



A **Celtic Cross** is the symbol of the Church of Ireland.

CHURCH OF IRELAND/ANGLICAN COMMUNION

The Church of Ireland belongs to the Anglican Communion, a world wide grouping of self-governing churches, including the Church of England. In Scotland and the United States, members are known as Episcopalians.

The *Christian Bible* is the key holy book of the Church, which shares the principal beliefs of other traditions of Christianity (described on page 16).

Clergy are usually called priests or deacons. Those in charge of parishes are usually described as rectors.

Summary of Essential Practice Points:

Please refer to the full text of the highlighted points related to the following summary points.

1 *Profile of the Church of Ireland/ Anglican Communion:*

Members of the Anglican group may be from the Church of Ireland, Church of England or if they are from Scotland or the United States they may refer to themselves as Episcopalian. Lutheran Church members from the Nordic and Baltic countries can receive religious services from Church of Ireland clergy.

2 *Religious contacts and religious practices:*

Each healthcare setting has a designated Church of Ireland chaplain whose role includes responding to the religious needs of Anglicans. There are a number of religious ceremonies (sacraments), each having a specific purpose including aiding healing and preparation for death.

3 *Death-related religious rituals:*

The chaplain or designated religious contact should be called if the person is in imminent danger of death.

4 *Cleaning and touching the body:*

The normal washing and preparation procedure can be carried out on a deceased person.

5 *Initiation ritual/infant baptism:*

The *Sacrament of Baptism*, initiation into the religion, normally takes place in infancy. A newborn child should be baptised if in danger of death. The chaplain can administer this sacrament. In an emergency a Christian lay person may follow the instructions under the theme *Initiation ritual/infant baptism*.

Profile of the Church of Ireland/ Anglican Communion

Essential Practice Point

1

The Church of Ireland has the second largest (stated) religious affiliation in the state. Census 2006 indicated that the Church increased its membership by close to 9% between 2002 and 2006, with 125,585 members in 2006.

Those who are likely to belong to the Church of Ireland are mostly Irish but increasingly members may have been born outside the State. Many Anglicans in Ireland have come from England, mainland Europe, North America, Africa and Asia.

Some of the people in the healthcare setting, for example visitors to Ireland, may be members of churches in communion with the Church of Ireland. These include the Church of England. Scottish and United States' members refer to themselves as *Episcopalians*.

Lutherans from the Nordic and Baltic countries are also full members of the Church of Ireland. The Church of Ireland can act as a representative of Lutheran Church members from Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway and Sweden. All practices/ceremonies are the same in both churches.

Care of the ill

Religious contacts and religious practices

Essential Practice Point

2

- Each healthcare setting has a designated Church of Ireland chaplain whose role assists in responding to the religious and spiritual needs of members of the Church of Ireland and other Anglicans. Clarify with the person if they would prefer to be visited by their own priest/rector or if they are satisfied that the chaplain administers religious services.
- Anglicanism contains a number of religious ceremonies, called sacraments, each of which has a specific purpose including aiding healing during illness, preparation for death and initiation of infants into the religion. Two commonly administered sacraments are those of *Holy Communion* and *Baptism* (described below). The chaplain or religious contact may administer any sacrament required.

Blood Transfusion and Organ Transplantation

There is no religious objection to these matters.

Care of the Dying

Death-related religious rituals

Essential Practice Point

3

- In the event of imminent death the chaplain or designated religious contact given by the person should be called to provide religious and spiritual support to the person and family.
- Anglicans and their families may be comforted by the Church of Ireland chaplain being called to offer prayers. At the request of the person or family the chaplain will administer the *Sacrament of Holy Communion*. A request may sometimes be made to the chaplain to anoint the dying person. This may need sensitivity on the part of the chaplain to address the wishes of all concerned.
- Prayers may be said at the bedside of the dying patient. Following death the family may wish to gather around the bed to commend the person to God and give thanks for their life. These practices can be assisted by the Church of Ireland chaplain.
- Often a short service may take place in the mortuary chapel prior to the deceased leaving.

Customs to be observed at death

Anglicans of Irish origin may expect a health practitioner to sit with them in the moments following the loss of a loved one. It is important to discern the family expectations in these matters and be sensitive to them. If in doubt, check with colleagues or the chaplain.

Cleaning and touching the body

Essential Practice Point

4

The normal washing and preparation procedure can be carried out.

Postmortem requirements

There is no religious objection to postmortem.

Interment ritual

Both burial and cremation are acceptable generally. Arrangements are usually made with the person's local Church of Ireland parish priest.

Religious Icons and Symbols

Personal and religious items

Some Anglicans (and Lutherans) may wear a cross. This should be treated with respect and should not be removed without the consent of the patient/family.

Use of religious symbols

- A plain cross and candles are appropriate in the mortuary area.
- It is preferable that the crucifix is not displayed in the mortuary area when an Anglican family is using the facility.

Additional Notes on Maternity and Paediatric Care

Initiation ritual/infant baptism

Essential Practice Point

5

- In the Anglican tradition the *Sacrament of Baptism* is the religious ceremony that initiates the person into the religion. This usually takes place in infancy. If a new born infant is in danger of death it is important that the child is baptised.
 - If the infant dies before baptism can be performed, a *Naming Ceremony* can be offered by a Church of Ireland chaplain or priest.
 - In an emergency any Christian, including a midwife or another healthcare practitioner, may perform a baptism. This is done by making the sign of the Cross on the child's forehead, pouring a little water on the forehead and saying the words "(child's name), I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen." Many parents will derive great comfort from knowing that their child has been baptised.
- At a later time a surviving child can be publicly welcomed and into the religion.

Foetal, infant and child death

- There are no specific religious requirements governing many areas of foetal, infant and child death. The chaplain can offer particular ceremonies based on the needs and wishes of the parents, which are of paramount

importance in these sensitive situations.

- In the case of a stillbirth the chaplain can offer a *Blessing or Naming Ceremony*. These rituals can also be performed in the case of miscarriage, based on a request from parents.
- A funeral service will be offered for all cases of foetal, infant and child death. The nature of the service is based upon the wishes and needs of the bereaved. Local clergy tend to work with the bereaved family in the preparation of the funeral service. The chaplain will be a contact person and a resource in these matters.
- Parents will value the knowledge that the remains are treated with respect.

Memento of a deceased child

There is no objection to offering a memento of a deceased child to the parents, be it a footprint, handprint, lock of hair, etc.

Developing a Church of Ireland Contact

Each healthcare setting has an appointed Church of Ireland chaplaincy resource. The chaplaincy department can provide details of the local contact.

The annual publication *The Church of Ireland Directory* lists the names and contact details of chaplains assigned to hospitals.

Contributors

Two Church of Ireland clergy contributed to this section and jointly approved the finalised content. They were Reverend Bruce Pierce, Director of Education and CPE Supervisor, St. Luke's Home, Cork and Canon Patrick Comerford, Church of

Ireland Theological Institute. Canon Comerford provided us with detailed guidance and clarification on the historical development of Christianity for the sub-section *Terminology and traditions within Christianity* in section 3. Both Reverend Pierce and Canon Comerford provided us with materials written by them that are referenced in the bibliography.