

# St Boniface Trust Essay Competition

## **Why I am an Anglican and believe I shall remain so**

**Stuart Buchanan**

*[The Judges rated this essay very highly, and called it 'inspirational'. The author is a lay person engaged in Church work. Apart from some formatting, little modification has been done prior to publication.]*

I haven't always been an Anglican; I am an Anglican by conviction. But to say that I will remain an Anglican, it is helpful to be aware of the underlying reasons why people might change denominations.

### **Why do people change denomination?**

I was brought up a Presbyterian<sup>1</sup>, and it was university that brought me into contact with other denominations and the social, political and lifestyle challenges of the gospel. On graduating I moved into a Christian community house, which had been set up by local Methodists, living out our faith within a multi-racial, inner-city area. Later I worked, through the Quakers, in Kenya. Returning to England I lived in another Christian community house, again with Methodist roots; as well as worship within the community house, I continued to worship with the Quakers.

A year later I moved to London to work for an Anglican mission agency and into a Christian community house attached to the local parish church. Initially combining Anglican worship at work with Quaker worship on Sundays, I found myself drawn into the local parish church and was eventually confirmed as an Anglican.

### **The impact of generational perspectives on choice of denomination**

Reflecting on this journey, in the light of an understanding of what influences Christians of different generations, I can see that I am a child of my time; a product of my generation.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Presbyterian Church of England united with the Congregational Church in England and Wales in 1972 to become the United Reformed Church.*

There were other factors involved as well but this journey reflects pragmatic decisions related to how best I could be involved in the outworking of God's mission at different times in my life.

Research on different generations identifies some of the factors that influence the worldview and thinking of different generations<sup>2</sup> suggesting the following dominant influences:

- Christians born prior to 1945, and shaped by the depression and World War 2, have a strong sense of duty and loyalty to both organisations and to the vision, core beliefs and doctrines of those organisations; they respect strong leadership and institutional authority but feel that conflict is best suppressed and avoided;
- Those born between 1945 and 1965, shaped by both the post-war boom and world events such as the break up of colonial empires, the Cuban missile crisis and the Vietnam War are more comfortable challenging authority, are idealistic and, as Christians, will want to find the best way, at any particular time, to use their God-given gifts for the good of the Kingdom;
- Those born after 1965 have not only been shaped by post modernity but often also by the fragmentation of family and society. Important factors for them as Christians will be experience and relationships.

Although this is a simplified stereotype, I suggest that it can be helpful to reflect on three aspects of why we might choose to belong to a particular denomination:

- loyalty to the underlying vision, doctrine and beliefs;
- how God-given gifts can best be used for the Kingdom;
- relationships and experiences.

My own spiritual and denominational pilgrimage and formation also includes other issues mentioned above, but the greater emphasis upon the 'God-given gifts for the good of the Kingdom' correctly identifies the generation that I belong to.

### **The impact of current issues on choice of denomination**

We are not only shaped by the generation that we belong to, but also respond to the issues of the day. I would suggest that two key ones are post-modernism and post-Christendom; post-modernism impacting upon much of the world and post-Christendom impacting upon those parts of the world that were once considered as part of Christendom. A generation that is both Post-Christendom and influenced by post-modernity is also likely to consider itself post-denominational.<sup>3</sup>

It has been suggested that post-Christendom means that the church is moving from:

- centre to margins;
- majority to minority;
- settlers to sojourners;
- privilege to plurality,
- control to witness;

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<sup>2</sup> Material in 'Reflections on Attrition in Career Missionaries: a generational perspective into the future' by Kath Donovan and Ruth Myers, writing in 'Too Valuable to Lose', edited by William D Taylor (William Cary Library, 1997) is developed further, particularly with regard to selection for vocation, in 'Called by God?' (Stuart Buchanan, SPCK, 2008) pp23-29.

<sup>3</sup> This is explored further in 'Called by God', *ibid*, pp29-30

- maintenance to mission;
- institution to movement.<sup>4</sup>

Although these moves apply to some extent to all denominations, a denomination specifically associated with Christendom, an established church such as the Church of England, experiences these changes more acutely. It takes time for such a Church to re-interpret and re-establish its own sense of identity; this process can be exciting for some, but confusing for many and not necessarily a comfortable place to be. For some this may be a reason to move to a different denomination where the changes don't feel as severe.

Modernity offered certainty; a meta-narrative that all were expected to buy into and accept and a church or denomination could be expected to, largely, speak with one voice on an issue. A denomination with strongly centralised decision-making processes and governance can still do this. Denominations that are congregational in their governance can come to their own conclusions, do their own thing and ignore those who hold different views; but Anglicanism doesn't work with either of these styles of governance and can be an uncomfortable place to be for those who seek certainty within an uncertain and changing world.

A changing world has led to rapid changes within the outworking of Anglicanism itself. One generational factor is loyalty to organisations and beliefs, but it can become very confusing trying to remain loyal to an organisation when it is perceived that the organisation and its core beliefs are changing. The generational analysis also suggests that it is this generation, most motivated by loyalty, vision and beliefs, which is least equipped to cope with conflict and difference, so it is not surprising that there is so much sorrow, pain and anger experienced by some in responding to these changes. For some, the only way forward appears to be a move to a denomination that offers certainty and commitment to the original doctrines.

This issue of loyalty to an organisation and its beliefs and doctrines raises the question that is fundamental to the theme of this essay: what is Anglicanism?

### **What is Anglicanism?**

I have led a workshop on Anglicanism for those, mainly in their early twenties, going for short-term overseas mission service. We would start by writing down words that they associated with Anglicanism and consider if they felt positive or negative about each word, exploring the reasons underlying their feelings. There were two words that were generally seen as negative that we would particularly explore.

The first word was *compromise*; there was a feeling that this was a recent phenomenon in response to current events. Compromise may have become more obvious in recent years but I believe that it began in 664 with the Council of Whitby. Traditionally, the root of the term Anglicanism is attributed to the words and action of Pope Gregory who on seeing blonde, fair-skinned slave boys, and being told that they were Angles, responded that they were not Angles but angels<sup>5</sup> and sent St Augustine to England to convert this people. But Christianity had already existed in England since at least 200 AD as a result of the Roman occupation and it had continued in some form after its Roman leaders had fled England in

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<sup>4</sup> 'Post Christendom' (Stuart Murray, Paternoster 2004); and 'Church after Christendom' (Stuart Murray, Paternoster, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> *Non Angli, sed angeli*

the early 5th century. There was also Brittonic Christianity, a non-Roman form of Christianity, originating in North Africa with quite different practices, which had eventually come to England from the Celtic missions.

The success of St Augustine's mission led to a tension between the practices, particularly the date of Easter, of the Church established by St Augustine, and the existing local church. The Council of Whitby<sup>6</sup> was where the local or national Church decided that it should be part of the universal or Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup>

If Pope Gregory, in sending St Augustine, is identified as the father of Anglicanism, then we must also recognise that the existing Christianity, shaped by the local context of these islands, both Brittonic and post Roman occupation, was the mother. Anglicanism was birthed through compromise; through the attempt to hold together being part of the local or national expression of church with being part of the Catholic or universal Church. This tension and need for compromise, and to be *'both and'* rather than *'either or'* is part of the very soul of Anglicanism and reflects the personality of Anglicanism. This attempt at compromise, to be *both and*, both part of the wider church as well as the local church, becomes obvious at the time of the Reformation. Instead of being Reformed or Catholic, the Anglican Church became defined as Reformed Catholic. It is, at least in its early centuries, a national church that sees itself as part of the Catholic (or universal) Christian body.<sup>8</sup>

Ian Douglas, who as a theological educator was involved in the design of the 2008 Lambeth Conference and is the current Bishop of Connecticut, has defined Anglicanism as 'the embrace and celebration of apostolic catholicity within vernacular movements' and says that 'Anglicanism should be ideally placed in the struggle to hold together the catholic and the local, the experienced and the received.'<sup>9</sup>

The second word that needed unpacking during my workshops on Anglicanism was *tradition*. For young people, influenced by post modernism, tradition is a word that can easily be dismissed; it can be seen as tradition for its own sake. Richard Hooker built the post-Reformation understanding of Anglicanism on the relationship between Scripture, Tradition and Reason<sup>10</sup> and this understanding has been affirmed more recently by the Virginia Report.<sup>11</sup> Young people generally feel comfortable with both scripture and reason but tradition generally produced bad vibes.

We needed to explore this word and realise that tradition is about the 'received'; it means taking seriously how Christians have understood things within their own context in the past. It is dangerous to just take scripture and apply reason to it if we ignore how scripture has been understood, in the light of reason, in different contexts at different points in history.

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<sup>6</sup> A full description of the debates can be found in Book III Chapter 25 of *'The Ecclesiastical History of the English People'*, written by Bede in 731.

<sup>7</sup> The coming-together of these different strands of Christianity is described in *'Something in Common'* (Adrian Chatfield, *St John's Extension Studies 1998*) pp12-23.

<sup>8</sup> The first non-British bishop was Samuel Seabury who was consecrated as Bishop of Connecticut by the Episcopal Church of Scotland. *The emergence of the Anglican Communion, from its Church of England roots, is helpfully described in 'Saving Power'* (Michael Doe, SPCK, 2011) pp14-24.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in *'Saving Power'*, *ibid*, p50.

<sup>10</sup> The Concept, though not the exact words, is developed in *'The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity'* published 1594 and 1597.

<sup>11</sup> <http://lambethconference.org/1998/documents/report-1.pdf>

Tradition shouldn't mean doing things the way that they have always been done for the sake of it, but it does mean understanding how things were done in the past and taking that on board in interpreting the implications of scripture for us today. The Anglican emphasis upon scripture, tradition and reason is about not only taking scripture seriously but also trying to hold together being part of the universal church as well as being true to the local context of the day.

I believe that as well as holding together being part of the universal church and the local church, Anglicans value the past, affirm the present and respect the future. *Nothing about Anglicanism is fixed or final; many decisions are seen as only provisional. Anglicans recognise that God has not finished with Anglicanism yet, and he may take it in directions that its founders could not have envisaged - and would not like.*<sup>12</sup> This means that for me Anglicanism is not a set of doctrines, but a way of (locally and nationally) being church and (globally) being Communion. As such, my understanding of Anglicanism must be shaped both by Anglicanism itself, but also by belonging to a parish in the Croydon Episcopal Area of the Diocese of Southwark within the Church of England.

The 1888 Lambeth Conference formulated the Lambeth Quadrilateral<sup>13</sup>; revisiting this, the Windsor report says "The Lambeth Quadrilateral commits Anglicans to a 'series of normative practices: scripture is *read*, tradition is *received*/ sacramental worship is *practised*, and the historic character of apostolic leadership is *retained*.'"<sup>14</sup> Alan Bartlett comments, 'This is a tight balance but it is a balance of *doing* as much as a balance of conceptual beliefs. This sense that Anglicanism is about *doing the faith* more than *defining the faith* is strong, with its corollaries of modest statements of faith held alongside disciplined practices.'<sup>15</sup>

For me, Anglicanism isn't so much a destination, but a journey, but for a journey we do need directions. The process that produced *The Anglican Way: Signposts on a Common Journey*<sup>16</sup> distilled much past and current Anglican theology and concluded that Anglicans are:

- formed by scripture;
- shaped through worship;
- ordered for Communion;
- directed by God's mission.

It is with this understanding of the nature of Anglicanism, rather than a commitment to specific doctrines or beliefs, that I can be confident that I will continue to be an Anglican.

### **Why I believe I shall remain an Anglican**

Having suggested that choice of denomination might be influenced by: beliefs and vision; best using God-given gifts for the good of the Kingdom; experience and relationships, I find these are helpful headings through which to explore my continued commitment to Anglicanism and I also find that I can hold them alongside the four *'Signposts on a Common*

<sup>12</sup> 'Something in Common', *ibid*, p4.

<sup>13</sup> <http://lambethconference.org/resolutions/1888/1888-11.cfm>

<sup>14</sup> Windsor Report, Para 51, p26.

<sup>15</sup> 'A Passionate balance – the Anglican Tradition' (Alan Bartlett DLT, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.anglicancommunion.org.ministry/theological/signposts/english.cfm>

*Journey'*. Although my personal starting point may have been a pragmatic response to using my gifts, these other aspects have become equally important.

### **Beliefs and vision**

We are *formed by scripture* and *ordered for Communion*, but Anglicans will interpret scripture differently to develop their beliefs and vision according to their context. I will remain an Anglican because I believe that Anglicans are in the process of learning how to creatively deal with difference and draw on the insights and energy that can be present in diversity. People have always held different views from other people, and disagreed with each other, and differences emerged within Christianity right from the beginning, but Jesus' prayer is that we should be one<sup>17</sup> and the work of the Holy Spirit in Acts appears to honour that prayer. The book of Acts tells of the early Church needing to respond to tensions between Hellenist and Hebrew Jewish believers<sup>18</sup> and then struggling to hold together in responding to Gentile believers<sup>19</sup>, in both cases trying to hold together the local and the universal.

Recent developments within our world, such as globalisation and post modernity, make difference more obvious than it was for previous generations. One response is to try to impose our views on others; a counter response is to only relate to those who hold similar views to us, dismissing views that challenge our own. Neither response provides the full vision of Christ, nor creatively harnesses the energy which can be released, when different understandings of Christ, gained from different local contexts, are held together in what Andrew Walls describes as the *Ephesian moment*.<sup>20</sup>

Both nationally and globally, Anglicans have developed forms of governance to try to creatively hold together the tension between these two positions so that there is a mutual interdependence amongst the parishes within a diocese, the dioceses within a province and the provinces within the Communion.

As Anglicans have grappled with issues such as human sexuality, women's ministry and the authority of the bible, increased strains in relationships have evolved both internally within certain provinces and between different provinces. The provinces of the Communion are currently considering adopting a *Covenant*<sup>21</sup> to clarify their mutual interdependence and how difference and disputes may be creatively addressed. Following provincial decisions, the Communion as a whole will decide on adopting this at ACC 15<sup>22</sup>, in Auckland, New Zealand in November 2012.

The Anglican Communion has been described as a gift;<sup>23</sup> if the Anglican Communion learns how to creatively respond to difference and diversity then it has a gift to offer to the

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<sup>17</sup> John 17

<sup>18</sup> Acts 6

<sup>19</sup> Acts 10-11

<sup>20</sup> Key aspects of this can be found within

[http://www.aco.org/listening/book\\_resources/docs/ephesian\\_moment.pdf](http://www.aco.org/listening/book_resources/docs/ephesian_moment.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/covenant/final/text.cfm>

<sup>22</sup> The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) is the decision-making body within the Anglican Communion. According to the number of members within any province, the province is allocated one, two, or three members who will comprise laity, clergy and bishops who meet together approximately every three years. The meeting in New Zealand in 2012 was the fifteenth such meeting.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/news.cfm/2011/11/30/ACNS4995>

world<sup>24</sup>. With many gifts, it is important to read the *instructions* and with many complex gifts these days it can also be helpful to read a *users' forum*. Rather than *instructions* or an *users' forum*, the Anglican Communion has identified four Instruments of Communion<sup>25</sup>: Lambeth Conferences, Primates Meetings, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) and the Archbishop of Canterbury<sup>26</sup> and developed different initiatives to try to enable deeper listening, understanding and engagement with what it means to be Anglicans in the modern world.

These initiatives include the use of Indaba<sup>27</sup>, a move away from the traditional parliamentary style of decision-making, to one that encourages mutual listening, better understanding of difference and an attempt to reach consensus. This approach was first used by the Anglican Communion at the 2008 Lambeth Conference and was also integrated into the decision making processes at ACC 14 in Jamaica in 2009. Some who have experienced this approach to decision making are keen to implement it within their local context.

Continuing Indaba<sup>28</sup> is a way of continuing to encourage listening within the Communion enabling Christians from three different parts of the world to experience each other's context and seriously engage with difference. As one point of tension within the Communion is how scripture is used in different contexts, it is important for Anglicans to understand how each other use the bible and *The Bible in the life of the Church*<sup>29</sup> is a way of beginning to facilitate this discussion.

I am encouraged by the initiatives that Anglicans are developing globally to try to engage creatively with difference but, as an Anglican, I need to be aware of what it means for me personally. As an Anglican I believe that *'Whatever view I hold as a Christian on any issue, I need to do so with an awareness and understanding of the views of those of Christians of different cultures who have a different understanding. I need to live with the tension of these different views and allow this tension to enrich my own understanding.'*<sup>30</sup>

Both the Church of England and the Anglican Communion will make certain decisions that I agree with, and wish to celebrate, but I need to do so with an awareness of the pain and sorrow that these decisions will mean for others. It is by entering into the pain, sorrow and confusion, as well as the joy, of belonging to a Communion, which is both local and universal, that I and other Anglicans can celebrate a vision that is truly a gift to the world.

### ***Best using God-given gifts for the good of the Kingdom***

We are *directed by God's mission*. I am excited by Anglican approaches to mission. Anglicans, with other Christians, have become increasingly aware of the *Missio Dei*, the realisation that it is God's mission, not ours, which God invites us to be involved in. I am encouraged that it was nearly 40 years ago that Anglicans were able to define the creative

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.gloucester/Anglican.org/mission/link>

<sup>25</sup> Many would also say that the Mothers' Union, which is so young, vibrant and active within much of the Communion, is the fifth instrument of Communion.

<sup>26</sup> The four instruments are described on <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/communion/index/cfm>, but the Archbishop of Canterbury is better described as a focus of unity rather than an instrument of Communion.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/continuingindaba/resources/pdf/h0p3.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/continuingindaba/whatis/index.cfm>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/theological/bible/index.cfm>

<sup>30</sup> 'Cross Cultural Christian' (Stuart Buchanan, *St John's Extension Studies* 2010), p36.

relationship between the local and the universal church speaking of *mutual responsibility and interdependence* in our response to God's mission, saying: *The responsibility for mission in any place belongs primarily to the church in that place. However, the universality of the gospel and the oneness of God's mission mean also that this mission must be shared in each and every place with fellow-Christians from each and every part of the world with their distinctive insights and contributions. If we once acted as though there were only givers who had nothing to receive and receivers who had nothing to give, the oneness of the missionary task must now make us all both givers and receivers.*<sup>31</sup>

To take this vision forward a series of *partners in mission*<sup>32</sup> consultations began in 1973 with provinces inviting partners from around the Communion to discuss their mission strategy. This in turn gave way to the concept of *companion links*<sup>33</sup> establishing an on-going relationship between dioceses in different parts of the world so that they can be encouraged to engage with each other's mission. It was this capacity for the church in one place to be challenged by the church in another place that led to the *Decade of Evangelism*<sup>34</sup> which, amongst other things, encouraged western churches to see mission as comprising more than just the *parish pastoral care* model that was often the dominant strand.

I am challenged and motivated by the Anglican holistic understanding of mission outlined by the five marks of mission<sup>35</sup>

*To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom*

*To teach, baptise and nurture new believers*

*To respond to human need by loving service*

*To seek to transform unjust structures of society*

*To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth*

But it is also a dynamic understanding of mission that continues to explore what mission should be in a changing world, leading to the consideration of a sixth mark related to the role of peace and reconciliation within mission.<sup>36</sup>

Although some Anglicans may disagree with each other when talking, when they are actually involved in God's mission they are more likely to be united. The official *Anglican Networks*<sup>37</sup> have been a way of bringing Anglicans together from around the Communion to share concerns and insights on various mission issues. The 2008 Lambeth Conference brought about two exciting initiatives that encourage and enable Anglicans around the Communion to share good practice, encouragement, prayer and resources with each other. The *Anglican Alliance*<sup>38</sup> is involved in development, relief and advocacy and the *Evangelism and Church Growth Initiative*<sup>39</sup>; through their websites and *facebook* groups I can be informed, resourced and motivated for mission in my local situation and helped to realise that any divide between evangelism and development is an artificial one, a consequence of modernity, and that mission in many parts of the Communion is truly holistic.

<sup>31</sup> *Report of ACC-2, Dublin, 1973, p53*

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/commissions.mission/doc.cfm#s4>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/commissions.mission/doc.cfm#s7>

<sup>34</sup> [http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/commissions.mission/b\\_doc.cfm](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/commissions.mission/b_doc.cfm)

<sup>35</sup> *Bonds of Affection-1984 ACC-6 p49, Mission in a Broken World-1990 ACC-8 p101.*

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/communion/acc/meetings/acc14/resolutions.cfm#s5>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/networks/index.cfm>

<sup>38</sup> <http://anglicanalliance.org/>

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/ecqi/index.cfm>

Insights from the decade of evangelism have re-invigorated the Church of England in its mission bringing into being Fresh Expressions,<sup>40</sup> an ecumenical initiative with a very strong Anglican involvement. Fresh Expressions is also found in other parts of the Anglican Communion where the church is facing the challenges of post-Christendom. An important Anglican partner within the Fresh Expressions work is the Church Army and the Church Army International web page<sup>41</sup> lists the different national Church Army societies within the Communion. Words and phrases such as *missional* and *mission-shaped*<sup>42</sup> have increasingly become part of our Anglican vocabulary.

As well as these new initiatives, the Church of England is still in a strong position to build upon its role as the established church in responding to pastoral needs within the parish and putting new energy into exploring evangelism within traditional approaches to mission in what the Archbishop of Canterbury describes as a *mixed economy*<sup>43</sup> approach to mission. Statistics from the Archbishops' Council's Research and Statistics Unit indicate that cathedral worship has grown by 37% since the beginning of the millennium<sup>44</sup>.

### ***Experience and relationships***

As an Anglican I am *formed by scripture* and *shaped by worship*. As an Anglican I have the potential to experience God in different ways through worship; to meet God and experience him through:

- the big picture of the salvation narrative expressed through liturgically marking the seasons of the Church year;
- the exposure to the whole of scripture that is offered through use of a lectionary;
- the feelings of Israel sharing their experience of wrestling with God in the words of the psalms;
- biblical passages within liturgy;
- regular sacramental worship;
- sharing the Peace, when I need to look into the eyes, shake hands and greet other members of the Body of Christ;
- the experience of forgiveness through confession and absolution within liturgy;
- the shape, structure and sense of direction, purpose and flow within liturgical worship;
- the regular use of the Offices available to me corporately, or individually;
- the rhythm and familiarity of liturgy, that allows my spirit to soar;
- the creative prose found in liturgy and Collects that expresses my feelings in ways I could never articulate myself;
- the spaces and silences in between the words of the liturgy, spaces to be touched in new ways by God;
- the noises, disturbances and distractions that might break into liturgical worship, reminders that God is also experienced when the 'local' breaks into the 'universal';

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/>

<sup>41</sup> <http://churcharmy.org.uk/pub/aboutus/international/CAInternational.aspx>

<sup>42</sup> There are 16 books with 'mission-shaped' in the title on the Church House bookshop website. <http://chbookshop.co.uk/commerce/product-search.aspx?search=mission%20shaped&PG=1>

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1788/archbishop-talks-about-fresh-expressions-on-bbc-local-radio>

<sup>44</sup> This story, which can be found at <http://bpd.wordpress.com/2011/05/09/communications-update-2/> is an example of a story of encouragement that has been shared throughout the Communion in the June 2011 edition of 'Evangelism and Church Growth Initiative' newsletter.

- the structures suggested for intercessions, and resources available, that broaden my horizons and help me focus beyond my congregation to the wider community, the nations and the whole of God's creation;
- the intercessions of others who express their prayers differently from the way that I would do it;
- worship in different Anglican churches, representing the whole breadth of Anglican churchmanship, taking me out of my comfort zone;
- sermons from people representing a whole range of theological perspectives and preaching styles;
- worship of Anglicans from other parts of the Anglican Communion;
- the words, music and feelings experienced through the whole range of musical traditions used by Anglicans in their worship.

I might not always grasp the opportunity to experience God in new ways through different experiences, but am aware from the Exodus, the Exile and Jesus in the wilderness, that it is often when we are taken outside of our comfort zone that we are able to experience God in new and life changing ways.

We are *ordered for Communion*. The Church of England is no longer described as 'the Conservative party at prayer'; the local parish may still not represent a cross-section of the local community but both through what is offered to the local community by being the established parish church and through new missional initiatives, it is probably at least as representative of the community as any other denomination. Diocesan links and the work of mission agencies provide opportunities to feel part of the wider Anglican Communion. As an Anglican I have the opportunities to relate to people locally, within and beyond, my parish church and within parts of the wider Anglican Communion. Also, through the instruments of Communion I belong to a church that relates to the whole Anglican Communion and know that my diocese and bishops are prayed for by other Anglicans around the world through the Anglican Cycle of Prayer.

### **Jesus Christ, the 'both and'**

I am a follower of the one who is 'both and'; Jesus is both the one who is *experienced* and known through *received* knowledge of those who have gone before; both local and universal: both Jesus of Nazareth representing the local, incarnate in a specific location a particular point in history and also the cosmic Christ; the one who was with God in the beginning and through who all things came to be<sup>45</sup>; both local to our planet, sharing our humanity, and also Divine, part of the Trinitarian Godhead.

It is sobering to reflect that if Jesus had been just divine, and not also human, they wouldn't have crucified him; they couldn't have crucified him. If Jesus had been just human, and not also God, they wouldn't have needed to crucify him. It is because Jesus was both human and God that he was crucified. That might be why when we, as a church, try to be 'both and' we can sometimes feel that we are experiencing crucifixion; but crucifixion is a necessary prerequisite before resurrection can be experienced.

### **Anglicanism as preparation for heaven**

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<sup>45</sup> John 1.1-5

Two stories about heaven come to mind. A Korean story, rooted in a Buddhist worldview, tells of a man dying and being shown around hell. He is taken to a room with the most amazing banquet spread out on the table but all of the people have six-foot long chopsticks and can only use these to eat. No matter how hard they try they are unable to get any of the delicious food into their mouths and all are angry and frustrated and tortured by the wonderful aromas and sights of the food that they can see. The man asks what heaven is like, and is told that it is exactly the same, with the food, the tables and the six-foot chopsticks; the only difference is that the people in heaven use their chopsticks to feed each other.

There is also a Christian story told of a man dying and going to heaven. St Peter takes him, with a group of others who have recently arrived, to show them all around. As they approach a walled off area, Peter tells them all to stop speaking and be quiet. After they have tip-toed past this section of heaven, Peter tells them that they can speak again. The man asks Peter what was behind the wall. Peter replies “That is where the Anglicans/ Baptists/Catholics/Charismatics/Orthodox/Pentecostals (*delete all but one of this list to reflect your own experiences or prejudices*) are, but they don’t think that anyone else is here in heaven.”

I would like to finish by combining elements of both stories and suggest an Anglican story about heaven and hell. A man dies and on reaching the pearly gates is taken for the welcome tour by St Peter. They enter a big room and immediately the man can experience the atmosphere. There is a feeling of frustration, hurt and pain; some people are shouting at others, some are going around saying spiteful things about other people; some are physically fighting; people are bruised, hurt and bleeding; some are crying and others sullenly silent, having retracted into themselves and ceased trying to communicate with others. No one is listening properly to what anyone else says and no one is joyful. Peter explains that all of these people have different views on issues and disagree with each other and don’t try to listen and that this is hell.

The man asks Peter what heaven is like. Peter explains that there too, people have different views from each other but they listen to each other properly, and ask questions to try to find out why others have different views, and understand their contexts and why they see things differently; in doing this they find that they are enriched and energised by the diversity of views and able to respect each other and experience joy and respect, enjoying each other’s company despite the differences; they can also focus and celebrate what they have in common.

Of course, the Korean Buddhist story comes from a worldview that believes that we can get to heaven through our own efforts. The worldview underlying my Anglican story is that we can only get to heaven through the grace of God. I believe that as we expose ourselves to difference through our Anglican pilgrimage, and make ourselves vulnerable, we increasingly find opportunities to encounter that grace; in fact, given the level of difference and diversity that Anglicanism embraces I firmly believe that being an Anglican increases those opportunities for me to encounter God’s grace.