

U.S., Canadian Anglicans await royal wedding festivities

by [Piet Levy](#)

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(RNS) An ocean away from the pomp and circumstance of Prince William and Kate Middleton's nuptials on Friday, parishioners at Grace Anglican Church in Brantford, Ontario, will host their own royal festivities, complete with a free continental breakfast and traditional wedding bunting.

"Lent (is) over, so it will be time for a party," said the church's rector, the Rev. David M. Ponting, who said the church is inviting people to dress up as their favorite royal or British celebrity.

"I haven't decided if I will be the Archbishop of Canterbury or Elton John," he joked.

The Ontario church is one of a scattering of Episcopal churches in the U.S. and Anglican churches in Canada that are steeping the tea and toasting the crumpets in honor of their spiritual cousins across the pond.

Canadian Anglicans and U.S. Episcopalians are the North American branches of the worldwide Anglican Communion, which grew out of the Church of England as the British Empire spread around the world.

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, who will officiate at the wedding in Westminster Abbey, is considered the spiritual leader of a far-flung Anglican flock, although he has no direct power over any of the communion's 44 member churches.

The Church of England has a direct tie to Britain's storied monarchy -- Queen Elizabeth II holds the title of "Supreme Governor" of the Church of England, and Williams' predecessors have crowned British

monarchs for nearly 1,000 years.

Ponting said Anglicans typically hold the British royals in high regard -- bells tolled in mourning upon news of King George VI's death in 1952, prompting hundreds of townspeople to gather at Grace Anglican to mourn.

In Chicago, members of the Episcopal Church of Our Savior hosted a black tie fundraiser in 1981 to celebrate the marriage of Prince Charles and Princess Diana, said Roger Gumm, chair of the parish's royal wedding breakfast event.

This time around, the event will be a more casual free breakfast, said the church's rector, the Rev. Brian Hastings. He added, however, that the church's assistant rector, the Rev. Martha Korienek, intends to buy a new hat for the affair.

Beyond food and the optional dress up, Grace Anglican will be accepting donations for its feed-the-hungry program, and host Communion following the wedding, Ponting said. Gumm will offer a service of morning prayer at the end of the Chicago event.

The clergy said they'll be proud to see the world stop to watch a decidedly Christian -- and Anglican -- wedding ceremony inside the storied Westminster Abbey. They'll also be cheering for Prince William, who will one day inherit his grandmother's title of Supreme Governor for the Church of England.

"It's a celebration of our roots and extends our identity to a larger group in England and across the world," says the Rev. David Kluttermann, pastor for The Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist in Wausau, Wis., which will serve tea to guests at a wedding-viewing and fundraising party.

"If Anglicans can't have high tea to celebrate the royal wedding, who can?"