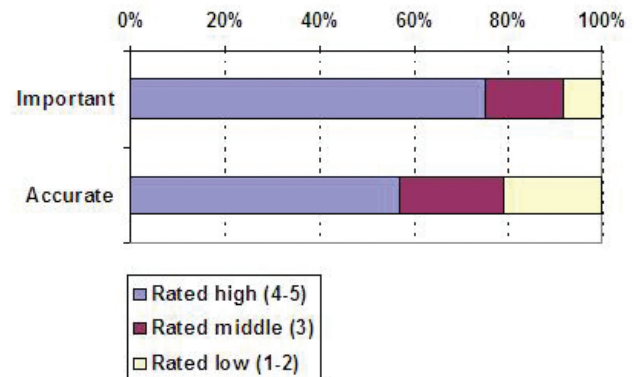
We are all here to learn from the Scriptures and worship our King. That is what everyone should remember (Lay survey).

Episcopalians regard scripture as highly important to their Church's identity. Episcopalians embrace the distinctive early Anglican heritage of presenting scripture to the people, in the language of the people. Ordained Episcopal leaders pledge that they recognize scripture to contain "all things necessary for salvation," and preaching is expected to draw directly upon the biblical texts read each day of worship. Further, clergy and laity often claim that people hear more scripture every week in the worship of the Episcopal Church than in other Protestant churches. In the Anglican emphasis of scripture, reason and tradition, Episcopalians rated scripture as most important.

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



However, Episcopalians – both leaders and congregation members – acknowledged a gap between the high aspiration of the centrality of scripture and the actual demonstration of being a church grounded in scripture. This distance between *should* and *is* in surveys is echoed in interviews. It is also reflected in the common public perception that Episcopalians do not know their Bibles as well as hoped for, despite the *BCP* lectionaries available for the daily reading of scripture. While Episcopalians rated scripture as more important than tradition, and reason (that is, in terms of what the Church *aspires to*), they rated scripture equal to or slightly lower than tradition and reason as accurate about identity (that is, in terms of what the Church actually *is*).

The Church is clearly not of one mind, and if the Church goes into any major decision like this without knowing what its theology is, then we really have strayed from the ability to use scripture as a tool to make decisions. And once you've strayed from the ability to use the scripture to make decisions, you're just kind of a group of people. You might as well be a political action committee because you're not defined in any one thing that people agree on anymore (Lay deputy).

The gap between *should* and *is* regarding scripture may be due to significant differences in how to interpret scripture. It has become clearer that scripture can be read from a variety of perspectives, and at its best each perspective is motivated by a quest for truth and revelation.

You can't just appeal to scripture because everybody claims to be scriptural. How do we read the scripture? When you use the best tools, the exegesis and devout hearts, and what do you come up with? The Anglicans have come up with the Prayer Book tradition and the articles, the creeds, the great catholic creeds (Representative stakeholder).

Shifts in scriptural interpretation are not unique to Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church moved in significant ways in scriptural interpretation, for example, from a treatment of Darwin as banned material to an embrace of evolution as a legitimate understanding of God's creative action. Lutheran scriptural interpretation has stepped beyond strictly delineated "Law and Gospel" distinctions laid out by Luther, particularly in response to injustice. Just as these two churches have people in their midst reading scripture from a wide range of perspectives, the Episcopal Church also has people who read and interpret scripture differently.

Basically, the position of my parish is [that] the traditional interpretations of scripture that have existed and been part of this Church for the past 2000 years should still be welcome in this Church. They should not be excluded now that this vote has been taken by General Convention; that "all those people are wrong." That's a lot of the feeling now in the broader discussion. "Now that we've taken this vote, old interpretations are wrong, and new interpretations are correct." The traditional-thinking people in our Church are not welcome. And I think my prayers wanted to make a particular stand, and express that traditional thinking people are still welcome in our Church (Lay deputy).

Unfortunately, Episcopalians who approach scripture differently often do not understand one another. Conservative and liberal Church leaders tend to take a negative view of approaches to biblical interpretation that differ from their own.

We really are held together by our common belief that we're trying to follow Jesus Christ and that we share communion together. I have found it a place where more than one interpretation on almost all things is welcome. One of the scary things here is that there are a sizable number of people, for the first time, who feel that there is only one way to approach the authority and interpretation of scripture. To me, this is something so non-Anglican ... (Clerical deputy).

When Episcopalians attempt to better understand such differences in biblical interpretation, they find the current Church conflicts that center on human sexuality are probably not the easiest places to start. For many, the stakes in those conflicts are simply too high, and the debate includes many issues and emotional responses that move beyond scriptural debate. Hearing can thus become impeded, and people can begin to exaggerate each other's perspectives.

They approach scripture – theologians, pastors, and liberal denominations – they approach scripture under what's known as the hermeneutic of suspicion; that is, they suspect that these things are ancient, and therefore irrelevant. And when the Bible speaks specifically about homosexual activity, and more generally about God's purpose in marriage, people suspect that this is, "this was good for an ancient day, but not necessarily needful for our current day" (Representative stakeholder).

Reflection Questions

- How well does the Church train people to read and listen to scripture, at all levels of involvement and leadership?
- How well-versed are Episcopal leaders in different approaches to biblical interpretation? What education across the Church might help in understanding the merits and limitations of approaches?
- How do our unique situations and emotional investments interact with our reading and understanding of scripture?

Pastoral

The perfect institutional church does not exist, nor can we create one – a better one maybe, for a time. In the meantime, caring for people, proclaiming the gospel, preaching and teaching, caring for one another: all that's the important stuff. That's where Christ is known. That's the blood and guts of the Church. The rest of this is just clothing (Representative stakeholder).

Part of all this sexuality issue makes it harder for parents to raise kids today, and for me, the Church has a true pastoral calling to help parents in every way that they can. Find resources to help them raise their kids educationally and spiritually (Lay deputy).

At its most basic, a pastoral perspective includes a deep, empathic appreciation of the full humanity of any person. It recognizes that any decisions made and counsel offered with individuals and local communities must take into account the real spiritual and physical needs, assets, and strengths of the people involved. People often invoke the word pastoral to refer to how the Church or its leaders have, or have not, responded to a deeply felt need.

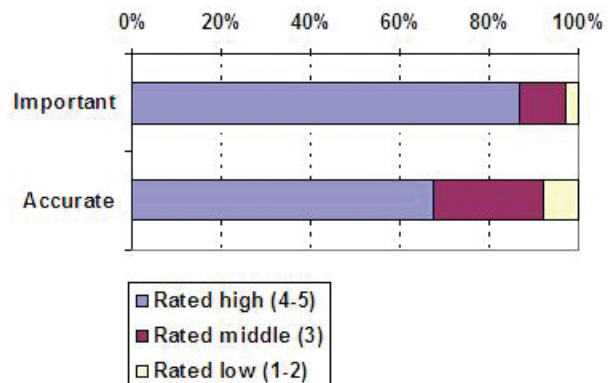
The term pastoral can be fuzzy and used in widely varying ways. For instance, common uses of the term pastoral indicate qualities such as kindness, warmth, emotional availability, sympathy, and accommodation of others' perspectives. Other uses of the word point to a set of actions associated with caring for people and offering guidance. The pastoral rites in the BCP (confirmation, marriage, reconciliation of a penitent, healing, and burial) encompass a sense

of the term pastoral as related to significant transitions in life circumstances.

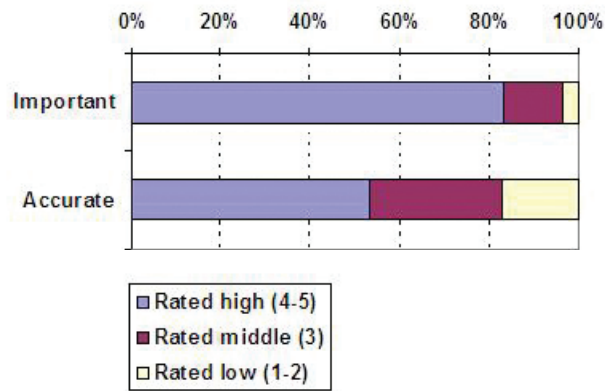
Pastoral: Portraying or expressive of the life of shepherds or country people especially in an idealized and conventionalized manner: idyllic; of or relating to spiritual care or guidance, especially of a congregation (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

Nonetheless, most Episcopalians regard pastoral as an important part of Episcopal identity, and a moderately accurate descriptor of the Church as it now is. As might be expected, people tend to see some distance between what *is* and what we *could be*, a gap that was particularly pronounced for congregation members. Only 54% of them saw pastoral as a highly accurate description of Episcopal identity (perhaps reflecting their own congregational experiences as well as their assessments of the wider Church).

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



As with other aspects of identity, Episcopalians seem to apply pastoral to widely different situations, and have a range of expectations. Pastoral engagement by any Christian with other people no doubt involves care and empathic recognition of shared human fallibility. However, being pastoral also engages people's wills and imaginations, as they look toward the fullness of Christ to which all are invited, and toward the fullness of being for which all were created.

Reflection Questions

- What do Episcopalians mean when they say "pastoral"? What are your associations with the term? What situations come to mind? What behaviors and responses do you expect, and how do you expect to feel as a result of pastoral encounter?
- To what extent is "pastoral" associated with clergy? To what extent is it associated with the local congregation and its individual members? To what extent is it associated with the Church as a whole?
- When are different kinds of pastoral response needed?

Table Talk: Episcopalians Discussing *Secondary* Identity Themes

This chapter includes descriptions and discussions of the secondary themes of Episcopal identity that emerged in interviews with Episcopalians. Ratings of these themes were moderately high and somewhat closely inter-related – but not as strong or central as the core identity themes.

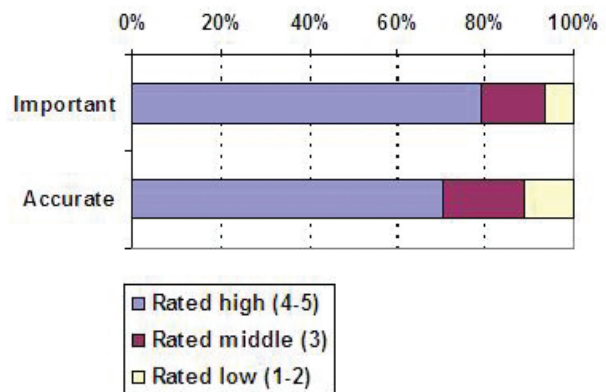
Reason

... We regard the Bible as central ... and what the Church has done, historically, is always part of our ethos because we don't pretend to invent religion today; we stand on the shoulders of the apostles. But reason, I think, is Anglicanism's peculiar contribution to the mix, because we have always been a thinking church. There was an advertising blitz for the Episcopal Church, kind of funny posters, and one of them said, "You don't have to leave your brain at the door when you join the Episcopal Church." And...this, I think, speaks to the current situation because what people have done is to say "Have we not learned anything from the social times? Have we not learned anything from biology? Have we not learned anything from psychology?" So we don't believe those are inimical to theology but cooperative with them. We look at the whole ball of wax (Representative stakeholder).

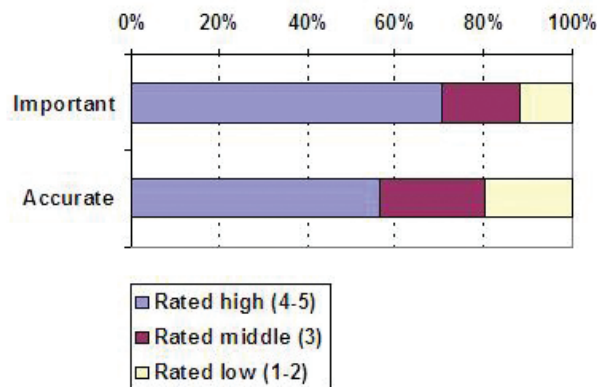
[The Anglican Communion] has strayed from the 'reason' leg of the tripod of scripture, tradition, reason (Lay survey).

Episcopalians hold a strong notion of their Church as a place where thinking Christians can find room for doubt, questioning, and engagement of the mind in general. Episcopalians also hold a deep regard for other sources of knowledge – the sciences, philosophy, and the arts – as God-given. Reason was accorded relatively high importance and accuracy as part of Episcopal identity, but endorsement of reason's centrality by leaders or congregation members was not unanimous. Overall, reason ranked second to scripture in importance but above tradition, although some regarded scripture, tradition, and reason as equally important.

Episcopal Church Leaders
(Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



Reason is considered essential for understanding and applying scripture and for discerning a right course of action. But what is reason? In interviews, many Episcopalians associated reason with free thinking and openness to new ways of thinking. For example, a lay congregation member described reason as “inclusion of human intelligence as a factor in evolving beliefs.” Episcopalians seem attracted to new ideas and greater complexity. Some spoke of their appreciation of a church where individual thinking was welcomed rather than discouraged.

It is, I think, and continues to be, a church that prides itself on being tolerant of questions, that doesn't think that there are simple answers; that is willing to constantly be open to new ideas, new interpretations, new understandings, new revelations, and to not be static (Lay deputy).

I've been an Episcopalian since I was born. And that's why I've always stayed with it – that you were allowed to think, have your own ideas, encouraged to think and have your own ideas, actually (Clerical deputy).

A high appreciation of reason and the potential for human understanding – combined perhaps

with the historic upper- and upper-middle-class status of the Episcopal Church – corresponds with a high value for education and the sciences. Congregation members and bishops alike noted a non-dogmatic approach to Christian education and an openness to multiple perspectives on truth as distinctive markers of Episcopal identity.

[There is] very little conflict between science and Episcopal theology (Lay survey).

I think we're a church that invites questions and engages hard issues as we continue to discover new things about the world and about humanity. We tend to listen to the questions of every given time, balancing scripture and tradition and new insights of reason and science. Therefore, we're a thoughtful church, a reflective church, and a church that has an appropriate amount of flexibility and openness to new insights, as well as the great tradition of biblical faith (Bishop).

Along with its strengths, an emphasis on reason also carries potential concerns. For instance, a focus on reason disembodied from the totality of the person can lead to an elevation of mind and a de-emphasis of emotion and any form of direct revelation. Even more risky, reason disembodied from its cultural context can lead to a belief that reason really can be “pure,” unaffected by our own perspective and position.

Interestingly, the Episcopal Church is described as having a theology expressed and shared more through its worship than through intellectual propositions. This raises questions about *how* reason is engaged by Episcopalians and to what end. Some people saw a relationship between the Episcopal Church's emphasis on reason

and its historical position of social privilege and prestige. Education and class can shape the social importance and use of reason in ways that might not be immediately obvious.

[The Episcopal Church] built a national cathedral. It took great pride in the fact that the political and economic leadership of this country were Episcopalian. That gave it kind of a crypto-establishment aura. That particular ... identity collapsed at a certain point. And I think, out of that, the Episcopal Church tried to put itself forward as a kind of enlightened form of Christianity with roots in a kind of rich history and liturgical tradition, but nonetheless open to the latest developments in learning and culture. And

I think this particular identity is still playing itself out. You see this in an attempt to distinguish ourselves from more conservative or "closed" communities, be they Roman Catholic or evangelical Protestant. So there's a kind of animosity within the mainstream of Episcopal clergy in particular against evangelicals and Catholics of an overly extreme identity. In other words, we pose; we present ourselves as an open, enlightened community. And I think through that, the links with historical Anglicanism, in fact, have played less and less a part (Representative stakeholder).

Reflection Questions

- What is reason? What are its qualities? Are reason and wisdom alike, and if so, how?
- How is reason fostered? What are the disciplines of reason? How are they best practiced?
- What sources of information do we access by applying reason to our theological understanding and Christian life?
- What are the similarities and differences between reason and free thinking?
- How do you employ reason effectively in understanding scripture, tradition, and contemporary context?
- How might reason differ across cultures and social or historical settings?

Inclusive

I think one of the things that has been very distinctive about us ... and which is, in some sense, in jeopardy, is sort of an Anglican comprehensiveness (Representative stakeholder).

My family and I are less conservative than the current leadership in the diocese. I have some concerns about the apparent support for non-inclusiveness in our diocese. Intolerance does not seem to me to be Christ-like behavior (Lay survey).

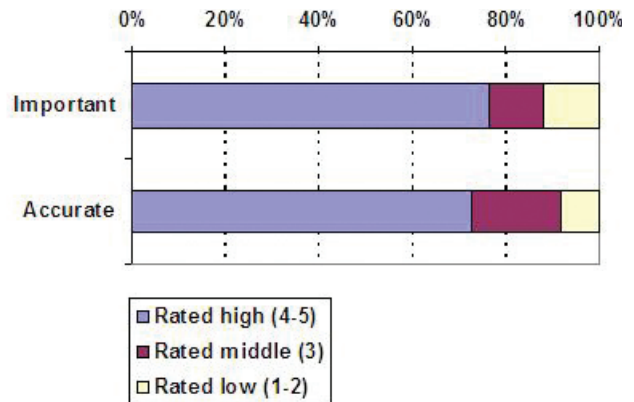
The theme of inclusiveness engendered some of the most vigorous conversation among Episcopalians interviewed. Inclusion has been a key theme discussed in the Church's debates, conflicts, and actions related to the place of gay and lesbian people in the life of the Church. In the past, it has also been a principal concern regarding the role of women in both lay and ordained leadership. Episcopalians who placed significant emphasis on inclusion often cited two significant movements in the Church and society as evidence of how the Church can change: women's rights (and women's ordination), and the Civil Rights movement.

The Episcopal Church had a history of ... having a big tent with lots of different kinds of people in it. There's an old expression that there are three kinds of Episcopalians: low and lazy, broad and hazy, high and crazy. So we've all managed to get together (Representative stakeholder).

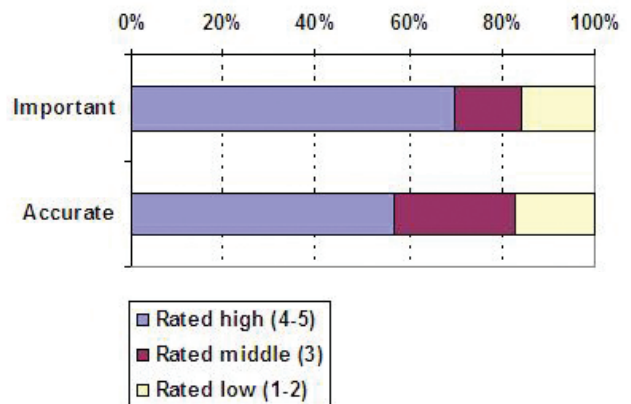
Inclusion is used as a banner or overarching goal by those who lead some of the progressive or liberal movements in the Church. It is often juxtaposed with "purity," a banner for those

who lead conservative movements. Inclusion is also raised by some conservative members and leaders as a question mark. For example, when the Episcopal Church seeks to include all people, does that include people who are socially or theologically conservative?

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



While the term "inclusion" aroused for Episcopalians a wide range of responses, most Episcopalians recognized it as an important part of Episcopal identity as well as an accurate description of the Church as it is. More than 76% of leaders and more than 70% of congregation members said that inclusion was an

important *aspiration* of the Church and nearly 73% of leaders (but only 56% of congregation members) indicated that it was a highly accurate description of what the Church currently is.

For many Episcopalians, inclusion connotes the practical reality of Anglican comprehensiveness: an expansive vision of a “big tent” and an expansive representation of redeemed humanity in leadership.

My parish exhibits a radical hospitality in welcoming all people into the presence of Christ, which makes my heart sing (Lay survey).

I think the thing that brought me to the Episcopal Church was ... the comprehensiveness of it. That it really is the sort of the big tent meeting place where there is home for one more. It's Rehoboth – the mythological name of King David's palace was Rehoboth, “room for one more.” The comprehensiveness of the Episcopal Church of the Anglican Communion is very important to me, as well as its ability (at least up until now) to hold in tension such divergent perspectives (Representative stakeholder).

Inclusion has come to represent a direct consequence of an incarnational faith. Christ's relationship with people of all walks of life is cited as the example to which the Episcopal Church aspires.

It was a sense that the Church was following the model that Christ set of radical inclusion. He dined with the unclean; he spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well. All the parables are about inclusion, inclusion, inclusion, and don't worry quite so much about what the Pharisees or those in religious power or what the Levitical law said. First operate with love and acceptance, so it seemed to me we were following the mind of Christ (Representative stakeholder).

Some fundamental struggles emerge from emphasizing inclusion. For example, to what extent does inclusion mean assimilation of a group into the greater whole, and to what extent does it mean that the greater whole accommodates and adjusts to the unique beliefs and practices of a newly included group?

[I think it was] in 1949 at the General Convention when ... a priest from the Diocese of Pittsburgh said, “People are coming back from the war, families are moving to suburbs, we need a sign so people can find the Episcopal Church.” And General Convention said “OK, the Methodists are doing this, the Lutherans are doing this, we need a sign.” So they commissioned the national Church to develop a sign, sort of a logo that could be hung in neighborhoods around and cities around the country that would help direct people to find the Episcopal Church. And that sign said, “The Episcopal Church Welcomes You.” Well, we had never said that before [laughing]. We had said, “Anybody who needs to be an Episcopalian

already is one.” And so I think that we’ve begun to live into our own vision. And we’re now living into the reality of that vision. Yeah, the Episcopal Church welcomes you and yeah, we mean it, and that means you. But what if that person is a different color, what if that person is a different gender – or maybe they can come into the church, but they have to stay in the pew, they can’t come behind the altar or serve on the vestry ... So we’re living into the tension of what it means to say “The Episcopal Church Welcomes You” (Representative stakeholder).

This quotation speaks to the heart of some of the struggles inherent in inclusion. *Assimilating* inclusion simply absorbs others into existing realities and structures without adjustment. *Accommodating* inclusion requires adjustment by the larger body to take in the unique contributions of the newly included group. This leads to discussion, debate, conflict, and creativity in problem-solving. But it also requires an inevitable adjustment in *identity*. Some who advocate strongly for inclusiveness as part of the identity of the Episcopal Church see a fundamental challenge to current leadership, a challenge of identity adjustment.

Another challenge inherent in inclusion is the question, “Included for what?” Without a clear statement of purpose by the including organization or community, a simple emphasis on inclusion can become vacuous and even a bit imperial. Clear statements of purpose and commitment can come from identity themes regarded by Episcopalians as most central and important, including our centeredness on Christ and our shared sacramental and incarnational

theology as expressed in the *Book of Common Prayer* and found in scripture.

A challenge raised by more conservative Episcopal leaders was the question regarding borders or boundaries of inclusion. When does inclusion come into conflict with scripture? If they are in conflict, how do we make judgments about what is most central in scripture? And do these collective judgments include diverse voices and theological perspectives?

So now you have a Church leadership that has, in essence, said “We don’t believe the basic tenets of the Bible on these important and specific matters.” But the leadership is saying “Never mind that. You can still be liberal and catholic and evangelical and charismatic and enjoy the full unity in our diversity.” But they have not appreciated the impact of denying the clear teaching of scripture on all evangelicals and all charismatics and all Anglo-Catholics (Representative stakeholder).

In other words, when the Church (or any organization) says it embraces inclusion, this declaration is not always met with adequate emphasis to make inclusion a reality. People of color responding to the survey tended to give lower ratings to the *accuracy* of inclusion as a descriptor of Episcopal identity. That is, their experience of the Church did not indicate to them that inclusion was in actuality a central focus of identity, purpose, and value.

Reflection Questions

- What do Episcopalians mean by “inclusion”? What does it mean to include?
- How has your congregation or diocese practiced “assimilating inclusion”? How has it practiced “accommodating inclusion”? What have been the results?
- When is inclusion most genuine?
- What boundaries of inclusion does the Church hold, and what boundaries does it question? What are Episcopalians’ shared theological resources for engaging questions of inclusion and boundaries? On what grounds can Christians justifiably exclude, and from what?
- Are there “levels” of inclusion? Does inclusion always imply immediate and full access?
- What responsibilities and responses are incumbent on the including organization? What responsibilities and responses are incumbent on the included groups?
- How does a church navigate conflicts when various included communities come into conflict over their Christian beliefs and practices?

Tradition

I believe we’re a church that has balanced the great Catholic sacramental tradition with the insights of the Reformation ... We’re a church that finds its unity in the scriptures, not in any particular confessional statement, recognizing that the scriptures are interpreted differently. And therefore, we’re a tradition that has to live with a fair amount of diversity in the midst of unity centered in Christ and the word of God ... in the Anglican tradition of which we’re a part, the threefold

authorities of scripture, tradition and reason, and with them, the related traditions, they represent the evangelical, the catholic and the liberal, like a three-stranded rope all woven together (Bishop).

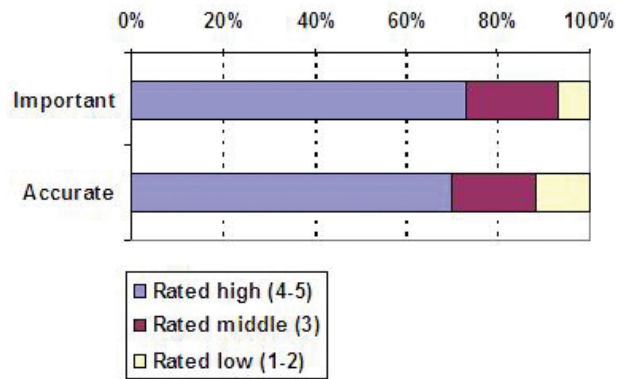
I think there’s a certain self-righteousness that is part of our DNA that’s just manifested itself in new ways in this day and time. That’s when I get most upset; it is over the self-righteousness, the looking down our nose at folks who disagree with us, which is our worst self. In terms of pride, I am glad

that we are a place with an incredible richness of history and, in our best moments, value the various strands of our tradition that weave together, that create the Episcopal Church. In our best moments we really do value these things. We just get mad at each other and pretend that we don't (Bishop).

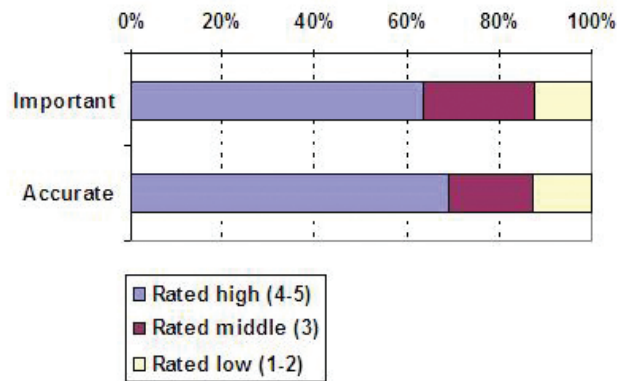
Episcopalians recognize tradition as a moderately important aspect of Episcopal identity. The distinctly Anglican emphasis on tradition (that is, the fullness of Christian tradition) charts a course between Reformers emphasizing scripture alone (*sola scriptura*) and Roman Catholics emphasizing Church tradition as God's ongoing revelation. The *BCP* points to continuity of tradition in the historical documents and in the historical prefaces of earlier prayer books.

Nearly 74% of Episcopal leaders rated tradition as highly important to Episcopal identity, and 70% rated tradition as a highly accurate description of Episcopal identity. Congregation members' ratings of importance and accuracy were similarly close, though importance was rated slightly lower than accuracy (63% and 69%, respectively). For most respondents, there was a high degree of coherence between how well tradition describes what the Church *is* and how well it describes what the Church *aims to be*.

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



For the 16th century Anglican, Richard Hooker, tradition was a critical element in the life and theology of the Church, to be evaluated along with but subordinate to scripture and reason. Hooker's ordering is echoed in this study, which rates tradition as important to Episcopal identity but somewhat less important than scripture and reason. But in contrast, Episcopalians tended to rate tradition (and reason) as somewhat more accurate descriptions of actual Episcopal identity than scripture. Also, 30% of respondents did not think tradition accurately described a central and distinctive emphasis of the Episcopal Church in its identity, purpose, and values.

Episcopalians questioning the place of tradition in the current life of the Church expressed concern about the willingness of Episcopalians to change longstanding positions, in essence, to “break with tradition.”

So this whole [new] understanding of the ancient bedrock foundations of our faith has finally come to full blossom in the Episcopal Church, where if you listen to the arguments of the liberal-leaning or revisionist-thinking, they will actually say that these are ancient documents there to guide us, but their relevance for today is not real. In fact ... they say, in a wild statement, that “God is doing a new thing.” Just on the surface, that is such an arrogant statement that now, in my culture, in my lifetime, God is doing a new thing and we can therefore overturn 2000 years of teaching and 4000 years of tradition (Representative stakeholder).

The manner in which Episcopalians engage tradition and its relationship to scripture and reason has become part of the current debate in the Church. For many Episcopalians, engaging tradition and reason with scripture signals something about the work of contextualizing the Gospel. Some Episcopalians do not see this type of effort exercised to the same degree in Anglican churches in some other nations.

Some parts of the communion tend to see the Bible’s authority in a much more singular fashion, whereas, in other parts of the communion, including for the most part, the Episcopal Church, the Bible’s authority is much more contextual. That old Anglican stool of tradition and reason and the scriptures is much more the mode of decision making. Whereas in other parts of the communion, the Bible is first and those other things are important and can have an effect, but they can never trump the Bible (Representative stakeholder).

Given the nature of Anglicanism, and its efforts at making room for contextual development of the Church in each nation and culture, multiple traditions have emerged. Church polity and governance differ from place to place, reflecting the nations and cultures in which these policies emerged. Practices in worship differ, and these differences have increased as churches move to speak more directly to their local contexts. Within the Episcopal Church itself, differences in tradition exist from region to region, reflecting local theological and missional history as well as cultural differences.

For some, the current tensions in the Episcopal Church result from lack of education and immersion in the deep tradition of Anglicanism and the Episcopal Church. For others, the current issues are an outcome of over attachment to tradition at the expense of prayerfully discerning any ongoing revelation or movement of the Holy Spirit.

Many of the issues that I confront in this diocese, when a rector leaves or when there's a crisis in the Church, even the situation at [a congregation] when that group was seeking to depart from the Episcopal Church, a lot of that had to do with clergy who did not train people about the rich history of Anglican tradition and the particulars of the Episcopal Church. So we had people who had no real sense of allegiance or sense of obligation to anything Episcopal. In fact, in some cases it was a negative. It was used as, "The Episcopal Church is everything we're not; we're different than the Episcopal Church." And I think where that's been allowed to take place has been damaging (Bishop).

[By paying] attention to elements of conservation and liberation, both of which have to be part of our dynamic identity ... we can serve tradition. And, faith is also about liberation. What we inherited from the Jewish tradition and what we experienced as Christ's resurrection is a kind of liberation. ... An ideal Church would be one that celebrates all those dimensions of a dynamic identity, one that is a living faith tradition, experiencing a living God, a risen Christ, the Holy Spirit, as opposed to just hanging on to perspectives of an earlier time or traditions that are handed down in one parish, for example (Bishop).

Part of the tension from holding tradition as part of our identity arises from these questions: Whose tradition? Which tradition or traditions will be followed, and which will be neglected or diminished? There is not a single tradition of Christianity, nor has there been a single tradition uniformly followed within Anglicanism or the Episcopal Church. The Episcopal Church, like other denominations, is more of a "tradition of selected traditions." However, at times of political or theological polarization, the set of traditions can become divided, and serve one position over another. It is at such conflicted times that tradition, which might otherwise serve as an anchor, instead can be used to intensify the dispute.

If I were to describe sort of the ideal, what I would like to see is an image that I used ... of a sailboat where some are called to catch the winds of the Spirit that blows all kinds of different direction. And sometimes I wish I were that kind of person, but I'm not. I'm called to be a keel, sort of to be a stabilizing piece to keep the boat from turning over. But I think that both of those pieces of sort of "new occasions teach new duties," – Holy Spirit wind blowing, and the stabilizing piece of the tradition and the keel, [are] essential to keep the boat doing what it needs to do. And sometimes I'm fearful that the ministry of the keel is not appreciated and we have keels bailing out right and left (Bishop).

Reflection Questions

- What parts of Christian tradition are not practiced or embraced by the Episcopal Church? Why?
- What are the written and unwritten traditions of the Episcopal Churches in your diocese? What aspects of Christian tradition are emphasized equally, and what aspects are emphasized differently, from congregation to congregation?
- How do we determine what belongs to Christian tradition and what does not? What is considered tradition-with-a-capital-T, as opposed to an enduring local cultural Christian tradition, or an idiosyncratic tradition of a particular time or place?
- How might tradition best be considered in the light of scripture and reason?
- When does tradition bind, and when does tradition free?

Common Liturgy

The first thing I'd say [is that the Church] is very liturgically oriented. That's one word, and that's the heart and soul, I think, of us (Representative stakeholder).

The beauty and shape of our liturgy, and the way that that can be found throughout the Episcopal Church, going from church to church, having prayer and all of the other rites available to us can make one, wherever you travel, feel a little bit at home (Bishop).

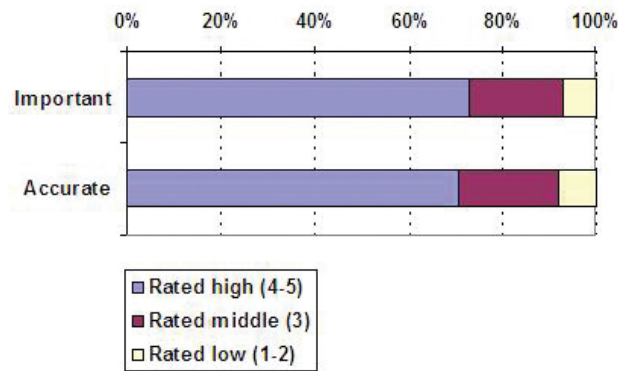
The sense of common liturgy is important to many Episcopalians. Even with the diversity of liturgical forms available in the *BCP* and the various supplements (*Enriching Our Worship*),

Episcopal churches are recognizable by their particular liturgical format, language, style, and expressed theology. While the *BCP* provides a theological and historical anchor, the lived practice of Episcopal worship reflects how Episcopalians encounter and praise God.

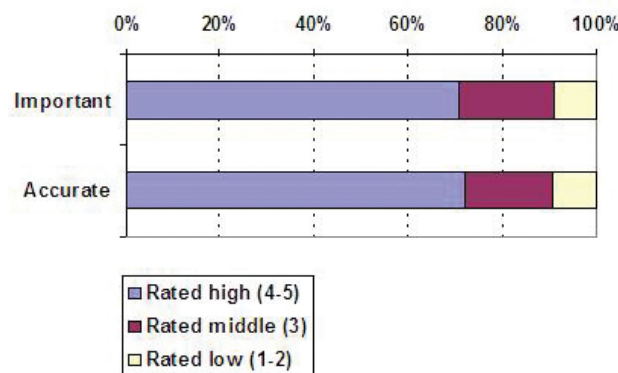
I'm a cradle Episcopalian, and my sense of the identity of the Episcopal Church, what is central and enduring about us, is our liturgical tradition that brings together people with different interpretations, and different emphases, and different theological understandings. That has been one of our great strengths (Bishop).

The majority of Episcopal leaders and members (more than 70%) regarded a common liturgy as highly accurate and important for Episcopal identity, while about 30% gave it lower ratings. While many see common liturgy as quite central and distinctive to the Church's identity, others see a common liturgy as less central.

Episcopal Church Leaders
(Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



Both “cradle” Episcopalians and converts to the Episcopal Church frequently mention experience of the liturgy as an important appeal. Episcopalians are drawn by the rich history, beauty, and flexibility of the Episcopal liturgies.

What attracts me to the Episcopal Church would be the liturgy, which keeps in touch with the pre-Reformation Church, as well as embodies insights that came at the Reformation. So we have a very gracious and beautiful liturgy that allows wide participation and can be used rigidly and can be used fairly freely (Representative stakeholder).

This attraction to form raises a key question for some Episcopalians: To what extent does form trump substance? Others wonder whether aesthetic interest and motivation can get in the way of inclusiveness or discipleship.

I've never thought of the Episcopal Church as a large mega-church that attracts lots and lots of people, but rather a church that has a pretty select interest group, if you will, those that particularly enjoy putting a lot of their efforts and energies into worship and liturgy and style, if you will. Although I don't necessarily think that it's a stylish thing to be an Episcopalian, but I do think the Episcopal Church does value the way in which things are done, as much as it values the things that it does (Lay deputy).

The links in our minds between liturgy, aesthetics, and style raise challenging questions about class and culture. Attachments to particular aesthetic forms, while they can energize congregational conflicts over worship, are powerful. They reflect passionately guarded memories of experiences in liturgy that have shaped lives.

Reflection Questions

- What theology is expressed in our common liturgies? What are we saying about God, what are we saying to God, and what do we believe God is saying to us?
- To what extent is liturgy central to your congregation's or diocese's identity as Episcopalian? Can you recognize and participate in the liturgies of other Episcopal churches? What about those of churches in other denominations?
- What is most important about Episcopal liturgy? What are its strengths? What are its deficits? What, if anything, do you sense is missing?
- How does aesthetic liturgical experience shape or not shape people's Christian lives?
- How does the Episcopal Church's focus on liturgy, aesthetics, and style impact its efforts at inclusiveness and discipleship?

Ceremonial

It is very important to the "old guard" portion of our parish that we maintain the identity of "high church", sophisticated, traditional and conservatively liberal. Our rector has balanced a fine line between growth and patience to bringing our parish into a new place of growth (Lay survey).

Along with a strong identity found in the *Book of Common Prayer* and a relatively strong focus of identity on common liturgy, the Episcopal Church also has a reputation for ceremony. This tradition is in part an Anglican inheritance, including services of Advent Lessons and Carols, the ordination of clergy and bishops,

and the rich choral traditions of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer.

The ceremonial quality of Episcopal worship also reflects more recent liturgical renewal movements that have highlighted some significant Anglo-Catholic contributions, although highly ceremonial services can range from "low church" congregations with elaborate processions for Morning Prayer to "high church" congregations, where incense and bells accentuate the celebration of Eucharist. Musical styles can range within ceremony as well, from Tudor English choral anthems and Medieval Latin chant to African drums, jazz, and hip-hop. The continuing expansion of supplemental books such as *Lesser Feasts and*

Fasts, The Book of Occasional Services, and *Enriching Our Worship* provides ceremony for every day of every liturgical season and special rites for a wide array of events and circumstances in our lives.

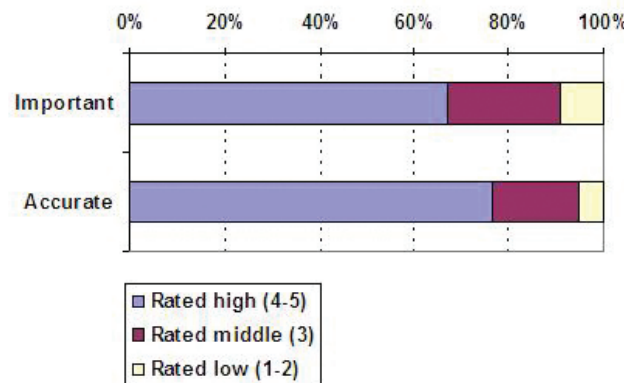
Not all ceremony is Catholic in origin, as the Episcopal Church and the Church of England also have histories of ceremonial worship. However, several interview respondents noted a move toward more Roman Catholic ceremonial expressions, beginning in the 1800's and culminating in some of the changes in the 1979 BCP.

Up to that point the identity of the Episcopal Church had been taken, of course, from the Church of England, and there was a very strong sense of anti-Catholicism, that Rome was still sort of the "Guy Fawkes Church," as I call it; the sense that those Romans are out there ready to blow us up. That was still very much of a part of the consciousness of the 19th century Episcopal Church in the US. Now in the midst of all of this comes this Anglo-Catholic movement, the Oxford Movement that says, "You know, Roman Catholicism is not all bad. And in fact, we'd like to see our ceremonial return to some of the elements of Catholic ceremonial, such as having monstrances and reserving the Blessed Sacrament, and this sort of thing." And that just went all over the more traditionally Protestant, evangelical folks (Representative stakeholder).

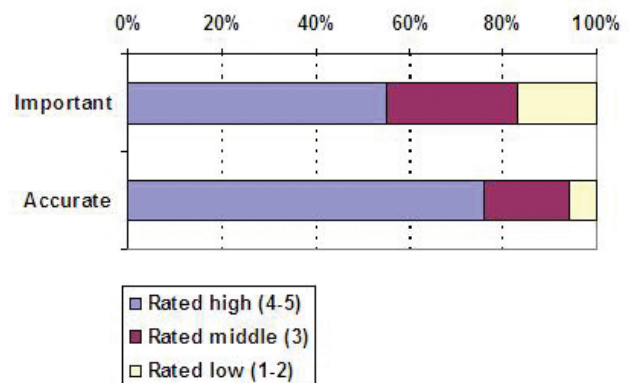
Not all Episcopalians see the emphasis on ceremonial as centrally important to the Episcopal Church, and a significant percentage recognized a bit of an imbalance between its importance and its actual emphasis. Nearly 77% of leaders and more than 75% of congregation members

rated ceremonial as a highly accurate description of something central to Episcopal identity, but only 67% of leaders and 55% of congregation members regarded ceremonial as highly important. Thus, many Episcopalians see some disparity, as the actual emphasis on ceremony outpaces its importance.

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



We are moving toward a more traditional service at a time when fewer and fewer people can identify with these ways (Lay survey).

I think it would become more and more a ritualized part of the sort of pan-Protestant mainstream. We would still have more splendid ceremonies than the Presbyterians and the Methodists and dress up rather differently and all of that. But I think more and more our doctrine would accommodate those directions. Sometimes one fears that one is reading things into others' statements. For instance, the presiding bishop recently gave a sermon on the Eucharist at St. Paul's Cathedral in London and what I read of that sermon, made me really wonder if the ceremony of admiration surrounding the liturgy in our Church really has meaning or is just being done because it's fun (Representative stakeholder).

This critique is mentioned not only by evangelical members of the Episcopal Church, but also by Anglo-Catholics. Here, discussion focuses on concerns that form may have taken the place of what it was intended to represent and signify.

I remember Anglo-Catholics saying in the early 70s that we [Anglo-Catholics] had won. And I know my bishop ... says [Eucharist is the] central service, Eucharist every day, everybody uses [candles and albs] ... there's

no issue about reserving the Blessed Sacrament. And what I tried to convey to him is that in terms of externals, you could say that the Anglo-Catholics won. In terms of substance that Anglo-Catholics sought to express through those externals, we have lost. Dr. Pusey, the founder of the Anglo-Catholic movement, cautioned young, and shall we say wilder, men against advanced ceremonial, because he said ceremonial would be seen as its own end. And ceremonial was meant to consolidate doctrine; that's what the Anglo-Catholic movement was about – doctrine. He lost that argument, but I think he's shown himself prescient (Representative stakeholder).

Ceremonial as a strength can also become a hindrance. Secular broadcast media can at times depict the Episcopal Church's worship as a kind of archetype of pomp and circumstance, particularly as they show clips from worship in cathedrals or at national or diocesan gatherings. This may contribute to public images of an elite church, which are as prevalent as or more prevalent than images of a sacramental community. As more rites and written prayers are created and used for various occasions, these images can affect how Episcopalians think about and access prayer.

Reflection Questions

- Why is ceremony so strong in the identity of the Episcopal Church?
- How well does ceremony support Christians in our discipleship?
- What is central, and what is peripheral, in our ceremonial worship?
- How can we best use ceremony to point to the deep theological understanding embedded in it? How do we evaluate ceremony for its focus, purpose, and content?
- How does ceremony reflect and speak directly to people inside and outside the Church?
- How well does ceremony express what we see as most central about our particular Christian identity as Episcopalians?

Experience

You have a lot of different ways of going about Jesus and you have a lot of different ways of going about God, and that's good. Let's hear about what your experience has to say. I'll tell you what mine is. If we put it all together we'll have a very colorful tapestry (Representative stakeholder).

To me, the question is "Can you see from your experience with them as full people that they are filled with the Holy Spirit?" And if they are, get out of the way (Representative stakeholder).

Some Episcopalians speak of experience as an important facet in theological reflection, an addition in fact to Hooker's triumvirate of scripture, reason, and tradition. Here again, people share a sense of the theme's importance but ap-

pear to understand its meaning in different ways. Experience in this context can refer to a person's experience of God (an essential element in Christian life emphasized by the Wesley's and others of the Great Awakening). It can also refer to one's own experience in general or experience of the Church, others, or life as a whole. Attending to these forms of experience becomes pastoral, in that it helps people develop spiritually and become more awake to God's presence and grace in their daily lives.

That's been an ongoing struggle of the Episcopal Church – that its rich liturgy gives one an experience of God, the awesome God who created us, but we haven't always done a good job of helping people know, day in and day out, what that looks like and how to live that out (Clerical deputy).

For many Episcopalians, introducing experience into theological reflection and decision-making can be a form of giving testimony, bearing witness to God’s plenitude of grace and the multiple ways God touches human life. Some regard experience as an important source of information in practicing discernment, a kind of “show me” sensibility in which one can recognize through experience of people something about their character, integrity, and God’s work in their lives. Scripture, Christian reflection, and our immersion in the spiritual life of the Church help shape this kind of attunement to people.

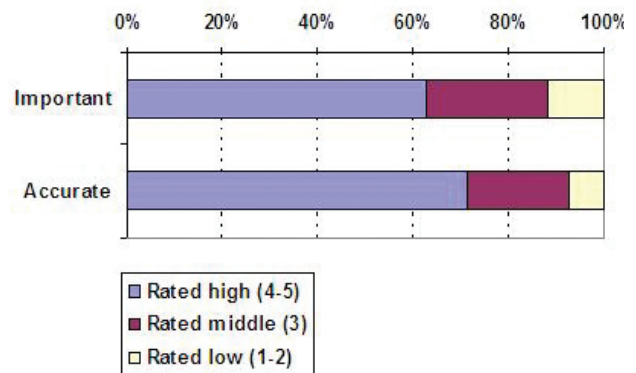
Experience has *de facto* been a part of pastoral and ethical considerations from the earliest beginnings of the Church. Part of this attentiveness to experience comes from a fundamental Christian recognition that human life is complex and rarely straightforward, that sin and grace, brokenness and human goodness often intertwine. Part of the attention to experience stems from an incarnational faith, as well. Episcopalians spoke of how people experienced God and God’s transformation in different ways, and how this was an integral part of the greater Christian story.

I think one of the major things of scripture and the major messages of Christianity is the surprise that we experience when we see God’s presence and God’s blessing in an unexpected place or person (Clerical deputy).

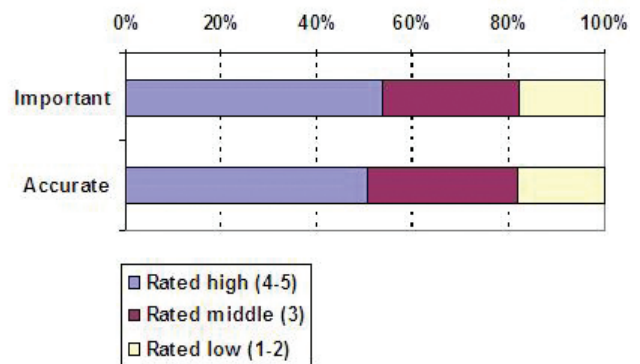
This being said, Episcopalians were not of one mind about the significance of experience as an aspect of Episcopal identity. While more than 71% of Church leaders considered experience as something that accurately describes what the Church actually emphasizes and values, only 63% of leaders regarded experience as a highly

important part of the Episcopal Church’s identity. The other 37% rated experience as something less important or unimportant to the Church. For leaders, there is disparity between accuracy and importance, with some Episcopalians seeing more emphasis currently given to experience than what they think *should be* given.

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



Congregation members also rated experience as less central than tradition, reason and scripture. But their views of accuracy and importance were relatively consistent, suggesting an overall perceived coherence between *aspiration* and *actual* identity, as well as a general sense that experience was not among the most central themes of Episcopal identity.

The disparity for leaders may be related to how experience is being used in current Church debates and controversies. As recommended by bishops and other leaders in the Episcopal Church – and by Anglican bishops of previous Lambeth gatherings – the Church has begun to engage in a long process of listening to the experience of gay and lesbian individuals. For some, this period of listening has gone on long enough; for others, it has not been long enough. For still others, even the prospect of engaging in such a listening process seems wrong.

The Episcopal Church takes seriously the voice of culture. Richard Hooker is often cited for the three legged stool of Scripture, tradition, and reason. It was John Macquarrie who expanded that. He's not the only one, but he certainly expanded beyond those three to say that the formative factors of theology would include experience, revelation, Scripture, tradition, reason, but he also added culture. In the end [he] said, "Culture is what ultimately reminds us that our theology is never done" (Bishop).

I would want to go a little further than just "believe." I think it has to do with experience too. Most of us are products of our environment, and whatever way we've been introduced to the grace of God through the Christian witness becomes our standard. That's what we're comfortable with. For many people, the notion of a gay Christian is an anomaly. It sure was for me. As I've talked with people one-on-one, when I meet people whose primary experience with gay people has been negative, or frightening, or confusing, or just they haven't had any

individual experience, but have just picked up the vibes of the culture. Then the notion of a gay person being bishop is just [frightening], or even downright threatening – especially if the experience with someone gay was threatening. So I think that a lot of resistance may be because of their own personal histories. I know that's true for me because my experience with the first gay people I met was a very positive one. And I've wondered, "Would I have the same opinion, had my initial experience with gay people been very negative, traumatic, frightening" (Clerical deputy)?

When people share experiences that are unusual for most Church members, they and the Church community face a different kind of challenge. Unfamiliar experiences can remain unfamiliar because of lack of interaction with different cultural worlds. When those individuals share experiences unfamiliar to a community, they face challenges of not only describing their experiences but explaining them, showing their importance, and pointing to the ways they have understood their experiences as Christians. In essence, they face the task of being apologists for their experiences. This includes drawing attention to the limits of the community's current understanding. This apologist's approach was applied to the African practice of polygamy, and was earlier a key strategy in the movement toward women's ordination. In these cases, the rest of the Episcopal or Anglican community faced the task of listening to people's experiences and asking new questions about scripture, reason, and tradition.

The Episcopal Church has been pushed into being – has been pushed by these very faithful gay and lesbian Christians and their friends and family – into being more honest about that. We’ve been ordaining gay men for centuries. We’ve just lied about it. As we began to understand that we need to be more honest in all sorts of ways, that was happening with that issue too. And gay and

lesbians were becoming emboldened and more courageous and standing up and saying “I’m who you’re talking about.” You’re having this discussion in your parish hall. Let me stand up and say “That’s me you’re talking about. Your neighbor, your baby sitter, the guy who lives down the street, the woman you see jogging by your house: that’s me” (Representative stakeholder).

Reflection Questions

- What experiences have shaped your understanding of scripture? How has scripture shaped your understanding of certain experiences?
- Are there experiences of God that you readily share within your church? What makes that possible?
- Are there experiences of God that you do not share within your church? What stops you from sharing those experiences?
- How does experience of certain people shape your general attitude toward “types” of people? How does the process of developing mental “types” enter current church debates, and does it affect all sides?

Societal Change (Two Identity Themes: Responsive to Societal Change and Source of Societal Change)

[The Episcopal Church is] a place that has in various ways tried to engage the realities of national culture in a non-isolated fashion ... (Clerical deputy).

With its engagement of a Social Gospel, and a focus on being a moral voice for the nation that dates back to the late 1700's, the Episcopal Church has sought to engage society in meaningful ways. Episcopalians are motivated to "make a difference" – to address social needs and concerns, and to serve in some way as transforming agents in our communities, nations, and the world.

The one thing that I hear and see constantly out there is that there is a large group of people, and I would say not only a majority, but a large majority in this Church, that wants to get on with mission. And their answer to all this – they may not use the term – they want to do things that make a difference. They want to join hands and run a food bank or something in the town. They want to sponsor a hospital in Haiti, they want to do things, where we being many are one in Christ (Representative stakeholder).

Episcopalians have thought intensely and critically about the societal engagement of the Episcopal Church. In doing so, whether praising or criticizing, they addressed two forms of societal engagement: (1) a responsive or reactive approach, and (2) an advocating or proactive approach. (These correspond to the two themes

of this section: Responsive to Societal Change and Source of Societal Change. Because they are closely related, they are treated together, even though Source of Societal Change actually comes out as a tertiary theme, and therefore less related and less central to the identity of the Church.)

The first form, the responsive approach to societal engagement, includes both pastoral responsiveness (that is, responding directly to real societal needs and concerns) and identity adjustment (that is, allowing cultural changes to change the Church). In *EIP* interviews, the positive elements of responsiveness to societal change included cultural sensitivity and direct care. The negative elements of responsiveness included slowness to act, capitulation to unhealthy patterns, and failures to lead or take a stand. Responsiveness is tightly linked in Episcopalians' minds with inclusiveness and an emphasis on experience, both secondary Episcopal identity themes.

You don't just start from a clean slate, so to speak. You inherit much about the culture of the Church from the place in which you experience it, and I think that's true all over the United States, as well as in the Anglican Communion (Bishop).

I think another issue regarding the broader culture is that ... sadly sometimes we more reflect the culture than transform it. I think we do represent the kind of progressive liberal elite of the East Coast. That's kind of the mindset. And so the values of the Church, at least as they get articulated sometimes, it's on a national level. Some more like the values of the liberal elite of the East Coast,

and I speak as a native [of state], than, shall we say, the values of the Kingdom of God. And so it's really easy for us to mistake what we soak in from a culture for what God is actually asking us to do, and I see that as one of our kind of spiritual Achilles heels (Bishop).

At its root, the second form, the advocating or proactive approach to societal engagement, involves providing an example to society through the Church's ministries. It also entails more direct challenges to society through public statements, political leverage, advocacy and protest, and alliances formed to bring about social change. The positive elements of this proactive approach include a sense of responsibility for shaping the common good and a contribution to systemic change. The negative aspects of a proactive approach include concerns that it's all talk and no action. Also, there's a perception of the Church's influence that exceeds the reality. The proactive approach to societal engagement was consistently among our tertiary Episcopal identity themes and also linked to themes of diverse theological positions and a prophetic voice.

I think The Episcopal Church is a church that values worship, values liturgy, and also values a role in society of asking the hard questions; of challenging society to be more inclusive, to grow, to stretch, to be something of an example in society (Lay deputy).

The fundamental questions about how the Episcopal Church interacts with society are reminiscent of Richard Niebuhr's questions in *Christ and Culture*: To what degree does the

Church affirm and honor the good in society? To what extent does it challenge or attempt to transform society? And to what degree does it withdraw from society? Even more fundamentally, "how much is the Church shaped by the culture in which it is situated?" This question undergirds the debates and conflicts that have emerged over the decades and centuries in the Episcopal Church (and any mission-focused church in any context).

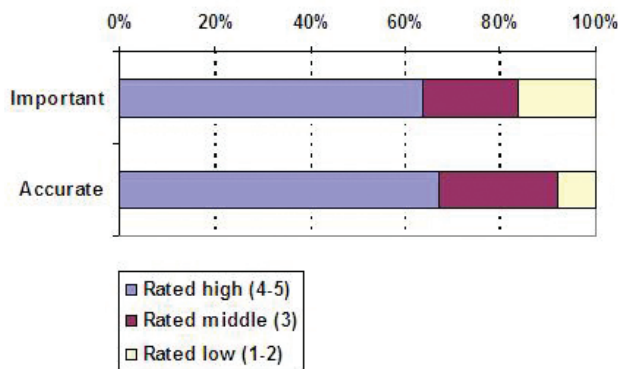
We interact with society to help bring about life changing experiences for Christians. We can't withdraw from society all together, although there is a segment that wants to do that and that's not just in the Episcopal Church. That's across the theological spectrum. There are those who want us to be the culture. Of course that, unfortunately, can lead to a dangerous [path.] I can think of the dangerous experience of Nazism, frankly. That's what they were doing (Bishop).

Obviously, I would like, most days, to believe that the Church is ... [having] a great influence on the culture. But in my more realistic moments, what I hope for is not so much that culture changes the Church, or the Church changes the culture, but that there be an exchange between the culture and the Church. ... It is in that living exchange that goes on that I think people are brought to more thoughtful places, and deeper places, and deeper experiences (Bishop).

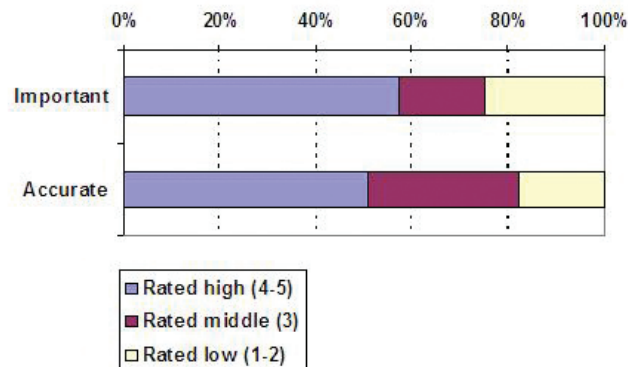
Episcopalians regarded responsiveness to societal change as moderately important and moderately accurate, with 64% of Church leaders and 57% of congregation members rating responsiveness

as highly important to what they believed the Episcopal Church aspires to be and 67% of leaders and 51% of congregation members rating responsiveness as a highly accurate description of what the Episcopal Church is. Interestingly, 16% of leaders rated responsiveness as unimportant – something for the Church not to hold as primary to its identity.

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies) Responsive to Societal Change



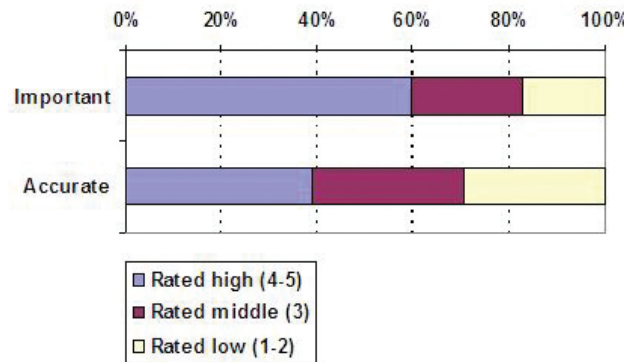
Episcopal Congregation Members Responsive to Societal Change



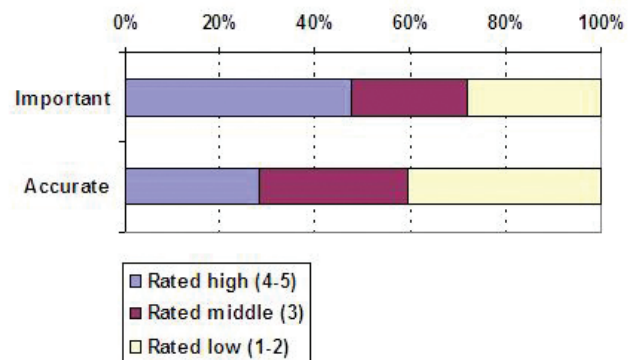
In contrast, Episcopalians rated the proactive approach to societal engagement (Source of Societal Change) as moderately important, but not very accurate: 60% of leaders and 48% of congregation members rated proactive societal engagement as highly important to the Episco-

pal Church's aspirations, while 17% of leaders and 28% of congregation members rated it as unimportant. More significantly, only 39% of leaders and 28% of congregation members rated proactive societal engagement as a highly accurate description of the Episcopal Church as it currently is, while 29% of leaders and 40% of members rated it as an inaccurate description. In other words, there is a marked disparity between what Episcopalians see as the actual proactive social engagement of the Church and how important they think it is for the Church.

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies) Source of Societal Change



Episcopal Congregation Members Source of Societal Change



The question of what role the Church has or should have in relation to social and cultural change surfaces in the current issues facing the Episcopal Church. It is not a new question, and has surfaced before in relation to other social and cultural changes, including those related to the Civil War, the Civil Rights movement, anti-war sentiment during the Vietnam War, the women's movement, and the culture-wide increase in divorce. Currently, the question surfaces in relation to human sexuality.

For some Episcopalians, proactive societal engagement raised a red flag of overt political activism. That is, they thought advocacy through words and resolutions and protests was not nearly as effective a Christian witness as direct ministry.

I think there's been a change in profile of the membership to more politically active type individuals who see the Church as a tool they can use for their political activism and influence. Those conservative and more traditional folks who see the Church as an instrument for doing ministry have been leaving the Church with this shift from a focus on ministry to a focus on political activism. After you've been at a few General Conventions you feel like the Church is less rolling up its sleeves and trying to tackle issues through its own ministry, and doing more of trying to tell other people through the government how to deal with issues. For folks who really want to be a part of an organization that's rolling up its sleeves and doing its own thing, it's less satisfying (Lay deputy).

Others felt passionately committed to advocacy and social transformation, and expressed some degree of frustration with Episcopalians who seemed more interested in a kind of status quo Christianity.

Exasperation! We are always in front of everyone but Unitarians. It's hard to be so out there sometimes, but it is the right place (Lay survey).

I think there's always been the strain between those who believe the gospel means "We need to be out in the world working with the poor, the voiceless, the powerless," you know doing those really radical things like feeding the hungry, and clothe the naked and things like that. And those who believe church is the safe place they go to worship with people just like them – [who] go to be comforted by words they could say from memory from a prayer book that has not changed since their childhood in a setting that has not changed since their childhood, and when that vision of the Church is disturbed, it's very bothersome to people (Representative stakeholder).

Reflection Questions

- How is societal engagement understood by Episcopalians theologically? Does societal engagement reflect a sacramental, incarnational, scriptural, Christ-centered faith?
- How do your congregation and diocese engage with society? Is the responsive or proactive approach more dominant? What strengths and drawbacks do you see in each approach?
- When has societal engagement by the Church been a source of pride? When has it been a source of embarrassment?

Table Talk: Episcopalians Discussing *Tertiary* Identity Themes

This chapter describes and discusses tertiary themes of Episcopal identity that emerged in interviews with Episcopalians. On surveys, these themes were rated lower and held less tightly together than the core and secondary themes.

Middle Way

I would probably use the term “the via media,” the middle way. This Church has tended to stand between Protestant and Catholic traditions, attempting to create a big tent, if you will, where folks of both persuasions can live together. And in doing so, it has tended to not be rigid about its doctrinal snafus and its requirements, particular beliefs about particular things from its members (Representative stakeholder).

Rated highest among tertiary Episcopal identity themes, the Middle Way (or *via media*) is a phrase Episcopalians often use to describe their Church. The Church uses this phrase to point to an Anglican understanding of itself as “fully catholic and fully reformed.” It also is used to indicate a particularly Anglican approach to tolerating different perspectives and finding common ground. Both descriptions of the Middle Way speak to a sense of Anglican comprehensiveness among Episcopalians, which they understand as something more than mere compromise or cooperation. They see it as an

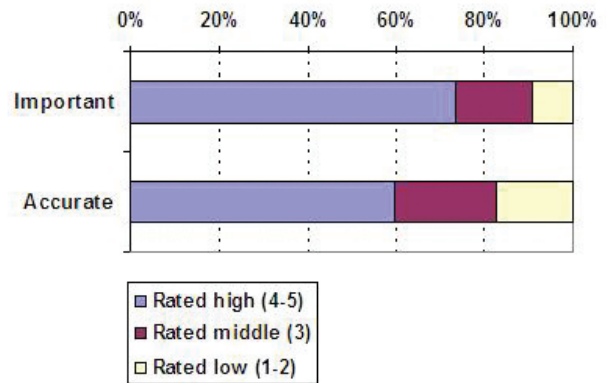
attempt to chart a path that accommodates seemingly contrasting perspectives, based on a belief that God’s perspective may be broad enough to include all of those perspectives. Many interviewees referred back to historical events in the Church (the Elizabethan Settlement, the first Lambeth Conference gathering of Anglican bishops) as demonstrations of the Middle Way.

It is worth noting that early Middle Way solutions in the Church of England did not incorporate all Christian perspectives and voices of the era. For this reason, the phrase cannot be seen as synonymous with radical inclusion, not unless there is a certain disregard for the real limits that have been part of Anglican comprehensiveness. Certainly, the breadth of perspectives within Anglicanism has expanded on a variety of topics, to include what different cultures within Anglicanism regard as acceptable practices (for example, polygamy). A kind of Middle Way perspective seems to have been part of the consciousness of the Anglican missionary movements, as Anglicans attempted to respect, understand, engage, and even incorporate some aspects of different cultural perspectives. (For example, the Church Missionary Society’s work in Nigeria stressed indigenous leadership, a radical practice for the time period.)

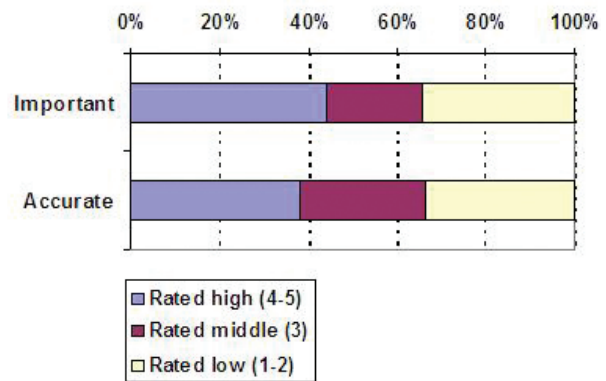
In our DNA [are] the seeds of this. We should have expected this. Because it [The Episcopal Church] has been rigorously catholic – small c, and the only one left because the Roman Catholics aren't anymore. And so it was in the DNA; it's not a change; it's absolutely part of the trajectory. With the British Empire, the Anglican Communion is now majority black. And the median Anglican is an 18-year-old African girl. So why should we be surprised that groups that haven't necessarily been at the center of the Episcopal Church, like gay folk, or black folk, or whoever, are at the center? We shouldn't. It's absolutely in the DNA (Representative stakeholder).

Episcopal leaders regarded the Middle Way as a moderately accurate description of the Episcopal Church and an important aspect of Episcopal identity, but there was wide disagreement about its accuracy and importance. Congregation members were not nearly as strong in their endorsement of the Middle Way as a central, enduring, and distinctive element of Episcopal identity. While 74% of Church leaders rated the Middle Way as highly important, only 44% of congregation members did so. Only 38% of members rated it as a highly accurate description of the Episcopal Church. The disparity of responses may suggest a lack of clarity, either about what is meant by Middle Way or about what in the nature of Episcopal identity is comprehensive yet distinct from Roman Catholic and Protestant Reformed traditions.

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



The phrase Middle Way implies for many, but not all, plenty of room for conversation and differing perspectives, with an abiding sense that ultimate truth is bigger than any one perspective. Thus, the Middle Way evokes images of expansive inclusion of perspectives, safe harbor, and “roominess” for many Episcopalians.

I really do believe that we are the via media, that we are a Middle Way. I've grown up in this Church from childhood, believing and experiencing that this Church is accepting of all sorts of people from different political and theological perspectives; that the altar rail is large enough and wide enough and long enough to contain all of us who find our spiritual identity, our spiritual journey within The Episcopal Church, and that the Church puts us individually, and me personally, in a strong position to make conscientious decisions which I then have to live into. I could be from the right; I could be from the left. This Church allows me to explore both or one and still feel welcomed here. I've always felt that way, and I've seen it. No one has ever asked me my politics before giving me communion. In that regard, and as a priest, it frees me to be with my parishioners as a companion, as a guide, as a partner, as they struggle with life decisions, with conscientious decisions, knowing that the Church is what it says it is – and that's a sanctuary (Representative stakeholder).

The critical issue related to the Middle Way as part of Episcopal identity is: What are we willing to consider, engage, and incorporate, and what are we not? Some things stand beyond the pale of consideration. For instance, there can be no Middle Way regarding slavery. When is breadth and a deep respect for God's greater truth (and a recognition of our human limitations in thought) the most appropriate response, and when is it more appropriate to say, as Martin Luther did, "Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me"? Thus, while some feel that the Middle Way opens up a space for broader

inclusion, others may equate the Middle Way with a middle-of-the-road approach that does not go far enough in some respects.

I am proud of what we are doing to expand. ... As a parent who sees three of my five kids not wanting to participate in a homophobic, rule bound, out of touch church, I am saddened – as that is NOT the church I participate in every week and oftener. ... My political sensitivity says my diocese and its leadership have defined the middle way fairly accurately. What concerns me is that this middle road of the diocese, which has its rationality in politics, money, and scripture, is not where we need to be if we are going to survive as an active church (Lay survey).

My diocese is fence sitting; my bishop lacks courage to go one way or another (Lay survey).

We lack the capacity to be objectively introspective. These people, these policies, these failed approaches and processes have led to several failures in hiring clergy, instability, and lack of leadership. We stack the deck with people who do not make waves. The problem with this is we silence or do not hear the disagreements below the surface until we have a reasonable revolution on our hands. Rather than persuade, we stack the deck and under the appearance of participatory democracy ram through what right-minded people believe is correct. I appreciate the dilemma, but there is an immense message of disrespect delivered to those in the minority when this occurs. And given the way the vote is stacked, the minority is probably a silent

majority. Frankly, I am in favor of various minorities serving in the clergy without embarrassment, but, frankly, rather than to admit this might be contrary to the Bible, we torture the argument beyond all reasonable degrees of objectivity. All of this, in my opinion, raises serious questions about our leadership and in particular how we select people for the seminary. We have great conformity of thought at a price (Lay survey).

Nonetheless, the Middle Way strategy allows a certain ambiguity to be part of the solution. For example, the term “Real Presence” without more specific definition allows for a range of interpretations regarding how Christ meets us in the Eucharist. Such lack of clarity can be disconcerting but also allows space for exploration of different possibilities. Some see a Middle Way identity threatened by recent decisions in the Episcopal Church that for them move more toward absolute either-or solutions, rather than toward an ambiguous but spacious Middle Way that does not seek a majority vote.

I think to some extent, as the issue became so clear, that people did take sides, because, frankly, there was no middle ground. But I don't think that people were swayed one way or the other out of frenzy or emotional intoxication. It was an amazing Church up until last year because it was able to plot out a pretty wide middle ground that a lot

of people could stand on. You could say, for example, yes, we have our rules, our policies, our laws and our canons, but we're also pastors and we are free to apply them pastorally as we see fit. So we're not legalists by any means. On the issue of human sexuality, that middle ground evaporated (Representative stakeholder).

The Middle Way strategy requires work and involves a peculiar form of reconciliation and harmonization that does not mandate absolute agreement or concession. As this respondent put it:

I think our diocese under the bishop's leadership is doing well in troubled times by insisting that dialogue continue within the diocese and the AC, and facilitating that dialogue (Lay survey).

Such work invites Episcopalians to acknowledge tensions, live with imperfection in one another (and themselves), pray for revelation, and respect themselves and others. In short, the work invites Episcopalians to wholeness of being, healthy differentiation, and holy community (see p. 12).

Reflection Questions

- How do we, as Episcopalians, use “Middle Way” in our discourse? To find a “comfortable enough” consensus under a broad definition? A way of charting both inclusion and exclusion?
- Do we see the Middle Way as an ever more expanding embrace of different perspectives, reflecting knowledge of the range of human reality?
- What has not been embraced in the Middle Way approach?
- To what extent does the Middle Way involve cultural adaptation? At what cost?
- What are best practices to sustain the Middle Way? How do dichotomous thinking and/or voting practices contribute to or detract from the Middle Way?

Diverse Theological Positions

We have a diversity of theological views, from evangelical to charismatic to Protestant to practically high Catholic. (Anglo-Catholic is what they call it.) So we've been able to, even within a diocese, have Anglo-Catholic parishes and low-church parishes. Certainly, I think on average, it varies somewhat by region of the country and reflects the culture of the part of the country that the Church is located in (Lay deputy).

Most Episcopalians deeply appreciate the theological diversity they believe is part of Episcopal identity. The motto “fully catholic, fully reformed” in itself expresses a wide theological range, and Episcopalians recognize their Church as containing Christians with widely varying beliefs and perspectives. As the quotation above suggests, people also recognize

regional variations in theologies. The appreciation of theological diversity correlates strongly with Episcopalians’ regard for scripture, reason, tradition, and the comprehensiveness of the Middle Way.

I think central is, first of all, that it is a church where people are encouraged to think, and not simply become automatons. I think central is that it is a place where folk can raise questions and do deep faith discernment. Of course, part of what I'm talking about is my own experience. The Episcopal Church is a church that, for most of my life, has not required strict agreement with any particular theological perspective. ... There is, for some folk, a sense that if one does not tow a particular party line, one may not even be Christian – which I never heard growing up in this Church, or most of

my years in ordained ministry. There were times in my early life where there were debates about theological perspectives, mostly high-church, low-church kinds of things. There are those who say, "Well, that's not as important," but I think it is (Bishop).

This perception and value of theological diversity is rooted in Episcopalians' understanding of Anglican and Episcopal history. The Elizabethan Settlement did not result in all clergy and laity gravitating toward the center, but rather left room for clergy and laity to embrace and pursue their particular theological perspectives. This resulted in a history of ongoing theological conflicts and disagreements that still allowed for retaining unity in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. Some Episcopalians now find themselves wondering whether that unity can hold in the midst of what are perceived to be deeply fundamental issues of faith.

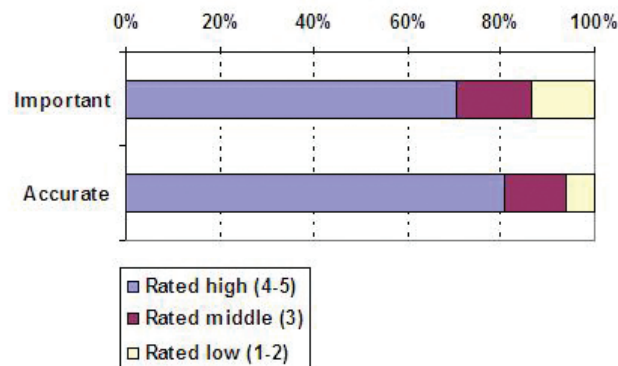
You have three distinct groups in Anglicanism world-wide: one being evangelical, another being more Anglo-Catholic, and another being "Liberal," or in England, the "Broad Church" party. And what made it work was there was a common, agreed-upon, basic faith among the diverse practice within those three groupings. But what happened in America since the 60s, particularly in the 70s and 80s, is that, unfortunately, it metastasized into something very different, where the idea of tolerance, which is a very good idea, got smuggled down into the essentials. And the problem with that is that it's not compatible. I mean, if you say Jesus is Lord, and I say Jesus isn't Lord, and we compromise and say Jesus is sometimes

Lord, that's not a Christian church. So, it was one of these terrible things ... that our great strength combined with the cultural background and turned into a great weakness (Representative stakeholder).

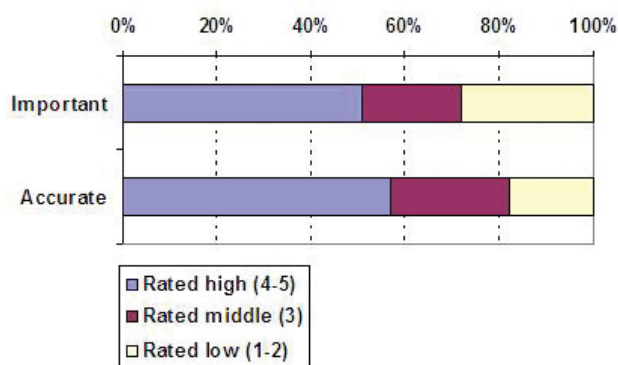
As this quotation indicates, current Church conflicts and disagreements raise questions about what is regarded as most central or essential in Christian faith. What is theologically non-negotiable? And what is non-essential, or peripheral, to the core of what it means to be Christian?

Despite these concerns, Episcopalians regard diversity of theological positions as both an accurate and an important aspect of the Episcopal Church's identity. A high percentage of Episcopal leaders (81%) rated theological diversity as highly accurate of what the Church currently *is*, while slightly more than 70% of leaders regarded it as highly important for the Church. Similarly, more Episcopal congregation members gave high accuracy ratings (58%) than high importance ratings (51%). While their overall ratings were lower than those of leaders (as they are generally throughout this survey), congregation members rated theological diversity sixth in order of importance (see Appendix E). As with other identity themes, there was a wide distance between *is* and *should be* for some Episcopalians, in this case reflecting their sense that the Episcopal Church's current identity as theologically diverse was outpacing the importance of such an identity.

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



Some Episcopalians expressed concern with what they perceived as a range of theological diversity that simply drifts into forms of cultural accommodation.

So much is at stake. There really is a different gospel that's emerged in the Episcopal Church. It's a very therapeutic Jesus that comes alongside you and affirms you in your identity and blesses you where you are. I mean, it's a gospel of affirmation, but the gospel of the New Testament is a gospel of salvation (Representative stakeholder).

Others were deeply concerned by what they perceived as attempts to contain theological diversity in overly-restrictive ways.

Whatever shame I feel, at any level of communion, has to do with the manner by which we dispute our claims, not that we have them (Lay survey).

I've staked a good deal of my ministry on the ... assumption that people with different interpretations of scripture could dwell together in unity. Some of my assumptions have been challenged because there is a certain radicalism that has been expressed in recent years that makes that sort of coexistence very difficult for some people (Bishop).

I have found it a place where more than one interpretation on almost all things is welcome. One of the scary things is that there are a sizable number of people, for the first time, who feel that there is only one way to approach the authority and interpretation of scripture. To me, this is something so non-Anglican (Clerical deputy).

The many and diverse theological positions within the Episcopal Church cover significant territory, spanning much of what can be found across different Christian traditions. However, this wide range of theological positions does not eclipse Episcopal identity. One might hold some fundamentalist, Roman Catholic, liberal Protestant, or universalist theological ideas but still be more essentially Episcopalian than anything else.

Reflection Questions

- What are examples of theologically diverse positions in your congregation or diocese? How are they expressed? How do you make space for differing Christian opinions?
- When is theological diversity an advantage and when is it a disadvantage for Christian communities?
- How do scripture, reason, and tradition each contribute to theological diversity? To a sense of commonality?
- To what extent do personal and cultural differences in the experience of life contribute to theological diversity and commonality?
- What is most essential for Episcopalians as Christians to hold in common? What do these essential elements suggest about boundaries?

Ecumenical

It has been my hypothesis that the Episcopal Church engaged in an ecumenical endeavor that came very, very close to what you might call success. Ultimately there's no success until there is a complete spiritual union, with Jesus Himself and with the whole rest of the Church, which is in Jesus (Representative stakeholder).

Helping to mend the fractured Body of Christ, to bring together at least some of the many disparate Christian denominations, emerges from a desire to apply Anglican comprehensiveness to a broader universe. The Episcopal Church has long been involved in ecumenical efforts, as reflected in the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (found in the *BCP*, page 876)

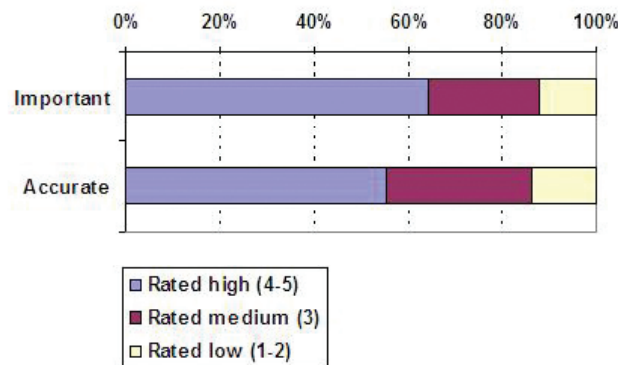
as well as the Church's ongoing participation in the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches, and the Churches Uniting in Christ.

In the past ten years, the Episcopal Church has embraced a full communion agreement with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and is moving toward full communion with United Methodist and Moravian churches. Episcopal and Anglican churches are also in full communion with other Christian denominations worldwide, including the Old Catholic Church in Germany and the Philippine Independent Church. By and large, the Episcopal impulse toward ecumenism is driven by a sense that the Christian family is larger than the Anglican Communion.

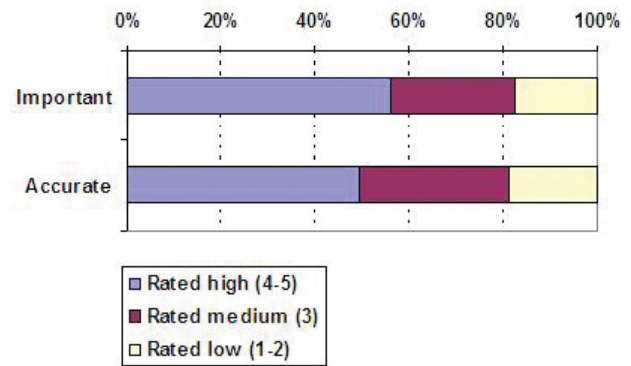
We have had ecumenical interests from the beginning. We've had strong contacts with the Lutherans, the Roman Catholics, as well as international contacts. And we have done this, however, from an Anglican originating point (Representative stakeholder).

Episcopalians regarded ecumenism as moderately important to the identity of the Episcopal Church, with 64% of Church leaders and 56% of congregation members rating being ecumenical as highly important. Only 55% of leaders and 50% of congregation members considered being ecumenical as a highly accurate description of what the Episcopal Church currently is. While important, ecumenism is not among Episcopalians' top priorities in what the Episcopal Church *aims to be*. However, for *congregation* members, it is linked with secondary Episcopal identity themes, and is not simply tertiary.

Episcopal Church Leaders
(Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



Challenges to ecumenism come from all sides, both inside and outside the Episcopal Church. Some Christian denominations and groups refuse to participate in ecumenical prayer services, for political and theological reasons. Various encyclicals from the Vatican have suggested a turn away from more openly ecumenical language emerging from Vatican II to more restrictive language that declares the inferiority of Christian churches in the Protestant traditions. Recent decisions by the Episcopal Church have also had repercussions for ecumenical – and interfaith – relationships, with some denominations slowing their dialogue with the Episcopal Church and others (like the Eastern Orthodox Churches) deliberately halting further dialogue.

Reflection Questions

- What ecumenical efforts can the Episcopal Church offer toward unity in the Body of Christ? What that is central to Episcopal identity can contribute to ecumenism?
- How do your congregation and diocese practice ecumenical partnership with other denominations?
- What blocks a stronger actual practice of ecumenism, such as clergy exchanges, parish partnerships, shared programs, and cooperation at judicatory levels?
- What are “sticking points” for the Episcopal Church in ecumenical relationships? What are “sticking points” for other denominations vis-à-vis the Episcopal Church?

Diverse Spiritual Practices

Of course, [what makes the Episcopal Church unique is] our liturgy, but we do that differently from place to place in a lot of ways. But the participation in the Eucharist ties us together (Lay deputy).

There [are] high-church parishes, low-church parishes, more informal, more formal, more traditional music, more contemporary music. There are all kinds of variations, but I think the glue that holds us together, the commonality that holds us together, is embracing a particular vision of worship, and as mediated through the Prayer Book tradition, and while the local adaptation of that may have a thousand variations, those are still adaptations of a common life, not different lives (Bishop).

In the same way they recognize diverse theological positions, Episcopalians recognize among their congregations and dioceses diversity in spiritual practices. This is most readily apparent in practices related to weekly worship, and is also obvious in different ways congregations conduct rites of baptism, confirmation, marriage, healing and burial. For instance, even though weekly celebration of Holy Communion has become the norm in most dioceses and congregations, some congregations alternate between Holy Communion and Morning Prayer.

Some congregations extend the Episcopal Church's open communion for all baptized Christians to any people seeking God. Many congregations celebrate baptism upon request throughout the Church year, while many others retain baptism for the principle feasts of

the Church calendar. Traditional confirmation in many congregations has been either replaced by or supplemented with newer programs for young Christian formation, such as Rite 13 and Journey to Adulthood, or “Confirm not Conform.” Clergy who preside at weddings vary in how much premarital counseling they expect of couples and how many sessions they themselves conduct, while congregations have differing expectations of parish membership for couples getting married. Some churches have public rites of healing every week as part of Sunday worship or weekday worship, while others do not. Some clergy offer funerals or memorial services only for Church members or for people related to members, while other clergy conduct funerals and memorial services for the wider community. Dioceses differ, too, in their recruitment, selection and training processes for ordained leaders.

These differences in the use of the rites of the Church are not merely the result of different whims or tastes but come from theological and pastoral consideration about the communities that clergy and congregations serve. Similarly, congregations (and groups within them) differ in the practices of Christian discipleship they emphasize. Congregations, and sometimes dioceses, develop particular *charisms* or strengths of Christian practice – including prayer, study, social outreach, contemplation, pastoral care, hospitality, playful creativity, evangelism, fellowship, and reconciliation. These differences come out of the particular expressions of Christian life in each community.

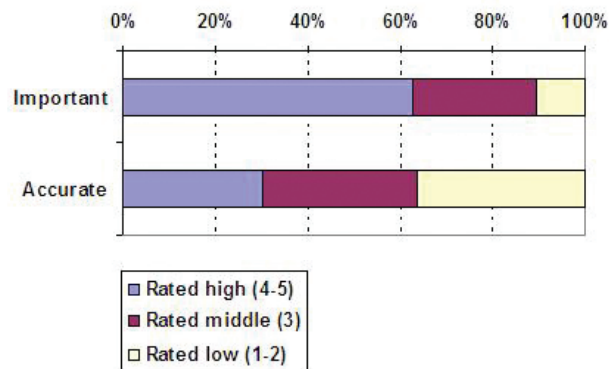
Nonetheless, there is marked consistency in many of the practices of Episcopal congregations and dioceses. Baptism and Eucharist remain central to Episcopal Christian life.

Communion is open to all baptized Christians. The *BCP* fosters liturgical consistency in the offering of sacramental and pastoral rites. Church leaders recognize their responsibility in fostering recognized patterns of discipleship among all the faithful. Many view the consistency and similarity shared within the Episcopal Church as defining the boundaries of diverse spiritual practices. It should be noted that an important critique comes from clergy and laity of color, who say they have not experienced the Church as welcoming their spiritual practices and expressions.

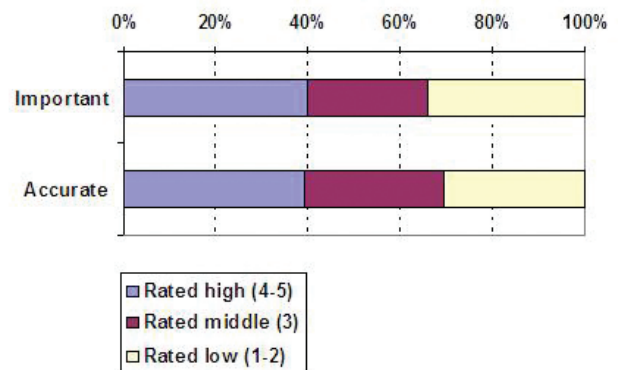
Theological reflection and pastoral consideration have led Episcopalians to different opinions regarding whether or not to bless committed relationships of gay and lesbian couples. Differences in choices of whom dioceses will ordain are also the result of theological reflection and pastoral consideration in different contexts.

Not surprisingly, Episcopalians differ widely in how much they think the phrase “diverse spiritual practices” accurately expresses something central to the identity of the Episcopal Church. Some 33% of leaders and 30% of congregation members gave this identity theme a low accuracy rating, and only 30% of leaders and 40% of congregation members gave it a high accuracy rating. But more than 62% of leaders (versus 40% of congregation members) rated diverse spiritual practices as highly important. It seems that Episcopal leaders want the Church to have a certain degree of diversity in spiritual practices. But they do not see the Church currently reflecting that diversity, nor do they see diversity in itself as central to Episcopal identity. Congregation members regarded diverse spiritual practices as relatively less important and not very accurate in terms of Episcopal identity.

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



Reflection Questions

- What spiritual practices are essential and non-negotiable for all Christian communities?
- What are particular practices in your congregation or diocese that reflect something unique about how you are living as Christians?
- How do you see theological and pastoral considerations shaping your spiritual practices? How does scripture influence or shape your understanding of those practices?
- How might others challenge you theologically to reflect on your own spiritual life and develop other spiritual practices?
- How is diversity of spiritual practice important? How is consistency of those practices important? How do consistency and diversity best balance one another?

Prophetic

I think there are two perceptions. [There are] those who think the Episcopal Church is prophetic and moving forward with all these very significant movements and social positions ... And there are those who see it adrift into oblivion. ... So there are certainly two different places (Representative stakeholder).

The term prophetic, as typically used by Episcopalians, does not mean fortune-telling or prediction of future events, as its more typical contemporary use in English. The word prophetic as used by Episcopalians refers more to its English meaning as visionary, and its biblical meaning as truth-telling. Episcopalians understand the ancient prophets to have spoken difficult truths to the nations and to the people of Israel, calling them to repentance, change, and new visions of bearing witness to God in the world.

What I've seen is a very deep concern that our involvement in those movements reflects what's in the gospels, and particularly that they reflect the spirit of the prophets of the Old Testament. And I think that's not really acknowledged by people who want to chalk this up to some sort of political pandering. When you look at when things happen and when stands were taken, in a great many cases it was not when it was politically popular and politically correct. I mean, Jonathan Daniels didn't get shot for signing people up for voter registration in Alabama because it was a popular thing to do. You don't get shot for doing popular things. You don't get crucified for doing popular things and being nice. The bulk of the

Church takes a little time to catch up. But I think the trajectory has been there; the paying attention to the prophetic voice (Representative stakeholder).

Because of these biblical connotations, using the term prophetic to get the message of the Gospel across is risky. The term conjures up images of fervent speeches, impassioned sermons, and protest and demonstration, and might seem to challenge unquestioned assumptions and habits of both the Church and society. It does not connote a demure or polite stance, nor even necessarily a stance of compromise. As such, the word prophetic can become a home in Episcopal identity for visionary assertiveness, yet it also can potentially evoke the expression of anger.

Is it going to be a bland, tepid, neutral leadership, or is it going to be bold, courageous, assertive, maladjusted, and audacious – all of that without being retaliatory? And I think that's a crisis. I think that is a huge central crisis and I ask the question: What are our seminaries and our parishes doing to create that kind of leadership? What is happening to prophetic leadership? Where in the hell is prophetic leadership? That's one of my biggest pieces of anger, is that we somehow have ... a priestly notion of leadership that wants to soothe the waters and make everybody calm, and we've lost sight of prophetic leadership of the Church, and it just pisses me off (Representative stakeholder).

The quotation above could have come from progressive, conservative, or otherwise intensely concerned Episcopalians, and represents a direct contrast with both the pastoral identity theme

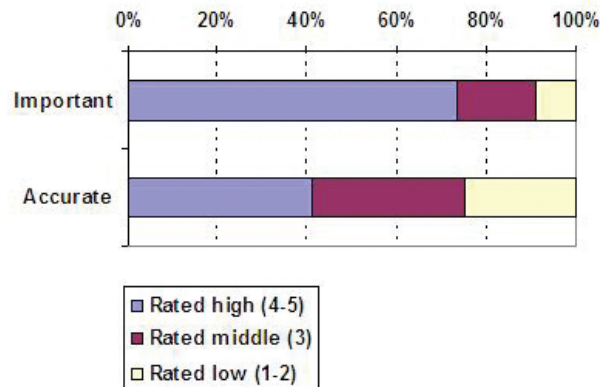
and the Middle Way theme. Both conservative and progressive leaders use the term prophetic to describe the stances they are taking. This is a somewhat typical approach of people in strongly polarized situations. Using the term prophetic can enhance legitimacy by imbuing each party's stance with ethical and/or eschatological significance.

Episcopalians do not sense, as a whole, that the Episcopal Church can be accurately described as prophetic – at least not as it currently is. This was especially true for congregation members, who in fact saw being prophetic as a stand-alone identity theme, not linked with any other themes of Episcopal identity. Being prophetic was among the lowest rated aspects of Episcopal identity, with only 41% of leaders, and 13% of congregation members rating it as a highly accurate description. Some 25% of leaders rated it as inaccurate. However, more than 73% of leaders saw a prophetic identity as very important to the Episcopal Church. In the minds of Episcopal leaders, the disparity between is and what the Church should aim to be is quite strong for a prophetic identity of the Episcopal Church.

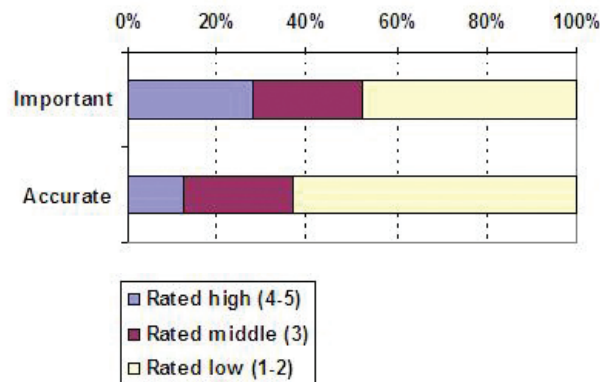
However, the disparity is not so pronounced for congregation members. Only 28% regarded being prophetic as an important part of Episcopal identity, while more than 47% regarded it as relatively unimportant. Once again, the remarkable difference between leaders and congregation members raises questions: Is the difference due to disparities in theological education and, perhaps, confusion regarding the term “prophetic” (that is, some people thinking that prophecy means telling the future), or are congregation members signaling a discomfort

with the Church's emphasis on social justice and public confrontation of “principalities and powers”? Further research may help discern more clearly the reasons behind these differences among groups.

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



In describing what prophetic meant, Episcopalians talked about clarity, truth-telling, and passion. A prophetic community does not respond simply to unjust actions, but also to inaction by those who refuse to take a stance or to those who attempt to ignore the unjust practices around them.

The prophets were absolutely right for laying the problems of the religious community at the feet of the priests, who, you know, cry "Peace, peace" when there is no peace. ... I think the leader sets the tone for the desired outcome. If the priest is wishy-washy, the congregation is going to be adrift. If the clergy is very clear, one way or the other, the congregation is going to be clear, one way or another. Those who disagree with that clarity will leave. But if the priest or the leader has set the example of, "This is a family where we bring our issues to the table and we discuss them and we work them out and nobody leaves," then that's going to happen too. And that's pretty much what we've done in this congregation, is to say "There isn't a

topic that's off-limits; there isn't a disagreement that we can't work our way through" (Representative stakeholder).

The challenges of being prophetic are in the humanity of the prophet delivering the message and the humanity of the community receiving the message. Testing one's own truth-claims becomes increasingly difficult, the more passionately one feels about them. Testing another's truth-claims becomes increasingly difficult, the more passionately one's community opposes them. In these cases, scripture, tradition, reason, and experience can be used in humility to test truth-claims, or they can be used as part of a more egocentric effort to bolster one's own position or counter another's claims.

Reflection Questions

- How are we using the word, "prophetic"? What is visionary, what is truth-telling, what is challenging to injustice or neglect?
- How can the Episcopal Church address the distance between its actual and desired prophetic identity?
- What are the benefits and risks involved in being prophetic?
- How does a prophetic identity relate to other identities such as the Middle Way or inclusive or sacramental?
- How much is being prophetic a solitary venture, and how much is it the work of the community?
- To what extent does a prophetic identity demand consistency between words and actions? Can one challenge another community (for instance, a government) without having one's own house in order?

Dispersed Authority

[The Episcopal Church] values an authority that's shared among all the orders, unlike a pope or unlike scripture as the ultimate authority (Representative stakeholder).

Things it [the Episcopal Church] has in the past claimed to be distinctive have to do with a certain kind of corporate commitment to the hearing and receiving of scripture, corporate prayer, a place in a larger catholic communion that is not governed by a centralized authority (Clerical deputy).

I like our polity – the balance between clergy and laity, and the respect of the episcopate (Lay deputy).

In interviews, Episcopal leaders frequently mentioned dispersed authority as a unique marker of Episcopal Church identity. Dispersed authority in this context means a system of Church authority that is neither centralized nor tightly hierarchical. There is no arch-episcopacy, and the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church is regarded as first among equals (*primus inter pares*), similar to how the various primates of the Anglican Communion have understood the position of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Rectors serve and lead the congregations that select them, with the bishop's approval but without direct episcopal supervision. Deacons serve at the direct behest of the bishop in locations throughout a diocese, but work in close partnership with priests and lay leaders. Laity vote with clergy for bishops, select priests for congregations, vote for and propose Church legislation, and lead many of the ministries of the Church.

One of the things that makes us unique in catholic Christendom is that laity and clergy get to vote on policy along with bishops. [In] virtually every other church with bishops, it's only bishops who have a say in the policy. Our laity and our clergy have a veto power over them, which is really unusual (Representative stakeholder).

Parishioners are the most important in how the parish is directed (Lay survey).

The dispersal of authority in the Episcopal Church has arguably increased in the 220 years since it created a bicameral legislative structure (House of Bishops and House of Deputies). The most dramatic shift occurred in the mid-twentieth century with the adoption of a baptismal ecclesiology that took baptism as the foundation of all ministry, lay and ordained. This change, resulting in part from ecumenical efforts toward Church unity, emerged in different ways in the adoption of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*.

Now, in the catechism of that book [1979 BCP], there is a question, I think a very significant question, "Who are the ministers of the Church?" The answer is lay persons, bishops, priests and deacons, in that order. That is significant, because the old prayer book, as you can well imagine, just said bishops, priests, and deacons without any reference to lay people – that is the most radical contribution of the 1979 Prayer Book, because it puts all ministry on a par. It's saying that ordained ministry is not superior to lay ministry; it's just different (Representative stakeholder).

Recognizing an equivalent importance of ministry of all the baptized brought up questions about perceived double standards in responsibility and discipleship. The same respondent continued:

So having put ministry at a par, whether you're a bishop or an alto in a chorus, it basically said you cannot have – this is my opinion, obviously – one set of rules for one kind of minister and another set for the other. In the old days, when there was a definite separation, of lay and ordained ministries, you could say "Well, bishops have to be this, that, and the other, and priests, and lay people blah blah blah." We had a double standard on many things in the Church. For instance, the Church reluctantly allowed people to be divorced. But the unwritten rule was that clergy – it didn't apply to clergy. And most bishops, not that long ago, would have said, "If you remarry after divorce, you can't work here any more." OK? So there has been a double standard (Representative stakeholder).

Some saw a problem in how leadership was or was not exercised by people in different orders of ministry in relation to current Church issues. In the face of collective conflict and confusion, some focused instead on strengthening leadership at the local level.

Top down leadership [is a problem] (Lay survey).

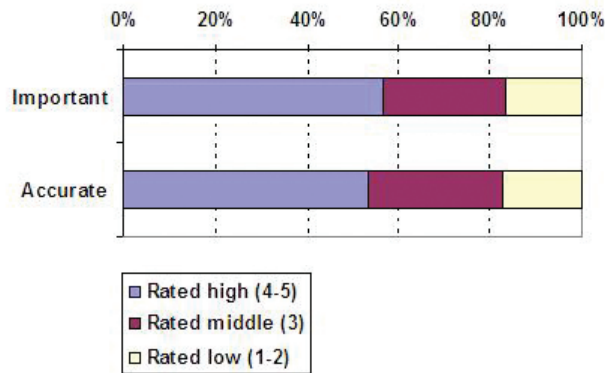
[People said] "Oh, the trouble with the Episcopal Church is that there is no leadership in this issue, no leadership in this issue." I looked, I was really very articulate when I said, "The reality is that you people are the

leaders. The leaders of the Church in our system is not the hierarchy, it's everybody" (Representative stakeholder).

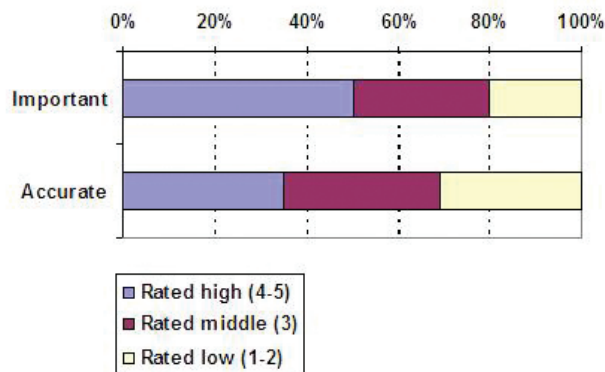
I think there's an increasing sense that the Church doesn't know what it is, an increasing awareness on the part of the members of the Church. So, one of the things we've noted in this diocese, and I would guess many other places, is that the whole ordination business, and the General Convention as a whole, in a dynamic sense have been driving the Episcopal Church further and further into isolated congregationalism. Having already said that the Episcopal Church has bishops ... [it] is really more congregationalist than many Baptist churches and old congregational churches. People have said that for a long time, and there is some truth about that in how congregations like to make decisions about their money and hiring and so on. What is the case now is that people are turning to congregationalism in almost self-conscious ways as a means of survival (Clerical deputy).

On surveys, Episcopal leaders considered dispersed authority as a moderately accurate (53%) and important (56%) theme of Episcopal identity, lower than most other identity themes. For congregation members, ratings were even lower, with only 50% rating dispersed authority as highly important, and only 35% rating it as highly accurate. The ratings suggest a sense of disparity for laity between what the Church espouses and what is actually practiced.

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



Perhaps the people most intensely involved in current Church issues are more concerned than others with how authority is constituted and

exercised. For those on the inside, who attend conventions and sit on Church councils and advocate with various groups, the way authority works becomes more important. Many who observe or participate in the Church's General Conventions have been struck by the manner in which decisions are made.

The Episcopal Church was so attractive to me because one, the ordination of women, and the fact that they really were having these rambunctious conventions and really dealing with issues, and even being in Minneapolis [2003 General Convention] ... and even the national press saw this at the hearings, people were respectful of one and other and people were heard. There were long lines at all the mics, and we sat through hours and hours of hearings, patiently letting someone speak for, someone speak against. Someone speak for, someone speak against. I can't even think at General Convention of any time anyone even elicited a groan from the audience. People were listening respectfully. That has been, to me, the joy of the Church (Representative stakeholder).

Reflection Questions

- What are continuing hierarchical practices in the Episcopal Church – conscious and unconscious? What are their benefits, and what are their costs?
- How well have people in all orders of ministry embraced their authority? How well have they embraced their responsibility and discipleship?
- To what extent has baptismal ministry been embraced and exercised by the Church, across all orders of ministry? What impact does this have (or not have) on authority?

Table Talk: Episcopalians Discussing *Stand-Alone* Identity Themes

The final chapter includes descriptions and discussions of stand-alone themes of Episcopal identity that emerged in interviews with Episcopalians. These are idiosyncratic themes that were not related to other identity themes.

Elite

I see The Episcopal Church as one of those institutions, American institutions, first of all, sort of an American mainline denomination, Protestant denomination in most people's minds, that has been seriously identified, regularly identified, with the establishment of government and power in this country and sort of chaplain to the structural government or power-makers (Representative stakeholder).

This Church is Elitist and not very friendly to visitors (Lay survey).

Episcopalians, often grudgingly, recognize elitism as a part, both historically and currently, of the identity of the Episcopal Church. The Episcopal

Church has a long record as a key religious institution of the ruling class in the United States, with census data and other sociological records consistently listing the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church USA, and Reform Judaism as the religions of choice among the wealthiest Americans.¹⁶ The classic book, *The Power of Their Glory*¹⁷, names many of the most influential, powerful, and wealthy individuals in American history as members of the Episcopal Church. It further describes how social-climbing individuals sought out membership, and how membership became a ticket into tight circles of influence for politicians and industrial leaders.

While more contemporary leaders and members have talked about a shift away from that elitism, recent studies challenge that notion. By and large, the Episcopal Church still has its largest, most active, and most financially secure congregations in wealthier, predominantly white communities in the United States, most often in the wealthiest suburbs or well-heeled urban neighborhoods.¹⁸

16 Rodney Stark and C. Y. Glock, 1968. *American Piety: The Nature of Religious Commitment*. Berkeley, CA: University of California; Claude S. Fischer and Michael Hout, 2006. *Century of Difference: How America Changed in the Last One Hundred Years*. Russell Sage Foundation Publications; Lawrence Otis Graham, 2000. *Our Kind of People: Inside America's Black Upper Class*. San Francisco, CA: Harper.

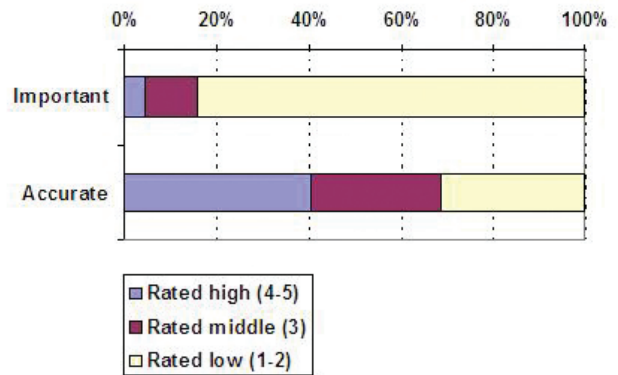
17 Kit and Frederica Konolige, 1978. *The Power of Their Glory – America's Ruling Class: The Episcopalians*. New York, NY: Wyden Books.

18 Gortner & Dreibelbis, 2005. "Episcopalians on the Trail of Social Capital." Presented at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion annual meeting, Boston.

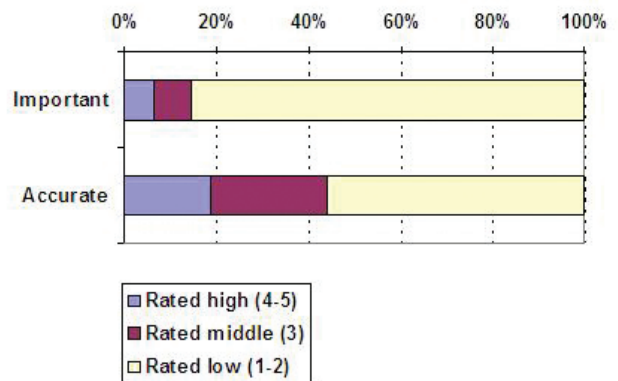
Many Episcopalians find this aspect of Episcopal identity to be a bit of an embarrassment. They feel there is something un-American about the elitism they perceive in themselves. More fundamentally, elitism does not square well with the Gospel, and does not fit with the Church’s discourse about inclusion, comprehensiveness, and centeredness on Christ. Elitism evokes images of classist and racist attitudes, a *noblesse oblige*¹⁹ approach to those less fortunate, and an obliviousness to the desperate challenges many people face in their lives. This elite status may have its advantages in terms of privilege and influence, yet it has also become a negative, or shadow side, in the identity of a church that’s trying to become more embracing and diverse.

Surveyed Episcopalians downplayed the importance of an elite identity, marking it as unimportant, and, in fact, something they do not want to be or aspire to be. Leaders acknowledged at least moderate accuracy of this description of the Church, but congregation members did not. In fact, only 19% of members regarded elite as highly accurate. This is not surprising, since people in groups tend to downplay the centrality of shadow-side aspects of their identity, even if those aspects strongly influence the culture of the group.

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



Negative aspects of group identity are sometimes used by people who are unhappy with the group, and that comes into play in the Church. The interviewees who were most disconcerted by recent decisions in the Episcopal Church were the ones who cited the Church’s elite status as evidence against new directions the Church is taking. They used this assessment, while perhaps correct in some sense, to make a case for arguments focused on other issues. For example, one lay survey respondent referred to his or her diocese as “too dominated by white

19 An often ironic reference to ethical obligations of the advantaged toward those less advantaged.

males; not open enough to those who do not belong to the old boys' club." Another respondent described the Church as follows:

The reality is that it is a deeply upper middle class, deeply white, deeply Western, increasingly secularized denomination, that is elitist in its outlook and out of touch with not only its own grass roots but with much of the rest of the world. See, another big shift that's happening during a lot of this period that we've been talking about is globalization. You have the huge growth of the global south within Anglicanism, but also the consciousness of the world Church. The Episcopal Church is very, very much self-consciously focused on itself and its own sense of importance. And this is in a period of decline (Representative stakeholder).

Neither downplaying nor heavy-handed accusation are very effective in helping Episcopalians recognize, discuss, and change this challenging part of Episcopal identity. It may be important to reflect on the positive ways in which the Church's social status has affected ministry and mission. Historically, the Church's elite status has meant it had the money and the power to build and sustain schools and universities, hospitals, ministry centers, and beautiful churches. The Episcopal Church's charitable giving has been generous, disproportionate to its size. Yet, it is also worth reflecting on how elitism might affect other identity commitments to comprehensiveness, inclusion, and a scriptural and incarnational faith centered on Christ.

Reflection Questions

- How do we recognize and deal with negative aspects of our identity?
- In what ways – direct and indirect, obvious and hidden – do we intentionally or unintentionally maintain the elite status of the Episcopal Church?
- What are the strengths of the Episcopal Church's elite status, currently and in the past? What are the weaknesses?
- How has elitism shaped ministry with communities not part of the dominant culture of the Episcopal Church?
- In what ways might the elite status of the Church have affected its theology, liturgy and missional practices?
- What might Episcopalians need to change or give up in order to become more comprehensive and inclusive across the lines of class, race, and culture?

Salvation – Episcopal Church as Source?

Many people are attracted to church, and the Episcopal Church is no exception, out of the sense of personal salvation. Something has happened in their life, and they have turned to God and to religion. They see God and religion as the source of their salvation through something that was extremely difficult and ... they credit the Church as being an important factor in the changes brought forth in their life (Lay deputy).

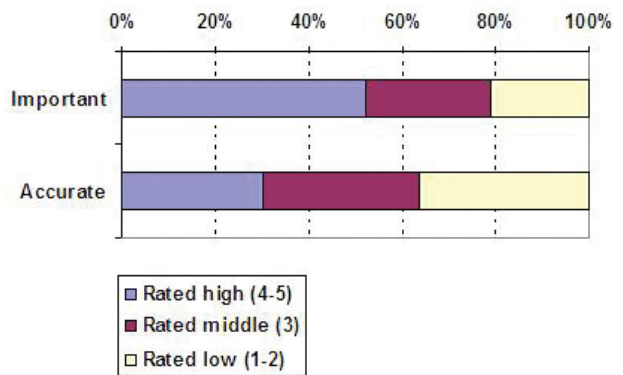
Our parish is full of "velveteen rabbits"! Very real people who have been saved by Christ!! (Lay survey).

Episcopalians might readily agree with the quotations above. And yet salvation is not a word that came immediately to mind for Episcopalians in this study as a primary and distinctive description of the identity of the Episcopal Church. One might not expect this, looking at the Church's creeds and liturgies. Its clergy declare in their ordination vows that they believe the scriptures to contain all things necessary for salvation. The theology in the Church's Eucharistic prayers proclaims salvation and grace. The renewal of baptismal vows and the General Thanksgiving in the daily offices call Episcopalians to remember their redemption in Christ.

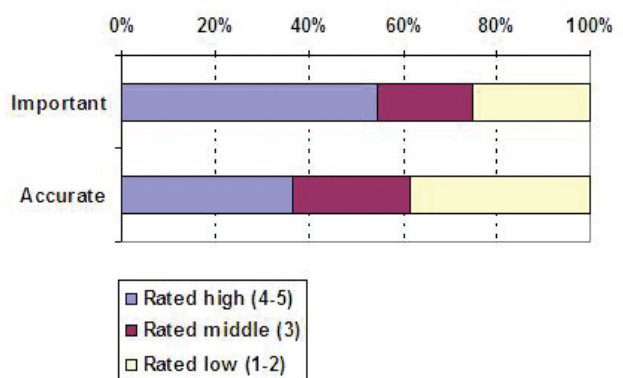
Nonetheless, Episcopalians in our study regarded source of personal salvation as a less important descriptor of distinct Episcopal identity. This may be because respondents made a distinction between the Church as source of salvation and Christ as the source, or because they tended to distinguish the Episcopal Church from some

more evangelistic traditions. For both leaders and congregation members, there was a marked gap between ratings of accuracy (30% in the high range for leaders and 36% for congregation members) and importance (52% in the high range for leaders and 55% for congregation members), suggesting that Episcopalians want salvation to be somewhat more central than it currently is to Episcopal identity.

Episcopal Church Leaders (Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



Preaching that Christ is the only Savior for all mankind – the Church is failing in this (Lay survey).

Put the cross, not the rainbow, back as our symbol (Lay survey).

It is not clear why salvation was rated so low as a part of Episcopal identity. It may be that the wording of the survey (Source of personal salvation) suggested that the Church might see itself as being salvation's source. This is not a position many Episcopalians would take, since the true source of salvation is God and not the Church. Perhaps salvation is not something regarded as unique to the identity of the Episcopal Church. And yet, neither is holding Christ as central, but Episcopalians rated that theme as the most important aspect of the Church's identity. Perhaps the word salvation is associated more with the theologies of Baptists and American Evangelicals, more so than with the theologies of Roman Catholics and other mainline Protestant denominations with which Episcopalians might more closely identify.

Another possible reason is that the word salvation carries some negative connotations associated with evangelism in the minds of Episcopalians.²⁰ After all, the Episcopal Church, like some other mainline denominations, has not invested significant energy or training in evangelism. Perhaps, too, some of the more Calvinistic theological associations with salvation (for example, total depravity as a thoroughly negative view of human nature) do not mesh easily with other important aspects of Episcopal theology. It may be that the term "saved" connotes an uncomfortable sense of who is "in" and, consequently, who is "out." And a final possibility: Salvation is regarded as only a part of the greater whole story of God's love.

Instead, interviewees from the *Episcopal Identity Project* more frequently used the language of *transformation* and *new life*. Such language at its best (and, we believe as it was intended) can encompass the fullness of Christ's redemptive work. This transformation through Christ includes salvation from sin and corruption, conversion of heart and mind, and sanctification through a lifelong process of healing and moving toward completion in Christ and wholeness in our own humanity.

With our brothers and sisters around the world, finding ways to strategize to reach other countries and groups who never had a chance to know that God loves them and Christ has given them an opportunity to transform into the way they were supposed to be. That's one identity that a lot of congregations around the Church fit (Clerical deputy).

I would see an "ideal" Episcopal Church as one in which every member is engaged in mission and ministry, and sees their vocation, not just in the Church, but in the world. Where worship is lively, and the music is good, and the people have a sense of being filled by the Spirit in their worship, and find joy in it. ... Where lives are transformed. All those things would, to me, be the "ideal" Episcopal Church (Bishop).

As suggested by these quotations, transformation is both deeply personal and broadly societal, and continues through life for all Christians, particularly as they engage in min-

20 Gortner, 2008. *Transforming Evangelism*. New York, NY: Church Publishing.

istry and discipleship. One way Episcopalians have understood salvation is on a much broader level than the individual, as many see the Church as working with Christ for the redemption of communities, societies, cultures, and the world. This is reflected in congregation members' moderately high ratings for the mission-focused identity theme – a theme that appeared only on the congregation members' survey.

I think our tradition has been mostly Christ as the transformer of culture. ... I do believe that the gospel calls us to a life of faith which is different from the world, but it doesn't call us to be separate from the world or against the world. It calls us to be engaged with the world, transforming the world with the love of Christ. We're called to a deep relationship with Jesus and a deep involvement in the world for Jesus' sake, which puts you in some tension with the world's values and ways, of course, but it doesn't separate you from the world (Bishop).

It was not possible to explore how people thought about this identity theme, since not enough interviewees talked about salvation directly enough. However, there may be a connection between Episcopalians' low ratings for salvation and the Church's historic difficulty in engaging evangelism. This low sense of identity related to salvation distances the Episcopal Church from the Church of England's emphasis at its beginning in the mid-sixteenth century. This distance was not achieved overnight, but instead is the result of a long, steady set of

historical shifts and developments, both in the Episcopal Church and in the Church of England. Some theological and spiritual work may be warranted to recover a language of redemption.

Well, I would say that there is an over-abundance of incarnational appreciation to the diminishment of at least a whisper of atonement theology, mainly issues around sin and the cross. And I would say that sort of a wonderful balance that we are in [at] our best of times has tilted away from, if you will, our evangelical roots, which are not our only roots by any means, but those roots have kind of atrophied and I'm concerned about that. By that I mean issues of atonement, as I said, issues of personal holiness, transformation, those kind of pieces that the evangelical wing of the Church has historically brought to the table ... personal salvation. We have done a wonderful job in our focus around issues of communal transformation. Societal transformation is not something I want to do away with, but I think in our good efforts with that we have neglected the personal piece ... and I guess I would show my prejudice and say that I think a little bit more attention to the transformational power of God the Holy Spirit in people's lives through Jesus the Christ – I would love to see that not dominate, but sort of find a voice (Bishop).

Reflection Questions

- How do you define the term “salvation”? Is it the same as “redemption,” “transformation,” and “new life”?
- Do the themes of salvation and redemption receive appropriate emphasis in the life of the Church? How would you change that?
- What is the role of the Church (either ideally or actually) in personal transformation? How does personal redemption relate to the ministry and mission of the Church?
- Does this identity theme hold mainly positive or negative for you? Why? Can you think of events or incidents in your life that contributed to your feelings about salvation?

A-confessional

Our center is worship, not dogma. We come together to worship God, and what we believe personally is interesting but not the main point (Clerical deputy).

Confessionalism: Adherence of a church or denomination to particular standards, expressions, confessions, doctrines, or symbols of faith. Confessional statements focus and codify the beliefs of a church or denomination and distinguish the church's beliefs from the beliefs of others outside the church.²¹

Episcopalians interviewed for this study described an a-confessional (or non-confessional) approach to Christian faith as a distinctive element of the Episcopal Church's identity, either as a strength or a weakness. This is not the same as agnosticism or an absence of beliefs. But for many, a strength of the Episcopal Church is its commitment to creating a Christian environment where it is not mandatory to adhere to a specific set of doctrines unique to the denomination.

²¹ Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum, 1999. *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church: A User-Friendly Reference for Episcopalians*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated.

I tend to understand the meaning of confessional church because of my ecumenical work. It is a fairly narrow way. That is, a church would have a certain document that sets out its understanding of the Christian faith in a comprehensive way. While we do have a confessional document of sorts (it has 39 articles), that document deals in a very summary fashion, and it deals only with issues which were controverted in England as an effect of the Continental Reformation. You don't see a systematic exposition of where the Anglican Communion stands, the way you would if you looked, for instance, at the various Lutheran confessions or catechisms as put together in the Book of Concord. There is no equivalent to the Book of Concord (Representative stakeholder).

The absence of a commonly shared confession of doctrine is a matter of current discussion not only in the Episcopal Church but in the wider Anglican Communion. Some see the absence of a doctrinal confession as inviting moral and theological confusion. Others see the absence of a doctrinal confession, but the presence of the historic creeds, as providing a valuable opportunity for debate, interpretation, and adaptation of less central aspects of Christian faith while holding fast to the most central Christian affirmations.

There was a theologian some years ago named Terry Holmes, and he had a wonderful piece ... where he talked about the fact that we have never been a confessional church. We are not a church that defines itself in some of the stricter kinds of definitions of what must be and what must not be. But we are joined together by the Book of

Common Prayer; by our common worship. And when this branch of the Anglican Communion began in 1785, there were people from seven colonies that gathered in Philadelphia because they shared common prayer (Representative stakeholder).

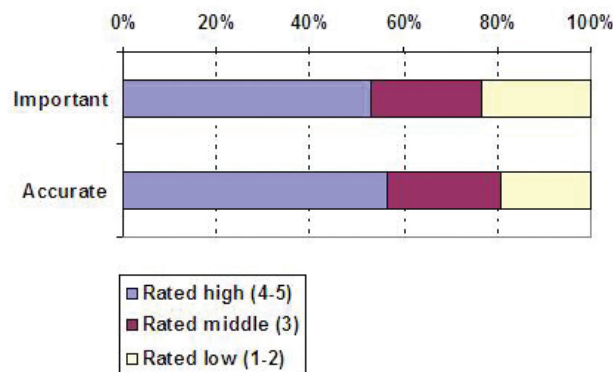
I see the Episcopal Church not as a separate church that has the right answers as to what it means to be a Christian. Rather, I see it as a kind of religious order. It's not necessary to be an Episcopalian in order to be the right kind of Christian. We don't have THE correct doctrines but rather, I believe the Episcopal Church is a religious order, in a sense, in the context of the larger catholic (small c) minded community. There's nothing that, for me, makes me want to say to people, "You ought to join the Episcopal Church because we have the right answers." Rather, when somebody is interested in the Church, I say "Why don't you join us? We have an interesting and lively way of expressing who we are as Christians" (Clerical deputy).

It is typical of any large group of dissimilar people and cultures. I believe in God's and Christ's church. I like the Episcopal Church but it IS NOT the foundation of my faith. Organization and administration and politics are necessary for continued existence and growth of the Church. I don't have to like everything about it to accept that necessity (Lay survey).

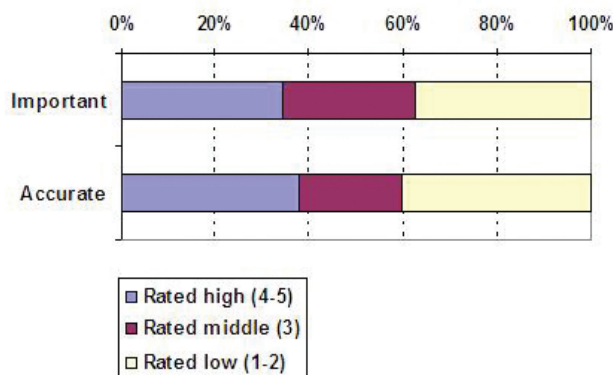
On surveys, Episcopalians regarded this a-confessional approach to Christianity as one of the least important aspects of Episcopal identity, with 52% of leaders and only 34% of congregation members rating it as highly

important. One explanation as to why this theme rated so low may be a lack of common understanding of the word confessional, which some might misinterpret to mean confessing one's sins. In terms of accuracy, Episcopal leaders saw the a-confessional stance as a moderately accurate aspect of what the Episcopal Church currently is, with 56% of leaders endorsing it as highly accurate and only 38% of congregational members viewing it as highly accurate. In other words, both leaders and congregational members perceived an a-confessional faith to be a stand-alone element of Episcopal identity, neither central to identity nor connected with other identity themes.

Episcopal Church Leaders
(Bishops, Priests, Deputies)



Episcopal Congregation Members



A fundamental part of being a-confessional seems related to a recognition that God's reality and purposes are beyond our limited mortal comprehension. This fundamental theological perspective was expressed by people on all sides of the debate, and seemed to shape their vision of the Church as small in comparison with God.

Some of the vagaries of an a-confessional faith have to do with boundaries. The current debates raise questions and concerns about what is central, what is peripheral to faith in and experience of Christ, and where the borders of Christianity fall.

It's probably why we'll never be as large as other denominations, because it takes a certain level – and I know I risk sounding snobby about this – but there it is, it takes a certain level of spiritual maturity to achieve those two things, the comprehension and the holding in tension the divergent perspectives. It's so much easier to live in the land of black-and-white, ten rules on the board and just follow these rules and you'll be okay, or just do as I say because father or mother knows best. That's the easy part. So I think it takes a certain maturity to be an Episcopalian, to be an Anglican (Representative stakeholder).

This last quotation raises a concern: To what extent does commitment to an a-confessional faith and a tolerance of ambiguity foster a sense of intellectual or spiritual superiority? Is it possible that an a-confessional approach, conceived as a matter of humility before God, might be twisted to support a form of intellectual elitism?

An a-confessional stance does not undermine the importance of a creedal faith – one which affirms those things regarded as most essential in the historic creeds of the Church (principally, the Nicene and Apostle’s Creeds). But this a-confessional stance does allow for ecumenical breadth, theological diversity, and inclusive

comprehensiveness. Thus, it has become a part of the dialogue in the current controversies of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion, even though it is not regarded as a highly important or accurate aspect of Episcopal identity.

Reflection Questions

- What, if any, is the difference between reciting the creeds and agreeing to a confessional statement?
- How are the documents in the BCP – the Outline of Faith and the various historical documents including the 39 Articles – different from a confessional statement?
- What is gained or lost by agreeing to a doctrinal confession? What is gained or lost by holding an a-confessional approach to Christian faith?

Epilogue: Some Theological and Ethical Reflections

As we reach the end of this report, how do we answer the question, “What is the Episcopal Church?” No singular concept captures the fullness of its complexity, yet there is a clear structure to its multifaceted identity. As Episcopalians, we are generally consistent in what we regard as most central to our shared identity, and in how we prioritize the many themes that contribute to what it means to be the Episcopal Church.

At the heart of Episcopal identity is its centeredness in Christ, its sacramental and incarnational theology, its *Book of Common Prayer* that reflects and celebrates a range of Christian theology, its groundedness in scripture, and its pastoral approach in handling challenges. Liturgical expression of faith also resides near the heart of Episcopal identity. Themes related to theological and spiritual diversity and societal impact tended to be less central to Episcopal identity, with people expressing the widest degree of opinion about them.

Our sense of Episcopal identity is clearly related to how we experience being part of the Episcopal Church. Our feelings, our sense of belonging and being part of something personally meaningful, and our words and actions are all related to how we perceive the identity of the Church to which we belong. Identity matters. Shared identity matters.

One of the deepest undergirding ideas of Episcopal identity, and one of its fundamental challenges, is *comprehensiveness*. The questions of comprehensiveness lie near the heart of the Church’s current issues of debate. How truly comprehensive is the Episcopal Church? How comprehensive can it be? How far can this sense of comprehensiveness stretch? Are there some identities that are simply incompatible with each other in a Christian community? What are the boundaries of the “big tent”? Which identities, when embraced, threaten to stretch other identities to their breaking point? These questions cannot easily be considered until we have explored and discussed some more complex questions about Episcopal identity.

Around one table, receiving from one another, we discover not only ourselves and one another, but the risen Christ in our midst, in whom there is now no longer Jew nor Greek, slave nor free. Resting on the road to Emmaus, it is not until the bread is broken, that bread which brings together grains scattered across the wide land, that the disciples recognize Jesus. Questions about the limits of comprehensiveness cannot be answered without first engaging the openness of coming to table with one another to hear, listen, honor, and challenge one another.

Reflection Question Guidelines

There are questions raised throughout this report that are intended to help guide Episcopalians in our continuing conversations around the table. To engage these questions as openly and richly as possible, here are some ground rules for conversation.

Observe a common ethic in discourse, and recognize the temptations of careless speech.

With practice, we can become more attuned to the pitfalls and traps of aggrandizement, minimization, demonizing, and deflection in our speech. We can more carefully assess our uses of analogies. More subtly, we can begin to recognize how our speech contributes to polarizing and either-or thinking. And we can take responsibility for our own words and the potential of their enduring consequences.

Perhaps some of the re-learning that is needed in our discourse can occur through intentional efforts to sit with people from very different perspectives and to try to articulate these different perspectives ourselves, honorably and respectfully.

There is a whole strain in scripture and in our theological tradition that suggests, to use a Biblical image, the narrow door. And I think there's also an image that has arms wide open, but it's both-and. It's both a part of who we are and we have a discomfort in claiming both as having truth. ... I think it's far more nuanced. I will sit with liberals and give them the conservative, traditional piece; and I've just finished sitting with a bunch of conservatives and I give them the inclusive piece. That's one of my callings (Bishop).

We have a lot of similarities to ancient Judaism. ... The rabbis always went out two by two because no one rabbi could convey the truth. There was a kind of humility that the truth emerged in the dialectic between two rabbis who didn't agree with each other. ... That dialectic is very stimulating and I think it helps us get to the truth more than having total agreement with everybody or some kind of litmus test or towing the line (Bishop).

Begin with common ground and areas for common work.

Episcopalians demonstrated widespread consensus on core themes of Episcopal identity – a sacramental and incarnational faith as expressed in the *Book of Common Prayer*, rooted in scripture (and tradition), holding Christ as central, and expressing this faith in public worship and pastoral ministry. These identity themes are a natural starting place for common work, as they are areas regarded by almost all Episcopalians as central. In addition, the Episcopal Church could benefit from further theological work and development of these most valued areas of identity. How do these themes hold together and speak to a common core? How do they shape Episcopalians' understanding of other aspects of our shared identity?

Such work is not merely an attempt to look for the "lowest common denominator." Rather, it is an effort to find our common voice, our central source of strength and power in our shared identity as Episcopal Christians. Episcopalians' core identity values deserve riveted and disciplined attention by our bishops and theologians, as teachers of the Church and guardians of

the faith. But all Episcopalians can engage in focusing on our core commitments to Christ, through lives of discipleship that honor, embrace, and explore what it means to be sacramental and incarnational Christians grounded in scripture. Such discipleship begins with Jesus, who asks his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?"

Tell one another core stories of faith and encounter with God.

A more direct way of focusing on what we hold as central can be through direct sharing of our own stories of spiritual transformation and redemption. In stories, people express identity and values in a sharper yet more intertwined way, and may discover deep, soulful respect for one another. One interviewee described this process at work, and how it helped people step beyond stereotypes without losing touch with their own concerns.

We are on opposite sides on the sexuality issues and are both very deep loving Christians. ... And one of the things we tried to do in those meetings was to bring together as nearly equal number as we could, really, people devoted to the [different perspectives]. One of the first things we did was to spend 20-30 minutes per person, going around the table, sometimes as many as 28 people, telling who Jesus is in your life. And once I can see people experiencing Jesus in their

lives, and talking about that, who radically disagree with me on this issue, it's very hard for me to demonize them. ... For example, conservatives often reported they were just shocked to find out how much the Bible means to some of us progressives. I guess they thought we were jettisoning the Bible. That's one of their stereotypes about us. One of our stereotypes about them is that we were really shocked to find out they really are concerned about poverty and AIDS and all kinds of other issues in the world. We sometimes stereotype them as Bible-thumping, mono-issue persons with no political commitments at all (Bishop).

Find fruitful ways to engage disagreement.

There are some significant points of disagreement in the Episcopal Church. However, distances from one another may not be as great as previously thought. Simply recognizing this can help reframe the conflicts and raise hope for reconciliation. It is possible to engage in responsible discourse in the midst of conflict. How can laity, bishops, priests, and deacons help create situations in which they turn toward rather than away from one another? How can they affirm one another, and allow themselves to be influenced by one another? Once again, this involves disciplined spiritual self-examination.

Sadly enough, that tradition of making room for everybody has come to a place of drawing lines and "if you don't do it my way, you're not part of me." I'm saddened by that and I hope that that stops and that we return to an openness that allows us to respect the dignity of each other and to work in relationship with one another. ... There [are] certain little things that I'm not going to agree with that other people do. What we can do is tie all of our disagreements in a bundle and hold them aside and have the major bundle that contains them be the acts of mission and historicity of our tradition of the Anglican Communion. If we can do that and not have to have everybody think like us, I think we're in good shape and we will exist and we will thrive and we will flourish (Bishop).

Episcopalians have the opportunity to model a different path through conflict. Exploring different ways of interacting around one table can allow us to develop better ways of wrestling, contending, and conversing more honestly. Then, those inside and outside the Episcopal Church may take notice of how we do this. There may even be a trickle-down effect to other areas of conflict and confusion in local congregations and centers of ministry. And then the public will either lose interest or gain interest, depending on what is most central and important to them. And Episcopalians can continue on with the work of the Gospel.

So even though we're in a time of conflict and turmoil and higher stress, my belief is that we will all, both liberal and conservative, come out of this as healthier individuals. Perhaps at different sides, yes. Hopefully, both for liberal and conservative alike, much as I don't like those terms, hopefully drawing closer to the Lord as a result ... That's what's important to me in the midst of all this, that the Church care for its people, that the Church pray for and proclaim Christ in the midst of its people ... The institutional stuff: lo, we will always have it with us. And we will never, ever, get it completely right. The perfect institutional church does not exist, nor can we create one. A better one maybe, for a time. In the meantime, caring for people, proclaiming the gospel, preaching and teaching, caring for one another: all that's the important stuff. That's where Christ is known. That's the blood and guts of the Church. The rest of this is just clothing (Bishop).

Appendix A: What is the Episcopal Identity Project?

The *Episcopal Identity Project* is a large-scale study of identity, emotion and wellness in the Episcopal Church. Funded in part by the College for Bishops and CREDO Institute, Inc., the research is being conducted by three professors whose interests are in the life and health of organizations and organizational members: Dr. Elaine C. Hollensbe at the University of Cincinnati, Dr. Glen E. Kreiner at The Pennsylvania State University, and Dr. Mathew L. Sheep at Illinois State University. The scholars receive financial and administrative support from their universities and are assisted by graduate students who work closely with them.

In February of 2004, the researchers, who were assisting CREDO with other projects on clergy wellness, were brainstorming with leaders of CREDO and the College for Bishops about further collaborative research that might help the Episcopal Church.²² It struck the group that the Church was at an opportune moment for an in-depth study of its identity. They agreed that key to the success of the study would be collecting data from a multitude of perspectives, using a variety of research methods, and conducting the study over time. The researchers envisioned that a comprehensive study of Episcopal identity could greatly benefit the Church now, as well as provide a benchmark for the future, when the Church might step back and take stock again.

The researchers themselves are no strangers to religious life. Elaine Hollensbe, a committed Roman Catholic, has worked with CREDO Institute, Inc. for nine years, helping it develop a body of literature on individual and organizational wellness. Glen Kreiner is a committed Mormon and understands first-hand the intensity of identity for a religious community and denomination – with a particular appreciation for a religious organization that has strong lay involvement. Mathew Sheep, who started on this project as a doctoral student, came to organizational research from a previous career as a pastor in the Christian Church and has had first-hand experience with how differently people can perceive the Church's identity.

Beginning in 2004, Elaine, Glen, and Mathew have worked with the Episcopal Church to help it examine how the Church and its members, as a whole body and as constituent parts, respond to events that raise the possibility of change in the Church's life. Specifically, the *Episcopal Identity Project* explores how people's perceptions about Episcopal identity are related to these events and forces.

An organization's identity comprises that which is most central, enduring, and distinctive. It engages questions such as: Who are we? How are we different from others? What is most important to us? In light of events of the past

²² The researchers were in the midst of a project with Episcopal priests (entitled "Borders and Bridges") that explored emotion management, work-family balance, and individual identity issues. Given the early success of that project, another one that wedded the interests of the research team with the needs of the Church seemed ideal and providential for all parties.

few years, Episcopalians have found themselves reflecting in new ways on their collective identity as a church and their individual identities as Episcopalians. The *Episcopal Identity Project* has, in essence, taken the temperature of the Episcopal Church according to its own members and leaders, and through reports like *Around One Table*, offers a mirror back to Episcopalians.

The guiding questions for researchers in the *Episcopal Identity Project* have been the following:

1. How do people understand Episcopal identity? What are different themes of Episcopal identity, and how varied are they? How do different people relate to these various themes of Episcopal identity?
2. How do Episcopalians describe the formation of Episcopal identity and whether it has changed or stayed the same over time?
3. How have Episcopalians both pursued and responded to changes in the Church during the past several years? How do people's perceptions of Episcopal identity affect their language and discourse? How then do people use language to construct, debate, and deconstruct Episcopal identity?
4. How do Church identity and organizational change influence each other?
5. When identity shifts, what happens to Church stability, development, and health?
6. How does emotion both shape and get shaped by Episcopalians' perceptions of their Church's identity?
7. How do people's perceptions of Episcopal identity affect their sense of personal connection with and investment in the Church?
8. What relationships are there between people's perceptions of Church identity and their health and well-being?

How Was The Study Accomplished?

The Episcopal Identity Project is a multi-method study that has been tailor-made for the Episcopal Church. The research team first arranged interviews with people representing different areas of leadership in the Church. Following the 2003 General Convention, the team identified people to interview, using press releases and conversations with various Church leaders to guide them to people representing a wide variety of positions. The team continued to gather interviews using what is called a "snowball sampling" method: like a snowball rolling downhill, a sample grows as people experience the process, learn to trust the researchers, and recommend others to contact. Throughout this interviewing process, the research team was attentive to making connections with people across the spectrum of opinions in the Church, seeking out different types of leaders. Specifically, they interviewed individuals in the following categories:

- Informed research partners (Church leaders who could help the team make connections with various people)
- Representative stakeholders (lay and ordained leaders representing various positions and concerns)

- Persons of interest (people who received public attention)
- General Convention deputies
- Seminary deans
- Selected bishops
- Presiding bishops (former and current)

Within these groups, the team interviewed individuals who represented different theological opinions and political alliances, from the most liberal to the most conservative. Quotations from these people appear throughout this document, with their confidentiality maintained and honored (no names or locations are given).

The team then created surveys for different groups in the Church – bishops, active and retired priests, General Convention deputies, and laity (see Appendix C for demographic

distributions). Surveys were designed to ask questions about the following: the identity of the Episcopal Church; feelings about the Episcopal Church and the 2003 and 2006 General Conventions; level of identification with the Episcopal Church, the Anglican Communion, a particular diocese, and parish; relationships with different interest groups in the Episcopal Church; personal choices and perceived outcomes in relation to decisions of the 2003 and 2006 General Conventions; and some basic demographic information like gender, race, and age. Questions focused on the life and experience of the Episcopal Church. Questions about identity were created following analysis of interviews, in which various identity themes surfaced repeatedly.

The research team learned that it could count on a high response rate from Episcopalians.

Summary of Interviews and Surveys

Groups Surveyed	Surveys Sent	Surveys Completed	Response Rate
Bishops	All bishops (153)	92	60%
Active clergy	1000 (randomly selected)	414	41%
Retired clergy	All who retired between 9/03 and 12/05 (982)	385	39%
GC deputies (lay/clergy)	All deputies for 2003 and 2006 (1277)	674	53%
Laity	414 congregations from active priest sample sent letter inviting open participation	1004	NA
TOTAL		2569	

People Interviewed

Bishops	22
General Convention deputies	14
Representative stakeholders ^a	18
Persons of interest ^b	21
TOTAL	75

a “Representative stakeholders” are lay and ordained leaders representing various positions and concerns.

b “Persons of interest” are people who received public attention in various media.

In addition to interviews and surveys, the research team has also collected historical and statistical data produced by Church research departments, official Church press releases and media reports since August 2003, mainstream media stories about the Episcopal Church, and a sampling of various email and web-based editorials, commentaries, opinions, and reactions regarding the Episcopal Church and the actions at the 2003 and 2006 General Conventions that have sparked controversy. These secondary sources (totaling over 1000) have contributed to a deep and broad understanding of the issues with which the Church is wrestling.

Finally, the research team has conducted on-site observations and interviews at General Convention 2006, various parishes, seminaries and dioceses, the Episcopal Church Center in New York, and two House of Bishops meetings between 2003 and the present. Throughout their research, the team has been attentive to listening to people representing all positions – including those who have experienced themselves as excluded and those who have actively sought new alliances. Bishops, priests, deputies, and leaders of various organizations and constituencies have commended the researchers for their even-handed approach and trustworthiness.²³

Research from the *Episcopal Identity Project* has garnered keen interest from other audiences, including scholars and professionals in organizational behavior, business, and the social sciences. Colleagues of the research team have expressed their surprise at the level of participation by members and leaders in the Church and by the degree of access they have been given to leaders and members, from all sides of the table. This study is breaking new ground in organizational research and is likely to set standards for how people study all sorts of organizations in the future.

More importantly for the Episcopal Church, the *Episcopal Identity Project* provides an opportunity for all Episcopalians to look more carefully at themselves, with the benefit of detachment afforded by the research team and their generous care in hearing and accounting for as many perspectives as they could find. This report, *Around One Table*, provides the Episcopal Church with a powerful mirror: results from surveys and interview quotations reflect back to Episcopalians their own perceptions of their Church – not always easy but certainly honest.

23 Surveys with different groups were completed at different points in time. This is a result of the researchers' using insights from one wave of data to inform subsequent surveys and interviews. The bishops completed the first survey a year and a half following the 2003 General Convention (in Spring 2005). Active and retired priests completed the survey a year later, following some adjustments to the survey. Deputies completed the survey shortly following the 2006 General Convention and were asked only to rate the accuracy of the identity themes (not the importance of them). Congregation members took the survey in the latter part of 2007. Some of the variations among these groups in their perceptions of Episcopal identity may be influenced by the differences in when they completed the survey.

How Was the *Around One Table* Report Developed?

As described above, the *Episcopal Identity Project* – both through extensive interviews and quantitative surveys of various categories of clergy and laity – provided much data for understanding Episcopal identity. To ensure that results from the academic study would be informative and relevant to the Church, The Rev. Dr. David T. Gortner (then a faculty member at Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CDSP), now at Virginia Theological Seminary) was commissioned through CDSP by the College for Bishops and CREDO Institute, Inc. (both sponsors of the research) to work with the *Episcopal Identity Project* researchers to produce this report. Using cluster analysis and a number of other statistical techniques, Dr. Gortner, with the three primary researchers, conducted extensive analysis of the quantitative survey data – described in the body of the *Around One Table* report – to produce the four-tiered classification of 23 Episcopal identity themes. Illustrative quotations were selected from their qualitative interviews to provide rich descriptions of how diverse samples of Episcopalians talked about these concepts of identity “in their own words.” Dr. Gortner thus served as primary author and quantitative analyst for the report, with supportive contributions from the primary researchers.

Around One Table also received extensive input and feedback along the way from a diverse array of Episcopalians through numerous coordinating meetings with the leadership of the College for Bishops and CREDO, as well as extensive feedback from their boards of directors and advisors. In addition, a research meeting was held at Church Divinity School of the Pacific in June 2007. Top scholars from various disciplines, such as sociology and theology, as well as representatives of the Episcopal Church, provided valuable input on how the data might be of most interest and benefit to the Church. Additionally, the researchers have presented findings from the project to multiple academic audiences. Thus, both the *Episcopal Identity Project* and *Around One Table* have been exposed to the constructive and critical insights of others in order to produce a practical resource for the Church, while at the same time faithfully adhering to social scientific practices for valid research.

Appendix B: Researcher Statements



It is a delight, honor and privilege to have the opportunity to work with such fine, committed, and good-hearted scholars as Glen, Elaine, and Mathew. They approach the *Episcopal Identity Project* with joy and care for this wonderful, strange, richly diverse body of The Episcopal Church. And I have been touched deeply by the heartfelt honesty, commitment, and passion of the people of The Episcopal Church who participated – from all perspectives. My own research, ministry, and teaching have been – and continue to be – enriched by this project and these wonderful colleagues.

The Rev. David T. Gortner, Ph.D.
Professor of Evangelism &
Congregational Leadership
Director, Doctor of Ministry Programs
Virginia Theological Seminary

*(Work begun while Assistant Professor of Pastoral
Theology at Church Divinity School of the Pacific)*



Without any exaggeration, my work on this project has been one of the highlights of my life. As one who grew up in a Methodist and Episcopalian family, a former minister, and now an organizational researcher, I have been moved on many levels as I have interacted with a broad representation of the Church during these historic times. It has been a privilege to listen as leaders and members alike honestly and openly describe their deep connections with the Church – for a diversity of reasons and with a variety of emotions – but always from the heart a phenomenal caring about how an organization’s identity impacts its mission.

Mathew Sheep, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Management,
College of Business
Illinois State University



To me, the *Episcopal Identity Project* is, purely and simply, a blessing. As a researcher, one always hopes to find a project that resonates with one’s academic and personal interests. To find a project that also provides unconditional access, terrific colleagues, and some of the most interesting people one could hope for truly is a blessing. I am grateful to the College for Bishops and CREDO Institute for their belief in and support of this project, and to the hundreds of Church leaders and members who have shared with us their insights, emotions and time.

Elaine Hollensbe, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Management,
College of Business
University of Cincinnati



The *Episcopal Identity Project* has been a remarkable experience. Many facets of my life passions are tapped by this work – as a Christian, as a scholar of organizations, and as a student of the divine nature of identity. And I couldn’t ask for better colleagues, whom I consider dear friends. Heartfelt thanks to all those who shared their ideas and insights with us throughout this journey.

Glen Kreiner, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Management
& Organization,
Smeal College of Business
The Pennsylvania State University

Appendix C: Demographics of Various Groups Surveyed

The following table contains a summary of demographic and Church background information for respondents to each survey. As with any survey, there is some missing demographic data.

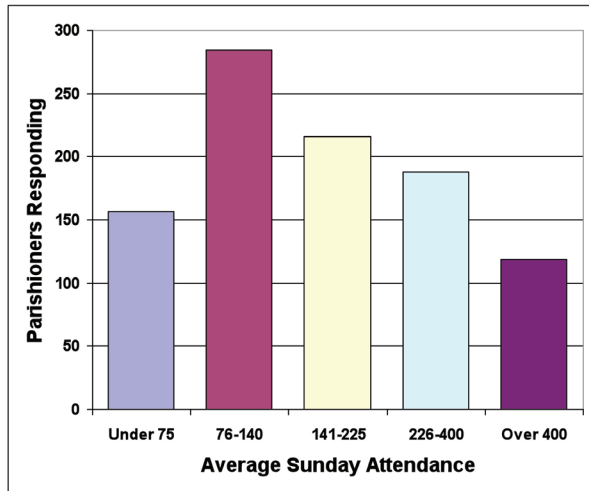
Among survey respondents, there is a wide distribution across age for all groups, and distributions for gender and race are representative for bishops, priests and deputies. However, for congregation members, men and Caucasians are somewhat over-represented when compared to general Church membership.

Function/Order of Ministry	Surveys Completed	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Age	Tenure (in years)
Bishop	92	F — 6 M — 86	(Not asked — too easy to identify individuals)	26-35 — 0 36-45 — 1 46-55 — 21 56-65 — 57 66-75 — 12 76-85 — 1	1-10 — 57 11-20 — 20 21-30 — 6 31-40+ — 1
Active Priest	414	F — 128 M — 285	African-American — 11 Asian — 3 Caucasian — 365 Hispanic — 9 Native-American — 4 Mixed — 16	26-35 — 25 36-45 — 49 46-55 — 143 56-65 — 165 66-75 — 31 76-85 — 0	1-10 — 142 11-20 — 108 21-30 — 97 31-40 — 60 41-50+ — 3
Retired Priest	385	F — 49 M — 331	African-American — 14 Asian — 3 Caucasian — 351 Hispanic — 1 Native-American — 3 Mixed — 5	26-35 — 0 36-45 — 1 46-55 — 1 56-65 — 179 66-75 — 198 76-85 — 0	1-10 — 14 11-20 — 60 21-30 — 61 31-40 — 171 41-50+ — 73
GC Deputy	675	F — 291 M — 384	African-American — 48 Asian — 5 Caucasian — 600 Hispanic — 6 Native-American — 4 Mixed — 7	18-25 — 8 26-35 — 11 36-45 — 44 46-55 — 161 56-65 — 255 66-75 — 156 76-85+ — 36	NA
Congregation Member (See note following table)	917	F — 509 M — 403	African-American — 13 Asian — 3 Caucasian — 878 Hispanic — 7 Native-American — 1 Mixed — 14	18-25 — 11 26-35 — 38 36-45 — 129 46-55 — 224 56-65 — 269 66-75 — 191 76-85 — 48 86-95 — 1	NA

Note: The random sample of lay congregation members who responded to the survey consisted of 1004 individuals who were demographically and geographically diverse and representative within a 95 percent confidence interval of the population of the Episcopal Church. In comparison to demographic data supplied to the researchers of the entire Episcopal Church population, the demographic composition of the EIP lay survey sample on average varied 5% or less from that of the entire Episcopal Church. Thus, the EIP sample is both randomly drawn and representatively diverse within normative guidelines of social science. The percentages of respondents in our sample represented Episcopal

Provinces proportionally, following the same pattern from smallest to largest Provinces in average Sunday attendance (ASA). Moreover, the same holds true for composition of race and gender. The average age of our sample is 56, slightly older than the average age for the Episcopal Church, which is 48. However, that may be because younger children – who might be counted as members in the population average – were not eligible to fill out the survey. Even so, the age range for the EIP sample approximates a normal distribution around the mean. Parish size is also representative in the sample, the distribution of which is shown below.

Parish Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) for EIP Lay Survey Respondents



Appendix D: Clusters of Identity Themes

The following table provides a listing of the themes of Episcopal identity (combining importance ratings with accuracy ratings for each theme) as they clustered together for each group of people surveyed – priests, congregation members, and diocesan bishops. As can be seen, there are similarities and differences in the ways each group of people implicitly organized their sense of Episcopal identity. The table offers a ready tool for fostering further conversation.

Cluster of Identity Themes	Priests (n=650) <i>On 23 themes</i>	Congregation Members (n=715) <i>On 24 themes</i>	Bishops (n=83) <i>On 20 themes</i>
Core Episcopal Identity	BCP Sacramental Incarnational Scripture Christ as Central*	BCP Sacramental Common Liturgy Ceremonial Tradition Scripture Christ as Central* Pastoral	BCP Sacramental Incarnational Pastoral
Secondary Episcopal Identity	Common Liturgy Tradition Ceremonial Pastoral Diverse Theologies Reason Experience Responsive to Soc Change* Inclusive Middle Way	Inclusive Responsive to Soc Change* Experience Reason Ecumenical* Mission-Focused** Dispersed Authority	Tradition Reason Scripture Common Liturgy Ceremonial
Tertiary Episcopal Identity	Prophetic Source of Societal Change Diverse Spiritual Practices Dispersed Authority Ecumenical*	Diverse Spiritual Practices Diverse Theologies Source of Societal Change Middle Way	Inclusive Diverse Theologies Dispersed Authority Middle Way Experience Prophetic Diverse Spiritual Practices Source of Societal Change
Stand-Alone Identity Themes	Source of Salvation A-Confessional Elite	Incarnational Source of Salvation Prophetic Elite A-Confessional	A-Confessional Source of Salvation Elite

*Not on original survey for bishops

**Mission-Focused was an emergent theme added later in the research phase. It appeared only on the surveys of congregation members and is, therefore, not discussed as a separate theme in this document. The theme of mission, however, weaves throughout many of the other identity themes, and is often associated in the qualitative data with the theme Christ as Central.

For all groups, core Episcopal identity consistently included the *Book of Common Prayer*, a sacramental theology, and (when included on the survey) having Christ as central²⁴. Priests and bishops considered an incarnational faith also as part of core Episcopal identity – but congregation members did not. Priests and congregation members both placed scripture among their core themes. For both congregation members and bishops, part of the core of Episcopal identity was a pastoral approach to ministry. Also clustered for congregation members in core Episcopal identity were a common liturgical life, the place of ceremonial expression, an emphasis on tradition – themes that priests and bishops considered more secondary.

There were more differences between groups in their secondary Episcopal identity cluster. For all groups, secondary Episcopal identity included reason and (when included on the survey) responsiveness to societal change. For priests and congregation members, it also consisted of experience and inclusiveness. For priests and bishops, the identity themes of tradition, common liturgy, and ceremony clustered among these; for bishops, scripture was included here. For priests, a pastoral approach to ministry, theological diversity, and the Middle Way fell among these secondary themes. Congregation members' secondary themes of Episcopal identity included being ecumenical and mission-focused and having dispersed authority.

The remaining eight identity themes for priests were more distant from these core and secondary identity values. Identity themes of elite, an a-confessional faith and source of salvation were not grouped at all (stand alone themes), with elite the least related to all other themes. Also forming a somewhat strongly interrelated grouping – but distant from core and secondary identity values – were what we have called tertiary identity values, having to do with the Church's governance and purposeful engagement with the world: being prophetic and a source of societal change, having diverse spiritual practices and dispersed authority, and being ecumenical.

For congregation members, closely related but somewhat distinct were tertiary identity values: diverse spiritual practices, diverse theological positions, the Middle Way, and the Church as a source of societal change.²⁵

Tertiary identity values of bishops clustered in two subsets having to do with comprehensiveness (inclusion, diverse theological positions, dispersed authority, and the Middle Way) and engagement with people and the world (experience, prophetic witness, diverse spiritual practices, and being a source for societal change). These composite tertiary identity values were moderately strongly related to both core and secondary identity values,²⁶ with the subset having to do with comprehensiveness and engaging human difference more strongly related.

24 The survey of bishops, which was the first survey to be distributed, did not include the theme Christ as Central.

25 $r = .640$.

26 $r = .587$ with core identity values and $r = .608$ with secondary identity values.

Interestingly, congregation members' ratings for an incarnational view of Christian life and being a source of salvation were related to one another. These two themes had the most wide-ranging scores, varying independently of almost anything else except each other. The other distant themes – the outliers that were least related to the rest of the clustered themes – included having an a-confessional faith, being an elite Church, and being prophetic.

Appendix E: Charts and Tables of Identity Themes

Ratings of Episcopal Identity Themes across Orders and Roles of Ministry

The table below shows average ratings of each identity theme for each group surveyed. Blank items indicate an item was not part of that particular survey. The first column under each group shows average ratings for importance of the identity theme, while the second column represents perceived accuracy.

	Bishops		Active Priests		Retired Priests		Deputies		Congregation Members	
	<i>Important/Accurate</i>	<i>Important/Accurate</i>	<i>Important/Accurate</i>	<i>Important/Accurate</i>	<i>Important/Accurate</i>	<i>Important/Accurate</i>	<i>Important/Accurate</i>	<i>Important/Accurate</i>	<i>Important/Accurate</i>	<i>Important/Accurate</i>
Christ as Central	—	—	4.77	3.77	4.68	3.66	—	4.21	4.52	3.81
Sacramental	4.68	4.47	4.68	4.60	4.62	4.41	—	4.58	4.24	4.19
Incarnational	4.58	4.09	4.56	4.09	4.51	3.96	—	4.18	3.50	3.18
Book of Common Prayer	4.42	4.30	4.44	4.55	4.36	4.34	—	4.62	4.20	4.25
Grounded in Scripture	4.55	3.58	4.43	3.65	4.51	3.56	—	3.98	4.06	3.45
Pastoral	4.42	4.10	4.33	3.76	4.42	3.70	—	3.86	4.18	3.50
Inclusion	4.16	3.86	4.13	3.81	4.13	3.77	—	4.14	3.89	3.58
Middle Way	4.13	3.49	4.15	3.65	3.88	3.35	—	3.81	3.06	3.02
Tradition	4.09	3.57	3.92	3.82	3.98	3.65	—	3.94	3.72	3.76
Diverse Positions	4.04	4.07	3.95	4.21	3.98	4.07	—	4.20	4.00	3.57
Reason	4.00	3.70	4.17	3.81	4.19	3.70	—	3.98	3.86	3.48
Common Liturgy	4.00	3.63	3.93	3.84	3.94	3.78	—	4.03	3.89	3.88
Ecumenical	—	—	3.75	3.52	3.81	3.39	—	3.72	3.56	3.41
Responsive to Societal Change	—	—	3.77	3.74	3.69	3.77	—	3.94	3.45	3.47
Prophetic	3.90	3.25	3.94	3.02	4.04	3.03	—	3.41	2.67	2.17
A-confessional	3.85	3.79	3.4	3.63	3.5	3.56	—	3.66	2.92	2.91
Salvation	3.73	3.06	3.41	2.70	3.65	2.87	—	3.13	3.49	2.92
Diverse Practices	3.71	3.65	3.60	3.68	3.86	3.65	—	3.87	3.03	3.12
Dispersed Authority	3.68	3.74	3.53	3.44	3.64	3.44	—	3.56	3.39	3.03
Source of Societal Change	3.64	3.13	3.63	2.94	3.64	2.88	—	3.38	3.30	2.83
Experience	3.60	3.98	3.80	3.83	3.90	3.80	—	3.98	3.46	3.42
Ceremonial	3.45	4.01	3.62	4.17	3.62	4.10	—	4.21	3.51	3.96
Elite	1.59	3.00	1.61	3.25	1.66	3.16	—	3.03	1.50	2.43
Mission-Focused*	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3.81	3.06

*Mission-Focused was an emergent theme added later in the research phase. It appeared only on the surveys of congregation members and is, therefore, not discussed as a separate theme in this document. The theme of mission, however, weaves throughout many of the other identity themes, and is often associated in the qualitative data with the theme Christ as Central.

Overall Survey Response Patterns

The charts below present average ratings of the identity themes in order of importance, then accuracy, then disparity between importance and accuracy. (The chart showing the combination of accuracy and importance is found in the main text, Chapter 1.) These charts present ratings from the combined surveys of bishops, active and retired priests, and deputies, as well as congregation members. Because deputies were only asked to rate the accuracy of each theme, the number of respondents rating accuracy is always higher than the number of respondents rating importance.

Importance – Aspirational Episcopal Identity

In the first two charts, the identity themes are presented in descending order of rated *importance*, from questions rated the highest to those rated the lowest.

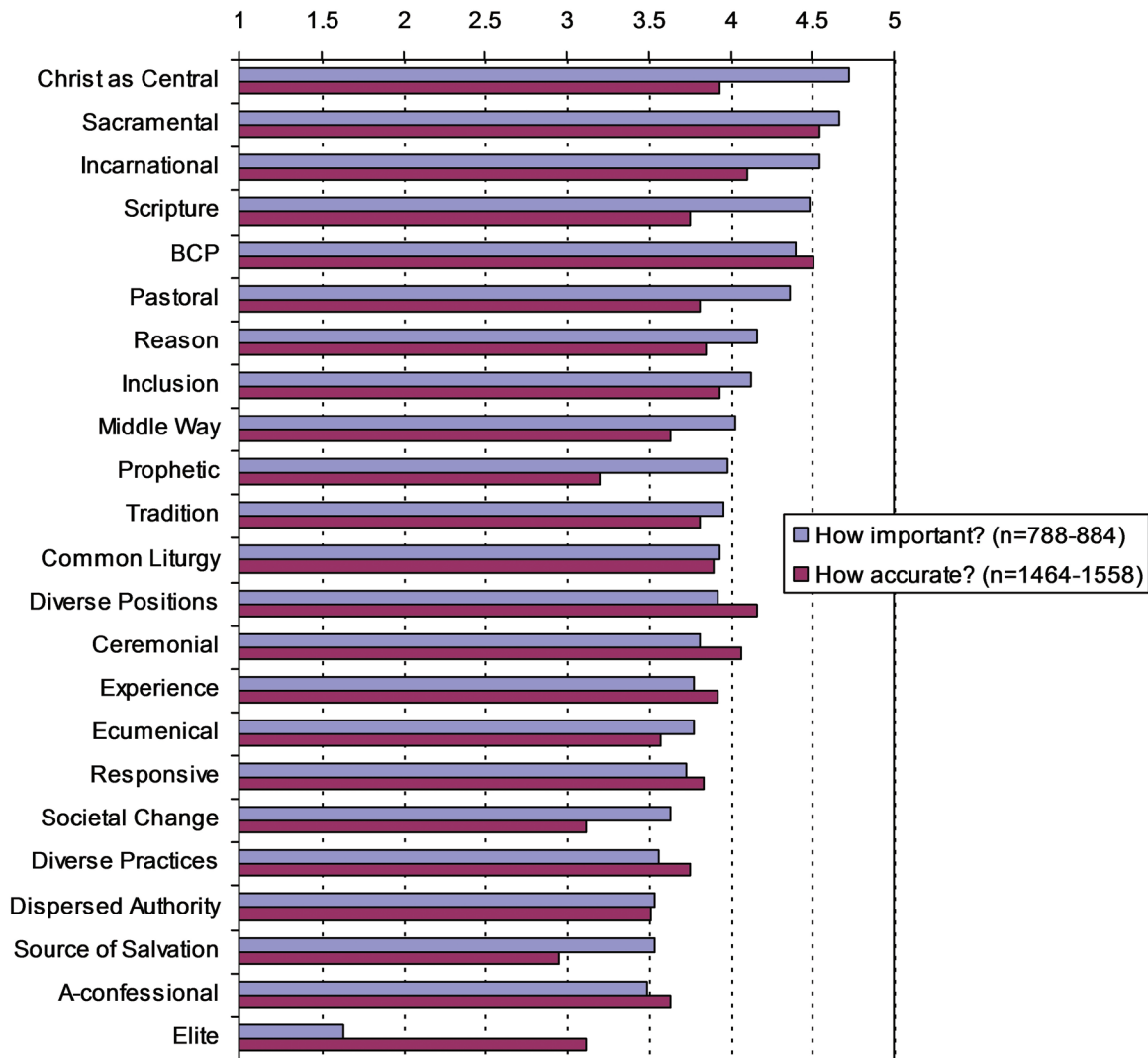
Of absolutely *most distinctive importance* to Episcopal leaders was that Christ be central to the Episcopal Church's shared Christian life, and that the Episcopal Church have a sacramental and incarnational view of Christian life. Also rated among the most important themes were the centrality of scripture, sharing and adhering to the *Book of Common Prayer*, and a primarily pastoral approach in ministry. (Average ratings were 4.4 or higher, with most people rating these themes with a '5' on a 5-point scale.)

Next in importance, with scores between 3.9 and 4.3 and with a broader range of responses and increased disagreement, were the following: emphasizing the place of reason in Church life, emphasizing inclusion of all people in the life of the Church, holding to the Middle Way (seeking conciliation between conflicting positions), being prophetic in public witness, emphasizing the place of tradition in Church life, sharing a common liturgical life that can be recognized across the Church, and allowing space for diverse theological positions.²⁷

There were also themes of Episcopal identity that leaders considered *relatively unimportant* (rated on average between 1.5 and 3.5): being an elite denomination, being a-confessional (that is, not having a shared doctrinal confessional statement), being a source of personal salvation, having a Church governance with dispersed authority, and having diverse spiritual practices.

27 People who responded to this survey tended to mark the majority of questions at the high end of the rating scale. This is not unusual in such surveys. Decades of studies on happiness, optimism, and outlook on life have produced fairly uniform patterns of responses, with people gravitating toward the high end of rating scales. For a religious community like the Episcopal Church that wants to commit itself to so many things, leaders may feel a pull toward emphasizing all ideals, hopes, and aspirations as central to Episcopal identity, and leaders may then struggle with making more refined gradations of what is absolutely *most* important.

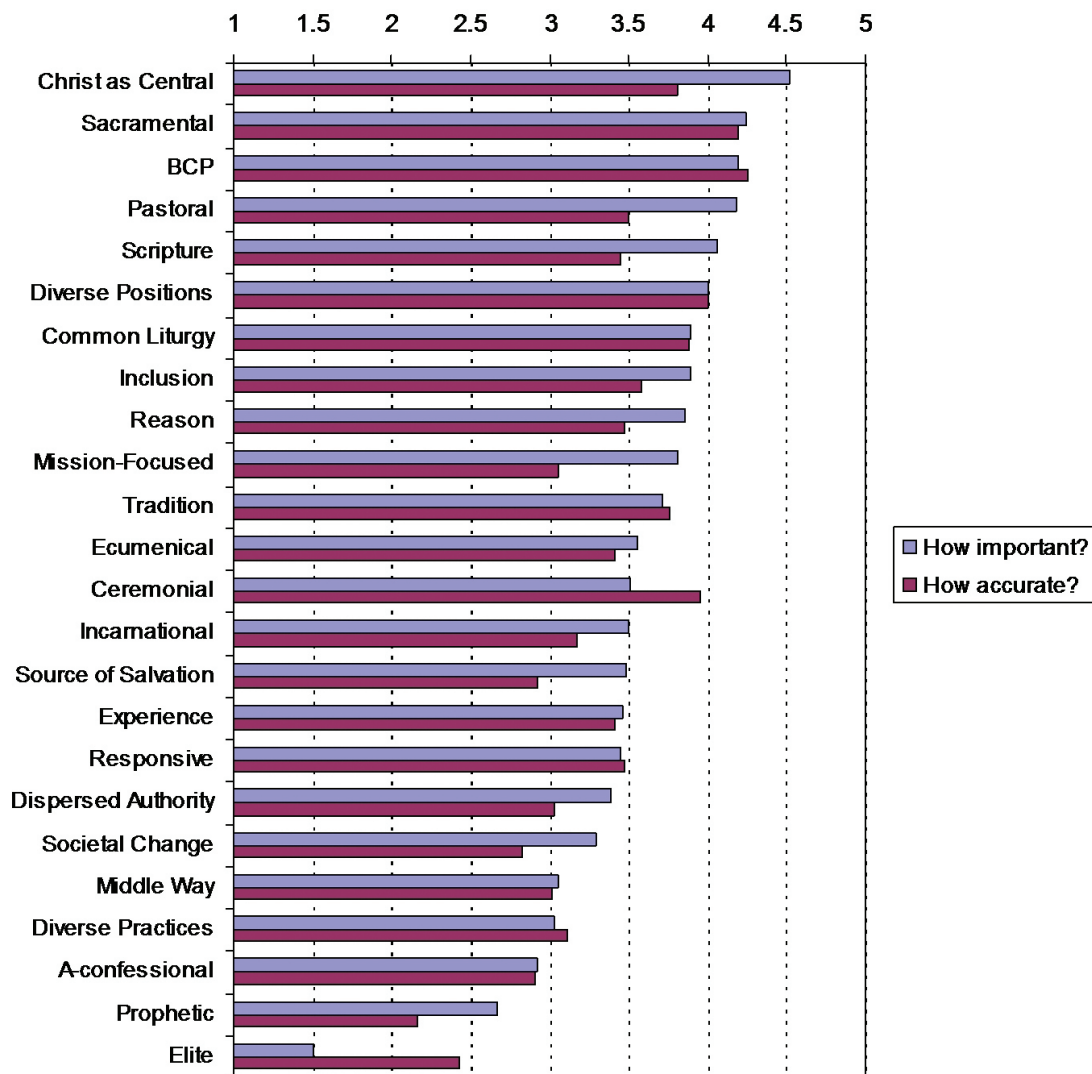
Idealized Identity of the Episcopal Church in Order of Importance
Bishops, Priests and General Convention Deputies



Congregation members' ratings (next page) were somewhat similar to Episcopal leaders, although their average endorsement of items was typically lower, across almost all themes. Most of their top themes matched those of leaders, but in a slightly different order: Christ as central, sacramental, *Book of Common Prayer*, pastoral, and scripture (ratings between 4.1 and 4.6). Their next most important themes were diverse theological positions, common liturgy,

inclusion, reason, missional focus, and tradition (ratings between 3.7 and 4.0), again similar to ratings of Church leaders, but also placing a missional focus among the more important themes of Episcopal identity. Note that mission-focused was an aspect added to the lay survey, based upon suggestions by earlier survey respondents. This aspect was not included on the initial surveys of Episcopal leaders.

Idealized Identity of the Episcopal Church in Order of Importance
Congregation Members

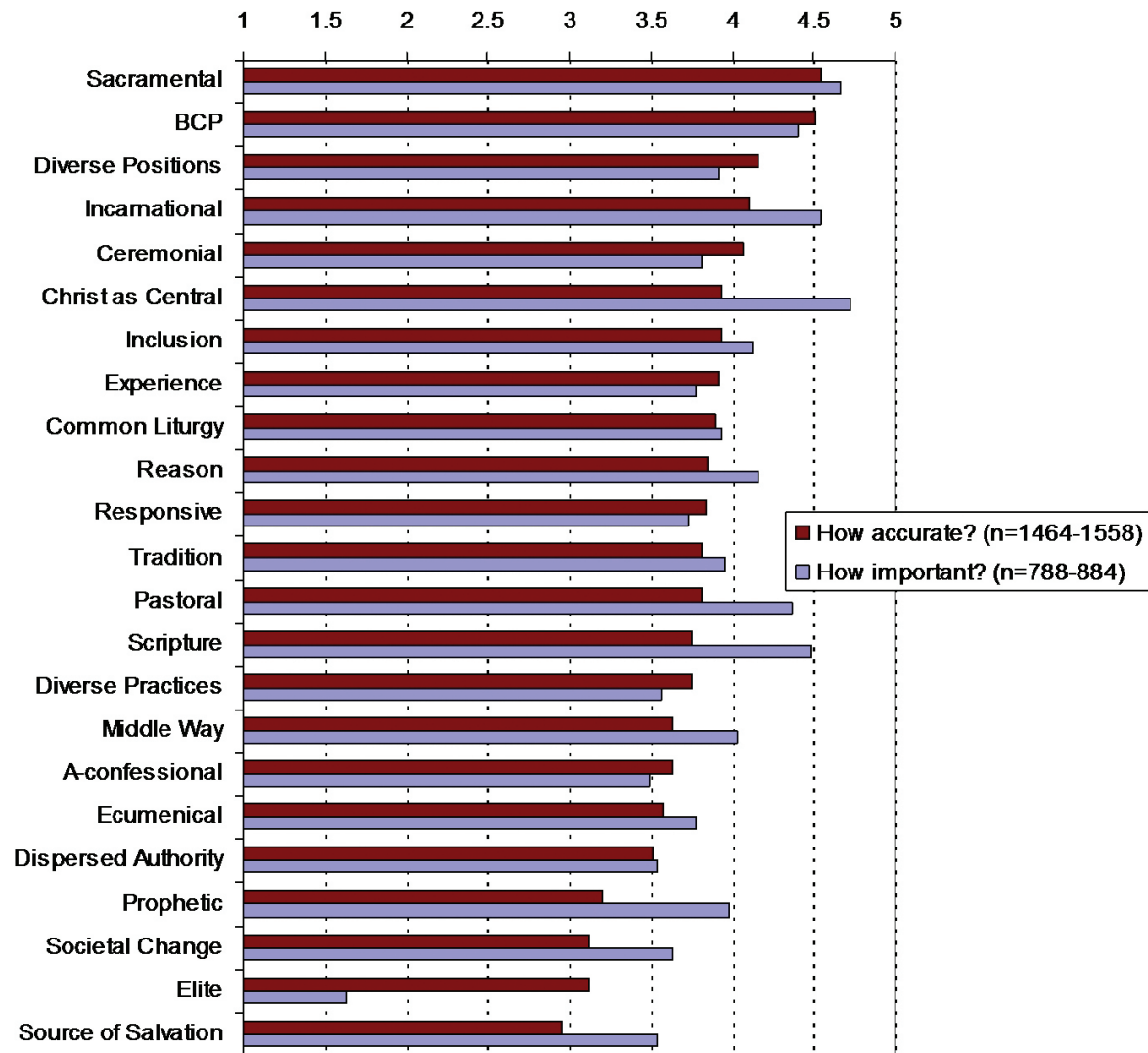


Accuracy – Realized Episcopal Identity

In the chart on the next page, you will find the identity themes presented in order of Church leaders’ ratings of accuracy, how much they perceived each theme to represent something central and distinctive to what the Episcopal Church actually is. As indicated, the order of identity themes in this chart is rather different from the previous chart (idealized identity).

What Church leaders saw as the realized identity of the Episcopal Church tells a distinct story from what they saw as the aspirational identity of the Church.

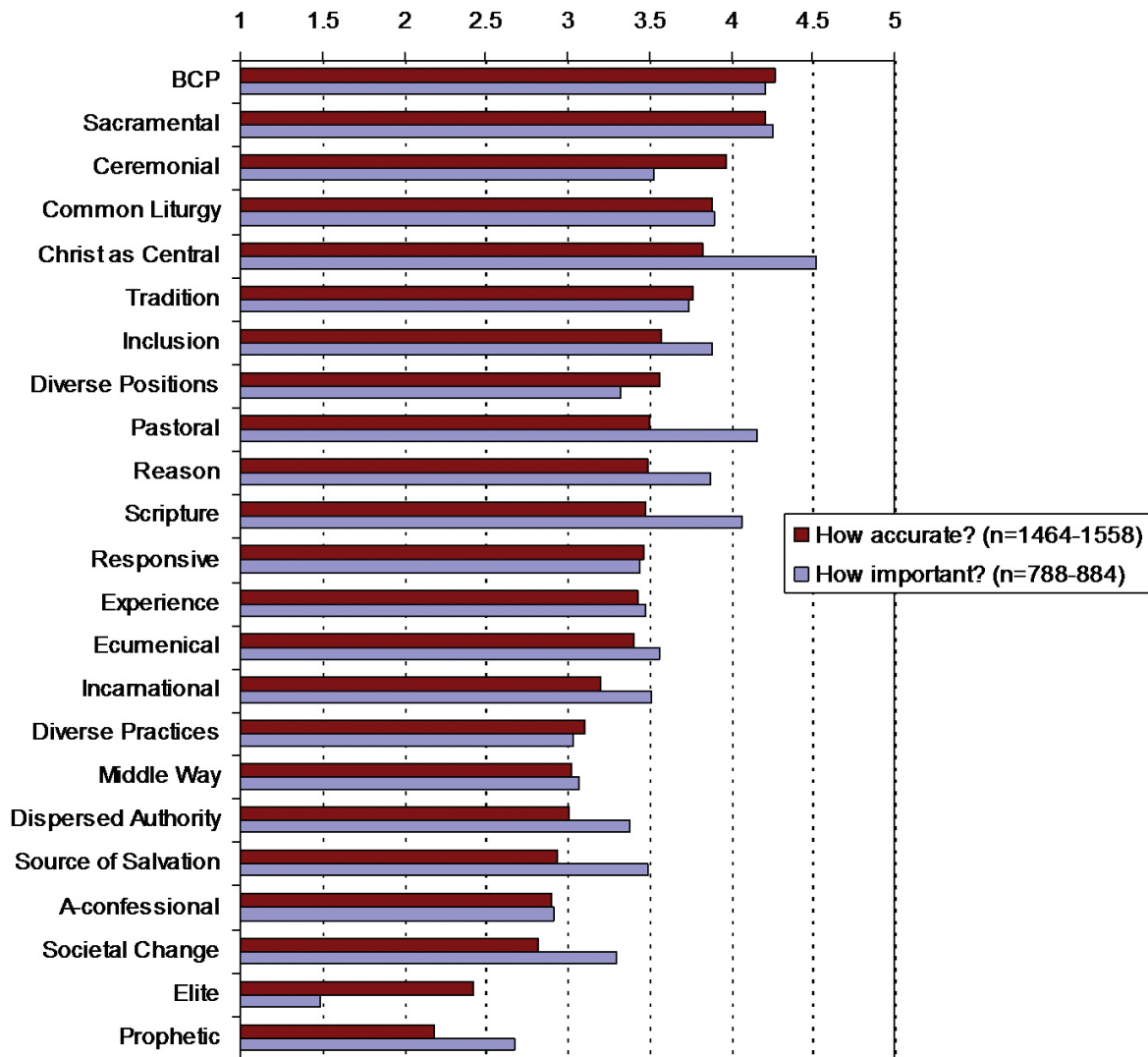
Realized Identity of the Episcopal Church in Order of Accuracy
Bishops, Priests and General Convention Deputies



Episcopal leaders rated accuracy lower than importance for most themes. As is true for most people, Episcopalians' realized identities did not always measure up to their aspirational identities. Episcopal leaders rated a sacramental view of Christian life and the *Book of Common Prayer* as most accurate (average ratings 4.5). The next *highly accurate* themes were having diverse theological positions, an incarnational view of Christian life, being ceremonial, holding Christ as central, emphasizing inclusion of all people, emphasizing the place of experience in Church

life, and having a common liturgy (averages between 3.9 and 4.2). *Moderately accurate* but in a lower range were reason, responsiveness to societal change, tradition, a pastoral emphasis in ministry, scripture, and diverse spiritual practices (average ratings around 3.8). The items rated as *least accurate* about the Episcopal Church were being a source of personal salvation, being an elite church, being a source of societal change, and being prophetic (averages between 2.9 and 3.2).

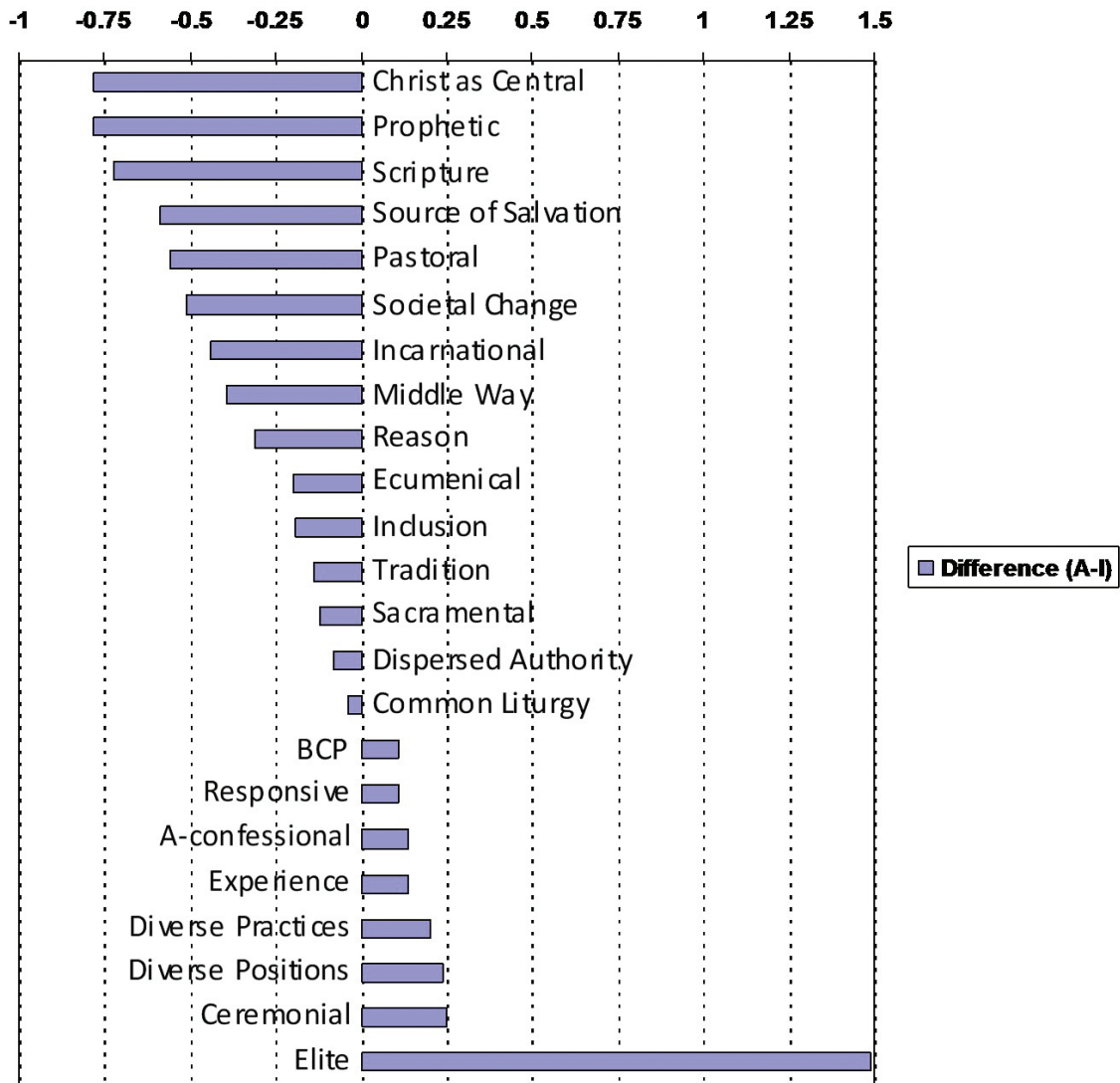
Realized Identity of the Episcopal Church in Order of Accuracy Congregation Members



Episcopal congregation members rated the *Book of Common Prayer* and a sacramental view of Christian life as *most accurate* (average ratings 4.2). The next *highly accurate* themes were being ceremonial, having a common liturgy, holding Christ as central, and emphasizing the place of tradition in Church life (averages between 3.8 and 4.0). *Moderately accurate* but in a lower range were inclusion of all people, having diverse theological positions, a pastoral

emphasis in ministry, reason, scripture, being responsive to societal change, emphasizing the place of experience in Church life, and being ecumenical (averages between 3.4 and 3.6). The items rated as *least accurate* about the Episcopal Church were being an elite church, and being prophetic (averages between 2.2 and 2.4).

Identity Disparities – Accuracy in Light of Importance (A – I)
*Bishops, Active Priests, and Retired Priests (785-880)**



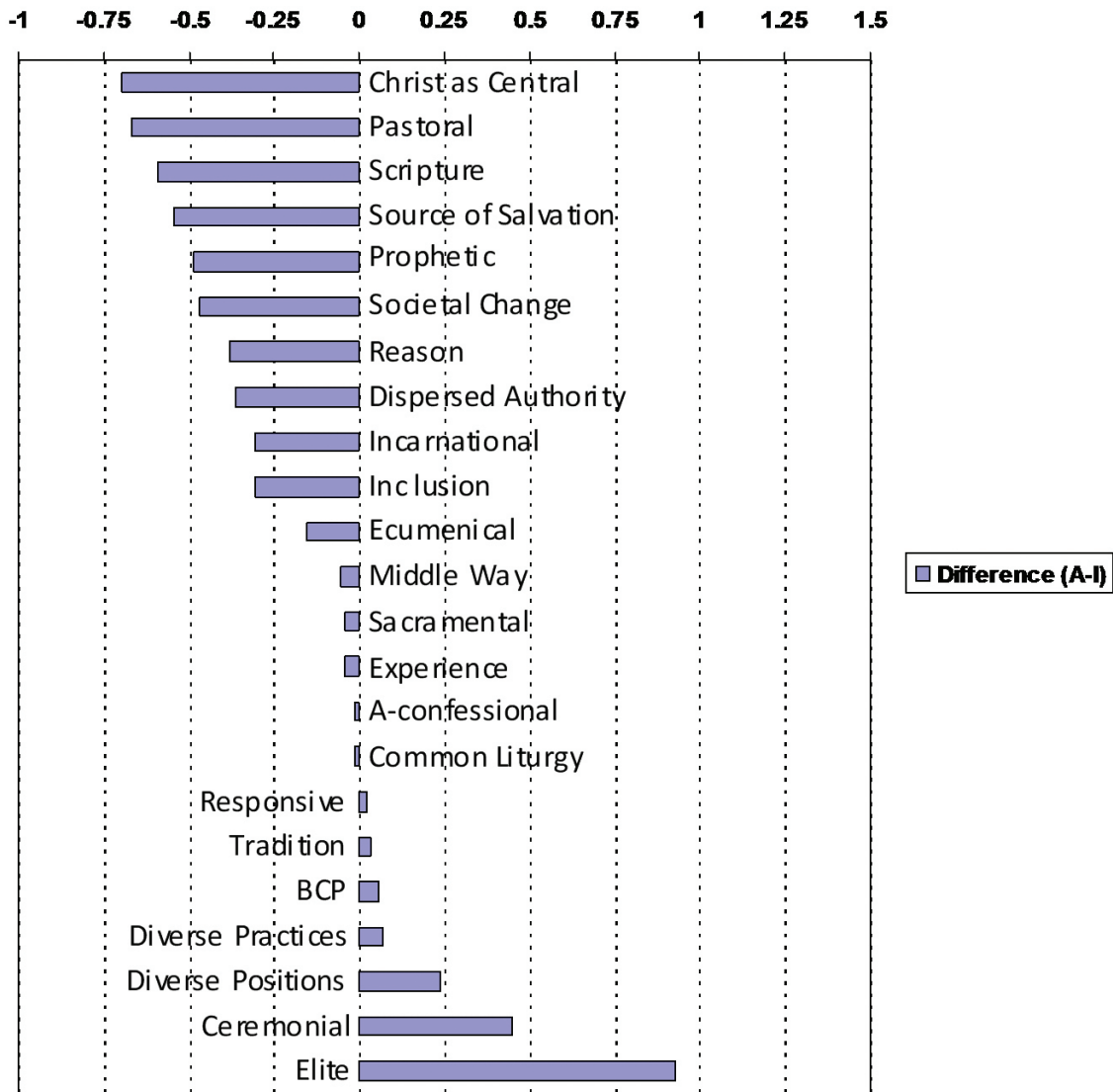
*Deputies are excluded in this chart, because they only received and rated questions about accuracy.

Congruence and Disparity – How Well Do Importance and Accuracy Match?

Another way to look at these questions is to examine the distances between ratings of importance and ratings of accuracy. These distances point to the degree to which people see the Episcopal Church matching its aspirations and hopes with its current actions and life. These charts shows how congruent or disparate people’s ratings were of the identity

themes – in short, how accuracy measures up to importance, or how realized identity measures up to aspirational identity. The charts present the average difference between people’s accuracy and importance ratings (A – I), from the most disparate negative score (more important than accurate) to the most disparate positive score (more accurate than important).

Identity Disparities – Accuracy in Light of Importance (A – I)
Congregation Members (1044)



For Episcopal leaders, the greatest gaps between accuracy and importance are for the identity themes of holding Christ as central, being prophetic and emphasizing scripture in Church life (around -.75). Two of these were rated as among the most important themes, but accuracy ratings were dramatically lower. Other significant gaps where accuracy fell below importance occurred with themes of being a source of personal salvation, being pastoral, being a

source of societal change, holding an incarnational view of Christian life and adhering to the Middle Way (around -.5). On the other end of the spectrum, the most extreme gap, with accuracy far exceeding importance, was the theme of being an elite church (+1.5 for bishops and priests, and almost +1.0 for congregation members). The graph for congregation members indicates a smaller gap between importance and accuracy in most of the themes, compared to bishops and priests.

Church leaders saw Episcopalians as living up to their aspirations and ideals (i.e., small deviations) for sharing a common liturgy, practicing dispersed authority, sharing and adhering to the *Book of Common Prayer*, being responsive to societal change, holding a sacramental view of Christian life, being a-confessional, and emphasizing tradition and experience in Church life. Congregation members saw Episcopalians as living up to their aspirations for having a common liturgy, being a-confessional, being responsive to societal change, emphasizing tradition, emphasizing experience in Church life, holding a sacramental view of Christian life, adhering to the Middle Way, adhering to the *Book of Common Prayer* and having diverse spiritual practices. Some of these are among the most important or accurate identity themes while some are among the less important or accurate.

Summary and Discussion

From these basic analyses, some clear patterns emerge – patterns echoed in the cluster analyses that isolated core, secondary, tertiary, and stand-alone identity themes. First, the themes most frequently rated with highest importance are consistent with the tradition of Anglican theology and practice.

- Episcopalians passionately want their Church to hold Christ as central, and believe their Church attempts to do so (though not as well as they wish).
- Episcopalians see the Church both actually and ideally as a “people of the book,” whose faith is united by and expressed in their *Book of Common Prayer*.
- Episcopalians view their Church as both aspiring to hold and successfully expressing a sacramental understanding of the Christian life and relationship with God.
- Episcopalians see their Church both seeking to hold and expressing a deeply incarnational theology.
- Episcopalians want their Church to be deeply grounded in scripture, but see some gap between what is hoped and what is lived.

Second, the themes most frequently rated with the highest accuracy reflect current perceptions of the Episcopal Church both inside and outside.

- Episcopalians view the Church as committed to sacramental and incarnational understandings, bringing this to bear on worship, prayer, and approach to Christian life.
- The Episcopal Church gathers around its *Book of Common Prayer* as one of its core unifying features and most profound expressions of faith.
- Episcopalians see their Church as holding multiple theological perspectives, both locally and broadly, and having a deep appreciation for this aspect of Episcopal life.
- Episcopalians recognize their Church as highly ceremonial, more than most Christian denominations, and wonder a bit about how important this really is to its identity.

Third, in terms of congruence and disparity between realized and aspirational identity (that is, accuracy and importance):

- Episcopalians believe that the Church is highly congruent in its emphasis and aspirations to a sacramental Christianity and the *Book of Common Prayer*.
- Episcopalians also believe the Church is congruent in its less central emphasis on common liturgy, dispersed authority, responsiveness to societal change, an a-confessional faith, tradition and experience.
- Episcopalians sense a significant deficiency in the Church measuring up to its aspirations of being Christ-centered, focused on scripture, and being prophetic.
- Episcopalians would very much like to de-emphasize any notion of their Church as elite.

Appendix F:

Historical Notes by Chapter

Prologue

Historical Note 1

The distinctive Anglican approach to communion can be traced back to the Elizabethan and post-Elizabethan Settlements in the Church of England, where preservation of peace and unity was reached between Catholic and Reform-oriented perspectives. This came only after intense and violent conflict, both verbal and physical, with aggressive words and actions by both sides, and with damage to soul, body and property. The original Elizabethan Settlement found an uneasy compromise between the Catholic and Reform-oriented perspectives only after intense verbal and physical conflict, and excluded peoples that represented extremely different understandings of Christianity and of the Church (for instance, Anabaptists and counter-reforming Catholics). It set the stage for an Anglican approach to Christian fellowship, focused on a comprehensiveness that has become a deep part of Episcopal identity.

Historical Note 2

There is a story of fellowship of other committed Christian leaders, around a table, at the height of the early Reformation, the famed Colloquy of Marburg, where Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon sat at table with Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer, and others. The reformers failed to reach unity because of clear differences on the nature of the Eucharist. As discussion continued, Luther reportedly wrote on the

table the words, *hoc est corpus*, urging a literal understanding of Jesus' words, "This is my body." When Zwingli pressed for a metaphorical understanding, Luther in typically strong fashion said, "You and I are of a different Spirit," and left the meeting. The rift from this meeting has continued through the centuries to the present among Protestant denominations.

Chapter 1

Historical Note 1

The fledgling Church in a fledgling nation pursued some distinctive markers of shared identity immediately. Samuel Seabury's consecration through the Episcopal Church of Scotland brought the historic episcopate onto American soil. The first Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* created a pattern of worship for the Episcopal Church in America that signaled at once a deep connection with the historic life and worship of the Church of England and a departure that adapted liturgy and religious life to the American context. The development of a bicameral house for Church legislation and council directly echoed the American political system adopted by ratification of the U.S. Constitution. And the Church attempted to situate itself within the new republic as an instructive and authoritative voice of conscience and moral guidance, working for the development of the good of society through education and involvement in public life.

Historical Note 2

Over the past two centuries in the Episcopal Church, contrasting perspectives have led to debates, arguments, and conflicts. Various parties in the Church have clashed and argued bitterly. There have been separations and threats of separations. Some separations include the Methodist Episcopal Church in America in 1784 (due to Episcopalian discomfort with the lay-led “enthusiasm” movement), the Reformed Episcopal Church in 1873 (due to controversies about the theology of baptismal regeneration – that is, that baptism is the source of new life and new creation), the Anglican Orthodox Church in 1963 (due to perceptions of overly liberal and high church leanings in the Episcopal Church), people who helped form the Charismatic Episcopal Church in 1992, and various Anglican congregations and dioceses that left over issues related to biblical interpretation, Prayer Book revision, the ordination of women and, recently, issues of sexuality. Each change has introduced new complexity into Episcopal identity. That complexity is itself recognized by many as a central identifying theme of the Episcopal Church.

Chapter 2

Historical Note: Sacramental

The unique sacramental focus of Episcopal life and ministry also recalls its own roominess for theological diversity and its history as a Church housing diverse positions on the Eucharist (as established in the Elizabethan Settlement). But it also calls to mind the historical division with the Reformed Episcopal Church in the late 1800's over the theological doctrine of baptismal regeneration, a doctrine asserting that the primacy of God's action in baptism means that

baptism is both necessary and sufficient for salvation and new life in Christ.

Historical Note: Scriptural

Differences in Episcopal identity (idealized and realized) around scripture date back to the 18th and 19th centuries in American and European church history, with literalism and historical criticism emerging from very different responses to social, philosophical, and scientific developments, not the least of which was Darwin's evolutionary biology.

Chapter 3

Historical Note: Reason

Reason's importance in Episcopal identity – and to a certain degree in Anglican identity – is a theological matter. An inheritance from the English Reformation and the Enlightenment brings a deep regard for reason as an enduring imprint of the image of God. Hooker's high regard for reason is distinct from theological perspectives of other reformers (like Luther and Calvin), who saw the whole of human nature, including reason, as fundamentally darkened and corrupted by humanity's fall into sin.

Historical Note: Reason

One might recall the alleged words of Bishop Joseph Butler to John Wesley: “The pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Spirit is a horrid thing – a very horrid thing”; or Butler's pamphlet, *A Charge against Enthusiasm*, distributed throughout his diocese; or the imprisonment of George Whitefield in Georgia because he incited people to enthusiasm (Luke Tyerman, 1876. *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley*. Harper and Brothers).

Historical Note: Ceremonial

Concerns regarding the emphasis on being ceremonial focused on whether or not form was becoming more important than content or aesthetic delivery more important than the spiritual good delivered. Related to this were concerns about possible misplaced priorities: that some would become involved in the Church out of love for its aesthetic expression but never really embrace committed discipleship. This is not a new concern, and not uniquely Episcopalian. It was expressed by the prophets in scripture, by religious reformers through the centuries, and even noted by psychologists such as Robert Allen and Bernard Spilka in their distinction between committed and consensual religious identity (Robert O. Allen and Bernard Spilka, "Committed and consensual religion: A specification of religion-prejudice relationship," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 6 (1967): 291-306).

Appendix G:

Theological Notes by Chapter

Chapter 1: Charting Multiple Themes

Aspirational and Realized Identities

Distinctions between aspirational identity and realized identity are part of Christian language. Paul talks about actual and ideal self-knowing: “Now I know in part, then I shall know in full” (I Corinthians 13:12). Paul also laments his own inability to live as he intends and hopes to live: “I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind” (Romans 7:22b-23). The warnings of the prophets and the messages to the Churches in the book of Revelation point to disparities between what people say they are and what they actually do.

Chapter 2: Core Identity Themes

Christ as Central

“Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ... [so] that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. ... In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you

also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God” (Ephesians 2:13-16, 21-22).

“... We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end” (Nicene Creed, *BCP* pp. 358-359).

Sacramental

“The sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace” (An Outline of The Faith, *BCP* p. 857).

“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:27).

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of

Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (I Corinthians 10:16).

"Come, all ye kindreds of the nations, to the immortality of the baptism" (Hippolytus, Discourse on the Holy Theophany).

"For the power that the Eucharist gives us is unity. This means that after we have received Christ's body and become his members, we are what we have received. Only then does the Eucharist really become our daily bread" (Augustine, Sermon 57).

"We live in a sacramental universe" (William Temple, *Nature, Man and God*).

Book of Common Prayer

"It is a most invaluable part of that blessed 'liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,' that in his worship different forms and usages may without offence be allowed, provided the substance of the Faith be kept entire; and that, in every Church, what cannot be clearly determined to belong to Doctrine must be referred to Discipline; and therefore, by common consent and authority, may be altered, abridged, enlarged, amended, or otherwise disposed of, as may seem most convenient for the edification of the people, 'according to the various exigency of times and occasions'" (Preface to the *Book of Common Prayer* (1789), brought forward as the Preface to the 1979 *BCP*, p. 9).

"... all things should be done decently and in order" (I Corinthians 14:40).

Incarnational

The Church's sacramental focus comes from and returns to an incarnational theology that helps the Church embrace a deep organizational identity as, truly, the body of Christ in the world today. John Macquarrie said: "The Church re-presents Christ in the sense of making him present in the world. It does so in virtue of the fact that it is his body, or an 'extension of the incarnation.' ... In the word and sacraments, the divine presence is focused so as to communicate itself to us with a directness and intensity like that of the incarnation itself ..." (Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, pp. 447, 449).

"And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ... From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace" (John 1:14,16).

"The divine Son became human, so that in him human beings might be adopted as children of God, and be made heirs of God's kingdom" (An Outline of the Faith, *BCP* p. 850).

"Our Lord Jesus Christ [is] ... like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer (Theotokos); one and the same Christ ..." (Definition of the Union of Divine and Human Natures in the Person of Christ, Council of Chalcedon, 451, *BCP* p. 864).

"Celebrant: Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
People: I will, with God's help" (Baptismal Covenant, *BCP*, p. 305).

Scriptural

“Your word is a lantern to my feet and a light upon my path” (Psalm 119:105).

“All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (II Timothy 3:16-17).

“What scripture doth plainly deliver, to that the first place of credit and obedience is due; the next whereunto is whatsoever any man can necessarily conclude by force of reason; after these the voice of the Church succeedeth” (Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity Book V*, ch.8).

Pastoral

“The central question ... always concerns how at any moment God’s activity is discerned ... and responded to” (*Handbook of Pastoral Studies* [Carr, 1997], p. 21).

“‘Pastoral’ – that ‘broken-backed word’ – should always sound warning bells when it is encountered. When it is indiscriminately applied it often obfuscates and may be used to avoid hard decisions or to escape the charge of unclarity” (*Handbook of Pastoral Studies* [Carr, 1997], p. 9).

Moses said, “I took the leaders of your tribes, wise and reputable individuals, and installed them as leaders ... I charged your judges at that time: ‘Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien. You must not be partial in judging: hear

out the small and the great alike; you shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God’s” (Deuteronomy 1:15a, 16-17a).

Chapter 3: Secondary Identity Themes

Reason

“Reason is the director of man’s will, discovering in action what is good. For the laws of well-doing are the dictates of right reason” (Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Book I*, ch. 7).

It is “by force of the light of reason wherewith God illuminateth everyone which cometh into the world, men being enabled to know truth from falsehood, and good from evil, do thereby learn in many things what the will of God is ...” (Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Book I*, ch. 8).

“Reason is intelligent enough to taste something of things above, although it is more careless about investigating these” (Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, II.ii).

“Reason, therefore, by which man distinguishes between good and evil, by which he understands and judges, being a natural talent, could not be totally destroyed, but is partly debilitated, partly impaired, so that it exhibits nothing but deformity and ruin. In this sense John says, that ‘the light’ still ‘shineth in darkness,’ but that ‘the darkness comprehendeth it not’” (Calvin, *Institutes*, II.xii).

“When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish

ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known" (I Cor. 13:11-12).

"And the sentences which reason giveth are some more some less general, before it come to define in particular actions what is good. The main principles of reason are in themselves apparent. For to make nothing evident of itself unto man's understanding were to take away all possibility of knowing any thing. And herein that of Theophrastus is true, "They that seek a reason of all things do utterly overthrow reason" (Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book I, ch. 8).

Inclusive

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

"There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out. Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God. Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last" (Luke 13:28-30).

"John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterwards to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us'" (Mark 9:38-40).

Tradition

"Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 'Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands before they eat.' He answered them, 'And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?'" (Matthew 15:1-3).

"Do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or Sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ" (Colossians 2:16-17).

"It is not necessary that the Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word" (Articles of Religion, XXXIV, *BCP* p. 874).

Common Liturgy

"When the burnt-offering began, the song to the LORD began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of King David of Israel. The whole assembly worshipped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt-offering was finished. When the offering was finished, the king and all who were present with him bowed down and worshipped" (II Chron. 29:27b-29).

"The Holy Eucharist, the principal act of Christian worship on the Lord's Day and other major Feasts, and Daily Morning and Evening Prayer, as set forth in this Book, are the regular services appointed for public worship in the Church" (Concerning the Service of the Church, *BCP*, p. 13).

Ceremonial

“Every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish, Ceremonies or Rites of the Church ordained only by man’s authority, so that all things be done to edifying” (Articles of Religion, XXXIV, *BCP*, p. 874.)

“For special days of fasting or thanksgiving, appointed by civil or Church authority, and for other special occasions for which no service or prayer has been provided in this Book, the bishop may set forth such forms as are fitting to the occasion” (Concerning the Service of the Church, *BCP* p. 13).

Experience

“When Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, saying, ‘Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?’ Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step ... ‘And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning ... If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?’” (Acts 11:2-4,15,17)?

“In the broadest sense, then, it is the experience of existing as a human being that constitutes a primary source for theology; not just explicitly religious experience, but all experience in which a religious dimension is discernible” (John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, p. 6).

Societal Change

“It becomes impossible for a priest, who knows what the Lord’s Supper means, not to take part to the best of his power in every work of political or social emancipation; impossible for an earnest communicant not to be an earnest politician” (Stewart Headlam, 1880’s – quoted in Hood, *Social Teachings in the Episcopal Church*).

“No mere reestablishment of an old economic order will suffice. Christ demands a new order in which there shall be a more equitable distribution of material wealth, more certain assurance of security for the unemployed and aged, and, above all else, an order which shall substitute the motive of service for the motive of gain” (Pastoral Letter, House of Bishops, 1933).

Chapter 4: Tertiary Identity Themes

Middle Way

James speaking after the dispute regarding an attempted requirement of circumcision for Gentile believers: “I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood” (Acts 15:19-20).

“It hath been the wisdom of the Church of England, ever since the first compiling of her publick Liturgy, to keep the mean between the two extremes, of too much stiffness in refusing, and of too much easiness in admitting any variation from it ... Our general aim therefore in this undertaking was, not to gratify this or that party in any their unreasonable demands; but to do that, which to our best understandings we

conceived might most tend to the preservation of peace and unity in the Church; the procuring of reverence, and exciting of piety and devotion in the publick worship of God; and the cutting off occasion from them that seek occasion of cavil or quarrel against the Liturgy of the Church" (The Preface, The Church of England *Book of Common Prayer*, 1662, pp. 8-9).

Diverse Theological Positions

"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20-21).

The Church is a unity; yet by her fruitful increase she is extended far and wide to form a plurality; even as the sun has many rays, but one light; and a tree many boughs but one trunk, whose foundation is the deep-seated root; and as when many streams flow down from one source, though a multitude seems to be poured out from the abundance of the copious supply, yet in the source itself unity is preserved ... She [the Church] stretches fourth her branches over the whole earth in rich abundance; she spreads far and wide the bounty of her onward flowing streams; yet there is but one head, one course, one mother, abounding in the increase of her fruitfulness. Of her womb are we born, by her milk are we nourished, and we are quickened from her breath (Cyprian, *De catholicae ecclesiae unitat*, 5).

Ecumenical

"... this Church is ready in the spirit of love and humility to forego all preferences of her own ... this Church does not seek to absorb other Communion, but rather, co-operating

with them on the basis of a common Faith and Order, to discountenance schism, to heal the wounds of the Body of Christ, and to promote the charity which is the chief of Christian graces and the visible manifestation of Christ to the world" (The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral 1886, points 3-4; *BCP*, pp. 876-877).

"We therefore understand full communion to be a relation between distinct churches in which each recognizes the other as a catholic and apostolic church holding the essentials of the Christian faith. Within this new relation, churches become interdependent while remaining autonomous. ... Diversity is preserved, but this diversity is not static. Neither church seeks to remake the other in its own image, but each is open to the gifts of the other as it seeks to be faithful to Christ and his mission" (Call to Common Mission, 1999, point 2).

"Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. ... Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God ... Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another" (Romans 14:3,5-6,13).

Diverse in Christian Practices

"In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes" (Judges 17:6).

“Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions. ... The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:25-27).

“... to appease all such diversity (if any arise), and for the resolution of all doubts, concerning the manner how to understand, do, and execute, the things contained in this book: the parties that so doubt, or diversely take any thing, shall always resort to the Bishop of the Diocese, who by his discretion shall take order for the quieting and appeasing of the same...” (Preface, *The First Book of Common Prayer* (1549), BCP p. 867).

Prophetic

“The appeal to moral incentive can accomplish splendid work in detail; it can bring blessed help to unnumbered individuals, comforting, inspiring, and achieving once in a while under the most depressing circumstances, miracles of rehabilitation. ... But unaided, it is in the main helpless to compass that decent society we crave, and which to our shame two thousand years of Christianity have failed to realize” (Vida Scudder, *Socialism and Character*).

“We proclaim the Gospel of what God has done and is doing in Christ, of the dignity of every human being, and of justice, compassion and peace. We proclaim the Gospel that in Christ there is no Jew or Greek, no male or female, no slave or free. We proclaim the Gospel that in Christ all God’s children, including women, are full and equal participants in the life of Christ’s

Church. We proclaim the Gospel that in Christ all God’s children, including gay and lesbian persons, are full and equal participants in the life of Christ’s Church. We proclaim the Gospel that stands against any violence, including violence done to women and children as well as those who are persecuted because of their differences, often in the name of God” (Response of the House of Bishops, 2007, Camp Allen).

Dispersed Authority

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve ...” (Matthew 20:25-28).

“The dispersal of authority in Anglicanism is rooted in the conviction that Christians to whom the scriptures are read in their own language are able to judge of the essentials of the faith. ... Authority is not embodied, it is dispersed; and the reaching of authoritative decisions is a continuous process involving all participators” (Steven Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism*, p. 99).

Chapter 5: Stand-Alone Identity Themes

Elite

“Jesus said to them again, ‘Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’ They were greatly astounded and said

to one another, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible" (Mark 10:24-27).

Salvation

"Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples" (I Chronicles 16:23-24).

"Christ is now the righteousness of all them that truly do believe in him. He for them paid their ransom by his death. He for them fulfilled the law in his life. So that now in him, and by him, every true Christian ... may be called a fulfiller of the law; forasmuch as that which their infirmity lacked, Christ's justice hath supplied. ... These great and merciful benefits of God, if they be well considered ... move us for his sake also, to be ever ready to give ourselves to our neighbours, and, as much as lieth in us, to study with all our endeavour to do good to every man. These be the fruits of true faith: To do good as much as lieth in us to every man; and, above all things, and in all things, to advance the glory of God ..." (A Sermon of the Salvation of Mankind, 1547 *Book of Homilies*).

"In these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life" (Eucharistic Prayer B, *BCP* p. 368).

A-confessional

"That in all things of human ordering or human choice, relating to modes of worship and discipline, or to traditional customs, this Church is ready in the spirit of love and humility to forego all preferences of her own" (The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral 1886, point 3; *BCP*, pp. 876).

Jesus said to the Pharisees and scribes, "You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said: "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines" (Matthew 15: 7-9 quoting Isaiah 29:13).

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Appendix A: What is EIP

"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known" (I Corinthians 13:12).

"For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like" (James 1:23).

Appendix H: A Sample Way of Discussing Various Perspectives on Anglican Comprehensiveness, Using Jesus' Parable of the Wedding Banquet

Jesus' parable of the wedding banquet, as recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew, holds within the story two perspectives that seem to be most in tension and competition in current Episcopal and worldwide Anglican dialogue. Episcopalians find themselves emphasizing one portion of the parable and de-emphasizing the other. On one hand, there is a theme of radical inclusion in the wedding banquet for all who would come, regardless of class or position in life. On the other hand, there is a theme of what constitutes fitting acceptance of the inclusion offered in the feast and the potential of taking the host's generosity for granted. In this parable one can find themes of *radical inclusion* and of *vital transformation* side by side. As Episcopalians engage this tension, they find themselves asking different questions: What is the scope of the radical hospitality offered in the Gospel, and how should that be expressed in the Church? What is the essence of transformation of lives in Christ?

What follows is the parable of the wedding banquet as recorded in Matthew 22, and a few questions. This exercise is one simple way to begin to examine and perhaps change habits of discourse with one another.

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding

banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth'" (Matthew 22:1-13).

Reflection Questions

- How do different approaches to scriptural interpretation incorporate – or dismiss – the complex elements of the parable above?
- What do you tend to emphasize more in this parable? Why?
- What does your faith community tend to emphasize more in this parable? How? Why?
- In a situation or issue involving strongly clashing perspectives, can you articulate not only your own perspective and position, but the perspective of the other side? Can you do this in a way that honors the integrity, care, and passionate commitment of the other side?

