

Activity - Getting acquainted

FAISS

Patricia Bays' book *Meet the Family* is a great introduction to the experience and reasoning of a modern Anglican. This passage summarises her experience of Anglicanism over the course of her life so far. Take a look and see if you have any similar experiences.

I was immediately drawn to the Anglican Church by its worship -- the orderly pattern of common prayer, the richness of its music and symbolism.

I have remained an Anglican, have studied and taught theology, and been involved with the life of the Anglican Church at many levels -- parish, diocesan, national and international.

My life as a member of this church has brought me a great diversity and richness of experience. I love the Anglican Church and am committed to living and working within this family.

Read through the following passages on different elements of Anglican life.

Individuals

If you are working individually, respond to the questions by making notes, by drawing or use other creative media.

Groups

If you are working in groups, use the discussion questions to start conversations about life in the Anglican community.



Worship

“Here are some of the things that I celebrate about the life of the Anglican Church.

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I love the worship, with its ordered patterns of prayer, the same from week to week and yet varied according to the seasons. I love the rhythm and music of the language of worship, and the colour and dramatic action of the services. Anglican worship, quite deliberately, I think, involves all our senses. Our churches are (usually) visually tasteful, colourful, and attractive. Wood, stone, fabric, appeal to touch as well as sight; flowers or incense connect with the sense of smell; the Eucharist, celebrated week by week, stimulates the sense of taste. Anglican worship is much more than a performance to be observed or listened to.”

Questions

- 1 Describe the elements of Anglican worship that you most appreciated.

- 2 What variations have you encountered in other places?

- 3 What appeals to you most about it?



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Common Prayer

"I appreciate also a certain "matter-of-factness" about Anglican worship. We join in common prayer. "Common" does not mean "ordinary" in this context. It means that we all say the same words together when we pray. Anglicans use set texts, printed in our books of Common Prayer.

You will not find the priest extemporising in prayer. Our worship does not depend on the personality of the priest or the quest for novelty or the stirring up of an emotional reaction. We worship God in accustomed patterns, the same week by week. This provides an order and stability to worship, though we do have variations according to the seasons of the year."

Questions

Remember when you experienced Anglican common prayer. What elements do you recall?
(Look up the Daily services in the prayer book to refresh your memory)

- 1 What is your reaction to the quote above? Is that an accurate reflection of the Anglican prayer you have experienced?

- 2 What are some current-day parallels in your life that provide similar routine and stability for you? In what ways are they similar to common prayer?



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Sacraments

“The sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, are an important part of being an Anglican. For us, the Eucharist is daily bread, food for our journey. It is to be celebrated frequently, on all occasions, in sorrow and in joy.”

Questions

- 1. Obviously, so much more could be said about the sacraments in Anglican life. When you experience the Eucharist, what does it bring to mind for you? What happens in that moment for you?

Four horizontal lines for writing the answer to question 1.

- 2. Baptism is the other sacrament thought of as “ordained of Christ” (Article XXV, The Articles of Religion) in the Anglican Church. What are some of the reasons people bring their children to be baptised?

Four horizontal lines for writing the answer to question 2.



Reason and common sense

"I find helpful the importance of reason and common sense in Anglican theology. God gave us minds and expects us to use them. The Anglican Church places a great deal of importance on theological exploration, and I appreciate this freedom to question and explore. Sometimes this exploration brings controversy.

In the 1960s Bishop John Robinson's book 'Honest to God' explored the Christian teaching about the nature of God in terms that secular society could understand.

In the 1990s Bishop John Spong has written for contemporary men and women a number of provocative books exploring the Bible and the Christian approach to human sexuality. Both authors have generated a good deal of debate, in church circles and in the wider world. I value membership in a church which allows and, in fact, encourages such exploration, and is not threatened by the debate."

Question

- 1 List advantages of a faith that 'encourages such exploration' and 'debate'?

- 2 What objections are there to such an approach?



The life of the imagination

“I also love the encouragement of the life of the imagination. Anglicans find God through art and music and fiction and poetry as well as through the Bible and theological texts. The great Anglican writers who shape and are shaped by our distinctive way of doing theology include such people as George Herbert, C.S. Lewis, William Shakespeare, T.S. Eliot, Madeleine L'Engle, Dorothy Sayers, and P.D. James. A current interest of mine is using literature in religious education, to encourage the use of the imagination in exploring Christian faith.”

Question

- 1 C.S. Lewis is reported to have said, “Reason is the natural organ of truth and imagination is the organ of meaning.” What do you think?



Creation and Incarnation

"I like the Anglican emphasis on the doctrines of Creation and the Incarnation. We affirm that the world and human beings are good because they are God's creation.

In Jesus Christ, God became human and shared in our everyday existence. God must value human nature very highly if God is willing, in Jesus Christ, to "take our nature upon him" as our prayers say, and if God also raises that same human nature to new life after Jesus endured suffering and death.

We must work to bring all of humanity to its full potential as God intended, and I rejoice that we do this by loving God and by being involved in our society to work for change."

Questions

- 1 What does the Christian belief that "Jesus became truly human" mean to you?

- 2 For Anglicans, in what ways does that make a difference to daily living?

- 3 Some Christian thinking starts with the idea that humans and creation are basically evil. Anglicans, on the whole, do not share this thinking. How would it alter a person's view of the environment and humanity to follow this more positive outlook?



Diversity

"I like the diversity which Anglicanism offers. Within our communion we have a variety of styles of worship, of theological emphases. Yet we keep also a strong sense of family, of connections, of links in worship and structure. Through my involvement with international committees of the Anglican Church, I have had the privilege of worshipping in Anglican churches in many parts of the world.

In a Nigerian village I was escorted into the church by a group of Women's Guild members, singing and clapping and dancing up the aisle. The service was in the Yoruba language, but the pattern of the liturgy was the same as at home. In Malaysia, in a small frame church on a palm oil plantation, we sat on benches for the Eucharist. The music was supplied by a guitarist and two small boys who played a lively beat on the drums. Outside a young boy tended a flock of small goats and edged nearer to the open windows to hear what was going on.

Everywhere I have travelled there has been a warm welcome for a fellow Anglican, and I have felt at home as the familiar words and actions of the service unfold. It will be an enriching experience for you if you can visit these other "family members" when you go to different places.

I invite you to join with me in exploring what the Anglican Church is like and getting to know your fellow Anglicans or Anglican neighbours."

Patricia Bays, 1996

What are your reactions to the author's summing up of Anglicanism?

- 1 Describe the ideas that will stay with you.

- 2 Whose voices are missing?

- 3 What elements of this expression of faith do you find difficult?

- 4 List all the questions you have about these ideas.

