

Autistic Christians Support Community

Appreciating Anglo-Catholic Liturgy

Presenter: Catherine Ebenezer

Chair: Sue
Chat Monitor: David

20 June 2026

AGENDA

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 1. 11.00 – 11.05 | Welcome and Introduction |
| 2. 11.05 – 11.15 | Catherine: Appreciating Anglo-Catholic Liturgy |
| 3. 11.15 – 11.45 | Discussion (30 mins) |
| 4. 11.45 – 11.55 | Community Update |
| 5. 11.55 – 12.00 | AOB |
| ----- | |
| 12.00 - 12.30 | Social time |

Autistic Christians Support Community

Appreciating Anglo-Catholic Liturgy

Catherine Ebenezer

Appreciating ANGLO- CATHOLIC LITURGY

Some personal reflections

Altar of St John the Divine, Kennington

Image source: Wikimedia Commons



Core thesis

“Anglo-Catholic liturgy can offer a structured, sensory, predictable and non-threatening environment that aligns well with autistic processing styles and spiritual needs”

*Altar front for the Chapel of the
Resurrection, Pusey House in Oxford by
Ninian Comper*

Image source: Wikimedia Commons





Preconceptions / assumptions

- Impossibility of 'belonging' and genuine belief – felt out of place
- Pressure to 'respond' in a 'correct' way / 'feel right'
- Faith a private, individual matter - embarrassment
- Associated with peak experiences – choral performances
- Scruple / guilt
- Simplistic ideas of vocation, duty, service

What is liturgy? What is its significance?

“The term **liturgy** (from the Greek *leitourgia*, meaning ‘public service’ or ‘work of the people’) refers to the **prescribed forms, rituals, prayers, and order of worship** that structure Christian public worship. It is the formal, structured framework through which a congregation participates collectively in worship.”

- Participative / collective
- Embodied
- Formative
- Connects to history and tradition
- Objective

λειτουργία

What is Anglo-Catholicism?

- Emerged from Oxford / Tractarian movement – 19th century – focused on the inherent ***character*** of the church – not subordinate to the state
- Flourished early 20th century, now sadly split by disagreements – has liberal and traditionalist wings
- Emphasises continuity / commonalities with early church and with Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches – the ‘Catholic’ aspects of Anglican heritage
- Arising from its sacramental theology, excellence in liturgy a major focus, alongside theology and devotion – ‘the beauty of holiness’

Predictability and structure

- Relatively *fixed structure* of the liturgy (eucharist, daily offices) - reliable framework for corporate worship
- *Prescribed* (albeit flexible) *postures* - standing, sitting, kneeling, processing, etc., remove the social anxiety of 'unwritten social rules'
- The liturgical *calendar* - a richly complex and satisfying overall structure that cycles yearly through the main themes of the faith

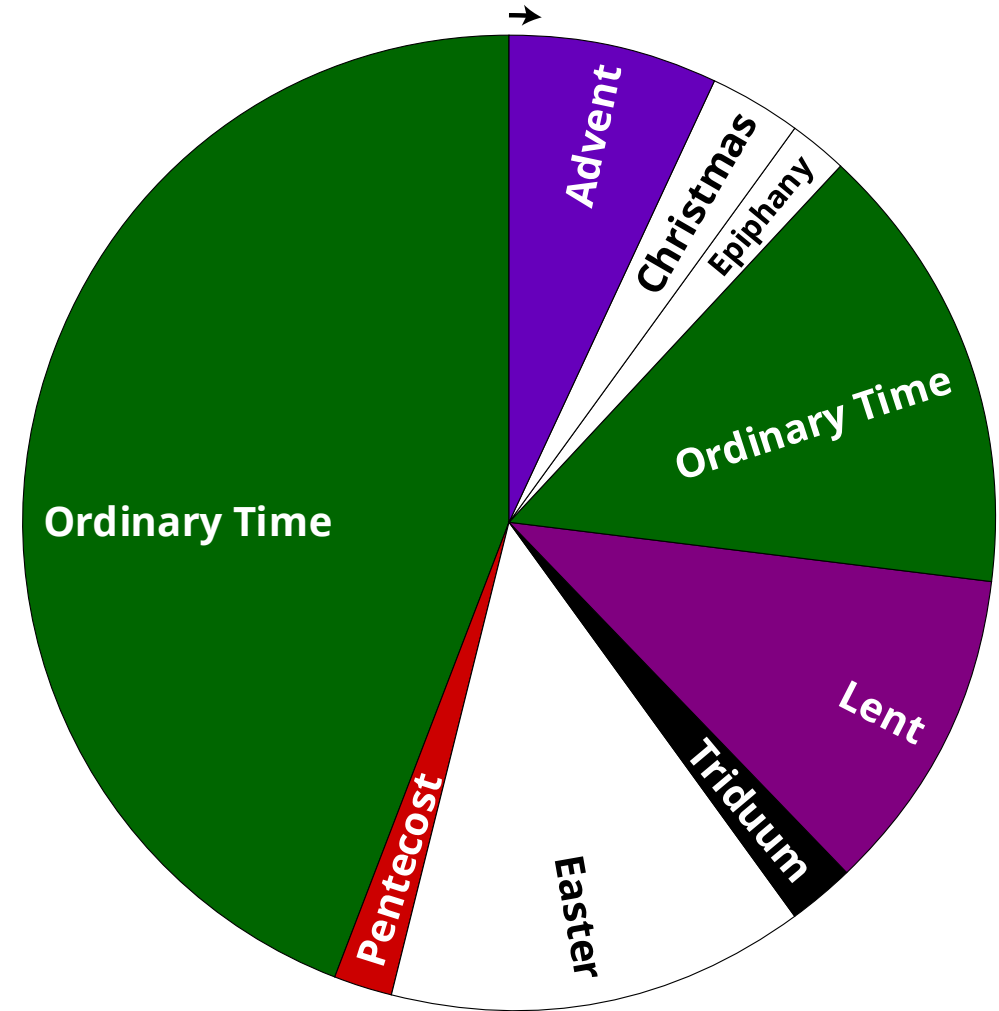


Image source: Wikimedia Commons

Sensory engagement

- Sensory richness in a controlled, predictable way:
 - *Sight*: architecture, stained glass, images, statues and vestments provide visual anchors
 - *Smell*: incense marks sacred time and space – a strong environmental cue
 - *Sound*: bells, organ music, choir music have predictable, resonant frequencies
 - *Gesture*: more powerful / expressive / meaningful than words



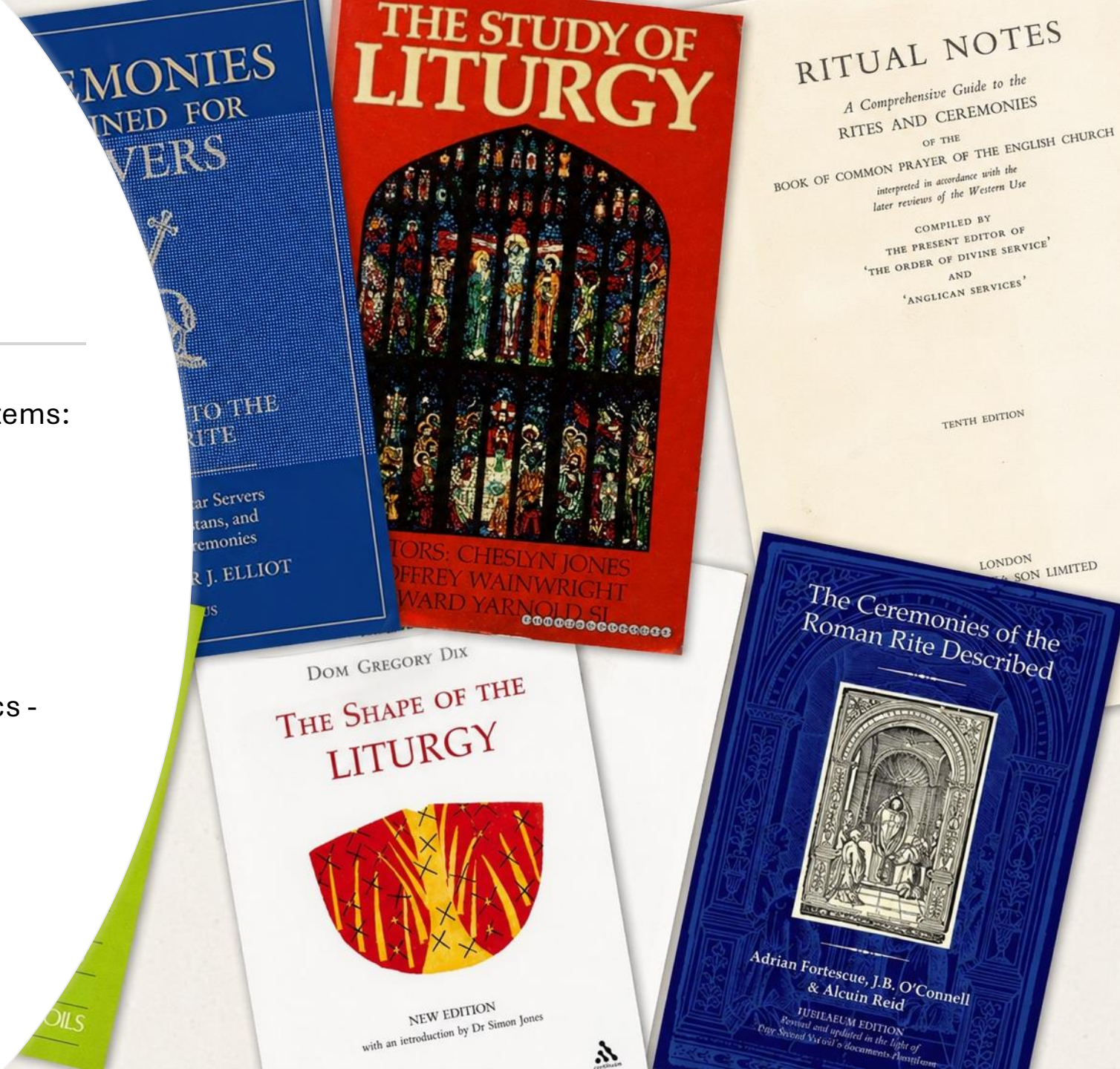
Image source: Wikimedia Commons

Community without social pressure

- *Parallel* worship - people worship together, but are focused on the liturgical action
- *Objective* worship – focus is upward and outward, on God – no expectation or social pressure to express feelings, demonstrate subjective responses, or otherwise to interact with other people
- Worship is *communal* and *corporate*
- Silence and stillness are valued – *quiet reverence* - allowing one just to ‘be there’
- Aesthetic integrity – emphasis on *beauty* and *correctness* – resonates with a strong sense of ‘how things ought to be done’ / discomfort with sloppiness and inconsistency

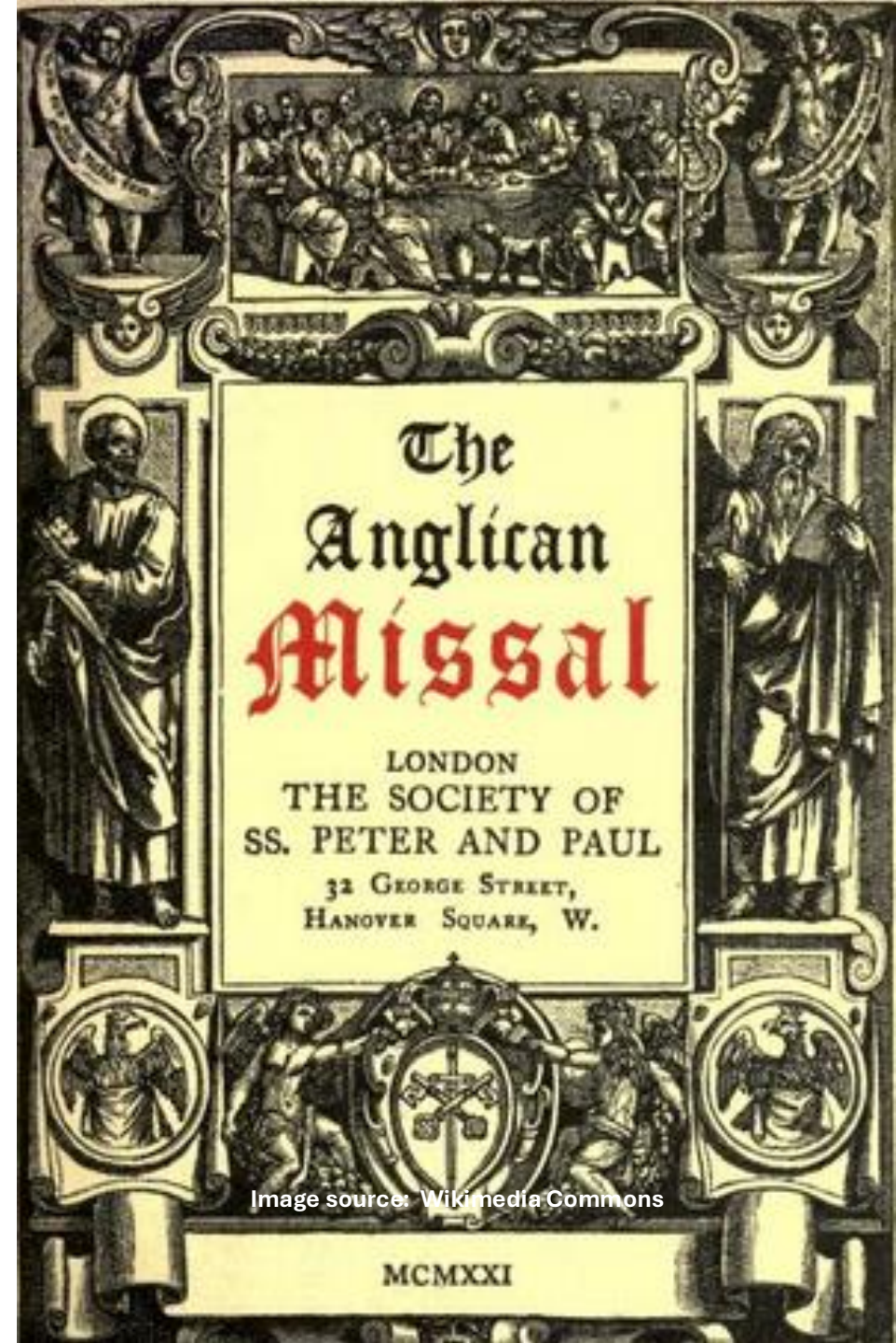
A special interest?

- Affords the joy of 'deep-diving' into complex systems:
 - Rubrics
 - Ceremonial
 - Vestment symbolism
 - Liturgical calendar
 - Church history
 - Theology of the church and sacraments
- ... in the company of like-minded Anglo-Catholics -
– a ready-made community!
- Can offer deeply satisfying roles in the liturgical action:
 - Altar serving
 - Singing



*“Anglo-Catholic liturgy is a
‘beautiful, accessible
sanctuary for neurodivergent
minds.’”*

Your thoughts ???



References

- St Mary Magdalene's Church, Eccles (n.d.) What is Anglo-Catholicism?
<https://www.stmarymagdaleneeccles.org.uk/about-us/st-mary-magdalene-1/>
(18/06/26)
- Lynch, Gerry (2017) On Anglo-Catholicism
<https://www.gerrylynch.co.uk/teaching/on-anglo-catholicism/> (18/06/26)
- Hixson, Myles (2020) What is Anglo-Catholicism? Anglican Compass.
<https://anglicancompass.com/what-is-anglo-catholicism/> (18/06/26)
- Schneider, Matthew P (2022) *God loves the autistic mind: a prayer guide for those on the spectrum and those who love us*. Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media

COMMUNITY NEWS

CFE Discussion Schedule - 2026

DATE	DAY/TIME	CFE-Autism DISCUSSION TOPIC	SPEAKER	CHAIR	CHAT
17 Jan	Sat/11am GMT	Long Covid and Autism - overlapping communities?	Grant	Stewart	Sue
21 Feb	Sat/11am GMT	Beating alcohol dependence?	Courtney	Sue	David
21 Mar	Sat/11am GMT	Autistic burnout and trauma?	Sue	David	Stewart
18 Apr	Sat/11am BST*	Seeing, noticing, valuing?	Stewart	David	Sue
16 May	Sat/11am BST	Wounded healers - Christ, Coventry and Me.	Franceska	Stewart	Sue
20 Jun	Sat/11am BST	Appreciating Anglo-Catholic Liturgy	Catherine	Sue	David
18 Jul	Sat/11am BST	Humour, Faith and Autism?	Jonathan	David	Sue
Aug		Summer Break – no meeting			

* The UK changes from GMT to BST on 29 March 2026

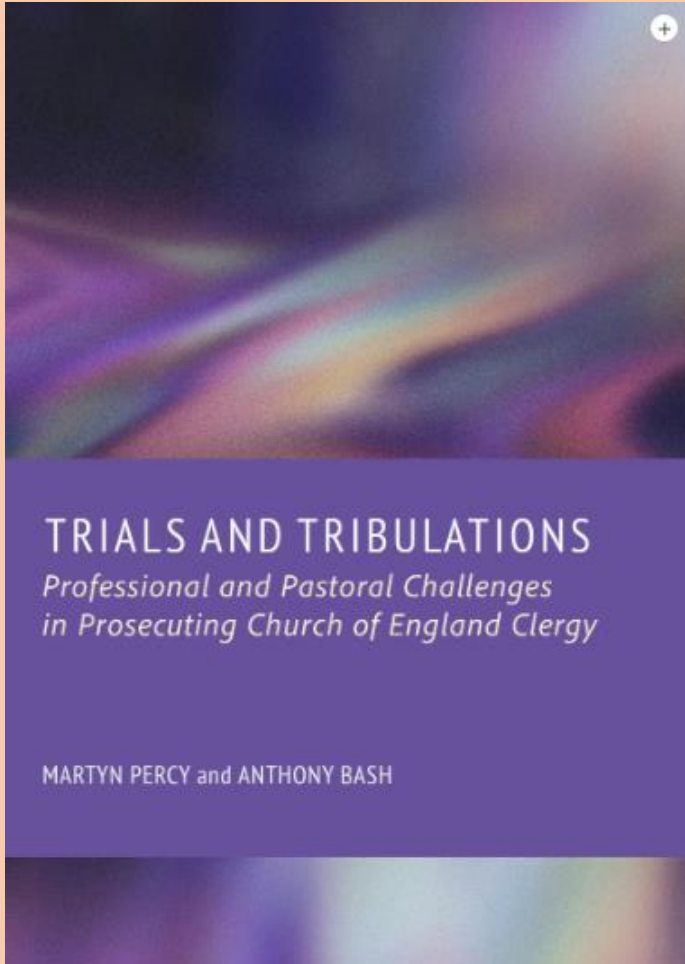
CFE Discussion Schedule - 2026

We are now looking for topics for September onwards.

If you would like to take on one of these topics (below) – or have another idea – or are happy to do a talk and would like help choosing a topic - please let me know.

Topic	Lead	Schedule
Rules and Tricks for Autistic flourishing: Can project management ideas help?	Stewart? Rebecca?	
Building helpful and 'impactful' relationships outside meetings	Neil?	
Autism and Other Faiths	Chris?	
Monotropism		
AI, Autism & Faith		
Ageing: an issue for autistic Christians?	Sue?	
Raising issues with Church: "shall I stay or shall I go?"		
Autism and Shame, a faith-based approach?	Sue?	
Safeguarding - what is a 'safe space'?		
Applying the alexithymia emotion chart to the fruits of the Spirit	Tali	Feb 2027?
Battling with insomnia (Psalm 3)	Stewart	
An holistic model of autism - revisited	Stewart	

New Resource



Ethics Press

https://ethicspress.com/products/trials-and-tribulations?_pos=1&_sid=1532490a4&_ss=r

New book about the treatment of clergy in the CofE

Expensive! (hardback only) - £87.99