

**Discussion Questions For
“Claiming the Vision:
Baptismal Identity in the Episcopal Church”**

Video 1: Baptism and the Sacramental Life

The Meaning of Baptism

1. In what ways has your baptism bound you to God and to other Christians?
2. When Dr. Stevick says the church exists for the sake of those outside it, what does he mean?
3. Remember a time in your own childhood or youth where you were called to be a minister of the Gospel.

The Early Church’s Pattern of Baptism

1. Bishop Griswold equates life in Christ with life lived in Christian community. How does this compare to other Christian perspectives about what baptism means?
2. Considering the historical origins of Lent as the time for preparing persons for baptism, how might your own Lent be changed by a focus on the community of faith rather than one’s own individual practices?
3. The early church understood that Christians need to talk about and reflect together on their sacramental life and religious experiences in order to grow in faith and understanding. What helps you to continue to grow in your faith and understanding?

The Baptism Rite

1. What do we mean when we renounce Satan in our baptismal rite?
2. How does seeing baptism as initiation change or inform your understanding of the baptismal service and your part in it?
3. How do you understand for yourself the symbolic act of making the sign of the cross on the forehead of a baptizand?

Why the Baptism and Confirmation Rites Needed to be Rewritten

1. How do we prevent confirmations from being rites that graduate young people from church?
2. Who should be confirmed?
3. If baptism is what makes one a full member of the body of Christ, and the rite of confirmation is the mature affirmation of our Christian faith, by what means might we effectively prepare and authorize persons to be Episcopal leaders of Episcopal communities and governing bodies?

The Days Set Aside For Baptism

1. Talk more extensively about the ways in which each of these days helps us to understand the meaning of baptism more fully. Easter Vigil, Pentecost, All Saints Day, The Feast of Christ's Baptism, the bishop's visitation.

The Relationship between Baptism and the Eucharist

1. How is your own understanding of the Eucharist enriched by seeing it as the repeatable part of baptism? What does that say to you about the act of communing?
2. When have you tasted Christ in your life?
3. Remember an important moment in your life that involved eating and drinking.

The Open Table: Can Those Not Yet Baptized Receive Communion?

1. What is the practice in your community regarding communing the unbaptized?
2. Is it possible to invite all to the table and still maintain the deep unity between baptism and the Eucharist?
3. What should churches do about disputed questions within the church?

The Relationship between Word and Sacrament

1. Dr. Weil describes the sacraments as the Word made visible. What does he mean by this?
2. When has scripture nourished you in your own life?
3. How has scripture nourished and constituted your community in its life?
4. Why is scripture so important to our faith?

The Relationship between Sacraments and Daily Life

1. Does your own experience on Sunday mornings help you make the connection between your spiritual identity and your everyday life?
2. Why is it important to pronounce the sanctity of basic human acts through our ritual life?
3. What do rituals and sacraments do for us? To us?

The Prayers of the People

1. How do we keep our weekly prayers of the people from becoming mechanistic and rote? What is the community's responsibility with regards to this?
2. Why is it the role of the deacon to lead the prayers of the people? How does that help shape the nature of those prayers?
3. When have you been transformed by the prayers of your community?

The Peace

1. The peace is the acknowledgement of our baptismal reality. It is the place where we meet Christ in one another. Is this your community's experience of the peace?
2. How can reconciliation take place through the peace?

3. Some congregations move the peace to the end of the service to keep the service shorter. What is lost in doing this? Why did the prayer book authors put the peace between the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the table?

Christ's Presence in Our Worship

1. Describe a time when you were healed, forgiven, or able to forgive as the result of a worship experience.
2. Why are our Christian symbols so powerful? Why is it so easy to forget their power?
3. Talk about a lay person in your community who clearly has a gift and is exercising that gift within your church.

The Importance of Daily Prayer

1. Imagine a world where daily we all joined across the world in prayer no matter where we were and what we were doing. How might the world be changed?
2. How, when, and where do you pray in your everyday life?

Relating To Other Faith Traditions

1. Why can't we make common cause?
2. What does Bishop Griswold mean when he suggests that Christians do not have exclusive rights to God?
3. If God is "all permeating mystery" how do we leave room for mystery in our own lives? Our own churches?

How the 1979 Prayer Book Has Changed the Episcopal Church

1. Do you experience worship passively or actively?
2. How does the prayer book call you to active participation in Christ and active engagement with the world?
3. Where do you believe the Spirit is leading our Episcopal Church?