

‘Here is a theologically informed and practically based handbook to encourage seekers of God and strengthen Christians in their journey of faith. The challenge and joy of being a disciple is woven into the call of mission and a life shaped by the Eucharist. Written by seasoned practitioners, this is an excellent resource for confirmation groups, general enquirers and people of faith who want to go deeper. The group sessions and leader’s guides are superb. The book will confirm faith and energize disciples.’

*The Rt Revd Dr Stephen Pickard, Director
Oxford Centre for Ecclesiology and Practical Theology*

‘For those who think disciple-making began in West London with the “Alpha” course, *Being God’s People* reminds us that catechesis has its roots in the earliest period of the Church’s life, and throughout its life, the Church has sought to form disciples after the pattern of Jesus Christ. Structured around the shape of the Eucharist, this course provides for the modern Catholic wings of every Church what Alpha and Emmaus have provided elsewhere for Evangelicals. While obviously written with an Anglican parish in mind, with some adaptation of language, however, it could equally serve a broader ecumenical constituency, especially wherever the Eucharist forms the guiding structure for faith and practice. This course written by Greenwood and Hart is biblical, practical and imaginative, and faithful to the teaching of the Church. Forming individuals and a community around the habitus of the Eucharist is ages old and yet contemporary in its challenge to individualism and consumerism, and I welcome this new resource to the armoury of discipleship-making and community-forming that is always the task of the congregation and its ministers.’

*The Revd Dr Paul Goodliff, Head of Ministry
Baptist Union of Great Britain*

‘A rare combination: a resource with a well-thought-out theology and a lively, creative and open learning structure for small groups. In *Being God’s People*, Robin Greenwood and Sue Hart provide us with a rich resource which will be used in parishes for confirmation preparation and, beyond that, for the nurturing of disciples alive to God and the world around them.’

*The Revd Dr Roger L. Walton, William Leech Research Fellow
Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University*

‘The Eucharist is at the heart of the Church’s life. Through chapters rich in food for spiritual thought and plans for experiential encounters that engage God’s people with one another, Greenwood and Hart take us on a ten-session journey deeply into this core reality of the Christian faith, unlocking its potential in the power of the Spirit to more fully form disciples among those preparing for confirmation and those seeking a richer life of faith. Following the movements that gave shape to the celebration of the Eucharist, this course in discipleship promises to enrich the experience of worship and to enliven the Church in its mission in and for the world.’

*Bishop Robert Alan Rimbo, Metropolitan New York Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

‘Being God’s People will, I hope, be a valued resource for local churches which take seriously their adult Christian nurture at a time in history when the making of disciples could not be more important. Robin Greenwood’s no-nonsense theological linking of the Eucharist to Christian living is paired in each chapter with a section that celebrates and helps groups to take ownership of the material.’

The Rt Revd Robert Paterson, Bishop of Sodor and Man

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Being God's People

*The Confirmation and
Discipleship Handbook*

ROBIN GREENWOOD

and

SUE HART



First published in Great Britain in 2011

Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
36 Causton Street
London SW1P 4ST
www.spckpublishing.co.uk

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-281-06361-1
eBook ISBN: 978-0-281-06678-0

Typeset by Caroline Waldron, Wirral, Cheshire
First printed in Great Britain by Ashford Colour Press
Subsequently digitally reprinted in Great Britain

Produced on paper from sustainable forests

*For eucharistic communities worldwide,
seeking solidarity with God's work
in the whole of life*

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Foreword

Returning recently to preach at St Mary's, where Robin and Sue both now minister, I was struck by the debt I owe to that community. More than a quarter of a century on from serving as a deaconess, I appreciated much more deeply the nurture the congregation offered, their challenge in the face of new ideas and, with the local community, their willingness to take seriously a 'twenty-something' trying to talk about God.

Of course the clergy with whom I served, as well as laity in formal roles, made highly significant contributions to my learning; but retrospectively I am reminded forcibly why we talk about 'training parishes' as well as 'training incumbents'. The community where we train is as important as the individuals who train us.

At a human and at a divine level there is no surprise in this. We know we cannot 'go it alone'. We know too that we can only be Godlike in community. The Trinity graphically points it out. We act it out each time we gather to celebrate the Eucharist. These are simple truths for the Christian, but in a world where community is fractured and societies and nations struggle, a gift for others. Community as a place of learning, nurture and celebration is desperately needed.

In this context Robin and Sue's handbook offers leaders of all kinds a resource for developing faith and helping people discover or rediscover Christianity. The book is deeply embedded in an understanding of community, God and the Eucharist, owing its own debt to Robin's long-term study of Christian teaching and ministry. It is a practical handbook, in which Sue follows through these elements with a structure that draws out the eucharistic offering of celebration – the fun as well as the profundity. The group work models choice for leaders, care and attention to detail and a way of 'travelling together differently' in discipleship.

These are recipes tried and tested with the local community, so Robin and Sue practise what they preach. I wish it had been around for the twenty-something deaconess to use in Confirmation preparation all those years ago.

*The Venerable Sheila Watson
Archdeacon of Canterbury*

Preface

We offer this handbook as:

- 1 A resource to be used and adapted by clergy, Readers and all – ecumenically where possible – who have responsibility for developing faith in local churches, corporate and personal.
- 2 Ten short chapters by Robin, to be used by anyone leading or participating in a faith-development course. Written especially within an Anglican situation, we hope this material may connect with a wide variety of Christians.
- 3 Ten learning processes by Sue, opening up the themes of each chapter in conversation, prayer, creativity and hospitality.

For six years, in a modern catholic setting, we have worked together within a wider team on learning processes for the local church community serving the entire neighbourhood. We are proud, at the outset, to own faith in God who, as loving and outward-facing interrelation, is among us and constantly working in the world. This Trinitarian God we worship and serve in community and public life shapes our way of practising Christian community as inherently mutual.

Our understanding of mission, Church, discipleship, human maturity and Eucharist speaks of abundance and blessing, as God's gifts given in community. As faithful witnesses we are called to seek the welfare of every situation in which we are placed, an advance sign of God's final hope for creation.

Inevitably, then, we challenge and offer an alternative to individualistic and adversarial accounts of Christian faith and human solidarity. Our approach, rooted in Scripture and reflection on Christ's presence in all the particulars of life, takes as its background canvas God's work in the world characterized as generous, open and engaged. The baseline for this handbook is the belief that God's people exist as a learning, pilgrim community in which *everyone is a contributor, whatever his or her role*. Figure 1 (overleaf) shows key elements of this.

So this is the viewpoint from which we advocate a eucharistically shaped Mission within the Anglican tradition. We hope that others will be able to find encouragement here too, even though your view may be from a different point. In our own local church community we offer a variety of forms of worship, especially for those who are seeking faith. But we recognize how much we are formed by the radical openness of the Eucharist, and want to commend to others the work of

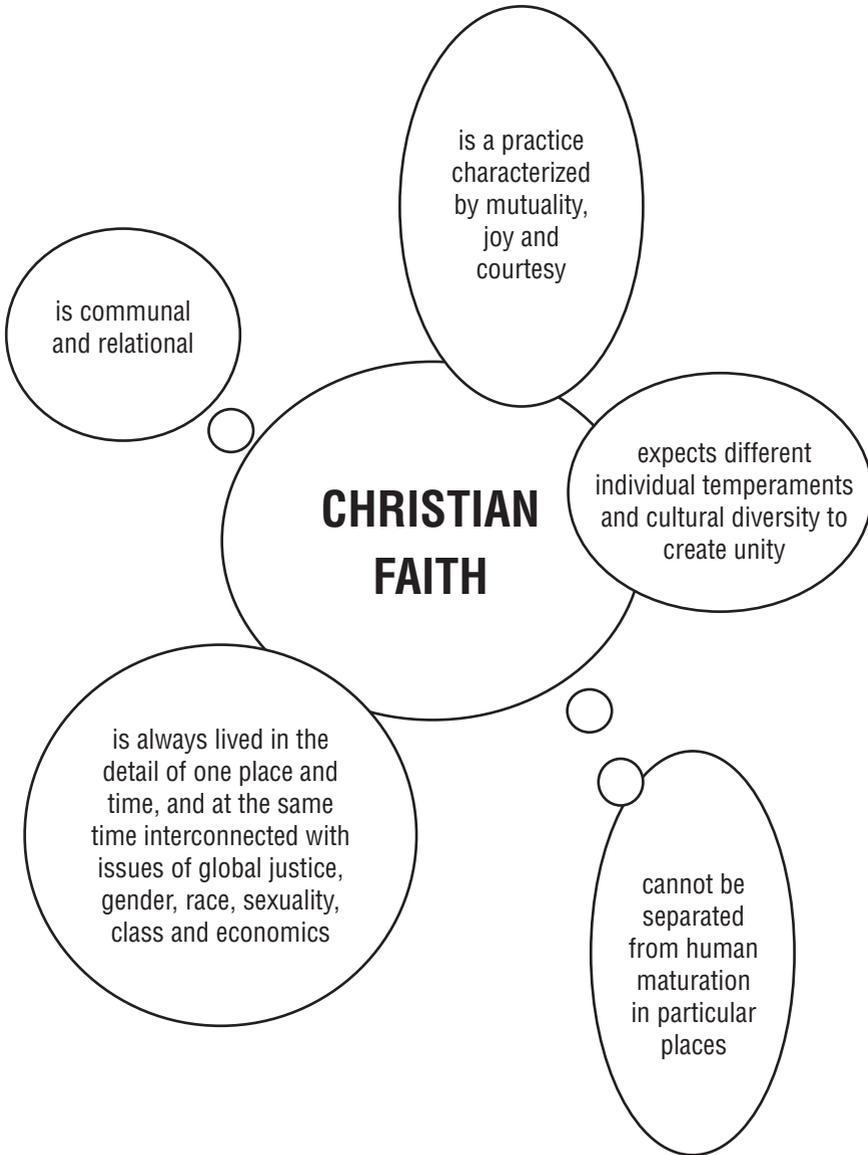


Figure 1: The faith of a learning pilgrim community

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building on the tradition we have received, developing and adapting it in ever new circumstances.

We're not offering here a commentary on the Eucharist itself but discovering in the shape of the eucharistic celebration the entire meaning of Christian discipleship and mission. The eucharistic practice of early churches, as communities of the resurrection in many different locations, was formed long before the first words of the New Testament were written.

As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians, the essential dimensions of the Eucharist are a distillation of all that it means to be a Christian community, serving God's purposes (1 Cor. 11.23–end). The habits formed in the eucharistic celebration take many shapes, through immersion in and constant redevelopment of this tradition handed on to us 'from the Lord' (1 Cor. 11.23).

We invite people in church communities to dare to grow further into intimacy with God and participate in the coming of God's kingdom for the world.

The sessions

These sessions offer practical encouragement to local churches to be creative in deepening the corporate practice of Christian Hope. For some this may be:

- the first chance of this kind ever;
- the time to renew the commitment of Confirmation;
- the journey towards Confirmation;
- the chance to be converted again;
- the gateway to journeys of faith not yet imagined;
- the opportunity to evaluate the life and work of their church.

Robin's particular contribution lies in the brief chapters, while Sue's mainly lies in helping leaders and group members to reflect on them, as a stimulus for their own growth in faith. Sue writes: 'These sessions are for willing workers who struggle a bit with making what is in their hearts a reality.'

Churches and individuals could use this handbook in several ways. First, in a group, alone or as a church, depending on numbers, you could simply read and reflect on the chapters, which offer a rapid framework of Christian community belief and practice. Second, clergy, Readers or lay leaders could make choices from the practical ideas for learning to create a discipleship, Confirmation or Lent course. Whoever is leading – preferably not alone – could plan to use both the chapters and the sessions to stimulate learning in the church community.

