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‘DIFFERENCE IS GOD’S GIFT TO US’: ANGLICANS, ETHNICITY AND CULTURE

MOVING FAR BEYOND ITS ENGLISH ROOTS,
ANGLICANISM HAS BECOME A GLOBAL COMMUNITY
WITH DIVERSE CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS
—AND A SHARED DOCTRINAL CORE AT ITS HEART.

The Rev. Irwin Sikha, incumbent at St. Margaret’s
Tamil Anglican Church in Toronto

PHOTO: ESTHER SIKHA

Two centuries ago, a Hindu priest in India encountered an Anglican missionary from the British Isles. The Hindu was the latest in a long line of priests who had served for generation after generation at a local temple; the Anglican was a priest and physician. When the Anglican attempted to share the gospel with his Hindu counterpart, he received a strong rebuke.

In that region of India, people worshipped a snake, the cobra, representing a serpentine race in the pantheon of Hindu gods referred to as the nāga. The priest admonished the missionary for teaching something foreign to his people, who had practiced their spiritual beliefs for centuries, and sent him away.

Shortly thereafter, the same cobra that the priest worshipped bit his wife. At this time he had travelled to another village to save the life of a man also suffering from a snakebite, pulling him in an oxen cart. By the time the priest returned home, his wife had died.

The priest killed the snake and sought out the Anglican missionary. "Tell me," he said. "Tell me about this God you're talking about."

From that moment on, his family tradition no longer produced Hindu priests, but Anglican priests. Today, this man's great-great-great-great-grandson, the Rev. Irwin Sikha, is a sixth-generation Anglican priest and incumbent at St. Margaret's Tamil Anglican Church in Toronto.

"He received Christ, and he was thrown away from his family," Sikha says of his ancestor. "His whole family was pushed away. He served the Lord, and after that... from every generation, God has chosen at least one person [from my family] to be an Anglican priest."

While Anglican worship in India retains its English and British roots, church culture often reflects Indian traditions in art, music, clothing and ritual.

Anglicans in the Church of South India, for example, will often go barefoot in worship. When preparing to get married, Indian couples may consult wedding astrologers and schedule the wedding on a date with more auspicious positions of the stars and planets—a traditional practice that remains even when the wedding takes place at a Christian church.

"Culture and religion...are so intertwined in India,"

Sikha says. "It's very spiritual. Everything is spiritual."

In India, it seems, the most effective Anglican ministry is that which expresses Christianity in a manner most familiar to the people.



Is the Anglican Church of Canada an ethnic church? For Canadian Anglicans accustomed to thinking of Canada as a predominantly English-speaking place with a single national identity, answering that question may be a bit like trying to see the water you're swimming in, or like trying to hear your own accent. *What accent? I don't have an accent.* But Anglicans with cross-cultural experiences suggest there are a few reasons to take the church's very name—Anglo, Canadian—as a clear marker of ethnicity.

With its origins in the practices and beliefs of the Church of England, Anglicanism has long contained a strong influence from English national culture and identity.

The Rev. Jesse Zink, principal of Montreal Diocesan Theological College, recalls a seminary student who did a field placement at a German Lutheran church. During his time there, the student observed that this church viewed its ethnic identity as part of its religious identity, celebrating Oktoberfest and hosting many German-themed events. Its worship, however, was not dissimilar from that in the Anglican Church, prompting the student to suggest to Zink that Anglican churches are in some sense "English ethnic churches."

"I hadn't thought about it really in that way before, but it makes a lot of sense," Zink says. "Clearly, the Anglican church in its current form and existence owes a lot to the work of the Church of England, especially the Anglican Church in Canada, which used to be called the Church of England in Canada. So there is that core sense of relatedness."

The influence of the Church of England and English culture is readily apparent in the Canadian church. The official flag and crest of the Anglican Church of Canada each include the Cross of St. George, a red cross on a white background—which is also the national flag of England. Worship and liturgy are generally in the English language, and English choral music makes up a large part of church hymnals.



Bishop Jenny Andison (second from left) meets with Anglican clergy in India. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED



Elsewhere in Toronto, another Anglican comes from a family tradition of Christian ministry on the Indian subcontinent.

Bishop Jenny Andison, bishop suffragan of the diocese of Toronto and area bishop of York-Credit Valley, is a fifth-generation Anglican clergy person. Like previous generations of her family, Andison was born and bred in England and preached the Christian faith throughout the subcontinent, living in both India and Pakistan. Her ancestors had a long history of involvement in the Church Missionary Society (CMS), one of the historic missionary societies of the Church of England now known as the Church Mission Society.

Andison's father was a medical missionary in Pakistan, where she spent part of her childhood. Her grandfather worked with the CMS in a part of the former British Raj, now part of Pakistan. Her great-grandfather built many Anglican churches in what is now Pakistan, and her great-great grandfather also spent time there.

Besides England, Canada, India and Pakistan, Andison has also lived in Japan and Singapore. Through her experiences, she has come to see the transformative power of the gospel in countries around the world.

"The Good News of Jesus is good news for everybody... That's not a theory for me, I've actually seen it with my own eyes," Andison says. "That's very powerful when you realize Jesus is both in culture, but transforms culture. I've seen how beautiful that can be...and how the Anglican tradition at its best has contributed to the rich diversity of the body of Christ around the globe."

"I've also seen how the Anglican church has struggled in different countries to effectively enculturate itself...and how easy it is to mistake English culture with the gospel."

The gospel, Andison says, cannot be known outside of culture; even Jesus lived within the specific cultural context of first-century Palestine.

"There's no neutral gospel that is not filtered through human experience," she says. "God knew that, which is why God became incarnate as Jesus."



While it has been largely displaced in worship by the *Book of Alternative Services* (BAS), the *Book of Common Prayer* remains the foundational prayer book for Canadian Anglicans, as it does for Anglicans around the world. But even the BAS includes numerous litanies for Elizabeth II as Queen of Canada, England and the United Kingdom.

Despite this enduring English influence, Zink believes "that's not the whole story" when it comes to the meaning and cultural expression of Anglicanism.

From its inception, Zink says, Christianity has crossed cultural barriers and frontiers. The Christian faith began as essentially "a sect of Judaism" that "crossed a cultural frontier and entered the gentile world... As it did, it changed, and Christianity has continued to do that."

"Anglicanism is no different in that way," he adds. "Anglicanism throughout its history has been able to cross cultural boundaries and as it does that, it comes to new understandings of itself."

Zink cites the example of 19th-century abolitionists who, as members of the Church of England, worked to end the slave trade in the British Empire.

"Part of their work for abolitionism came about because they understood that Africans could be Christian too and were made in the image of God, and when they understood that, that cultural difference was



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— Bishop Jenny Andison



no barrier to the spread of the Christian gospel," he says.

A more recent example of Anglicanism crossing cultural boundaries, he adds, is the development of a self-determining Indigenous church within the Anglican Church of Canada.

"It's an example of allowing the Anglican tradition—the Christian tradition—to flourish in another cultural expression other than the kind of English-speaking expression that we're so used to.... I think that part of our job [for non-Indigenous Anglicans within the church] has been about providing the space for that flourishing to happen."



Across the Anglican Church of Canada, diverse cultural expressions of the church are flourishing in many different ways.

Many new Anglicans are immigrants from non-English or non-Western backgrounds, leading to an increasing number of church services in languages other than English or catering to different nationalities and cultures. But English cultural traditions continue to make themselves felt, even among immigrants to Canada. The *Anglican Journal* in its June 2019 issue documented the rise of Chinese ministry in Toronto and Vancouver, two cities with large populations of Chinese immigrants or Chinese-Canadians. In the Metro Vancouver area, roughly half the population is from an Asian background, the majority being ethnic Chinese.

Douglas Fenton, executive archdeacon for the diocese of New Westminster, says that the influx of people from different cultural backgrounds poses questions for Anglicans: "How are we the church intersecting or engaging or interacting with this enormous group of people? And to what degree are we being welcoming,

hospitable, generous and effecting ministry with or among them?"

The diocese of New Westminster, he says, currently has two small parishes that are predominantly Chinese, offering services in Mandarin and Cantonese.

"Our struggle is finding materials and liturgy and so on that's been translated or is accessible," Fenton says. "Oftentimes, even some of the stuff that comes out of [China's special administrative regions of] Hong Kong and Macau is very English."

The case of Hong Kong illustrates how immigrants to Canada who enter the Anglican Church retain a degree of English or British cultural influence. From 1842 to 1997, Hong Kong was a colony of the British Empire.

Decades ago, Hong Kong was the primary source of Chinese immigration to Canada. In recent years that distinction has shifted to mainland China, where there is far less exposure to English or Anglican traditions.

"I think the challenge there is that they are coming from a place where religion itself was effectively outlawed," Fenton says.

"If we're talking about mainland Chinese and all the tribal groups that exist in mainland China...how do we help them bring that into their faith and life within the context of a parish church on Sunday? I think those are questions that we haven't, in my experience at least, begun to even contemplate and wrestle with."

In Toronto, Anglican churches also display a rich mix of cultures. But as area bishop of York-Credit Valley, Andison believes that the biggest challenge is less in reaching different cultures and more in reaching younger generations.

Local congregations, she says, "are increasingly linguistically and ethnically diverse...in parishes that



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– *The Rev. Jesse Zink*



are what we call diaspora congregations, where you've got Swahili speakers worshipping together, and then Cantonese speakers worshipping together, and people from Ghana worshipping together and people from Tamil Nadu worshipping together. But we also have really mixed congregations, where it's people from all over the world in one congregation.

"Where I think we're still really struggling in Toronto is, there may be increasing linguistic and racial diversity, but...we're not connecting nearly effectively enough with children and young people of all cultures and races. When you talk about diversity, diversity of age is an issue as well. There's a lot of work for us to do."



In his own experience, Sikha has seen many of these phenomena first-hand: the key role of the British Empire in spreading Anglicanism; the ability of Christianity to cross cultural barriers; the ways in which the church manifests itself in different cultures; and the challenges of reaching youth of all ethnic backgrounds.

Though the Anglican Church of Canada today tends to view colonialism in negative terms due to its association with the oppression of Indigenous peoples, Sikha takes a different view. He believes that the colonization of India was a "blessing", citing accelerated development that included airports, railways, schools and Western medicine. Through the history of British India, he says, Christians there became "more British, more English."

"It was to our advantage.... That why I'm able to speak English like this now, to communicate in English," Sikha says. "My father was also an Anglican priest and when he committed to serve the Lord, he had to study theology. He went to England and he studied in

a seminary there, and his commitment was to serve in India."

Towards the end of his seminary training, Sikha's father undertook practical training at various churches in England around the time of the Second World War. He eventually became an incumbent, got married, and he and his wife had daughters in England.

Though happy in England, Sikha says, his father experienced a vision from God that would prompt him to move with his family back to the subcontinent.

"One night, the Lord spoke to him and said, 'What was your commitment? You committed to serve me in India among the Tamil people, and what are you doing here?' So he literally left everything and came back empty-handed to India."

Irwin Sikha would be born in India. His family eventually settled in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, where Tamil is the official language.

It was through growing up in this region that Sikha learned how to speak Tamil. But initially, he says, his father's decision to move back to India displeased other members of the family.

"We were so mad at him when he [told] the stories [of] how he lived [in England] and how life was.... Our family, our culture was so British in our home," Sikha recalls. "But outside it was so Indian. That's how it was. Then as I grew up, there were many scholars and Tamil literate people, highly educated people, who received the Lord."

Yet among those converts, he says, there was a desire to express their new faith in a way befitting their own experience; to illustrate that "we don't need to kill our culture to be Christian."

Upon reaching adulthood, Sikha followed the family tradition and became an Anglican priest himself. To



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— *The Rev. Irwin Sikha*



understand the experience of preaching in India, he suggests, one must realize the sheer diversity of cultures within the country.

“Every province has their own language, their own culture, their own food habits, everything... In India, you go to another province, you're a foreigner,” Sikha says. “You can't communicate to anybody because you don't know their language.”

With so many different languages across India, the only common language is English. As a priest, Sikha typically found himself assigned to churches where people from different states congregated. Though he gave services in Tamil, often he found himself leading worship in the *lingua franca*: English.

In 2002, Sikha made the decision to move to Canada, funding the trip with money from an export business he owned. His reasons for moving to Canada were not certain even at the time for Sikha, who had never travelled outside India. He had expectations of Canada being a “Christian country” with “churches everywhere.”

Upon arriving in Canada, Sikha was alone and didn't know anyone. During this time, his wife sent him money from India on a regular basis. On a typical day he would buy a token and ride the subway, talking to people about Jesus and sharing the gospel.

Most of the white people he spoke to, Sikha recalls, said that they had attended church or Sunday school as children, but no longer did. When he asked them why they stopped attending, he says, “they didn't have a big reason to give me.”

On one occasion, Sikha encountered a young man from the Caribbean who was wearing a cross around his neck, and was surprised when the man said that he was not a Christian. When Sikha asked him why he was

wearing a cross, “he gave me a sheepish smile and he says, ‘For fun.’”

“In India we don't wear a cross like that... Only a bold Christian would wear a cross,” Sikha says. “I used to wear a cross all the time, to say I'm a Christian. That day I called my wife and I said that God needs us here.”

After Sikha's wife moved to Canada and found a job as a software engineer, he began ministering to people personally, including a number of Tamils. Initially starting a church in his home, he rented out space at a Chinese church in Markham for a congregation that grew to more than 20 people. Eventually he applied with the Anglican diocese of Toronto to become the incumbent at St. Margaret's Tamil Anglican Church.

During his interview, he remembers, “I was talking to them how all our churches have to fine-tune ourselves and be sensitive to who our community is around, and make ourselves so that when they come in, they don't feel that they've come to an alien place.”

Preaching in English to a mixed congregation, which includes both Tamils and non-Tamils, Sikha strives to combine both traditional Anglican worship with contemporary elements that can attract younger people, including second-generation Tamils.

“Personally, I won't like to change any word in the liturgy,” he says. “To me it's very precious. It's so grounded in scripture and so powerful and very well-defined what I believe. My liturgy tells me what I believe... I can't see myself altering anything in that.”

Tamil culture, however, tends to prefer more “intensity” in worship, Sikha says.

“The preaching should be like that. If you preach like the typical Anglican, it's very difficult for them. They won't listen. So I've altered those things a little bit.”



Congregation at St. Margaret's Tamil Anglican Church PHOTO: ESTHER SIKHA

Where piano was not encouraged in his early years as a preacher—Anglicans in India tended to favour the organ—music at St. Margaret's utilizes drums, piano and guitar.

Sikha is currently attempting to organize a band to bring more contemporary music to younger Tamils, many of whom have left the church in recent decades. That shift does not mean abandoning Christianity altogether—many have joined the Pentecostal church, known for its lively forms of worship.

"That's the thing I'm going to do this year, form a music band...so they can hear me when I talk, so that they listen and understand what I'm saying," Sikha says.



Any discussion of whether the Anglican Church is an "ethnic" church must also take into account ways in which the church historically tried to impose English language and culture on those from non-English backgrounds—a practice that at its most extreme meant the attempted eradication of other languages and cultures.

In its commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, the Anglican Church of Canada is still struggling to overcome the legacy of the residential school system, in which the church harshly punished Indigenous children for speaking their traditional languages.

Yet one of the foundational texts of what it means to be an Anglican condemns such an approach in the strongest terms. The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, written in the 16th century, historically defined the doctrine of the Church of England and today remain part of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Article XXIV of this doctrine makes clear the perspective of Anglicans on the matter of language: "It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the Primitive Church, to have public Prayer in the Church, or to minister the Sacraments in a tongue not understood of the people."

Bishop Anderson calls Article XXIV an example of "Anglicanism at its best." But in comparing this article to the practice of Anglican missionaries, the historical



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record shows a wide disparity regarding the spread of the gospel in native languages—a disparity that largely depended on the attitude of individual missionaries.

While some missionaries learned the languages of the people they encountered and made an effort to adapt their teachings to the local culture, others enforced the use of English believing in their own cultural superiority.

“If there was any place where [Anglicans] were exterminating local languages, they’d not paid attention,” Andison says. “We sort of betrayed our own heritage.”

Andison recalls attending a Mandarin and Cantonese church for Chinese New Year in which church leaders asked her not to wear black or white, which are considered bad luck on the holiday, but red. She thanked them and wore a red blazer.

“I would have been sending a culturally insensitive, negative message through my clothing, maybe inadvertently,” Andison says. “Language isn’t just words. It’s also clothing, music, food.”

The need for Anglicans to “minister the Sacraments in a tongue understood of the people” has a special resonance in Quebec, where the respective predominance of English and French has been a fraught political issue.

Traditionally, Zink says, the strength of the Anglican diocese of Montreal has been tied to the strength of the city’s anglophone community. Many Anglican churches in Montreal are named after St. George, further betraying the church’s English origins.

“If you look back 50 years ago or 60 years ago, before the [independence] referenda, when Montreal was much more firmly an anglophone city, the Anglican Church was much stronger then,” Zink says. “Part of what it

means to be an Anglican church in Montreal is to both seek to serve our local community of francophones, anglophones and allophones, but also to stay in touch with the larger Anglican Church of Canada.”

The availability of liturgical texts in languages other than English is another challenge for the church in non-English speaking areas.

“It really bothers me, I have to say, when the General Synod passes liturgical revisions and reforms and only makes those available in the English language,” Zink says.

“I appreciate it takes great resources to translate things, and if we’re going to translate into French, we also translate into Cree or Inuktitut or whatever other languages that we need,” he adds. “That increases the amount of resources needed. But the fact that the General Synod can just sort of pass that, and as far as I can tell, not say anything about the fact that these are only in one language, is a real indication of where we stand as a church.”

In Quebec, even the very name of the church can pose an obstacle.

“The name of our church in French is l’Église anglicane du Canada, and that’s not maybe the most positive thing when you’re trying to reach out to francophones,” Zink says.

While General Synod has previously considered changing the name of the church in French to L’Église épiscopale du Canada, its official name remains L’Église Anglican.

“That seems to proclaim this association with English identity,” Zink says, “which in this part of the world is a real political statement to make.”



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— *The Rev. James Liu*



The association of Anglicanism with English identity is not limited to the culture, language and name of the church. It also has a theological component, through the enduring influence of English theologians from around the time of the Protestant Reformation. Their views on church doctrine greatly inform the question of what it means to be Anglican from a theological perspective, including for Anglicans from non-English cultural backgrounds.

In the diocese of Toronto, Chinese ministry congregations that conduct services and activities in Mandarin and Cantonese recently held a series of seminars that introduced parishioners to the history and theology of John Wycliffe, Thomas Cranmer and Richard Hooker. By studying the ideas of these leading figures from the English Reformation, congregational leaders hoped to encourage faith formation and foster a greater understanding of Anglican liturgy and theology.

The Rev. Morning Wang, assistant curate and associate of Mandarin ministry at St. George on Yonge, says that when it comes to practically teaching people about God, “We need some powerful instruments. And according to Richard Hooker, the liturgy, the sacrament, is a powerful instrument [for] our internal life.”

As part of their devotional life together, Chinese Anglican congregations in Toronto lay significant emphasis on reading the prayer book and the weekly distributed daily office.

The Rev. James Liu, assistant curate at St. James' Cathedral, points out that regardless of culture, Anglicans are “one family” united in what they believe.

“Anglicanism is changing now,” Liu says. “It's not the Church of England. It's not only the English church now...

But the spiritual [aspect] is the same thing. We do have different cultures... We have Chinese culture, but what we believe is the same thing [as] the English side. It's Anglican.”

What, then, is at the core of Anglican belief? As Bishop Anderson observes, “You're going to get different answers from different people.” But she points to a number of popular ideas about what it means to be Anglican.

One is the Anglican self-identity as “a reformed catholic expression of historic Christianity,” in which the church traces its “catholic” roots all the way back to Jesus and the disciples, but views itself as subsequently “reformed.” Another, related perspective is the frequent description of Anglicanism as *via media*, or a “middle way” between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.

Yet another answer is one extrapolated from the ideas of Richard Hooker, which views Anglicanism as understanding Christianity through “three pillars”: scripture, informed by reason and tradition.

Finally, in terms of church structures, Anglicans are a denomination with a truly worldwide scope.

“Like the Roman Catholic Church, we're one of the global denominations,” Anderson says. “Not all denominations are global, and I think that's one of our gifts... We are part of a global family that we learn from... at our best selves. We're challenged by one another and we're fed and nourished by one another around the globe.”



In Canada, the existing church is also crossing paths with different understandings of Anglicanism through an influx of refugees and immigrants.



There's this real opportunity, I think, before us as to how we respond to the migration that we see taking place around the world—and to what extent are we going to be open to allowing that to transform ourselves, our understanding of the Christian gospel, and our churches as well?

— *The Rev. Jesse Zink*



Near St. George's Anglican Church in downtown Montreal, where Zink attends worship, is a YMCA hostel where new arrivals to the city often live. In 2017, thousands of people fled the United States seeking political asylum in Canada after the Trump administration's crackdown on immigrants. Unable to claim asylum at the official border crossing, they crossed the border illegally. After being arrested by the RCMP, they declared asylum and were brought to Montreal to enter the Canadian immigration system.

"These people are coming from all over the world: Uganda, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Haiti," Zink says. "Many of them are Christian, because it's the nature of Christianity today that Christianity is growing in strength in the non-Western world, and so they bring their Christianity with them.... Some of them are Anglican, and so they look for a close Anglican church and it happens to be the church that I attend."

Over the last two years, Zink has seen a rise in newcomers to Canada at St. George's who are looking for a church, and are "not from a white anglophone background, as many other people in that congregation are."

At one welcome for 10 new members in the fall of 2019, not one of the new parishioners was born in Quebec, Canada or the United States. Instead they were from Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

"When we talk about the growth of Christianity around the world, in the non-Western world, that's not something that's happening over there," Zink says. "It's something that's happening over here."

"These people are coming to us, and they're wanting

to worship God with us. That is a tremendous blessing. It's a tremendous opportunity. But I'm also going to say it's a challenge for your standard old English-speaking, mostly white Anglican church in the diocese of Montreal.

"There's this real opportunity, I think, before us as to how we respond to the migration that we see taking place around the world—and to what extent are we going to be open to allowing that to transform ourselves, our understanding of the Christian gospel, and our churches as well?"

One way the Anglican Church of Canada is addressing the challenge Zink describes is through an increased commitment to anti-racism. Since becoming primate, Archbishop Nicholls has made opposing racism a central focus and urged Anglicans to do the work necessary to tackle racism as a systemic issue, both inside and outside the church.

Besides attitudes towards migrants to Canada, racism has also found expression in the church through its historic attitudes towards Indigenous people and its role in colonial projects such as the residential school system. But racism can also appear in more subtle ways.

"There are different kinds of racism," says Fenton, who coordinates the Dismantling Racism program in the diocese of New Westminster. "By that I mean there's the overt kind, and then there's the kind where you don't recognize that you're a racist and doing racist things, even while you're being nice."

Fenton recalls his own experience growing up, when he faced prejudice due to his Métis heritage.

"Nobody was overtly racist against me," he says. "But now, looking back, they were against my family. It

wasn't until I was almost ready to leave high school that I realized that even some of my best friends had this sort of second-class understanding of who I was because of being Métis."

Part of welcoming people from different cultures and backgrounds into the church, Fenton says, involves making sure everyone feels truly welcome and a part of their church community and has the opportunity to share their own gifts.

He recounts the presence of many Iranian Christians at Anglican services on Vancouver's North Shore shortly after the shooting down of UIA Flight 752 in Iran, which led to the deaths of all 176 passengers and crew aboard.

"In moments like that, people are quite delighted that we have Iranian Christians and we can feel very smug and self-righteous.... My wonder is, what happens to them in three months' time?" Fenton says. "Are they sitting around the outside or at the back again? Or are they welcomed and invited into places of leadership and respected for the gifts they bring to the community? Are they just making cookies because everybody likes Persian cookies, or [is one of them] the treasurer in the parish?"

"Yes, it's important for us to have prayer books and hymn books in languages other than our own, and Bibles in languages other than our own," he adds. "But at the end of the day, I think it's really about attitude and the way in which people know that you want them to be there and that you really appreciate and love, respect and care for them because of who they are."



If at its best, Anglicanism is about spreading the gospel "in a language understood by the people," members of the church are increasingly taking that lesson to heart.

Bishop Anderson offers the example of Christ Church St. James, a "middle-class Caucasian congregation" in Etobicoke with a significant food bank ministry. Over time, the congregation noticed that more and more people from Mongolia were coming to their food bank.

"To make a long story short, they've started having Bible studies," Anderson says. "They've baptized some Mongolians. They now have a small worshipping Mongolian Anglican community...because they've been able to take the gospel as Anglicans and they've gone and gotten Mongolian-translated Bibles."

Christ Church St. James has also connected with a Mongolian pastor in the United States, and sent one of their new Christian converts away for training so she can become a lay evangelist to Mongolians.

At her last episcopal visit to St. James a few months ago, Anderson saw that the congregation now has simultaneous translation of its services, with one woman translating the liturgy from English to Mongolian for the 15 Mongolian members of the congregation.

"I just think that is an example of Anglicanism at its best," Anderson says. "If they saw a need, they said, 'Great, we're going to share the good news of Jesus with them'...and they went and figured out, 'How can we get Mongolian resources to do this?' That kind of stuff is happening all over the diocese of Toronto, which I think is exciting."

St. Margaret's Tamil Anglican Church is another such example, tailoring its service to members of the Tamil community in Scarborough.

Sikha, who describes being "good friends" with Anderson since before she was a bishop, praises her efforts to adapt to the different cultures of parishes across Toronto and to "preach in their language, the expression of what we speak."

"A big majority of immigrants are spiritual people, people who care about religion," Sikha says. "So [if] we can reach out to them and bring them into the church, to concentrate and give our attention more to immigrants would be a nice thing."

Christian history, Zink says, shows the extent to which people of different backgrounds can learn from and transform one another.

"I think that difference is God's gift to us," he says. "I think that that's the story of creation, that creation is in some ways the process of differentiation: light from dark, land from sea, woman and man...I see difference as a great gift. But it can also be threatening to many people, and it can be challenging, and so that process of engaging with difference is deeply Christian...."

"I think it's necessary to be a Christian to engage with difference, and yet there are all kinds of ways in which it can go off the rails. To be a Christian who engages with difference takes a lot of prayer and support and commitment, and I'm hopeful that that's what we can continue to do." ■