



The Story of Saint Augustine of Canterbury

Inspired by the storytelling style of Godly Play by Jerome Berryman

*Storyteller, dressed in cassock,
center of worship space, with mic
pack*

This is the story of Saint Augustine of Canterbury. The church remembers St Augustine every spring on May 26. But why do we remember him? Let's see.

Augustine was a Benedictine monk, serving in Rome. We do not know much about his childhood or early life. We think he was born in Rome. We do know that he was educated and we know that he was likely a good administrator, because he was serving as the prior of the monastery.

Augustine was happy in that role and probably would have liked to stay there but Pope Gregory the Great decided to send him to England to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity and build the English Church. To help him be ready for this work, the Pope made him a bishop. The Pope also selected a number of other monks to go with Augustine – God never sends us by ourselves but rather equips us with companions in the faith. The group was really scared and overwhelmed by the task before them and tried to turn back, but the Pope sent them encouraging letters and they continued on to England.

In 597, Augustine and 30-40 other monks landed on the shores of Kent.

*Move to step inside a pile of boxes
wrapped in brown paper*

The King of Kent, Ethelbert, had married a Christian wife named Bertha. The king let Augustine and his monks take over the ruins of an old church from Roman times. Those ruins were located in what is now Canterbury. In time, the people built a great cathedral on this site in Canterbury and it is still home to the English church.

*Walk with processional cross to
font. Pause and dramatically fill the
font with water from a pitcher. You
might include the crucifer that day
in this action.*

Augustine wasn't an especially enthusiastic missionary. He and the other monks began celebrating the liturgy and leading processions, just as they would have done in Rome. They let the people decide if they wanted to take part, or not. In time, the King of Kent, likely encouraged by his Christian wife Bertha, decided to be baptised. One Christmas Day, there was a miraculous event, where hundreds and hundreds of people decided to become baptised. This was common in the medieval period – mass conversions to the faith following the baptism of the king.

Put on bishop's costume

Shortly after, the Pope in Rome decided to send other bishops to establish the church in various parts of England. Augustine was made Archbishop of Canterbury, a role that exists to this day. Because of Augustine's early work, the church grew to include London and Rochester. Eventually, it spread throughout England.

"Big, generous symbols"



Walk to center and lift pulpit Bible

Augustine died on May 26 in the year 605. He was revered as a saint soon after his death. In art, he is often pictured with a Bible or holding a book of the Gospels, to credit him for establishing Christianity in England.

Omit in places not named for St. Augustine of Canterbury

Our church is named after St. Augustine of Canterbury. Originally, we were called the St. Cuthbert's Northlea Mission. This congregation that formed in North Leaside in April of 1946 celebrated their first Eucharist together on May 26, 1946. That was St. Augustine of Canterbury's feast day and so the Bishop of Toronto chose that name for this new church. And maybe there is another reason why we are like Augustine. We were a new church added to a neighbourhood that already had Christian roots and a Christian memory.

The Church remembers Saint Augustine because he was a missionary to England. We remember him because he brought the Good News of Jesus to the people. We remember Augustine because he brought so many people to baptism. We remember Augustine because he was the first Archbishop of Canterbury. He re-established a church on old ruins and on that very spot, there is now a cathedral dedicated to God. It is a sacred place for the English Church and English Christians living in other countries. For more than 1,400 years, Archbishops in Canterbury have served the church in England and around the world. Anglicans like us continue to be in relationship with that church founded by Saint Augustine.

Place the Bible down for the wondering. Encourage congregation members to offer answers – perhaps by offering your own. Repeat their answer to both affirm their answer and so that it is spoken into the mic so all can hear, including those watching the recording.

I wonder. I wonder what part of Saint Augustine's story you like best?

I wonder what part of the story you think is the most important?

Is it that he was a missionary? An archbishop? Is it because he re-established the church in England? Is it because so many came for baptism or that the King of Kent became a Christian and helped to make England a Christian nation? Is it because the Archbishop of Canterbury is still a symbol for Anglicans around the world?

I wonder if there is part of the story that is just for you? Do you see yourself anywhere in the story of Saint Augustine?

"Big, generous symbols"