

ACNA's Book of Common Prayer 2019

Beautiful, Historical, and Significant

A Layperson's Perception

By

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Purpose

As the news of an upcoming Book of Common Prayer 2019 (BCP 2019) for the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) began to surface I started to hear questions and in some cases concerns from members of our congregation. Two questions seemed to be verbalized most often.

Why do we need a new prayer book?

Will it change how we worship on Sundays?

Questions like the above and others stimulated my interest in trying to develop a paper to help answer some of the questions and concerns that are on the minds of some parishioners. It would be wonderful if all Anglicans would learn to appreciate the beauty, history, and significance of our new BCP 2019.

Introduction

While skimming the Internet I ran across an article written by Ben Jefferies, the vicar of The Good Shepherd Anglican Church in Opelika, Alabama. The article is a very detailed look at the new ACNA's Book of Common Prayer 2019. But what caught my eye was a picture of the new prayer book. I was drawn to the pattern of crosses on the front cover and the book's vibrant red color.

When I received my personal copy of the new prayer book it was an exciting moment. I was drawn to the red color and the striking cover design. Many scholars believe the symbol dates back to the 11th century and was adopted as the coat of arms of the new Jerusalem Kingdom. The large cross in the center represents the authority of Christ to command spreading the gospel to the world. The four smaller crosses represent the Gospel spreading to the four corners of the world. The five crosses together are known as the Jerusalem Cross. ACNA's use of the Jerusalem Cross represents the Gospel spreading from Jerusalem to the four corners of the world. Powerful.

Thumbing through the pages it was amazing to see all the detailed information contained in each section or perhaps on every page.

The Preface (p. 5) contains a powerful summation of the new prayer book, in part it reads:

“The Book of Common Prayer (2019) is indisputably true to Cranmer’s originating vision of a form of prayer and praises that is thoroughly Biblical, catholic in the manner of the early centuries, highly participatory in delivery, peculiarly Anglican and English in its roots.....”

What a strong defining statement of authenticity. No doubt the new BCP 2019 will be all I had hoped during its development. I look forward to using it for many years and I think the same will be true for all the members of the ACNA and beyond.

2019 is an exciting year for the ACNA, as it is celebrating its ten-year anniversary. Much has been accomplished by ACNA for orthodox Anglicans in

the ten years, including our new prayer book. From my perspective the Book of Common Prayer 2019 is of major importance and deserves taking time to unpack its incredible contents especially for laypersons. Take time to study it and make it your own. Then apply it to your daily spiritual life as a Christian and an Anglican.

The driving force behind development of the new BCP 2019 was the first Archbishop of the ACNA, Robert Duncan. He planted the seed for the new prayer book in 2009. Additionally, he chaired the ACNA Liturgy Task Force during its development. Thanks to the hard work of many laypersons, clergy and Bishops we now have our new Book of Common Prayer 2019. It is beautiful, historical, and significant prayer book. Thanks be to God!

After the Protestant Reformation swept through England in the 16th and 17th centuries the 1662 Book of Common Prayer helped stabilize much of the unrest for the Church of England. Archbishop Duncan believes that very well might be the role of the BCP 2019 for ACNA.

The Church including clergy and laity now have a unique opportunity to learn about and implement the BCP 2019 as a guide for our individual and corporate worship. There is no better time than now to make our new prayer book a part of our daily spiritual discipline. Why? Because the more time we spend with the Lord, the more we will desire to become like Him. The more we become like Him the more we will desire to share His love with others which is His desire for all Christians.

Former Archbishop Robert Duncan stated,

“The Book of Common Prayer is nothing more than the Bible organized for worship.”

That is a significant statement, as Anglicans believe the Bible is the anchor of our faith and everything that Anglicans believe is tied to it. The Thirty-Nine Articles as true Anglican doctrine, the three historic creeds, and the first four Councils of the undivided Church are all based upon scripture and nothing more. That is to say for Anglicans the Bible is our foundation.

The founding entities of the ACNA agreed in 2009 to the Fundamental Declarations of the Province, a core of Christian beliefs. For our purpose today the Declaration of importance is the following:

“We receive the Book of Common Prayer as set forth by the Church of England in 1662, together with the Ordinal attached to the same, a standard for Anglican doctrine and discipline, and with the Books which preceded it, as the standard for the Anglican tradition of worship.”

That statement makes clear the importance of the new Book of Common Prayer 2019. We are blessed by the fact that our BCP 2019 is bringing to us a prayer book first published in 1549, which was crafted by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. At the time Cranmer felt the need to encourage, facilitate, and standardize corporate worship, according to the Biblical standards. Cranmer saw no rhyme or reason to the varying liturgical rites being used in different parts of the realm. He believed Church services should be liturgically the same to avoid confusion and facilitate organized worship within the Church of England.

Our BCP 2019 will not only facilitate organized corporate worship but it will also be a wonderful resource for personal worship or just as important a family devotional time.

Pastor Ben Jefferies, a member of the Liturgical and Common Worship Task Force, wrote this about our new 2019 BCP:

“The 2019 BCP needed to be presented in a form that would be easily, even instantly useful to the first time Anglican liturgy attendee, as well as the veteran priest saying his Daily Office. It also needed to be beautiful and pleasing to the eye, even though form must follow function.”

After reviewing my copy of BCP 2019 I would say Pastor Jefferies’ statement has been achieved, even exceeded. How does this new prayer book facilitate corporate worship and personal prayer and praise? Let’s find out.

Corporate Worship

In corporate worship, we come together and unite ourselves with other believers to acknowledge the holiness of God, to hear God’s Word, to offer prayers, to listen to God, and to celebrate the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

Remember Jesus’ promise about corporate worship and prayer:

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” (Matthew 18:20 ESV)

As a congregation focuses on worship of our Lord corporately, the individual’s spiritual awareness of God’s presence is heightened. In worshipping together, we are spiritually prepared and motivated, as a congregation, to go into the world as faithful Christians and face the realities of life and share the love of Christ with the world.

Corporate worship is so very Biblical. David, a man after God's own heart, wrote:

"I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord." (Psalm 122:1 BCP 2019)

O praise the Lord with me, and let us magnify his Name together.
(Psalm 34:3 BCP 2019)

As important as corporate worship is it is just as important to have a personal time of prayer and praise with the Lord each day.

Personal Worship

Sundays are the main time for corporate worship, but that leaves six days to devote to personal worship. If we desire to become more like Jesus, then we need to spend time with Him. Our new BCP 2019 offers a perfect opportunity to develop personal prayer and praise time with the Lord. Perhaps I should say a time speak to Him and time to listen to Him. The apostle Paul writes in his first letter to the Thessalonians: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing..." (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Our new BCP 2019 contains Daily Offices for Morning Prayer, Midday Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Compline. Each one is good for a private time with the Lord. As an example, Morning Prayer is a great way to start the day. It certainly helps keep our eyes focused on Jesus as we start a new day. Plus, the liturgy helps individuals to be more focused and spiritually

prepared to offer up personal intercessions and thanksgivings (p. 25) during our personal prayer time.

One of the Daily Morning Prayer concluding sentences (p. 26) sets a wonderful tone for the day.

“May the God of hope fill us with all the joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” (Romans 15:13)

Conclusion

I urge every individual who possess a Book of Common 2019 to read it, study it, make it yours, and apply it in your daily prayer life.

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