

How Does Leadership Work in the Anglican Church?

Worldwide

The Anglican Communion consists of over 70 million members organized in 42 self-governing national and regional Churches made up of about 500 dioceses, 30,000 parishes and 64,000 individual congregations in 164 countries. Member churches are bound together through core Anglican beliefs rather than central legislative and executive authority. Unity is sustained through mutual loyalty and the consultation of bishops at the Lambeth Conference, first held in 1867. At the conference, bishops reaffirm unity, discuss matters of mutual concern and pass resolutions that act as guidelines. It's held roughly every 10 years at Lambeth Palace, London, UK at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, currently Justin Welby. He serves as spiritual leader of the Church of England as appointed by the reigning monarch on the advice of the British Prime Minister, yet within the Anglican Communion he serves only as a focal point for maintaining unity. He is recognised as the "first among equals". Although Conference participants function independently and do not always agree on emerging issues, they agree to respect differences that might otherwise cause division within the Communion.

Canada

In Canada, Archbishop Linda Nicholls serves as spiritual leader of the Anglican Church (Primate). She is elected by the General Synod (bishops, clergy and lay delegates) from every diocese. Canada is divided into 30 dioceses, grouped into four ecclesiastical provinces led by Metropolitan Archbishops who are elected by provincial synods (bishops, clergy and lay delegates). Each 'diocese' is governed by a diocesan synod (bishops, clergy and lay delegates chosen by the parishes) which also elects Diocesan bishops.

Each diocese is comprised of parishes which are self-supporting church communities, each led by a parish priest and within which there is an elected parish council (lay leaders, parish delegates to synod and church wardens). Parishes are often grouped geographically into a deanery, headed by a regional dean elected by fellow clergy. Incarnation is in the Trafalgar Deanery and the clergy meet on a regular basis to deal with common concerns.

In summary, the Anglican Communion strives to invite the democratic participation of all members of the Church in its function and governance with an ethos of 'unity in diversity' in following Christ.