

My Love for the Book of Common Prayer

(The Rt. Revd. William Cliff, the Bishop of the Diocese of Ontario, recently accepted the invitation of the PBSC to become the Society's new Episcopal Visitor, following the retirement of the Rt. Revd. Michael Hawkins. The role of the Episcopal Visitor is to act as liaison between the PBSC and the House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada. In this article Bishop Cliff reflects on the influence of the Book of Common Prayer in his spiritual life.)

I was raised in a Christian home environment. My father identified as Church of England in a general way, but he was away from home for long periods because of his work, so my mother, who was a believer although not Anglican, took me off to the local Pentecostal church, and it was the formative church of my childhood. The scriptures were very real to me, and the preaching and respect for scripture that I learned as a child were things that I always looked for afterwards, any time I went to a church.

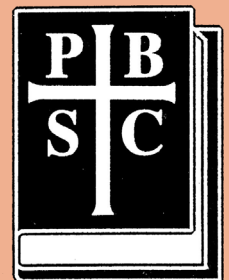
I studied music while doing my undergraduate degree at the University of Western Ontario in London. While I was there, I was asked if I might like to join the choir at St. Paul's (Anglican) Cathedral, where the primary mode of worship was the BCP. I agreed; and once I had joined the cathedral and experienced the music and worship, I was bowled over by their spiritual power. It was all a revelation. I fell in love with the language and theology of grace that the BCP embodied. I was truly brought back into the church (having wandered away from it through most of my teen years) by my second year of university. I loved the order and rule of life which the BCP embodied and taught me. I began to say Morning and Evening Prayer privately. I was hooked.



The Rt. Revd. William Cliff

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After graduating, I went to Huron University College to pursue an M.Div. There I experienced weekly worship according to both the Book of Common Prayer and the Book of Alternative Services, as the Chapel at Huron offered sung services every day. I was ordained Deacon and Priest in 1992 and served a curacy in Simcoe. I then served as Rector of the Parish of Hanover and Durham, followed by the Parish of Strathroy and Adelaide. My love for the Prayer Book liturgy stood me in good stead, for ten years after ordination I returned to Huron

University College as the Chapel Rector, and for thirteen years prayed the Offices in the same chapel I had worshipped in as a seminarian.

I was elected Bishop in 2015, first serving in the Diocese of Brandon, and since 2023 in the Diocese of Ontario. Throughout that time my heart has always gone back to the BCP and the Daily Offices. Even today I make it a priority to attend Evensong at the Cathedral in Kingston whenever I can, and thankfully, they usually invite me to sing the Office with them.

As a bishop, I have travelled widely and enjoyed worship with Anglicans around the world. The common heritage, theology and worldview of God's grace expressed through the life of Jesus in the Prayer Book have formed me as a Christian and been to me a bedrock of Church life, whether in Indigenous communities in Northern Manitoba, in a small parish in the UK, in many churches in the United States or even in Rome on a visit with other clerics. To this day I remain formed and nourished by the prayers of the BCP.

PBSC Old Testament Lectionary Accepted for Trial Use in Florida

(By the Revd. Matthew Perreault. Fr. Perreault is a member of the National Council of the PBSC. He hails from Calgary, Alberta, and in 2021 he moved with his wife Lindsay to Central Florida to take up a position as the rector of St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in the town of Eustis. This article describes how he and a group of fellow clergy successfully persuaded the diocesan bishop to authorize the 1962 Canadian eucharistic lectionary, along with the set of Old Testament lections compiled by the PBSC, for trial use in their parishes.)

What is the purpose of the eucharistic lectionary? In the original Prayer Book tradition, Thomas Cranmer makes clear that his goal, with the modest revision of the traditional eucharistic lectionary, is the edification of the

people. In the 1970s and beyond, however, much of Anglicanism abandoned the traditional one-year lectionary in favour of a new three-year Revised Common Lectionary which had been developed by Rome.

The three-year model sought to expose the faithful, over the course of the three-year cycle, to as much of Scripture as possible. It was to be a tool to make the faithful as familiar as possible with Scripture in an era where it was becoming clear that the people were less and less familiar with the whole of the Bible. A laudable goal, indeed; however, a surpassingly difficult task.

In short, the goal of the lectionary had gone from edification to exposure. In the 40 or so years since its introduction to North American Anglicanism,

it has become normative, and even in Canada where the Prayer Book remains the standard of faith, many dioceses have dubiously licit instructions that the BCP's lectionary is not to be used and instead all parishes must use the RCL. In the United States, while elements of the 1928 Prayer Book have been re-authorized for use, the lectionary was explicitly exempted from that authorization.

The results of this transition have been mixed at best. In my own parish, I was struck by the comment of a parishioner who had been attending the parish for 40 years, and who off-handedly commented one day that they had no idea that Sirach was a book of the Bible. This was not a theological statement about the Canon of Scripture, but rather a reflection of the fact that the goal of the three-year lectionary, of

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exposing the faithful to Scripture so that they would become more familiar with the Word of God, had failed this particular parishioner.

This coincided with the work of the Prayer Book Society in developing an Old Testament supplement to the Prayer Book's lectionary, a project with which I had a limited role in being a reviewer of the drafts, with my

parishioners proclaimed "Sir, we wish to see Jesus!"

We ultimately identified a number of key issues that we felt, in our own parochial contexts, had led to our pastoral need. First and foremost was a lack of thematic clarity caused by discontinuity between collects and readings. In the summer of year B or C, it was entirely possible to have a complete disconnect

lesson did not seem to be causing it to sink in. With such unconnected and disparate readings, it was often difficult for the preacher to draw connections between the readings, meaning that often enough one or two would be entirely ignored. As the preacher ignored them, so too did the faithful.

Finally, while the goal was exposure, the reality is that 156 Sundays over three years is not nearly enough time to expose the faithful to Scripture in a meaningful way. Even in the BCP Office lectionary, which was designed for exposure to Scripture, the two-year cycle has 700 days and four lessons per day to accomplish that, a much more manageable task! With only three years of Sundays, the reality is that significant portions of Scripture are still missed, with, for example, the most complete use of any book of the New Testament being the Epistle to the Ephesians at three-quarters usage. With many of the faithful believing that they were receiving the fullness of the story of Scripture from the lectionary, their own impetus to read Scripture was actually lessened!



*St. Thomas' Episcopal Church
Eustis, Florida*

move to a new parish having left me unable to take a fuller role in a project which I whole-heartedly endorsed. Having moved from Canada to the United States, I never imagined that my familiarity with the project would lead to its use in my own parish!

In early 2024, a group of clergy in a study circle began discussing our serious difficulties, primarily from a pastoral perspective, with the three-year lectionary. Harkening back to the Greeks' bidding to Philip, our

between the Collect, Old Testament, New Testament, and Gospel lessons. This disconnect was a cause of confusion for those new to the Anglican tradition, where there seemed to be no rhyme nor reason to the prayer said at the beginning of the Mass or the readings that were eventually read, and seemingly ignored by the preacher.

This was ultimately the second issue. While exposure seemed good in principle, it had practical deficiencies. Simply reading the

Pastorally, our group sought to address those issues. Fundamentally, we argued that a one-year lectionary focused on the person of Jesus Christ, with the reader thus being captivated by the person of Christ, is the best and only true way for a sustained discipleship that will encourage devotional reading and study of Scripture.

Using resolutions of the American General Convention which encouraged bishops to

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permit liturgical experimentation in their dioceses for the sake of enriching the liturgical life of the Church and people, the group asked the Bishop to authorize a three-year trial of a one-year lectionary. With some feedback, the Bishop enthusiastically endorsed the proposal, and after setting terms, authorized it for use, but not before encouraging the inclusion of two additional parishes.

While the proposal submitted to the bishop considered five different possible one-year lectionaries, our group ultimately proposed the Prayer Book Society's Canadian Lectionary with Old Testament Supplement as our preference. Its design allows for the least disruption to parishes familiar with the three-year lectionary's style of readings, and its cost is far less than that of any other option we discussed.

In the fall of 2024, the Bishop of Central Florida authorized five parishes to use the Prayer Book Society's lectionary beginning on Advent 2024 through the Sunday Next before Advent 2027, with the additional condition that feedback be gathered from parishioners, and a draft report be submitted to the Standing Committee (of the General Convention) on Liturgy and Music prior to the 2027 General Convention, and that a final report be compiled and submitted after the conclusion of the initial three-year trial. As well, pending the results of the first year of implementation, the bishop has expressed his openness to expanding authorization to other parishes beginning in Advent 2025.

In just a little more than two months of use at the time of this writing, feedback so far has been

extremely positive. Parishioners at one parish who are a part of a feedback committee have noted clearer connections between the readings and collects, highlighting a distinct theme for each Sunday. At another parish, there has been extreme excitement over the changes with the seasonal themes becoming much more evident during the Scriptural progression through Advent, Epiphany, and Gesimatide.

In Canada, use of the OT Supplement would require authorization from the Bishop, but the Central Florida model may provide a useful example for parishes in Canada interested in a return to the traditional Prayer Book lectionary, which would similarly answer the cry of the faithful who wish to see Jesus in their lectionary!

A New Chaplain for Wycliffe College

(In an exciting development, the Revd. Chris Dow, one of the national vice-chairmen of the PBSC, was recently appointed as chaplain of Wycliffe College in Toronto. Fr. Dow describes his experiences since arriving at the College last August.)

After serving for over two years in Iqaluit, my wife and children and I decided to move south for family reasons, and also because an exciting new opportunity became available. I am now the Chaplain and Director of Field Education at Wycliffe College, Toronto.

It was as a student at Wycliffe 15 years ago that I first discovered the Prayer Book - and it was the daily rhythm of morning and evening prayer in the college chapel that drew me into Anglicanism. I am pleased that the Prayer Book is still used in the Wycliffe chapel for half of each semester and that the history and ethos of the Prayer Book are still taught in several courses. This is thanks in large part to Bishop Stephen Andrews, a long-time supporter of the Book of Common Prayer, who will retire from his role as Principal in June. We are grateful for his promotion of the Prayer Book over his entire career

of parish, episcopal and academic ministry.

My role includes overseeing chapel services, student placements, and pastoral care to students. Additionally, I teach a course I inherited from my predecessor called "Life Together", named after Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book of the same title. In addition to Bonhoeffer, we also read the Rule of St. Benedict and introduce students to an Anglican Benedictine spirituality founded upon daily prayer, especially psalmody.

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I have delighted in getting to know the students and feel stimulated being back in an academic setting. I have also enjoyed renewing connections with Toronto-area BCP parishes and their clergy.

Although I work in Toronto, my family and I have settled in my hometown of Kingston.

During academic term, I typically commute into Toronto on Sunday evenings and stay through at the college until Thursday afternoons. In Kingston, I am an honorary assistant at St. John's, Portsmouth.

I am delighted that our National Chairman, Fr. Gordon Maitland, is moving to Kingston in April and that Bp. Cliff of

Ontario has recently agreed to become our new episcopal visitor. With all of us being in Kingston, it has also made sense to move the Society's general mailing address there (as you will see listed on the back of this newsletter). I'm excited for the opportunity that this will allow for us to brainstorm and collaborate on new initiatives for the Society.

Lenten Retreat at Monastery, Nova Scotia

Friday, March 21 – Sunday, March 23

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s numerous retreats were jointly organized by the St. Andrew's Mission Society of King's College Chapel, Halifax, and the Nova Scotia – P.E.I. branch of the PBSC at Our Lady of Grace Monastery, located in Monastery, N.S. (The monastery was originally Trappist, later Cistercian and then Augustinian, until 1999.) The retreat house is now once again open to visiting groups, and some Maritime Anglican clergy are organizing a Lenten retreat this month along the lines of the previous ones. The cost is \$250 per person, and includes accommodation and meals from Friday supper until Sunday lunch. Enrolment is limited to 24 persons, and limited student support is available.

Schedule for the event:

Friday:

4:00 pm - arrival; 6:00 pm – Evening Prayer; 6:30 pm - supper; 8:00 pm – first address; 9:00 pm - Compline

Saturday:

7:15 am – Mattins; 7:30 am – Eucharist; 8:00 am – breakfast; 9:30 am – second address; 12:00 pm – noonday prayers; 2:00 pm – third address; 5:30 pm – Evening Prayer; 6:00 pm – supper; 8:00 pm – fourth address; 9:00 pm – Compline

Sunday:

7:30 am – Mattins; 8:00 – breakfast; 9:30 am – fifth address; 11:00 am – Eucharist; 12:00 pm – lunch; 1:00 pm – depart.



The retreat will be led by the Revd. Gethin Edward. Fr. Edward was born and raised on Prince Edward Island. A son of former PBSC National Chairman Michael Edward and a cradle Anglican, he grew up attending St. Peter's Cathedral in Charlottetown, where his faith was formed and fostered by the Common Prayer tradition. During his teens, encouraged by the communities he found at the St. Michael's Youth Conference and the chapel at King's College, Halifax, he discerned a vocation to the priesthood, and after marrying his wife, Meg, in 1999, entered the divinity program at Wycliffe College, Toronto. He was ordained a priest in 2010, in the diocese of Saskatchewan. He now lives and ministers on PEI with his family, where he is the priest in charge of the parish of Montague and Souris, and also a member of the spiritual care team at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Charlottetown. For more information on the retreat, please contact Fr. Edward at gethin.edward@gmail.com.

A Sermon for the First Sunday in Lent

(By Bishop Michael Hawkins, Honorary President of the PBSC; from the archive of his sermons on our website.)

If you could turn stones into bread, would you? If you could fly like a bird, would you? If you were offered all the money in the world, would you take it?

The story of Jesus' temptation is the story of power unexercised. It is hard for us to understand, because we live so much in a day when "just because I can" is justification for any action at all. I have always found it helpful to consider Jesus' temptations in terms of power, because here, as in the Garden of Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane, this is a most helpful way to understand what's really going on. The way of love is not the way of power, at least of worldly power.

Jesus has just been declared and affirmed in his Baptism as God's beloved child. And here, at the outset of his ministry, there is this testing. What does it mean to be God's Son, to live in his love? How do you demonstrate and live out that relationship?

Now the three temptations of Jesus, God's only and beloved Son, belong to us, too, who have been baptized and are God's beloved children. These are the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Jesus is tempted, as are we, to avoid the cross; to avoid the humiliation, suffering, selflessness, sacrifice and obedience of the cross; and

to try and find some short cut to glory.

The first thing we need to realize in this account is that Jesus suffers and is tempted with us. The two greatest accounts of our Lord's temptation come at the beginning and end of his ministry, here and in the Garden of Gethsemane. In this account,



The Rt. Revd. Michael Hawkins

the emphasis is on Jesus' victory, and the means of that victory which is the word of God, the sword of the Spirit. In Gethsemane, we have a picture rather of the reality of the temptations Jesus faced and of his struggle with them. So the first point of our Lord's being tempted is this: Because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted. For we have not a high priest who is unable to

sympathize with our weakness, but who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Jesus knew well that while the spirit may be willing, the flesh is weak. Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer. He knows the real, hard and painful struggles we all have with temptations.

He knows how hard it is to be good, to choose and do what is right. He sympathizes, from and in his own experience, with your weakness.

So whatever your addiction, your besetting sin, your repeated error, your fatal flaw, your great weakness – Jesus Christ has sympathy for you. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. But he tells us that, not to excuse our backslidings, or to pretend that our sins are not so grievous, but rather that he might show us where we may find strength, and grace to help in time of need.

For Jesus not only suffers temptation with us, but for us. And his victory in the wilderness and in Gethsemane may be ours. In the first place, it is by the word of God that he conquers and it is in the second place by prayer. By these means of grace, the Bible and Prayer, we may share in Christ's victory over temptation. We may find that power, which we know lacking in ourselves, to live truly as God's beloved children. We need grace to help in time of need, and the two ways by which we may avail ourselves of that grace are Scripture and prayer.

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To review, here are the two points we have covered thus far. 1. Jesus was tempted with us, and therefore he can sympathize with our struggles. 2. Jesus was tempted for us, to win against the devil and his seductions, and to show us the path to victory by the grace of God. We follow him in that victory, especially by Scripture and Prayer. And this leads to my third point: Jesus' temptations show us that it is all really about our relationship with God. The devil, as in the beginning, sows the seeds of doubt as to our relationship with God, whether we are really his beloved children. And Jesus faced this first and for all.

Whether you're struggling this Lent with having given up chocolate, or whether you're tempted in your life to lie or commit adultery, it is all really about your relationship with your Father. The devil lies to us about the Christian life, life as a child of God. He makes it out to be a life of banquets and grand displays, about kingdom and power and glory for us, here and

now. Jesus' three temptations have to do with Food, Fame and Fortune. They have to do with the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life. The devil would have Jesus, and us, focus only on these. But in every instance, the Scripture Jesus quotes recalls his relationship with his Father. For him to chose to make bread out of stones, would be like Esau selling his birthright for a bowl of soup. And for Christians, all sin is like that – forfeiting our relationship with God our Father, for some bowl of soup or another. Jesus is tempted to chose stuff over his Father, to chose the creation over the Creator. He will eat, and he will provide miraculous bread, but to feed others, he will show himself the Son of God. Not by a flashy display of power, but by suffering love. He will take the kingdom and the power and the glory. Not by compromise with evil, but by overcoming evil with good. He will not choose these things over his relationship with God as his beloved Son. So in every answer, by every Scripture, Jesus recalls his relationship with

God his Father. He depends upon and trusts him, so he does not change stones to bread, because he will not test his Father's love. He does not throw himself off the temple peak, because he worships and serves God his Father, so he does not worship another, the devil.

All our temptations and all our sins must be regarded in this light, in the light of what they mean to our relationship with God – how we are and live as his beloved children, and as brothers and sisters to one another. It is about our relationship with God, for that alone will make us happy, to live as God's beloved children, and as brothers and sisters to each other. No amount of stuff – of food, fame or fortune – will satisfy our hearts and souls. We are all of us weak sinners, but we are by God's grace, through the blood of Christ and the gift of the Spirit, poured out for us and on us, God's beloved, forgiven children. Let us then seek his grace to help us to live, to choose, and to love as such.

PBSC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Prayer Book Society of Canada will be held via Zoom on Saturday, May 31st at 2:00 pm EDT. Further details, the Zoom link and various supporting documents will be posted on our website at this link: <https://prayerbook.ca/agm-2025>. 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 30th, since these officers are elected by the National Council. Nominations are also invited for the positions of Councillor and Honorary President, and these will be elected 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 Communications Coordinator, Diana Verseghy, at 12 Sherbourne Dr., Maple, ON, L6A 1G8. (Email address: diana.verseghy@sympatico.ca.)

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Opinions expressed in this
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