

# ***CELTIC FLAMES AND HOLY SPIRIT FIRE***

**By**

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The emergence of the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches (CEEC) is a new and clear phenomenon in recent church history, reflecting one of the most hopeful signs of ecclesiastical recovery in recent times. Much like the Oxford Movement of a century ago, Anglicanism is recovering the fulness of its Protestant and Catholic heritage. Rather than a continuing reformation that is more revision than renewal, the CEEC embodies both the gains of the Protestant Reformation and the formation of the pre-reformation Church in terms of its unity, theology, polity, and liturgical practice. Renewal of the present has been found through recovery of the past.

In contrast to the contemporary Roman Catholic Church defined by the counter-reformation decisions of the Council of Trent, the CEEC looks to its roots in Lindisfarne, Hippo, and Nicea. Contrary to the Orthodox Churches, the CEEC's approach to theology is not Mediterranean and Byzantine as much as it is Celtic and Anglo-Saxon. Unlike the Episcopal Church USA, the CEEC is not an evolved product of secular humanism, classic liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, and modernity; rather the Church came into being from a convergence of recent streams of evangelical, charismatic, and sacramental thought. The resulting blend is the discovery of treasures old and new.

As has always been true of the Anglican Communion, our primary authority is scripture interpreted in the light of tradition under the illumination of the Holy Spirit unto which all reason must be taken captive. Because the Church existed before scripture, we believe the context of the Apostles' teaching is necessary to understand their writing.

The Convergence Movement began as a sovereign move of the Holy Spirit in various locations around the globe. In our history there were three defining moments. In 1989 in conversation between Archbishop Mike Owen, Archbishop Wayne Booshada, and Archbishop Robert L. Wise were developing, at the same time a network of churches overseen by Archbishop Russ McClanahan was pursuing merging the various expressions of Christian worship and finally a single parish in Virginia all found themselves on a similar journey. To our knowledge Archbishop Wayne Booshada was the first to use the term "Convergence". The idea brought segments of the Holy Spirit's work in recent decades into a new whole. The re-assembling of these broken pieces has been like the reconstruction of an archeological discovery. Once the fragments were pieced together, a surprising shape appeared. To the amazement of many, a mosaic emerged depicting the ancient church in the soft pastel colors of the English countryside.

The CEEC's task is to restore the ancient memory of the apostolic church to full expression in contemporary life. As the dream is realized, the Church re-emerges as the full expression of what Paul envisioned in his prayer for the Ephesians, "the Church, which is His body, the fullness of him who fills every thing in every way."

## *The Treasures Old and New*

As the psalmist prayed, “De profundus ..., out of the depths have I called to you Lord, hear my voice,” so multitudes have prayed fervently for the restoration of the Church. The CEEC discovered this hope is realizable by embracing the ancient creeds of Christendom which define the catholicity (defined as that which was believed, everywhere, always, by everyone) of the first fifteen centuries rather than the constant pursuit of endless theological innovations.

Like a house of cards, the continually evolving contemporary theologies in their flight from the Enlightenment and Scientism have tumbled down, leaving many disillusioned people in despair. The answer lies not in striking out for additional accommodations to the modern mind but in hearing the witness and testimony of the Apostles and their successors. The ancient way is the best path through the modern maze.

In a similar vein, the charismatic dimension of the CEEC is not defined by contemporary Pentecostalism, but is an expression of the empowerment always present in the ancient liturgies of the Church. The charismata or gifts of the Spirit were first imparted through the imposition of the hands of the Apostles and their successors. The ongoing recovery of these gifts of word, deed, and mercy are a natural and vital part of the public and private worship of the CEEC.

Similarly, the CEEC is a thoroughly evangelical church. However, its definition of evangelism is drawn from the work of the founder of the Evangelical Movement, the Anglican Priest John Wesley. Intending to renew the existing church, John and Charles Wesley were horrified by the suggestion of starting a denomination separate from the Anglican Church, or the Church of England. We share their desire to recover the primary and necessity of personal encounter with Jesus Christ in the life of every believer. The Wesley's remind us that within the context of the sacramental life, conversion is a necessary facet of the Christian's journey toward fulfillment.

Our Lord Jesus Christ intended the Church to circulate around a Eucharistic center. His command, “as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do it in remembrance of me,” is fulfilled each week in CEEC congregations. The drama of remembrance is not recounting, but re-encountering the Risen Christ whose real Presence is with us at His table.

We celebrate this glorious experience with liturgies that date back from the Church of England to the brother of Jesus, St. James, the first bishop of Jerusalem and his Holy Communion Services in 68 A.D.

## *Te Deum Landamus*

In the service of morning prayer, we often pray, “You are God: we praise you; You are the Lord: we acclaim you; You are the Eternal Father: All creation worships you. To you all angels, all the powers of heaven, Cherubim and Seraphim, sing in endless praise: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.” The Te Deum expresses the heart of CEEC faith and practice. We believe worship is the most important task of the Church.

By using the best contemporary music available combined with the great hymns of the church, we offer the praise and homage God asks of His people. The CEEC does not attempt to entertain with worship because the primary focus is Him and not us. Rather, we join with the angels and archangels, the company of the apostles, and the noble army of martyrs in praise saying and singing, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts: Heaven and earth all full of your glory, Glory be to you, O Lord Most High.” We believe this heavenly gathering stands in the shadows of every service.

While private worship is vital, our priests, deacons, and laity know that worship is never solitary. Our use of the liturgical gifts of the past link us in the “Communion of the saints,” with the martyrs and believers from past centuries. In the recovery of the holy, the righteous and the sacred, we also find the most dramatic and exciting opportunities for expression of spontaneity of the Holy Spirit. As was true of the ancient Church, the CEEC believes the best context for the release and manifestation of the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit in liturgical worship.

Nothing expresses the intent of the CEEC better than Psalm 115, Non nobis, Domine. “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory; because of your love and because of faithfulness.” The CEEC is on a passionate quest to exalt the living God who has given us existence, rebirth, and eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with Him and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever.

## *Eternal Life*

St. John’s Gospel teaches us that eternal is to found in knowing the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; One God. This life does not begin a death or a future judgment but in our experience of the Risen Christ. Each Sunday in the service of Holy Eucharist, we offer this encounter. It comes from receiving the Risen Christ.

Would you like to receive eternal life? Not tomorrow, but today in a life filled with purpose, hope, and love? Would like a dynamic experience of the Holy Spirit? We invite you to join us in our pilgrimage toward eternity.