



Be Prepared...
for new adventure!

ANGLICANISM

Introduction

The Anglican Church is an organisation with branches in 164 countries and a total of about 75 million members worldwide. The various National Churches have a good deal of autonomy but all recognise the spiritual leadership of the Archbishop of Canterbury (Canterbury in England) and they talk to each other via a body called the Anglican Consultative Council. As well, all Anglican bishops come together at the Lambeth Conference which is held every ten years.

There are many differences between individual Anglican churches but they hold four things in common:

- The Bible as a basis of faith;
- The Nicene and Apostles' Creeds, basic statements of Christian belief;
- Recognition of the *sacraments* of Baptism and Holy Communion, and
- The historic episcopate; that is, the continuity of the line of bishops since the time of Christ.

It has been said that the Anglican Church rests on the three pillars of **Faith, Reason** and **Tradition**. The unique strength of Anglicanism lies in their balance of these three aspects of their religion with no single pillar being any more important than any other.

This article attempts to explain the basics of Anglican Christian belief and to serve as an introduction to what Anglicans do, and why. There are sections on general Christian beliefs, on the Anglican Church in particular, and on what actually goes on in a church service. There is a glossary of terms at the bottom of this article.

Who do Anglican Christians believe God is?

Perhaps the deepest, the most profound of all mysteries is the mystery of the Trinity. The Church teaches us that although there is only one God, yet, somehow, there are three Persons in God. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God, yet we do not speak of three Gods but only one God. They have the same nature, substance, and being.

We came to know this immense mystery because Christ revealed it to us. Just before going back to heaven, He told them: "Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). We know that these Three are not just different ways of looking at one person. For at the Last Supper, Jesus told us: "I came forth from the Father." So He is different from the Father. But He also promised: "If I go, I will send Him [the Holy Spirit] to you. . . . He will guide you to all truth" (John 16:28, 7, 13). So the Holy Spirit is also different.

Even though the Three Persons are One God, yet they are distinct: for the Father has no origin, He came from no one. But the Son is begotten, He comes from the Father alone. The Holy Spirit comes or proceeds from both the Father and the Son. These different relations of origin tell us there are three distinct Persons, who have one and the same divine nature.

Even though everything the Three Persons do outside the Divine nature is done by all Three, yet it is suitable that we attribute some works specially to one or the other Person. So we speak of the Father especially as the power of creation, of the Son as the wisdom of the

Father, of the Holy Spirit as goodness and sanctification.

The two doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation (the birth of Christ) are the foundation of Christian life and worship. By becoming man, God the Son offered us a share in the inner life of the Trinity. By grace, we are brought into the perfect communion of life and love which is God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

What happens in Church?

Anglican services are extremely varied and flexible. Set forms of words are available - in the Book of Common Prayer and A Prayer Book for Australia, as well as several older equivalents but the use of these is optional. There is much variation in style between individual parishes and some parishes use different services on different Sundays of the year.

The core of many Anglican services is **Holy Communion**, also known as **Eucharist**. This is a ceremony derived from the supper which Jesus held with his followers on the night before his arrest and being put to death on a cross. Christians believe that this ceremony creates a special sort of contact with God, which helps to strengthen us as Christians.

Glossary of terms used in the Anglican Church:

- **Baptism:** the ceremony of cleansing used when a person becomes a member of the Christian Church.
- **Confirmation:** a conscious re-affirmation of baptismal vows, for those baptised as babies and desirous of taking responsibility for their own faith journey.
- **Congregation:** the group of people who attend a church.
- **Creed:** a formal statement of Christian belief.
- **Diocese:** a regional grouping of parishes under the direction of a bishop.
- **Eucharist:** another term for Holy Communion, or the service containing

it.

- **Gospel:** one of the four accounts of the life of Jesus in the New Testament.
- **New Testament:** the part of the Bible dealing specifically with Christianity, and containing the Gospels.
- **Old Testament:** the part of the Bible predating Jesus, and containing Jewish religious laws and traditions.
- **Parish:** an individual church, and the area for which it has responsibility.
- **Sacrament:** one of the core ceremonies of the Church, defined as 'outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace'. Holy Baptism and Eucharist are the two main sacraments in the life of the Anglican Church.
- **Trinity:** the combination of the three recognised aspects of God, known as Father, Son (Jesus of Nazareth) and Holy Spirit.