

FEAR LESS, HOPE MORE.

[FAITH & COURAGE INITIATIVE]

Jesus immediately said to them:
“Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

— Matthew 14:27



Christ Church Charlotte
CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them.

And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "**Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.**"

Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Matthew 14:22-34

Dear Friends,

What are you afraid of?

We spend so much time dodging and managing our fears. My own list ranges from irrational to agonizing and it seems as if there's something new to add daily. Yet there is a sacred element to fear as well, because –*if we're open to it*–fear will lead us to God. And God always leads us to hope.

The only way to cross the chasm from *fear* to *hope* is by *faith* and with *courage*. Faith is trust. It is an awareness of God at the center of life. And courage is the energy required to live out this faith. **The Faith & Courage Initiative** is a bold response by Christ Church to the pervasive fear in our hearts and world today. It is meant to help us fear less, hope more and live into God's dream as individuals and collectively as a parish.

This is where it begins. Consider this booklet your invitation to a flourishing faith and a sense of everyday courage. Spend time with it. Ponder the content deeply in your heart. Then join us in community as we seek to live the questions.

Love and blessings,



The Reverend Chip Edens

How to Use This Book

We have created this book as a resource for personal reflection and learning about fear, faith and courage. It asks important questions and introduces practices that lead us into a place of peace and hope.

You are invited to use it in your own way, whether as a part of your daily prayer time, around the dinner table with your family, or in a small group of faithful friends.

Center yourself in God's love and grace and pray for insight. Take time to read the questions and related scripture passages and reflect deeply. Write your answers in the book or simply ponder them in your heart. There is no "right" way to proceed; just commit to the practice and expect to be blessed in the process.

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EXPLORING FEAR

FEAR is a part of life.

What do you fear the most?

*Do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my
victorious right hand.*

— Isaiah 41:10

EXPLORING COURAGE

COURAGE is a gift God gives us when we have faith.

How do you find faith?

*Be strong and of good courage,
do not fear for the
Lord your God goes with you;
he will not fail you or forsake you.
— Deuteronomy 31:6*

EXPLORING HOPE


HOPE is the belief that God is with us
and will ultimately provide for us
with our participation and trust.

What gives you hope?

*May the God of hope
fill you with all joy
and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.
— Romans 15:13*

How We Experience Fear, Courage and Hope

FEAR	COURAGE	HOPE
normal part of life	cultivated in faith	given by God
•	•	•
loud, persistent	quiet, strong, convicting	resilient, powerful, inspiring
•	•	•
convincing	based on trust	centered on promise
•	•	•
appears/is real	takes effort to listen	takes vision to embrace
•	•	•
holds you back	propels you forward	rooted in God
•	•	•
the more you feed fear, the more powerful it becomes	the more you lean into courage, the more powerful it becomes	the more hope lives in you, the more powerful it becomes



In the following pages, we invite you
to explore how Jesus practiced his faith
with courage and discover new ways
in which you might do so, too.

Practices That Move us from Fear to Hope



WORSHIP & PRAY Worship and prayer, done in community or alone, are ways we create space to listen, reflect, and respond to God in heart, mind, soul, and even body. The Jesus movement continued with the help of the disciples and endures today when two or three are gathered in God's name (Matthew 18:20). Whether preaching on the Sea of Galilee, praying in solitude, or sharing a meal with friends, Jesus' ministry came alive through practices of worship and prayer.

Now during those days Jesus went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. Luke 6:12

DISCOVER & LEARN Discovering and learning welcome us into a greater awareness of the presence of Jesus in our lives, enabling us to explore, grow, and deepen our relationship with God. Through parables, sermons, spontaneous gatherings, and miracles, Jesus taught his followers about the way of love and how to build the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). Jesus' life, death, and resurrection invite us to live lives full of wonder as we continue the daily practice of discovering and learning.

Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them. Psalm 111:2

PRACTICE WELLNESS Wellness is how we nurture, strengthen, and repair our mind, body, and soul, and allows us to assist others with these tasks. Jesus knew, as we do, that wellness can be compromised by different infirmities, and so he healed physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual infirmities. Jesus cared for others but also took care of himself through prayer, rest, spending time with his disciples, and spending time alone. (Mark 1:35).

When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” John 5:6

LIVE IN COMMUNITY Living in community is expressed in care, compassion, intimacy, and growing closer to God, our neighbors, and the world. Jesus’ model for ministry followed a simple command, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind . . . And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:35-39). God invites us to live in community by welcoming, including, and building others into our lives, family, neighborhood, and church.

We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. Romans 12:5

BUILD DIVERSE RELATIONSHIPS Building diverse relationships is the result of engaging with those who differ from us in a process that seeks understanding and unity. Jesus’ ministry was to people of different cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. From the calling of the disciples to the sending of the disciples with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), Jesus calls us to be co-creators in building diverse relationships.

Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Luke 6:37

ADVOCATE, SERVE, & GIVE Advocating, serving and giving are the ways we respect the dignity of every human and seek equity for all. From our baptismal covenant to God’s covenant for a just world, we are called to advocate and serve for those without a voice. God’s preference is for compassion, breaking barriers, foregoing egotistic pride, and for hope. By sending the Spirit to be and advocate for all (John 14:26), Jesus calls us to do uncomfortable things and to serve others just as he served.

Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream. Amos 5:24

Take Your Own Journey

START WITH GOD: A PRAYER FOR COURAGE

*God of courage,
endless source of faith and hope,
grant us wisdom and knowledge in the midst of uncertainty.*

*God of hope,
creator of all that is seen and unseen,
grant us patience and trust in the midst of anxieties.*

*God of love,
redeemer of all that is broken,
grant us strength and compassion to comfort the afflicted.*

*God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit,
above, below, beneath, and beside us,
above all else - help us to fear less and hope more.*

Amen.

EXPLORE

Discover which practices resonate for you, and how you might embrace new ones.

GROW

Become more faithful and courageous through Christian practices.

DEEPEN

Integrate God's desire for you to be less fearful and more hopeful, faithful, and courageous.

We invite you to reflect on the questions on the following pages.
You might be surprised by what you learn about yourself and about God.

Questions for Reflection

WORSHIP & PRAYER

1 Where do you find or experience God in the world?

2 How do worship and prayer help you experience God?

3 How might a deeper experience of worship and prayer help you have a life of faith and courage?

Questions for Reflection

DISCOVER & LEARN

1 Who has been your greatest teacher about faith?

2 What is one big question you have about God, the Episcopal tradition, or your faith?

3 How might a deeper commitment to discovering and learning cultivate faith and courage?

Questions for Reflection

PRACTICE WELLNESS

1 How do you know when you are well?

2 Are there areas of your life where you experience greater wellness than others (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual)?

3 How might an attention to wellness impact your faith and capacity to live courageously?

Horizontal lines for writing.

Questions for Reflection

LIVE IN COMMUNITY

1 When/where do you feel the most known, loved, understood, and supported?

2 Do you actively or intentionally work to build community among family, friends, coworkers, or church members?

3 Why is living in community a key to cultivating a life of faith and courage?

Questions for Reflection

BUILD DIVERSE RELATIONSHIPS

1 Where do you experience diversity in the world?

2 How are communities strengthened by diverse people and perspectives?

3 How might diverse relationships help us understand and deepen our own faith and courage?

Questions for Reflection

ADVOCATE, SERVE, & GIVE

1 Who has been the greatest advocate in your life?

2 What causes are worthy of your advocacy, service, and generosity?

3 How does speaking up for others and sharing our resources deepen our faith and expand our ability live courageously?

May you always know Christ is present in the storms of life.

May you experience the outstretched hand of Christ
in the troubled seas.

May Christ empower you to step out in faith and courage
to help others who are afraid.

May Christ fill your life with love, hope, and peace.





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