

AN OUTLINE OF THE FAITH,
COMMONLY CALLED THE CATECHISM,
OF
THE PROGRESSIVE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Human Nature

1. *What are we by nature?*
We are part of God's creation, made in the image of God.
2. *What does it mean to be created in the image of God?*
It means that we are free to make choices: to love, to create, to reason, and to live in harmony with creation and with God. However, we are also free to disobey, or deny the reality of God.
3. *Why then do we live apart from God and out of harmony with creation?*
From the beginning, we have misused our freedom. We work against God and put ourselves in the place of God.
4. *Why do we not use our freedom as we should?*
Because we rebel against God, and we put ourselves in the place of God.
5. *What help is there for us?*
God has acted in Jesus to bring us back to a loving and forgiven relationship. In that action all humanity is offered re-creation and wholeness.

Concepts

6. *What is religion?*
Religion is love toward God and toward our neighbor (all neighbors).
Mark 12.28-31: And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all? The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.
1 John 4.21: The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also ;
7. *How do we know that God exists?*
Whether we look to the universe and its order, or to ourselves and our talents, we obtain the conviction that there exists one God, who created, maintains and manages everything.
8. *Of what does love toward God consist?*
Love toward God consists of our respect for his laws and our endeavor to fulfill them.

The child sincerely loves and respects his parents if he obeys them and conduct himself so that he merits their love. In the same manner, we respect and love God if we are obedient and try to live according to his will.

9. *What is the purpose of religion?*
The purpose of religion is to refine our souls through LOVE toward GOD and neighbor, to ennoble our feelings and to encourage service to God and neighbor.

God

10. *How do we become aware of God?*
By God's initiative in our thinking and understanding: by experiencing and reflecting on the wonder and mystery of creation, birth and death, love, guilt and the need to find meaning and worth beyond ourselves.
11. *What do we mean when we say: I believe in one God?*
When we say: I believe in one God, we express our conviction, that God exists, and that God, both in essence and in person is the only One; that God is the creator of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
12. *What do we learn about God?*
God is eternal, earth maker, pain bearer, life giver; source of all that is and shall be; father and mother of us all. We learn that God is one, yet revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - a Holy Trinity.

God as Father

13. *What does the Church teach about God as Father?*
There is one God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
14. *What does this mean?*
This means that the universe is good, that it is the work of a single loving God who creates, sustains, and directs it.
15. *What does this mean about our place in the universe?*
It means that the world belongs to its creator; and that we are called to enjoy it and to care for it in accordance with God's purposes.
16. *What does this mean about human life?*
It means that all people are worthy of respect and honor, because all are created in the image of God, and all can respond to the love of God.
17. *How are we to comprehend God?*
We comprehend God as Spirit and as Love.

18. *Where can we find God?*
God can be found all around us. God is present in all human beings, in all life. God is in all things, and all things are part of God. This is known as *panentheism*.
19. *What do we mean: God is just?*
When we say, God is just, we mean that God judges our lives and all of our deeds, rewarding the good and punishing evil. Everyone must bear the consequences of his or her life and works.
20. *What do we mean: God is merciful?*
When we say, God is merciful, we mean that his fatherly love makes allowances for our faults, gives us time for improvement and to reform ourselves and he forgives us.

God the Son

21. *What do we mean when we say that Jesus is the only Son of God?*
We mean that Jesus is the only perfect image of the Father, and shows us the nature of God.
22. *What is the nature of God revealed in Jesus?*
God is love.
23. *What do we mean when we say that Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and became incarnate of Mary?*
We mean that by God's own act, his divine Son received our human nature from Mary, his mother.
24. *Why did he take our human nature?*
The divine Son became human, so that in him human beings might be reconciled to God.
25. *What is the purpose of Jesus' teachings?*
The purpose of Jesus' teachings is to acquaint us with the laws of God and thereby to deliver us from ignorance, sin and from the fear of death.
26. *How does Jesus deliver us from ignorance?*
Jesus delivers us from ignorance through his teaching and his example, which acquaints us with God, our duties and our callings.
27. *How does Jesus deliver us from sin?*
Jesus delivers us from sin by revealing what is sin and how one can avoid it. With the example of his life set before us, which we endeavor to follow, we escape more and more from sin.
28. *How does Jesus deliver us from the fear of death?*
Jesus delivers us from the fear of death by strengthening our faith in the fatherly love of God and in eternal life.

29. *What is the great importance of Jesus' suffering and death?*
Jesus suffered, as we ourselves must suffer, to remind us that we have forgotten we are also from God and are also divine.

30. *How do we summarize the teaching of Jesus?*
We summarize the teaching of Jesus as follows:

God is one and is Spirit: God is our providential Father.

We are children of God and brothers and sisters to each other.

Our most important duty: to love God, to love our neighbors and to build the Kingdom of God on earth.

In fulfillment of our duties we shall listen to the voice of our conscience, we shall always choose good, truth and beauty, and we shall be loyal to these.

If we live in that way, our reward will be a restful heart, peace among us and the joy of eternal life.

The Holy Spirit

31. *What do we mean by "Holy Spirit"?*

By Holy Spirit we mean the power of God, and its help for good, which clarifies the intellect, cleanses the heart and strengthens the will, thus enlightening, calming, encouraging and making one happy.

32. *Who or what is the Holy Spirit?*

The Holy Spirit is the Wisdom, or Sophia – the sacred feminine -- aspect of God.

33. *In whom did the Holy Spirit work?*

The Holy Spirit worked in the prophets, apostles and in all of those good and true people who loved God and humanity.

34. *Is the Spirit of God working in us today?*

The spirit of God is working in us today as well, enlightening our reason, enabling us to know good and truth and strengthening our will to persistently remain close to good and truth. At the same time it makes our frailties known, causing us to reform and to improve ourselves.

35. *How does the work of the Holy Spirit help us?*

The work of the Holy Spirit helps us to practice the teachings of Jesus, to attend worship with a zealous spirit, to participate in services, to preserve the purity of the heart and to perform our moral religious duties.

God's People

36. *Which is the most noble creature of God on the earth?*
The most noble creature of God on the earth is the human being.
37. *How is the love of God made manifest toward us?*
The love of God is made manifest toward us in that he raises us up from among the creatures and blesses us with spiritual gifts so that we can be his children and his collaborators.
38. *What are our God-given spiritual gifts?*
Our God-given spiritual gifts are as follows: faith, reason, free will, conscience and love.
39. *What is Faith?*
Faith is confidence in God, whereby we are able to create a childlike relationship with God, our providential Father.
40. *What is reason?*
Reason is that spiritual gift which help us to gather knowledge, to think and form opinions about God, ourselves, our neighbors and the world. In these activities reason in the lantern of faith as well.
41. *What is free will?*
Free will is that spiritual gift by which we can decide freely for ourselves to follow the good and true, or the false and evil.
42. *What is conscience?*
Conscience is that spiritual gift which considers our actions and encourages us for good, but restrains us from evil. Conscience rewards us if we do good and accuses us if we do evil.
43. *How can we give thanks to God for our spiritual gifts?*
We thank our providential Father for our spiritual gifts through love toward God and neighbor, through creative work and through unselfish service.

The Commandments

44. *What are the Ten Commandments?*
The Ten Commandments are the laws give to Moses and the people of Israel.
45. *What do we learn from these commandments?*
We learn two things: our duty to God, and our duty to our neighbors.

46. *What is our duty to God?*
 Our duty is to believe and trust in God;
 I To love and obey God and to bring others to know him;
 II To put nothing in the place of God;
 III To show God respect in thought, word, and deed;
 IV And to set aside regular times for worship, prayer, and the study of God's ways.
47. *What is our duty to our neighbors?*
 Our duty to our neighbors is to love them as ourselves, and to do to other people as we wish them to do to us;
 V To love, honor, and help our parents and family; to honor those in authority, and to meet their just demands;
 VI To show respect for the life God has given us; to work and pray for peace; to bear no malice, prejudice, or hatred in our hearts; and to be kind to all the creatures of God;
 VII To use our bodily desires as God intended;
 VIII To be honest and fair in our dealings; to seek justice, freedom, and the necessities of life for all people; and to use our talents and possessions as ones who must answer for them to God;
 IX To speak the truth, and not to mislead others by our silence;
 X To resist temptations to envy, greed, and jealousy; to rejoice in other people's gifts and graces; and to do our duty for the love of God, who has called us into fellowship with him.
48. *What is the purpose of the Ten Commandments?*
 The Ten Commandments were given to define our relationship with God and our neighbors.
49. *What is the Great Commandment?*
 The Great Commandment was given to us by Jesus Christ.
 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind; and the second is like unto it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.
50. *How do we follow the Great Commandment?*
 We follow the Great Commandment by respecting the dignity of all people, and respecting all people as God's Creation, declared by God to be good, as recorded in the book of Genesis.
51. *What does this mean?*
 This means that we should not hesitate to speak up against oppression, prejudice, inequality, bullying or anything that marginalizes or persecutes in any way any of God's children, and denies them their dignity.

Sin and repentance

52. *What do we call sin?*
We call sin all those improper actions which are committed with consciousness, through which we violate the law of God.
53. *What type of sin do we recognize?*
We know two types of sin: sins of commission and sins of omission. Sins of commission are the result of someone's improper action, and sins of omission are those in which someone fails to avail him- or herself for good either through delay, lack of sympathy or negligence.
54. *Can someone say of him- or herself that she or he has no sin?*
No one can say about him- or herself that she or he has committed no sin, because in spite of the resistance of our spirits, we frequently break the laws of God and do evil instead of good.
55. *Why do we break the laws of God?*
We break the laws of God because we are weak.
56. *What do we mean when we say that we are weak?*
When we say that we are weak, we mean that we are children of God in development. Besides our virtues we have failings as well, which are the constant danger of our humanity because they obscure our understanding, they destroy the quietude of our hearts and disturb the peace among us. These failings together we call weaknesses.
57. *How do the other denominations explain the evilness of human beings?*
The other denominations explain the evilness of human beings with the Biblical story of the first human couple who ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. As a result of their action, the fall of humanity into evil was further compounded because human beings became unable to will good on their own. They call this original sin.
58. *Does The Progressive Episcopal Church teach original sin?*
The Progressive Episcopal Church does not teach original sin. We do not believe that through the sin of the first human couple we all became corrupted. It would contradict the love and justice of God to attribute to us the sin of others, because sin is one's own personal action.
59. *What is the result of sin?*
The result of sin is the denial of our son- and daughtership and the separation between God and humanity. These expressions are our punishment.

60. *Is there forgiveness?*
There is forgiveness. But if sin has taken place, it is impossible to erase as if it had never happened. However, God is a longsuffering, loving Father, who does not reject us because of our evil, but gives us time and the possibility to reform and improve ourselves. This is the forgiveness about which Jesus taught us in his parables.
61. *From whom do we expect forgiveness of our sins?*
We expect forgiveness of our sins only from God.
62. *How can we expect forgiveness of our sins?*
We can expect forgiveness of our sins by God only if we sincerely repent, turn away from our sins and daily strengthen ourselves in love and goodness.

The Holy Scriptures

63. *What are the Holy Scriptures?*
The Holy Scriptures, commonly called the Bible, are the books of the Old and New Testaments; other books, called the Apocrypha, are often included in the Bible. The canon of Scripture varies greatly across Christianity, from sixty-six books in the Protestant Christian canon to eighty-one books in the Ethiopian Orthodox canon.
64. *What is the Old Testament?*
The Old Testament consists of books written by the people of the Old Covenant, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to show God at work in nature and history
65. *What is the New Testament?*
The New Testament consists of books written by the people of the New Covenant, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to set forth the life and teachings of Jesus and to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom for all people.
66. *What is the Apocrypha?*
The Apocrypha is a collection of additional books written by people of the Old Covenant, and used in the Christian Church.
67. *Why do we call the Holy Scriptures the Word of God?*
We call them the Word of God because God inspired their human authors and because God still speaks to us through the Bible.

Holy Baptism

68. *What is Holy Baptism?*
Holy Baptism is the sacrament by which God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ's Body, the Church, and inheritors of the kingdom of God.

69. *What is the outward and visible sign in Baptism?*
The outward and visible sign in Baptism is water, in which the person is baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
70. *What is the inward and spiritual grace in Baptism?*
The inward and spiritual grace in Baptism is union with, birth into God's family the Church, and new life in the Holy Spirit.
71. *What is required of us at Baptism?*
It is required that we reject evil in all its many forms, and with all its empty promises. We are to turn to Christ, and put our trust in him.
72. *Why then are infants baptized?*
Infants are baptized so that they can share citizenship in the Covenant, membership in Christ, and redemption by God.
73. *How are the promises for infants made and carried out?*
Promises are made for them by their parents and sponsors, who pledge that the infants will be brought up within the Church, to know Christ and be able to follow him.

The Holy Eucharist

74. *What is the Holy Eucharist?*
The Holy Eucharist is the liturgy through which we remember Jesus' life, and the price he paid for his ministry with its message of love and reconciliation. It is the commemoration of the Passover meal in the upper room the night Jesus was betrayed by Judas.
75. *What else is the Eucharist?*
The Gospel of Philip teaches us that the Eucharist is Jesus. In Syriac it is called pharisatha (broken bread), which is "one who is spread out." By the Didache we are taught that "Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom."
76. *By what other names is this service known?*
The Holy Eucharist is called the Lord's Supper, and Holy Communion; it is also known as the Divine Liturgy, the Mass, and the Great Offering.
77. *What is the outward and visible sign in the Eucharist?*
The outward and visible sign in the Eucharist is bread and wine, given and received according to Christ's command.
78. *What is the inward and spiritual grace given in the Eucharist?*
The inward and spiritual grace in the Holy Communion is the Body and Blood of Christ given to his people, and received by faith.

79. *Of what does the Lord's Supper consist?*
The Lord's Supper consists of bread and wine.
80. *What do we mean by the expression: "This is my body, this is my blood?"*
By the expression: "This is my body, this is my blood?" we mean that the bread symbolizes the broken body of Jesus, and the wine symbolizes the blood of Jesus. We receive the body and blood of Christ spiritually in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper.
81. *How must we prepare to become worthy guests for the Lord's Table?*
To become worthy guests of the Lord's Table, we must prepare ourselves in an inner and spiritual way.

We must return thanks to God that God has created us, not only with physical, but spiritual life as well.

We must remember Jesus with feelings of respect and love.

We must have an attitude of good will and love for our neighbor, with whom we are all children of one God.

Repenting our mistakes and our sins, we must promise that in the future we will endeavor to better preserve the purity of our hearts and to live a life worthy of God and of ourselves.

These together create our self-examination, without which we make useless our gathering around the Lord's Table. The Apostle Paul reminded us: "Let a man examine himself and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup, for anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body and drinks judgment upon himself." (1 Corinthians 11:28-29)

Other Sacramental Rites

82. *What other sacramental rites evolved in the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?*
Other sacramental rites which evolved in the Church include confirmation, ordination, holy matrimony, reconciliation of a penitent, and unction.
83. *How do they differ from the two sacraments of the Gospel?*
Although they are means of grace, they are not necessary for all persons in the same way that Baptism and the Eucharist are.
84. *What is Confirmation?*
Confirmation is the rite in which we express a mature commitment to Christ, and receive strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands by a bishop.

85. *What is Ordination?*
Ordination is the rite in which God gives authority and the grace of the Holy Spirit to those being made bishops, priests, and deacons, through prayer and the laying on of hands by bishops.
86. *What is Holy Matrimony?*
Holy Matrimony is Christian marriage, in which two people enter into a life-long union, make their vows before God and the Church, and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows.
87. *What is Reconciliation of a Penitent?*
Reconciliation of a Penitent, or Penance, is the rite in which those who repent of their sins may confess them to God in the presence of a priest, and receive the assurance of pardon and the grace of absolution.
88. *What is Unction of the Sick?*
Unction is the rite of anointing the sick with oil, or the laying on of hands, by which God's grace is given for the healing of spirit, mind, and body.
89. *Is God's activity limited to these rites?*
God does not limit himself to these rites; they are patterns of countless ways by which God uses material things to reach out to us. God moves and speaks to us through people, places, and things.

The Church

90. *What is the Church?*
The Church is the community of the New Covenant.
91. *How is the Church described in the Bible?*
The Church is described as the Body of which Jesus Christ is the Head and of which all baptized persons are members. It is called the People of God, the New Israel, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, and the pillar and ground of truth.
92. *What is the mission of the Church?*
The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.
93. *How does the Church pursue its mission?*
The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, promotes justice, peace, and love; attends to the poor and needy, feeds the hungry, comforts the afflicted, gives rest to the weary, and soothes the sorrowing.
94. *Through whom does the Church carry out its mission?*
The church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members.

95. *Who are the ministers of the Church?*
The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.
96. *What is the ministry of the laity?*
The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.
97. *What is the ministry of a bishop?*
The ministry of a bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the whole Church; to proclaim the Word of God; to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry.
98. *What is the ministry of a priest or presbyter?*
The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.
99. *What is the ministry of a deacon?*
The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.
100. *What is true ministry?*
True ministry is when we are servants to those in need around us. All from bishops to laity are called upon to be deacons – servant ministers -- in service to our community to the best of their ability. This means we should seek out those places where we might assist with feeding the hungry & homeless, visiting the sick, and demonstrate God's love in active outreach.

Prayer

101. *What is prayer?*
Prayer is our response to God's love. We pray in the name of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit.
102. *What are the different ways of prayer?*
We can pray with or without words, by ourselves or with others. The main kinds of prayer include adoration, praise, thanksgiving, confession of sins, intercession to God for others and for ourselves. The prayer of listening to God is called meditation or contemplation.

103. *What is a helpful way for us to begin?*

We can realise God's presence with us by being quiet and still, and by recognising God's love within us and around us.