The Anglican Way: Signposts on a Common Journey

This document has emerged as part of a four-year process in which church leaders, theologians and educators have come together from around the world to discuss the teaching of Anglican identity, life and practice. They clarified the characteristic ways in which Anglicans understand themselves and their mission in the world. These features, described as the 'Anglican Way', were intended to form the basis for how Anglicanism is taught at all levels of learning involving laity, clergy and bishops. This document is not intended as a comprehensive definition of Anglicanism, but it does set in place signposts which guide Anglicans on their journey of self-understanding and Christian discipleship. The journey is on-going because what it means to be Anglican will be influenced by context and history. Historically a number of different forms of being Anglican have emerged, all of which can be found in the rich diversity of present-day Anglicanism. But Anglicans also have their commonalities, and it is these which hold them together in communion through 'bonds of affection'. The signposts set out below are offered in the hope that they will point the way to a clearer understanding of Anglican identity and ministry, so that all Anglicans can be effectively taught and equipped for their service to God's mission in the world.

The Anglican Way is a particular expression of the Christian Way of being the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ. It is formed by and rooted in Scripture, shaped by its worship of the living God, ordered for communion, and directed in faithfulness to God's mission in the world. In diverse global situations Anglican life and ministry witnesses to the incarnate, crucified and risen Lord, and is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Together with all Christians, Anglicans hope, pray and work for the coming of the reign of God.

Formed by Scripture

1. As Anglicans we discern the voice of the living God in the Holy Scriptures, mediated by tradition and reason. We read the Bible together, corporately and individually, with a grateful and critical sense of the past, a vigorous engagement with the present, and with patient hope for God's future.

2. We cherish the whole of Scripture for every aspect of our lives, and we value the many ways in which it teaches us to follow Christ faithfully in a variety of contexts. We pray and sing the Scriptures through liturgy and hymnody. Lectionaries connect us with the breadth of the Bible, and through preaching we interpret and apply the fullness of Scripture to our shared life in the world.

3. Accepting their authority, we listen to the Scriptures with open hearts and attentive minds. They have shaped our rich inheritance: for example, the ecumenical creeds of the early Church, the Book of Common Prayer, and Anglican formularies such as the Articles of Religion, catechisms and the Lambeth Quadrilateral.

4. In our proclamation and witness to the Word Incarnate we value the tradition of scholarly engagement with the Scriptures from earliest centuries to the present day. We desire to be a true learning community as we live out our faith, looking to one another for wisdom, strength and hope on our journey. We constantly discover that new situations call for fresh expressions of a scripturally informed faith and spiritual life.

Shaped through Worship

5. Our relationship with God is nurtured through our encounter with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in word and sacrament. This experience enriches and shapes our understanding of God and our communion with one another.

6. As Anglicans we offer praise to the Triune Holy God, expressed through corporate worship, combining order with freedom. In penitence and thanksgiving we offer ourselves in service to God in the world.

7. Through our liturgies and forms of worship we seek to integrate the rich traditions of the past with the varied cultures of our diverse communities.

8. As broken and sinful persons and communities, aware of our need of God's mercy, we live by grace through faith and continually strive to offer holy lives to God. Forgiven through Christ and strengthened by word and sacrament, we are sent out into the world in the power of the Spirit.

Ordered for Communion

9. In our episcopally led and synodically governed dioceses and provinces, we rejoice in the diverse callings of all the baptized. As outlined in the ordinals, the threefold servant ministries of bishops, priests and deacons assist in the affirmation, coordination and development of these callings as discerned and exercised by the whole people of God.

10. As worldwide Anglicans we value our relationships with one another. We look to the Archbishop of Canterbury as a focus of unity and gather in communion with the See of Canterbury. In addition we are sustained through three formal instruments of communion: The Lambeth Conference, The Anglican Consultative Council and The Primates' Meeting. The Archbishop of Canterbury and these three instruments offer cohesion to global Anglicanism, yet limit the centralisation of authority. They rely on bonds of affection for effective functioning.

11. We recognise the contribution of the mission agencies and other international bodies such as the Mothers' Union. Our common life in the Body of Christ is also strengthened by commissions, task groups, networks of fellowship, regional activities, theological institutions and companion links.

Directed by God's Mission

12. As Anglicans we are called to participate in God's mission in the world, by embracing respectful evangelism, loving service and prophetic witness. As we do so in all our varied contexts, we bear witness to and follow Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Saviour. We celebrate God's reconciling and life-giving mission through the creative, costly and faithful witness and ministry of men, women and children, past and present, across our Communion.

13. Nevertheless, as Anglicans we are keenly aware that our common life and engagement in God's mission are tainted with shortcomings and failure, such as negative aspects of colonial heritage, self-serving abuse of power and privilege, undervaluing of the contributions of laity and women, inequitable distribution of resources, and blindness to the experience of the poor and oppressed. As a result, we seek to follow the Lord with renewed humility so that we may freely and joyfully spread the good news of salvation in word and deed.

14. Confident in Christ, we join with all people of good will as we work for God's peace, justice and reconciling love. We recognise the immense challenges posed by secularisation, poverty, unbridled greed, violence, religious persecution, environmental degradation, and HIV/Aids. In response, we engage in prophetic critique of destructive political and religious ideologies, and we build on a heritage of care for human welfare expressed through education, health care and reconciliation.

15. In our relationships and dialogue with other faith communities we combine witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ with a desire for peace, and mutual respect and understanding.

16. As Anglicans, baptized into Christ, we share in the mission of God with all Christians and are deeply committed to building ecumenical relationships. Our reformed catholic tradition has proved to be a gift we are able to bring to ecumenical endeavour. We invest in dialogue with other churches based on trust and a desire that the whole company of God's people may grow into the fullness of unity to which God calls us that the world may believe the gospel.

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