PRAYER BOOK POLICY

The Prayer Book is fundamental to our identity as Episcopalians and represents the best thinking of generations of Anglican poets and theologians. In some cases blood was shed over the language we use and we need to take this heritage seriously. As you are planning your Sunday worship, therefore, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- The rubrics of the Prayer Book are normative for the principle Sunday service. There is always room for “tweaking” this to meet local needs, but the Prayer Book language and order should remain the foundation and guide for anything we do.

- If you plan to depart from the rubrics, make this request to the Bishop in advance and indicate why you wish to make the change and for how long a period of time. You will also need to explain to the congregation the reason for making a change. This applies for the main Sunday service only. Weekday services or other special gatherings are up to you. Many congregations are finding an evening Taizé or Celtic style service to be particularly effective.

- There are places in the Prayer Book service where you are encouraged to be creative. For example, the Prayers of the People. The forms provided in the book are intended as suggestions, and having the congregation devise their own prayers can deepen the worship experience.

- The series, Enriching Our Worship, is considered a form authorized by our church, and might be used along side of the BCP when appropriate. Other Anglican liturgies, for example, the New Zealand Prayer Book, should be used sparingly and with permission of the Bishop only.

We need to be especially protective of our wedding and funeral rites. If couples wish to be married in this church, then our service needs to be followed. Again, there are places where one can be creative, but having the couple "write their own vows" is not within our tradition. Likewise, funerals should be planned which are based on Prayer Book language.

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and have a clear Christological emphasis, and are not just occasions for eulogies by family and friends.

- The question has come up about the use of the lectionary—is it always to be followed? I would view this as the normative practice, but it is entirely appropriate to depart from the lectionary readings when there is a major event in the community which needs to be addressed (such as a natural disaster) or when you might wish to do a sermon series on a particular topic over a period of time. It is also up to your discretion to shorten the number of appointed readings (always including the Gospel reading) or edit them for length. Non-Biblical readings may be added to the service, but not used instead of Scripture.