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*Bishop Andrew
Writes*



A few years ago I was attending a church camp where we were involved in afternoon workshops. In one workshop, everyone was handed a cardboard milk shake container by the leader and asked to construct an object or symbol portraying what they thought of the Anglican Church.

There were some dramatic results. Within seconds of being given the task, one person promptly jumped on the container; another embraced it in a very devotional sense, while another person kissed that carton. Perhaps the most original effort was by a person who took an origami approach to the subject and somehow managed to make an elephant out of the milk shake container.

The task very quickly and powerfully illustrated to everyone present the diversity and strength of feeling about what the Anglican Church meant to them. Some loved it, some wanted to change its whole orientation, and others just wanted to obliterate it.

These studies will encourage you to

explore your own understanding of what it means to be Anglican.

In the world at the present time there are about 75 million Anglicans spread across all nations and continents. There are 38 Anglican Churches that make up the Anglican Communion. These are called Provinces, with each province being independent and able to decide on its own affairs. We are bound together not by doctrine, but by relationships and what are called the Instruments of Unity, of which there are four.

- The Archbishop of Canterbury
- The Lambeth Conference
- The Anglican Consultative Council
- The Primates' Meeting

We are not a hierarchical church like the Roman Catholic Church that revolves around a leader like the Pope and adheres to a central body of doctrine and belief. Neither are we a confessional church with prescribed beliefs and doctrines.

For the past two hundred years one of the hallmarks of Anglicanism has been its diversity

Being an Anglican in the 21st Century is not straight forward or clear cut.

The origins of the Anglican Church as a church in its own right date back 500 years to the 16th Century

and the time of Henry VIII. However many Anglicans would trace their roots to the ancient apostolic church of the 1st Century through the See of Canterbury and its origins in the Roman Catholic Church.

Anglicanism came to Australia with the first fleet in 1788, and so came with the beginning of white settlement in this nation.

The first Anglican (or as it was then, Church of England) service in Australia took place at Sydney Cove on Sunday, 3 February 1788 and was conducted by the Revd Richard Johnson, an Anglican priest/chaplain who came on the first fleet.

As the British Empire spread, so did the Church of England throughout the world to the point where the Anglican Church is today.

The Anglican Church of Australia is a relatively recent name, because up until 1978 we were known as the Church of England in Australia. Indeed for the first three hundred years of its life, the Church of England was essentially a Church in England and was an “established” Church. This means that the King or Queen of England was the Head of the Church as well as the Head of State. This situation still remains in England today, but the Anglican Church in Australia is not “established”.

As a late Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, in the 1980s said:

We have developed into a world wide family of churches. No longer are we identified by having some kind of English heritage. English today is now the second language of the Communion. There are more black members than white. Our local diversities span the spectrum of the world's races, needs and aspirations.

However, as I write this study guide there are major tensions within the worldwide Anglican family and major issues are emerging for the future of the Communion. These include the interpretation of Scripture, human sexuality and the authority of the Church.

As one commentator, Ian Douglas {1}, has put it: *Historically related through the See of Canterbury but who seek to love and serve God in their various locales and contexts as mutually responsible and Interdependent sisters and brothers in Christ. In any family, tensions among siblings are abound to arise, and the Anglican family of churches is no different.* (p46)

But let us not get too bogged down on the present state of Anglican affairs, as the purpose of this study is to help us understand what Anglicanism is.

To some it is messy and pragmatic. To others it allows such a diversity of belief and practice – this is its greatest strength!

This study will cover five significant areas important in

understanding what it means to be an Anglican:

- The Anglican Church Of Australia
- Worship and the Book of Common Prayer
- The Essence of Anglicanism
- The Sources of Anglican Beliefs
- Being An Anglican Today

I hope you find this small guide stimulating, informative and helpful. It does not seek to be an exhaustive or encyclopaedic analysis of Anglicanism, but more to serve as an introduction, to give one a taste. As Anglicans we are first and foremost followers of Christ, but in the mosaic of the Christian faith we have a unique and positive contribution to make.

Enjoy the book!

Bishop Andrew Curnow

For the next five weeks, we agree to the following commitment as a group.

ATTENDANCE:

To give priority to group meetings.

PARTICIPATION:

To make every effort to participate fully within the group.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

To keep confidential everything that is shared.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

To accept the challenge to reach the goals we have set ourselves.

ACCESSIBILITY:

To give one another the right to call at any time for spiritual help in time of need - even in the middle of the night.

EVANGELISM:

To make an effort to each encourage one person to join this group.

SPECIFICS

We will meet on(Day of week)

We will meet at(Home/Place)

The meeting will begin at..... and close at

We agree to all have left by to not over stay our welcome.

GROUND RULES

Refreshments

Baby Sitting

Newcomers.....

Absence.....

I WILL TRY WITH GOD'S HELP TO BE A REGULAR, FAITHFUL, CARING MEMBER OF THIS GROUP.

Names of Group Members

Phone

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
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.....
.....

Remember:

We should encourage new people to join the group during this study.

Since the coming of the first fleet, Anglicanism in Australia has had its own unique history. As in the Catholic and Orthodox churches, Australia has been carved up into Anglican dioceses which are a geographical area containing a collection of parishes. Each diocese has a Bishop and in the larger metropolitan dioceses there are Assistant Bishops.

At the present time there are twenty-three dioceses in Australia and, under the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia which came into effect in 1961, each diocese is autonomous.

The dioceses in Australia meet together every three years in General Synod to adopt legislation and pass resolutions. However, decisions taken by General Synod are not binding and must be passed by each individual diocese to have effect in that diocese. This is in marked contrast to General Synods meeting in other Anglican Provinces {2} where the decisions of General Synod are binding.

Some would say that this is concurrently the greatest strength and the greatest weakness of the Anglican Church in Australia. It is a strength because it means that each diocese can genuinely represent the views of its constituents and is not forced or bound to adopt a position that is contrary to that of the diocese. It is a weakness because it means that as a national church we

have no clear position on many major issues - it is up to each individual diocese to decide.

The Senior Bishop of the Anglican Church of Australia is called the Primate, but it is largely a position of honour and influence and has no strong designated power attached to it. The Primate is a focus of unity and, after careful and wide ranging consultation with his peers, can be a spokesperson for the Church

All of this can suggest to the outsider the Anglican Church in Australia is organisationally messy and not easy to understand, and in the current context of Australian society the Church must overcome such challenges to be an effective voice.

Over the past fifty years Australian society has changed dramatically - globalisation, changing patterns of population growth, immigration, and shifting expectations concerning family life, work, sexuality and leisure have occurred. The functions that were once the purview of the clergy, are now increasingly performed by an expanded welfare state that consists of social workers, counsellors and psychologists. Regrettably in some cases they are not performed at all.

During the 1970s and 1980s the breach between the spiritual and secular aspects of our society had widened. A multitude of public policy reforms such as those

concerning gambling, drinking hours, censorship, family law, anti discrimination and reproductive technologies was introduced and generated various strong currents of support and opposition within the Church. At that time, many Australians began to think of Christianity “as a private religious option,” and viewed church leaders simply as religious experts whose opinions were sought less frequently {3}

Concurrently with such social changes, the Church had declined in terms of membership and influence. But some notable changes were also underway within the Church as it struggled to regain its ministry outreach and influence. Major ones included changes in:

- The respective roles of the clergy and laity. The laity has become partners in the ministry and mission of the Church and not merely supporters through attendance at worship and financial giving. There has been a move from being attendee to participant, from being passive to active. Some would say that in certain instances this move has been for the laity to do more “church work” whereas the intention of this shift in role was to empower the laity to be more effective bearers of the mission of the church in their local communities and places of work and recreation.

- The role of women in the

Anglican Church of Australia. Although there are some dioceses that still do not ordain women, the majority of Australian dioceses do, and women now constitute 12 per cent of the priests in Australia. In addition to this, women serve in all key roles within the Church, with the notable exception at this time being as bishops.

- The style of worship, in the hymns sung and in the language of liturgy. Lay people have become much more involved in the delivery and leadership of worship.

- Many facets of parish life including a decline in Sunday schools and other church groups such as youth groups and women’s and men’s groups. In our society there is much more social and community choice available to people, whereas once the local church was one of the main organisations for providing social clubs and activities.

The Church also has been challenged and questioned from within on the credibility of some traditional doctrines and practices. Such questions did not stem from groups within the Church, but were openly raised in the classrooms of our expanding education systems and by the media which increasingly began to put the Church under the microscope

It is easy to be nostalgic about the past, but the time has come for the Anglican Church to focus on the

future. Recently there has been new awareness in the Church of its mission or task to take Christ to the world and our local communities. It is called the Mission Shaped Church movement, or in some places Fresh Expressions. In 2005, the Archbishop of Canterbury said of this movement:

It is for dioceses and parishes to think creatively about how to connect the old and the new, to encourage traditional parishes to share prayer and energy with new initiatives in church life, and above all to help break down the perennial suspicion between the historic mainstream and the risk-taking innovators. The historic mainstream after all, had its origins in risk taking innovators.

Most of all, the Mission Shaped Church movement is about making churches healthy so that they become strong bases for building and growing the Church. It does this through taking the context in which the church is set seriously and then systematically sets out to build a relationship between the church and the local community. The word mission literally means sending and as people of God we are sent to proclaim God to the world and to tell people about the Good News of Jesus Christ (evangelism). God is concerned for the welfare and well being of the planet, for the pursuit of justice, and longs for a relationship with every individual human being. God's

mission is vast and wide and as Anglican Christians we are called to be part of that mission.

The Church is not to be a club for the self-interested, but a gathering of people empowered by God to spread the Good News!

{2} In the Anglican Communion, Australia is regarded as one Province.

{3} (See Building the Mission Shaped Church in Australia. General Synod Resource, Broughton Publishing, 2006).



Welcome and Introduction:

As this is the first time you have come together as a group, each of you might introduce yourself and tell something about yourself, or alternatively, say why you have decided to come along to this study group.



Opening Prayer:

Give to your Church, O God, a bold vision and daring charity,
A refreshed wisdom and a generous spirit,
That the good news of your Son may be celebrated in this time and place,
through him who makes all things new,
Even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Getting Started:

- Spend some time looking at this Study Guide and discuss page five. Then each using your own study book fill out the pages together. These study sessions are designed to be informative and enjoyable.
- Share with the group how and when you became an Anglican or a Christian.
- Share any comments you may have about the introduction to this study on pages 6 and 7.



Read the Scripture Passages:

Romans 12: 1-13

- Chapter 12 in Romans finds Paul giving clear instructions to the early Church on ethical and practical matters.
- Faith, to which we all have equal access, puts us on the same footing before God.
- There are a diversity of gifts and abilities in the Church, but we must all work together.
- Love, natural affection, generosity, hope and hospitality are the hallmarks of a healthy church.



Share your comments

1. How do you believe changes in Australian society over the past 50 years have impacted on the Anglican Church?
2. In what ways do you see the Anglican Church reflecting St Paul's message from this study's reading?
3. What do you think of the notable changes that have taken place as identified in the study? What others can you add to them?
4. What understanding of knowledge do you have of the Mission Shaped Church?
5. How do you think your congregation, church or parish is becoming Mission Shaped?
6. In what ways do you believe the Anglican Church has to change for it to grow?



Discussion Follow-Up

Jot down two things that you would like to be included in a report either to the parish or to a joint meeting of a number of study groups that may be meeting in your congregation / parish.

Alternatively you may like to do this individually and share your points by meeting for a sixth session



Closing Prayer [To be said together]

Infinite Lord and eternal God,
 Rouse your Church in this land,
 Restore your people's sense of mission,
 And revive your work in encouragement and strength,
 By your Spirit, teach us to give our energy, our time, our money,
 our service and our prayer,
 Here and in all the world;
 In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Hospitality:

Relax over a cuppa and biscuit or cake!

NEXT WEEK!

- For supper, ask someone to bring along a desert and plunger coffee to share with the group
- Read the material for Study 2 on pages 12 - 14
- If you have a copy of the Book of Common Prayer 1662, bring it along next week. Also ask someone to bring a copy of A Prayer Book for Australia.



Notes:



After you have undertaken your preparation for next week's study group, give yourself a ✓

