

# The Prayer Book Society of Canada Newsletter

Lent 2022

## The Diamond Jubilee of the BCP The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1962 Edition of the Canadian Book of Common Prayer

*(By the Revd. Dr. Gordon Maitland. Dr. Maitland is the National Chairman of the Prayer Book Society of Canada and a parish priest in Windsor, Ontario.)*

The year 2022 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1962 Canadian Book of Common Prayer. However, before we say anything more about that book, it is worth noting that this year also marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of the first Canadian version of the Prayer Book. When the Church of England in Canada gained its autonomy from the Mother Church of England in 1893, it also gained the right to revise the Prayer Book without seeking the approval of parliament because the Church



*The Frobisher Expedition, 1578 (see page 3)  
Watercolour by Gordon Miller*

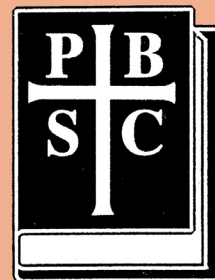
of England in Canada was not an established church. A Canadian BCP was given final approval by General Synod in 1918, but the Primate's proclamation giving final assent to the canon authorizing the new book was not issued until 1922. Thus, 100 years ago, Canadian Anglicans for the first time had a version of the Prayer Book that they could call their own. This version of the BCP was authorized for use until it was replaced by the 1962 edition. This means that the Anglican Church of Canada's second edition of its Prayer Book has now been in use twenty years longer than the first version.

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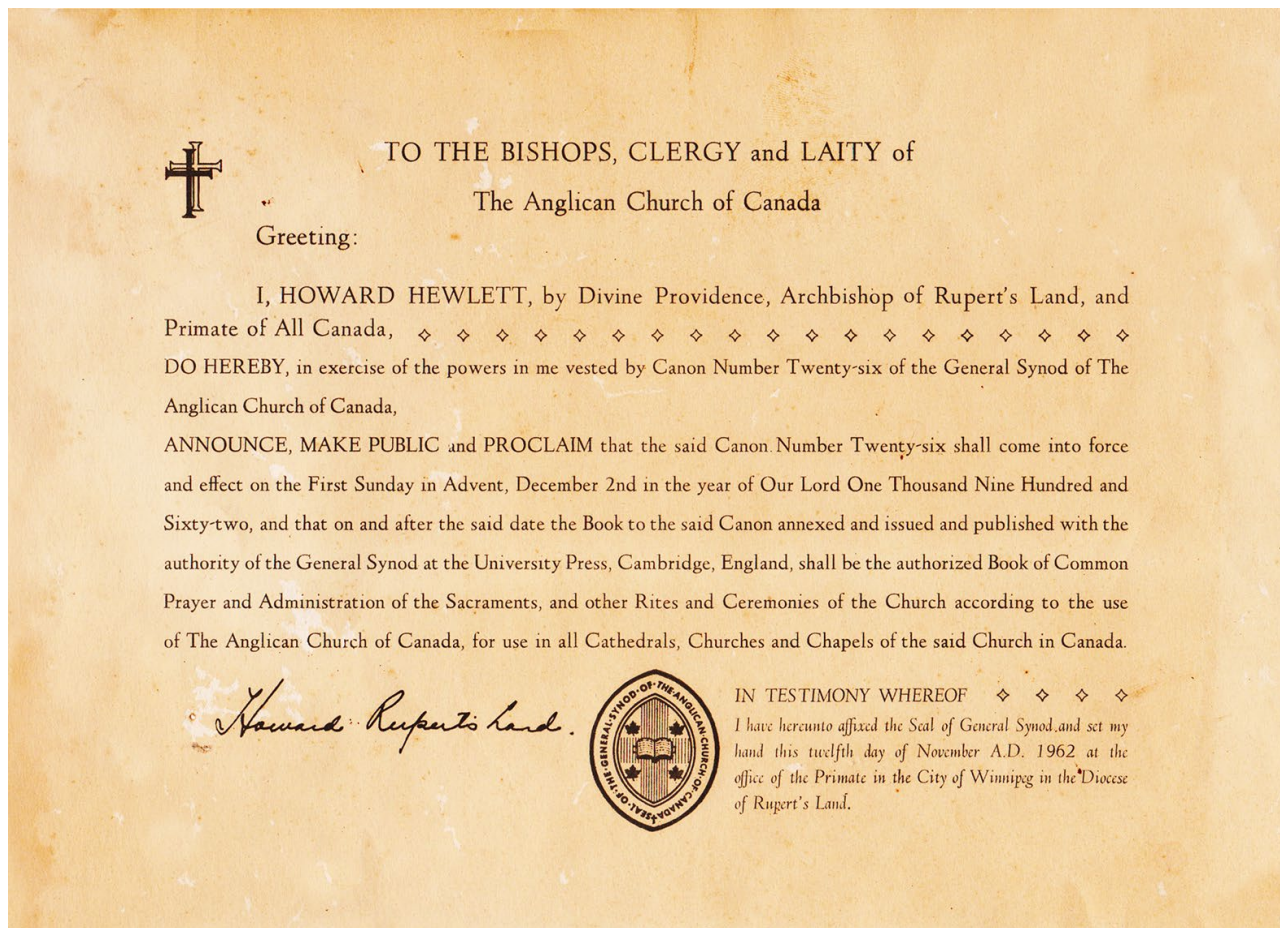
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The Prayer Book Society is suggesting three dates that could be observed as a way of marking the Diamond Jubilee celebration of the current BCP. Each of these dates has a significance in the history of the Prayer Book. The first date is Monday, March 21, which is the date of Archbishop

on our website in early March and advertised via Facebook, and we hope that many people will have noticed it there.) Archbishop Cranmer was the architect and compiler of the original Book of Common Prayer in 1549. Although the Prayer Book has undergone various changes since

this date in 1959 that the 1962 Canadian BCP was first used (on an experimental basis) in the Canadian Church. Why, you might ask, is it called the 1962 BCP when it was first published in 1959? In our Canadian Church, any legislation which comes before General Synod and



Thomas Cranmer's martyrdom. This is Cranmer's feast day in both the BCP and BAS liturgical calendars. (Note: unfortunately, because of mailing disruptions due to COVID, this print copy of the newsletter may not arrive in your hands before that date. However, this article was posted

that time, the wording of many of the prayers and exhortations is still his work and has stood the test of time for more than 450 years.

The second significant date for this Diamond Jubilee year is Saturday, September 3. It was on

has the potential for changes in doctrine must be passed by two consecutive General Synods to come into effect. For Anglicans, doctrine is enshrined (in part) in our liturgical formularies, and therefore changes in the Prayer Book have potential doctrinal implications. Thus, it was not

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until the revised Prayer Book was passed at a second General Synod in 1962 that it could be accepted by the Church as a whole. Between 1959 and 1962 the new Prayer Book was used only experimentally alongside the 1922 Canadian BCP.

The September 3 date has further significance for Canadian Anglicans. It was on this day in 1578 that the first recorded celebration of the Eucharist using the Book of Common Prayer took place in what is now Canada, celebrated by the Revd. Robert Wollfall in Frobisher Bay during an expedition in search of the North-West Passage led by Sir Martin Frobisher. The historical significance of the September 3 date was not lost on the Anglicans assembled for General Synod in 1959, because the Bishop of the Arctic, D. B. Marsh, was allowed to be the first cleric to celebrate the Eucharist using the new Prayer Book, which took place in St. George's Church, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec. The choice of date and celebrant for the first Eucharist using the present Prayer

Book was a conscious way of signaling the historical continuity of Anglicanism within Canada. Since September 3 falls in the Labour Day weekend this year, Canadian Anglicans may wish to celebrate the occasion of the first use of the 1962 BCP on a Sunday or week day afterwards.

The final significant date in this Diamond Jubilee year is the first Sunday in Advent, November 27. After the revised Prayer Book received approval at the 1962 General Synod, the then Primate, Archbishop Howard Hewlett Clark, sent out an episcopal decree to the whole Canadian Church that the canon authorizing the exclusive use of 1962 BCP would come into effect as of the first Sunday in Advent 1962. As it turns out, Advent I fell on December 2 in 1962, so rather than observe the actual date (December 2 falls on a Friday this year) the Prayer Book Society is suggesting that it would be more convenient to urge parishes to observe the anniversary on the first Sunday in Advent 2022, which is November 27. On the

page opposite is a scan of the Primate's decree which was sent out to every Anglican Church in Canada announcing the official date on which the sole use of the 1962 Book of Common Prayer would come into effect.

The 1962 Book of Common Prayer is still authorized for use in the Anglican Church of Canada, and it is hoped that even congregations which use primarily the Book of Alternative Services for their worship will consider using the BCP for some of their celebrations this year. The BCP is a part of our Anglican heritage, and a significant marker of Anglican identity. Educational resources and suggested liturgical material for celebrating the above anniversary dates have been posted on our website ([prayerbook.ca](http://prayerbook.ca)) and we invite interested people to visit it and explore them. An informed acquaintance with the 1962 Canadian Book of Common Prayer will help Canadian Anglicans to appreciate the deep and rich legacy of faith our forebears have entrusted to us.

### ***PBSC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING***

The Annual General Meeting of the Prayer Book Society of Canada will be held on Saturday, May 28<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm EDT at Wycliffe College in Toronto. Participants may join the meeting either in person or online via Zoom. Further details, the Zoom link and various supporting documents will be posted on our website at this link: <https://prayerbook.ca/agm-2022>. The annual Chairman's and Treasurer's reports will be presented, and the meeting will elect up to twenty 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 April 30<sup>th</sup>, 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](mailto:rwbentley@sympatico.ca)).



*(By the Very Revd. Chris Dow, a member of the PBSC National Council, who was chosen to be Dean of the Arctic and rector of St. Jude's Cathedral in Iqaluit last November.)*

But I am taking online Inuktitut classes, preparing to teach a course on the Psalms at the Arthur Turner Training School, and working on the next major development phase of the Common Prayer Canada app. We are in the early stages of adding Indigenous languages, beginning with Eastern Arctic Inuktitut. There are about 40,000 native speakers of this language, located mainly in Nunavut and northern Quebec. There is also a significant population in Ottawa. The writing system used in Inuktitut is based on the syllabic writing originally developed by Methodist missionary James Evans for Cree speakers, which was later adapted and introduced to the Inuit by Anglican missionary Edmund Peck. Here is a sample of it:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Unfortunately, the Eastern Arctic Prayer Book is not yet digitized, so we will be partnering with Inuit Anglicans in the Diocese of the Arctic who will manually type the text of the liturgies in Canadian Aboriginal Syllabics unicode. This is slow, careful, detail-oriented work that could take up to a year to complete. We would like to acknowledge a generous contribution from the Ottawa Branch of the Prayer Book Society which is helping to fund this project. If you would also like to make a donation, you can do so through the Canada Helps link on the "Donate" page of our website: <https://prayerbook.ca/contact/donate/>. Your gift will be used to help pay our developer and provide honoraria for our typists.

## Our Great Inheritance

*(This eloquent and incisive essay was written by H. Matthew Lee, who was a PBSC bursary recipient in 2021. It originally appeared in "Covenant", the weblog of the Living Church Foundation, in September 2020, and is reprinted here with permission. Matthew publishes in "Covenant" under his baptismal name of Paul.)*

The Book of Common Prayer is the great masterpiece of the English Church, and although the Anglican Communion today is now present beyond the historical conquest of the British Empire, it is still impossible for us to think about and understand Anglicanism without reference to the history of the Established Church of England. This is particularly acute for me as someone who has little, if any, connection to the English and their colonial exploits by personal or familial history. Nevertheless, as an Anglican, the great treasures and sins of the English Church are as much my inheritance as they are to a thoroughbred Englishman, as we are mystically bound together by the common chalice and altar.

Through the Prayer Book, Thomas Cranmer almost single-handedly set the liturgical dialect of English Christianity which remains to this day. It is a language so grand that it was adopted by those outside of the Anglican Church, and not just by other Protestants. Long before the social emancipation of English Catholics and the

post-Vatican II ecumenical thaw, Roman Catholic translations of the liturgy into English adopted Cranmer's renderings of liturgical Latin into English as we can see in the early bi-lingual missals and, perhaps most significantly, the English translation of the Tridentine Breviary by John Crichton-Stuart. The same goes for English translations of the Orthodox liturgies which began in earnest with the Anglican hands of John Mason Neale and Isabel Hapgood.

Almost five centuries after its advent, the rhythm of the Prayer Book's English has lost little of its power. As a literary masterpiece the Prayer Book is greater than the works of Milton, more significant than even Shakespeare, for it created the language of prayer for the English-speaking world — a sacral English, a dialect set aside uniquely for the loftiest purpose of worshipping God.

Despite the prodigious efforts of Anglophone Christians to vulgarize the language of prayer over the past half-century, the hieratic English of the Prayer Book still remains in all its grandeur. Far from being a museum piece it is still used daily in prayer; far from being "outdated" it is spoken not just by our stubborn elders who are content with the sacred language of their childhood but also the many young Anglicans who have discovered the classical Prayer Book and its irresistible magnetism.

But for all its literary excellence, if the aesthetic quality of the Prayer Book's prose were all we cared about, the Anglican legacy would be poor indeed. One might sympathize with W. H. Auden's exasperation at the introduction of "contemporary English" into the liturgy in his 1968 letter to St. Mark's in the Bowery, and perhaps have even repeated his words verbatim ("Have we gone stark raving mad?") while hearing the vulgarity that is supposed to be "friendly" to the modern ear. But losing oneself to purely aesthetic effect is a fascist play, not a Christian one. Certainly, Auden himself did not only have the aesthetic in mind in his letter as he notes that "one of the great functions of the liturgy is to keep us in touch with the past and the dead".

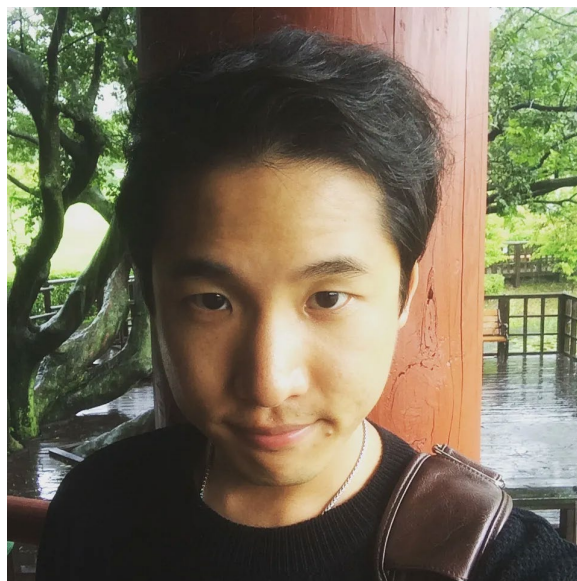
So, setting aside the ways the Prayer Book's exalted dialect has been taken up and renewed by the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox today, what is it about the old Prayer Book that grasps our spirit with such power? The reason is much deeper and more profound than the fact that it avoids the cheap journalese that infects every corner of the Church, whether it be in its modern liturgical texts or diocesan pronouncements. No, the true reason for its power is that it still speaks those things which we have all stopped saying without apology, and it speaks them through our own mouths as we pray.

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When one recalls the most moving passages of the Prayer Book they will all, invariably, be concerned with spiritual matters, moral themes, and attestations to transcendent otherness that are now strange and offensive to our decadent age. “In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth; in the hour of death, and in the day of judgement.” Who today talks about the hour of death and the day of judgment? Not even at funerals do we talk about death today, distorted as they are into the strange first-world decadence of “celebrations of life” or the unmitigated narcissism of “living funerals”. Do we imagine that we will outrun the deaths of our beloved and ourselves if we distract ourselves hard enough? But we hear from afar the truth perennial, perennial because Biblical: “Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow...” And before we are left desolate in the recognition of our mortality, the voice of the deep intercedes for us: “... suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from thee”, and commits our mortal remains with those words that are still recognized by all: “earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life... blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”

When do we hear such meditation on the inevitability of our mortal end, or the cosmic agony of alienating ourselves from God in the pains of death? When have we last heard such things from the dean standing under the stars and stripes at a Republican rally; from the curate singing the national anthem in front of the altar



*H. Matthew Lee*

(heaven knows what the “Land of the Free” or the “True North” have at all to do with Calvary and the Empty Tomb); the vicar duped by the latest “public intellectual” swindler; or the bishop waving a rainbow flag at the Pride parade? Might our upper-middle class white clergy have started to understand even a little about the mortal gravity of “lightning and tempest; plague, pestilence and famine; battle and murder, and sudden death” from the comforts of their suburban homes, now that a pandemic and social upheaval have arrived on their front steps?

A part of the old Prayer Book’s power is how it reveals our self-righteous pretension for the sickness it is, a brittle narcissism that hides itself under the activist rhetoric of the day. When we see another mealy-mouthed publication from a synod, even Lambeth, saying something like, “May God lead us to solve our social inequality”, we can still hear the noble voice echo from the choir loft: “comfort all that are in danger, necessity, and tribulation... and all that are desolate and oppressed.”

For generations Anglicans prayed for truth and grace, peace and humble comfort, justice and atonement. But now, it seems, we cannot help ourselves from issuing a constant stream of fatuous self-indulgence thinly disguised in the jargon of social concern — and fancy ourselves wise for it.

If only we were able to realize how facile all this is when our Anglican churches are among the most socio-culturally monochromatic institutions in North America. But if we incline our ear even in the midst of all such grim banalities, we can still hear the old organ bellow from above with moral clarity: “... there is no health in us: But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders.”

But more significantly, the old Prayer Book continues to inspire such great devotion from a diversity of young people, whether leftist or

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conservative, “Evangelical” or “Catholic”, because it is perhaps the last thing we have left in contemporary Anglicanism that is unashamed of being *Christian* in a robust, confident way. It is the only thing left which is connected, in both form and content, to our forebears and has resisted the contemporary obsession with novelty and “relevance”.

What brings us to breathe life into the old Book with our prayers and allow it to shape our minds, tongues, and spirits, is that in its pages we find religion. In it we find a tradition that has been hallowed by the lips and fingers of the generations before us; in it are the liturgies which animate Scripture into the grammar of prayer, a language that speaks with confidence about the transcendent otherness of God and with sobriety about our sins. When we pray the Office we are in the company of the cloud of witnesses — the old granny in the country parish, the young soldier sent to his death by kings and high councils, the cloistered monks, the Israelites weeping by the rivers of Babylon.

The Prayer Book is sublime because its language is so authentically Christian, so authentically *human*. It gives glory to the majesty of God and unflinchingly lays witness to the grandest virtues and deepest failures of the human soul, and thereby shows us the path to repentance and true transcendence — our becoming one with God. Therein lies its timelessness, the reason for its relevance to our very day, and

why so many have returned to these old words; these words that were deemed obsolete by an arrogant generation and pawned off for amateurish novelties.

When one opens a contemporary revision of the Prayer Book or some other concoction from our “liturgical committees”, one discovers a studious erasure of whatever is supposedly too difficult for our frail modern minds, too uncouth for the cultured ear — even to the point of censoring Scripture. There is to be no talk about rage or judgment; no mention of death or tribulation; no examination of gluttony and lust; no remembrance of sin or atonement; no courage to face suffering and martyrdom; no thoughts of even the cross or the empty tomb — no, of course not, because all these things would make us impolite company to modern society; too serious, too *religious*. And by that very fact, these new liturgical texts and lectionaries are irrelevant to both Christians and non-Christians alike, because they are inauthentic to the complexities of both God and human life.

Well-meaning as our Church might be in all this, our preaching is banal, our theology incoherent, our discipline nonexistent, because they are not grounded in the genuine prayers of the Church, shaped by the fullness of Scripture and hallowed by the witness of the saints. While stodgy English discipline still remained in her clergy and laity, the Anglican Church was able to speak with some truth about spiritual and

moral matters due to the guidance and authority of the Prayer Book, even in the midst of the Church’s greatest periods of decadence. Let us today restore the ancient landmark which our fathers have set (Prov. 22:28), so that tomorrow we might speak more truthfully.

For all the manifold failures of the Anglican Church, indeed her multitude of great sins, it had the singular fortune to have had its foundations laid in an age of great strife, disease, and upheaval. It was mostly penned by the hand of an opportunistic man who, for all his sins, mustered his courage and recovered his integrity at the last moments as he thrust his right hand into the fire and burned on the pyre. The Bible and the Prayer Book, written by the Israelites and the English, carry a universal quality that transcends the ages of the authors. One, because it is the revelation of God; the other, because it is a faithful witness to the revelation of God. It is for this reason that I, who am neither Jew nor English (let alone Greek, Roman, or Slavic), have them as my spiritual ancestors. So, in the memories of my predecessors I will carry these heirlooms which I have received as an adopted son to the next generation who belong to the Lord of Hosts.

So I beseech thee, good Lord, to hear us, “That it may please thee to give us true repentance; to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances; and to endue us with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, to amend our lives according to thy holy Word.”

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