

An Introduction to Anglicanism
University of Fribourg, 23 March 2026

Three London Churches: the Diversity of the Church of England

The Church of England (C of E) as a 'broad church', with a wide range of traditions within it.

Evangelical

- Reformed emphasis on Bible and preaching.
- Holy Communion celebrated regularly but not usually as central emphasis of the Church.
- Clergy may be called 'ministers' rather than priests.
- Often favour contemporary music, especially if influenced by Charismatic renewal.
- Concern for evangelism, sharing faith beyond the church.
- Evangelicals generally oppose same-sex marriage, but some Evangelicals support it.

Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB). Famous for *Alpha* Course, church-planting.

<https://www.htb.org/>. Video of service:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqQchelkQjg>.

Anglo-Catholic

- Role of the priest ('Father') is emphasized.
- Main resistance to ordination of women among traditionalist Anglo-Catholics.
- Traditional Catholic practices such as Gospel procession, incense, ringing of bells.
- Sermon much shorter than in Evangelical churches, maybe just five minutes.
- Saint's days; daily Mass; Confession; pilgrimages
- Some may hold traditional views on marriage but tend not to campaign about this like Evangelicals. Liberal Catholics typically support same-sex marriage.

All Saints, Margaret Street. <https://asms.uk/>.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLdHX-POXig>

Liberal

- Not particularly distinctive in terms of worship-style.
- Emphasis on openness to the world, progressive thinking, solidarity with the oppressed.
- 'Inclusive Church': support for sexual minorities, same-sex marriage.
- Sermons typically seek to connect faith with contemporary realities.

St John's, Waterloo. <https://stjohnswaterloo.org/>

The Church of England: Its History and Distinctive Features

The origins and internal diversity of Anglicanism lie in the history of England in the 16th century.

Henry VIII (1509-47)

- In 1509 Henry a devout Roman Catholic, and C of E a loyal part of RC Church.
- Henry's 1534 Act of Supremacy rejected authority of Pope and RC Church in England.
- Henry remained Catholic in his thinking and opposed Protestantism, but established himself as supreme head of Church in England, prompted largely by Pope's refusal to grant him permission to divorce Catherine of Aragon.
- This created a situation which allowed Protestant influence to grow in England. "Without the divorce, there would have been no Reformation; but that does not mean that there was nothing to the Reformation but the divorce."

The reigns of Henry's three children

- Edward VI (1547-1553). Advisors all Protestant. Archbishop Cranmer promoted Protestant Reformation - e.g. especially in two new prayer books.
- Mary (1553-1558). Devout Catholic, restored Roman Catholic Church. Many Protestants, including Cranmer and other bishops, were publicly executed.
- Elizabeth (1558-1603). Protestantism re-established, in moderate form. RCs persecuted.

The Elizabethan Settlement

- Kept some Catholic practice: e.g. robes; bishops, priests & deacons; liturgy; saint's days.
- Richard Hooker (1554-1600) defends C of E against RC Church and Puritanism.
- Book of Common Prayer balances Catholic and Reformed views of Holy Communion. Priest says first: "*The body of our Lord, Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.*" then "Take and eat this *in remembrance* that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart, by faith, with thanksgiving."

The Church of England in following centuries

- An uneasy relationship between Protestant and Catholic tendencies.
- 18th century: Evangelical influence from e.g. John and Charles Wesley.
- 19th century: Anglo-Catholic Revival led by Newman (who became RC), Pusey, Keble.
- Recently: alternating periods of Catholic and Evangelical dominance.

The Liberal Anglican Tradition

- This does not have the same kind of *historical* origin that we can point to for the Evangelical and

Catholic strands. A recurrent style of Christian thinking confident in use of reason and experience to understand God, the universe and our place within it.

- Anglicanism as a three-fold cord: scripture, tradition and reason. Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics respectively emphasize scripture and tradition; Liberals stress the need for a *reasonable* faith, open to modern thinking and new truths.
- Liberal thinking has often prompted debates about, e.g., evolution; the Bible and history; miracles; the ministry of women; the nature of marriage.

An Anglican statement from 1920s: “Anglicans are heirs of the Reformation as well as of Catholic tradition and they hold together in a single fellowship of worship and witness those whose chief attachment is to each of these, and also, thirdly, those whose attitude . . . is most deeply affected by the tradition of a free and liberal culture.”

A tradition that seeks to maintain *balance*: e.g. *A Passionate Balance: The Anglican Tradition*.

The Gospel and the Catholic Church by Michael Ramsey (1936): classic modern account of Anglicanism as holding together Reformed and Catholic understandings of what Christianity is:

“For while the Anglican Church is vindicated by its place in history, with a strikingly balanced witness to Gospel and Church and sound learning, its greater vindication lies in its pointing through its own history to something of which it is a fragment. Its credentials are its incompleteness, with the tension and the travail in its soul. It is clumsy and untidy, it baffles neatness and logic. For it is sent not to commend itself as ‘the best type of Christianity’, but rather by its very brokenness to point to the universal Church wherein all have died.”

“The Church of England is *part of* the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.”

The importance of liturgy. When asked: “What is your theology?” Anglicans have often responded: “Read our prayer book.” Anglican liturgy as the best clue to Anglican identity?

Structures of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion

1. The Church of England (<https://www.churchofengland.org/>)

Threefold Order: Bishops, Priests and Deacons

- Different attitudes to episcopal ministry. Is it of the Church’s ‘esse’ or just ‘bene esse’?

- Anglo-Catholics emphasize that apostolic succession has been maintained in Anglican episcopate. This is less important to Evangelical and Liberal Anglicans.
- Anglo-Catholics see priesthood in ‘ontological’, Evangelicals in more ‘functional’ terms.
- Women first ordained as deacons in 1987, priests in 1994, bishops in 2015.

Ministry in Parish Churches and Beyond

- The diocesan/parish system covers the whole of England (not the other UK countries).
- Diocese in Europe. 9 chaplaincies in Switzerland.

The Established Church

- Henry VIII’s Act of Supremacy (1534). King or Queen as ‘Supreme Governor’ of C of E.
- State-Church relationship has evolved. Recent changes include a lessening of the role of the Prime Minister in appointment of C of E bishops. *Yes, Minister* (BBC comedy) episode on choosing bishops:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2dNCw0hPLs>
- Continuing expressions of the C of E’s ‘established’ status include: Government-supported church schools (but now also for other churches and religions); some senior bishops in the House of Lords. But the state does not support the C of E financially.

Worship

- 1662 Book of Common Prayer (BCP) developed out of earlier prayer books of Cranmer.
- 20th century: liturgical revision, due to ecumenical openness (so, e.g., Roman Catholic influence) and to the desire for more contemporary language.
- Most recent revision is *Common Worship*.

Theology and Theological Training

- BCP contains a Catechism and the 39 Articles. These still have some official status in the C of E but are in practice largely ignored. Clergy are no longer required to state their agreement with the 39 Articles - which the vast majority would find very difficult.
- Clergy are trained in a variety of institutions. In the past, these were all residential colleges, connected to university theology faculties (Oxford, Cambridge, Durham). Recent emphasis on non-residential training, often with older candidates.

2. The Anglican Communion <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/>

- Growth of C of E presence around the world through British Empire led in 1867 to first Lambeth Conference for all Anglican bishops, usually meeting every ten years.
- Now over 41 member churches/provinces (some very small).
- AC a much looser, less centralized structure than the RC Church. The Archbishop of Canterbury (ABC) is not a Pope. Each province determines its own liturgies and laws and elects its own bishops. So what holds it together?

The Instruments of Unity

- The ABC. *Primus inter pares*.
- The Lambeth Conference.
- Primate's Meeting (Primate = head of an AC), about every three years
- The Anglican Consultative Council

The Lambeth/Chicago Quadrilateral (1888)

- The Scriptures
- The Creeds
- The Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion
- The Episcopate (locally adapted)

Crisis within the Anglican Communion

- Growing tensions in recent decades, much more over marriage than ordination of women.
- Criticism of policy in western provinces over same-sex relationships and marriage led to 'impaired communion' with, e.g. Nigeria and Uganda boycotting Lambeth Conference and emergence of alternative structures for more conservative provinces (e.g. GAFCON).
- ABC Rowan Williams promoted an ultimately unsuccessful attempt made by the Windsor Report (in which Bishop N. T. Wright played a leading role) to find a way to balance (a) local autonomy and diversity and (b) unity and a degree of cohesion.

AC Office in London, tiny central administration compared to Vatican.

AC's 5 Marks of Mission: <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx>

Anglicans and Ecumenism

Relations with the Roman Catholic Church

- The break with Rome under Henry VIII and the subsequent development of the C of E in a more Reformed direction...
- Persecution/marginalisation of RCs in England. Little rapprochement for some centuries.
- 1896 Apostolicae Curae declares Anglican orders “absolutely null and void”.
- Some conversations begin in early 20th century (Malines).
- Huge change in climate and growth of ecumenical hopes with Vatican II. Visits of ABCs to Rome for the first time in centuries.
- Dialogue processes, notably ARCIC.
- More recent ecumenical cooling due to Anglican ordination of women and changes of teaching around marriage.
- Currently: *de facto* much cooperation and friendly interchange but moves towards unity largely on hold.

Relations with Protestant churches

- From Anglo-Catholic angle the major problem is the lack of episcopal succession in e.g. Methodism. For a more functional Evangelical theology of ministry this is not such a big issue, but it has prevented progress towards union. Also, e.g., Anglican criticism of the ecumenical Church of South India in the 1940s and 1950s.
- But there have been some ecumenical unions, notably the Porvoo Communion, mainly with Scandinavian Lutherans.

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