

Episcopal Church Language

(From the Lay Professional's Handbook, Diocese of Upper South Carolina. Used with permission.)

G e n e r a l T e r m s

Anglican. An adjective describing the worldwide communion of autonomous churches in communion with the Church of England. The Episcopal Church is a part of that Communion. Anglican can also be a noun. (See Episcopal, Episcopalian)

Apostolic Succession. Episcopalians along with other Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Orthodox and some other Christian bodies trace their bishops' spiritual heritage in an unbroken line back to the first apostles of Jesus.

Book of Common Prayer. The primary guide for worship in the Episcopal Church. The first Anglican Book of Common Prayer was written in 1549 by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, drawing on material from a number of Latin books and manuals then used to conduct services. The 1979 Book of Common Prayer is now in use. This revision replaced the 1928 prayer book.

Canons. The written rules governing church policy, structure and procedure. There are national canons and each diocese has its own. (See also under titles)

Cathedral. The church in a diocese where the bishop has headquarters is the cathedral of that diocese. The city in which the cathedral is located is the "see city" from the Latin word for seat or the place where the bishop's throne or cathedra is located. Some dioceses have no cathedral.

Catholic. The word comes from a Greek word meaning "universal" and may therefore be applied to all Christians. When used this way a lower case c is used –catholic. When used with a capital C it refers to the Roman Catholic Church which should always be referred to by all three words.

Diocese. A diocese is made up of several congregations with a bishop as its chief pastor. The diocese is the basic local unit of the church. Depending on the number of Episcopalians, a state may have more than one diocese. The legislative body of the diocese is the annual convention of clergy and lay deputies from each congregation.

Episcopal. An adjective derived from the Greek *episcopos*, meaning overseer or bishop. Episcopalian is the noun. Episcopalians attend the Episcopal Church.

Episcopal Church Annual. Also known as "the Red Book," this publication contains names and addresses of every church in every diocese, all national church offices and committees, bishops and diocesan staff, all schools, centers, agencies, religious orders and all clergy. (www.theredbook.org)

General Convention. The General Convention is the highest legislative body of the Episcopal Church. It meets every three years and is made up of a House of Bishops and a House of Deputies. Half of deputies are clergy; half are lay persons.

Lambeth Quadrilateral In 1888 the world's Anglican bishops, meeting at Lambeth England adopted four articles as essentials in any plan of union with other Christian bodies: The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion and the historic episcopate (see Apostolic Succession).

Vestry/Mission Committee. The Vestry/Mission Committee is the elected body of lay persons which handles the parish's business matters and serves as a council of advice for the rector. Vestry/Mission Committee members are elected at a parish's annual meeting. The rector presides at meetings of the Vestry/Mission Committee.

Titles and Forms of Address

Archbishop. The title used in the Church of England, the Anglican Church of Canada and other branches of the Anglican Communion for bishops who have responsibilities beyond the limits of their dioceses. For example, there are two archbishops in England, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York, each of whom is responsible for a province containing many dioceses. The Archbishop of Canterbury serves as the spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion and resides in the see city of the province of Canterbury and at Lambeth Palace in London. The correct form of address for an archbishop is The Most Reverend.

Archdeacon. Originally the chief deacon who assisted a bishop, this is now the title of an ordained person who serves on a diocesan bishop's administrative staff and is usually responsible for communication with clergy and working with smaller churches in a diocese. The correct form of address for an archdeacon is The Venerable.

Bishop. A bishop is the chief sacramental officer of the Episcopal Church and the office that gives the church its name – episcopos, Greek for bishop or overseer. Diocesan bishops are chief pastors for their dioceses, entrusted with safeguarding the teaching and faith of the church and with special offices of ordination and confirmation. They are required to visit all parishes and missions in their dioceses at regular intervals, preside over diocesan conventions and assume administrative oversight of their dioceses. The correct form of address for a bishop is The Right Reverend.

Canon. A cathedral canon is a person, lay or ordained, who is on the staff of a cathedral and on its canonical roster carrying out the work of the bishop in the diocese and the pastoral work of the cathedral itself. A diocesan canon is an assistant to the bishop. The correct form of address for a canon who is ordained is The Reverend Canon. A canon who is not ordained may be called Canon (last name).

Deacon. One of three offices to which people can be ordained in the Episcopal Church. The deacon's vocation lies in serving – especially the weak, the sick, the poor, the lonely – and in interpreting to the church the needs and hopes of the world. In the Eucharist, deacons read the gospel, lead the Prayers of the People, introduce the Confession, prepare the altar and assist the distribution of bread and wine, perform the ablutions and dismiss the people. Deacons are addressed as Deacon, Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms. according to preference or local custom.

Dean. The title for the head of a cathedral staff, the head of a seminary faculty or the clergy person elected or appointed to preside over meetings of a geographical division of a diocese called a deanery or convocation. The correct form of address for a dean is The Very Reverend.

Minister. From a Latin word meaning servant. In the Episcopal Church lay persons as well as bishops, priests and deacons are ministers, servants of God, caring for their brothers and sisters inside of the church and outside as well.

Preacher. Preaching is only one function of the ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church. Preacher is not an appropriate synonym for a bishop, priest or deacon.

Presiding Bishop. The presiding officer and primate of the Episcopal Church and a symbol of the unity of its dioceses. The Presiding Bishop is elected at a meeting of the General Convention by the House of Bishops with the concurrence of the House of Deputies for a term of nine years. The Presiding Bishop's official cathedral is the National Cathedral in Washington, DC; his offices are in New York City. The Presiding Bishop represents The Episcopal Church to the members of the Anglican Communion. The correct form of address for the Presiding Bishop is The Most Reverend

Rector. The priest in charge of a parish, a self-supporting church, is its rector. The rector is called and elected by the Vestry. The rector may appoint assisting priests who may be called curates, associates, or assistants. The correct form of address for a rector is The Reverend.

Reverend. An adjective and not a noun. It is incorrectly used with a last name only or without the article as in Reverend Jones. The correct form of address would be The Reverend John Jones.

Vicar. A vicar is the priest in charge of a mission, which is supported financially by a diocese. A vicar is appointed by the bishop. The correct form of address for a vicar is The Reverend.

Architecture

Altar. The table on which the bread and wine are placed during a celebration of the Eucharist.

Chancel. In classic church design, an area of pews, seats, or stalls set apart from the nave used by ministers leading the services and sometimes the choir.

Chapel. Part of a large church building where an altar is placed separate from the main altar of the church.

Columbarium. Space reserved in a wall of a church building or on its grounds where the ashes of deceased members may be placed.

Lectern. Reading stand that holds the Bible or lectionary texts for the reading of scripture lessons.

Narthex. The room between the main door to the outside and the main door to the nave of the church is the narthex in traditional church architecture.

Nave. The large space running between the narthex and the chancel where the congregation sits stands or kneels during public worship. The term nave is derived from the Latin word *navis* meaning ship.

Pulpit. An elevated stand from which the sermon is usually preached. In traditionally arranged churches it is located on the north side of the nave. In some churches, the lectern and pulpit are combined in one.

Sanctuary. The area around the altar and inside the altar rail in a traditional church building.

Transept. In cruciform (cross-shaped) churches, the transepts make up the horizontal crossbar. Traditionally the nave and chancel run east and west and the transepts run north and south.

Sacraments and Services

Sacrament. According to the catechism in the Book of Common Prayer sacraments are the “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive grace.” The

Episcopal Church recognizes the two sacraments of **Baptism** and **Eucharist** as both biblically grounded and essential to the church. It also recognizes five other sacramental rites: **confirmation, ordination, marriage, reconciliation and anointing or unction.**

Holy Baptism. Baptism is the rite of full initiation, by water and the Holy Spirit, into membership in the Christian church. In the Episcopal Church Baptisms take place in the context of the Eucharist at any Sunday or feast day of the year. Baptism may be by immersion or pouring water over the head of the baptized. In the Anglican tradition, the celebrant always makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the baptized often anointing with the oil of chrism at the same time. The order of service for Holy Baptism is found in the Book of Common Prayer on page 299.

Holy Eucharist. The Eucharist is the principal act of Christian worship on Sundays and on other major feast days. The word Eucharist comes from the Greek word Eucharistia meaning “thanksgiving.” The Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ’s resurrection and ongoing presence at work among us. The Book of Common Prayer includes three versions beginning on page 323 with Rite One.

Confirmation. Confirmation is a rite of mature commitment to Christ through prayers, the renewal of Baptism vows, the laying on of hands by a bishop. One must be baptized in order to be confirmed. Confirmation usually follows a period of prayer, study and instruction called confirmation class or inquirers class. The order of service for confirmation is found on page 413 of the Book of Common Prayer.

Daily Office. These services of prayer for morning and evening are read by individuals as daily devotions or corporately as liturgy in church. The chief purpose of the daily office is remembrance, thanksgiving and praise. The daily office may be led by lay people as well as by clergy. Orders of service for the daily office begin on page 37 in the Book of Common Prayer.

Holy Matrimony See page 422 of the Book of Common Prayer

Reconciliation of a Penitent. This is the rite by which a minister of the church absolves and offers forgiveness of sin to a penitent in the name of Christ and the church. See page 447 of the Book of Common Prayer.

Anointing. This is the rite of applying consecrated oil in Baptism, confirmation and ministrations of the sick. Traditionally it signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit and is used in services where an individual is set apart for special reasons.

Sources

“e-pis-co-pal lan-guage: Defining Church Terms.” Forward Movement Publications, eighth printing.

Wall, John N. *A Dictionary for Episcopalians*. Cowley Publications, 2000.