

Living as an Episcopalian 5. The Church: Organization, Ministry and Mission

Last update Jan 1, 2002

Topics

1. What is the Church?

1.1. Wherever Christ Is, There is the Catholic Church

1.2. How is Christ Present in the Church?

1.2.1. Christ is Present in What Way?

1.2.2. Christ is Present in the Church through the Proclamation of the Word

1.2.3. Christ is Present in the Church Sacramentally

1.2.4 The Church as Both "Event" and Institution

1.3. The Visible vs. the Invisible Church

1.4. The Notes or Marks of the Church

1.4.1. The Four Notes or Marks

1.4.2. One

1.4.3. Holy

1.4.4. Catholic

1.4.5. Apostolic

2. Ministry

2.1. The General Ministry vs. the Special Ministries

2.2. The General Ministry of the People of God

2.3. The Special Ministries

3. Organization

3.1. The Parish Church

3.1.1. Church Membership

3.1.2. Governance of the Parish

3.1.3. Choosing Clergy Leadership

3.1.4. Removing Clergy Leadership

3.1.5. Rectors vs. Vicars

3.2. The Diocese

3.2.1. Parishes and the Diocese

3.2.2. The Bishop and Diocesan Council

3.2.3. The Annual Convention

3.2.4. Other Bishops in a Diocese

3.2.5. The Selection of a New Bishop for a Diocese

3.3. The National Church

3.3.1. The Nine Provinces of the National Church and Special Dioceses

3.3.2. Governance of the National Church

3.4. The Worldwide Anglican Communion

3.4.1. The Members of the Anglican Communion

3.4.2. The Lambeth Conference

3.4.2. Other Important Structures and Gatherings in the Anglican Communion

4. Mission

4.1. Foreign Missions

References

1. What is the Church?

1.1. Wherever Christ Is, There is the Catholic Church

In essence:

“wherever Christ is, there is also the catholic church”
- Ignatius of Antioch, 1st century

1.2. How is Christ Present in the Church?

1.2.1. Christ is Present in What Way?

“wherever Christ is. . .”

“Is” in what way? What kind of presence?

- 1. Christ is present through the *proclamation of the Word of God*
- 2. Christ is present *sacramentally*. The Church is a kind of a sacrament

1.2.2. Christ is Present in the Church through the Proclamation of the Word

Christ is present in the church through the proclamation of the Word

The church is the community that comes into being wherever the word of God is faithfully proclaimed and received

- **“Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them”** (Matt 18:20)

This sense of the church implies the church is fundamentally an “event;” the institution of the church is secondary / incidental. This sense of the church is dominant in most Protestantism

1.2.3. Christ is Present in the Church Sacramentally

Christ is present in the church sacramentally. The church is a sacrament of Christ, or like a sacrament:

- Church is the visible and historical sign of Christ present in the world
- Church is “the prolongation of Christ in time and space”

The church is thus the community of people in the world and in history (= in space and time) who are in communion with God

This sense of the church implies the institution of the church itself has a fundamental importance (although not its particular structure). This sense of the church is dominant in Roman Catholicism.

1.2.4 The Church as Both “Event” and Institution

The Anglican view of the church combines both the sense of the church as an event in which the word of God is being proclaimed, and the sense of the church as an institution (= community of believers in space and time) which lives in the world and in history as the visible sign or sacrament of Christ on earth.

By affirming the Church as that place where Christ is present both sacramentally and in the Word, the Anglican church believes:

- The Church is the People of God
 - the new people of God continuous with Israel
- The Church is Communion or Fellowship
 - who share a common life:
 - between God and each believer
 - between individual believers

1.3. The Visible vs. the Invisible Church

Theologians have asked if the true church is the "Visible" church or the "Invisible" church.

The **Invisible Church** is the church whose members are:

- people who are / will be saved, the *elect*
- people who are thus known only to God

The **Visible Church** is the church whose members are:

- people distinguished by outward signs of baptism, affirmation of a creed, participation in the Eucharist
- a community of fallible, imperfect, flawed human beings

Article XIX: affirms that Anglicans hold that the true church is the *visible* church

1.4. The Notes or Marks of the Church

1.4.1. The Four Notes or Marks

The "notes" or "marks" of the Church are:

- One
- Holy
- Catholic
- Apostolic

1.4.2. One

The church should be **One**.

Today, unity that we can affirm includes:

- theological unity "where Christ is, there is also the church"
- "biological" or "organic" unity. The historical evolution of the church can be thought of as like the development of branches of a tree (there are today many individual branches, but it is still a single tree)

However, we must also acknowledge the disunity in the church:

- sociologically, culturally
- organizationally
- we cannot even share the Eucharist together

1.4.3. Holy

Holy means being set apart by God for God.

There is no mention in the New Testament of "institutional holiness"

The only holiness is the holiness of the individual. Therefore: the church can be holy only to the degree that the individuals making it up are holy.

Since all individuals are also sinful, we must say:

- the community of the church is *holy and sinful at the same time*
- the church is part of the battlefield between God's Spirit and evil in the world
- the front of the battlefield runs:
 - through the holy church and the unholy world, and
 - through the middle of the human heart

1.4.4. Catholic

Catholic is a word referring to the universal, total, entire church, as distinct from just the local church. A **catholic church** is a community concerned with the whole, universal, world-wide church

1.4.5. Apostolic

To say the church is **Apostolic** is to say each member of the church is called to live in accord with the testimony of the apostles

- This testimony is made concrete in the exercising of the apostolic ministry

2. Ministry

2.1. The General Ministry vs. the Special Ministries

We can distinguish two facets of ministry:

- The general ministry of the people of God
- The special ministries or Orders ("The Holy Orders"):
 - bishops
 - presbyters
 - deacons

2.2. The General Ministry of the People of God

The general ministry of the people of God is the continuation of the work of Christ (St. Paul called this the work of reconciliation):

- *service* to fellow human beings
- *proclamation* and witness
- *sacrifice* and self-giving

The whole church (membership through baptism) is a royal priesthood and kingdom of priests (I Peter 2:5,9, Rev 1:6, 5:10, 20:6)

Mission is the outgoing, expanding aspect of ministry.

2.3. The Special Ministries

By the early second century a **threefold ministry** had been defined in the church:

- *a bishop* in each town
- *a presbyter* in charge of each house church
- *deacons* assisting

By the third century, **Apostolic Tradition** had been defined by Hippolytus:

- bishops ordained by other bishops
- presbyters ordained by bishops with assistance of other presbyters
- deacons ordained by bishops alone

Presbyters were called **priests** by the mid 3rd century

The specific ministries of the clergy are ministries which the clergy accept *in addition to* the general ministry that they and every Christian accept. The clergy are the "guardian of the word and sacraments". They must:

- faithfully proclaim the word
- faithfully administer the sacraments

Their special ministry involves:

- an *inner* call

- supplemented by *outward* call of the Church (selection, recommendation)
- the inward and outward calls are “completed” in *ordination* by a bishop:
 - a sacramental act involving:
 - a divine dimension = the “conferring of grace”
 - a new *way of being* in the Church

3. Organization

3.1. The Parish Church

3.1.1. Church Membership

"Church" Membership

From the Prayer Book:

- “The Church is the Body of which Jesus Christ is the Head and of which all baptized persons are members”

Membership in a particular Episcopal Church

By Canon Law, a membership in a particular Episcopal church requires:

- baptism in the Episcopal Church, or baptism in another church, with that baptism recorded in the Episcopal Church

Communicant Members of a particular Episcopal church are members who have received communion at least 3 times in previous year

3.1.2. Governance of the Parish

The **Rector**. Duties are:

- to conduct Church services
- to teach the faith

The **Vestry**

- senior officers, called **Wardens** are elected by the parish or by the Vestry
- duties are to manage the finances and the property of the church

Annual Parish Meeting

- elects the Vestry
- accepts the report of rector
- accepts the report of Wardens
- accepts the treasurer’s report

3.1.3. Choosing Clergy Leadership

The procedure for choosing Clergy leadership:

- Search Committee formed
- Vestry with advice of bishop chooses interim priest
- National Church and diocese provides names of priests to Search Committee
- Resumes reviewed, interviews conducted
- Recommendation made to Vestry
- Vestry elects new priest
- Bishop must approve selection

3.1.4. Removing Clergy Leadership

Removing Clergy Leadership is possible only with:

- due cause

- the bishop's consent

3.1.5. Rectors vs. Vicars

If a parish is self-supporting, the priest is called a “**rector**” (Latin for “ruler:” he or she presides over Vestry Meetings).

If a parish is non self-supporting congregations (“missionary congregations”), the priest is called a “**vicar**” (one who represents another [the bishop]).

3.2. The Diocese

3.2.1. Parishes and the Diocese

A diocese can range in size from ~20 parishes to nearly 200 parishes

The diocese provides:

- resources and guidance
- means of working in common mission

Each parish is assessed certain monetary amount to pay for work of diocese

3.2.2. The Bishop and Diocesan Council

The work of a diocese is directed by a **Bishop** and a **Diocesan Council**
Together, they administer the budget and programs of the diocese.

3.2.3. The Annual Convention

Each diocese holds an **Annual Convention**.

Delegates include:

- lay delegates from each parish
- all priests

The **Annual Convention**:

- adopts yearly budget and programs
- elects the **Diocesan Council**
- votes on important issues and election of individuals requires majority approval of both lay and clergy delegates

3.2.4. Other Bishops in a Diocese

Other bishops in a diocese might include:

- **Suffragans** - additional bishops elected to assist diocesan bishop
- **Assisting Bishop** – a clergy who is already a bishop who is appointed by diocesan bishop to assist him/her.
- **Coadjutor** - a bishop elected to serve with a retiring bishop in the interim period

3.2.5. The Selection of a New Bishop for a Diocese

Steps in the Selection of New Bishop:

- A Nominating Committee is formed
- A **Special Diocesan Convention** is held. This Convention::
 - includes all priests of the diocese
 - includes lay delegates from each parish

- the winning candidate must have majority vote of all the clergy and all the laity
- The election of bishop must have the approval of a majority of the other dioceses
- Each new bishop is consecrated by at least three other bishops, as required at **Council of Nicaea 325 A.D.**

3.3. The National Church

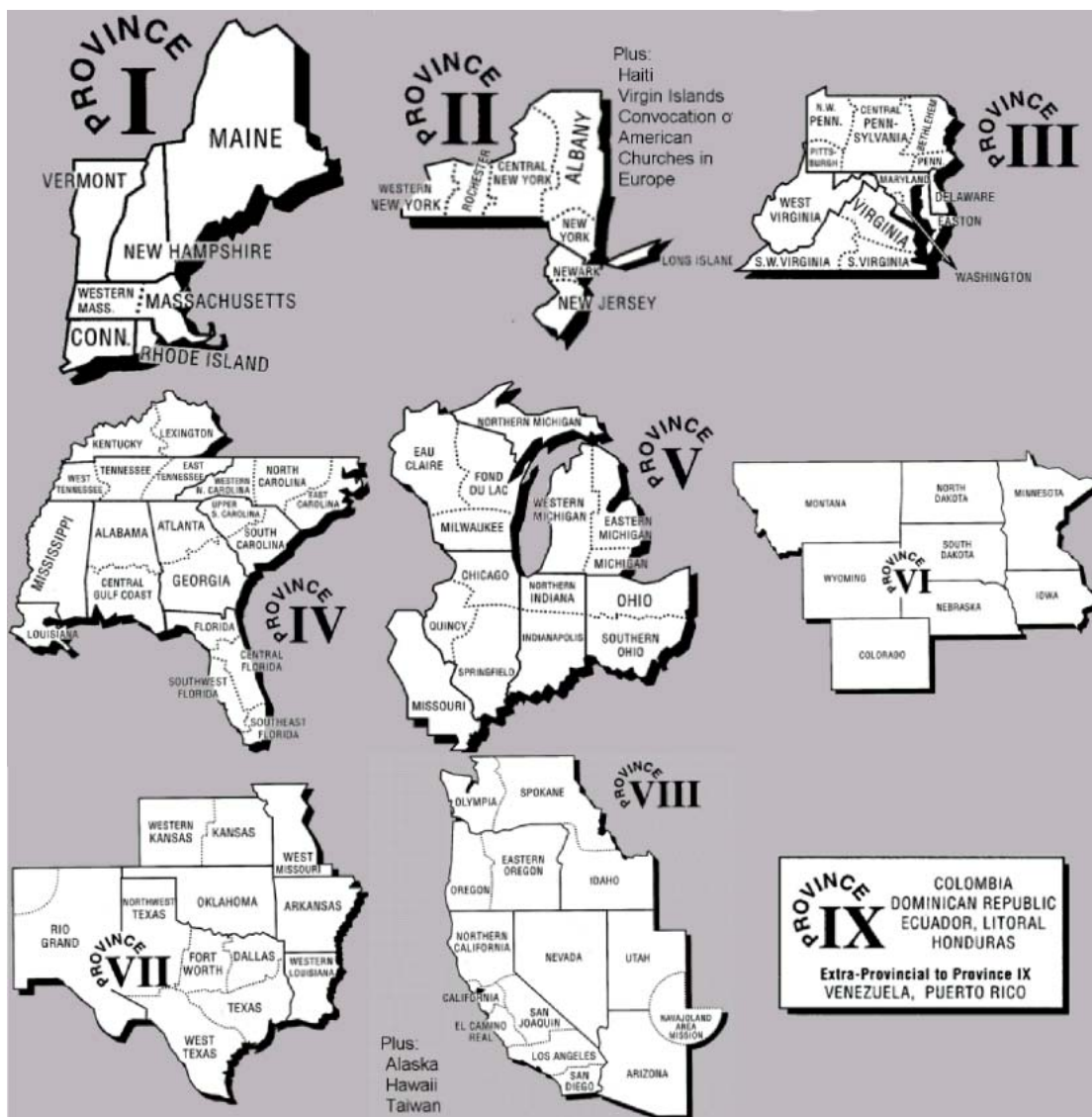
3.3.1. The Nine Provinces of the National Church and Special Dioceses

The dioceses of the National Church are grouped into 9 provinces

The National Church includes several overseas and special dioceses:

- Navajoland
- Convocation of parishes in Europe
- Bishop for the Armed Services
- dioceses in Episcopal Church of Mexico
- dioceses in Virgin Islands, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Columbia, Ecuador

Maps of the Nine Provinces:



(Image files of the provinces are taken from the Website of the Episcopal Church U.S.A.)

3.3.2. Governance of the National Church

The work of the National Church is directed by the **Presiding Bishop** and the **Executive Council**. They are each elected through a **General Convention**.

The **Presiding Bishop** is

- the chief pastor and executive of the church
- charged to “speak God’s words to the Church and to the world, as the representative of this Church and its episcopate in its corporate capacity”
- must visit every diocese during his or her tenure
- consults with bishops and diocesan representatives

A **General Convention of the Episcopal Church** is

- held every three years
- elects **Presiding Bishop** and **Executive Council**
- two houses:
 - **House of Bishops** (all bishops)
 - **House of Deputies** (four lay members and four clergy from each diocese)
- adopts the budget, resolutions on matters of concern to church

3.4. The Worldwide Anglican Communion

3.4.1. The Members of the Anglican Communion

The members of the worldwide Anglican Communion each began from a “Church of England” established

- in former colonies of the British empire,
- through missionary work in non-colonial countries

3.4.2. The Lambeth Conference

In **1867**, the first **Lambeth Conference** was held at the residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lambeth Palace. 87 bishops attended. Since then, a Lambeth Conference has been held every ten years (except during WWII).

About 800 bishops attended the **1998** Lambeth Conference.

A **Lambeth Conference** is for “conferring,” not “legislating”

- Statements are issued on consensus opinions
- Each national church remains free to make its own decisions about common life within its church

3.4.2. Other Important Structures and Gatherings in the Anglican Communion

Anglican Congresses

- held twice in last half 20th century
- delegates: priests, bishops, laity

Anglican Consultative Council

- elected membership bishops, priests, laity
- provides regular consultation between members of the Communion

Anglican Executive Officer

- facilitate communication among the Churches

4. Mission

4.1. Foreign Missions

As Anglican churches around the world have grown independent, the character of foreign missionary work out of the American Episcopal Church has changed. Important groups to note include:

■ **Volunteers for Mission**

- Episcopalians with particular skills sent in response to requests from other Anglican Churches

■ **Partners in Mission**

- Churches of Anglican Communion exploring ways of older and younger churches working together, sharing resources

References

Christian Theology. An Introduction. Second Edition. Alister E. McGrath. Blackwell Publishers. 1997.

Introduction to Theology. Revised Edition. Owen C. Thomas. Morehouse Publishing. Harrisburg. 1983

The Anglican Vision. The New Church's Teaching Series, Volume 1. James E. Griffiss, Cowley, Boston. 1997

Welcome to the Episcopal Church An Introduction to Its History, Faith, and Worship. Christopher L. Webber. Morehouse. 1999

What is Anglicanism? Urban T. Holmes III. Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg, 1982.