

The Prayer Book Society of Canada Newsletter

Lent 2020

New Prayer Books for Wycliffe College Chapel

The PBSC recently donated a set of 60 new Prayer Books to the chapel at Wycliffe College in Toronto. On January 15th, they were formally dedicated during a service of Prayer Book Holy Communion. After the service, those present were invited to crowd into the chancel area for a group photo, holding aloft the new books (see photo below).

Prior to the service, an informal reception was hosted by the principal of the college, the Rt. Revd. Dr. Stephen Andrews, to which PBSC representatives and interested students were invited. The Revd. Dr. Gordon Maitland, national chairman, and Dr. Diana Versegby, newsletter editor, attended on behalf of the PBSC, and around twenty students participated. During the second half of the reception, Dr. Andrews invited Drs. Maitland and Versegby to speak to those assembled about the BCP and the PBSC. The following are excerpts from the discussion.



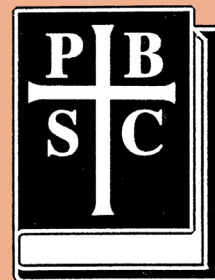
SA - I thought we might have a conversation about the Prayer Book – its past and its future, and so on. But first I'd like to give the two of you the opportunity to identify yourselves a bit – tell us something about your personal and ecclesial lives, and your own relationship to the Prayer Book. Diana, could we begin with you?

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DV – Sure. So I’m not a cradle Anglican; I was raised as nominally Roman Catholic, but no one that I knew well had a very strong faith, so I ended up falling away from the church as a teenager. But in my mid-20s I went through a very difficult period in my life, and finally realized that I couldn’t do it on my own, and that I needed God. So I decided to start investigating the various options. I checked out just about everything going – Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and so on, but for a long time I didn’t think of taking Christianity seriously, because throughout my younger days no one else around me had taken it seriously. But then I started reading C.S. Lewis. I had loved his Narnia stories as a child, and at that point I discovered his theology books. The first one that attracted my attention was called “The Problem of Pain”. It just totally shattered my indifference to Christianity. And I devoured all of his theology books that I could get my hands on after that, and they just blew me away. For the first time in my life I found Christianity explained to me in a way that actually made sense. So I started to explore various denominations. As a graduate student at U of T, each day I was walking by a little church called St. Thomas’s Anglican. And one day I thought I’d take a look inside and see what it was like. It was more impressive than I expected! And I noticed a little red book lying on a shelf in the narthex, called “The Book of Common Prayer”, and thought, oh, this must be what they use for their worship. So I opened it up, and I was just mesmerized by the depth of it, and the beauty of it, and the theological richness of it.

I borrowed a copy, and I took it home, and read it from cover to cover. When I came to the Articles, I just found them so amazingly balanced, and thoughtful, and *sensible*. Moreover, I read in them things like, the laity should receive Communion in both kinds; priests should be able to marry; the Pope was not infallible – things that I’d always believed myself. So I thought, “good grief, I must be Anglican!” And I’ve never looked back since – the Prayer Book is still the core of my devotional life, and the reason why I am an Anglican.

SA – Thank you. So, Gordon?

GM – So, I was baptized as an Anglican in Hamilton, which is my home town. My parents stopped going to church for unrelated reasons – they didn’t go for a long time. As a child, as a teenager, I went to a number of different churches or didn’t go at all. But when I was about to start university, I decided to get confirmed and get involved in church again and so I returned to St. Paul’s Anglican Church, where my parents had been married – in Westdale, in Hamilton. Music was a big interest for me, and I joined the cathedral choir in Hamilton. From there I went off to seminary. That was in the late 1980s; it seems so long ago now, and before many of you were born, actually!

SA – Some people in this room may not be aware that there are other seminaries in Canada!

GM – Yes! I went to Trinity College, across the street. But of course I took some courses here

as well. The late 1980s was a time of tension and transition; the Book of Alternative Services had just been published. And so liturgy wars were an unpleasant aspect of parish life and seminary life in those days. My interest in the Prayer Book was part of the overall upheaval in the church at that time. I liked the Prayer Book; it was what I wanted to stick with. I was rather mischievous as a seminarian because my friends and I would do little pranks in the chapel at Trinity to uphold the Prayer Book, which were not appreciated by the chaplain! But sins can be forgiven, so it’s all good. I was ordained for the Diocese of Niagara in 1990, and afterwards I moved to the Diocese of Huron. I’m living in Windsor now; my wife is the archdeacon of the area, so she is my boss. We both have congregations in Windsor. And I’ve used the Prayer Book for pretty well all of my ministry; in some churches I had the good fortune that it was the only book used. But in most of the congregations that I’ve served, they’ve had both BAS and BCP. I’m willing to use the BAS, but I’ve always liked and preferred the Prayer Book. So that’s just a brief synopsis.

SA – You mentioned the 1980s and the “liturgy wars”. That anticipated my next question. Very few of us were around during those years. Wycliffe College was much involved in the conversations around the new liturgies that were emerging, that would eventually give rise to the Book of Alternative Services. The faculty actually published a series of papers on the new services, and Dr. John Webster of

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Wycliffe was appointed the chair of the BAS review committee. He produced a very fine analysis of the Book of Alternative Services, which you can still find online on the Anglican Church of Canada website. So, you both lived through the wars; what were the wars about? And why don't the wars exist any longer? Did anybody win the war? And where is the church these days?

DV – Well, in a nutshell, the reason for the war was that from the very outset, the BAS was brought in not as an alternative to the BCP, but as its replacement. The Prayer Book Society was formed as a grassroots, lay organization to uphold the Book of Common Prayer, to re-educate people about it, and to resist the alarming loss of our tradition that we were seeing everywhere. As a result, the Society was looked upon with skepticism and suspicion. We were accused of being subversives; of being disloyal; of trying to undermine the church; of trying to stop the march of progress and enlightenment; and so on. “This is the way of the future! Get with the program!” we were told. This went on for about ten or fifteen years. But I'm happy to say that since then, gradually the tide has turned; and I think that after a while, once the initial fervour had died down, and the people who were promoting the alternative services thought that

they had “won”, they came to regard us with a bit more tolerance, and started to appreciate what they had perhaps thrown away too hastily in some cases. And I'm gratified to say that in recent years, in the colleges, almost all the student applicants for our PBSC bursaries have been of exceedingly high quality; thoughtful young people who value the tradition, who want to preserve and revive the tradition. And that's really heartening for us, who lived through that period, to see: that our efforts weren't in vain. As a matter of fact we have been told on several occasions that if it were not for the PBSC, we would not have a Prayer Book today in the Anglican Church of Canada. The campaign to replace it with the BAS would have been successful. So I think we can give ourselves a pat on the back for that!

SA – Just a slight digression for an advertisement – can you tell us more about the PBSC bursary programme?

DV – Certainly. We offer bursaries to divinity students, or students engaged in general theological studies, who value the Book of Common Prayer and wish to support its use. We do this every year, and we advertise the bursaries in all the theological colleges across the country. This

past year we awarded 19 bursaries, ranging in amounts from \$250 to \$1000, depending on how knowledgeable the student was, how experienced in the use of the Prayer Book, how eloquent, and so forth.

SA – How does the application process work? Do the applicants have to write an essay?

DV – No, they just have to submit a short covering letter explaining their interest in the bursary and in the BCP, together with a copy of their CV and the names of two references. After all the applications are in, the candidates are interviewed by the members of the PBSC bursaries committee. Candidates living in Toronto are interviewed in person, and those living elsewhere by phone. We find that we get a much better sense of where applicants are coming from, their background, their sincerity and so on, by talking to them rather than just reading a letter. And I think that the students actually appreciate having the personal contact with someone from the PBSC – they appreciate our taking the time to seek them out, and find out what they're about, and learn about them personally – learn about their prayer life and so on. So I think that's a form of ministry too.

About Bequests: Like most other non-profit organizations, the Prayer Book Society of Canada relies on the generosity of its supporters to continue to operate and to do its work. While much of this funding comes from ongoing donations, some of our support comes from the bequests of those who remembered us in their wills. For those who have not already done so, we ask that you please remember us when you consider those who will benefit from your estate. Whether your will specifies a large gift or a small one, we will be very thankful for whatever you choose to give. Some of the money that we have received in the past has been used to donate Prayer Books to our seminaries, as you can see from the main article in this newsletter. Some bequests have been invested to provide income in the form of interest and increase the money that is available for special projects. Audited statements of the Society's finances are available to any who wish to see them. Thank you very much in advance for your consideration.

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SA – And when are the bursaries awarded?

DV – The calls go out in September; we do the interviews in late November, and the awards go out in December. So if anyone here hasn't applied before, and if you're interested, do look for the flyers next year. In fact there are several bursary recipients here in this room.

GM – I just want to return to your original question, about the liturgical wars in general – just to give some more reflections on the rawness of the 1980s. There was very inadequate preparation for the introduction of the BAS to congregations. In theory, every parish priest was supposed to give an explanation to the congregation of why this new book was arriving and why theologically it had different emphases than the Prayer Book – just providing a rationale for the process. But in fact, that didn't happen in most places. So for example in my wife's congregation where she grew up, the rector took all the Prayer Books out of the pews one Sunday afternoon and replaced them with copies of the BAS. When people arrived the next Sunday, there was the new book, and the rector said, "The bishop wants us to use this new book, so we're going to use it." No preparation; no explanation; nothing. And needless to say that created tremendous resentment, to say nothing of the moral cowardice of the rector in blaming the bishop. As another example, I remember the priest who was at St. Luke's Burlington before me – a sort of radical young cleric – telling everyone that if you liked the Prayer Book you were obviously in the same league as Ronald Reagan and the

religious right in the United States, and you must be a morally reprehensible person. It was all very nasty. Another aspect of the introduction of the BAS was over-sell by the bishops. Already attendance was sliding in churches, and the BAS was touted as the magic bullet that would solve all the problems of the Anglican Church of Canada. I remember our bishop having an information session at a deanery event, and he told us in all seriousness that if we used this new book, young people would come streaming back into church, because they would see what a great new worship opportunity we had. Of course, that didn't happen, and so an incredible disillusionment set in. Well, obviously there's more to reaching out to people than just a book. But that didn't seem to have entered a lot of people's minds. So, there were a lot of factors. Poor preparation, over-sell that this was going to be the panacea to solve all problems, and just the ugliness of church politics as well.

SA – I know, you talk very frankly in terms of what this put the church through. Perhaps many people here don't know about one of the chief moments of that time – when an actual ecclesiastical lawsuit was brought against the then bishop of Qu'Appelle, who had been consecrated as a bishop using the Book of Alternative Services, the question being whether that was a lawful consecration. The court did conclude that it was a lawful consecration, but it was very acrimonious, very divisive, and in fact the only time that an ecclesiastical court has ever happened in the history of the Anglican Church of Canada.

DV – Well, I should just mention, regarding that event, that there was a statement made by the court afterwards, thanking the Prayer Book Society for the civil way in which we made our representation – we identified this issue as a matter of principle that needed to be raised, a question of clarity. I come back to the comment that I made earlier: if the BAS had been brought in as an actual alternative, instead of as a replacement for the Prayer Book, there would never have been a need for a Prayer Book Society. We're not against alternative liturgies, as long as we're not forced into using something which is simply not the core tradition of our church. It's not that we're against something – we're for something.

SA – Yes – still, the resolution of that could have had a huge impact if the decision had gone the other way. But I want to carry on with you, Gordon, about how perspectives have changed. I should mention that that ecclesiastical court involved Bishop Eric Bays, and he attended my consecration as bishop, which was done using the rite from the Book of Common Prayer. It was the first time the BCP had been used for the consecration of a bishop in 30 years. And it was really a remarkable moment, and a kind of statement on the part of Eric Bays, about his respect for the Book of Common Prayer, and its tradition.

GM – Well, regarding changing perspectives, I think there are several factors at work here. One is that, in a sense, time heals wounds. And fatigue has set in, so we've moved beyond all that rawness. But also,

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historically now, having used the two books in tandem for 35 years, those who were so in favour of the BAS can now admit that it has weaknesses, and those of us on the Prayer Book Society side can admit that there are good things that did come out of that whole liturgical movement. So part of it comes from this period of increasing distance. Another aspect is that if you look at the little essays in the BAS that are included as prefaces to each service, they very much reflect the liturgical thinking of the 1970s, which we have moved beyond. For example, if you look at the little essay about eucharistic prayer 2 in the BAS, which claims that it represents “the rite used in Rome in the year 215 from Hippolytus” – well, no serious liturgical scholar would agree with that now. That was debunked many years ago. So that sort of thing changed the perspective as well. Also, I think that nowadays, when we’ve lost so much of the tradition, there’s a growing attraction to it – it’s become a novelty to look at it. You come at it with fresh eyes – it’s no longer part of a war. In fact, as many of you probably know, parallel movements of this new reappropriation of tradition are happening in other churches. For example, in the Roman Catholic church now, it’s cool to go to the traditional Latin mass, which is attracting a lot of young people.

DV – Also, I’d say that this time of huge upheaval in the Anglican church since the early 2000s, in the wake of the same-sex blessings controversy etc., has made us realize that what ties us to the Anglican Communion is in fact the Prayer Book. The Book of Alternative Services is a local Canadian product. It is not

what ties us to the global Anglican family – it’s the BCP that does that. It grounds us in what it means to be Anglican. So out of that massive turmoil, at least this one positive thing has come – a recognition of the core of our Anglican identity.

SA – Gordon, you anticipate again a question that I had. We hear stories about situations in England for example, about young people going to cathedrals for choral Evensong, and a kind of revival of Prayer Book Anglicanism in various places. But some are inclined to dismiss that. What do you say to those who think that interest in the BCP is a form of nostalgia – a hankering for a church that never really existed, or a fascination – maybe a misguided fascination – with a form of medieval piety?

GM – I guess the parallel there is again in the Roman Catholic church, where the Pope and bishops are baffled by young people going to the traditional Latin mass even though they were not alive to experience it when it was the liturgy of their church. And for us too, we can ask, why would young people be interested in a book that they’ve never experienced before? You can’t have nostalgia for something that you never lost. So I think there has to be something more than nostalgia involved in all of that. Maybe for older people there is a sense of nostalgia – perhaps for people of my parents’ generation? But I don’t think you can say that about younger people who don’t remember the days – even I don’t remember the days! – when it was just purely Prayer Book worship. All the experimental stuff was already coming in –

when I was confirmed in 1980, it was well underway.

DV – What I would say, from my conversations with young people, is that they’re looking for roots, they’re looking for groundedness, they’re looking for some sort of solid foundation, that has stood the test of time. And you find that in the Prayer Book – in spades. It’s really quite tragic how, so soon after the 1962 Canadian BCP came out, the liturgical turmoil began!

GM – Yes, indeed. When I was ordained, there were clergy who had gone through introducing the 1962 book to their congregations, and were then being faced with introducing the BAS, so you’re right, it was a relatively short span. When the book was finalized in 1962, it was just before all the liturgical upheaval of the 1960s began to happen. Vatican II opened in 1962, and once all those huge changes happened in the Roman church, there were ripple effects through all the other churches. So that is why our 1962 book is often described as the last classic Prayer Book revision. It came out just before all the change and the liturgical movement hit. By 1972, experimental booklets were being introduced into some congregations. So in less than 10 years priests and congregations were being told that the new book they had just gotten was now the old book. And now there is such diversity in the Anglican church that you could almost get away with anything. Which is both good and bad.

SA – It’s a question of uniformity and identity. I think it’s a problem – one of the problems in the Anglican Church of Canada – that because bishops

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are no longer saying that you can only use either the BAS or the BCP, people are taking their liturgies from the internet and there's all sorts of experimentation going on. And it's hard for bishops to know what's taking place at the parish level. In my experience it would regularly happen in meetings of the House of Bishops that a bishop would complain that they would go into a parish, and for example there would be no Creed on a Sunday, or no confession on a Sunday. For the most part they'd surrendered control of liturgy in the diocese. If you have a book that you've authorized, you say to clergy and congregations, this is the official book. Then, you can maintain some kind of common identity.

GM – I know of a diocese in which they have permitted their clergy to write their own eucharistic prayers. And they're usually of terrible quality and of dubious orthodoxy. It's been allowed, so once you give that kind of permission, how do you rein it back in? It just becomes harder and harder to control. So now, I can go into an Anglican church and not even recognize what they're doing. I think it's become a snowball of increasing

diversity, with no one to put on the brakes or maintain any commonality. I don't know what the solution to that is – I really don't.

SA – So what are your hopes for the future of the BCP?

GM – I hope it will remain authorized, and a book that people can use, and in print! I'm a realist enough to know that it will never become THE book again, but it would be nice to see it used more often and in more places.

DV – I would like to see it become the basis for some sort of re-flowering of the Anglican Church of Canada. If we could just remember where we come from, and the richness of our tradition, that could become the fertile soil that leads to a rejuvenation of our church. That's my hope.

To conclude, may I follow up, Bishop, on your opening comment that you yourself identify as a Prayer Book Anglican? Could you elaborate on that?

SA – Certainly. On a very personal level, this means that it

is my primary form of piety, it shapes my soul. I became an Anglican through the Prayer Book in theological college. I was a Presbyterian, getting ready to be ordained in the Presbyterian church, and I thought, as long as I'm at seminary, I should find out what some of these other traditions are like. I had moved from the United States, where I had a responsible role in the life of the church, to Canada, where nobody knew who I was, and I was going through lots of personal questioning. And I wandered into an Anglican church for Evening Prayer, and there was the Book of Common Prayer. And all of a sudden here were these prayers, that I instantly related to. They were the unarticulated prayers of my own heart. And so there was a sense in which I found myself reflected in the BCP. And the more I've studied it, the more I prayed those prayers, the more insights I've come to in terms of who I am, and my relation to God. So I don't regard it as the only way to God, but I do think that the Prayer Book tradition and Anglicanism itself is one of God's gifts to the catholic church. So I'm an unapologetic Anglican that way.

PBSC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Prayer Book Society of Canada will be held on Saturday, June 13th, at St. Peter's Cathedral Church in Charlottetown, PEI, beginning at 2:00 PM. The annual Chairman's and Treasurer's reports will be presented, and the meeting will elect up to fifteen National Councillors.

Nominations are invited for the positions of National Chairman, Vice-Chairmen, Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Recording Secretary. Nominations for these positions must be received by May 31st, since these officers are elected by the National Council. Nominations are also invited for the positions of Councillor and Honorary President, and these may be either submitted beforehand or presented at the AGM. Nominees for all positions must be members of the PBSC, and nominations require a mover and a seconder, both of whom must also be members of the PBSC. Nominations are to be sent to the national Recording Secretary, Ronald Bentley, at 737 Hot Springs Way, Gloucester, ON, K1V 1W8 (rwbentley@sympatico.ca).

Resources for Clergy, Seminarians, and Worship Leaders

The Prayer Book Society of Canada is proud to be able to offer resources for all who do worship planning, whether they be clergy, seminarians or lay readers. The resources that we are making available are both a source of material for historical research, and practical guides as to the celebration of traditional language rites.

Already posted to our website is the work entitled *The Canadian Holy Week Book*. This resource was compiled by Fr. John McCausland of the S.S.J.E. monastic order (Society of St. John the Evangelist), the same person for whom is named *McCausland's Order of Divine Service*, the yearly "Ordo" printed by the Anglican Church of Canada. The Holy Week book was published in 1973 when Anglican churches were beginning to include these kinds of services into their liturgical life.

Fr. McCausland took material from the Book of Common Prayer, the Book of Common Praise (the 1938 Hymn Book), the English Missal, and other traditional sources to produce rites for Holy Week that were not available in the BCP itself. They include the blessing and procession of palms on Palm Sunday, the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil. These services can be used elaborately in a great cathedral, or more simply in a parish church. The directions and rubrics as to how to celebrate

these rites are clear and easy to follow. It is worth noting that much of the material used to compile the Holy Week rites in the Book of Alternative Services was based on, and adapted from, this Holy Week Book. They are thus traditional language versions of what may be found in the BAS, which means they harmonize with worship according to the BCP.

The other resources that we hope to have posted to our website soon are two editions of *Readiness and Decency*. The first edition was published in 1946 by other brethren of the S.S.J.E. This practical guide was intended to be used with the 1918 version of the Canadian BCP and was mostly concerned with the celebration of the Eucharist. This edition will be of interest to scholars who want to know how the 1918 book was actually used by many priests in Canadian parishes. Of particular interest are the directions as to how to do a "North End" celebration of the Eucharist. Many Low Churchmen at the time felt that celebrating the Holy Communion facing east at the altar was too "Romish" or "Papist" so they conducted the service at one side of the altar instead. While this method of doing the Eucharist has now disappeared from the Canadian Church, it will be of interest to those researching the history of liturgical practice.

The second edition of *Readiness and Decency* was written in 1961 by the same

S.S.J.E. brethren who wrote the first edition, and was intended for use with the then new and experimental 1959 edition of the Canadian BCP. It was much expanded so as to have directions as to how to celebrate the Daily Offices and the Pastoral Offices. This practical manual has a wealth of historical background and pastoral guidance in the observances of the rites of the Book of Common Prayer. There are directions for an elaborate celebration of the Holy Eucharist with many sacred ministers, or a plain celebration of the Holy Communion with one assistant. The authors are quite aware of the fact that any worship service needs to be adapted to the variables of local context: the architecture of the building, the size of the sanctuary, the depth of the chancel, the acoustics of the space, and many others. All of this is to say that *Readiness and Decency* is still a useful guide for any cleric, seminarian, or other worship leader when planning the worthy celebration of the services and sacraments of the Church.

Both the *Canadian Holy Week Book* and the second edition of *Readiness and Decency* have search features that allow the reader to look for certain chapters or services within the pdf download, and it is hoped that this will make these resources for ministry all the more helpful for those who take advantage of them.

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