**Teaching Programme**

**Introductory books:**

* Metropolitan Kallistos Ware: The Orthodox Church
* Bishop Hilarion Alfayev: The Mystery of Faith
* Kyriacos Markides: The Mountain of Silence
* The Way of the Pilgrim (various translations)

**1 “Theosis”: becoming infused with God’s Energy/ united with God**

For the Orthodox, Theosis is the key to the Christian life, and the purpose of human life.

Reading: Abbot George, Theosis (for sale in church, or ask Cuthbert)

**2 The Nicene – Constantinople Creed (325AD & 381AD):**

A baptismal act of faith

Defining what we believe:

* Christ has two natures: human and Divine
* The Holy Trinity is One Nature in Three Persons (in the original Greek, one “ousia” in three “hypostases”)
* These two core beliefs are embedded in how we make the sign of the cross: the smallest two fingers touch the palm, and represent the two natures of Christ; the thumb, index and middle fingers are touched together, and represent the Trinity)

**3 What is the Church?**

In the Creed we say “I believe in… **One** **Holy** **Catholic** and **Apostolic** Church”. What does this mean?

* **One**: organisational unity/ Eucharistic unity/ unity of belief/ mystical unity
* **Holy**: The Body of Christ/ communion of saints
* **Catholic:** the word “Catholic” means “whole”. The Church covers the *whole* earth, and teaches the *whole* faith, all that is needed for salvation
* **Apostolic:** we hold to the faith of the Apostles, which has been passed down through the bishops through the laying on of hands to this day

What are the roles of Clerics & laity? The priest is icon of Christ, but **all** the people are priests (Affanasiev).

**We are the “The Church of the Councils”, and believe that decisions are formed in Church Councils, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.** The model for the Council was set at the time of the Apostles, during Council of Jerusalem, described in Acts 15.28, where St James presided. A dispute had arisen as to whether converts to Christianity needed to be circumcised, and, after a discussion, St James concluded:

“For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

**29**That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well.”

**The Seven Ecumenical Councils:**

**(See:** [**https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\_seven\_Ecumenical\_Councils**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_seven_Ecumenical_Councils)**)**

1 **Nicaea 325:** discussed the nature of Christ – was He fully divine?

2 **Constantinople 381:** completed the Creed

**3 Ephesus 431**: Nestorius (Patriarch of Constantinople) opposed the term

“Theotokos” (Mother of God) – saying that the human Christ is not divine. He was Accused of teaching that Christ was two persons, one human, one divine. Nestorius was deposed, and the Council stressed that Christ was one person.

**The Council also declared that “the Creed shall never be altered”**

4 **Chalcedon 451**: in opposing the doctrine of the two persons of Christ, the “monophysites” went too far the other way, and stressed the “one nature” of Christ. The Council upheld the idea of Christ as “One Person in two natures”. A large portion of the eastern church did not accept the Council: now called “monophysites” or “non - Chalcedonians”. They still exist in Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Middle East.

5 **Constantinople 553**: further arguments over 2 natures of Christ

6 **Constantinople 681**: opposed monothelitism, and stressed that Christ had two wills, human and divine. Christ led the way for humans, by harmonising his human will with the Will of God:

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; let not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22.42)

In other words, Christ had a human will, but recognised that it should be conformed with the Divine Will.

For insisting on this point, St Maximus the Confessor was branded a heretic, along with Pope Martin, was exiled, and had his hand and tongue cut off, dying in exile 662

Quinisext/ Trullo (porch)/ Constantinople: canons only, not accepted by Rome: 692

**7 Nicaea 787**: ended 34 years of iconoclasm

**It is debated whether these following councils are ecumenical:**

**8: Constantinople 870**: Photian Schism: does a deposed Patriarch have the right to appeal to Rome? Also condemned Filioque, but continued communion with Rome anyway.

**9: Constantinople Councils 1341 - 1351**: defended St Gregory Palamas’ doctrine of allowing a distinction between the Essence and Energy of God. We CAN experience God’s Energies, but not His Essence

Failed reunion Councils: 1274 Lyons/ 1439 Florence

**2016 Council?** History will judge. Council needs to be received.

**4 The Seven sacraments (“mysteries”): God’s outpouring of Grace**

**Limited to seven? Or is the whole of Church life sacramental?**

Reading: A Schmemann: “For the Life of the World”

**1 Baptism:** incorporation into the Church/ expulsion of demons from the heart: they can attack us but from outside only. Death of the old man and birth of the new man. Potential for Theosis. We sing during baptisms: “As many as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ” (letter of St Paul to the Galatians 3.27)

Reading: A Schmemann: “Of Water and the Spirit”

**2 Chrismation**: makes good any deficits in non- Orthodox baptism. Confers Pentecost on us, the coming of the Holy Spirit. Whereas Baptism is more about putting on *Christ*, Chrismation is the “seal of the gift of the *Holy Spirit*” <https://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-sacraments/chrismation> Special annointing oil/ myrhh/ chrism is prepared by bishops on Holy Thursday for use in chrismation

**3 Confession:** sins washed clean, allowing us to progress to Theosis. Repentance, “metanoia” – turning to Christ. Confession as a public act: we are one community

**4 Eucharist:** Partaking of the Real (not symbolic) Body and Blood of God. Illumination from within. “If you do not take my body and blood you have no life” John 6.53

**5 Ordination,** 3 fold:

Bishops

Greek Episkopos, meaning over (epi) seer (skopos)

Authority to ordain priests, given by St Paul to Timothy & Titus: “this is why I left you

in Crete… that you might appoint elders in every town as I directed you” (Titus 1.5)

Distinction between bishop and priest not always clear in Bible, clear by the time of

St Ignatius of Antioch (died AD 107): “do nothing without the bishop’s approval”

Priests

Greek “presbyter”, meaning elder

* Acts 15.6, at the Council of Jerusalem, “the Apostles and presbyters were gathered together to consider this matter”
* 1Tim 4 -5: presbyters were ordained by the laying on of hands, and preached to the flock

Deacons:

Greek “diacon”, meaning servant/ server

* Acts 6:1-7 - Deacons are appointed to assist the elders (apostles) in their ministries.
* Philippians 1:1 - Paul ties deacons and elders together as essential church ministries. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:"
* I Timothy 3:8-13 - The qualifications of deacons, which immediately follows the qualification of elders.

*But in a sense we are all priests: St Peter writing to Christians in all places: “you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Peter 2.9). Orthodox seeks to maintain a balance between the officially ordained priesthood, and the universal priesthood.*

**6 Marriage:** obedience/ asceticism/ self – sacrifice.

Reading: Meyendorff: “Marriage, an Orthodox Perspective”

**7 Unction/ healing:** anointing – unity of body and soul

**5 Liturgy**

History: origins in Jewish worship

We look at the structure of the Divine Liturgy – a glimpse of eternity; liturgical cycles; the existence of Typicon/ the 8 tones

Archminandrite Vasileos: Hymn of Entry

A Schmemann: The Eucharist

Feasts and Fasts: the liturgical cycle; daily cycle; daily feasts (The Menaion); the 12 great feasts; the Great Fast & Pascha

Reading:

A Schmemann: Great Lent

N Uspensky: Evening Worship in the Orthodox Church

**6 Tradition**

Canons: the gateway to freedom/ law of love

The Church Fathers

Scripture: its place in Orthodoxy

**7 Prayer**

“Pray without ceasing” is our ideal

Prayer as our connection with God, and the opening of our hearts to God’s Divine Love

Liturgical prayer & Daily prayer; The Orthodox prayer book; the Jesus Prayer

Reading:

The Orthodox prayer book.

Metropolitan Kallistos: The Jesus Prayer

The Way of the Pilgrim.

Theophan the Recluse

**8 The History of Orthodoxy**

Byzantium, Russia, the Great Schism, Protestantism, modern ecumenism.

Reading: Kallistos: The Orthodox Church

**9 Asceticism**

Integral to daily life

Monasticism: origins

Athos

Reading:

Tito Collander: the Way of the Ascetics

Markides: The Mountain of Silence

Porphyrios/ Paisios

**10 Icons: windows to Heaven**

What icons are, how they are made, their origin, their place in the life of the Christian life.

**11 The Company of Heaven**

The saints: the church is one. Honouring the saints, prayer to saints

Mary as the ultimate model for the Christian. The place of Mary, Mother of God, Theotokos, in the life of the Church and of every Christian.

The angelic host.

**Summary: the life of the Orthodox Church leads us to theosis and salvation**

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