

Church History: Of Things Anglican and Episcopalian

The study of history is a way of backing up a few hundred years into the past in order to get a head start on the future.

– Frederica Harris-Thomsett, *We Are Theologians*

Our Roman and Anglican Roots

- 44 Roman conquest of Britain. Christianity arrives about this time.
- 50 Council of Jerusalem. Christianity is a separate religion, not a sect with Judaism.
- 64 Persecution of the Church under Nero.
- 209 Alban, the first English martyr (dies for offering shelter to a Christian missionary).
- 312 Constantine ends persecution: Christianity becomes official religion of Rome.
- 325 Council of Nicea establishes the Nicene Creed.
- 407 Last date-certain of any of official Roman presence in Britain.
- 432 Patrick (an Englishman from a clerical family) evangelizes Ireland
- 500 First Celtic monastery founded in Tintagel.
- 530 David, bishop in Wales, popularizes Christianity there.
- 562 Columba, an Irishman, popularizes Christianity in Scotland.
- 597 Pope Gregory decides to send a Christian Mission to Britain. Augustine is sent.
- 663 Synod of Whitby: The English Church comes under Roman authority.
- 731 Bede (“The Venerable”) completes his Ecclesiastical History of the English People. Incidentally, this work popularizes the use of the “Anno Domini” (AD) system of dating.
- 1066 Norman Conquest.
- 1380s John Wyclif’s English translation of the Bible.
- 1401 Persecution of Lollards (Dutch word for "babblers"). They are mostly working men, revolting against clergy. Their leaders read Wyclif’s translation of the Bible.

The Reformation.

The church is in terrible shape, and everyone agrees change is necessary. Lutherans rediscover justification by faith and personal relationship with Christ. They popularize the Bible, and retain most of the traditions of the church (though not scholasticism, allegory, or the historic episcopate). Calvinists (Presbyterians, Puritans, Reformed, Congregationalists, etc., also Zwinglians) reject everything not expressly commanded in the Bible. Anabaptists (Baptists, charismatics, etc.) deny there has been any continuity in the historic Church. Humanists (liberals, Unitarians) introduce scientific study of old documents and traditions and emphasize the ethical teachings of Jesus. Roman Catholics rediscover scripture, tradition, reason, and mystical experience in their own counter-reformation. Ultimately, we Anglicans are influenced about equally by all five movements.

- 1521 Lutheran books appear in England. Cambridge students form a study-group at the White Horse Tavern; Thomas Cranmer is perhaps among them. Henry VIII writes a book on the sacraments against Luther. The bishop of Rome gives him a golden rose and names him “defender of the faith”.
- 1525 Henry VIII seeks for an annulment of his 1st marriage to Catherine of Aragon.
- 1536 Henry VIII ensures the permanent popularity of the English Reformation by abolishing the monasteries and sharing the loot with almost everybody.
- 1547 Henry dies. Succeeded by young son, Edward VI.
- 1549 First Book of Common Prayer.
- 1553 Edward dies. Succeeded by Mary, who attempts to return England to Rome.
- 1558 Mary dies. Succeeded by Elizabeth I.

Elizabeth’s solution to the strife between Protestantism and Catholicism would eventually be called the Elizabethan Settlement - a “middle way” (via media). Under her rule, a new edition of the Book of Common Prayer was created which continued with the tradition of being as vague as possible for the purpose of allowing as many different interpretations as possible. This motive of achieving maximum inclusiveness has remained an important aspect of the Anglican church down through today.

http://atheism.about.com/library/glossary/western/bldef_elizabethansettlement.htm

- 1649 Cromwell and his Puritan government behead King Charles I.
- 1689 *Act of Toleration* partially restores civil rights to Roman Catholics and Dissenters. The events since the Reformation have finally convinced most Anglicans of the virtues of tolerance and mutual forbearance.

The American Church

- 1597 Francis Drake, English privateer, lands in San Francisco Bay and conducts first Anglican service in North America.
- 1607 Founding of Jamestown colony in Virginia. Most colonists have Puritan leanings. Robert Hunt, priest, leads Morning and Evening Prayer daily.
- 1624 Virginia becomes a royal colony, required to conform to Church of England (though without a bishop, confirmations, ordinations, etc.)
- 1620 Plymouth colony founded by Separatists.
- 1630 Massachusetts Bay colony founded by Puritans on a Calvinist model for a Christian commonwealth.
- 1684 Massachusetts Bay colony's charter as a Puritan state is revoked by England.
- 1687 Anglican liturgy is introduced at South Church, Boston, on Good Friday. Irate Puritans wait outside until it is over.
- 1691 Freedom of worship guaranteed in New England and New York for all Protestants. King's Chapel in Boston is the center of Anglican worship, but there are essentially no parishes for several decades.
- 1776 Declaration of Independence. Two-thirds of the signers are nominal Episcopalians.
- 1782 William White, rector of Christ Church, Philadelphia, writes "The Case of the Episcopal Churches in the United States Considered", suggesting clergy and laity elect some bishops and not bother about apostolic succession yet.
- 1784 Samuel Seabury is consecrated first American bishop by Scottish bishops
- 1789 First General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church; First American Prayer Book
- From the Preface: It is a most invaluable part of that blessed "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" that in his worship different forms and usages may without offense be allowed, provided the substance of the Faith be kept entire; and that, in every Church, what cannot be clearly determined to belong to Doctrine must be deferred to Discipline; and therefore, by common consent and authority, may be altered, abridged, enlarged, amended or otherwise disposed of, as may seem most convenient for the edification of the people, "according to the various exigency of times and occasions."*
- 1861 Civil War. Many feel the Episcopal Church will break in schism, but the Episcopal Church emerges from the war to be a voice of real Reconstruction.
- 1864 Trinity Parish Milford is incorporated.
- 1867 The current Trinity church building is constructed.
- 1892 Prayer Book revision.
- 1928 Another Prayer Book revision.

- 1960s-70s Church is proactive in movements opposing segregation and opposing the Viet Nam war.
- 1970 Ordination of women as deacons approved.
- 1973 Approval of ordination of women to the priesthood falls a few votes short of passage.
- 1974 Eleven women are “irregularly ordained” priests in Philadelphia.
- 1975 Four more women ordained priest in Washington.
- 1976 The General Convention of the Episcopal Church approves the ordination of women to all three orders of ordained ministry: deacon, priest and bishop; Declares that gay and lesbian people are entitled to “full and equal claim” on the pastoral care and concern of the Church.
- 1979 New Prayer Book is introduced.
- 1982 New Hymnal is adopted.
- 1989 Barbara Harris consecrated bishop suffragan of Massachusetts
- 2003 Gene Robinson elected bishop coadjutor of New Hampshire; General Convention recognizes “local option” for blessing same-gender unions.
- 2003 Lambeth Commission on Communion established by Archbishop of Canterbury.
- 2004 Windsor Report delivered by Lambeth Commission.
- 2005 ECUSA House of Bishops receives Windsor Report and establishes moratorium on new Bishops and participation in blessing same-gender unions until 2006 General Convention.
- 2006 With respect to consecration of bishops the General Convention agreed to “exercise restraint by not consenting to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion.”

(online source: www.justus.anglican.org/resources/timeline)