Twenty-four things (most) Episcopalians Believe....

Some Episcopalians will take issue with some or all of what follows. Most Episcopalians believe more or less than 24 things, so this list is not the last word!

1. God is Creator. God is creative love. God is life-giving Spirit. God is thus three “persons” of one “being.”

2. "God is closer to us than we are to ourselves" --St. Julian of Norwich. God is also “wholy other”, beyond our knowing. We live in this paradox.

3. God is manifested vividly, fully, compellingly, in Jesus of Nazareth, who lived, taught, healed, proclaimed a new commonwealth, was killed, and raised to life. He is God’s “Word” made flesh.

4. Jesus remains among us to invite resurrection from the many forms of death around us and in us and to offer us the gift of life.

5. Evil is real. We are capable of doing evil. In our baptism we renounce it. And God transforms evil into his own good and gives us the will and strength to transform it in ourselves and the world.

6. Community with Jesus as the center, grounded in the life of God, enlivened by the Spirit, is a gift. The institutional church is a major way that community is accessible to us. So even as an institution the church is a sacred thing. But God is not captive to the fallibilities of the church!

7. Christian community becomes what it is in sacramental acts, specific, tangible, material things in which the mystery of God's love is made known to us, especially in Baptism and the Lord's supper or Eucharist or Mass. Those "religious" sacraments help us to see everything sacramental: the whole world discloses the generosity of God, the whole world is a sacrament of grace.

8. The worship of the community involves everyone and is the offering of the special gifts of each.

9. Christian community does not exist for itself, but to invite the transformation of the world. The community becomes what it is not only in "sacramental acts" but in reaching out with Christ's love, justice and mercy to heal and free. Christian community works best when it is self-monitoring. Our leaders engage in an annual process of self-examination. Our leadership is trained to identify and prevent the spread of such institutional evils as racism and child abuse.

10. Uniformity of beliefs and disciplines is stifling. Our differences disclose the variety of gifts the Spirit gives. We will have different perceptions about what friendship with God requires of us. So we don't tell each other what to do or make judgments about each other. We do try to be supportive of each other. We try to be "a church in which there are no outcasts" as our former Presiding Bishop puts it. We struggle hard to overcome those fears which keep us from being fully inclusive. God is not through with us yet. So we strive to be a community in which we have “in all things essential, unity; in all things non-essential, diversity; in all things, charity.”

11. The full participation of women in all aspects of the church and the honoring of their gifts is something the Spirit requires of us. There is no place in the church which is not women's place. As women's full participation in the community and special gifts are respected we discover that God is not only our Father but our Mother.

12. Abortion is an agonizingly complex question. We are both pro-life and pro-choice. Those seemingly contradictory positions seem to us to be consistent and reasonable. We are pro-life because a fetus is potential human life in a unique way and requires respect and reverence. On the other hand the life and health of a woman is of considerable moral meaning. When those claims for life conflict, women and their husbands and families and physicians are the best people to make moral judgments. The state needs to respect the moral agency of these people. And the Church needs to emphasize the sacred and fragile nature of God's gift of life.
We struggle with this issue.

14. On the whole, truth is likely to be found more in what is affirmed than in what is denied and more in "both/ands" than in "either/or". So black and white thinking and thinking dominated by negations probably is not helpful.

15. Institutions are necessary, but should be kept in the service of community, not the other way around. Hierarchies seem not to be the wave of the future, at least not the future of God, who creates not from above but from the midst of the world. The kinds of hierarchy which remain part of church life exist to serve the people of God, not to dominate them. There are some among us who don’t get this.

16. The Scriptures speak God's truth with special power and are God's Word. Simplistic and literalistic interpretations may miss the point of what God says to us.

17. Tradition is a treasure through which we can discern God's future, not something with which to enshrine our past. There is much rich insight in the tradition which helps us to look forward to God's future. “Tradition is the living faith of the dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.” (Jaroslav Pelikan's "The Vindication of Tradition")

18. Reason is a gift. We should accept it even in religious matters. We affirm the importance of an ongoing conversation between the voices of faith and those of science, art, culture, economics and public life.

19. Some of us know conversion as a specific, sudden experience. Most of us know it as a life-long process. Those who know it as a specific experience find that it is authenticated in a life-long process of growth.

20. Friendship with God and God's people is serious, but it is held lightly in joy. Play is as religious as work.

21. Friendship with God is acted out mostly in our daily lives in what we do, with few pronouncements.

22. Anyone who claims to speak for God should do so only after listening in much silence.

23. Any church with Henry VIII among its members surely would understand something about forgiveness!

24. We are not the true church. But we are part of it! It has many parts. In affirming loyalty to our own church we do not disparage others.

This statement was mostly written by the Rev. Canon Ronald Osborne.
A light hearted look at what Episcopalians Believe

Episcopalians occasionally believe in miracles and sometimes even expect them, particularly during stewardship canvasses or when electing bishops or vicars, or recruiting church school teachers.

Episcopalians believe in ecumenical dialogue because they are certain that after all is said and done everyone else is bound to become Episcopalian.

Episcopalians strongly believe in Scripture, tradition and reason. While they aren't sure what they believe about these three things, there is almost universal agreement that that is hardly the point.

Episcopalians believe that everything in their life and faith is improved by the presence of good food and drink, not including lime-carrot jello, tropical punch koolaid, or canned tuna fish in any form.

Episcopalians believe that anything worth doing is especially worth doing if it has an obscure title attached to it (e.g. sexton, thurifer, suffragan, canon, dean).

Likewise, Episcopalians believe that any place worth visiting is greatly enhanced by a name that only obliquely describes it (e.g., nave, narthex, sacristy, undercroft, church school supply room).

Episcopalians firmly believe that coffee hour is the eighth sacrament, but only if the coffee is caffeinated.

Episcopalians believe that anthems are most efficacious if sung in Latin or German, especially during Lent.

Episcopalians generally believe that they are the only people God trusts enough to take the summers off from Church.

Some Episcopalians believe Rite I is the best expression of the liturgy. Some believe Rite II is better. Most Episcopalians haven't noticed the difference; they just hope the whole things gets over before noon.