

## We Are a Convergence Apostolate

We adopt as our aim “the unanimity and singularity of the Apostolic and Patristic Church” in both our faith and practice. Our stated vision is “a return to unity based on the recovery of the essential oneness of the ancient, medieval, and contemporary church”. But it is not enough to merely announce that “we have not emerged from divisions created by historic differences over doctrine and practice”; our walk of faith must be a constant striving to overcome and deliberately heal those divisions – and to encourage others to do the same – if we ever hope to see the unity Christ prayed for in John 17.

We must intentionally live the unity we claim, and this includes a determined decision to stand together and support one another. Our living example of unity **must** include the charismatic, the evangelical and the sacramental. And it must do so precisely because the Body of Christ around the globe is sacramental, evangelical and charismatic. Not entirely, to be sure. Unquestionably there are elements of His Body that embrace only one or two of these aspects of Christian life. But **the Body of Christ is sacramental, evangelical and charismatic, because God Himself is sacramental, evangelical and charismatic**. These elements of our faith life are only reflections of the nature of God. As such, they should be the very things that **draw us together**, not drive us apart.

As a convergence communion, our goal is to have each of these elements expressed in such rich fullness and balance that they form a blended and wholesome expression of life and worship. No single element should detract from or overwhelm the others. Each component of our identity must strengthen the others. As is the case with a well-prepared gourmet meal, it is the proper integration of the ingredients that allows them to complement one another. For us, the proper integration of the sacramental, the evangelical and the charismatic allow us to reach to the heavens with powerful *charismatic* worship that includes the entire congregation in *biblically-grounded* life and growth by means of the *liturgy* and the Eucharist.

As convergence takes place, and Christians who have walked in one or two of these expressions begin to embrace the fullness of the three currents in the river of God, the richness of their integration will greatly enhance the life and worship of the church. The process of adaptation and inclusion of new elements into the worship experience of the congregation will naturally take time and must be implemented through patience and sensitivity. Those walking in the fuller expressions have a responsibility to disciple those who are yet growing into them; recognizing that the end goal is **spiritual maturity**, not **uniformity**.

But as each of us grow in Christ – and NONE of us has arrived, we are all *en route* – it is here at the points of growth that we must CHOOSE to stand together. As our enemy attempts to drive wedges between us we must choose to see the very wedges of division as **stepping stones to unity!** To deliberately accept one another in our places of growth, and lift up one another, encouraging each other to “Press On, and take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of us!” To take a concept from the Jerusalem Declaration, ***we must celebrate the God-given diversity among us which enriches our global fellowship, and acknowledge and accept freedom in secondary matters.*** The key is that we must be dedicated to work together and seek the mind of Christ on any issues that threaten to divide us.

### **We Are Sacramental**

We believe, as a **Sacramental** church, that the sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace given by Christ to His Body, the Church, as a means by which we continually receive renewed expressions of His grace and love toward us as we participate in them. Through our use of the liturgy in worship we include the entire gathered body of believers in our expression of love to our Creator and Savior. Liturgy allows every member of the Body of Christ to live out their God-ordained role as priest. **(I know, we have heard it said and may have even said it ourselves, "Oh, that old dead liturgy". Well, liturgy is neither living or dead...just living or dead people doing it!!! It is up TO US, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to bring a LIVING and POWERFUL LITURGY to our congregations.)**

Peter tells believers that we are “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God”, and that by the exercise of that royal priesthood we “declare the praises of Him who called (us) out of darkness into His wonderful light”. (1 Peter 2:9) We draw our worship practices and liturgy from different points of time - from the ever-evolving, rich and comprehensive traditions of Catholic faith and practice, to the influences of the Protestant Reformation; from the liturgical beauty found in both the Eastern and Western expressions of Christian worship.

As in the Anglican spiritual tradition, our worship is liturgical; and for us that is best expressed and informed by the various Books of Common Prayer. We attempt to maintain and practice the faith as given to us by the Apostles and on through the various expressions of the worldwide Anglican family. The CEEC defines Anglicanism as English Orthodoxy, developing from the very beginning of the Christian faith in the British Isles and enduring to the present age. Therefore, in our usage, Anglicanism is inclusive of its Celtic origins, Patristic roots, the Medieval Church, the Protestant Reformation, the Wesleyan Evangelical Revival, the Oxford Movement, and the modern Charismatic movement. We measure Anglican history not only from Thomas Cranmer forward, but also from the Reformation backward. **Anglicanism in the CEEC is not**

**shaped by its connection to the See of Canterbury, but by its relationship to history and the Body of Christians who choose to express their faith in the historic Anglican tradition.**

We affirm, as the Church of England has, the historical significance of the doctrines set forth in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, and the values espoused in the *Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral*, (**understanding the context of the CLQL is especially relevant to our times!!!**) the *Baltimore Declaration*, the *Chicago Call* and the *Manhattan Declaration*. We concur with **the Jerusalem Declaration** of GAFCON and the **FELLOWSHIP OF CONFESSING ANGLICANS, to which I and a number of our other Bishops belong**: “The Gospel of the Kingdom is the good news of salvation, liberation and transformation for all.” As such, we join them in charting “a way forward together that promotes and protects the biblical gospel and mission to the world,” solemnly accepting and embracing with them the tenets of orthodoxy which underpin our Anglican identity. With other Anglicans across the globe, we rejoice in our Anglican sacramental and liturgical heritage.

### **We Are Evangelical**

Holding to “the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3), we unequivocally declare our belief as an **Evangelical** church that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God. They contain all things necessary for salvation and godly living. We hold to the historic and conservative position that they are inerrant, and as such are a faithful guide in all matters.

We see the Holy Scriptures as the sole rule of faith and practice as interpreted by Apostolic tradition, historic orthodoxy, (**sanctified**) reason and experience. We embrace the historic orthodoxy of the three creeds, commonly called the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed.

The teachings of the Bible are not subject to the whimsy of modern society, nor should our application of them be. Precisely because we hold to such a high view of the Holy Scriptures, we are committed to faithful reading, studying, teaching, and preaching from the Scriptures. Since they are the very word of God, we believe the Holy Scriptures are a wellspring for spiritual maturity.

The Church has always had a responsibility to identify and reject both heretical teachings and those who embrace them. Our decision to stand within the pale of historic orthodoxy will require that we do not stand with churches or leaders who have denied the orthodox faith in word or deed. **It is not we who have left them**, but they that have abandoned faithfulness to orthodox doctrine. We lovingly call upon them to repent and return to the Lord, “in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a

knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will” (2 Ti 2:25–26); and we stand ready to receive them in love and walk with them in true communion when they do.

We also embrace the Evangelical distinctiveness that underlines the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, a holy life, and a commitment to evangelism and mission. We should make Christ's last command our first priority!! We are not ashamed of the Gospel. We recognize that Jesus Christ is the only hope for man's salvation. “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”(Acts 4:12)

As has been said in the vision statement of a local Parish, “**We do not exist for the church. We are the Church, and we exist for the world.**”

### **We Are Charismatic**

We believe, as a Spirit-filled **Charismatic** church, that we must be open to the work, gifts and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Throughout two thousand years of church history, God's people have always been a spiritually gifted people. From the early apostles to the modern church, Christians have been endowed with a power beyond themselves, the ***dunamis*** power of the Holy Spirit. That power is such a critical element that those trained and disciplined by Jesus Himself were forbidden to begin their ministry immediately after His ascension into heaven! Christ's command to His disciples was absolutely clear – they were to remain in Jerusalem until they had received the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. His indwelling presence and the accompanying power of His gifts of grace are as much a requirement for effective ministry today as they were then. NO MINISTRY WITHOUT THE POWER OF GOD was the instruction of the Lord!!!! We cannot think we have the power to transform lives in ourselves! We must ***constantly*** seek the infilling power of God in our lives. Paul's directive in Ephesians 5:18 is in the present infinitive tense. He instructs us to “be constantly being filled with the Spirit”. Further, we must encourage our parishes to allow and anticipate His presence and working through the spiritual gifts in both our worship and daily acts of service and in personal relationship with Him.

### **And, Yes ....I Can Count To “One”**

Few things are as clearly presented in scripture as the absolute unity of the Body of Christ. Paul writes that there is “**one** body and **one** Spirit— just as you were called to **one** hope when you were called— **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism; **one** God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph 4:4–6) The unquestionable call to every Christian is to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (Eph 4:3)

For us, “making every effort” is seen as a mandate commanding us to reach out in love, to build bridges and relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ wherever and whenever we can. We refuse to see ourselves in competition with other believers, churches, groups, communions, denominations or movements.

**How can you possibly be in competition with yourself?** There is ONE BODY. The hand is not “better than” the ear because it serves a different function. The left eye does not compete with the kidney, nor can it do so. We are all members of one body. As each of us walks out our calling, our goal is only to “use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” in order that “in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ”. (1 Peter 4:10-11)

**Completion** is a much better view than **competition**. The foot completes the body, so the hand can reach its goals. They fulfill totally different functions, but accomplish far more together than they ever could apart. A convergence diocese based in Nashville, Tennessee is not “in competition” with the Southern Baptist Convention. They are two parts of one body. A convergence province based in London, England is not “in competition” with Canterbury. They support and complement one another. A convergence congregation in Springfield, Missouri is not “in competition” with the Assemblies of God. They each serve the same Lord. **Each reaches some, none reaches all; but together we can reach more.**

Here is a **PILLAR** of the vision I am laying before our communion .... **IT IS TIME TO PUT THE CONCEPT OF COMPETITION TO DEATH!**

We are the Body of Christ. Note, please, **THE** Body. There is only one! “God has **combined** the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, **so that there should be no division in the body**, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now **you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it**”. (1 Co 12:24–27)