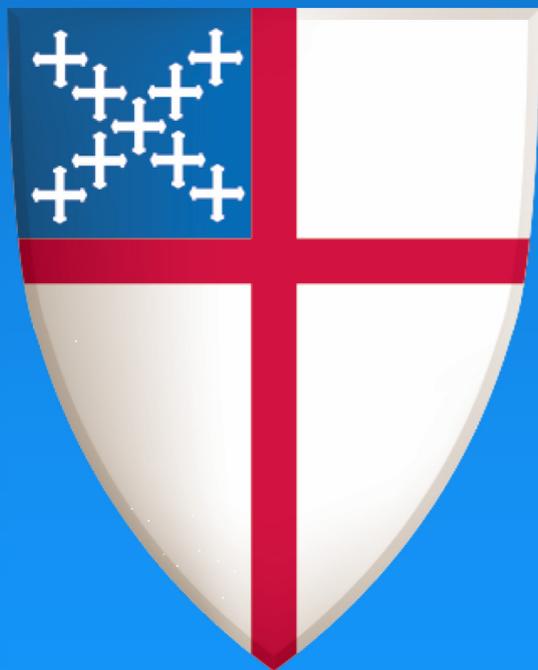
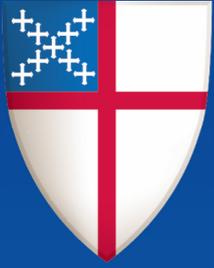


The Distinctiveness of the Episcopal Tradition

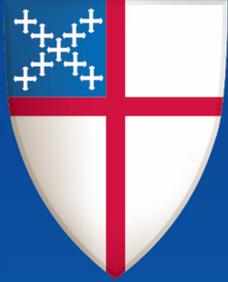


Session #2: What We Believe



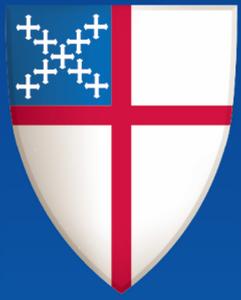
We Are a Creedal Church

- A creed is an authoritative statement of doctrinal belief.
- Examples:
 - Old Roman Creed: references to it in 2nd century.
 - Apostles' Creed: a fuller version of the Roman one, earliest text in 390 BCE.
 - Nicene - Constantinople Creed: First draft in 325 CE, final form 381 CE.
 - Athanasian Creed: earliest text in 8th c. Contains "anathemas."
- Called "symbolon" in Gk, "symbolum" in Lt. A "symbol" of the faith.
 - A symbol points to a reality greater than itself. Not a comprehensive or final statement.
- Creeds are part of Tradition, the "deposit of faith."



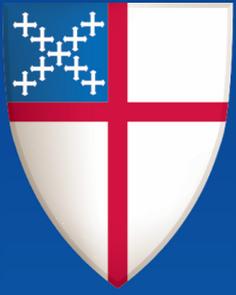
What is a “Creedal Church?”

- Not a clear-cut issue.
- Ancient differences over the Nicene Creed: “two natures” of Jesus Christ, relationship of Father and Son, relationship of the Holy Spirit to Father and Son.
- In modern times, issue is one of authority of Creeds compared to the Scriptures.
 - “Sola Scriptura,” “Sola Fides”: Creeds not very important.
- Anglicanism’s “three-legged stool” of Scripture, Tradition and Reason
 - All three given equal weight.
- TEC is a creedal church, BUT...creeds are neither comprehensive nor definitive. Reinterpretation with respect to Tradition and reason. Nicene Creed uses 3rd c. language and concepts.



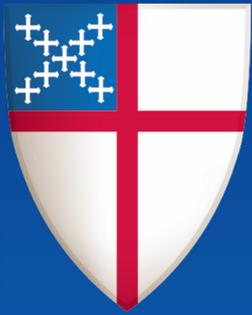
We Are a Church of Word and Sacrament

- The Word = Scripture. Tradition of Scriptural interpretation is contextual, not literal.
- Sacraments illustrate the Incarnational Principle:
 - God is present in creation so the material world communicates and mediates the spiritual world.
- Anglicanism is profoundly incarnational. Emphasis on beauty.



What is a Sacrament?

- A symbolic sign that points to a greater reality.
 - Metaphorical: asserts is/is not simultaneously.
- Outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace.
 - Grace is God's favor towards us. Cannot be earned, given freely.
- Two "Sacraments of the Gospel": Baptism, Holy Eucharist.
- Five "sacramental rites:" Confirmation, Ordination, Holy Matrimony, Reconciliation of a Penitent, and Unction (Anointing of the Sick or Dying).
- Sacraments are communal celebrations.
- Sacraments bring "life in abundance" to the person and the community of faith that celebrate them.
- Sacraments, particularly Holy Eucharist, were a source of division in the Reformation.



The “Via Media” at Work, Sacraments Edition

From Eucharistic Prayer B, BCP, p. 369:

We pray you gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and the Blood of the new Covenant.

From Communion Rite, BCP, p. 364-5:

Facing the people, the Celebrant says the following invitation

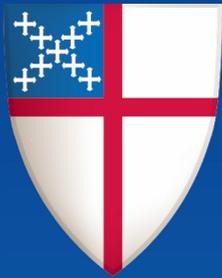
The Gifts of God for the People of God

and may add

Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Post Communion Prayer, BCP, p. 365:

...and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.



How We Are Church

- Baptismal Ecclesiology. *Ekklesia* (Gk) = assembly or church. Ecclesiology = theology of the church.
- Baptism is defining sacrament, full initiation.
 - Incorporation in the Body of Christ (not a denomination).
 - Inclusive, shared identity with all the baptized. Transcends denominational differences.
- All the baptized participate in the ministry and mission of the church. Gifted with all they need by the Holy Spirit.
- Not a “top-down” approach.
 - Clergy have specialized roles: empower and enable, guide and support. Mission does not “belong” to them; they are not “over” the people they serve.
- The work of the Church is transformation and healing of the world.
- Our Eucharistic celebrations are the realization and fulfillment of our unity, and foretaste of the heavenly banquet.