



CONFIRM NOT CONFORM FOR ADULTS

SESSION 12

ANGLICANISM: THE SACRAMENTS

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THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT

A life of faith is not merely intellectual assent to a set of propositions. To live in faith means to step out into something greater than ourselves, to enter into mystery, to not know. One way we do this, week after week, is through the Eucharist. We do not expect that those who take part in the Eucharist know exactly what it means or what happens in and through receiving the bread and wine. Instead, we receive the sacrament as a gift of grace from God, unmerited and yet freely given to us.

This does not mean that we approach the sacraments thoughtlessly or carelessly. Believing them to be gracious gifts from God, we would be ungracious if we received them without some care and consideration. But the sacraments are ultimately a personal experience that cannot be fully explained through doctrine or description.

There is only so much we can teach about the sacraments. Ultimately, they are experienced by each person as an encounter with God. There is no one right way to receive the gift of grace. God's favor toward us does not depend upon getting it right. We receive God's favor with limited understanding but with humble confidence in God's presence with us.

PRE-SESSION CHECKLIST

Before the day of the session

- Review all the scripted and spoken parts of the session, paying particular attention to the things you should read aloud. Remember, the provided text is merely a suggestion—improvise, add to it, or change it as you see fit.
- Review the timeline for this session. The timeline is a suggestion only, and you should feel free to adapt it if more time is needed for an activity or a high-energy discussion.
- **Make sure you have the following on hand:**
 - Flip-chart paper
 - Masking tape
 - Marker
 - A blindfold or two
 - Oranges—enough for everyone to have at least one slice, with one whole orange left over
 - Some kind of wet wipes
 - One copy of *The Book of Common Prayer* for each person
 - Music-playing device
 - A short, soothing piece of recorded music that can be played to the group: for example, *Gymnopedie No. 1* by Erik Satie
 - Copies of the *What Is a Sacrament?* and *Sacrament Watch* handouts for each person
 - The *Rules of the Road* and *Chaos and Creation* sheets
 - Optional: Computer, tablet, or other device that will allow you to show a YouTube video to the group

On the day of the session

- **Set up the space [approximately 45 minutes]**
 - Check the space you'll be using for the Gathering and other activities. Is there enough room for everyone? Enough chairs and floor space?
 - Have copies of the handouts ready to distribute.
 - Keep the oranges out of sight so that whoever is blindfolded during the *It's a Mystery* presentation won't know about them.
 - Title one piece of flip-chart paper, "What is a sacrament?"
 - Have at least three additional pieces of flip-chart paper ready for the discussion titled What Are the Sacraments?
 - Have copies of *The Book of Common Prayer* ready to distribute.
 - If you plan to show the YouTube video, set up any equipment you need. Check to make sure everything is connected, online, and working. If you don't have Wi-Fi in your space, or if it is slow, you can use a variety of programs (that can be found online) to download the video to your computer.

- Set up the music-playing device. Make sure the music you want to play is cued up and ready to go,
- Post the *Rules of the Road* and *Chaos* and *Creation* sheets where everyone can see them.

Timeline

-0:05-0:00	Gathering
0:00-0:10	Discussion: It's Your Funeral
0:10-0:20	Discussion: Reflections on Spiritual Practices
0:20-0:35	Presentation: It's a Mystery
0:35-1:00	Discussion: What Are the Sacraments?
1:00-1:15	Discussion: Outward and Visible Signs
1:15-1:20	Homework: Sacrament Watch
1:20-1:30	Closing Prayer: Hand Meditation

SESSION 12

GATHERING

~5 MINUTES

- Welcome people as they arrive.
- Do your utmost to start the session right on time. If people walk in when you are already under way, that's all right. Starting on time shows that you respect the time and the effort of participants who have arrived.

DISCUSSION: IT'S YOUR FUNERAL

~10 MINUTES

- In the homework for Session 11, participants were asked to prepare their own burial service.
- Spend a few minutes to allow participants to reflect on what they discovered in the course of their preparations.
- Introduce the discussion with your own words or the following:
 - As you remember, at our last session, we asked you to plan your burial service. We're going to spend just a couple of minutes talking about that experience. If you find that this has brought up some strong emotions or reactions for you, we hope that you will spend some time talking with [me/the rector/the clergy/a spiritual director/your therapist] to explore that in the depth that you need. For right now, we're going to touch base about this assignment. Please do not hesitate to ask for more time one-on-one if you need it.
 - Knowing that this is a sensitive topic for many, please know that you do not have to share any more than is comfortable.
- Then start the discussion.

Discussion Question	Potential Follow-up Questions	Facilitator Notes
What did you discover as you prepared this service?	What surprised you?	
What was it like preparing your funeral service?	How did it feel?	Be aware that this is a very sensitive topic for some people. Do not probe. If there are strong feelings, don't try to "fix" them.
What did this assignment suggest about what is important to you?	Were there any themes or common threads in your choices?	

Did making these preparations for your funeral provide insights into how you want to live your life?	If so, what?	
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DISCUSSION: REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

~10 MINUTES

- Take a few minutes to allow participants to reflect on the spiritual practice that they chose at the previous session.
- Introduce this discussion by saying these words or your own:
 - As we do each time (more or less), we will have a chance to talk about our spiritual practice, but no one is required to say more than is comfortable.

Discussion Question	Potential Follow-up Questions	Facilitator Notes
What spiritual practice did you choose?		Participants do not need to reveal their spiritual practice if they do not want to.
How did it go?	What was the hardest thing about doing this practice? What did you gain from it? What felt uncomfortable or unnatural about it? What happened that you did not expect?	Give people some time to respond to the more open-ended “How did it go?” before asking other leading questions. If they have plenty to say, don’t worry about the follow-ups—they are there to prompt people who are not sure where to go. The main thing is for participants to share what was foremost for them in the experience of their spiritual practice.
Is there anything else?		

Option for larger groups: Divide into small groups or pairs to have this discussion.

- Invite participants to continue with that practice, expand upon it, or choose a new practice to use daily until your next session.
- **In addition:** Check in on how their Scripture memorization and world religion research is going. You don’t need to do much: simply keep the assignment in front of them so that they don’t need to cram the week before. (Or at least not as much.)
- Then move on to the presentation. You might want to start by saying, “And now for something completely different ...” or something equivalent.

- Ask participants if words can describe everything.
- Let them debate the question for a minute or two.
- Ask for a volunteer who would be willing to be blindfolded. Assure the volunteer that nothing's going to happen to him or her.
- After blindfolding your volunteer, bring out the whole orange and the orange slices.
- Say to the group:
 - Describe this thing and what you experience when you respond to it for [the blindfolded person]—without using the name of the object.
- Distribute the orange slices to everyone except the blindfolded person.
- Ask them to describe the orange slices for the blindfolded person.
- The blindfolded person may be able to guess the object by the smell as well as the descriptions the other people offer. If so, you can remove the blindfold. If not, let him or her guess for a minute or so; then remove the blindfold.
- Ask everyone if there was anything missing from the description.
 - Although they may say other valid things, what you're looking for is that the *experience* itself cannot be fully shared. It has to be experienced by each person individually.
- Give an orange slice to the formerly blindfolded volunteer.
- Say, using your own words or the following:
 - One thing you cannot fully share with others is your personal experience of something—even something as ordinary as the taste of an orange.
 - There are things in our lives that are beyond words or even our ability to understand them in a logical way. They are experiences that can't be described well in words.
 - In our faith, we believe that sometimes God speaks to us, not in words, but in that sense of mystery. Somehow we know God is involved, even if we can't talk about a specific reason. Something happens that makes us feel closer to God, or to things that are holy or sacred, that we may not be able to explain.
 - As long as there have been human beings, there have been these experiences of sacred mystery. People draw on the walls of caves, or write poems, or sing songs, or sit in silence to try and capture what it's like when we are near holy things.
 - The church calls these moments “sacraments” because they are sacred.
 - *The Book of Common Prayer* (and we know all about *The Book of Common Prayer* now, right?¹) tells us a little more about sacraments.

¹ This assumes you used Session 11 on *The Book of Common Prayer*.

- Give each person a *Book of Common Prayer*
- Say:
 - One section of *The Book of Common Prayer* that we did not look at last time was the catechism.
- Ask participants to find the catechism in the Prayer Book (it begins on page 843).
- Ask what else it is called.
 - Answer: An Outline of the Faith
- Ask for a volunteer to read the first paragraph on page 844, Concerning the Catechism (copied here):
 - This catechism is primarily intended for use by parish priests, deacons, and lay catechists, to give an outline for instruction. It is a commentary on the creeds, but is not meant to be a complete statement of belief and practice; rather, it is a point of departure for the teacher, and it is cast in the traditional question and answer form for ease of reference.
- Ask if anyone can translate that into English.
 - You’re looking for something like, “The catechism is a teaching tool, but it’s not meant to be the be-all and end-all of belief.”
- Say:
 - With that in mind, let’s look at what the catechism says about the sacraments.
- Have participants turn to page 857 in *The Book of Common Prayer*.
- Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the first question and answer under the heading The Sacraments.
- Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the second question and answer, found on page 858.
- Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the third question and answer.
- Then begin the discussion:

Discussion Question	Potential Follow-up Questions	Facilitator Notes
What are the sacraments, according to <i>The Book of Common Prayer</i> ?		They can simply read what it says in the Prayer Book: “The sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace.”
What do you think that means?	What does it mean to you?	They may have very different ideas from you about what that means—and they may have very different ideas from one another. Jot notes on them all.

<p>Say: "Here is another way to define sacraments." Write on the flip-chart paper the following:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sacraments are things we can see, or feel, or touch, or taste, or hear, that make us realize God is with us.</p> <p>Ask what they think of that definition, but don't dwell too long there. Move on to the next question:</p>		
How does the catechism define grace?	What does grace do, according to the catechism?	Write the word "Grace" on the flip chart paper. The answer, according to the catechism, is "God's favor towards us." Write that under the word "Grace."
How would you put that in your own words?	How do you define grace?	Write their definitions on the flip-chart paper.
What are the "two great sacraments" according to the catechism?		Start a new piece of flip-chart paper. The answer is Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. Once people have answered, write "Holy Baptism" on the left side and "Holy Eucharist" on the right side
How are these sacraments "outward and visible signs"?	What is outward and visible about them?	Write the appropriate answers under each of the sacraments.
How do these sacraments provide an "inward and spiritual grace"? How do these sacraments show God's favor towards us?	Why do you think this sacrament offers this grace?	Write their answers under the appropriate sacrament. People may disagree, so ask them to offer their reasons why they think what they do.
Can you name any other sacraments in the church?	What are they called?	If they can name them, write them on the flip-chart paper. They are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation • Ordination • Holy Matrimony • Reconciliation of a Penitent • Unction If they cannot, hint that they may find them listed elsewhere in the catechism. (They are on pages 860-861.)
What are these other sacraments?		Some of these sacraments, such as Holy Matrimony, will probably be familiar. Others, such as Unction, may not. Let people know that discovering what each of these sacraments are will be part of their homework.

Is it possible to have sacraments, or sacramental moments, other than the ones listed here?	Have you ever experienced a sacrament that wasn't in church?	Let them discuss this for a moment, then direct them (if they haven't already found it) to p. 861 where it says, "Is God's activity limited to these rites?" Have a volunteer read the answer out loud.
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- Say:
 - As a church and as individuals, we know that the sacraments of the church—Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, etc.—are not the only sacraments. Other moments or experiences can be sacramental, too. If there's a moment when we just feel God's presence, or we know something special is happening but we don't know what or why, it might just be a sacramental moment.
 - [Maybe it's something like this.]
- [If you have the technological capability, show the YouTube video *Guerilla Handbell Strikeforce* <http://youtu.be/40qHb9uFpRI>].
- [Ask if they recognize the song]
- Hand out the *What Is a Sacrament?* sheet found in the Session Materials and allow them a minute to write down the class definitions, if they wish.
- Tell people to hold on to the sheet because it will help them with their next homework assignment.

DISCUSSION: OUTWARD AND VISIBLE SIGNS

~15 MINUTES

- Suggest that it's time for a stretch.
- Invite participants to stand and stretch with their hands up in the air, to touch their toes, or to do a few jumping jacks, etc.
- Then invite people to get comfortable and play a (brief) slow, soothing piece of music. (One suggestion would be the *Gymnopedie No. 1* by Erik Satie.) Let that seep in.
- Then begin the following brief discussion:

Discussion Question	Potential Follow-up Questions	Facilitator Notes
Which of those things we just did best matched your mood as we started that activity?		
How did each of those activities change how you felt?	How did the activity affect your mood or emotions?	We are making the assumption that these different activities will have some effect on everyone's mood.
Why do you think that is?		See if they have any ideas about this.

- Say, using your own words or these:
 - Sometimes people criticize what others do, saying that they are just “going through the motions.” And there’s truth in that. It’s important that what we do has some intention and meaning behind it, that we’re not simply following directions.
 - On the other hand, sometimes the motions affect us. The very act of going through the motions can work on us in mysterious ways. Your body is not separate from your mind or your spirit. They are all part of the same package, which is you.
 - One of the things that’s important about the sacraments is that you don’t have to understand them with your mind in order to do them with your body or be changed by them in your spirit.
 - You don’t need to know exactly what happens in the Eucharist to receive the bread and wine and have it mean something.
 - You don’t need to know exactly what happens in Baptism before you are baptized.
 - The sacraments are an act of faith, taking a step without knowing exactly where it’s going to lead you.
 - [*If you are preparing people for baptism or confirmation*] As you think about whether or not you want to be baptized/confirmed, we’d like you to think about what it means for you. You may not know exactly. You may not even be able to put it into words. But as you think about going through these motions of being baptized/confirmed, take a little time to imagine what this might mean for you.

HOMEWORK: SACRAMENT WATCH

~5 MINUTES

- Distribute the *Sacrament Watch* handout and go over the directions.
- Remind people before they leave that they can move any questions that got answered from the *Chaos* sheet to the *Creation* sheet—or add more questions that have come up.
- Remind them of the date and time of the next session.
- Then invite them to join in a closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER: HAND MEDITATION

~10 MINUTES

The Hand Meditation is a prayer form developed as part of the Confirm not Conform youth curriculum. It seems appropriate to include it here, after the discussion of how what we do with our body also informs our thoughts and prayers.

Photos	General Directions	Detailed Directions	Comments
	<p>“Close your eyes. Clench your hands together into a fist.”</p>	<p>“What is it you are holding on to? Is there something that is knotting you up inside? Is there something you don’t want to let go of? Is there something you are struggling with? Is there something you don’t want anyone to see? Is there something you don’t want God to see? Whatever it is, notice that it is there. Notice what it feels like, without judgment or blame, simply observing and allowing the knowledge of what you are holding to come to the surface. And if you’re not sure what it is, that is fine. Simply notice whatever is there.”</p>	<p>There’s no need to hurry through this script. Allow silence between each of the questions. Allow each of the gestures time to breathe.</p>
	<p>“Now, if you wish, open your hands.”</p>	<p>“It may be that you don’t feel ready to do that, and that’s O.K. You can go through this whole meditation with your fist clenched. But know that the invitation is there for you to open your hands, whenever you’re ready. When you have unclenched your fist, notice what that feels like. Does it feel freeing? Does it feel scary? What’s in your hand now?”</p>	<p>In this movement of the hand meditation, we recognize that in God’s eyes, whatever is hidden in our clenched fist is already known and seen and loved. At the same time, we recognize that this is a gift to be received willingly, not something to be forced on participants. As long as participants are respectful of others, they may partake of as much or as little of the hand meditation as they wish.</p>

	<p>“Push whatever your hand is holding towards God.”</p>	<p>“Whatever was worrying you or scaring you or tying you up in knots, whatever you were carrying with you, whatever you were afraid to let other people see, push it toward God and let God catch it. Let God take whatever it was from you. Let your hands be empty.”</p>	<p>Allow time for this image to sink in.</p>
	<p>“Now, hold your open hand in front of you with the palm facing upwards.”</p>	<p>“Now that your hands are empty, allow God to put a gift into your hands. This may be a gift of encouragement. It may be a challenge or instruction. It may be a message of love. It may be an inward and spiritual grace. Maybe you don't know what it is or you're not sure anything is there, and that's O.K. But whatever it is that God wants to give you, allow God to place it in your hand. What does it feel like? And how does it make you feel? Take a few moments and simply notice whatever is going on for you.”</p>	<p>This gesture can be frustrating for those who may not sense or feel anything. Although you will want to allow some time for people to experience whatever gift God wants to give them, you do not need to stay at this step until everyone has had a revelation of some kind.</p>

	<p>“Press the gift that God is giving you into your heart.”</p>	<p>“See this gift entering into your body, traveling through your bloodstream. What does it feel like? Allow God’s gift to spread through you. If you don’t feel like you have received a gift, or are not sure if you want to receive the gift, you can keep standing with your hands open, or, if you wish, press your open hand to your heart. It may be that you discover something in that movement that you didn’t find in your open hand.”</p>	<p>This gesture allows people to be active recipients of God’s gift to them. Again, allow for differences of experience and keep the pace slow and meditative, but not lugubrious.</p>
	<p>“Finally, hold out your hands to offer your thanks to God.”</p>	<p>“Whether it is for a gift you have received today, or for anything else, use this gesture to offer your thanks to God for anything you wish. When you have offered whatever thanks you wish, please leave quietly. Go with God.”</p>	<p>The gesture of thanks is important, even if there are no revelations. There is no formal unpacking of the experience at this point.</p>

POST-SESSION REVIEW

At some point before your next session, meet as a team (if there is a team) or schedule some time for yourself and spend a few minutes reviewing what went well and what could be changed. Some things to consider:

- Overall, how did this session go?
- What reactions did people have to the *It's Your Funeral* homework? Is there anyone you feel should get a follow-up phone call? Did anyone over-share? How can you manage that for future sessions?
- How did the activity with the blindfold go? Did someone volunteer?
- Were participants able to strike a balance between the technical discussion of sacraments and their personal experiences?
- How did the Hand Meditation work with this group?
- If you were doing this session again, what would you do differently?
- What did you learn from leading this session?
- What affected you personally? What questions did this session raise for you? How will you address them?

Be sure to take a look at the next session. Figure out:

- What needs to happen by then?
- Are there any questions from the *Chaos* sheet that might be answered in the session?
- What materials do you need to gather or purchase?
- Who will do these things?
- When will they be done?

SESSION MATERIALS

WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

Definitions from *The Book of Common Prayer* (pp. 857-858, 860, 861)

Q. What are the sacraments?

A. 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.

Q. What is grace?

A. Grace is God's favor towards us, unearned and undeserved; by grace God forgives our sins, enlightens our minds, stirs our hearts, and strengthens our wills.

Q. What are the two great sacraments of the Gospel?

A. The two great sacraments given by Christ to his Church are Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist.

Q. What other sacramental rites evolved in the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

A. Other sacramental rites which evolved in the church include confirmation, ordination, holy matrimony, reconciliation of a penitent, and unction.

Q. How are the sacraments related to our Christian hope?

A. Sacraments sustain our present hope and anticipate its future fulfillment.

Definitions from our group:

HOMEWORK: SACRAMENT WATCH

Instructions:

Write your own definition or explanation of each of the sacraments of the church.

In addition, at the end of each day, make a note of any sacraments or sacramental moments that you observed. These can be official, church-related sacraments; moments in daily life that resemble or bring to mind church sacraments (e.g., sharing a cookie may resemble the Eucharist to you); or moments in which you feel that God is near.

Before the next class, write a short reflection paper (one to two pages) on the sacraments and what you have noticed about them in your own life and in your personal observations of the world around you.

Sacrament	Definition
Baptism	
Eucharist	
Confirmation	
Ordination	
Holy Matrimony	
Reconciliation of a Penitent	
Unction	