



I am an Episcopalian

The following is a summation of the beliefs and practices of the Episcopal Church USA:

As Episcopalians, we are followers of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and we believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Episcopal Church has members in the United States and the territory of Puerto Rico; and also in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Venezuela, Curacao, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Haiti, Honduras, Micronesia, Taiwan, and the Virgin Islands.

We strive to love our neighbors as ourselves and respect the dignity of every person.

The Episcopal Church is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion, and traces its heritage to the beginnings of Christianity.

Our liturgy retains ancient structure and traditions and is celebrated in many languages.

Both men and women, including those who are married, are eligible for ordination as deacons, priests and bishops.

We believe in amendment of life, the forgiveness of sin, and life everlasting.

Lay people exercise a vital role in the governance and ministry of our church.

Holy Communion may be received by all baptized Christians, not only members of the Episcopal Church.

We uphold the Bible and worship with the Book of Common Prayer.

We affirm that committed relationships are lifelong and monogamous. Episcopalians also recognize that there is grace after divorce and do not deny the sacraments to those who have been divorced.

We affirm that issues such as birth control are matters of personal informed conscience.

We celebrate our unity in Christ while honoring our differences, always putting the work of love before uniformity of opinion.

All are welcome to find a spiritual home in the Episcopal Church.

A brief history of the Episcopal Church:

The beginnings of the Church of England, from which The Episcopal Church derives, date to at least the second century, when merchants and other travelers first brought Christianity to England. It is customary to regard St. Augustine of Canterbury's mission to England in 597 as marking the formal beginning of the church under papal authority, as it was to be throughout the Middle Ages.

In its modern form, the church dates from the English Reformation of the 16th century, when royal supremacy was established and the authority of the papacy was repudiated. With the advent of British colonization, the Church of England was established on every continent. In time, these churches gained their independence, but retained connections with the mother church in the Anglican Communion.

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The Anglican Episcopal family consists of an estimated 85 million Christians who are members of 44 different Churches. These make up 38 Member Churches (also called Provinces) and six other national or local churches known as *Extra Provincials*, spread across the globe.

The Episcopal Church in the United States has approximately 2.0 million members spread throughout 100 Dioceses.

Grace Church Nyack is part of the Episcopal Diocese of New York currently under the episcopate of The Right Reverend Andrew Dietsche. The Diocese of New York currently consists of 197 active parishes.

A Brief History of Grace Episcopal Church Nyack:

Grace Episcopal Church was incorporated in October of 1861, and consecrated in May of 1882. Since 1882 Grace Church continues to be a beacon of hope and haven of healing, playing an integral and transformative role for affecting positive change in Nyack and around the world. Grace Church is active in the community, both as a parish and as individual members, addressing its needs through outreach programs, especially to those in recovery groups. Grace Church has an enduring legacy of being a welcoming, warm, and mission-driven parish, comprised of over 300 households. Members are representative of Nyack, Rockland County and of nearby New York City in our variety of backgrounds, conditions, ages, life experiences and lifestyles. As a parish, we value deeply and are nurtured by our Episcopal Church tradition and our connection to the Anglican Communion. Our renowned music program reflects our commitment to tradition, yet we have explored new forms of worship. Grace Church has been led in the past by 10 Rectors. The current (11th) Rector is the Reverend Owen C. Thompson.

Our Mission Statement:

We believe that Grace Episcopal Church is called by God to live the way of Jesus through a ministry of reconciliation, seeking to restore all people to unity with God and each other, through prayer, worship, spiritual growth, witness and action. — October 16, 2000

BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Initiation:

“Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body, the Church” (Book of Common Prayer, p. 298).

In the waters of baptism we are lovingly adopted by God into God’s family, which we call the Church, and given God’s own life to share and reminded that nothing can separate us from God’s love in Christ.

Initiation into the Christian faith begins in the waters of our baptism, for it is from this space that our common life flows. Because the Episcopal Church has a deep sense of Catholicity alongside an understanding of the Reformation, it is often seen as a “bridge” church and as such, many come through our doors from myriad traditions: Southern Baptist, Quaker, Congregationalist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic, to name a few.

It is for this reason that the Episcopal Church has several rites of entrance into this branch of the Body of Christ. Baptism is primary among them, but depending upon the tradition that one has experienced, the following rites are regularly celebrated.

- Baptism, a sacramental rite that spiritually cleanses and welcomes new members into the community of Jesus Christ. Adult baptism usually takes place at the Easter Vigil service (the Saturday night before Easter).
- Confirmation, a sacramental rite in which a person who has been baptized into the Christian church is confirmed as a member by the bishop.
- Reception, a ceremony celebrated by the bishop, in which someone who has been confirmed in other Catholic communions is received as a member of the Episcopal Church.

- Reaffirmation, a ceremony in which those who have been baptized in other Protestant denominations reaffirm their baptismal vows.

If you would like to learn more about entering into the Christian faith as member of the Episcopal Church, please call or email the parish office.

Official Membership in the Episcopal Church:

In addition to the Rite of Holy Baptism, individuals wishing to become Episcopalians and members of a particular Episcopal parish must be *received* into the Episcopal Church. Individuals are encouraged to participate in a catechism course (Offered in a question-and-answer format, the Catechism found in the back of the Book of Common Prayer, pp. 845-862 helps teach the foundational truths of the Christian faith).

Catechism courses vary from parish to parish, yet, each should ideally focus on liturgical practices and theological principles that are foundational to the faith (i.e. sacraments, creedal statements).

After the completion of the course, an individual is invited to be received into the Episcopal Church at an official confirmation service, where the bishop will lay hands on the individual in the midst of the congregation and welcome them into the Body of Christ through the Episcopal Church.

Parish Membership:

Individuals who wish to become members of a particular Episcopal parish and are already Episcopalians must ask their former parish (if there is one) to send a letter of transfer and have their membership officially transferred to the new parish.

Members of the parish are considered "Communicants in good standing" which means that they are baptized and are actively involved in the life of the parish including, through volunteer-ministry and service, financial support (as able), and prayer. Communicants are able to serve on the Board of Vestry and vote in parish elections, and are encouraged to use their gifts and skills as they feel called for the benefit of the church-community.

The Hope and Expectation(s):

As the Christian faith and life is a journey one must choose, it is the hope and prayer of any parish community that its members are committed to God, to each other, and to serving the world with the love of Christ. As a church is comprised of human beings, it is not perfect, yet, Jesus' loves her/us and gave his life for her/us. The Church is a living and breathing organism. In other words, the people (not the building) are the Church, the Body of Christ in the world. The success or failure of a church depends solely on its membership and the commitment of each and every baptized individual to do his or her part for the glory of God and the building up of God's kingdom on earth. Thus, each member has a covenantal obligation and responsibility to care for one another, respect one another, support one another, and share in this sacred and life altering and enhancing work of God in the world.