

# *My Faith My Life* [www.myfaithmylife.org](http://www.myfaithmylife.org)

## Morehouse publishes Cathedral parishioner's book for teens



Jenifer Gamber wrote her book “to provide young people in the Episcopal Church the tools to embrace their full place within the Church.” “When I began working with Canon Kitch on confirmation three years ago,” said the Nativity Cathedral parishioner, “it became clear that there were few resources available to help teens understand the language of our church, its worship, history, sacraments, and approach to the Bible. There are a number of wonderful relational-based curricula, which is the basis of our faith, but no guide for navigating the institution the Church.”

*My Faith, My Life: A Teen's Guide to the Episcopal Church* (\$9.95, Morehouse, 2006) is an essential handbook for teens in the Episcopal Church – and a great resource for confirmation classes, youth study groups, and high school Christian education programs.

The book serves as a guide to the Christian faith and the Episcopal Church, covering everything from scripture, church history, and sacraments, to the meaning of prayer and ministry in the lives of real teens today.

The following is from the narrative on the Morehouse site:

If you listen closely enough to teenagers, you'll hear their deep yearning to connect with God, and a powerful instinct to belong. And you'll find out right away the one thing they really hate—being preached to.

In *My Faith, My Life*, teenagers learn all about the Christian faith they've been baptized into – and the Episcopal Church that offers them a spiritual home. With lively writing that's always informative and never condescending, the book gives them all the basics they need to know to understand their faith – and claim it as their own.

A 96-page leader's guide for using *My Faith, My Life: A Teen's Guide to the Episcopal Church* as part of a confirmation program will be available in August at [www.churchpublishing.org/myfaithmylife](http://www.churchpublishing.org/myfaithmylife).

For a lot more, visit Jenifer's website, A Place for Episcopal Teens to Explore Faith, at [www.myfaithmylife.org](http://www.myfaithmylife.org).

“The most consistent feedback I've received is that the book isn't just for teens,” Jenifer said recently. “For those who haven't yet been to the free companion website or shared it with teens in your family, extended family, or church family...check out [www.myfaithmylife.org](http://www.myfaithmylife.org) for all sorts of free stuff like meditation tools, Jeopardy games, audio prayers, etc.”

A leader's guide will be available in mid August at [www.churchpublishing.org/myfaithmylife](http://www.churchpublishing.org/myfaithmylife).

The guide will be the publisher's “test book” for a new way of delivering some publications: for \$5.95 you can download a PDF file (over 100 pages). The guide offers two models for leading confirmation: six 2-hour sessions + overnight retreat or twelve 1-hour session. The framework for each session begins with opening worship, group games, discussion of the book using questions that appear throughout each chapter of the book, and explorations/discussions keyed to topics in the book. Included also: a discussion of learning styles so you can vary the exercises to appeal to variety of styles, discussion of adding a mentor program, sample parish newsletter articles, and more.

### Chapter 1: Baptism and Confirmation: Beginnings

Baptism is full initiation into the Body of Christ. Because many of us were baptized as infants, our parents or guardians made promises on our behalf. Now as maturing young people we can claim our faith as our own. Confirmation provides that opportunity. To claim our faith, we must actively seek to understand it. This book seeks to help candidates for confirmation understand their faith and membership in the Church.

## Chapter 2: The Bible: Stories about Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

The Bible is a family album of sorts—a collection of stories of God’s creative and redeeming actions through history. They are stories of the human family living in the grace of God. The New Testament is the story of God’s greatest redeeming act—coming into the world and dying on the cross. We are never finished reading the Bible. Each time we return to the album, we don’t just remember, we relive the events; we are changed by them. We learn more about ourselves and God. This chapter provides readers with an overview of the kinds of writing in the Bible and a simple framework for reading and understanding what it is saying to us today.

## Chapter 3: Knowing Our History

As any one of us knows from family albums, our history shapes who we are. This chapter presents the history of the Christian Church beginning with gospel stories and continuing through Constantine, the Reformation, Henry VIII, Samuel Seabury, the establishment of the Episcopal Church, all the way up to The Rt. Rev. Barbara Harris and into today. The history of the Episcopal Church is a very American experience. By interspersing questions about today’s liturgy and practices, readers can see the impact of our history on the Episcopal Church and our beliefs today.

## Chapter 4: Faith: What Do We Believe?

We experience God through tradition (worship, prayer, the Saints), the Bible, and culture (music, art, daily life), using our human capabilities of reason to understand our experiences. As a mystery, God is necessarily beyond words. Still, we seek to find words to describe our relationship with God. Words are our primary form of communicating with others. This chapter explores a number of Anglican beliefs, focusing specifically on the theology of the Apostles’ Creed: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. But belief in God demands a living response to our world—to keep God’s commandments. The commandments are a guide to how to live our belief in community.

## Chapter 5: Worship: Responding to God’s Blessings

Worship is our response to God’s daily blessing of life. Worship can be individual as well as corporate and is entered into with our bodies as well as our hearts and minds. This chapter presents a variety of ways we worship, but focuses on Holy Eucharist in the Book of Common Prayer. The particular focus will be on the Eucharist. As a liturgy, the Eucharist does not just remember the Last Supper, but transforms us into new creations, drawing us ever closer to Jesus and God and the Kingdom of God.

## Chapter 6: The Sacraments

Sacraments transform our lives—creating and recreating us as a community of God’s people. This chapter explains sacraments and how they are central to our understanding of Christianity as an incarnational faith. The two great sacraments of the Gospel are Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. Five other sacramental rites are confirmation, ordination, holy matrimony, reconciliation of a penitent, and unction. This chapter explores each sacrament.

## Chapter 7: Spirituality: Created for Prayer

As created beings, yearning to know and be in relationship with our creator, the spiritual life, is natural. Deep within our hearts rests a yearning for God. So, how do we come to know God? The same as we do with others—through frequent conversation. Through prayer we reveal our deepest desires and listen to God’s desires for us. This chapter talks about the practice of prayer and other Christian disciplines of being in the presence of God. Prayer can be silent or loud, alone or in community; it can be an act of service or an act of celebration such as keeping the Sabbath.

## Chapter 8: Navigating the Church: From Parish to Diocese to Nation

Humans are social beings and as communities grow, we organize ourselves with institutional hierarchy and governance. It’s a necessary part of being God’s hands in this world. We are asked to worship God and serve God’s creation in the world. Just as with any institution the Episcopal Church has its own style of leadership and governance. This chapter reviews that structure as well as its authority, which seeks to fulfill its missionary work and maintain unity. The structure of the parish church, the diocese, the national church and the worldwide Anglican Communion is presented. Included in the discussion are the four orders of ministry and their functions. Through our baptism we are given the gifts of ministry. Ordained ministry supports the ministry of the laity.

## Chapter 9: What Is God Calling You To Do?

This chapter challenges teens to consider their own ministries. Many people, not just youth, identify ministry with a collar. But most ministry is the work of the laypeople. The Catechism makes it quite clear that ministry is what we do. As representatives of Christ and his Church we are ministers wherever we are—home, school, work, and at play. A pretty awesome thought! But that’s how God made us. Each of us has been given special gifts and we are to use those gifts in our ministry. This chapter will discuss the variety of spiritual gifts, present a method for discerning those gifts, and talk about ways we use those gifts both in the life, worship, and governance of the Church and out in the world. This will continue to be an important task for young people as they discern their calling in life—where should I go to school? What job should I take? Whom should I marry? And so on.

## Glossary and Index