



LIVING DISCIPLESHIP

# STEPPING OUT IN FAITH: TEACHING CHILDREN EPISCOPAL BELIEFS & PRACTICES

Adult Facilitator Guide

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Illustrations by Geri Shields



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# Introduction

Welcome to *Stepping Out in Faith: Teaching Children Episcopal Beliefs & Practices!*

This curriculum is a seven-week overview of the sacraments as outlined in the catechism of the Episcopal Church. Designed for use in a weekly formation time, each session is approximately an hour long. The purpose of this curriculum is to help children begin to build a foundational understanding of what it means to be an Episcopalian—globally, locally, and personally.

This curriculum can work in a variety of settings, including as an introduction to the Episcopal Church, a series offered in conjunction with the complementary adult resource, *Practicing Our Faith*, an adult inquirers and/or confirmation classes, or a summer series. This curriculum is written with children ages 6-10 in mind but can be adapted as needed.

*Stepping Out in Faith* is a companion piece to the book, *Walk in Love: Episcopal Beliefs & Practices*, which teachers will need to review. Published by Forward Movement, *Walk in Love* and *Stepping Out in Faith* are part of a larger curriculum called Living Discipleship.

Living Discipleship is an all-ages curriculum designed to help individuals and communities know more fully God revealed in Christ Jesus. Living Discipleship is structured in three years: one year on Exploring the Bible, one year on Celebrating the Saints, and one year on Practicing our Faith. *Stepping Out in Faith* is part of the Practicing Our Faith resource. To learn more about the other Living Discipleship resources, visit [www.forwardmovement.org](http://www.forwardmovement.org).

## About *Stepping Out in Faith*

Every baptized person is a member of the Church, the Body of Christ, and therefore a minister of the Gospel of Christ. This includes children of all ages. As full members of the church, children should be taught from birth about the beliefs and practices of their faith. Children who are familiar and comfortable with their faith will grow in the practice of restoring all people to unity with God and each other, as they pray, worship, proclaim the gospel—and promote justice, peace and love throughout their life.

One of the most important aspects of the Christian faith is the understanding of the sacraments and what they represent. Learning to seek, name, and celebrate outward and visible signs of inward spiritual graces is a spiritual practice that sustains and nurtures faith in Christians of all ages. *Stepping Out in Faith* seeks to provide this foundational understanding of the sacraments to help children connect their daily lives to the story of God, the love of Christ, and the movement of the Holy Spirit in the world, in order that they may grow in knowledge and grace.

The rhythm of learning for these lessons follows a simple **Huddle, Hear, Act, Share** format and is based upon the same structure as a Holy Eucharist service. You may do as much or as little from each section as you feel is best for your class.

### Huddle



- This section includes welcoming activities and the lesson's introduction. The purpose is to help children focus their attention on what is at hand as a class, the same way that our opening hymns and collects (prayers) help us to come together in our focus as we begin a service of Holy Eucharist.

### Hear

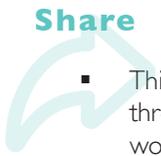


- This section will focus on storytelling, on listening to “what the Spirit is saying.” This section reflects our Liturgy of the Word, which includes readings from scripture and a sermon or homily.



## Act

- This section will provide the children a chance to respond to what they have heard during the **Hear** portion. This parallels with such aspects of Holy Eucharist such as confession, prayers of the people, reciting the creeds, and eucharist itself.



## Share

- This section prepares children for taking what they have learned back into their everyday lives through prayer and a charge to action. This parallels a deacon's charge "To go and serve the world."

## Additional Resources

This curriculum is designed so that it can be led, with careful preparation, using the provided resources. All that is needed is the free curriculum download, copies of *The Book of Common Prayer*, and *Walk in Love: Episcopal Beliefs & Practices*. Unless noted, all of the page numbers refer to *The Book of Common Prayer*.

### Books

*Today is Baptism Day* by Anna V. Ostenso Moore

*When the Bishop Comes to Visit: An Activity Book for All Ages* by Brook H. Packard

*Water of Baptism, Water for Life: An Activity Book* by Anne Kitch

*Let Us Pray: A Little Kid's Guide to the Eucharist* by Jeannie Turrell

*A Child's Guide to the Holy Eucharist: Rite II* by Sarah Horten

*Christ's Own Forever - Leader Guide Episcopal Baptism of Infants & Young Children*  
by Mary Lee Wile

### Other

**Grow Christians** A website and community dedicated to supporting and developing faith in children and those who love them. [www.GrowChristians.org](http://www.GrowChristians.org)

*Children & Holy Communion* by Forward Movement

Additional activities and projects: <https://www.pinterest.com/episcoforma>

Album - Table Settings by Liturgical Folk

Album - Crumbs by Liturgical Folk

**Faith@Home:** Lectionary-based readings and reflections for all ages. [www.dofaithathome.org/](http://www.dofaithathome.org/)



## CHAPTER I BAPTISM

# Introduction to the Lesson

Welcome to *Stepping Out in Faith: Teaching Children Episcopal Beliefs & Practices*! This curriculum has been specially designed to correspond with the sacrament portion of the book *Walk in Love: Episcopal Beliefs & Practices* from Forward Movement.

The purpose of this curriculum is to help children begin to build a foundational understanding of what it means to be an Episcopalian, globally, locally, and personally.

This week's lesson begins by focusing on what a sacrament is and on our practice of baptism.

Let's begin with some background information for you, as the facilitator. An excerpt from *Walk in Love*, Chapter 2: The New Life of Grace, does a lovely job of explaining the importance of sacraments—and especially baptism—in the Episcopal Church:

### What are sacraments?

The classic definition of sacraments says they are “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace.” In other words, sacraments are an external manifestation of something that happens internally. To put it another way, they are earthly signs of heavenly activity. For example, when we baptize someone, the outward sign is water; but, inside, the person is changed.

It's important to emphasize that the sacraments are not the only way to receive grace; the grace of God's love and blessing comes to us in our daily lives in many ways. At the same time, however, when we partake in the sacraments, we can be confident of receiving God's grace. Sacraments are not mere symbols (and this will be an important distinction to convey to the children in your class). In the Holy Eucharist, the bread and wine are not just reminders of Jesus' last meal with his friends, but they become Jesus' Body and Blood. We can be confident that Christ is truly present in the eucharist, and that in receiving Holy Communion we receive God's grace.

### Something to note:

Anglicans don't always agree on the number of sacraments. During the Reformation period in the 1500s and 1600s, our forebearers focused on two sacraments: baptism and eucharist. Later on, in the nineteenth century especially, Anglicans began to talk about seven sacraments. Today, we often divide the sacraments into two categories. The dominical sacraments (taught by Jesus) are baptism and eucharist. And the five ecclesial sacraments (taught by the church) are confirmation, healing (unction), reconciliation (confession), marriage, and ordination. *The Book of Common Prayer* is somewhat inconsistent but usually calls the first two “sacraments” and the last five “sacramental rites.” In terms of our theology though, all seven are clearly sacramental: They are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace.

## Baptism comes first

Baptism is the first sacrament. It is the first one Jesus taught. We might think of baptism as the sacrament of birth, because baptism is often carried out with infants. But we should look at baptism in a broader context, as the sacrament of beginning for all new Christians. Even adults begin their new life and journey as disciples of Jesus Christ at their baptism.

Jesus did not invent baptism. He took an existing practice and completely redefined it. In the ancient world, as is the case today, many religions made use of ritual baths. In Jesus' time, many Jews understood baptism to be a cleansing, a way to wash away sins. Some sects even understood baptism to be part of rituals for entry; baptism was required for membership.

At his own baptism, Jesus was blessed by God's presence for all to see. This dramatically introduced the coming of the Holy Spirit in baptism, and Jesus continued to teach this as the way of beginning a new life of faith. From that moment in the Jordan River, Jesus and his followers continued—to this very day—a baptism that is by water and the Holy Spirit.

Soon after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, the earliest Christians began to teach baptism as an essential part of the Christian life. Saint Paul teaches,

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3-4)

Saint Paul conveys two important ideas about this sacrament. First, baptism is the way to enter into the church, the body of Christ Jesus. Second, in baptism, we die to our old selves and rise to new life in Christ. This aspect of baptism is perhaps clearer when the person being baptized is plunged under the water and then raised. Whether an infant or an adult, there is something bold about seeing someone symbolically drowned and raised to new life!

In most Episcopal churches today, our practice of baptism symbolizes the experience less dramatically: Instead of full immersion in the water, the baptism is conducted with a pouring or sprinkling of water over the person's head. What is important is that we use water and that we do the baptism in the name of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Whether we use a few drops of water or dunk someone in a pool, whether the baptism takes place in an ornate bejeweled font (a bowl of sorts that holds the water for baptism) or an outdoor stream, the same thing is accomplished: We are made new in Christ.

Today's lesson on sacraments and baptism will begin the process of unpacking exactly what a sacrament is and the foundation and practice of baptism in our tradition. The second session will address what it means to live as a baptized person, following the vows of our Baptismal Covenant in the world.

## Preparing for the Lesson

### Format

- The rhythm of learning for these lessons follows a simple *Huddle, Hear, Act, Share* format—and is based upon the same structure as a Holy Eucharist service. You may do as much or as little from each section as you feel is best for your class.

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## Hear



- This section will focus on storytelling, on listening to "what the Spirit is saying." This section reflects our Liturgy of the Word, which includes readings from scripture and a sermon or homily.

## Act



- This section will provide the children a chance to respond to what they have heard during the **Hear** portion. This parallels with such aspects of Holy Eucharist such as confession, prayers of the people, reciting the creeds, and eucharist itself.

## Share



- This section prepares children for taking what they have learned back into their everyday lives through prayer and a charge to action. This parallels a deacon's charge "To go and serve the world!"

## Tools Needed

Several copies of *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Bible

If your congregation prints the service in bulletin form, see if you can find copies of one that includes a baptism service

Shell (similar to the one used at baptisms)

Bowl of water and towels

Candle

The Symbols of Our Sacraments: Baptism handout

Paper

Coloring utensils (markers/crayons/colored pencils)

## Lesson Objectives

Establish meaning of sacraments

Introduce baptism as first sacrament

Share stories of baptism

Become familiar with objects and symbols of baptism

## The Lesson

### Huddle



#### Welcome Activity

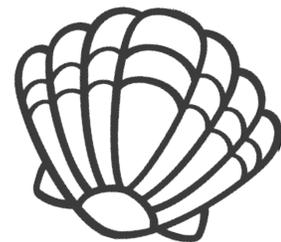
As children enter the classroom, invite them to a table where you have markers, crayons, and copies of the “The Symbols of our Sacraments: Baptism” Coloring Sheets (found in the Tools section of this curriculum). Ask them to work on the activity sheets while they wait for all the children to arrive.

Once everyone has arrived and all the children have had a few moments to work on their sheets, gather everyone together, and have a few children share their drawings or writings.

#### Begin with Prayer

Gather the children around the bowl of water that you have prepared. Pass around the baptismal shell, allowing each child to dip and pour water from the shell into the bowl. As they do this, ask them to repeat the following prayer (from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 308):

*Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit  
you have bestowed upon us your servants the forgiveness of sin,  
and have raised us to the new life of grace.  
Sustain us, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit.  
Give us inquiring and discerning hearts,  
the courage to will and to persevere,  
a spirit to know and to love you,  
and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works.  
Amen.*



#### Understanding Sacraments

Ask the children to sit in your gathering space. Share the following information with the class. (If you have older children, you may ask them to read each of these statements.)

**Leader:** What is a sacrament? Has anyone here ever heard that word before? What do you think it means? (Allow for some answers).

**Leader:** As Episcopalians we define a sacrament as something that is an “outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace.” That might sound a little mysterious. What do you think this means? (Allow for some answers).

Go Further: Use a word processing program to copy and paste each of the following statements onto individual sheets. Enlarge the font and print them out for the kids to hold for the entire class to read or share.

- Sacraments are the things that we can see, touch, and hear on the outside that remind us of the ways God has changed and is changing us on the inside—in our hearts and minds.
- In our church tradition we honor two sacraments that Jesus himself honored and five sacramental rites (or acts) that stand out as particularly unique but common ways of feeling God’s love and presence.
- Two of the sacraments come from the life of Jesus: baptism and eucharist.
- The other five sacramental acts are: ordination (when someone becomes a priest, deacon, or bishop), holy matrimony (marriage), confession and absolution (a special time of asking for and receiving forgiveness,) blessing the sick and dying, and confirmation (when we decide to commit to God and the Episcopal Church).