

About Us

St. John's Anglican Church, Porterville

The Dean of the San Joaquin Convocation reported to the 1899 Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of California that church work had begun in Porterville. When a Women's Guild began meeting in 1908, this led to regular services of the church held in a second story room over a hardware store beginning in 1909. For a time, Lay Reader Richard M. Trelease of Visalia conducted services. He was later ordained. By the time of the first Convocation of the Missionary District of San Joaquin on May 9, 1911, the delegates of St. John's, Porterville, were seated, although no mention is made of "voice" or "vote" as they were still "passing through the regular procedure of organization." Official organization of St. John's took place on June 4, 1911, with Bishop Sanford's consent. At the second Convocation in Hanford, May 22, 1912, St. John's was formally admitted.

The Rev. Lee Axtell Wood of Visalia conducted regular services in Porterville (as well as in Tulare). In 1911, he was appointed the official Priest-in-charge, and soon moved his residence to Porterville. Valuable lots were purchased on the corner of D and Thurman. A guild hall was opened and dedicated by Bishop Sanford in May 1913. This was later modified and is the present church site. Under Fr. Wood's leadership the congregation grew. He remained until year's end 1929 when he became the first Student Pastor at Fresno State College and Vicar of the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit, Fresno. He was succeeded by Fr. John Keble Burleson.

After World War II, the Rev. Charles M. Brandon came to Porterville as Vicar after eleven years as an army chaplain. It brought a new lease on life for St. John's. Under his leadership St. John's grew and became self-supporting. Parish status was granted by the Convocation in 1948. Fr. Brandon retired as Rector in 1959. He continued to live in Porterville until his death.

The Rev. John Atkinson served as Rector from 1960 to 1963. Fr. M. Fletcher Davis was Rector from 1964 to 1968. Fr. Richard Warren was Rector from 1969 until his retirement in 1977. Fr. James C. Thompson succeeded as Rector in the summer of the same year. A program of repair and painting on the aging church building was completed, and under Fr. Thompson's leadership the church thrived.

The Bishop appointed Fr. Thompson as Dean of Sequoia Deanery in late 1987, following the resignation of Fr. Don Cole of St. Paul's, Visalia, from the position as Dean.

St. John's continued as an Episcopal Congregation until 2009 when the Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin joined with and remains in the province of the newly formed Anglican Province, the Anglican Church of North America (ACNA) in 2009.

What is an Anglican?

First and foremost, Anglicans are Christians. Globally, Anglicans form the third largest body of Christians in the world (around 80 million members) behind the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches.

The name “Anglican” is traced back to the ancient Anglo-Saxon tribes of Europe. The tribal name was spelled “Engles” or “Angles” and the tribe’s speech was the precursor to the English language. Their island became known as England, and their Christians were known as Anglicans. By the way, the *name has nothing to do with “angels.”*

Just as the English language spread with the British empire, so did Anglican Christianity. When Anglicans resettled in new lands, they brought their personal faith with them. Chaplains and pastors were often among their number. Additionally, many Anglicans traveled as missionaries to share the Gospel. Consequently, Anglican churches now exist all over the world in more than 165 countries. As Anglican Christians became a global family, the demographics shifted dramatically. While Christians from Britain, the United States, Canada, and Australia continue to play an important role, today the “average” Anglican is a young woman from Sub-Saharan Africa.

The Anglican ethos holds together three streams of the Christian Church. For those familiar with Church History, Dr. Les Fairfield provides a synopsis of the history that shapes its life today:

The Protestant movement recalled the 16th century Church to the primacy of the Word—written, read, preached, inwardly digested. The 18th century Holiness movement reminded the Church of God’s love for the poor. The Anglo-Catholic movement re-grounded the Church in the sacramental life of worship. All three strands are grounded in the Gospel. Each one extrapolates the Gospel in a specific direction. No strand is dispensable. Other Christian bodies have often taken one strand to an extreme. By God’s grace the Anglican tradition has held the streams in creative tension. This miracle of unity is a treasure worth keeping.

Anglican worship is diverse, and it is best understood by visiting and attending a local congregation. What is common to all is an inheritance of worship that recognizes the supremacy of the Bible and often finds expression through the Prayer Book. To understand what and how Anglicans pray is to understand what they believe. The Prayer Book, described as the Scriptures arranged for worship, provides helpful resources for everything from personal daily devotions to large public gatherings of worship. It includes prayers for every season of life.

If you are searching for a church home, please consider Saint John’s Anglican Church, Porterville. The worship is liturgical, the sermons are biblical and relevant to the times in which we live, and the members are warm and friendly.