



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ANGLICAN

Week 1: The Anglican Church is Historic (Pre-Reformation English Church)



Anglican Identity: History

- What is an Anglican?
- The irony of this lack of knowledge regarding who we are.



Anglican Identity: History

- Henry's Church?



Anglican Identity: History

- Today, we are going to explore the Church in Britain from the first century through the fifteenth century.
- We will see that the Anglican Church existed long before Henry VIII.

Anglican Identity: History



- Ancient legend about the origin of Christianity in Britain: Joseph of Arimathea – AD 60
- Joseph and 12 companions made their way to Glastonbury.

Anglican Identity: History



- The Holy Thorn is a hawthorn tree that is found in Glastonbury.
- The legend is that it was brought by Joseph of Arimathea from the Promised Land to England.

Glastonbury

“The holy thorn has become part of the legend of Joseph of Arimathea. According to this story, when Joseph arrived in Glastonbury with his twelve companions he climbed Wearyall Hill, whose name derives from his proclaiming 'we are weary all'. He planted his staff in the ground whilst he rested. The following morning the staff had taken root, and it grew into the miraculous thorn tree.”

Glastonbury Abbey

Anglican Identity: History



- Is this legend true?
- The Church was in Britain by the second century according to several witnesses.

Anglican Identity: History



- There is a second possible explanation for the Christian origins in Britain.
- St. Paul mentions a man named Aristobulus in Rom 16:10.
- According to tradition, he was one of the 70 who were sent out by Christ to preach.

Anglican Identity: History



- He was also the brother of Barnabas, who is called an apostle in the Book of Acts.
- The tradition in the Orthodox church is that St. Paul made Aristobulus a bishop and sent him to Britain.



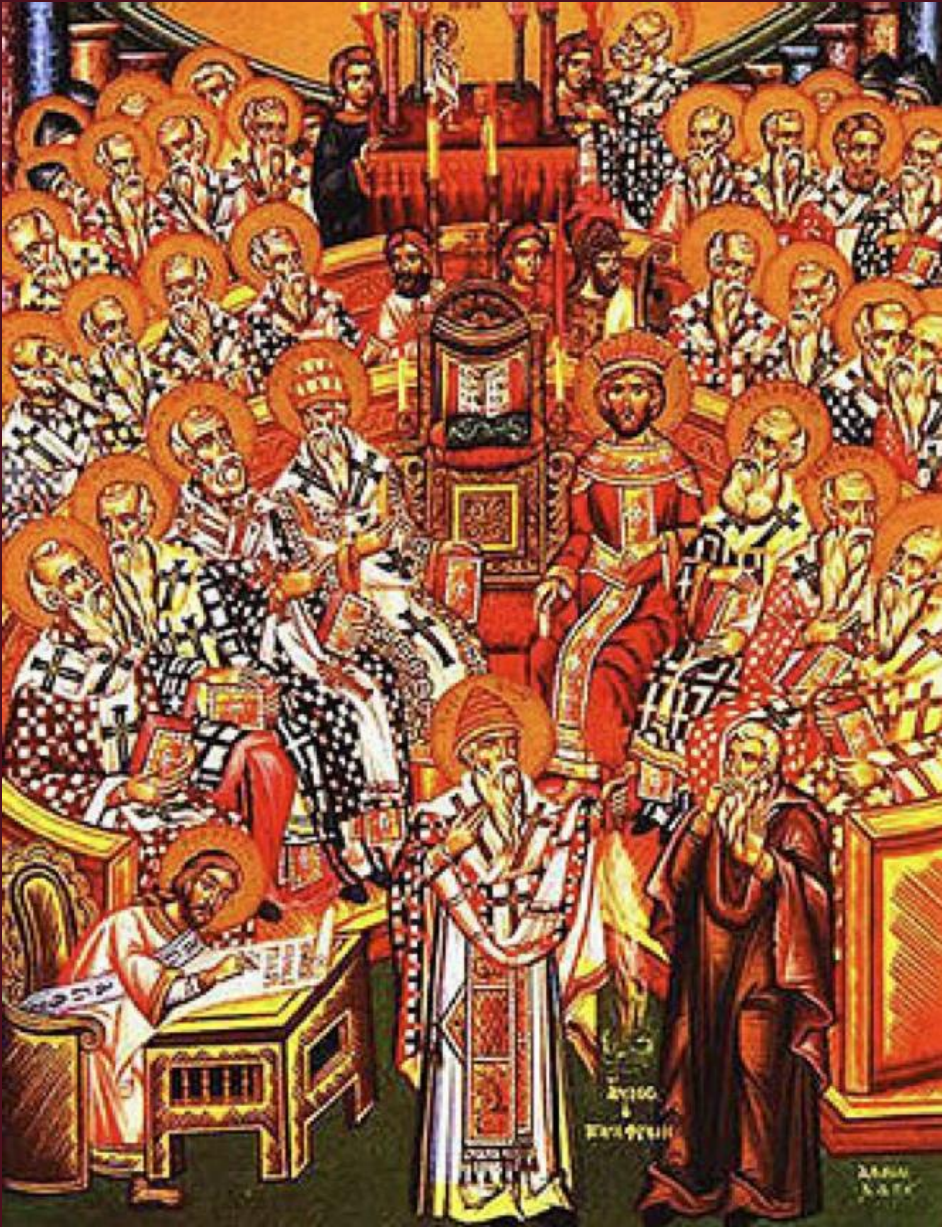
Anglican Identity: History

- Tertullian (c. 200) claimed that the name of Christ had already “conquered parts of the Britons unreached by the Romans.” (Bray, 2)



Anglican Identity: History

- Tertullian also mentions that there were already bishops, priests and deacons in Britain by that time.



Anglican Identity: History

- There is also a historical record of three bishops from Britain (from London, York and Colchester) attending an important early Church council (Arles AD 314).
- A note from St. Athanasius also suggests that a bishop from Britain may have been at the Council of Nicaea (325).



Anglican Identity: History

- We also have record of an early Christian martyr in Britain.
- The martyrdom likely took place during the Diocletian persecution around AD 304.



Anglican Identity: History

- There was an outbreak of persecution against Christians and a priest named Amphibalus sought refuge in the home of a soldier named Alban.



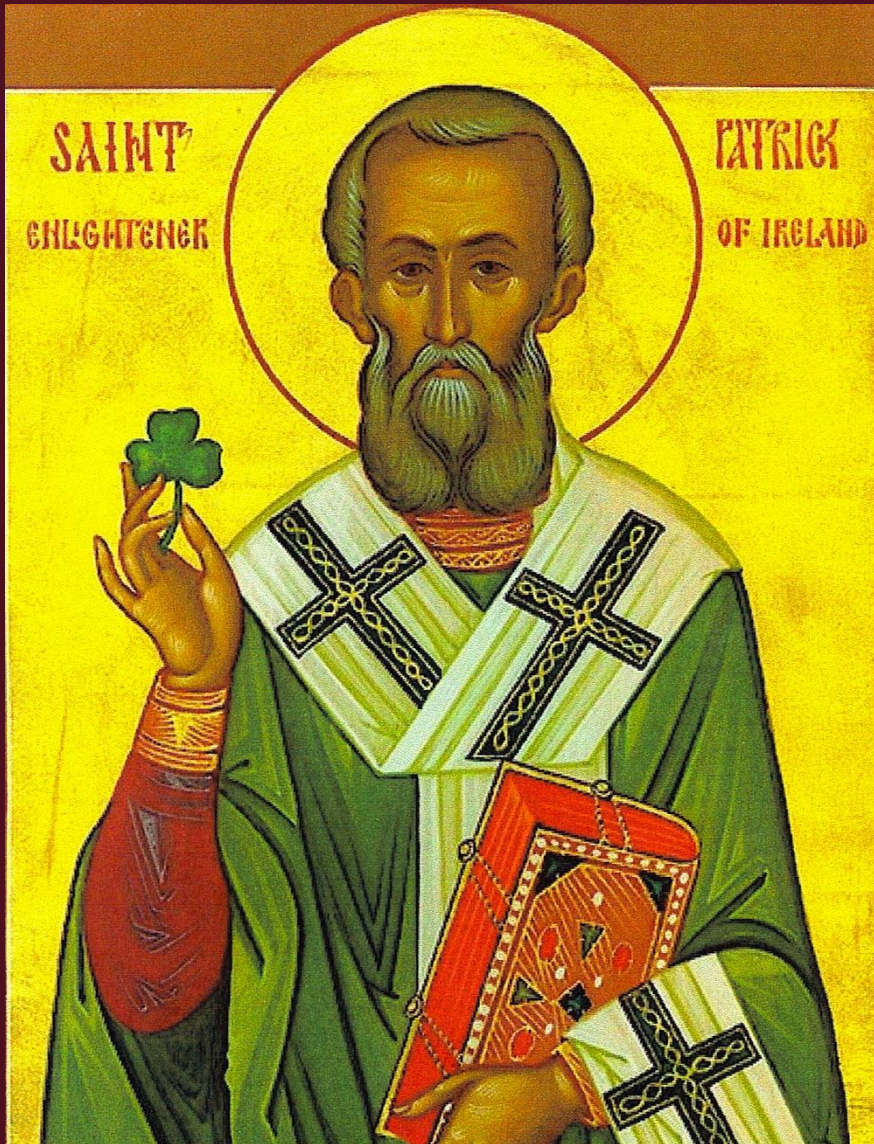
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- Alban was so impressed by Amphibalus' piety and witness that when the soldiers tracked Amphibalus down, Alban took on the priest's cloak and suffered in his place, allowing the priest to escape.



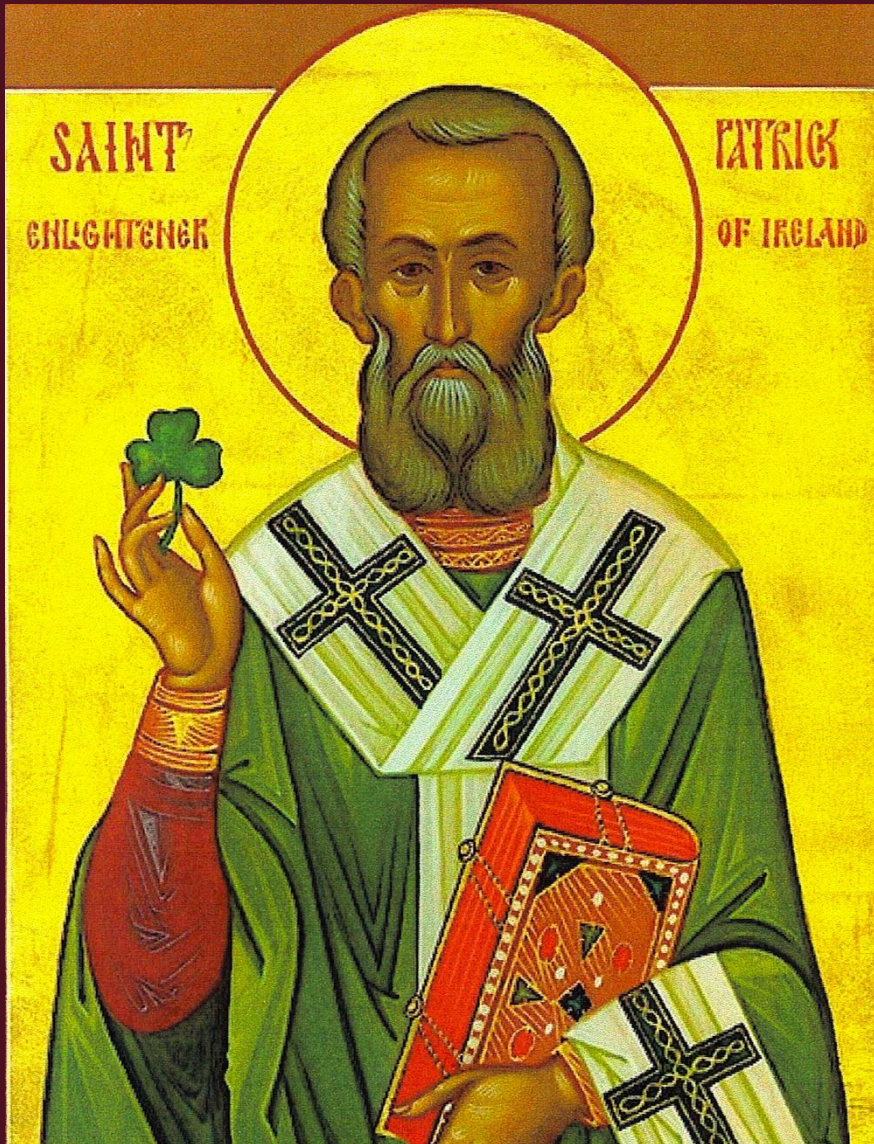
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- On a less positive note, one of the earliest heretics in Church history was from Britain.
- Pelagius (360-418) was rebuffed by St. Augustine and condemned by the Church.



Anglican Identity: History

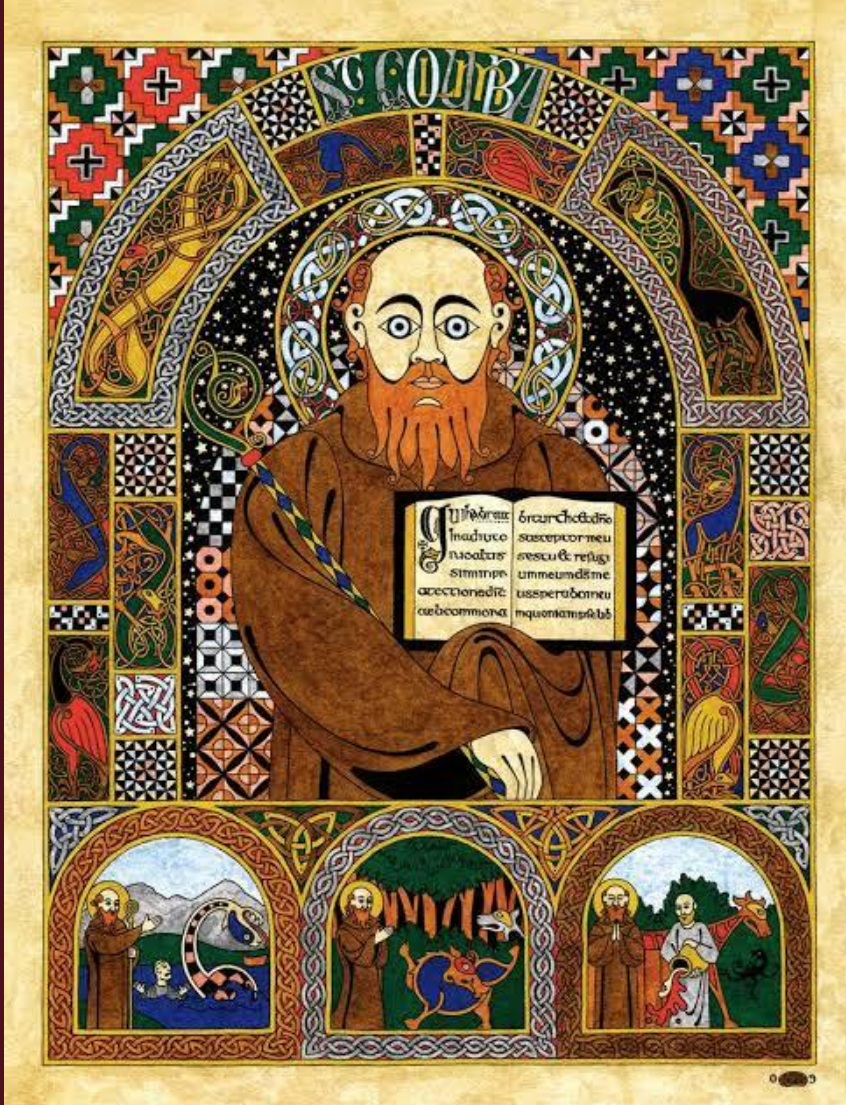
- One of the most successful early missionaries of the Church was also from Britain.
- St. Patrick is typically associated with Ireland today, but he was originally from Britain.



Anglican Identity: History

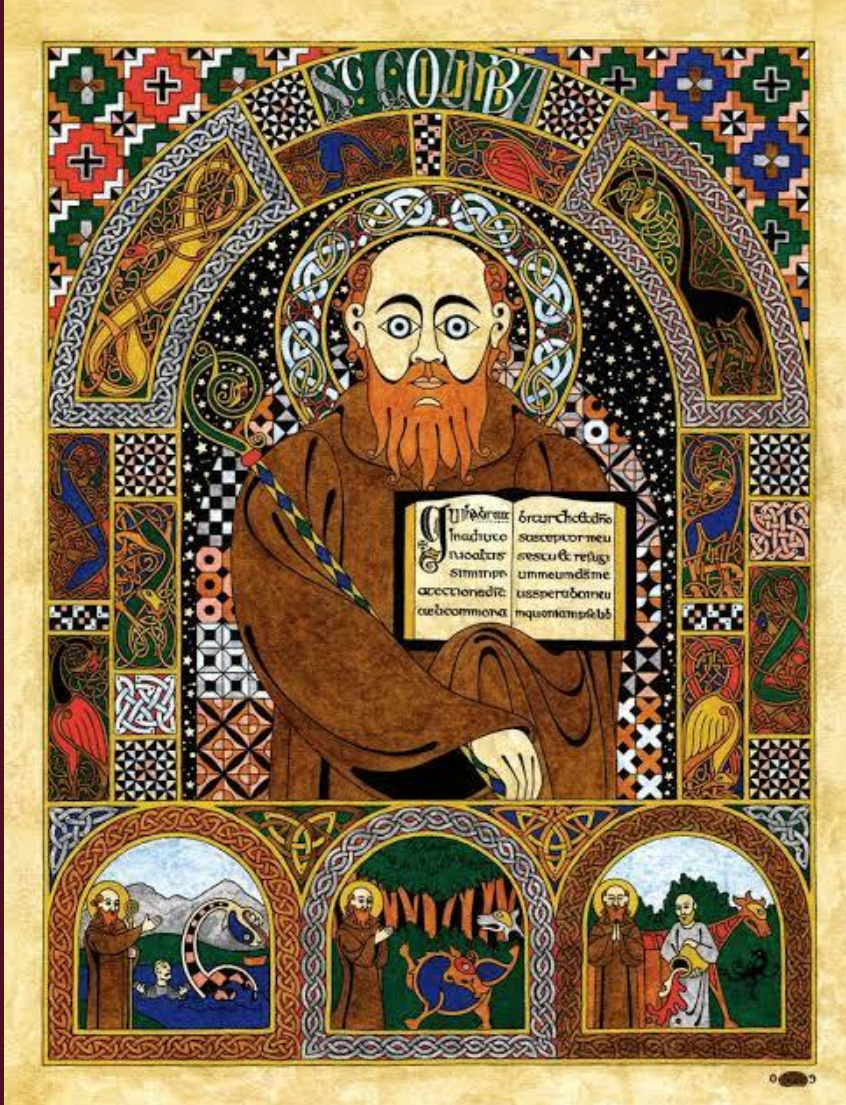
- As a young man, he was captured by pirates and sold into slavery in Ireland.
- Even though he escaped and went home, he later returned to evangelize those who had enslaved him.

Anglican Identity: History

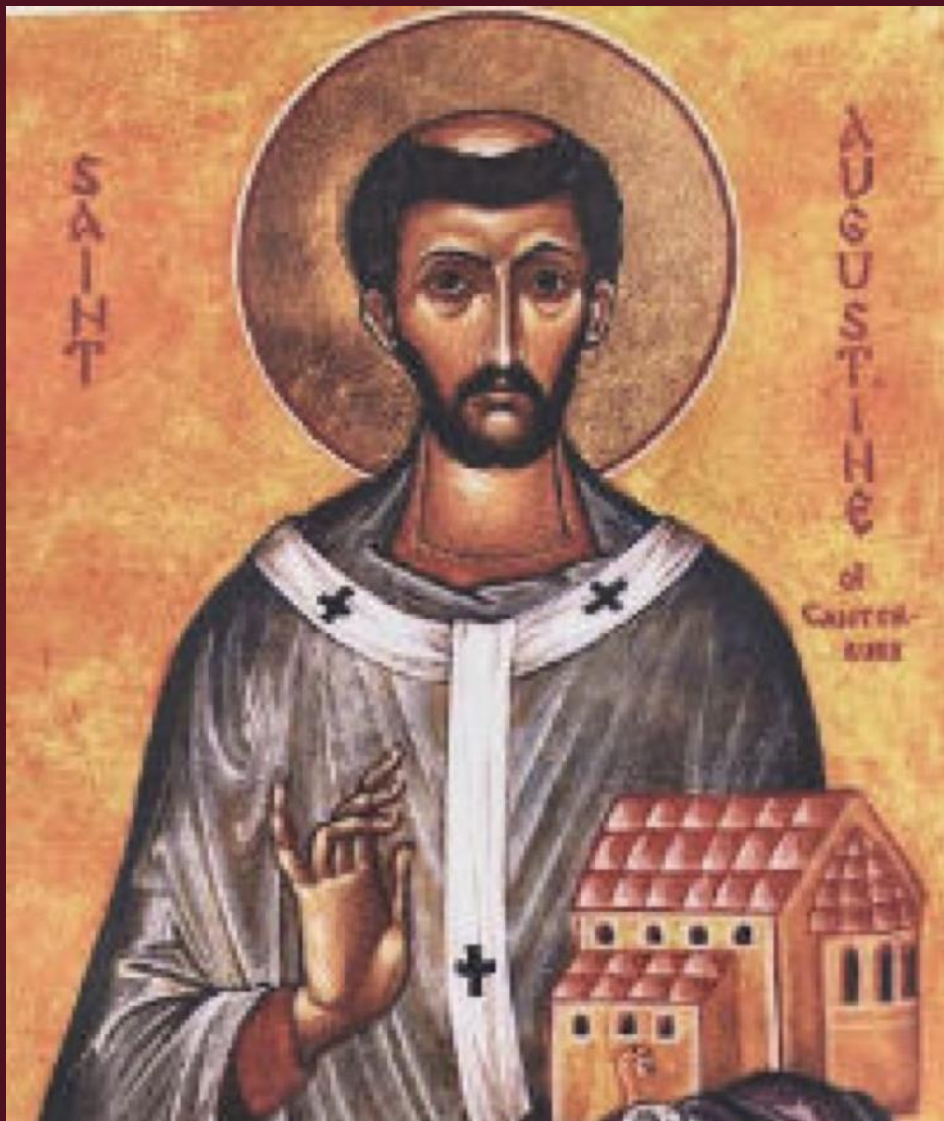


- There is another famous missionary from the middle of the 6th century who is also part of the Anglican story.
- Columba was born in Ireland and later became a bishop.

Anglican Identity: History

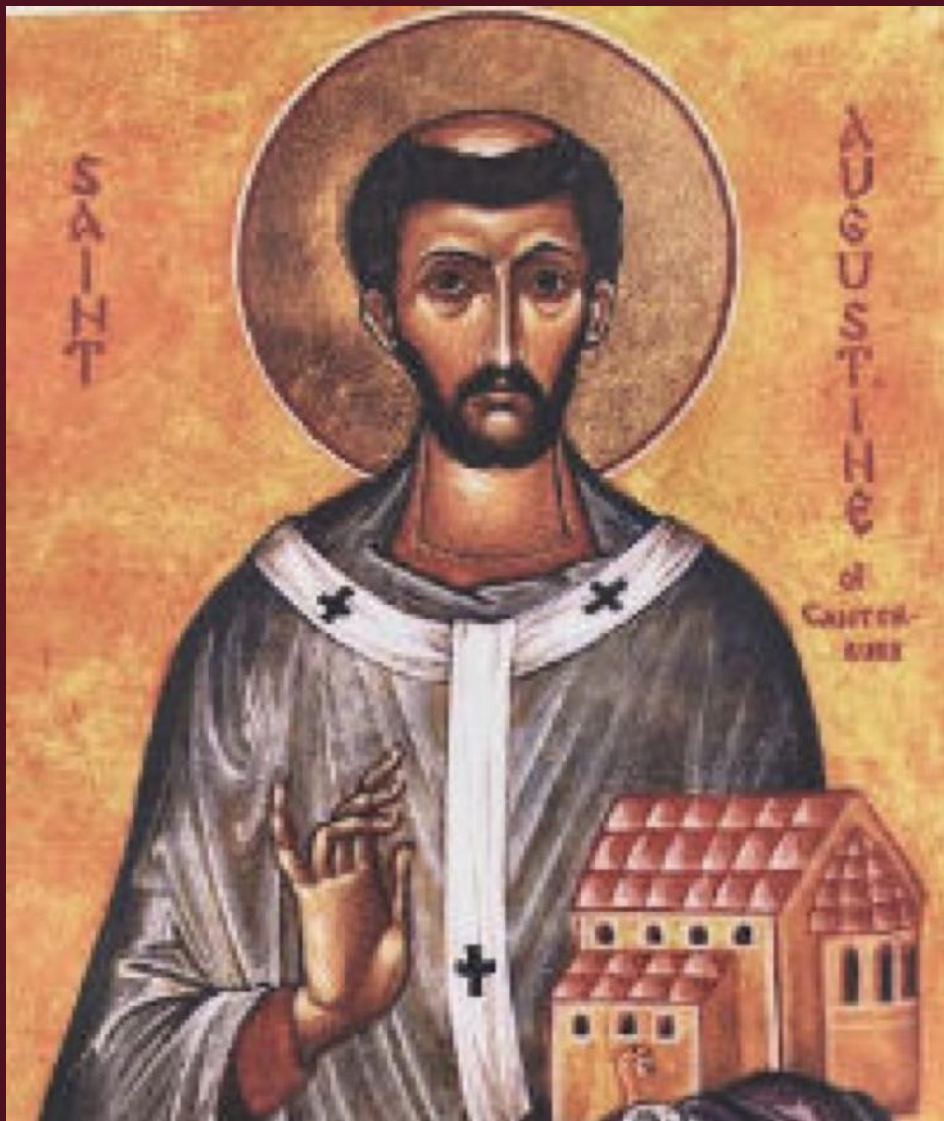


- He founded a famous monastery in Iona which became a mission-sending hub.
- He is credited with taking the gospel to Scotland.



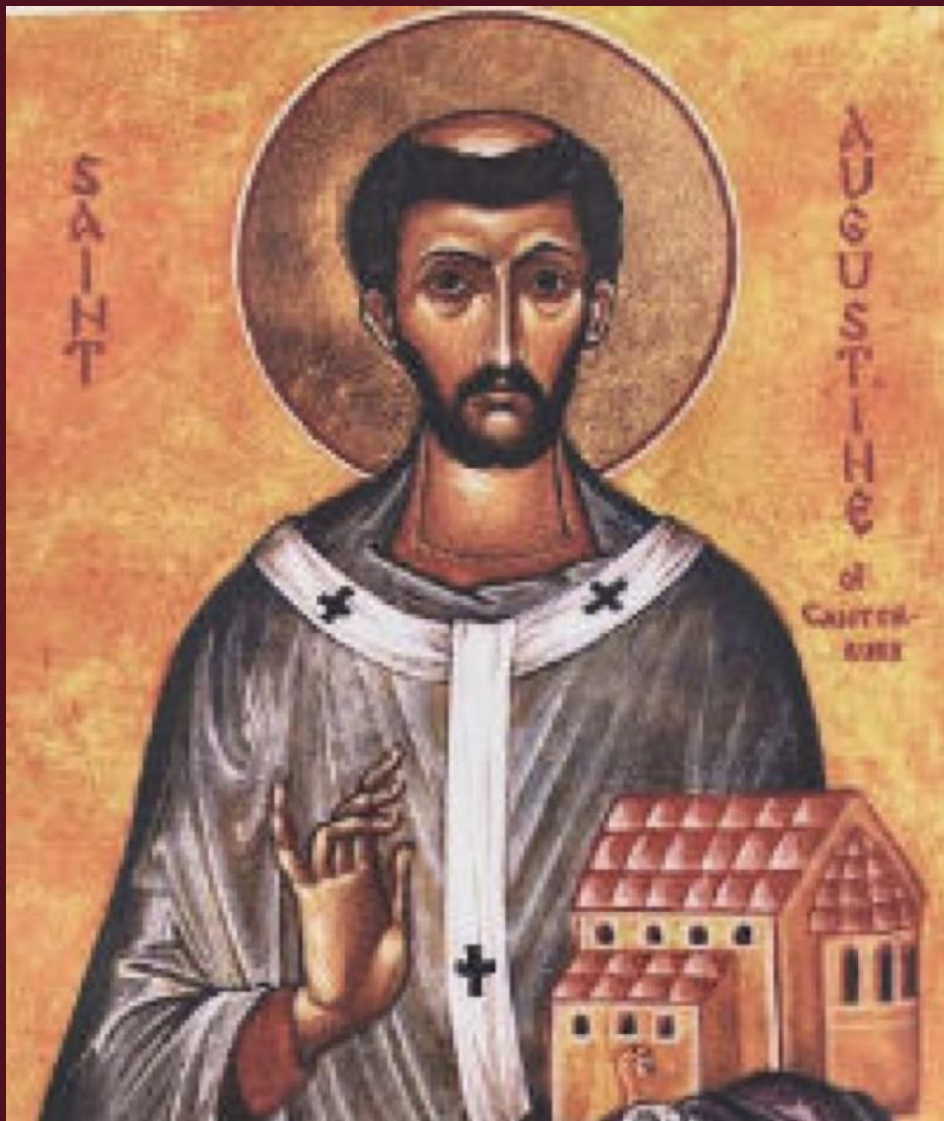
Anglican Identity: History

A major turning point in Anglican history occurred in 597 when Gregory the Great sent a group of monks led by a man named Augustine (now known as St. Augustine of Canterbury) to evangelize England.



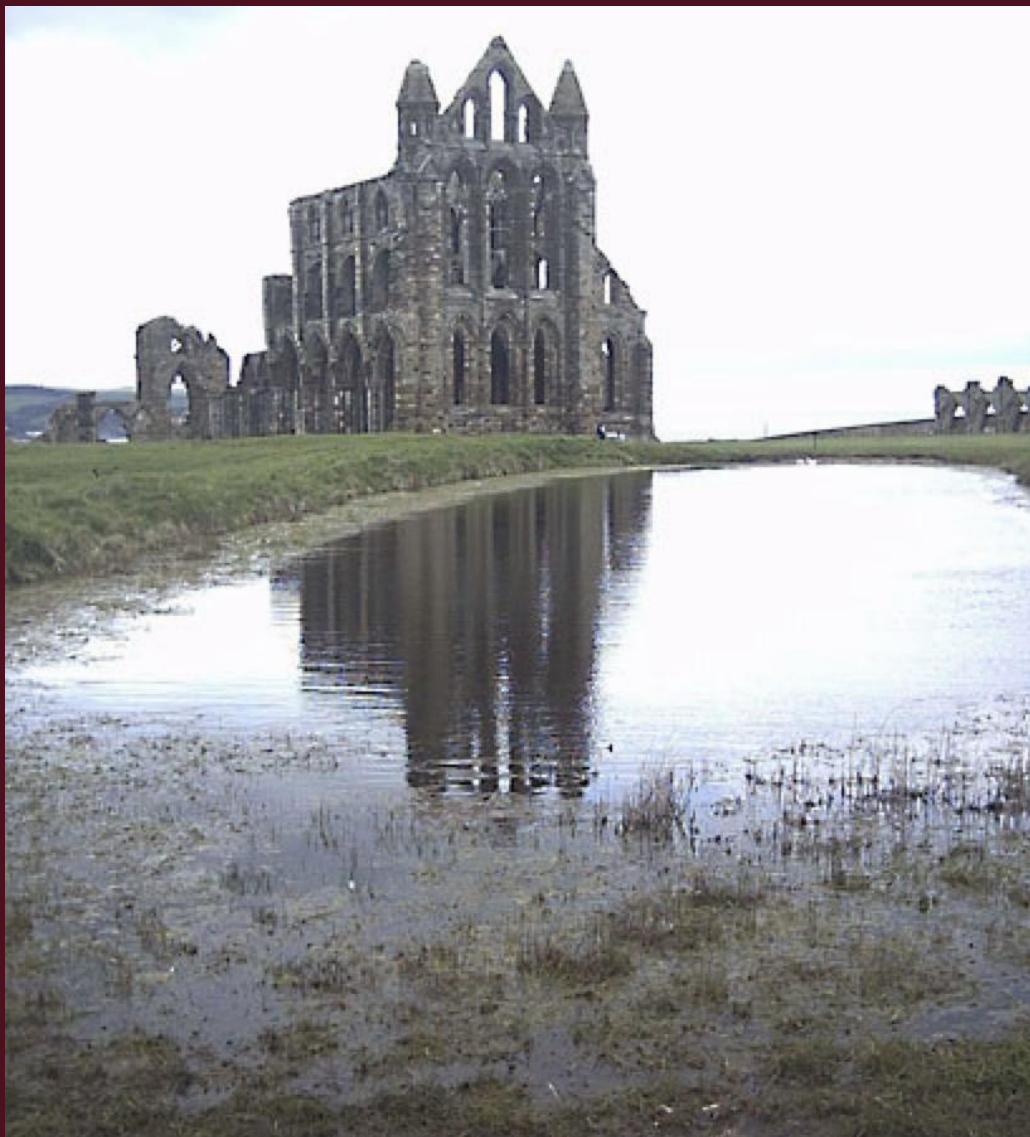
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- When they arrived in 597, they found the Church already established in Britain.
- In fact, Queen Bertha was a Christian and her husband, Ethelbert was open to the faith and allowed Augustine's mission.



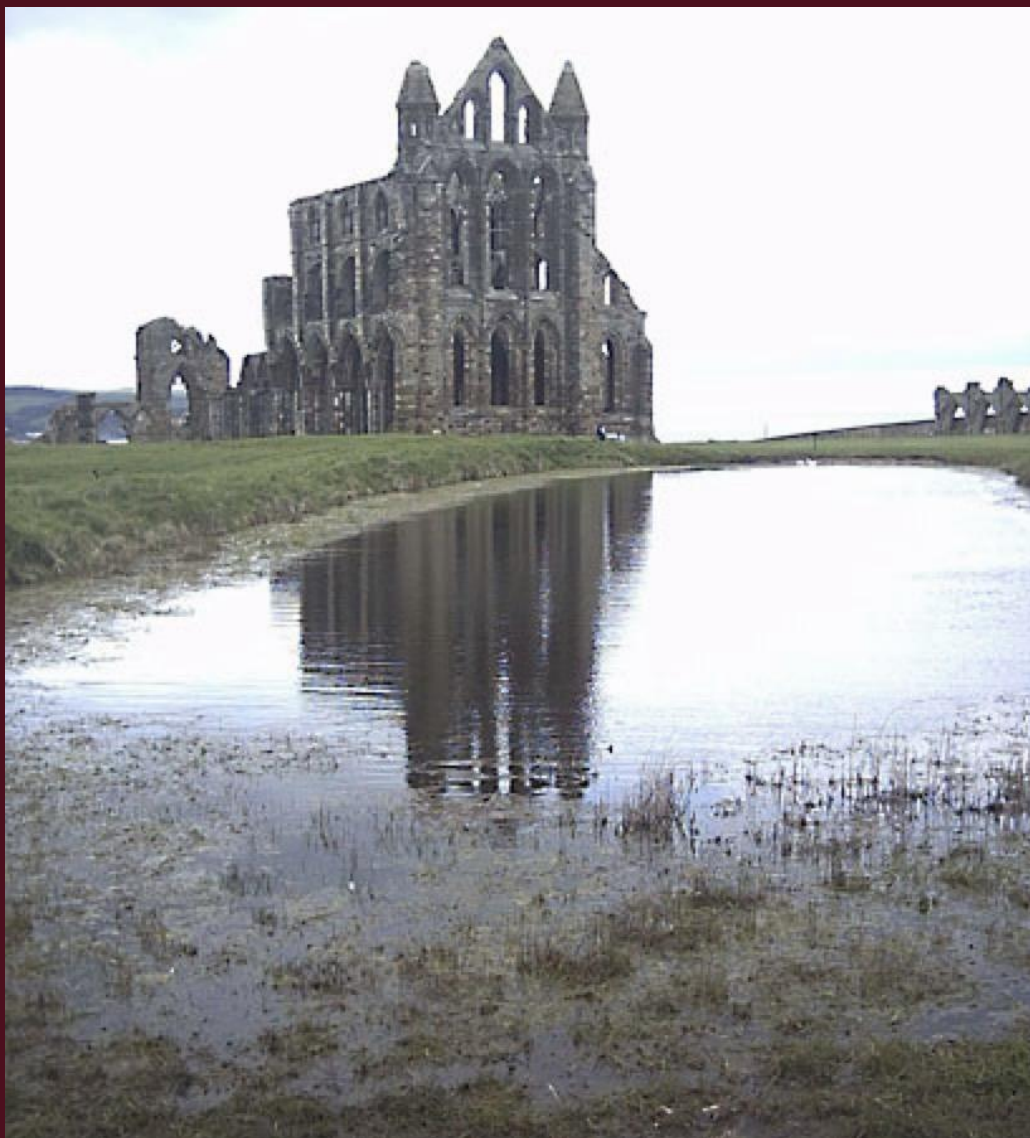
Anglican Identity: History

- Augustine and his companions setup their headquarters in Canterbury and began evangelizing.
- These were Benedictine monks who greatly shaped the spirituality and prayer life of the Anglican Church.



Anglican Identity: History

- This new mission from the Roman church marks a transition in the early history of Christianity in Britain.
- There was some conflict between the existing church and the new mission which took years to resolve.



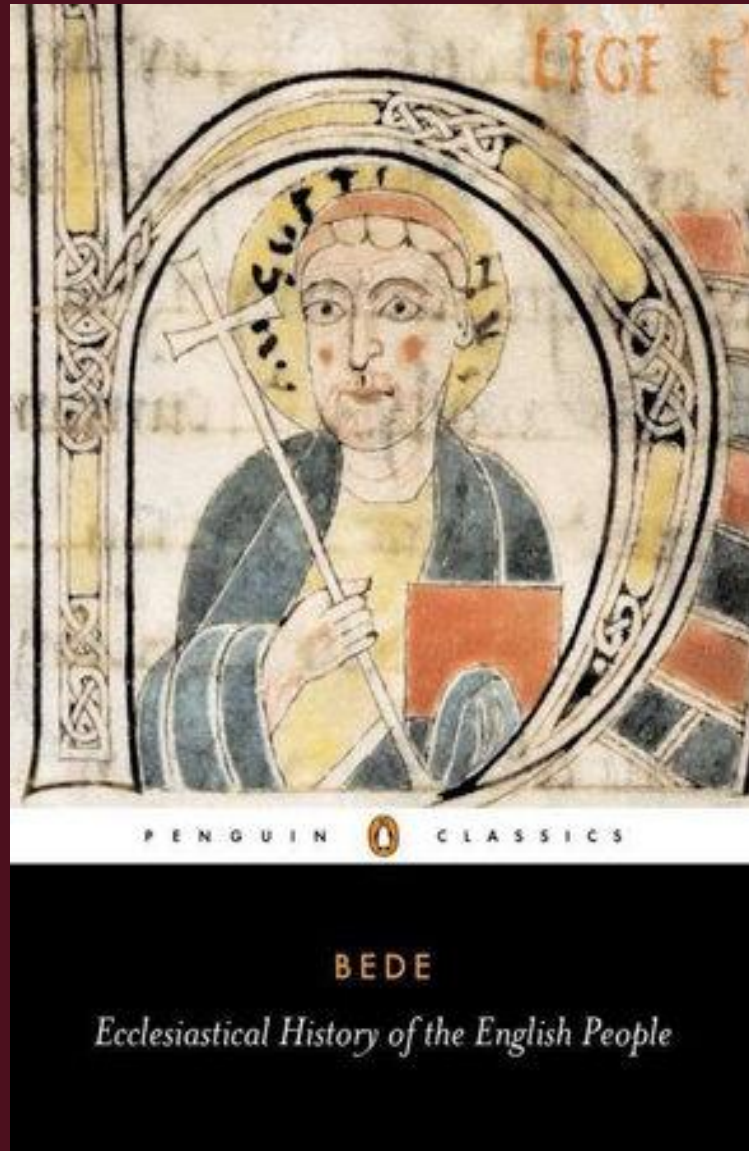
Anglican Identity: History

- This resolution began to take place at an important synod which was held in Whitby in AD 664.
- They debated some of their differences which included the calculation of Easter.



Anglican Identity: History

- Further consolidation occurred under St. Theodore, who became Abp. of Canterbury (668-690).
- Essentially, the earlier churches in Britain agreed to submit to the Bishop of Rome and were basically subsumed into the Roman Church.



Anglican Identity: History

- It should be noted that there was a significant historical work of the preceding era which was written in the early 8th century by The Venerable Bede, a monk.
- Bede was something of a Roman apologist because he tried to argue for Rome's influence in England before the late 6th century.

Anglican Identity: History



- The Magna Carta, which was penned in 1215, has in the opening line that “the Ecclesia Anglicana shall be free.”
- That line would become an important touchstone in the 16th century.



Anglican Identity: History

- This early history of Christianity in Britain also includes the devoted Christian King Alfred.
- He defended his people against the Viking invaders but was also instrumental in promoting Christian education and the restoration of the churches in the land.

Anglican Identity: History



- Two of the greatest Christian universities in the world developed in the 11th and 13th centuries in Britain—Oxford and Cambridge.

Anglican Identity: History



- In the 14th century, John Wycliffe, a philosophy professor at Oxford and a priest in the Church, set out to translate the Scriptures from Latin into English.
- It should be noted that he did this in spite of opposition from the leadership of the church in Rome.

Anglican Identity: History

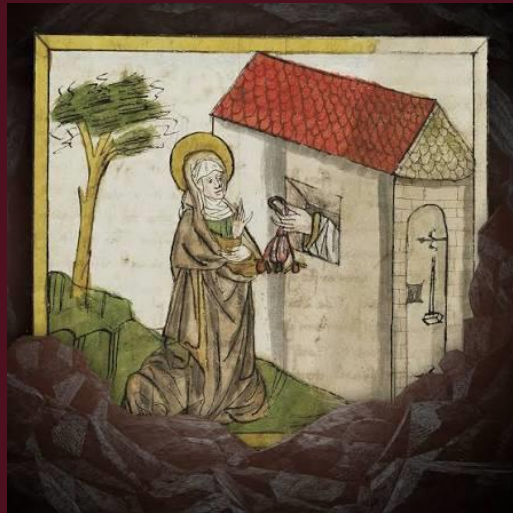


- Wycliffe's name is synonymous with Bible translation.
- He has become the inspiration for putting the Holy Scriptures in the languages of people all over the world.



Anglican Identity: History

- In the 14th and 15th centuries, the English church also produced three of the greatest spiritual writers of the Western Church: Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, and Julian of Norwich.





Anglican Identity: History

- Henry's Church?
- Only someone who is woefully or willfully ignorant of history could make the claim that the Anglican Church was Henry's church.



Anglican Identity: History

- The Anglican Church has a rich history which stretches all the way back to the second century (and maybe the 1st).
- We are an ancient church!



Anglican Identity: History

- The fact that we were likely evangelized by the Eastern church and later consolidated with the Roman church gives us certain affinities with both.
- A bridge church in ecumenical work.



Anglican Identity: History

- The early Anglican church produced remarkably successful missionaries and were at the forefront of Christian education,



Anglican Identity: History

- The Anglican Church was also the inspiration for putting the Scriptures into the languages of every people.
- It also produced spiritual writers who have increased the devotion of countless Christians around the world for centuries.



Anglican Identity: History

- Next week, we will continue our exploration of Anglican identity by tracing the effects of the 16th century Reformation on the Anglican Church.
- We will see how Henry VIII became a part of the story of the Anglican church but certainly did not define it.