

Christ Church Parish
We are a welcoming Episcopal parish renewing its people as disciples of Jesus Christ
through worship, formation, and service

Adult Formation 2022
A Trip to the Wellspring of Anglican Spirituality: London
June 27, 2022

Timeline

Thomas Cranmer 1489-1556

Henry VIII 1491-1547 [Anne of Cleves, H4; Catherine Howard, H5; Catherine Parr, H6]

Mary 1516-1558 [mother: Catherine of Aragon, H1]

Elizabeth I 1533-1603 [mother: Anne Boleyn, H2]

Edward VI 1537-1553 [mother: Jane Seymour, H3]

[H plus number: wives of Henry VIII]

The peccadillos of Henry VIII

On November 14, 1501, **Catherine**, daughter of the Spanish monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, married **Arthur**, Prince of Wales, heir apparent to the English throne, his father being Henry VII. Arthur's young brother, Henry, was present at the wedding which took place in Old St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Why a marriage that allied England with Spain? Let's be clear: Arthur and Catherine did not marry for love. Rather the marriage was intended to produce a political alliance capable of controlling France and its territorial ambitions. Less than five months after the wedding, Arthur died on April 2, 1502, having contracted a "sweating sickness," what medical historians consider a form of hantavirus or anthrax poisoning. Arthur's brother succeeded to the throne as **Henry VIII**. In 1509, he married Catherine, his brother's widow.



With his coronation, Henry's enormous appetites became well-known: a hunger for ever-greater wealth, ever-more sexual encounters, and greater power. Henry [left] spent lavishly on himself, frequently bringing the royal treasury to a penniless state. At the same time, Catherine's inability to produce a male heir vexed Henry - he who had already engaged in a sexual dalliance with Mary Boleyn, Catherine's lady-in-waiting. In 1525, Henry set his eyes on Mary's sister, **Anne**, a member of Catherine's retinue. Thinking a younger woman would produce a male heir, Henry sought the annulment of his marriage based on this biblical injunction: "If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing: they shall be childless" (Leviticus 20:21; KJV). Henry thought the failure to produce a male heir was punishment for marrying his brother's spouse (questionable as the argument was). Catherine eventually gave birth to a daughter named **Mary**. Enter Thomas Cranmer.

Thomas Cranmer

Thomas was born in 1489 to a family of the minor nobility in Nottinghamshire. In 1503, he began his studies in Jesus College at Cambridge University. He was attracted to the teaching of the Catholic humanists who argued that that reform of Christian faith and life should be guided

by the teaching and practice of early and high medieval Christianity (late medieval Christianity, 1350-1500, was besieged by the Black Plague, clergy absenteeism, and papal corruption). Indeed, Cranmer began to collect early and medieval texts. He became a student of the writings and liturgies of Eastern Orthodoxy (we've been singing the Trisagion at Christ Church recently: an import from the Byzantine liturgy made possible by Cranmer). In 1515, Cranmer married **Joan** (no known surname) who died in childbirth in 1520. He then served as a Fellow of Jesus College and was ordained a **priest**. As a Catholic humanist, Cranmer was an enthusiastic student and scholar of the New Testament and the new biblical scholarship emerging in England and on the Continent. He admired the biblical studies of the German reformer, **Martin Luther**.



As Henry VIII was seeking an annulment, Cranmer [left] joined other Cambridge scholars who suggested to Henry that he not pursue a legal case in church courts but rather wait as English university scholars canvassed other scholars throughout Europe concerning the case and its reliance on a biblical injunction. *Thus was Cranmer brought into the orbit of Henry VIII.* In January 1532, Henry appointed Cranmer ambassador to the court of

Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. While visiting the city of Nuremberg, Cranmer witnessed first-hand the reforms initiated by Luther's followers and was deeply impressed by them. He was also impressed by **Margarete Preu**, the niece of a leading "Lutheran" reformer, **Andreas Osiander**. Thomas married her in secret as priests were required to maintain celibacy.

In October 1532, Cranmer was surprised to receive a letter informing him that he had been appointed the archbishop of Canterbury, a position that had been secured for him by members of Anne Boleyn's family in gratitude for his efforts to secure an annulment for Henry. It was through Cranmer's efforts as the chief cleric in England that the annulment was declared *without* papal sanction in May 1533, an action that infuriated **Pope Clement VII**. And yet the pope was powerless to do anything: he was advised to treat the English with utmost care - Germany, Switzerland, and parts of France were in rebellion against his already waning power.

The Church of England

The pope's refusal to grant an annulment prompted Henry to separate the church in England from papal control. In November 1534, Parliament approved the **Act of Supremacy**, an act that abolished papal authority and declared the English monarch Supreme Head of the Church of England: no longer the Roman church *in* England. This dramatic change in English Christian life prompted considerable reform but such reform was no easy thing as many in England were opposed to the separation from Rome. Here we witness the concern for **balance between extremes** in English spirituality: the views of reformers *and* of conservatives needed to be heard and considered. We see this desire for balance in the **Ten Articles**, the first attempt at clarifying the theology of the Church of England. The first five articles were shaped by the reformers while the next five articles reflected the views of the conservatives. As you might imagine, the Ten Articles had something that pleased *and* annoyed both sides of the debate.

What we witness in the rocky period from 1534 until Henry's death in 1547 are two currents in English Christian life. First, Henry vacillated between showing regard for reformers within the

Church of England and concern for English Catholics loyal to Rome. As he grew older and weaker in body and mind, he was subject to the arguments of both groups. But what was foremost in his mind was the need for a **political unity** that would enable England to withstand the territorial ambitions of other powerful countries: *one monarch, one church, one people, one military force*. Second, England became a **refuge for reformers** of various theological stripes who fled persecution on the Continent: Zwinglians, Calvinists, Radicals, and Lutherans. Thus, in addition to Catholics, Henry and Cranmer lived in a country where there was considerable **theological diversity**, each group promoting their particular views. How would such a theological stew support unity in England and in the Church of England?

The Book of Common Prayer

As he witnessed Lutheran reforms in Germany, Cranmer recognized that the public liturgy and the Bible used in worship were no longer in Latin but rather in the language of the people, translated by Luther himself. Neither Luther nor Cranmer sought to make up a new form of worship as did other reformers. Rather they sought to *reform the order of worship* which had come from the earliest Christian communities as witnessed in the early and medieval texts they studied as part of the humanist project. While Henry was still alive, an English **Great Bible** was authorized for use in English parishes in 1538. It might be a challenge for us to imagine the effect of hearing the biblical stories proclaimed in one's native tongue *for the first time*. In 1544, the first liturgy in English was approved for use in parishes: **The Exhortation and Litany** (see The Book of Common Prayer 1979, page 148 ff.).



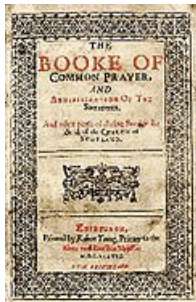
The year 1547 witnessed the accession of **Edward VI**, son of Henry and Jane Seymour. In the same year, the *Sacrament Act* introduced the first major reform of the Mass: a booklet entitled, **The Order of Communion**, in English, with the proviso that baptized Christians should receive the wine chalice as well as the bread. With the monarch's permission as Supreme Head of the Church, Cranmer began the arduous task of creating one **Book of Common Prayer** from the many books of the Roman Rite. He was not alone in this project and gathered a group of scholars and clergy at Windsor Castle [above] to produce an *English* form of public worship.

Remember our sojourn with Osmund in Salisbury? It was the **Sarum Rite** that guided Cranmer and his colleagues, albeit translated into English. Cranmer also incorporated elements from Eastern Orthodox liturgies and the Mozarabic Rite of Spain, a medieval order of worship. Now we ask, "What was distinctive about the Book of Common Prayer 1549?"

- It was **authorized** by Parliament for use throughout England on January 21, 1549
- The **language of the people** was used so that they could participate *actively, fully, and consciously* in the liturgy, that is, in the "work of the people animated by God's Spirit"
- The **Calendar** retained the seasons of the liturgical year (e.g., Advent, Lent), the feasts of Jesus Christ (e.g., Nativity, Epiphany), and the saints (e.g., St. Mary the Virgin, St. Mary Magdalene)
- An Order for **Morning Prayer** ("Matyns") and **Evening Prayer** ("Evensong") with a schedule of Psalms, biblical readings, and prayers for each day of the year

- **Collects** for each Sunday, feast day, Morning Prayer, and Evening Prayer: one of the great literary achievements in English spirituality
- Reformed orders of **Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Communion** (sacraments of initiation)
- **Vernacular preaching** on the biblical readings appointed for Sundays and feast days
- Reformed orders of **Marriage, Care of the Sick, and Burial** (sacramental rites of Christian life)
- An order for the **Consecrating of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons**
- An explanatory note as to why some **ceremonies** are retained and others omitted

Cranmer and his associates were convinced that the language of worship and thus the language that forms people in Christian faith and life be **scriptural**, especially in its poetic and parabolic forms. Thus the Prayer Book either quotes directly from the Bible or includes close paraphrases of biblical texts: close to **90%** of the BCP is scriptural quotation or close paraphrase. As some have said, “The BCP is the Bible arranged for worship.”



The theology of the Lutheran reformers guided the retention and omission of language in the Book of Common Prayer, that is, an emphasis on **God’s grace and love** for all humankind - in contrast to the late medieval Roman emphasis on the need to be “godly” or perform good works in order to merit God’s grace and eternal life. And an emphasis on justification by grace alone; an emphasis that suggested worship is *not* what we do for God - not a sacrifice we offer to God - but rather **God the Holy Three coming to us** through the Word of God and the Sacraments of Grace to orient us toward life in the world.

A **resistance to traditionalist antiquarianism** (“We’ve never done it that way before!”) and to **trendy novelties** (“Let’s make it up each week!”); rather a commitment to *conservation* with *ongoing reform*. Cranmer thus wrote in the BCP 1549:

Whereas in this our tyme, the myndes of menne bee so diverse, that *some thynke* it a greate matter of conscience to departe from a peece of the leaste of theyr Ceremonies (they bee so **addicted to their olde customes**), and *agayne on the other syde*, some bee so newe fangled that they woulde **innovate all thyngs**, and so despyse the olde that nothyng canne they lyke but what is newe: It was thought expediente not so muche to have respecte howe to please and satisfie eyther of these partyes, as howe to please God, and profite them bothe.

“Addiction to their old customs” vs. “innovating all the time” - do we sense again the tension to *hold together* both tradition and its reform or change?

We can say that the Book of Common Prayer is a Catholic form of worship reformed by a number of Protestant theological emphases: *both* Catholic *and* Protestant thus creating a **third way**, a distinctive **middle way** between the two.

Cranmer’s Death

On July 6, 1553, Edward VI died. On August 3, **Mary**, the daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon, entered London and was greeted as queen. Mary was a devout Catholic who quickly set about restoring the “olde religion” throughout England. Almost 800 aristocratic families,

loyal to the Book of Common Prayer, fled England. Mary had priests and bishops loyal to the BCP arrested. Some 280 clergy were burned at the stake for their refusal to support the return of papal primacy in England. Among them was Thomas Cranmer. At first hoping to save his life and his family, Cranmer privately denounced some of the “Protestant” reforms approved during the reign of Edward VI, reforms Cranmer himself had initiated. He was taken from prison and allowed to stay at Oxford. Yet Mary was not moved by his confession of loyalty to the Roman religion. He was told that he could make a final recantation in the Church of St. Mary the Virgin. On March 21, 1556, he entered the pulpit and to the surprise and anger of the gathered assembly, *rejected* any loyalty to Rome and thus any loyalty to Mary. He was forcibly removed from the pulpit and tied to the stake where he died as the fire took his life. Bishops Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley were burned at the stake on October 16. With them, Cranmer is commemorated as a martyr of the English Reformation on October 16.

Elizabeth’s Settlement

In November 1558, Mary died and her half-sister, **Elizabeth**, daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, became queen. Her coronation on January 15, 1559, was widely and enthusiastically celebrated. And yet Elizabeth ruled a country still fiercely divided by opposing religious factions: Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, Puritans, Radicals, and the many who supported the Church of England. Elizabeth's religious convictions gave no clear single of her sympathies: while she approved of the Book of Common Prayer 1552 (a revision of the 1549 edition), she also kept what many considered Catholic symbols - the crucifix and the rosary - and thought preaching overrated and not all that important, a view that alarmed Lutherans, Calvinists, and Puritans.



At the same time, Elizabeth [left] was well aware of the **political threat to England** from Catholic monarchs who were aggrieved at the death of Mary: monarchs supported by the pope who hoped to return England to the “olde religion” by invasion and conquest. Elizabeth was well aware of the many Catholics in her realm as well as the many Protestants from the Continent who had taken refuge in England. She had little tolerance for the Radicals and the Puritans who sought to destroy any remnant of the older religion as present in the Book of Common Prayer. What was a new queen to do in this potentially volatile situation in which religion and politics were so closely intertwined?

In February 1559, the House of Commons passed a reform bill that would restore royal supremacy in the Church of England and make the BCP 1552 the worship of the English people. The bill was widely opposed and Elizabeth wisely refused to give it royal assent. A second bill was brought forth the named the monarch **Supreme Governor of the Church** (not Supreme Head as with Henry), and asked that all clergy take an oath in support of the monarch as governor of the Church of England, abolishing papal control. Communion in both bread and wine was stipulated and protections for Catholics were present. This Act of Supremacy was passed in both houses: Commons and Lords.

A subsequent bill, the Act of Uniformity, established the **Book of Common Prayer 1552** as the **authorized worship book** of the Church of England. It also required attendance at the Sunday

service though the requirement was not enforced. Nonetheless, the passage of the bill gave rise to what were called **Nonconformists** - Protestants who refused to conform their worship and beliefs to that of the Church of England. The Act of Uniformity also allowed for worship practices that had not been omitted by the BCP 1549, including the use of **vestments** associated with the Sarum Rite. This is where clerical dress, if you can imagine it, became symbolic of one's religious loyalties: Puritans and Calvinists, sporting a *black academic robe* (and a beard) were bitterly opposed to any garment used *prior* to the 16th century; reformed Anglican priests wore a *white alb, stole, and chasuble* (and were clean-shaven), the vesture worn by priests at the time of Henry's break with Rome: what we see worn by the presider in most Episcopal parishes today.

In effect, what did Elizabeth settle?

The center of Anglican faith and life became **worship** as expressed in the Book of Common Prayer: *not* a statement of faith; *not* a particular theological conviction be it Calvinist, Radical, Catholic, or Puritan; *not* a set of personal behaviors by which others would judge one a "true" Christian. This is why Anglicans have so strongly emphasized the desire that every Anglican and Episcopalian own a Book of Common Prayer. Unlike Lutherans with the Augsburg Confession or Calvinists with the Westminster Confession or Catholics with papal encyclicals, Anglicans have no theological "statement" other than our worship. Thus, when someone asks, "What do you people actually believe?" our most common response is: "Come and join us in worship." The spiritual practice of common worship, common prayer, is our "statement," so to speak! Thus those people who seek precise beliefs and dogmatic statements will be disappointed with Anglican spirituality. Guided by the Book of Common Prayer - a thoroughly biblical worship book - we are comfortable with poetry and parables, with dreams and visions and images that can be experienced and interpreted in a variety of ways. Indeed, that is the nature of ritual: it cannot be reduced in meaning to one thing.



If worship were the **center** of Anglican spirituality, then there could be room for differing theological convictions. Consider this text spoken as the bread was offered to a communicant:

[1] The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. [2] Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving.

The first sentence is from the BCP 1549; the second from the BCP 1552. The first sentence would be received by many as an affirmation of the **physical presence** of Christ in the bread: a Catholic and Lutheran view. The second, however, could be interpreted as supporting only a **spiritual presence** with a focus on remembrance of a past event, a view favored by Calvinists, Radicals, and Puritans. Elizabeth's "settlement" allowed for two different interpretations of the same ritual action. The action did not change but the words used to present it to the people allowed for two different viewpoints.

In a similar manner, with Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox (and quite *unlike* Protestants), we **pray for the dead** “because we still hold them in our love, and because we trust that in God's presence those who have chosen to serve him will grow in his love, until they see him as he is” (BCP 1979, 862). Yet *unlike* Catholics and the Orthodox, we do not require prayer for the dead.

While Cranmer had supervised the creation of Thirty Nine Articles (concerning a number of theological convictions, still present in the BCP 1979) and Books of Homilies for use by preachers in Church of England parishes, it was the Book of Common Prayer, *used by all people*, that became the identifying mark of Anglican faith and life. Consequently, it was the **BCP** and the **King James Version of the Bible** - an English language Bible - that became the two literary achievements of the English Reformation.

Cathedrals and music

The Radical and Calvinist/Presbyterian reformers of the 16th century *prohibited* the use of music in worship or drastically *reduced* music to the singing of psalms and nothing else. Instruments were forbidden and pipe organs were destroyed. Cathedrals - the seat (*cathedra*) of the bishop - were transformed into parish churches. Such was *not* the case in England. The Church of



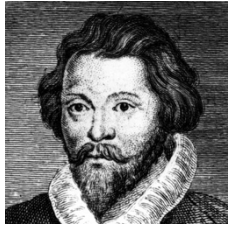
England maintained the ancient and medieval Christian practice of bishops (regional supervisors), priests (neighborhood leaders), and deacons (managers of service to those in need). Thus, cathedrals were and are maintained in Anglican life just as they are among Nordic Lutherans, Catholics, and the Orthodox. It was in Anglican cathedrals that musicians flourished and influenced parish music.

During Elizabeth's reign, **Old St. Paul's** [left] was the cathedral church of London. Architectural historians suggest that the cathedral was modeled on the cathedral at Salisbury (ring a bell?). Indeed, it was Edward the Confessor who donated stone for the building of St. Paul's in 1086/87, a Norman Romanesque building that boasted one of the tallest spires among European cathedrals. Adjustments to the Romanesque structure transformed it into a shining example of *Early English Gothic*. It was the acoustics of the building that encouraged the flourishing of choral music.

Rather than reduce musical texts to the psalms, the Church of England welcomed other *biblical, poetic texts* (e.g., the Benedictus, the Magnificat, the Song of the Three Young Men), *liturgical texts* from its history (e.g., the Te Deum) as well as those from *Eastern Orthodox liturgies* (e.g., the Trisagion; the entrance litany), and *early Christian lyrics* (e.g., Ephrem the Syrian). At Old St. Paul's, the Sunday liturgy was enriched by the presence of a **choir of boys and men** in what would come to be called a “choral liturgy.” Indeed, we can say that the Anglican musical tradition was nourished in cathedrals.

The use of English in worship opened the treasures of church music and also inspired the creation of new musical settings to texts that were now sung in the vernacular. An excellent

example is **the Great Service** composed by William Byrd [below], a court musician who was active during Elizabeth's reign. The Service is a setting of biblical anthems and psalms appointed for Morning Prayer, the Holy Eucharist, and Evening Prayer as celebrated in Old St. Paul's and the chapels royal: Psalm 95; the Te Deum; the Benedictus or Song of Zechariah; the Kyrie and the Creed; the Magnificat or Song of Mary, and the Nunc Dimittis or the Song of Simeon.



While Elizabeth was fond of Lutheran theological views, she was also fond of Catholic ritual as celebrated in the Sarum Rite. Again, we see the holding together of two things at the same time. The same can be said for music: the singing of ancient, **traditional texts** now in **English** with **new musical settings** also held together tradition and reform - not one or the other.

The downside of the cathedral music tradition was that it easily made worship a passive experience for the worshippers: choirs sang, not the people; clergy read the lessons, not lay lectors; once pews were introduced into Anglican churches, the wealthy were able to rent a pew (the rental fee subsidizing the clergy stipend), while the poor were relegated to a balcony or outside the church within hearing distance of the sermon. In our day, the emphasis has changed dramatically in light of our baptismal theology that calls upon various ministers, lay and ordained, who assist the assembly in its worship and life.

What then of this dimension of Anglican spirituality?

A **Book of Common Prayer** that guides the community in its worship and its understanding of God, humankind and human purpose, and the world; our tutor in how to pray

Worship in the **language of the people** (Jesus spoke his own native tongue), so that one might fully, actively, and consciously participate in the stories and sacraments of God's presence

A spirituality suffused with the poems, parables, visions, and images of the Bible: a **scriptural spirituality** focused on the person of **Jesus Christ**

A commitment to **honor** and **reform tradition**, that word from the Greek and Latin which means, "handing on something precious to a new generation"

A willingness to live with and learn from **differing theological viewpoints**

Resistance to unchanging theological views and statements of belief

An open-mindedness that allows one to **change one's mind** in light of new experience, new knowledge, and new crises

Next page ...

Questions

1. Do you recognize any of the elements of Anglican spirituality discussed here in your own spirituality? If so, what are they? Why are they important to you?
2. Is the Book of Common Prayer a tried and true “friend” or something that you’ve had little chance to explore? If the latter, would you enjoy an overview of its “logic” and purpose?
3. Have you changed your mind regarding a matter of faith? If so, what was it and why did it change?
4. Is the notion of living in a paradox - holding two things together at the same time - welcome, uncomfortable, enticing, or just weird?

Links

A short online tour of Windsor Castle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRSeF8twOig>

A drone view of Windsor and Windsor Castle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBBQUFdujM0>

A longer and chatty online tour of Windsor Castle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNOMkDT69Ts>

An online tour of a reconstructed Old St. Paul’s London

<https://aleteia.org/2021/10/09/virtual-recreation-of-st-pauls-cathedral-captures-the-sounds-of-17th-century-worship/>

The Tallis Scholars sing Byrd’s Magnificat from the Great Service (as heard by Elizabeth I)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q93IEVNSjBM>

A sweet tour of the “new” St. Paul’s London

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KA2jxB3ddc>

A wonderfully **witty** introduction by the Archbishop of Canterbury to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, as she opens the General Synod (national meeting) of the Church of England, 2015

<https://www.royal.uk/queens-relationship-churches-england-and-scotland-and-other-faiths>