

What Episcopalians Believe

The word "Episcopal" comes from the words "epic" and "scope".

- This **epic scope** includes **wide-open arms of welcome**. The Episcopal Church welcomes and celebrates the ministries of all people, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, social class or age. We strive to live by the message of Christ, in which there are no outcasts and all are welcome.
- Our character is deeply based in our ability to include a **diversity of perspectives**. We are grounded in what we call the "via media": the middle way between extremes. Rather than telling people what to believe, we provide safe places for questions and struggles of faith. Consequently, our unity comes from worshipping together, not agreeing with each other.
- Our beliefs are rooted in the **broad range** of scripture, tradition and reason. We believe the bible to be the word of God that **contains all things necessary** for reconciliation with God. We believe the Bible speaks to us still in our own time and place. We walk a middle way that includes **Catholic and Protestant** traditions. We are a sacramental and worship-oriented church that promotes thoughtful debate about what God is calling us to do and to be, as followers of Christ.
- The Bible is the foundation of our faith, and the sacred stories shape all that we do. We read the bible with **open minds**. We believe God has given us intelligence and individual experiences to help us build an understanding and relationship with God and with God's creation. We understand that the bible includes many types of literature such as poetry, history, letters, gospels, and prophecy. And so, we do not interpret the Bible literally. We see it as a living text, through which God continues to speak to us. Informed by our tradition, reason and experience, our understanding of scripture **continually evolves and expands** as we experience God's presence in our lives.
- In another sense, "Episcopal" means that we are a church with bishops, who have a **grand scope** of responsibility within in the church. Their authority can be traced back through an unbroken chain of apostolic succession that emerges from Jesus' commissioning of the first apostles.
- We formally affirm the **faith we have in common** in the words of the historic Nicene Creed and Apostles Creed. An outline of our faith is given in the Catechism found in the Book of Common Prayer.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

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.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Catechism

<http://www.bcponline.org/Misc/catechism.htm>