

**THE
ANGLICAN
WAY**

PREFACE

The Anglican Communion is the third largest body of Christians in the world, and earth's largest Protestant denomination. It's one of the most active, growing, and fruitful fellowships of churches on the planet. In North America, new Anglican congregations are popping up on a weekly basis. Many thousands of people are joining these churches. In the mid-twentieth century, the American version of the Anglican Church was a sleepy country club. Today, it's part of an unexpected and amazing worldwide movement of God.

I'm the pastor of a growing church, and our congregation is largely made up of people who were not raised in the Anglican tradition. As people become part of our church, they find a beautiful and rich faith, but one that is unfamiliar to most of them. For years, visitors, newcomers, and members alike have asked me for a guidebook, but sadly, a practical and up-to-date introduction to living and worshipping as an Anglican Christian did not exist. That's why I decided to write one.

I grew up in the Anglican Church, I graduated from one of our seminaries, and I was ordained in 1998. I have been an active part of several Anglican churches, and have had contact with hundreds more. In 2004, I became the founding pastor of the congregation I still serve.

Most of my ministry has been with people who aren't familiar with this tradition. They may like this Anglican thing, but they don't understand it. They're hungry to know more. Whether over coffee, at a conference, on the Internet, in a church sanctuary, or in a classroom, I've had thousands of hours of practice explaining the Anglican Way. Now I'm pleased to offer that guidance to a larger audience.

IS THIS BOOK FOR YOU?

This book is for the person who has been visiting an Anglican church. You know you like it, but you don't fully understand it. Maybe you haven't been part of a church in a long time, or maybe this is your first Christian experience, and you want to know what this whole thing is about.

This book is for the Christian who is intrigued by the Anglican Way. Maybe you grew up in some other denomination and you want to know how to connect with this one. Maybe you are an Evangelical who wants to make sure we're Bible-based. Perhaps you're charismatic and want to know that the Holy Spirit is here. If you are a Catholic, you may want to make sure we take the sacraments seriously. This book will help you to explore those questions and other related issues.

This book will help you explain Anglicanism to your parents, friends, or kids. There may be someone who thinks you've joined a cult, or that you've become a Catholic or a fundamentalist, or something that has to do with angels ("Angelican" being my favorite misspelling of Anglican). This is the book you can hand to that person and say, "I'm not totally crazy."

This book will help the Anglican who's been going to church for a long time but would like to understand more about our tradition. Maybe

you're getting confirmed, or you're going to serve as a lay leader. You might feel called to ordination. This book will help you dig a little deeper.

This book is a resource for Anglican pastors. When someone comes up to you and says, "Is there a book about all this Anglican stuff?" I hope you'll say, "Yes, there is." You might consider using this book for Confirmation class. Maybe it can be a jumping-off point so you can focus on what matters to you.

This book is not written to help someone "do religion" the "right way." My single greatest fear in writing this book is that someone will use it to construct religion without grace. That would make me very sad, and I honestly believe it would sadden God, too. I wrote this book as a way to share the Gospel. I hope that, as you read it, you'll come to better know Jesus Christ and his amazing grace.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

I find the topic of religion, cut off from personal narrative, to be both esoteric and terribly boring. Early on in the writing process, I decided to write to you as if we were having a conversation. I'm going to share personal stories, talk about my friends, my family, and my church. The Anglican Way is alive, and I can't think of a better way to describe it than to let you in on the lives of Anglicans

This book is divided into four parts. While they are closely related to each other, they each cover different topics. "Part I: The Compass Rose" is about the generous nature of Anglicanism and its history and philosophy.

"Part II: Walking the Anglican Way," is about how Anglican Christianity is lived out in the real world. You'll find chapters on personal devotions, the home, and preparing for worship.

“Part III: The Anglican Church” is about our major traditions. You’ll find information about baptism, ordination, leadership, and other subjects that many people find both mysterious and fascinating.

“Part IV: Anglican Help Desk,” should be thought of as the reference desk at the library, or the “Notes” at the bottom of a Wikipedia page. Check out the table of contents to see what sparks your interest.

One last thought about reading this book. If you come across an unfamiliar term, look it up in the Glossary (Chapter 31). We Anglicans have our own jargon, which I try to avoid in this book. But if you’re going to be with us you’ll want to learn some of the lingo.

A WORD ABOUT DIVERSITY

When your denomination is made up of nearly 80 million people living in a vast number of cultures, you can rightly say that your church is diverse. This is a wonderful thing, but it can lead to confusion. Since I’m an Anglican priest, I’m often asked this question: “What do Anglicans believe about issue X?” Issue X can be practically anything, from abortion, to politics, to alcohol, to miracles, and much more. I always answer in the same way. I say, “Asking me what Anglicans think about issue X is the same as asking me what human beings think about issue X.”

There are any number of people who call themselves Anglican who will answer any question of belief in any number of ways. If you look hard enough, you’ll find an Anglican with every conceivable position on every imaginable topic. The diversity of opinions held by Anglicans sometimes leaves the boundaries of Christianity altogether. I find this both frustrating and painful. I have spoken to Anglican priests who are essentially Buddhists, Unitarians, or Wiccan. I have met atheist Angli-

PREFACE

cans, white-supremacist Anglicans, and fundamentalist Anglicans. I once read about an Anglican chaplain who was a practicing Muslim. In other words, there are people who call themselves “Anglican” who simply aren’t Anglican by any respectable definition of that word. They remind me of that famous line from the movie *The Princess Bride*—they keep using the word Anglican, but it doesn’t mean what they think it means.

Just because someone claims the word “Anglican” does not mean that person has anything to do with the “Anglican Way.” When I talk about the Anglican Way in this book I won’t be talking about what fringe groups think and do. Instead, I’m going to address the best of Anglicanism as it has been practiced down through the centuries, and as it’s being lived out by millions of Anglicans to this very day. I think that’s fair, and I hope you agree.

CHAPTER 1

WELCOME TO THE ANGLICAN WAY

EVERYONE HAS A WAY

When Jesus was walking the earth two thousand years ago, he would sometimes say to a person, “Follow me.” Some people rejected that call. They had more important things to do. Some would follow for a while but then they’d give up. Those who remained with him would later find themselves hiding from the government, scared for their lives. Following Jesus was hard.

Following Jesus is still hard. Sometimes we feel we have better things to do. Some of us don’t stick with it. In some parts of the world, Christians still hide from terrorists or oppressive governments. Worse yet, we can’t even see Jesus. At least those first disciples could follow by physically walking behind him. We don’t have that option. We don’t have him ahead of us on the literal road, so we need some other way to know where he’s going. How do we follow someone we can’t see? We need a path, a method, a guide. We need a Way.

Every living person who follows Jesus Christ does so in a “Way.” By “Way” I simply mean a method of living a Christian life. There are many Christian Ways; many traditions and understandings. Each offers its own blessings, challenges, and discouragements.

Every Christian walks a Way, this is unavoidable. So pick a good one, choose one that's helpful, one that feeds your soul. The Anglican Way is one of many paths of living as a Christian. I don't claim that it's God's favorite Way, but it's my favorite Way. It helps me, it feeds my soul. I hope I can help you make some sense out of it. I hope it will feed your soul, too.

THE CUP

All Christian Ways are like cups. There are many kinds of cups in the world, small and large, made of glass, pottery, plastic, etc. They can hold all kinds of things, from water to coffee to ice cream.

Think of pouring wine into a cup. The wine itself is independent of the cup, but experts will tell you that the kind of cup you pour wine into will affect the taste. The cup won't turn the wine into something else (wine doesn't become beer when you pour it into a plastic cup), but it will change the experience, and the right wine glass can bring out the flavor of the wine. A good cup can lead to a better wine-drinking experience.

It's best to put wine into the right kind of cup, but the cup isn't the most important thing. The wine is what matters. The Anglican Way is a cup. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the wine. The Anglican Way is a good cup into which to pour this most magnificent of wines, but it isn't nearly as important as the wine itself. It isn't the only kind of glass you could use, but it is a good one, and one that does a nice job of allowing the wine to be experienced as it was meant to be.

So, what is this Anglican cup like? How is it different? Let's start with one of its most unusual aspects.

UNITY

I dislike election season. While wars, famines, and natural disasters rage, all the news broadcasters seem to talk about is whether a candidate's tie is patriotic enough. Political dialog has given way to political diatribe in our increasingly fractured society. Partisan bickering has even found a home in American churches. Pastors and congregations sometimes choose sides between "red" and "blue." They wave the banners of parties and candidates, often in the name of Jesus.

One Sunday morning, not long before a presidential election, I spent a few extra minutes walking around our church parking lot. I saw a large number of political bumper stickers. What might be surprising is that no party or candidate seemed to be in the majority. I found Democratic cars next to Republican cars, Green cars next to Libertarian cars. I found stickers reminding me that God is neither Republican nor Democrat, and others calling for the election of Jesus as president.

You might think that any gathering with so many different political viewpoints would get out of hand. We should have been yelling at each other, like the people on TV and Facebook. Thankfully, this was not the case. People in our congregation take their political beliefs very seriously, and I believe most of them have processed these ideas theologically. They vote for their candidate because they believe, in part, that the candidate best reflects their religious values. They discuss politics with one another, sometimes in our church's hallways and classrooms. In all my years of pastoring these people, I have almost never heard anyone speak in a disrespectful way or leave a discussion with a newly broken friendship.

How can this be? Liberals, moderates, and conservatives in the same room together, politely sharing their ideas in the context of love and

friendship? What is the magic formula that has brought peace to the American battlefield? In one word, the answer is “grace.” That grace has room to operate in Anglicanism.

In the Anglican Way, there is unity in the midst of diversity—and this diversity is not just political. If you were to join our particular congregation in worship on any given Sunday, you would find yourself praying alongside men and women from a great variety of backgrounds. For instance, we are a congregation with no dominant age group. And while not every Anglican congregation is multigenerational, this Way lends itself to more diversity than many churches.

Our diversity extends to matters of faith as well. Our church is filled with people from a great variety of religious backgrounds, and many of them may hold opinions that are not taught by the majority of Anglican clergy. For example, in the Anglican church we typically baptize babies and young children. However, my congregation has some families who chose not to baptize their infants. As their pastor, I have genuine dialogue with them regarding this decision. I explain the reasons why we baptize children, but I don’t attempt to change their minds. I’m happy to hear their beliefs, and while I don’t share them, I certainly respect them. As their children grow older and make faith commitments of their own, I’ll be happy to baptize them. I leave these decisions entirely in the hands of the parents.

VIA MEDIA

This ideal of unity in the midst of diversity is often expressed in an Anglican slogan: *via media*. That’s a Latin phrase which means “the middle way.” Our denomination was created by men and women trying

to make a middle way between the extremes of Roman Catholicism and European Protestantism. As the centuries have progressed, we have consistently asked, “How can we be a “both/and” church rather than an “either/or” church?” Sometimes this desire has gotten us into trouble. We have split the difference on things that we shouldn’t have. Most of the time, however, it has been a path of love, mercy, and grace.

Another way to talk about the *via media* is through a statement attributed to a seventeenth-century Lutheran theologian named Rupertus Meldenius. He said, “In essentials, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, love.” At its best, the Anglican Way embodies these three statements. There are things that are essential, and these are worth fighting for. There are things that are doubtful, opinions we can have honest disagreement about. But in all things, we must keep Jesus’ commandment to love one another at the heart of our conversations.

You might think that the hardest thing about the *via media* is figuring out which things are essential things and which things are doubtful. That can be quite difficult. What some Christians see as essential others see as doubtful, and vice versa, and in a moment, I’m going to list the essential Anglican things. But I believe this isn’t the most difficult part of the Anglican Way. The hardest part is love.

LOVE

Love is the most easily dismissed of God’s commandments and characteristics. Christians sometimes seem to say, “Of course we should love people, we all know that. So now let’s get on with what we really want to do—fight about theology!” But love is the central Christian ethic, it’s the heartbeat of the church. It’s central to us because it’s essential

to God. “God is love,” says the Bible (1 John 4:8, NIV). At the core of the Trinity is a love relationship between three Persons. God cannot be separated from love. Love is his nature. Unless the church is actively living out the reality of love, there is little reason to debate theology. And unless the church has a healthy theology we won’t recognize true love when we see it.

Jesus commands us to love one another. It’s easy to love someone I don’t have any conflicts with. But loving someone I have a real disagreement with? Loving someone in the context of hearing and telling the truth? That’s hard. It’s also precious. True love happens at the friction points of the church. When Meldenius says “In all things love,” he isn’t giving us an empty platitude. If we’re going to be a church that doesn’t insist on complete conformity, we’ll have to keep love always at our center.

This kind of love comes through the grace of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit. We Anglicans don’t have a monopoly on grace. Far from it! But when a group of people lives in the Anglican Way, grace abounds. It sometimes feels like this Way is designed by grace, for grace.

BOUNDARIES

Cohesive groups must have shared values. If they lose these values they fall apart. This has been true since before recorded history. Anthropologists believe that early tribes divided from one another when some members chose to farm rather than hunt. Genesis 11 speaks of the Tower of Babel, in which humanity divided based on their lack of common language. The Old Testament tells stories of Israel falling apart when it stopped worshipping a single God and decided to worship

the idols of neighboring nations. You can see this tendency today in political parties, marriages, denominations, clubs, corporations, and countries. A lack of common values destroys cohesion.

The Anglican Church is not immune to division. Over the past several years, some Anglican groups have not held to the Anglican Way. The result has been the fracturing of the Anglican Communion on the international level. However, when the historic essentials of the Anglican Way are maintained, the church flourishes. Unity brings cohesion and health.

ESSENTIALS

Thanks in part to a seventeenth-century theologian named Richard Hooker, Anglicans have often spoken of three ways to hear from God: Scripture, tradition, and reason. Scripture always takes first place in the Anglican Way, while the other two help us to understand the Bible. It might be helpful to further divide these three essentials into the following five.

1. JESUS CHRIST

Jesus is the human face of God and the first subject of theology. Without him, we don't know the Almighty. Without Christ, we are lost. In the Old Testament, God revealed himself through the Law and the prophets. Throughout all time, he's present in nature, morality, and history. Without Christ we would not know the fullness of the Father or the Holy Spirit; we would not be forgiven, saved, or redeemed. We would not be the church. Jesus Christ is the heart of the Anglican Way because he is the heart of our lives in this world and in the age to come. We are utterly dependent upon him—on his incarnation, birth,

baptism, teaching, healing, miracles, fulfillment of prophecy, transfiguration, suffering, crucifixion, death, resurrection, ascension, sending of the Holy Spirit, and promise to return.

2. THE GOSPEL

The Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ has been proclaimed for 2000 years in words, sacraments, and deeds by the church. Without this missional proclamation none of us would know the Lord (Romans 10:13-15).

3. THE BIBLE

The Bible is the story of God's relationship with his creation, and especially with his people. It reveals the love that he showed in creation, in the calling of the prophets, in setting aside his chosen people, and in revealing himself in Jesus. Through the Bible, the truth of Christ and his Gospel are preserved for us. The Bible recounts all things necessary for our salvation (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Anglican Way is grounded in God's Word.

4. THE CHURCH TRADITIONS

In his book *Orthodoxy*, G.K. Chesterton called tradition "the democracy of the dead." Throughout the ages, the church has resolved some important issues. It has made essential pronouncements in the great Creeds of the church (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed). The Anglican Church has created the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662), 39 Articles of Religion, the Catechism, and something called the Quadrilateral (see Chapter 18). All of these are rooted in the Bible, point to Jesus, and help to form the essential shared values of the Anglican Way. Our liturgies, our hymns, our structures,

and our leaders are part of a tradition that, at its best, connects us with one another in God.

5. THE CHURCH TODAY

Contemporary issues require contemporary responses. Under the guidance of these other four essentials (Christ, the Gospel, the Bible, and the Traditions of the Church), today's church has both the right and responsibility to grapple with modern life. We rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance of our bishops and archbishops, our local congregational leaders, as well as one another. We must make use of prayer, study, and Spirit-inspired reason to hear from God in our modern context. The twentieth-century German theologian Karl Barth "advised young theologians 'to take your Bible and take your newspaper, and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible'" (*Time*, May 31, 1963). That's a great image of the Anglican Church today.

The church must never violate Christ, the Gospel, or the Bible. Some traditions are based entirely on the Bible (such as the Creeds) and should never be changed. Other traditions are helpful, but non-essential, and from time to time these may need to be reformed. Anglicans believe that this sort of reformation should always be done with the utmost care. Tradition is in need of being reconsidered when it no longer serves the Gospel. Praying and reasoning together over time can help us discern if and when traditions should be changed.

DISTINCTIVES

From these essentials flow certain distinctives, things that should be true about every church in the Anglican Way. Each of these distinc-

tives, taken individually, will be found in non-Anglican churches. However, it's unlikely that you will find all of these together in a church that isn't Anglican.

1. PRIMACY OF SCRIPTURE

Anglican churches hold that Old and New Testaments together are the Word of God and contain all things necessary for salvation. We believe that the Bible holds authority in questions of God and humanity over all other traditions, arguments, decisions, and values.

2. TRINITARIAN

Anglicans believe that there is One God who exists eternally in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, we believe that Jesus Christ is completely God and is also completely human. If a religious group does not teach these two doctrines, we do not recognize them as Christian.

3. SALVATION

Anglicans believe that every human being on earth is in need of the saving help of Jesus Christ. We believe that salvation is in Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone.

4. WORD AND SACRAMENT

Anglicans believe that a church is a community that gathers around the proclamation of the Word of God and the celebration of the sacraments of Christ. We believe in preaching the whole of the Gospel. We teach that the sacraments are external signs of interior grace, signs commanded by Christ for the building up of his church.

5. COMMON LIFE

We believe that God has called us to live our lives together in Christ. We engage in liturgical disciplines of prayer, worship, and repentance. Anglicans embrace a full life of seasons and hours, fasts and feasts. We are called to lives that are both ordered and creative.

6. MISSION

Anglicans have a mission to the world. This mission is one of both proclaiming the Gospel and living it out. This means that we believe in starting new churches, evangelizing our neighbors, ministering to the poor, and caring for the world.

7. APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

The church preserves and protects the Gospel through our bishops. They are the successors of the Apostles through heritage, teaching, and character. Our bishops were consecrated by other bishops, who were consecrated by other bishops, all the way back to the Apostles. They have the responsibility of guarding the faith that has been delivered to us, and of serving those whom God has put under their care.

8. *SEMPER REFORMANDA*

Anglicans are never finished. We are, as the Latin phrase above puts it, “always reforming.” Although we are stabilized by tradition, we are nevertheless looking for ways to better proclaim the Gospel in our own day.

9. *VIA MEDIA*

As mentioned earlier, this Latin term means “the middle way.” The Anglican Way lives at the center rather than the extremes. We have

learned that it's impossible to be radical about more than one thing. We don't desire to be radical about politics, traditions, ideas, or even religion. We just want to be radical about the only thing worth being radical about: the amazing love of God in Christ.

Before we move on to how all of this works together in the real world, we need to spend a few pages looking at the history of the Anglican Church. The story of the church will give you a sense of how this Way came into being.

CHAPTER 2

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

To understand the Anglican Way, it's important to understand how the Anglican Church came into being. The Anglican Church began as the Church in England. The word "England" means "Land of the Angles." The Angles were a Germanic tribe that came to Britain in the third century AD. The word "Anglican," also based on the word "Angle," simply means "English." Historically speaking, whatever Christian church existed in England was, in that sense, Anglican.

Christians appeared in England perhaps as early as 67 AD. From the earliest days, Christianity in the British Isles was different from that found elsewhere in Europe. Some scholars believe that the people who first brought the Gospel to England didn't come through Italy or France. Rather, they may have traveled from the Middle East across North Africa and up the Atlantic coast. Regardless of where it came from, a distinct form of the faith grew and spread throughout the islands. Today we call it Celtic Christianity. This religion evolved through a series of immigrations and invasions. Its leaders included saints like Patrick, Columba, and Aidan.

At the beginning of the seventh century, a Roman Pope named Gregory the Great sent a man named Augustine (not the famous writer of "The Confessions") to England. It was the Middle Ages, a time in

which communication across Europe was extremely difficult. Augustine's task was to check on the church in Britain. Augustine was pleased to find that the Gospel was alive and well all over the island, though the way the faith was practiced varied from the Roman Way. The Roman Church insisted that the Celts adopt European practices, and over the next century or two the European form of Christianity slowly replaced the Celtic one.

Over time, England saw the rise and fall of many kings. Some were native to the land while others were invaders. Many of these rulers shared one interesting similarity: they claimed that the church in England was under their authority, not under that of the Pope. William the Conqueror once sent the Pope a letter reminding him of this, and the Magna Carta of 1215 asserted the independence of the English Church.

The modern Church of England officially got its start in the midst of the Reformation (the sixteenth century). Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, and others also came into being during this critical time in Christian history. The Anglican Church displayed one key difference from all these other new denominations; rather than being a church born of theology, it was born of geography.

Look at the names of those groups. Lutherans followed the teachings of Martin Luther. Calvinists followed the teachings of John Calvin. Anabaptists are named after one of their primary theological beliefs, that a person should be baptized again as an adult. The Anglican Church was not named after a leader or an idea, it was named after a place.

On February 11, 1531, King Henry VIII declared himself the head of the Church in England. On that day, every Christian living in England effectively became an Anglican. Their membership in this emerging denomination had nothing to do with what they believed,

how they wished to worship, or what teacher they followed. They lived in England and that was enough.

King Henry was the leader of a church that was filled with all kinds of competing theologies and forms of Christian practice. There were people who believed what the Reformers believed, what Anabaptists believed, or what Roman Catholics believed. There were congregations who were worshipping like Martin Luther, and others who were worshipping like the Pope. They were all part of one, big, dysfunctional family, and their differences were going to have to be dealt with in that context.

Henry VIII tried making Reformed changes to the church, but he also left many Catholic practices in place. Sometimes he changed his mind back and forth. One of his favorite hobbies became confiscating church property and using it to fund his government. His own theology was always a mystery, and probably more muddled than he let on. It's said that he used to execute Lutherans and Catholics for heresy on the same day. He was a confused man.

Those early Anglicans didn't do a very good job of loving each other in Christ. As elsewhere in Europe, many people died and much property was destroyed as people fought each other over how to best follow the Prince of Peace. After much uncertainty, Queen Elizabeth I came to the throne at the age of 25 in 1558. Following the teachings of Henry's great archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, Elizabeth established the essential elements of the Anglican Way. During her reign, Anglican worship and theology became standardized. She ordered a simplified Catholic style of governance and worship along with essentially Lutheran preaching and theology. She brought compromise and moderation to the English Church. No one got everything they wanted, which was part of the genius of her Reformed Catholicism, her Anglican Way.

As the centuries rolled on, England established a worldwide empire. Where the empire went, the church followed. As it traveled, this church was often called “The Anglican Church,” which simply meant “the English Church” or “the Church from England.” English settlers established Anglican churches in North America. After the American Revolution, they began calling their church “Episcopal” (which means “of bishops”), and a new branch of the Anglican Church was born. A worldwide communion was coming into existence.

The British Empire extended into Africa and Oceania, the Caribbean, Australia, and Asia. At first, only English people were members of the church. But soon, missionary movements appeared. Anglicans shared the Gospel with indigenous peoples. When the empire finally began to recede, as all empires do, it left churches behind. These grew and, like the Episcopal Church in America, gave themselves new names. Independent branches of the Anglican Communion took root all over the world.

Today, many churches found in England aren't Anglican. The country is filled with Catholics and Pentecostals, Presbyterians and Methodists, Muslims and Hindus. On the other side of the coin, there are about 80 million people in the world who claim “Anglican” as their religious tradition. These people live in approximately 165 countries. There are 44 independent provinces within the Anglican Church, and the Church of England is only one of those provinces. If you are an Anglican in the world today, you are most likely African. There are also many Anglicans who are Latin American and Asian, as well as Anglicans in all Western countries.

People who are both Anglican and of European ethnic descent (like me) are a minority in today's Anglican Church. English-speaking caucasians are a small fraction of those who walk in the Anglican Way.