

Toward an Anglican Catechumenate

*Guiding Principles for the Catechesis Task Force
Anglican Church in North America¹
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Abstract

This document presents a working definition of a catechumenate for the Anglican Church in North America along with guiding principles for implementing this disciple-making initiative. The Task Force proposes a mission-minded dual catechetical approach: (1) catechetical evangelism, which focuses on disciple-making in an evangelistic situation (*from the 'front porch' of the church*); and (2) liturgical catechesis, which focuses on disciple-making within the formational contexts of family and church (*'from the font'*). The guiding principles, which are drawn from Anglican formularies and historic patterns from the undivided Church, reflect this comprehensive framework for implementation. They will be useful in the selection or development of a common catechism as well as the collection and/or production of Christian education materials (especially curricula) that serve the mission of the Church.

Introduction

The Catechesis Task Force was formed (originally as the Committee on Catechesis & Curriculum) to advise the House of Bishops of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) concerning the training and instruction of the faithful and, most especially, the making of disciples of Jesus Christ. The Task Force is particularly mindful of paragraph two in Article III (“The Mission of the Province”) in the ACNA Constitution:

The work of the Province is to equip each member of the Province so that they may reconcile the world to Christ, plant new congregations, and make disciples of all nations; baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything commanded by Jesus Christ.

The Task Force understands the critical role of catechesis in the ministry of the Church and aims to strengthen the ACNA’s commitment to calling, forming, equipping, and sending followers of Jesus Christ—“truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.”² The Great Commission necessarily includes instruction, as directed in section two of Canon four (“Of the Administration of the Dominical Sacraments”):

¹ This report was prepared with extensive collaboration from members of the Catechesis Task Force. The lead writer was Phil Harrold, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Church History, Trinity School for Ministry, Ambridge, PA. For questions concerning the contents and overall status of this working document please contact Prof. Harrold at pharrold@tsm.edu.

² Unless otherwise noted, references herein to *The Book of Common Prayer* are drawn from Rite One, found on pp. 322-349 of the 1979 edition (The Church Hymnal Corporation, New York). Please note that this does not signify an endorsement of the 1979 edition *per se*, only a recognition that it is widely available to many readers of this document. Cross-references may be found in the 1662 BCP and to subsequent editions in North America, especially the 1928 BCP, as recognized by the Reformed Episcopal Church, and the 1962 Canadian BCP.

All Clergy shall take care that all within their cures are instructed in the doctrine, sacraments, and discipline of Christ, as the Lord has commanded and as they are set forth in the Holy Scriptures, in the Book of Common Prayer, and in the Church Catechism.³

Reflecting the ACNA's ties to the wider Anglican Communion, the Catechesis Task Force also works in support of the Anglican Catechism in Outline (ACIO), as proposed in the Interim Report of the Global South Anglican Theological Formation and Education Task Force (presented to the Global South Primates Steering Committee on 6 January 2008). As noted in the Report's Preface, paragraph four:

The Task Force saw a need to provide a common theological framework to underpin the varieties of catechisms throughout the Anglican Communion. In January 2007, the Task Force recommended to the Global South Primates the drafting of such theological framework that would "incorporate common elements for each catechism reflecting Biblical faith, historic Anglican heritage and the mission situations in which the faithful live today."⁴

With these commitments in view, the Catechesis Task Force has been charged (originally as the Committee on Catechesis & Curriculum) to serve the Province in the following ways:

- (1) encourage lifelong spiritual growth and learning, with particular emphasis on the hallmarks of genuine discipleship, and especially a transformative apprenticeship (or follower-ship) to Jesus Christ;
- (2) develop a comprehensive catechumenal vision and framework, which will include a common catechism: this will be submitted for approval and implementation throughout ACNA;
- (3) facilitate the collection and/or production of Christian education materials, curricula, etc. that serve this catechumenal end.

In addition, the Task Force acknowledges the current challenges of restoring catechesis to its critical place in the mission of the Church. In a recent survey conducted by the Task Force over a hundred respondents scattered throughout the ACNA confirmed the widely held belief that Anglicans are failing to effectively catechize young people, especially. A majority of the respondents were dissatisfied with the catechesis of adolescents and children with 57% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction with the training of adolescents and 52% disappointed with the catechesis of children. Results for higher age levels fared better, but still reflect significant doubt or, at least, uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of training and equipping disciples.⁵

In response to these challenges and to the charge given us, the Task Force will work on the basis of the guiding principles listed at the conclusion of this report. Here follows a rationale for these principles and the essentials of an Anglican catechumenate, as well as criteria for discerning what is permissible *and* prudent, given the mission, context, and diversity of ACNA constituents.

³ The ratified Constitution and Canons of the ACNA are available online at: <http://anglicanchurch.net/>

⁴ Anglican Catechism in Outline (ACIO), Interim Report of the Global South Anglican Theological Formation and Education Task Force (6 January 2008), Preface, Paragraph 4. The ACIO is available online at: http://www.globalsouthanglican.org/sse/aciointerimreport_1.pdf.

⁵ The Survey results will be published in a forthcoming report. A press release of the Survey was made available at: <http://acnaassembly.org/index2.php/acna/page/99>.

Terms & Definitions⁶

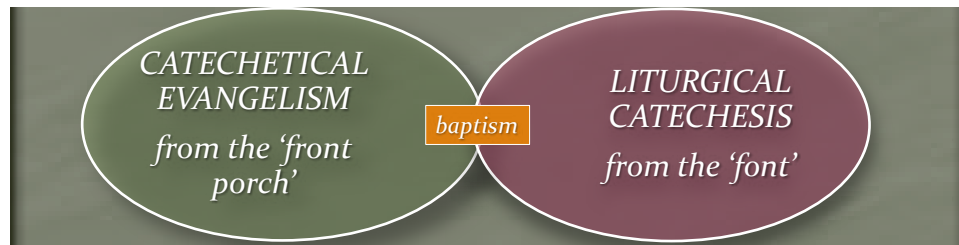
Catechumenal Terminology: We use the term *catechumenate* because it is the overall operational framework in which *catechesis* (instruction) and *catechism* (the instrument[s] of instruction) function. A catechumenate necessarily accounts for activities and processes that form and equip Christians, pre- or post-baptism. A catechumenate does not merely deliver information regarding the Christian faith; it also transmits the skills, including how to read and respond to Scripture, which prepare individuals for full participation in the life and mission of the Church, building-up the whole people of God in Christlikeness and discipleship. In short, a catechumenate makes communities of life-long disciples of Jesus Christ.

As a working definition, the ACNA Catechumenate seeks, welcomes, instructs, trains, forms, and deploys Christians who pursue, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the call of Jesus to live according to his gospel as citizens in his kingdom and members of his body, the Church. Accordingly, the Catechumenate is realized in four dimensions: (i) the call to new identity (Galatians 4:6-7) and new community (I Peter 2:9-10) to live to the praise of God's glory (Ephesians 1:3-14); (ii) the call to faithful witness (Jude 3) and endurance (Matthew 10:22); (iii) the call to holiness (I Peter 1:13-16) and stewardship (Matthew 25:14); and (iv) the call to ministry (Romans 12:4-8; Galatians 6:10) and mission (Acts 1:8; Matthew 5:13-16).⁷

Thinking Missionally about a Catechumenate

The historic catechumenate promotes a missionary zeal that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians *in the world*, empowering the faithful to fulfill their vocation as disciples and to understand their role in bringing Christ to all people and all places. The catechumenate reflects the evangelical mind of Christ, which seeks to form believers who are compassionate, merciful and just.

Given the missionary situation of the Anglican Church in North America, the Task Force will acknowledge two intersecting pathways in the catechumenate: *catechetical evangelism*, from the 'front porch' of the local church, and *liturgical catechesis*, from the 'font.' The first approach highlights the transformative process of becoming a Christian (conversion) in an evangelistic and, at least initially, un-churched situation. This pathway leads individuals through a series of preparatory stages and rites of passage that culminate in baptism and initiation into the full sacramental life and Gospel-defined mission of the Church. It might be called "Protocatechesis" in its focus on the "seeker." The second approach is defined by conversion from 'cradle-to-grave,' with particular emphasis on the spiritual nurture of baptized children by godly parents in catechumenal parish settings. At their confirmation, such individuals "make a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their baptism."⁸



⁶ See also the glossary of key terms at the conclusion of this report. A helpful definition and discussion of catechesis is found in J. I. Packer, "Called to Catechize," *The North American Anglican*, vol. 2 (Spring 2009): 46-55.

⁷ Slightly modified from the definition provided in the Anglican Catechism in Outline (ACIO), Interim Report of the Global South Anglican Theological Formation and Education Task Force (6 January 2008), Preface, Paragraph 9.

⁸ BCP, 412; J. I. Packer would identify the second approach in terms of "catechesis proper as well as ongoing catechesis. See, especially, J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010).

Obviously, these pathways are not mutually exclusive in the everyday life of those communities of faith which reach out to the lost *and* nurture those who, by God’s grace, are born into church-attending Christian families. Both aim to form, equip, and deploy disciples of Jesus Christ who fully participate in the life and mission of the Church. Nevertheless, each approaches the catechumenate from a different starting point that reflects the situation and life-course of individual catechumens. Let us take a closer look at each of these catechumenal pathways.

Catechetical Evangelism: In the early years of the Church, when “Christians were made and not born” (quoting Tertullian), an individual seeking membership in a local household of faith had to go through a long period of catechesis prior to baptism.⁹ The process was marked by four stages: (1) *evangelization* (inquiry and introductory summary of the faith), (2) *catechesis* (long-term instruction and mentoring), (3) *enlightenment* (final pre-baptismal instruction), and (4) *mystagogy* (post-baptismal instruction concerning the rituals and deeper mysteries of the faith, especially the Eucharist).¹⁰ This four-stage approach reflected the ministry context of the emerging Christian community. The Church existed as an outpost of resident-alien in a pagan and pluralistic world—a world in economic disarray, social and political instability, and cultural decline. Conversion involved a radical transformation from one way of life to another, from the stories of bondage to idols and power structures to *The Story* of God’s rescue mission in the person and work of Jesus Christ.¹¹

The Anglican Church in North America finds itself in a similar situation today—in what many refer to as a ‘post-Christendom’ world that is becoming less Christian each day. In its robust church-planting initiatives, the ACNA will recover a pre-Christendom approach to catechesis that is designed to introduce un-churched and non-Christian individuals to the Gospel and the pilgrim people of God. The journey is defined not just by instruction, but also by formation in the inner life, lifestyle, and worldview of biblical faith. It is a holistic vision that becomes reality as individuals who previously followed the ways of the world begin to follow the way of Jesus. After all, as Aidan Kavanagh reminds us, “Catechumens do not fall from heaven in Glad Bags.” They must first be evangelized—that is reached through witness and word—with the Good News of Jesus Christ. When this happens, the Church will necessarily see conversion as a process, as a journey of formation in stages.¹²

Practically, this means that the journey will feature pre-baptismal instruction set within a consciously evangelistic framework. Conversion will be realized in a turning, or series of turnings, to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The ‘evangelization’ stage will initiate this turning in response to the hearing of the Gospel. As commitment strengthens, so will understanding of salvation and transformation of outlook and conduct. Believing, belonging, and behaving are intertwined even in a more formal catechetical stage, perhaps lasting from one- to three-years. Ultimately, a period of more intense preparation

⁹ Tertullian, quoted in Alexander Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life: Christian Development through Liturgical Experience* (Department of Religious Education: Orthodox Church in America, 1983), 7.

¹⁰ A standard history of early catechesis is available in Michael Dujarier, *A History of the Catechumenate: The First Six Centuries* (New York: Sadlier, 1979). See also Robert Louis Wilken, “Christian Formation in the Early Church,” in *Educating People of Faith: Exploring the History of Jewish and Christian Communities*, ed. John Van Engen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); Paul J. Griffiths, *Religious Reading: Their Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion* (Oxford University Press, 1999); and Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999). It is important to note that the traditional four stages are marked by three rites (1) preliminary acceptance into the order of the catechumens; (2) election or enrollment of names of those who are approved for baptism; and (3) the sacrament of initiation—baptism.

¹¹ Recall the words of Origen (c. 185 - c.254): “Captives we have been, who for many years Satan held in bonds.” *Homilies on Luke* 32.4.

¹² Aidan Kavanagh, O.S.B., “Catechesis: Formation in Stages,” in *The Baptismal Mystery and the Catechumenate*, ed. Michael W. Merriman (New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1990): 37.

(*illumination*), typically offered during the season of Lent or, perhaps, during Holy Week, sets the stage for baptism, inaugurating the catechumen into the Body of Christ. More instruction and formation follow in the *mystagogy* and full participation in the sacramental life and mission of the Church.

In a very crucial sense, this entire journey is evangelical in flavor—that is, it involves a deeply transformative response to the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. That is why we refer to this four-stage pathway as ‘catechetical evangelism.’ Already, the vision is being articulated by our Archbishop, Robert Duncan, and by our leading pastors and church planters.¹³ Rector of Truro Church (Fairfax, VA), Tory K. Baucum, describes catechetical evangelism as “the front-porch of the Church”—a distinctive “social space” and “faith culture” with “patterned practices that encourage and enable evangelical hospitality, so that those who are far from Christ may come close to him and discover in the hospitality of the Church the warm, reconciling welcome of her triune God.”¹⁴ The front-porch extends into the mission field of the Church, ever widening the arena of welcome and witness.

Drawing on the wisdom of ancient Christian catechesis, the small group dynamics of John Wesley’s Methodist societies, and the more recent ALPHA course, Baucum’s front-porch is accommodating and relational. It is adaptive to all kinds of social-cultural contexts and upholds friendship and social networks as necessary media for developing interpersonal trust. The hospitality will necessarily include formative relationships between seekers and their sponsors/mentors and teachers outside as well as within the Church, rituals that engage the whole person in “threshold events,” and a “language of transformation” that expresses the content of faith and new way of life in a richly diverse context—“a normative context for the Holy Spirit’s saving work among the people of God.”¹⁵

Catechetical evangelism is also envisioned by church-planting bishop (Anglican Mission in America) Todd D. Hunter in his book, *Christianity Beyond Belief: Following Jesus for the Sake of Others* (2009). With Baucum, Hunter reminds us that the Christian faith is a journey: “following Jesus’ model of life in the kingdom through the power of the Holy Spirit in the actual events of our lives.”¹⁶ This “brand-new life,” realized in terms of believing, belonging, and behaving, begins with the sort of front-porch hospitality described by Baucum. It will take a variety of forms, depending on individuals, their apostolic gifts, and their mission contexts, even as it strives for the enduring goals associated with the historic four-stage catechumenate. Hunter observes:

We are accustomed to seekers following this model: first they believe Christian truth, then they join our churches, and then they take on our practices and behaviors. I suspect, though, that upon reflection we may see that people have come to faith in more varied ways. Today, many people are starting at the ‘end’ and practicing their way into the faith. It seems to be working just fine. Others start in the middle by joining a Christian community before they believe. In fact, they often join in an effort to find out what Christians believe.¹⁷

Echoing the relational dynamics of the ancient catechumenate, Hunter sets forth the goal of “cooperative friendship” with God and neighbor at the micro-level of interpersonal relationships (especially in his small-group ministry known as Three-Is-Enough), and the macro-level of Church life and mission.

¹³ For Archbishop Duncan’s stress on “missionary focus,” see his “Inaugural Address” and “Introduction to the Constitution and Canons” at the ACNA website: <http://www.theacna.org/>.

¹⁴ Tory K. Baucum, *Evangelical Hospitality: Catechetical Evangelism in the Early Church and Its Recovery for Today* (Landham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2008), xv.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 19, 35. We might also recall here the insights of Anglican evangelist and scholar Michael Green, *Church without Walls: A Global Examination of Cell Church* (London: Paternoster Press, 2002).

¹⁶ Todd D. Hunter, *Christianity Beyond Belief: Following Jesus for the Sake of Others* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2009), 24.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 96-97.

Through the love and care that God's people show, unchurched and non-Christian individuals discover a life that is qualitatively different from what they knew before. Biblical instruction, spiritual practices and skill development (especially reading and responding to Scripture), and increasing participation in the life and mission of the Church train them to be more aware of the needs of others and more attentive to "the still small voice" of God. Jesus Christ becomes their pattern and conformity to the mind of Christ their heart's desire (Phil. 2:5). The Holy Spirit, in turn, provides the power and gifts that are required to live as fully active members of Christ's Body (I Cor. 12).

The evangelical hospitality and socialization described by Baucum and Hunter provide entry to the deeper formation uniquely found in the Church. This will usually involve a transition from the relatively unstructured, even casual, atmosphere of welcome to a more structured and formal process that requires long-term commitment. Local communities work out these details in a way that preserves both hospitality *and* integrity. The "front-porch" is, in effect, an extension of the disciple-making catechumenate into the mission-field of the Church. That is why stage-one (evangelization) may occur primarily outside church walls, in homes, workplaces, coffee shops, etc. Stage-two (catechesis) may also be accomplished, in part, 'where people are at,' as long as it steadily points to the goal of full participation in the sacramental life and Gospel-defined mission of the Church. Here is where the journey inward (spiritual transformation) leads to the journey outward (loving service to God and neighbor). In the words of Simon Chan it is "the community in which the gospel finds its concrete expression in worship, life and mission."¹⁸

Indeed, a comprehensive catechumenate leads converts into the "Christian sacramental universe," where they encounter the mystery of the triune God's grace and glory in the liturgy. This pathway is indicated by the liturgical progression in the *Book of Common Prayer* from "hearing and receiving thy Holy Word" to becoming, sacramentally, "very members incorporate in the mystical body" of Christ. This participation also incorporates individuals into the mission of the Church where, in Cranmer's words, we "do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in." So, in effect, becoming what we eat determines our identity *and* our mission, individually and corporately. This brings us to the pathway known as liturgical catechesis.

Liturgical Catechesis: Those who are born, baptized, and raised to maturity in Christian homes and church settings start from a different place, but head toward the same destination as those who come to faith through the catechetical evangelism of the Church. The catechetical process may differ in its starting place and order—with baptism preceding confirmation—but the aim is the same: "to form, equip, and deploy disciples of Jesus Christ who fully participate in the life and mission of the Church." Children, youth, and, perhaps, young-adults are the catechumens who, like their counterparts from unchurched or non-Christian backgrounds, undergo preparation through study, skill-development, and formation, but for the particular purpose of "ratifying and confirming" the solemn promises and vows previously made on their behalf in infant baptism. In the Order of Confirmation of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, the bishop prays for their strengthening in the Holy Spirit, the daily increase of "the manifold gifts of grace; the spirit of wisdom and understanding," and "true godliness," all this implying a deliberate course of training in discipleship. Because this pathway is completely circumscribed by the liturgical life of the Church, it is often referred to as 'liturgical catechesis.'

Here there is as much attention devoted to the way stages of faith and rites of passage signify new thresholds and, indeed, progress in the journey. This reminds us that the reality of conversion still depends on the reassembly or reordering of the personality around a new center of gravity: the person and work of Jesus Christ. The transformation, as always, is enabled by divine grace and mediated through the

¹⁸ Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 107.

Christian home and the varied ministries of the Church. It is perhaps more subtle given the steady nurture afforded by faithful parents and godparents, as well as the Christian community as a whole. But as in catechetical evangelism, the young person's faith is ultimately "deployed and consummated" as he or she participates more fully in the Body of Christ.¹⁹

The term 'liturgical catechesis' is also used to indicate a wide range of necessary connections between the liturgy and the catechumenate, reminding us that worship is as essential to the making of a Christian as socialization, learning, and training. Anglican theologian John H. Westerhoff III provides a helpful description of what this looks like in the context of the Eucharistic liturgy:

We are formed by the liturgy so that we might live a Eucharistic life, a life in gratitude to God. We gather in the grateful awareness that God is with us. We listen and thank God for God's Word. In grateful response to God's Good News we sing a love song of thanksgiving. We pray thankfully, knowing that God is already seeking to do good things for us and all people. In gratitude for the gift of community we share God's peace. In thanksgiving we bring to God what God has already given to us. In thanksgiving we share God's gifts and with gratitude we go forth to bring God's grace to all peoples. Christian stewardship implies a Eucharistic life. When the Eucharist is at the center of our lives then both a proper understanding of stewardship and a faithful life as stewards of God are made possible, indeed are enhanced.²⁰

But liturgical catechesis also accounts for the ways that catechesis serves this liturgy. Here we demonstrate the biblical faith that shaped *The Book of Common Prayer*, both in its language and its forms and rituals. We also explore the historic relationship between catechesis and the Service of the Word, which in the ancient world was called the Rite of the Catechumens. It is crucial that catechumens develop the skills necessary to recognize and receive the evangelical and formational power of the liturgy and enjoy the everyday blessings of the prayer book in the Daily Office, the Lectionary, and so on. In all of these means of grace, the distinctive liturgical life of the Church is nourished and sustained as it finds fertile soil in the lives of its catechumens. Liturgical catechesis is especially mindful of these mutual benefits.²¹

Customarily, the dynamic relationship between liturgy and catechesis has been most fully realized where the whole process of initiation is set within the worship life of the Church. This makes particular sense when infant baptism is followed by catechesis and confirmation—the traditional nurture scenario that brings children to maturity in Christ's body. This is a sign that the community of faith is equipped not only to evangelize and welcome the stranger, but also pass on the faith to its own, particularly the children of godly parents. But we must also remember that liturgical catechesis extends to the whole of life, from cradle to grave, and to all of those who are committed to authentic discipleship in Jesus Christ.²² Ultimately, liturgical catechesis demonstrates the mutual necessity of a vital worship-oriented (the

¹⁹ Kavanagh, 40.

²⁰ John H. Westerhoff III, *Building God's People in a Materialistic Society* (New York: Seabury Press, 1983): 73.

²¹ Historically, this relationship is most keenly realized in the 'mystagogical' stage. It is here that we: (1) interpret the rites in light of the events of salvation, in accordance with the Church's living tradition; (2) present the historic/traditional meanings of the signs, symbols, and gestures contained in the rites; and (3) bring out the significance of the rites in the life of the church as essential for Christian life. Here one gains a deep and abiding understanding of the Paschal mystery and how Christ died for the sins of all humanity because of His profound love for each and every single person.

²² With regard to content, it is important to note that the hallmarks of traditional catechesis—the Apostles' Creed, Decalogue, and Lord's Prayer—are also standard features of historic Christian worship. Together they form a coherent theology and pattern of Christian life. All are recited in a corporate setting with an attitude of praise and thanksgiving. Here, according to Simon Chan, we realize that "[w]e are a community marked by belief in the triune God [in the Creed]; our practice is governed by God's gracious gift of this law [in the Decalogue]; and this graced life is characterized by personal communion with the triune God [in the Lord's Prayer]." See Chan, 109.

vertical dimension) *and* mission-oriented life (the horizontal dimension) that sends us “into the world . . . to love and serve” God.²³

Given the prominence of scriptural authority in historic Anglicanism, the relationship between the Bible and liturgy in the Service of the Word is of fundamental importance. We must remember that the Church is constituted by Word and Spirit to be the place where we most effectively hear and respond to the Truth. Here we discover that Scripture has a story to tell—the Story of Salvation: creation, fall, redemption, and new creation. As *the* Story becomes *our* story, it orients—indeed, trains—us toward God’s righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16), and through instruction, skill-development, and formation we become its “truth bearers” in word and deed.²⁴ As we move from the Service of the Word to the Service of the Table or Altar this Gospel story is expressed in form as well as content. The inner structure will, according to J. I. Packer, consist of three major themes in the biblical metanarrative: (1) sin, detected and confessed; (2) grace, proclaimed and celebrated; and (3) faith, focused and expressed. The meaning of the Scriptures—indeed the rule of faith itself—is found and comes alive here, providing a rich narrative context for proclamation, adoration, edification, and, indeed, deployment in the Great Commission.²⁵

Little wonder that a necessarily organic relationship exists between catechetical evangelism and liturgical catechesis. Whether starting from outside or inside the Church, these life-changing paths converge as they initiate and build-up individuals into Christ’s body. They share a common praxis (most especially the Service of the Word and the Daily Office), a common story (the Gospel narrative), and a common goal (discipleship). In catechetical evangelism we are mindful of the front-porch entry into this corporate reality, while in liturgical catechesis we tend to the intricate in-working and out-working of the cross-shaped sacramental life of God’s people.

Now let us take a closer look at the distinctive Anglican features of this vision.

An Anglican Synthesis

Recovery of effective catechetical practice from the undivided church requires the missiological discernment of an enduring solidarity, or sense of continuity, over time and place. The history is long and complex. Not only does the Anglican trajectory, in particular, present us with a bewildering diversity, but also a marked degree of confusion or, at least, contradiction regarding the relationship between catechesis, baptism, and confirmation.²⁶ Still, it is possible to draw a distinctively Anglican map of the

²³ *BCP*, 365.

²⁴ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville KY: Westminster-John Knox Press, 2005), 419-420.

²⁵ J. I. Packer, “Rooted and Built Up in Christ (Col. 2:6-7): The Prayer Book Path” (Concord, Ontario: Prayer Book Society of Canada, n.d.). This essay is available as a .PDF file at <http://groups.google.com/group/anglican-catechism-sub-committee/files>. Schmemmann would agree with Packer in his assertion that the meaning of all liturgical acts, including blessing, thanksgiving, repentance, petition, sacrifice, entrance, etc. are given in the Scriptures, “but it is only through liturgy that they come alive to us in a new, unique and actual sense.” He adds: “All this means that the teaching of the Bible must be closely linked to liturgics, in order to make the Bible and the liturgy mutually explain, complete and ‘reveal’ each other.” See Schmemmann, 19.

²⁶ A more detailed study of the history of Anglican catechesis is forthcoming from the Task Force. For present purposes, it is important to note that Anglicans have had a formal catechism from the beginning, thanks to Thomas Cranmer’s inclusion of an adapted Lutheran “shorter catechism” in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer. Subsequent modifications and expansions appeared in the more enduring 1662 form of the Catechism, and this remains the standard point of reference for catechetical development to this day and throughout the Anglican Communion. But there is *the* Catechism and there are *catechisms*! Even in Cranmer’s day a wide variety of English catechisms were in use, and the plethora of local adaptations escalated as Anglicanism spread to the colonies and beyond. There remains a family resemblance—for example, the traditional three hallmarks of Creed, Decalogue, and Lord’s Prayer

intersecting pathways previously described—whether from the front-porch or from the font. These converge in, and constitute, what Tory Baucum refers to as a “faith culture.” As we reflect, historically and theologically, on the internal dynamics of this culture, we recognize the guiding principles for an authentically Anglican catechumenate today.

In his dual role as reformer and Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer set about the task of redefining (and restoring) conversion as a continual reorientation of the believer’s heart around the dynamic principle of grace and gratitude. In this way, according to Ashley Null, “divine gracious love, constantly communicated by the Holy Spirit in the regular repetition of scripture’s promises through Word and Sacrament, was to inspire grateful human love, drawing believers towards God, their fellow human beings and the lifelong pursuit of godliness.”²⁷ That’s quite an agenda! In practice, Cranmer assumed it was best achieved in the formative context of the Church’s liturgy, hence his great concern regarding the need for a reformed prayer book. In effect, he would have identified most closely with liturgical catechesis, as described above—especially given the cradle-to-grave scenario that was assumed in an established Church (and Christendom) setting.²⁸ Let us briefly consider this from the standpoint of his prayers and his understanding of the role of Scripture.

First, his prayers seek divine assistance so that the reading and proclamation of God’s Word will bring forth “loving holiness” in individuals and in the whole people of God. In the Litany, for example: “That it may please thee to give all thy people increase of grace, to hear meekly thy word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.” At Holy Communion: “And to all thy people give thy heavenly grace, and especially to this congregation here present, that with meek heart and due reverence they may hear and receive thy holy word, truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.” And in the Confirmation service: “Almighty everliving God, which makest us both to will, and to do those things that be good and acceptable unto thy Majesty... let thy Holy Spirit ever be with them; and so lead them in the knowledge and obedience of thy word.”²⁹

remain—and the question-and-answer form tends to subdivide topically, with a systematic scope that includes God the Father, the Old Covenant, sin and redemption, God the Son, the New Covenant, God the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures, and so on. The study of Anglican catechesis is further complicated by a history of shifting relationships between catechesis, baptism, and confirmation. At times, confirmation has required extensive catechesis, at other times, catechesis has nearly fallen by the wayside in routine pastoral care and parish life. Not surprisingly, in mission-field situations, catechesis has preceded baptism at an age of accountability. More recently (since the 1970s), in the United States, catechesis has been subordinated to confirmation, which in-turn has been marginalized or drastically minimized (in content and overall emphasis) in many parishes. The Task Force Survey referenced earlier in this report reveal some of the negative outcomes of this trend. It is our operating assumption in the Task Force that confirmation must be inherently catechetical in purpose and scope—that is, it must be comprehensive in working toward our working definition of the ACNA Catechumenate (p. 3). Consequently, we sometimes use ‘catechetical’ as an adjective in our references to confirmation. For helpful historical overviews see James F. Turrell, “Catechisms,” in *The Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer*, eds. Charles Hefling and Cynthia Shattuck (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 500-508; and Ian Green, *The Christian’s ABC: Catechism and Catechizing in England, c. 1530-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

²⁷ Ashley Null, “Thomas Cranmer and the Anglican Way of Reading Scripture,” *Anglican and Episcopal History* vol. 75 (2006): 514.

²⁸ Cranmer did not think of evangelism in an exclusively individualized sense (as we often do today), nor did he view the Church as a mission-outpost in an alien culture. His ecclesiastical understanding was shaped by late medieval Christendom—albeit a Christendom in need of serious repair. Thus, his mandate was to evangelize a nation according to the gospel of justifying grace in Jesus Christ. For a helpful discussion of the wider social dimensions of Cranmer’s reform agenda see, especially, Ashley Null, “Thomas Cranmer and Tudor Evangelicalism,” in *The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities*, eds. Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2008): 221-251.

²⁹ Cranmer, quoted in Null, “Thomas Cranmer and the Anglican Way,” 514-515.

Second, with regard to the role of Scripture, Cranmer's "Preface" to the Great Bible is most particular. Null elaborates:

... the scriptures were "the fat pastures of the soul" and the "most holy relic that remaineth upon earth." Here the English people would find everything they needed to learn about God and their own situation. Here they would experience the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to give them new life in this world as well as eternal life in the world to come. Here they would find the power to love their neighbor as themselves and so improve their society. Here they would meet God, becoming one with him in their hearts, forever.³⁰

Cranmer directly associated conversion with a transforming response to the reading and hearing of Scripture in an atmosphere saturated with prayer. This explains why catechesis itself became so strongly associated with the Daily Office. Biblical literacy was chiefly understood in terms of knowing the major passages and narratives of the Bible, its dual-canonical organization, and its "sufficiency" in containing "all things necessary to salvation." But Cranmer also thought such a level of acquaintance with Scripture would enable the disciple to "continue, proceed, and prosper from time to time, showing oneself to be a sober and fruitful hearer and learner. Which if he do, he shall prove at the length well able to teach, though not with his mouth, yet with his living and good example..."³¹ By the seventeenth century, in fact, Evening Prayer became the primary context for catechetical instruction, with lessons and sermons focusing on the traditional headings of the prayer book catechesis. A new rubric in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* mandated that after the second lesson, catechizing was to be done openly, *during* the service. This pattern continued until the nineteenth century invention of Sunday School.³²

This development provides some cues for adapting Cranmer's practical theology to the missional realities of the front-porch. Clearly the morning and/or evening offices have, historically, been understood to serve a catechetical function—as a delivery system, of sorts, for biblical faith. In translating to a broad range of catechetical contexts, we would want to account for the *disposition*, *direction*, and *discipline* of Cranmer's practical theology, as set forth in the Daily Office.³³ We see these features woven together in Cranmer's classic homily entitled "A Short Declaration of the True, Lively, and Christian Faith":

- a new *disposition*: "a true trust and confidence of the mercy of God," which enables us to "return again unto [Christ] by true repentance." Cranmer grounded this proper confidence in an understanding ". . . that [God] doth regard us and that he is careful over us, as the father is over the child whom he doth love, and that he will be merciful unto us for his only Son's sake, and that we have our Saviour Christ our perpetual Advocate and Priest in whose only merits, oblation, and suffering we do trust that our offences be continually washed and purged whensoever we, repenting truly, do return to him with our whole heart." This disposition suggests a fundamental reorientation of life . . .
- a new *direction*: "steadfastly determining with ourselves through [God's] grace to obey and serve him in keeping his commandments and never to turn back again to sin." Cranmer was convinced that our trust and confidence in God turn us toward him; we find ourselves re-oriented according to the pattern of Christ's life, which is marked by obedience and love . . .
- a new *discipline*: "Such is the true faith that the scripture doth so much commend; the which, when it seeth and considereth what God hath done for us is also moved through continual

³⁰ Ibid., 515-516.

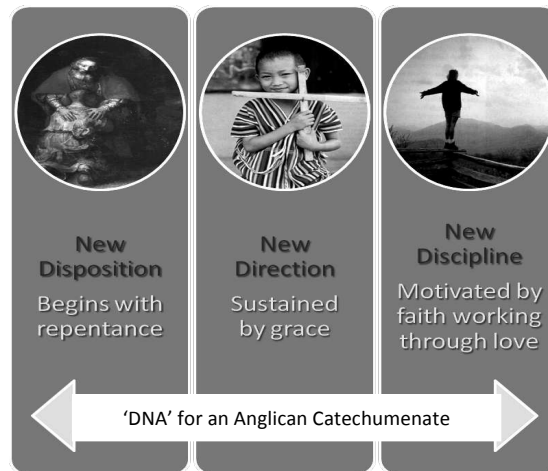
³¹ Cranmer, "Preface to the Great Bible," 1540.

³² Turrell, 503-504.

³³ Philip Harrold, "The Ancient Wisdom of Catechumenate with Some Anglican Echoes in Cranmer," *Trinity Journal for Theology & Ministry*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Fall 2009).

assistance of the Spirit of God to serve and please him, to keep his favour, to fear his displeasure, to continue his obedient children, showing thankfulness again by observing or keeping his commandments and that freely, for true love chiefly and not for dread of punishment or love of temporal reward, considering how clearly without our deservings we have received his mercy and pardon freely.” As the Holy Spirit enables us, we live to serve and please God with an obedience motivated by love. This obedience is marked by a training in righteousness—what we might call the life of a disciple.

Notice that the disposition is expressed in *repentance* out of loving gratitude to God for his saving *grace* in Jesus Christ. This new direction of life continues to be sustained by grace, and the discipline or daily working out of discipleship is motivated by a *faith* working through love. This establishes a fundamental pattern in Cranmer’s theology of conversion and provides the ‘DNA’ for an Anglican Catechumenate.³⁴ The ‘three-D’s’ account for the relational dynamics, growth, and patterned life that mark the journey from the front-porch as readily as the font. Both converge in the sacramental life and Gospel-mission of the Church, glorifying God and “stirring-up godliness.”³⁵ For this reason, we see the three-D’s as necessary to the development and sustaining of a distinctively Anglican “faith culture.”³⁶



The ‘faith culture’ constituted by the ‘Story’ will still need a front-porch—a vital practice of evangelical hospitality suited to the un-churched in a post-Christian and, certainly, post-Christendom world. The porch serves as an entry point to the household of faith, to the sacramental life and Gospel-mission formed, sustained, and deployed by the liturgical catechesis of the Church. Here one realizes full participation in “the one life of the one family in every age and place.” This was Cranmer’s vision, and it continues to inform and inspire us today as we think missionally about the catechumenate.

³⁴ J. I. Packer, Introduction to *The Work of Thomas Cranmer* (Berkshire, England: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1971): xxvi.

³⁵ Recall from Cranmer’s Preface to the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549) that “such Ceremonies” are primarily meant for “the setting forth of God’s honour and glory, and to the reducing of the people to a most perfect and godly living.”

³⁶ What Cranmer did—and this is of crucial importance for recovering the genius of the Anglican Way—was situate conversion, now properly guided by a recovery of the Gospel, within the “catholic order” of the historic Church. He wove a powerful Gospel narrative back into the fabric of a durable tradition that had, over the centuries, worked out the intricacies of disciple-making in the everyday life of God’s People. Again, *the Story* invites us to: (1) face our utter need of Christ; (2) acknowledge God’s merciful provision of Christ; and (3) express our trustful, thankful response in word and deed toward God and neighbor. See Packer, “Rooted and Built Up in Christ,” 2.

Guiding Principles for the Catechesis Task Force

The principles listed below will guide the work of the Catechesis Task Force as it responds to the three-fold charge given by the ACNA Education Task Force: (1) to encourage lifelong spiritual growth and learning: emphasizing the hallmarks of genuine discipleship, and especially a transformative apprenticeship (or follower-ship) to Jesus Christ; (2) to develop a comprehensive catechumenal vision and framework, which will include a common catechism: this will be submitted for approval and implementation throughout ACNA; (3) to facilitate the collection and/or production of Christian education materials, curricula, etc. that serve this catechumenal end.

- 1. Working definition:** the ACNA Catechumenate seeks, welcomes, instructs, trains, forms, and deploys Christians who pursue, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the call of Jesus to live according to his gospel as citizens in his kingdom and members of his body, the Church. Accordingly, the Catechumenate is realized in: (i) the call to new identity (Galatians 4:6-7) and new community (I Peter 2:9-10) to live to the praise of God's glory (Ephesians 1:3-14); (ii) the call to faithful witness (Jude 3) and endurance (Matthew 10:22); (iii) the call to holiness (I Peter 1:13-16) and stewardship (Matthew 25:14); and (iv) the call to ministry (Romans 12:4-8; Galatians 6:10) and mission (Acts 1:8; Matthew 5:13-16).
- 2. The call to new identity and new community:**
 - The Catechumenate will be continually informed by the inner structure (or 'DNA') of classic Anglican worship—repentance, grace, faith.
 - This DNA will generate the form and content of catechetical evangelism (on the 'front-porch' as it extends into the local mission field) and liturgical catechesis (from the 'font') in making disciples of Jesus Christ.
- 3. The call to faithful witness and endurance:**
 - The Catechumenate will recognize the historic patterns and content of catechesis and confirmation and provide guidance and resources in adapting these disciple-making pathways to local needs and circumstances in the Church, church plants/missions, the family, and the varied relational networks of the mission field.
 - At the heart of these historic patterns is a comprehensive program of biblical instruction, skill development (especially reading the Scriptures and responding), and formation in biblical and historical faith.
- 4. The call to holiness and stewardship:**
 - The Catechumenate will support a "faith culture" that embodies the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the belief, belonging, and behavior of disciples and disciple-making communities.
 - This culture will be defined vertically by Triune worship and horizontally by evangelical hospitality and mission to the unreached.
- 5. The call to ministry and mission:**
 - The Catechumenate will initiate and sustain individuals in the sacramental life of the Church, incorporating them into the Body of Christ.
 - This incorporation involves their gifting, training, and deployment as disciples who make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Glossary

- Anglican ‘DNA’:** at the heart of Thomas Cranmer’s theology and liturgical genius is the gospel of justification by faith, which can be succinctly defined in a “sin-grace-faith” sequence (as articulated by J. I. Packer; herein the term ‘repentance,’ the acknowledgement of sin, is substituted for ‘sin’). In the classical expression of Cranmer’s homilies, this three-fold order of salvation is indicated in a disposition that begins in *repentance*, a direction that is sustained by *grace*, and a discipline that is motivated by *faith* working through love.
- Biblical literacy:** an essential goal of the Anglican Catechumenate is attaining knowledge of the major passages and narratives of the Bible, its dual-canonical organization, and its “sufficiency” in containing “all things necessary to salvation.” Cranmer thought such a level of acquaintance with Scripture would enable the disciple of Jesus Christ to be a “sober and fruitful hearer and learner,” as well as a witness of God’s Word in “his [or her] living and good example.”
- Catechumenate-catechesis-catechism:** **catechumenate** is the overall operational framework in which **catechesis** (instruction) and **catechism** (the instrument[s] of instruction) function. A catechumenate necessarily accounts for activities and processes that form and equip Christians, whether pre- or post-baptism.
- Catechetical evangelism:** this catechetical pathway highlights the transformative process of becoming a Christian (conversion) in an evangelistic and, at least initially, un-churched situation. Individuals are led through a series of preparatory stages and rites of passage that culminate in baptism and initiation into the full sacramental life and Gospel-defined mission of the Church. Some refer to this as “protocatechesis” because it is targeted at seekers.
- Conversion:** a turning around or transformation from one life direction to another, most especially through repentance and faith (Acts 3:19). This transformation of whole persons begins when they become followers of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. But there is also a continuous aspect of conversion which Thomas Cranmer understood to be an “ongoing reorientation of a believer’s heart.”
- Four-stage catechesis:** the four stages of the ancient catechumenate are (1) **evangelization** (inquiry and introductory summary of the faith), (2) **catechesis** (long-term instruction and mentoring), (3) **enlightenment** (final pre-baptismal instruction), and (4) **mystagogy** (post-baptismal instruction concerning the rituals and deeper mysteries of the faith, especially the Eucharist)
- Front-porch:** a distinctive “social space” and “faith culture” with “patterned practices that encourage and enable evangelical hospitality, so that those who are far from Christ may come close to him and discover in the hospitality of the Church the warm, reconciling welcome of her triune God.” (Tory Baucum). Catechetical evangelism is closely identified with the operation of this social space.
- Liturgical catechesis:** this catechetical pathway is defined by conversion from ‘cradle-to-grave,’ with particular emphasis on the spiritual nurture of baptized children by godly parents in catechumenal parish settings. At their **confirmation**, such individuals publicly affirm their faith and commitment to the baptismal vows. Liturgical catechesis is also attentive to the wide range of necessary connections between the liturgy and catechumenate, tending to the mutual benefits of integrating these formative arenas in life-long growth and discipleship, vertically (through worship) and horizontally (through mission).