A NON-CONFORMIST IN AN ANGLICAN CHURCH

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Category: Musing on General Themes

Since we came to live in High Wycombe, Sue and I have been worshipping at Christ Church in Flackwell Heath.Â We initially started going there because we have a few friends who are involved in the Church (we were at Bible college with the vicar). This is the first time I have regularly worshipped at an Anglican church and I thought that I'd put down a few of my thoughts about the experience.

Firstly, I have to say that I am enjoying the more liturgical style of worship. It is a personal thing, but I like to know where a church service is going. The old hymn-sandwich was great for me, as I knew what to expect at each point. The newer non-conformist style of mixing things up leaves me rather confused. Having a liturgy means that at any point in the service I have an idea of what we are doing and where we are going - I rather like that.

I also enjoy the participatory aspect of the liturgy. I'm not a great sitter and listener, and being able to join in with the prayers and creed.

I have to admit that I hate *the peace* and at the same time think it is excellent. Forcing me to greet the people around me, makes me feel very uncomfortable, but I need to be pushed out of my comofort zone. For English people who do not easily meet and greet strangers (or even friends), it is good to have a part of the service which makes us get to know one another.

The services at Christ Church are not 'sermon based' the way that I have grown used to in other contexts. At times, I do miss the rigour and discipline of consecutive biblical exposition. However, I find that having the liturgy and communion at the centre of the service to be very inspiring.

That being said, I find wandering up to the front of the church and taking communion from clergy who are seperated from the rest of the congregation by a barrier to be very off putting. At root, I am a theological non-conformist and I believe strongly in the priesthood of all believers.Â I just simply can't accept anything that makes such a strong distinction between the clergy and laity.

The bottom line is that there are some things that will stop me ever being an Anglican.Â I'm not keen on the idea of an established church and I don't like a strong laity clergy divide. On the other hand, I thoroughly enjoy the services at Christ Church and at this point in my life it is doing me good, so I'll put my reservations on hold and carry on benefitting from meeting God's people at Christ Church whenever I'm not preaching elsewhere. I'll let Sue comment for herself if she wants to.