

How2charist: Digital Instructed Eucharist

Small Group Discussion Guide



When God finds us, there is always a celebration. In the Eucharist, we gather to celebrate God finding us in Jesus Christ. If you're feeling lost, when you come to receive Jesus in bread and wine, ask to be found. If you know what it is to have been found by God, when you come to receive Jesus in bread and wine, give thanks – thanks to the one who came looking for you, and found you.

-Br. Geoffrey Tristram
Society of Saint John the Evangelist

Welcome!

This discussion guide accompanies the **How2charist: Digital Instructed Eucharist**. (Available for free download at www.how2charist.com.) *How2charist* is a resource for formation and evangelism based on the Rite II Eucharistic liturgy of The Episcopal Church. The film and guide were made in consultation with many Episcopal clergy and lay leaders, that it might capture core elements of the service which would be recognizable to all Episcopalians and follow and honor *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Since local custom and personal practice differ widely, there will be some parts that mirror your own experience and some which will seem completely foreign to your experience; the similarities and differences are great starting points for conversation with a leader at your local church (visit www.episcopalassetmap.org), a confirmation class, or an adult Christian formation group. You might find that you want to use this resource in one single session or as a series. We've broken down the Eucharist into four chapters for this purpose. Watch the chapter through and then discuss some of the questions below -- adding questions from your own community -- or pause at various points to dive deeper into components of the liturgy.

God's presence has been abundant in the creation of the *How2charist*, and my prayer is that you also encounter God as you engage with this film! This has been a communal effort, and I give great thanks for the gifts and voices of many who have made this dream a reality, and for you, fellow disciples on the journey.

Many thanks and blessings,

Chapter One: Liturgy of the Word (Part 1)

Have you worshipped in both Rite I and Rite II?

Which one resonates with you? Why do you feel more connected to that rite?

What do you call the main church service in which you take part?

(i.e. *Holy Eucharist, Mass, The Lord's Supper, The Great Thanksgiving*)

Try on the different names. Do they change your understanding or perception of what is happening in the liturgy?

The Gloria is not the only musical option before the opening collect.

Are there other hymns of praise that you think would be appropriate in place of the Gloria?

(i.e. *"Angels We Have Heard on High"* during Christmas)

In the Episcopal Church, we do a lot of pew aerobics -- standing, sitting, kneeling -- during a worship service. Some have to do with individual preference and others follow specific rubrics or local norms.

In general, we **sit to listen/learn** (readings and the sermon), **stand to praise** (hymns, Gospel, and some prayers), and **kneel to pray** (Confession, Prayers of the People, and Eucharistic Prayer).

What are some personal or communal reasons these might differ?

How do you connect to the psalm during the liturgy?

How does the manner in which you pray the psalm -- said in unison or responsively, chanting an antiphon, or listening to the choir sing it -- change your engagement with it?

The psalms cover the full range of the human experience, from joy to lament. Psalms can be used to reinforce themes from other parts of scripture, and as such, often complement the gospel in our Revised Common Lectionary.

Do you have any favorite psalms?

Which genre of psalms speaks to where you are on your faith journey?

SIDEBAR

A note on crossing oneself at the Gospel

Some people make the sign of the cross on themselves three times at the beginning of the reading of the gospel: forehead, lips, and heart.

This is not required, but is a matter of personal piety.

Those who do cross themselves are saying a prayer with their hands, asking God to be in their thoughts (as they cross their forehead), in their words (as they cross their lips), and in their hearts (as they cross their hearts).

Chapter Two: Liturgy of the Word (Part 2)

The sermon is a time of dialogue between you, the preacher, and God. What, if anything, do you do to help you listen and engage? (i.e. take notes, close your eyes, meditate on a stained-glass window or icon)

How do these practices help you engage the word of God?

Is there a sermon that has stayed with you long after you heard it? What was it about that particular sermon that resonated with you?

The Nicene Creed is a communal statement of faith outlining what we believe about the trinitarian nature of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Most people in the Episcopal Church say it each week (it's required at the main Sunday service and on major feasts), but there are individuals who don't participate because they don't feel like they understand or agree with all of it.

What parts do you struggle with theologically or find confusing?

"Let us pray for the Church and for the World."

The Prayers of the People represent the prayers of the gathered community.

Do you have a personal practice of prayer, and -- if so -- how does it differ from these communal prayers?

The Prayers of the People vary widely by local context; what is your community's practice regarding writing the prayers (or using the sample forms provided in *The Book of Common Prayer*) and bidding them?

Some communities spend a lot of time exchanging the peace with one another (leaving their pews to greet those far away), while others exchange the peace quickly (only the people within one or two pews).

What is your congregation's practice?

How does this practice feel to first-time visitors?

Are you able to strike a balance between welcome for the newcomer and nourishment for the long-time parishioner?

SIDEBAR

Corporate confession, prayed during a Eucharistic service, is the acknowledgement that we have communally sinned against God, one another, and our earth. This can feel very different from individual confession, in which one confesses their sins to a priest with the assurance of pardon given. The Episcopal Church's rite for individual confession is called Reconciliation of a Penitent (*The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 447- 452).

Chapter Three: Liturgy of the Table (Part 1)

What might it look like for you to walk in love in your local community?

How does the next part of the verse -- “[Jesus] gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God” -- influence this practice of walking in love?

How might this Eucharistic reminder call you to embody sacrificial love in your own context?

What might be the call for the whole community gathered?

The collection plates represent the offerings of the whole gathered community.

Is there something else, tangible, you could imagine being brought forward at this point of the service?

What offerings are forgotten or unknown in your community?

“Heaven and earth are full of your Glory. Hosanna in the highest.”

We sing or speak this phrase every time we gather for the Eucharist, even in the moments in our lives when it doesn't feel like the earth is full of God's glory.

What might it mean to sing God's praises for all things in heaven and on earth, even in times of trial?

What practice of gratitude or practice of praise is important to you?

“This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sin.”

Who is left out of the “many” around our tables? Who is missing from your table either at the Eucharist in your church community, or at the many other tables where you eat and fellowship?

What would it mean to invite them? How might it happen?

“We remember his death. We celebrate his resurrection. We await his coming in glory.”

This is one of the places in the service where we remember forwards and backwards -- we remember what happened in the past; that Jesus died and was born again and we remember what that means for us and for God's people and the whole of creation now and into the future.

SIDEBAR

The liturgy feeds us so we can be sent into the world to serve and to feed. The deacon sets the table for the Eucharist, reminding the gathered community that they are called to set tables in the world: to welcome strangers, to stand in solidarity with the poor, and to call to mind those who are not yet around the table. “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done,” we pray in the Lord's Prayer. The in-breaking of God's kingdom that happens when we gather together at the Eucharistic table is, itself, a sign and a symbol for the in-breaking of God's kingdom that happened first through Jesus and happens again every time we - the Body of Christ, fed by the Body of Christ - are sent back out into the world.

Chapter Three: Liturgy of the Table (Part 1)

“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.”

What might this line of the Lord’s prayer mean for our Christian vocation?

What might change about the way we live as Christians if we really believed that earth, as well as heaven, would bear God’s kingdom?

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

Other translations of this prayer say “forgive us our debts/sins as we forgive our debtors/those who sin against us.”

Is there a difference in your own understanding between trespasses, debts, and sins?

How might it feel to come to God’s table during communion if you believed you were really forgiven and that you really had forgiven others?

SIDEBAR

Eucharistic Prayers

There are several Eucharistic prayer forms in the Episcopal Church: two in Rite I; four in Rite II; three in *Enriching our Worship*; and others approved for local use. Each has rich imagery and follows a pattern: opening dialogue; thanksgiving for creation, the incarnation, and our redemption; institution narrative and anamnesis (remembering Christ’s death, resurrection, and second coming); offering bread and wine; epiclesis (invoking the Holy Spirit); and concluding thanksgiving.

Which Eucharistic prayer speaks to your heart?

Do you have a favorite line from a Eucharistic prayer?



Chapter Four: Liturgy of the Table (Part 2)

The Great Silence is an important pause in the liturgy to remember what Christ has done for us.

What are other times in your life when you need a chance to pause and remember this?

Taste and See

How have you experienced God's goodness in your life?

How have you found refuge and help in God in your time of need?

"The gifts of God for the people of God."

What would it mean for you to live with the knowledge that you truly are one of the holy people of God?

In the celebration of the Eucharist, ordinary substances of bread and wine become extraordinary as we recognize within them the presence of God.

How do you recognize God's extraordinary presence in other ordinary things in your life?

We often associate strong memories with meals. What are some memories you have around receiving communion?

How does your experience of communion compare to what you see in the film?

The deacon (if present) always gives the dismissal. A deacon helps ensure that the church is aware of the needs of the wider community, and leads parishioners to serve others outside the church walls.

What are some ways that your church could meet the needs of the surrounding community and the wider world? What is one way you might take the things you've learned and experienced in the liturgy out into the world?

SIDEBAR

The fraction anthem sung in the How2charist is a hymn called *Taste and See*, written by James A. Moore in 1983. This hymn paraphrases Psalm 34, in which the psalmist praises the God who meets our every need, who hears all our cries and draws near to us, the God who protects us, rescues us, saves us. In the Psalm, and in Moore's hymn, God's people are invited to taste and see the goodness of the Lord, to seek and find their refuge in God. As we taste the bread and wine of the Eucharist we are reminded of the good things God provides for us, and we are reminded that God draws near to us in our time of need. This is the story of the Incarnation, of God drawing close to humankind to be with us in the struggles of human existence, and drawing us close to God, our source of refuge and help.

Closing Questions for Discussion

How has this walk through the Eucharist changed your understanding of what we do?



What stood out for you?



What questions do you have?



What challenged you?



Where did you see God?



Additional Resources

The Ceremonies of the Eucharist: A Guide to Celebration

Howard E. Galley

Walk in Love: Episcopal Beliefs & Practices

Scott Gunn and Melody Wilson Shobe

Welcome to Sunday

Christopher L. Webber

The Episcopal Church

www.episcopalchurch.org

Episcopal Dictionary of the Church

www.episcopalchurch.org/library/glossary/all

The Book of Common Prayer Online

www.bcponline.org

Find an Episcopal Church near you at:

www.episcopalassetmap.org

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