

The
EPISCOPAL
CHURCH



A Greeting to Visitors at the
CENTURY OF PROGRESS
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CHICAGO, 1933

The Episcopal Church

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH is a part of the one Church which began some two thousand years ago when Jesus Christ commissioned His Apostles to go into all the world under the guiding power of the Holy Spirit.

Within a hundred years the Apostles or their close associates and direct followers had carried the life and worship of the Church in all directions, and had written the books and letters which we know as the New Testament.

In the third century if not earlier Christianity was in Britain, and so began the history of the English or Anglican Church through which the Episcopal Church came to America.

After twelve or thirteen centuries the English Church found it necessary to resist encroachments and claims of the Church of Rome and finally refused to tolerate them. Long before this the eastern part of the whole Church, centering in Constantinople, had resisted the domination of Rome; in 1054 communion between them was broken and to this day the great Eastern Orthodox Church, numbering millions in its many national branches, is not in communion with Rome. In England, the Church brought its long protests to a head in the sixteenth century, and communion between the English Church and Rome was broken. At the same time in England many reforms were brought about, made necessary because the essential Christian faith in the course of fifteen centuries had become obscured and overlaid with erroneous additions. This was a reform from within, which in no way interrupted the continuity of the Church or broke any of its connecting links with the earliest days.

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Characteristics

ALL THIS accounts for the fact, which puzzles some people, that the Episcopal Church is catholic and protestant, primitive and reformed,—all at the same time.

It is catholic and primitive in that it has preserved the faith and order which in the early days was taught everywhere: the threefold Ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons; the Sacraments, especially Baptism and the Holy Communion; the Creeds, as the brief record of the facts on which the Church is based; and the Holy Scriptures.

It is protestant and reformed in that it did away with the abuses of the Middle Ages, and to this day it protests the error of what it holds to be unwarranted additions and unscriptural developments.

History

WHEN ENGLISH colonists came to what is now the United States they brought the Church with them and organized its temporal affairs at the same time that the government was taking form. Most of the country's early statesmen were also Churchmen, and the governments of Church and State have many similarities, notably in their legislative bodies, which in each case have two houses. That of the Episcopal Church is called its General Convention and has a House of Bishops and a House of Clerical and Lay Deputies; it meets every three years.

Missionaries sent by the English "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts" were responsible for much of the work of the Church in the colonies. The Church which was represented by the little group who held their first General Convention in Philadelphia, in 1785, began to spread westward with

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the pioneers, out over the trails of the covered wagons, up into the Northwest, up and down the California coast, and down into Texas. Seventy-five years later, when the country was torn asunder by civil war, the Episcopal Church did not divide into northern and southern sections but maintained its unity, and at the General Convention of 1865 northern and southern bishops and deputies met as before.

The Episcopal Church now has 1,320,000 communicants, 150 bishops, and over 6,000 other clergy in more than 8,000 parishes and missions. All these have the vital basic elements in common, but they also include such different points of view and such a wide variety of ceremony that visitors are sometimes puzzled and do not see the underlying unity.

Activities

FOREIGN MISSIONARY work, which from the day of Pentecost has been an obligation of the whole Church, began in the Episcopal Church about 1835, and now there are more missionary bishops overseas than were in the United States a hundred years ago. In China and Japan the American bishops join with English and Canadian, with Chinese and Japanese bishops, in the supervision of native or national Churches in those lands.

The Episcopal Church's missionary work at home and abroad, and its national social service and religious education, are organized as departments of a National Council with headquarters at the Church Missions House, 281 Fourth Avenue, New York City. The mission staff includes about four hundred Americans and two thousand native workers in foreign fields, and nearly eight hundred in the continental United States who are wholly or in part supported by National Council funds. Hundreds more are supported locally.

Faith and Practice

IT WAS SAID above that the Episcopal Church is both catholic and protestant; it is also both conservative and liberal. Its *Book of Common Prayer*, which has been called the greatest book in English excepting only the Bible, sets forth its services not according to any one individual opinion but by the continually studied and tested judgment of the Church as a whole. In addition, Church people hold countless informal services in church and parish house and home.

In its teaching, the Episcopal Church, trusting the guiding wisdom of the Holy Spirit, sets forth what it believes to be true moral values, and says to its children, not "You must conform," but, "For the sake of your richest and fullest development, you will wish to obey the Church's laws," and provides supernatural strength and life through the Sacraments to help in that obedience.

Believing that the Christian life should neither neglect nor over-emphasize any one aspect of Christian teaching, the Episcopal Church through the Prayer Book observes the Christian Year, calling attention in turn to each of the great events of our Lord's life and to His teachings.

It is a Bible-reading Church. In nearly all of its official services there are two Scripture readings. When the Prayer Book directions are faithfully followed most of the Old Testament, practically all the New Testament, and much of the Apocrypha are read through each year.

Believing that the assured results of true scholarship can never run counter to true religion, the Episcopal Church welcomes every honest endeavor of science and learning.

Believing that the source and the meaning of all beauty are in Jesus Christ Himself, the

Church welcomes every art and makes its services as beautiful as possible in His honor.

Teaching the sacramental principle that all physical matter is the instrument of spirit, the Church believes that spiritual healing is a natural part of its ministry.

Serving a Lord Who said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," the Episcopal Church gives to its bereaved and sorrowful people the sure and certain hope of life hereafter and comfort now in spiritual communion and fellowship.

The Churchman looks to God not only in sorrow but in joy, believing that every good gift comes from Him and is to be enjoyed and used not selfishly, but to His glory.

Our Family

IN EPISCOPAL CHURCH parishes are found poor people and rich people; cultivated scholars and statesmen, and plain uneducated men and women; city people, business men, employers and employees, college students, and country people living in villages and on farms and ranches. There are communicants of foreign birth or parentage representing more than forty races.

Those who most love the Episcopal Church and most deeply believe in it are the most conscious of their own shortcomings and their neglect of obligations. Only the utmost devotion of every member in worship and service to our Lord, continually strengthened by His gift of new life in the Sacraments, can reveal the full meaning and power of the Church.

