

# CHRIST CHURCH COURSES

## LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH

### SESSION 1: What does the church believe?

**Learning Aim:** by the end of the session participants will have a good understanding of the current teaching of the Church of England by considering the statement of faith of the Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC).

**Pastoral aim:** that the group have explored the wider belief of the Church of England as a context for discussions about being human, marriage, sexuality and gender. Discussion of these specific issues will therefore be deferred to later sessions.

#### CONTENTS

1. Introduction and welcome (5m)
2. Aims and structure of session (5m)
3. Story Time (5m)
4. CEEC statement of faith (5m)
5. Introduction to statement (8m)
6. God (8m)
7. Bible (8m)
8. Atonement (8m)
9. Church (8m)
10. Sacraments (7m)\*
11. Ministry (7m)\*
12. Christ's return (8m)

## LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH

0. Engaging Well

1. **What does the church believe?**
2. The Beautiful story 1
3. The Beautiful Story 2
4. Living out the Beautiful Story
5. The case for change
6. Implications of change
7. Gender

## **13. Lordship of Christ (8m)**

### **1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME**

In the last session we looked at ways in which we can both engage well and create a safe space to explore the sensitive issues of being human, marriage, sex and gender.

The purpose of this session is to lay out and explore the wider biblical narrative that informs the doctrine and belief of the Church of England. This will provide context for the specific discussions we will have later in the course.

Much of what we discuss will be accepted and agreed. Some may not. As throughout the course, we seek the Lord's face and a clear understanding of his will and ways.

**Let us pray.....**

***We pray Come Holy Spirit. Grant us the openness to hear your voice. The wisdom to discern through your voice, your command and your heart. The humility to receive, to be challenged and to see things afresh as you lead us. In the name of your Son, our savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.***

### **2. AIMS AND STRUCTURE OF THIS SESSION**

The primary resource in this session is the Statement of Faith of the Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC). To discern the belief of the Church of England would require us to look at the "formularies of the church" that ordained ministers affirm in their declarations when they are ordained or licensed to ministry. These are:

- the Book of Common Prayer
- The 39 Articles of Religion
- Canon law
- the other authorized liturgy of the church

The contents of these documents are encapsulated and underpin in the statements of faith of Church of England churches and in umbrella organisations such as the CEEC. Reviewing the Statement of Faith therefore is one way to answer the question – *What does the Church of England believe?*

In this session we will work through the statement with the aim of doing 3 things:

- seeking clarity about what the Church of England believes

- thinking through practical and pastoral implications for members of the Church of England; and
- any implications for churches

### **3. STORY TIME 1: Laura and Stephen**

Laura and Stephen share what it is like to face the struggles of life as a married couple. Watch Laura and Stephen's story at <https://llf.churchofengland.org/mod/videotime/view.php?id=583>

### **4. CEEC STATEMENT OF FAITH**

The Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC) is a body created by John Stott in 1960 to provide a "collective Evangelical voice within the Church of England". Its stated priorities are: *"... to encourage evangelism, bible-based and Christ-centered formation of discipleship, evangelical leadership within the Church of England, and evangelical unity within and outside Anglicanism"*

The Statement of Faith can be found at <http://www.ceec.info/basis-of-faith.html>

Watch the video that comes with this session and stop for discussion at each discussion point.

### **5. INTRODUCTION**

1. As members of the Church of England within the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church we affirm the faith uniquely revealed in the holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, of which the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion are a general exposition. Standing in the Reformation tradition we lay especial emphasis on the grace of God - his unmerited mercy - as expressed in the doctrines that follow.

*Do you think that faith is uniquely revealed in scripture?*

*Have you read the 39 Articles of religion? How important do you think they are to the faith of the Church of England?*

*Do you "stand in the Reformation tradition"?*

*How important is grace to you in your faith?*

*What do you think of when you hear the word "doctrine"?*

### **6. God**

2. **God as the Source of Grace** - In continuity with the teaching of Holy Scripture and the Christian creeds, we worship one God in three persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God has created all things, and us in his own image: all life, truth, holiness and beauty come from him. His Son Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, was crucified, died, rose and ascended to reign in glory.

**<sup>4</sup> May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Cor 13:14)**

*Are there any of these statements that trouble you?*

*What does it mean to be "made in God's image"?*

*Do you believe that ALL life, truth, holiness and beauty come from him? What is our part in these things?*

*Who is Jesus and what did he do? Are you comfortable with these ideas?*

## **7. THE BIBLE**

3. **The Bible as the Revelation of Grace** - We receive the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the wholly reliable revelation and record of God's grace, given by the Holy Spirit as the true word of God written. The Bible has been given to lead us to salvation, to be the ultimate rule for Christian faith and conduct, and the supreme authority by which the Church must ever reform itself and judge its traditions.

**<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16)**

*Do you think that the bible is "the wholly reliable revelation and record of God's grace"?*

*Is the bible "the true word of God written"?*

*Is the bible "the supreme authority"? If not, what is instead?*

*How do you feel about the suggestion that the bible "contains all that is required for salvation" and is it the ultimate rule for Christian conduct?*

## **8. THE ATONEMENT**

4. **The Atonement as the Work of Grace** - We believe that Jesus Christ came to save lost sinners. Though sinless, he bore our sins, and their judgement, on the

cross, thus accomplishing our salvation. By raising Christ bodily from the dead, God vindicated him as Lord and Saviour and proclaimed his victory. Salvation is in Christ alone.

**<sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, (1 Cor 15:3-4)**

*Is salvation "In Christ Alone"?*

*How do you feel about the primary purpose of Jesus' incarnation being to "save lost sinners"?*

*Are you lost? OR Were you lost?*

*Was Jesus raised bodily? How did that vindicate him and save you?*

*How do you feel about this idea of atonement? (ie Jesus atoning for our sinfulness through his death).*

## **9. THE CHURCH**

5. **The Church as the Community of Grace** - We hold that the Church is God's covenant community, whose members, drawn from every nation, having been justified by grace through faith, inherit the promises made to Abraham and fulfilled in Christ. As a fellowship of the Spirit manifesting his fruit and exercising his gifts, it is called to worship God, grow in grace, and bear witness to him and his Kingdom. God's Church is one body and must ever strive to discover and experience that unity in truth and love which it has in Christ, especially through its confession of the apostolic faith and in its observance of the dominical sacraments.

**To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: (1 Cor 1:2)**

*How do you feel about church as a "covenant community" that has "inherited promises"?*

*Are we a fellowship of the Spirit manifesting fruit?*

*Should we "worship God, grow in grace and bear witness"?*

*How important is it to strive for truth and love that we have in Christ?*

*Should confession of apostolic faith be a priority?*

## **10. THE SACRAMENTS**

6. **The Sacraments as the Signs of Grace** - We maintain that the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion proclaim the Gospel as effective and visible signs of our justification and sanctification, and as true means of God's grace to those who repent and believe. **Baptism** is the sign of forgiveness of sin, the gift of the Spirit, new birth to righteousness and entry into the fellowship of the People of God. **Holy Communion** is the sign of the living, nourishing presence of Christ through his Spirit to his people: the memorial of his one, perfect, completed and all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, from whose achievement all may benefit but in whose offering none can share; and an expression of our corporate life of sacrificial thanksgiving and service.

**<sup>16</sup> John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16-17) ...<sup>19</sup> And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19)**

*Are the sacraments a true means of God's grace **only** to "those who believe and repent"? How important is this requirement to access grace?*

*How important to you is the idea that baptism is about "new birth"?*

*How sacrificial is Holy Communion in thanksgiving and service? Is it what God gives to us or what we offer to him?*

## **11. MINISTRY**

7. **Ministry as the Stewardship of Grace** - We share, as the People of God, in a royal priesthood common to the whole Church, and in the community of the Suffering Servant. Our mission is the proclamation of the Gospel by the preaching of the word, as well as by caring for the needy, challenging evil and promoting justice and a more responsible use of the world's resources. It is the particular vocation of bishops and presbyters, together with deacons, to build up the body of Christ in truth and love, as pastors, teachers, and servants of the servants of God.

**<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)**

*Should the People of God (ie you and I!) share the "royal priesthood common to the whole church"?*

*How do you feel about the fourfold mission – proclamation, caring, justice and stewardship?*

*Are clergy called to "build up the body of Christ in truth and love"? What does this mean practically?*

## **12. CHRIST'S RETURN**

8. **Christ's Return as the Triumph of Grace** - We look forward expectantly to the final manifestation of Christ's grace and glory when he comes again to raise the dead, judge the world, vindicate His chosen and bring his Kingdom to its eternal fulfilment in the new heaven and the new earth.

**12 "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.....17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" (Revelation 22:12-13, 17)**

*How expectant are you of Christ's return?*

*Do you believe that you will be vindicated and that the Kingdom will be fulfilled? What does that look like?*

## **13. LORDSHIP OF CHRIST**

### **Additional Declarations (Taken from the Constitution)**

1. (4.1.1.) We gladly proclaim and submit to the unique and universal Lordship of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, humanity's only Saviour from sin, judgement and hell, who lived the life we could not live and died the death that we deserve. By his atoning death and glorious resurrection, he secured the redemption of all who come to him in repentance and faith.

**<sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and**

**under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:8-11)**

*Do you gladly proclaim and submit to Christ as Lord?*

*How do you feel about the idea that he "lived the life we could not live"?*

**Next time:** we will begin to look at what the Church of England currently teaches about being human, marriage, sexuality and gender by looking at the CEEC video *The Beautiful Story*.