

The Book of Common Prayer 2019

O V E R V I E W

Week Three: August 28—Pastoral Rites & Other Highlights

Review & Reflections

- The Book of Common Prayer is not technically a prayer book, in the sense that it is a mere collection of separate prayers (though it does include a lot of prayers); rather the prayer book is more like a playbook, or a script actors use for performing a play.
 - In this case, the “plays” to be executed or the “acts” to be performed are acts of worship.
 - You can read and study the prayer book for your own personal edification, but at the end of the day, it is meant to be performed with others in public; it is liturgy, “the work of the people.”
 - The Book of Common Prayer is practical in that it is intended to be practiced. That is why the prayer book exists: that God may be worshiped, decently and in good order.
- The Book of Common Prayer contains the lyrics of Scripture put to the music of prayer. People love this book not only because it gets them in the Bible, but through Scripture and prayer, it prepares them for an encounter with God.
- What about you: what so far has stood out from this overview of the BCP 2019?
- While you could say that the Book of Common Prayer is a clergy handbook of sorts, it’s not just for clergy. The prayer book is for the entire Church, clergy and lay alike. That’s why included below are a few suggestions for Application.

Pastoral Rites

- The Pastoral Rites walk through the pivotal times in the life of a Christian, inviting God into some of life’s most important moments: birth, marriage, waywardness, sickness, death, and burial.
- Though these rites are used mostly by the parish priest, it is valuable for all people to be familiar with them as they can be utilized in a variety of contexts.

- “The rite of **Holy Matrimony** is a worship service of the Church, ... [and it] signifies the communion between Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, and the Church, his holy bride” (198); it is considered by Anglicans as a sacramental act.
 - Arguably some of the most popular words from the Book of Common Prayer come from its marriage rite. The opening words and the vows especially are heard in many wedding ceremonies of those from non-liturgical and even non-Christian backgrounds.
 - Application—read and reflect upon this rite as a devotional act for a married couple; it also would make a great group study on marriage.
- **Thanksgiving for the Birth or Adoption of a Child** is “an occasion for thanksgiving and prayer in family and community. This rite is provided for use in a hospital or home, or during public worship.” (215)
 - This rite does not serve to replace Holy Baptism, but provides the opportunity for families to give thanks upon the birth or adoption of a child.
 - These types of celebrations should be done more often by the Church.
 - Application—as this rite can be appropriately done in a hospital or home, it is something any Christian can use during such occasions. Even more, some of the prayers work well to use separately from the rite itself.
- **Reconciliation of Penitents** (223), or commonly known as Confession, is a sacramental act of the Church based on the instructions from James 5:16, “Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed,” and the authority Jesus gave his Apostles to absolve sins (John 20:23).
 - According to Anglican teaching, all may receive it, some should, and none must. However, because Anglican teaching doesn’t require it, the rite of reconciliation is unfortunately underutilized in today’s Church, and many Christians miss out on the blessing and healing that come from this gift.
 - “The content of a confession is not normally a matter of subsequent discussion. The secrecy of a confession is morally binding for the confessor and is not to be broken.” (222)
 - Application—schedule an appointment with one of our priests to receive the rite of reconciliation. It is beneficial to do so regularly, but especially when a particular sin weighs heavily on your soul.

- **Ministry to the Sick** (225) reflects the centrality of healing in the ministry of Jesus, and so should be “central to the ministry of the Church, the Body of Christ. Spoken prayer, anointing with oil, and the laying on of hands are the principal outward means employed by the Church for its ministry to those whose health is in any way impaired.” (222)
 - The rite provides a template for offering ministry to the sick; it need not be followed slavishly.
 - Application—this rite can be easily adapted and administered to those who are sick and willing to receive prayer. Furthermore, it is always encouraged for people to follow the instructions of James: “Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord” (5:14).
- **Communion of the Sick** “is used when the consecrated elements are brought from an earlier celebration of Holy Communion” (227) and administered to the sick.
 - “Lay persons may be trained and authorized [Lay Eucharistic Ministers] to carry the consecrated elements of Christ’s Body and Blood to the sick (or those otherwise confined or kept away from regular celebrations of the Holy Communion).” (222)
 - This rite is a beautiful extension of the Church and its gathering as the elements that were consecrated during a worship service are given to those unable to attend due to sickness.
 - Application—when sick on a Sunday or in the hospital, please request for yourself or on behalf of others that Communion be brought sometime that week and administered.
- A useful list of **Additional Prayers** and Scripture passages pertaining to sickness, operation, or recovery can be found on pages 231–35.
- **Ministry to the Dying**, or commonly known as “last rites,” is a customary part of the Church’s pastoral care. (236)
 - “When a person is near death, the minister should be notified... This liturgy is intended to be prayed with one who has received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord” (236). Others present are invited to join in the prayers.
 - Application—“This rite is designed to be flexible in length. It may be adjusted according to the circumstances and condition of the dying person... In the absence of a member of the clergy, this service may be led by any Christian.” (241)

- **Prayers for a Vigil** are used soon after death and prior to a funeral for those who want to keep vigil, sometimes even before the body is taken. (243)
- **The Burial of the Dead** “is an occasion of both sorrow and joy—our sorrow in the face of death, and our joy in Jesus’ promise of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting” (246).
 - The Burial service is an Easter service that beautifully proclaims the Good News of the resurrect Jesus and his triumph over death.
 - It is often said that whatever tradition one comes into the world as, you want to go out an Anglican, because of the beauty and power of this rite.

Other Highlights from the BCP 2019

- **The Great Litany** (91) was the first English language rite prepared by Thomas Cranmer and published in 1544, a Latin rite that dates back as early as the 5th century. The Litany is a form of intercessions that makes a wide variety of requests, teaching the Church how and for what to pray. It can be used in conjunction with other services or by itself. Because of its penitential tone, it is especially appropriate during Lent, though it can be prayed at any time.
- **The Renewal of Baptismal Vows** (194) gives people a chance to renew their vows, especially when there has not been a recent opportunity at a baptism service. This rite often takes place at the Easter Vigil, if there are no baptisms scheduled.
- **The Institution of a Rector** (515) is a rite where the Bishop, who holds spiritual oversight as chief Pastor for all the churches in his Diocese, delegates spiritual and canonical authority to a minister as the Rector of one of his Congregations.
- **The Consecration and Dedication of a Place of Worship** (525) provides a liturgy for the blessing of a worship space and its furnishings, provided the Congregation has exclusive control of the facility.
- **Collects & Occasional Prayers** (597) provide not only a list of the collects of the Christian year, including holy days and commemorations, but also prayers for a variety of needs and occasions, more than any other prayer book.
 - The word “collect” is the noun form of the verb “collect,” so that a collect collects the prayers of the people and distills them into a concise and poetic form, which typically has four parts: address, petition, purpose, mediation.
 - These collects give us words to pray that have been carefully thought through, prayed over, and historically proven to sum up the Church’s requests in one particular area.

- Collects are specific enough to speak to an area of need, but broad enough to be true to a group of people.
- Application—make it a habit not only to utilize for personal devotion, but also to personalize various occasional prayers for others (e.g., for those in need, for family and personal life).
- The **Documentary Foundations** (765) is a section that includes documents on which the Anglican tradition, in general, and the Anglican Church in North America, in particular, were founded.
 - **The Fundamental Declarations of the Province** (766) makes seven statements of faith that represent the heart of what the ACNA affirms.
 - The **College of Bishops Resolution Concerning the Nicene Creed** (768) states that the Nicene Creed will be translated into English as faithfully as possible from the original Greek, that the *filioque* clause is optional, and that the ACNA will work toward global unity as it pertains to the creed.
 - **The Athanasian Creed** (769), along with the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, is one of the three catholic creeds, focusing on the doctrine of the Trinity and Christology.
 - **The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion** (772) express the Anglican response to certain doctrinal issues and controversies during the time of the Reformation that make plain where the Church of England stood in relationship to the Roman Catholic Church in 1571.
 - **The Jerusalem Declaration** (791) is a statement of orthodox Anglican belief drafted and published in 2008 at the formation of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) in Jerusalem.
 - **The Preface of the BCP 1549** (794) explains why the prayer book appeared during the Reformation and Cranmer's vision for its use in England.
 - **The Preface of the BCP 1662** (798) provides the historical context for this revision of the prayer book, the one that becomes the standard for the entire Anglican Communion (read paragraph at the bottom of page 800).