

COMPASS

Diocese
of Argyll
and
The
Isles

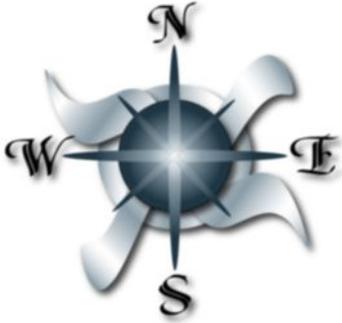
‘Compass’: a three-session introductory course to Christian faith and the spirituality of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

Session 1: Practising Faith in Church

Session 2: Looking at Life

Session 3: Following Christ





Introduction

'Compass' is a three-session course designed to introduce new members to Christian faith and values and to refresh and deepen the discipleship and understanding of those exercising lay ministry in congregations.

It starts from where we are: our experience as Christians. It seeks to draw out the points at which our experience touches those of the Christian tradition, and in particular, that of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

During the course, participants will:

- look at the practice of Christianity in the S.E.C. and reflect on how it speaks of God
- explore the values we hold and their relationship to Christian (and Anglican) tradition and the guiding of the Holy Spirit
- share their experience of following Christ in the Church and in their lives

The course is presented in three sessions but could extend to more.

In **Session 1**, we will look at our experience of worship, the practice of the early church, and the sacraments.

In **Session 2**, we explore how we pray for others, how we find meaning in the face of life's experiences, especially suffering, how we make moral choices, and what a 'Christian character' is.

In **Session 3**, we look at discipleship: how we come to faith and discover our gifts, and how we might put into practice the call to make God's love known to the world.



SESSION 1: Practising faith in Church

One of the common phrases about worship is 'How we worship reflects what we believe'. You can tell a lot about belief by looking at a congregation gathered together: not just the words, but the way in which worship is conducted, the way in which people take part and relate to each other, the way the space is used, the time given to speech and silence. So what does our practice of Christianity tell us about our faith?

We come to church for all sorts of reasons, and we find many different experiences.

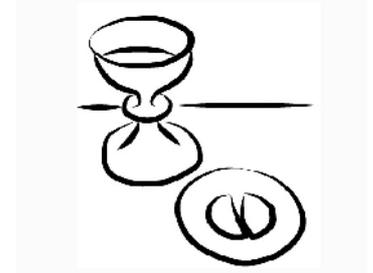
Discuss in groups of 2 or 3:

“What do you most look forward to at church?”

- put your findings up on a board or flipchart.
- see if they fall into groups – e.g.: to do with worship; to do with fellowship; to do with learning
- what falls outside these groups?

If you would like something to get you started, try identifying which of these words describe what you find at church:

celebration	receiving	emotion	rest	struggle
friendship	talking	sacrifice	nourishment	learning
giving	healing	quiet	work	touch
peace	demands	movement	challenge	images



“So what does our practice of Christianity tell us about our faith?”



Practising Faith in the Church ... continued

Read this account of early Christian worship:

The Weekly Worship of the Christians: written AD 150

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows, and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead.



Justin, Apologia I, 67

(© The Ante-Nicene Fathers,
edited by Revd Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson,
Volume I, Page 186,
published by T and T Clark Ltd, Edinburgh.)

Make a rough sketch of the outline shape of the church you worship in.

Mark the following items:

- ALTAR:** is it at the east point of the church or in the nave or where?
what does its location tell us about how we understand God's presence?
how is an altar different from a 'communion table'?
- PULPIT:** compare the location of the pulpit to a Kirk or an Orthodox church
what does it tell you about the role of the sermon in our liturgy?
what are the ways in which we learn about our faith?
- LECTERN:** what takes place at the lectern in your church? Is it just the readings?
where are intercessions offered? What does this tell us about our prayers?
how do people find out about what is going on at church?



The central action of the Church is the Eucharist – which means ‘Thanksgiving’. It is also called ‘Holy Communion’, ‘The Lord’s Supper’ and ‘Mass’.

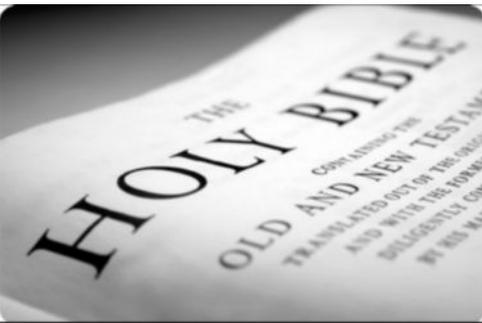
Consider the parts of the service, as found in the SEC 1982 Liturgy:

(1) *The Preparation*

How do we begin worship? Is it a ‘gathering’, an ‘approach’, a ‘journey’? You might want to describe your various experiences or the mood and movement when the service begins.

Look at the initial elements (up to and including the Collect). What is the different significance of placing the Peace and Confession at (2) and (5) rather than at (15) and (16)? Can you separate them? What is a ‘Collect’, and why does it change with the calendar? When is the ‘Gloria’ appropriate and when the ‘Kyrie eleison’?

(2) *The Liturgy of the Word*



Which parts of the Bible are read? How are four gospels fitted into a Lectionary cycle of 3 years? Who reads the Bible passages in worship you have experienced, and where?

The sermon is an attempt to make the Gospel live afresh, and to help us to meet God in the word of Scripture and in our lives. What was expected in the passage from Justin’s account of early worship quoted above?

The Creed is a statement of belief from the fifth century, which identified baptised Christians – those who would share in Holy Communion. The intercessions gather the concerns and thanks of the people.

(3) *The Liturgy of the Sacrament*

The ‘Eucharist’ is a ‘Thanksgiving’; how is gratitude expressed in this part of the service? (You might find it helpful to look at Eucharistic prayer V.)

How and where in this part of the service are other elements (penitence, reconciliation, praise ...) expressed?

(4) *The Sending Out*

What is a ‘blessing’? What are we sent out to do?



Or, to prompt a more general reflection on church, read the following passage:

John 17:20-26 (NIV) Jesus Prays for All Believers

²⁰My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: ²³I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. ²⁴Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. ²⁵Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

List the different desires of Jesus in this prayer.

Which aspects of our church experience express them?

(you might want to go back to the groupings of worship / fellowship / learning etc)

John describes how the disciples first experienced Christ's risen presence amongst them on the evening of Easter Sunday:

John 20:19-22 (NIV) Jesus Appears to His Disciples

¹⁹On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²²And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

We see the life of God being shared with human beings: The Father sending the Son in love; the Son giving his life in love for the world; the Spirit teaching us and drawing us into the love of God and each other. This is the Trinity – the loving and giving nature of God expressed in the mystery of relationship.

Christ has been called 'The sacrament of God'. He shared the life of God with us, in human existence, offering us the grace of reconciliation with God, new life, nourishment, healing, hope. He made visible to us the love and joy that is in the heart of God.

The Holy Spirit was given to the first disciples and the apostles at Pentecost, and to all Christians so that the power of God to renew and transform our lives in Christ might continue.

This is the power that we recognise when we celebrate the sacraments. A sacrament has been described as "a visible sign of an invisible reality." Many sacred actions can be thought of as sacramental, for example, saying the Lord's Prayer or sharing a sign of peace.

Have you experienced 'sacramental moments' apart from those celebrated by the Church? What made them 'sacramental'?



“Sunday is the first day of a week-long desire to live facing God, following God and serving God”

SESSION 2: Looking at Life

George Herbert wrote “*Seven whole days, not one in seven, I will praise thee*”. It reminds us that Sunday is the first day of a week-long desire to live facing God, following God and serving God. In our lives, we experience situations and people that constantly demand choices of us: about what we say, what we do, how we relate to others. What do we take into account when we make those choices? Are they just habitual or even instinctive? Where does a Christian perspective fit in?

Discuss in twos and threes: ‘Does being a Christian make a difference to the way you look at life?’

Think about how the world is prayed for in your congregation. It may be in prayers of intercession during a service, or in prayers offered at other times.

List the areas of concern that are voiced in these prayers.

Can they be grouped under different headings? (e.g. ‘world’; ‘power’; ‘vulnerable’) Are there any areas of life or groups of people that very rarely are prayed for?

How do we address God in the prayers?

You might want to look at the opening phrases of intercessory prayers in the liturgy you use and identify the names and powers we attribute to God.

What do we pray for?

It might be helpful to go back to the headings of the topics prayed for. What kind of attitudes, values and changes do we seek?

What does this tell us of the Church’s view of God, and God’s concern for the world around us?



Read the following passage:

Romans 8:18-27 (NIV) Future Glory

¹⁸I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

What does this passage suggest to you about how a Christian might view the world?

You could look at the meaning and significance of some key words, such as:

present sufferings	creation	decay	glorious freedom
Groaning	saved	hope	patiently
Spirit	intercedes	for the saints	God's will

Christians sometimes say that their faith gives meaning to their life: a story, a purpose, a relationship that lifts our understanding above the surface appearance of what is going on. St Paul was trying to help the early Christians see that they can understand their sufferings now as part of a bigger picture of God's ultimate glory.

- **Have you experienced something in your life where your Christian faith has made a difference to your understanding of it?**
- **Share this, if you can, with the person next to you.**



But it is not always easy or even possible to see God in the midst of suffering and pain.

Read this poem addressed to God:

*I will tell you, Sir, about a woman of yours,
Who suddenly had all her trust removed
and turned to the wall and died.*

*I remember how she would sing of your love,
Rejoice in the tiniest favour;
The scented jonquils,*

*The flowering currant bush,
The wet clay,
Spoke to her unerringly of benevolence.*

*I remind you, Sir, of how, brought low,
She cowered like a tinker's dog,
Her hope gone, her skin loose around her bones.*

*Where were you, Sir, when she called out to you?
Where was the love that height nor depth
Nor any mortal thing can overcome?*

*Does it please you, Sir, that your people's voice
Is the voice of the hare torn between the hounds?*

(Complaint by Padraig Daly, 1999)

What questions does this poem raise for you?

Think back to the words we use to address God when we pray in intercession:
how do we understand God's power in the face of suffering?

You might want to consider the view of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, imprisoned by the Nazis as a Christian Pastor:

God lets himself be pushed out of the world onto the cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way in which he is with us and helps us ... The Bible directs man to God's powerlessness and suffering; for only the suffering God can help.

(Letters and Papers from Prison p.164)





Christian faith influences not only how we think of God and our experience of life, but also the moral choices we make. In the Anglican tradition, Scripture, reason and tradition are all foundations on which those choices may be made.

Select an issue and think about your attitude to it

e.g. euthanasia; marriage and relationships; money; climate change ...

- **what is really important for you?**
- **where do those values come from?**
- **would you change your mind about it because of a Bible passage?**
- **or a logical argument?**
- **or because of what the Church had always done?**
- **or because you see the issue in the light of Jesus' two great commandments – to love God and your neighbour as yourself?**

Read this passage:

Ephesians 4:17-24 (NIV) Living as Children of Light

¹⁷So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. ²⁰You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. ²¹Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²²You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

- **Should we expect Christians to have views on life, its goals and its problems, that are different from 'the world's' views?**
- **How have the views of the Church changed over the centuries on moral issues?**

A Christian view of the world is not just a matter of the moral choices we make; it grows from the inner character we develop. St Augustine of Hippo wrote: 'Love and do what you will' (*Treatise on John's Letters vii.8*) He meant that if we have a true love of God and each other, then we will do what is good and pleasing to God.

We can get an idea of the inner character that God gives us from St Paul's list of the 'fruits of the Spirit':

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:19-23)

What about those who show these fruits in their own lives but do not call themselves Christians?

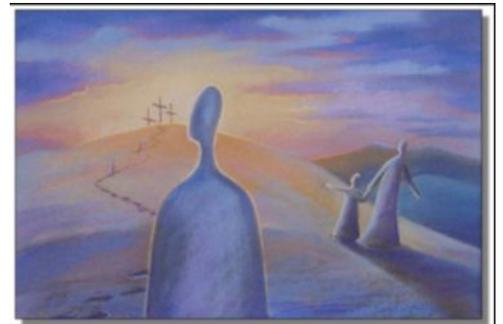


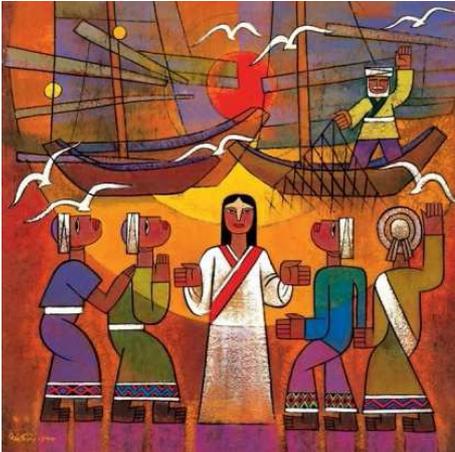
SESSION 3: Following Christ

A very early description of Christian discipleship was 'The Way' (see Acts 9:2, 22:4, 24:14) It underlines the fact that being a Christian is not a static experience, but a journey. Our lives will be touched by our faith – whether it is our practice, our attitudes and values, or our own growth. The 'Way' may be marked by sudden or gradual changes, in how we conceive of God, the world and our own place in it. Experiencing the life of the Church draws us into a wider journey: the Way followed by the Christian family as a whole.

Where are you 'on the Way' at the moment?

You might find it helpful to draw your journey, for example as a path through a landscape. What are the significant landmarks, bridges, obstacles, forms of transport, fellow travellers, people who have given directions, or who have got in the way?





Read:

Mark 1:16-20 (NRSV)

Jesus Calls the First Disciples

¹⁶ As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people.' ¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

I Thessalonians 1:4

For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you ...

I Corinthians 1:26-29

²⁶ Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: ** not many of you were wise by human standards,* not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong ...*

- **What do these passages tell us about the beginnings of discipleship? Can you recognise any of your own story in them?**

A major landmark on our journey with God is receiving the sacrament of baptism. We begin our lives in the Christian family, and are given God's grace to grow as disciples.

- **Looking back on your own faith journey, when do you identify yourself as becoming a member of the Church?**
- **of the S.E.C.?**
- **Of your current congregation?**



It is tempting to see becoming a disciple as something we do, but it is more a matter of making room for God to live within us. St Paul wrote of Christians as the 'body of Christ', filled with the gifts of the Spirit to enable Christ to renew and transform the world.

Read these two passages:

Romans 12:4-8 (NIV)

⁴Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

I Corinthians 12:4-11 (NIV)

⁴There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. ⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

List the gifts of the spirit that Paul describes.

- **How many of these have equivalents in our own Church life?**
- **Which are recognised as 'ministries'?**
- **Which expressions of discipleship and service ('ministry) in our Church are not listed by Paul in these passages?**



Consider what gives you energy and fulfilment in your own life.

- **Can you recognise gifts of the Holy Spirit?**
- **How might they contribute to 'building up the Body of Christ'?** (see *Ephesians 4:11-13*)

You might find a prompt in the Summary of the Law that Jesus gave:

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: "The first commandment is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Amen. Lord, have mercy. (from the S.E.C. Liturgy 1982)

As baptised Christians, we are called to follow Christ in an active way.

Compare these two sentences:

"N., as a disciple of Christ will you continue in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers?" (From the S.E.C. Baptism liturgy 2006)

"In baptism every disciple is called to make Jesus known as Saviour and Lord and to share his work in renewing the world." (From the S.E.C. Ordinal 1984)

- **What are their particular emphases?**

The term 'disciple' means 'learner', or 'apprentice'. We learn about the faith and how to follow Christ through our experience in the Church family and our developing relationship with God. Teaching, the common life and sacramental worship make us 'lifelong learners' in the Christian Way.

But the Way, for both individual disciples and for the Church, is the Way of Christ himself. This began with his being sent by the Father to reconcile the world:

¹⁶ 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17 (NRSV))

We are called to journey on Christ's Way with the grace of the Holy Spirit:

Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' (John 20:21 (NRSV))

Think back to the concerns that we voice in intercessory prayer, which were explored in Session 2. Christians are called to follow Christ in proclaiming the Good News of God's love, forgiveness, healing, justice, mercy, new life, salvation and hope.



There are many ways in which this can be done in the world around us, and each Christian, each congregation, each Church in every age must pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal God's particular call to mission ('sending').

Argyll and The Isles has been exploring our vision as a missional church in our beautiful setting, here in the West of Scotland. 'Building the Vision' has allowed every congregation to explore their history, strengths and vision for the future. To see where our mission lies, it can be helpful to look at the Anglican Communion's 'Five Marks of Mission'

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom - *through word and sacrament and by the actions of our lives*
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers - *to grow and support strong disciples, prepared for their journey on 'The Way'*
- To respond to human need by loving service - *service to others, charitable work, being active for those in need - all these are signs that point towards the kingdom of God*
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society - *no matter how small, how powerless we may feel, there are always actions that can be taken to counter injustice, big or small*
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth - *the beauty of creation is all around us - and the environmental importance of Christian stewardship cannot be underestimated*

Christ's Way led to the Cross and Resurrection. His was a life of absolute self-giving, whose humility and sacrifice was crowned with life and eternal glory. Jesus warned his followers that there was a cost to discipleship:

³⁴ He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.' (Mark 8:34-35 (NRSV))*

As Christians follow Christ, they draw closer to his experience and character. The Church, as the Body of Christ, will also be an image of his life and sacrificial love. It is a high calling to the most exciting journey of all:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (1 Peter 2:9 (NRSV))*



DRAWING IT ALL TOGETHER

Imagine you are explaining to someone why you go to church. How would you describe:

- **what a disciple is?**
- **what the church is for?**
- **what you are hoping for in the future?**

Finally:

Make a note of what you would like to explore in more depth about this topic.





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adapted for use in the Diocese of Argyll and The Isles
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