

What do Anglicans Believe?

*A Study Guide to Christian
Doctrine from Anglican and
Ecumenical Statements*

*Theological Education
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Communion (TEAC)
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The Anglican Consultative Council
Saint Andrew’s House
16 Tavistock Crescent
London W11 1AP
United Kingdom

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What do Anglicans Believe?

Introduction

In his great set of poems 'The Four Quartets' T.S. Eliot describes how we can have an experience but miss the meaning. This can be as true for theological students as anyone else: they can become so preoccupied with the practicalities of ministry and church life that they lose touch with the meaning of what it is all about.

Spending time in study of the doctrines of the Christian faith, the beliefs which undergird all that we do, can make all the difference. This study guide provides an opportunity for students to do this, with the help of Anglican and ecumenical texts freely available on the internet, not least for those across the Anglican Communion who do not have access to theological libraries. Furthermore, as Eliot goes on to say, finding the meaning 'restores the experience in a different form.'

The study guide builds on the dialogue about doctrine that Anglican churches have had with each other and with other churches across the world ever since they were formed. Over recent decades these conversations have produced a rich and authoritative collection of agreed statements, written by Anglican theologians in partnership with theologians from other churches, to create a broad and rich map of the Christian faith as it has been received and handed on by these churches.

In this study guide, then, taking advantage of the availability of these statements from various websites, a concise and well-grounded introduction to Christian doctrine is assembled for use in home groups, study programmes, seminaries and theological colleges across the Anglican

Communion. It has been produced by members of the Inter Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order (IASCUFO) working in partnership with the Anglican Communion's department of Theological Education in the Anglican Communion (TEAC). It has been compiled to be uploaded onto the theological education pages of the Anglican Communion website, to be freely available for use by all.

To help readers engage with the texts the study guide uses an interactive approach, with questions and answers running through every chapter. It begins with broad questions, namely what is doctrine in general and what is the doctrine shared by all historic churches, and from there narrows down to specific Anglican doctrine. The first chapter looks at the nature of doctrine in general, introducing its place within discipleship and mission as a whole. The second chapter turns to the doctrines of the Nicene Creed, the most ancient and widely used creed today, shared by churches of both East and West, South and North, using a recent and widely welcomed ecumenical text that unpacks and applies its meaning for today. This chapter will offer a structure for engaging with it. The third and longest chapter turns to the doctrine of the

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Church, drawing on a rich selection of Anglican and ecumenical ecclesiological statements, to approach this topical and important subject from a number of directions, also touching on the nature of the sacraments.

Agreed statements, however, only take us so far. They need to be not only read but understood, interpreted and expressed in worship, mission and discipleship. There need to be moments when 'the penny drops' and the meaning of doctrines becomes clear and energising and we go on to express them in our lives.

All of this will be very different in different places, depending on the social and cultural realities of the respective context. Each study group will find its own way of doing these things, at a level and in a way that is appropriate for them. The person leading the study process will need to be sensitive to these dynamics and fashion the study accordingly.

To help with this, this study guide draws on an approach to learning often described as 'See-Judge-Act', or 'Taking in, Taking stock, Taking action'.¹ It is a simple but effective three-step method of reflection and action which moves from the learner's context to the text in question and then to a practical response, to be repeated again and again:

See

This first step is all about coming to see the situation in which we find ourselves – our 'context'. Such an analysis will ask what is happening, who is involved, and what are its effects. In this case, with doctrine as the subject, the questions will be about what is the current role of doctrine (or specific doctrines) in the life of our church (whether local or regional), who is involved in that role, and what effect does it have. This first step of the pedagogical process requires a degree of social analysis and is best done as a group exercise, involving those who share this reality and who can analyse it together.

Judge

The second step is all about gaining a critical perspective on the subject, by learning from authorities such as scripture, church teaching and scholarship, and comparing and contrasting what is currently the case in our context with what could and should be the case. As far as doctrine is concerned, this step involves reading and learning from authoritative ecumenical and Anglican statements, on the meaning and place of doctrine and specific doctrines in the life of the church, and then reflecting on how the situation uncovered by the first step

¹ See, for example, Simon Cuff, *Love in Action: Catholic Social Teaching for Every Church*, London: SCM Press, Chapter 8: 'See, Judge, Act'. Cuff traces the origins of this approach back to St Thomas Aquinas. On 'Taking in, Taking stock and Taking action' see *God's Justice: Just Relationships between Women and Men, Girls and Boys: Study Materials for use by Theological Colleges, Seminaries and Training Schemes in the Anglican Communion*, Section 2, pp.14- 18, Anglican Communion Office 2019, <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/348551/TEAC-Just-relationships-women-men.pdf> These approaches are similar in some respects to the 'pastoral cycle' found in much recent pastoral and practical theology.

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is positively critiqued by this. What changes and growth in understanding of doctrine, and specific doctrines, could and should be made, and how could they find more authentic and inspiring expression in our Christian lives? Most of the contents of this study guide is to resource this second step.

Act

In response to the critical perspective on church life gained in the second step, the third step is all about deciding how in practice we are going to bridge the gap between what is happening and what should be happening. In this case it is all about deciding how doctrine in general, and specific doctrines, should play a more contextually authentic and inspiring role in our worship, mission and discipleship, and then resolving to make those changes. This is best done as a group exercise so that we can support each other in these changes and hold each other to the commitments we make.

This study guide approaches each area of doctrine through this three-step method. Within this, as mentioned, it uses a question and answer form of presentation, going through each section as a dialogue between the reader and the relevant statements. At each point the reader is asked to move from reading and understanding to interpretation and practical expression. With this approach, furthermore, there is no single set of outcomes, for each group in its own context will find its own way of living out the doctrine it has received.

All texts in boxes are quotations from ecumenical texts. Information about the texts with bibliographical details are given at the end of the study guide. There are also some recommendations of texts for further study.

This study guide is a working draft and will be revised and expanded in due course. I would be pleased to receive comments and suggestions for a revised edition in due course.

Stephen Spencer

Director for Theological Education at the Anglican Communion Office

stephen.spencer@anglicancommunion.org

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1. What is Doctrine?

Seeing

An engaging way of studying doctrine is to begin with analysing the place of doctrine in the life of the church - our 'context'. As already mentioned, such an analysis will ask what is happening, who is involved, and what are its effects. With the subject being the core beliefs of the Christian community over the ages, the questions will therefore be about the role of this doctrine in the life of our church, who is involved in that role, and what effect does it have.

These questions can be addressed in a whole range of ways, for example by looking at how new members are admitted to the church and whether they assent to a doctrinal statement or take on a clear doctrinal outlook. How much understanding and ownership of doctrine is there among the community as a whole? What is the place of the creeds in the worship of the church and in the discipleship of its people? How much doctrinal teaching takes place from the pulpit or in small study groups and how much reflection and reception is there upon it? What about the setting in which the community gathers, such as the architectural layout and decoration of the church building, or the liturgical and social life of the community, or the kind of outreach it makes into the wider community: does it implicitly or explicitly embody the beliefs of the church community and do the people see and own it as such? Are the doctrines of the faith

guiding and inspiring God's people, whether collectively or individually, or is this doctrine marginal to their common life?

The answering of these questions does not need a major research project. Those who already belong to a local church can bring together their own knowledge, understanding and impressions and paint a portrait, as it were, of the situation. Admittedly it will be from one point of view, but this will still have authority for all that. The purpose of this first stage is not to provide a final set of answers but to start asking some relevant questions, to raise awareness of the issues and to see that all is not what it could be within the lived reality of the church community.

Judging

The second step, as mentioned, is all about gaining a critical perspective on the subject, by learning from authorities such as scripture, church teaching and scholarship, and comparing and contrasting what is currently the case with what could be the case. As far as doctrine is concerned, this step involves reading and learning from authoritative ecumenical and Anglican statements, on the meaning and place of doctrine in the life of the church, and then exploring how the situation uncovered by the first step is positively critiqued by this. What changes and growth in understanding and expression are they implying could be made?

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The rest of this chapter provides a set of perspectives and questions to assist with this. The leading questions below open the way for a set of answers from the statements. The challenge then becomes this: in what ways do these answers challenge the lived reality of our church community? In what ways do they affirm what is already there? What changes and growth might they encourage? Each section ends with a discussion question in italics to help readers engage with all this.

Acting

In response to the critical perspective on the place of doctrine in church life gained in the second step, the third step is all about deciding how in practice we are going to bridge the gap between what is happening and what could be happening. In other words, how could doctrine in general play a more contextually authentic and inspiring role in our worship, mission and discipleship, and how could those changes be made. This is best done as a group exercise so that we can support each other in these changes and hold each other to the commitments we make.

The difficulty is that the second step will have revealed a whole range of possible actions, at both individual and corporate level, some straightforward and some very ambitious. These will be too many to attempt all at once, so decisions must be made about which to prioritise. As always, it will be better to do a few things well rather than many things poorly. One way of prioritising is to ask which of the changes will make the biggest impact on the life of the Christian community as a whole, and then enact this one. Which change, in other words, is going to enable doctrine to play a more contextually authentic and inspiring role in its worship, mission and discipleship? This third step is the most important of all because it is the one which will make a real difference to the ongoing life of the church and the world.

Resources for *Judging*

1. Where does doctrine sit in the life of the church?

To be a Christian is to follow and be shaped by Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. It is to be drawn into an ongoing journey of learning and living the way of Jesus in community, for personal, communal and cultural transformation, and sharing this faith with others through the power of the Holy Spirit. Anglicans around the world are currently rediscovering the authenticity and energy of this through what has been called the season of intentional discipleship:

Intentional Discipleship and Disciple-Making, pp. 3, 126-7:

The season of intentional discipleship is all about 'people growing in their sense of being loved by, and loving God as encountered in the person of Jesus Christ, and responding by offering themselves to God and God's world through coming to know Jesus more deeply, and ordering their lives around this relationship, in community with all of Jesus' disciples...'

'Discipleship is the very essence of Anglicanism. Anglicanism, from its roots in Celtic and Augustinian spirituality and shaped by the European Reformation, has always been a lived-out (not a purely intellectual or spiritualized) faith. It is about following and living the ways of Jesus... Discipleship reflects the Catholic-Protestant nature of the Anglican Communion. We discover the true meaning of the Catholic nature of the Church as we follow a Saviour who unites all people, all things, in himself, and we discover the true vocation of Protestantism as our discipleship leads us into a prophetic engagement with all that is not holy.'

This life of discipleship therefore calls Christians to grow in understanding and ownership of their faith, and to be able to communicate it in inspiring ways to others. This is where doctrinal theology comes into play (theology comes from the Greek words *Theos*/God and *logos*/words ie. words about God). Christians through the ages have reflected together on how to speak about their faith, in the light of Scripture, finding appropriate language for expressing what they believe in ways that communicate with the people and places in which they find themselves. It can be said that God's people are doing theology and reflecting doctrinally whenever they talk about the nature of God, about God's acts of creation and redemption and tell others about all this in new and fresh ways. This has been the case for a very long time:

*The Preface to the Declaration of Assent', Canon C15 of the Church of England:
...the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh [its faith] in each generation.*



To what extent does your church 'proclaim afresh' the Christian faith? How could it do this better?

2. Where does doctrine come from?

Christians have been doing theology together since earliest times. They stand together in this, as the words of St Paul testify: 'There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all!' (Eph. 4:4-6). And yet, as we read even in the accounts of the Acts of the Apostles, Christians have formed distinct communities sometimes divided over doctrine or culture, as well as separated through geography. So there has always been tension over whether there is too much diversity and whether it is healthy or unhealthy.

Differences in theological understandings were among the questions addressed by the 'Ecumenical Councils' in the early centuries of the Christian era, meetings that drew together bishops and theologians from across the breadth of the churches. The Councils were called 'ecumenical', meaning 'general' or 'universal', in a Latin term derived from the Greek word *oikoumenikos* meaning 'from the whole world'. The conclusions of the first four of these councils – the 'Catholic councils'² – which include such important matters as the nature of Christ as fully human and divine, the Trinity, and the Nicene Creed – are held to be authoritative doctrine by most historic churches.

The Anglican Covenant

Section One: Our Inheritance of Faith

1.1 Each [Anglican] Church affirms:

(1.1.1) its communion in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

(1.1.2) the catholic and apostolic faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation.



To what extent does your church pay attention to and learn from the creeds? How could you learn from them in a deeper way?

² The Councils of Nicea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451).

3. How is doctrine handed on?

Doctrine is handed down from the apostolic church in a dynamic kind of way:

International Anglican–Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission, *Growing Together in Unity and Mission: Building on 40 years of Anglican–Roman Catholic Dialogue: An Agreed Statement* (2006)

26. Anglicans and Roman Catholics embrace a common Christian inheritance, shared for many centuries, “with its living traditions of liturgy, theology, spirituality, Church order, and mission”. We agree that the Church lives in a dynamic process of tradition, “communicating to each generation what was delivered once and for all to the apostolic community”, and that the Church is “servant and not master of what it has received”.³

However doctrines are not simply handed on by church authorities. There is a two way process of offering and receiving, a dialogue, out of which comes authoritative teaching:

Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue *The Church of the Triune God*, Section IX Reception is part of the ongoing life of the Church. Ever since the time of Christ and the Apostles, the Church has constantly received and re-received the message of her Lord. Jesus Christ himself, in receiving our humanity, received his mission from the Father. He received too the history and Scriptures of the people of Israel to which he belonged as man. Belonging to a particular generation at a particular time, he acted and spoke within the tradition transmitted to him. In the Scriptures themselves, stories, images and ideas in one part are taken up and reworked in other parts. The process of reception precedes the Church, which herself can be seen as a product of reception.



How is doctrine received and reworked in your local church? How could this happen in a more dynamic and involving way?

4. How has doctrine been revived in recent decades?

The modern ecumenical movement has re-invigorated the process of churches exploring doctrine together. This has happened especially through the Faith and

³ The three quotations cite, respectively, the papal encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, n.86; The Malta Report (Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission, 1968; published in *The Final Report*, pp.108-116), n.3; and *The Gift of Authority* (of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, 1998), n.14.

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Order movement, which arose out of the missionary movement in the Nineteenth century when churches became more and more aware of the need to understand and work with each other:

World Council of Churches, 'What is Faith and Order?':


The desire to heal or prevent Christian division is as old as Christian division itself, which, as the New Testament testifies, dates to the very origins of Christianity. Yet in the modern ecumenical movement of the past century, the attempts to heal have quite broadly taken two complementary forms, which might be characterized as "discussing together" and "doing together." In any human division, whether on the level of a family, a friendship or an institution, reunion needs to be a combination of discussing - what happened to bring about the division, what is it that really divides us, what can be done to bring us together, and doing - beginning already to act in some way together and build, or rebuild, some kind of common life.

The movements which arose at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, movements which spawned the modern ecumenical movement, reflected these forms. The doing was represented by the Life and Work Movement, while the discussing was the task of the Faith and Order Movement. One needs to emphasize once again that these two areas of activity and their concerns were always seen as complementary: the discussing is about what Christians do and what they are, and the doing involves a great deal of cooperative discussion!

Today, the Life and Work Movement is represented in the World Council of Churches in those activity areas where the Christian churches act cooperatively: e.g., in education, humanitarian response, and programmes aimed against injustice and the abuse of people and the environment.

The Faith and Order movement is integral to the World Council of Churches. The aim of the Faith and Order movement has always been, and still is, "to proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity". The chief means of achieving this goal is through study programmes dealing with theological questions that divide the churches.

Churches have extensively explored aspects of the faith in formal dialogue with other churches, both bilaterally (such as in the Anglican Roman Catholic International Consultations - ARCIC) and multilaterally (such as within the Faith and Order movement of the World Council of Churches).

 ***In what ways has your church talked with other churches about the Christian faith? How could this happen in new ways in the future?***

5. Why engage in dialogue about doctrine?

Often it is through talking with others that churches are prompted to sharpen and clarify what they believe, and the find how best to express this, together learning and growing in the life to which God calls us:


World Council of Churches, *Notions of 'Hierarchy of Truth' – An Ecumenical Interpretation*, Report of the Roman Catholic–WCC Joint Working Group (1990):

36. By better understanding the ways in which other Christians hold, express and live the faith, each confessional tradition is often led to a better understanding also of itself, and can begin to see its own formulations of doctrine in a broader perspective. This experience and discernment of each other is mutually enriching. The process respectfully approaches the mystery of salvation and its various formulations, with no intent to “reduce” the mystery by any or all formulations. The process is a means of more adequately assessing expressions of the truth of revelation, their interrelation, their necessity and the possible diversity of formulations...

Other benefits were identified by the Anglican-Baptist ‘International Conversations’:

Anglican Communion and Baptist World Alliance, *Conversations Around the World 2000-2005* (2005), from the Introduction:

1. To enable Anglicans and Baptists to learn from each other and to deepen understanding of relationships between our two communions in the light of their histories.
2. To share with each other how we understand the Christian faith and to work towards a common confession of the Apostolic Faith.
3. To identify issues of doctrine and the nature of the church to be explored further in possible future conversations.
4. To look for ways to co-operate in mission and community activities, and to increase our fellowship and common witness to the Gospel.

 **Have you ever been led to a better understanding of your faith by talking about it with those from other churches and traditions? Are there new ways you could do this in future?**

6. Can churches learn doctrine from each other?

The wide range of agreements, statements and other material coming from dialogues have set out where churches share common language and perspectives, and where they have different experiences, emphases or viewpoints.. Sometimes they have also helped clarify where they have used different language to express matters on which they agree in substance, and so have assisted in overcoming misunderstandings and disagreements of the past:

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) was a historic agreement signed by Lutherans and Catholics in 1999. It states that the churches now share “a common understanding of our justification by God’s grace through faith in Christ.” To the parties involved, this essentially resolved the 500-year-old conflict over the nature of justification by faith which was at the root of the Protestant Reformation.

Learning from other churches and drawing on their theological explorations is not new. This was very evident during and following the Reformation era.

From Article XIX of the Thirty-nine Articles, 1572:

‘THE visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.’

Article 7 of the Lutheran Augsburg Confession of 1530,

‘Our churches also teach that there is, and always will be, one holy church. The church is the gathering of all believers, in which the gospel is purely preached and the sacraments are properly administered.’



In what ways have you learnt doctrine from other churches? How could this be encouraged in the future?

7. Is there a need to find new ways to express doctrine?

Different periods of history with their different cultures require new ways of understanding and expressing the faith:


Anglican-Reformed International Commission, *God's reign and our unity*, (1984):
40 Orthodoxy is not maintained simply by repeating the same words. In its missionary advance the Church is always required to find in the languages of those who are brought to faith from many cultures, words which direct their minds in teaching and worship to the one true God. Likewise, as the Church continues to hand on the faith in each new age, it is required to find new words which, in the language of these new generations, will rightly express that faith. Both our communions, receiving the Scriptures as the authoritative standard of faith, acknowledge the need for this continuing effort of reformulation both in teaching and in worship.

In fact, the church has engaged in reformulation and re-ordering of doctrine over many centuries:

World Council of Churches, *Notions of 'Hierarchy of Truth - An Ecumenical Interpretation*, Report of the Roman Catholic-WCC Joint Working Group (1990):
18. Some Christian traditions, upon reflection, perceive two dimensions of a "hierarchy of truths". On the one hand, God's revelation itself exhibits an order, such as the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. On the other hand, in the continuing response of faith to revelation by God's pilgrim people, one sees an ordering of truth which has been influenced by the historical and cultural contexts of time and place. These varied responses in faith to revelation have resulted in different orderings and emphases in the doctrinal expressions of various churches in their various historical periods, and of groups and even of individuals within churches. The Second Vatican Council recognizes that in the investigation of revealed truth, East and West have used different methods and approaches in understanding and proclaiming divine things and that sometimes one tradition has come nearer than the other to an appropriate appreciation of certain aspects of a revealed mystery, or has expressed them in a clearer manner (Decree on Ecumenism, 17).

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19. In the ecumenical dialogue churches may become more aware of existing hierarchies or orderings of truths in their tradition and life. Through dialogue changes can result also in the ordering of a church's own teaching, and this can facilitate rapprochement. The Reformation churches, for example, increasingly acknowledge the significance of the episcopal ministry in their order of truths; and the Roman Catholic Church is finding a new appreciation of the doctrine of justification by faith. These are signs of convergence.

 *In your experience have encounters with other churches made you change your understanding of certain doctrines? Has this been enriching? How could it be encouraged?*

II. What is the Doctrine of the Creeds?

How are we to study of the core doctrines of the Christian faith in a systematic way when we do not have access to a good theological library or only a limited amount of time? The ecumenical text *Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, from 1991, offers a way of doing this. It has become a foundational statement for the contemporary church, one of the most important texts to come out of the Faith and Order movement towards the end of the Twentieth century. It was written by leading theologians including the German Protestant theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg and the French Roman Catholic theologian Jean Tillard. Its status has led it to being re-printed a number of times and in 2010 it was re-published with a new preface by Dame Mary Tanner. It is now freely available online from the World Council of Churches. (For details see the list at the end of this study guide. There are also a range of associated resources from Faith and Order which are also listed.)

This text prints and explicates the words of the ancient Nicene Creed, which is proclaimed by both Western and Eastern churches in their worship and is a key expression of their unity in the Christian faith. The text goes through the Nicene Creed section by section, drawing out and applying the meaning

of each of them. It does three things within each section: it provides a clear and informative explanation of the meaning based on historical scholarship; it presents the Biblical basis of each affirmation; and in a longer 'Explication for Today' section it shows how this affirmation speaks to the modern age especially in response to challenges posed by, for example, atheism, secularism and other religions.

There are additional resources connected with this text listed at the end of this chapter.

Mary Tanner, who was very involved with the formation of the text from 1982 through to its publication in 1991, commends it in the following way:

The challenges of the contemporary world are not identical to those of the 1980s. But there could hardly be a time in history when the world is more in need of hearing a confident and united voice proclaiming the good news of Christ for all people. Those who take up this study will find that it leads them into new avenues of exploration of the faith and the way that our common faith challenges, and is challenged by, events in today's world. *Confessing the One Faith* is a marvellous instrument to help churches... grasp the opportunity to make common confession and to live this out together. (p.viii)

The statement is divided into ten sections and these provide good sub-divisions for a ten session study programme covering the main doctrines of the creed:

1. **The One God** – pages 16-27
2. **The Father Almighty** – pages 27-34
3. **The Creator and his creation** – pages 34-42
4. **Jesus Christ – incarnate for our salvation** – pages 43-54
5. **Jesus Christ – suffering and crucified for our sake** – pages 54-64
6. **Jesus Christ – risen to overcome all evil powers** – pages 64-72
7. **The Holy Spirit** – pages 73-81
8. **One holy, catholic and apostolic Church** – pages 81-90
9. **One baptism for the forgiveness of sins** – pages 90-96
10. **The resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come** – pages 97-104

A Practical Approach

Building on the first chapter, here is a way of reading and responding to each section of the text, once again using the See-Judge-Act approach to learning:

Seeing

The first step will be all about coming to see the meaning and role of the designated doctrine from the Nicene creed in the life of the church, whether local or regional, also who is involved

in that role and what effect it has. As always, this first step of the pedagogical process requires careful analysis and is best done as a group exercise, involving those who share this reality and who can analyse it together.

As in the first chapter, these questions can be addressed in a whole range of ways, for example by looking at how much understanding and ownership of the doctrine exists in the community as a whole, what its place may be in the worship of the church and in the discipleship of its people, and in what ways it is taught from the pulpit or in small study groups and how much reflection and reception of it there is. What about the setting in which the community gathers, such as the architectural layout and decoration of the church building, or the liturgical and social life of the community, or the kind of outreach it makes into the wider community? Does this doctrine implicitly or explicitly play an active part in the church community and do the people see and own it as such? Is it guiding and inspiring God's people, whether collectively or individually, or is it marginal to their common life?

In this exercise the point will be to gather knowledge, understanding and impressions and compile a useful portrait of the situation. The aim will not be to provide a final answer but to ask some relevant questions and to see whether this doctrine has a meaningful part to play in the lived reality of the church community.

Judging

The second step, as before, is all about gaining a critical perspective on the subject, by learning from authorities such as scripture, church teaching and scholarship, and comparing and contrasting what is currently the case with what could and should be the case. As far as specific doctrines are concerned, this step involves reading the relevant section in *Confessing the One Faith*, and then exploring how what was uncovered by the first step is positively critiqued by what this section shows. In other words, in what ways does this text challenge the lived reality of our church community? In what ways does it affirm what is already there? What changes and growth in understanding and expression might it encourage?

Acting

In response to the critical perspective gained in the second step, this step is once again all about deciding how in practice we are going to bridge the gap between what is happening and what

should be happening. In this case it is all about deciding how the doctrine in question should play a more contextually authentic and inspiring role in our worship, mission and discipleship, and then resolving to make those changes. As always, this is best done as a collaborative exercise so that we can support each other in these changes and hold each other to the commitments we make.

The difficulty is that the second step will have revealed a whole range of possible actions connected with different doctrines, at both individual and corporate level. These will be too many to attempt all at once, so a strategic decision must be made about which action to focus on. As in the chapter above, this can be decided by asking which action connected with which doctrine is going to do most to help the church community live out its faith in a contextually authentic and inspiring way in its worship, mission and discipleship? This should be the one to act on first of all.

III. What is the Church?

Church, Mission and Sacraments in Anglican and Ecumenical Texts

Agreed statements offer important insights into what Anglicans believe about the church, the mission of the church in the world and the way in which the church nourishes and feeds believers through the sacraments. This chapter explores these theological issues through different agreements and statements to which Anglicans have contributed, drawing out common theological themes across the different dialogues. The different sections approach these themes through a range of leading questions that help to build and reinforce understanding of what they point to. Each section also contains a discussion question to encourage reflection on how its theme finds expression or could find expression in your own local church.

Seeing

As in other chapters the first step is to see what understanding is already in place in the local church setting from which we come. This requires some social analysis and is best done as a group exercise, involving those who share this reality and who can analyse it together. So, in this case, how much understanding of the church reveals itself in worship, in mission and in the discipleship of the people? In what ways

is an understanding of the church taught from the pulpit or in small study groups and how much reflection and reception of it is there? What about the setting in which the community gathers, such as the physical layout of the church building, or the liturgical and social life of the community, or the kind of outreach it makes into the wider community?

As before, the point will be to gather knowledge, understanding and impressions and compile a useful portrait of the situation. The aim will not be to provide a complete answer but to ask some relevant questions and to see whether such understanding has a meaningful part to play in the lived reality of the church community.

Judging

The second step, as before, is all about gaining a critical perspective on the subject, by learning from a set of ecumenical and Anglican statements on the church, and then exploring how they positively critique the lived reality of our church community revealed in the first step. In what ways do they affirm what is already there? What changes and growth in understanding and expression do they call for? The rest of this chapter is resourcing this step.

Acting

In response to the critical perspective gained in the second step, the third

What do Anglicans Believe?

step is once again all about deciding how in practice we are going to bridge the gap between what is happening and what should be happening. In this case it is all about deciding how Anglican doctrine of the church should play a more contextually authentic and inspiring role in our worship, mission and discipleship, and then resolving to make those changes. As always, this is best done as a collaborative exercise so that we can support each other in these changes and hold each other to the commitments we make.

The difficulty is that the second judging step above will have revealed a whole

range of possible actions connected with different aspects of this doctrine, at both individual and corporate level. These will be too many to attempt all at once, so a strategic decision must be made about which action to concentrate on. As in the chapter above, this can be decided by asking which action connected with which aspect of church doctrine is going to do *the most* to help the church community live out its faith in a contextually authentic and inspiring way in its worship, mission and discipleship? This should then be the one to act on first of all.

Resources for Judging

1. Where to begin?

Building on chapter II we must go first to the creeds and to their description of the Church:

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in ... the holy catholic Church.

Most churches with which Anglicans are in dialogue recognise the Nicene Creed as a foundational statement of faith. Expanding on the Apostle's Creed, which is an early creed used at baptisms, the Nicene Creed was worked out at the Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381) and names what are often known as the 'marks of the Church': the Church is One, it is Holy, it is Catholic, it is Apostolic. Anglicans therefore understand themselves to be part of the One Holy Catholic Apostolic Church, but recognise that this is not an exclusive claim. Other churches also share in and help to constitute the church. This recognition should underlie but also inform the ways that we work together with other Christians.

Porvoo Common Statement (§ 7, 58.a.i)

We each understand our own church to be part of the One, Holy, Catholic Church of Jesus Christ and truly participating in the one apostolic mission of the whole people of God.

We acknowledge one another's churches as churches belonging to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ and truly participating in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God.

Our church, then, does not exist in and of itself, but always looks outside itself. It exists to participate in the Apostolic mission, which is to share with other Christians the good news of the gospel of Christ in word and deed. What it means for the Church to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic takes us to the centre of how it relates to the Trinitarian God. As Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, explains:

All four marks of the church are about Jesus Christ. The church is one because Jesus Christ is one; the church is holy because Jesus Christ is holy; the church is catholic because Jesus Christ is the saviour of all; the church is apostolic because, as the Father has sent Jesus, so Jesus sends us. In other words, if we are to understand the nature of the church at all, we are to understand who Jesus Christ is and what he does.⁴

Q *In what ways does the life of your church demonstrate that it is of Jesus Christ and what he does? How could it show this more clearly?*

2. What is the calling of the Church?

The church comes from Jesus Christ and draws us always into his mission. In this it exists as a sign of the new creation proclaimed through Christ in the New Testament. It is not and can never be the fullness of that new creation, but seeks always to offer a foretaste of that:

World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* § 1, 5

The Christian understanding of the Church and its mission is rooted in the vision of God's great design (or "economy") for all creation: the "kingdom" which was both promised by and manifested in Jesus Christ ... The Church, as the body of Christ, acts by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue his life-giving mission in prophetic and compassionate ministry and so participates in God's work of healing a broken world.

The Church has always been dedicated to proclaiming in word and deed the good news of salvation in Christ, celebrating the sacraments, especially the eucharist, and forming Christian communities.

Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *Church as Communion* § 18

The Church as communion of believers with God and with each other is a sign of the new humanity God is creating and a pledge of the continuing work of the Holy Spirit. Its vocation is to embody and reveal the redemptive power of the Gospel, signifying reconciliation received through faith and participation in the new life in Christ.

⁴ See aoc2013.brix.fatbeehive.com/articles.php/1675/one-holy-catholic-and-apostolic-church

What do Anglicans Believe?

For the Anglican Communion its fidelity to this vocation is expressed through its commitment to expressing five marks of Christ's mission:

Five Marks of Mission

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom;
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers;
- To respond to human need by loving service;
- To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation;
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.



How, in your experience, is church life a sign and foretaste of God's kingdom? How could it be so more effectively?

3. How is the Church one?

The existence of a multitude of different churches in the world makes this one of the hardest questions to answer. It means this section is the longest in this study guide in order to do justice to the question.

The Protestant reformers offered one very influential answer. Drafted by Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon, the Augsburg Confession (1530) defined the church simply and clearly in terms of the “true preaching of the gospel” and the “proper administration of the sacraments” in “the congregation of saints”.

Augsburg Confession, Article VII, On the Church (1530)

The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered. And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike.

What do Anglicans Believe?

In England, this definition was adopted in the Thirty-Nine Articles:

The Thirty-Nine Articles (1572)

XIX. Of the Church: The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same...

XX. Of the Authority of the Church: The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation.

For many Protestants, agreement in doctrine – that is, agreement about what it means to preach the gospel truly and administer the sacraments properly – is sufficient as a basis for church unity, as the Augsburg Confession affirms. The Thirty-Nine Articles show this view incorporated into Anglicanism.

The Reformation also recognised the principle of *adiaphora* – that is, of “things indifferent”, or the things upon which salvation does not depend – exemplified in both the final sentence of Augsburg's article VII and in article XX of the Thirty-Nine Articles. This recognises that the practices of churches can be legitimately expected to differ ie. they may differ on questions of what is not necessary for salvation.

But how is the Church one when it exists in Christian communities that often disagree with each other? Ecumenical statements focus on this question. They seek to make real Christ's prayer “that they may be one” (John 17:21). The vision is that of St Paul: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:4-6). The fundamental unity of the Church lies in the gospel, and local churches, denominations and confessions seek to recognise and articulate this unity.

Differences between churches can be seen as negative, as destroying the unity of the church wanted by Christ, or as positive, reflecting the different ways in which different churches have received and live out the gifts of the gospel. This double aspect of ecclesiastical difference was recognised in the ‘Appeal to All Christian People’ issued by the Anglican bishops gathered at the Lambeth Conference in 1920.

What do Anglicans Believe?

'Appeal to All Christian People', *Lambeth Conference* 1920, Resolution 9:

We are all organized in different groups, each one keeping to itself gifts that rightly belong to the whole fellowship, and tending to live its own life apart from the rest... We acknowledge this condition of broken fellowship to be contrary to God's will, and we desire frankly to confess our share in the guilt of thus crippling the Body of Christ and hindering the activity of his Spirit. ... The vision which rises before us is that of a Church, genuinely Catholic, loyal to all truth, and gathering into its fellowship all "who profess and call themselves Christians," within whose visible unity all the treasures of faith and order, bequeathed as a heritage by the past to the present, shall be possessed in common, and made serviceable to the whole Body of Christ. Within this unity Christian Communions now separated from one another would retain much that has long been distinctive in their methods of worship and service. It is through a rich diversity of life and devotion that the unity of the whole fellowship will be fulfilled.

The Lambeth Appeal was a call for church unity. For many Protestants (as seen above) church unity, like the church itself, is established through reaching a shared understanding about what it means to preach the true gospel and coming to agreement about the proper administration of the sacraments. Anglicans in their understanding of the basis of the unity of the church refer to the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, adopted by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church meeting in Chicago and then by the Lambeth Conference in 1888.

Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, *Lambeth Conference* 1888, Resolution 11

In the opinion of this Conference, the following articles supply a basis on which approach may be by God's blessing made towards home reunion:

- a. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
- b. The Apostles' Creed, as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
- c. The two sacraments ordained by Christ himself - Baptism and the Supper of the Lord - ministered with unflinching use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him.
- d. The historic episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his Church.

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The fourth point of the Lambeth Quadrilateral focuses on the ministry and order of the church and highlights the importance of the 'historic episcopate, locally adapted.' This leaves open a key question: are bishops essential to the being (Latin, *esse* – to be) of the church, or are they the way that Anglicans believe the church should practically be constituted, enhancing the good functioning of the church, but not absolutely essential (Latin, *bene esse* – to be well)? All churches have some form of oversight, or *episcopate*, but not all churches have bishops (eg. the Methodist Church of Great Britain and Ireland).

In their Appeal for Christian unity the bishops at the Lambeth Conference of 1920 were clear about 'the spiritual reality of the ministries of those Communion which do not possess the episcopate. On the contrary we thankfully acknowledge that these ministries have been manifestly blessed and owned by the Holy Spirit as effective means of grace.' However they did suggest that 'considerations alike of history and of present experience justify the claim which we make on behalf of the episcopate. Moreover, we would urge that it is now and will prove to be in the future the best instrument for maintaining the unity and continuity of the Church. '(Appeal to All Christian People,' Paragraph VII).

Debates about church leadership, oversight and the episcopacy continue between Anglicans and many of their ecumenical partners, including the Lutheran and Reformed churches. Agreement on how both churches recognise the historic episcopate is essential and fundamental to any Anglican agreement which leads to a relationship of (full) communion. Moreover, whilst all Anglican churches have bishops in the historic episcopate, across the Anglican Communion the member churches also conceive of the relationship between bishops, synods, and people in different ways, with some provinces giving bishops extensive executive powers while others give them very little of this.

These differences can be resolved, as is shown by the existence of the United Churches such as the Church of North India and the Church of South India, but also the Porvoo Agreement between the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches and the British and Irish Anglican Churches, the Waterloo Declaration between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada, and *Call to Common Mission*, the agreement between The Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Called to Full Communion: the Waterloo Declaration, Conclusion

We are ready to be co-workers with God in whatever tasks of mission serve the Gospel. We give glory to God for the gift of unity already ours in Christ, and we pray for the fuller realization of this gift in the entire Church.

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The United Churches have moved into a situation of structural unity, bringing together several churches to form one church. Other agreements of (full) communion between churches do not achieve structural unity, but they allow churches to grow together, working together in ways that were not possible before.

In seeking unity it is always important to remember that the ultimate aim of Church unity is not about the institution and organisation of the Church. Rather it is about the reconciliation of the whole world to Christ.

Q *Think of some different churches that you know. In what ways can you identify the four features of the Lambeth Quadrilateral within each of them?*

4. How is the Church holy?

The holiness of the Church is reflected in, and to some extent constituted by, the holiness of individual Christians, created in the image of God, called by Christ, and shaped by the Holy Spirit.

Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission, *The Procession and Work of the Holy Spirit* §10

We affirm that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and perfects the personal lives of believers, and the sacraments of the Church, and is active in the entire cosmos. In the Church, as the body of Christ, believers receive purification, sanctification, and justification by the Spirit, for it is the very nature of the Church to be, according to the divine call, 'holy and without blemish' ... The holiness of the Church is not dependent on the virtues of her members, nor undermined by their failings, all of whom pray 'Come Holy Spirit and renew the face of the earth!'

The extent to which holiness is defined by ethics is a growing concern for churches and therefore for ecumenical agreements. The key focus in discussing holiness, however, is on its expression in the mission of the church to the world. The unity of the church and its holiness are intertwined in the church's response to God's Word.

Anglican-Reformed International Commission, *God's Reign and Our Unity* § 21

The pattern of unity in diversity is thus in the Godhead. The God whose being is holy love, uniting the Father, Son and Spirit, draws us by the work of the Spirit into participation in the Son's love and obedience to the Father. This same holy love draws us to one another. This is grace, and to reject one another is to reject God's grace. The reason why we can never rest content in our separation is the unlimited grace of God the Father, who has accepted us in the beloved Son and

What do Anglicans Believe?

bound us together in his own life by the power of the Holy Spirit – a life in which we are called to reflect both the unity and diversity of the Godhead.

The holiness of the church – and with it the holiness of individuals – is not constituted solely through an inward focus on personal piety, or on ethics, but also and essentially through an outward focus on and response to the needs of the world. This focus on God's mission to the world is essential to the work of the church and the work of churches together.

Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church* §§ 5-7

As children of God, our true freedom is to be found in God's service, and our true happiness in faithful and loving response to God's love and grace. We are created to glorify and enjoy God, and our hearts continue to be restless until they find in God their rest and fulfilment.

The true goal of the moral life is the flourishing and fulfilment of that humanity for which all men and women have been created. The fundamental moral question, therefore, is not "What ought we to do?", but "What kind of persons are we called to become?" For children of God, moral obedience is nourished by the hope of becoming like God (cf. 1 Jn 3:1-3). True personhood has its origins and roots in the life and love of God.

Societies are also called to be moral:

Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, p. 8

Approaching creation in love, as a gift to ourselves and others, both individuals and societies are challenged to actions of generous self-giving, frugality, and self-restraint.

... It is our task as human beings to ensure that the blessings of creation are distributed with justice among the nations. The struggle against poverty is both a material and a spiritual imperative.

Holiness is a broad concept:

Anglican-Methodist International Commission, *Into All the World*, p. 9 ("Wesleyan essentials of faith")

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The life of holiness holds together conversion and justice, works of piety and works of mercy.

The church's fidelity to its mission is therefore intrinsic to its holiness. Holiness is in a deep way constituted by the Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission (see Question 2 above).

Where do you see holiness in the church today, either individually or corporately? How could this holiness be enhanced through the mission of the church?

5. How is the Church catholic?

The Church is catholic because it pertains to all. The term "catholic" derives from the Greek "kath' holos", which means "pertaining to the whole". It offers a reminder that God's church is universal, even though it always appears in local manifestations. The whole Church of God is constituted by its parts but it also transcends them.

Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission, *The Procession and Work of the Holy Spirit* §§11-12

We affirm that the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth and sets us free, and so is the source and guarantor of the catholicity of the Church, existing throughout the world in different local manifestations under the One Lord, Jesus Christ, in the realm of space and time. ... These universal and cosmic marks of the Church catholic always take particular and local manifestations... Regional and local synods are thus part of the greater whole. The Holy Spirit enables these local manifestations of the catholicity of the Church together to become greater than the sum of their parts, that is universal.

Discussions of the Church as catholic may sometimes use the term in different ways. Churches may be described as "Catholic" in distinction to Protestant churches. Within inter-Anglican debates, Catholic may refer to liturgical or theological preferences. However, the credal affirmation that the Church is Catholic points beyond these differences to affirm the catholicity of the Church in which all of creation belongs together.

Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *Walking Together on the Way* §26
God 'desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim 2.4) through 'the one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all' (1 Tim 2.5-6). Just as Jesus

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was sent by the Father for the salvation of the whole world (Jn 3.16–17), so the disciples are sent by the risen Lord to continue his work of salvation (Jn 20.21). The Church is the sacramental manifestation of the *missio Dei* (ARCIC, *Church as Communion* §§16–24). The missionary identity of the Church is universal in scope. The missionary Church can thus be seen to bring to fulfilment the promise once made to Abraham that in him all the tribes of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12.1–3).

To affirm that the Church is catholic is therefore to recognise and affirm the Church's role in God's mission. The Church Catholic does not only serve those who proclaim the name of Christ, but seeks to bring blessings to the whole world.

Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *Church as Communion* §3

To explore the meaning of communion is not only to speak of the church but also to address the world at the heart of its deepest need, for human beings long for true community in freedom, justice and peace and for respect of human dignity.

Anglican-Reformed International Commission, *God's Reign and Our Unity* § 17

Our quest for Christian unity is seen steadily in the context of God's purpose to reconcile all people and all things in Christ.



In light of these statements, how does the catholic nature of the Church find expression in your church? How could this nature be better expressed?

6. How is the Church apostolic?

The Church is Catholic, but it is also apostolic, tracing its beginnings to the teachings of Christ, proclaimed by the apostles, and affirming the continuity of its teachings across time and space.

Anglican Communion and Baptist World Alliance, *Conversations Around the World* §9.

Baptists and Anglicans have a twofold sense of continuity – directly with the church of the New Testament (Scripture), and with the story of the catholic church through the ages (tradition).

What do Anglicans Believe?

The affirmation of the apostolicity of the church recognises the need to interpret the gospel message anew for each generation.

Anglican-Lutheran International Commission, *Pullach Report* §73

The apostolicity of the church is God's gift in Christ to the church through the apostles' preaching, their celebration of the gospel sacraments, and their fellowship and oversight. It is also God's sending of the church into all the world to make disciples of all nations in and through the apostolic gospel. Thus apostolicity pertains first to the gospel and then to the ministry of Word and sacraments, all given by the risen Lord to the apostles and through them to the church. Apostolicity requires obedience to the original and fundamental apostolic witness by reinterpretation to meet the needs of each new situation.

This sense of continuity is also sensitive to the specificity of historical developments.

Porvoo Common Statement §7

The faith, worship and spirituality of all our churches are rooted in the tradition of the apostolic Church. We stand in continuity with the Church of the patristic and medieval periods both directly and through the insights of the Reformation period. We each understand our own church to be part of the One, Holy, Catholic Church of Jesus Christ and truly participating in the one apostolic mission of the whole people of God. We share in the liturgical heritage of Western Christianity and also in the Reformation emphases upon justification by faith and upon word and sacrament as means of grace.

There is a close relationship between the Church's apostolicity and its ministry.

World Council of Churches, *Baptism – Eucharist – Ministry* § M34

Apostolic tradition in the Church means continuity in the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles: witness to the apostolic faith, proclamation and fresh interpretation of the Gospel, celebration of baptism and the eucharist, the transmission of ministerial responsibilities, communion in prayer, love, joy and suffering, service to the sick and needy, unity among the local churches and sharing the gifts which the Lord has given to each.

What do Anglicans Believe?

One of the key questions in the discussion of apostolicity is the role of ordained ministers, and particularly bishops, in ensuring the church's apostolicity, as question which continues to be relevant to exploring relationships to other churches.

Anglican-Lutheran International Commission, *Pullach Report* §56

In the concept of apostolicity there is common ground insofar as all teaching, life and ministry of the church have to be in continuity with the fundamental apostolic witness and commission to go out into the world. It is the role which the succession of bishops plays within this wider concept of apostolicity which is one of the main controversial points between the two traditions.


In all discussion of the nature of the church and the role of the ministry, it must always be remembered that the apostolicity of the church is not focused on the preservation of the institution but on furthering God's mission.

Anglican Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Commission, *Dublin Agreed Statement* §16

The Church in each generation participates in the apostolic mission to the world. The Church is 'not of the world' (John 17.14), but it is in, with and for human society. Its mission is to save and transform society by the power of the Holy Spirit. This mission includes preaching, teaching, worship, diakonia, testimony against injustice; also the hidden life of prayer, and martyrdom.

Anglican-Lutheran International Continuation Committee, *Niagara Report* §§23-24.

The apostolicity of the Church is the mission of self-offering (not self-preservation) for the life of the world. The Church thus serves the reign of God, not the reign of sin and death. The Church serves the mission of God's suffering and vulnerable love, not a mission of its own devising. The Church serves the mission grounded in and shaped by Christ's way of being in the world. The Kingdom of God is thus the over-arching theme of history.

 **Based on the above quotations, what aspects of the life of your church express the apostolic nature of the Church? How could this nature be better expressed by your church?**

7. What is the place of the Sacraments?

Through the sacraments God's people are called and strengthened for God's mission in the world. The sacraments make it possible for God's people to represent Christ, that is, to be the body of Christ in the world.

Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, Introduction.

Through the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension—and through the extension of these events in the sacramental life—all humanity, together with the whole of creation, is called to participate in God's saving action.

Anglican-Reformed International Commission, *God's Reign and Our Unity* §67, 85

Both word and sacrament have their actualization in the presence of the risen Lord. ... In the ministry of the word and sacrament the whole Church is again and again enabled to receive forgiveness and to renew its participation in Christ's ministry in the world.

Through both word and sacrament, the Church proclaims the gospel message of hope and healing.

Porvoo Common Statement §13

[Our churches] are called together to proclaim the Christian hope, arising from faith, which gives meaning in societies characterized by ambiguity. Again they are called together to proclaim the healing love of God and reconciliation in communities wounded by persecution, oppression and injustice. This common proclamation in word and sacrament manifests the mystery of God's love, God's presence and God's Kingdom.

Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue, *The Church of the Triune God* §5

The Father's gift of the Spirit to us makes the Church a 'Spirit-bearing' body, so that the Spirit is manifested in the entire life of the Christian community, in sacramental action, in the mutual relation of believers, and in the lives of holy persons.

What do Anglicans Believe?

The Church is built up through word and sacrament, which assures Christ's presence through the Holy Spirit.

Anglican-Lutheran International Commission, *Pullach Report* §58

The church is constantly built up, renewed and strengthened by Christ's actual presence and action, through Word and Sacrament, in the Holy Spirit

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the sacraments provide a bridge between earth and heaven or a foretaste of the kingdom.

Anglican-Oriental Orthodox International Commission, *The Procession and Work of the Holy Spirit* §11

The Holy Spirit ... unites the earthly Church with the heavenly, as revealed in the anamnetic [remembering] and liturgical acts of the Church, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, in which we are joined with the worship of heaven.

Both Baptism and the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, offer this mediating role, strengthening believers to participate in God's mission in the world.

Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *The Church as Communion* §24

The sacramental nature of the Church as sign, instrument and foretaste of communion is especially manifest in the common celebration of the eucharist. Here, celebrating the memorial of the Lord and partaking of his body and blood, the Church points to the origin of its communion in Christ, himself in communion with the Father; it experiences that communion in a visible fellowship; it anticipates the fullness of the communion in the Kingdom; it is sent out to realize, manifest and extend that communion in the world.

The sacraments mark the giving of God's grace.

Anglican-Baptist, *Conversations Around the World* §64.

Anglicans generally regard the elements of bread and wine as both 'expressive' signs (portraying the death of Christ) and 'effective' signs (conveying the grace of God which springs from the sacrifice of Christ).

Baptism affirms the giving of forgiveness through grace, and the promise of a new future.

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Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue, *The Church of the Triune God* §29
Baptism is associated with forgiveness precisely because there the Holy Spirit is at work. Forgiveness is about opening humanity to the future and to a new quality of human relationships. Existentially, forgiveness has to do with identifying someone, not on the basis of his or her past or present, but by granting this person a future in spite of his or her past or present. It is about healing the past and realising the new humanity in Christ.

The sacraments are a reminder of the freedom from sin bestowed by Jesus Christ.


Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, p. 26
[L]iberation from sin ... is the freedom to cooperate in obedience with God's love. Hence freedom for God in grace ... is the freedom which Jesus Christ restores to us through Baptism and reaffirms in Eucharistic communion: 'So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed' (Jn 8.36).

Entering this freedom is a task for our – and the church's – lifetime.

Anglican-Methodist International Commission, *Into All the World*, §51.
Being the Church, just like being a Christian, is a work in progress. Living out our baptism takes a lifetime; living out becoming the Church the creeds describe will take from the first coming of Jesus for his saving work until his coming at the end of time.

Through the sacraments the church community of all who are called is strengthened for God's mission.

Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue, *The Church of the Triune God* §8
The grace of God in sacramental mystery draws us to a life in the world of love for God and neighbour expressed in devotion to 'the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers' (Acts 2.42) and in charity to the poor (Acts 2.44-45; 4.32).

 **Have you experienced the sacramental life of your church as a sign and foretaste of God's kingdom? How could your church enter into this mystery in a greater way?**

8. What is communion?

A recent and widely welcomed ecumenical statement provides the biblical background for this key question in the contemporary church:

World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* § 13

In the Church, through the Holy Spirit, believers are united with Jesus Christ and thereby share a living relationship with the Father, who speaks to them and calls forth their trustful response. The biblical notion of *koinonia* has become central in the ecumenical quest for a common understanding of the life and unity of the Church. This quest presupposes that communion is not simply the union of existing churches in their current form. The noun *koinonia* (communion, participation, fellowship, sharing), which derives from a verb meaning “to have something in common,” “to share,” “to participate,” “to have part in” or “to act together,” appears in passages recounting the sharing in the Lord’s Supper (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-17), the reconciliation of Paul with Peter, James and John (cf. Gal. 2:7-10), the collection for the poor (cf. Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:3-4) and the experience and witness of the Church (cf. Acts 2:42-45). [So] As a divinely established communion, the Church belongs to God and does not exist for itself. It is by its very nature missionary, called and sent to witness in its own life to that communion which God intends for all humanity and for all creation in the kingdom.



But what does the relationship of communion between and among churches practically involve?

Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order, *Towards a Symphony of Instruments*, 1.12

...communion involves the three dimensions of recognition, commitment, and participation: firstly, recognition of one another, on the basis of apostolic faith and order, as sister Churches belonging to the one holy catholic and apostolic Church; secondly, mutual commitment to live and act together in fellowship and to do this through appropriate conciliar channels; and, thirdly, unrestricted mutual participation in the sacramental life of the Church, that is to say, a common baptism and a shared Eucharist celebrated by a common ordained ministry. These three dimensions of mutual recognition as Churches, mutual commitment, and mutual sacramental participation are the key components of ecclesial communion.

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However, there is also a place for disagreement and questioning of each other in the context of respect and dialogue:

Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, *Communion, Conflict and Hope*, § 113, 114

Mutual accountability and communication are needed for communion to function. A personal, and even more, a theological vocabulary of disagreement is necessary in order to allow communication to continue across frontiers of disagreement.

The above process of listening, responding, reflecting and questioning, points to the dynamic aspect of communion in the body of Christ. Communion is not a steady state reality that one either has or does not have. It has to be nurtured through open and persistent conversation where there is mutual trust and forbearance, always thinking the best of the other, always hoping and praying for new ways of sharing in the riches of the Gospel. Sustaining communion is in fact a continual consultative process. It is through such an endeavour that the Lord of the Church is graciously present and calling the church onward and upward.

The theologian Scott MacDougall has described how this kind communion exhibits five marks: that it is 'tensive' (ie. expressing the tension of God's kingdom being both present in the world and yet to come to that world); open to others, prepared to take risks, trusting and hopeful.⁵

Q Describe an occasion where disagreement followed by respectful dialogue has led to a stronger sense of communion among Christians. How can this be encouraged in the life of the church?

9. How to sum up?

The Anglican Covenant is a statement of 2009 that was accepted by some provinces but not by the Anglican Communion as a whole. Some provinces rejected it because of proposals in its fourth section. The earlier sections, however, are widely recognised as providing a good summary of Anglican doctrine of the church. The first section picks up many of the statements quoted above, and so provides an appropriate way of summing up this chapter:

⁵ Scott MacDougall, *More than Communion: Imagining an Eschatological Ecclesiology*, London: T & T Clark, 2015, 6.2 'Five Marks of an Eschatological Ecclesiology', available at https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=HUjCBwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=More+than+Communion&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjGxOzg_pLpAhVMTBUIHT7FBHwQ6AEIKDAA#v=onepage&q=More%20than%20Communion&f

The Anglican Covenant

Section One: Our Inheritance of Faith

1.1 Each Church affirms:

(1.1.1) its communion in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

(1.1.2) the catholic and apostolic faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation. The historic formularies of the Church of England, forged in the context of the European Reformation and acknowledged and appropriated in various ways in the Anglican Communion, bear authentic witness to this faith.

(1.1.3) the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as containing all things necessary for salvation and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

(1.1.4) the Apostles' Creed, as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

(1.1.5) the two sacraments ordained by Christ himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with the unfailing use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him.

(1.1.6) the historic episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his Church.

(1.1.7) the shared patterns of our common prayer and liturgy which form, sustain and nourish our worship of God and our faith and life together.

(1.1.8) its participation in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God, and that this mission is shared with other Churches and traditions beyond this Covenant.

1.2 In living out this inheritance of faith together in varying contexts, each Church, reliant on the Holy Spirit, commits itself:

(1.2.1) to teach and act in continuity and consonance with Scripture and the catholic and apostolic faith, order and tradition, as received by the Churches of the Anglican Communion, mindful of the common councils of the Communion and our ecumenical agreements.

(1.2.2) to uphold and proclaim a pattern of Christian theological and moral reasoning and discipline that is rooted in and answerable to the teaching of Holy Scripture and the catholic tradition.

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(1.2.3) to witness, in this reasoning, to the renewal of humanity and the whole created order through the death and resurrection of Christ, and to reflect the holiness that in consequence God gives to, and requires from, his people.

(1.2.4) to hear, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Scriptures in our different contexts, informed by the attentive and communal reading of – and costly witness to – the Scriptures by all the faithful, by the teaching of bishops and synods, and by the results of rigorous study by lay and ordained scholars.

(1.2.5) to ensure that biblical texts are received, read and interpreted faithfully, respectfully, comprehensively and coherently, with the expectation that Scripture continues to illuminate and transform the Church and its members, and through them, individuals, cultures and societies.

(1.2.6) to encourage and be open to prophetic and faithful leadership in ministry and mission so as to enable God's people to respond in courageous witness to the power of the gospel in the world.

(1.2.7) to seek in all things to uphold the solemn obligation to nurture and sustain eucharistic communion, in accordance with existing canonical disciplines, as we strive under God for the fuller realization of the communion of all Christians.

(1.2.8) to pursue a common pilgrimage with the whole Body of Christ continually to discern the fullness of truth into which the Spirit leads us, that peoples from all nations may be set free to receive new and abundant life in the Lord Jesus Christ.



Which of these statements is most challenging to the life of your church? How could your congregation respond?

We also share God's mission with all those who confess Christ's name. God's mission calls us to work with all of humankind in bringing his transformative love to the world. The Church as a whole therefore has a special role and identity. The Porvoo statement of 1993 offers a rich and suggestive description of this:

Porvoo Common Statement §20

The Church is a divine reality, holy and transcending present finite reality; at the same time, as a human institution, it shares the brokenness of human community in its ambiguity and frailty. The Church is always called to repentance, reform and renewal, and has constantly to depend on God's mercy and forgiveness. The Scriptures offer a portrait of a Church living in the light of the Gospel:

- it is a Church rooted and grounded in the love and grace of the Lord Christ;
- it is a Church always joyful, praying continually and giving thanks even in the midst of suffering;

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- it is a pilgrim Church, a people of God with a new heavenly citizenship, a holy nation and a royal priesthood;
- it is a Church which makes common confession of the apostolic faith in word and in life, the faith common to the whole Church everywhere and at all times;
- it is a Church with a mission to all in every race and nation, preaching the gospel, proclaiming the forgiveness of sins, baptizing and celebrating the eucharist;
- it is a Church which is served by an ordained apostolic ministry, sent by God to gather and nourish the people of God in each place, uniting and linking them with the Church universal within the whole communion of saints;
- it is a Church which manifests through its visible communion the healing and uniting power of God amidst the divisions of humankind;
- it is a Church in which the bonds of communion are strong enough to enable it to bear effective witness in the world, to guard and interpret the apostolic faith, to take decisions, to teach authoritatively, and to share its goods with those in need;
- it is a Church alive and responsive to the hope which God has set before it, to the wealth and glory of the share God has offered it in the heritage of his people, and to the vastness of the resources of God's power open to those who trust in him.

This portrait of the Church is by no means complete; nevertheless, it confronts our churches with challenges to the fidelity of our lives and with a constant need for repentance and renewal.



Which of these bullet points best describes where you think your church is being called to in mission? What practical steps are needed to get there?

Recommended Further Reading

The Church: Towards a Common Vision

(World Council of Churches, 2013).

What can we say together about the Church of the Triune God in order to grow in communion, to struggle together for justice and peace in the world, and to overcome together our past and present divisions? *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* gives a remarkable answer to this question. Produced by theologians from the widest range of Christian traditions and cultures, *The Church* addresses first the Church's mission, unity, and its being in the Trinitarian life of God. It then addresses our growth in communion – in apostolic faith, sacramental life, and ministry – as churches called to live in and for the world.

Online in many different languages at: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-church-towards-a-common-vision>

Towards a Symphony of Instruments: A Historical and Theological Consideration of the Instruments of Communion of the Anglican Communion: A Working Paper,

The Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith & Order (IASCUFO), Anglican Consultative Council 2015.

What kind of body is the Anglican Communion? How do its constituent parts relate to each other? What is the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury? What place does the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meeting have within it? This paper moves from church doctrine to polity, looking at the various constituted structures that facilitate the common life of the Communion, called the 'Instruments of Communion'. As the paper says, such polity 'is a proper concern of the Church, deserving of its best study and reflection.'(1.14) This paper provides excellent instruction on all this for all theological students. <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/209979/Towards-a-Symphony-of-Instruments-Web-Version.pdf>

Portuguese translation from paulo.ueti@anglicancommunion.org

Spanish translation is in preparation.

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Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church (1993). Online at: http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/105236/ARCIC_II_Life_in_Christ_Morals_Communion_and_the_Church.pdf
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- International Anglican–Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM)

Growing Together in Unity and Mission: Building on 40 years of Anglican–Roman Catholic Dialogue: An Agreed Statement (2006) http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20070914_growing-together_en.html

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Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381), Faith and Order Paper 153, Geneva: World Council of Churches 1991, available online at <https://archive.org/details/wccfops2.160/mode/2up>

New edition with a preface by Dame Mary Tanner, Wipf and Stock, Eugene: Oregon (2010). The text is unaltered.

In the run up to the publication of *Confessing the One Faith* a range of testimonies from around the world were gathered together to show the diversity of the faith of the churches and the unity within it. These fascinating context-based statements were published in four short volumes and are also available online:

Confessing Our Faith Around the World, the World Council of Churches, Geneva:

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Vol 1 Asia and the Americas, Faith and Order Paper 104, 1980 <https://archive.org/details/wccfops2.180/page/n1/mode/2up> Vol 2 Africa, Asia, Europe, Australasia and North America, Faith and Order Paper 120, 1983 <https://archive.org/details/wccfops2.127/page/n3/mode/2up>

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Towards Sharing the One Faith, A Study Guide for Discussion Groups, Faith and Order Paper 173. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1996 <https://archive.org/details/wccfops2.180/page/n1/mode/2up>

'What is Faith and Order?' www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/faith-and-order/what-is-faith-and-order

Dame Mary Tanner, European President of the World Council of Churches from 2006 to 2013 and moderator of its Faith and Order Commission from 1991 to 1998, writes of this study guide:

'It is such an important guide on Christian doctrine from Anglican and ecumenical sources. It offers such a good, engaging way to help students and clergy become familiar with ecumenical documents in a way that is relevant for their own lives and local experiences in worship and in mission and to ensure that that work is not forgotten. And it's use of questions to readers will draw them into the subject. It is just what the Faith and Order commission in my day would have hoped for ie. receiving the fruits of the convergence statements in changed lives and in changed, closer relations with others who could also recognise the faith of the church in the documents.'