



# Church of the Southern Cross

A Member Diocese of the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches (CEE C)

## Apostolic Succession

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### The Ministry in the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches

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Today, catholic believing Christians believe that the successors of the apostles are the bishops of the Church. We are an Episcopal (Anglican) branch of the Church. The word Episcopal literally means governed by bishops. The bishops of the Church are to safeguard her unity, doctrine, worship and discipline. It is their responsibility, or their delegates, to shepherd and administer the Church until the Lord returns. In the local church, the pastor is charged by the bishop with the role of shepherding and administering the flock of Christ entrusted to them.

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### **The Sacrament of Holy Orders in the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches**

A sacrament is an action performed by the Church through its sacramental ministers in the community of the faithful. The sacraments were ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ to convey a specific gift of His grace to the recipient. To be even more precise, it is God Himself, who acts through the minister of the sacrament.

This means that the sacrament is effective in and of itself. It is God who not only has ordained that the gift be given, but who, in fact, gives it. The Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches holds to and practices the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Since the earliest days of the Christian Church, there have been specific orders of ministers in the Church. St. Mark 3:14 says, "And He appointed twelve, whom He also named apostles, to be with Him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message." These orders we still know today as bishop, presbyter (priest) and deacon; and each has specific and well-defined functions within the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. God calls out certain of His followers to represent Him in this unique way. Ordination into any of these orders is accomplished by the proper prayers and the laying on of hands of a bishop.

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The Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches believes that the ministry is a gift of God through Christ to His church, which He has given for the perfecting of the life and service of all its members. The Church as a whole is a priestly body, since it is the Body of Christ, the great High Priest. All its members, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, share in its priestly nature. Yet from the beginning, God has entrusted particular ministries to particular persons within it, and these have, through the Church, received the commission of Christ.

The ordained ministry of the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches consists of bishops, priests and deacons. In accepting this ministry, the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches desires to maintain continuity with the historic ministry of the Church as it has come down to us from early times through what is commonly known as the historic apostolic succession. An ordination service is the sacramental rite by which one of these ministries is conferred. It is an act of God in His Church. The Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches believes that in all ordinations and consecrations the One who truly ordains and consecrates is God, who through the words and acts of a bishop in the apostolic succession, along with other representatives, and in response to the prayers of His Church, ordains, commissions and empowers for the office and work to which they are called the persons whom it has selected.

In the earliest ordination of which we have record, that described in Acts 6:1-6, the following parts appear: election by the people, prayer and the laying on of apostolic hands. This pattern describes for us the scriptural and historical authority for the essential elements in ordination services; the same three parts form the basis for every ordination in the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches:

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Prayer for those about to be ordained or consecrated, that they may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for their ministry and the laying on of hands of at least three bishops (in an Episcopal consecration), of the bishop and priests (in an ordination of priests), or of the bishop (in an ordination of deacons).

To these have been added an examination of the candidates concerning their beliefs and duties, proper vesting according to their order, the delivering to them of the instruments of their office, and the presentation and greeting of the newly ordained. The above three steps are the means used by the original apostles themselves and are still in use today. This is considered necessary for valid ordination, together with the correct intention on the part of the ordaining bishop. This is why the succession of bishops from the apostles down to our own day is so carefully guarded and maintained. In the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches we have been wonderfully blessed with a rich and variegated Apostolic Succession that connects us to many branches of the Apostolic Churches, both east and west.

### **Cyprian or Augustinian?**

When we look to the writings of the Fathers, we see that they not only affirmed but deeply believed in Apostolic Succession. Several of the Fathers wrote on the subject, fathers such as Clement, Ignatius, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Cyprian and Augustine. Each one of them, bringing to the Church a deeper and fuller understanding of what it means to be in continuity with the church of the apostles.

As time passed, those branches of the church that considered themselves to be within the historic apostolic succession identified with one of two schools of thought in regard to apostolic succession. One school of thought is grounded in the teaching of Cyprian, and is held today by the Eastern Orthodox Churches. The other understanding of apostolic succession is derived from Augustine and is held by the apostolic churches of the west. In the Western Church, based upon the teaching and influence of Augustine, a four-fold criterion was developed to determine the validity of the consecration of a bishop in the historic apostolic succession; three are exterior, the fourth is interior.

The four criteria are:

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In Western Christian thinking, if these criteria are met in a consecration, a bishop is within the apostolic succession. The Roman Catholic Church, the churches of the Anglican Communion, the Old Catholic Churches united by the Union of Utrecht, the Philippine Independent Church, the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, the United Churches of South India, North India, Pakistan and

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### **The Apostolic Succession In The Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches**

The Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches holds a succession of spiritual authority from the Apostles, perpetuated by a laying on of hands in consecrating our bishops, thus preserving and validating our sacraments and orders. This unbroken historic succession of apostolic authority and faith has been handed down through the centuries of Catholic Christianity to the present day one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, of which we are members. In the Communion we have been extremely blessed to receive a rich and variegated apostolic succession that has its roots in both the Eastern and Western branches of the Church. These lines of succession have helped root us deeply in the historic faith of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs and saints of every age. We will forever be gratefully indebted to those servants from which such a priceless gift has come. The Apostolic Succession of the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches is traced through the following branches of the church:

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The presentation of the candidates to one of the bishops, this being the last step in the process of choice of them by the church

Prayer for those about to be ordained or consecrated, that they may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for their ministry and the laying on of hands of at least three bishops (in an Episcopal consecration), of the bishop and priests (in an ordination of priests), or of the bishop (in an ordination of deacons).

To these have been added an examination of the candidates concerning their beliefs and duties, proper vesting according to their order, the delivering to them of the instruments of their office, and the presentation and greeting of the newly ordained. The above three steps are the means used by the original apostles themselves and are still in use today. This is considered necessary for valid ordination, together with the correct intention on the part of the ordaining bishop. This is why the succession of bishops from the apostles down to our own day is so carefully guarded and maintained. In the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches we have been wonderfully blessed with a rich and variegated Apostolic Succession that connects us to many branches of the Apostolic Churches, both east and west.

### **Cyprian or Augustinian?**

When we look to the writings of the Fathers, we see that they not only affirmed but deeply believed in Apostolic Succession. Several of the Fathers wrote on the subject, fathers such as Clement, Ignatius, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Cyprian and Augustine. Each one of them, bringing to the Church a deeper and fuller understanding of what it means to be in continuity with the church of the apostles.

As time passed, those branches of the church that considered themselves to be within the historic apostolic succession identified with one of two schools of thought in regard to apostolic succession. One school of thought is grounded in the teaching of Cyprian, and is held today by the Eastern Orthodox Churches. The other understanding of apostolic succession is derived from Augustine and is held by the apostolic churches of the west. In the Western Church, based upon the teaching and influence of Augustine, a four-fold criterion was developed to determine the validity of the consecration of a bishop in the historic apostolic succession; three are exterior, the fourth is interior.

The four criteria are:

- **Form:** The consecration must be done in the context of the Eucharistic liturgy to be valid. This is to emphasize the connection of the ordination within the community.
- **Matter:** There must be an actual laying on of hands by a bishop during the liturgy. Prayer is not sufficient in and of itself.
- **Minister:** The one who performs the consecration must be a validly consecrated bishop within the apostolic succession.
- **Intention:** The intent of the laying on of hands and the prayer within the liturgy must be to ordain or consecrate the person to hold orders.

In Western Christian thinking, if these criteria are met in a consecration, a bishop is within the apostolic succession. The Roman Catholic Church, the churches of the Anglican Communion, the Old Catholic Churches united by the Union of Utrecht, the Philippine Independent Church, the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, the United Churches of South India, North India, Pakistan and

Bangladesh, as well as other autocephalous Catholic bodies hold to the Augustinian understanding of Apostolic Succession.

The Eastern Orthodox Churches hold to Cyprian's view of Apostolic Succession; therefore Roman Catholics and Anglicans, as well as the others mentioned above are not necessarily accepted as being in the apostolic succession, although in practice the Orthodox church has received Roman Catholic priests without requiring them to be ordained in the Orthodox Church.

The Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches holds to the Augustinian view of Apostolic Succession. It meets the standard of the four criteria as developed in the Western Church, and stands with the other branches of the church catholic that are in the historic apostolic succession.

### **The Apostolic Succession In The Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches**

The Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches holds a succession of spiritual authority from the Apostles, perpetuated by a laying on of hands in consecrating our bishops, thus preserving and validating our sacraments and orders. This unbroken historic succession of apostolic authority and faith has been handed down through the centuries of Catholic Christianity to the present day one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, of which we are members. In the Communion we have been extremely blessed to receive a rich and variegated apostolic succession that has its roots in both the Eastern and Western branches of the Church. These lines of succession have helped root us deeply in the historic faith of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs and saints of every age. We will forever be gratefully indebted to those servants from which such a priceless gift has come. The Apostolic Succession of the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches is traced through the following branches of the church:

- Anglican
- Metropolitan-Archbishops of Albania
- Armenian Catholicate-Patriarchate of Cilicia-Catholic Uniate
- Patriarchate of Moscow, Greek Melkite
- Patriarchate of Antioch-Melkite Uniate
- Catholic/Patriarchate of Assyria (The East)
- Chaldean Patriarchate of Babylon of Baghdad-Chaldean Uniate
- Syrian "Jacobite" Patriarchate of Antioch
- Order for Corporate Reunion
- Antioch Orthodox Succession
- Roman Petrine Succession-the Roman Catholic Church of Brazil
- Holy Russian Orthodox Synod
- Roman Petrine Succession-Utrecht Old Catholic Church
- Ultrajectine
- Old Roman Catholic

*"Almighty God, Giver of every good gift; Look graciously on Your Church, and so guide those who shall be consecrated bishop, that the church may receive faithful pastors, who will care for your people and equip them for their ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."*