

What's an Anglican Anyway?

In short—Anglicans are Christians whose spiritual and theological roots can be traced back to the historic Church of England. The word itself is derived from the *Angles*, a tribe from Northern Germany who settled in Northern and Eastern England in the 5th and 6th centuries.

The English Christian Church is thought to have been founded by Christian missionaries in the 1st century A.D. It developed according to the growth and influence of various people groups in the British Isles including the Gauls, Celts and Saxons (as well as the Angles). St. Patrick was a famous product of the early Church in England.

In the 7th century, thanks in part to the efforts of Christian missionaries from Rome, the English Church came into compliance with Roman Christian customs. This carried the day for nearly 900 years until, during the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, English Christians again charted a separate course. By the second half of the 17th century, the character of the English church was fairly settled—with the English language Bible of 1611 (The “King James”) and the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1662 at its heart.

Some people describe the Anglican Church as a “Reformed Catholic Church.” It is united with other reformation churches in giving the Bible chief authority; but it retained much of the historic church’s liturgy and order in the process. For example, we celebrate Holy Communion weekly as was the custom of the early church and refer to our clergy as *Bishops*, *Priests* and *Deacons*.

Anglican Churches can be found in great varieties: Some emphasize our reformation heritage and have a lot in common with our “Bible Church” brethren. Others lean more on the Catholic side and have an elaborate liturgy. Some even have been influenced by the 20th-century charismatic movement and can bear a resemblance to Pentecostal churches. But in whatever shape you find an Anglican church, at its core you will find:

- A **Biblical** church that considers the Bible to be the “ultimate standard of faith.”
- An **Orthodox** church that accepts and teaches the ancient faith as outlined in the Apostles and Nicene Creeds.
- A **Sacramental** church that is obedient to our Lord’s commands to seek to *baptize* all nations and to “Do this in remembrance of me” (*celebrate the Lord’s Supper*).
- A **Catholic** (*universal*) church that follows the historic order of the church dating back to ancient times including the episcopal (*having bishops*) method of governance.

Anglican churches are the third largest group of churches in the world today after the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches.