

ACU Jessie Nicholson Memorial Lecture
Trinity College Theological School | February 09, 2015

Recent Anglican Forms of Daily Prayer _____

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Blessed be God, who gives us life with all creation, joins us to the saving death of Christ, and raises us to new life through the Holy Spirit. May God be with you.

I am delighted to be invited to speak this evening, and I have chosen a topic close to my own heart: daily prayer. As a student of the church's liturgy, as a person privileged to have for fifteen years worked in the formation of the church's ministers, as a pastor, and as a pray-er, this is a dear concern of mine, and I hope that it will be engaging for you.

The daily services of *A Prayer Book for Australia* (herein APBA) were published in 1995, and in my narrative this evening I want to set them in context: looking backwards and looking forwards from that time, and around the Anglican Communion, at a range of resources that partner churches have produced to foster the prayer lives of their people. I am conscious that there may well be people in this room, here and now, who have prayed the APBA services day in, day out, for twenty years, and to those persons, I offer my respect—just as I invite us to look at how daily prayer is being done differently in various elsewhere, and looking for clues as to what new rounds of liturgical renewal might perhaps involve here.

I am also glad to honour Ms. Jessie Nicholson, for whom this lecture is named. I never knew her, as some of you no doubt did, but I have been able to read about her, and I have the sure sense that I would very much have liked this vibrant, tenacious, determined, woman. I confess that I don't know if I would have made it into her category of "proper priest"—and I would probably argue with her about the category, but at least I get the impression that she might have enjoyed the argument. And I also have no idea what Ms. Nicholson might have made of either the APBA's materials for daily prayer or any of the other resources I will begin to introduce tonight. Her own spirituality was clearly grounded in holy communion, and she attended daily mass, but I take it that a person with a eucharistic spirituality is open to rejoicing in however others find their way to intimacy with God.

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It seems obvious to begin my reflections, then, around 1979 and 1980, which was the end of an era for a certain kind of everyday prayer in the Anglican Communion. In 1979, the USA-based Episcopal Church published its *Book of Common Prayer* (herein BCP-79). The BCP-79 has fixed forms of prayer, the same every day, for morning, mid-day, evening

and night-time, as well as a—rather stiff—form of “daily devotions for individuals and families.”¹ For morning and evening at least, its forms were, effectively, much the same in structure and in many of the actual texts, as Anglican forms since 1549. One innovative feature, though, was the suggestion of lamp-lighting at prayer in the evening. At around the same time, in 1980, the Church of England produced its *Alternative Service Book* (herein ASB).² This had only fixed forms of prayer for morning and evening—and it must be said, proved to be wanting, as can be seen in the fact that the everyday prayer provisions of the CofE have undergone little less than a revolution since this time.

I called this turn into the 1980s the end of an era, and indeed it was at least the beginning of the end for very fixed and prescriptive patterns of prayer. Much more variety begins to be found, with creative—and I think, missionally necessary—movement away from, or at least expansion of, the essentially sixteenth-century legacy. In 1985, the Anglican Church of Canada’s *Book of Alternative Services* (BAS)³ heralded an important change by incorporating seasonal material in its daily prayer forms. It expanded the BCP-79’s suggestion of lamp-lighting into a “Service of Light”—which has proved popular and spread elsewhere. This included some lovely *berakah* prayers, drawn from a Roman Catholic source; for example, for Lent:

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, the shepherd of Israel,
their pillar of cloud by day, their pillar of fire by night.
In these forty days you lead us into the desert of repentance
that in this pilgrimage of prayer
we might learn to be your people once more.
In fasting and service you bring us back to your heart.
You open our eyes to your presence in the world
and you free our hands to lead others
to the radiant splendour of your mercy.
Be with us in these journey days
for without you we are lost and will perish.
To you alone be dominion and glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

BAS also enriched its psalmody with a psalm-prayer for each of the psalms, perhaps inviting a more meditative way of engaging the psalter. It also offered several pages of introductory notes to the daily office (as of all of the book’s component parts) exploring the history, theology and enactment of the rite beyond the text. This too proved popular and has been followed by others.

¹ See http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/formatted_1979.htm In this paper, I have avoided technical footnotes, and simply used web-addresses where resources can be found, where such are available. But for more on some of the themes in this paper, see the references in Stephen Burns and Bryan Cones, “A Prayer Book for the Twenty-first Century?” *Anglican Theological Review* 96.4 (2014): 639-660.

² <http://www.oremus.org/liturgy/asb/mep/index.html>

³ <http://c2892002f453b41e8581-48246336d122ce2bobccb7a98e224e96.r74.cf2.rackcdn.com/BAS.pdf>

More radical change took place in 1989, which saw the publication of *A New Zealand Prayer Book* (NZPB)⁴ by the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia (and note the shift away from the definite article in the book's title). This had forms of prayer for morning and evening (by implication from their context alongside what follows, primarily for Sunday), daily services for each day of the week, daily devotions for each day of the week, mid-day, night-time and family prayer. Both daily services and daily devotions offer contents that change day by day, held within a stable pattern that always remains the same. This started something that has become widespread, as we shall see in what follows. The devotions are based around core passages of the Gospels and fragments of the Prayer That Jesus Taught, incorporating a more informal register of language and contemporary idioms. Some of these features can be seen in this example:

**Our Father,
hallowed be your name
on earth as in heaven.**
 **E to matou Matau,
 kia tapu tou ingoa
 ki runga kit e whenua,
 kia rite ano ki to te rangi.**

Holy One, holy and eternal,
awesome, exciting and delightful in your holiness:
make us pure in heart to see you;
make us merciful to receive your kindness,
and to share your love with all your human family;
then will your name be hallowed on earth as in heaven.

...God of work and rest and pleasure,
grant that what we do this week may be for us an offering
rather than a burden;
and for those we serve, may it be the help they need.
Amen.

Also seen here is an example of how languages other than English—Maori, and Pacific Islander languages—are found in the NZPB, side by side with, and interspersing, English. NZPB's Night Prayer is entirely shaped by inclusive language, with a version of the Prayer That Jesus Taught crafted in feminist communities of women-church:

**Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all this is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven...**

⁴ <http://anglicanprayerbook.nz>

And “local” inculturation is also feature of the book, so that, for example a “Benedicite Aotearoa” as it were “riffs” on the ancient song: “You Maori and Pakeha, women and men, all who inhabit the long white cloud. . .”. There are also the like of striking Poi chants and adaptations of psalms to depict local landscapes. Likewise, New Zealander poets’ work is turned to prayer: so James K. Baxter’s poetry is used to shape images of God as sunshine, mother eagle, bright cloud, kind fire and singer of songs in the hearts of the poor.

There is, perhaps more than other book I will discuss this evening, a real attempt to commend daily prayer to all in NZPB. It is also at least arguable that NZPB is now the most widely used prayer book across the Anglican Communion, and it certainly remains a flagship of liturgical renewal for different reasons. But another ferment in daily prayer was taking place at around the same time in Europe, with *Celebrating Common Prayer* (CCP),⁵ produced by the European Province of the Anglican Franciscans, although able to be officially used in the CofE. Published in 1992, this very quickly became popular, which in many places meant that the ASB was happily disused. Like NZPB, CCP has morning and evening prayer for each day of the week. Significantly, it also has “Simple Celebrations” of morning and evening prayer. Moreover, both fuller forms and simple celebrations are correlated to seasons: so daily prayer on Wednesday has an emphasis on Christmas themes or those relating to the Blessed Virgin Mary; Thursday has an emphasis on Epiphany themes, and so on. The simple forms are intended for use at home, in families or groups, and all but the leader needs only one page of the book open in front of them. This proved good for children, and hospitable all round. But CCP is also very rich, with prayer-forms for mid-day and night-time, and a wealth of thanksgivings for baptism, mission, healing, etc. There are also one or two inclusive language canticles.

A Prayer Book for Australia came in 1995 and it shows some influence from those that went before. For example it includes CCP’s warm opening prayers; in the morning, for example:

The night has passed and the day lies open before us;
let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence may be kept.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever. Amen.

It also has the super *berakah* prayers used in BAS. Like NZPB and CCP, there are forms of prayer for morning and evening through each day of the week, as well as for a form for night-time and a Service of Light. The services were later re-published, minus the Service of Light, but with some default texts added, in an attractive and accessible separate booklet.

⁵ <http://www.oremus.org/liturgy/ccp/>

But—oddly?—there is very little influence from the more daring developments in near neighbour New Zealand. In fact, perhaps more than others since 1979, the Australian resources are shaped almost entirely by scripture and traditional collect-forms.⁶

Some more initiatives in line with at least some of NZPB's concerns came in 1998, with *Enriching Our Worship* (EOW) by the USA-based Episcopal Church.⁷ This provides resources for morning and evening prayer in inclusive language, contesting what it calls “*Paterfamilias*” imagery for God. The introduction to EOW also highlights the need for multi-lingual and multi-cultural resources for daily prayer, but it must be said is less successful at this than it is in embracing feminist scrutiny of gendered language.

Our Modern Services (OMS) from the Anglican Church of Kenya, out in 2002, is more difficult to place in the emerging trajectories I am tracking, but must be mentioned because it is very impressive in its own way. It has fixed forms of prayer for morning, evening and night-time, and has many notable features. First, it uses vivid language; so people are welcomed to prayer thus:

We have come together, the people of God,
drawn by his Spirit, longing for his Word,
to praise the holy name of the Lord,
to share his glorious news of grace,
to pray for our needs and the pain of the world,
to rejoice in his love and be sent in his peace.

Second, it encourages much singing, and puts popular choruses to good effect, especially (but not only) at the prayers of the people. And: like NZPB, it makes striking attempts at local inculturation. So there are blessings of crops people are growing: maize and beans, rice and potatoes, tea and coffee; and of animals people are tending: cattle and camels, sheep and goats, chickens and pigs. And a moving canticle based on Habakkuk 3 reflects local life in a most poignant way, switching images from olives to mangoes: “Though the mango tree does not blossom... yet I will rejoice...”.

Through the early Noughties, the Church of England trial ran its *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* (CWDP), which was published “definitively” in 2005.⁸ It is very closely based on CCP. Like NZPB, APBA and CCP, it provides forms of morning and evening prayer for each day of the week. It innovates, though, in having one series of morning and evening prayer forms for each of the seasons of the year, and another series for the days of the week in ordinary time. It also provides a very informal “Prayer During the Day” (the analog to CCP's simple celebrations) which can be used either as a framework for evangelical-

⁶ There are no on-line versions of the APBA. I am grateful to the Revd. Dr. Colleen O'Reilly for information on publishing arrangements for the book.

⁷ <https://www.churchpublishing.org/media/275X/EnrichingOurWorship1.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/texts/daily2.aspx> More than others, the CoE has embraced on-line publication of its liturgical resources, and they are all available at no cost at links from <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship>

style Quiet Time or in ways akin to the Roman Catholic Office of Readings. There are suggestions for both extensive and “pillar” lectionaries (the latter being “purple passages,” geared for newcomers, visitors, and sometime participants). CWDP also has forms for mid-day and night-time, with variants for each of the seasons. There are, like BAS, psalm-prayers, and each psalm is also given a refrain, to accent the musicality of the psalter, and indeed invite it to be sung, however simply. Again like BAS, there are extensive notes on history, theology and the rite beyond the text (the recent CofE rites tend to call these notes “pastoral introductions”). The full range of CCP thanksgivings is included, with new *berakah* prayers too—for example, for the word, thus:

Blessed are you, Lord our God.
How sweet are your words to the taste,
sweeter than honey to the mouth.
How precious are your commands for our life,
more than the finest gold in our hands.
How marvellous is your will for the world,
unending is your love for the nations.
Our voices shall sing of your promises
and our lips declare your praise...

All of the services are marked by lots of permissive rubrics (for example, “this or another,” “may be said,”) and between these and the pastoral introductions, very careful attention is encouraged to the enactment of the rites, and how the texts may be placed in inviting ceremonial scenes; for example, in “Prayers at the Foot of the Cross” which with a Commemoration of the Resurrection sits alongside the thanksgivings:

any of those present may come forward to touch the cross. They may, for example, place their forehead on it as a sign of entrusting to God, in union with Christ and his suffering, their own burdens as well as those of others.

At over 900 pages in length (longer than the entire APBA), CWDP is mammoth, but in being so inclusive of so many different options and styles, it is a major attempt to encourage prayer of one kind or another, “common” at least in all being resourced by this one book. (CWDP is itself also just one volume of the *Common Worship* range—with other volumes for episcopal, initiation, and pastoral services, and so on, so the reality of common prayer in the CofE is now that we can no longer talk simply of a book, but more like a shelf-full of them).

Finally, I want to invite attention to *Daily Prayer for All Seasons* (DPFAS),⁹ the new book of the USA-based Episcopal Church, published as recently as 2014. It provides the full monastic cycle of *Lauds* (dawn), *Prime* (start of day), *Terce* (later morning), *Sext* (mid-day), *None* (afternoon), *Vespers* (evening), *Compline* (bed-time) and *Vigils* (mid-

⁹ The draft version of the book is available on-line:
http://s3.amazonaws.com/dfc_attachments/public/documents/3165408/Daily_Prayer_from_the_Blue_Book_-_2012.pdf

night)—all creatively re-invented. There are forms of all this for each day of the week through each of the seasons (with two forms—on the themes of creation and rest—given for ordinary time, to enable more diversity). The services vary in length, shift between singular and plural pronouns, include fragments of languages other than English (at least Chinese, Dakota and Spanish), employ lots of inclusive language, take up practices from emergent church (particularly the kinds of things typically done in “open space”), and sometimes even draw on material from non-Christian religious traditions. To get a sense of some of this, consider the question for reflection offered for *Lauds* in Advent: “How will I look for God’s glory today? How will I help others to see it?,” or the question at *Compline* in the same season, “How shall we travel through the darkness of Advent?” Note too that texts used to invite mediation are very eclectic: so at *Sext* in Epiphany, Leo Tolstoy is quoted: “In the name of God, stop a moment, close your work, look around you”; at *Compline* in that season, Denise Levertov’s poem “Candlemas”; at *Prime* in Epiphany, a quotation from Terry Tempest Williams, about noticing the colour of birds’ eyes. The meditation for *Compline* in Lent is another involving birds, though this time from the eighth-century Chinese poet Li-Po:

The birds have vanished into the sky,
and now the last cloud drains away.

We sit together, the mountain and me,
until only the mountain remains.

For *None* in Holy Week, the fifteenth-century Sikh guru Kabir is cited:

Look
what happens to the scale
when love
holds
it.
It
stops
working.

In different respects, DPFAS may advance EOW’s concern for multi-cultural and multi-lingual material. And at least some of its features (echoes of emergent churches, non-Christian wisdoms) represent new initiatives in official Anglican forms of daily prayer. In some ways, too, there are curious discontinuities not only with the weight of the heritage but with other recent Anglican offerings elsewhere. For example, although scripture is present throughout *Daily Prayer for All Seasons*—it is featured, one way or another, in every service—there is no lectionary provision at all. And it is notable, given emphasis elsewhere on rubrical freedoms and local adaptation, that despite there being many variant texts for prayer in DPFAS, there are no permissive rubrics. DPFAS is a highly ambitious attempt to put everyday prayer forms into people’s hands in ways that are interesting and winsome. Yet it is most striking that although it is clearly conceived as a “complement” not a replacement

of any kind for the BCP-79, it is a very different sort of resource—and the BCP-79 and DPFAS together represent a very interesting contrast that enables us to see quite clearly that recent Anglican forms of daily prayer are very varied.

Discussion is current about “Anglican identity and liturgical diversity” (see, for example, Mark Earey’s recent book, *Beyond Common Worship: Anglican Identity and Liturgical Diversity*), and from my brief survey tonight we most certainly can begin to imagine why this might be so. For “Catholic Anglicans”—not least “Catholic Anglicans embracing the future,” as ACU claims in the strap-line to its publicity and promotions—there are significant challenges and opportunities to face. Let me say that, so far as I know, catholicity is not something that any of us can grasp, or claim that we possess, but rather it is a constant provocation to be evermore generous and open-hearted. We can learn or re-learn that lesson in looking at what our Communion-partners, our Anglican sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, get up to in their everyday prayer.

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