

To Love and Serve

Anglican Beliefs & Practices

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Introduction

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

—*The Book of Alternative Services*, p. 215, 249

Every Sunday in Anglican churches across the country, people gather for Holy Eucharist. We follow the same pattern every time. We gather, we are transformed by God's Word and the celebration of Holy Eucharist, and we are sent out. Because of our use of prayer books, we hear many of the same phrases over and over as we follow this pattern. One of the last things we hear week after week are the words: "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord."

This sentence is used in the dismissal, which comes at the very end of the liturgy. After the prayers, the hymns, the readings, the communion, the blessing, and even the announcements, this sentence sends us back into the world to be the living sign of the love we have just received. While brief, this sentence is powerful. It is even an imperative—three imperatives in fact: go; love; serve. Together, these three verbs give us direction

and purpose for the week to come, reminding us that our worship shapes our whole lives and not only our Sunday mornings.

The first verb in the dismissal—“Go”—comes with an instruction on how to go, that is to go “in peace.” Like so much of what is in our liturgies, this phrase comes directly from scripture. At the end of two stories in the Gospel according to Luke (Luke 7:36-50; 8:40-48), Jesus says “go in peace.” In the first story, Jesus receives love through the anointing of an unknown woman, offers her forgiveness, and then tells her to “go in peace.” In the second story, an unknown woman touches Jesus, and he feels a power go out of him. She tells him that she has experienced healing and he tells her then, “go in peace.” These stories of dynamic worship, forgiveness, healing, and restoration empower people to “go in peace.” And it is this same empowerment we are to know again by Jesus’s spirit every time we gather and then hear “go in peace.” We hear “go” in no uncertain terms, but we are sent with new power and hope.

The next two verbs in the dismissal tell us what we are going in peace to do. We leave the worship service with clear instructions as to what to do next: love and serve the Lord. In the way of Jesus, these two verbs are inextricably linked—to love is to serve. In the Gospel according to John, Jesus demonstrates his love for his disciples by washing their feet and tells them to do likewise so that they might love as he loves (John 13). In the Gospel according to Luke, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37) to illustrate what loving our neighbour looks like: offering care when it is needed, regardless of the circumstances. Love is revealed in service; service is love with legs. And Jesus is clear: if we want to love and serve him, we need to love and serve one another just as he loved and served us.

Suggested Dismissals

Go forth in the name of Christ.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

Let us bless the Lord.

These can be found in the Book of Alternative Services, p. 215.

“Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” It’s a tall order, sending us out of the liturgy with a mission we know we can’t possibly fulfil on our own. All too often, we find peace elusive, and we fail to love and serve God the way we want to. We need God’s grace to strengthen and restore and inspire us.

This is where our liturgies come into play. To see bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ is to behold God’s grace, to see radical transformation. Taking part in the sacraments helps us to see God’s grace at work in the world around us. Seeing God’s grace at work trains us to open our hearts and our eyes to God’s action in the sacraments.

For Anglican Christians (or Episcopal ones, as we are known in some countries), prayer, belief, and life itself are inextricably related. Right belief helps our prayer and our lives. Daily prayer shapes our belief and guides our lives. A sacrificial, loving life feeds our prayer time and transforms our faith from passive to active.

This book is about serving in love. For Christians, this journey begins at the baptismal font, is nourished by the riches of the church, and is lived out in the world beyond the walls of churches. You can see an artistic hint of this idea

on the cover of the book. You see the inside of a church, but instead of a back wall, the church mystically opens up to a lovely path through a forest. Our churches invite us to follow Jesus into the world. And of course, our faith invites us to bring our world into the church.

We hope you find in this book not only an overview of the beliefs and practices of the Anglican Church but also a foundation for a life that is guided and nourished by the church and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Christian Faith

Some readers of this book will be new to the Christian faith. Others will be veterans but may wonder about the authors and what they believe. If you want a more comprehensive view of the basics of the Christian faith, see the Resources section at the back of this book. But for now, we offer a very basic summary of the faith so that you can see our perspective—or maybe get the lay of the land if you are new to the faith.

Of course, we accept the teaching of the ancient creeds of the church (see Chapter 13). Since we are all priests, we have also gladly promised to teach the doctrine of the church. And we take scripture very seriously, agreeing in our ordination vows that the Bible contains all things necessary to salvation. Perhaps it is helpful for us to share our faith as a story—not our story but the story of scripture.

In the beginning, before there was anything else, there was God's love. God brought forth everything, including this planet where we live, creating light and dark, land and sea, animals and plants, and finally making people. God gave us our freedom—the ability to choose right or wrong and

whether to even follow God—and we squandered our gift. We chose to walk away from God, preferring selfishness and fear.

God sent prophets to remind us of God's way. From time to time, we listened to the prophets, and we remembered who we are and how we are meant to live. Each time, we eventually rejected the prophets and their message, always returning to selfishness and fear.

Finally, God's own son was sent into the world. Jesus Christ was born like any other human, tiny and vulnerable, in the middle of nowhere in a backwater region of the Roman Empire. The most important birth in history might seem to some to be insignificant and ordinary. We learn a lot about the God we worship when we see that God chose to enter our world not in power and might, but in vulnerability.

Jesus Christ was Perfect Love enfleshed. Jesus showed us who God is and how we are to love. Jesus's love is expansive: he especially loved the unlovable and people at the margins of society. Jesus's love is honest: he always told the truth. Jesus's love is invitational: he wanted to draw people into his way of life and love.

Then as now, the powers of the world feared and hated Perfect Love. This kind of love is a threat to empires and all powerful people. The love of Christ cares about people, but it cares nothing for power, for might, or for prestige. The authorities in Jesus's day tried to extinguish Perfect Love by killing Jesus. They put him on a cross to die.

Jesus died. But on the third day, as God had promised, Jesus was raised to new life. Jesus wasn't kind-of dead, kind-of raised to a sort-of new life. No, we believe that Jesus was stone-cold dead, and God the Father raised him completely to new life.

We celebrate this new life at Easter, but we celebrate more than the power of something that seems impossible. We celebrate that in the raising of Jesus to new life, we see God's love is stronger than death, stronger than fear, and stronger than anything that can happen to us in this earthly life.

Jesus soon returned to dwell with his Father in heaven, but before he left, he promised that he would send the Holy Spirit to abide with the church and lead people into all truth. Fifty days after that first Easter, when the disciples were gathered to celebrate their Feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on the church in all its diversity, from many nations and peoples. In that act, God showed us all that the church is for everyone of every culture.

The New Testament presents several letters and documents from the time of the early church. In these letters, Saint Paul and others write to fledgling Christian communities that are trying to figure out what it means to follow Jesus. This is where we are in the story. Like those early Christians, we are trying to figure out how to follow Jesus in our own imperfect way. Fortunately, we have the Holy Spirit, God's abiding presence, who can lead us into all truth.

Being a Christian is not meant to be easy, and no one who reads the gospels could think otherwise. The way of Jesus can be a source of profoundly deep joy, as we are offered a way to live as God hopes: for love alone. Being a follower of Jesus means that we will "take up our cross" and follow him, that we will choose the difficult path at times, but it is not easy to overcome our intrinsic fears and selfishness. Being a follower of Jesus means we will proclaim Jesus Christ to all people, teaching them about his commandments.

Most of this book is an exploration of what it means to be an Anglican Christian. We believe there is not just one way to be a Christian, but we are head-over-heels in love with the

Anglican way of following Jesus. You will read more in the chapters to come, but the shortest version is that Anglican Christianity is a way of following Jesus that is rooted in the Bible and the sacraments of the church, united by shared ways of praying. We will unpack that in the chapters to come.

In This Book

After sharing what we see as the Anglican understanding of prayer (Chapter 1), we move through the sacraments of the church (Chapters 2-8). We spend a bit more time on baptism and eucharist, since they are the primary sacraments. We turn next to how the church keeps time, including daily cycles (Chapter 9) and yearly cycles (Chapter 10). We look very closely at Holy Week, the most important week of the year for a Christian (Chapter 11). And we look at the end of our earthly pilgrimage, funerals, and burial (Chapter 12).

Because our faith is not just about liturgy but also about beliefs, we explore some basic teachings. We discuss the ancient creeds (Chapter 13) and how we read the Bible (Chapter 14). The idea of salvation or redemption only makes sense if we talk about sin and grace, so we do that in Chapter 15. This section wraps up with a chapter on prayer (Chapter 16).

The church itself is an important part of our faith, so we spend time exploring the community of people who follow Jesus. Chapter 17 is an overview of church, while Chapter 18 explores how we Anglicans organize ourselves. Chapter 19 reminds us that the church is not just the living holy ones but also those who have gone before us, the holy ones who dwell with God as saints. And Chapter 20 considers how we are all called to follow Jesus in particular ways.

The next three chapters look at how we might care for God's creation (Chapter 21), at the implications of God having become human in Jesus Christ (Chapter 22), and at how we nurture the spiritual gifts that God has given us (Chapter 23). Finally, we end with encouragement to continue as followers of Jesus. We share spiritual practices, such as daily prayer or service of others (Chapter 24). Lastly, we hope you will learn how God's story is your story and how you might share that story with a world in need (Chapters 25 and 26).

How to Use This Book

We encourage you to have a copy of the Book of Alternative Services handy as you read *To Love and Serve*. You can find the most recent version of the Book of Alternative Services as a PDF on the national church website: anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/BAS.pdf. Maybe your priest will loan or give you a copy too. There are numerous citations from the Book of Alternative Services, including collects (or prayers) that start each chapter. We encourage you to look up the citations in the Book of Alternative Services to provide tangible connections between beliefs and practices. Whenever you see a number by itself, framed by parentheses, that is a page number in the Book of Alternative Services. Occasionally, you will see a reference to the Book of Common Prayer (1962) which is also available online at: anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/BCP.pdf. Especially in the chapter on the daily office you will see citations to this prayer book.

You can certainly read your way through *To Love and Serve* on your own. Maybe your curiosity is stoked by something in one of the chapters, and so we have provided some suggestions for additional reading or exploration.

A book group could make productive use of *To Love and Serve*, relying on the discussion questions here to get things

going. Hopefully your group will have a rich conversation. This book's publisher, Forward Movement, also offers free downloadable courses about Anglican beliefs and practices. Funded in part by a generous grant by the Constable Fund of the Episcopal Church, the curricula are available for children, youth, and adults in English and Spanish. These courses include, *Transforming Questions*, *Celebrating the Saints*, and *Exploring the Bible*. You can learn about these offerings at forwardmovement.org.

About This Book

It all started with a Facebook post to a group of Canadian Anglican and Lutheran clergy:

Does anyone know of anything that's like Gunn and Shobe's Walk in Love, but doesn't cite the 1979 BCP four times on every page?

No one did.

So a few of us decided to see about making something a lot like Scott Gunn and Melody Shobe's *Walk in Love: Episcopal Beliefs & Practices*, and, with the full support of Forward Movement, the result is now in your hands. This book has the same bones as the original Episcopal edition—and much of the same flesh as well. Our principle was to change only what needed to be changed in order to accurately reflect the practices, structures, and culture of the Anglican Church of Canada. As a result, many chapters are largely untouched by this editing process while others have been significantly rewritten. As Canadians, we are used to having to translate American materials for our context, and most of us do it on the fly. It was a fascinating and rewarding experience to think carefully about the similarities and differences between our two churches resulting in roughly equal parts envy and pride.

Fundamentally, though, we have much more in common than not.

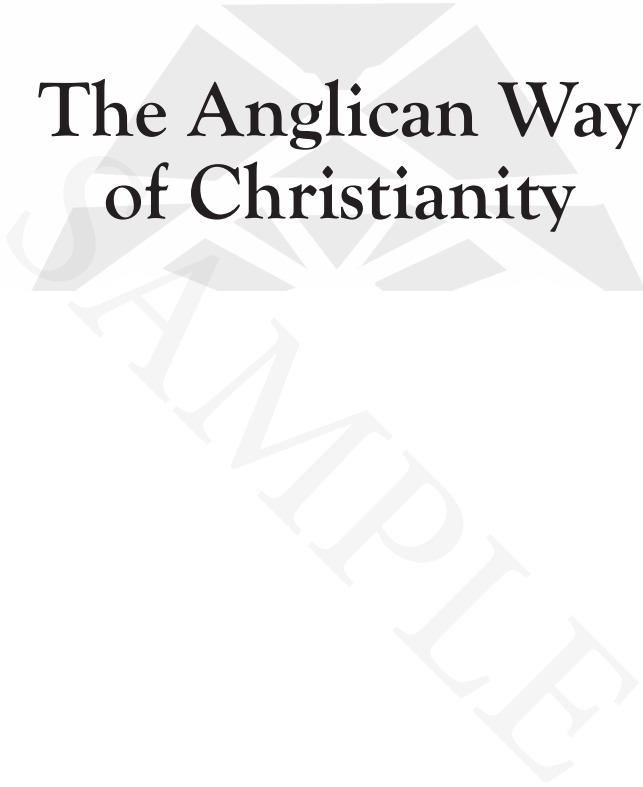
The team, led by Jessica Schaap, developed a strong collaborative process. Debbie Noonan and Grace Burson reviewed each chapter and made notes on what needed to be changed and replaced references to the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer with the Canadian Book of Alternative Services or Book of Common Prayer. Rhonda Waters and Jessica then rewrote or added sections to the chapters to complete the adaptation.

Some of the personal anecdotes in the book come from the experiences of Scott or Melody and some come from Jessica or Rhonda. They all use “I.” Don’t worry too much about that, and just enjoy the stories.

The team hopes this book will be a genuine help to parishes and people as you walk the Christian path in the Anglican way. As you seek to love and serve, we pray you come to know the Spirit’s power within you that can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine.



The Anglican Way of Christianity



Chapter 1

Keep Your Hearts and Minds in the Knowledge and Love of God

Beliefs and Practices

Every now and then, someone asks me about my favourite prayer, assuming that a priest should have a ready answer to such a question. The truth is, I don't have a favourite prayer – I have dozens. Like favourite books or favourite songs, each of these prayers lodged themselves in my soul for different reasons and will rise up when I need them.

One of my favourites is the beautiful doxology that ends Holy Eucharist: *“Glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God, from generation to generation, in the church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen”* (BAS, 214). For reasons unknown to me even now, the congregation of my childhood parish stayed seated for the first prayer after communion, but we would positively leap to our feet in order to proclaim that prayer of hope and confidence. To this day, my heart leaps even if my

feet stay firmly planted, and the phrase “from generation to generation” still paints a picture in my mind of the faithful people of that little rural church. This is the prayer that comes to me when I need encouragement or confidence.

Another favourite is the ancient prayer known as the Trisagion, always set to music in my mind: “*Holy God, holy and mighty, holy immortal one, have mercy upon us*” (BAS, 187). The grandeur and solemnity of this invocation captured my imagination as a child and continues to speak to me of the mystery of God. It comes to me when I am fearful for the world and when I am astonished by its beauty.

Yet another is the prayer for the newly baptized: “*Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works*” (BAS, 160). Each time I have the privilege of saying these words over a new Christian, infant, adult, or in between, I wonder what more we could ask. This prayer names my desire for the people with whom I minister, for my own family, and for myself.

But some of my favourite prayers are not found in our prayer books at all. Some are turns of phrase from the Bible or from literature or from my own heart that have returned to me time and time again. Some are memories that may or may not have words still attached: the night at church camp when, having snuck out of our cabins, I prayed with a friend who was struggling with grief and self-doubt and found myself filled with a sense of God’s presence; the moment I first learned how to pray by just telling God what I wanted; the moment I said yes to God’s invitation to become a priest.

Each of these prayers, and many more besides, express my need and gratitude and wonder to God but that is not all they do. They also shape how I imagine God and my relationship

with God which, in turn, shapes how I live my life—and how I live my life shapes the prayers I pray. Round and round it goes in a complex, interwoven dance of word, belief, and action.

This is not only true of me or of ordained clergy or of experienced and sophisticated prayer practitioners. It is true of everyone who prays, whether they are fully aware of it or not, for better or for worse. What we pray matters. And so one final favourite prayer, a blessing to root us firmly in God even as we learn and grow and make mistakes and try again: “*The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always*” (BAS, 683).

Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi

The understanding of the power of prayer to shape our faith and our life is a foundational principle of the Anglican Church: *Lex orandi, lex credendi*.

This Latin phrase is loosely translated “the law of prayer is the law of belief.” Or, said another way, “you are what you pray.” In the Anglican Church, prayer, belief, and action are intimately tied together.

The more we pray something, the more deeply it becomes a part of us. We are shaped by the prayers that we pray, as both the act of prayer and the content of those prayers inform how we think about ourselves and the world. Even more than shaping our beliefs, our prayers shape our actions, pushing us to live out in our daily lives the things we have said with our lips. Our prayers demand that we ask ourselves

some difficult questions. How does what we say on Sunday inform how we think on Thursday? What do our prayers and beliefs call us to *do* on Monday and Tuesday and every other day? As we pray, we are shaped by our prayers, so that over time, with God's help, we become the very things for which we pray. In this way, common prayer is the source, not only of the prayers that the Anglican Church uses regularly but also of the content of our beliefs and the guideline for how we practice our faith.

The Book of Common Prayer

The Anglican Church is defined by how we worship, which is guided by common prayer. And the way we pray is what binds together the worldwide Anglican Communion. Our

The Anglican Communion is the third largest Christian communion in the world, after the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. It includes 85 million people in over 165 countries. Learn more about the Anglican Communion at anglicancommunion.org.

pattern of prayer is both ancient and modern, drawing on the tradition of the church through the centuries and responding to the needs and concerns of faithful Christians in this day and age.

The Book of Common Prayer was first published in 1549 under the direction of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury.

The book was the result of an extraordinary idea: the prayers that we say in worship should be held in common, that is, they should be available to all people in their native language. Prior to the publication of the Book of Common Prayer, books of liturgy were mostly reserved for clergy (bishops, priests, and deacons) and monastics (monks and nuns). These books also were largely written in Latin, a language spoken by only the educated elite. In the wake of the Reformation, Cranmer and others

believed that prayer, like scripture, should be available to all people, clergy and laity alike, and that people should be able to read and understand the prayers of the church in their own language.

From this deep conviction arose the Book of Common Prayer. Some of the prayers in the Book of Common Prayer were written by Cranmer himself. With the sensibility of a poet, he crafted words to give voice to the deep longings of human hearts and to put us in conversation with God. But for many other prayers, Cranmer relied on centuries of tradition, painstakingly translating into English prayers that had been passed down through the generations, reaching back to the earliest celebrations of the eucharist and creating a living connection with our ancestors. The first Book of Common Prayer was ancient and modern, holding on to patterns of prayer that were hundreds of years old yet speaking in the language of its time.

In writing that first Book of Common Prayer, Cranmer also sought to find a *via media*, a middle way, between Catholic and Protestant sensibilities. It was a time when the church was still being rocked by the waves of the Protestant Reformation. In response to the criticisms levied against the Roman Catholic Church, many were willing to throw the baby out with the bathwater, changing their practice of prayer radically so as to sever any connection with the practices of the Roman Catholic Church.

Cranmer and others sought a middle ground, a liturgy that retained some aspects of Catholic thought and practice while being informed by the best of Protestant theology. Finding that middle way was costly, angering extremists on both sides. It ultimately led to Cranmer's execution for heresy when Roman Catholic Queen Mary took the throne. But the legacy of *via media* lives on as a foundational principle in our prayer books and in Anglican belief and practice.

Ancient Prayers

The 1549 Book of Common Prayer included some wonderful collects composed for that first edition, and we still use some of these prayers today in a modern form in the BAS and in the original traditional language in the BCP.

O Almighty God, who hast built thy Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto thee; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BAS, 384 and BCP, 297)

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them; that, by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BAS, 391 and BCP, 97)

Thomas Cranmer and his team also made use of some ancient prayers that they translated for use in 1549.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made and dost forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BAS, 281 and BCP, 138. This prayer is based on a liturgical book from the eighth century called the *Gelasian Sacramentary*.)

If you would like to learn more about the origin of different prayers in the prayer books, refer to *Commentary on the American Prayer Book* by Marion J. Hatchett.

Over the years, prayer books in the Anglican Communion have been edited and revised a number of times, with each iteration balancing the ancient with the modern, seeking a middle way between extremes. In addition to *Common Worship*, which are volumes of contemporary prayer, the Church of England still uses the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, which bears a great resemblance to the original 1549 edition. The Episcopal Church in the United States of America adopted its first prayer book in 1789; that book was both deeply informed by both the original Book of Common Prayer and the Scottish Episcopal Church's Book of Common Prayer. The Book of Common Prayer currently authorized for use in the Anglican Church of Canada was last revised in 1962, and the Book of Alternative Services, the most widely used worship text in the Anglican Church was published in 1985.

Praying as a Community

When we come together each week and pray according to common worship texts, we are praying, in a deep sense, as a community. Our liturgy—the words and actions of worship—is not about “every person for themselves” or about how “*I* like to pray” or even how the priest likes to pray. Instead, we are keeping a tradition of worship that stretches through time and is shaped by a tradition of prayer that has been passed down from generation to generation.

Our prayers connect us not only through time but also through space to all the other members of the Anglican Communion, a worldwide body bound by a shared history and shared worship. While Anglican congregations across the globe have varying beliefs and practices, Anglican Communion churches are all connected, in some way, to the Church of England, and each has a prayer book that has been influenced and informed by the Book of Common Prayer.

Liturgy is a commonly misunderstood term, with people saying that it means work of the people, suggesting that participation by everyone in the gathering is the point. While it is surely important for each person in a eucharistic gathering to participate in her or his own way, this is not what liturgy is about. A better translation of the Greek word is public work. Back in ancient Greece, people offered a liturgy if they donated money for a civic building, for example. Liturgy was an offering for the good of all people, for the public. In this way, our liturgies are meant to be public works, that is, offerings for the good of the whole world.

If you visit an Anglican church anywhere in the world, you will have a basic idea of what is going on. Even if you can't understand a word of the language being spoken, the order of service and the actions of worship will be very familiar.

All Anglican priests take a vow at their ordination to the priesthood to be faithful to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Anglican Church. At baptism and again at confirmation, every Anglican promises “to continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.” Note that this promise doesn’t say prayer but rather “in the prayers.” In baptism and confirmation, we commit to more than a general idea of prayer; we promise to pray *like this* and *in community*. The

prayer books contain the kinds of prayers that we promise to be faithful to—the prayers that mark us both as Christians and as Anglicans.

Breadth and Opportunity

Now, a person might hear about these promises of prayer and think that the tradition of common prayer is a straitjacket that limits and restricts how we interact with God. Nothing could be further from the truth. One of the greatest gifts of the prayer books is their breadth. The prayer books offer tremendous opportunity for creativity and diversity.

The Anglican Church's prayer books are not eternal, stagnant documents; they have been revised, sometimes significantly, as the times and cultural contexts change. But the prayer books are also not meant to be taken lightly or to be subject to whims and passing fads. Because we believe that we are shaped by what we pray, the form and content of these prayers matters deeply. For that reason, revision of our common worship texts is a lengthy process.

In 2010, a task force of the Faith, Worship, and Ministry Committee of General Synod began a process to revise common worship texts that are in contemporary language. This process continues more than a decade later. The revised or new texts go through a trial process with input from all the orders of ministry: bishops, priests, deacons, and lay people. Then they are authorized for use across the church as bishops give permission.

- ❖ The prayer books include an incredible variety of liturgies, including Holy Eucharist and Holy Baptism, marriage and burial, confirmation and ordination. But there are also forms—guides for worship—for daily prayer, including Home Prayers and the Daily Office, an ordered routine of praying at different times throughout the day. In addition, the prayer books feature prayers for those who are sick and for grace at meals, for victims of addiction, for schools and colleges, for rain and for travelers, and many more.
- ❖ Most Anglican parishes mainly use the Book of Alternative Services but can offer liturgies using the Book of Common Prayer as well. This can seem confusing, but it is actually a beautiful part of our Anglican heritage, another way that we hold on to the ancient while also responding to the world around us. The Book of Common Prayer is full of thees and thous, the more formal and traditional language that echoes the earliest prayer books.

It is a language of beauty, poetry, and mystery. The Book of Alternative Services and newer texts for Morning and Evening Prayer, Eucharistic Prayers, and other liturgies are more contemporary, changing the thees and thous to yous and translating some of the more complex words and concepts so they are easier to understand, while still holding on to the beauty and tradition. In this way, our common worship texts are both ancient and modern, and our prayers benefit from a greater richness because we have many options.

- ❖ Even within the language of a certain rite, there is a great deal of variety. For example, the Book of Alternative Services offers six different options within Holy Eucharist for eucharistic prayers in modern language. Each eucharistic prayer uses different phrases and images to draw us into the mystery of Holy Eucharist. For instance, Eucharistic Prayer 2 is connected to some of the oldest eucharistic prayers, grounding us in ancient tradition. Eucharistic Prayer 4 talks about outer space, reminding us of our modern context. The different prayers emphasize different aspects of our understanding of God, in order to help us have a greater appreciation for what happens when we come together for Holy Communion.
- ❖ In addition to the different liturgies, the Book of Alternative Services is also attentive to the different seasons of the church year. The liturgies offer various options for opening greetings, prayers, and refrains that reflect the different times of the church year. From Advent to Lent to Epiphany to Easter, the seasonal options give our prayers context and nuance.
- ❖ While the prayer books have some requirements, much is left unwritten as well. This allows for a great variety of practice, from the vestments that people wear, the

decorations on the altar, and the colors of the seasons to the hymns, anthems, and instrumental music of our worship.

- ❖ Actions such as when we cross ourselves, processions into and out of church, whether or not to use incense, and many other things, are decisions for individual communities.

Worship according to forms of common prayer offers unity in the midst of diversity, allowing individual congregations to have both variety and constancy. Many aspects of prayer and worship are the same across all Anglican churches, no matter where they are located, while other components differ from one community to the next.

Praying with Our Bodies

Prayer is a full-contact sport. Prayer is not just a matter of the mind or the mouth—it is a matter of the whole body. It is meant to involve every part of ourselves. We live out that reality in worship by the different actions we use when we pray. The common worship texts sometimes direct us to sit, sometimes to stand, sometimes to kneel. Sometimes we are told to speak, sometimes to remain silent, other times to sing. Some people even include actions: crossing themselves at certain moments, bowing their heads at the name of Jesus, and genuflecting (dropping to one knee in reverence) before the altar. The different actions can make it seem like we aren't engaged in prayer but rather Anglican aerobics! The truth is that these different actions and postures of prayer help us to engage our *whole selves* in worship. They are ways of living out the truth that we praise God, as in the words of a beloved prayer: “not only with our lips, but in our lives” (BAS, 129).

By actively engaging our bodies in prayer, we acknowledge that prayer demands more than just our words. We proclaim in our actions that God wants all of us—and that we are offering all of ourselves to God.

Our actions and our motions are only part of our prayers; worship involves all of the senses. In worship, we see light and darkness as candles flicker, and we see the variety of colors in changing vestments, church hangings, and stained glass windows. We hear music sung or played and words spoken and chanted, and we experience silence that tells its own story. We smell the beeswax of burning candles, the holy perfume of incense, the beautiful scent of anointing oil. We taste the bread and wine. And we touch: the smooth surface of altar rails, the thin pages of prayer books and hymnals, the hands of our neighbours and strangers. Our worship engages all of our selves: our bodies and souls, our mouths and our movements. And it engages all of our senses: sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. Our prayer is embodied action.

This tenet extends beyond our worship. Praising God “not only with our lips, but in our lives” means that our prayers must shape the way we live, not only for an hour on Sunday but also for every hour of every day of every week for our entire lives. We don’t just involve our bodies in worship on Sunday by kneeling or standing, smelling and tasting. We involve our bodies in worship every day, by living in our lives what our lips profess in prayer. Praising God involves more than just the prayers we say or the things we believe; it includes the way we *practice* our faith on a daily basis.

What we pray is incredibly important, because it both shapes and reflects what we believe. And what we believe is incredibly important, because it both shapes and reflects how we live. Prayer changes us, in deep and meaningful ways.

As a priest, I have had the precious gift of praying with people as they age and when they are dying. Again and again, I have prayed with someone who suffers from dementia or Alzheimer's or a person who is non-responsive, who doesn't seem aware of what is going on or is unable to respond in any way. Yet when I start the Lord's Prayer, more often than not, that non-responsive, largely non-verbal person will begin praying along. The words might be mumbled or difficult to decipher. She might be a few beats behind me or say only certain phrases. But even if he's forgotten nearly everything else, he remembers the Lord's Prayer. Prayers that we pray often and repeatedly become so much a part of us that we remember them on an instinctive, visceral level.

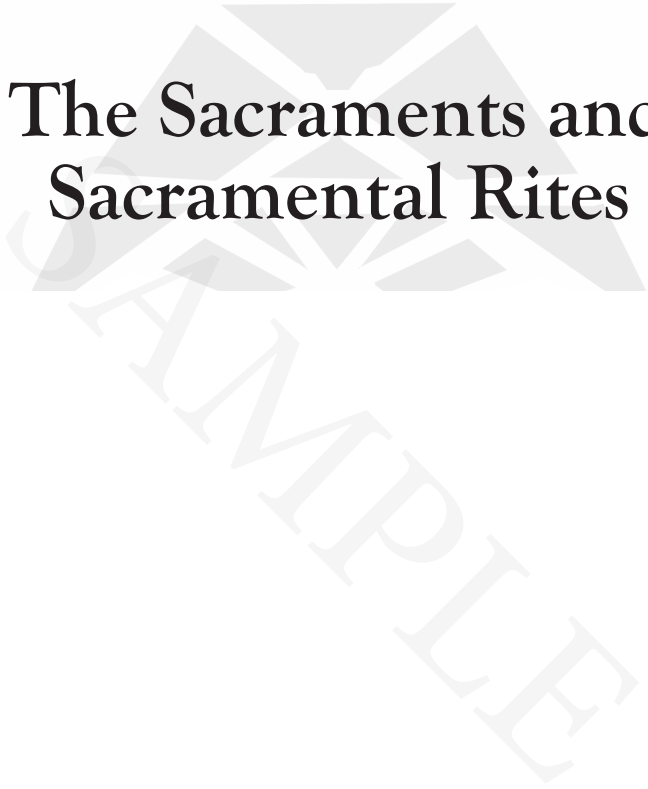
Prayer changes our brains and our behaviour. What we say and do on Sunday informs and shapes how we act and think on Thursday and Monday and every other day. When we spend our time in prayer focused on gratitude, we become more grateful people. When we pray for peace, we begin to act more peacefully. Our prayers become a deep and meaningful part of us, words that are truly learned "by heart," being taken into ourselves and shaping us.

For Reflection

- * What is your favourite prayer, and why is it your favourite?
- * Do certain lines from prayers come to mind during your daily life? What are they and when do you think about them?
- * What does the baptismal promise “to continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers” mean to you? How have you lived up to that promise in your life? How could you do better?
- * What are some of the gifts of scripted, common prayer like those in the prayer books? What are some of the difficulties with this kind of prayer?



The Sacraments and Sacramental Rites



Chapter 2

The New Life of Grace

Baptismal Beliefs

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon these your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised them to the new life of grace. Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. *Amen.*

—*The Book of Alternative Services, p. 160*

Prayer—our conversation with God, both spoken and silent—is an important way to experience God in our lives. But it is not the only way. In the Anglican Church of Canada, sacraments loom large. In the sacraments, we experience grace, which the collects of our prayer books describe as the gift of God that strengthens, forgives, heals, and frees us. Grace opens up a new way of life. While God’s grace absolutely comes in infinite ways, even outside the church, we know that the sacraments are “sure and certain” means of grace.

The classic definition of sacraments says they are “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace.” In other words, sacraments are an external manifestation of something that happens internally. To put it another way, they are earthly signs of heavenly activity. For example, when we baptize someone, the outward sign is water, but inside, the person is changed.

It’s important to emphasize that the sacraments are not the only way to receive grace; the grace of God’s love and blessing comes to us in our daily lives in many ways. At the same time, however, when we partake in the sacraments, we can be confident of receiving God’s grace. Furthermore, sacraments are not mere symbols. In the Holy Eucharist, the bread and wine are not simply reminders of Jesus’s last meal with his friends, but they become Jesus’s Body and Blood. We can be confident that Christ is truly present in the eucharist, and that in receiving Holy Communion we receive God’s grace.

Anglicans don’t always agree on the number of sacraments. During the Reformation period in the 1500s and 1600s, our forebears focused on two sacraments: baptism and eucharist. Later on, in the 1800s especially, Anglicans began to talk about seven sacraments. Today, we often divide the sacraments into two categories. The dominical sacraments (taught by Jesus) are baptism and eucharist. And the five ecclesial sacraments (taught by the church) are confirmation, healing (unction), reconciliation (confession), marriage, and ordination. The Book of Alternative Services does not explicitly list the sacraments, and the Book of Common Prayer distinguishes between baptism and Holy Eucharist and the other five. In terms of our theology though, all seven are clearly sacramental: they are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace.

Holy Baptism

Baptism is the first sacrament. It is the first one Jesus taught. We may think of baptism as the sacrament of birth, because baptism is often carried out with infants. But we should look at baptism in a broader context, as the sacrament of beginning for all new Christians. Even adults begin their new life and journey as disciples of Jesus Christ at their baptism.

Jesus did not invent baptism. He took an existing practice and completely redefined it. In the ancient world, as is the case today, many religions made use of ritual baths. In Jesus's time, many Jews understood baptism to be a cleansing, a way to wash away sins. Some sects even understood baptism to be part of rituals for entry; baptism was required for membership.

In the New Testament, the famous practitioner of Jewish baptism was John the Baptist (hence the name!). John spent his days calling people to be transformed and to be prepared for the Messiah who was to come soon. He spoke of his own practice of baptism, saying, "I baptize you with water for repentance" (Matthew 3:11a). But John added an important teaching: "one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11b).

Jesus adopted the idea of a cleansing ritual required for entry into a community. And just as John had promised, Jesus's baptism added new dimensions, starting with his baptism by John in the Jordan River.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is

proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.” Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:13-17)

At his own baptism, Jesus was blessed by God’s presence for all to see. This dramatically introduced the coming of the Holy Spirit in baptism, and Jesus continued to teach this as the way of beginning a new life of faith. From that moment in the Jordan River, Jesus and his followers continued—to this very day—a baptism that is by water and the Holy Spirit.

In most Anglican churches today, our practice of baptism symbolizes the experience with a pouring or sprinkling of water over the person’s head instead of full immersion. What is important is that we use water and that we do the baptism in the name of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Whether we use a few drops of water or dunk someone in a pool, whether the baptism takes place in an ornate font (a bowl of sorts that holds the water for baptism) or an outdoor stream, the same thing is accomplished: we are made new in Christ.

Soon after Jesus’s death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, the earliest Christians began to teach baptism as an essential part of the Christian life. Saint Paul teaches,

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3-4)

Saint Paul conveys two important ideas. First, baptism is the way to enter into the church, the Body of Christ Jesus. Second, in baptism, we die to our old selves and rise to new life in Christ. This aspect of baptism is perhaps more clear when the person being baptized is plunged under the water and then raised. Whether an infant or an adult, there is something bold about seeing someone symbolically drowned and raised to new life!

Union with Christ

Today when we speak about baptism, we continue to understand it as a mix of interrelated actions. The Book of Alternative Services names many of those actions, including being “made one with Christ in his death and resurrection... cleansed and delivered from all sin...and [brought] to new birth in the family of [God’s] Church” (157). The introduction to the baptismal liturgy also emphasizes that baptism makes us part of “a new creation” and “a new humanity” (146). Let us look at each of these actions.

- ❖ **Made one with Christ in his death and resurrection.** This is exactly what Saint Paul talks about in Romans. We are mystically joined with Christ when we are baptized. The old way of living and the sinful self dies. A new person is raised to life, and we receive the promise that we too will be raised at the last day, at the resurrection of the dead.
- ❖ **Cleansed and delivered from all sin.** To understand this one, we have to back up, all the way to creation. The church understands that humans were all made in God’s image, and we humans were made wholly good. Then we were given freedom, and we made poor choices that resulted in the captivity of humanity, the idea that we are ruined and entrapped by sin. We have squandered the

goodness and freedom that God gave us, and, left to our own devices, we will continue in this destructive way of living. Through baptism, we are cleansed from this curse of sin. We are made clean and new in baptism.

- ❖ **Brought to new birth in the family of God's Church.** Baptism is the entry to the church, to the community of those who have committed themselves to follow Jesus. But it is more than a membership requirement; in baptism, we are adopted into God's family.
- ❖ **Made part of a new creation and a new humanity.** Baptism is a kind of foretaste of the flourishing life that the church believes God wants for all the universe. Saint Paul writes in Romans that creation groans and looks for a redeemed humanity to be revealed. Baptism is a revealing of what a redeemed or new humanity might look like and live like. Also, baptism is not an individual private event but a corporate, collective event. We are not just new individuals in baptism but are assuming a new human nature.

Though not every Christian will see the complexity of baptism in exactly the same way, baptism is the one sacrament that nearly all Christians recognize as universal. As long as the baptism involved water and was done in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, it is considered valid. Nearly every church around the world will recognize each other's baptism.

Some Christians reserve baptism as a sacrament only for adults. These Christians usually believe that baptism requires understanding. Anglicans have a different view of the sacrament, believing that God's grace is present in the sacrament even when we do not understand how or what is happening. Therefore, we baptize people of all ages,

Baptismal candidates are always supported by sponsors, whether the candidates are adults, children, or infants. We colloquially call the sponsors of younger children “godparents” but they are really sponsors, just like any other. Sponsors help candidates or their parents prepare for baptism with the intention to “support them by prayer and example in their Christian life.” Being a sponsor is not just an honour but a major commitment to a life of Christian mentoring and support. Sponsors answer on behalf of infants who cannot speak for themselves in the baptismal liturgy, and they signify their role in adult and older children’s baptisms by presenting the candidates to the priest.

including infants, believing that God’s grace is surely and certainly present. It is then the responsibility of parents and godparents to raise the child in faith, helping the child to grow into promises made on his or her behalf.

Most of the time, baptisms are performed by clergy in churches, in the community that represents the Body of Christ. But of all the sacraments, baptism is the one that can be performed by anyone, anywhere, in an emergency. Talk to nurses, especially in places where babies are born, and you may hear stories of emergency baptism for deathly ill infants. In these situations, all that is required is water and simple words. “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Just a dab of water and these words make a person the recipient of every benefit of baptism.

Sometimes babies who have received emergency baptism get well, and the family later wants a public celebration in the church. We have a way of celebrating these baptisms that does not repeat baptism—because baptism is permanent and indelible—but allows the congregation to welcome a child into the church.

For Reflection

- * How have you experienced inward and spiritual grace through one of the sacraments?
- * The BAS mentions four aspects of baptism: (1) being made one with Christ in his death and resurrection (2) cleansed and delivered from all sin (3) brought to new birth in the family of God's Church (4) made part of a new creation and a new humanity. What is important about each of these emphases?
- * Our scriptures and liturgies make a strong connection between baptism and death. What are some of the things that we die to in our baptism, and how is our relationship with death changed by the waters of baptism?
- * Through the waters of baptism, we are raised to the new life of grace. What are some of the qualities or characteristics of this new life?

