

The Prayer Book Society of Canada

Newsletter

Michaelmas 2018

A Millenial on Christianity and the BCP

(Louis Harris is a son of the Revd. David Harris, the past national chairman of the PBSC. (Fr. Harris was also the assistant priest at St. Peter's Cathedral in Charlottetown, PEI for a number of years, and afterwards became the rector of St. Giles' Church in Reading, England.) Louis was one of the PBSC bursary recipients last year, and he has kindly agreed to provide an interview for our newsletter.)

You come from a religious family background; how has that affected your faith?

It's true that my father is a priest, and so the Christian faith has been a part of my life. But I would say that my own journey into the faith didn't begin, at least cognitively, until I moved away from home at the age of 18, (my family was in England and I moved to back to Charlottetown). I very quickly abandoned the faith, which was unremarkable since I was labouring under the conviction that I had been indoctrinated. There were about two years during which I was a fairly vehement atheist – I would say Dawkins-esque; I would throw parties and I'd be the one, along with a few of my friends, who would be railing against religion and talking about how evil it is while thoughtlessly participating in that certain kind of debauchery that is standard at undergraduate university parties! Oddly, it was without my family that I came to understand the faith, when the life I'd built without them came crashing down and I realized that I was surrounded by people who weren't good for me and weren't good for themselves, and the whole mechanism of our friendships and our relationships was beginning to break down. For a few months after this breakdown it gradually dawned on me that love is the most important thing in the universe, and that this is what my dad had been talking about my whole life, and that was when I understood the Christianity that I was brought up into. It was pretty



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humiliating at the time, but it was also enlightening. Finally there came a moment when I acknowledged that there was a God, and I would say that that was when I became Christian again, although it took about another year for me to actually acknowledge who Christ was. I think the primary influence my family has had on my faith has been as a forum to ask questions. Once I came to the faith properly there was a lot that needed to be sorted out, and indeed there still is, and my brothers and sisters and I talk about the questions we have and will often go to our father to sort out good answers. Beyond that, my parents were very good at letting the faith work itself out in our lives, and so most of my siblings would probably say that they experienced their journey to the faith outside of our family life.

You were raised in a largely Prayer Book environment. What experience have you had of other liturgical forms vis-à-vis the Prayer Book?

I have family members who are of other faith traditions. Primarily through them I've had experiences ranging from the far-out charismatic end of the spectrum— the Toronto Airport church, for example — to the extremely Anglo-Catholic end in England. While I lived in Reading, I attended a church called “St. Lawrence In Reading” for two and a half years. It's a youth-oriented church with a focused youth-oriented style of worship — raised hands, big projector screen, sitting on couches and beanbags, *et cetera*. It was a fun thing for a 16-year-old, but it wasn't what I'd call a deep Christian experience. You

go and hang out with your friends, and do some vaguely Christian activities. The administration members were definitely Christian, but the environment was attractive not because it was particularly deep, but because I was dancing around with my friends and laughing and making jokes. And I certainly made great friends there. But I wasn't being drawn into infinity, so to speak.

The BCP has always been there, throughout these various experiences, and there's certainly a part of me that loves it simply because it's something I've known my entire life. But that love is broadened by the fact that the contents of Anglicanism for the last 400-plus years have been defined by it. I've found nothing else even remotely as solid. The Anglican vision is a particular interpretation of Christ's invitation into participation in the divine life. The Prayer Book happens to be a product of the tradition of the Church of England, but as the title implies, it's a book for everyone, at all times, in all places. It tries to draw us into a common life of worship that opens us up to this grand historical vision of the Church, but with a strange, pure, almost sublime simplicity. I love and have a taste for high Anglicanism, but there's no part of me that says that's the way it has to be done. I say nothing with any authority and I hope if I'm wrong to be corrected, but it seems to me that the vision that you're invited into in the Book of Common Prayer doesn't say that it is the only way to do it. This vision offers the Prayer Book as a really good tool for living a prayerful life, and I do believe that it is.

I do think that if we're going to resurrect a vision for Anglicanism, (because right now Anglicanism, at least in the west, seems to me a little confused about what it is) I believe it's going to have to be through the Prayer Book, and through participation in our tradition. The Prayer Book is essential to the Anglican identity. If Anglicanism has an insight, which I'm inclined to think it does, for the church universal, it is going to be in the Prayer Book. The problem that I see with many of the modern forms of Anglican worship is that the motivations underlying their creation are fundamentally flawed. The rationale that the revisers gave us for producing them seemed to lie in their being scared that people weren't going to church any more - the idea that they were responsible for saving the church. They thought that the faith had to be watered down to make it palatable. I think the future will see a Church that expresses the overwhelming nature of the vision, and stops trying to simplify it. I think that will probably take the shape of a return to the tradition.

How do other young people of your age view liturgy? What forms of worship do they tend to prefer?

I know of a few, especially those who were brought into Christianity by less traditional forms of worship, who continue to have a taste for those forms. Overwhelmingly, though, in my experience, (and I know a good many young Anglicans at this point from many places in the western world — Europe, Canada, the United States), my generation's basic question is,

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should we even bother with this Christian stuff? And if you get to the point where you answer yes, generally you're not looking for something watered down anymore, you're looking for the real thing – something ancient and traditional and something that you don't understand yet. So the way you find that is by going to an ancient tradition and participating in it, being formed by it.

Logically these new Christians won't be inclined to have a taste for the modern stuff, because why would you bother? If you're going to bother being a Christian, you're going to bother with all of it – it means going in and being overwhelmed by something strange and timeless. For example, I know a lot of young people in PEI who have converted to Roman Catholicism because of the old Latin Tridentine mass. I remember, I had a conversation two or three weeks ago with a very close friend of mine whom I met at St. Lawrence's in England, and he had always been very drawn to their free-form kind of worship – he even once told me that he didn't like the old stuff because it's boring and it's too much work. Yet he told me in that last visit that he had come to realize that the church absolutely needs to be grounded in the ancient things, because otherwise it's going to lose itself. And the fact that he could come around like that was a real eye-opener for me. So yes, I think that for my generation, if they don't already realize that to be a Christian means to participate in the ancient faith, they will come to that realization. And when they realize that, they aren't going to be impressed by liturgies that were written just thirty or forty years ago. There's a girl that I

know in England who came to faith at St. Lawrence's as well; she later left, but even now she says that when she feels like she needs to go to church, she's going to look for an ancient church. So this is a sensibility that even secular millennials have.

So how do you see your future? Are you are seeking ordination?

Right now, I think what I'm doing is wandering, in a sense, rather than actively pursuing ordination. When I'm participating in a mass it's true that I look up at the altar and there's a longing in my soul to be there. But I'm not filling out paperwork in every diocese I can to make that happen. The truth is that it feels like it's happening organically – over the last three years it feels like I've moved closer to that, and the trajectory seems in that direction. When I came back to the faith all those years ago there was this weird disjointed conversation that I had with my parents, where I blurted out that maybe I'm supposed to be a priest, and I had never thought about that before ... and so I'm kind of going with that. I don't yet know what a vocation would look like, and I don't know where it would be; all I know is that I have a longing to be there, at the altar. Maybe that might sound egotistical? I suppose that's one positive thing about eastward celebration (which for me is the norm): it's not about you, it's entirely about the Person in front of you. Christ is the centre of attention!

How do you see the future of the Anglican Church?

That's a difficult one, because things are so confused right now. I don't see a strong resurrection/recovery movement right now of the kind that I was describing, involving the Prayer Book and a rediscovery of our tradition, but if such a movement is happening, if the seeds I see are in fact being sown, I'll be here to watch them grow. Through thick and thin, I'll be here. I think it comes back to what I said a minute ago about service. It's not always gratifying, and it's certainly not glamorous – faithfully abiding in the mire that we find ourselves in. Maybe we'll be out of the mire later and we can joy in that. There are certainly threats of schism, and indeed a certain amount of schism has already occurred. But I'm inclined to think that since we are promised that the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church, some parts of Anglicanism in its most faithful form will remain. I have a personal hope that I'm called to serve not only the church that I've inherited, but the part of the world that I've been brought up in, and that I look at with a certain amount of sadness, and a hope for something better. I would hope that some day my path may be participating in a process of rejuvenation. But it's not our place to make a plan. It's entirely our place to listen. And I do think that I've come to the realization that because this is what I've inherited, I have to carry it forward. I know that I will be an Anglican until I die; I don't know what it will look like when that happens.

Celebrating with Reverence: The Training of Future Clergy

*Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably
with reverence and Godly fear. (Hebrews 12.28)*

*(By the Revd. Dr. Gordon
Maitland, PBSC National
Chairman.)*

One of the tasks of seminary training is to prepare future priests to celebrate the sacraments and services of the Church in a faithful and reverent manner. This means understanding the shape and substance of the various rites in the authorized service books, and having a knowledge of the rubrics which govern how one is to correctly perform the liturgical actions. Such training should include the historical circumstances which gave rise to the prayers and services as they have come down to us, as well as providing guidance as to how to respond to the different pastoral circumstances which may bear on the actual celebration of the rites. In addition to formal course instruction, most seminaries also have students placed in churches for a time where they will learn in a practical way how to conduct worship.

All of this training is important, and all of our seminaries make an attempt to provide such instruction as best as they can. However, the results are often uneven, depending on the resources any particular seminary may have, the qualifications of the person giving the liturgical instruction, and the ideology or political slant

that a particular seminary may bring to their training. Not all seminaries will bother to train students to appreciate and use the traditional rites found in the Book of Common Prayer, on the mistaken assumption that such instruction is unnecessary or irrelevant to the needs of the Canadian Church. It is with this *lacuna* in mind that the PBSC has thought it worthy of our attention to provide online resources that would be helpful for instructing seminarians (or those already ordained) as to the decent and reverent celebration of the rites and ceremonies of the Prayer Book.

The first and foremost resource we want to provide is an online copy or version of the manual entitled *Readiness and Decency*. This manual was first published in 1946 by three members of the Society of St. John the Evangelist when they still had a monastery in Bracebridge, Ontario. The first edition of the book was intended to help priests in the celebration of the rites as they appeared in the 1922 version of the Canadian BCP. In 1961 the book was revised to conform to the then new 1962 BCP. A final edition was published in 1975 to take into consideration some of the liturgical changes and innovations that came about in the turbulent 1960s, such as celebrating the Eucharist facing the congregation. Needless to

say, *Readiness and Decency* has been out of print for many decades and existing manuals are now hard to find. Fortunately, I personally have several copies which I have managed to acquire over the years from retired or deceased clergy.

Readiness and Decency includes a general outline of principles of conformity to the integrity of the rites as well as basic instruction as to how to stand and move about in the sanctuary. There are suggested directions as to how to celebrate all of the sacraments, offices, and services found in the BCP. The book also includes many helpful diagrams as to where to set the various vessels on the altar, where the celebrant should stand at the altar while celebrating, and how priests should hold their hands for praying and giving blessings. The book assumes a moderately Anglo-Catholic approach to ceremonial, but is in no way rigid as to the application of its principles. Our hope is to scan or produce an online version of the 1961 edition of *Readiness and Decency*, as this was the one specifically written for the 1962 BCP. However, we will probably include directions on how to celebrate the Eucharist facing the people from the 1975 edition, as this is the reality for many priests today in their particular contexts.

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There are already digitized versions of the famous volume *The Parson's Handbook* by the Revd. Percy Dearmer available on the internet. There was a time many years ago when almost every Anglican cleric would have had a copy of this liturgical manual for reference in his office. While it is an excellent resource for learning about the

neglected in seminaries is instruction as how to sing or chant the services, especially Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and the Holy Eucharist. It would be fitting if every aspiring cleric would be required to have vocal and choral training, but this is just not possible at the present time. Thus, it would be helpful if a seminarian or cleric could hear

Music of the Anglican Liturgy – Canada and was sung by the choir of Grace Church on-the-Hill, Toronto. The recording has all the chant and Merbecke settings for the Holy Eucharist, all the sung parts of Matins (to various Anglican Chants) and two sung versions of the canticles from Evensong. There are also several psalm settings as well.



At the PBSC Annual General Meeting in Calgary last May, the National Chairman was presented with an eagle feather by Mr. Sid Holt, a new member of the PBSC National Council. Among First Nations, the eagle feather is the most honoured gift that can be given to an individual, and is regarded as cementing a friendship.

It is hard to believe at this distance of time that our National Church at one time actually took pains to prepare such official educational resources for the benefit of congregations nation-wide. Of course, the Church also had the financial resources available at that time to undertake such initiatives. I myself did not even know that such a resource existed until I acquired a copy from a now deceased Bishop. It is our hope that the audio tracks on this vinyl disc can be converted into digital mp3 files that can then be turned into YouTube clips for posting on our website. I also possess other recorded tracks of Anglican liturgy that could be similarly transformed for digital use.

historical forces that have shaped the Book of Common Prayer, it is limited in its applicability to the Canadian context because all of the references in *The Parson's Handbook* are to the 1662 BCP used by the Church of England. Nevertheless, we would like to include links to this book (and others similar to it) so that people can refer to them if they wish.

The one aspect of liturgical training that is perhaps the most

how the services are suppose to sound when sung or chanted so as to at least get a sense of the melodies, pitch and rhythm of the various prayers and responses. Fortunately, such a resource does exist.

Sometime in the early 1960s the Anglican Book Centre officially commissioned a recording to assist choirs in singing the then new 1962 version of the BCP. It is entitled

We are excited about the possibility of having these liturgical resources available for seminarians and clergy who want to learn about how to conduct services from the Book of Common Prayer. We will be contacting a number of Canadian Anglican seminaries to be sure that they are aware of these resources as well. This is all part of our effort as a Society to ensure that the BCP remains an integral part of the life of the Anglican Church of Canada.

A Prayer for the Jews

(An update on the lead article in the last issue of the PBSC Newsletter)

(By the Revd. Dr. Gordon Maitland, PBSC National Chairman.)

As readers of the last issue of our Newsletter may remember, a motion was brought forward last year for consideration at the next General Synod in 2019, to remove the prayer entitled “For the Conversion of the Jews” (BCP p.41) from the selection of Prayers and Thanksgivings Upon Several Occasions in the Book of Common Prayer. Regardless of the intention behind the prayer and the theology that it expresses, it is widely seen by many in the Church as being (at best) unhelpful in our relationship with the Jewish people and (at worst) as propagating an anti-semitism that is not compatible with our calling as Christians. As was reported in the last issue of our Newsletter, a number of us in the PBSC felt that it would be better to put forward a proposal either to modify the existing prayer or to come up with an acceptable replacement prayer rather than to see it disappear altogether.

Fr. Chris Dow of the Diocese of Saskatchewan and I took it upon ourselves to try to find a way forward that would be satisfactory to all the parties concerned. After consultation

with some bishops and theologians, we realized that any prayer that explicitly prayed for the conversion of Jews, however gently worded, would find no traction at General Synod and would be rejected out of hand. We therefore concluded that it would be better to focus on retaining those aspects of the present prayer that speak of the conversion of our own hearts in regards to our Jewish brothers and sisters.

Fr. Chris Dow, with consummate knowledge of Old Testament allusions and terminology, made the greatest contribution to the prayer in terms of its imagery, while my contribution was more stylistic and grammatical. The several drafts of the prayer were shared with various members of the PBSC National Council as well as with several theologians to get their feedback, and the final version agreed upon was this:

For Reconciliation with the Jews

O God, who didst choose Israel to be thine inheritance: have mercy upon us and forgive us for violence and wickedness against our brother Jacob; the arrogance of our hearts and minds hath deceived

us, and shame hath covered our face. Take away all pride and prejudice in us, and grant that we, together with the people whom thou didst first make thine own, may attain to the fulness of redemption which thou hast promised to us through thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

This prayer was submitted to Bishop Bruce Myers of Quebec who has in turn shared it with several other members of the Canadian House of Bishops, with members of the Council of General Synod (COGS), and with members of the Canadian Rabbinic Council for their feedback. It must be stressed that the wording in the above prayer is still open to emendation and thus no one should assume that it will necessarily be the final version of the prayer that goes before COGS for formal consideration. This is an ongoing process. We are thankful that it has come this far and we are hopeful that some fruit of our efforts will make it to General Synod for their consideration next July. Please pray that we will remain faithful in our intentions and seek to please God alone in all that we will do.

Giving Thanks for Christ Church Cemetery, Poplar Lake, Alberta

*(By the Revd. Don Aellen,
Rector, Church of St. John the
Evangelist, Edmonton, Alberta)*

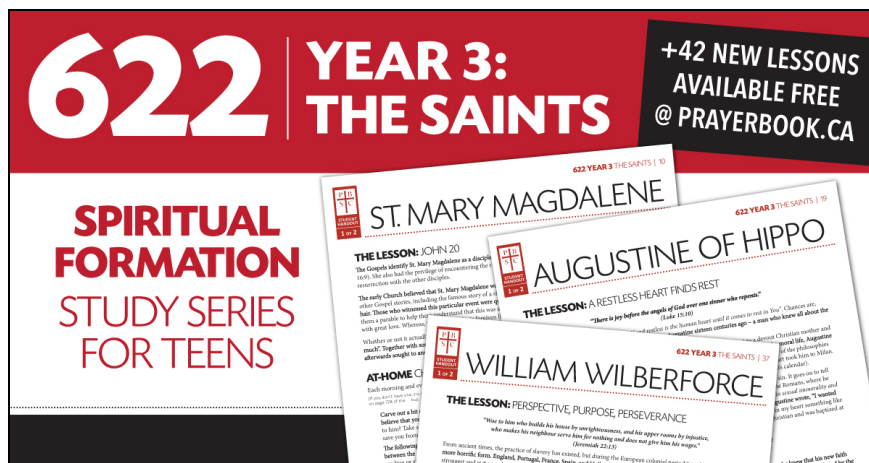
Urban clergy are faced with a conundrum raised by urban cemeteries and modern cultural burial practice. In the liturgy preceding burial, we proclaim Christ's victory over the grave – "Yet even at the grave we make

will restore to the one whom we love but see no longer.

Then urban clergy get to urban cemeteries – and all that theological *oomph* goes out of the sail; we go to a grave side where there is no mound of earth taken to create the grave; cemetery policies that are reluctant even to lower the casket

Christ Church Cemetery, Poplar Lake. I was delighted to see a huge mound of soil beside the grave, the backhoe that dug it parked nearby, the contractor with his boom and winch at hand. The mourners gathered around the grave. We had time and space to pray, to pray for the hallowing of the grave, to sing. And there was no hesitation when it came to lowering the body fully into the place of repose. And when I prayed, "earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life ...", I had real handfuls of dirt to throw onto the coffin and in the sign of the Cross. We witnessed the contractor winching the lid down on top of the grave liner, seeing the sealing of the grave while we prayed that only the Resurrection would disturb this place of rest. Family grabbed shovels and began to backfill. Others joined in, using their hands. And everyone felt less helpless, less bereft, less separated; it was as though we were still acting in love and connection, seeing our sister cared for by those who loved her. A curious joy pervaded, a hope, a finishing, that allowed everyone to leave with greater grace and trust.

I was and am very grateful to know that there is a cemetery that allows us to act out the faith we proclaim. It's been a long time since I was a rural priest where such practices are still normal. I realized anew how potent it is; and I'm grateful for Christ Church Cemetery.



our song: Alleluia!" We proclaim that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of Christ – "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities ...". We have talked about the mystery of Christ hallowing human life, which is why we handle the body with respect and dignity and love – that body that was the temple of the Holy Spirit, and made in the image of God. And our forebears in faith knew that when we lowered that body into the ground, and backfilled the grave with our own hands and muscle, we did so in the sure hope of the resurrection of the dead – that this grave will not be able to contain the life that Christ

into the ground (what do we think we are there for, anyway?) and no way for mourners to have a hands-on participation in backfilling a grave – denied a powerful pastoral action that is healing to our grief.

Current attitudes toward death and urban cemetery policies separate and sanitize the event of death. That which is very real is made to seem somehow less real. Most often I feel we have been cheated out of something that should rightfully belong to us as people of the Resurrected Christ.

Recently, I had the opportunity to preside over the burial of a dear sister in Christ, at

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