

# What makes us

# Anglican?

There is no such thing as The Anglican Church. There is no “head” – no pope, no primate, no president – of the Anglican Church.

But there are, across the world, 77 million members of a body known as the Anglican Communion (making it the third largest Christian communion in the world, after the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church).

These 77 million are gathered into 38 provinces, each province being separate from the other and each fully autonomous. Many, such as The Anglican Church of Uganda, are defined by a national geography. Each province is headed by a bishop or archbishop, and each province is in “full communion” with the Archbishop of Canterbury – and that’s what makes us Anglican. More or less.

The Anglican Communion  
Our Faith

**The Rev. Canon James Rosenthal**

Anglican/Episcopal churches uphold and proclaim the Catholic and Apostolic faith, proclaimed in the Scriptures, interpreted in the light of tradition and reason. Following the teaching of Jesus Christ, Anglicans are committed to the proclamation of the good news of the Gospel to all creation. Our faith and ministry have been expressed through *The Book of Common Prayer*, received and adapted by local churches, in the Services of Ordination and in the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, first expounded at the missionary Conference in Chicago in 1886, and revised by the Lambeth Conference of 1888. The quadrilateral sets out four essential elements of the Christian faith:

\* The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as “containing all things necessary to salvation,” and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

\* The Apostles’ Creed, as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

\* The two Sacraments ordained by Christ himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.

\* The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

Central to Anglican worship is the celebration of the Holy Eucharist (also called the Holy Communion, the Lord’s Supper or the Mass). In this offering of prayer and praise, the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ are made a present reality through the proclamation of the Word, and the celebration of the Sacrament. Anglicans celebrate the Sacrament of Baptism, with water in the name of the Trinity, as the rite of entry into the Christian Church, and celebrate other sacramental rites, including Confirmation, Reconciliation, Marriage, Anointing of the Sick and Ordination.

Common prayer is at the heart of Anglicanism. Its styles may vary from the simple to the elaborate, from evangelical to catholic, charismatic to traditional. The various Books of Common Prayer give expression to a comprehensiveness found within the churches, which seeks to chart a via media in relation to other Christian traditions.

## **Our Churches**

Deriving from the ancient Celtic and Saxon churches of the British Isles, Anglicanism found its distinctive identity in the 16th and 17th century Reformation, when the separate Church of England, along with the Church of Ireland and the Scottish Episcopal Church, came into being. At the time of the American Revolution, an autonomous Episcopal Church was founded in the United States, and later Anglican or Episcopal churches were founded across the globe as a result of the missionary movements of the 18th and 19th centuries. Many of these were given autonomy as Provinces in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. In South Asia, the United Churches, formed between Anglican and several Protestant traditions, also joined the Anglican Communion, as did churches elsewhere such as the Spanish Episcopal Reformed Church and the Lusitanian Church of Portugal.

## **The Instruments of Communion**

The churches of the Anglican Communion are held together by the bonds of affection and common loyalty, expressed through links with the “Instruments of Communion”:

- the Archbishop of Canterbury as the focus for unity
- the Lambeth Conference
- the Primates Meetings
- the Anglican Consultative Council.

## **The Archbishop of Canterbury**

The churches are all in communion with the See of Canterbury in the Church of England, and thus the Archbishop of Canterbury, in his person and ministry, is the unique focus of Anglican unity. He calls the Lambeth Conference and Primates Meetings and is president of the Anglican Consultative Council. The 104th Archbishop of Canterbury in succession to Saint Augustine, the Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. Rowan Williams, was enthroned in February 2003.

## **The Lambeth Conference**

Every ten years or so, the Archbishop of Canterbury invites the bishops of the Anglican Communion to join with him in prayer, study and discernment. At the last Lambeth Conference in 1998, more than 800 bishops were welcomed to the conference, which was held in Canterbury.

## **The Primates Meeting**

Since 1979, the Archbishop of Canterbury has also invited the primates (the presiding bishop, archbishop or moderator) of each of the 38 provinces to join him in regular meetings for consultation, prayer and reflection on theological, social and international matters. These meetings take place approximately every 18 months to two years.

## **The Anglican Consultative Council**

In 1968 the bishops of the Lambeth Conference requested the establishment of a body representative of all sections (bishops, clergy and laity) of the churches, which could coordinate aspects of international Anglican ecumenical and mission work. With the consent of the legislative bodies of all the provinces, the Anglican Consultative Council was established and has met regularly since.

## **The Anglican Communion Office (ACO)**

There is a permanent secretariat, based in London, which serves the Instruments of Communion. The secretariat is responsible for organizing all meetings of the Instruments of Communion, as well as the commissions and networks of the Communion. Funding comes from the Inter-Anglican budget, supported by all member churches according to their means. They are also invited to contribute to special projects, such as the Personal Emergencies Fund and the Anglican Episcopal World Christmas Appeal.

The ACO is based at St. Andrew's House, London, under the leadership of the Secretary General, the Rev. Canon Kenneth Kearon. St. Andrew's House offers a small number of rooms as accommodation for pilgrims and visitors.

The ACO publishes *Anglican Episcopal World* – a regular magazine containing articles and news from across the Communion – which is produced in print and on the Anglican Communion website. Updates to the Anglican Cycle of Prayer (daily prayer intentions for the Communion) can be found in the magazine and also on the Anglican Communion website.

ACNS is the electronic Anglican Communion News Service, available by e-mail subscription and on the website at [www.anglicancommunion.org](http://www.anglicancommunion.org).

## **Canterbury Cathedral**

The Cathedral Church of Christ, Canterbury, England, is the mother church of the Anglican Communion. Daily prayer and celebration of the Eucharist stand at the heart of its ongoing ministry, and the Archbishop is present at Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. The work of the Cathedral was recently extended with the development of the International Study Centre, which welcomes pilgrims and students from across the world. The ministry of the Cathedral is led by the Dean (the Very Rev. Robert Willis) and Chapter of Canterbury.

**The Compass Rose** is the symbol of the Anglican Communion. It is centered on the Cross of St. George, and with the biblical motto, "The Truth shall set you free" (John 8:32). The Compass Rose itself bears witness to the mission of the Anglican Communion as it extends this message to all corners of the globe.

**Canon Jim Rosenthal is the press officer for the Anglican Communion. This article is reprinted with permission from *The Texas Episcopalian*, March 2007.**

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