

# What Are Episcopalians?

## **We are global.**

The Episcopal Church is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Over the centuries, Anglicanism has developed from a predominantly British form of Christianity (i.e., the Church of England) into a genuinely global tradition. Today there are approximately 85 million Anglicans worldwide, and Anglicanism constitutes the third largest Christian communion in the world. What is more, the countries which have the largest and most active Anglican populations are no longer England or the United States, but African countries like Nigeria, Uganda, and Kenya. This international growth has brought wonderful diversity and incredible vitality to the Anglican tradition.

## **We are biblical.**

Episcopalians believe the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the “Word of God written” and we therefore defer to Holy Scripture as the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. But the Bible is not just a source of authority for Episcopalians. It is also the daily bread upon which we live. We believe that Scripture contains “all things necessary to salvation” and that it is a principle means of God’s ongoing, active work of grace among us. For this reason, we strive not only to submit ourselves to Scripture, but also to allow it to saturate our lives as we “hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” its words and teachings in our worship and daily prayer.



## **We are liturgical.**

Episcopalians are frequently identified by the way we worship, according to the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer. That worship includes many elements: prayer, praise, the preaching and reading of Scripture, the celebration of Holy Communion—and many actions—sitting, standing, kneeling, and singing. Our order of worship is at once both ancient and new, both corporate and personal, and both reverent and heartfelt.

## **We are catholic.**

Episcopalians understand ourselves as one branch of the larger Church “catholic” (i.e., universal and undivided). As catholic Christians, we embrace and confess the historic creeds of the early church. We retain the ancient, threefold order of ordained ministers: bishops, priests, and deacons. We celebrate the sacraments, as faithful Christians have from the beginning. And, we joyfully celebrate our unity with all baptized and faithful Christians throughout the world, as fellow members of the “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.”

## **We are evangelical.**

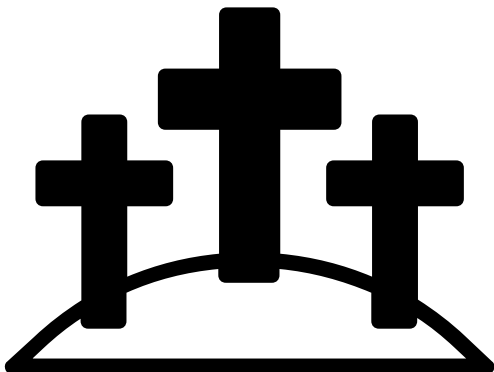
The word “evangelical” carries a wide variety of connotations for people today (not all helpful!), but its most basic meaning is simple “gospel-centered.” And that is precisely what Episcopalians strive to be: a people whose lives are centered on the good news of Jesus Christ. It was this gospel which Thomas Cranmer and other English Reformers sought to communicate as they developed early Anglican liturgies and homilies. It was this gospel which defined the message of great Anglican preachers such as George Whitfield, Charles Simeon, Festo Kivengere, and John Stott. And it is this same gospel which lies at the heart of our worship, our preaching, our prayer, and our witness and service in the world today.

## **We are charismatic.**

At its core, to be “charismatic” is to depend on the grace and power of the Holy Spirit to live daily as Christ’s disciples, in union with God and with one another. The Anglican tradition is rich in its exploration of life in the Spirit, from its early roots in Celtic spirituality, to medieval scholars and mystics like St. Anselm, Richard Rolle, and Julian of Norwich, to Reformation writers like Lancelot Andrewes, Thomas Traherne, Matthew Parker, and John Wesley, to more recent writers like Evelyn Underhill, Dorothy Sayers, and C.S. Lewis.

## **We are missional.**

Today, the Episcopal church is often described as one branch of “the Jesus Movement.” Jesus launched this movement when he welcomed the first disciples to take up their cross and follow Him. Today, we participate in that movement with our whole lives, as individuals and in community together. We seek to follow Jesus by loving God with our whole heart, soul and mind and loving our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:36-40); by bringing those who do not know God to the knowledge and love of Him; and by restoring each other and all of creation to unity with God in Christ (BCP, p. 855).



## **We are open-minded.**

Episcopalians recognize that we do not have all the answers and are open to exploring the questions honestly and without fear. We find wisdom and truth in different sources, including science, and strive to listen to one another carefully. We are also committed to sticking together, even when we disagree.

## **We are historic.**

The Anglican tradition has played a major role in world history. Some notable people from that tradition include theologians like Thomas Cranmer, Richard Hooker, John Wycliffe, N.T. Wright, John Stott, and J.I. Packer; social reformers like William Wilberforce and Desmond Tutu; novelists like Jane Austen, the Bronte sisters, C.S. Lewis, Alan Paton, and Madeleine L'Engle; poets like John Donne, George Herbert, and T.S. Eliot; and multiple U.S. Presidents and other world leaders.