



TRADITIONAL ANGLICAN COMMUNION

The Traditional Anglican Communion is a branch of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church instituted by Jesus Christ. The word 'Anglican' refers to our spiritual heritage and roots in the historic Church of England.

Traders, merchants and soldiers seem to have brought the Christian Faith to Britain shortly after it became part of the Roman Empire in the middle of the First Century AD. Sixteen hundred years later, during what we call the Reformation, the Church of England emerged as a unique institution. It retained its 'Catholic' heritage enshrined in the Creeds, the decisions of the General Councils, its liturgy and sacraments, and in the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons in Apostolic Succession. It 'reformed' itself by eliminating some nonessential accretions of the later medieval Church, by restoring much of the practice of the earliest Christians, and by insisting upon the authority of Holy Scripture as the rule and guide of Faith.

Members of the Church of England came to North America in the 16th and 17th centuries. In many parts of British North America, the Church of England was the 'established' or official Church. After the American Revolution, American Anglicans established an autonomous branch of the Church, which became known as the Episcopal Church. In Canada, following Confederation in 1867, the Church of England in the Dominion of Canada was established, holding its first General Synod in 1893 (to be renamed the Anglican Church of Canada). During the last 25 or so years, both the Episcopal Church in the United States and the Anglican Church of Canada have abandoned most of the tradition of historic Anglican Faith and Practice. It is this tradition that many former Episcopalians and other faithful Anglicans are seeking to preserve and proclaim.

Restoration in North America

In 1977, a Congress of Concerned Churchmen took place in St. Louis, Missouri. There, a statement called *The Affirmation of St. Louis* was adopted; it affirms as unalterable the received Faith and Tradition of the Church, the essentials of Christian belief, and the essential foundations of the Holy Scriptures, the writings of the Early Fathers of the Church, the authority of the General Councils, and the Apostolic ministry of male bishops, priests, and deacons.

As a result of this meeting several groups of Anglican traditionalists in the US and Canada began efforts to form a 'continuing,' still-Anglican Church. The work in Canada prospered (with the establishment of the Anglican Catholic Church of Canada in 1979), but in the U.S., where events were complicated by a lack of unity, several jurisdictions emerged, working independently of each other. However, in 1991, members of the 'American Episcopal Church', almost half of the 'Anglican Catholic Church', and others who had reordered their Anglican witness at the Congress of St. Louis, united in one body to form the Anglican Church in America.

In 1990, at a gathering in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, the Traditional Anglican Communion was formed under the *Victoria Concordat*. A worldwide Communion of traditional Anglican churches in Canada, Australia, Britain, India, Ireland, Latin America, South Africa, the United States, and Zambia.

Our Faith and Worship are set forth in the *Book of Common Prayer*. This treasure of English language, scriptural spirituality and Catholic worship has shaped the lives of countless faithful Christians through the centuries and is the basis of our services of worship.

Catholic and Reformed

As we have seen, the traditional Anglican Church affirms its 'Catholic' heritage. That term is used to affirm our fidelity to the whole Faith as revealed by Jesus Christ (without either additions or subtractions) as proclaimed by the Apostles, evangelists, saints, scholars and martyrs of the Early Church and taught in Holy Scripture. At the same time Anglicans give thanks for the witness of those pastors and teachers who, in the 16th and 17th centuries, sought to 'reform' the Church, some of whom gave their lives in witness to the authority of the Bible as the principle rule of Faith and Practice.

What is this Faith we have sought to preserve?

Anglican faith is thoroughly grounded in Holy Scripture. Anglicans believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the authentic record of God's revelation of himself, his saving activity, and moral demands - a revelation valid for all people and for all times. We hold that the ancient creeds - the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian - express the faith of the Church and are to be understood as they are written. The Anglican Church is a credal church, not a confessional one. The creeds, which come from the earliest years of Christianity, summarize the 'faith once delivered to the saints' (*Jude 3*). By them we are taught that God is one God in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; that God the Son became man, born of a virgin as our Lord Jesus Christ; that by our Lord's sinless life, death and resurrection he gained access for us to God the Father and opened the way for us to be children of God and to live with him for all eternity.

On Christian morality, we believe that every Christian is obligated to form his or her conscience by the Divine Moral Law of the Mind of Christ as revealed in Holy Scriptures, and by the teachings and Tradition of the Church. Such teaching is especially seen in the Sermon on the Mount (*St. Matthew 5,6,7*) and in our Lord's Summary of the Law, which states that we must first love God with our whole heart, soul and mind, and also love our neighbors as ourselves, as well as in his teaching on the sanctity of all human life, and of marriage and the family.

Worship

Worship is the prime responsibility for all Christians. Anglicans believe that the life of Christian service is possible only through a full life of worship, through which we receive God's love and express our love to Him. Hence, we believe it is our obligation not only to worship God together every Lord's Day (Sunday) but also to have a daily life of prayer. A number of parishes are able to offer the Daily Offices and the Holy Communion during the week, as well as on Sunday.

Anglicans are expected to pray. When we pray in private, each of us prays in his own way (although guidance and instruction are available for those who wish to grow in the life of prayer). When we pray together in services of worship, our 'common prayers' are liturgical, that is, they are structured. Only in this way can we truly share our worship of God. Our liturgical worship involves the whole person - body, mind and spirit. We are active participants rather than just listeners. Worship to us is not 'show business.' It goes from us to God rather than from a preacher to us. We come to church to give God the praise and worship which, as His creatures, we owe Him, not to get something for ourselves.

The Holy Eucharist

The center of our worship is the Holy Eucharist. Other traditional names for this service are: the Holy Communion, the Mass, the Lord's Supper, and the Divine Liturgy. It is the service specifically commanded by Jesus in the New Testament. The Eucharist joins our offering of worship to Christ's offering of Himself upon the altar of the Cross. As He promised (*Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; John 6; I Corinthians 11*) Jesus is truly, spiritually present under the outward forms of the consecrated Bread and Wine, to infuse our lives with the spiritual strength of His life. By receiving Holy Communion, we give our Solemn Assent, our "Amen," to the entire Anglican Eucharistic service. We express our belief that the Eucharist is a spiritual sacrifice which must be administered by a bishop or a priest whose ministry derives in succession from the Apostles themselves. We express also our faith in Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist. Because of the seriousness of these affirmations, this Church does not presume to invite those who in good faith cannot yet accept these beliefs to compromise their conscience by receiving Holy Communion at our Altar. It is for these reasons that we are not an "open Communion" Church. Those who do so believe, and who have been confirmed by a Bishop in Apostolic Succession, and who are spiritually prepared, are welcome to receive Holy Communion.

Morning and Evening Prayer

The Daily Offices of Morning and Evening Prayer are prayer services derived in many ways from the Synagogue worship of the Old Testament. They consist of readings from the Psalms, other Bible readings, canticles (songs), and prayers. They are provided in the Book of Common Prayer in a manner which makes their discipline of prayer, psalmody, and Holy Scripture the daily spiritual diet of the Church, clergy and lay folk alike.

Sacraments

The first Christians regarded the Church as Sacrament. Jesus, Who is God, became truly human in the Incarnation, in the same manner as we are human, except that He was without sin. The Church is truly his Body. It is the outward and visible sign of God's presence with his people. Gradually, teachers identified certain outward and visible signs as 'sacraments', that is as actions of the Church which gave

the grace of God's presence and blessing. Anglicans regard the two Gospel Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist as being 'generally necessary to salvation'. Five other sacramental rites, in their Biblical sense, are also termed sacraments (being Confirmation, Holy Matrimony, Holy Orders, Penance, and Unction or Anointing of the Sick).

Conclusion

Anglicans take seriously our Lord's call to all Christians to serve Him. This means both a ministry within the Christian family and a ministry to the world to spread the Gospel and actively to show forth Jesus Christ in our lives.

"In the firm conviction that 'we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ', and that 'there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved', we acknowledge our duty to proclaim Christ's saving Truth to all peoples, nations and tongues.

"We acknowledge that rule of faith laid down by St. Vincent of Lérins: 'Let us hold that which has been believed everywhere, always and by all, for that is truly and properly Catholic.' Accordingly, we declare our intention to hold fast the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic faith of God and to transmit the same unimpaired to our posterity.

"We affirm as integral to the history and essential to the formation of this Communion all of the doctrinal, moral and other theological principles set out in the Declaration of loyal Anglicans gathered in the Congress of St. Louis, Missouri, United States of America in the year 1977, generally known as *The Affirmation of St. Louis*."