

Subject: Principles for Revision of Common Worship Texts

Moved By: The Rev. Dr. Richard Leggett from the Diocese of New Westminster

Seconded By: The Rt. Rev. Michael Bedford-Jones from the Diocese of Toronto

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this General Synod direct the Faith Worship and Ministry Committee to prepare principles and an agenda for common worship texts revision.

EXPLANATORY NOTE/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The revisers of the first Canadian prayer book (1918) noted two complementary forces in the liturgical life of the church: fidelity to a tradition of liturgical prayer extending over many centuries and responsiveness to the expressed needs and concerns of the present generation of Christians who gather to offer their praise and prayers to God. Forty years later, the revisers of the second Canadian prayer book (1962) echoed the words of their predecessors. Three years later, the General Synod of 1965 authorized diocesan bishops to engage in liturgical experimentation even as the church became accustomed to its then new prayer book. In 1971 General Synod directed the National Executive Council to initiate a process of liturgical revision to prepare alternatives to the services of the prayer book of 1962. Between 1974 and 1982 the Doctrine and Worship Committee produced a series of texts for trial use and evaluation by the Church.

In 1980 the General Synod committed the Anglican Church of Canada for the foreseeable future to a pattern of worship found in the Church of England and the Anglican Church of Australia. In this pattern the traditional rites of the Church as printed in *The Book of Common Prayer* (1962) co-exist with contemporary and alternative rites as authorized in *The Book of Alternative Services* (1985). During the past twenty years the Anglican Church of Canada has continued to review the rites contained in *The Book of Alternative Services* as well as provide a new *Occasional Celebrations* (first published in 1992), *For All the Saints: Prayers and Readings for Saints' Days* (first published in 1994) and *Eucharistic Prayers, Services of the Word and Night Prayer: Supplementary to The Book of Alternative Services* (2001). Various General Synods have also added services to *Occasional Celebrations* and commemorations to *For All the Saints* as well as French-language texts based upon *The Book of Alternative Services*.

In the years since the publication of *The Book of Alternative Services* there have been developments outside of Canada that warrant the attention of the Canadian church. The International Anglican Liturgical Consultation, a body that reports to the Anglican Communion Office, has produced a series of agreed statements on baptism, eucharist, ordination and Anglican identity and worship. Our full communion partners, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, participated in a multi-year project that has resulted in their new worship book, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (2006). This project produced a number of informative preparatory documents that have much of value for Anglican reflection. The Church of England Principles of Revision of Common Worship Texts

has completed its *Common Worship* project to replace *The Alternative Service Book 1980*.

In addition to the developments mentioned above, the Anglican Church of Canada has the documents associated with the BAS Evaluation Commission and of a study during 2000 of liturgical leaders in the church. These critiques, evaluations and proposals as well as the actions of General Synod suggest that it is appropriate for the Faith, Worship and Ministry Committee to consider principles and an agenda to guide the revision of common worship texts.

Furthermore, the current practice of worship in our Church falls into several patterns: (a) use of *The Book of Common Prayer*, sometimes with a degree of flexibility not envisioned by its rubrics; (b) use of *The Book of Alternative Services*, sometimes with a degree of flexibility not envisioned by its rubrics; (c) authorized diocesan rites in languages other than English or French; and (d) use of rites not authorized for use in the Anglican Church of Canada. All four patterns suggest that the development of principles for the revision of common worship texts is a desirable action for our Church to take.

Some members of our church may wonder whether the present climate of our church is amenable to the pursuit of this task. Faith, Worship and Ministry believes that the development of such principles may in fact contribute to greater clarity about the character of Anglicanism in Canada in the twenty-first century. Given the role of liturgical texts in the formation of Anglican identity, times such as ours may be precisely the right time to engage in this enterprise.

The development of principles and an agenda does not commit the church to the revision of its present worship texts at this time. It is an opportunity for the Faith, Worship and Ministry Committee, in broad consultation with many interested and affected groups within our church, to develop a statement of principles and an agenda that will guide the church should the revision of our common worship texts be deemed desirable by the next General Synod. Furthermore, prior to any commitment to the process of revision itself, the General Synod will determine whether the principles and agenda presented by Faith, Worship and Ministry are ones by which the church should be guided.

Source

Faith Worship and Ministry Committee

Submitted by:
Michael Bedford-Jones, Chair

A) Does this motion contain within it any financial implications?

Yes x No

Within the budget of the Faith Worship and Ministry Committee

B) If yes, has the General Synod Expenditures Committee considered the implications?

Yes No