



The 39 Articles of Convergence Faith and Practices

Unity in essentials.
Diversity in matters of doubt.
Love in all things.
- The Dictum

It is our belief that there is a multitude of valid expressions of Christ's Church. We are following God's call to us to provide an expression of His Church that holds certain core beliefs and distinctions centered around the convergence of the primary historical streams of Sacramental, Evangelical, and Charismatic theology. The particular blend of these historic streams is expressed through the ministry of The Canonical Order of Chaplains. An acknowledgment of the value and some specific expression of each are necessary for membership in this family.

The Sacramental Stream: emphasizing the sacramental presence of God through liturgy and rites, symbolism and signs, orthodoxy, preservation of historical episcopacy, and a historical view of the church. While honoring God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, the sacramental worship emphasis is upon God the Father. The Sacramental Stream, demonstrating spirituality through ministry to human needs and material signs and symbols.

The Evangelical Stream: emphasizing salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ through personal conversion, the authority of Scripture, theological intellectualism, evangelicalism, the importance of preaching as contrasted with ritual, and a reformational view of the church. While honoring God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, the evangelical worship emphasis is on God the Son. The Evangelical Stream is a ministry proclaiming the Gospel, and emphasizing the importance of proclaiming biblical truth to the world around us.

The Charismatic Stream: emphasizing the free expression of the gifts and person of the Holy Spirit, especially in expressive praise and in miraculous signs and wonders, practical theology, and focus on life and ministry in the Spirit, and an informal New Testament view of the church. While honoring God the Father and God the Son, the charismatic worship emphasis is upon God the Holy Spirit. The Charismatic Stream is a ministry of the ministry of the Gospel, emphasizing miraculous personal experience with God through His word and power. (From *The Sound of Rushing Waters*, used by permission of the author.)

Therefore, the beliefs, teachings and practices of the Canonical Order of Chaplains are base in the Holy Scriptures. God's people have believed that it is fundamental to live by each word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Mathew 4:4). These Articles of Convergence truths are intended simply to be a basis of communion among us (i.e., that we all speak the same thing, (I Corinthians 1:10, Acts 2:42).

We should consider the Order of Chaplains is a Spirit-led body of believers and, thus, we are exhorted to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). The Spirit of God leads the Order of Chaplains into all truth (John 16:13). Accordingly, these articles are not a closed creed. We are constantly renewing our commitment to truth and deeper understanding and respond to God's guidance in our beliefs and practices.

1. HOLY SCRIPTURE

The bible is the Father's "God-breathed" revelation. It is valid for all cultures throughout all generations as the ultimate rule of faith and conduct. God's written Word is to be the Church's supreme authority in all matters of doctrine, tradition and practice.

2. THE CHURCH

There is only one, holy, universal and apostolic Church. Its membership includes all people of all generations who have confessed Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

3. CHURCH HISTORY

Each generation since the day of Pentecost has contained a remnant of God's people who have faithfully served Jesus as Lord. We belong to a "holy nation and royal priesthood" that has continued uninterrupted since the days of the apostles. It is important that we appreciate the spiritual insights and godly example of each generation that has gone before us in Christ.

4. UNITY

It is Christ's desire that His Church be one "even as He and the Father are one." Therefore, unity must be the active desire of all Christians. Our identity in Christ must always take pre-eminence over our affiliation. True Christian unity requires both substance and form. Its foundation is the Father's revelation that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God," and its parameters are the tenets of historic orthodoxy.

5. ORTHODOXY

The historic faith, "once for all entrusted to the saints," is faithfully expressed in the Church's historic creeds: The Apostles' Creed, The Nicene Creed, and the Creed of St. Athanasius. These creeds are to be fully received as trustworthy expressions of orthodox Christian faith.

6. SUBSTANCE AND STRUCTURE

The substance of the gospel message must always take precedence over the structure of the Church. As the Father freshly pours out His "new wine" in each generation, the "wineskin" of Church structure must be sufficiently flexible to contain it. It is a form of idolatry whenever the Church's structure becomes more important than the message it is meant to contain.

7. RENEWAL, EVANGELISM, AND REVIVAL

Renewal occurs when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the Church. Evangelism occurs when the Holy Spirit is poured out through the Church into the world. Revival occurs when the seeds planted through evangelism sprout and produce a harvest of repentance and conversion. The Church must never be content unless there is a constant stream and ever-present experience of renewal, evangelism and revival.

8. WORSHIP

The Church's worship is meant to be:

- 1. Sacramental**

("Do this in remembrance of Me...")

- 2. Evangelical**

("Teach what is in accord with sound doctrine ...")

- 3. Charismatic**

("Eagerly desire spiritual gifts...")

All of these unique aspects of worship are to be fully expressed in the whole realm of the Church's life. None of these elements is to be over-emphasized and none is to be neglected.

9. SACRAMENTAL WORSHIP

A calibration of the Holy Nature of God and His alter. Sacramental expressions (outward and visible signs of spiritual realities) are integral to human nature and speak to the deepest part of the human spirit. They are therefore necessary for appropriating the fullness of God's grace. While those sacraments instituted by Christ Himself, namely, Holy Communion and baptism, are to take pre-eminence, other sacramental expressions such as the anointing with oil, the laying on of hands, altar calls, candles, confession and absolution, the arts, and dance can be used to inspire faith and should be commonly practiced.

10. EVANGELICAL WORSHIP

An evangelical emphasis in worship promotes the dynamic preaching and teaching of God's Word and accentuates the primacy and necessity of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ in the life of every believer. The advancement of Scriptural literacy guards sacramental worship from superstition and helps balance the subjective experiences of charismatic worship with the objective truth of God's written Word.

11. CHARISMATIC WORSHIP

We welcome and anticipate the Holy Spirit's participation in our worship through the manifestation of His Shekinah Glory and His spiritual gifts. All supernatural manifestations should be exercised in an orderly way for the common good and should be weighed carefully in order to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God."

12. BAPTISM

Holy baptism is the sacramental seal of our covenant relationship with the Lord, "the pledge of a good conscience towards God". We are to obey Christ's command to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". Infant baptism was universally practiced by the Church for 1500 years before the Reformation and is fully consistent with the principles of Holy Scripture. Accordingly, infant baptism is to be continued and encouraged. At the same time, a public reaffirmation of one's baptism at the time of conscious conversion is also appropriate and not contrary to the Scriptural concept of "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. The sacramental sign of water, through pouring or immersion, should accompany baptismal reaffirmation.

13. THE LORDS SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is one of the primary means of receiving God's grace and power because it is a "participation in Christ's body and blood." While the transformation of the bread and wine is a Divine Sacramental Mystery rather than physical in nature, the Real Presence of Christ is truly experienced in the receiving, by faith, of Holy Communion.

The consecration, blessing, and presentation of the host and cup is held in the office of the Bishop and given to those Priests and Deacons who serve.

Scripture gives no restrictions on who may preside at the Lord's Table but rather gives the command, "do this as often as you drink it". We, at the same time, understand that God has placed authority into the Church for the edifying of the body. We understand that blessing flows from the head to all of the body.

Thus, presiding over the Lord's Supper is at the Bishop's blessing and for those Priests and Deacons who serve. For the sake of order, congregational members should not lead a service of Holy Communion beyond their present sphere of leadership and blessing.

- a. For instance, parents may receive the Consecrated Elements and celebrate communion within their families but not in a home church group;
- b. Recognized, and blessed, home church leaders may serve the Consecrated Elements within their home groups but not in a service of public worship;
- c. Bishops and Priests should preside at the Lord's Table whenever the whole community gathers together to "proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again".
- d. For the sake of necessity as needed when no Consecrated Elements are available we refer to the ancient church fathers who saw the need for grace and allowed for it's distribution. We can do no less.

14. ABSOLUTION

The spoken assurance of God's forgiveness to a penitent sinner is of great comfort and should not be restricted to the ministry of the Priesthood. We should all "confess our sins to one another" and be confident in pronouncing God's absolution of sin to anyone who truly repents and turns to Christ for forgiveness.

15. DELIVERANCE

The casting out of demons is an important part of Christ's commission to all believers. There is no Scriptural foundation for restricting this ministry to a selected few within a congregation or a diocese. However, wisdom and discernment must always be exercised in this ministry and the ordained leadership of the Church should correct those who abuse this ministry.

16. THE NEW BIRTH

Being born again is essential to "entering the kingdom of heaven" and is the spiritual experience that sacrament of Baptism symbolizes. The New Birth occurs when the Holy Spirit regenerate us. Then, there is:

1. A conscious turning away from sin, the world and the devil.
[Repentance]
2. A conscious turning to Jesus for forgiveness, acceptance and eternal life. [Faith]
3. A conscious turning over of our lives to the Father in complete submission and surrender. [Obedience]

In the New Birth, we "become new creations in Christ," and are "sealed by the Holy Spirit," and receive "the gift of eternal life".

17. BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the biblical description of a deep, personal encounter with the Holy Spirit. The result is an inner assurance of salvation, an increased power to witness for Christ, and the supernatural manifestation of spiritual gifts. It is an experience subsequent to and separate from the New Birth, though both can be experienced together as was the case for Cornelius's household and the disciples at Ephesus.

18. Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The following list comprises what the Bible commonly calls the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the order listed, as translated in the King James Version, they are:

- the word of wisdom
- the word of knowledge
- faith
- gifts of healing
- the working of miracles
- prophecy
- discerning of spirits
- divers kinds of tongues
- the interpretation of tongues

Some would require that Christians manifest a particular gift, such as speaking in tongues, as evidence of a deeper work of the Spirit within. Others would have us believe such a gift is no longer available or acceptable.

We give God sovereignty, and hold to a belief that does not allow us either to require a certain gift or to restrict the Holy Spirit in how He will work. Rather, we call upon all Christians to open their lives to God's Holy Spirit to fill, empower, and "gift" each person as He sees fit.

We affirm the gifts of God's Holy Spirit as biblically valid for today, and advise that they be exercised under the guidance of God's Word and the authority of the local church. Since the Holy Spirit is the source of Christian unity, we must ever guard against any use of the gifts, which would lead to division within the Church.

19. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Neither the new birth nor the baptism in the Holy Spirit produces in and of themselves the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control come as a result of "abiding in Christ" and continually "sowing to please the Spirit".

20. LOVE

All the commandments of God are summed up in the word, "Love". Firstly, we are commanded to love God with our whole being, with a passion unrivalled by anything else. Secondly, we are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves, "doing unto others as we would have them do to us". The extent to which these commandments are being fulfilled in our lives is an accurate measure of our closeness to Christ.

21. HOLINESS

Holiness is the aim of all true believers. While salvation is a free gift of God's grace, we are not to return to our sin as "a dog returns to its vomit". Worldliness and sinfulness are to be shunned; godliness and purity are to be embraced through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are to "purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God".

22. THE SINFUL NATURE

We are sinful beings by means of both nature and choice: by nature through our inheritance of Adam's fallen nature and by choice through our own willful rebellion and disobedience. While we do receive the indwelling Spirit of Christ in the new birth, we do not lose our sinful nature, causing a continual warfare within between "the flesh and the Spirit". Perfect holiness is possible through continual obedience to the Spirit's prompting but we must always recognize that the sinful nature will manifest its desires whenever "our minds are not set on what the Spirit desires".

23. THE FAMILY

God establishes order and authority for our protection and the peaceful operation of societal relationships. God's order in the family is in no way a reflection of inequality of value or differing levels of worth. God's revealed will for the family is that of parental authority over children and the headship of the husband in relation to his wife. The husband's headship is expressed in self-sacrificing leadership and tenderhearted love, looking to Christ's headship over the Church as his example. The wife's role is to respond in loving submission to her husband's leadership in everything that is consistent with godliness and holiness of life. The husband is never to misuse his authority for selfish ends and the wife should under no circumstances disobey God's command in order to submit to her husband. Together the husband and wife are to exercise God's protective authority over their children, the father being primarily responsible for the children's spiritual

care and training. Children are to honour their parents and obey them in all things consistent with holiness and righteousness of life.

24. MARRIAGE

Marriage is a gift from God wherein a man and a woman “become one flesh”. The purpose of Christian marriage is:

1. The hallowing of the union between man and woman
2. The mutual comfort, companionship and complement the one is to the other;
3. The creation of family for the nurture, care and upbringing of children;
4. The modeling to the world of Christ’s relationship with His Church.

It is the only relationship given by God in which sexual affection is to be expressed.

25. DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

The Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches and The Canonical Order of Chaplains agree that the life of our past and old sinful nature is washed away by the Blood of Jesus. In Him all things are made new, so Divorce in the lives of our members before salvation is buried with the Old Man/Woman at baptism. Each of us is raised as a New Man/Woman living in Christ. It is recognized that many will be borne into the Church having experienced divorce and remarriage for a wide variety of reasons; they are to be warmly welcomed into the fellowship of Christ’s body as “new creations in Christ”.

As Christians, the Scriptural reasons for the dissolution of marriage are death, adultery and abandonment. It is our opinion that sins of malevolence* is also the abandonment of the vows of marriage. For the good of all separation, and/or divorce would be advised. Only under these circumstances is a partner free to end the covenantal commitment and pursue remarriage.

*The world created by God had suffered an estrangement from him, an estrangement chosen by what he had created. This estrangement, this sin, was not a mere irritant or blemish. At its core it is malevolence, the direct movement toward what is evil and a rejection of what is good: at its core it rejects goodness at its source; it detests God and hence becomes detestable itself. It is the only thing in creation that is irreconcilable with God. Most of the malevolence that we as human beings encounter is

mixed with weakness, confusion, error, and ignorance, and therefore its full nature and its aversion from God are obscured from us, (until it manifests its nature in relationships), Most of the sin we encounter is blended with mitigation and excuses, so that what it is is not clearly disclosed to us. ("It's not that he wanted this terrible thing; he only wanted something else, something quite reasonable, and this is how it turned out").

Eucharistic Presence: A Study in the Theology of Disclosure.

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http://books.google.com/books?id=C5oAgq3aKIC&pg=PA60&lpg=PA60&dq=Sins+Of+Malevolence&source=bl&ots=8Q8NRQHPZn&sig=LUldAGleFOMkOJjk7VbBttlYnFU&hl=en&ei=XnvYStDhDYuk8Ab6nPW2BQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CBEO6AEwAg-v=onepage&q=Sins+Of+Ma

26. HOMOSEXUALITY

The CEEC extends their hands to the Gay and Lesbian community as Christ would, In Matthew 11:28 Jesus gives humanity this invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." As Christ, the Church is God's arm of deliverance. God hates all sin but loves all sinners, and desires all of us to come to Him and receive forgiveness and deliverance from our sins and receive new life in Christ that is holy and righteous.

God has a deep love for all who are in a homosexual orientation and lifestyle. His desire is that they would know His love and be set free through knowledge of His truth. The homosexual orientation is an orientation toward sin and cannot be affirmed in membership, marriage, and ordination. To all who turn from sin and trust in Christ, there is complete forgiveness, healing for sexual brokenness, and a new beginning in the Father's grace and love.

27. ABORTION

Human life begins at the moment of conception and must be accorded the same dignity and respect due to all who bear the "image of God". The willful termination of the life of an unborn baby for any reason whatsoever is sin. The Father's heart grieves for the multitude of children whose lives have been prematurely ended through the horror of abortion. His heart also cries out for those men and women who have become captives to guilt and judgment through their involvement in this sin. It is His desire that they come to knowledge of the truth and turn to Christ for healing and forgiveness. It is imperative that the Church expose the deceit of abortion, call for national repentance, and secure the institution of laws which protect the unborn.

(Surgical procedures for conditions such as ectopic pregnancy and uterine cancer are not considered abortions either medically or morally.)

28. ABSOLUTES

Moral and theological absolutes flow out of the character and revelation of the Eternal God who is “the same yesterday, today and forever” and “does not change like shifting shadows”. The claim that there are no moral absolutes and that all truth is relative is not only false and absurd, it denies the very nature of God who is the source of absolute truth. Personal perception of reality is not to be confused with or equated to the Scriptural concept of objective, eternal truth.

29. SYNCRETISM AND PLURALISM

Syncretism (the blending together of world religions) and Pluralism (the giving of equal value to all world religions as paths of salvation) are concepts that are in direct opposition to the plain teaching of Holy Scripture. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” The Acts of the Apostles makes it clear that the Name of Jesus is the only “name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved”. Similarly the apostle Paul teaches that if salvation could be attained through the observance of religious laws and rituals “Christ died for nothing”. Syncretism and Pluralism are not new temptations for the people of God. High places for the worship of Baal, the Assyrian altar in the temple of God, Solomon’s downfall, and a host of other biblical examples demonstrate that this “new age” philosophy is simply an old evil dressed up in a new guise.

30. MODERN BIBLICAL CRITICISM

With the exception of textual criticism, the academic disciplines of higher biblical criticism are largely theoretical and speculative and should be viewed as such. Moreover, modern biblical criticism has provided a stronghold for the undermining of Scriptural authority and consequently a foundation for the present apostasy in many Churches. Bible colleges and theological seminaries, whose basis of Scriptural teaching is source, form, and redaction criticism, should not be considered for ministry preparation or financial support.

31. HEAVEN AND HELL

Jesus Christ will visibly return to earth at which time every human being will stand before God’s throne of judgment. Those “names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” will enter the New Jerusalem and eternally enjoy a pure

and undefiled relationship with God. Those whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life will be "thrown into the lake of fire," a place of eternal torment prepared for the devil and his angels.

32. LITURGY

Written liturgies are helpful for preserving orthodoxy in theology, balance in worship, and a common, united focus in prayer. The use of a modernized form of the "Book of Common Prayer" is recommended but not meant to be restrictive. Other liturgies and new liturgical rites may also be used provided they meet the standards of Biblical orthodoxy. While it is recommended that written liturgy be the basic framework for public worship, there are times when a "scaled down" liturgy or no liturgy at all is also appropriate.

33. VESTMENTS

Traditional vestments can have positive and negative effects. For some, they help create an atmosphere of awe and reverence toward God. For others, they appear archaic and lack sacramental relevance for our present culture. Thus, the use of all vestments should be left to the discretion of the presiding minister in accordance with the goals of the service at hand.

34. THE CHURCH YEAR

The major days, preparatory seasons of the Church Year and the Hebrew feasts should be celebrated in some measure to ensure an annual reminder of the major tenets of Christian faith and its Old Testament roots. The worship themes of all other Sundays, weekdays and seasons of the year may be determined by the needs of the congregation concerned.

35. LIFE GROUPS (HOME CHURCHES)

Small home fellowships of seven to fourteen people are to be the foundational units of the Church's structure. As much as possible the, churches discipleship, pastoral care, evangelism and ministries should flow from within the home church structure.

36. ORDINATION

Preparation for ordination should emphasize both "formation" and "information". Candidates for Holy Orders should work towards whatever educational level is appropriate for them: private study, Bible College, Bachelor's degree, Master's Degree, or Doctoral Studies. The main training for ordination should incorporate an apprenticeship model and take place within a congregational setting.

37. THE DIACONATE

Although the title “deacon” is not used in Acts Chapter 6, the ministry of deacons can rightfully be traced back to this servanthood ministry in the life of the early Church. Thus, the diaconate should not be seen as a temporary order or an apprenticeship for the Priesthood. It is a permanent order for those who are specifically called to mercy ministries to the poor and needy in the Christian community.

38. WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

The ideal leadership model in the New Testament is a team ministry that blends together differing strengths and God-given gifting. Women are not to be excluded from this for it is clear, both biblically and experientially, that God gives the gift of leadership to both men and women. The only restriction placed on women’s ministry in the Scriptures is the way in which it is to be exercised in relation to men. Leadership in the Church family is to reflect God’s order in the natural family, with men assuming the role of headship. In practice this means:

1. Women are not restricted from ordination in the Church.
2. Team leadership that includes both male and female presbyters should be encouraged in the life of the congregation.
3. Offices requiring headship, namely “Rector and “Bishop,” are to be exercised by men.

39. FIVE-FOLD MINISTRY

God has established five main leadership Ministries (Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, and Teacher) to “prepare God’s people for works of service”. Wherever possible, new staff members should be chosen with this five-fold leadership gifting in mind.

These articles are a compilation of Convergent faith and practice.
Compiled and edited by Bishop David Scott.
They are intended to provoke reasoned thought and discussion
to help bring definition and clarity to the Convergence Movement.
Your thoughts and comments are welcome
These articles are not intended to replace
The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, established in 1563,