

Liturgy and Common Worship Task Force

February Report to the Archbishop and to the Church

The first meeting of a re-organized Liturgy and Common Worship Task Force took place at St. Vincent's Cathedral, Bedford, Texas, 26 and 27 February, 2015.

The Most Rev. Robert Duncan has succeeded the Rt. Rev. Bill Thompson as chair. There are both carry-over members from the original task force, and a number of new members, together representing the breadth and strength of the Anglican Church in North America. The Rt. Rev. Keith Ackerman continues as Vice-Chair and Dr. Jim Packer continues to bring his wisdom and insight as Senior Reader.

Significant structural changes to enhance the effectiveness of communication between the College of Bishops and the Task Force, as well as to enable the production of more texts in a shorter time, have been instituted. A Bishops Review Panel was established in December and five sub-committees of the Task Force were populated at the February meeting: 1) Calendar, Collects and Lectionaries; 2) Episcopal Offices; 3) Offices of the Hours and Special Liturgies; 4) Pastoral Offices; 5) Psalter and Music. A member of the Liturgy and Common Worship Task Force chairs each of the sub-committees, but sub-committee membership is not limited to task force members. Consequently many additional individuals and talents are brought into the work. Additionally a secretarial, editorial and translation team is being gathered.

The February meeting of the Task Force focused on rites for Baptism and Confirmation. Prepared for the College of Bishops in the run-up to Assembly and re-worked by the Vice-Chair in September, the Bishops Review Panel spent two days in December providing substantial input, again revising the proposed texts. The Task Force came to consensus around the materials sent by the Review Panel and it is anticipated that Baptism and Confirmation rites will be sent to the College of Bishops for adoption in June as working texts available to the Church.

New understandings are emerging. Using the 1662 Book of Common Prayer as the theological guide does not mean rigid adherence to the shape of its liturgies, especially since most of 1662 was not offered within a eucharistic context. Modern service times with an upper limit of 75 minutes also become an important consideration. The importance of Confirmation – both for adult profession of faith and apostolic laying-on-of-hands – is also a clear mandate of the Bishops. On those occasions where Baptism and Confirmation are combined (such as an episcopal visitation) fresh challenges present themselves to the Task Force.

The Task Force will also consider putting forward, in addition to the Foundational Canon (Long Form) and Abridged Canon (Short Form), two “ecumenical Canons,” most likely similar to Prayers A and D of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. Additionally, the possibility of adjusting rubrics for greater flexibility in the Short Form is to be examined. One member of the Task Force has been assigned responsibility for bringing back a proposed standard text of the Athanasian Creed.

Feedback gathered in response to the working texts printed in Texts for Common Prayer (liturgytaskforce@anglicanchurch.net) is being collated for use by the LCWTF, preparatory to recommending final texts to the College of Bishops. Nevertheless, final texts are some distance off and

comments are still welcome. The immediate priority of the Task Force is to produce the remainder of the prayer book texts, working through the sub-committees.

Submitted by:

The Most Rev. Robert Duncan

Chair