

## Context:

Christians are made, not born. *Growing In Faith Together* takes seriously the difficulties of living out one's Christian faith in a secular, pluralistic, quickly-changing world. It recognizes that Christian formation is a life-long process, best occurring in the community of other seekers and believers. *Growing In Faith Together* helps persons learn to integrate the promises made in Baptism into daily life.

## History:

In the early Church, adults often spent up to three years preparing for Holy Baptism, the means of initiation into the Christian community. This process of initiation, which included water baptism, the laying on of hands and anointing (what we call confirmation) and reception of the Eucharist, took place at the Great Vigil of Easter. Persons preparing for it were called "catechumens"-hearers of the Word - and were accompanied throughout their preparation by sponsors, who were members of the local assembly. The emphasis was on orthopraxis, Christian *living*, as well as orthodoxy, Christian *believing*.

## Purpose:

*Growing In Faith Together* seeks to equip persons to enter upon a life-long process of living out The Baptismal Covenant and incorporate them into the life of faith at St. Luke's Episcopal Church. This process is sometimes called "conversion," the process whereby we enter ever more deeply into the Paschal Mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. This process results in the transformation of all our relationships and the heightening of our sense of ministry in Christ's name.

## Parish Involvement:

*Growing In Faith Together* seeks to involve the entire parish community in this process of adult Christian formation. All the baptized are called to welcome those being initiated, to pray for them, and to witness to them by their lives and faith. Members of the parish also accompany them on their faith journey as sponsors, and others serve on the GIFT team. Each stage is celebrated by a public rite at a major liturgy, so the entire community can participate.

## For Whom:

*Growing In Faith Together* is modeled on the ancient catechumenate but is not only for those seeking baptism. It is a process of formation for Christian living open to:

- \* persons baptized as infants who want to make a mature public affirmation of their faith,
- \* adults seeking for baptism,
- \* persons seeking to be married or to have their children baptized in the church,
- \* new members from other congregations or denominations,
- \* lapsed members seeking to return to active involvement in the church,
- \* nominal members seeking to deepen and renew their commitment,
- \* active members seeking to reaffirm their commitment to Christ.



## Stages of the Formation Process:

### 1) INQUIRY

### 2) FORMATION IN CHRIST

### 3) INTENSIVE PREPARATION

### 4) FORMATION IN MINISTRY

## Group Gatherings:

\* Meeting times: Wednesday Evenings 6:30 - 8 p.m.

During the months of January, February, March, April and May

\* Each session includes prayer, worship, instruction, and reflection and discussion on Scripture.

# Being a Christian

is a matter of being in relationship:

- 1) with God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
- 2) with other Christians in the community of the Church,
- 3) with all other human beings and all of God's creation,
- 4) with our deepest spiritual selves.

## *Growing In Faith Together,*

modeled on the process for baptismal preparation in the Early Church (called the "catechumenate") is the process at St. Luke's Episcopal Church wherein all baptized persons or those seeking baptism are invited to grow in these relationships.



*Growing In Faith Together* is comprised of four stages, each inaugurated by an appropriate liturgical rite. The process culminates in the Sacraments of Christian Initiation: **Holy Baptism, Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, Reception and Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows.** It is a process marked by prayer, worship, reflection on God's Word in Holy Scripture, ministry, the sharing of faith stories, and immersion into the life of the Church.

By participating in *Growing In Faith Together* you will:

- \* gain a sound understanding of and commitment to living out the Baptismal Covenant,
- \* see how God's Word can transform your life,
- \* experience what it means to be a Christian in the Episcopal Church,
- \* be a full and active part of St. Luke's life and ministry,
- \* develop deep spiritual friendships and a sense of community,
- \* gain greater intimacy with God and discern your own gifts for ministry as a believer and disciple of Christ in the world.

*"Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Through baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life."*

Romans 6:3-5

*"All of you who have been baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with him. All are one in Christ Jesus."*

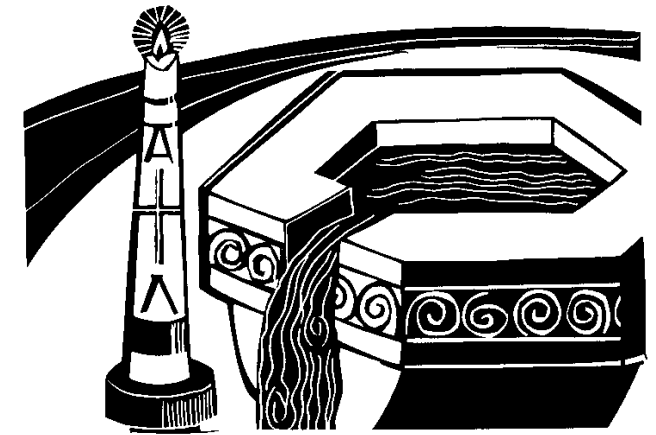
Galatians 3:27-28

*"Grant, Lord God, to all who have been baptized into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, that, as we have put away the old life of sin, so we may be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and live in righteousness and true holiness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen."*

From a prayer for all Baptized Christians,

Book of Common Prayer, p.306.

# *GROWING IN FAITH TOGETHER*



The Catechumenal Process  
at  
St. Luke's Episcopal Church

Formation for Christian  
Life and Ministry

2012

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