

LITURGICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Proposing of report at General Synod 2003
Bishop of Meath and Kildare

OUTLINE

“Not the beginning of the end but the end of the beginning..”

A process which began over 40 years ago with the 1958 Lambeth Conference which initiated discussion of re-visioning liturgy throughout the Anglican Communion. Taken up by the Church of Ireland in the early 1960s..

A journey

- through the 1967 Communion service (still in the language of a previous age),
- through the first contemporary language services at the end of the 1960s,
- through the Alternative Prayer Book of 1984, existing in tandem with the Book of Common Prayer of 1926,
- through now to a new Book of Common Prayer which holds the vision of **the common prayer**, the shared prayer of the Church of Ireland, as encompassing **both** the traditional heritage of the Anglican Communion in the time-honoured words of the Tudor liturgies **and** worship in the language of the contemporary culture, which was also the vision of Cranmer himself..

This part of the journey, the construction of a new Book of Common Prayer (encompassing both the traditional and the contemporary), began at the 1997 General Synod and – as the person who then proposed this as the way forward – it is an enormous pleasure for me to propose now this report but we must realise that this point is not the end of anything..

We have now to use the Book of Common Prayer and use it well. ***I firmly believe that liturgy is a weapon of mission..*** Many people today walk into a church service almost on an impulse (literally off the street sometimes) and judge the Church, Christianity, the Gospel itself, on what they encounter in that single act of worship. If the worship is working, a journey of discipleship may begin or be resumed. If the worship is sloppy, careless, or lifeless, a potential disciple may have been turned away.

You will have read in the report that resources are being put into enabling the Church to introduce the new Book of Common Prayer effectively. We wish Canon Ricky Rountree well in this work as Central Liturgical Officer and we also ask that the Church, north and south, east and west, will use his energy and his expertise to the full.

Part of the function of a speech such as this is to thank those who have been part of the work of the LAC. We mark with gratitude the work of Canon Clive West and Canon Billy Marshall, both of whom had long involvement with the work of the LAC and who have now retired. But it is a pleasure to thank also those who have been at the very forefront of this phase in the life of the Church – two chairpersons in succession, Bishop Edward Darling and Bishop Harold Miller (the latter with the assistance of Dean Michael Burrows as vice-chair), two secretaries, Canon Brian Mayne and Canon Ricky Rountree. Canon Brian Mayne continues his service to the Church as the editor of the new BCP, a meticulous, onerous and demanding task for anyone.

It is foolhardy to single out other individuals but the Church of Ireland would be very remiss, as we pass the milestone of 200 meetings of the LAC, not to note with huge gratitude and affection the work of Canon Edgar Turner who has had a continuing connection with the work of liturgical revision since this whole process began in the early 1960s. We still rely a great deal on his expertise, wisdom and - at times - his necessary fatherly correction!

The end of the beginning – the work of worship and of revisioning worship has no end in this life.