

What is Anglicanism?

Christianity is the world's largest religion, with upwards of 2 billion followers on every continent. It is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ who lived in the Holy Land 2,000 years ago. **Interested in learning more about who Jesus and what it means to follow him visit <http://christianity.net.au/> and/or <http://www.rejesus.co.uk/>**

Anglicanism is one of the traditions, or expressions, of this Christian faith. Other Christian traditions include Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Protestant Churches, which include Lutheran, Baptist, and Pentecostal Churches. The word Anglican originates in *ecclesia anglicana*, a medieval Latin phrase dating to at least 1246 that means the English Church, but in the past two centuries the tradition has been adopted around the world. Now 85 million members are part of national or regional Churches that call themselves Anglican (or Episcopal in some countries) which collectively are known as the Anglican Communion.

Anglicans and Episcopalians the world over share aspects of their history, tradition and ways of worshipping. But no two churches are exactly alike even within a diocese, let alone a province or between countries. This unity in diversity is one of the things that make the Anglican Communion so special and such rich ground from which to change to world.

History

The Church of England (which until the 20th century included the Church in Wales) initially separated from the Bishop of Rome during the reign of King Henry VIII, reunited under Queen Mary I and then separated again under Queen Elizabeth I.

The Church of England has always thought of itself not as a new foundation but rather as a reformed continuation of the ancient "English Church" (*Ecclesia Anglicana*) and a reassertion of that church's rights. As such it was a distinctly national Church.

Anglican worship outside of Britain begins as early as 1578 in Canada. The Anglican Communion traces much of its growth to the older **mission organisations** of the Church of England such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK, founded in 1698), the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG founded 1701, now known as *Us*) and the Church Missionary Society (CMS, founded 1799).

They sent missionaries to countries including those colonised by the British. During the 18th and 19th Centuries bishops from the British Isles led dioceses and national Churches in a variety of countries including India, Canada, the West Indies and New Zealand. A notable exception was The Right Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther who was the first African Anglican bishop in Nigeria during the latter part of the 19th Century.

In 1783, following the American War of Independence the parishes of Connecticut elected Samuel Seabury as their bishop. As the Church of England could no longer ordain him, he turned to the Scottish Episcopal Church - a move seen by some as the beginnings of an Anglican Communion with autonomous Member Churches.

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/identity/about.aspx>

A Building With Foundations

Anglicans have a number of ways of deciding what they believe, of defining the content of their doctrine. Like a tower with strong foundations, Anglican doctrine is built upon Scripture, the ancient creeds, distinctive ways of worship, doctrinal statements, important texts, and continuing discussion.



Thomas Cranmer wrote and compiled the first two editions of the Book of Common Prayer, a complete liturgy for the English Church. With the assistance of several Continental reformers to whom he gave refuge, he changed doctrine in areas such as the Eucharist, clerical celibacy, the role of images in places of worship, and the veneration of saints. Cranmer promulgated the new doctrines through the Prayer Book, the Homilies and other publications.

Scripture

The Bible is acknowledged as the 'ground' on which any expression of Christian faith must be founded.

The Ancient Creeds

Anglicans, like many other Christians, formally profess their faith in the words of the historic Christian creeds, which were formulated in the early centuries of the Christian Church. (The word 'creed' comes from the Latin 'credo' = 'I believe')

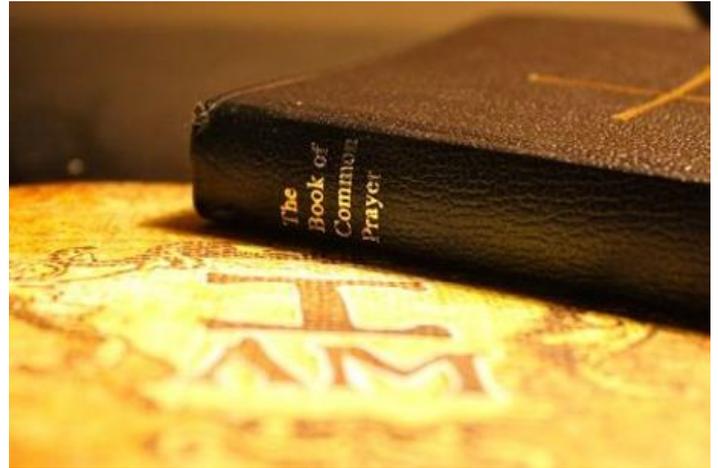
These are:

- [The Apostles' Creed](#)
- [The Nicene Creed](#)
- [The Athanasian Creed](#)

The Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed are used very regularly in Anglican worship, the Athanasian Creed is used in worship less often, but is considered to set out the classic understanding of key Christian doctrines about the nature of God and the person of Jesus Christ.

Distinctive ways of worship

Lex orandi, lex credendi (Latin loosely translated as "the law of praying [is] the law of believing") refers to the relationship between worship and belief, and is an ancient Christian principle which provided a measure for developing the ancient Christian creeds, the canon of scripture and other doctrinal matters based on the prayer texts of the Church, that is, the Church's liturgy.



Unique to Anglicanism is the **Book of Common Prayer** (BCP), the collection of services that worshippers in most Anglican churches used for centuries. It was called common prayer originally because it was intended for use in all Church of England churches which had previously followed differing local liturgies. The term was kept when the church became international because all Anglicans worldwide used to share in its use.

In 1549, the first Book of Common Prayer was compiled by Thomas Cranmer, who was then Archbishop of Canterbury. It has undergone many revisions and Anglican churches in different countries have developed other service books, but the Prayer Book is still acknowledged as one of the ties that bind the Anglican Communion together.

Doctrinal statements

Among specifically Anglican statements of faith the **Thirty-Nine Articles**, dating from the Reformation period in the sixteenth century, has a particular historical importance.

Important texts

This includes sermons and books which have been given a defining role because a consensus about them has grown up over time. The 16th Century Homilies are an ancient example, as are Richard Hooker's *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.

Developments in the nineteenth century meant that there was a need to clarify certain aspects of Anglican belief and practice. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral was first formulated in Chicago in 1886 and then amended and formally adopted by the Lambeth Conference of 1888. It is still considered an important touchstone text defining Anglican identity. Its four clauses refer to the acceptance of the Holy Scripture as the rule of faith; the Apostles' and the Nicene creeds; the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and the role of bishops in leading and governing the church.

There are also *Catechisms* in which a series of questions and answers are posed to young people or adults who seek Baptism or Confirmation normally set out, in the context of teaching, key beliefs which a professing Anglican might be expected to hold.

Source: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/identity/doctrine/foundations.aspx>