

Episcopal Language II

[A short guide to many of the terms and phrases used in the Episcopal Church.](#)

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815

a short reference to the main office complex of the Episcopal Church in New York: Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10017, (212) 867-8400.
www.episcopalchurch.org

1928 Prayer Book

a version of the Episcopal book of worship in use from 1928 to 1979; some services from this prayer book have been retained in the current prayer book as "Rite I" services. Preference for the use of the 1928 edition is sometimes associated with "conservative" attitudes in the Episcopal Church.

Acolyte

originally a minor clerical order but now usually a lay function in the church; the acolyte assists the priest, lights and carries candles, and performs other ceremonial functions.

Advent Wreath

a special wreath containing five candles used in churches and homes as reminders of the four Sundays before Christmas. Four of the candles are arranged in a circle, the fifth--a white candle--is placed in the center. By tradition one additional candle is lighted each Sunday until on the fourth Sunday all four candles are lighted. On Christmas, the fifth candle is lighted.

Advent

the season of the church year immediately prior to Christmas beginning with the fourth Sunday before Christmas; also the entire Christmas season.

Alb

the white robe worn by the priest when celebrating communion; generally worn over daily clothes but under other vestments, scarves, etc.

All Saints' Day

November 1; a feast day in the church in commemoration of all the known and unknown saints.

Altar Guild

a special, usually lay, group in a church charged with the maintenance and preparation of the altar and its furnishings in a church; altar guilds may also supervise church decorations and flowers.

Altar

a table [located in the sanctuary or the crossing] on which are placed the vessels for holding the bread, wine, and water used in the Eucharist or communion.

American Episcopal Church

a separated group of American Episcopalians who differ with the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America over matters pertaining to liturgy, ordination, and church government; this group has often favored the use of the "1928 Prayer book", and has generally opposed the ordination of women.

Anglican

simply means English; a term indicating the English origins of the Episcopal Church. Sometimes seen in the expressions Anglican Church or Anglican Communion--both of which terms simply indicate any national church which derives from the Church of England

Anthem

sacred vocal music using scriptural words; now also any vocal music or hymn sung by a choir but not by the congregation.

Archbishop of Canterbury

the presiding bishop of the Church of England; sometimes acknowledged by American Episcopalians as the honorary spiritual head of the entire Anglican communion.

Archbishop

a bishop over a group of dioceses or national church; for instance, the Archbishop of South Africa or New Zealand.

Archdeacon

a priest who is on a bishop's staff and who exercises some administrative supervision over parishes, missions, priests, or programs for the bishop; archdeacons are referred to as "The Venerable" [The Ven.]: The Venerable Hudson Stuck. Salutation in letter: "Dear Archdeacon Stuck" or "Dear Mr. Stuck". The title `Reverend' is not used if Venerable is used. Archdeacons sometimes wear purple instead of black cassocks.

Ash Wednesday

the day which marks the beginning of the season of Lent, a period of spiritual discipline, fasting and moderation in preparation for Holy Week and Easter; one of the most important days of the church year. In the Ash Wednesday service, the priest or bishop lightly smears ashes onto the forehead of a person. On this day in Sewanee, a number of people may be seen who appear to have a black or gray smudge on their forehead.

Baptismal Font

see Font.

Bishop and Council

a type of diocesan government; the council is a governing or advisory body usually selected from several sub-divisions of a diocese.

Bishop, Assistant

a specially ordained or otherwise specially designated person who has the spiritual and liturgical rank of a bishop and who usually assists the Bishop of a diocese; some retired diocesan bishops become assistants to other bishops; some assistant bishops are specially ordained for their work. Assistant Bishops can perform most functions performed by other bishops.

Bishop, Co-adjutor

an ordained person consecrated to become the next bishop of a diocese when the diocesan bishop retires; when the bishop retires or resigns, the Co-adjutor becomes the Diocesan and the term Co-adjutor is dropped. Suffragan bishops do not automatically become diocesan bishops.

Bishop, Diocesan

the primary bishop of a diocese; sometimes referred to as "The Diocesan.

Bishop, Suffragan

a working co-bishop in a diocese but without inherent right of succession when the diocesan bishop retires or resigns. Suffragan bishops are sometimes called by another diocese to become their Diocesan bishop.

Bishops, Letters to

envelope and inside address; salutation: The Rt. Rev. John F. Marks, D.D., Bishop of Kansas, 413 Purchase Street, Kansas City, KA 12123; Dear Bishop Marks: Or, The Rt. Rev. Joseph H. Curtis, Suffragan Bishop of Maine, ...; Dear Bishop Curtis: Or, The Rt. Rev. William E. Devon, D.D., Bishop Co-adjutor of Kansas...; Dear Bishop Devon:

Book Of Common Prayer

a collection of prayers, readings, Psalms, devotions, and services used by the Episcopal Church; the worship book used by Episcopalians. Nearly all services in any Episcopal Church will be printed in this book.

Canon

the title of a priest who serves on the staff cathedral, except that the head staff priest of the cathedral is the dean; the canon is addressed as "The Rev. Canon Jane H. Wilson" Salutation in letter: "Dear Canon Wilson" or "Dear Ms. Wilson".

Cantor

a person who chants or sings; often a solo voice that begins the service. The Festival of Lessons and Carols begins with the solo of the cantor.

Carillon

a set of church bells; generally found only in churches large enough to have a tower or steeple strong enough to support the weight of the many bells; some of the bells may weigh a ton or more.

Cassock

the black robe worn by priests; bishops' cassocks are usually purple.

Cathedra

the special chair that a bishop sits in during a church service: The Bishop's Cathedra. The cathedra is sometimes moved to a prominent place for special occasions--as for the conferring of honorary degrees.

Cathedral

an Episcopal Church which is the official church of a bishop of a diocese; sometimes such churches are indicated by the word Cathedral in their name, but not always. Cathedrals are usually in the charge of a priest who is referred to as the Dean of the Cathedral; such Deans are referred to as "The Very Reverend...". Not all large churches are cathedrals; not all cathedrals are large.

Catholic

literally, "universal" or "found everywhere"; usually, however, a reference to the Roman Catholic Church although the term also includes Anglican, Syrian, Greek, Coptic, Russian and other churches. The Episcopal Church is a catholic church. Catholic churches generally accept the teachings of tradition as well as scripture and usually accept the validity of one or more ancient creeds as the summary of the Christian faith.

Celebrant

the main priest in a Eucharist, mass, or communion; the priest who performs the consecration of the bread and wine; the celebrant may be assisted by other priests, deacons, chalice bearers, acolytes, etc.

Chancel

the portion of a church between the front row of pews and the altar; usually the place the choir sits; sometimes also called the "choir".

Chant

a musical recitation of words midway between reading and singing; in All Saints' the Psalm in the worship service is often chanted.

Chapel

a place of worship lacking a parish congregation [although chapels may have a permanent clergyman]; chapels may be large or small, private or institutional. A term for a place of Episcopal worship associated with a college, university, or seminary. A small place of worship attached to a larger structure.

Chaplain

the minister in charge of a chapel or a minister to a group of people who are not organized as a mission or church.

Choir

a special group of singers who chant or sing during a worship service; also, the part of the church where the choir sits.

Church Annual

The Episcopal Church Annual: the yearbook of the Episcopal Church containing names and addresses of all Episcopal organizations, dioceses, churches, a list of all clergy, etc. Sometimes also called the "Red Book". www.theredbook.org

Church of England

the name of the Episcopal Church in England.

Church, local

the smallest social division of the Episcopal Church; above the church is the diocese; above the diocese is the province; above the province is the national church. Sometimes church refers to the local building; sometimes to the local congregation. See also parish, congregation, and communicants.

Clergy

the group of ordained ministers of a church or denomination; all ministers together as distinguished from lay persons. When used in distinction from laity, the term includes both bishops and priests; sometimes the term refers to all priests *except the bishops*: as in the expression, "All bishops and other clergy..."

Clerical Directory

The Episcopal Clerical Directory: a biennial listing of all Episcopal clergy with short biographical paragraphs about each person including schooling, ordination, churches served, family information, address, service to the Episcopal Church.

Clerical

an adjective referring to ordained persons and their work.

Co-adjutor Bishop

see Bishop Co-adjutor.

Collar, clerical

a stiff round shirt collar worn by Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Orthodox, and some Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran and other clergy; widely regarded as a sign or identifying mark of clerical status.

Communicants

the members of a local church; those who do or who are eligible to receive communion; loosely identified with the roll of the local church: "St. Mark's has 300 communicants [=official members]." But, "There were 37 communicants at the Eucharist at the early service [=37 people received the Lord's Supper]."

Communion

the Christian sacramental meal, equivalent to the Lord's Supper; now more commonly called 'Eucharist' in Episcopal churches; also called Mass in Roman Catholic churches.

Compline

an evening service to end the day; although the service is an old Christian usage, it has only recently been added to the Prayer book of the Episcopal Church.

Congregation

the group of people who attend church; the members present for the worship service.

Consecration

a special service of dedication or ordination; a church [without debt] may be consecrated--made holy to God's purposes; a service by which an ordained person becomes a bishop.

Convent

a disciplined spiritual residential community for women; similar to a monastery.

Convention, General

a gathering every three years of the national Episcopal Church; at General Convention each diocese is represented by appointed or elected deputies. At General Convention the basic regulations and decisions that govern the church are made. For voting, the General Convention consists of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies.

Convention

a meeting of a church body, as in a diocesan convention.

Convocation

a special gathering of a religious or academic group, usually marked by use of special vestments, ceremony, procession, etc. Also the name of a special group of ordained persons.. Sometimes the meeting of all the clergy of a diocese is called convocation.

Cotta

a short robe often worn by choir members.

Council/Diocesan Council

a group for diocesan government; and appointed or elective group that advises the bishop; at the diocesan level similar to the vestry at the parish level; sometimes referred to as "Bishop-and-Council".

Crossing

in church architecture, the main intersection of aisles at the front of the church; if viewed from above, these aisles form a large cross. Sometimes the altar is located at the crossing. In a service, crossing refers to a hand gesture of making a cross pattern on one's body; also a gesture made by a priest or bishop over a congregation or upon a person at death or baptism.

Crucifer

a person in a religious procession who bears the cross and who leads the procession into the church.

Crucifix

a kind of Christian symbol which is a cross with a likeness of the body of Christ on it; usually thought of as a "very Catholic symbol" by some protestants.

Curate

a deacon or other person not fully ordained who receives a fee for working in a small parish; the parish a curate works with is his 'cure'; sometimes a curate is the newest assistant to a senior minister at a large parish. Curates generally work under the supervision of a senior minister and do not have full responsibility for their parish. Equivalent to a vicar.

Cursillo

a contemporary, popular movement of Christian renewal in the Episcopal Church; usually involves a very close-knit group of people in an intense retreat for a weekend, followed by spiritual disciplines and gatherings.

D. Min.

Doctor of Ministry; a special graduate program for clergy offered by many seminaries; courses are often scheduled in the summer so that parish clergy may attend.

D.D.

common abbreviation of the honorary degree Doctor of Divinity; an honorary degree reserved exclusively for ordained persons, especially bishops. The abbreviation is used after the bishop's full name: The Rt. Rev. Duncan M. Gray, Jr., D.D.

De-consecration

a ritual or service for returning a former sacred building or site to a non-sacred status; church buildings no longer in use as churches are de-consecrated before being sold or destroyed.

Deacon

the initial level of ordination in the Episcopal Church. Unlike protestant churches where Deacon is a lay order, in the Episcopal Church Deacon is a clerical order. Deacons often have special clerical duties; by tradition the Gospel is read by the deacon if a deacon is on the staff of a church or chapel.

Dean

title used for the resident clergyman of a cathedral; also used for the chief academic officer of a college or seminary. If the dean is ordained, the title "The Very Reverend" is appropriate; if the dean is a lay person, this title is not used.

Deputy

an official church or diocesan delegate to a meeting; a deputy may be clerical or lay.

Diaconate

the state of being a deacon; also, the life of deacon-like service in the church.

Diocesan Seals

heraldic insignia of a diocese; the painted plaques above the bishop's chairs in the sanctuary of All Saints' chapel. Diocesan Seals are sometimes cut into rings or dies for impressing wax on official diocesan documents.

Diocese

a unit of church organization; the spiritual domain under a bishop. A diocese may contain many parishes and churches.

DOCC

Disciples of Christ in Community; an extension program of the School of Theology at Sewanee.

EFM

Education For Ministry; the popular extension program of the School of Theology at Sewanee.

Epiphany

January 6; a feast celebrating the visit of the Wisemen to the infant Jesus; the end of the Christmas season.

Episcopal

the name of a form of church organization which means government by an overseer

episcopos

Episcopos is the Greek word from which we derive the English word 'bishop'.

Episcopalian, The

the general newspaper of the Episcopal Church; usually sent to each communicant or family of a church; news of the moves of clergy from one church to another is often published in this paper.

Epistle, The

a reading from the New Testament other than from the Gospels; also any reading from the Bible other than the Gospels or Psalms.

Epistle Side

the right side of a church when facing the altar; this older usage is now no longer accurate in churches reading the gospel from the right side pulpit. See Gospel Side.

Eucharist

a "good gift" or thanksgiving; the current usage in the Episcopal Church to refer to communion or the Lord's Supper.

Eulogy

a speech or homily in praise of a deceased person; brief remarks about the deceased at a funeral.

Evensong

an evening worship service; evening prayer; and evening prayer service featuring a choir.

Executive Committee

a type of diocesan government in which a committee advises the bishop; the executive committee is smaller and usually less representative than the Bishop-and-Council type of government.

Father

a familiar or direct way of referring to some ordained clergy: the Reverend John F. Marks, but--in personal conversation or in the salutation of a letter--Father Marks, Dear Father Marks. Typically used of all Roman Catholic clergy and of some Episcopal clergy. Be careful in using or not using this term: some clergy do not like it; others are offended if it is not used. Usually the people who prefer the term assume that you know they prefer it. There is no easy way to tell what the clergy preference is except by paying attention to letters, conversations, etc.

Folk Mass

communion in which the music is often guitars or other instruments instead of organ music; a term for a less formal communion service which incorporates new songs, spirituals, folk songs, and contemporary poetry as part of the worship service.

Font

a basin of water used in baptism. The Episcopal Church practices baptism by "sprinkling" rather than by "full immersion".

General Convention

the national triennial meeting of the Episcopal Church; parishes send "deputies" or official representatives to General Convention.

GOE's

General Ordination Exams; a set of uniform tests required of most seminarians before their graduation from seminary.

Gospel, The

any reading from Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John in the New Testament; also a general reference to the essential message of the Christian faith.

Gospel Side

an older usage for designating the interior of a church; originally, the Gospel Side was the north side [the left side facing the altar]. See Epistle Side.

High Church

a designation of a church emphasizing theological or liturgical formality; a church with several vested assistants and many fine utensils used in the service; a church that sings or chants its service rather than reading or speaking it; a church that celebrates the Eucharist every Sunday [though most Episcopal Churches do this now]. Such churches sometimes appear to be more "catholic" as in Roman Catholic.

Holy Orders

a way of referring to ordination among Roman Catholics, Episcopalians and others: an ordained person is spoken of as "being in holy orders"--meaning that the person has made priestly vows and has been admitted by a bishop into one of the several levels of ordination.

Holy Week

the period from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday; most important period of the church year with many special services.

Homily

a short sermon often on a single topic of devotion or morality.

House of Bishops

all the bishops of the Episcopal church sitting as a legislative and judiciary body of the church.

House of Deputies

as the lay and presbyter delegates to a general convention sitting as a legislative body.

Hymn

sacred words set to music; church vocal music involving the congregation and distinguished from the Psalm or anthem.

Incense

the "smell" element in Smells & Bells; a fragrant [and now usually hypo-allergenic] powder burned in a small dish or pot; used during the service or in the processions in recollection of one of the three gifts of the Wisemen to the Christ Child.

Inclusive Language

the attempt to find forms of religious expression which are not biased in favor of a particular gender group. Some churches favor an Inclusive Lectionary, and some have altered prayers and hymns so that gender-restrictive images and pronouns are removed: "Our God who art in heaven..."

Installation

a service in which a person is made the official bearer of a clerical or academic office: the Installation of the Dean or Vice-Chancellor; a service at which an already consecrated bishop is installed as bishop of a diocese.

Junior Warden

the assistant to the Senior Warden; usually becomes Senior Warden after the Senior Warden's term is up.

Laity

the non-ordained members of a church; all lay persons together; "the people" as distinguished from "the clergy". The laity are the chief ministers of the church.

Lay Chaplain

a lay person whose vocation is to work in a chapel or as a minister to a non-congregational group such as a college undergraduates or the visitors at a hospital or campground.

Lay minister

a person who is not ordained, but who works closely with a church or religious program. Some lay ministers are un-paid volunteers; some are paid staff members of a church.

Lay person

any non-ordained person; in the Episcopal church today, lay person is often used instead of the older protestant usage "layman".

Lay Reader

any non-ordained person who participates in reading part of a church service. In some churches Lay Readers are officially recognized as a special group assisting in church services.

Lay

from laios, a Greek word meaning the people.

Lectern

a raised platform with railing used for reading prayers or scripture; usually located at the front of the nave opposite the pulpit.

Lectionary, Inclusive

the use of Biblical texts which are not biased in favor or male or female images and which avoid male or female pronouns such as Him or Her. Texts, which avoid the use of images of God as Father. See Inclusive Language.

Lectionary

the complex series of Biblical readings used in the Episcopal Church throughout the year.

Lent

the period of fasting, sobriety and meditation following Ash Wednesday; in the past Lent was widely associated with denial or "giving something up for Lent.": "I gave up smoking for Lent." Or, "I gave up desserts for Lent." The season recalls the period of Christ's fasting and meditation in the wilderness, so traditionally is for a period of forty days--from Ash Wednesday to Palm Sunday. The term is derived from an old word for 'lengthen' which referred to the lengthening days of early spring.

Lesson

also the Epistle; any reading from the Bible except the Gospels or Psalms; usually read on the opposite side of the church from where the Gospel is read; in older practice the Lesson was read from the "Epistle Side"--the right side facing the altar, while the Gospel was read from the "Gospel Side"--the left side facing the altar. Current practice in many Episcopal churches does not conform to this older pattern.

Liturgy

literally the word means the work of the people; generally used to refer to the full text of the words of a worship service; any ritual order for holding a church service.

Living Church, The

a monthly magazine of the Episcopal Church often discussing current issues in the life of the Church.

Low Church

a church that is less formal; a church that does not chant or sing its service; a church that alternates Morning Prayer with Eucharist; such churches sometimes appear to be more "protestant".

M. Div.

Master of Divinity; the basic American theological degree; in earlier years, the first theological degree was the B.D. [Bachelor of Divinity], but in the late 1960's many American divinity schools began to allow their earlier graduates to exchange their B.D. degrees for the newer M.Div. degree.

Mace

a staff or baton usually embellished with metal used as an insignia of office.

Mardi Gras

literally "fat Tuesday"; a festival day ending a period of celebration and excess; usually occurs mid to late February, sometimes early March. Immediately followed by Ash Wednesday and Lent.

Mass

the Roman Catholic name for the Christian sacramental meal but sometimes used by conservative Episcopalians to refer to communion or Eucharist.

Maundy Thursday

the Thursday of Holy Week; the name is from Latin 'mandatum' referring to Christ's commandment concerning foot-washing; also the day on which the first Lord's Supper was celebrated.

Mission

a local Episcopal congregation that has not yet attained the status of a church with a full-time priest; also a church that has lost its church status and reverted to mission status. St. James' in Midway was a mission; when it became able to support a full-time priest, it became a church: St. James' Episcopal Church. Usually a mission does not have a full-time minister and does not have the full complement of daily or weekly services.

Miter/mitre

the liturgical hat or head dress of a bishop.

Morning Prayer

a morning worship service without communion; now this service has generally been replaced by a eucharistic or communion service.

Mr./Mrs./Ms.

used in referring to clergy when the full name is not used: The Reverend John F. Marks, but: The Reverend Mr. Marks; the Very Reverend Guy F. Lytle, but: the Very Reverend Mr. Lytle.

Narthex

an enclosed space at the entry end of the nave of a church; the entry porch.

Nave

the main part of a church; the place where the congregation sits. Derived from an old word for ship; in older churches the beams of the roof resembled the beams and timbers in the sides of a ship.

Ordination

a special service for inducting a person into holy orders; the ritual that makes a person a priest or minister.

Palm Sunday

the Sunday before Easter. In an Episcopal Church, members of the congregation carry real palms during the service; in some churches, the tradition is that palms from one year are saved, dried and later burned to make the ashes used at the next year's Ash Wednesday service.

Parish hall/house

a gathering place for a local congregation separate from the church building.

Parish

the group of people of a certain area who are organized into a local church; sometimes the word also refers to the geographic region around a church. In the South many of the present-day counties were once referred to as parishes [as is still the case in Louisiana]; mostly a reference to the local congregation.

Parson

now rare in Episcopal usage. Any priest or minister; often a reference to low-church or non-Episcopal clergy. Sometimes a term of affection for an older clergyman especially of rural background.

PB

Presiding Bishop

Peace, The

also known as Passing the Peace; a ritual in the Episcopal Church in which members of the congregation, including the clergy, greet one another. The priest says, "The Peace of the Lord be always with you." The congregation responds, "And also with you." Immediately after these words people shake hands or speak or sometimes embrace in the church.

PECUSA

initials of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America

Pension Fund

the Church Pension Fund; the retirement program for clergy and other church workers of the Episcopal Church

Prayer Book

a short way of referring to the Book of Common Prayer, the worship book of the Episcopal Church containing services, psalms, prayers, etc.

Presiding Bishop

the elected Episcopal head of the Episcopal Church in America [PECUSA]; the chief administrator and spiritual head of the Episcopal Church. The Episcopal Church *does not* refer to its head bishop as an archbishop.

Priest

a special term for the minister of a Roman Catholic or Episcopal or Orthodox church; originally the term mean someone who performed a sacrifice; later the term referred to those who said Mass; now often synonymous with minister although the older terminology is still familiar in some churches.

Procession

the line of choir, clergy, acolytes, crucifer, torchbearers and others walking into a church to begin a service.

Province

one of the major organizational divisions of the Episcopal Church; a group of dioceses usually under the parliamentary direction of a diocesan bishop who serves as president of the province.

Pulpit

a raised platform with railing used for the sermon or homily; generally located to one side [usually the right side facing the altar] of the front of the nave, not in the center as in most protestant churches.

Purple
this color [or some shade of violet] in vestments usually indicates that the wearer is a bishop.

Reader
anyone who reads a lesson, psalm or prayer in a service. Lay persons may read any lesson but the Gospel reading is usually done by an ordained person.

Recession
a procession out of a church.

Rector
the priest or minister of a local church or parish; the head priest of a parish.

Rectory
the residence of a rector; the place where an Episcopal minister lives.

Red Book
see Church Annual.

Requiem
a funeral service or memorial service. Sometimes the word is preceded by the word 'solemn': Solemn Requiem. Sometimes the word is preceded by 'high': High Requiem --which only indicates that portions of the service will be sung or chanted. A High Requiem Mass is a funeral service with communion and singing of parts of the service.

Reredos
[rear-re-doss] any decoration behind or above an altar; may be in the form of statues, screens, or tapestries.

Reverend Doctor
and ordained person [hence Reverend] who also holds some degree at the doctorate level [hence Doctor]-a way of referring to a priest who was also a professor or to a priest who held an honorary doctorate; a bishop who held a doctorate would be referred to as the *Right* Reverend Doctor.

Reverend Father
an affectionate, devotional or pietistic way of referring to a priest who accepted the term Father.

Reverend Mr./Mrs./Ms.
see Mr./Mrs./Ms.

Rite One
a portion of the Book of Common Prayer which contains worship services using the older language of the 1928 edition of the prayer book.

Rite Two
a portion of the Book of Common Prayer containing worship services which use more modern language.

Sacristan
liturgical assistants who have charge of sacred vessels, vestments, etc.

Sacristy
the room near the altar where priests vest for the service; the room where the communion vessels and vestments are kept.

Sanctuary
the portion of a church at the head of the chancel around the altar; the space immediately around the altar. Sometimes used to refer to the whole interior of the church, but this is not the usual Episcopal usage.

See
generally Roman Catholic usage referring to the ecclesiastical residence of a bishop; occasionally used by Episcopalians

Seminarian
a student in a seminary; a student in residence in a school of theology.

Seminary
a residential academic program for the study of theology.

Senior Warden
the chairman of the vestry; the lay person who heads the governing board of the local church.

Sexton

an older English title for the person in charge of the church building [or a special portion of it] and grounds; in America the Sexton is also commonly head of maintenance and custodial services and may perform additional duties such as ringing the church bell.

SPCK

Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; one of the oldest missionary organizations of the Anglican Church. SPCK specializes in publications and other media for promoting Christian knowledge.

Stole

a long, narrow strip of cloth worn around the neck of the priest and allowed to hang down the front of the clerical vestments; some stoles are decorated with diocesan or school insignia near the lower ends.

Suffragan

see Bishop, Suffragan.

Surplice

a white over-garment worn over other vestments; somewhat longer and fuller than a cotta; always worn by the priest when celebrating the Eucharist.

Torch [Torch Bearer]

a person who carries a candle in a religious procession; often the Crucifer is followed by two "Torches"--two persons each carrying a candle mounted on a short staff.

Trinity, The

a fundamental symbol of the Christian faith and a very important doctrine in Catholic Christianity; the Trinity refers to the oneness and essential unity of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Twelve Days of Christmas

the time from December 25th to January 6th, that is from Christmas day to Epiphany. The time from the first Sunday in Advent until Christmas Eve is, properly, Advent; the time from December 25th to January 6th is the Christmas season or the "Twelve Days of Christmas."

Twenty-eight Book

a way of referring to the edition of the Book of Common Prayer approved by the Episcopal Church in 1928; a version of the prayer book which retained older forms of language; sometimes the phrase is shortened with reference to the persons who prefer this prayer book and they are referred to as "twenty-eighters." This was the prayer book in use in the Episcopal Church until 1981; it was used at the eight o'clock All Saints' service until the late 1980's.

Venerable

see Archdeacon.

Vergger

an older usage for someone who carries a mace or ceremonial staff in procession; verggers sometimes also had responsibility for the condition of the interior of a church.

Very Reverend, The

a form of address for clergy who hold the office of dean in a church or school: the dean of a cathedral would be referred to as "The Very Reverend John H. Martin, Dean of Trinity Cathedral". See also Dean.

Vestments

clothing worn by people who lead the services of a church; clothing worn by clergy. [The clothing worn by monks and nuns is usually called a 'habit'; the clothing worn by choir members is usually called a 'robe'; the clothing worn by professors is usually called a 'gown'.] Colors used in some vestments are changed during the year to indicate the seasons of the church year. Vestments are usually styled by cut and color to indicate whether a person is a deacon, presbyter, or bishop. Bishops' vestments for instance include a purple shirt.

Vestry

governing board of a local Episcopal church consisting of lay members, much like the board of deacons in a Baptist church; the group that usually makes basic decisions about church budget, building plans, etc. Usually headed by a Senior Warden assisted by a Junior Warden who often follows the Senior Warden in office.

Vicar

an older English term referring to a priest in charge of a vicarage --a small parish; usually such priests were substituting for the "official" or assigned priest; sometimes but not often used by American Episcopal clergy.

Votive candle

a devotional candle placed in a church or chapel; many votive candles are placed in All Saints' for the Festival of Lessons and Carols. Votive candles are often small, short candles in a special glass holder.

Wafer

the bread part of the Lord's Supper; often an unleavened, thin cracker; sometimes the wafer is imprinted with a cross; some wafers are large, being several inches in diameter.

Wine

the beverage portion of communion symbolizing the blood of Christ; equivalent to the grape juice used in some protestant churches. Communion wine is fermented grape juice and is therefore alcoholic.
