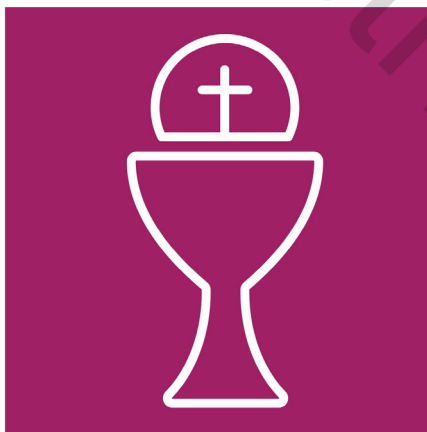
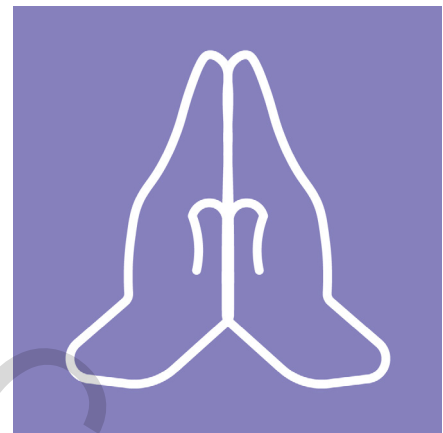


SIGNS AND GRACE

An Introduction to the Sacraments

FACILITATOR GUIDE



THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 

 Forward
Movement



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Signs and Grace: An Introduction to the Sacraments!* This is a three session, video-based course designed to give basic teaching and space for discussion around the sacraments. This resource is intended for congregations or small groups to use during three weekly gatherings, either in Sunday morning formation, a weekday small group, or an online session. *Signs and Grace* invites participants to engage more deeply with scripture and the liturgy of the Episcopal Church to explore the richness of baptism, eucharist, and the sacramental rites of the Church.

WHY SACRAMENTS?
It's important for all Episcopalians to understand sacraments, because the sacraments are at the center of how we practice our faith. Our life in Christ begins in baptism, and we are nourished throughout our lives by the eucharist. More to the point: sacraments give us tangible ways to encounter God. We can literally taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

How to Use This Course

Signs and Grace: An Introduction to the Sacraments is a class designed for adult forum, Sunday School, or small group use. Each session is intended to last 45-60 minutes and includes:

Facilitator Guide	Video	Participant Guide
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tips for group facilitation • Italicized script • Bible study passages • Group discussion questions • Options for going deeper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20-minute video on the sacraments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group discussion questions • Note-taking and reflection



Session

INTRODUCTION

Content

FACILITATOR GUIDE

Signs and Grace is designed to be flexible so that you can use it in the way that best suits your community.

45-Minute Class

- Use facilitator guide
- Omit Bible study
- Encourage reading Bible passage between classes

60-Minute Class

- Use facilitator guide
- Include Bible study

TIPS FOR VIRTUAL USE

Meeting online can expand your attendance and include people from a wider swath of your community.

- **Expand:** Meeting online can expand your attendance and include people from a wider swath of your community.
- **Platforms:** Includes Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, and a variety of other options. Choose your meeting platform based on what is most comfortable for the leader and accessible to the widest number of attendees.
- **Troubleshooting:** Consider having a person appointed for technology support who is not the session leader, so that the leader can focus on content while another member helps to troubleshoot any issues that might arise.
- **Practice:** Do a practice run of your platform with the leader, the technology support person, and one other tester at least one week before the first session. In that meeting, practice using the different features of the platform, including showing the video.
- **Start Early:** Start your first meeting at least 10-15 minutes early so that people can practice logging in and troubleshoot any audio or video challenges before the content begins.



Session I

INTRODUCING THE SACRAMENTS

Session Goals & Set Up

FACILITATOR GUIDE

THE BIG IDEA

The sacraments are the outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace. (Book of Common Prayer, 857) In a confusing and chaotic world, God promises to always be present to us in the grace of the sacraments.

Session Goals:

This session's video, reflection, discussion, study and prayer will help participants:

- Understand a basic definition of sacraments and why they are important in the life of the church and individual Christians.
- Explore briefly the two main sacraments and five sacramental rites so that they have a broad understanding of each
- Examine selections of The Book of Common Prayer and the Bible related to each of the sacraments to discover the connections between our current practice and Jesus' life and ministry.
- Relate the scriptures and prayers to their own experience so that they can begin to recognize the role the sacraments might play in their own encounter with God and their ongoing life of faith.

BEFORE THE SESSION

- **Review:** Carefully and prayerfully watch the video, read through the leader's guide, and make notes in the week before the session.
- **Remember:** You are not meant to be the expert, but you want to be familiar with the material and open to how God is speaking to you through this week's lesson.
- **Print:** Print out your leader's guide and copies of the participant handouts (pages 23-26) for each person who will be attending.
- **Test:** Make sure you try to show the video with the exact equipment you plan to use during the session. Test both the audio and video quality and be sure that the screen and speakers are positioned so that all participants can see and hear.
- **Prepare:** Download the video in advance, rather than trying to stream it over the internet. It will give a higher quality resolution and has less chance of being impacted by technical difficulties.



Welcome and Introduction

Hello and welcome to Signs and Grace: An Introduction to the Sacraments! We are so glad you're here. This is our first in a series of three weeks where we will explore the sacraments together. Each week we'll gather, watch a short video, and break into groups for discussion (and Bible Study, if time allows).

Opening Prayer

Let's start with prayer.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshiped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer 215)

Icebreaker Question(s)

Before we begin today's session, let's take a few moments to get to know one another. At your table groups, go around and introduce yourself by saying your name and answering the questions:

Why are you here today?

What are you hoping for right now?



Session I

INTRODUCING THE SACRAMENTS

Video Content

Video Screening

Today's session is an overview of the sacraments and sacramental rites of the Episcopal Church. If you don't know what that means, don't worry—we'll be learning about it together! We are going to watch a video that will introduce us to the topic and give us a good starting point for discussion.

On your handout you have an outline and space for taking notes; I encourage you to follow along and use the space to fill in the questions and write your observations.

Take a moment to be sure that you can see the screen; you might need to move your chair. If you have any problems with hearing once the video begins, raise your hand so that I can address them.

[Video screening begins now and will last twenty minutes.]

TRANSITION TO DISCUSSION

After the video, invite the group to engage in some discussion and reflection. This discussion could take a number of possible forms:

- For ten or fewer participants, you can explore the questions as a whole or divide people into groups of 3-4.
- For more than ten people, we suggest having groups of 5-8 sit around tables to facilitate discussion.
- Some weeks you might choose to “pair and share” inviting people to join with a partner to discuss the questions, so there is time to go deeper.
- Alternatively, you could have participants spend 3-5 minutes writing out their first responses on paper, and then sharing with a partner or the group.



Discussion

In your groups, discuss the provided questions together. Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers - just enjoy the conversation. It's okay to disagree or not know what you think.

No one is required to talk if they don't want to, but the discussion is always enriched by multiple points of view.

Please be brief with your first response so that everyone has a chance to speak; you can always go around and elaborate or ask follow-up questions if there is more time.

Respect each other by listening and allowing different opinions. Don't correct someone else's perspective once it's shared and ask curious questions without judgment.

What was one thing that surprised you or something you learned in today's presentation?

Describe a time when you experienced God's grace in a sacrament. What was that like?

What is a sacrament that you haven't experienced, but that interests you?

What is one thing you wonder about or wish to learn more about as you continue to explore the sacraments?

The sacraments are gifts from God, and they call forth in us a response. What are some of the gifts we receive in the sacraments? What are the responses to which we are called?



Session I

INTRODUCING THE SACRAMENTS

Optional Content: Bible Study

FACILITATOR GUIDE

Biblical Exploration (optional)

We've included a Bible study in each session. If your session has more than 40 minutes, you can do the Bible study during class time. For shorter sessions, encourage participants to read through the Bible passage on their participant handout in the week to come and reflect on the questions individually. Feel free to use the provided approach or another Bible study method that better fits your context.

Bible passage: John 2:1-11

Choose the Bible translation that best fits your context. You may also read the passage from different translations and compare them. Ask a member of the group to read the passage aloud or prepare in advance to read the story yourself.

Reflect

What word or phrase stood out to you in this story?

What do you notice about the way that Jesus acts in this story?

What surprises or delights you in this story?

Allow brief responses without commentary.

Discuss

Next, invite the group to discuss in pairs, small groups, or together the connection between this story and the sacraments.

In this story, Jesus changes water into wine, which is an outward and visible sign of God's active transformation at work.

What grace do you think Jesus gives in this moment?

The passage says that Jesus performed this sign to reveal his glory. How do you see sacraments in today's church revealing the glory of Jesus?

In John's gospel, this is Jesus' first miracle; what might that teach us about this event and its importance?



Going Deeper

The questions and activities below are opportunities for participants to continue to reflect on and connect with the ideas of the class in the week to come. Invite those present to pick one or both as their homework to continue their learning and growth.

The Catechism has sections about the Sacraments, Baptism, Eucharist, and the sacramental rites on pages 857-861 in the Book of Common Prayer. Read through the questions and answers this week.

What words or phrases resonate with you in these reflections on the sacraments?

What is something that surprises you in these questions and answers?

What's one thing you learned or hope to remember?

The liturgies in the Book of Common Prayer are full of rich language that helps us to encounter the sacraments and sacramental rites. This week read through the service for the Reconciliation of a Penitent on pages 446-452 or Ministration to the Sick on pages 453-461.

What is your favorite prayer or phrase from this liturgy?

Where do you see God's grace in this liturgy?

How does this liturgy enrich your understanding of the sacraments?

Closing Prayer

Thank you for sharing your time today so that we could explore the sacraments together. Before we head out, let's close with a final prayer.

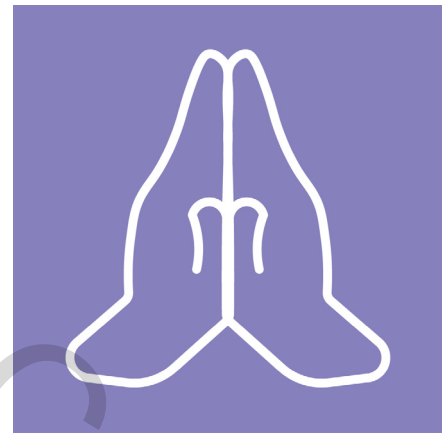
The Lord be with you. And also with you. Let us pray.

O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.
(Book of Common Prayer, 223)

SIGNS AND GRACE

An Introduction to the Sacraments

PARTICIPANT GUIDE





Session I

INTRODUCING THE SACRAMENTS

Welcome & Video

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshiped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer, 215)

Icebreaker Questions

Why are you here today?

What are you hoping for right now?

THE BIG IDEA

The sacraments are the outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace. (Book of Common Prayer Page 857) In a confusing and chaotic world, God promises to always be present to us in the grace of the sacraments.

Video Notes

God's grace and activity are not limited to the sacraments; the sacraments are places where we are assured that God's grace is always present.



Questions for Reflection and Conversation

What was one thing that surprised you or something you learned in today's presentation?

Describe a time when you experienced God's grace in a sacrament. What was that like?

What is a sacrament that you haven't experienced, but that interests you?

What is one thing you wonder about or wish to learn more about as you continue to explore the sacraments?

The sacraments are gifts from God, and they call forth in us a response. What are some of the gifts we receive in the sacraments? What are the responses to which we are called?

“These rites are patterns that reveal to us the many ways that God can use the material things of this world to reach out to us. The sacraments also sustain us in a beautiful yet complicated and sometimes chaotic world.”



Biblical Passage: John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” ⁴And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” ⁵His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” ⁶Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. ⁹When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom ¹⁰and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” ¹¹Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

What word or phrase stood out to you in this story?

What do you notice about the way that Jesus acts in this story?

In this story, Jesus changes water into wine, which is an outward and visible sign of God’s active transformation at work. What grace do you think Jesus gives in this moment?

The passage says that Jesus performed this sign to reveal his glory. How do you see sacraments in today’s church revealing the glory of Jesus?

In John’s gospel, this is Jesus’ first miracle; what might that teach us about this event and its importance?



Going Deeper

The Catechism has sections about the Sacraments, Baptism, Eucharist, and the sacramental rites on pages 857-861 in the Book of Common Prayer. Read through the questions and answers this week reflect on and journal about or discuss the following questions this week

What words or phrases resonate with you in these reflections on the sacraments?

What is something that surprises you in these questions and answers?

What do you notice about the way that Jesus acts in this story?

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Closing Prayer

O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer, 223)