

The Prayer Book Society of Canada Newsletter

Thanksgiving 2026

Reprinting the Prayer Book

(By the Rev. Canon Dr. Gordon Maitland, National Chairman of the PBSC)

One of the most common questions that arrives in the Society's email inbox is the question of when the Book of Common Prayer will be updated and reprinted. It has been four years since her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth passed away, and the fact that Prayer Book has not been updated has been a frustration for many. I may mention that the online BCP app maintained by the PBSC was updated within a month of the Queen's repose, and also that the Church of England had an updated BCP in print before the end of 2022.

One of the main problems confronting our Church has been the fact that to date, the national office has relied on a PDF scan of the existing Prayer Book for printing purposes; that is, until now, Gilmore Printing (the selected printing house of the Anglican Church of Canada) has simply used that PDF scan to produce reprints of the church's worship books. Now that there is a need to change the texts in the BCP, a whole new digital master copy has had to be produced. While it is possible to modify an existing PDF, this typically results in formatting problems and other technical glitches, so that it much more straightforward to produce a new document rather than modify the old one. Another challenge relates to the formatting of the Table of Lessons for Morning and Evening Prayer (pp. xvi – xlvii). When one looks at these tables, one can see that the pages mirror each other across the spine of the book. While this arrangement was easily done using the old method of mechanical typesetting, it becomes much more difficult to do with digital printing. Thus, the Table of Lessons had to be completely reformatted so as to have each page stand on its own.

Although all of these difficulties could be overcome, there was apparently no urgency on the part of the national office to undertake the work. Other priorities took precedence until an intervention by our Episcopal Visitor, the Rt. Revd William Cliff of the Diocese of Ontario. He raised the issue in the House of Bishops, and all agreed that everyone was



The Revd. Canon Dr. Gordon Maitland

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waiting for an updated BCP and that no one wanted to purchase the existing outdated BCPs in stock at Gilmore Printing. With the backing of the Primate, the Most Revd. Shane Parker, the Director of Communications was asked to speed up the work of updating the Prayer Book.

We are happy to report that the Prayer Book Society of Canada has been a part of the revision process from the beginning. The Director of Communications, Alicia Brown, asked for our help in redesigning the Table of Lessons, and the Revd. Chris Dow and I suggested several different designs based on already existing BCPs from various sources. A draft electronic version of the revised BCP was produced, and a copy of this draft book was sent to the PBSC for proofreading. A number of volunteers (both from the Society and beyond) have been doing the slow and tedious work of going through the text, line by line, to check for errors and typos. Not surprisingly, the newly typeset Table of Lessons had numerous mistakes that needed to be corrected, and these initial corrections have been sent to the

national office. While the work of proofreading the draft BCP continues to be slow and onerous, we are thankful for the opportunity as a Society to ensure that the new draft is as error-free as possible. We hope it can be finished around the end of this year so that the revised BCP can be published sometime in 2027.

The key changes to the revised BCP will be, firstly, that it will contain the name of our current Sovereign, King Charles, in the various State Prayers and in the preces and responses at Morning and Evening Prayer. Secondly, the recently composed collect, *For Reconciliation with the Jewish People*, given final approval at General Synod in 2023, will replace the previous collect, *For the Conversion of the Jews*, in the section entitled "Prayers and Thanksgivings Upon Several Occasions". The Table of Moveable Feasts will be extended out to 2065. The national office will apparently be looking for a new publisher for the book, and the plan is that it will be printed in various sizes and with different bindings: for example, there will be the usual pew edition, as well as large-print and gift editions.

Of course, some people will ask, "When will the Book of Alternative Services be updated and published?" Speaking personally, I doubt very much that the BAS could be reprinted with only the changes to the Sovereign's name. There are supplementary Eucharistic Prayers and Seasonal Collects which have been approved by General Synod that would need to be added. The Office Book, *Pray Without Ceasing*, effectively replaces all of the material for Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer that appears in the BAS. The psalter that appears in *Pray Without Ceasing* replaces the BAS psalter that was borrowed from the Episcopal Church in the USA. In short, the BAS would have to be so completely and thoroughly revised as to constitute a new book altogether. And at the present time the national office of the Anglican Church of Canada has neither the money nor the staff to effect such a drastic revision. Thus, it is ironic that the Book of Common Prayer will soon be the most up-to-date worship book that the Canadian Church has in its possession.

BURSARIES AVAILABLE

Each fall, the PBSC makes available a limited number of bursaries of up to \$1000, for Anglican students engaged in religious studies who value the Book of Common Prayer, use it in their daily prayer life, and wish to support its continuing use in the Anglican churches in Canada. Students in the ordination stream are particularly encouraged to apply. This year the deadline for applications is November 6th. Students wishing to be considered for one of these bursaries should submit a copy of their curriculum vitae and the names, addresses and phone numbers of two references, together with a covering letter explaining their interest in this bursary and in the Book of Common Prayer, to the chair of the PBSC Bursaries Committee, Dr. Diana Verseghy, at the following email address: diana.verseghy@sympatico.ca. Candidates will be interviewed by the Bursaries Committee via Zoom in mid to late November, and awards will be made in mid-December.

Free Methodists and the Prayer Book Lectionary

(By the Revd. Joel Webb, the pastor of a Free Methodist Church in Croswell, Michigan, describing his introduction of the BCP lectionary into his church's worship..)

On January 19, 2025, I began my first Sunday as pastor at Croswell Free Methodist Church. This historic congregation, the first Christian worshipping community in Croswell, predating the city's incorporation, has a storied past and a prominent physical presence in the downtown. Known locally simply as "the Methodist Church", it carries a deep legacy shaped by both continuity and recent change.

In the wake of denominational shifts within the United Methodist Church regarding teachings on morality and sexuality, this congregation made the uncommon decision among nearby Methodist churches to affiliate with the Free Methodist Church rather than the newly formed Global Methodist Church. Following that transition and the retirement of their lay pastor, and just months before my own ordination, I was appointed to serve.

The Free Methodist Church itself was founded in 1860 in Pekin, New York, under the leadership of B. T. Roberts and others who were expelled from the Methodist Episcopal Church. Their commitments were: abolition, holiness of life, and a return to a more vital and disciplined Methodism as in its

primitive state. What began as a renewal movement has since become a global denomination, with the 95% of its members now outside the United States.

Yet despite this rich heritage within the pan-Wesleyan movement, the modern Free

Methodist Church often reflects the broader patterns of American evangelicalism in both theology and worship style. While our official rituals of Baptism and Holy Communion remain, and still bear the liturgical traces of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, they are often detached



The Revd. Joel Webb, officiating on Easter Sunday last year.

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from the fuller liturgical and sacramental framework that once sustained Methodist life, especially in praxis.

This raises an important question: how does a Free Methodist congregation come to embrace a more historic, liturgical pattern of worship? In our case, it has been a convergence of history, context, and formation. The congregation's United Methodist roots meant that a structured liturgy was not entirely foreign. At the same time, my own journey, shaped by a growing engagement with the liturgical and sacramental traditions of the Church, provided both the impetus and the framework for renewal.

I was first introduced to the Book of Common Prayer through Anglican bus-mates during a trip to Israel, an encounter that confirmed a trajectory already forming in my life and ministry. That trajectory deepened through seminary study, particularly in lectionary-based preaching, and through sustained engagement with the Anglican and Wesleyan traditions. John Wesley's Anglicanism became especially significant for me. As a lifelong priest of the Church of England, Wesley's spirituality was formed by the rhythms of Scripture and the Book of Common Prayer; Morning and Evening Prayer, frequent Communion, and the ordered life of the Church. Methodism, in its earliest expression, did not abandon these patterns but intensified them. Recovering that vision has become central to both my personal life and pastoral ministry.

When I arrived in Croswell, we began with the Revised Common Lectionary alongside the standard Sunday liturgy from the United Methodist Hymnal. This provided a familiar and accessible starting point. From there, our worship developed in several stages. By Pentecost, we had moved to weekly celebration of Holy Communion and began using the 2019 ACNA lectionary. Shortly thereafter, our liturgy took shape around a slightly adapted form of the Renewed Ancient Text from the 2019 Book of Common Prayer. These changes were received with openness, especially when paired with intentional teaching, including an instructed Eucharist that walked the congregation through the meaning of each element of the service.

In the weeks leading up to Advent 2025, I encountered a series of papers from the Prayer Book Society of Canada (PBSC) commending the traditional one-year lectionary. Compelled by their argument, I began studying the 1662 lectionary more closely, alongside Fr. Melville Scott's *The Harmony of the Collects, Epistles, and Gospels*, which offers rich theological commentary on its structure. What became increasingly clear is that the strength of the one-year lectionary lies not simply in its content, but in its repetition. Over time, its fixed cycle forms patterns, grooves, in the hearts and minds of a congregation. Scripture is not only read but remembered; not only encountered, but internalized. For this reason, we transitioned to the 1662 one-year lectionary at the start of the liturgical year in Advent:

purchasing a copy of the lectionary book, conformed to the collects of the ACNA, and even creating our own Gospel book with the readings in the translation our church uses (NIV). While we are still in the early stages of this practice, even now in our first year, there is a growing sense of coherence and depth in our common life of worship.

Our hope is that, over the course of years, this steady rhythm of Word and Table will form us more fully as a Eucharistic people, rooted in Scripture, shaped by prayer, and grounded in the historic life of the Church. In this way, what began as a local pastoral transition may, by God's grace, become part of a wider recovery of Wesleyan liturgical and sacramental identity.

More broadly, it is my hope that this kind of renewal might contribute, even in a small way, to a wider recovery of Methodism's Anglican inheritance, not as an exercise in nostalgia, but as a living resource for theological clarity, sacramental depth, and ordered worship. The genius of early Methodism was not in departing from this heritage, but in enlivening it for the sake of evangelism and holy living. Through my involvement in the Free Methodist Liturgical Network, I am encouraged that this recovery is not isolated, but part of a growing conversation and shared work, seeking to see this inheritance once again take its rightful place in both our theology and our practice.

PBSC Event in Montreal Friday, October 30th

All are invited to attend a meeting of the Prayer Book Society in Montreal at Saint John the Evangelist church (137 Av. du Président-Kennedy). There will be a service of Evensong according to the Book of Common Prayer at 5pm followed by a potluck supper and a lecture given by Dr. Torrance Kirby.

Dr. Kirby is a professor of ecclesiastical history at McGill university. He specialises in the work of the great Anglican theologian Richard Hooker, and is a fellow of the Royal Historical Society. He has authored several books on Hooker's work.



St. John the Evangelist Church



Dr. Torrance Kirby

The lecture ("Richard Hooker on the Public Duties of Religion") will focus on the role of aesthetics and the sensual in the life of the Church. The Prayer Book has an aesthetic role to play in the life of the church which can appeal to the sensibilities of the population at large. Richard Hooker placed a high importance on this aspect which will be explored during the lecture.

For more information, contact Kieran Cabana at this email address: kierancabana@gmail.com

A Gift Returned: Why Canadian Rectors Should Adopt the Book of Common Prayer

(This arresting article is by Tyler W. J. Mutch, a founding member of a recently formed organization, “Canadian Anglicans for Renewal”. Its membership consists of young adults under 30, who are committed to bringing the Anglican Church back to its roots: in particular, the Book of Common Prayer. Representatives of CAR recently approached the PBSC, and our two organizations have been exploring ways in which we can work together.)

On Pentecost Sunday, June 9, 1549, English congregations gathered under King Edward VI to worship according to a “Book of Common Prayer” (hereafter the “BCP”), and the people heard the Church’s worship in their own tongue. The BCP brought together the liturgy, services, and doctrines of the Church of England into one book. It made such services accessible even to the illiterate, who could understand and come to expect what a Sunday mass may look like on any given day. In this sense, the BCP fulfilled its name, and gave the common person a direct relationship with the institution that presided over them. It became a tool to safeguard the laity against rogue clergy, and united the Church in a commonality of worship that all could understand.

Nearly five centuries later, Anglican parishes across Canada gather to worship, yet what they

pray, and who decides it, can vary enormously from one church to the next. In some of these parishes the weekly liturgy is determined by the rector’s preference, and it is worth asking whether this serves the laity, or only confuses them as to what the Anglican Church of Canada stands for. The assertion of this paper is that rectors should adopt the BCP, as it offers us an alternative that is liturgically beautiful, theologically sound, and a safeguard for ordinary worshippers.

Archbishop Cranmer and his successors produced prose that has shaped the English language to this day. Phrases that are commonplace now, and even adopted by other Churches, such as “earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust” have now been used to comfort mourners everywhere and for centuries. What the BCP accomplishes best is its plain and dignified communication. This simplicity and beauty of worship is innately meaningful; it teaches the ordinary worshipper that prayer is an offering of our best words as well as a conversation with Him. Congregations that pray in language so carefully constructed will be formed to approach God with reverence, with every sentence calling back to His Word.

The BCP is saturated with Scripture. The lectionary carries a congregation through the Bible in

an ordered way so laity can know what to expect. The Psalter is read through in a monthly cycle, so each Psalm becomes a meaningful and immediately relevant prayer for the parish. Each service rehearses the Creeds and the Lord’s Prayer, and the Catechism provides the seeker with a faithful and compact summary of what Christians and Anglicans believe. The Church has long held that how we pray shapes what we believe, and the BCP is the epitome of this. Laity who have worshipped from the BCP for years will not need a degree of theology to know the faith they are a part of, because they have already prayed it repeatedly, and in their own way made it theirs. They will not need a theologian to notice when or where a sermon contradicts the Creed that was just recited, or when a passage has been quietly rewritten.

The laity are most vulnerable where the BCP governs the most carefully: baptism, marriage, at the deathbed, and at the grave. At these times we are the most emotional, exposed, and susceptible. A fixed rite means that the family receives the Church’s consolation and not one minister’s own interpretation. Of course, the BCP cannot prevent every abuse, but it does remove a wide range of areas in which unaccountable clergy might operate. This protection is worth having in an era where people can be more influenced by personality

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over the Word of God. A Church that is serious will care about the safety and well-being of its own laity, and should value any structure that keeps its clergy answerable to something beyond themselves.

One common criticism against the BCP is that the language used can seem foreign to newcomers. But an unfamiliar text is not an inaccessible one; it only needs to become familiar. Otherwise, the parishioner must learn the mind of the rector rather than the mind of the Church. Parishes that use the BCP can teach it patiently, with clear printed guides, announcements, and preaching that unpacks what is being said and why. Some contemporary services themselves lack the proper depth that is discovered in older liturgy, and it is this very depth that many newcomers are seeking.

Rectors who elect to adopt the BCP need not shy away from other liturgies either. They only

need to recognize that the BCP is the fullest expression of Anglican worship, and is the tool by which we measure a service. Adopting the BCP places the parish on a firm ground: its worship is beautiful, shaped by Scripture, and accountable to something greater than the personality of the rectors. It is a treasure given to the Church by our predecessors, and we ought not to discard it. It was given to the laity on that summer morning in 1549 to help them understand worship, and rectors should return this gift.

The Anglican Church of Canada sits at a crossroads: it can continue to depend on the preferences of the rectors, or it can return to a common text. Should we continue down our current path, the Church may very well drift apart amongst a sea of personal preferences. Today, we see that youth are coming to the Church, and they may desire something concrete, deep, and meaningful. This starts with the BCP, a book we can all

understand, appreciate, and that binds us together. It is through this book that one can look at an aspiring young Anglican today and answer one of their first questions: what is an Anglican?

A group of young Anglicans, under the banner of Canadian Anglicans for Renewal ("CAR"), is pursuing one such goal: to bring the Church back to its roots. CAR was founded earlier this year and now numbers over 100 members across Canada; it consists of, and is led by, young adults under 30, both laity and clergy alike. It is a grass-roots organization that seeks to connect young Anglicans together; it wants to revive an Anglican identity and get people passionate about the Anglican Church. This starts by asking that aforementioned question of who we are. The answer to this question starts at our roots, looking back to that morning in 1549 when the BCP was first used. A book that makes us all Anglican.



The Trinity choir, publicized in the previous issue of the PBSC newsletter, singing at St. John's Church, Portsmouth (Kingston), at Candlemas in February of this year.

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