

**Q: What does it mean to be Anglican\*?**

**Answer Part IV: Contemporary and Traditional**

*\*This is the focus question for Synod (the decision-making body of the wider Anglican church) which met on November 8<sup>th</sup>, so I have been using the Question of the Week for the past four weeks to examine different aspects of how we might answer. Next week will be the last part of this series of Questions. This is not an exhaustive answer to the question, but it has hopefully sparked some further reflection and conversation.*

One of the primary concerns of the newly-forming Anglican church in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was that worship be in the vernacular, the people's language. Furthermore, the Bible was being translated into English for the first time, and this initiative coincided with the development of the printing press and therefore the first time that the Bible could be made widely available for people to own and read for themselves. The Anglican church is founded on a history, then, which understands our faith as a living, breathing thing, responding to the HERE and the NOW, for our faith to be expressed in the language of the people, to be participatory, reflecting the contributions, not just of a few educated in the field of theology, but of us all. It can very much be said that the Anglican church, wherever and whenever it exists, understands itself as a Contemporary faith expression.

At the same time, the Anglican church has always sought to honour and uphold the core faith that has been passed along to us, the wisdom of those who have gone before us. We have never been in the business of 'reinventing the wheel.' We understand that the Scriptures are the basis of our faith, and we proclaim that the Old and New Testaments are 'the word of God, and contain all things necessary to our salvation.' Our worship service is not a constantly changing expression of a particular congregation's understanding of the faith, but is patterned on worship that goes back all the way to the ancient church and the earliest followers of Christ. We form our common life, not on the changing whims of society, but on the principles which have always been upheld in our baptism: growing in faith through Scripture, worship, the Eucharist; practising forgiveness; inviting others to share with us in faith; striving for justice and peace; caring for God's good creation; and serving our neighbours, believing that in doing so, we are serving Jesus himself.

We sometimes refer to St. George's 8am service as the 'traditional' service, and then labelling our 10am worship as 'contemporary.' In fact, these titles are misleading. Like our community, our Anglican worship is always Contemporary and always Traditional. It is contemporary because it is happening now, rooted in the prayers, concerns, language, music, hopes and worries of real people, living right here and right now. Our worship is traditional because we mine the rich resources of prayer, story, and song that have been faithfully passed from one generation to another over hundreds and even thousands of years.