

Statement of Faith

The Episcopal/Anglican church in Jerusalem and the Middle East

The Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa

Who are we?

We are the Episcopal/Anglican Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa within the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East and part of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

What is our faith?

We, the Episcopal/Anglican Church of the Diocese of Egypt and North Africa, uphold and proclaim the faith of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, which is founded on the teaching of the Scriptures, and is expressed by tradition and the Creeds.

What is our vision?

Our vision is to build up the Church of Christ through sound teaching of scripture, worship and dedicated holistic service to our communities. We are devoted to dialogue and cooperation with the other Christian denominations and other Faiths among which we live.

Our goals

1. To reach the unreached for Christ
2. To train believers for leadership, service and mission.
3. To proclaim the Gospel of Christ through holistic ministry.
4. To build bridges with other denominations and faiths.

Diocese of Egypt, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa

(within the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East)

PRINCIPLES OF FAITH AND PRACTICE

“In essentials, unity; in non essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.” St. Augustine of Hippo

Preamble: These principles of faith and practice in no way replace our reliance upon the Scriptures, as expressed in the historic ecumenical creeds and the traditional Anglican foundational documents. Our prayer is that these principles, in so far as they reflect the mind of God, might increasingly shape our church, our leadership and our common life together.

1. The Triune God

There is one, and only one, God, self-revealed as three persons, "of one substance, power and eternity," the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Gospel invites us through the Holy Spirit to share eternally in this divine fellowship, as adopted children of the God in whose family Jesus Christ is both our Saviour and our brother. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 4:4-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1 Peter 1:2; Jude 20-21. Cf. Article I of the 39 Articles, Book of Common Prayer [BCP], p. 699.)

2. Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier

The almighty triune God created a universe that was in every way good until rebellion of his creatures disrupted it. Sin having intruded, God in love purposed to restore all creation, through the calling of a covenant people through Abraham, the coming of Jesus Christ, the one and only redeemer of all nations, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to sanctify, the building up of the church for worship and witness, and the coming again of Christ in glory to make all things new. Works of miraculous power mark the unfolding of God's plan throughout history. (Genesis 1-3; Isaiah 40:28; 65:17; Matthew 6:10; John 17:6; Acts 17:24-26, 28; 1 Corinthians 15:28; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 1:11; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 11:3; Revelation 21:5. Cf. Article I.)

3. The Word made Flesh

Jesus Christ, the incarnate and eternal Word of God, born of the virgin Mary, sinless in life, raised bodily from the dead, and now reigning in glory though still present with his people through the Holy Spirit, is the incarnate Word of God. He is God with us, the sole mediator between God and humanity, the source of saving knowledge of God, and the giver of eternal life to the church universal. (Matthew 1:24-25; Mark 15:20-37; Luke 1:35; John 1:14; 17:20-21; Acts 1:9-11; 4:12; Romans 5:17; Philippians 2:5-6; Colossians. 2:9; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 1:2; 9:15. Cf. Articles II-IV; the Nicene Creed, BCP.)

4. The Only Saviour

Human sin is prideful rebellion against God's authority, expressing itself in our refusing to love both the Creator and his creatures. Sin results in alienation from and guilt before God, and in

society produces injustice, oppression, personal and social disintegration. Sin destroys hope and leads to a future devoid of any enjoyment of either God or good. From the guilt, shame, power, and path of sin, Jesus Christ is the only Saviour; penitent faith in him is the only way of salvation.

By his atoning sacrifice on the cross for our sins, Jesus overcame the powers of darkness and secured our redemption and justification. By his bodily rising he guaranteed the future resurrection and eternal inheritance of all believers. By his regenerating gift of the Spirit, he restores our fallen nature and renews us in his own image. Thus in every generation he is the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6; Acts 1:9-11; 2:32-33; 4:12; Romans 3:22-25; 1 Corinthians 15:20-24; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 2:13-15; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 4:14; 5:11-12. Cf. Articles II-IV, XI, XV, XVIII, XXXI.)

5. The Spirit of Life

The Holy Spirit, "the Lord, the Giver of life," sent by Jesus Christ from the Father to the church at Pentecost, discloses the glory of Jesus Christ, convicts of sin, renews the sinner's inner being, induces faith, equips for righteousness, creates communion, and empowers for service. Life in the Spirit is a supernaturalizing of our natural existence and a true foretaste of heaven. The loving unity of Spirit-filled Christians and churches is a powerful sign of the truth of Christianity. (Genesis 1:2; Exodus 31:2-5; Psalm 51:11; John 3:5-6; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-11, 13-15; 1 Corinthians 2:4; 6:19; 12:4-7; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 4:4-6; 5:22-26; Ephesians 1:13-14; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 2 Timothy 3:16. Cf. Article V; The Nicene Creed.)

6. The Authority of the Bible

The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are "God's Word written," inspired and authoritative, true and trustworthy, coherent, sufficient for salvation, living and powerful as God's guidance for belief and behaviour. The church may not judge or alter the Scriptures, selecting and discarding from among their teachings.

The trinitarian, Christ-centred, redemption-oriented faith of the Bible is embodied in the historic ecumenical creeds and the Anglican foundational documents. To this basic understanding of Scripture, the Holy Spirit leads God's people and the church's counsels in every age through tradition and reason prayerfully and reverently employed.

(Deuteronomy 29:29; Isaiah 40:8; 55:11; Matthew 5:17-18; John 10:35; 14:26; Romans 1:16; Ephesians 1:17-19; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21. Cf. Articles VI-VIII, XX.)

7. The Church of God

We believe the church to be the family of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is the community of believers, justified through faith in Christ, incorporated into the risen life of Christ, and set under the authority of Holy Scripture as the word of God. The church on earth is united through Christ to the church in heaven in the communion of the saints. Through the church's ministry of the word and sacraments of the Gospel, God channels life in Christ to the faithful, thereby empowering them for worship, witness, and service.

In the life of the church only that which may be proved from Scripture should be held to be essential to the faith and that which is non-essential should not be required of anyone to be believed or be enforced as a matter of doctrine, discipline, or worship. (Ephesians 3:10-21; 5:23, 27; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 12:1-2; 2 Timothy 3: 14-17. Cf. Articles XIX, XX and XXI.)

The Anglican / Episcopal denomination in our region is committed to ecumenism, seeking to build positive relationships with all denominations and so learning to appreciate their traditions while cherishing all that is good in our own. (John 17:21, Ephesians 4:4-6)

8. The New Life in Christ

God made human beings in the divine image so that they might glorify and enjoy their creator forever, but since the Fall, sin has alienated us all from God and disorders human motivation and action at every point. As atonement and justification restore us to fellowship with God by pardoning sin, so regeneration and sanctification renew us in the likeness of Christ by overcoming sin. The Holy Spirit, who helps us practice the disciplines of the Christian life, increasingly transforms us through them. Sinlessness, however, is not given in this world, and we who believe remain flawed "in thought, word and deed" until we are perfected in heaven. (Genesis 1:26-28; John 3:5-6; 16:13; Romans 3:23-24; 5:12; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Galatians 5:22-24; Ephesians 2:1-5; Philippians 2:13; 2 Peter 3:10-13. Cf. Articles IX-XVI; Book of Alternative Services, p. 191.)

9. The Church's Ministry

The Holy Spirit bestows distinctive gifts upon all Christians for the purpose of glorifying God and building up his church in truth and love. All Christians are called to be ministers, regardless of gender, race, age, or socioeconomic status. All God's people must seek to find and fulfill the particular form of service for which God has called and equipped them.

Within the priesthood of all believers we honour the ministry of word and sacrament to which bishops, priests and deacons are set apart by Ordination. (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:11; 12:4-7, 27; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 3:1, 12-13; 5:17; Hebrews 2:11; 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10. Cf. Articles XIX, XXIII.)

10. The Church's Worship

The calling of the church, as of every Christian, is to offer worship, in the Spirit and according to truth, to the God of creation, providence, and grace. The essence of Christian worship includes: praise and thanksgiving for all good things, confession and repentance, proclamation and celebration of the glory of God and of Jesus Christ, prayer for human needs and for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, and self-offering for service. All liturgical forms --verbal, musical, and ceremonial -- stand under the authority of Scripture.

The Book of Common Prayer provides a biblically-grounded doctrinal standard, and should be retained as the true model for all alternative liturgies. It is not necessary that all orders of service should be exactly alike; they may change according to countries, times and cultures, provided that they remain true to Scripture. No form of worship can truly exalt Christ or draw forth true devotion to him without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Prayer, public and private, is

central to the health and renewal of the church. Healing, spiritual and physical, is a welcome aspect of Anglican worship. (John 4:24; 16:8-15; Acts 1:8; 2:42-47; Romans 12:1; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 12:7; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5; 5:19. Cf. The Solemn Declaration of 1893, p. viii, BCP; Articles XXV, XXXIV.)

11. The Priority of Evangelism

Evangelism means proclaiming Jesus Christ as divine Saviour, Lord, and Friend, in a way that invites people to come to God through him, to worship and serve him, and to seek the empowering of the Holy Spirit for their life of discipleship in the community of the church. All Christians are called to witness to Christ, as a sign of love both to him and to their neighbours. The task, which is thus a matter of priority, calls for personal training and a constant search for modes of persuasive outreach. We sow the seed, and look to God for the fruit. (Matthew 5:13-16; 28:19-20; John 3:16-18; 20:21; Acts 2:37-39; 5:31-32; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 15:2-4; 2 Corinthians 4:5; 5:20; 1 Peter 3:15.)

12. Dialogue with other Faith Communities

Scripture requires God's people to endeavour to live at peace with all. Love of neighbour is not conditional upon the religious allegiance of the neighbour concerned. Our Christian obedience requires us to be in respectful dialogue with other faith communities. Our intention in dialogue is to remove misunderstanding, build friendships, explore common beliefs and examine differences, and engage in joint social endeavours, but always to be loyal to the Christian essentials to which we are committed, and which ultimately and only give hope to all peoples. (Hebrews 12:14)

13. The Challenge of World Mission

Evangelism, social concern, pastoral care, and dialogue remain necessary responses to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. His command to preach the gospel world-wide, making disciples and planting churches, still applies.

Christ and his salvation must be proclaimed sensitively and energetically everywhere, at home and abroad, and cross-cultural mission must be supported by praying, giving, and sending. Global mission involves partnership and interchange. (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 10:2; Romans 15:23-24; 1 Corinthians 2:4-5; 9:22-23; 2 Corinthians 4:5; 8: 1-4, 7; Ephesians 6:19-20; Philippians 2:5-7; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8.)

14. The Challenge of Social Action as part of Mission

The gospel constrains the church to be "salt" and "light" in the world, working out the implications of biblical teaching for the right ordering of social, economic, and political life, and for humanity's stewardship of creation. Christians must exert themselves in the cause of justice and in acts of compassion, therefore, social action is an integral part of our obedience to the Gospel. (Genesis 1:26-28; Isaiah 30:18; 58:6-10; Amos 5:24; Matthew 5:13-16; 22:37-40; 25:31-46; Luke 4:17-21; John 20:21; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; James 2:14-26; 1 John 4:16; Revelation 1:5-6; 5:9-10. Cf. Article XXXVIII.)

15. The Standards of Moral Conduct and Sexual Behaviour

All aspects of moral conduct are important to the Christian and special vigilance needs to be exercised in relation to misuses of money and power.

There is much confusion over sexual ethics. It should be recognized that God designed human sexuality not only for procreation but also for the joyful expression of love, honour, and fidelity between wife and husband. These though are the only sexual relations that biblical theology deems good and holy.

Adultery, fornication, and homosexual unions are intimacies contrary to God's design. The church must seek to minister healing and wholeness to those who are sexually scarred, or who struggle with sexual temptations, as most people do. The church may not lower God's standards of sexual morality for any of its members, but must honour God by upholding these standards. For this reason the Resolution I.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference should be fully respected. (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:21-24; Matthew 5:27-32; 19:3-12; Luke 7:36-50; John 8:1-11; Romans 1:21-28; 3:22-24; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 13-16; 7:7; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Timothy 1:8-11; 3:2-4, 12.)

16. The Family

The family is a divinely ordained focus of love, intimacy, personal growth and stability for women, men and children. Child abuse, domestic violence, rape, pornography, parental absenteeism, sexist domination, and abortion all represent a serious threat to family life. Divorce and polygamy reflect a weakening of the family ideal. Christians must strengthen family life through teaching, training, and active support, and work for socio-political conditions that support the family. Single-parent families and victims of family breakdown have special needs to which congregations must respond with sensitivity and support.

Singleness, involving abstinence from sexual relations, also is a gift from God and a holy vocation. To Christians with this calling God gives grace to live chaste lives. Congregations should seek to meet the particular needs for friendship and community that single persons have. (Psalm 119:9-11; Proverbs 22:6; Matthew 5:31-32; Mark 10:6-9; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:21-6:4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 John 3:14-15.)

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