

A Special Service of Matins to Celebrate the 350th Anniversary of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer Sunday 9th September 2012

A Brief History

The Service of Morning Prayer derives from the Monastic Offices of Matins, Lauds and Prime in the Sarum Breviary of 1085.

The Service of Evening Prayer derives from the Offices of Vespers and Compline.

The First Prayer Book

Thomas Cranmer was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury by King Henry VIII in 1532. Subsequently, he was warmly received as a reforming Archbishop by the Protestant King Edward VI and compiled the first Book of Common Prayer in 1549, which was adopted by Parliament that same year, and was then revised by Cranmer in 1552.

The Suspension of the Prayer Book

On the accession of the Roman Catholic Mary Tudor to the throne in 1553, Cranmer was tried for heresy and sentenced to death by burning. The use of the Book of Common Prayer was thus suspended until the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558.

The English Civil Wars and Commonwealth

With the rise of the Puritans, the Book of Common Prayer was considered to be based too much upon the Roman Breviary, and in 1645 Parliament replaced it with the *Directory for the Public Worship of God*. This did not allow the people to have any part in worship through responses, prayers or hymns and most famously banned both Christmas and Easter! Committees were set up to destroy copies of the Prayer Book, but the people resisted these changes and most Prayer Books survived. It was difficult and sometimes dangerous to seek out a Prayer Book service, but many did so.

The Restoration

Following the death of the Puritan Oliver Cromwell and the Restoration of Charles II as king in 1660, the Book of Common Prayer was reinstated. Its revision in 1662 is the form we still use today, 350 years later. Additions included a Baptism Service for those of Riper Years, and Prayers for those at Sea.

Missionary Expansion

During the 18th and 19th Centuries, missionaries translated the Book of Common Prayer into several languages for use throughout Africa and Asia. Today the Book of Common Prayer remains the official service book of the Anglican Church worldwide.

An Outline of the Service of Morning Prayer

Exhortation

From the 1552 Prayer Book, “Dearly beloved brethren...” was based upon a Lenten homily in the Sarum Breviary of 1085.

Notice the duplication of words:

“acknowledge and confess”; “sins and wickedness”; “assemble and meet together”; “not dissemble nor cloke”.

Notice also the invitation to Confession –

“saying after me”, not “with me” – because

originally this would either be repeated

clause by clause by the congregation or repeated in its entirety.



Confession

From the 1552 Prayer Book – Before this date, the act of confession was considered a private matter and so no communal prayer was included.

Based upon Romans 7:8-25, the prayer includes requests for mercy and to live rightly towards God, others and ourselves.

Absolution

The Minister’s words do not convey pardon (which was considered too Roman Catholic), but offer the assurance of pardon to the truly penitent.

Lord’s Prayer

To be led by the Minister “with an audible voice”. Before 1549 the Minister was directed to say it “secreto” (secretly or in an undertone).

In 1662, the Doxology at the end of the Lord’s Prayer was also added.

Versicles and Responses

Found in Anglo-Saxon Offices from the 6th Century onwards, although the Gloria dates from the 4th Century.

Venite

From the 1549 Prayer Book and based upon Psalm 95 from the Great Bible translation of 1538. In Henry VIII’s Primer it is entitled “A song stirring to the praise of God”.

Old Testament Lesson

The first mention of the Scriptures being read in public is in Nehemiah, 5th Century BC.

In the synagogues of Jesus’ day there were two readings, one from the Law and one from the Prophets.

Psalm

To be sung “in order as appointed”, a practice dating from the early centuries of monasticism.

The 1662 Prayer Book psalms are entirely the work of Tyndale and Coverdale (1535) because they are more suitable to be sung than the King James Bible version.

New Testament Lesson

Until the 4th Century, the Lessons were chosen by the Minister, but thereafter Lectionary Books, containing appropriate Lessons for specific days, began to appear.

Te Deum

From the 1549 Prayer Book – to be sung daily except in Lent.

The history of this old hymn to the Trinity is obscure but dates from the 5th Century.

Benedicite

An alternative hymn to the Te Deum, it was in common use during the 4th Century.

Benedictus

The song of Zacharias based on Luke 1:68-79, included in Matins because it was considered to be a summary of the messages of both Testaments.

Jubilate Deo

Psalms 100, from the Great Bible. Originally used in the Office of Lauds at sunrise, its joyful content characterises the tone of Morning Prayer in the way that the Nunc Dimittis characterises the tone of Evening Prayer.

Apostles' Creed

Dating from the 8th Century and so called because it contains Apostolic teaching. However, the earliest use of any Christian creed dates from 1st Century, and was used in the context of Baptisms.

The Sarum Breviary of 1085 indicated that the Priest alone should recite the Creed and then the Lord's Prayer inaudibly, because it was considered appropriate to "conceal these sacred mysteries from the heathen and unbaptized".

Lord's Prayer

Placed here as a fitting introduction to this supplicatory portion of the service. The doxology is omitted at the end of the prayer because the mood here is not one of praise but of intercession.

Versicles and Responses

Found originally in the Office of Prime, and all taken directly from Scripture.

Collect for the Day

Originally used at the end of the Office of Lauds.

The Reformers rewrote several of the Collects, rejecting any which were considered to be inconsistent with Scripture.

Collect for Peace

From the 1549 Prayer Book – based on Scripture and originally used in the Office of Lauds.

Collect for Grace

Morning Prayer originally ended here, but in 1662 five further Collects were added.

Five Further Collects

A Prayer for the King's Majesty (1559), full of the fervent loyalty of the Tudor period.

A Prayer for the Royal Family (1604), composed by Archbishop Whitgift originally for James I and Queen Anne.

A Prayer for the Clergy and People, originally found in Cranmer's Litany.

The Prayer of St Chrysostom, first in print from the 9th Century, but from the Liturgy of Constantinople bearing the name of the 4th Century saint.

The Grace, based on 2 Corinthians 13:14.

*These Collects are now replaced by Prayers of Intercession
which come later in the service.*

The Last Word

"The words of the Book of Common Prayer have a rare capacity not only to sink into the memory through their rhythms but to calm the very pace of our thoughts." (Archbishop Rowan Williams)

[St Thomas à Becket Church, Warblington](#)