

The Church of England traces its history in England back to the early centuries of the Christian faith. There is evidence that there were Christians in England in Roman times, and in 597 (after the Romans had left) St **shop of Canterbury.**



Up until the sixteenth century the Church in England was an integral part of the Roman Catholic Church, but a combination of religious and political reforms in the time of King Henry VIII led to the Church in England breaking away from Rome and the authority of the Pope to become the Church of England.

The Church of England over the years has existed in parishes – local geographical units with a parish church in which the people joined together to worship. The parishes are grouped together into dioceses, each headed by a bishop. There are currently forty-two dioceses, but two of these (the Diocese in Europe and the Diocese of Sodor and Man) are, in fact, outside England.

The Church of England seeks to be a Christian presence in every community, up and down the land. Each parish or group of parishes has a parish priest – a minister ordained (or set apart) for ministry, who leads the people in worship, teaches the faith and gives pastoral support to the people of the parish. And much of the ministry of the church is undertaken by lay people: the faithful Christian disciples who live out their faith in Jesus Christ in worship and service.

The Church of England is not the only church in England, and it seeks to work with and be reconciled with other churches and Christian communities. Furthermore, it is part of a worldwide family of churches whose traditions are very similar. This is called the Anglican Communion. Anglican churches can be found all round the world, including in the other nations of the United Kingdom.

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