



Role of the Archbishop of Canterbury

The Archbishop of Canterbury is the most senior bishop in the Church of England and thus, in effect, its spiritual leader. The Archbishop is also the ceremonial leader of the global Anglican Communion, an international network of churches in more than 165 countries.

The role of the Archbishop of Canterbury is wide in its scope:

Diocesan bishop of Canterbury

- All dioceses in the Church of England have a diocesan bishop, who is responsible for the spiritual leadership, governance and oversight of clergy within the diocese.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury is the diocesan bishop of Canterbury, which covers eastern Kent. They are supported in this ministry by the Bishop of Dover.
- The Canterbury diocese is the seat of the Church of England's most senior cleric because it was the seat of the first Archbishop, St. Augustine of Canterbury, who arrived in Britain in 597 and established the See of Canterbury.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury regularly spends time in the diocese, especially during ordinations and festivals such as Easter and Christmas.

Primate of All England

- In Anglicanism, 'Primate' denotes the chief archbishop or bishop of a province of the Anglican Communion.
- As the most senior bishop in the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury holds the title of Primate of All England.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury chairs the General Synod (the Church of England's legislative body), along with the Archbishop of York.
- They play a key role in ceremonies of national importance such as coronations and royal funerals, baptisms and weddings.



Metropolitan Archbishop of the province of Canterbury

- The Archbishop of Canterbury has metropolitan authority over the province of Canterbury, also known as the southern province. The Archbishop of York, meanwhile, is Metropolitan Archbishop of the province of York (the northern province).
- Metropolitan authority refers to supervisory authority over all bishops and clergy, in this case in the 30 dioceses in southern England.

The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Anglican Communion

- The Archbishop of Canterbury is seen as a focus of unity, with leadership and pastoral responsibilities in the Anglican Communion. The Archbishop works to foster unity and coordination amongst the member churches worldwide.
- The Anglican Communion is one of the world's largest Christian communities, with tens of millions of members in more than 165 countries.
- The office of the Archbishop of Canterbury is one of the four Instruments of Communion, alongside the Primates' Meeting, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Lambeth Conference. Each instrument works to build bonds of friendship and common purpose among the Member churches of the Anglican Communion, while respecting the autonomy of Member church. They facilitate dialogue, coordinate mission work, and address challenges facing Anglicans globally.
- Provinces of the Anglican Communion are autonomous and interdependent.

Lord Spiritual

- The Archbishop of Canterbury is one of 26 bishops who are summoned by the Monarch to serve as 'Lords Spiritual' in the House of Lords.
- Lords Spiritual lead the House in prayer at the start of each sitting day and play a spiritual, pastoral and legislative role in the work of the Lords.
- Like other Members, Lords Spiritual can take part in all business of the House, including tabling and asking questions to the government, leading or speaking in debates, scrutinising legislation, voting, and serving on committees.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury is one of five bishops who serve in the Lords in an ex-officio capacity; the others are the Archbishop of York, and the bishops of London, Durham, and Winchester. The remaining Lords Spiritual are invited to attend the Lords based either on length of service, or under the terms of the Lords Spiritual (Women) Act 2015.



The Church of England and the nation

- As the established church, the Church of England has a unique constitutional and legal status, making it the 'state church'.
- The Church of England is for every person in England. Everyone lives within a parish, with its own church(es) and leadership, and everyone may access baptisms, weddings and funerals in their local parish church, regardless of personal belief.
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