

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

**Video 2: The History and Theology of the Baptism Rite in the
1979 Prayer Book**

The Process for Developing the 1979 Prayer Book

1. Dr. Stevick describes the work of developing the 1979 Prayer Book as the most important work of his life. Why do you believe this work was so important?
2. What has been the most important work of your life?

The Early Work of the Christian Initiation Committee

1. Why might it be necessary to consider prayer book revision after twenty-five years of use?
2. Is it time for us to consider prayer book revision again? If so what might a new prayer book need to take into account? What would be the costs? What would be the gains?

The Last Band-aids on Cranmer

1. Dr. Weil describes the committee’s growing consensus that what was called for in the church was not modest revision of the 1928 baptism rite, but instead a radical return to the commonly held ancient practices regarding baptism. What did we reclaim by looking back to the most ancient sources?
2. Dr. Weil alludes to the complicated history of confirmation when it began as the bishop’s blessing of baptizands after their baptism. As a result of medieval historical developments, that blessing moved to some years after an infant’s baptism. Later Reformation theologians re-envisioned this blessing called confirmation as an opportunity for those who had been baptized as infants to make a mature affirmation of faith. Why might such an affirmation have been important to the Reformers and why might it still be important to us today?
3. Describe a time in your life when you truly felt ready to make a mature affirmation of faith.

Key Principles of the Baptism Rite: The Priesthood of All Believers

1. What does the idea of the priesthood of all believers mean?
2. Dr. Mitchell describes the difference between ritual performed using minimal signs and symbols and ritual using vivid signs and symbols. What are some of the minimal signs and symbols you witness in contemporary liturgical practice? What do full symbols communicate that minimal symbols can’t?

Key Principles of the Baptism Rite: Returning to the Ancient Rites

1. Has the privileged place of the Christian world been dismantled in our contemporary world? If so, what does that mean for the future of the church?
2. If we cannot be guaranteed that society will help raise up new generations of Christians, what will it take from us to make that happen?

The Nature and Purpose of The Christian Initiation Committee's Work

1. Dr. Weil asserts that the radical rethinking of what it means to be the church that has been an outgrowth of reclaiming a baptismal vision has still not been fully realized in the church. What do you think he means by that? What still needs to be realized?
2. The authors of the baptismal rite in our prayer book acted courageously and with conviction and vision. In what ways are we, the next generation of Episcopalians, being called to think and act courageously?
3. In what ways is the Episcopal Church's understanding of baptism as full initiation into the church both leading the way and offering challenges to other churches in the Anglican Communion?

How the Early Work of the Committee Was Received By the Church

1. How might current debates within the Anglican Communion find new expression if we all assumed that no matter how radical the assumptions might sound to us, we were all acting on the highest motives?

Major Contributors to the Revisions: Margaret Mead and Bonnell Spencer

1. Much of the history of the development of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer is the story of individual Christians and grassroots movements willing to offer their best to the glory of God and the health and future of their church. How might their story of faith and courage inspire us to meet the challenges of the life of faith in our own day?

Major Contributors to the Revisions: The Women of the Committees, Howard Galley, and Charles Mortimer

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Major Contributors to the Revisions: Leo Melania

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Major Contributors to the Revisions: Frank Griswold

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Christendom

1. Dr. Stevick describes Christendom as a world where faith is passed from generation to generation through a societal process. How is faith passed from one generation to the next in your community? What role, if any, does society have in forming us as Christian people?
2. Has the privileged place of the Christian world been dismantled in our contemporary world? If so, what does that mean for the future of the church?
3. If we cannot be guaranteed that society will help raise up new generations of Christians, what will it take from us to make that happen?

A Rite for a Post Christian World

1. Do you see your own community living in a post-Christendom era? How is that demonstrated?
2. How do you believe living in a post-Christendom era will change life in the church?
3. When in your own life have you experienced a ministry that was exhilarating?

The Prayer Book Leads the Church into Its Future

1. How has the church changed since 1979? In what ways do you think our prayer book has led us into the 21st century church?
2. What principles drawn from the prayer book do you see as central to being an Episcopalian today?