

Did You Know

That we, members of the Episcopal Church are webs of relationships formed by Love and Common Prayer

The Episcopal Church traces its roots to the Church of England and we are not the only Christian community in the world to do so. There are more than 70 million people in 163 countries that call themselves Anglican because they belong to congregations with roots similar to ours.

Those roots were put down by missionaries and by settlers who journeyed to new lands and brought with them The Book of Common Prayer and Anglican clergy. The churches, which grew up from those seeds, resembled each other in basic ways, yet also reflected their individual cultures. Your experience of worshipping with Anglicans in Alaska, for instance, may well be very different than if you were worshipping with Anglicans in South Africa or Italy but all Anglicans use a version of The Book of Common Prayer.

Even the way Anglicans govern their churches differs throughout the world. For instance, in some churches, bishops are appointed by the government or by archbishops. In other Anglican churches, clergy and lay people elect their bishops. Few member churches gather both its clergy and lay people as the Episcopal Church does to vote on the direction of the church's mission.

Our common history and common prayer make us members of what we call the Anglican Communion. At the center of the Communion is the leader of the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury. S/he is the spiritual head of the Communion, but has no direct authority over any Anglican church outside of England. Each member church is connected or "in communion," as Anglicans say, with the Archbishop of Canterbury and, through him/her, to every other church. The member churches of the Anglican Communion are joined together by choice in love, and have no authority over one another.

This arrangement may seem complicated, and it has led to some tension. For at least the last 40 years, the leaders of some of the 38 member churches of the Communion have said they are "out of communion" with the Episcopal Church because of our decisions, first, about ordaining women and then, in 2003 consecrating an openly gay man as the bishop of New Hampshire and the marriage of same-gender relationships.

Yet, the Anglican Communion has been called a mystery, which we are always trying to understand. Many say living in this sometime-imperfect web of relationships is a gift from God. Indeed, we are called by God to be an example of how a group of very different people might be held together by our love of God, our belief that Jesus invited everyone to the table and our desire to spread that love in this world that is often divided. (Source—Anglican Communion website)

"O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery..." *The Book of Common Prayer, p.280*

I love this about our Episcopal Church! I could not think of a better way to identify whom we are – a wonderful and sacred mystery, relationships bound together by Love and a book full of prayers; and if you find this intriguing, if you'd like to know more about the Episcopal Church, her history, liturgy, The Book of Common Prayer, why we do the things and 'moves' we do; if you'd like to learn more about how to 'juggle' two books, how/why we stand, sit, kneel, make crosses on ourselves sometimes or not...then look for an education offering which Wayne and I

will lead (YES, both of us), **EPISCOPAL 101**. Even if you've been around the block and back again with the Episcopal Church you may like a refresher or a chance to discuss, agree, disagree—we love creating an environment to learn together, no matter what. Let's get together and 'talk church'.

Fondly and faithfully, Nancy+