

# The Prayer Book Society of Canada Newsletter

Christmas 2007

## The PBSC at General Synod 2007

By Diana Versegghy  
PBSC Toronto Branch

As our members and supporters know, we went into General Synod this past June facing some major challenges. On the whole the outcome has been very positive – more positive than some of us had dared to hope.

The main challenge facing the PBSC specifically was of course the prospect of liturgical revision. A motion had been brought forward by the Revd. Dr. Richard Leggett of the Vancouver School of Theology, seconded by Bishop Michael Bedford-Jones, both of the national Faith, Worship and Ministry Committee, proposing: “That this General Synod direct the Faith, Worship and Ministry Committee to prepare principles and an agenda for common worship texts revision”. Of course, as the PBSC has said time and again, we are not in principle opposed to revision of the BCP. Our 1962 book is itself the product of several revisions, from 1549 through 1552, 1559, 1662, and 1918. But we are firmly convinced that undertaking Prayer Book revision at this time would be a serious mistake.



The PBSC booth at General Synod. From left to right: David Nusko, Jim Salladin and the Revd. Gordon Maitland.

As described in our recent regional and national mailings, the national PBSC mounted a two-pronged campaign to get our views across. Before Synod, the Chairman's Task Force produced a brochure which was sent to all Synod delegates, explaining why the motion should be defeated. The salient points were as follows:

**1) Revision at this time would be a new source of conflict.** While we struggle to hold together the church we all love, let's not deliberately re-introduce projects that will inflame existing tensions. The last two General Synods decided not to pursue Prayer Book revision. It wasn't a good idea then, and it isn't a good idea now.

**2) We don't have theological consensus.** What good revision requires – and what we lack – is any sort of theological consensus about liturgical worship, let alone common worship texts.

**3) Parishes don't want this.** BCP parishes certainly don't want it, and parishes favouring the BAS are not looking for a new common prayer book but for fresh modern liturgies (which will already be stale in the nine years it would take to produce a new book).

**4) There is a better way.** We should follow the lead of the Church of England, which has kept the BCP intact, but also has produced “Common Worship”, a collection of published and on-line materials which can be continually updated and revised, reflecting diverse devotional practices. “Draw the Circle Wide”!

*(Note - “Draw the Circle Wide, Draw it Wider Still”, a line from a contemporary hymn written by Gordon Light, was the theme of General Synod 2007.)*

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At Synod itself, the Society organized a booth in one of the display areas. This booth was the product of months of hard work on the part of a committee struck by the national PBSC, under the chairmanship of the Revd. Gordon Maitland. The staff manning the booth included Fr. Maitland; our national chairman, Fr. David Harris; Vancouver branch president Norah Johnston; author Sue Careless; two youth representatives, Jim Salladin from Vancouver and David Nusko from Mount Hope, Ontario; and myself. Fr. Stephen Sharman of Winnipeg provided invaluable assistance with local arrangements. Providentially, our booth was located in a very advantageous position: on the same floor as the Synod plenary hall, in a pleasant, bright room with coffee, tea and water available, and right by the door, so that delegates couldn't miss us when entering or leaving. The backdrop of the booth consisted of three specially-designed banners, with a fresh, contemporary look and catchy slogans. In the centre was an image of a surfer, with the caption "The Book of Common Prayer: Live Large, Pray Large". On one side was an image of a tree in full bloom, with the caption "The Book of Common Prayer: Deep Roots, New Growth". On the other was an image of a child running through a field of wildflowers, with the caption "The Book of Common Prayer: Religious Poetry in Motion". On the table of the booth, we had several items offered for sale: Sue Careless's first two volumes of the series "Discovering the Book of Common Prayer – A Hands-On Approach"; educational DVDs produced by our affiliate organization, "Parish Alive!"; and Prayer Books, which we

customized with ribbon markers upon request. There was also a good selection of giveaway items. Probably the biggest hit was an eye-catching black and white PBSC-logo tote bag, large enough to hold the voluminous Synod binder that delegates had to carry around with them as well as notepads, a water bottle and an umbrella. We produced 200 of these as gifts for delegates; by the end of the first day more than half of them were gone, and by the end of the second day we had only thirty left. Every last one had been claimed by the end of Synod. (Pat Bryan, of Port Hope, Ontario, who was unfortunately unable to attend Synod, masterminded the production of both these and the banners.) We also had a brand-new, colour information brochure on the Society, free bookmarks echoing the design of the three banners, and back copies of the last two issues of the national PBSC newsletter. Last but not least, we had a fun item: a button with a dinosaur skull on it and the slogan, "Think you have image problems? ... The Prayer Book Society." All of these items generated a great deal of interest, among supporters and detractors alike. In short, we sent a strong message that we were organized, determined, articulate, friendly, generous and fun-loving.

The liturgical revision motion finally came to the floor (after one or two false alarms) on Monday morning, the last day of Synod. Our efforts up to that point had evidently had an impact, because the mover, Dr. Leggett, began his remarks by saying (rather disingenuously, I thought) that the motion "was not about Prayer Book revision". However, this in turn prompted a

response by the Revd. Dr. Stephen Andrews of Thorneloe College in Sudbury, the newly elected Prolocutor of Synod, who said that he was glad to hear this, since he appreciated the work and witness of Prayer Book parishes, and that he therefore proposed that the words "common worship texts revision" in the motion be struck and replaced with the words "revision of our contemporary language worship texts, and the production of fresh new liturgical expressions". To the delight of the PBSC staff observing the debate, this was accepted as a "friendly amendment" by both the mover and seconder of the motion (meaning that it did not have to be voted upon by the whole of General Synod), and after a few delegates had spoken to the motion, it passed comfortably.

Needless to say, this is tremendously good news for the PBSC. Since the energies of liturgical revision will be focussed on the BAS and other contemporary language texts over the course of the next period (which can be expected to last for roughly ten years, since revised books of worship must be approved by two successive General Synods), we are now free to concentrate our attention on confidently promoting the understanding and use of our Prayer Book, without worrying about what objectionable proposals for it might be just around the corner. Among other things, this means full steam ahead for Sue Careless's third and final volume in the "Discovering the BCP" series, which I have asked her to start writing as soon as she can.

## A Parting of the Ways?

Desmond Scotchmer

The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, meeting this past summer, voted on resolutions that will have significant ramifications for the Canadian church's membership in the worldwide Anglican Communion. The first of these ran as follows:

**"This General Synod resolves that the blessing of same-sex unions is not in conflict with the core doctrine (in the sense of being credal) of the Anglican Church of Canada".**

The motion passed by 152 votes to 97 among the clergy and laity (61% to 38%), and 21 votes to 19 among the bishops (52.5% to 47.5%).

What does this signify? Firstly, what strikes this writer is the *oddness* of the motion: both its wording, and its intent. The Creeds do not touch on matters of sexual morality. They deal specifically with the nature of the Trinity, and of the life and saving work of Jesus Christ. How can a motion declare something to be in conflict, or not in conflict, with something else when it does not, in fact, address that issue at all? Christian teaching on morality, including sexual morality, is not set out in the Creeds, that is not their purpose. Christian moral teaching is set out elsewhere: in the Scriptures, of course.

Be that as it may, the motion passed. However, as passed it represented a version that was significantly diluted from the

original, which read as follows:

**"This General Synod resolves that the blessing of same-sex unions is consistent with the core doctrine of the Anglican Church of Canada."**

Seen against the original version, the amended version might seem like an attempt to find some sort of middle way. However, it will, of course, create *at the very least* considerable disquiet among anyone who subscribes to the classic understanding of Anglicanism as both Reformed and Catholic. (And, after all, shouldn't *all* Anglicans still subscribe to such an understanding of Anglicanism? It needs to be emphasized that this historic understanding, of Anglicanism, as both Reformed and Catholic, is foundational and normative for our church, and has never been changed by any synod, here or elsewhere. The last Lambeth Conference vigorously upheld such an understanding, as did the Windsor Report. And every priest and bishop in the Anglican Church of Canada has solemnly sworn before God and the Congregation to uphold it, the faith of Christ *as this Church has received it*. Crucial to any understanding of the Anglican Church as Reformed and Catholic is the premise that doctrine stands under the authority of Scripture, and cannot be remade on the fly).

It also needs to be said that, under Canon Law, any doctrinal change must be passed by a two-thirds majority by two consecutive synods. However, Synod decided that this motion needed a vote of only 50 % plus one in order to pass, in spite of the fact that it had serious implications for church doctrine. Had the 2/3 rule been in place, the motion would have

failed. Speaking for myself, I can only say that such tactics engender deep misgivings regarding Synod's intentions.

This motion was followed by a second motion, which would have given the go-ahead for each diocese to permit same-sex blessings on its own. Unlike the first motion, this motion was voted for by each order (laity, clergy, and bishops) separately. The motion was passed by the order of laity by 78 votes to 59 (56.9% to 43.1%), and in the order of clergy by 63 votes to 53 (54.3% to 45.7%). However, it failed in the House of Bishops by a vote of 19 for and 21 against (52.3% to 47.5%).

While the agenda to rewrite the Christian religion so as to conform to the attitudes of secular society has been checked – for now – the events of Synod have already been subjected to the usual media "spin".

The *Anglican Journal* started things off with an editorial stating that General Synod's resolution meant that same-sex blessings were "theoretically acceptable", and were not a communion breaking issue. Numerous letters printed in the *Journal* downplayed the significance of any potential split in the Anglican Communion world-wide, taking a "who-cares-about-church-unity-anyway?" approach, arguing that the church has been split before, and, after all, isn't Anglicanism the result of just such a split? One of the more egregious of these letters was even boxed for our attention. In the *Globe and Mail*, an Anglican clergyman (Canon Eric Beresford, "Anglicans: A Church in Confusion" – July 9, 2007) stated that the Anglican Church of Canada had declared the blessing of same-sex unions to be a



“matter indifferent”.

However unsatisfactory General Synod’s motion was, conservatives need to be quite clear about several things: General Synod did not at any time state that same-sex blessings were “theoretically acceptable”. At no time did Synod declare same-sex unions *to be* a “matter indifferent”. To imply otherwise is to play fast and free with the actual record. Synod’s resolution echoed the St Michael Report, which declared the blessing of same-sex unions to be a matter of doctrine, though not credal or “core” doctrine. (It’s important to note that, while making this distinction, the Report nevertheless recognized that the issue of same-sex blessings touches on a number of central doctrines such as salvation, incarnation, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, sanctification, and holy matrimony, among others).

Events continued to unfold within the Anglican Church of Canada: the Diocese of Ottawa voted on October 12/13 by 177 to 97 (64.6% to 35.4%) to approve same-sex blessings, and the Diocese of Montreal on October 20 voted to request the bishop to grant permission to bless same-sex unions by 44 to 25 (63.8% to 36.2%) in the order of clergy and 59 to 32 (64.8% to 35.2%) in the order of laity. In both cases, the bishop indicated he would take no action one way or the other – for now. It is important, I believe, to remember that in the diocese of New Westminster, resolutions in favour of same-sex unions were passed at successive synods, and this was put forward by some as a justification for Bishop Ingham’s decision to authorize them. Likely, proponents of same-sex blessings in

both Ottawa and Montreal are looking at the New Westminster events as a model.

The Anglican Communion worldwide (Lambeth Conference 1998, the Windsor Report of October, 2004, and recent meetings of the world-wide Anglican Primates) have made it clear that blessing same-sex unions represents a significant departure from Anglican teaching that “tears the fabric” of the Communion “at its deepest level”. Against this backdrop, the actions of the diocese of Ottawa and Montreal can only be seen as a repudiation of world-wide Anglicanism, and a willingness to “walk apart” from the global Anglican Communion. Strange – and sad – to see Anglican dioceses, which once vaunted their ecumenism, retreat into such a parochial, narrow and separatist understanding of the church. Church unity has been something that Anglicans of all shades and varieties have been passionate about for many years. If Canadian liberal Anglicans can suddenly be so cavalier about unity *within* Anglicanism itself, as evidenced by letters to the *Anglican Journal*, and

by votes at diocesan synods, whatever can their commitment be to a wider Christian ecumenism?

Still, events continue to play out on the international Anglican front. Much will depend on how the Archbishop of Canterbury responds to events in the light of the ongoing Windsor process, outlined in the Easter 2007 edition of the PBSC Newsletter.

Our readers will remember that in February, 2007, the Primates of the Anglican provinces, meeting in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, endorsed a process intended to lead to reconciliation for the fractured Anglican Communion. At that time, the Primates requested from the American House of Bishops an undertaking to respect the teaching of the Anglican Communion on same-sex unions. The response from the American bishops has been, to say the least, equivocal, and global Anglicanism waits to see what the response in turn will be from the Archbishop of Canterbury. The disregard for that reconciliation process shown by the dioceses of Ottawa and Montreal has now been thrown into the equation. Stay tuned.



For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.  
*Isaiah. 9: 6.*

## Adventures in the Church in Belize

*Nicholas Hatt, a member of St. Stephen's Church in Chester, N.S., and a student at the Atlantic School of Theology, participated in the Anglican Church of Canada's International Internship Program for Theological Students this past summer. He served for three months in the Parish of St. Andrew in the town of San Ignacio, Belize. Here are excerpts from his three letters home, describing his experience.*

I arrived in Belize on May 14. I spent my first few days in Belize City, the former capital, which still remains the social and commercial centre of the country. The city, as one resident of San Ignacio described it to me, is "rough". It is littered with many large homes and businesses which look as though they had once enjoyed a golden era – but no more. With tremendous levels of economic disparity in some parts, the city has a substantial crime and drug rate. Most buildings are surrounded by a fence with a locked gate. But there are also some very well to do homes, including the Prime Minister's home in Belize. Economic prosperity has

reached some parts of the country.

After some time in Belize City at the Diocesan Offices, I was fortunate to visit St John the Baptist Cathedral, which is a charming, 19th century colonial building. I was able to spend some time with the Cathedral Dean, Lloyd Neal. Fr Neal was kind enough to not only give me a tour of the Cathedral, but also took me around Belize City for a good part of the day. Our first stop was Queen's Square Anglican Primary School, to which the Dean is chaplain. The schools in Belize are mostly church-run, with only teachers' salaries paid by the government. All the other expenses fall to the various churches. We arrive in time for the Dean to lead the teachers' morning devotions. "What do you need?" he asks them. "What do the children need? What does this country need?" The children need love, they tell him. "And sometimes, I don't have enough love to give to them", says one teacher. "They don't get it at home, and I can only give so much." Another teacher speaks up, "The children need food. Too many of them go to bed hungry, or they show up at school without breakfast", she

says. There are many worries on their mind.

The current political turmoil in the country also features large. The Dean turns to Luke 12:22-31. "Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not...If then God

so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Later, as we drive away, I ask the Dean how Belizeans hear those passages, given all the worries that plague them. "I am glad you are articulating that aspect", he says, "because many of them do have to worry, just to make it through each day. But they need to know that Jesus is the only way out."

On Ascension Day I was able to attend Divine Worship at the Cathedral, with over 300 children who attend one of the local Anglican primary (elementary-level) schools. The Cathedral was full of 5 to 9 year olds, belting out selections from Hymns Ancient and Modern at the top of their lungs. Alleluia!

St Andrew's Church and Rectory are located in downtown San Ignacio, on Burns Ave. The church has both English and Spanish-speaking congregations. The Spanish-speaking congregation is served by a local Spanish priest, Olivia Vasquez, while I will serve the English congregation. The parish also has two satellite points in the rural areas: St. Hilda's in Georgeville, and St. Barnabas' in Central Farm. Unfortunately, the parish has never had a priest stay for more than six years, the latest incumbent having left about one year ago. They celebrated their centennial only 2 years ago, and the current church building was raised in 1998 to replace the former which had become infested with termites. This congregation is by no means averse to hard work!

I couldn't ask for more friendly or gracious hosts here in San Ignacio.



The Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, Belize City

The Rectory where I stay even had a fridge full of milk and juice and water when I arrived! The parishioners I have met over the past few weeks come from a whole variety of ethnic backgrounds, including Mayan, Spanish, and Garifuna. While most speak fluent English, and English is the language for conducting business and used in teaching school, most talk on the street is done in Creole, which is a mix of broken English, Spanish and other local dialects. I am slowly starting to pick up bits of Creole. I managed to impress one of the school teachers when he tried to trick me by throwing in some Creole – I simply replied in English! Together, with a good sense of humour, my Belizean friends are helping me to break the small language barrier.

Over the past few days, as I have met parishioners and townsfolk, I have also made myself busy at the three local Anglican schools. As the pastor at St Andrew's, I also serve as chaplain to the more than 600 children and teachers at these schools. On a regular basis the children come to the parish church where I lead them in worship. With graduation fast approaching at the end of June, it will soon be a very busy time at the schools.

School teachers are required, as part of their employment with the school, to participate in the life of the parish church, and many regularly assist with Sunday School and other youth programs at St Andrew's. Scripture classes are a regular part of the week-day school curriculum, as are weekly worship services. I must admit that I have found it almost jarring to hear the Lord's Prayer and Apostles' Creed said by whole

classrooms of children. The contrast with Canada, where public prayer is largely discouraged, if not prohibited, is striking.

My knowledge of Scripture has certainly been put to the test over these past few weeks. I quickly learned that teachers might call upon me, on the spot, to teach a Scripture class on any given day, or lead the children in devotions! I surprised myself on a number of occasions. God bless the Daily Office Lectionary of the Book of Common Prayer for broadening my knowledge of the Scriptures over the past few years! I also provided weekly worship services at each of the schools, for both the children and the teachers. Every Wednesday the children at St



Classroom at St. Barnabas's School

Andrew's School, for instance, would walk over to the parish church for Morning Prayer. On Tuesday mornings I would visit the school and lead teachers in devotions before the school day began. I quickly learned that the life of the school was inseparable from the Christian faith.

A few weeks later, while taking the 2-hour bus ride in to Belize City, I sat next to Ms Kareema, a former government education officer, and a devout parishioner at St Andrew's in San Ignacio. A graceful, dignified lady, who attended graduate school in France, Norway and Belgium, she

explained to me what it really means if a child cannot continue in school: "The children who don't go to school just end up on the streets", she said. "I've seen it time and time again. Mommy and Daddy have to work, they can't look after these children, and so the children wander around trying to make a living. They get involved in drugs and prostitution and gangs, and they can bring in a lot of money. And if the family has lots of children and needs the money, parents often just let it happen: 'that's one less mouth I have to feed'." As she spoke I pictured the young children I see all over the country, aimlessly wandering, often barefoot, selling their baskets of fruit and Johnny cakes to hungry tourists who walk by. A recent curfew imposed in Belize City, requiring children to be off the streets after 8 p.m., only underscores this social tragedy.

A few weeks later, I again found myself on the bus with Ms Kareema. When we reached Belize City she walked me through her old neighbourhood, as I headed for the Diocesan Offices. "This used to be a very well-to-do area", she said, as she pointed out various homes of family and friends now moved away. But this well-off neighbourhood is no more. Once stately, colonial era homes, with sweeping verandas and impressive Georgian windows, are now left to crumble, surrounded by open sewers and rotting garbage. "How did this happen to Belize City?" I ask. Her reply startles me. She doesn't blame it on crime or any other immediate cause, but something else: "The men have let us down. They have children with one woman, and then run off and have children with another one, and they



don't take any responsibility for what they do. We don't have real families anymore. The children can't go to school and get an education, and people have to work for whatever amount they can get."

Aside from my activities at the school, I've been busy with the regular activities of parish life, including confirmation classes, preparation of candidates and families for baptism, visitation to the sick, and attending special services in the Diocese. There are too many stories to tell. But one particularly notable event from mid-June: I was fortunate to attend a confirmation at Santa Trinidad in Frank's Eddy, a rural community near the centre of Belize. This small, Spanish-speaking congregation meets in a crude, unfinished concrete building, with a dirt floor and pews hewn out of rough lumber. The interior of the church is adorned with rough wooden crosses, with a makeshift altar made from a large tree stump and some boards. This is just one of three mission churches established by the Diocese only a

few years ago in an attempt to reach out to those communities which have not typically been Anglican. Christians from the local village had gathered, young and old alike, singing Spanish hymns led by a local elder who sat in his pew, gently strumming a guitar. I was able to follow along with the aid of the English/Spanish BCP, and gentle prompting by smiling locals who turned pages for me and offered me their pew. It was a moving experience on many different levels – these are the people for whom Jesus died!

Over the past three months I have witnessed countless instances of religious faith which I never could have imagined possible, for such was my weak faith. One Sunday at St Hilda's Church in Georgeville, one of the mission churches in the parish, I was struck by how attentive those gathered were as I read the Scriptures that morning: "And they did eat and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets" (Lk. 9:17). I later commented on this to a parishioner whom I had come to know rather well. Knowing I was in



Confirmation candidates  
(Nicholas Hatt in back row)

one of the poorest sections of the parish, I naively asked, "But how is it that people here trust so much in those words of assurance, when you know your neighbour's child probably went to bed hungry last night?" She smiled at me, touched my arm, and said, "Because God does answer our prayers ... he just does. It might take a little while, but sooner or later you just see how he's working."

Perhaps what has been most profound about my time in this country has been the gratitude so

many Belizeans have for life. They give thanks for every thing they have, not overlooking the simple necessities of life such as food, shelter and clothing, which I so often neglect. But even when in need, they are grateful. They know the reality of that great paradox: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

The past few weeks have seen a number of important events in the life of St Andrew's parish. In early June we hosted Confirmation with Bishop Wright, which saw nine candidates confirmed. A few weeks later a missionary group from St Luke's Episcopal Church in Texas arrived and offered a Vacation Bible School at St Andrew's and St Hilda's Churches. Nearly 400 children from the community showed up each day for the week-long event! There were baptisms and a funeral – the beginning and the end – where we all watched as the family pushed the casket into the tomb and sealed it with cement.

In all these things, the Belizeans around me were grateful. I was inspired.

I leave this Friday for Canada with a grateful heart for the people of this country. There are many problems in Belize-political, social and economic hardship – but through it all they see that God is blessing them.

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