

Q: What does it mean to be Anglican*?

Answer Part I: A follower of Jesus.

**This is the focus question for Synod (this decision-making body of the wider Anglican church) which meets this November, so I will be using the Question of the Week for the coming weeks to examine different aspects of how we might answer.*

To be Anglican is, first and foremost, to be a follower of Jesus, joined into his life, which is lived out as the church, the Body of Christ. Before we talk about anything distinct about the Anglican culture or the Anglican characteristics, it is fundamental that we start here, with the common ground that we share with countless other Christian denominations seeking to follow Jesus.

Related to this most central identifier is that the Anglican church looks to apostolic succession. We see a consistent connection from the earliest followers of Jesus all the way to our faith and community as it is lived out today. Although our faith is living, and is therefore responsive to the Time and Place in which we are currently located, it is also understood as having a core set of practice and belief that is *traditio*, a Latin word which means ‘passed along.’ Each successive generation of Christians bears responsibility for receiving the faith from those who went before us, living the faith in the context in which we find ourselves, and then passing it along to our next generations.

Although there are numerous other touchstones for the core of the faith, one of the basic outlines to which Anglicans have always referred – along with many other Christian denominations – is the Apostles’ Creed. In recent generations, it has been quite fashionable, and certainly permissible, for faithful Christians to raise questions around particular pieces of the Apostles’ Creed, and yet the Creed continues to give a fair picture of the backbone of the Christian faith:

-God the Creator – God is Lord and ruler of our lives. All that has its being was created by God.

-Jesus – We pattern our lives on Jesus, a historical person who also reveals to us the face of God. Among other things, Jesus shows us that death does not lead to ending, but Resurrection; that God marks our human lives as holy, as holding the potential of revealing and participating in the Divine; that by Jesus’ cross we see a God who journeys with us in our human lives, even into suffering and death.

-Holy Spirit – The power of God is at work in our lives and in the life of the world, forming us into the church, acting as an agent of forgiveness, reconciliation and Resurrection.

-Trinitarian – We believe in One God who we experience in three distinct ways. Within the life of God is a relationship of love. When we live in the image of God, we recognize that our lives too are designed for relationship: with one another, with God.

From this baptismal proclamation of faith, we are then given a template, a series of practices for how we are to live, outlined in the Baptismal Covenant: we live in the community of faith, the church; we share our faith with others in how we speak and what we do; we act as agents

of reconciliation in our world; we live lives of compassionate service; we strive for justice and peace and dignity in our world; we care for God's creation.