



by Revd Chris Probert  
Chaplain  
Eglise anglicane  
de la Manche

### Who are.....the Anglicans?

- The third largest Christian Communion in the world, with 85 million members in more than 165 countries (including more than 3 million Francophone members), a family of 46 self-governing Churches living in communion with one another and with the See of Canterbury (UK).
- Our Communion is both Catholic and Reformed, holding the Faith of the ancient undivided Church expressed in the Creeds, and led by Bishops in the Apostolic tradition.  
<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/>

### .....in Europe?

- Most Anglicans in Europe belong to the Church of England Diocese in Europe, with our Bishop based in Brussels, serving 30 countries across Europe, Turkey and Morocco. There are 250 churches in the Diocese.  
<https://www.europe.anglican.org/>

### .....in France?

- English churches have existed in France since before the Reformation. Today 73 churches in France, each part of a registered Association Cultuelle (loi 1905), are joined in a *UNION NATIONALE des associations cultuelles de l'Eglise d'Angleterre en France*. The Bishop is represented here by the Archdeacon of France. There are four Deaneries: la Manche is in the Deanery of North West France.

### ....in la Manche?

- The Anglican community in la Manche was (re)founded in 2002 as 'Christ Church Coutances' (a previous church was established in Avranches in 1828), and was placed by the Bishop under the protection of the Bishop of Coutances and Avranches: we enjoy warm ecumenical relationships, and the use of church buildings. A move to Gratot:Hommeel established a more permanent base, and a second church was established in the southern corner of the *departement*.  
<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/christ-church-manche-normandy>

### What will we find when we visit?

- Anglican worship is rich in the Bible - normally three readings and a psalm. Like almost all English-speaking Christians we follow a pattern of readings across three years, based upon a different Gospel each year.
- Anglican worship is liturgical - it follows a pattern, and includes dialogue between leader and people, as well as texts said by all together.
- Anglican worship follows the pattern of the Christian Year, including the use of traditional colours for the seasons.
- Sunday worship always includes sermon, prayers of intercession, and usually singing.
- The Anglican Eucharist is celebrated by an ordained priest or bishop, and follows a pattern that has developed over centuries, based on the practice of the Early Church.
- Holy Communion is both Bread and Cup, and is open to members of any Christian Church.
- Other worship is usually based on the Daily Prayer of the Church, but celebration is very flexible according to the decisions of the minister.
- Our services here are usually in English, but sometimes use both languages. A French-speaking church member will happily help you and answer your questions. If you don't understand a sermon, ask for a copy to take home.

### Some possible surprises

- Women have served in ordained Anglican ministry for some years, and this change is widely (but not universally) accepted. Those who disagree find their views still honoured.
- Anglicans sing! We have a rich heritage of singing together, using hymns and songs dating from the 3rd century to today - our hymns are an important expression of our shared beliefs and devotion.
- The local congregation matters! We look to our church to be a warm and welcoming community - a family - and the quality of relationships between us is important to us. Worship together - then sharing refreshments (and sometimes meals), expresses and cements that community.

## FAQ

Questions people sometimes ask

*What are your unique distinctive beliefs?*

We have none! Anglicans hold the faith of the ancient and undivided Church. We hold to Scripture (*the Bible*), Tradition (*the lived experience of the early Church*) and Reason (*reflection, conscience, fresh insight*). The way we combine these things gives a unique flavour to our Anglican life together.

*Do Anglicans believe they are the only true church?* No! We believe being an Anglican is a good way to serve Christ within His living Body the Church - but respect others who do things differently. We don't believe any one part of Christendom should claim to be the *only true church*: we all need one another in order to be complete in Christ.

*What about the 16th century Reformation?*

Anglicans are not disciples of the distinctive ideas of Luther, Calvin or Zwingli. The main aim of the Reformation in England was a return to simplicity, to *weed God's Garden, not to redesign it*.

*Is there an Anglican catechism?*

Yes - it contains only two pages! *Does this mean you don't believe very much?* No - it means we do not define very much. The catechism is an expression of what holds us together as a community, but it is only a brief summary of a rich pattern of faith expressed in worship and witness. You can read the Church of England Revised Catechism on the Manche Chaplaincy website.

*What do you believe about the Eucharist?*

Holy Communion is spiritually *the Body and Blood of Christ, truly given by him and received by the faithful*. We do not further define how we understand that term. The perfect sacrifice of Christ cannot be repeated: the Eucharist unites us with that sacrifice so that we share what Christ achieved for us.

*May we receive Holy Communion?*

Yes - we invite Christians in good standing from other churches to receive, but we recognise that some other churches may not allow their members to share in our Eucharist, and we respect that understanding.

*Do you believe in Our Lady and the saints?*

Yes! Anglicans believe in the communion of saints, and celebrate individual saints on their day in the calendar - We rejoice in their fellowship and examples, but we do not ask them for their prayers as part of our worship. Mary the Mother of Christ is honoured in four feasts of her own and in her place in several feasts of Christ, but we do not demand beliefs going beyond what we see in the Bible.

*Do you have Anglican saints?*

Yes! We have no formal process to declare them, but each province recognises and remembers those who are important to their history.

*Do Anglicans go to confession?*

Confession is included in our services with general absolution, private confession with a priest is an option but not an obligation. Some go regularly, others in times of crisis, others never. Individuals decide for themselves. Priests hear confessions and declare forgiveness, and are bound to the rule of secrecy.

*Is the King of the UK the Head of your Church?*

No! In the Church of England (only) the King has a special role - 'Supreme Governor' - and is the leading lay member. The Head of the Church is Jesus Christ! The Archbishop of Canterbury is the leading ordained person in the Church of England. Archbishops lead in all the churches of the Anglican Communion.

*What other ministers do you have here?*

In la Manche, as well as a priest we have three 'lay deacons' (called 'Readers'). Formation takes three or more years. Working with the priest they lead, celebrate services, and carry out mission and pastoral care. Some ministers of other Christian churches also serve in our community. All ministers are authorised by the Bishop.

*Do lay members have a part to play?*

Yes! Every church elects two lay leaders (*church-wardens*) who have direct access to the bishop. A Church Council is elected by the members each year, and works with the priest to guide the life of the church. Lay members are elected, alongside their priests, to lead the diocese, and to the Church of England General Synod in London.

*How do people become Anglicans?*

Many are brought up in Anglican families, but others become Anglican Christians by conscious choice. Some become Christian believers and make us their home, others may have been members of other churches.

Every church welcomes enquirers, but becoming an Anglican isn't 'an easy answer', and we encourage people to grow in faith by staying in their existing churches. No perfect church exists - and we certainly are not a perfect church!

### *Building bridges with others.*

We are *both* catholic *and* protestant, though we may understand those words differently from other people.

Like the Orthodox, we do not agree that only Rome decides who is truly catholic. Respecting the pope while not accepting his authority over the whole Christian world makes us also protestant, but without needing to accept the particular theologies of different protestant communities.

Our ecumenical calling is to be a 'bridge church' - one end firmly planted in catholicity and the other protestantism, bridging the gap between them. Some Anglicans (and Anglican churches) live in the middle of the bridge, others feel more comfortable nearer one end of the bridge or the other.

So, those comfortable at the 'catholic end' may prefer daily Mass, the Rosary, sacramental confession. Those comfortable at the 'protestant end' may prefer simple services, sermons, an emphasis on the Bible. These are not 'divisions' between us - they are preferences!

### *Meet some Anglican saints*

*The Seven Martyrs of the Melanesian Brotherhood, Solomon Islands, 2003* (24 April)

Members of a religious community, worked for peace between warring tribes: kidnapped and murdered by a tribal group who rejected their efforts.

*Christina Rossetti, poet 1894* (27 April)

Devout Victorian poet and writer, composed a number of hymns including the popular Christmas Carol *In the bleak midwinter*.

*John & Charles Wesley, priests 1791* (24 May)

Founders of the methodist movement, a vigorous missionary revival in the UK and the US that later became a different denomination (The Methodist Church). Wrote thousands of hymns, a good number still in use today in all English-speaking churches.

*George Herbert, priest 1633* (27 February)

A parish priest, poet and hymn writer, the influence of his approach to pastoral care shaped Anglican ideals of ministry for four centuries.

*Elizabeth Ferard, deaconess 1883* (18 July)

Revitalised the ministry of deaconesses in the Church of England, founded Deaconess Community of St Andrew, forerunner of the re-establishing of the Religious Life in the Church of England.

### *We are Anglicans!*

Come and meet us if you would like to find out more!