

9 Things You Should Know About Anglicanism

June 30, 2014

Last week the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) held their annual provincial assembly. The ACNA is part of a growing reform movement that feels orthodox Anglicans have been “squeezed out of the Episcopal Church and Anglican Church of Canada by successive changes to historic Christian teaching and Anglican practice.” To gain a better understanding of this tradition, here are nine things you should know about Anglicanism and the Anglican Communion.

1. Anglicanism is a tradition within Christianity comprising the Church of England and churches which are historically tied to it or have similar beliefs, worship practices and church structures. With a membership estimated at around 80 million members worldwide, the Anglican faith (including both those within the Anglican Communion and Anglicans outside of it) is the third largest Christian communion in the world, after the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches.
2. The Anglican faith is often considered a reformed Catholicism, a hybrid between the Catholic and Protestant faiths. (For instance, one key dividing point between Anglicanism and Catholicism is the issue of absolute authority.
3. The Anglican Communion is an international association of churches consisting of the Church of England and of national and regional Anglican churches in full communion with that mother church. The status of full communion means that there is mutual agreement on essential doctrines and that full participation in the sacramental life of each church is available to all communicant Anglicans. There are also groups, such as those aligned with the Continuing Anglican movement or the Anglican realignment, whose relationship to the worldwide Anglican Communion is still being negotiated.
4. Although joined in a global communion, Anglicanism has no international juridical authority and each province is wholly self-governing. The 34 provinces, 4 United Churches, and 6 other churches of the Anglican Communion are autonomous, each with their own governing bishop and governing structure. Some take the form national churches (such as in England, Canada, and Japan), while others are a collection of nations (such as in Central Africa and South Asia) or geographical regions (such as Vanuatu and Solomon Islands). Some churches are extra provincial (for example, Bermuda aligns with Canterbury) or outside the Anglican Communion altogether.
5. The churches of the Anglican Communion are “linked by affection and common loyalty” and in communion with the See of Canterbury. The term “see” refers to the seat of a bishop, thus the “See of Canterbury” refers to the position held by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the highest ranking bishop in Canterbury, one of two ecclesiastical provinces which constitute the Church of England. The Archbishop of Canterbury is the spiritual leader and “focus of unity” for the Anglican Communion and head of the three “Instruments of Unity: The Archbishop calls the once-a-decade Lambeth Conference, chairs the meeting of Primates (i.e., chief archbishop or bishop of a province), and is President of the Anglican Consultative Council. The Archbishop of Canterbury is considered the *primus inter pares*, the first among equals, of the college of Primates.
6. Since there is no binding authority in the Anglican Communion (the Archbishop of Canterbury has no authority outside of his own province), the “Instruments of Unity” serve to hold the various churches

and provinces together. The Lambeth Conference is a gathering of bishops, meeting every ten years, the meeting of Primates takes place every two or three years for consultation on theological, social, and international issues, and the Anglican Consultative Council brings together bishops, presbyters, deacons, lay men and women, and youth, to work on common concerns.

7. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (also known as the Lambeth Quadrilateral or the Lambeth-Chicago Quadrilateral) encapsulates the Communion's unifying doctrine and serves as a primary guide for ecumenical discussion with other Christian denominations. The Lambeth Conference of 1888 passed Resolution 11, which states:

That, in the opinion of this Conference, the following Articles supply a basis on which approach may be by God's blessing made towards Home Reunion:

(a) 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.

(b) The Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

(c) 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.

(d) 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.

8. The *Book of Common Prayer* is the foundational prayer book of Anglicanism. In 1549, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, created the book by translating Latin Catholic liturgy into English, and infused the prayers with Protestant reform theology. The book became one of the great works of literature and influenced both the English language and the liturgies of other Christian traditions, particularly marriage and burial rites (e.g., "Dearly beloved: We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony. . .")

9. There are numerous terms that are unique to or have distinctive meanings when referring to Anglicanism, such as: bishop (a successor to one of the Twelve Apostles, who has been consecrated by other bishops), archbishop (a bishop who has additional responsibilities), communion (refers to both the Lord's Supper and the Anglican Communion), curate (an assistant to the person in charge of a parish), deacon (the initial level of being ordained in the Anglican Church), diocese (fundamental unit of structure of the Anglican church, which contains many parishes and churches), Episcopal Church (The U.S. province of the Anglican Communion calls itself "The Episcopal Church"), parish (smallest unit of administration, usually consisting of only one church), province (administrative division of the church that is bigger than a diocese and smaller than the whole world), rector (a priest who is the leader of a self-supporting parish), and vicar (the priest in charge of a parish or mission that is supported financially from the outside).

Anglican Beliefs

<http://www.religionfacts.com/anglicanism/beliefs>

The Anglican Communion is an organization of autonomous national churches connected with the Church of England, which has its roots in the 16th century Protestant Reformation.

Anglicanism or Episcopalianism is the general form of doctrine, worship and structure based on the tradition of the Church of England, which extends beyond membership in the Anglican Communion.

Anglicanism is characterized by a *via media* (middle way) between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Anglicans are not subject to the Pope and are Protestant in most areas of doctrine, but Anglicans also retain many Catholic forms of worship, including a hierarchy based on bishops (which is the meaning of the word "Episcopalian").

Anglican and Episcopalian Beliefs

Anglicanism in general allows for significant freedom and diversity within the bounds of scripture, reason and tradition. This has led to considerable variation in Christian beliefs and Christian practices between Anglican churches in different provinces.

For example, some Anglican churches ordain women to the priesthood while others do not, and some emphasize Protestant doctrines while others hold more to Roman Catholic teachings.

This diversity has sometimes caused strain with regard to issues of authority and comprehensiveness of the Anglican Communion, which is especially apparent after the recent ordination of a practicing homosexual bishop in North America, which most other Anglican churches do not agree with.

Anglican rituals are expressed primarily in the Book of Common Prayer, a collection of liturgy developed by Thomas Cranmer in the 16th century and periodically modified since then. However, the Book of Common Prayer is not held to be normative. Much diversity has recently developed in Anglican worship around the world, and many different Prayer Books have been issued.

In general, Anglican worship tends to be Catholic or "High Church" in flavor, with prescribed rituals and readings, bishops and priests, vestments, saints' days and elaborately decorated churches.

Our Doctrinal Standards

Perhaps the best shorthand statement of our doctrinal position as a seminary is the famous formula set forth by Lancelot Andrewes' in defining the boundaries of faith and practice for the Church of England:

One canon reduced to writing by God himself, *two* testaments, *three* creeds, *four* general councils, *five* centuries, and the series of Fathers in that period – the centuries that is, before Constantine, and two after, determine the boundary of our faith.

“One Canon”

We affirm that the Canon of Holy Scripture is central to our Rule of Faith, standing as the ultimate norm of belief and practice. We affirm the Bible to be the infallible and revealed Word of God. Hence we test all things by God's Word written.

“Two Testaments”

We affirm the 39 canonical books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament to be the limits of biblical inspiration. The received books of the Deuterocanon or “Apocrypha”, while being an important subdivision of the greater biblical corpus, are in no way afforded the same status as the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments. The Church may read them “for example of life and instruction of manners,” yet they are not used or applied to establish binding doctrine (cf. Article VI of the Articles of Religion of the Church of England).

We also affirm **Two Sacraments** as 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 (cf. Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886/1888).

“Three Creeds”

We affirm (1) the Apostles' Creed, as our Baptismal symbol; (2) the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith; and (3) the creed known in the West as the “Creed of Saint Athanasius”, as affirming the mysteries of the Triune God and the Personal union of two Natures in our Divine Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

“Four Councils”

We affirm the dogmatic definitions of the first four ecumenical councils of the undivided Church – (1) Nicaea, A.D. 325, (2) Constantinople, A.D. 381, (3) Ephesus, A.D. 431, and (4) Chalcedon, A.D. 451 – as representing the true mind of the Church Catholic in the face of heresy and controversy, and the consensus of the faithful as led by the Spirit of God into all truth. The later ecumenical councils (i.e., the fifth, sixth, and seventh) are affirmed as orthodox to the degree that they are consistent with, while adding nothing to, the substance of dogma defined by the first four.

“Five Centuries”

We affirm the witness of the Spirit of God during the formative period of the Church, otherwise known as the Patristic era, contained primarily in the writings and testimonies of the great Fathers of the first five centuries (roughly from the Apostles to Gregory the Great). This witness continues to inform our faith and practice, especially in the areas of polity, worship, and evangelical mission.

One further note...

Andrewes Hall finds its identity in the **Reformed** character of the historic Protestant Church of England and the greater Anglican tradition. Thus we cherish and honor the heritage of the Book of Common Prayer and the Articles of Religion contained therein. Nevertheless, we also remain open to fellowship, dialogue and interaction with Christians of all branches of Christ’s Church in the spirit and heritage of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886/1888.

The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral 1886, 1888

The **Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral**, frequently referred to as the **Lambeth Quadrilateral** or the **Lambeth-Chicago Quadrilateral**, is a four-point articulation of Anglican identity, often cited as encapsulating the fundamentals of the Communion's doctrine and as a reference-point for ecumenical discussion with other Christian denominations. The four points are:

1. The Holy Scriptures, as containing all things necessary to salvation;
2. The Creeds (specifically, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds), as the sufficient statement of Christian faith;
3. The Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion;
4. The historic episcopate, locally adapted.

The Quadrilateral had its genesis in an 1870 essay by an American Episcopal priest, William Reed Huntington. Huntington's purpose in proposing these four elements was to establish "a basis on which approach may be by God's blessing, made toward Home Reunion," that is, with the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

Adopted by the House of Bishops Chicago, 1886

We, Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, in Council assembled as Bishops in the Church of God, do hereby solemnly declare to all whom it may concern, and especially to our fellow-Christians of the different Communion in this land, who, in their several spheres, have contended for the religion of Christ:

1. Our earnest desire that the Savior's prayer, "That we all may be one," may, in its deepest and truest sense, be speedily fulfilled;
2. That we believe that all who have been duly baptized with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, are members of the Holy Catholic Church.
3. That in all things of human ordering or human choice, relating to modes of worship and discipline, or to traditional customs, this Church is ready in the spirit of love and humility to forego all preferences of her own;
4. That this Church does not seek to absorb other Communion, but rather, co-operating with them on the basis of a common Faith and Order, to discountenance schism, to heal the wounds of the Body of Christ, and to promote the charity which is the chief of Christian graces and the visible manifestation of Christ to the world.

But furthermore, we do hereby affirm that the Christian unity...can be restored only by the return of all Christian communions to the principles of unity exemplified by the undivided Catholic Church during the first ages of its existence; which principles we believe to be the substantial deposit of Christian Faith and Order committed by Christ and his Apostles to the Church unto the end of the world, and therefore incapable of compromise or surrender by those who have been ordained to be its stewards and trustees for the common and equal benefit of all men.

As inherent parts of this sacred deposit, and therefore as essential to the restoration of unity among the divided branches of Christendom, we account the following, to wit:

1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God.
 2. The Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.
 3. The two Sacraments,--Baptism and the Supper of the Lord,--ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.
 4. 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.
- Furthermore, Deeply grieved by the sad divisions which affect the Christian Church in our own land, we hereby declare our desire and readiness, so soon as there shall be any authorized response to this Declaration, to enter into brotherly conference with all or any Christian Bodies seeking the restoration of the organic unity of the Church, with a view to the earnest study of the conditions under which so priceless a blessing might happily be brought to pass.

Note: While the above form of the Quadrilateral was adopted by the House of Bishops, it was not enacted by the House of Deputies, but rather incorporated in a general plan referred for study and action to a newly created Joint Commission on Christian Reunion.

Lambeth Conference of 1888

Resolution 11

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- (b) The Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
- (c) 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.
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