

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

To aid in understanding of frequently used terms

Anglican Communion

The 38 provinces around the world, plus extra-provincial churches, that are in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury. Member churches are independent but share a common heritage concerning Anglican identity and a commitment to scripture, tradition, and reason as sources of authority.

Apostolic Succession

The doctrine that the authority and the mission given by Jesus to the Apostles have descended in a direct and unbroken line of bishops to the bishops of today.

Canon

1. An ecclesiastical rule or law adopted by General Convention or by Diocesan Convention.
2. A member of the clergy, or less often a lay person, on the staff of a cathedral or of a bishop with a particular assigned responsibility

Canon to the Ordinary

A canon who is specific to the Bishop's office; a staff officer who performs tasks as assigned by the Ordinary, or Diocesan Bishop.

Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral

A four-point articulation of Anglican identity, that also describes the Anglican Communion's ecumenical principles. The four points are:

1. The Holy Scriptures, as containing all things necessary to salvation;
2. The Creeds (specifically, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds), as the sufficient statement of Christian faith;
3. The Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion;
4. The historic episcopate, locally adapted.

Church of England

The church that resulted from the split of the English Church from Rome in the 16th Century; also known as the Anglican Church. The formal head of the Church of England is the reigning monarch; its spiritual head is the Archbishop of Canterbury. All other member churches of the Anglican Communion trace their origins to the Church of England. (see also Book of Common Prayer)

Diocese

A territorial unit of administration, consisting of a number of individual parishes, under the pastoral oversight of a bishop.

Evangelicals

Episcopalians who identify with the teachings of Protestantism and the reformed tradition, emphasizing Scripture and the importance of individual conscience. Evangelicals are sometimes called "low church" because they believe Christ allows great freedom in organizing the church and its liturgical practices. Within Anglicanism, the term does not have the same meaning it has within American Protestantism, where the term usually refers to Christians who emphasize salvation and conversion.

High Church

A designation of a church emphasizing theological or liturgical formality; a church with several vested assistants and many fine utensils used in the service; a church that sings or chants its service rather than reading or speaking it; a church that celebrates the Eucharist every Sunday [though most Episcopal Churches do this now]. Such churches sometimes appear to be more "catholic". See also Low Church.

Lambeth Conference

A meeting of the bishops of the Anglican Communion once every 10 years at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and originally held at his palace at Lambeth in London. Now held at the University of Kent. Though it is one of the Communion's four "instruments of unity," it has no binding authority over any province of the Communion.

Mission

A local congregation that is in union with the diocese that is not financially able to support a full-time clergy person on their own.

Parish

A local congregation that is in union with the diocese and which is self-supporting

Presbyter

See "Priest." The term "priest" is a contraction of the term "presbyter."

Priest

A presbyter. A cleric in one of the three orders (bishop, priest or deacon) of ordained ministry. The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

Primate

The bishop with pastoral and administrative responsibility and authority for a group of dioceses that constitute a Church. A primate is sometimes called a metropolitan or archbishop. The Presiding Bishop in the case of the Episcopal Church, and the Archbishop of Canterbury in the case of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion.

Standing Committee

A committee of clergy and laity elected by the Diocesan Convention to be a council of advice to the bishop, and to carry out canonically defined duties regarding transfers of property, approval of candidates for the ordained ministry, election of bishops, and other matters of diocesan concern.

The Trinity

A fundamental symbol of the Christian faith and a very important doctrine in catholic Christianity; refers to the oneness and essential unity of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Vestry

The rector, wardens and vestry members of a parish. The wardens and vestry are the official representatives of the parish in the absence of a rector. The wardens have special roles and need the firm support of their vestry colleagues.