

Theological Education - TEAC - Anglican Way An essential reading list

Books on Anglican Ethos and Outlook with Lay People in Mind

“On Being an Anglican”

It has been suggested that it would also be useful to suggest books that might be suitable for individuals, particularly lay people, wishing to deepen their understanding of the Anglican ethos. Different selections may well be appropriate in different geographical contexts.

So we have gathered the following two separate lists with lay people in mind.

The first is produced by Joanna Cox, the Adult Education Adviser for the Church of England. The second is a list of the books published over the last few years by Cowley Publications in the United States in their New Church's Teaching Series.

We welcome suggestions by Anglicans/Episcopalians particularly from other regional contexts of other books and will seek to publish such recommendations as they become available. We also welcome further comments on the books already listed.

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1. Church of England

Joanna Cox, the Adult Education Adviser for the Church of England writes: Many diocesan courses include modules/sessions on Anglicanism. Resources described below might be helpful as reference for adult educators / Reader trainers designing such courses, or for participant use. All are relatively accessible, and focus on Anglican ethos and outlook, not history. Heavy or academic books are not included. Comments expressed are mine, (says Joanna), and may not necessarily be those of the Archbishops' Council or the Board of Education!

Paul Avis, The Anglican Understanding of the Church

SPCK 2000

This short paperback (pp90) looks at Anglican ecclesiology, and does not attempt to explore Anglican perspectives on other issues such as sacraments or ministry. It offers a clearly written and well-structured introductory analysis of the theological concepts involved. . It aims “not to make too many assumptions about the reader's previous knowledge”, and so starts with several pages of explanation and exploration of the term ‘ecclesiology’. The chapter on the sources of Anglican ecclesiology includes a particularly clear guide to the ‘historic formularies’ and other foundation documents.

It is one of the few books listed that has a good index, so is useful for reference and study, but is not designed as a book to hand to the casual enquirer.

Adrian Chatfield, *Something in Common*

St John's Nottingham 1998

This may be unfamiliar, as it is available only by ordering direct from St John's College Nottingham Extension Studies (Telephone 0115 925 1117). It is in A4 format (116 pages), and it attempts to be user-friendly with a design that includes diagrams, quotes and cartoon-like sketches. The text is clearly written, and is slightly more weighty than the cartoons suggest. It contains frequent distance learning exercises, which contribute to its somewhat 'bitty' look, though it is much easier to dip into than some others. There is a strong emphasis on the world-wide Anglican communion.

Main chapter headings are: The 'true' Anglican, Anglican Roots, A way of Praying, Believing – with style!, A Body at work, Working with others, Today's Anglican agenda. Chapters are then well subdivided. I found bits useful when teaching a foundation diocesan certificate course, but the lack of an index is a drawback.

This book was widely distributed to all participants at the 1999 youth 'Time of our Lives' event at Lambeth. I am told that it did not appear to engage the 16-25 year olds there, though the fact that it was given out cold without any follow up didn't help.

David Edwards, *What Anglicans Believe in the 21st Century*

Cassell 2000

This paperback (pp 114) is a revision of Edwards' 1974 book. It aims to help readers "who are Anglicans in all parts of the world to understand their own tradition and what it has to offer". It is solid text, thinking through questions alongside the reader – who is addressed throughout as 'you'.

There are six chapters on aspects of the Trinity, four on Christian values (love, freedom, forgiveness and listening), followed by chapters on Church, History, Anglicanism and Holy Communion. It is a book to read through, rather than to dip into for detailed information (though it has an index). I am told that this has also been used successfully for adult confirmation candidates.

Richard Giles, *How to be an Anglican*

Canterbury Press 1998 /2003

A reissue previously titled *We do not presume...* (1998)

This 134 page paperback is described on the cover as 'A beginner's guide to Anglican life and thought'. It is designed for those with bemused questions about Anglicanism, rather than as an academic contribution. It discusses Anglican approaches (scripture, doctrine, sacraments, worship, prayer, church, authority, moral questions, membership, community and other faiths) in a quizzically intelligent way and without poker-faced solemnity.

I wonder if it may appeal most to those who are already asking questions: those who know nothing at all about Christianity or the institution might be puzzled. Personally, I found it an enjoyable read with turns of phrase that made me smile (e.g. 'There we go...keeping God amused again'), but some might take issue with some opinions. A quote from the blurb accurately sums it up as "an intriguing, inviting and accessible book".

Hugh Montefiore, Reaffirming the Church of England

Triangle 1995

Small pocket-size (11cm X 17 cm, pp150). This is not particularly attractive to look at, with poor quality paper and very basic layout. It aims to describe the C of E 'Why it is, What it is, How it is', and includes an enormous amount of factual material in a small volume. There are short chapters on C of E doctrine, worship establishment, spirituality, saints, orders, laity, moral teaching, schools, finance, discipline, ecumenical relations and the Anglican Communion.

From my 'lay discipleship' perspective, it slightly blotted its copybook with the chapter on laity – who are only described in relation to church structures. Apart from this, it seems to do what it set out to do well and with great clarity.

Edward Norman, An Anglican Catechism

Continuum 2001

Recently reissued in paperback, the small size makes this look as if it should be easy to read and use (11.5 cm X 20 cm pp153). But the text is solid, there are inadequate subheadings, and some paragraphs are so long that they extend over 2 or more pages! Sentences are frequently impenetrable and the vocabulary sometimes feels far from colloquial – e.g. 'The Church of England believes that the expression of a relationship of affection and commitment between married people remains moral where the procreative intention is suppressed in order to avoid the perceived evil of generating children for whom no satisfactory conditions of living can be anticipated'.

Alastair Redfern, Being Anglican

DLT 2000

This 140 page paperback is part of the Exploring Faith, Theology for Life series – which uses some of the material originally developed by the Aston training scheme. The series claims to be for 'people who want to take Christian theology seriously'. It is designed for study or distance learning; there is suggested further reading and frequent boxed exercises for individual distance learners or group use.

The text includes a lot of stories and historical snippets – 'snapshots of people and principles' – which make the book much easier to read than the rather dull design and layout leads you to expect! The book helpfully explores Anglicanism as an evolving tradition, rather than a static guardian of 'truth'.

Its chapters are Being Anglican, Foundation and Framework, Shaping a tradition, Shaping a national church, Shaping a spirituality, Mission in an indifferent world, Reforming Anglican identity, Revising the role of a national church, Parochialism re-aligned, Anglicanism world-wide. The 'index of themes' is thin.

I am told that it has been found very helpful for use in diocesan foundation courses.

Ian Bunting (ed), Celebrating the Anglican Way

Hodder 1996

(out of print) This 250 page reader has chapters by different authors. It says it is written for 'the intelligent enquirer', and has sections relating to 'Believing',

'Belonging', 'Following the Anglican Way' (behaving), and 'Anglican structures' (organisational and architectural!). It includes information about the church as it actually is, rather than just focussing on original aims or ideals (e.g. a chapter on 'churchmanship'). There are numerous references to different parts of the Anglican Communion, not just the Church of England.

The book is easy to use, with a good index and clear lay-out (with boxed quotes / examples / illustrations in the margins). There are study questions offered at the end of each chapter – these seem more appropriate as essay titles than for group discussion, though the blurb is unrealistically optimistic about their potential for group-work.

2. Cowley Publications, United States

The New Church's Teaching Series which has been published over the last few years is designed as a complete teaching series for Episcopal congregations – covering a variety of topics that it is important for Christians to be informed of. As well as specifically 'Anglican' themes – the series also covers other topics such as using the Bible, ethical issues etc, although these are normally addressed bringing in Anglican perspectives. Some books in the series are inevitably better than others. The entire series is listed below.

A Guide to The New Church's Teaching Series by Linda L. Grenz

This is the 'How to' book for the series, with guidance in using the material in groups etc.

The Anglican Vision by James Griffiss

This is the first book in the series and gives a broad overview.

The review of the book on www.amazon.com comments 'It is a one-volume introduction to Anglicanism. There are two primary sections - Origins of Anglicanism, and Anglican Belief and Practice. In the first part, rather than beginning with the Reformation or the Church Fathers, Griffiss traces the development of Anglicanism in a very personal way, using stories of his own experiences in seminary and ministry, as well as the stories of others in their journeys toward church community. The more standard history - here a very basic overview (as a more in-depth history comes in a later volume) - is developed in the following three chapters, always with an eye toward setting the context for Anglicanism today. In the second section, Anglican Belief and Practice, again Griffiss gives a brief overview of topics such as worship and belief (there are more detailed discussions of each topic here in later volumes in the series). Griffiss puts his own belief structure into this - the church has no set dogmatic or doctrinal system to which one must adhere. Griffiss sees, in addition to the various sacramental practices of the church, that the church itself can be viewed as a sacrament, an 'outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace'. Griffiss traces some of the relationships between scripture, reason, tradition, liturgy and spiritual practices that comprise a community.'

Opening the Bible by Roger Ferlo

This focuses on Bible study – but particularly with Anglican perspectives in mind, drawing on the thinking of Tyndale and Cranmer and the work of Richard Hooker. It also relates to the way that many Anglicans hear the Bible primarily through the liturgy.

Engaging the Word by Michael Johnston

This follows on from the previous volume, and focuses on the question of methodologies for reading the Bible. The author sees the purpose of reading the Bible as to build community and find the place of Jesus.

The Practice of Prayer by Margaret Guenther

This looks at the varied ways Episcopalians/Anglicans may seek to deepen their life of prayer.

Living with History by Fredrica Harris Thompsett

This takes a look at the role of history in a unique way. Rather than looking at the linear description of history as a timeline of dates, times, places and people (some of which is covered in other volumes of this series anyway), she develops the idea of history in a 'backwards' fashion, by looking at key issues alive in the church today, and then tracing back to the historical forces that shape and influence those issues.

Early Christian Traditions by Rebecca Lyman

This looks at early church history and practice. Though not specifically Anglican in its focus it does remind its readers of the roots of the Creeds, said regularly in Anglican worship.

Opening the Prayer Book by Jeffrey D. Lee

The book explores the development of the Book of Common Prayer, and looks at the possibilities for further liturgical reform.

Mysteries of Faith by Mark McIntosh

A reviewer comments that this book, 'looks at various topics that one might find easily in either a systematic philosophical theology course, or in a course on spirituality and mysticism. Various topics in the text include Christology and Trinitarianism, Incarnation, Revelation, Creation, Eschatology and Sacramentality. These terms might seem off-putting and forbidding at the start, and indeed they can be very weighty issues, but McIntosh approaches them in an interesting fashion, looking at the most practical and applicable ways for these topics to impact life in community.'

Ethics after Easter by Stephen Holmgren

This book 'looks at the issues of ethics and morality in an Anglican fashion. The first question Holmgren addresses is what are called to do from our baptismal covenant? How now should we live? There are questions in this of worship, of theology and of

spirituality, but Holmgren specifically addresses the question from the standpoint of moral theology - a high-sounding phrase that really focuses upon the basic question of our vision of God, and how God would want us to live.'

Christian Social Witness by Harold T. Lewis

This continues the theme of the previous volume looking at the issues of ethics and morality in an Anglican fashion, particularly as it relates to living in community in the world. A reviewer comments, 'Lewis draws on Anglican figures such as F.D. Maurice and William Temple to trace a history of Anglican concern for social justice ministry, developing from the concept of incarnation - that God is present in the world. Lewis traces the history of Anglican social witness from the Church of England through to the early Episcopal church, highlighting issues such as the Episcopalian response to slavery and the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement'

Horizons of Mission by Titus Presler

This traces the history of and issues linked to world mission, particularly bearing in mind an Anglican perspective.

A Theology of Worship by Louis Weil

This is the concluding book in the series which rounds it off. A reviewer comments that it 'looks at issues such as who presides or celebrates certain sacraments, and by extension does other functions of the church; what language the churches use, and particularly, the English of the Prayer Book; issues of cultural diversity in worship; music and its role in worship, along with other arts; and finally, a development of sacramentality sensibility.'