

TRADITIONS OF ANGLICAN LITURGY

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The history of *A New Zealand Prayer Book* has striking similarities to, and parallels with the history of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Not really surprising since the New Zealand Prayer Book has evolved from the English one.

It took 118 years for the *Book of Common Prayer* to evolve into the form with which we are familiar. Writing liturgy takes time for testing, time to explore the theology behind worship, time for improvements to be incorporated. For over 60 years modern liturgists have worked on revising and rewriting the Prayer Book and it seems that this process will continue indefinitely so that our worship will relate to changing patterns in our society.

As with the *New Zealand Prayer Book*, Cranmer's Prayer Book was produced one service at a time beginning with an English Litany in 1544 and followed by an Order of Communion in 1548. Prayer Books were published in 1549, 1552, 1559 and 1604. Cranmer was martyred in 1556 but various compilers continued the work just as our *New Zealand Prayer Book* has been worked on by a Commission with many people involved in writing it.

The *Book of Common Prayer* shows the influence of other liturgies from many countries and in the same way the new Prayer Books from England, Australia, India and Canada have had an effect on the New Zealand writers.

Cranmer's aims in producing the *Book of Common Prayer* are very similar to the aims of modern liturgists.

1. Services should be held in English instead of Latin.
No longer would there be a special dead language used by the clerics and not understood by the congregation.
Today our modern English usage is very different from the Elizabethan English of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Words have altered meanings, eg. "truly and indifferently minister justice", for impartial administration of justice.

Our customs have altered too. The wives of Henry VIII promised to "Be bonny and buxom in bed and at board" which hardly seemed appropriate in Elizabeth's reign: and the Elizabethan promise to "love, honour and obey" is no longer appropriate for to-day's brides.

2. Liturgy is the work of the people and Cranmer aimed to restore this work to the people by having more congregational participation in all Services. Unfortunately this aim was thwarted by the high level of illiteracy. General literacy at last makes it possible for a variety of responses, canticles and prayers to be used by the whole congregation. Our modern liturgies have been tested with congregations and it has been relatively simple to consult with the people who use them. Marriage services have been written with the help of young couples. Parents and god-parents have shared in shaping the Baptism Service. Funerals have been developed to meet the pastoral needs of the bereaved.
3. Before the production of the *Book of Common Prayer*, individual Services were separately bound. Psalms, canticles, prayers were often in different books. Cranmer reduced the multiplicity of books to one. As the liturgists have worked on each part of the Prayer Book, separate books have been published to make it possible to test out and re-write the various sections without enormous expense. Now we have gathered together the 'little books' again.
4. The *Book of Common Prayer* replaced many Regional Usages. During the years of experimenting we have discovered that variations to suit the pastoral needs of different congregations have been welcomed and yet there needs to be some unity. The new Prayer Book is more flexible than Cranmer's National Usage. Once again the increased literacy of congregations makes the use of alternatives feasible but there is still a National cohesiveness.
5. An important part of Cranmer's work was the reform of the Lectionary to give a wider and better use of Scripture. Using a good lectionary maintains a balance of themes. The *New Zealand Lectionary* has been updated to provide for some of our history and traditions to be incorporated into our worship.
6. Preaching had fallen by the wayside by the time of the Reformation. Cranmer restored the sermon to all Services. The restoration of less

formal prayers of intercession in our *New Zealand Liturgy* to focus on the Scripture readings and the preaching seems a logical development of Cranmer's principles.

Looking at what Cranmer set out to do in the *Book of Common Prayer* lays down guidelines and principles for ordering the worship of the Church. Once again we have discovered that Liturgy involves all the people of God and is an ongoing task for each generation. The history of the *New Zealand Prayer Book* will not end with its publication in 1989 - let us hope that the present form will not be frozen for a further 327 years as the *Book of Common Prayer 1662* was!

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