

THAT WE ALL MAY BE ONE: TOWARD A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF
ETHICS IN ECUMENISM IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

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The discussions regarding denominational full communion between The Episcopal Church (TEC) and the United Methodist Church (UMC) in the 21st century caused this author to question the fullness of the ecumenical policy and practice of TEC, in particular its relation to and reflection of TEC theology and ethics. This thesis reflects on ecumenism in TEC as it relates to history, theology, and ethics, and offers a proposal on how to more fully articulate and foster a deeper understanding of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral in conversation with the Baptismal Covenant as the key to ecumenism with the intention of developing and implementing consistent and comprehensive policy in denominational ecumenical efforts.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1886, bishops from around the United States gathered and agreed on the Chicago Quadrilateral. This document, which was meant to articulate the core truths of The Episcopal Church (TEC), was then taken up by bishops across the Anglican Communion, the international umbrella that designates and holds together national and regional churches that identify as Anglican or Episcopal. The result of their work went on to serve as the formal basis by which determinations would be made regarding the inclusion of Churches in the Anglican Communion, the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888 (Appendix A). Additionally, the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral created the foundational blueprint for TEC's denominational ecumenical relationships, a blueprint that is still used today.

The goal of this project is to determine the value of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral in present ecumenical realities. Is it sufficient to continue to serve as the parameters by which TEC bases its most integrated ecumenical relationships with other Christian denominations? Defining ecumenism and then exploring the way it is impacted by a TEC doctrine of the church in general terms will lay the groundwork for what it means to pursue Christian unity. A review of the history of TEC sets the stage for surveying the current state of ecumenism in the church. This will lead to a discussion of ethics and the Baptismal Covenant, culminating in a proposed plan to move forward fully understanding the confluence of denominational identity and the response to the ecumenical call to unity.

Throughout this work, the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (hereafter referred to as the Quadrilateral) mentioned above and the idea of a three-legged stool will be common points of reference. While greater detail on both of these subjects is found later, it may be helpful to keep in mind the basic points of each. The three-legged stool is a colloquialism based on the work of Anglican theologian Richard Hooker (1554-1600), wherein he describes the way scripture, tradition, and reason are to be held together. The Quadrilateral articulates four truths about the church, which form the litmus test applied in pursuit of formal Christian unity. They are:

1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the revealed Word of God.
2. The Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of Christian Faith.
3. The two Sacraments – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, – ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.
4. The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God in the unity in His Church.¹

The stool and the Quadrilateral are woven into the history, identity, and theology of TEC and will be critical touch points in considering the role and language of the ecumenical pursuits of TEC. The question we will encounter is around how they are understood and applied. Further, this consideration will include the role of morals and ethics in our pursuit of unity.

¹ The Episcopal Church, *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 877. See Appendix A for the full text.

Chapter 2: Ecumenism

Before proceeding further to discuss the theology, history, and identity of TEC and relating it to pursuits of unity, it is necessary to establish a common frame of reference and understanding of ecumenism. The word ‘ecumenical’ brings many images to people’s minds when thinking about their own experiences. It is a multifaceted term, and as with all words, ‘ecumenical’ functions in human imagination and lived realities in different ways. Multi-church outreach projects like food pantries and building homes, congregations that use worship books from multiple denominations, and community prayer vigils are familiar to many.² It can be applied to significant integration efforts as well as a single shared event or program.

When Jesus gathered his disciples together in the upper room for what we now call the Last Supper, there was one church, one group of people who knew Jesus intimately and were to build the church with Jesus as the foundation. There was one message, one interpretation, one community. Yet even within that gathering, unity did not prevail. Judas was plotting a betrayal, Peter often seemed to have no idea what was happening, and there were internal politics, disciples jockeying to be the most favored or loved. Jesus rarely uses the word “church” in relation to his followers, nor was he clear about his intentions for the future of the group gathered.

² Some people view interfaith partnerships as ecumenical endeavors. While such endeavors can be a great way to build community, learn about one another, and work on common goals, interfaith cooperation is distinct from ecumenism, which is lodged specifically in the bringing together of Christian denominations and churches.

More than 2,000 years later, there seem to be more groups than can be counted. All of these groups, congregations, and denominations started with the same story and proclaim the same basic faith. However, like those gathered in the upper room, they are not the same. Megan Castellan, an Episcopal priest and writer, describes this as the same basic story for all but, “different churches have, over time, emphasized different parts of the story.”³ And in emphasizing different parts of the story, differing understandings of Christianity have developed. The church is no longer one group of people in a room, even a group without unanimity on all things, eating with and learning from their friend Jesus.

While it makes some sense that denominations, whether by circumstance or context, history or geography, training or resources, would not be identical or uniform in every way, it also seems logical to assume that the variations would be minimal. Christianity is a religion that is centered on one God who revealed Godself to humanity in a single person of God. There was only one message, one Rabbi, with an intense focus. Tom Ferguson, former dean of Seabury-Bexley Seminary, asserts that Jesus’s preaching and teaching was grounded in three aspects: “radical ethics based on the Law of Moses,” which Jesus claims to fulfill, apocalyptic energy, and a specific understanding of community.⁴ The teaching was centered in just three readily identifiable foundations. But as we read in Paul’s letters, the variances in understanding and application grew almost

³ Megan Castellan, *Welcome to a Life of Faith in the Episcopal Church* (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2019), 21.

⁴ Thomas Ferguson, *The Episcopal Story: Birth and Rebirth* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2015), 8.

immediately after the death and resurrection of Jesus, leading us to a place in the 21st century where the church is greatly divided.

Ecumenism is the attempt to normalize cooperation and form a reunited church in Christendom. And while few will disagree with cooperation, a reunited church is not as clear or easy to pursue.

Unity

*Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul (Acts 4:32).*⁵

Throughout the Bible can be found calls to unity, to work toward peace and mutual growth, and to gather as one in Christ Jesus. It is easy to argue that local churches should combine efforts to work on different issues and programs such as homelessness and community gardens. It is easy, even, to agree that one heart and soul is how we are called to be in relationship with others. It is more difficult, however, to fully come together under a single structure of beliefs that are not just shared but are also truly defining.

An important yet challenging aspect of this commitment to unity is defining it. One roadblock arises from the confluence of unity and uniformity. Just as identity is not meant to be uniform, scholar Letty Russell says that God, instead of conflating uniformity with unity, “expects a unity that is rooted in our recognition that the growing diversity of the church and the world is a gift of God, rather than a threat to our own

⁵ Wayne A. Meeks, *The HarperCollins Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993). The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

comfortable life and faith.”⁶ Difference is not a threat in God’s world but, rather, a positive characteristic of the Body of Christ and something that is clear as such in scripture. “So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another,” (Romans 12:5) Paul writes. The different gifts of individuals, different people, are meant to come together as important parts of God’s community.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Cor 12:12-14)

Just as this truth applies to individuals in the eyes of Paul, it can also be true of denominations. There is value in different forms of liturgy, value in varied methods of evangelism, value in a breadth of living out a call to Christian action. Yet still we resist the idea of equality in difference. We align uniformity with unity in a misinterpreted definition of actual Christian unity.

As noted, it did not take long for factions and differences in understanding to become lodged in the very being of the church. Attempts to interpret the teachings of Jesus were heard and understood in different ways as they spread further and further from the source. By 325 CE, there was such disagreement about significant topics such as the humanity and divinity of Jesus that a group gathered in Nicaea to try to determine the infallibility of doctrine. An agreement was struck and accepted in the form of Nicene Creed, which is still used in many churches today on a regular basis as a confession of faith.

⁶ Letty Russell, *Just Hospitality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 63.

Despite the adoption of the Nicene Creed, unity was not defined in such a way that it could be achieved, and scholars continued to argue over the doctrinal commitments of Christianity. Over the centuries this continued as academics, theologians, and people of faith worked to understand the particulars of the church. Efforts to define baptism, communion, and the confession of faith brought questions that directly impacted the unity of the church. As more people experienced more of the teachings and practices of Christianity, through the dual lens of individual context and the varied teachings of church leaders, the schisms grew. “There is a contradiction between the essential unity of the church and its empirical disunity,”⁷ write Episcopal seminary professors Owen Thomas and Ellen Wondra as they consider the theology of the church. Simply put, as changes in the world such as the Reformation and invention of the printing press made it possible for all to read scripture in their own tongue, diversity in practice and profession led to unity becoming less likely in Christendom. And as the world changes, Thomas and Wondra remind us that so does the church. “...New kinds of unity and disunity are emerging in the church. So the task of the church today is to heal the old divisions while not allowing the new tensions to divide the church further.”⁸ Further, the work is to determine which differences lead to disunity and which can hold true in unity. Separating doctrinal and theological beliefs from other aspects of denominational identity can lead to part of the answer, though at its core is a necessity to know truth so that changes can occur as the world and our knowledge shifts.

⁷ Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology, Third Edition* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 270.

⁸ Thomas and Wondra, 273.

A Smattering of Ecumenical Endeavors

Thomas and Wondra have given us a call to action – to try and repair things without making them worse. And that is where the ecumenical movement comes in. To cover all aspects of ecumenism is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is helpful to have a sense of the evolution of the movement and some key moments and collaborations.

Christianity faced early schisms over theology and creeds, leading first to a split between the Eastern churches and the Western churches. Over time, Roman Catholicism became dominant in many places, and it is still the largest Christian church worldwide. The Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century refuted the Roman Catholic interpretation and propagation of Christianity and gave rise to new or more clearly depicted denominations. Over time, over 700 churches or denominations developed in the U.S.A. alone.

While these divisions came about for a variety of reasons, some more justifiable than others, Christian churches and denominations have not been wholly dedicated to separation. Efforts to come together were made off and on over the centuries. However, the modern ecumenical movement was established in 1910, at the World Missionary Conference (WMC) in Edinburgh, Scotland. The goal of the WMC, Ferguson writes, was “to avoid confusion and competition in the foreign mission field and to collaborate on spreading the gospel.”⁹ As missionaries traveled around the world, they often joined forces with others from different denominations to do the same work of spreading the

⁹ Ferguson, 89.

Gospel message. While working in rural and isolated places, encountering the challenges of being an outsider in a foreign country, was better done when in harmony, this conference signaled a move to control the competition in how Africans were being colonized. The result was greater cooperation and possibilities for ecumenism – but within a setting of Western colonialism with impact still present today. This meant that the goal of sharing the Good News, of introducing people to God and Christ Jesus, while still a living out of the Great Commission, from the point of a specific denomination was secondary to the imposition of western ideals in developing Christian communities abroad.

The 1910 conference turned out to be a precursor to the establishment of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948.¹⁰ At its inception, the WCC was a global organization. Leadership came from around the world, adding an element of physical unity that was naturally diverse in areas of language, geography, race, ethnicity, and gender. The WCC was not established as a legislative body or to become the overseer of the church universal. Rather, the WCC was established to encourage unity among Christian churches and to increase evangelistic impact by bearing witness to Christ Jesus together. For decades, the WCC has worked to establish visible unity in the world through focus on faith, witness, and service.¹¹

Another outgrowth of the WMC was the Faith and Order Movement. Following his participation in the WMC in 1910, Episcopal Bishop Charles H. Brent “made the link

¹⁰ Ferguson, 90.

¹¹ Nicholas Lossky, et al, eds., *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, 2nd edition* (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2002), 1223-1231.

between the Edinburgh Conference with its call for Christian unity and the need to resolve issues of faith and order in the divided churches.”¹² Brent subsequently worked within the ecumenical movement to establish dedicated work in faith and order, leading to the formal establishment of a group by the same name. Faith and Order brought, and still brings, people together to identify and work to overcome obstacles to unity. Over time, it has dealt with a broad set of theological issues that have been the source of disagreements and separations.

In just a few decades, the work of the Faith and Order movement expanded to a point at which it was ready to be joined with established ecumenical efforts. At the North American Conference on Faith and Order in 1957, it was decided that the World Council of Churches (WCC) would establish the Faith and Order Commission.¹³ In his essay on the topic, Jeffrey Gros posits the goal of the movement as creating visible unity in faith, fellowship, and common life in Christ with the intention of pursuing unity in the spirit of evangelism, noting that in visible unity, the world might believe. The WCC has influenced ecumenism’s pursuit for unity in many ways since that time, perhaps most significantly in the Faith and Order document *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, adopted by member churches in 1982.

¹² John Gibaut, “Faith and Order at 100”, October 14, 2020, accessed March 11, 2021, <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/faith-and-order-at-100>.

¹³ Jeffrey Gros, F.S.C., “The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral and the U.S.A. Faith and Order Movement,” in *Quadrilateral at One Hundred*, ed J. Robert Wright (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1988), 196.

The Consultation on Church Union (COCU) was founded in 1962, and by 1972 included nine denominations in the United States, with both traditionally Black churches and traditionally white churches on the membership roster. The focus of COCU was centered in the pursuit of agreement about the ministry and sacraments of the church. The issue of fully recognizing the validity of baptism through other members of the union was successfully pursued, at which point the collaboration moved toward establishing a covenant on communion. One step at a time, the COCU was committed to “promoting unity with wholeness,”¹⁴ an effort that continued in the establishment of Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC) in 2002.

The idea and pursuit of unity is lodged in relationships. At this time, many such relationships are built on theological or church order principles. Sometimes the most visible are the moments of cooperative work between individual and parishes, the hands-on engagement. These relationships come in many forms. When Pope John XXIII initially proposed Vatican II, he described it as ecumenical and universal. Though it was later clarified as a Roman Catholic event, it still fostered ecumenical discussions, thanks to input on the agenda from the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and through the inclusion of 186 delegate observers from other denominations.¹⁵

A specific “result of Vatican II was the establishment of a wide variety of international theological dialogues, commonly known as bilateral conversations.”¹⁶ These

¹⁴ Lossky, 252.

¹⁵ Lossky, 1188-1189.

bilateral conversations tend to seek reconciliation via conversations about baptism, communion, authority, and other critical topics. TEC is involved in many bilateral conversations, with some working to create a full communion agreement, which entails collaborating through mixed-denomination congregations, sharing clergy, and more.

To this point, it has been assumed that unity is desirable. In Paul's Letter to the Philippians, we are told to, "be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind" (Phil 2:2). In the Book of Common Prayer, the catechism includes a call to "restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ."¹⁷ It seems like an obvious call and effort, but there are roadblocks to the work. The ecumenical movement exists because of the propagation of different denominations. And while we are called to be one, there are times and situations where factions may be necessary. For example, in the introduction to the volume he edited about ecumenism in TEC, William Norgren states that "local ecumenism is a priority, yet local activity is necessarily partial because it is unique."¹⁸ What happens in one city is not going to be uniform with what happens in another city, for example. There are times when identity is so strong or important that it necessitates separation. But unity is not the same as absorption. The pursuit of communion with one another does not require the loss of

¹⁶ Paul A. Crow, "Ecumenism since the start of the 20th century," accessed February 13, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christianity/Ecumenism-since-the-start-of-the-20th-century>.

¹⁷ BCP, 855.

¹⁸ William A. Norgren, ed. *Ecumenism of the Possible: Witness, Theology and the Future Church* (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1994), viii.

denominational identity. To know what needs to be preserved on a grander scale than the idiosyncrasies of a local parish, it is critical to now consider identity and ecclesiology.

Chapter 3: Theology and Identity

In the last chapter, we briefly reviewed the history and formative points of the Christian ecumenical movement. Since its inception, the Christian community has struggled with determining and living out a sense of unity. Scripture offers examples of both struggle and the call for unity from the earliest Christian voices, affirming that division has been present from the start. Now we move to some key theological reasons why we fail to “with **one voice** glorify God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:6) (emphasis mine),¹⁹ by considering the doctrines of sin and ecclesiology, and how they direct denominational identity and a sense of unity in TEC.

Doctrine of Sin

Every three years, the lectionary cycle gives us a long string of consecutive passages from Paul’s letter to the Romans. One year, I decided to develop a preaching series on sin. This is not a comfortable or frequent topic for Episcopalians. It is generally seen as enough to include a corporate confession of sin in weekly worship services, so this series was not the most popular thing I have ever preached. However, I continue to believe it is one of the most important things I have ever preached, for it is in the Episcopal understanding of sin that disunity is embedded.

¹⁹ I am highlighting “one voice” with the idea that Paul was calling on people to proclaim together the glory of God. This is not intended to assume that everyone must be speaking the same language or have the same cultural contexts. Rather, a diversity of voices speaking of the same glory can be even more supportive of the call to unity found throughout scripture.

In his sermon to recognize the centenary of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning began as follows:

At the root of all human division is sin. And, if I may be bold and forthright, it is human pride that is most often found at the core of the divisions that plague humanity. Sin creates division and fear prevents the healing: fear of differences, fear of the future, fear at the loss of those beloved things that keep us apart.

The church of Christ knows sin and it knows fear. The church of Christ knows division—division caused and perpetuated by human sin and fear... It is with humility and expectation that we know of Jesus's prayer for our unity—a unity that has so far eluded our understanding and realization.²⁰

In the moment of commemoration of a formative document, our primate²¹ started with sin and division, not celebration and glory. This was not to spoil the mood, but to put into context why we need an ecumenical movement.

Sin has long been a source of trouble and disquiet for humanity. In the Hebrew Testament, it could be seen as the defiance and fight against the will of God, in people ignoring God's will. When Jesus was on earth, he preached his presence as a necessary intercession on behalf of humanity, to account for our failure to be worthy – both of perfect love and of God.²² Some denominations have assigned sin to actions and developed gradations of sin. Other denominations view sin as the work of an outside force of evil. It is a “negative presupposition of the whole of Christian faith and theology,”²³ that can be political, lodged in weakness, pride, or misuse of spiritual gifts,

²⁰ Edmond L. Browning, “At the Dawn of the Third Millennium” in *Quadrilateral at One Hundred*, ed J. Robert Wright (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1988), 1.

²¹ In the Anglican Communion, of which TEC is a member, the head of the specific church (Church of Canada, Episcopal Church of South Sudan, Church of England, e.g.) is called a primate.

²² Thomas and Wondra, 145.

²³ Thomas and Wondra, 144.

for example. Thomas and Wondra center the traditional doctrine of sin in Genesis 3, describing it as an awareness that we are not right with God, not as we should or were created to be.²⁴

In traditional Episcopal teaching, sin is understood as a break in relationship. It is a fissure in relationships with God or others, an estrangement that leads to a lack of harmony. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus did not remove all sin from the world. Rather, “God was not content to leave us in our brokenness.”²⁵ Jesus was not with us to eradicate sin, but rather to show us a way out of the darkness so that we might embrace his call, “that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (John 17.21). Sin is found in the ways we fall apart from one another, in the hurt we cause one another, in the way we see others as “less than.”

Ecclesiology

One of the consequences of sin, the break in relationship with God and others, is the lack of unity in Christendom. With the ecumenical movement, we are now noticing those breaks in the relationships between denominations and asking what we are to do to repair those splits. In our ecumenical pursuits, we are asking what it means to form a united church. Before we can start to formulate an answer to that question, we need to understand what denominations hold sacred, how they understand ecclesiology.

²⁴ Thomas and Wondra, 149.

²⁵ Castellan, 23.

Ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church, is the application of theology to the structure and nature of the church. It is how the church understands itself from a theological standpoint. And while it impacts ecumenism, ecclesiology is not the same thing.

Ecclesiology often addresses the tension between principles and systems. Principles are those things that come from God, core and irrefutable truths. They are universal in application. Systems, on the other hand, are formed by people attempting to apply structure and life to God's principles. And the fallibility of humans in creating such systems can lead to the disunity present in Christianity.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul explains that,

Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' (1 Cor 12:12-21).

His comparison of unity in Christ to the unity found when all parts of the body are working in their designated ways and in harmony seems clear and logical. No body part alone is whole and able to do the work of the body. This is compounded by the understanding of the church as Christ's body on earth. Yet, despite the clear call to work together and see one another as equally worthy in the eyes of God, denominations seem

to have each taken on a body part, the UMC as one foot and TEC as the other foot, for example, and then chosen to step away from each other and the other parts of the body.

One reason this happens is because denominations each have their own set of rules, policies, and systems. These practices and beliefs form the institutional church, the entity of human making that functions in the world. Yet, despite efforts to do so, it is not possible to separate the denominations or the institutional church from the church as the body of Christ on earth. “This does not mean that the church does not have an inner, invisible, spiritual life, but that it cannot have this in a vacuum...apart from an outward institutional life, even as a Christian cannot have an inner spiritual life apart from an outward bodily life.”²⁶

Ideally, this means that denominations determine what binds them to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the inner and spiritual life of the institution, and then develop policies and systems that enable an orderly corporate expression of the inner spiritual life. In doing so, many questions arise. In regard to authority, denominations ask who is God calling, to what role, and how? In ministry, how does the denomination understand its call in the world, and then actually live that out? How does sin impact believers, and who can offer forgiveness on God’s behalf? Is the church confessional or covenant based? Does the denomination subscribe to a system of ethics or of rules? And what is the essential being of the church in Christ?

In TEC, the accepted ecclesiology or doctrine of the church has shifted with the world around it. In an essay presented during the centenary celebration of the

²⁶ Thomas and Wondra, 269.

Quadrilateral,²⁷ Stephen W. Sykes comments on the historical doctrine of the church and asks if such a thing still exists in this time. Whereas the English Reformation focused on “reforming abuses in the continuing life of the existing church” and not “from some basic doctrine or premise,”²⁸ Sykes posits that the scripture and the creeds come together as a moral activity that is essential to the historical doctrine of the church. While the doctrine of the church was found within the Articles of Religion, colloquially known as the 39 Articles, drafted in 1571 and adapted for TEC in 1801,²⁹ the Quadrilateral, along with the Book of Common Prayer are now believed to supersede the 39 Articles. And related more specifically to ecumenical affairs, Sykes acknowledges the components of the Quadrilateral are currently applied as the doctrine of the church but does so cautiously. “My argument is that it is both possible and desirable for Anglican theologians to attempt to formulate the Anglican understanding of the church.” And this needs to happen because “the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral is no substitute for such an undertaking.”³⁰ TEC ecclesiology is not as simple as rattling off the four principles, but the principles are still important in understanding the identity of TEC.

Episcopal ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church, is centered in structure and governance as understood through the lens of theology. While it is a critical starting place

²⁷ Stephen W. Sykes, “Anglicanism and the Anglican Doctrine of the Church” in *Quadrilateral at One Hundred*, ed J. Robert Wright (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1988), 156-177.

²⁸ Leonard Hodgson, “The Doctrine of the Church as Held and Taught in the Church of England” in *Quadrilateral at One Hundred*, ed J. Robert Wright (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1988), 156-177.

²⁹ Anglicans Online, “Articles of Religion,” accessed February 14, 2021, http://anglicansonline.org/basics/thirty-nine_articles.html.

³⁰ Sykes, 177.

and immutable piece of TEC identity, it is not the sole basis on which the identity of TEC has evolved and is known. As such, the breadth of identity must be considered in actions throughout the denomination. Within TEC, understanding sin as described above is a formative aspect of ecumenism as identity, and ecclesiology in doctrine. Sin also pairs with ecclesiology to describe some of the identity of TEC as it strives to heal a broken world.

TEC Identity

In considering Episcopal identity, two strains of thought emerge. In one, the institutional understanding of identity and core truths seems to be lodged in the doctrine of the church, particularly when determining ecumenical pursuits. Scripture, Creeds, Sacraments, and Apostolic Succession, the four points of the Quadrilateral, are the markers articulated. In the second, an individual Episcopalian, from a new convert to the Presiding Bishop, may describe things that overlap with the institutional guidelines but find that daily life and practice affirm other necessary tenets of identity. In the next chapters, we will address the convergence and divergence of these tenets. At this point, it is necessary to consider the views of individuals, lay and ordained, in the Episcopal congregations.

In a recent survey, people were asked to name important aspects of identity in TEC.³¹ In each set of answers, there were things lifelong Episcopalians would expect

³¹ Appendix B.

such as liturgy and music. There were responses that could be assigned to nearly any church, such as ‘to engage in fellowship’ and ‘to grow in faith.’ Most commonly, people cited inclusivity and the hallmarks of welcoming as significant aspects of TEC’s identity. Several respondents then linked concepts of welcome and inclusion to the biblical call that we all may be one.³²

“God’s mission in, for, and to the world is the restoration of wholeness.”³³ At the culmination of 40 years of ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church, the Rev. Clayton Morris reflected on the role of the church in *Holy Hospitality*. Using worship and the liturgy, a significant foundation of identity for many Episcopalians, Morris welcomed readers to consider aspects of hospitality that should be lived out as the mission of the church. Speaking literally and metaphorically, Morris lodged wholeness in the notion that “the church is about making connections between those who have food and those who need it.”³⁴ In doing so, he laid out core principles of the church universal and applied them to TEC.

The call to hospitality is not unique to TEC. Many parishes from different denominations proclaim welcome, if for no other reason than to bring in newcomers and prevent the death of the church. Morris notes this by saying it is necessary to practice “hospitality as a way of life.”³⁵ The understanding and application of hospitality must

³² Appendix C.

³³ Clayton L. Morris, *Holy Hospitality: Worship and the Baptismal Covenant*, (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2005), 13.

³⁴ Morris, 22.

³⁵ Morris, 11.

include a dimension of accepting differences as equally valid. In her book, *Just Hospitality*, Letty Russell cites two stories in Genesis, creation and the tower of Babel, as being signs of God's desire for diversity over uniformity. Furthermore, considering those two passages alongside the Pentecost story in Acts demonstrates that diversity can be a building block in the pursuit of understanding and unity. "When reading the story of Babel in conjunction with Acts 2, we see that unity comes, not through building a tower of domination or uniformity, but through communication. Acts 2 does not say that the people no longer had their own languages and customs but that they could understand one another."³⁶ So it is not that we are being called to give up denominational identity in the pursuit of unity; rather, we are to celebrate how it can help us bring people together.

Scripture is central to TEC, both its existence and the way it is considered and understood. In the Quadrilateral, the first point of agreement is to accept "The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as 'containing all things necessary to salvation,' and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith."³⁷ The Bible is not to be left to occasional reading but must be integral in the lives of Christians. Castellan elaborates by saying, "...we believe the Bible contains profound truth about humanity's ongoing relationship with God. For this reason, we try to incorporate the Bible into much of our daily life and practice."³⁸ However, it is not just constant presence that is important; the Bible is to be understood in light of tradition and reason, and it is to be

³⁶ Russell, 59.

³⁷ BCP, 877.

³⁸ Castellan, 3.

read in community. Understanding ‘all things necessary to salvation’ does not happen in isolation. As Castellán puts it, “The Episcopal Church has historically believed that the Bible must be understood by humans reading in community with our common sense and reason fully engaged.”³⁹

On the front page of TEC’s website, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry calls for identity to be found in the life and work of Jesus. “Being a Christian is not essentially about joining a church or being a nice person, but about following in the footsteps of Jesus, taking his teachings seriously, letting his Spirit take the lead in our lives, and in so doing helping to change the world from our nightmare into God’s dream.”⁴⁰ Following the patterns of the life of Jesus is expected to be both fulfilling and instructive, offering a balance between religion and faith.

In the Baptismal Covenant,⁴¹ Episcopalians proclaim the dignity of every human being. This core TEC principle is applied in many arenas, and it is particularly visible in TEC’s long history of service, outreach, and community engagement. But the living out of this principle is more than operating clothing pantries or offering safety to asylum seekers. Ferguson posits that in the early 19th century, “the church radically reimagined how it understood itself, and began to commit, as a whole, to spreading the Good News.”⁴² Particularly over the second half of the 20th century through now, there has

³⁹ Castellán, 7.

⁴⁰ Michael Curry, “The Episcopal Church,” accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/>.

⁴¹ BCP, 304-305.

⁴² Ferguson, 72.

been a significant increase in promoting social justice for all: all genders, races, cultures, sexualities, socioeconomic levels, educational backgrounds, and more. One obvious example of this intentional development was the General Convention of 1976, when “the same convention that approved women’s ordination also declared, for the first time, that homosexual people should receive the same care and pastoral reception as heterosexuals.”⁴³ In 1976, both were countercultural to the national way of thinking.

Perhaps the most central piece of identity in this time (2021) is described by Curry as the *Way of Love*. This mantra or mission statement encompasses things such as the application of the Baptismal Covenant and the dedication to hospitality described above. It calls on people to interpret incarnation, why God became human, as a response to the “particular joy in the notion that there was something so indelibly lovable about humanity.”⁴⁴ It also affirms Castellán’s understanding of priesthood. “Becoming a priest is based on God’s call in a person’s heart – not whatever physical abilities or characteristics they may possess.”⁴⁵ If we continue this logic in conversation with the Baptismal Covenant, TEC holds true the knowledge that God calls to all people’s hearts, both in assigning and lifting up many gifts as described in the 12th chapter of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, and in extending that love and call to all, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, and more, without prejudice.

⁴³ Ferguson, 94.

⁴⁴ Castellán, 21.

⁴⁵ Castellán, 46.

The core identity of TEC is found in relationships. Gathering in community, praying together, building a connection with God and those around us, and serving those in need are all ways to engage and develop relationships with God, and to mend the fissures in the world. The sin of discontinuity and breaks in relationships described at the start of this chapter, in combination with the accepted doctrine of the church, directly forms the core identity of TEC. To understand how this came to being and is present in TEC now, we must now turn to history.

Chapter 4: History and Ecumenism in TEC

To this point, we have developed a framework for and knowledge of ecumenism in general terms. Brief surveys of the Doctrine of Sin and the Doctrine of the Church were related to the identity of the Episcopal church. Now it is time to link the theology and identity of TEC with ecumenical pursuits. Over the course of this chapter, we will touch briefly on the history of Christianity and the history of TEC. Afterwards, we will review the specific history of ecumenism in the Episcopal Church and engage with the concept of the three-legged stool, the Quadrilateral, and the work currently being done in TEC ecumenical affairs.

How did we get here?

Just as this is not a paper on the comprehensive history of ecumenical efforts in the Christian church, it is also not a detailed history of the Christian or Episcopal church. Yet there are some points and moments that are beneficial to highlight before moving on.

While it may seem counterintuitive due to the continuity of recognized scripture and the centrality of Jesus, the Christian church has evolved and changed throughout history. This is more natural than not, as the church is of God but in this world. And being in this world, the foundation and proclamation of the church is unshaken but the life and look of it is subject to the shifting world around it. In a Bible study class recently, one of the participants asked what made the time of Jesus the right time for the birth of Christianity. While there is a lot that can be attributed to God's will, there is also a very

practical reason, one that shows how and why variations in the church appeared so quickly.

Focus on relationship was characteristic of Christianity even in the first years of the movement.⁴⁶ From its inception, the members of the Christian community created close bonds and focused on caring for one another. “Something new was emerging in the private homes where believers in ‘Jesus the Christ’ gathered,”⁴⁷ is how scholar Wayne Meeks identifies the origins of what we now call “the church.” Gathering in these house church groups, people were able to engage in the kind of relationships taught about and modeled by Jesus. As the fledgling religion grew and spread, “it produced in many of the new Christians a sense of belonging...a brotherhood.”⁴⁸

Furthermore, at the time of the birth and life of Jesus, the world was opening up. The Romans had been building roads for about 300 years, and these roads were connecting trade routes and people at a rapid pace. As early Christianity spread quickly via personal connections and networks, the freedom to travel brought great opportunity for spreading the Good News. This does not mean Christianity immediately became Roman in nature; the closeness of the communities meant it was lodged in the individual setting. Ferguson explains, “while shaped by its Roman context, Christianity was never contained by a single culture or context.”⁴⁹ Christianity adapted as it grew so that the

⁴⁶ Joel Comisky, “What Was the New Testament Church Like?” March 9, 2015, accessed March 7, 2021, <https://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2015/what-was-new-testament-church-like.html>.

⁴⁷ Wayne Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 119.

⁴⁸ Meeks, 121.

⁴⁹ Ferguson, 13.

church in Rome, while focused on central commonalities, was not like the church in Philippi. Different regions had people of different faiths, so explaining the message of Jesus to the Jewish communities differed from preaching his word to the gentile communities.

Over time, the church established itself and grew across the region and then the world. In the first several centuries, theologians argued over what was necessary to accept in an affirmation of faith, a *creed*, for a person to be Christian. The divinity of Jesus and the question of salvation were just two of the “hot topics” for early theologians such as Irenaeus and Polycarp, Ignatius and Augustine. Not surprisingly, everything was not agreed upon and set in stone in those early centuries, so as the faith grew and expanded, more division settled in. Even the things agreed upon were not uniform in application. For example, the question of authority of spiritual leaders, often referred to as apostolic succession, has long been a topic of debate, and even in the eighth century, people debated over who should be considered as the rightful successor to Peter,⁵⁰ a debate that caused many splits at the time and is still a painful source of division. The question of sin, if and how one accumulates it as well as how it is mitigated, has been a topic of discord for centuries. The Protestant Reformation affirmed the idea of grace but asked, “How could a person access the grace of God?”⁵¹ Even such questions as who is allowed to read holy scripture and in what language have caused rifts of small and large magnitude.

⁵⁰ Ferguson, 33.

⁵¹ Ferguson, 45.

It was in the time of the Protestant Reformation that the Church in England (CoE) also experienced a reformation. Now the hub for a communion of national and provincial churches around the world, the Anglican Communion, the Church of England (CoE) was solidified as a national church focused in England. While people often joke that it was established so King Henry VIII could get divorced, the more accurate explanation is that it emerged from a dispute about authority. At the time, the Roman Catholic Church, under the direction of the Pope, was the church authority, even in England. As Luther and others started questioning the authority and infallibility of the Pope, so did King Henry. He claimed God's will and authority was linked not to a foreign leader but instead to the monarchy, a claim that is still maintained today. In that declaration, subsequently confirmed by Parliament, the CoE became independent of the authority of the papacy. There are far more details and idiosyncrasies about the reformation of the CoE, but for our purposes it is important to note the central question was where to find the seat of authority. When it was determined to be in the crown, the church developed and flourished. There was a "particular relationship between the church and the state,"⁵² and the CoE was solidified as an inherent part of England's faith, culture, and national identity.

Shortly after this overhaul, Richard Hooker emerged as an authoritative theologian in the CoE. His defense of the church under Queen Elizabeth I, a daughter of King Henry VIII, was rooted in ecclesiastical law founded in the theories of Thomas Aquinas. While Hooker wrote broadly and authoritatively on many topics, there are two

⁵² Ferguson, 64.

that were significantly countercultural in the Roman Catholic society at the time and are still formative for the CoE, TEC, the Anglican Communion, and other denominations: the source of grace, and the source of authority.⁵³

First, the participation of God in our sacraments is not just from using the right elements or, as Martin Luther also taught, even in the individual administering them. Rather, in TEC, sacramental grace comes from God and rests in God's choice to transform the person in front of God. In TEC, it is taught that while clergy are not to strive for hardened hearts, their imperfections do not disrupt the glory and protection of God's love and grace.

Second, Hooker proclaimed that authority was not in the papacy only, the Bible only, or even the crown only. Reflecting the commitment to *via media*⁵⁴ established in the CoE by Queen Elizabeth and explained in more detail in the next chapter, authority is balanced on scripture, tradition, and reason. In the words of Hooker, "What Scripture doth plainly deliver, to that the first place both of credit and obedience are due; the next

⁵³ Ferguson, 59.

⁵⁴ The Church of England and its offshoots, including The Episcopal Church, have long proclaimed a commitment to *via media*, that is, the middle way. This has long caused fuzziness in belief and practice, leading some to think that the church has no definitive views on anything. While it sparks jokes about Episcopalians as wishy washy, creating nicknames such as the "anything goes" church, and creates a space for sayings such as "all may, none must, some should," the real intent is to provide space for all in the fellowship of God. Queen Elizabeth ruled at the start of Anglicanism, presiding over a nation strongly divided between Roman Catholicism and the Puritan and Protestant forces. She committed to the CoE as a faith where not all had to agree on everything, but all were to commit to coming together to form one community that prayed together, a middle way that allowed for diversity of believers while building faith and fellowship.

whereunto, is what any man can necessarily conclude by force of Reason; after this, the voice of the church succeedeth (Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity 5,8,2).”⁵⁵

This grounding of authority outside of a single person allowed all people to try and understand and know God. People were no longer dependent on the interpretations and ruling of the Pope, nor bound to religious decisions made in a single setting.

Hooker’s identification of scripture, tradition, and reason was quickly adopted by the church and still understood as the “right” way to read scripture in TEC. Episcopalians use this paradigm, the ‘three-legged-stool,’ to understand faith and action in all aspects.

It was from this framework that the early colonists had to figure out who they were since they could not be a “Church of England.” By 1821, the early Americans had established the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, the corporate body of what is now known as The Episcopal Church. And just as the Church of England had to find its own way in reformed England, so did the new church in America. Significant early milestones in the development of TEC reflected the same concerns about identity, sin, and ecclesiology as its predecessor. Authority was not vested in the See of Rome. In 1784, Samuel Seabury became the first bishop in the United States by securing “Episcopal consecration from Scotland in return for a promise to use the Scottish eucharistic prayer in the liturgy.”⁵⁶ In proceeding by this route, Seabury maintained the line of apostolic succession in his consecration and in the understanding of the source of

⁵⁵ Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, quoted in J. Clatworthy, “The Point of it All,” accessed on February 14, 2021, <https://www.clatworthy.org/theology/bible/hooker-scripture/>.

⁵⁶ Ferguson, 70.

authority in the church. Right at its inception, TEC looks to choose political and historical compliance over theological consideration in the development of the church.

In 1801, the houses of the General Convention established the Articles of Religion referenced in the previous chapter as the 39 Articles. Ferguson identifies the document as a commitment to continue in the Christian faith while also striking a “balance between the Lutheran and Reformed understandings.”⁵⁷ Containing declarations on faith, scripture, authority, and more, this document brought clarity to the identity and theology of TEC.

At a TEC gathering of the House of Bishops in 1886, the Chicago Quadrilateral was affirmed and then taken to the Lambeth conference two years later.⁵⁸ While it was well received, the bishops at Lambeth were not unanimous in their agreement about adopting the statement. Even in the early stages of adopting this rhetoric for ecumenism, unity was lacking on specific language, leading the Lambeth conference to make some changes from what was already passed by TEC.

On the Anglican side, Henry Chadwick asserts that the Quadrilateral was meant to offer a way to reunite all Christians in England, returning to the significance of a single national church. As such, he considered a broad interpretation of the four parts and the opportunity for reconciliation and moderation to be inherent in the document.⁵⁹ Even so,

⁵⁷ Ferguson, 59.

⁵⁸ The full text of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral can be found in Appendix A. In addition to several iterations of adopted language of the Quadrilateral, there is some deeper explanation and clarity on what language was used and why.

⁵⁹ Henry Chadwick, “The Quadrilateral in England” in *Quadrilateral at One Hundred*, ed J. Robert Wright (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1988), 140-155.

the Quadrilateral failed to unify everyone because it was still viewed as too specific and universal in its ecclesiology. And while it has no provision of the authority of the Pope, the role and authority of the episcopacy and its relationship to the line of apostolic succession were seen as discounting the spiritual leadership of other denominations that did not have the same practice or commitment.

On the Episcopal side, Günther Gassmann affirms that while the Quadrilateral was meant to be a formula for Episcopal and Anglican identity and unity, it was also meant to serve as a source of guidance and reconciliation in the ecumenical movement. It was intended to guide the church in delivering its message to the world, the Gospel story and promise.⁶⁰

Encountering Ecumenism within History

With this historical backdrop in mind, we turn to the broad strokes of the discipline of ecumenism in TEC. As noted, the entire Anglican movement came out of a desire to be ecumenical in nature, claiming an identity that held both Protestantism and Catholicism in the same church. Once established in the United States, TEC continued that work of defining the identity of the church and incorporated the findings in navigating relationships with other denominations and the nation. In 1838, Anglican theologian F.D. Maurice wrote The Kingdom of Christ, in which he identified the six

⁶⁰ Günther Gassmann, “Quadrilateral, Organic Unity and the WCC Faith and Order Movement,” in *Quadrilateral at One Hundred*, ed J. Robert Wright (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1988), 178-194.

essential signs of the church as Baptism, set forms for common worship, the creeds, the Eucharist, ministry, and the Scriptures.⁶¹

Maurice's book served as the precursor for William Reed Huntington's work, *The Church-Idea: An Essay Towards Unity*, published in 1870. This essay lamented the lack of church unity and presence of divisions in Christianity. He proposed the basic, necessary tenets of TEC which later became the proposal for the Quadrilateral.⁶²

Huntington believed these principles were a reasonable expression of Episcopal identity, and, further, that they were needed by the nation. Accepting them as a church would, he thought, set TEC up to be a national church just as the Church of England was initially formed to be.⁶³

At the time of his writing, Huntington was a respected and known priest in TEC. The Rector of All Saints Episcopal Church in Worcester, Massachusetts, Huntington was the leading presbyter in the House of Deputies. He founded the first order of deaconesses in TEC and co-founded a local ecumenical clergy fellowship. With Bishop Henry Codman Potter, Huntington served as a trustee of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City with the plan to turn it into a center of Christian unity, a beacon in the city. And after developing the Quadrilateral, he served as the chief architect of the 1892 Book of Common Prayer.⁶⁴ His knowledge and understanding of TEC and the larger

⁶¹ J. Robert Wright, "Heritage and Vision: The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral," in *Quadrilateral at One Hundred*, ed J. Robert Wright (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1988), 140-155.

⁶² Bryan Owen, "On the Way to the Quadrilateral: William Reed Huntington," July 27, 2018, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://livingchurch.org/covenant/2018/07/27/on-the-way-to-the-quadrilateral-william-reed-huntington/>.

⁶³ Wright, 10.

Christian community meant he proposed the Quadrilateral with full comprehension of TEC's identity and a plan for unity that was true to TEC's orthodoxy.

The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral

The goal of articulating the orthodoxy of the faith was not a new concept when Maurice and Huntington embarked on their work. Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and many others developed and articulated a Christian orthodoxy that included the same points as Maurice and Huntington, namely scriptures, creeds, sacraments, and the ministry of the Historic Episcopate.⁶⁵ And in following in the footsteps of the Early Church, Huntington, in particular, made a strong case for articulating the same four areas of faith.

As noted in Appendix A, there was some discussion of how to understand scripture. Is it God revealed? It is an accurate, literal account of God in this world? Does it speak to everything necessary to accept God's love and grace? In general, though, the canon of scripture was accepted without question. The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed had been in liturgical use for quite some time, so while some people thought only one needed to be named and others wanted both included, the disagreement was, again, minimal. Even today there is not a uniform answer in TEC as to the number of Sacraments; some say two (Baptism and Communion), while others also consider Marriage, Confirmation, Unction, Ordination, and the Reconciliation of a Penitent

⁶⁴ Wright, 8-46.

⁶⁵ Wright, 43-44.

(Confession) as Sacraments. Yet everyone agrees that Baptism and Communion are Sacraments derived directly from the life and teachings of Jesus. The fourth point of the Quadrilateral is not as clear or calmly received.

“No article of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral has excited more controversy than the statement on the Historic Episcopate,” notes William Franklin in his work on ecumenical and interfaith affairs for TEC.⁶⁶ This Historic Episcopate is the belief that bishops trace their ordination back to the apostles, and in doing so, the authority and validity of their call is confirmed. Huntington included it in the Quadrilateral, while Maurice looked at the whole of ministerial orders and referred to the unbroken line as apostolic succession. This is not unique to TEC; the Roman Catholic church, Nordic Lutheran church, and Eastern Orthodox also rely on Apostolic Succession as the means for authority of ordained clergy. The controversy comes from two fronts. First, the idea that the lineage of ordination can be traced from Jesus to the present day is uncertain at best. Historical records are not always complete, and there have been points of great controversy over where those lines really exist and in whom. Second, while there is great weight in accepting this tradition, people often use it to discount religious leaders from other traditions, making it a limited and exclusionary principle more apt to cause division than inspire unity. Reliance on and engagement in the related controversy around the Historic Episcopate seems to obscure other potential issues in ecumenical pursuits by focusing on ministry as an outgrowth of Apostolic Succession instead of actions and

⁶⁶ R. William Franklin, “The ‘Historic Episcopate’ and the Roman Catholic Church: from Huntington’s Quadrilateral to 1988,” in *Quadrilateral at One Hundred*, ed J. Robert Wright (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1988), 98-110.

beliefs, on authority instead of living out truth by fixing doctrine in the institution rather than theology.

Huntington is thought to have said that the Quadrilateral is not supposed to be comprehensive, that more is needed for it to truly be a force,⁶⁷ yet the wholesale adoption of the Quadrilateral as the premise of our most integrated ecumenical efforts means that we are working from a limited assumption of what is needed for the unification of the church. This has led to problems. “The modern ecumenical movement is challenged by the Anglican Communion’s gift of the Quadrilateral, and its fruits bring further evangelical challenges of reconciliation in the form of questions relating to authority, spirituality and reception not envisioned a century ago,”⁶⁸ criticizes Gros. This is not solely because of the controversy surrounding the Historic Episcopate, but rather because the Quadrilateral document as a whole relies on obedience, history, tradition, and polity, making it a good start but due to the absence of reason (harkening back to the three-legged stool) and ethics (perhaps a fourth leg?), perhaps not the most helpful paradigm for ecumenical work today.

Moving Forward

The desire to attend to Paul’s final appeal to the people of Corinth has been a part of the life of TEC throughout its existence. “Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you,” (2

⁶⁷ Wright, 45.

⁶⁸ Gros, 212.

Cor 13:11) Paul wrote as his farewell. TEC has strived to do just that, and not without careful consideration of its actions.

With the development of COCU and Vatican II influences, ecumenical unity became more of a priority. In 1967, the General Convention declared, “It is church policy that all dialogues and other efforts toward visible unity must be held in close relationship to each other.”⁶⁹ At the time of this writing, TEC is engaged in dialogues with the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Methodist Church, and the Roman Catholic Church. Full communion partnerships exist between TEC and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), the Moravian Church, the Philippine Independent Church, the Church of Sweden, the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht, and the Mar Thoma Syrian Church.⁷⁰ A proposal to enter into the same relationship with the Bavarian Church has been submitted to the General Convention. And apart from these formal agreements and relationships, the work of coming together with other denominations is prolific throughout TEC.

This work and the resulting agreements are not to be made in isolation or without reference to the overall work toward Christian unity. In the sermon noted earlier, Bishop Browning warned that we must, “deal with the process of evaluation, decision, and ultimately ‘reception’ of agreed statements and to draw the implications for our life as a church,”⁷¹ when we are seeking ecumenical relationships. We cannot ignore the impacts

⁶⁹ Norgren, viii.

⁷⁰ <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/ecumenical-interreligious/>, accessed March 1, 2021.

⁷¹ Browning, 4.

these agreements have on our faith and church teaching. When TEC's focus shifted from primarily inward to an outward looking commitment in the 1960s, the acknowledgement of obligation to all people, regardless of race, gender, et cetera, became more important and was meant to impact the pursuit of unity. The reaction to shifting from being too inwardly focused was "that church unity could not be based simply on continuities such as the sacraments and church order, but that unity would be a gift resulting from obedience to the mission of the church."⁷² And thus, *mission* was brought into the discussion, leading us to ask if the Quadrilateral is sufficient to continue as the parameters for ecumenical discussions.

⁷² Thomas and Wondra, 262.

Chapter 5: The Missing Piece - Ethics in Ecumenism

Thus far, we have explored ecumenism in broad terms, the impact of doctrines of sin and ecclesiology on denominational identity, and the history and ecumenical movement of The Episcopal Church. There were notes of success and progress in the pursuit of Christian unity, and a solid framework was established for this work. Yet, as TEC continues to intentionally come together with other denominations, one significant piece of the puzzle is missing.

At the time of this writing, the United Methodist Church and TEC are approaching what is hoped to be the successful end to decades of work toward full communion between the denominations. To this point, the negotiations between TEC and the UMC are centered in the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, consistent with TEC's established foundation for pursuing the type of fluid and full relationship being proposed.⁷³ The UMC made news when, "in 2019, a special session of General Conference met specifically to address ongoing, unresolved divisions regarding homosexuality."⁷⁴ Things erupted when decisions were made to strengthen restrictions on ordination and same-sex weddings. While their vote was not the adoption of a new policy but rather the recommitment and strengthening of something that already existed in the UMC Book of Discipline, it was still a highly criticized vote that surprised many

⁷³ The full communion proposal under consideration can be found at https://www.episcopalarchives.org/sites/default/files/gc2018/Gift_to_the_World_TEC-UMC_communion_11-21-2017rev.pdf,

⁷⁴ United Methodist Church, "Ask the UMC: What is the church's position on homosexuality," accessed on March 11, 2021, <https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-is-the-churchs-position-on-homosexuality>.

people, including members of TEC, which allows same sex marriage and the ordination and ministerial service of homosexual and transgendered clergy. TEC members started to ask what this meant for the UMC-TEC negotiations.

While the UMC policy affirmed above is not in violation of the four requirements of the Quadrilateral as they are applied, it is in direct contradiction with the work and commitment of TEC in recent decades. If a proposal for full communion were to pass during a General Convention,⁷⁵ TEC would suddenly be thrust into a situation of welcoming full communion with a denomination that would not accept all TEC clergy or apply sacramental rites in the same way. Not only would the LGBTQI clergy in TEC not be recognized, but the action of mandating stricter enforcement and stronger consequences for violation removes the practice of *via media* on which TEC was built and continues to employ.

Ultimately, TEC and the UMC decided to continue conversations as possible while the UMC discerns who they are and how they are called to be in this world. As that happens, and as other dialogues continue, the question that we now ask is, what's next? The Quadrilateral is considered a sufficient statement of faith and identity for TEC. In forming these unified relationships with other denominations, is a "sufficient statement" enough? Or do we need to reevaluate our policy for our integrated ecumenical endeavors?

In February 2021, eleven months into a pandemic that radically shifted how most churches operate and sparked reflection on the call and identity of congregations and the

⁷⁵ The 80th General Convention was scheduled to occur in July 2021 but has been moved out a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic in confluence with the canonical requirements of meeting in person.

wider church, a brief survey for members of TEC was administered.⁷⁶ The questions asked were designed to elicit information about what they believe to be both the identity of TEC and how those opinions influence an understanding of denominational ecumenical pursuits. When asked how members identify TEC, the most commonly listed characteristics related to the inclusivity and welcoming nature of the denomination (13 mentions). Identification as progressive included specific notations about working for justice and on modern social issues and was noted 11 times. These were followed by seven responses that included the affirmation of TEC as adaptive/transitioning with culture, and love – including a note about Presiding Bishop Michael Curry’s focus on The Way of Love.⁷⁷ The identification of inclusivity, unity, and dignity of all is overwhelming when viewed together as a grouping of a common ethic.

There is nothing wrong with the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral as we discuss the unity of the church universal, but as we pursue ecumenical and full communion relationships, might we need to include an element of how we interact with the outside world, of our ethics that were lifted up by the members of the tradition?

Ethics and *Via Media*

In a church committed to the principle of *via media*, there is some question about how we would define the ethics of TEC and apply them – both to ecumenical work and to the church at large. We are a church that comments on specific moral choices by noting

⁷⁶ See Appendix B.

⁷⁷ Detailed responses are found, unedited, in Appendix C.

that abortion is not ideal but removing the right to make an educated choice that is best for all is not acceptable. We think divorce is the breaking of a sacramental rite while also affirming the practice for marriages that are no longer based in “mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity,”⁷⁸ because these broken relationships do not allow God’s people to live as God intends. But seeing the middle way, *via media*, as nothing more than welcoming points and counterpoints, is limiting and can be harmful.

The impetus for considering this project as well as the role of *via media* was to respond to issues related to human sexuality, but the same principles can be applied to any number of places in the church and society where dignity is lacking: sexism, racism, classism. TEC has done some of this well and some of it poorly. When I was a teen, we spoke cautiously about sexuality to avoid discomforting those not yet “ready” to welcome all, at the expense of the dignity of the LGBTQIA community. *Via media* was, in that situation as in the late response to slavery in the 19th century and other social justice stands and actions, quite harmful to many in pursuit of trying to maintain the status quo of the majority. In trying to welcome all, it resulted in alienating some.

Just because TEC can, at times, seem committed to being all things to all people, the “anything goes” church, “Catholic lite,” with all the pomp and circumstance but none of the guilt and rules, does not mean it is devoid of theological ethics. In fact, the statement of ethics and call to live them out is found at the start of the journey as a member of the church. The Baptismal Covenant, professed by all present each time an

⁷⁸ BCP, 423.

Episcopal parish welcomes a new soul into the faith by the Sacrament of Baptism, contains a clear, succinct, and accepted statement of ethics and morals.

The words ethics and morals are often used interchangeably in everyday life. Ethics are lodged in the life and teachings of an institution and form an umbrella as they survey the view from 30,000 feet and reflect on the shaping of individual actions and morals. Morals, on the other hand, are centered in an individual, affirmed and demonstrated in the actions of a person. They are the response to both the happenings of life and the moral framework in which they are centered.

The relationship between ethics and morality is symbiotic. People live with an eye on morals derived from the larger systemic ethics to which they subscribe. This requires intentionality, as Beverly Wildung Harrison reminds us. "If you opt out of the process of reflecting and clarifying your own conduct, you are, in a fundamental way, also opting out of the hard work of being a moral person."⁷⁹ This is an individualized activity, but for Christians, it is also work done in community. "We Christians have particularly to dissent and argue that Christian ethics is about moral community."⁸⁰ Because Christianity is inherently and intentionally focused in the "we" and a sense of community and interdependence, the relationship between ethics and morals is necessarily stronger than it might be in other frameworks.

⁷⁹ Beverly Wildung Harrison. "Doing Christian Ethics." In *Justice in the Making: Feminist Social Ethics*, by Beverly Wildung Harrison, edited by Elizabeth M. Bounds, et al, 30-37. (Louisville: Westminster John Know Press, 2004), 34.

⁸⁰ Harrison, *Justice in the Making*, 34.

It is important to recognize and engage in this practice of intentionality and application of ethics and morals in day-to-day life. Morris reminds us that full faith is not an option if we neglect it. “Spirituality is a natural and essential part of human existence and thus is an important aspect of the life of the church. But it is essential that spiritual practice be balanced with a commitment to ministries of peace and justice in the world.”⁸¹ We are not simply of the Spirit; we are in the world. Avoidance or neglect of the world leads to blank spaces or rips in our faith. It is a sign that we are not experiencing God fully. We try to better our relationship with God, to know more and then more fully live into our call as Christians. And we do this not just for us, but also so that we may spread the saving love and grace as commissioned. Yet, “as hard as we might try, we cannot ever really figure out God. But the discipline of theology encourages us to come up with language for God and our faith that other people can understand...about sharing our experience with God,”⁸² Castellan explains.

Articulating and sharing our experience with God is not a simple academic exercise lodged in proofs and musings. It is not a strict and literal reading of scripture with a check list. Hooker taught that scripture, tradition, and reason are connected in the Anglican understanding of God. While scripture and tradition are clearly given a voice, missing in the Quadrilateral is the distinct articulation and adherence to reason, a significant part of the identity of TEC. The church is a community of moral life and

⁸¹ Morris, 29.

⁸² Castellan, 16.

ethical discourse, and our engagement and adherence to the church community is rooted in practice, in everyday life, not just in abstract or technical principles.

Baptism and the Baptismal Covenant

In 1979, the current Book of Common Prayer was officially ratified by the deputies and bishops of the General Convention. While it was full of familiar prayers and teachings, there were also significant, intentional changes in content and foundation. “The 1979 Book of Common Prayer distinguishes itself from its predecessor largely in its insistence on a baptismal ecclesiology,”⁸³ as Morris describes it. Seeing the changing landscape of Christendom, liturgical scholar Ruth Meyers notes that the committee working on the creation of the new Book of Common Prayer, “worked to form a rite...suitable for the Episcopal Church as it moved into the post-Christendom era...and at the same time solidly rooted in biblical principles and the Christian tradition.”⁸⁴ According to Meyers, that rite, the service and declarations of baptism, was born out of theology. The people working on the revisions and new text were committed to making sure that what was being proclaimed had theological heft behind it, and what better place to make that clear than in the Baptismal Covenant?

Some people view baptism as little more than a family tradition, complete with cupcakes and great-grandma’s original baptism gown. And while that reunion and celebration is good, there is more. Baptism is the official acceptance of being part of the

⁸³ Morris, 22.

⁸⁴ Ruth A. Meyers, *Continuing the Reformation*. (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1997), 210-211.

Christian faith. It is the initiation, the welcome into God's church. A person stands up and says, "I believe" in front of others, makes a public declaration of faith. For infant baptism, which is allowed and encouraged in TEC, "Sponsors of infants...present their candidates, make promises in their own names, and also take vows on behalf of their candidates."⁸⁵ These are not promises offered with fingers crossed, but serious commitments. People are expected to go through preparation in advance so they understand what they are promising, and it is in this preparation that the body of Christ and the church are formed. This is a critical moment in developing new Christians. If done well, it can have lasting impact; if neglected, the memory may drift away. Yet, as that which "brings people into the fold," the formation is extremely important. William Ladd, former Dean of Berkeley Divinity School in New Haven, cautions against not taking it seriously. As we revel in our worldliness and postmodern understandings of everything, he warns that, "we may smile at exorcism and salt, but the church of the early period did actually overcome paganism. How far are we getting with our easy-going ideas about baptism and church membership?"⁸⁶

Rather than minimizing or even skipping formative preparation altogether, the need to teach what it means to be a part of the faith must be linked to this rite of baptism. This teaching is often a task given to seminarians who are in a parish-based internship and called upon to teach the new members the basics or to sit in with other clergy

⁸⁵ BCP, 298.

⁸⁶ William Palmer Ladd, *Prayer Book Interleaves*. (New York: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1942; reprint by Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, 2018), 80.

engaged in formation. In some ways, it may seem daunting. Where to start? As it turns out, in TEC the syllabus is built into the liturgy.

Centered in the rite of baptism is the recitation of the Baptismal Covenant, found in the Book of Common Prayer and in its entirety in Appendix D of this work. It is set between the presentation and examination of those joining the faith and the actual initiation of the new members. The covenant is prayed by all, demonstrating that, “portions of the baptismal rite focus on the individual, but this is balanced by the involvement of the entire community.”⁸⁷ All present are committing or recommitting themselves to the Baptismal Covenant each time someone is baptized. The covenant takes the place of the Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene Creed in regular worship on those occasions as the communal affirmation of faith. This means that whatever is in the covenant must be important.

The Baptismal Covenant is the most comprehensive and complete statement of who we are and what we believe as Episcopalians. The foundational theology of creeds is presented in the first part of the covenant. The second part asks a series of questions about the church and scripture, sin, witness, the call to recognize the dignity of all, and more. Stated another way, the covenant has two parts – the creed and the acceptance of a call to action. It is in learning about and accepting these questions and answers that we come to know how TEC understands the identity of its congregants as members of the body of Christ.

⁸⁷ Meyers, 195.

While much of what is promised may seem normal and obvious today, it was intentional and revolutionary when it was first adopted. Meyers notes that when the committee was drafting the new covenant in the late 1960s, one of the members of the group, Henry Breul, suggested adding a commitment to social action, which led to the inclusion of, “Will you strive for justice, peace, and human dignity among men and nations?”⁸⁸ As discussed earlier in the history section, it was during the 1960s that TEC pushed open the doors to the world and denounced behavior contrary to the gospels, and it was important for that to be reflected in this first Sacrament of the church. “The baptismal covenant clearly identifies ministry of social justice in the world as the focus of the church’s identity,”⁸⁹ Morris confirms.

As clear as scholars find this to be, the application and consequences of intentionally speaking of this essential piece of identity are not as clear or easy in practice. And it is in this lack of clarity that we encounter the first problem: we are not all the same. Unity is not uniformity. Going back to the start of Christianity, divisions have sprouted. In his first letter to the people of Corinth, Paul immediately lets the people know that he is aware of the divisions among them. “For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters” (1 Cor 1:11). In the infancy of the Christian tradition, separations already existed. The church may have been Christ’s body on earth, but that did not make it immune from human brokenness or division, which Episcopalians identify as sin. The Corinthians, Paul

⁸⁸ Meyers, 205.

⁸⁹ Morris, 96.

charges, are claiming a religious identity without fully adopting its beliefs and related practices. Calling the people “infants in Christ” (1 Cor 3:1) and not adults, Paul is frustrated that they do not accurately understand the message and commissioning of God through Jesus. As Corinth was known to be a trading site and likely the most significant Greek city of the time,⁹⁰ the presence of a multicultural and multinational community leads, in Paul’s opinion, to inconsistencies. There is jealousy and quarrelling, Paul comments, behaviors of the flesh, the most unrefined state of humanity in the Gospels, and not behaviors of the divine. (1 Cor 3:3) This is a typically strong reaction from Paul, perhaps arising from his insistence on spiritual maturity and unity.⁹¹ Paul wants people to hear and know one message. Yet that may not be possible in light of different contexts and foundations.

Combining multiple contexts with the acceptance of one God and one call to God’s work in the world elicits tension. Thus, it is critical to balance the necessary truths with, as Kwame Anthony Appiah describes it, the “areas of permissible differences.”⁹² What things are nonnegotiable and what variances can be allowed? From the Baptismal Covenant, for example, is it a permissible difference to vow to respect the dignity of all people – except those who violate scripture because they are women talking in church? Couple that with the rampant cultural practice of excluding those who are not the same,

⁹⁰ Mary Ann Getty, "1 Corinthians," in *The Collegeville Bible Commentary*, edited by C.S.A. Diane Bergant, & Robert J. Karris, O.F.M., 1100-1133. (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1989), 1100.

⁹¹ Getty, *1 Corinthians*, 1101.

⁹² Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2018), 39.

and more problems and threats to unity crop up. Individuals do this all the time. It is why we have so many negative “isms” in our culture. But it is not just individuals who are the source of discord between stated ethics and lived-out morals, of exclusion. Many denominations practice exclusion on a regular basis. Some preach that heaven is only accessed by the donation of a certain amount of money or by at least a specific number of good works. Some proclaim that God is only available to women through a husband, father, or other male figure. And some denominations condemn those who love or live as part of the LGBTQIA community, labeling them as excluded and damned members of society. This does not happen in a vacuum. Scripture is cherry picked and interpreted in a way that justifies the views, for example. It may be a defense against a changing culture that may negatively impact an understanding of the world. And in this defensiveness, truth can be lost in evil and the obscured heart, a never-ending loop. “The struggle for survival, recognition, and domination...helps forge self-enclosed identities, and such self-enclosed identities perpetuate and heighten that same struggle,”⁹³ theologian Miroslav Volf explains. When the threat of survival and dominance surfaces in an individual or institution, it can lead to ethical norms that result in great conflict.

Conflict in Rights and Responsibilities

One of the results of the addition of specific language about social mission in the Baptismal Covenant is the reinforcement of Christian accountability. Christians interpret

⁹³ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 176.

their place in God's kingdom by accepting the principle of *imago Dei*, that humans are created in God's image. The origins of this principle are found in Genesis.

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Gen 1:26-27)

Genesis 5:1 and Genesis 9:6 reinforce this message of humankind being created in the image of God, assigning not just status but also intentions to humanity.

Being loved by God is a common theme in Christian preaching and writing. The offer of love and grace freely given by God is, particularly for Protestants, a foundational theological truth. It is important. However, accepting *imago Dei* takes the relationship between people and God one step further. Humans are not just loved by God but also made in God's likeness. This is often understood to mean that human life is sacred, and when harm comes to an individual, it also is a transgression against God.

In John 4:11, we are told, "Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another." When a Christian subscribes to the principle of *imago Dei*, is not just that the person in question is created in God's image and holds God's likeness. All people, starting with Adam and Eve, are created in God's image: the people we like and the people we dislike. This is often forgotten when people are embroiled in conflicts of identity and faith. Those in disagreement may have trouble seeking Christ in an antagonist, but that failure of recognition can lead to problems. Christian ethicist Ellen

Ott Marshall suggests that rather than being dismissed in conflict, the *imago Dei* is meant to form the foundation of relationships.

I point to the *imago Dei* not only because we need parameters around how we treat one another while we remain in conflict, but also because we simply must live as though one of the central tenets of the Christian faith actually matters. You are created in the image of God, and so is the person you despise.⁹⁴

It is amid these conflicts that we return to Appiah's idea of permissible differences.

Rectifying the inconsistencies is not as simple as creating and adhering to a list of rules. To do that would only be to live and act outside oneself. Harrison says, "The person who merely follows orders or acts out someone else's imperatives is not considered a conscientious or morally mature person."⁹⁵ Christian ethics, she contends, are not about learning a script or plan, but rather a way to identify formational needs and necessities. And in this learning, it is also necessary to hold up permissible differences.

Further, simply because ethics and dignity are to be universally applied does not mean "one size fits all." Power differential, privilege, and opportunity necessitate not only action but also creativity in application. In a base argument for the necessity of ethical work focused on race and gender, West notes that while principles may be broad, application may need to be nuanced. "Ethics, particularly social ethics, is a normative project. Its major purpose is not only to analyze existing practices that inhibit and assault the social and spiritual well-being of persons, but also to specify how those practices should be transformed to provide or support socially just and spiritually nourishing

⁹⁴ Ellen Ott Marshall, *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), 44.

⁹⁵ Harrison, 33.

relations among us.”⁹⁶ In analyzing and transforming practice and goals we see the relationship between teleology and deontology, right action and right result, as bound together.

How does all of this relate to the Baptismal Covenant? In accepting that we are made in God’s image and claiming membership in God’s church, we are accepting the rights and responsibilities we promise in the covenant and among them, the vow to uphold social actions and care. We are to be shaped by the liturgical rite, as we are by all liturgical rites, making ethics and moral action an inherent part of our identity as Episcopalians.

Love and Action

The question before us is whether it possible to live into and reflect the ethics and morals articulated in the Baptismal Covenant? And can we apply those ethics and morals to our policies, particularly in the area of ecumenical pursuits and relationships?

The Right Reverend John Hines, Presiding Bishop of TEC from 1965 to 1974, was a student of the social gospel. He “believed Christians had a unique obligation to side with the poor, downtrodden, and the oppressed.”⁹⁷ At the time the new baptismal rite and its related covenant were being crafted, Hines was bringing to the forefront of TEC, a basic ethic that is common if not universal throughout Christian denominations. He was acknowledging that our identity was not lodged in the practice or tactile world of

⁹⁶ Traci West, *Disruptive Christian Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Publishing, 2006), 38.

⁹⁷ Castellan, 71-72.

acceptance of scriptures, creeds, sacraments, and holy orders, for example. How we live is also a critical piece of who we are, essential to our being. In 2018, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry pulled that aspect of moral identity under the more universal umbrella of love. This is not a love that fails to acknowledge the brokenness of the world that defines sin or the struggle of conflict the results from culture being set against the values of *imago Dei*. It does not, as Castellan explains it, fail to acknowledge the struggle, hate, or problems of the world.⁹⁸ Rather, it assigns the value of love to people and the intersection of the Holy Spirit, centering TEC's approach to the world in humanity and the recognition of the inherent worth of all.

Grounded in his call for TEC to understand itself as more than just a church and instead as “the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement,” Curry became convinced that Jesus’s revolutionary message, a message that changed lives and the world around people, is necessary and found in the simple call to “follow Jesus and his way of love. It was the key in the first century, and it is the key in our time.”⁹⁹ The Way of Love encapsulates the vows of the Baptismal Covenant, particularly the ones related to justice, dignity, and love.

Whenever we discuss love in an academic church setting, someone is quick to lament that English has just one word for it while the Greeks had at least three! The desire to differentiate the meaning and presence of *agape*, a deep love for the other, from

⁹⁸ Castellan, 22.

⁹⁹ Courtney Cowart, ed, *Walking the Way of Love*, (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2020), viii.

the love pictured in romantic comedies, becomes an essential part of expressing and understanding the depth of Christian love. This deep love is, as Curry describes it, “a firm commitment to act for the well being of someone other than yourself.”¹⁰⁰ It is a love built on care and hope. It is a love that springs from within and shows us the right thing to do and way to love. “Where selfishness excludes, love makes room and includes.”¹⁰¹

This love that Curry proclaims is synonymous with the identity of TEC. As we consider the promises made in the Baptismal Covenant, the love is intentional. It is radical and translates into accepting all people, loving all people, recognizing that sin is not equal to unworthiness, caring for the earth, and recognizing the dignity of all. The question is whether or not we can embrace love in such a way that as individuals we live into it and as TEC we adopt it in all of our work and policies.

Saying love is necessary is easily achievable; truly adopting love in all things is much more difficult. Similarly, saying we are all worthy of dignity and love through baptism is far easier than actually behaving that way. Society pushes against it. Religions push against it. Fear pushes against it. Love is not as easily quantified as the number of communion wafers or the line of apostolic succession. Therefore, as we build ecumenical partnerships, will we be led by that which is measurable, or will we embrace that which is difficult? In a recent survey, a majority of respondents said both are necessary.¹⁰² An accurate representation of this mix can be seen in this answer: “comparable

¹⁰⁰ Michael Curry, *Love Is The Way*, (New York: Penguin Random House, 2020), 14.

¹⁰¹ Curry, *Love Is The Way*, 27.

¹⁰² Appendix C

understanding of ordination, communion, and of all God's people."¹⁰³ When asked if the Quadrilateral was sufficient grounds for entering into full communion agreements, a typical sentiment was found in this response: "Yes with the caveat being we should not enter into Communion with denominations that discriminate."¹⁰⁴

Matters of history and tradition are important aspects of Episcopal identity, but they do not stand alone. The call to be disciples of Jesus and agents of love is worth considering with equal weight. And this call cannot be dismissed in our ecumenical pursuits. In our understanding of scripture and our Baptismal Covenant, we are a people called to mission and dignity, service and love, and this is a calling that cannot waver.

¹⁰³ Appendix C, Question 8, respondent 13 of 32.

¹⁰⁴ Appendix C, Question 9, respondent 2 of 28.

Chapter 6: What's Next

I started this project because of my own surprise and discomfort with the deep reliance on the Quadrilateral for considering full communion relationships with other denominations. In 2018, I was appointed to the TEC Task Force to Coordinate Ecumenical and Interreligious Work as a representative of the Standing Commission on Structure, Governance, Constitution, and Canons. I stepped into a discussion I thought I knew, but which was instead completely foreign. As a parish priest, I knew my perspective on ecumenical affairs was largely context and action based – what does the community need and who can we partner with to make that happen? What do my parishioners want to learn, and are there other churches with similar interests? When the Called to Common Mission agreement was solidified with the ELCA in 2001, there was a lot of discussion about the Historic Episcopate and the authority of bishops, but as someone who knew Lutherans based on shared causes and interpretations of scripture, I was thrilled with entering full communion and unconcerned about the details of apostolic succession. I assumed that even though we learned about the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral in our history classes, it was our common ground in action and views of the world that mattered in the ELCA negotiations.

I was shocked when, after two months on the TEC Task Force, the UMC Special Session of the General Conference voted to affirm something inherently contradictory to the TEC theology and practice of making ways for all people to be respected, all people to be worthy of dignity, and all people to have access to the sacramental rites and clerical leadership of the church, and TEC did not step back from the table. I was told that it was

unnecessary to consider the UMC vote as it did not transgress upon the principles set forth in Quadrilateral.¹⁰⁵ But even if this was true in a technical or legalistic sense, it struck at my conscience. My congregants and friends who identify as LGBTQIA asked if this meant TEC was no longer going to support their dignity and opportunities? This remains a valid question and concern.

The system TEC employs in considering ecumenical relationships has been in place for over 100 years. It is clear and simple, and it addresses well where we understand authority and God's voice in this world to exist. However, it is insufficient for considering dignity and justice, as noted in the Baptismal Covenant, in the discussions. It lacks taught morals for living out the church's ethics in daily life.

Not everyone is going to agree on every "social" issue, and not every issue will always be present in society. Trying to create a formula or practice that signals equality for members of one community or another is inevitably leaving someone or something out. Requiring partner churches to respond to issues of racial discrimination present here and now can be little more than a band aid on a serious problem. Issues and calls to action will change, but the pursuit of applying the ethics inherent in denominational identity to ecumenical work is something larger, deeper than learned or constructed cultural identifiers. This is about affirming and applying the ethics of TEC. To define ethical "requirements" too narrowly in these conversations is to ignore systemic issues in the world, as well as those emerging or yet unknown. Further, parameters that are too

¹⁰⁵ As was noted above, dialogues are continuing but there is no plan to pursue legislative proposals until the UMC resolves its plans for a way forward. This pause was not due to a violation of the Quadrilateral but rather as a response to the upheaval and uncertainty as the specific nature of the UMC moving forward.

specific can insist that there is only way to know God in the world, leading to greater disunity as others push back against that notion. However, there is a way to apply a dimension of institutional ethics to the established parameters that is sufficiently broad and also inherently true to the identity and theology of TEC.

Harkening back to the work of Traci West and applying it to the need to be both flexible and firm in asserting the accepted ethical truths found in TEC, it is clear that while this work must be pursued, it is not necessarily obvious or simple. Finding unity in belief and ethical necessities while allowing for the absence of uniformity is a task that requires principles that are broad and able to be applied with respect to nuances. It is because of this needed nuance to determine right action and right result that the next steps of this work are to be undertaken intentionally and with an open mind.

Next Steps

The Rev. Megan Castellan characterizes TEC's core as a constant. "The constant thread in the story of the Episcopal Church in the United States appears to me to be a group of people trying their hardest to do the will of the Spirit and to love each other...to follow their Christ and to hold on to each other."¹⁰⁶ As the intention is to establish a redefined or enhanced praxis to be used by TEC in the deepest denominational dialogues, the next phase of this work will need to happen within the affirmed structure of TEC. The Task Force to Coordinate Ecumenical and Interreligious Work, led by the Right Rev. Dr. Bill Franklin, has secured funding for two in-person meetings to occur within the next

¹⁰⁶ Castellan, 82.

three years.¹⁰⁷ In these gatherings, we will take up the questions of if and how we should incorporate ethics into our work. Additionally, we are in early discussions about developing and drafting a theology of ecumenism for TEC that would be considered. In pursuing that work, it will be important to include theological principles embedded in our understanding of *imago Dei*, that all are worthy of love and dignity. While permissible differences exist, and though culture and context vary, the fundamental truth in which we find our sameness lives in our acceptance and recognition that all people are created in God's image, worthy of inclusion and grace.

Perhaps the first question to consider is whether full communion demands equal affirmation, agreement, and acceptance of TEC ethics in the other party – especially those related to *imago Dei*. It is possible to split mission out from the trappings of ecclesiological agreement. Every day, local churches partner with congregations from denominations who would not accept TEC clergy at the altar, not recognize the validity of baptism from the TEC tradition, or reject the leadership of our female clergy. These partnerships come from that common call to serve the community in God's name. For example, there could be a food pantry at all three churches visible from our parking lot but coming together to develop one for the neighborhood is a better use of resources and thus offers a greater impact on those in need. But does that work for the pursuit of deeper Christian unity? Cooperating to achieve common goals can be a step toward the pursuit

¹⁰⁷ It was the intention to hold at least one of these meetings during the development of this paper, but the COVID19 pandemic prevented the necessary travel. As part of the leadership of the Task Force, I will be working with the Right Reverend R. William Franklin on the agenda and execution of these meetings.

of deeper Christian unity seems logical, but the survey responses in Appendix C suggest that the good that happens in joint enterprises, while important, does not necessarily reflect movement to unity. The goal of full communion is to live out the call for unity in the Christian faith. Is it really unity if we are not preaching the same gospel of acceptance, love, and dignity for all? Unity of mission can only go so far if the foundational tenets are not held by all parties in question.

It may be necessary to go to the members of TEC to understand how the church is being lived out in practical, tactile terms. To do this, the initial survey undertaken for this thesis will need to be refined and more targeted in questions while also being distributed much more broadly. It is critical to do this work in collaboration with both the traditional practice and the experiences of those who claim TEC membership in discussion.

When the Quadrilateral was approved at Lambeth in 1888, it was intended to be a guide for the Anglican Communion. Recognizing the vast differences in community and culture between nations and settings, there was a need to articulate the basic, non-negotiable tenets each member church of the Anglican Communion must affirm. If TEC, a member of the Anglican Communion, opted to expand the dimensions of consideration for full communion to include an aspect of ethics and practice, would it be possible to remain part of the Anglican Communion?

Alternatively, is it possible to adjust language and practice only for agreements with those outside the Anglican Communion? In some ways, that seems simple. It does not disrupt the Anglican connectivity that is deeply important to the identity of TEC. Yet

it also has the potential for setting up two tiers, a group with which we are socially aligned and a group that comes together based on shared history, for example.

In Episcopalian life, the Baptismal Covenant is the declaration of right action, of moral code, accepted upon joining the church and renewed regularly. And expanding or better understanding the contents of Quadrilateral demonstrates that it may already hold the key for recognizing and acting on this dictate.

In *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, an important Faith and Order paper affirmed by the World Council of Churches (including TEC) in 1982, apostolic succession, the fourth aspect of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, is clearly articulated in historical terms and practical application. It is also lodged in ethics. “The primary manifestation of apostolic succession is to be found in the apostolic tradition of the Church as a whole. The succession is an expression of the permanence and, therefore, the continuity of Christ’s own mission in which the Church participates.”¹⁰⁸ This connection between the authority of the apostles and the living out of Christ’s mission clarifies a critical dimension of apostolic succession in doing as Christ would have us do.

Additionally, the Faith and Order paper’s third point on sacraments is practical and instructive. Baptism and Communion are Sacraments because these are the things Jesus specifically told us to do to be a part of this faith. Yet the Sacraments are not just rituals meant to emulate the experiences of Jesus. Baptism has “ethical implications

¹⁰⁸ World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 26.

which not only call for personal sanctification, but also motivate Christians to strive for the will of God in all realms of life.”¹⁰⁹

Does our strict interpretation of these points need to be reconsidered? Apostolic succession is not only the laying on of hands but also the commitment to carry on the work of the apostles. Baptism is a call to embrace discipleship, to live out the morals derived from ethics and actions of “the way of love.” It is in the Baptismal Covenant that beliefs ascribed to are named and called into action. Perhaps it is not that a new set of rules is needed, but rather that the Quadrilateral needs to be more fully articulated and known, particularly in relation to baptism, in such a way that the ecumenical policy and practice of TEC cannot deny its ethical dimensions.

If sorting out these questions and the many others that are likely to surface affirms the need to expand on the Quadrilateral, the next step will be making it happen and educating people about current TEC practice in ecumenical work, both what is being done and why the work is done in such a manner. Working within the governance structure, legislation can be brought to the same type of convention that ratified the Quadrilateral in Chicago in 1886. Finally, as there is not an official, comprehensive statement of TEC’s theology of ecumenism, this work will contribute to its development.

¹⁰⁹ World Council of Churches, 3.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Ask how many Episcopalians it takes to change a lightbulb and a common answer is none – because we do not change! For centuries, churches have been slow to change established ways. Relying on tradition as essential to the church, the difficult work of being continually made new is often pushed away. Yet, “if we are to invoke tradition as the rationale for resisting change, we should probably notice that history is all about change, constant and continual change.”¹¹⁰ Morris said this in relation to liturgical change, but the application is far broader. The tradition of using the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral to guide ecumenical partnerships need not be dismissed, but it does need to change.

This project started by identifying and defining ecumenism in the Christian faith. Some pivotal moments and key groups in the pursuit of Christian unity were mentioned. And while some people may pessimistically say that ecumenism is how we weather the decline and eventual death of denominations, it was shown this is not the reason to pursue cooperation with others. Rather, central to the ecumenical movement is the call to Christian unity, urgings to come together throughout the Bible.

The next section focused on theology in TEC with specific reliance on sin in relationship to brokenness. As the breaking apart of religious groups and factions represent a break in relationship, we can understand sin and the approach to sin as a part of this conversation. Reviewing the doctrine of the church demonstrated both the

¹¹⁰ Morris, 50.

presence of broken relationships and the lens through which TEC knows and understands itself as a church.

Holding ecumenism in one hand and theology in the other, we then turned to the history and ecumenical pursuits of the Anglican Communion and TEC. It was shown that the current iteration of both was born out of a desire to determine authority in relation to God's will. This carried through the first century of TEC and was central to the Chicago Quadrilateral proposal. In that proposal, authority was established in scripture, creeds, sacraments, and the line of apostolic succession. This document was spurred by a desire to articulate the central tenets necessary for churches abroad to become a part of the Anglican Communion, as well as to try to corral the coming together of different traditions in this nation.

The current practices for establishing denominational ecumenical relationships were questioned as to whether they are comprehensive enough to guide this work. While the Quadrilateral has served well and offers a good foundation for this work, the response of one of the survey responders articulates well that it is not enough. When asked what is important to consider in denominational ecumenical pursuits and whether the Quadrilateral is sufficient, the respondent said, the current practice "strikes me as being more about the practical matters of integration—you can believe the things of the Quadrilateral but not be able to live together—i.e. people can be friends but make terrible spouses. To me the Quadrilateral is important as a conversation starter (like a first date) but full communion requires more like marriage counseling for joint household management and practical compatibility." And central to that marriage counseling is the

question of the place of the role of ethics in TEC's ecumenical pursuits, as identified in the Baptismal Covenant.

After reviewing theology, history, practice, and identity, it became time to ask, "What's next?" The work done thus far is a launching point for a deeper dive into the role of ethics in ecumenical affairs in TEC. The TEC Task Force for the Coordination of Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations will serve as the incubator for this further work, and it will also be the place in which a theology of ecumenism, which will include the role of ethics, will be drafted and established for TEC.

Toward the end of his book about the birth and rebirth of the Episcopal tradition, Ferguson theorizes, "This, I think, will be the main topic of the history of Anglicanism written in 2115: how the twenty-first century birthed a new Anglican synthesis."¹¹¹ Moving forward, in time and relationships, TEC must adapt, pursue diversity, and embrace global realities. It must divorce itself from culture wars and truly embody Christ in this world, the way of love, as Bishop Curry would say. But we need not do this in isolation or from scratch. Note that Ferguson used the term "synthesis" to describe where we are going. Particularly in our ecumenical work, we must affirm the identity of TEC—including that which already exists in ethics, theology, history—and unity, as well as that which needs to be more fully integrated into TEC practice and polity. It is not that we are to do this work because we feel we must hold tight as a church with a limited tradition. The doctrine of the church is linked to the ecumenical movement of which we are already a part. "The ecumenical movement forced the churches to face their own self-

¹¹¹ Ferguson, 98.

understanding, the nature of the church, and its unity in the face of its divisions.”¹¹²

Having stepped into the movement, we must now journey alongside others, with mutual commitments to dignity and justice, along the way of love.

¹¹² Thomas and Wondra, 262.

Appendix A

In the section on historical documents, the Book of Common Prayer, p 876-878 includes the Quadrilaterals as follows:

The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral 1886, 1888

Adopted by the House of Bishops

Chicago, 1886

We, Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, in Council assembled as Bishops in the Church of God, do hereby solemnly declare to all whom it may concern, and especially to our fellow-Christians of the different Communions in this land, who, in their several spheres, have contended for the religion of Christ:

1. Our earnest desire that the Savior's prayer, "That we all may be one," may, in its deepest and truest sense, be speedily fulfilled;
2. That we believe that all who have been duly baptized with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, are members of the Holy Catholic Church.
3. That in all things of human ordering or human choice, relating to modes of worship and discipline, or to traditional customs, this Church is ready in the spirit of love and humility to forego all preferences of her own;
4. That this Church does not seek to absorb other Communions, but rather, co-operating with them on the basis of a common Faith and Order, to discountenance schism, to heal the wounds of the Body of Christ, and to promote the charity which is the chief of Christian graces and the visible manifestation of Christ to the world.

But furthermore, we do hereby affirm that the Christian unity . . . can be restored only by the return of all Christian communions to the principles of unity exemplified by the undivided Catholic Church during the first ages of its existence; which principles we believe to be the substantial deposit of Christian Faith and Order committed by Christ and his Apostles to the Church unto the end of the world, and therefore incapable of compromise or surrender by those who have been ordained to be its stewards and trustees for the common and equal benefit of all men.

As inherent parts of this sacred deposit, and therefore as essential to the restoration of unity among the divided branches of Christendom, we account the following, to wit:

1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God.
2. The Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.

3. The two Sacraments,—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord,—ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.
4. The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

Furthermore, Deeply grieved by the sad divisions which affect the Christian Church in our own land, we hereby declare our desire and readiness, so soon as there shall be any authorized response to this Declaration, to enter into brotherly conference with all or any Christian Bodies seeking the restoration of the organic unity of the Church, with a view to the earnest study of the conditions under which so priceless a blessing might happily be brought to pass.

Note: While the above form of the Quadrilateral was adopted by the House of Bishops, it was not enacted by the House of Deputies, but rather incorporated in a general plan referred for study and action to a newly created Joint Commission on Christian Reunion.

Lambeth Conference of 1888

Resolution II

That, in the opinion of this Conference, the following Articles supply a basis on which approach may be by God's blessing made towards Home Reunion:

- (a) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
- (b) The Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
- (c) The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.
- (d) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.

Appendix B Survey

To inform the assessments and recommendations of the role of TEC identity in ecumenical relations, a short survey was administered following approval through the Drew University IRB process. The platform used was SurveyMonkey, and the solicitation of responders was done via a personal Facebook page. Over 48 hours, 33 responses were collected. What follows is a review of the results. The raw data analysis is included in Appendix C, starting on page 77.

The front page of the survey:

Ecumenical Partnerships in The Episcopal Church How does identity matter in our relationships?

You are invited to participate in a research study about the way Episcopalians connect identity with ecumenical relationships and partnerships. Your participation in this survey is voluntary. The purpose of this study is to gain insight on what Episcopalians view as most foundational in personal faith, congregations, and ecumenical relationships. The research will be gathered in February 2021. In this survey, you are being asked demographic and short reflection questions; it is expected to take approximately 5 minutes for you to complete. All questions are optional, and you may discontinue participation at any time before you hit “submit.” Completion of the survey indicates consent to participate. The benefits for participating in this study is the potential for your responses to guide the policy and practice of ecumenical endeavors in The Episcopal Church. As such, aggregate data may be shared with Drew University or The Episcopal Church as applicable.

The researcher has taken all reasonable measures to protect your identity and responses. For example, the data is SSL encrypted, it is stored on a password protected database, and IP addresses are not collected. However, e-mail and the internet are not 100% secure, so it is also suggested that you clear the computer’s cache and browser history to protect your privacy after completing the survey.

This study is being conducted by the Rev. Marisa Tabizon Thompson, Rector of All Saints Episcopal Church in Omaha, Nebraska, and enrolled Doctor of Ministry student at Drew University. Any question about this survey and the related study can be directed to her at mthompson2@drew.edu

Survey Questions

Question 1:

Do you consider yourself a member of the/an Episcopal Church? If yes, do you consider yourself active or inactive? (attendance, involvement in mission and ministry, and/or financial supporter)

Question 2:

Did you come to the Episcopal church from a different denomination or faith? Please type yes or no, and add which one(s) if your answer is yes.

Question 3:

Are you a layperson (not ordained), or ordained in the Episcopal tradition (deacon, priest, bishop), or ordained in another tradition?

Question 4:

How many years have you been an Episcopalian?

Question 5:

In a few words or phrases, how do you describe the identity of your church congregation/parish?

Question 6:

In a few words or phrases, how do you describe the identity of The Episcopal Church as a denomination?

Question 7:

In a few words or phrases, please share what is of greatest importance to your faith; i.e. why do you belong to/attend church?

Question 8:

In a few words or phrases, please share what you believe The Episcopal Church should consider as priorities in forming full communion* relationships with other denominations? What matters about the other denomination when forming these relationships?

*Consider full communion as long-lasting and the most integrated relationship between denominations that could include sharing of clergy, joint congregations, and more.

Question 9:

The Episcopal Church currently relies on the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral as a guide for our ecumenical work, found on pages 876-878 in the Book of Common Prayer. Is it sufficiently representative of the foundation and identity of the denomination? Please explain.

Question 10:

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix C

Survey Analysis and Responses

Question 1:

Do you consider yourself a member of the/an Episcopal Church? If yes, do you consider yourself active or inactive? (attendance, involvement in mission and ministry, and/or financial supporter)

Results: 31 (94%) active members; 2 (6%) inactive members; 0 non-members

Analysis: The majority of respondents consider themselves to be active members of an Episcopal church.

Question 2:

Did you come to the Episcopal church from a different denomination or faith? Please type yes or no, and add which one(s) if your answer is yes.

Results: 12 (36%) Always Episcopalian; 21 (64%) Came from another denomination

Other Denominations:

- Baptist – 3 (including one Southern Baptist)
- Congregational – 1
- Church of God – 1
- ELCA – 1
- Presbyterian – 2
- Roman Catholic – 4
- UCC – 2
- UMC – 5
- UU – 1
- Multiple – 1 (UCC, Presbyterian, Evangelical)

Analysis: About one third of the respondents identified as always being a part of Episcopal tradition. Two thirds came from other denominations. Of those, two thirds, 13 (62%) people identified as mainline Protestant previously. Roman Catholic was identified by 4 (19%) respondents. Three people (14%) came from other Christian traditions, and one person identified a background that included multiple denominations. This suggests to the researcher two things. First, based on this data, The Episcopal Church tends to attract members from other, similar traditions. These are people who would already share basic agreement with areas such as the Creeds, biblical interpretations, and worship styles or values. Second, no one who took the survey identified as coming from no tradition, Christian or otherwise, which seems to suggest that evangelism of the unchurched population is not yielding great results.

Question 3:

Are you a layperson (not ordained), or ordained in the Episcopal tradition (deacon, priest, bishop), or ordained in another tradition?

Results: 15 (45%) laypeople; 18 (55%) people ordained in the Episcopal tradition

Analysis: This division is close to equal in numbers with a slight edge toward clergy, suggesting that most respondents would have some sort of formal education and training which would include Episcopal/Anglican history, including the development and application of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral.

Question 4:

How many years have you been an Episcopalian?

Results: 0-5 years = 1 (3%); 6-10 years = 2 (6%); 11-20 years = 5 (18%); 21+ years = 24 (72%)

Analysis: This sample pool gathered is overwhelmingly coming from a significant amount of time and experience as Episcopalian. These respondents can be assumed to have a high level of familiarity with the church and tradition.

Question 5:

In a few words or phrases, how do you describe the identity of your church congregation/parish?

Analysis: The most commonly identified characteristic of individual congregations was related to mission and justice; it was noted 13 times. The liberal/progressive or conservative identity value was second at 9 mentions. Also with 9 mentions, was the area of diversity. The vast majority of these comments focused on race/ethnicity, but age of members was also seen as an identifying characteristic. Music and worship were next with 8 mentions. This suggests that while people identify their worship communities in many ways, the most common responses focused on how the church relates to the world through mission and as a voice for justice in society.

Responses:

1. Traditional
2. A group of faithful people committed to taking care of each other and our neighbors.
3. Inclusive, progressive, Christ centered, liturgical
4. Our clergy and parishioners are like family. Truly Holy Comforter!
5. Broad Church Episcopal, mildly diverse, urban
6. Active in community. A caring congregation inside and outside the parish.
7. Warm welcomed concerned
8. Progressive southern struggling with its racist past

9. We don't go to church services as much as we could, but we are very proud to be members of the Episcopal Church. I would consider it a big part of my identity.
10. Conservative with a helpful bent. Faithful in most things.
11. Strong outreach ministry, recognized music program, promotes Christian fellowship/social interaction, good attempts at inclusion, strengths of priests overlap or fill gaps.
12. Ancient traditions, modern mission, everyone welcome, very few rules – except love & Jesus
13. Middle to low church, white, elderly
14. Episcopal
15. Older, traditional
16. Moderately liberal, progressive, liturgically open
17. Slightly left of center, liturgically. Socially active and liberation minded. Mostly white and well-educated, but mostly middle class
18. Caring, active, involved in community service
19. Progressive, neither high nor low church – medium
20. Welcoming, genuine Christ-focused, loving, community focused, inclusive, fun
21. Episcopalian enough – actually seeking options
22. Friendly, compassionate, generous
23. Urban cathedral
24. Angle-Catholic, bilingual, conservative
25. Family of faith and caring.
26. Open to new ideas. Welcoming to the stranger. Innovative, progressive. A place to serve, learn and grow spiritually. A place to find solace and connect with others.
27. Episcopal, pastoral size, formal worship
28. Near-suburban, mostly white, 300-family Episcopal church with identified mission for outreach centered around feeding ministries. More young families than average these days.
29. Laidback Friendly Traditional Worship
30. We are a congregation committed to serving God by serving in our local community.
31. The church that keeps on feeding everyone, especially those hungry for ways to find Christ in our current situation.
32. Worship, service, justice, children's formation
33. It used to be conservative/middle of the road, but has become much more liberal in the past decade.

Question 6:

In a few words or phrases, how do you describe the identity of The Episcopal Church as a denomination?

Analysis: The most commonly identified characteristics of TEC were the liturgical nature of the church (13), including specific notes on Eucharist as the center of the faith, and the inclusivity and welcoming nature of the denomination (13). Identification as progressive (11) included specific notations about working for justice and on modern social issues. These were followed by 7 mentions each about adaptive/transitioning with culture, and love – including a note about Presiding Bishop Michael Curry’s focus on The Way of Love. While liturgy is clearly of great importance, the identification of inclusivity, unity, and dignity of all is overwhelming when viewed together as a grouping of a common ethic.

Responses:

1. Progressive
2. Inclusive. Open, Giving.
3. Inclusive, progressive, Christ centered, liturgical, Eucharist the primary way to worship.
4. The liturgy is the center of our worship which includes weekly Eucharist.
5. Welcoming, liturgical, ancient Christian tradition blended with modern social perspective
6. Increasingly broad-minded and reaching out to local community and beyond
7. That we all may be one!!!
8. Mixture of old ways beginning to more boldly seek justice
9. I think it is very inclusive, it supports kindness and not judging others. Our church wants to help people and welcome people and make people feel safe and loved. I think it’s exactly what Christ would want.
10. Liturgical with some modern adaptations
11. Old school, but moving out of the stodgy domain.
12. Love
13. White, elderly, progressive
14. Committed to loving God and our neighbors rather than using the Bible to justify hatred.
15. Open minded and liberal
16. Transitioning, liturgical, insular
17. Rich, white, nice, finding a liberation edge. Often theologically sophisticated, but in a weird pastoral way.
18. Political, open to everyone, diverse.
19. Progressives at prayer; rejected cousins of Roman Catholics...
20. Inclusive, Christ-focused, community focused
21. Losing it
22. Intellectual, traditional

23. I think of TEC as international, progressive and inspired by the Holy Spirit to become more enlightened in each generation. We have the humility to admit when we've been wrong and to change, painful as that may be.
24. Liturgy centered, adaptive, rapidly changing
25. Accepting
26. Very accepting, welcoming, and open to new ideas. At the forefront of social justice issues. A refuge for the oppressed.
27. Grounded in its practice of worship, which is formal and liturgical, with a strong focus on the Eucharist, for better or for worse.
28. Intellectual, somewhat arrogant because of its history, white church that is trying to re-envision itself in discipleship centered around the message of Jesus' inclusive love, and is either a) dying quickly in many places or b) being reborn in a few key population centers and parishes or c) both.
29. Inclusive Traditional worship
30. The Episcopal Church is part of Christ's one holy catholic and apostolic church, committed to reaching all people with the gospel of God's love.
31. "The Frozen Chose" until we were thawed by Bishop Curry's leadership.
32. Sacramental, catholic, inclusive
33. Liberal, The Way of Love

Question 7:

In a few words or phrases, please share what is of greatest importance to your faith; i.e. why do you belong to/attend church?

Analysis: When asked what was most important about church, there were 20 responses related to worship. From the sacraments to the style, music to ritual, worship is quite foundational within this group. The desire to be in and build community was close behind with 17 calls for coming together. Engaging in outreach or mission was next with 14 mentions, followed by the desire to grown and learn with 9 responses. And 8 people mentioned attending church because of God's love, power, and presence.

Responses:

1. To worship in community
2. I attend church to feed my soul.
3. Draws me closer to God and neighbor. Nurtures and inspires my faith journey and work in the world.
4. My belief in the Holy Trinity and the risen Christ. I attend church each week to worship our Creator along with my parish family. The church music is center to my worship experience.
5. Focus on Jesus' teaching and service to community, sacraments
6. I love our ritual and fellowship with our parishioners. It's gratifying to work on common causes.
7. The week is not complete without worshipping in Sunday's
8. To push for a more just world

9. It makes me feel a connection to other people
10. Fellowship with Christians in a liturgical setting
11. As a Christian I believe “going” to church is a responsibility, to hear and receive Gods word, and to commune with and receive Eucharist
12. Spiritual growth in a way which is relevant to my service to others, my community, my family and myself
13. To worship God, to help people in the community
14. Following Jesus is the foundation of my identity
15. The feeling in your heart and your actions
16. Originally because it was an extension of my family; now because I believe in the liberating power of God in Christ
17. The opportunity to pray, work, and build community with other Christians.
18. Community.
19. I need community to help me follow and initiate Jesus Christ.
20. Faith community, liturgy, to learn, service opportunities
21. Community, some ritual, help with my faith.
22. Spiritual connection, finding the presence of God, outreach to others in the community.
23. The church is our community – different from every other affinity group we affiliate with in that our agreement is not what binds us together. Rather, we find our kinship in a shared love of God.
24. Regular communion, connected with the ancient church, apostolic succession, tolerant of divergent thought, held together by the Nicene Creed.
25. Faith, support, and prayer
26. Connection with persons of faith Spiritual growth, although not that strong Most importantly serving other in their needs whether personal needs or spirituality.
27. Because I need regular, well-structured worship in my life, as well as a sense of sacred space. I feel God’s presence all around, but I need ways to live more deeply into that presence, and to find touch points and anchors to help me grow. I want to know what the presence would have me do, and how I should be in the world to know that presence more and more. As Sr. Monica Joan said on the BBC show “Call the Midwife,” “The liturgy is of comfort to the disarrayed mind. We need not choose our thoughts, the words are aligned, like a rope for us to cling to.”
28. Community, common worship that is beautiful and meaningful, working together for outreach
29. Community Keeping the big picture in mind
30. Belonging to a church strengthens my connection with God.
31. Having a community that shares many common beliefs, philosophies and genuine fellowship of love.
32. I need a sacramental community of disciples to best follow Jesus.
33. To be supported by others who are also serious about following Jesus.

Question 8:

In a few words or phrases, please share what you believe The Episcopal Church should consider as priorities in forming full communion* relationships with other denominations? What matters about the other denomination when forming these relationships?

*Consider full communion as long-lasting and the most integrated relationship between denominations that could include sharing of clergy, joint congregations, and more.

Analysis: When asked to name the values most important in ecumenical pursuits, 29 people listed one or more areas of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, with sacraments receiving the most attention. The most common other responses were that the denominations be inclusive (15) and that there is a shared mission (10). Three people simply advocated for unity, that we all may be one. This breakdown indicates to the researcher that while the current guide is important and necessary, it is almost equally believed that we must be considering dimensions of reason and ethics.

Responses:

1. Beliefs about the importance of liturgy, baptism, communion.
2. Centrality of the Eucharist. Liturgically centered. Theologically broad and inclusive.
3. I am open to full communion with the Methodist Church as we are with the Lutheran Church. The Methodists are becoming more and more like the Episcopal Church, the Liturgy, etc,
4. Priority of Jesus' teaching, liturgical worship, sacraments, historic episcopate and creeds
5. I feel that if we would work on common causes the full communion would gradually become a result.
6. Again that we all may be one !!!
7. Seeking of justice, equal treatment/inclusion of all people.
8. How welcoming are they of others different than they are? How forgiving are they of people they think have sinned? If the answer is "not much" then the relationship isn't that great and shouldn't be fostered.
9. Since we are followers of Jesus we need to combine our resources to take care of the poor!
10. That's tough in ordinary busy lives to develop and sustain relationships outside one's own chosen congregation. Common workshop relative to social issues, comparative topics related to Christian denominations as well as Jewish, Muslim, etc. panel discussions amongst neighboring church's, joint musical offerings, church fairs.
11. We are probably going to have to at least consider going into full communion with ANY mainline protestant church in order for us all to "survive"...however we must not waver on inclusion, the Creeds, racial reconciliation, creation care, our domestic & global mission partners, the youth of our church, or the basic aspects of any of the sacraments.

12. Shared theology and worship traditions
13. Comparable understanding of ordination, communion, and inclusion of all God's people.
14. Continuing to be open minded
15. Acceptance of all ordained clergy across rosters (ie no barriers based on ethnicity/gender/orientation) commitment to serving the vulnerable A commitment to beautiful and authentic worship, even if it doesn't look "Episcopalian"
16. Mutual acceptance of the Bible, and the Apostles and Nicene Creeds as sufficient summaries of the Bible. At least deep sympathy for each other's theology of orders of ministry (ordained and lay.) Carefully hammered out shared commitments to the sacraments.
17. Similar versions of the church's "role" in the world. Benefits of working together to help others.
18. God doesn't care about branding, however we can forward the reign of God here on earth pleases God.
19. God/Jesus as central to worship, agreement on the Nicene and Apostle's creeds as statements of faith, open Table, 2 sacraments- baptism and communion, inclusive and affirming
20. That they're not wacko.
21. Belief in the body and blood of Christ in Communion, acceptance of all people – LGBTQ, all ethnic groups
22. A basic foundation and belief in the dominical sacraments, baptism and Eucharist. A respect for if not total agreement with our full inclusion of women and the LGBTQ community.
23. Lambeth Quadrilateral – use real bread and wine, insist on linear apostolic succession.
24. Faith in 1 God.
25. Sharing views of theology, spirituality and polity between other Christian denominations. What is most important is coming to an understanding of the differences Nd how we are all similar/alike
26. A common sense of the mystery and sacramentality of the Eucharist is important – that's at the heart of who we are. I also think a shared sense that priests and bishops are not closer to God but essential to the meaning of our church structure and our understanding of the Eucharist, too.
27. Common vision for mission and outreach, and a commitment to theological and practical inclusivity for all people.
28. Inclusion
29. The Episcopal Church should prioritize respect for other denominations when forming full communion relationships. The relationships should be an opportunity to love our neighbor as ourselves. We should strive to better understand other denominations' points of view, knowing this may require more significant work an =d a longer period of time to find common ground for full communion.

30. That they view it as God's not Man's table and that ALL are welcome. No exceptions.
31. A better ability to see God and neighbors; preserving and living the catholic faith.
32. All people valued and able to access all sacraments and participation levels.

Question 9:

The Episcopal Church currently relies on the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral as a guide for our ecumenical work, found on pages 876-878 in the Book of Common Prayer. Is it sufficiently representative of the foundation and identity of the denomination? Please explain.

Analysis: In counting up how many people said yes or no, over two thirds of those who responded said yes. However, a closer look at the data indicates that of the 14 people who said this is sufficient, 4 offered caveats. Thus, of the 20 main responses, it is an equal division of 10 yes and 10 no/not completely. Perhaps more telling is that the greatest number of people, 13, either said they did not know it or simply skipped the question. As this group is heavily weighted to people who have been a part of this denomination for over 20 years, the researcher wonders if this is an issue of terminology or irrelevance, as one respondent suggested.

Responses:

1. Yes. It covers the basic beliefs.
2. Yes with the caveat being we should not enter into Communion with denominations that discriminate.
3. Yes
4. I would definitely agree and concur.
5. It's solid but it could be bolder.
6. I'm not versed well enough to know how to answer that. Sorry.
7. Yes, as long as we follow through and not try to bend it to our own purposes.
8. Basic tenets of faith: Word of God, sacraments, communion, the laying in of hands traditional whatever it's called for hundreds of years. And yes, I think these set up the Episcopal church's identity, which is why not having communion during covid is putting a big gap in the formula we live by.
9. Generally yes, however where do the sacraments aside from baptism and the eucharist find their grounding?
10. I haven't read them in a long time. Sure?
11. No – barely covered it in Seminary because it no longer seemed useful.
12. I don't have this book with me to answer this
13. Is this the GOEs? j/k the above question you ask (8) strikes me as being more about the practical matters of integration—you can believe the things of the Quadrilateral but not be able to live together—ie, people can be friends but make terrible spouses. To me the Quadrilateral is important as a conversation starter (like a first date) but full communion requires more like marriage counseling for joint household management and practical compatibility.

14. Before I took this survey, I would have said no—but then I basically answered the previous question with the C-L Quad. It is an unnecessary burden when the “historic episcopate” is interpreted flatly as a line of succession through magic hands. We should retrieve Hooker’s sensibility: having bishops is just fine and sometimes even good. But the episcopate should not be an article of faith as important as the Bible, creeds, and sacraments.
15. I’m not familiar with that guide.
16. Yes. It is both sufficiently broad and appropriately specific to include all Anglican expressions and allow cooperation with other Christian denominations.
17. I had never read this before and will say, coming from churches that were very much against ANY kind of ecumenicalism, this was beautiful. In my limited knowledge, having only been an Episcopalian for a short time, I do believe it IS representative of the denomination as I know it and as I have experienced it. The very first article 1.) Our earnest desire that the Savior’s prayer, “that we all may be one”... and 3.) “...in the spirit of love and humility to forego all preferences of her own...” Finally, “Furthermore, deeply grieved by the sad divisions which affect the Christian Church in our own land...” These words speak of a beautiful humility I see within the Episcopal church to reach beyond her own walls- to other denominations for understanding and unity, with the ultimate hope of healing and restoration of our Christian faith, to the Glory of God.
18. No.
19. Yes
20. I would say yes
21. Excuses are made in our current ecumenical process. Apostolic succession does not work laterally (ie UMC), Grape juice is not wine, baptism is essential for communion
22. ?
23. May I look at this guide further? I can email you comments later.
24. Sure. IT hits the basics. Although after the recent Max Lucado fiasco at the Nat Cat, I would add the complete acceptance of GLBTQ people, and a commitment to antiracism.
25. Depends on if you mean representative of what the denomination *is*, or what it *should be* - it accurately represents the “old: theological foundation – but I believe it does not represent who we should be because it makes no mention of discipleship, inclusivity, and personal commitment/devotion – i.e. it is devoid of the heat of Jesus, and even from a theological standpoint focuses too much on the structure and not enough on the Church as the body of Christ.
26. I think the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral lacks a sufficient depth when it comes to The Episcopal Church’s understanding of holy orders. This makes it challenging to find common ground with other denominations for the purpose of sharing ordained ministers.
27. Its beauty is in its simplicity. Not bogged down by details.

28. It's fine as far as it goes. I do wish we could add something about valuing all people as beloved children of God and able to fully participate in all sacraments, orders and leadership (Specifically thinking both about women and LGBTQIA+)

Question 10:

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Analysis: There were 11 people who offered additional thoughts. While no consistent response emerged from those responses, it was clear that many people simply love their church and the denomination, and many advocate for exercising caution in everything from politics to the assumption that we are all things for all people.

Responses:

1. No
2. Do not stray from the history of liturgical focused worship particularly with historic Anglican music.
3. Best wishes for good work!
4. No
5. Am a chalice bearer and lector and feel so honored to be a part of the liturgy the liturgy was the reason for the change
6. I would never join another church. I may not show up much and maybe you only see me at Christmas and Easter, but I'm here is heart and spirit.
7. We have a wonderful tradition but we should not think it is the best for all people.
8. It will be interesting to lean results and intention on this survey. Good luck with data.
9. As mainline churches shrink full communion partnerships will be the way to go
10. Don't exclude people with different political views.
11. We shouldn't take ourselves too seriously- always put God and the furtherance of God's kingdom first.
12. The Episcopal Church is a beautiful, welcoming denomination and I'm extremely glad to have found it!
13. Blessings on this work.
14. No
15. TEC needs to encourage non-traditional forms of worship and loosen the adherence to strictly BCP forms. Our mission field in the next several years will be the exvangelicals and we need to let go of our insider vocabulary and insistence on Eucharist as the central expression of our faith. Our strength as Anglicans has been in allowing indigenous communities to worship as an authentic expression of local culture. The church in Uganda is not the church in Japan nor the same as the church in Great Britain. We should not emphasize conformity at the expense of cultural diversity.
16. Often to be everything to everyone, we water down our essentials. It Is ok to be authentically Anglican and not need to adapt to others.

17. Not at this time. During this past year I am very privileged to be a member of an Episcopal Church, for its polity, political stance and standing strong against violence and injustices.
18. I now feel overwhelmed, so no.
19. Regionalism matters. I think of Episcopalians and ELCA being very closely aligned in the southern US, but other places they are not.

Appendix D
The Baptismal Covenant¹¹³

- Celebrant* Do you believe in God the Father?
People I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
- Celebrant* Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?
People 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.
- Celebrant* Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?
People 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.
- Celebrant* Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and
fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant* Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever
you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant* Will you proclaim by word and example the Good
News of God in Christ?
People I will, with God's help.
- Celebrant* Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as
yourself?
People I will, with God's help.

¹¹³ BCP, 304-305.

Celebrant Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the
dignity of every human being?
People I will, with God's help.

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