

Speech proposing the Report of the Liturgical Advisory Committee 2004: Bishop Harold Miller

Archbishop,

It is a great honour, and indeed a relief, to be presenting the Report of the Liturgical Advisory Committee on the occasion of the launch of the new *Book of Common Prayer* at this year's General Synod. I do not have to tell you that this is only the sixth *Book of Common Prayer* in the 450 years or so since the Reformation, and to be engaged in this particular stage of the history of the Church of Ireland is an experience which will always remain with me. When the General Synod in 1997 decided to go down the route of a new BCP, it was, to put it mildly, quite a challenge for the Liturgical Advisory Committee to ensure that the material would be through the Synod by 2003, and the book itself ready for the Synod in 2004. At many stages, mistakes could have been made or material could have proved to be unacceptable, but that did not happen, or at least did not happen often enough to put us off our timetable, and here we have the beautiful new book in our hands, ready to become the official *Book of Common Prayer* on Trinity Sunday, 6 June.

One of the very encouraging factors at the moment, is the way in which the new book has been received. It was always hoped that the 2004 *Book of Common Prayer* would have a unifying role in the Church of Ireland, and already this is proving true. Columba Press, our excellent publisher, did not believe me when I told them that they would be on their second print run even before the book was on the shelves, but this has proven to be true. By the end of May 110,000 copies will have been printed, and many of you are at this moment in a queue, waiting for the books for your parishes. And the book is already proving acceptable across the church at large, by churches which would have had the old BCP as their traditional route, and those which would have inclined more to the APB or other more contemporary liturgy.

The Liturgical Advisory Committee has always been one on which I have enjoyed serving the church. Partly because I have a passion for liturgy, but also because it is a committee which produces something which can be seen by all. There is a real sense of achievement. That has been helped by its wide and diverse make-up of the, which at times has led to interesting argument and discussion, but more often to a deep appreciation of the rich variety God has given us in the church. It is partly because these issues have all been worked out at committee level, that the material has been acceptable to you the General Synod, when it has arrived on the floor.

The question to answer now (which I'm sure has never crossed the mind of anyone here) is this: 'Haven't we had enough of liturgy, and isn't it time that this Committee, no matter how nice and helpful they may have been, should fall on

its sword and call it a day?' Happily that is not what we are proposing to you. But our report to you this year does indicate that we wish to 're-invent' ourselves for the next stage in the journey. This will not so much be a time of new services and resolutions and bills to Synod (What will we do with all that extra time?!), but a time of recognizing the truth of that little section in the preface to the new prayer book which everyone seems to notice:

...we must remind ourselves that words, however memorable, beautiful or useful,

are never to be confused with worship itself. The words set out on these pages are but the beginning of worship. They need to be appropriated with care and devotion by the people of God so that, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, men and women may bring glory to the Father and grow in the knowledge and likeness of Jesus Christ.

It is the intention, then of the LAC, to move beyond the mere words of worship over the next period of years into areas such as Liturgical resources, Liturgical Formation and education in congregations, the use of the internet in worship and music and architecture. This is, I suppose, a recognition that a new book in itself will never 'do the trick' in bringing worship to life. That requires a community of people who love and serve the Lord, who are growing as disciples, and for whom the praise and prayer of their hearts and lives is evident to those who share in worship with them. In other words, the worship in our churches must be literally four-dimensional. People must see in it a spirituality which can not be found in the world outside. Where that happens, we will be truly blessed, and my hope and prayer is that the work of the LAC can be part of what it is to set the agenda for such a renewal of our worshipping lives.

With this being a time of transition, several much valued members of the Committee will be leaving the Committee. I mention them by name, simply in alphabetical order:

Richard Clarke, Brian Blacoe, Tony Carver, Maurice Elliott, Norman Jardine, Dermot O'Callaghan, Cindy O'Shea and John Paterson. They have served the committee so well over the years, and we are truly grateful to them. Perhaps I could particularly single out John Paterson, who has been a member of the LAC since 1980. We wish him the rich blessing of God in his retirement, and than the Lord of every remembrance of his faithful ministry. Bishop Edward Darling is also 'hanging up his clogs' this year, having been a member since 1978, and of course, my predecessor in the chair.

And finally, it simply would not be possible to end this report without thanking Brian Mayne, who has become 'Mr BCP' for his incredible works as editor, Ricky Rountree for his continuing work as CLO and Sean O'Boyle for his quiet and constant helpfulness in the publication of the book.

It gives me great pleasure to propose the report of the Liturgical Advisory Committee