

# The Prayer Book TODAY

*Annual Conference and AGM Reports*

*The Diplomat's Wife: A story*

*Cranmer drama returns*

PBS

THE  
**PRAYER  
BOOK**  
SOCIETY

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If you are interested in becoming a member of the Prayer Book Society, please visit our website or contact the office at Copyhold Farm for an application form.

# Key dates 2025 -26

# Contents

## **Advent Quiet Day**

St James, Garlickhythe

**Saturday, 13th December at 10.00a.m.**

## **Cranmer National Finals**

Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace

**Saturday, 28th February 2026**

## **Cranmer Commemoration**

University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford

**Saturday, 21st March 2026**

## **PBS AGM**

Venue TBC

**Saturday, 29th August 2026**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Key dates 2025 -26 . . . . .                              | 3  |
| Chairman's Letter . . . . .                               | 4  |
| Advent Quiet Day . . . . .                                | 5  |
| Another Two to the Kilmister Tally . . . . .              | 5  |
| PBS Conference . . . . .                                  | 6  |
| Annual, General, and Well Met . . . . .                   | 8  |
| Fit for Diplomatic Life . . . . .                         | 11 |
| Icing of the Top . . . . .                                | 13 |
| Quires and Places Where They Sing . . . . .               | 14 |
| Ordo for 1662 BCP . . . . .                               | 15 |
| Co-ordinator's Annual Report 2024-25 . . . . .            | 16 |
| Words We Need to Hear . . . . .                           | 18 |
| Exit, Pursued by ... not the Churchwarden, Fortunately .. | 19 |
| Letters . . . . .   | 19 |
| Cranmer Drama Revived to Mark 60 Years . . . . .          | 20 |
| News from the Branches . . . . .                          | 21 |
| New Corporate Members . . . . .                           | 24 |
| A Pioneering Prayer . . . . .                             | 26 |
| The Old Music Made New . . . . .                          | 28 |
| Copyhold Corner . . . . .                                 | 34 |
| Branches . . . . .  | 35 |



# Chairman's Letter

One of the objections I sometimes hear about the continued use of the Book of Common Prayer, and also the King James Bible, is that its old-fashioned language makes it unusable in the present age. Even seasoned churchgoers find it difficult and unintelligible, they say, never mind people who have no experience of churchgoing. Furthermore, they tell us that because certain words have changed their meaning over the years, they really must be replaced with more suitable modern words, lest we confuse people or put them off by our rigid adherence to outdated language.

The Prayer Book Society does not exist to promote traditional language, however beautiful it may be. That said, it is my view that once we set out on a path of revision, exchanging a word here and a word there, then where exactly do we stop? It's difficult to see where the line can be drawn. If you take a chisel and start chipping away at a beautiful sculpture, before long you will find that you have created a completely different object, wholly unlike the one that existed before it.

Rather than chipping away, making little changes here and there, thereby running the risk of creating something wholly new and unrecognisable to that which existed before, we should instead teach and educate. At the end of the day, we were not born speaking any language. We only know language because someone taught us. We only know that *charity* (as in faith, hope and charity) means *love* because someone taught us.

Another word that has changed its meaning since the Prayer Book came into existence is one we associate with Whitsuntide—the word *comfort*. *We beseech thee, leave us not comfortless*, we pray in the week before Whitsunday, *but send to us thine Holy Ghost to comfort us*. On Whitsunday we pray that we may evermore rejoice in the holy comfort of the Holy Spirit.

It sounds rather like a plea for a heavenly blanket to be put around our shoulders; perhaps even a divine dummy to suck; or maybe an arm to be wrapped around us to make us feel safe, assuring us that we are not alone. And there's nothing wrong with that. We all long for that sense of heavenly care and protection, particularly when there seems to be so little peace and stability in the world at large. But there is more to the word *comfort*. A scene from the Bayeux Tapestry (which will be coming to the UK next year) provides us with a clue as to the broader meaning of the word as found in the Prayer Book Collects and the Comfortable Words of the Communion service.

In this particular scene, Bishop Odo, the half-brother to William the Conqueror and Bishop of Bayeux, is shown rallying Duke William's troops with the aid of a great club with which he spurs them on into battle. The Latin tituli embroidered above the scene reads: HIC ODO EPISCOPUS BACULUM TENENS CONFORTAT PUEROS. The traditional English translation is BISHOP ODO COMFORTETH THE TROOPS.

*The Prayer Book Society does not exist to promote traditional language, however beautiful it may be. That said, it is my view that once we set out on a path of revision, exchanging a word here and a word there, then where exactly do we stop?*

As a churchman, Odo would have been forbidden from holding a sword. Apparently, to wield a club was more acceptable! But whether it's a sword or a club, neither object immediately springs to mind when we think of *comfort*. The blanket, the dummy, the warm comfortable slippers, the peace and security of our homes, the arm around the shoulder, and the assurance that everything is going to be okay—these represent comfort; not the club, the sword and the battle!

The traditional understanding of the verb *to comfort*, as found in the Bayeux Tapestry, the King James Bible, and the Book of Common Prayer, is therefore more like this: to rally; to embolden; to strengthen; to encourage; to fortify. The more modern understanding of comfort—that which provides solace—derives from the Latin *solacium*. *Conforto*, however, the word used in the Tapestry and in traditional Latin liturgical texts, is the word from which we get *fort*, *fortress* and *fortify*.

Therefore, *leave us not comfortless, but send to us thine Holy Ghost to comfort us* might be rendered, *do not leave us without challenge: but send us your Holy Spirit to rouse us from our sleep and strengthen us for the battle*. It's about energy and movement and action; not lingering behind in apathy and inertia. *Leave us not comfortless—let us not become complacent, or give in when the going gets too tough*.

That is a good prayer, not just for the period between Ascension Day and Whitsunday, but for the whole of life as we seek each day to open our hearts to the gifts and graces of God, actively inviting the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to fill our hearts and minds, enabling us to more confidently witness to Christ in the varied circumstances of our lives. It's a good prayer for our Society too, as we seek to grow in number, in activity and in influence. For such a great task we will not be left comfortless; for today, as every day, Christ promises us the gift of the Holy Ghost to be our strength.

With my prayers and good wishes,  
Bradley Smith

# Advent Quiet Day

Saturday, 13th December, 10.00a.m. until 3.30p.m.

St James, Garlickhythe: Garlick Hill, London EC4V 2AF

The PBS Advent Quiet Day, hosted by the London & Southwark Branch, will take place once again at St James, Garlickhythe, in the City of London. It was William Shakespeare's parish church and offers much in the way of interest, not least its full and complete dedication to the BCP. A number of new initiatives are being encouraged under its Rector, the Revd Anthony Howe.

The day will be led by Canon Angela Tilby and begins at 10.00a.m. with refreshments then Matins at 10.30. The first address at 11.00a.m. will be followed by Holy Communion

at 12.25p.m. with the second address. Lunch (attendees to bring their own) precedes the third address. After a time of silence, Evensong at 3.00p.m. will conclude the day.

Previous participants in the day have described it as the perfect way to mark the season of Advent with a welcome spiritual focus in preparing for the festivities ahead.

St James, Garlickhythe, is close to Mansion House and Cannon Street stations. The event is free and booking can be made via the PBS website ([pbs.org.uk](http://pbs.org.uk)).

## Another Two to the Kilmister Tally

Two more lay people who have made an outstanding voluntary contribution to the life of the Prayer Book Society have been honoured with the Kilmister Award, its highest recognition.

Sandra Llewellyn was the first recipient at the recent PBS Annual Conference.

Every week, Sandra, with her husband Brian, who is a priest, works through each parish vacancy advertised in the *Church Times*, on the Church of England website and diocesan websites. Each parish profile is scrutinised to identify which parishes are using the Book of Common Prayer. The resulting spreadsheet gets wider distribution via the PBS website and social media channels.

'This helps clergy looking for parishes where the Prayer Book is used, known and loved,' said Bradley Smith, Chairman of the Prayer Book Society, as he made the award. 'You have our sincere thanks for the tremendous voluntary work that you do.'

The second recipient was Kirsten Lewis, Secretary of the Truro Branch of the PBS. 'This lady's commitment to the Prayer Book Society and the Book of Common Prayer is truly outstanding,' Bradley said. 'Kirsten is always telling people about the work we are doing, and for that we are so grateful.'

Kirsten attends every Archdeacon's Visitation in the Truro Diocese to ensure that every churchwarden has material about the PBS. She is also a member of the Diocesan Synod.

The Kilmister Award is named after Tony Kilmister, the Society's founder. It was established to recognise and celebrate the unsung heroes and heroines of the Society who, in many and varied ways, do valuable work to further the PBS cause. Recipients of the Award receive a handsome medal engraved with the PBS logo, and a framed certificate.

The Trustees always welcome nominations from members for future potential recipients.



Chairman Bradley Smith presents Kirsten Lewis (above) and Sandra Llewellyn (below) with their Kilmister medals

# PBS Conference 2025

*I Believe: The Creeds and the Christian Life* was the theme of the Prayer Book Society's annual residential conference held at the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, in September. Over 125 members and supporters of the Society were treated to a three-day feast of worship, fellowship and teaching centred around the Creeds in this 1700th anniversary year of the Council of Nicaea.

The Revd Dr Mark Smith, Dean of Clare College, Cambridge, was the first of four keynote speakers. His magnificent lecture, entitled 'From Constantine to Cranmer', focused on the history and development of the Nicene Creed, setting the scene for everything that followed. He enabled participants to explore the various textual changes made to the Creed after it emerged from the Council of Nicaea in its earliest form in 325, as well as the theological imperatives that motivated those changes. A key part of his presentation focused on Cranmer's concern for doctrinal orthodoxy and liturgical authenticity, and his decision to use the first person singular (*I believe*) rather than the plural (*We believe*) in the version of the Nicene Creed that appeared in the first English Prayer Book and its subsequent revisions.

Dr Smith's exploration of the *history* of the Creed paved the way for a splendid lecture on the *theology* of the Creed by the Revd Dr Cally Hammond, Dean of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. Dr Hammond began by reminding us of what the Church of England teaches about the Creeds in its key identity texts: the 39 Articles of Religion, the Canons (Church law), and the Declaration of Assent (made by clergy being licensed). She then unpacked some of the theological terminology employed by the Creed, explaining why such terminology was chosen in the face of various historical heresies, and stressing the importance of the Creeds in the contemporary Church. The final part of her lecture looked at the Anglican tradition of *singing* the Creed, with special attention given to Merbecke's setting, which has been

familiar to generations of Anglicans. It was that setting which was used during a sung service of Holy Communion immediately after the lecture.

Our third lecture was given by the Revd Dr Tom Woolford, Vicar of New Longton in the Diocese of Blackburn, and Tutor in Doctrine at Emmanuel Theological College. Dr Woolford spoke powerfully about the place of the Creeds and catechesis in parish life in a lecture on 'Prayer Book as Teacher'. After explaining how the Creeds and the Catechism have been used historically, he spoke about the place of the Creed in the structure of the Catechism: the grace of God comes first (Baptism), causing the gift of faith (Creed), flowing into a life of obedience (commandments) and gratitude (prayer), sustained by the means of grace (sacraments). He called for a return to providing a robust foundation of basic Christian teaching in today's parishes, urging the Prayer Book Society to lead the way by producing attractive catechetical resources to assist clergy and authorised lay ministers in this endeavour. Using illustrations from his own experiences, and examples from his own ministry, his lively and engaging talk promoted questions and comments from the floor about preparation for Confirmation, the admission of children to Holy Communion before Confirmation, and the place of the Prayer Book Catechism in contemporary Church life.

Our final lecture was given by the Revd Dr Jo Kershaw, Tutor in Liturgy at the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield, and Director of the Mirfield Liturgical Institute. It was a particular joy to welcome Dr Kershaw as a keynote speaker shortly after her election as a Trustee of the Prayer Book Society at this year's AGM. Her lecture centred on the much-neglected text of the Athanasian Creed (*Quicumque Vult*), which the Prayer Book expects to be said or sung at Morning Prayer in place of the Apostles' Creed on no less than thirteen occasions each liturgical year. Dr Kershaw explained that concerns about the Creed's damnable clauses began to



# A report from Cirencester

emerge at the time of the Enlightenment and have never gone away. Despite these concerns, she stressed that the Creed retains an official place as part of the doctrinal standard of the Church of England as referenced in the Articles and Declaration of Assent, and contains important teaching about the Incarnation and the nature of the Trinity. She closed her lecture by expressing her hope that members of the Prayer Book Society will continue both to use and to promote the Athanasian Creed as a safeguard against erroneous belief, and as a form of praise to the God to whom it bears witness.

In addition to the four keynote lectures, a series of devotional addresses were given during Conference services by the Revd Dr Thomas Plant, Rector of St Margaret's, Iwer Heath in the Diocese of Oxford. His thoughtful reflections, delivered in a beautifully poetic and accessible style, provided much food for further reflection and prayer.

Videos of all four lectures and three devotional addresses can be found on the Prayer Book Society's YouTube channel. We also plan to publish the papers in a future issue of *Faith & Worship*.

As ever, worship was at the heart of the Conference programme. We shared together in a full round of services, including two celebrations of Holy Communion. At the final service of Matins, which came immediately after Jo Kershaw's lecture, we sang the Athanasian Creed. This was certainly a first for many! Services were led by the Reverends Ewan Gillings (Hereford); Catherine Reid (York); Tom Sander (London); Jean Lamb (Southwell & Nottingham); Jonathan Bish (Leeds); and Emma Harrington (Coventry).

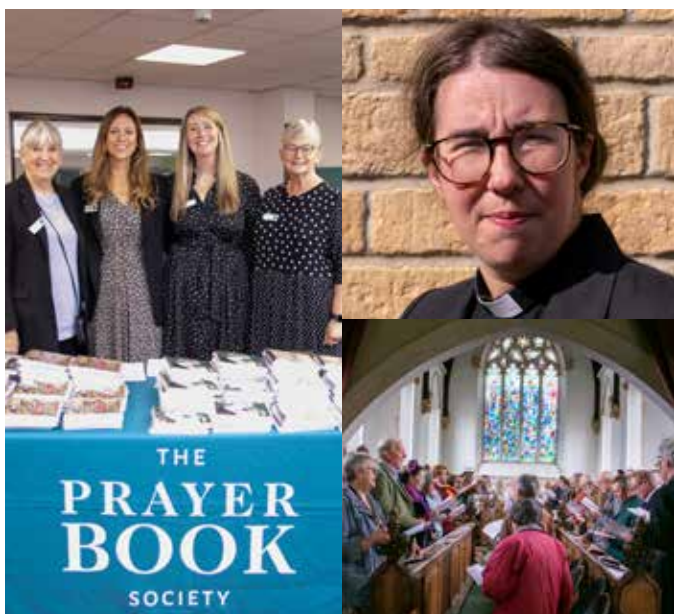
David Norman once again accompanied the singing with characteristic skill and sensitivity. He was also responsible for selecting the hymns, and so ably matching them with the Conference theme. The Revd Jonathan Beswick of St Peter's, London Docks, served as chaplain to the Conference, making

himself available for private spiritual counsel over the three days. Our after-dinner speaker on the Friday evening was the Revd Paul Ellerby, a priest of the Diocese of London and Director of McCabe Pilgrimages. McCabe very generously sponsored this year's worship book containing the hymns and psalms pointed for singing.

Putting on a conference takes a great deal of time and work, and we record our sincere thanks to everyone who worked so hard to make this year's gathering such a wonderfully rich and uplifting occasion. Our thanks must go above all to Rosemary Hall for her meticulous preparations, negotiations and communications, which enabled everything to run like clockwork.

The number of young people applying to attend the Conference grows year on year. During a panel discussion facilitated by our Interim CEO, David Harvey, on the Friday afternoon, we heard from some of these young people about the centrality of the Prayer Book in their journey of faith and vocation. We also heard stories of how its use is leading to growth, spiritual and numerical, in a variety of contexts, including university chaplaincy, a children's choir in the East End of London, and various expressions of parish life across the country.

Our participants come from a wide variety of backgrounds, social contexts and Church traditions; yet what is so clear is that the breadth of opinion, conviction, and theological and liturgical persuasion represented at the Conference is held together by the use of a common liturgy. The Book of Common Prayer was always meant to be a unifier. It was intended to hold people of different views and outlooks together in one Church, uniting them through a common framework of prayer and belief. In that respect, the Prayer Book Society has something valuable to share with the wider Church of England.



Left to right blocks:

1. Chapel worship, Cally Hammond, Mark Smith.
2. Thomas Plant, Tom Woolford, delegates in the lecture theatre.
3. Copyhold staff at the Conference bookstall, Jo Kershaw, Chapel worship.
4. The exterior of the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester.

# Annual, General, and Well Met

The 2025 PBS AGM took place in London on 30th August

For those members of the PBS who arrived early at the parish church of St Giles-in-the-Fields for the AGM, the sound of bells made for a suitably magisterial greeting. Sonorous and stately, their peals offered a celebratory note on this most auspicious day in the calendar. But before people become too excited that all PBS events should be heralded with bellringing, the simple explanation is that the meeting came on the heels of an earlier, happier moment: the marriage of its two churchwardens. Inside, the telltale signs of confetti added a further festive note. Congratulations to Oliver Flory and Catherine Campbell, who had already departed with a navel of guests to their wedding breakfast. It was a celebration of the ancient and modern. The couple had met via the Tinder dating app, and had the 1662 Prayer Book Rite for the marriage ceremony.

With his usual cheery gravitas, Bradley Smith opened the proceedings with warm words, welcoming all once again to the central London venue. The minutes of the previous year's meeting were approved and the usual reports received—including from interim CEO David Harvey on the unique opportunities the PBS currently has, and the Co-ordinator's report from John Service. Both presented a positive and upbeat view of the future, and acknowledged the widespread support of all PBS members in our shared

mission. The meeting also received encouraging news on the finances.

A new Trustee was elected: the Revd Dr Johanna Kershaw, Tutor in Liturgy at the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield, and Director of the Mirfield Liturgical Institute. Dr Kershaw was also to speak at the annual Conference this year.

With business of the meeting concluded efficiently and thoroughly, a short pause allowed for a number of happy reunions before the Very Revd Simon Robinson, Dean of Truro, rose to his feet for a fascinating and forthright talk. The title was, 'Lively Stones, a Spiritual House, an Holy Priesthood: The Book of Common Prayer as our Personal, Historical and Spiritual Continuity'. Prayer, both communal and personal, is central to our Christian identity, Dean Robinson said, and he pressed for an increase of faith in all.

That surge was certainly in evidence next when Choral Evensong, led by the parish curate, the Revd Philip Dawson, showed how 'the voice of prayer is never silent'. Happily sung hymns balanced with a fine sermon given by one of our new Ecclesiastical Patrons, the Rt Revd Jane Steen, Bishop of Lynn. Afterwards, and as a wholly fitting organ voluntary concluded the day, members gathered at the back of the church for a glass of wine to mark the successful passing of another year, another AGM, and another good service.

## Foundations for the Future

To recap on my presentation to the 2025 Annual General Meeting of the Prayer Book Society, this is a moment of opportunity. Yours is an enviable position among charities of comparable size: the Society enjoys reserves of some £1.8 million, carefully stewarded through legacies and investment. This gives you not only security, but the rare freedom to invest in evolutionary growth and modernisation. The question is how the PBS uses that freedom.

The Trustees' Strategic Plan for 2024–29 provides a clear map for the years ahead. Its themes are *Mission, Discipleship, Community*.

The PBS is charged to keep the Book of Common Prayer at the heart of the Church's life, to deepen understanding of its theology and spirituality, and to strengthen the community of members, Branches and clergy who uphold it.

Since April, my task as Interim Chief Executive has been to establish the foundations upon which that plan may be built. Systems are being modernised—migration to Office 365 is well underway and a full review of our membership database has been completed, with a replacement likely. Governance has been sharpened—a new safeguarding

policy is prepared and will be implemented nationally but keeping it light touch for volunteers. Staff roles and contracts have been reviewed. A membership campaign has reached out to lapsed supporters, while a discussion paper sets out proposals for new tiers of membership with benefits that add value. Our events programme is expanding, and work has begun to forge new alliances with theological colleges, dioceses and kindred societies.

The **next phase** belongs to the incoming Director, and the role was advertised early in September through many channels



(Left) The Bishop of Lynn, The Rt Revd Jane Steen. (Right) Interim CEO David Harvey



so the process is ongoing. Their agenda will be to widen the PBS's reach and voice as follows: To make membership easier and more engaging, with long-term predictable income through Direct Debit and fair subscription levels (unchanged since 2019) and diversification of income sources.

- To strengthen support for clergy and students, equipping them with the resources to use the Prayer Book confidently in parishes and colleges.
- To broaden the Society's community, reaching younger members, evangelicals as well as Anglo-Catholics, and more diverse congregations across the country.

- To establish the PBS through the BCP as one of the most trusted national advocates for liturgical best practice in the Church of England.

It is right to acknowledge both the achievement and the challenge before your Trustees and you, the members. The founding ambition of the Society—to secure the Prayer Book's continuing place in the worship of the Church—has been largely achieved. Yet the charity's duty does not end there. To preserve alone is insufficient; to grow, to influence, to inspire—this is the present calling. The PBS has the means to act boldly.

The resources entrusted to the charity give freedom to experiment and to learn without endangering continuity. The greater risk is not failure but stillness. Unless the PBS takes this moment to renew our common life and expand our reach, it could gently decline into the margins.

The Book of Common Prayer is not only our inheritance; it is a gift for today's Church at a time of tribulation. The task of the PBS, proclaiming afresh, is to ensure that its riches are known, loved and used by new generations.

**David Harvey Interim CEO**

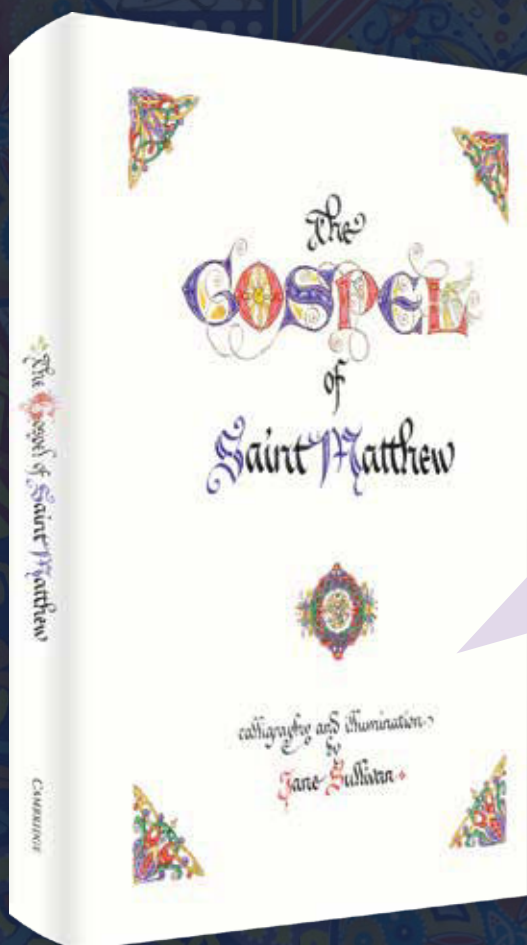
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# Fit for Diplomatic Life

Joanna Comer recounts a Prayer Book tale

Samuel Bagster of 15 Paternoster Row was a publisher who specialised in ancient and modern language translations of Bibles and Prayer Books. In 1821, the firm first published an octoglot edition of the liturgy of the Church of England. For each service, from Morning Prayer to the Communion, each page is divided into four. On the left-hand sheet are the same sections of the service in Ancient and Modern Greek, Latin and Italian and on the right, English, French, German and Spanish. The State Services (Gunpowder etc.), Articles of Religion and Ordinal are printed on facing pages in English and Latin. Forms of Prayer to be Used at Sea are printed only in English.

The copy which is the subject of this tale was printed a year later, the title page bearing the date MDCCCXXII. Being duodecimo, just six and a half by four inches, the print is very small and the services progress slowly through some 1,200 pages. It has a beautiful contemporary binding of wooden boards with bevelled edges covered with vellum, decorated with gilt outlines and green, red and pale blue staining. All the edges of the text block are gilt and gauffered in a delicate sloping pattern.

Inscribed on the front endpaper of this lovely book is: *Georgiana Liddell from Miss Shields ~1845.*

The Honourable Georgiana Liddell was born on 13th April 1822, the sixteenth and youngest child of Thomas Henry Liddell, first Baron Ravensworth. In 1839, at the age of seventeen, Georgiana was presented at Court. She wrote in her memoir, *Reminiscences of Court and Diplomatic Life*, that she was 'often invited to small balls at Buckingham Palace which were very select and pleasant'. She ascribed her introduction to Court at such a young age to the fact that her elder sister, Lady Normanby, was already a Lady of the Bedchamber.



**Georgiana Bloomfield** née Liddell, Lady Bloomfield (artist unknown), from a 2016 Shepphards auction catalogue



**View Of St. Petersburg**  
(Russian School, late 19th century)

Lady Normanby was caught up in 'the bedchamber row', as her sister describes it, when Queen Victoria was forced to accept the resignation of three of her Ladies-in-Waiting with strong Whig connections, when Robert Peel, a Tory, became Prime Minister in 1841.

Despite, or perhaps because of this, in December of that year, Georgiana, aged nineteen, was invited by the Queen to become a maid of honour. She was eminently qualified for life at Court, being both musical and fluent in French. She had also studied German and Italian, which she infinitely preferred to German, as being much more sonorous and beautiful. She greatly enjoyed her time spent in the company of the Queen but, early in 1845, she resigned her post to return home, her mother being in poor health.

In July of that year, however, aged twenty-three, she became engaged to be married to the 42-year-old John Arthur Douglas Bloomfield, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Court of St Petersburg, and received the following letter from Queen Victoria:

## Osborne, July 29, 1845.

*My dearest Georgiana,—I received this morning your kind letter announcing your marriage with Mr Bloomfield, which has surprised us most agreeably. I do not think you guilty of any inconsistency, and we only hope you will be as happy through a long life as we are; I cannot wish you more than this. I highly approve your choice, having a high opinion of Mr Bloomfield; and I shall be much pleased to have, as the wife of my representative at St Petersburg, a person who has been about me, whom I am so partial to, and who I am sure will perform the duties of her position extremely well. I pity you much for the painful separation from Mr Bloomfield to which you will be subjected. Once more repeating our sincere wishes for your happiness, and with our kind regards to your parents, who we hope are better,*

*Believe me,  
Always yours affectionately,  
VICTORIA R*



They were married in September 1845 and the following month, Georgiana set out with her husband to Russia. A year later, on the death of his father, the first Baron Bloomfield, they became Lord and Lady Bloomfield.

The date of the inscription would suggest that the book was a wedding present; it does, however, raise some other questions that

*to be treated with respect. Fancy yourself, Georgiana, in her situation—far from your country, your friends and relations, with the additional evil of bad health to contend with; then think what she must suffer, and think also that the bitter cup which might be sweetened by kindness, gentleness, and forbearance on your part, is only rendered more bitter by your cold and cutting indifference, and the evident dislike you show to her society. You may (as I know you do) throw all the fault on her; but be not deceived, God is not mocked, He sees us as we are; and our Saviour has told us to take the beam from our own eyes to enable us to see clearly to take the mote from our brother's eye, therefore when you are unkind or indifferent to your governess, or haughty to your maid, or disobliging and ungracious in your manner to those persons you do not happen to like, the fault rests with you; you may try to shake off the compunctious visitings of conscience, but be assured that until you acknowledge yourself wrong, and determine on amendment, you will not improve.*

so far I cannot answer other than by speculation.

*Georgiana Liddell* is a familiar form of address. By right, the daughter of a baron would be styled 'the Honourable', so the use of her name alone suggests a degree of informality or even familiarity, whereas the giver styles herself *Miss Shields*. Was this possibly an older woman who had known Georgiana for many years, even as a child? The book was printed in 1822, coincidentally the year in which Georgiana was born. Was it bought as a beautiful second-hand book, or rebound for the occasion, or had it been in the possession of the giver all those years? So far, I have failed to identify a Miss Shields in connection with Georgiana Liddell. She is not named in Lady Bloomfield's *Reminiscences*.

It seems unlikely that she was either of the two unnamed governesses who taught Georgiana at the family home at Ravensworth, County Durham. Georgiana describes the first as:

*a clever woman but a very odious one, and when she left she persuaded all my family to subscribe to a work she said she was about to publish on education, in which she gave an account of us all, turning us into ridicule; and the character she gave me was that I promised to be 'an undutiful child, a turbulent wife, a despotic mother, and a tyrannical mistress'.*

The second was Swiss, employed to improve Georgiana's German but not at all liked by her. Her recalcitrance led her mother to write a loving but sorrowful letter, rebuking her fifteen-year-old daughter's behaviour. She writes that, despite a 'naturally good disposition, and a quickness in learning', Georgiana showed, not to her mother but to her governess:

*a spirit of contention and contradiction which is as unkind as it is disrespectful, and is in no way justified by the ready blame you are but too apt to throw upon her temper to excuse yourself. It may be true that Mademoiselle is irritable, and even unjust at times; but she is still your governess, and ought*

That Georgiana took her mother's rebuke to heart is not only confirmed in her mother's subsequent letter but also in the fact that she kept the letters for the rest of her life. She acknowledged the debt she owed her mother, when referring to the 'solemn impression' her Confirmation made upon her; instruction:

*consisting literally in the knowledge of the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Church Catechism... but from my earliest years my mother had impressed me with a sense of God's presence, and tried to instil religious motives into my mind.*

The gift of this polyglot Book of Common Prayer was highly suitable for a young woman, much of whose future life would be lived abroad. Lord Bloomfield was recalled from Russia in 1851 to take up an appointment in Berlin, and in 1861 was made British Ambassador at Vienna, from which post he retired in 1870.

Lady Bloomfield took her religion very seriously. In the spring of 1852, she spent some time in Italy to improve her health, which had suffered from the harsh Russian winters. In a letter to a friend she commented:

*I went at Rome to hear a famous French preacher, the Abbé de la Vigne, who was giving a course of Lent lectures. He was eloquent, and his lectures were very edifying, and, as he did not touch upon our doctrinal differences, I listened to him with great pleasure and I hope profit. I think I have never felt the differences which rend the Church of Christ more painfully than I have done since I came to Italy; for there is certainly much that is great and good in the Roman Catholic Church, much we might do well to imitate. A devotion to the cause of religion, a self-denial, and conscientiousness about what is believed to be right which often shames me; and though the superstition is painful, I cannot help thinking that sometimes we fall into contrary extremes equally grievous. As*

*far as I am able to judge, I certainly think that the Church of England is the 'juste milieu'; and the more I see of other forms and other churches, the more I cling to the simple, scriptural, and beautiful Liturgy of our own Book of Common Prayer, and hope that in time it may be more generally adopted throughout Europe than it is now.*

She could use her influence to get things done. In *Reminiscences* she wrote:

*When first we went to Berlin, the Church of England service was held in a small room in the Hôtel du Nord. It was a very unsuitable place, and often when we were going to church, as we had to pass through the passages of the hotel, we found them encumbered with slops [chamber pots] and dirty linen! This was so very unpleasant, I one day represented the state of things to the King [Frederick William IV of Prussia], who immediately most kindly placed a large room at Mon Bijou Palace at our disposal, which was fitted up as a chapel by subscription, and opened for divine worship on Whit-Sunday 1854.*

The Bloomfields seem to have had a very happy, though childless, marriage. In the *Reminiscences*, she speaks of 'my dear husband'. When they were separated, such as when she was in Italy just before the outbreak of the Crimean war, he wrote to her almost daily, keeping her abreast of political ramifications as well as social encounters.

And she must have valued her polyglot Prayer Book, because when she died in 1905, aged 83, it was still in her possession. On the same page as the handwritten dedication, a printed label is pasted. It reads: *Canon Mowbray Trotter by bequest of Lady Bloomfield.*

### Notes

*Reminiscences of Court and Diplomatic Life* by Georgiana Baroness Bloomfield, from which quotations in this article are taken, was published in 1883 in two volumes and dedicated, with permission, to Queen Victoria. It consists mainly of entries from diaries and letters, beginning with her childhood and ending with Lord Bloomfield's retirement from diplomatic service.

John Arthur Douglas Bloomfield, 2nd Baron Bloomfield GCB PC DL, died without legitimate heir in 1879. From the age of twenty-nine, his mistress for three years was a Swedish actress, Emilie Högquist, by whom he had a daughter named Thecla, born in 1833, and a son, Albert, whose birthdate is unknown. Albert is not mentioned after 1834, when Emilie Högquist had gained the attention of Crown Prince Oscar, later King Oscar I, of Sweden by whom she had a further two sons.

The Revd Canon Mowbray Trotter was Canon Residentiary of Gloucester Cathedral from 1904 until his death in 1913.

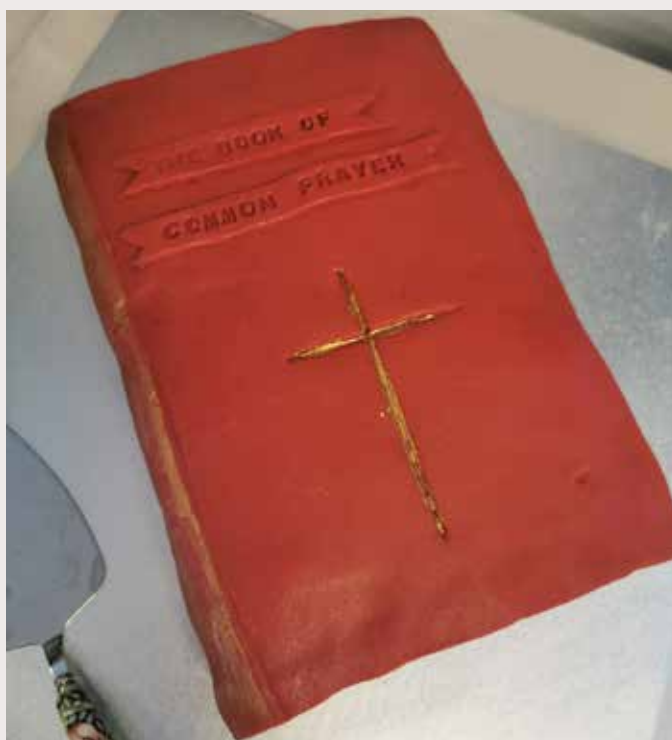
# Icing on the Top



Members of the Chichester West Branch recently visited St Mary's Hospital, an ancient almshouse in the Chichester city centre, where they joined residents for their regular celebration of Holy Communion according to the Book of Common Prayer by kind invitation of the Custos, the Revd Brian Cunningham. Refreshments were served after the service, including this splendid Prayer Book cake made by the Hospital Manager, Sue Porter.

St Mary's is a remarkable surviving example of a thirteenth-century hospital, still in use today as a Christian foundation, providing a home for up to 40 residents who are encouraged to attend daily chapel services based on the Book of Common Prayer.

Find out more about this remarkable place here [www.stmarysalmshouses.org.uk](http://www.stmarysalmshouses.org.uk).



# Quires and Places Where They Sing

Pat Ashworth reports on a new initiative to encourage churches to celebrate their patronal festivals

The Choral Evensong Trust (CET) expected a moderate degree of interest when, last November, it announced its inaugural Patronal Festival Grants awards: an initiative intended to foster community engagement and enrich the spiritual and cultural life of churches across the country.

It expected to award about five grants, enabling Choral Evensong to be celebrated in churches where it was not normally held. The grants were a £500 Patronal Festivals Grant, to enable a visiting choir to come and sing; or—for churches with a choir—a £250 Patronal Festivities Grant, to cover the cost of a community reception. There had been two trial runs in 2024, in the Dioceses of Chichester and Bath & Wells, and limited publicity was launched in these and through the *Save the Parish* newsletter.

‘We didn’t know what sort of response we’d get,’ Dr Rupert Sheldrake, a Trustee, remembers. ‘It was almost overwhelming—87 applications—and it was hard to raise the funds to cover [the 85 that were eligible], but we managed to do all that through private donations. People so liked the idea that, in some cases, it was pushing at an open door.’

‘Most people who wrote to me were churchwardens, saying how excited the PCC was about this possibility. About 80 per cent used the word “excited”—and PCCs are not normally that excited. It would have been terrible to downplay this.’

The key feature of a patronal festival, in this scheme, is that it is based on Choral Evensong. ‘That has the power to draw in far more people from the local community who are not regular churchgoers,’ Dr Sheldrake suggests. ‘So far, they’ve been enormously successful in bringing in people who don’t normally go to church, as well as those who do occasionally.’

‘The Trust considered that festivals could apply to every church in the land, even those who didn’t have a choir or didn’t normally do Evensong; and most of the applications were in fact from these. The stories of the saints, and the concept of the saint as the protector of the parish, also resonated with people,’ Dr Sheldrake says. ‘Honouring and calling upon the protector of the parish is deeply archetypal. It strengthens people’s link with their parish, strengthens the communities, and strengthens their relationship with their patron.’ He suggests that first approaches for putting on a patronal festival could be made to the patron of the benefice: the idea had appealed to those approached for funding for the 85, and they had been very willing to contribute.

Parishes who have already put on a festival this year have reported positively on the experience. It was the first Choral Evensong in twenty years for St George’s, Benenden, where singers came from across the Weald deanery to form a robed choir of fourteen voices. The service, described as ‘beautiful

and moving’, attracted a congregation of 70 from the village; the buffet was ‘delicious’, and the church had a chance to give an update on its ‘Renew, Restore and Rejoice’ project.

A regular congregation of twelve grew to 74 at Eglwys Sant Caron, Tregaron, where the festival was deemed ‘a rousing success... a really joyous affair... An amazing number of congregation members suddenly remembered how to chant responses.’

‘The patronal services present a wonderful opportunity for people to come together to celebrate the life and witness of the church, and of the patron saint from which the church bears its name,’ the Priest-in-Charge, the Revd Nicholas Bee, said.

The occasion at St Petroc’s, Timberscombe, was reported as ‘a very successful service, the likes of which was out of any villager’s memory. It would be wonderful to support more Choral Evensongs at the church, and we will do our best to find a sponsor [for 2026].’

‘Our typical service attracts an average of twenty people, so to have 100 squeeze in our church was a delight. We were able to attract people from beyond our parish who have a love for liturgical music, as well as a huge amount of local support.’ The Prosecco went down well, too, but none of it, the reporter says, would have been possible without the grant—a recognition that comes in every report.

When Richard Craig-Langley took over as director of music at St Mark’s, Newport, there was no choir or organist. ‘I wanted to turn things around and bring much-needed life back into the church,’ he said. ‘Our patronal festival was coming up, and I quickly discovered St Mark’s had not celebrated this in literally decades. Some didn’t know what a patronal festival was.’

‘I put together a choir of eighteen, which consisted of adults from around the Diocese and included choristers from our cathedral. We pulled in a congregation of 67 people, and there was much discussion about repeating it again next year... We’re going to be doing a final Choral Evensong to mark the newly formed resident choir’s last service before we break for the summer.’

The festival at the Annunciation, Brighton, ‘awakened a desire to celebrate Choral Evensong more often’. A newly formed professional choir was led by the choirmaster, David Price. The service attracted 50 visitors, and ‘a hearty meal of curry completed the celebrations... We offer our sincere thanks to the Trust for getting the ball rolling for our rediscovery of the liturgical jewel of the Church of England.’

They had a lasagne dinner after the ‘deeply moving’ service at St Mary’s, Frome St Quintin, in Herefordshire—‘generously made and in part donated by members of the parish’. St John of Beverley, Whatton-in-the-Vale, benefited

# Ordo for 1662 BCP



from having a former *Rector Chori* of Southwell Minster, Paul Hale, living in the parish. The Cranmer Company of Singers was the guest choir, which welcomed other local singers, ‘turning it into a “Come and Sing Evensong”’. The vicar, the Revd Timothy Chambers, is credited with the efforts he made, including creating invitations that were delivered to every home in the vicinity.

St George’s, Donnington, in Chichester, had to make what they could of St George, about whom little is known, but had ‘a glorious evening of worship and weather’. The vicar, the Revd Caroline Brown, reflected: ‘We try to do an Evensong once a quarter, but where our church is located does not make it ideal for our winter evening service. We are lucky in having a choir that still likes to “perform” and get together for events such as Evensong. We are also extremely lucky that we have a top-class organist/musician who is able to lead and direct such services, and is prepared to give up time to practise.’

The Grant enabled the church to print a professional order of service for Evensong, making it easier in future for those attending to follow. Although widely advertised—including on *A Church Near You*, St George’s Facebook page, the electoral list, and in a publication advertising local events—it did not attract anyone new on this occasion. But, after a specially commissioned cake, and wine, ‘we left to the sight of the setting sun over fields newly harrowed and awaiting seeding—perhaps a metaphor to challenge us to continue to be rooted and grounded as a Christian community’.

*Grants are not recurring, so will only be awarded to new applicants each year. If your parish church is considering putting on a patronal-festival Evensong:*

- *Invite your patron, in the first instance, to sponsor it. Nothing ventured...*
- *Confirm your organist and singers at the outset: for some, this has been the catalyst for reviving/forming a regular choir.*
- *Plan in good time, to gather good material. Michaelmas, for example, offers excellent hymns and anthems about the angels.*
- *Advertise as widely as you can. The CET website opened up notice of Choral Evensongs to the many people who loved them but weren’t on church mailing lists and didn’t know where they were happening.*
- *Invite people in the parish to donate to a festival in memory of a loved one.*
- *Go as big as you can on the hospitality.*
- *Collaborate with other churches with a strong choral tradition.*

Visit [choralevensong.org](http://choralevensong.org) or email [hello@choralevensong.org](mailto:hello@choralevensong.org)

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After two years of work, an Ordo for the 1662 BCP for 2026 is being launched by Father Jonathan Fleury.

‘One of the challenges I’ve found for clergy, especially those who want to encourage people to use the BCP, is that the lectionaries available can be quite confusing,’ says Father Jonathan, Priest-in-Charge of a group of three parishes in East Leeds. ‘And the lectionary printed in the BCP is not the original set out in the 1662 edition, which offers a fuller and more comprehensive diet of Scripture throughout the year.’

The new book, available in November, lists a comprehensive but simple-to-use lectionary for the entire year. Morning and Evening Prayer sit alongside the readings for Holy Communion, as well as liturgical observances like Ember Days and Black Letter Days.

‘I thought this would be beneficial for myself and my parishes, but also anyone else interested in having access to the lectionary of 1662,’ says Jonathan.

The 175-page A5 book has taken two years of research and study to produce. Last year, Father Jonathan road-tested a prototype to help finetune the final publication. ‘My wish is that the book will help further people’s access to the BCP,’ he says. Any profits from the project will be donated to the Prayer Book Society.

One of Father Jonathan’s churches, St Saviour’s Richmond Hill, has reintroduced Prayer Book worship at all its services, which has resulted in a growth in attendance.

Bradley Smith, Chairman of the PBS, comments: ‘Jonathan is to be congratulated on a fantastic project. It is so kind of him to donate surplus funds to the Society. I will be ordering my own copy shortly.’

To pre-order the book, please email Jonathan at [1662ordo@mailfence.com](mailto:1662ordo@mailfence.com), stating how many copies you’d like and including your postal address. The cost is £10 per copy plus postage and packing. Copies will be sent out by post by the end of November.

# Co-ordinator's Annual Report 2024-25

## Ordinand Packs

Every new ordinand entering training at the beginning of the 2024 academic year was presented with a BCP resource pack by the Society. This year, 639 packs were gifted to students. I strongly feel that, with every passing year, the gratitude for the gift of the BCP packs, and moreover the Society's standing at TEIs, increases.

## Evensong in the City

The Society continues to support this wonderful initiative at St Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield, London. Designed for young financial city-centre workers, the early evening Evensong is followed by bangers and mash, and drinks. Annual attendance is approaching 1,900 and this year, St Bart's laid on a special Choral Evensong to mark VJ Day.

## Prayer Books for Prisoners

I was contacted by Jane Woods, a Licensed Reader and Chaplain at HMP Hollesley Bay, a young offenders' prison. She asked specifically for two young inmates, aged fourteen to seventeen, to be gifted a BCP.

Our outreach to prisoners continues. In 2024, we provided 50 copies of the BCP to prisons across the country. My contact with the Anglican Prison Chaplains Association is particularly through PBS member, Canon Alan Pierce-Jones, lead Prison Chaplain for Wales. At their biennial conference, the PBS sponsors the modest gift of a wine reception. It is proving to be an excellent ongoing initiative.

## New BCPs for Old

The accession of King Charles III has naturally outdated many editions of the BCP, which include prayers for our former Queen, Elizabeth II. But even these older copies have real value. In November, I collected 50 in good condition. Forty were sent to the Revd David Brown, Chaplain of Holy Trinity Las Palmas, in Gran Canaria. The remainder are now being used by the members of the newly refounded Anglican Society at Sheffield University.

## Cranmer Awards

The 36th Awards Finals took place on 22nd February at Holme Pierrepont Hall, Nottingham. Twenty-one students took part in the two age group sections. Six judges were recruited, representing age groups vastly younger than previously in this competition, which proved an outstanding success. Prizes were awarded by the Venerable Phil Williams, Archdeacon of Nottingham. The standard of competitors remains impressively high.

For the 2026 competition, I am delighted to say that I have been able to recruit an additional seven new regional diocesan heats.



# John Service

## Ordinands Association

Originally formed in the 1960s, the Association of Ordinands has fallen off the radar of many of today's ordinands. Its aim was to link together and support all current ordinands on TEs and non-residential courses.

In conjunction with its current Chair, Helen Hambling, ordinand at Wycliffe Hall, and PBS member, Edward McMillan, currently studying at Ridley Hall, we plan to relaunch the association.

## Tradition Day

'We may think that we have finished with tradition but tradition has not finished with us.' That's the intriguing view of the Revd Canon Paul Wright, Sub Dean of the Chapels Royal and ex-army padre.

So many of our institutions are underpinned by tradition: the Monarchy, our military services and indeed the Book of Common Prayer. We are planning, with Canon Wright, to host a day in May 2026 at the Chapel Royal St James' for newly appointed clergy, and current and prospective ordinands to explore the importance of tradition.

## Close Encounters with the BCP

The popularity of Prayer Book services is growing, particularly with younger ordinands and clergy. We are in the early stages of organising a two-day Residential Youth Conference, which will explore and open up the BCP to the next generation of Church of England priests. Wycliffe Hall, Oxford will be the probable location of the conference, to be staged in September next year.

## Leaflet Roll-Out to Corporate Members

Starting this year, we have been providing the nearly 250 Corporate Member churches with leaflets and suitable display stands to promote the PBS to members of their congregations. Member churches in the Dioceses of London, Southwark and Oxford have now all received their resources. Chichester Diocese will be next and we plan to continue the roll-out until all the English dioceses have been contacted.

*Photos:*

*(Above) Benefactors Day at the Savoy Chapel*

*Cranmer Commemoration, Oxford*

*Festival Gathering, St Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield*

*(Opposite)*

*Sheffield students with BCPs*

*Resource pack for Sheffield University*

*Holme Pierrepont Hall*



# Words We Need to Hear

Some words are omitted by intent (like the penitential beginning of Morning and Evening Prayer, which I mention again specifically because of its importance); other words are omitted by inadvertence. Consider how some services and sections in the BCP are seldom heard because they have become ‘unfashionable’.

The Litany almost falls into this category but, most fortunately, we are still able to hear it sometimes, particularly during Lent. But nowhere near as frequently as the Prayer Book indicates. ‘To be sung or said after Morning Prayer upon Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and at other times when it shall be commanded by the Ordinary,’ says the rubric. Well, from time to time would be good because herein lies a most comprehensive list of suffrages to cover each and all of the human conditions, with a little form of creed at the start. Should some claim that it seems a little tedious to the modern taste, just listen to it sung to Merbecke and that view will be dispelled.

Following the Litany is a section called ‘Prayers and Thanksgivings upon Several Occasions’. Here are eleven splendid prayers, which are seldom, if ever, heard: For Rain; Fair Weather; In the Time of Dearth and Famine; In the Time of War and Tumults; any common Plague or Sickness; and for use in Ember Weeks, and for Parliament. Quoting even samples of them would consume too much space here, but do read them for yourself.

After the eleven prayers come eight Thanksgivings—largely given to saying ‘thank you’ to God for answering the pleas in these prayers just before them. This establishes a rather nice ‘please-and-thank-you’ regime, which ought to be present in our relationship with the Almighty, but is not always eminently so.

Fortunately, the General Thanksgiving (which comes first) is still frequently heard—even interposed into modern-language services, I would observe. The rest will not be well known. Yet how often in recent years would that ‘For Restoring Publick Peace at Home’ have been suitable? It begins:

*O Eternal God, our heavenly Father, who alone makest men to be of one mind in a house, and stillest the outrage of a violent and unruly people: We bless thy holy Name, that it hath pleased thee to appease the seditious tumults, which have recently been raised up amongst us.*

Again, have a read through all of them for yourself.

Another rarely heard segment perhaps loses out somewhat due to its rather unusual title: ‘At Morning Prayer’. What quite does that mean, some may ask? I might have preferred that it was just called ‘The Athanasian Creed’. The rubric tells us that it is to be used on thirteen specific days

each year instead of the Apostles’ Creed. Generally, it isn’t! Often said to be complicated, I find it to be anything but. It is probably the most complete and straightforward account of the Trinity (not the easiest of concepts) that one will find anywhere. Anyone who has studied formal logic will find it almost syllogistically spelled out in a similar sort of ‘All As are Bs, no Bs are Cs’ logical proof.

It uses words which make one think carefully about their meanings and significance—*uncreate, incomprehensible, coequal*. In my view, it needs to be said rather slowly so as to be considered, and I reckon it is one of the very few parts of the Prayer Book where singing it decidedly doesn’t help. Taken in this deliberate way, one will certainly understand the concept of the Trinity, which is one of the fundamentals of our faith.

There are some complete services where I have to accept that the cause is long since lost and therefore I don’t include them in my ‘need-to-hear’ list. That is not to deny their value but, realistically, who would learn the Catechism today? But one in this category that I do wonder about is ‘A Commination’. Perhaps we should hear what renders a man cursed, including ‘he that removeth his neighbour’s landmark’, ‘he that smiteth his neighbours secretly’, and ‘the unmerciful, fornicators, and adulterers, covetous persons, idolaters, slanderers, drunkards, and extortioners’. The first day of Lent is the specific time set aside for ‘A Commination’.

Next, I would refer you to the six splendid Collects set out individually after the Communion service, which ‘may be said also as often as occasion shall arise... by the discretion of the minister’. One or two of them will be well known because of their use on other occasions, like ‘Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favour’. Others will, I think, be generally unfamiliar—‘Almighty God, the foundation of all wisdom, who knowest our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking’. They have their pertinence to several sorts of occasions and they are there to be used. We need to hear them from time to time.

Be it services or segments from the BCP, these are all words we need to hear at the appropriate times.

Neil Inkley

Dear Sir,

My wife and I recently visited ‘The Spanish Gallery’ in Bishop Auckland, County Durham. The gallery focuses on the ‘Golden Age’ of Spanish painting, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and is the result of the vision of Mr Jonathan Ruffer, a committed Anglican of extraordinary generosity.

# Exit, Pursued by... not the Churchwarden, Fortunately

A friend of mine said, 'You always have your exit planned, don't you?'

I was about to refute this indignantly when it occurred to me that she was right. A minor detail, I realised that I always arrive at my destination backwards, reversing the car into any available space, poised for the departure.

I blame my grandmother, who was absolutely one for an early exit. No doubt I inherited the same characteristic. Invited to tea by some people she barely knew, after arriving and sitting chatting for a short while, she said it had been so pleasant and now she must be going.

'But we haven't had tea yet!' exclaimed her startled hostess.

My grandmother also hated carol services. As a child, I was happy to belt out 'Hark The Herald Angels Sing' with the best of them, but later I was less enthusiastic. Last year, I believe I set a record for an early exit from a carol service: I left during the first carol. I was committed to attending two carol services, reading a lesson at one of them, so no escape there.

For the other (not at my parish church but not far from home), I had received a three-line whip from my friend, the churchwarden. A guest choir was coming and an appreciative and large congregation was required.

I knew that parking would be difficult, as clergy and choir would occupy the limited space round the church. The rest of us would be in a small field up a short, steep track. It had rained all the year. Aiming to be really early and with a tow rope in the back of the 4x4, I set off. The cat yawned a goodbye as he settled in front of the woodburner.

In spite of the early arrival, the field was already filling up with cars. I managed to reverse into a narrow slot near the exit. Between car and church, there was slippery mud underfoot.

After being welcomed in, I found my attendance was superfluous, the main body of the church being already full. Either the attraction of the guest choir or the promise of mulled wine and mince pies afterwards had drawn the crowds.

It was a candlelit service and the church looked beautiful, with lights flickering in glass jars in each pew. My previous occupation had required recurrent fire training every three years and after a while, one merely sees romantic candles as

a fire risk requiring knowledge of appropriate procedures.

I automatically organised myself with instant access to the main door, in a three-person pew in a side aisle. I gathered later that it was normally considered too draughty a location by regular worshippers. I was well placed to hear the comments of later arrivals than mine. Two words featured constantly—'mud' and 'stuck'.

The small church was not merely full, it was bulging at the seams; most unusual nowadays for the C of E. My friend the churchwarden materialised at my elbow, asking me to move to the front due to space being available there. I refused as politely as possible and she hadn't time to argue.

A more forceful helper arrived, young and wearing a dog collar. He was marshalling a couple of large men, possibly father and son, towards my three-person pew, of which I was still the sole occupant. Not wishing to be jammed up against the wall by these two toughs, I stepped into the aisle to let them in. Without a glance or a 'thank you', they barged in and spread themselves over all the available space, leaving me standing in the aisle. Dog collar and I looked at each other and turned our attention to a nearby stack of chairs. The rector was beginning her welcome speech as we hastily arranged a row of six chairs along the back. Dog collar took the one nearest the main aisle and I took the one nearest the main door. It was uncomfortable and freezing cold.

Only one thing to do... I started to pray for the arrival of a latecomer. My prayer was instantly answered. As 'O Little Town of Bethlehem' began, the main door rattled. I leapt across and opened it to see a village lady whom I knew slightly. She was clearly surprised to see me as a helper but I gestured her in, pointing to the row of chairs. Obediently, she trotted towards them and I was out through the main door, closing it quietly behind me. My getaway was aided by the fact that I had no Prayer Book or handbag, only a paper Order of Service. Everything else was in zipped pockets, including a small torch.

I negotiated the field exit in four-wheel drive and was back with the cat before he'd really noticed that I'd gone.

I much prefer BCP Communion at 8.00a.m. on Christmas morning.

Adele Stephenson

## Letters

I would wholeheartedly recommend a visit to the gallery, but the item I would most like to bring to the attention of your readership is a carved inscription in one of the top floor rooms. It reads: 'Tradition is not the Worship of Ashes but the Preservation of Fire.'

Like me, I think PBS members will instinctively agree.

Yours sincerely,  
John Joyce

# Cranmer Drama Revived to Mark 60 Years



A play commissioned and performed to mark the 400th anniversary of the execution of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer is being revived by the PBS next year.

*The Trial of Thomas Cranmer* was written by poet and playwright Anne Ridler for performances in 1966. The BBC broadcast a recording of the play, which starred Frank Windsor, later of *Z Cars* and *Softly Softly* TV dramas, as Cranmer. Other actors included Derek Hart as the Witness, and Elizabeth Ogston (wife of Oxford academic Sandy Ogston, who became head of Trinity College), who played Margaret Cranmer.

The original play had one performance in the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford: the site of Cranmer's Trial.

The revival will be performed in the same church on 21st March, as part of the 2026 Cranmer Commemoration. It will be directed by Professor Elisabeth Dutton. Elisabeth is a member of the Department of English at the University of Fribourg and head of Early Drama for the Oxford Project, which examines plays written and performed in the Oxford Colleges between 1485 and 1642.

'This is an artistic first for the Prayer Book Society,' says PBS Chairman Bradley Smith. 'The revival of Anne Ridler's play at the location of its original performance and the historic setting of Cranmer's trial is thrilling. I hope both members and supporters of the PBS will come and enjoy this timepiece drama, centred on the imprisonment and trial of the Prayer Book's author.'

The surviving members of Anne Ridler's family will be guests of honour at the performance.

Tickets for the script-in-hand production will go on sale soon. St Mary's has a limited capacity, so do secure your seat as soon as possible.



## Sponsor the Production

The staging of this unique *Trial of Thomas Cranmer* drama is costly. The PBS would welcome financial assistance to help co-sponsor the production. Benefactors are asked to contact the PBS Interim CEO David Harvey, by calling the Copyhold office on 0118 984 2582 or emailing David direct at [david.harvey@pbs.org.uk](mailto:david.harvey@pbs.org.uk).

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# News from the Branches

## Chichester East

June and July was a busy time for our Branch. On Tuesday, 10th June, we held a Quiet Day, the venue being the peaceful church of St Peter's, Ashburnham, and the day was led by Father Jonathan Beswick, Rector of St Peter's, London Docks. Members and friends were welcomed by the Very Reverend Lee Duckett, Chairman of the Chichester Branch.

The theme of the day was 'Everyday patterns of prayer in 1662' and consisted of two sessions in the morning with quiet times after each session. During the quiet times, we could either remain in the stillness of the church or find a spot to sit in the beautiful grounds of Ashburnham Place. Father Jonathan gave us useful tools to help us get into the pattern of prayer, and referred to the Prayer Book as a reference. Prayer is a connection and conversation with God and does not have to be difficult or even time-consuming, but can become the pattern of our daily lives. The morning finished with Holy Communion according to the Book of Common Prayer and officiated by Father Jonathan.

We then gathered in the church hall for a buffet lunch and were able to enjoy conversation and friendship.

The afternoon session began at 2.00p.m. with one more session to sum up the day. An added and unexpected bonus was that Father Jonathan had printed out extremely useful handouts of forms of prayer from the BCP and how we might use them, a simple form of daily Morning and Evening Prayer and a Rule of Life for the Christian Disciple.

After tea, cake and the opportunity to ask Father Jonathan questions, the afternoon concluded with Evening Prayer, taken by Lee Duckett, and a group photo outside the church. The whole day was very successful and we were fortunate to have such an inspiring speaker.

On 29th June, members were invited to St Peter's, Bexhill for Choral Evensong and celebration for their Patronal Festival. The choir, under the direction of Mark Shepherd with their organist John Ross, filled the church with their singing. We were also treated to the trumpet playing of Crispian Steele-Perkins, along with delicious refreshments and champagne at the end of the service. It was a very well-attended and wonderful occasion.

A week later, we were invited to Sung Evensong and Patronal Festival at St Thomas à Becket Church, Lewes. This was another wonderful occasion and appreciated by those who attended. Our thanks go to PBS member Michael Conlon, who invited members to this service.

**Valerie Mighall, Secretary to the Chichester East Branch**

## Chichester West

In May, Branch members were invited to join the congregation of St Mary's, Barnham for a community tea and special service to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day. The Evensong included prayers, hymns and readings drawn from the National Services of Thanksgiving held at St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey in 1945, using the special service sheets produced by the Prayer Book Society for the occasion.

In June, members were once again invited to the annual Patronal Festival Evensong at St Peter's, Terwick. The service was, as ever, followed by delicious canapes and drinks in the churchyard. On the same date, our friends in Chichester East were invited to Petertide celebrations in Bexhill and Folkington.

July's first gathering was held in the stunning church of St Botolph, Hardham. Here, in this most remarkable little church, we sang Evensong surrounded by a magnificent collection of ancient wall-paintings. Rural Dean of Storrington, the Revd Canon Paul Seaman, officiated and preached; and afterwards we remained in the atmospheric church for refreshments.



*St Botolph's, Hardham*

On 29th July, the annual celebration of Holy Communion according to the Book of Common Prayer was held in St Olav's Bookshop, Chichester. The Bishop of Chichester celebrated, and preached a powerful sermon. Refreshments were enjoyed after this special event in the city's oldest place of worship.

We joined the congregation of All Hallows', Woolbeding for Evensong on 10th August, followed by Pimms and nibbles. As there is no electricity at Woolbeding, the only evening service during the winter is held at Christmas, and the Patronal Festival, which would normally be held in November, is transferred to the summer. Generously supported by the Choral Evensong Trust, the service was also a celebration of the parish's decision to join the Prayer Book Society as a Corporate Member.



*St Mary's, North Stoke*

The 15th August saw a return visit to St Mary's, North Stoke for the annual celebration of Holy Communion, jointly organised by the Branch together with the Friends of North Stoke. The Revd Canon Nigel Ashworth of Chichester Cathedral celebrated and preached, and there was an Act of Remembrance to mark the 80th anniversary of VJ Day. It is always a privilege to worship in this delightful church, which has been cared for by the Churches Conservation Trust for several decades.

On 17th August, we visited St Michael's, Up Marden, one of eight rural churches cared for by PBS Trustee, the Revd Christopher Hancock. We were treated to outstanding music in this delightfully rustic setting, and the celebrations continued for several hours afterwards in the churchyard. It was wonderful to share worship in this atmospheric setting with stunning views of the Sussex countryside.

Our fourth August gathering was held at William Cawley's Almshouse Chapel in Chichester on 23rd August. A small choir led us in the full complement of Psalms and



*William Cawley's Almshouse Chapel*

morning Canticles, with Dr Alan Thurlow providing the accompaniment. Held as part of celebrations to mark the 400th anniversary of Mr Cawley's Almshouses, Matins was followed by a short talk on the history and furnishings of the chapel, by local historian and PBS member, Alan Green. A longer talk was given by Mr Green on the same subject following the September Evensong held in St Olav's Bookshop in Chichester.

On Holy Cross Day, 14th September, our friends in Chichester East invited us to St Peter and St Paul, Peasmarsh for a special Evensong to mark the parish's decision to become a Corporate Member of the PBS. It was also an occasion to mark the retirement of the Revd Sr Liz Varley on her final Sunday in the parish. Sr Liz spoke about the importance of the Book of Common Prayer throughout her life and ministry, and she expressed her hope that many more people will come to discover its rich treasure through the valuable work of the Prayer Book Society. Bradley Smith gave an address on the history and significance of Holy Cross Day, and the service included a new setting of the evening Canticles by a local musician, Duncan Reid.



*Chairman Bradley Smith with the Revd Sr Liz Varley at SS Peter & Paul, Peasmarsh*

By the time this magazine reaches you, we will have enjoyed our annual Branch Festival at Chichester Cathedral. On 22nd October, we join the residents of St Mary's Hospital, Chichester for Holy Communion at 10.00a.m., and our final Branch service of 2025 will be Matins for Remembrance at St John's Chapel, Chichester, on 8th November at 11a.m.

## Lichfield

There were four services arranged for Lichfield Branch members in 2024–25. Choral Evensong was sung at Shrewsbury Abbey in September 2024 and again at St Mary's, Ellesmere this year in March, both supported by the Bishop of Shrewsbury, the Rt Revd Sarah Bullock, who preached on both occasions.

Then in June at All Saints, Leek, the St Cecilia Singers were in fine voice to sing 'Stainer in B flat' for the Canticles and various anthems, for a good gathering in the presence of the Lord Bishop of Lichfield, the Rt Revd Michael Ipgrave, who preached memorably on one 'holy, catholic and apostolic' church.

The year was rounded off by Choral Communion at Lichfield Cathedral. The Chamber Choir sang the setting to 'Schubert in G' and the anthem by Thomas Tallis, 'A New Commandment'. The Bishop of Oswestry, the Rt Revd Paul Thomas SSC, an incoming Episcopal Patron of the PBS nationally, celebrated and preached.

The liturgy was done particularly well; the music and singing were uplifting and a fine sermon was preached to a goodly number of supporters, including several clergy.

We were joined by Interim PBS Chief Executive, David Harvey, who took the opportunity to chat to members over refreshments afterwards. It rounded off a good year for the Branch.



*PBS Festival, Lichfield Cathedral*

## Manchester

Manchester Diocese Branch warmly invites EVERYONE to a 'Come and Sing' Evensong and lunch at St Edmund's Church, Falinge, Rochdale on Saturday, 22nd November 2025 in honour of the Feast of St Edmund (in conjunction with the Friends of St Edmund's and the Choral Evensong Trust). Guest preacher will be our new Branch Chaplain, the Revd Samuel Eccleston (Vicar of St Stephen's Church, Elton; St James' Church, Woolfold; All Saints' Church, Brandlesholme),

who is also a member of the Dominican Anglican Order of Preachers, so promises to be most engaging. Do let us know for catering purposes if you are able to join us for this joyous occasion. Lunch at 1.30p.m. will be followed by Choral Evensong at 3.00p.m.

For those who wish to join the choir, please attend at 12.00p.m. and notify the Revd Joshua Gaskell (Branch Co-ordinator) in advance so that music can be provided.

## Oxford

*The new Rector of the Parish Church of St Margaret of Antioch, Iver Heath, the Revd Thomas Plant, is a long-standing member of the Prayer Book Society, and writes the following:*

All services at our church are now based on the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. The 1662 Office is chanted daily. Both weekday and Sunday Masses follow the reordered 'interim rite' augmented with antiphons from the *English Missal*. We follow the historic eucharistic lectionary of the Western Church as preserved in the 1662 Prayer Book.

We worship God in the beauty of holiness, study the Scriptures faithfully, and joyfully live the ancient faith which Christ entrusted to the saints. A traditional and conservative Anglo-Catholic parish under the See of Oswestry, we teach only what aligns with the Bible and apostolic tradition. We strive unapologetically to offer a refuge of changeless truth in these changing times.

Although we are in Oxford Diocese, we are closer to West London, and readily accessible from Uxbridge and Slough.

All lovers of the English spiritual tradition are most welcome. We are especially looking for families interested in joining our home-schooling group, and singers who wish to invest their talents in traditional plainchant.

For more details of daily services and our in-depth Wednesday Bible Study, sign up to our online newsletter, [stmargaretofantioch.substack.com](mailto:stmargaretofantioch.substack.com), or contact Fr Thomas Plant, Rector, at [stmargaretofantioch@icloud.com](mailto:stmargaretofantioch@icloud.com).

*Suzanne Leon writes from Somerton:*

The Revd Richard Smail gave a marvellous service in St James's, Somerton on 18th May, with a congregation of 35 making it very successful. This service is held on every third Sunday of the month, with thanks to the clergy, including the Revd Andrew Foran. It is a traditional service, and a regular attendance would help with the upkeep of this historic, Grade I listed church.

On Sunday, 16th November, the Revd Richard Smail will return for the 1662 Traditional Matins Service, with Holy Communion, at 11.00a.m. All are welcome, with refreshments served afterwards.

The Revd Richard Smail is a classicist from Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He taught Classics at Radley College for fourteen years, was Assistant Chaplain of Keble College, and lecturer in Classics and Chaplain at Brasenose College. He is Chaplain to the Oxford Branch of the PBS and preaches annually at the Tower of London.

# New Corporate Members

We are delighted to introduce the latest churches to have signed up as Corporate Members of the Prayer Book Society.

The small church of **St Creden, Sancreed**, is located in the centre of Sancreed (Cornish: Eglossankres) in the gloriously wild and ruggedly beautiful area of West Penwith at the most westerly tip of Cornwall. Within the parish is a noteworthy prehistoric settlement at Carn Euny and, a few hundred metres west of the church, there is a holy well and baptistry, which predate the present parish church. There can be no doubt that a church stood on this same site long before the Norman Conquest. In 1667, the parishioners took action against the vicar in the Episcopal Court for making jokes at their expense during his sermons. Today, Sancreed remains a doggedly independent parish, providing a unique, traditional, contemplative place for worship in exceptional surroundings. Regular services of Holy Communion are offered in this ancient and beautiful church.

**St Luke's, Battersea**, is a local landmark built in the Romanesque style between 1883 and 1892. Today, the church boasts a large and diverse congregation, including many families and young people for whom special ministries are provided, with a Junior Choir, Junior Church, Pray and Play Group, and community Playgroup. In addition to lively, contemporary worship, the Prayer Book has a valued place at St Luke's where it is used monthly for the early Communion on Sundays. Recognising the missionary potential of Evensong, the Revd Lorenzo Fernandez-Smal has recently set about reviving a monthly Choral Evensong with enlarged choir in order to provide a space for people who are new to the faith, who simply love choral music, or who feel that Holy Communion is too much of a faith commitment at this stage in their journey.

**Storridge** is a rural Herefordshire parish with a beautiful church, **St John the Evangelist**, the first to be designed by the architect, Frederick Preedy. For over 160 years, it has been at the heart of village life. The congregation shares traditional Christian worship and values, reaching out into the wider community with a hand of friendship and welcome to all who wish to join them. Services at St John's primarily follow the Book of Common Prayer. These include Holy Communion, Matins and Evensong, some of which are available online. In recent years, the PCC has commissioned a popular online tour of the church, together with audio commentary. The church hosts an annual programme of literary and musical events, some featuring a Casson Positive organ dating from the nineteenth century, which has recently been restored to its original condition.

**Beckley and Peasmarsh** (in the Parish of Beckley and Peasmarsh) are two distinct and pretty villages situated in the south-east corner of East Sussex, not far from the historic Cinque port of Rye. Each village has its own historic church

with regular services, many of which are taken from the Book of Common Prayer.

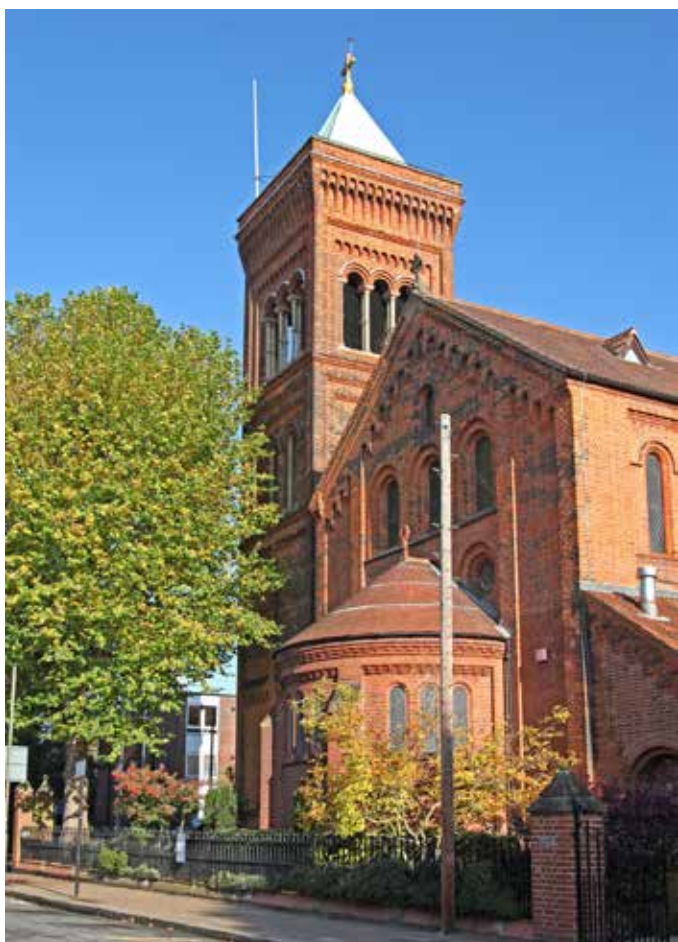
The Parish of Beckley was mentioned in the will of King Alfred the Great, and it is believed that herringbone stonework on the outside of the tower of **All Saints** is of Saxon origin. It is thought that the mighty oak beams within the lower portion of the tower were set in position as the framework for an older structure on the site. There are six bells and a Sanctus Bell. The earliest mention of bells dates to 1515, when there were only five of them. In that year, Thomas Awyke stipulated in his will, 'I bequeath to the reparation of the bells of Beckley.' In 1686, they were reported to be in good repair, but in 1708 they were recast and rehung by Richard Phelps, who had cast the tenor bell at Chichester Cathedral and the five-ton tenor of St Paul's Cathedral, as well as the tenors for Winchester Cathedral and Westminster Abbey.

There has been a church on the site of the present church of **St Peter and St Paul**, Peasmarsh, for nearly 1,000 years, and it is possible that there was once a Saxon church there. What is certain is that there was a Norman Church, for a charter exists in which Count Henry of Eu records that his grandfather, Count Robert, gave him the church of Peasmarsh soon after the Norman Conquest. The church stands approximately one mile away from the village; it is thought that the village centre moved after the Black Death. Among its many distinguishing features, there is a fine Norman chancel arch decorated with stylised heraldic animals, a medieval squint, twentieth-century stained glass depicting the Transfiguration, and a fine painted plaster panel inscribed with the Decalogue, Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

Following the retirement of the Revd Sr Liz Varley on Holy Cross Day 2025, the parish of Beckley and Peasmarsh seeks a new priest who will enjoy traditional worship in a rural setting.

In 1849, the Reverend Charles Leslie Courtenay was appointed Vicar of Saints Peter, Paul and Thomas at **Bovey Tracey** in Devon. Courtney decided to build a new church, dedicated to St John the Evangelist, to serve as a chapel of ease to the parish church, and a piece of land on an area to the south of Bovey Tracey was obtained. **St John's**, now listed Grade II, was built to the designs of R. C. Carpenter between 1851 and 1853. No longer a chapel of ease, it is now a thriving parish church in its own right, offering worship in the Anglo-Catholic tradition. Under the leadership of the Revd Matthew Cashmore, appointed in 2024, the Prayer Book has been adopted for the principal Sunday service once a month. The parish website describes it as 'a quiet, calm, and uplifting service which will leave you renewed in the grace of God'. There is now also a regular service of Evensong for which the choir and congregation are gradually learning new musical settings.

We warmly welcome applications for Corporate Membership from parishes and other institutions where the Book of Common Prayer is known, used and loved. Could your church be the next to join us? Details can be found on the PBS website, or you can contact our administrative office at Copyhold Farm for a printed application form.



*St Luke, Battersea*



*Ss Peter and Paul, Peasmarsh*



*St John, Bovey Tracey*



*St John the Evangelist, Storrige*



*St Creden, Sancreed*

# A Pioneering Prayer

## Philip Plyming introduces his new book on the General Thanksgiving

Perhaps like me you have popped into an old church while on holiday—perhaps to see inside, or perhaps to dodge a shower. If you have done this, you know that when you go into an old church, there are certain things you usually find. A guide to the building showing which bits were constructed when. A visitors' book with some appreciative comments in it. A box (or now often a machine) to leave a donation. And then at the back, by the hymn books, there are a shelf or two of dark small books arranged neatly in a row. If you go closer you can see they have the words 'Book of Common Prayer' on the spine. And if you pick them up, they often have dust on them and an unmistakable old book smell about them.

Because this is the first experience of, or introduction to, the Book of Common Prayer that many people have, it is easy to come to the view that this is, and always has been, an old-fashioned book whose day has long passed. But this is to misunderstand how innovative and controversial the Book of Common Prayer was when it was first introduced, and how it was, for quite some time, a book that was challenged and questioned more than any other book in these lands.

If we are going to understand and appreciate (and use) the prayer we know as the General Thanksgiving, we need to understand how the Book of Common Prayer came to be written and the extraordinary story of how this particular prayer only narrowly made it in.

### A controversial book

The Book of Common Prayer was radical change. Largely written by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer himself, the first edition came out in 1549 and was the first book of services which was a) for all churches to use and b) entirely in English as opposed to Latin. Cranmer also took some decisive steps away from a Catholic understanding of worship to a more Protestant one. From 9th June 1549 all churches had to use the Book of Common Prayer for their public worship.

It may be difficult to believe now, but the publication and enforcement of the new Prayer Book resulted in riots and open rebellion. This was especially the case in Devon and Cornwall, where Catholic sentiment was strong and people resented having to worship in English (when Cornish was often the mother tongue). Battles were fought, the city of Exeter was besieged for five weeks and over 5,500 people died. And all over a book we now see as rather dusty and old-fashioned.

Banned under the Catholic Queen Mary and reissued under Elizabeth I, the Book of Common Prayer was to be banned one more time. With the Civil War in the 1640s came the victory of the Parliamentarians, many of whom were Puritan in conviction and who regarded the Book of Common Prayer with distrust. And so in 1645 the Book of Common Prayer was outlawed by Parliament and replaced by another

book, more informal in nature, called the Directory of Public Worship. The Book of Common Prayer wasn't made legal again until 1660 and the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II.

### The man behind the prayer

There was a further decisive chapter of the Book of Common Prayer to be written, and here we meet the man behind the Prayer of General Thanksgiving, Edward Reynolds himself. His story is both remarkable and points to the fraught and painful times in which he lived. Reynolds was born in Southampton in 1599 and showed himself at an early age to be a fine scholar, taking his degree at Oxford.

His first job after ordination at the age of twenty three was as preacher at Lincoln's Inn in London, where he took over from the renowned John Donne. After nine years he moved to Braunston in Northamptonshire where he was vicar when the Civil War broke out.

Like a number of clergy, Edward Reynolds was happy to side with the Parliamentary forces and continued his pastoral ministry without the oversight of a bishop. For a while he became a leading light in the Presbyterian Church, attending the Westminster Assembly in 1643; he was made Dean of Christ Church Oxford and Vice-Chancellor of the University in 1648. Yet he was no hardline radical and refused to take part in some of the more extreme steps of the Presbyterian Church, such as making use of the Book of Common Prayer illegal. He lost his jobs in Oxford and returned to Northamptonshire before securing a post in a parish in London, where over time he increasingly spoke out in favour of moderation and tolerance in religious matters.

Given what the country had been through over the previous twenty years, such calls were entirely understandable. For while Reynolds had simply lost his jobs amid all the political turmoil, others had fared much worse. In a brilliant study of the eleven years when England was without a king, historian Anna Keay depicts stories from a 'post-war land scarred by conflict and its monumental cost—human, material and financial'. Up to five per cent of the population had died in the Civil War, the same proportion as in World War One. Families had been torn apart and communities ruined. And this was on top of the fragility of human life, with one-fifth of all children dying before their first birthday. For those who survived, life expectancy was significantly lower than it is today.

It is worth noting at this stage that these were not auspicious times to be writing a prayer of thanksgiving. Life for many people was both hard and uncertain.

### A restoration conference

Edward Reynolds was ministering in London when Charles II returned to England in 1660 and took the crown. King Charles clearly thought highly of him and made him Bishop of Norwich before the year was out. The stage was set for Reynolds's finest hour.

Soon after his restoration Charles II had sought to tackle one of the tasks at the top of his to-do list, which was to bring unity to what was a divided Church. In particular, he wanted to see if some reconciliation could be achieved between the bishops of the Church of England (who had been recently restored to their posts) and those representing the Puritan and Presbyterian traditions which had until recently held sway under the Commonwealth. The focus of discussion was the Book of Common Prayer itself, which the bishops wanted reinstated in full and which the Presbyterians thought deficient in a number of places.

Charles's solution was to call a conference to bring the differing parties together. Called the Savoy Conference (because it took place at a grand house in London called the Savoy Hospital), it brought together in the same room twelve bishops and twelve leaders of the Presbyterian Church, one of whom was a bishop. You've guessed it: it was Edward Reynolds.

Just imagine the scene: here was a bishop lining up against twelve of his colleagues. He was trying to get them to take seriously the complaints (called Great Exceptions) that the Presbyterians had about the Book of Common Prayer. One of their complaints was that the prayers in the Book of Common Prayer were too short and rigid. They wanted prayers that were longer and more clearly from the heart.

The Savoy Conference lasted for four months but it was clear long before it ended that it was going to be a complete failure. The bishops were in no mood to compromise. With Charles II behind them they held all the power and any concessions they made were token in nature. The Presbyterians got virtually nothing of what they wanted. It was clear that there was to be no accommodation of them in the national Church.

### The eleventh hour

And yet Reynolds did not give up. Despite his undoubted distress at the failure of the Savoy Conference and the threat that many of his Presbyterian colleagues would have to leave the Church of England, he still had one card left to play. Unlike his Presbyterian colleagues at the Savoy Conference, he was a serving bishop and so still had a role in agreeing the new Book of Common Prayer that Charles wanted to issue in 1662. The revised Book of Common Prayer would need to be agreed by the House of Bishops—that is, bishops including Reynolds. And so, as 1661 drew to a close, Reynolds had a plan. He was going to get a new prayer accepted and inserted at the very last minute.

How long the plan had been in the making we don't really know. Like many set prayers it uses phrases that have been used elsewhere, and other people were invited to comment

on it and make their own suggestions. Scholars have found phrases from the General Thanksgiving in all sorts of places, including in a personal prayer of Queen Elizabeth I from 1574. It seems likely that Robert Sanderson, Bishop of Lincoln, made some comments as well. But certainly Edward Reynolds was the one who pulled it all together. Perhaps after the disappointment of the Savoy Conference he tidied up the prayer he had been working on for a while and got ready to submit it.

And here, it would seem, he broke the rules. New prayers were not simply meant to be offered up for inclusion in the revised Book of Common Prayer. They were properly to be requested by the House of Bishops, but it seems that they had not asked for a new prayer of thanksgiving, general or otherwise. There were already brief prayers of thanksgiving for specific situations (rain, fair weather and deliverance from enemies to name just three) and it would seem that the bishops thought that was enough.

Also, new prayers were meant to be discussed and revised in committee before they were introduced to all the bishops. This would enable detailed textual work to be done so that plenary time was not wasted. Again, it seems that Reynolds did not go down this route. He was playing a high stakes game. He realised that he couldn't get all the changes that his Presbyterian colleagues wanted. But if he could get one change through, that might win over some of his moderate clergy friends and make the split in the Church slightly less drastic. It was perhaps a token effort, but it was worth a try.

So, it was at eight o'clock on the morning of Saturday, 14th December 1661 that Edward Reynolds, the Presbyterian bishop, introduced the General Thanksgiving to a meeting of the House of Bishops—that is, all his senior colleagues. First, he read the prayer out, no doubt quite carefully so that the rhythm and scan of the prayer could be well appreciated.

And then he sat back for comment. For two hours the bishops discussed the prayer, a sign that they were not prepared for it to go through on the nod. And then at ten o'clock they approved it.

Just six days later, on 20th December 1661, the final version of the Prayer Book was signed on behalf of the House of Bishops, ready for printing early in the New Year and its formal adoption on 14th August 1662. The Prayer of General Thanksgiving – now one of the most loved and popular of all the prayers in the Book of Common Prayer—had made it in by the skin of its teeth.

*Taken from Giving Thanks: Rediscovering the Heart of Gratitude by Philip Plymington, published by Canterbury Press. The book is available from The Prayer Book Society and [canterburypress.hymnsam.co.uk](http://canterburypress.hymnsam.co.uk).*



# The Old Music Made New

Alexander Trowell writes on bringing history to life

On the 25th October at 11.30a.m., the Prayer Book Society in collaboration with early music ensemble, *Antiquum Documentum*, staged a reconstruction of the Litany and Communion of the 1549 Prayer Book in Keble College Chapel in Oxford. It came hot on the heels of a series of reconstructions *Antiquum Documentum* is staging at St Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield. So far, they have done reconstructions of a Sarum Mass and a 1549 Communion service. Reconstructing this first Prayer Book was not entirely straightforward. With only so much evidence, and minimal rubrics in the Prayer Book itself, historians and writers have concentrated more on Protestantism and less on liturgical continuity.

Catholic and Protestant historians alike are keen to emphasise how different the 1549 Prayer Book was to what preceded it, and view it in the light of later English Puritanism; yet the process of researching and piecing together what it might have looked like seems to suggest perhaps this is not quite so.

There is a basic view that, from Whitsun 1549, there ended all traditional English Catholicism: altars stripped, images and windows smashed, fabrics and books burnt, choirs and organs silenced. Historians narrate this period based on prevailing politico-religious opinions, but the text of the liturgy itself is unequivocally more conservative. The English-ification and Reformation of the liturgy was an incremental process that started decades before 1549. In 1534, the Pope had to be removed from the liturgy; in 1538, readings at Mass were in English; in 1544, the first English Litany was published; in 1548, a Communion Rite was published—an insert for the Sarum Mass to allow the people to all receive in two kinds. The publication and enforcement of the 1549 Prayer Book cannot have come as a shock. It was far from a first step along the path of Reformation. The fact that this was a gradual process means that traditional religion was not wiped out in one go—parts (for example, shrines and monasteries) had been gone sometime before 1549; others (like choirs, organs, indeed liturgy itself) would remain until the Commonwealth.

The Prayer Book's lack of rubrics might appear to be a total Protestant reform of the liturgy: no ritual instruction could mean no ritual. However, this is not the only

interpretation. The work of Stefan Scot has suggested a rather more convincing view: that the lack of rubrics is not to prevent ritual, but rather because it assumes that the clergy, except when explicitly told not to (such as elevations), will conduct the liturgy as they always had done. Notably, the 1549 Communion ostensibly follows the same shape as the Sarum Mass as it might have been celebrated in a parish (albeit with the insert of 1548). This view is affirmed by the few existing instructions—the priest standing at *Goddess board* and the clerks alone making most responses are very clearly derived from traditional English usage.

Moreover, the construction of the liturgy speaks to a conservative theological viewpoint: to put the Confession *after* the Canon and just before the people's Communion surely suggests that the congregation and clergy are making their confession to Christ literally present on the Communion table or, indeed, altar (some churches had still failed to remove their Medieval altars by 1549), as opposed to its position at the Offertory in the 1552, 1559 and 1662 Prayer Books.

Archbishop Cranmer also adapts the propers of the old Mass (Officium, Grail/Tract, Alleluia, Offertory and Communion) and, in an attempt to revert to ancient Christian practice, condenses this into one Psalm portion at the start of the service (which may well have been used to cover censing the table/altar). This accompanies the Lord's Prayer and Collect for Purity, which together take the place of the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar. Like the old Mass, the *Gloria* follows the *Kyrie* and does not come after Communion. The order of Collects, readings, Offertory Sentences, Canon and *Pax* broadly follow the same order as Sarum, before going into the Confession and Communion lifted from the 1548 Communion Rite. At the start of the Communion service, the clergy are told they can vest as they always had done. Although undoubtedly there were radical Puritans who were already celebrating not even in a surplice at the North end, the vast majority of clergy, at least to begin with, must have celebrated the 1549 Communion in much the same way as the Sarum Mass.

This is not a Medieval Mass by any means: invocations of the Saints are gone; the Canon is meant to be clearly audible; the sung *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* do not provide liturgical backing music. Yet, the outfit in which Cranmer



dresses his new reformed liturgy is traditional and as reasonably conservative as possible. The 1549 Prayer Book can be viewed as the first in a series of Protestant liturgies, distinct and separate from England's Catholic past. In reality, it is the stepping stone between full-blooded Catholicism and rather sterner English Protestantism.

Mainstream historians appear to have read the array of episcopal injunctions banning and rejecting traditional Catholic practices and aesthetics as a sign that, from 1549 to 1550, these practices were immediately wiped out. However, surely the very fact they need to be banned again and again is because clergy, clerks and people are continuing many traditional practices, including the use of *pax breves*, parish loaves or even trentals—none of which are actually banned by the Prayer Book itself! To this end, Bishop John Hooper bemoans in 1549:

*They still retain their vestments and the candles before the altar; in the churches they always chant the hours and other hymns relating to the Lord's supper, but in our own language. And that popery may not be lost, the mass-priests, although they are compelled to discontinue the use of the Latin language, yet most carefully observe the same tone and manner of chanting to which they were heretofore accustomed in the papacy.*

Yet, Eamon Duffy, in *The Stripping of the Altars* (Yale University Press, 2005) paints a different picture:

*At a more obvious level, the switch from Latin to English immediately rendered obsolete the entire musical repertoire of cathedral, chapel, and parish church. Not least of the shocks must have been the silencing... of the liturgy... to a monotone dialogue between curate and clerk.*

This is quite a reductive view of musical change and innovation through the Reformation. And although many places were undoubtedly hit hard in this way, plenty of places found ways of recycling older music for the new liturgy. The Wanley Partbooks is the most notable collection of music for 1549 (which Peter Le Huray believes was 'copied out for a small parish church or private chapel', see *Music and the Reformation in England, 1549–1660* published by Cambridge University Press in 1978). They contain several settings of the Communion service: one a highly melismatic and complex lower-voice setting probably composed specially, and another two which are contrafactums of Taverner's *Mean Mass* and *Mass 'Small Devotion'*—this is a world away from the Protestant injunctions requiring that sacred music be syllabic.

Others are simpler, but perhaps not for Protestant reasons. They are no less complex than, say, settings found in the Old Hall manuscript or Tallis's *Mass for Four Voices*.

Perhaps the level of musical complexity corresponded to the solemnity of the occasion. The plainsong repertoire, which characterised much of the sound of the pre-Reformation liturgy, was renewed and adapted; works such as Merbecke's *The Booke of Common Praier Noted* (1550) demonstrate some of the ways this took place. Like older works, a lot of new vernacular polyphony employed *cantus firmus* techniques. All in all, it seems that clerks really did 'observe the same tone and manner of chanting' as they always had done.

This was the approach we took to our reconstruction. What rubrics are in the Prayer Book were all to be followed. Some concessions were made to injunctions, but to all intents and purposes the service looked like a High Medieval Mass. This is likely how many services looked between 1549 and 1552, where, for many Vicar-of-Bray-esque clergy, the Medieval rubrics were all they knew.

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## Stir up the wills of Thy people, O Lord!

Stir-up Sunday this year is 23rd November and a time to get the mixing bowl out for the annual Christmas Pudding. Here's a recipe to try.

Combine 140g (5oz) dried suet with 120g (4oz) sultanas, 120g (4oz) raisins, 250g (9oz) currants, 60g (2oz) chopped mixed peel, 60g (2oz) chopped blanched almonds or walnuts, 250g (9oz) dark brown sugar, 1 tsp mixed spice, 1 tsp grated nutmeg, half a tsp ground cinnamon, and 130g (4.5oz) breadcrumbs. Next, peel 2-3 Bramley apples (about 400g or 14oz) and grate into the mixture, then zest 1 lemon, followed by one orange and add along with its juice. Stir in 100ml (3 fl.oz) of dark rum or sweet sherry, the same amount of whole milk, half a tsp of almond essence, and three beaten eggs. Cover with clingfilm or a tea towel and leave in a cool place overnight.

The next day, give it a good stir again and in batches add 100g (3.5oz) sifted flour, mixing well as you go. Grease two pudding basins (around 1 ltr/2 capacity) with butter. Divide the mixture equally between each one. Now cut out two large squares of greaseproof or baking parchment, and place over each one, plus the same size in tinfoil. Just below the centre, fold up by an inch or so to overlap and form a pleat. Put this on top of each basin, and secure around the edge with string or a rubber band.

Place in steamers or large saucepans and steam covered, with boiling water, for 5-6 hours. If using a saucepan, make a trivet with an upturned saucer and pour in the water to halfway up the basin. Keep replenishing the water during the steam whenever necessary.

Once cooled, set the puddings aside and store in a cool place, covered with clingfilm. Some like to add a tbsp of brandy or rum each week to help things along. When ready to serve, re-steam for 1-2 hours or pop in the microwave (pierce the clingfilm cover first) for 6-8 minutes. Serve hot with brandy sauce or clotted cream.

# Copyhold Corner



*Belinda (retired), Gemma, Claire & Sarah—The Copyhold Team*

- Our Christmas cards are selling out fast. Please get in touch with us at Copyhold to order yours, or use the website. Every sale funds the work of the PBS and raises awareness of the work we do.
- Claire, Gemma, and Sarah all say a very big thank-you to everyone who said hello at the Cirencester conference. They enjoyed meeting you all. Here's to next year's event.
- The Cranmer Awards are hotting up via twenty one regional heats around the country. Find out more via your local Branch or the PBS website. Do support our young people who are proclaiming afresh in this new generation.
- Parish vacancies are published weekly on the PBS website. If you are about to go into interregnum then placing an entry in this comprehensive list of the Church of England parishes which use the BCP in their cycle of liturgy and worship could help the process along and find the perfect match.
- Advertisement rates in *The Prayer Book Today* will be increasing in 2026 due to higher paper and printing costs, not to mention postage rates. Anyone wishing to know more should get in touch with the Copyhold team for a conversation.

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