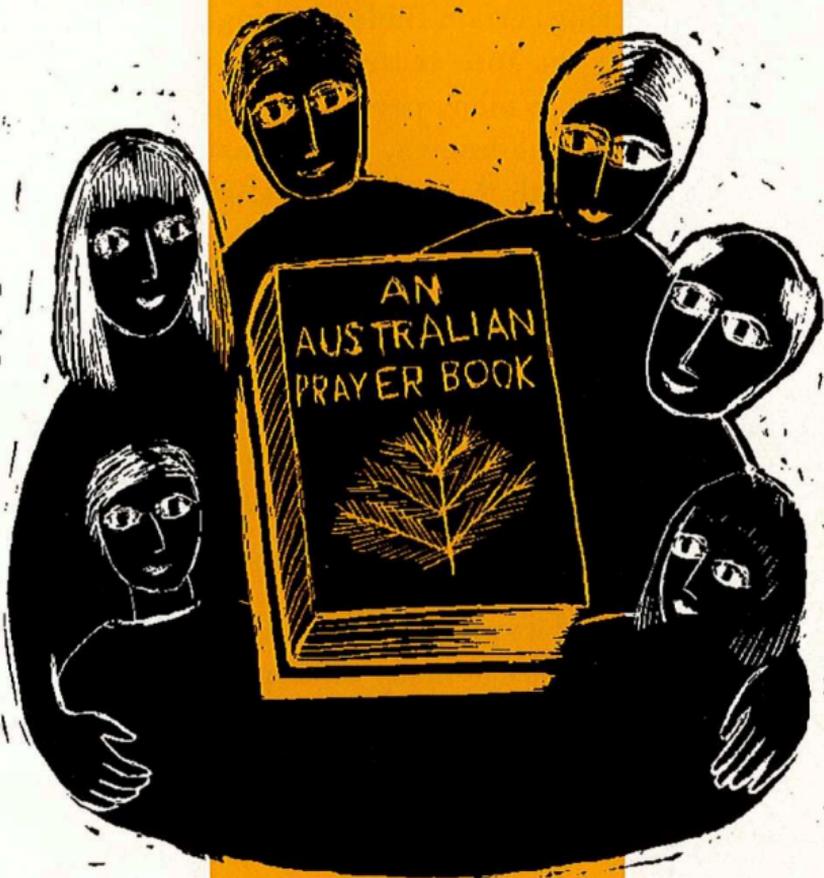


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# WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ANGLICAN



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## HOW IT BEGAN

The Anglican Church arrived in Australia along with the First Fleet. The English clergyman Richard Johnson travelled with this Fleet as its chaplain, and held a service of thanksgiving on Sunday, 3 February, 1788 under a tree at Sydney Cove. It was the first Anglican service in Australia.

The Anglican Church has its origins in early British history. By the 8th century there was one Church throughout the land. But in the Middle Ages beliefs and practices opposing certain Bible teachings came into the church. During the 16th century they were rejected in Britain, as well as in many parts of Europe. This Reformation, as it became known, means that the Anglican Church today is both Reformed and Catholic.

Roman Catholics say that the Reformers went too far. Others say that they didn't go far enough! Debates about these points still continue. That's why we have what is called High Church (sometimes called Anglo-Catholics), Low Church (Evangelicals) or Broad Church (Liberals). But all, with or without a label, belong to the one Anglican Church.

England extended its political and commercial interests through a vast empire to many other parts of the world. Because of this, the Church of England came to flourish in other lands, and this in turn laid the groundwork for the world-wide Anglican Communion of today.

Unlike the Church of England, the Anglican Church of Australia has no formal connection with the State.



## WHAT ANGLICANS BELIEVE

For Anglicans, the authority of the Bible is crucial. It is not to be compromised either by church practice or human thinking. Anglicans believe that the Bible contains all that we need to know about coming to know God and living the life he wants us to lead.

The Bible's central message is that all who believe in the death and resurrection of Christ may be sure of forgiveness and of being welcomed back into God's family. Because of this, these themes are stressed in every Anglican church service.

Anglicans believe that God, through Jesus Christ his son and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, desires that every man, woman and child live obediently to his will, and enjoy the fulness of life that he brings to all our relationships. In this way we relate to Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and saviour. God's love extends to all humanity, no matter what their race, gender, colour or culture might be.

Anglicans also believe that baptism and holy communion, established by Christ himself, are very important. Baptism with water, whether as children or adults, is strongly encouraged in the Bible as a sign of our desire to accept Jesus as our Lord and master.



When children are baptised, promises are made by parents or godparents on their behalf. These promises at a later date are 'confirmed' by the baptised child. Holy communion, sometimes called the 'Lord's supper' or the 'Eucharist', is held regularly. This service focuses on the role of Christ's death and resurrection in the new life of all true believers. It also reminds us that the power of Jesus' risen life is available for **this life and the next**, to all his followers.

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Anglicans, as an act of fellowship, welcome full members of other churches to take part with them in this Communion service.

## HOW ANGLICANS WORSHIP

The Anglican Church uses set forms of worship, or 'liturgies', a practice which has continued from the earliest Christian church. A common order of service in the hands of the whole congregation helps to preserve unity among the members and gives a sense of oneness with the past. It also helps people concentrate their attention, encourages participation by all, and gives some protection from one person's preferences being enforced on the whole gathering! *An Australian Prayer Book*, published in 1978, supplements the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* and provides a wide range of alternatives for worship.



All are welcome at such services.

## HOW IT IS ORGANISED

The Anglican Church is a large and diverse community of believers, with some 70 million members worldwide.

Each country or geographical region is represented as a province, each of which is made up of a series of dioceses supervised by a diocesan bishop. Each diocese has numerous parishes, and these in turn present the 'local face' of the Anglican Church.

The Anglican Church emphasises the independence of its various 'branches'. The Archbishop of Canterbury provides an important focus for our unity, but has no direct control over the Anglican Church of Australia.

The laws of the Anglican Church are administered on democratic lines, through its regular 'parliaments' or

synods. Its beliefs are set out in detail in the *Book of Common Prayer*, which dates back to the 16th and 17th centuries, and in the *39 Articles*, based on the teaching of the Bible.

## ANGLICANS AND OTHER CHURCHES

The Anglican Church is 'ecumenical' in nature, seeing itself as part of the 'whole household' of God within each local community as well as throughout the world. It encourages discussions with leaders and members of other churches, including the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches. For many years Australian Anglicans have been linked in fellowship and service with Christians of other churches.

Through membership of world councils and conferences, the Anglican Church works to promote unity and outreach. It doesn't claim to be the only church, nor does it recognise any other church's exclusive claim. Rather, it emphasises the essential oneness of the whole body of Christ.



The Anglican Church relates to people in need through a wide range of social welfare and counselling services, and a large welfare budget. It provides chaplains to the armed services, hospitals, schools, industry and prisons. Multi-million dollar projects provide for people of all ages and backgrounds. This demonstrates the practical outworking of the Christian faith to the physically or mentally ill, and to those seeking spiritual fulfilment. It doesn't line up with any particular political party but leaves its members free to commend or criticize.

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Anglican missionaries are at work throughout the world, taking up Christ's commission to preach the gospel to all people. They work with indigenous churches—and at their invitation—to strengthen the church's local witness.

## HOW TO BECOME AN ANGLICAN

The Anglican Church is open to all. Some people in years past claimed to be Anglicans because their grandparents and parents were members. Others went to Anglican services merely out of habit, or to attend a wedding or a funeral. Of course, they were always welcome, although in a very important sense they were not really **members**.

It is not difficult to become an Anglican—just contact your local minister or diocesan offices. If you are not a Christian, or if you're not sure whether you are or aren't, once again make contact with your local minister. If you prefer, you could read about what becoming a Christian means in *What is a Christian?*, available from the AIO, PO Box Q190, Queen Victoria Building, Sydney, NSW 2000 or phone (02) 265 1538.

ANGLICAN INFORMATION OFFICE

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