

Licensed Lay Ministry Course: A Personal Testimony

The Book of Common Prayer is the big tent we Episcopalians worship under every Sunday. From small rural parishes to suburban mid-size congregations to historic inner-city cathedrals, on any given Sunday we can expect to find Episcopalians everywhere opening to page 355 (“the dirty page”) to begin Holy Eucharist II. But the Book of Common Prayer is much more than just the rite of Holy Eucharist.

Beginning in February of 2019, a diverse group of lay people from across the Diocese of Florida came together for the first course to license Lay Worship Leaders & Catechists. We are twenty members, some cradle Episcopalian, and some from other denominations. Some of us are young, others young in spirit. Several of our members have been previously licensed in other dioceses as worship leaders or preachers. All of us seek to serve our parishes as lay worship leaders.

Our study began with the Old and New Testament, their use in the lectionary cycles, and Anglican and Episcopal church history. We explored what we believe by looking at the creeds, the catechism, and the rites of Baptism and Confirmation, all found in the prayer book. We then examined the services that can be led by a lay person: Compline, Morning, Noon and Evening Prayer, and the wealth of prayers and thanksgivings suitable for most any occasion. When we return after summer break, we will conclude with a study of the Liturgical Year and Prayer.

At the conclusion of the course in December, each of us will be better prepared to plan worship, lead Morning Prayer if required on Sunday, and to better explain and practice our faith. Best of all, we are forming friendships with people we might never have known. These relationships will continue to be a source for sharing and problem solving the worship challenges facing our respective congregations across Northern Florida.

Gail Larson,
Communicant, St Mary's, Green Cove Springs