

## **REACH – SOUTH AFRICA**

### **The Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa**

#### **The Great Commission**

*Mt 28:16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup> When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

The first Church of England service on record in South Africa was conducted by a Naval Chaplain in 1794. After the second British occupation of the Cape in 1806, congregations were formed, churches were built and the Church of England in South Africa became fully functional. The first Church of England church in South Africa was opened in 1814 in Simonstown.

After more than a century of work and witness the Church of England in South Africa consolidated its position in 1938 by adopting a carefully formulated constitution which confirmed its Anglican and evangelical roots. The first bishop to be appointed under the new constitution was the Rt. Rev. Fred Morris in 1955. Until that date he had been Bishop in North Africa but was willing to move to the other end of the continent to meet the need.

In 2011 we are made up of approximately 150 churches and 130 ordained clergy, as well as a number of full time student, youth, women's and children's workers.

So, who are we? What are our distinctives?

## **1. We are a Word centred church.**

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As expressed in our motto 'Your word above all things', the Bible occupies a central place in our denomination. The Church of England in South Africa is a 'Biblical' church.

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God written and to contain all things necessary for salvation. The Bible is to be translated, read, preached, taught and obeyed in its plain and canonical sense.

**Article 6** *"Holy Scripture sets forth everything that is necessary for our salvation. Consequently, nobody should be required to believe as an article of the Christian faith, or to regard as necessary for salvation, anything that is not found in Scripture or that cannot be proved from Scripture."*

## **2. We are a Missional church**

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We are evangelistic and missionary in outlook. We gladly accept the Great Commission of the risen Lord to make disciples of all nations, to seek those who do not know Christ and to baptise, teach and bring new believers to maturity. It is our aim 'to take the gospel to every man's front door' and to bring all people under the instruction and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

### **3. We are an Evangelical church**

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In the words of Bishop J.C.Ryle we are evangelical because of 'the absolute supremacy we assign to Holy Scripture, the depth and prominence we assign to the doctrine of human sinfulness and corruption, the paramount importance we attach to the work and office of our Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation He has wrought for mankind, the high place which we assign to the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man and the importance we place on the outward and visible work of the Holy Spirit manifested in the life, conduct and behaviour of the believer in overcoming the world, the flesh and the devil'.

### **4. We are a Protestant church.**

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Traditional Protestantism stands for the following: Scripture Alone, Justification by Faith Alone and the Universal Priesthood of all Believers

The universal priesthood of all believers implies the right and duty of the Christian laity not only to read the Bible in their own mother tongue, but also to take part in the government and all the public affairs of the Church. It is opposed to the hierarchical system which puts the essence and authority of the Church in an exclusive priesthood, and makes ordained priests the necessary mediators between God and the people.

The Church of England in South Africa upholds the priesthood of all believers. It believes it can only be effective in evangelism and mission if it trains and empowers its laity for gospel ministry.

## 5. We are a Reformed church

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The Church of England in South Africa holds to the five points of doctrine which lie at the heart of the Reformation - grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, scripture alone and to the glory of God alone.

Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury in the time of King Henry VIII, was able to bring Martin Luther's rediscovery of these great truths into the heart of the Church of England.

The Church of England in South Africa is Reformed in that it embraces and articulates these great biblical insights taught by Luther, Calvin and the other reformers.

## 6. We are a Creedal (Confessional) church

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The Church of England is a church that uses confessions of faith to express the teaching of the Bible. We uphold the four Ecumenical Councils and the three historic Creeds as expressing the rule of faith.

***Article 8:** The three creeds, namely the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and what is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, should be received and believed without reservation, because they may be proved from Holy Scripture.*

We uphold the Thirty-nine Articles as containing the true doctrine of the Church agreeing with God's Word and as authoritative for Anglicans today.

## **7. We are a Covenantal church**

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The Church of England in South Africa can be called a covenantal church because it emphasises God's one single covenant with his people promised to Abraham, which is a covenant not simply with individuals but with families. The promises of God included Abraham's children. We believe that God causes his covenant to run in the line of continued generations, i.e. with believers and their children. It follows that the children of believers should receive baptism, the sign and seal of God's covenant.

## **8. We are an Episcopal church**

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The Church of England in South Africa is an Episcopal church. It values Bishops as an ancient and well-trying form of ministry, agreeable to Scripture (though not actually required by Scripture). Bishops are viewed primarily as pastors and teachers.

We recognise that God has called and gifted bishops, presbyters and deacons to equip all the people of God for their ministry in the world. We uphold the classic Anglican Ordinal as an authoritative standard of clerical orders.

The ministry of women in the church is vital, but it does not require them to be ordained as Presbyters or Bishops. The proposal to admit women as Presbyters or Bishops would be a denial of the headship of the man as taught by the New Testament.

## **9. We are a Liturgical church**

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The Church of England in South Africa is a liturgical church in that it values and uses set forms for its

public services. In particular we are committed to the theology, principles and form expressed in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, to be translated and locally adapted for each culture.

In practice that means that each service must be congregational and include these five elements:

1. Confession of sin
2. Praise and Thanksgiving
3. Petition
4. Reading of Holy Scripture drawn from both Old and New Testaments
5. Exposition of Holy Scripture

## **10. We are an Anglican church**

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The modern form of the Anglican Church first emerged during the religious Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when the Church in England broke its ties with the Pope and the Church of Rome. From 1662 till today, the Book of Common Prayer, the 39 Articles and the Ordinal stand as the one touchstone of genuine Anglicanism.

Since the drawing up of its constitution in 1938, the Church of England in South Africa has remained in fellowship with Anglicans around the world that hold to the same doctrinal tradition.

The Anglican Communion reaches across 161 different countries and includes over 70 million individual members. Therefore, being an Anglican means much more than belonging to a local parish

church: it means joining a vast company of Christians across the whole world.

In Jerusalem June 2008, 1148 Anglican leaders representing 35 million practicing Anglicans worldwide, affirmed the **Jerusalem Declaration** at the **Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON)**. It addresses the crisis gripping the Anglican Communion over scriptural authority. The Church of England in South Africa (CESA) was invited to send delegates to GAFCON and it affirmed and accepted the Jerusalem Declaration at its Synod in September 2008.

True Anglicanism provides a Biblical, historical and theological anchoring that many Christians seek. It allows us to root our convictions in the riches of the tradition of Christian thought and prayer that faithful followers of Jesus Christ have passed down to us.

## **Conclusion**

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Denominations are certainly not the answer to the world's ills, nor are they our last and only hope. But a denominational structure can be a valuable tool for the church in her mission. The vast majority of world missions, church planting, discipleship, and other forms of ministry are done through denominational partnerships. Our gifts, passions, and experience have great influence through a combined national and worldwide denominational network.

A healthy denomination ultimately gives us strength. It's a home and not a prison. It allows us to share specific theological convictions, share resources and

practice expressions of ministry relevant to our particular context.

John Stott sums up our evangelical tradition:

*“First and foremost, by God's sheer mercy, I am a Christian seeking to follow Jesus Christ.*

*Next, I am an evangelical Christian because of my conviction that evangelical principles (especially ‘sola scriptura’ and ‘sola gratia’) are integral to authentic Christianity, and that to be an evangelical Christian is to be a New Testament Christian, and vice versa.*

*Thirdly, I am an Anglican evangelical Christian, since the Church of England is the particular historical tradition or denomination to which I belong. But I am not an Anglican first, since denominationalism is hard to defend. It seems correct to me to call oneself an Anglican evangelical (in which evangelical is the noun and Anglican the descriptive adjective) rather than an evangelical Anglican (in which Anglican is the noun and evangelical the adjective).”*

The Church of England is an Anglican evangelical denomination. With J.I. Packer we believe that “Anglicanism embodies the richest, truest, wisest heritage in Christendom.”

### Bibliography

<i>Speculating Anglican Futures</i>	<i>J.I.Packer</i>
<i>Historic Anglicanism</i>	<i>Bishop Paul Barnett</i>
<i>Why I am an Anglican</i>	<i>John Stott</i>
<i>Thank God I'm Anglican</i>	<i>Michael Jensen</i>
<i>The Church of England - What it is</i>	<i>Roger Beckwith</i>