

Growing in Faith – Week one Introduction and Tool one.

General note

The new rite of Affirmation of Holy Baptism is not understood as completion of baptism, nor a gateway to full participation in the Eucharist. The primary intention of the rite is pastoral. See Canon 25 "Of Admitting to Holy Communion" as amended in 2005.

Week one

There are many possible reasons for people to choose to participate in this course. What is it that has brought you here? Take a moment to think about your hopes, concerns and expectations. Writing them down as a personal record will mean that you will be able to look back and see them with hindsight later.

What is Faith?

What word would you use to describe Faith?

What are rites of passage?

If you believe something, then you have faith in it. Faith is also a decision to trust. This decision is sometimes motivated by strong belief, but we are often most aware of faith when we find it hard to believe. It makes sense then to describe faith as a journey we are on as well as an ability we have.

Special events are often used to recognize and mark significant moments as people's faith develops.

Can you think of any special events which mark moments of growth or which recognize important things?

These events are meant to help you! They can be a way for your family and friends to recognize who you are and how important you are to them (beliefs about you). They can also be a way for you to express what you believe to your family and friends (things you believe). They work best when it is both combined!

What values and beliefs are recognized by family and friends at a birthday party?

What beliefs about yourself do you express when you have a birthday party – or at something like a baptism?

How do we grow in Faith?

Tools to help us grow

In the Affirmation service the Bishop will ask you questions and ask you to make promises. These sessions are to help you prepare for it, but also to help you work out how to live and grow day to day. We will focus on the promises people are asked to make in the “Commitment to Christian Life section” but if you have any questions about the other sections – please let us know!

Just as people relate and grow in relationship with each other in many different ways, there are many means by which people become aware of an encounter with God. We will explore four general categories, one each week. They are a bit like four table legs, if any one of them is out of proportion the table will be wonky.

Tool no.1 Books, Creeds and Liturgies

(6. Commitment to Christian life ...as a disciple of Christ... continue in the Apostles teaching...)

If you believe that someone is important, you learn about them. If you want to research a celebrity, a TV series or historical figure how would you do this?

Which of these methods and skills can you use to learn about Jesus and the Christian life as understood by the disciples he ate and drank with?

How can you test to work out if something is true – worthy of belief and you putting faith in it? In this case “the Apostles teaching” or Authentic Christian living?

The Bible, Creeds and the different bits of the liturgy like collects and specific orders of service have been edited and changed for two thousand years in order to preserve the unchanging teaching of the Apostles. Aided by the Holy Spirit, and working with other Christians you can be a part of this process.

Let’s try one out together. Everyone has been encouraged to read the gospel according to Mark. Here are some resources to help you get the most out of reading the bible. Please try them out, and let us know if you have any other tips which could help people in the group (or the next people to do this course)

Close reading the Bible

Pray and ask God to help you understand the meaning of the text.

Here is a prayer I use sometimes.

Lord Jesus, I ask that you will help me to remember the true and relevant parts of what I read and that they will become a part of who I am. I ask that you will help me to remember the rest so that I can discuss it with other people and learn more about the truth.

First think about how language is being used in the text.

This is important, it would be odd try to understand the meaning and relevance of a poem in the same way as you interpret the instructions for using a toaster, or read a textbook.

Read the text

What is your first impression? Does anything stand out!

Read the text again, what do you think the writer wants to communicate to the reader?

What do you think God is using the text to communicate to you today?

What is your response? Do you have any further questions? Are you inspired to take any actions?

Some helpful questions ...

Where is the story set?

Who are the main characters in the story?

What happens, is there one important event, or a sequence of happenings?

What are the relationships between the characters?

What would the original readers have thought was normal, and would anything in the story have challenged them to re-think their understanding of normal?

Is the writer trying to make you laugh? or cry? (are there any jokes?)

Does reading this story, and comparing it to another situation, help you understand a/the situation better? (allegory)

How can the Bible help?

