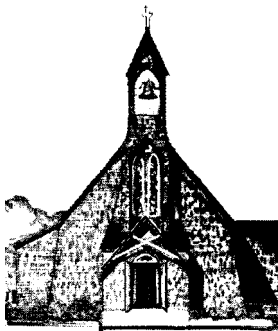


What It Means to be an Episcopalian

2005 Edition



**Holy Trinity by the Lake
Episcopal Church**
Heath, Texas

To restore all people to unity with God
and each other in Christ

972-771-8242

www.holytrinitybythelake.org

What is an Episcopalian?

An Episcopalian is a person who belongs to the Episcopal Church ("Episcopal" means "governed by bishops.")

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IS:

- derived from the Church of England and shares with it traditions of faith and order as set forth in its Book of Common Prayer
- one whose traditions include attitudes that are Protestant and Catholic, ancient and reformed, liberal and conservative
- brought to the American wilderness by the earliest settlers
- over two million members in the U.S. and some 77 million members worldwide, making it the second largest Christian body in the world

STRUCTURE OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH:

The Episcopal Church is a democratic church with a system of government resembling that of the United States.

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY has a primacy of honor throughout the Anglican Communion. However, every national Church within it is self-governing.

PRESIDING BISHOP is chief pastor, and Primate and is the chief bishop of the Episcopal Church.

BISHOP presides over a diocese and is assisted by the Standing Committee and councils of priests and laypeople.

DIOCESE (Group of Parishes) is a group of churches that are geographically associated under the authority of a bishop.

RECTOR (priest) presides over the parish. The rector is elected by the parish, subject to the bishop's approval.

VESTRY consists of parishioners elected to be the agents and legal representatives of the parish in matters of property and relations to the clergy.

LAYPEOPLE are also ministers of the Church. They take part in Church services and in its teaching mission.

Basic Episcopal Church Beliefs

Interpretation of the faith varies somewhat from parish to parish, but resides within the framework of these basic guidelines:

THE HOLY TRINITY – *God is 3 persons in one*

- **God the Father** Infinite, good, omnipotent
- **God the Son** the joyous union of both God and human being, whose life, death and resurrection set us free from bondage to sin and death
- **God the Holy Spirit** God's power of love moving within us in mysterious and unexpected ways

SALVATION

- The end of our separation from God; the beginning of a new life, lived according to God's will
- Gained by us because of Christ's sacrifice

Every Christian should witness to Christ's sacrifice—and express the living truth of this sacrifice to the world (evangelism).

THE CHURCH – *the people of God. All baptized people are the members. The Church is:*

- **One**—one body under one head, Christ
- **Holy**—the Holy Spirit dwells in it and its members
- **Catholic**—universal; holding the faith for all time, everywhere, for everybody
- **Apostolic**—continuing in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship

WORSHIP

- A joyous response to God's love
- An expression of hope for Salvation
- A chance to praise God and receive strength and forgiveness
- A way to share faith with other believers

Being an Episcopalian

Means striving to fulfill Christ's mission of redemption: to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray, and give for the spread of the kingdom of God

IT MEANS:

- Following God's commandments
- Raising children in Christ's love
- Getting involved in your parish
- Actively participating in the world through Christ in the Church

PARTICIPATE IN CHURCH SERVICES

- Pray and work together
- Share your faith through Christian education

PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY WORK

- Perform acts of charity
- Work for social justice and reform, and Christian unity on a personal, day-to-day basis.
- Spread the Good Word to people in the world community.

The Book of Common Prayer says that private worship alone is inadequate. Religion is a fellowship. You relate to the whole Church through your parish—your local church community.



Foundations of Faith

There are 3 basic sources of beliefs in the Episcopal Church

HOLY SCRIPTURE – *written by people inspired by the Holy Spirit*

The Old and New Testaments contain the essence of Christian doctrine. They reveal God to humankind and tell of our response to God in history. The Bible helps us to know God's will, revealed supremely through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The Scriptures are the Word of God, proclaiming that Jesus—both God and human being—is Christ, the Messiah.

REASON – *helping us to penetrate the full depths of God's truth*

The Episcopal Church does not control interpretation and practice. Instead, members are encouraged to:

- Use reason to explore and comprehend God's works
- Make responsible moral decisions under the guidance of Scripture, the ordained ministry and in response to sincere prayer

CHURCH TRADITION – *development of the Church under the Holy Spirit's guidance*

Tradition helps us to:

- Interpret Scripture
- Share experiences of early Christians and believers of every era
- Preserve hymns and prayers that keep our faith alive
- Strengthen our faith

Through its continuity and consistency, tradition helps preserve essential truths through liturgy.

THE SACRAMENTS: living signs of spiritual grace

Through the sacraments, God sustains the life of the Church and gives us the love and strength we need to live with Christ.

The 2 Sacraments of the Gospel

Were instituted and ordained by Jesus.

BAPTISM - *Initiation into the family of God.*

Baptism is administered once to each person—usually as an infant. Water is poured on the head or the child is immersed in water, to symbolize the washing away of sins. It is a pledge of repentance and obedience to divine will. It's a sign that a person has been reborn into a new family, the Church.

HOLY EUCHARIST- *Remembrance of, and praise and thanksgiving for, Christ's death and resurrection.*

In Holy Communion, ordinary bread and wine become the sacramental vehicle for Jesus Christ's presence within his people, as he promised. When receiving Communion, Episcopalians offer themselves to God in repentance, love and faith—and recall Jesus' death, acknowledge his sacrifice and renew hope in the heavenly banquet.

5 Other Sacraments

PENANCE involves sorrow for sinning, with a sincere desire to amend one's life. A priest gives assurance of God's forgiveness through absolution. Sinners reconcile with the Creator.

CONFIRMATION strengthens the commitment made to Christ at Baptism and is conferred by a bishop. It gives Christians courage to witness Christ in the world and to selflessly serve each other.

ORDINATION consecrates Christians in service to God. Spiritual power and grace are given to help them devote their lives to the good of the community—teaching, administering sacraments, governing the Church.

MATRIMONY is when God joins together a man and woman in the physical and spiritual union of marriage.

MINISTRY OF HEALING is a continuation of Christ's work among the sick. It involves "laying on of hands," anointing with oil and praying for physical and spiritual health.