

The Episcopal Church

Office of Public Affairs

Glossary – words that you might hear and what they mean

815 An abbreviation for the Episcopal Church Center, headquarters for many programs of The Episcopal Church – located at 815 Second Avenue in New York City. For more information: [Episcopal Church Center Info](#); [Episcopal Church Center](#)

ACC The Anglican Consultative Council, one of the four instruments of communion and the only one which includes lay representation. The ACC meets every two or three years and members are elected by their province. The Rt. Rev. Catherine Roskam, Josephine Hicks, Esq., and the Rev. Dr. Ian Douglas are the elected members of ACC for TEC. It most recently met in May 2009 in Jamaica. For more information: [Anglican Consultative Council](#)

Acolyte From the Greek meaning “to follow,” used for anyone who assists the presiding bishop or priest during the celebration of a sacrament. For more information: [Acolyte](#)

Acts 29 In the New Testament, The Acts of the Apostles ends at chapter 28. Acts 29 is the name taken by a number of groups and ministries to indicate their commitment to continuing the work of spreading the Gospel as described in Acts through renewal and church planting. For more information: [Acts 29 Ministries](#)

Affirming Catholicism A movement begun in 1990 by “Anglo-Catholics” in Anglican and Episcopal churches to recapture the catholic (universal, inclusive) tradition of the Church and which describes itself as opposed to biblical fundamentalism in the Anglican Communion. For more information: [Affirming Catholicism](#)

Alb The ancient Roman tunic, worn as an undergarment during Eucharistic celebrations. As the origin of the white garment worn at Baptism, it is a symbol for the basic Baptismal identity. The sign of an ordained Order of ministry—the stole—is worn directly over it. For more information: [Alb](#)

Alpha The Alpha Course is a ten-week program which introduces the basics of Christianity. Alpha started in the UK and is now used worldwide as an evangelism tool. For more information: [AlphaUSA](#)

Anglican A term indicating the English origins of the Episcopal Church. As Episcopalians, we are “Anglicans.” Sometimes seen in the expressions ‘Anglican Church’ or ‘Anglican Communion,’ both of which simply indicate any national church that derives from the Church of England and is in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury. For more information: [Anglicanism](#)

Anglo-Catholicism Inspired by the 19th century Oxford Movement, Anglo-Catholicism emphasizes the catholic (universal) tradition of the church. It highlights the sacramental life through “high” liturgical practices. For more information: [1. Anglo-Catholic Movement, Anglo-Catholicism;](#) [2. Anglo-Catholic Movement, Anglo-Catholicism;](#) [3. Anglo-Catholic Movement, Anglo-Catholicism](#)

Antiphon Greek for “alternating sound.” Using a chant text, often Psalm or Psalm-based, so that either half of a choral group sings half the text. The Psalms were originally themselves chanted “antiphonally”—the verses were alternated—but now the term usually refers to a single verse at the beginning and often repeated at the end. For more information: [Antiphon](#)

Apocrypha From the Greek meaning “hidden,” these are texts included in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible but not in the Masoretic collection, and hence not in most Protestant Bibles. They are included in Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican Bibles, and were obviously considered “part of the Bible” in Jesus’ day, since they are quite often quoted in the New Testament. For more information: [Apocrypha](#)

Archbishop of Canterbury The primate of the Church of England who is recognized by Anglicans throughout the world as the spiritual head of the Anglican Communion. The current Archbishop of Canterbury is The Most Rev. Rowan Williams. For more information: [The Archbishop of Canterbury;](#) [1. Canterbury, Archbishop of;](#) [2. Canterbury, Archbishop of](#)

BCP The Book of Common Prayer. Found in all Episcopal Churches – the basis of our worship service. For more information: [1. Book of Common Prayer](#); [2. Book of Common Prayer](#)

Bishop In the Episcopal Church, bishops are elected by their dioceses. For more information: [Bishop](#)

Breviary Over time, the Daily Offices as they were said in monastic communities got more and more complicated and communities started using multiple books. The “breviary” was developed to simplify the Daily Offices, and combines the prayers, hymns, canticles, antiphons, and the Psalter, into one book. For more information: [Breviary](#)

Bread for the World An ecumenical Christian movement that advocates and lobbies U.S. political leaders on behalf of the hungry people of the world. For more information: [Bread for the World](#)

Broad Church Today, broad church generally refers to a middle-of-the-road approach to liturgy -- not too high, not too low. The term derives from the theological and liturgical debates in the mid-19th century Church of England. The Broad Church Movement sought a more tolerant third party approach between the existing high and low church parties of the day. For more information: [1. Broad Church Movement](#); [2. Broad Church Movement](#)

Brotherhood of St. Andrew The Brotherhood is an evangelical Episcopal group for men and boys which emphasizes prayer, study and service among its members. It is now an international ministry throughout the Anglican Communion. For more information: [Brotherhood of St. Andrew](#)

Called to Common Mission The agreement of communion between TEC and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), which was first celebrated in 2000. For more information: [Called to Common Mission](#); [Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations Resources](#)

Chancel The chancel is the space around the altar where the clergy usually sits. Acolytes, the vergers and other participants who help lead the service may also be found in this area, which is sometimes partially enclosed by a railing. For more information: [Chancel](#)

Chasuble The sleeveless outer garment worn by the priest who presides at a service of Holy Eucharist. Its color depends on the Church calendar. For more information: [Chasuble](#)

Chrism Greek for “oil.” Holy oil blessed by a bishop that is used to anoint a newly baptized member of the church or to anoint the sick. Pronounced krí-zm. For more information: [Chrism](#)

Coadjutor A bishop elected and ordained to assist with Diocesan functions, who will, when a sitting Bishop retires or resigns, become the Diocesan Bishop. For more information: [Bishop Coadjutor](#)

Compline Based upon monastic night prayers, compline (pronounced cóm-plin) is the last of the four services in the Daily Office (BCP p. 127). For more information: [Compline](#)

Cradle Episcopalian A term indicating anyone who was born into a family of Episcopalians.

CREDO This is one of those fun church phrases that is a word – but is also an acronym. In this case, it stands for Clergy Reflection, Education, Discernment Opportunity, a national Episcopal organization that promotes clergy wellness through annual conferences that focus on further vocational discernment. For more information: [CREDO](#)

Cursillo A spiritual renewal movement of the national Episcopal Church. It begins with a 3-day weekend of worship, reflection and fellowship. Weekends are presently scheduled twice yearly. There are opportunities for continued involvement and activities, both within the parish and the larger diocese. For more information: [National Cursillo Center](#)

Dalmatic Like the chasuble, an outer garment derived from the classic Roman poncho, this is worn by the deacon in more formal celebrations. It is slightly slimmer in contour than the chasuble, usually. For more information: [Dalmatic](#)

Daughters of the King The Daughters of the King is an order for women in the Episcopal Church. Daughters live by a Rule of Life, which includes prayer and service in their parishes and communities. There are chapters of

the Daughters in every diocese of the Episcopal Church. For more information: [Daughters of the King](#)

Diaconate One order of the ordained ministry of the Episcopal Church, priests (presbyterate) and bishops (episcopate) being the other two. Some persons are called to serve as permanent deacons and those who will be ordained to the priesthood are first ordained to the “transitional” diaconate. For more information: [Diaconate](#)

Diocesan Council The governing board for a diocese, composed of bishops, and appointed and elected priests and lay persons, which bears responsibility for the development work of the diocese, particularly in between sessions of the Diocesan Convention.

ECVA Episcopal Church and Visual Arts A national organization with chapters in many dioceses that promotes and encourages the work of artists in the Episcopal Church. ECVA is known for its online exhibits. For more information: [ECVA](#)

ECW Episcopal Church Women An organization which strives to support all women in the church in their ministries. ECW was first organized in 1871 as the Women’s Auxiliary to the Board of Missions. Each diocese in TEC has an ECW chapter. For more information: [National ECW](#)

EFM Education For Ministry A popular four-year theological course for laypeople. For more information: [Education for Ministry](#)

ELCA The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America TEC is in communion with ELCA. For more information: See Called to Common Mission; [The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#)

EMM Episcopal Migration Ministries Advocates for the many international refugees in our world, helping give them a voice in the United States and in the international community. EMM is also one of only 10 agencies that hold agreements to receive refugees from various parts of the world with the U.S. Department of State. For more information: [Episcopal Migration Ministries](#)

EPF Episcopal Peace Fellowship Just as this national organization’s name indicates, EPF promotes and encourages the seeking of peaceful alternatives

to war and violence. EPF has local chapters throughout the church. For more information: [Episcopal Peace Fellowship](#)

ERD Episcopal Relief & Development The main disaster response organization of the Episcopal Church. ERD provides domestic and international emergency relief in the wake of natural and man-made disasters, such as the tsunamis in Southeast Asia and the Gulf Coast Hurricanes. As its name suggests, ERD also works to build communities through business, health, farming and other development programs. For more information: [ERD](#)

Evensong The daily rite of Evening Prayer set to music, usually from start to finish with the possible exception of the Lessons. Often accompanied by incense, to symbolize the “lifting up of prayer as the evening sacrifice,” it is among the most beloved and aesthetically pleasing of Church traditions. But it is in essence simply an elaboration of a service deliberately simple enough to be done every single day by every single person. For more information: [Evensong](#)

Executive Council The legislative body, made up of elected lay and clergy representatives from every province that governs the Episcopal Church between General Conventions. For more information: [Executive Council](#); [Executive Council of the Episcopal Church](#)

Fair Linen The white cloth used as the “base” for all sacred objects during the celebration of the Eucharist. Its origin was utilitarian, like a tablecloth; in time, it gathered the symbolism of the grave linens at the tomb of Christ. For more information: [Fair Linen](#)

Font The bowl used to hold the water for baptism, usually placed on a pedestal. For more information: [Font](#)

General Convention The main governing body of the church which meets every three years. The General Convention is made up of two houses: the House of Bishops (HOB) and the House of Deputies (HOD) which present, consider, modify and ratify resolutions that direct the work of the church for the next three years. The next General Convention will be held in July 2009 in Anaheim, California. For more information: [General Convention](#), [Executive Offices](#); [General Convention 2009](#); [General Convention](#)

Girls' Friendly Society Girls 5- to 21-years old can be members of this parish-based Episcopal society that has been around for over 130 years. Much like the Girl Scouts, the Society helps guide girls through the first part of their lives with an emphasis on worship and service. For more information: [Girls' Friendly Society](#)

Godly Play A teaching method for young children utilized in many Episcopal Sunday Schools. For more information: [Godly Play](#)

Happening This weekend retreat program for high school students “seeks to bring young persons to a fuller personal knowledge of and relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to a deeper level of commitment and apostleship.” For more information: [Happening](#)

High Church A term associated with a “high” view of the sacraments and ceremonial – incense, ornate vestments and detailed liturgical practices. See Smells and Bells and Anglo-Catholicism. For more information: [High Church](#)

HOB The House of Bishops, comprised of the bishops of TEC. One of two houses at General Convention. For more information: [House of Bishops](#)

HOD The House of Deputies, comprised of elected clergy and lay representatives from all the TEC dioceses. One of two houses at General Convention. For more information: [House of Deputies](#); [HOD](#)

Icon Greek for “image.” A visual catalyst for prayer, usually deep in color, two-dimensional, simple in style, made to engage the mind while meditating on a saint or God. Traditional icons are made according to a strict and prayerful process, ensuring that they are charged with spiritual energy. For more information: [Icon](#)

Instruments of Communion Very early on in the life of the emerging Anglican Churches, it became clear that there would need to be mechanisms by which the churches could take common counsel. These have become the core structures of the Anglican Communion, together known as the Instruments of Communion. When we speak of the ‘Instruments of Communion,’ we are referring (in historical order) to:

- The Archbishop of Canterbury
- The Lambeth Conference

- The Anglican Consultative Council
- The Primates Meeting.

For more information: [Instruments of Communion](#)

J2A Journey to Adulthood, a youth ministry program for 6th to 12th graders. J2A emphasizes rites of passage (see Rite 13), Bible study, prayer and fellowship. Used in many Episcopal parishes throughout the country. For more information: [J2A](#)

Jubilee Jubilee ministries and centers can be found all over the country. Jubilee ministries live out some aspect of the faith in outreach to the church and community. For more information: [Jubilee Ministries](#); [Jubilee Ministry](#)

Lectionary The set of Biblical readings appointed for use by the church throughout the year. For more information: [Lectionary](#); [Revised Common Lectionary](#)

LEVAS Refers to the hymnal **Lift Every Voice and Sing**. For more information: [LEVAS](#); [LEVAS II](#)

Low Church Today, it generally refers to those who use minimal ceremonial practices in liturgy. During the 19th century Oxford Movement, the term was used to describe Evangelicals whose practices contrasted with the high church Tractarians. For more information: [Low Church](#)

MDGs Not technically a “church term,” MDG stands for Millennium Development Goals, which were adopted by the United Nations in 2001 in their effort to eradicate global poverty by 2015. The Episcopal Church widely supports the MDGs, both in parishes and through such organizations as Episcopal Relief and Development (see ERD). For more information: [MDGs](#)

Miter This word goes all the way back to a Sanskrit word meaning “headband.” It is the triangular-shaped cap worn by bishops. For more information: [Miter, or Mitre](#)

Novitiate A special period of preparation and formation before a candidate is formally admitted to a Religious Order, during which the person learns the mind, work and spirit of the particular community whilst living among its

members. A person in the Novitiate is referred to as a Novice. For more information: [Novitiate](#); [Novice](#)

Oblates Someone associated closely with a Religious Order, but who will be living a modified form of the Rule of Life, which allows him or her to live outside the Religious house. Oblates are so-called because they make an oblation (or offering) of obedience to the community instead of taking the profession vows. In some communities, oblates remain celibate, in others they are allowed to be married. A few oblates live within a community house and then they are usually termed intern(al) oblates. For more information: [Oblate](#)

Oblation “Oblatus” is the past participle for “offer.” During the Eucharist, the elements, bread and wine (and sometimes the gifts of the congregation as well) are “offered” to God early in the Eucharistic Prayer. Celebrants who are returning to classic Christian practice often actually lift them up during the words of oblation, “recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.” For more information: [Oblation](#)

Pall Used in imperial Rome as a covering for a body lying in state, it has persisted into modern times; the heavy cloth draped over a coffin. The word is also used to define the stiff square used to cover the chalice and support the burse prepared for use during the Eucharist. For more information: [Pall](#)

Patronal Feast The day used by a parish to commemorate the saint or saints for whom it has been named. For more information: [Patronal Feast](#)

PLSE Pastoral Leadership Support Effort is an organization that helps parishes promote young leadership in their parish and church community. For more information: [PLSE](#)

Postulant A postulant is a person who has been approved by the bishop to begin study and preparation for ordination to the diaconate or priesthood. In religious orders, a postulant is a person who aspires to enter religious life and is in a preliminary stage of testing their vocation with a community, but has not yet taken vows. For more information: [1. Postulant](#); [2. Postulant](#)

Presiding Bishop The Presiding Bishop (PB for short) is the head bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church. Elected by General Convention for a nine year term, the PB presides over the House of Bishops and represents

TEC at meetings of the primates of the Anglican Communion and other international gatherings. The Presiding Bishop is the chief pastor of The Episcopal Church. The Presiding Bishop is The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori. For more information: [Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori](#); [Presiding Bishop](#)

Primate The title of the head of each of the 38 Provinces in the Anglican Communion. In TEC, the Primate is the Presiding Bishop, The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori. For more information: [Primate](#)

Province The nine geographical groupings of dioceses in TEC and the designation so used for groupings in the wider Anglican Communion. For more information: [Province](#)

Psalter The Psalter, as the Book of Psalms is often called, is actually a collection of different kinds of poetry spanning many centuries of history (from c. 1100 BC, Pss. 29, 68, to c. 400 BC, Ps. 119) and reaching essentially its present form around 300 BC. Evidences of the collective nature of the Psalter are seen in its division into five ‘books’ (e.g. Ps. 72:20), the references to various ‘authors’ (e.g. Psalm 89), as well as the different time periods represented (Ps. 137 is clearly from the period of Exile, c. 550 BC). For more information: [Psalm](#), [Psalmody](#), [Psalter](#)

Rite 13 The 6th to 8th grade section of the J2A program, Rite 13 emphasizes the passage from child to emerging adulthood. For more information: [J2A](#)

Sexton An English title for the person in charge of the church building [or a special portion of it] and grounds; in America the sexton is also commonly head of maintenance and custodial services and may perform additional duties such as ringing the church bell. For more information: [Sexton](#)

Smells and Bells An informal way of referring to high church liturgical practices; the “smells” are incense, the “bells” are Sanctus bells. For more information: [Bells and Smells](#); [Incense](#); [Sanctus Bell](#)

Standing Committee Every diocese has one. It’s an elected body of four clergy and four lay whose duties are many, including serving as counsel and advice to the bishop. For more information: [Standing Committee](#)

Stephen Ministry a program that promotes and trains lay leaders to provide one another and the larger parish community with pastoral care, while empowering and building up those lay leaders, as well. For more information: [Stephen Ministries](#)

Stole In ancient Rome, the garment, a long scarf, that distinguished the Senator. The Church orders of bishop and priest adopted this from the fourth century; deacons originally wore it on the left shoulder only, to free the busy right hand of the deacon. This is the origin of the slant-wise stole often worn by deacons today. For more information: [Stole](#)

Suffragan As in, Suffragan Bishop. In the Anglican Church, it refers to a Bishop who assists the Diocesan or Ordinary, but does not have the right of succession (as does the coadjutor). For more information: [Suffragan Bishop](#)

Surplice From Latin for “over the wool”—over the woolen cassock, that is. A white garment, worn over the cassock, for nonsacramental services such as Morning or Evening Prayer and Burial of the Dead. For more information: [Surplice](#)

Taize An ecumenical, largely Protestant, experiment in France in communal Christian living. Famous for their chants. Pronounced tay-zay. For more information: [Taize](#); [Taize: Description, Background & Services](#)

TEC Shorthand for The Episcopal Church. For more information: [1. The Episcopal Church](#); [2. The Episcopal Church](#)

TENS The Episcopal Network for Stewardship, which supports and encourages those who recognize and promote the importance of stewardship in their own communities and parishes. For more information: [TENS](#)

Thurible A vessel that contains burning incense. For more information: [Thurible](#)

Thurifer The acolyte designated to carry the thurible in procession. For more information: [Thurifer](#)

UBE The **Union of Black Episcopalians**, a national group representing African American clergy and laity in TEC. For more information: [UBE](#)

UTO The **United Thank Offering** is a fundraising and grant-making program begun more than 100 years ago by the Women's Auxiliary. UTO provides grants to churches and institutions in the United States and throughout the Anglican Communion. For more information: [UTO](#)

Verger A lay person who assists the clergy in conducting worship. They often carry an ornate virge (or mace) in procession. For more information: [Verger](#)

Vespers The alternate name for any service of Evening Prayer; originally, one of the seven (or eight) monastic hours, which were incorporated into Morning and Evening Prayer in the Anglican traditions. For more information: [Vespers](#)

Vestry An elected group of parishioners in a congregation. The room where vestments were kept gave its name at some point to the group of people who met in that room and governed the local parish. They now have the legal and statutory responsibility and rights involved with the maintenance and trusteeship of the church and its property, subject to their relationship with the larger diocesan authorities. For more information: [1. Vestry](#); [2. Vestry](#)

Via media 1. A Latin phrase meaning "middle way" that defines Anglicanism as standing between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Under Queen Elizabeth I, it came to be identified with the retention of catholic practice without the authority of the papacy. 2. A media organization of the Every Voice Network. 3. A video teaching course. For more information: [Via Media](#)

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