

ANGLICANISM

The Anglican Communion is a fellowship of Churches, which grew out of the Church of England, with linked histories and theology, and worship based on the Book of Common Prayer. It has 85 million members in 39 Provinces across 165 countries.

There are Anglican communities in Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Canada, the US, Australia, New Zealand, the West Indies, Africa, India, Japan, South Korea, South America. There is a presence in Jerusalem, the Middle East, and the Far East. There are also Anglican chaplaincies in Europe.

The Queen is Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Other Anglican provinces have different relationships with their political authorities, and each province is a fully autonomous regional Church.

As members of the Anglican Church we are united by:

- a common legacy which has at its heart the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- a faith expressed in the three main ecumenical creeds: Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian
- our recognition of the authority of Scripture and willingness to abide by it
- celebration of the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion
- use of liturgy based on the 1662 Book of Common Prayer
- our sense that there is connection with Christ and his people through time and space

Anglican Churches are shaped by the convictions rediscovered at the Reformation, expressed in the 42 Articles of Religion (1553) reduced to 39 in 1571, the homilies of 1547 and 1571, and in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer (preceded by the Prayer books of 1549, 1552, 1559).

The Reformers did not wish to create a new Church, but to 'Reform' the practice of the Catholic Church in England so that it conformed to biblical practice and belief. In 1549 the first fully English Prayer Book was published. In 1662, the Prayer Book was revised, holding fast to the theology expressed in the 1559 Prayer Book. The 1662 Book of Common Prayer remains the normative Prayer Book of the Church of England.

Church of England ministers take the **Declaration of Assent** as follows:

"The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation. Led by the Holy Spirit, it has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons. In the declaration you are about to make, will you affirm your loyalty to this inheritance of faith as your inspiration and guidance under God in bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation and making Him known to those in your care?"

I, A B, do so affirm, and accordingly declare my belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness; and in public prayer and administration of the sacraments, I will use only the forms of service which are authorized or allowed by Canon."

The Bible

Article VI. Of the Sufficiency of the holy Scriptures for salvation. *“Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.”*

The reading of Scripture is primary. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) was convinced that if the people were allowed to read the Bible then they would hear God speaking to them. From 1540 an open bible in the common language was placed in each church.

“In no other church anywhere is the bible read in public worship so regularly, with such order, and at such length, as in the Anglican fellowship of Churches.

Show us anything clearly set forth in Holy Scripture that we do not teach, and we will teach it; show us anything in our teaching and practice that is plainly contrary to Holy Scripture, and we will abandon it.” Stephen Neill.

Holy Communion

- Emphasis on the once and for all time all sufficient sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.
- Receiving the bread and wine is a spiritual receiving of Christ – reflected in the words of distribution in the 1662 Prayer Book:
The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving.
- Linking of consecration of bread/wine and their reception into a single act: we receive “by faith.”
- Rejection of transubstantiation when speaking of presence of Christ in communion.

It was for these teachings that Archbishop Cranmer and Bishops Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley were burnt at the stake in 1555, during the reign of ‘Bloody’ Queen Mary.

Three significant Anglican theologians

John Jewel (1522-1571). He takes his stand on scripture and the primitive church of the first six centuries. His accusation is that the Popes are the innovators and that there is no evidence in early church history for the supremacy of the Pope, or some of the later innovations.

Richard Hooker (1554-1600). He discusses the Order of the Church and argues for the freedom for regional churches within the fellowship of the one Church. The basis of his argument is the Word of God, found in Scripture.

He accepts what is given as good, provided it is not forbidden in Scripture, and if it builds up people in their faith. For instance, church music is helpful because it can move the emotions. We need to trust the sovereignty of God who works through time. He defends episcopacy, because although it is not commanded in Scripture, there is nothing in Scripture which proscribes episcopacy as practised in the Church of England.

Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626). He was a strong defender of episcopacy, but he writes: “Even if our order be admitted to be of divine authority it does not follow that without it there can be no salvation, or that without it a church cannot stand. Only a blind man could fail to see churches standing without it. Only a man of iron could deny that salvation is to be found within them”.