

Expressing What Christians Believe: Anglican Principles for Liturgical Revision

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What principles have guided liturgical revision in the Anglican Communion? This essay attempts to address that question for each of four historical periods, as well as offer suggestions for future revision. The author asserts that we cannot simply forge ahead with more experimental texts and trial liturgies if we truly endeavor both to value the inherited tradition and to move where the Spirit is leading us. By working toward a shared understanding of principles for liturgical revision, the Episcopal Church and other entities in the Anglican Communion can potentially avoid fractious conflict, produce better quality liturgical texts, and foster confidence that we are following divine guidance.

“Liturgy expresses what Christians believe. To change the liturgy therefore runs the risk of changing doctrine—or at least those doctrines which worshippers regularly hear and absorb and which become part of their Christian identity.”¹

Since the formal establishment of a separate identity for the Church of England from that of Rome in the sixteenth century, the various church entities that now form the Anglican Communion have made numerous revisions to their liturgy. What principles have guided these efforts? This essay attempts to address that question for each of four historical periods: (1) the reforms of the sixteenth century, focusing on the claims made by Thomas Cranmer and Richard

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¹ John R. K. Fenwick and Bryan D. Spinks, *Worship in Transition: The Liturgical Movement in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 169.

Hooker; (2) an interim period of relative liturgical stability; (3) the radical revisions of the latter twentieth century, including consultations and partnerships from this same period; and (4) the subsequent time of emerging issues. In addition, I will offer my own thoughts about how we Anglicans might best proceed in this new millennium.

As we move firmly into the twenty-first century, we begin to write the epilogue to the Liturgical Movement's history, and there is yet considerable pressure to revise liturgical texts throughout the Anglican Communion. Some cry for Cranmer, others insist on more expansive imagery—but many are calling for change. Perhaps it would be wise to reflect on the principles for such change, so that our discussions may be guided not so much by political rhetoric as by theological construct.

Through careful reflection on the principles that underlie our thinking, we will be more open to the guidance of the Spirit, as we seek to discern the will of God for the church and her liturgy. We cannot simply forge ahead with more experimental texts and trial liturgies if we truly endeavor both to value the inherited tradition and to move where the Spirit is leading us. As Daniel Stevick put it:

When liturgy is undergoing change or when it is in question, thinking about worship becomes highly conscious. At such times, churches cannot just do; they must reflect on what they do. Gifted persons must bring to awareness the principles by which worship is shaped and carried out. Communities seek to repossess what they have been given by history and, at the same time, to be open to what is new. At such times, liturgical communities must be discriminating and self-critical.²

While I shy from claiming I am such a “gifted person,” I nevertheless hope I can—in some small but not inconsequential way—help bring to awareness the principles by which worship has been and will be crafted, shaped, and revised in the Anglican tradition.

Sixteenth-Century Reforms

Ever since the liturgical reforms that witnessed to the birth of a separate and autonomous Church of England, scholars have debated

² Daniel B. Stevick, “Hooker’s Criteria for Liturgy,” *Anglican Theological Review* 73, no. 2 (Spring 1991), 139.

and discussed the significance of the series of liturgical changes made at that time. According to the early twentieth-century priest and scholar Percy Dearmer, “the old Latin services were translated into English, shortened, simplified, altered, and printed in one volume.”³ This somewhat broad generalization holds within it several widely held scholarly claims: (1) that the reforms of the sixteenth century were in essence translations and adaptations of earlier texts, not new compositions or wholly innovative rites; (2) that they tended toward simplification of what had been very complex material; and (3) that they were designed to fit within the covers of a single volume—so that curates no longer needed a variety of other books for their public service.

In his move to a vernacular liturgy, Thomas Cranmer did indeed introduce changes and emendations; his liturgy went beyond a simple literal translation of the Latin missal, even if it deviated only cautiously. Combining his own reading of the church fathers, his acquaintance with some Eastern rites, and his interest in several German church orders, Cranmer produced a kind of synthesis—while retaining the overall structure of the Latin rite.⁴ Some of these changes were doubtless introduced to soften the criticism of medieval Catholic doctrine and theology and to appease more Protestant parties.

Thus, another characteristic of the first books of common prayer was that of laying the foundations for what Richard Hooker would later call the *via media*, the Anglican middle way between extremes. In the emerging ethos of Anglicanism, the Prayer Book, from the start, sought to avoid “the cruel generalizations so characteristic of religious controversy.”⁵ The 1552 revision, for instance, has long been championed as a Protestant revision of the 1549 book, responding to criticism from the likes of Stephen Gardiner and Martin Bucer, among others.⁶ And yet it also “brought back various medieval elements in an effort to reconcile conservatives.”⁷ The degree to which the *via media* is either a compromise for the sake of peace or a comprehension for

³ Percy Dearmer, *The Story of the Prayerbook* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), 47.

⁴ Marion J. Hatchett, “Prayer Books,” in Stephen Sykes and John Booty, *The Study of Anglicanism* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1988), 123.

⁵ Dearmer, *Story of the Prayerbook*, 62.

⁶ See my work, “Stephen Gardiner’s ‘Explication’ and the Identity of the Church,” *Anglican and Episcopal History* 72, no. 1 (March 2003), and “Martin Bucer’s Influence on the English Baptismal Rite of 1552,” unpublished manuscript, 2004.

⁷ Hatchett, “Prayer Books,” 127.

the sake of truth remains a matter of discussion⁸—but that it exists in our ethos is unquestioned.

Marion Hatchett, summarizing and even quoting Cranmer's own claims, lays out four principles said to underlie the first Prayer Book: that it was (1) grounded in Scripture; (2) "agreeable to the order of the primitive Church"; (3) unifying to the church; and (4) edifying to the people.⁹ Cranmer could be said to embrace an additional five implicit principles, summarized as simplicity, conformity, language, involvement, and agreement.

First, simplicity: Cranmer, for instance, forbade the "vain repetitions" that the Puritans so loathed, removing many redundancies. He also sought to avoid the complexities of the inherited situation, in which enactment of the liturgy was "so hard and intricate a matter, that many times, there was more business to find out what should be read, than to read it when it was found out."¹⁰

Second, conformity: In the preface to the first Prayer Book, Cranmer also asserted that "the whole realm shall have but one use," decrying the previous great diversity in saying and singing.¹¹ The legislation that promulgated the first English Prayer Book was entitled the "Act of Uniformity,"¹² which required exclusive use of this book from Whitsunday, 1549.

Third, language: As part of his concern with edifying the people, Cranmer stipulated that "all things shall be read and sung in the church in the English tongue," in a "language and order as is most easy and plain for the understanding."¹³ The vernacular—not the traditional scholarly Latin—must be used.

Fourth, involvement: Cranmer expressed an interest in both the readers and the hearers, nomenclature that perhaps reflects a medieval mindset. Yet, he does provide that not only "the clearkes" but also "the people" shall answer.¹⁴ While by modern standards the people's

⁸ From the collect for the lesser feast of Richard Hooker, *Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2000* (New York: Church Publishing, 2001), 422.

⁹ Hatchett, "Prayer Books," 133.

¹⁰ Preface to the 1549 Prayer Book, as quoted in *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1979), 866.

¹¹ 1549 Preface, 1979 BCP, 867.

¹² Marion J. Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 8.

¹³ 1549 Preface, 1979 BCP, 867.

¹⁴ From the 1549 Communion liturgy, reprinted in *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI* (London: Prayer Book Society, 1999), 214.

participation is minimal, that it is required at all represents a radical shift from the precedent of his inherited tradition.

Fifth, agreement: Throughout the preface of the first Prayer Book and his writings, Cranmer continues to express a concern for texts, customs, and practices “much agreeable to the mind and purpose of the old fathers.”¹⁵ While he does not specify which authorities he cites, he continues to make a general appeal to patristic sources—a characteristic that will remain emblematic of Anglicanism for subsequent centuries.¹⁶

In his great work of the Elizabethan Settlement, *On the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Richard Hooker lays out his own principles for liturgical reform. Hooker first appeals to “the ancient simplicity” of former liturgies, thereby combing and upholding two of Cranmer’s criteria.¹⁷ Hooker lays out his own set of four additional criteria for liturgical revision, some of which also resonate with Cranmer. These are: fitness, historical continuity, church authorization, and practical necessity.¹⁸ Each of these will be discussed subsequently.

In the *Laws*, Hooker establishes common ground with his opponents, the Puritan party. In this, he demonstrates his very own principle of the middle way, seeking to embrace a diversity of theological and doctrinal opinion. While he defends the liturgy of the Church of England as “godly, comely, decent, profitable for the Church,”¹⁹ Hooker goes on to demonstrate how the liturgy also meets the objections of the Puritans.

These objections fell into five categories: that the “offensive ceremonies” were (1) lacking in “apostolic simplicity,” being too stately or elaborate; (2) too similar to uses of the Roman church; (3) derived from Judaism; (4) leading to idolatry and therefore scandalous; and (5) different from the uses of the early church. Hooker responded by insisting that the Puritans held New Testament grounds for things that were, in fact, simply matters of judgment. Note that their objections bear remarkable similarity to Cranmer’s principles: concerns for simplicity and patristic norms, for instance.

¹⁵ 1549 Preface, 1979 BCP, 866.

¹⁶ See my work, “On the Search for the Authentic Liturgy of the Apostles: The Early Church as Normative for Anglicans,” unpublished manuscript, 2005.

¹⁷ Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, IV.i.1, ed. John Keble (facsimile, Ellicott City, Md.: Via Media, 1994), 1:417.

¹⁸ See Stevick, “Hooker’s Criteria.”

¹⁹ Hooker, *Laws*, IV.iv.2.

Rather than respond to the five categories of objections individually, Hooker simply put forth four categories of his own, as stated earlier. The first of Hooker's criteria by which authorized customs or rites should be judged is, somewhat surprisingly, functional. Hooker insisted that the liturgy take into account the end which the words and actions serve, and described this end as twofold expression: the uniqueness of the church and its purpose, and the infinite majesty of God. The church militant should show forth the hidden glory of the church triumphant, Hooker insisted.

Second, historical continuity: Hooker explicitly states Cranmer's implicit purpose, to maintain continuity with tradition. He referred to "the long continued practice of the whole Church, from which unnecessarily to swerve experience hath never as yet found it safe."²⁰ Thus, Hooker cautioned against change simply for the sake of change—it may be risky.

Third, church authorization: While Hooker continued to assert a need to respect precedent and tradition, he also asserted the church's freedom in matters of discipline. "Conditions can arise for which historical precedent gives no real parallel; when that happens, Hooker understands that the church is not helpless," but can and must make new decisions in a new context.²¹

Fourth, practical necessity: Hooker asserted that what should be done in divine worship cannot be determined by general principles alone. From tradition we inherited great variety, and circumstances may prevent enacting the perfect ideal. Hooker put it this way: "When the best things are not possible, the best may be made of those that are."²²

In summary, Thomas Cranmer established precedent for a broad variety of principles for liturgical revision in Anglicanism, including a concern for continuity with tradition, a willingness to incorporate material from diverse sources, a tendency toward simplification, and an insistence that everything necessary be contained in a single book. His claims included retaining the essential structure and character of the Latin rite, while introducing such changes as would embrace the concerns of more radical reformers. His liturgy required the

²⁰ Hooker, *Laws*, IV.i.3.

²¹ Stevick, "Hooker's Criteria," 150.

²² Hooker, *Laws*, V.ix.1. Stevick suggests these words might well be hung in every vesting room, choir room, and sacristy.

participation and understanding of the participants, relying on a strong foundation in Scripture and patristic sources. Thus, Cranmer insisted that the liturgy must be unifying to the church and edifying to the people.

Hooker finessed and enhanced these points, blending ancient simplicity with practical necessity. He stated that liturgy needs to be an enacted, embodied rite that clearly serves the ends to which it is designed. All liturgical practice is in reference to a situation, and we cannot necessarily apply one standard to each particular context. “All men’s cases ought not to have one measure,” he wrote—a classic summary statement of the Elizabethan Settlement.²³ Thus, with Cranmer, he had a strong interest in historical continuity and a belief in the local church’s authority to make liturgical changes, but—unlike Cranmer—he admitted that the constraints of practical considerations sometimes trump the perfection of theoretical ideals.

In these somewhat rambling and sometimes even contradictory principles of Thomas Cranmer and Richard Hooker, we find the emerging ethos of Anglicanism: “Thus, . . . there was a single book containing all the necessary material for the celebration of the sacraments in the vernacular with the intent that the church of the realm should be united through its use of a single liturgy.”²⁴

Amendments and Revisions, 1604 to 1928

Although this time period represents the majority of the chronology of Anglicanism, from our current perspective the changes to liturgical texts were minimal—more doctrinal finesses than radical reforms. This is not to say that a wide variety of controversies were not discussed, debated, and sometimes even resolved during this period—baptismal regeneration, real presence in the Eucharist, the role of clergy, and a major shift in the theology of illness, among them. Yet, the 1928 American Prayer Book bears a striking resemblance to the English books of 1549, 1552, 1559, and 1662. I attribute this conservationist attitude to a variety of factors.

First, newly emerging political entities saw some revision as obligatory, but sought to make only such changes as were actually

²³ Hooker, *Laws*, V.ix.2.

²⁴ Alistair Stewart-Sykes, “1549: The Origin of Anglicanism,” in *But One Use: An Exhibition Commemorating the 450th Anniversary of the Book of Common Prayer* (New York: The General Theological Seminary, 1999), 37.

necessary. Thus, prayers for the monarch might be replaced by prayers for civil authorities—but clearly what predominated was a sense of maintaining a precious inheritance intact. In the United States, independence required a new prayer book,²⁵ but “in spite of the fact that various schools of thought were represented in the Philadelphia convention of 1785, or possibly because of the fact, the proposals for Prayer Book revision of that convention were notably conservative and restrained.”²⁶ Likewise, when the Church of Ireland ceased to be the politically established church there, a new prayer book appeared, with the preface indicating “some alteration in our Publick Liturgy became needful.”²⁷ The Scottish nonjurors, freed from state control over their rites in 1689, turned to ancient Eastern liturgies for models of liturgical reform—but they still kept the basic arrangement, outline, and speech patterns of the English Prayer Book.²⁸

Second, as alluded to above, the Prayer Book—or, at this point, the prayer books of the several provinces—began to take on a kind of iconic status, as a symbol of unity. As Hatchett puts it, “The book served a unitary function and as a conservative factor during various new movements of the nineteenth century which were potentially schismatic or, at least, disruptive.”²⁹ It is interesting to note that the Reformed Episcopal Church, a doctrinal offshoot of the nineteenth century, still uses what is in essence the Prayer Book of 1789. Perhaps, in a way, the Prayer Book became a symbol of orthodoxy and adherence to tradition in a time of theological diversity and exploration?

The English Prayer Book of 1662 serves as a case in point, albeit at an earlier time. The restoration of the monarchy brought with it the resurgence of liturgical worship—but precious few changes of any significant weight were made. Instead, the Savoy Conference commissioners more or less tinkered with the earlier rite, maintaining the essence of form, structure, and language (and in a language then long since archaic). Thus, the prevailing theme of this entire period from the Jacobean revision of 1604 to the American revision and English

²⁵ Hatchett, “Prayer Books,” 130.

²⁶ Marion J. Hatchett, *The Making of the First American Book of Common Prayer, 1776–1789* (New York: Seabury Press, 1982), 85.

²⁷ Preface to the Church of Ireland Prayer Book, 1879, quoted in G. R. Evans and J. Robert Wright, *The Anglican Tradition: A Handbook of Sources* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1991), 340. Emphasis added.

²⁸ Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book*, 358.

²⁹ Hatchett, *Making of the First American Book of Common Prayer*, 147.

proposed revision of 1928 can be seen as focusing on allowing only as many changes as are actually necessary, in the hope of maintaining a measure of church unity through the use of a common worship text.

The Liturgical Movement

“At Lambeth 1958, . . . one may now see that the handwriting was on the wall and that a time of profound liturgical change lay before them.”³⁰

In truth, by the 1950s the handwriting must have been set in stone, for the Lambeth Conference focused on Prayer Book “adaptation and enrichment” as far back as 1908—then only the fifth gathering of Anglican bishops worldwide.³¹ The 1908 conference adopted principles for revision of the Prayer Book: (1) the adaptation of rubrics to “present customs as generally received”; (2) the omission of parts of the services to “obviate repetition or redundancy”; (3) “the framing of additions . . . in the way of enrichment”; (4) “the fuller provision of alternatives” and “great elasticity”; (5) the change of “words obscure or commonly misunderstood”; and (6) the revision of the calendar and tables prefixed to the book.³²

Here, the bishops of Anglicanism affirm some of Cranmer’s and Hooker’s principles, while also introducing an entirely new concept. Rubrics have a way of becoming obsolete over time, and the appeal to “present customs” (principle 1) resonates with Hooker’s notion of practical necessity. The appeal to remove redundancy (principle 2) shows clear echoes of the call for “apostolic simplicity” and avoiding “vain repetitions.” And the call to change misunderstood words (principle 5) sounds like a restatement of Number 24 of the Articles of Religion, which is itself a restatement of Cranmer’s insistence on the

³⁰ Louis Weil, “A Perspective on the Relation of the Prayer Book to Anglican Unity,” *With Ever Joyful Hearts: Essays on Liturgy and Music Honoring Marion J. Hatchett*, ed. J. Neil Alexander (New York: Church Publishing, 1999), 329.

³¹ It is perhaps helpful to note here that the Lambeth Conference is an occasional gathering of the bishops of the Anglican Communion. Convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury about every ten years since 1867, Lambeth has no canonical authority. Its legislation is advisory only, and has no binding force on the various provinces of the Anglican Communion. Nevertheless, the resolutions of Lambeth Conferences are given respect and consideration—even if they are not always obeyed.

³² Resolution 27, Lambeth Conference 1908, in Evans and Wright, *Anglican Tradition*, 371.

vernacular.³³ Principle 6, on the revision of the calendar and tables, I would hold to be a thing indifferent. Although questions of saints' days and commemorations were a hot topic in the Reformation and even subsequently, by the twentieth century these are no longer issues of any significant import.

The other two principles, however, present something new, calling for enrichment, alternatives, and great elasticity. These two principles embody a shift in understanding—potentially a shift away from simplicity and uniformity. From whence do they come? “The foremost and most successful springboard for reform came with the Parish Communion movement which illustrates the appeal of prayer book rationale on its own.”³⁴ Now seen as the particularly English component of the wider Liturgical Movement, the Parish Communion Movement, and to a certain extent the Oxford Movement that preceded it, helped to establish a number of principles—most significantly, the centrality of the Eucharist: “the Lord’s own service on the Lord’s own day.”

Informed by advances in scholarship and the construct of modernity, the Parish Communion Movement set out in search of early Christian norms “in order to undercut the rows over churchmanship by going behind the quarrels to prior times.”³⁵ In order to accommodate the diverse needs of theologically opposing groups, and to reflect the diversity of those much-longed-for primitive norms, the Prayer Book apparently needed enrichment, alternatives, and great elasticity.

In 1958, the Lambeth Conference again set guidelines for liturgical reform, urging that a chief aim of Prayer Book revision should be to further that recovery of the “worship of the Primitive Church which was the aim of the compiler of the first Prayer Book of the Church of England.”³⁶ At the same time, the 1958 conference welcomed ecumenical convergence, which it resolved was a result of knowledge gained from biblical and liturgical scholars. Thus we see

³³ Article 24 reads: “It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the Primitive Church, to have public Prayer in the Church, or to minister the Sacraments, in a tongue not understood of the people” (1979 BCP, 872).

³⁴ John Frederick, *The Future of Liturgical Reform* (Wilton, Conn.: Morehouse-Barlow, 1987), 12.

³⁵ Frederick, *Future of Liturgical Reform*, 12.

³⁶ Resolution 73, Lambeth Conference 1958, in Evans and Wright, *Anglican Tradition*, 429.

the beginnings of the much more radical changes since the 1960s, based on the

aim of returning to the sources, the biblical and patristic heritage, incorporating the results of liturgical scholarship, and adapting to present conditions and missionary and pastoral needs. These revisions attempt to make the language more intelligible, to incorporate social concerns, and to allow for more flexibility to meet needs of particular worshipping communities. Various provinces have participated in ecumenical groups developing common translations of texts (International Consultation on English Texts, or its equivalent for other languages) and have adopted common lectionaries, based on either the post-Vatican II Roman lectionary or that developed by the Joint Liturgical Group.³⁷

Throughout the Liturgical Movement, Anglicanism and other denominations witnessed radical changes in the liturgy, which have been summarized as follows: (1) the struggle for community, in society and in the church; (2) participation of all the faithful in the church's liturgy; (3) a rediscovery of the early church as a model, coupled with a variety of newly discovered material from the early church; (4) a rediscovery of the Bible, liturgically and theologically; (5) a rediscovery of the Eucharist, both in Reformation churches and in Roman Catholicism; (6) an emphasis on the vernacular; (7) the rediscovery of other Christian traditions; (8) an emphasis on proclamation and social involvement.³⁸

In the rites of initiation alone, the Liturgical Movement brought forth tremendous changes. These include: (1) the adoption of a patristic model of initiation as the norm; (2) a move away from an "Augustinian" concern with sin to a "Cyprianic" concern for incorporation into the church; (3) involvement of the whole church, evident preeminently in the migration of baptism to the principal Sunday liturgy; (4) a concern for the integrity of symbolism, including such things as the use of significant quantities of water, the giving of a candle, and the increasing acceptance of anointing; and (5) various concerns about confirmation, infant communion, and rebaptism.³⁹

³⁷ Hatchett, "Prayer Books," 132.

³⁸ Fenwick and Spinks, *Worship in Transition*, 1–10.

³⁹ Fenwick and Spinks, *Worship in Transition*, 140–144.

Thus, the Liturgical Movement established a large number of broad principles for liturgical enactment, and these, in turn, helped shaped the radical reforms of Western liturgy in the latter twentieth century. These principles reiterated some sixteenth-century precepts (such as grounding in early church evidence), strengthened others (the full participation of the laity and the centrality of the Eucharist), and also introduced a number of significant new concerns (the call for enrichment, alternatives, and elasticity).

Consultations and Partnerships

Two recent Anglican relationships deserve mention here: the International Anglican Liturgical Consultations (IALC), begun in 1983, and the covenant agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church, known as “Called to Common Mission” and established in 1999.⁴⁰

The International Anglican Liturgical Consultation describes its origins as an independent meeting of Anglican liturgists who happened to find themselves at the same place and time. Originally established as an informal gathering of Anglicans associated with the international biennial liturgical conference known as *Societas Liturgica*, over the years since 1987 more formal relationships have developed—with the Anglican Consultative Council in particular. The IALC now has an appointed staff officer and formal recognition by the Anglican Consultative Council, the Joint Meeting of Primates (through the Anglican Communion’s Coordinator for Liturgy), and the Lambeth Conference (three of the four “instruments of communion” of the Anglican Communion, as defined by the Windsor Report of 2004).⁴¹ Thus, the IALC today is the closest thing the Anglican Communion has to a definitive authority on matters liturgical. The consultations have issued various documents relevant to this inquiry. Their resolutions, which, like those of the Lambeth Conference, do not have the force of canon law, are nevertheless taken seriously.⁴²

⁴⁰ Formally established by the Waterloo Declaration of 2001, a similar covenantal relationship exists through the Joint Anglican Lutheran Commission between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

⁴¹ <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/windsor2004/>

⁴² IALC documents and reports are available on the Anglican Communion’s website: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org>

In 1987, the IALC gathering at Brixon, Italy, articulated a concern that some Anglicans “watch their traditional liturgical forms give way to regional and contemporary patterns of worship expression.”⁴³ Held in New York in 1989, the subsequent consultation resolved that each province within Anglicanism “should be free, subject to essential universal Anglican norms of worship, and to valuing of traditional liturgical materials, to seek that expression of worship which is appropriate to the Christian people in their cultural context.”⁴⁴ While quite broad and general in character, these statements affirm the traditional character of liturgy as well as the need for contextualization. These two foundational principles appear to derive from and expand on two resolutions of the Lambeth Conference of 1988 regarding inculturation.

The first of these resolutions asserted that the gospel challenges some aspects of culture while endorsing others, and spoke of the need to express “the unchanging gospel of Christ in words, actions, names, customs, liturgies which communicate relevantly in each society.”⁴⁵ The second resolution called for liturgical freedom within each province of the Anglican Communion. Noting that common prayer expressed in the style of Reformation England has fostered cultural alienation in such diverse contemporary locations as urban England and rural Africa in the late-twentieth century, the IALC proposed better inculturation of worship, buildings, furnishings, art, music, and ceremonial—in addition to texts. In order to make contact with the deep feelings of a people, the process of liturgical inculturation must be open to innovation and experimentation, encourage local creativity, and be ready to reflect critically at each stage of a revision process, the Consultation declared.

The Consultation grounded these recommendations in the commonality of “essential Anglican norms,” and suggested that such norms are largely contained in the Lambeth Quadrilateral and can be expressed only by the use of vernacular language. The IALC then commended a five-step method to help people of diverse cultures find expression of their own identity in their forms of worship. Known as the Kanamai Statement, this method proposes: (1) listening to the whole body of worshipers; (2) exercising caution, particularly with

⁴³ <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/liturgy/docs/ialcreview.cfm>

⁴⁴ <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/liturgy/docs/ialcreview.cfm>

⁴⁵ Resolution 22, Lambeth Conference 1988. <http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1988/1988-22.cfm>

regard to the quickly changing nature of some cultures; (3) seeking insights from the work of other partner churches in the area, bearing in mind the liturgical convergence in the recent past; (4) understanding the principles employed by past efforts; and (5) recognizing and studying the liturgical inculturation that has already taken place.⁴⁶

At their 2005 gathering, the IALC put forth a set of liturgical elements and particular ethos that they value, including: an inherited tradition that holds together both catholic and reformed, texts that are authorized, freedom for varieties of expression, an ordered liturgical space, and aesthetic potential appropriate to the culture.⁴⁷ They also upheld the use of lectionary; use of responsive texts; committing words, music, and actions to memory; use of the Lord's Prayer; emphasizing the rhythm of liturgical cycles; use of the creeds; extensive reading of Scripture; as well as the corporate and participatory nature of worship. Thus, in nearly a quarter-century of their existence, the IALC has begun to articulate a helpful new set of constructs for liturgical revision in the Anglican Communion.

Roughly at the same time as the emergence of the IALC, full-communion relationships between Anglicans and Lutherans have developed. Of these, the covenant with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America deserves special mention here, as faithfulness to such a partnership requires Anglicans to consider the 2002 document of the Renewing Worship series known as *Principles for Worship*.⁴⁸ This excellent volume contains clear principles on language, music, preaching, and worship space. The careful and thoughtful preparation of this theological work highlights the significant contribution our Lutheran siblings have to offer us Anglicans. These *Principles for Worship* (1) echo Lutheran confessions and other foundational doctrinal assertions of Lutheranism; (2) incorporate salient points of the Liturgical Movement and Ecumenical Movement; and (3) provide helpful guidance in shaping new rites. The document is addressed to the worship of the Christian assembly, thus reinforcing all three of these fundamental convictions.

⁴⁶ See "The Kanamai Statement," in *Anglican Liturgical Inculturation in Africa*, ed. David Gitari (Bramcote, U.K.: Grove Books, 1994), 37–48.

⁴⁷ <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/liturgy/docs/ialc2005statement.cfm>

⁴⁸ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Principles for Worship* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress, 2002).

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America published its *Principles for Worship* as part of the Renewing Worship series in 2002. Beginning in 2001, that series published hymns and songs as well as worship texts for provisional use. Devised as a consultative process, the Renewing Worship series stands as a model many denominations may wish to emulate. Resources were produced both in print and electronic formats, the latter of which are available via the Internet without charge.⁴⁹ Being thoroughly Lutheran in its inception, the Renewing Worship project would not be complete without a thorough examination of the theology underlying such an endeavor. *Principles for Worship*, therefore, seeks to maintain fidelity to historic Lutheran formularies, including frequent quotations from the Augsburg Confession, the Small Catechism, and other confessional material.⁵⁰ *Principles for Worship* is divided into four major sections on language, music, preaching, and worship space. Each of these has an impact on the crafting of rites. Take music, for instance. Principle M-16 states that “music engages the whole community and the whole person.”⁵¹ Its background subsections speak of “making connections on many levels,” of being “one with each other, one with the physical universe,” and of music as a “means of healing and reconciliation.” Such notions can find much resonance in discussions of language and of liturgical texts as well. A section on the use of the means of grace is included as an appendix; it was previously published separately, and included here only for reference. In the opinion of this writer, however, it deserves more prominent placement. Nevertheless, it is on the subsection on language that we will focus our attention, summarizing the sixteen language principles in the following paragraphs.

I begin my discussion of this work with a wonderful and bold assertion found among the official principles: “God is one who speaks. God calls all creation into being and gives people language as a way of responding to God and forming community.”⁵² God speaks; God calls all creation into being; God gives people language. Together these are Part I, Principle 1 of *Principles for Worship*—the foundation, if you will. Note a significant nuance that firmly places *Principles*

⁴⁹ See <http://www.renewingworship.org>.

⁵⁰ Confessional material cited in *Principles for Worship* is quoted from the *Book of Concord*, ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress, 1959).

⁵¹ *Principles for Worship*, 44.

⁵² Principle L-1, *Principles for Worship*, 2.

for *Worship* in the Protestant tradition: God speaks and gives people language—directly. God does not speak and give the church language, with the church mediating that to the world. The authentic individual encounter with God is, therefore, here affirmed. This is one view of the prism of divine revelation—and one shared by this writer.

Principle L-3 holds that the church at worship uses many languages. While this certainly affirms the use of the vernacular in worship texts, the subsections highlight the paradoxical need for the language of worship to be both transcultural and contextual. Thus, the Lutherans have decided to live in the tension between one fixed idiom in a given language (transcultural) and variation based on specific location, population, and situation (contextual). This principle also describes the language of worship as countercultural (at odds with what the surrounding culture deems worthy to praise) and cross-cultural (allowing for adoptions into English from other cultural contexts).

God's justice and mercy are affirmed in Principle L-4, which suggests these must be expressed in the language of worship. Here is an aspect of deep structure, since liturgical language—as a means of divine communication—must mirror God's justice. Paraphrasing the prophet Amos, *Principles for Worship* holds that the assembly “encounters and proclaims the God whose justice rolls down like waters.”⁵³ Unlike some other statements that decry oppression or violence in worship texts, this principle seeks instead to affirm God's good intention, recognizing that language used in our worship has power, and this power forms and shapes the minds and hearts of the faithful. Subsection L-4E states: “Care is taken to use language that expresses mutuality with all people, all nations, and all creation, rather than attitudes of domination, division, or triumphalism.”⁵⁴

The principles include those asserting that God is present and acts through language (L-5), that words alone cannot express the fullness of God (L-6), and that texts employed in worship must be grounded in the language of Scripture (L-8). *Principles for Worship* also affirms the church's continual building upon the vocabulary of Scripture (L-9), rather than a need to translate or quote verbatim. This principle also acknowledges that worshipers' familiarity with

⁵³ *Principles for Worship*, 5.

⁵⁴ *Principles for Worship*, 5.

Scripture varies tremendously, and calls for explanation and interpretation of unfamiliar biblical speech and metaphors.

Principle L-5B proposes that “God is beyond the capacity of human speech fully to express,” holding that the multilayered, symbolic language of metaphor allows the community to point to a greater reality.⁵⁵ The principles here affirm the poetic character of liturgical language. The principle describes metaphor using metaphor, a curious though effective tautology,⁵⁶ and a method borrowed from the poet. This principle also asserts that the primary sources for metaphor in the liturgy are the stories and images of the Bible. This assertion is hardly controversial to me, as the author of a master’s thesis on metaphor and a priest of the Anglican tradition. It also resonates with my assertion that liturgical language shares characteristics with biblical language.

Without proposing any particular remediation, *Principles for Worship* also articulates a summary of some especially problematic concepts, such as “Father,” “Lord,” and masculine pronouns for the Divine. Principle L-9 simply states that “churches and individuals are exploring other words and images,” attesting to the ongoing development of language, even beyond the publication of *Principles for Worship* and *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

Insisting that worship is participatory, Principle L-10C defines the language of the liturgy as “spoken, sung, signed, and embodied in action by the assembly,”⁵⁷ maintaining that liturgical enactment alone can reveal the primary meaning of texts. In a meticulously phrased statement, *Principles for Worship* declares in Principle L-11 that “the language of worship uses carefully crafted vernacular speech as well as words and expressions not common in everyday speech.”⁵⁸ Here is a balanced and nuanced statement worthy of replication elsewhere. The subsections acknowledge that Christians share some common vocabulary derived from the original languages of Scripture and church tradition. Thus, texts may have devotional power in widely-held forms that have been memorized, even when these forms employ older and even archaic language idioms. While upholding the use of the language of

⁵⁵ *Principles for Worship*, 6.

⁵⁶ “Metaphor is a deep well from which many can drink, a door open to communal meaning” (*Principles for Worship*, 6).

⁵⁷ *Principles for Worship*, 14.

⁵⁸ *Principles for Worship*, 15.

common communication, the subsections also hold that some non-vernacular terms are integral to the vocabulary of Christian worship, as they link the assembly to all of God's people, across time and space.

In a statement built on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's own journey of inter-Lutheran cooperation and development, *Principles for Worship* affirms ecumenical convergence: "We seek to acknowledge and develop liturgical texts and hymns in cooperation with other churches. We support and participate in ecumenical efforts to prepare texts for common use, and initiate such cooperation where none exists."⁵⁹ Yet, to reserve denominational autonomy (and perhaps the distinctness of Lutheranism), the subsection also insists that "this church may also adopt or adapt texts prepared for use in other churches."⁶⁰ A footnote recognizes the International Consultation on English Texts, the Consultation on English Hymnody, the Consultation of Common Texts, and the English Language Liturgical Consultation as specific examples of ecumenical partnerships in which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has participated. It also acknowledges its integration of texts prepared by the Roman Catholic Church's International Committee on English in the Liturgy, as well as earlier grafts from the Prayer Book tradition within the Anglican Communion.

In a statement that seems to comprehend the very nature of ritual expression, Principle L-14 states: "The language of worship nourishes the memory of the community and the individual. Both repeating familiar texts and taking to heart memorable new texts sustain faith across generations."⁶¹ Granting the importance of long-term memory, particularly in times of loss and upheaval, a subsection emphasizes the need for texts that have connection to the broader church, that are familiar or even known "by heart," and that may be kept alive by their use in subsequent generations. At the same time, the principle insists that incorporating worthy unknown and new texts into worship enriches the faith of the assembly.

In what might well be the most ground-breaking of all the principles, L-15 declares the intent to use words, images, and metaphors that express the breadth of God's love. The subsections discuss people

⁵⁹ *Principles for Worship*, 16.

⁶⁰ *Principles for Worship*, 16.

⁶¹ *Principles for Worship*, 18.

of different color and ethnicity, of differing abilities, and of different genders. They call for reevaluation of worship texts in light of changes in the world and ongoing discernment of God's purposes. That this revolutionary tenet finds a home as principle number fifteen of a total of sixteen perhaps indicates reluctance by some to include it, and a compromise position in which it finds a home in *Principles for Worship*, but with not as much emphasis as its advocates might have liked. Nevertheless, it represents a significant paradigm shift, and a welcome corrective to centuries of neglect. Expressing respect and care for all that God has made is so integral to the gospel message that it seems appalling it took so long for an official church body to express this as a fundamental principle of liturgical language. Lutherans are to be commended for including this aspect of environmental stewardship—the first to “go green” among liturgical Christians, as it were.

Finally, the language principles champion opportunities for extemporaneous and other local expression, in intercessory prayer and sermons in particular. The subsections of this principle appear to delve into matters more practical than those addressed elsewhere, as they praise clarity of form and repeated use of pattern in intercessory prayer; remind us that such prayer is appropriately addressed to God and not primarily informative to the people gathered; and even suggest that directions, explanations, and announcements—while sometimes necessary—should always be clear and succinct, and may even consist of gestures instead of words.

Within the scope of this essay, it is impossible to summarize the significant contribution of *Principles for Worship*, or even to highlight all the best aspects of it. It is a document that should be read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested by Anglicans—and those entrusted with crafting liturgy, in particular. Just as the development of English-language rites within Lutheranism depended almost entirely on Prayer Book texts in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in the twenty-first century the time has come for us to reciprocate by appropriating theological wisdom from our Lutheran partners.

Likewise, given the great extent to which liturgical revision within Anglicanism in the past was carried by locomotives whose engineers also held the episcopate, it is surely time to consider listening more carefully to the scholarly consensus of the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation. The wisdom of liturgical scholarship, of covenantal partners in ministry, and of ecumenical convergence will help

us address the concerns we face in the decades to come—especially since all three commend a more in-depth process of careful listening to all the people of God gathered in prayerful assembly.

Further Emerging Issues

“There are few things about which human nature is so conservative as worship and prayer.”⁶²

Anglicanism has long expressed its identity in its liturgical life, and since the sixteenth century has looked to the Prayer Book as the icon of denominational unity. Some writers see this as a call to change the texts, as the book may articulate claims inconsistent with the life of the community.⁶³ Other voices call for a return to a kind of “traditional orthodoxy” that is apparently expressible only in Elizabethan language.⁶⁴ What may prove ironic here, writes William Seth Adams, “is that by retaining Thomas Cranmer’s convictions about vernacular liturgy, we may find a warrant for letting go some (at least) of Cranmer’s language.”⁶⁵ In other words, by insisting on strict adherence to foundational principles, the conservative party within Anglicanism may well be calling for its own demise.

Emerging issues, including power, privileging the clergy, cultural and ethnic diversity, sexism and the place of women in the church, homosexuality, and the recognition that we are no longer an exclusively English-speaking denomination: these inform the current discussion on liturgical revision. Some have held that particular questions deserve more conversation than others. Certainly, in the past few years, the question of homosexuality has dominated the headlines in the popular press’s coverage of Anglicanism. And some authors insist that sexism is doubly important, both because it oppresses women and because it is “particularly acute in the Anglican tradition because

⁶² W. H. Frere, *Some Principles of Liturgical Reform: A Contribution Towards the Revision of the Book of Common Prayer* (London: John Murray, 1911), 1.

⁶³ Clayton L. Morris, “Prayer Book Revision or Liturgical Renewal? The Future of Liturgical Text,” in *A Prayer Book for the Twenty-first Century: Liturgical Studies Three*, ed. Ruth A. Meyers (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1996), 243.

⁶⁴ See David Martin and Peter Mullen, eds., *No Alternative: The Prayer Book Controversy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981).

⁶⁵ William Seth Adams, “Expansive Language: A Matter of Justice,” in Meyers, *Prayer Book for the Twenty-first Century*, 236.

of the specific characteristics of the English language.”⁶⁶ What is clear is that these issues—like the theological questions of earlier times—will have an impact on the liturgy.

In the current time, we see a curious mix of forward-looking enthusiasm and anachronistic restraint. Some embrace change; others abhor it. On the forefront of change, the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation held in Dublin in 1995 articulated this recommendation: “In the future, Anglican unity will find its liturgical expression not so much in uniform texts as in a common approach to eucharistic celebration and a structure which will ensure a balance of word, prayer, and sacrament, and which bears witness to the catholic calling of the Anglican communion.”⁶⁷ Yet one cannot but help call to mind the 1964 Vestment of Ministers Measure in England, which raises questions of church establishment—and the ridicule to which it continues to subject the Church of England.⁶⁸ Although the IALC statement and the Vestment Measure are three decades apart, they serve as examples of the tension in which Anglicanism finds itself. Questions of identity form a big part of the predicament that results in this tension. Simply put: “What has been definitive for Anglicanism, from its inception in the sixteenth century until the present day, is the *Book of Common Prayer* in its successive editions.”⁶⁹ Maintaining that identity, while simultaneously respecting (dare I say “encouraging”?) plurality and diversity within the Anglican Communion: this remains a challenge.⁷⁰ This is not a quandary only of the new century.

Writing in 1963, Stephen Bayne lamented the shaky ground on which mythos of Anglican unity in the Prayer Book stood. Referring to the definition of the Anglican Communion put forth by the 1930

⁶⁶ Kwok Pui-lan, “Inclusivity, Language, and Worship,” in *Anglicanism: A Global Communion*, ed. Andrew Wingate, Kevin Ward, Carrie Pemberton, and Wilson Sithebo (New York: Church Publishing, 1998), 63.

⁶⁷ Morris, “Prayer Book Revision,” 253.

⁶⁸ “Ever since the second-generation Tractarians of the nineteenth century, the use of traditional Western eucharistic vestments, particularly the chasuble, had been seen by Evangelicals as a Roman badge symbolizing the sacrifice of the Mass, whereas the wearing of the surplice, scarf, and hood for the eucharist was seen by High Churchmen as indicating an extreme Protestant and ‘Zwinglian’ concept of the eucharist” (Fenwick and Spinks, *Worship in Transition*, 73). In England, apparently, the theological significance of vestments still falls under the purview of Parliament!

⁶⁹ W. Taylor Stevenson, “Lex Orandi–Lex Credendi,” in Sykes and Booty, *Study of Anglicanism*, 175.

⁷⁰ Kwok, “Inclusivity, Language, and Worship,” 65.

Lambeth Conference, Bayne wrote, "As prayer book revision proceeds in the several churches, it becomes increasingly difficult to describe exactly what the phrase means, 'as generally set forth,' with reference to the prayer book."⁷¹ In 1963, therefore, the idea of unity in the uniformity of the Prayer Book was unstable. By the turn of the millennium, we saw the collapse of that mythos.

In the muddle of sometimes contradictory influences, competing agendas, and conciliatory compromises that calls itself the Anglican Communion, there is not likely to be any quick or definitive resolution. What had historically been a Protestant-Catholic debate based on theological principles now seems to have morphed into a reactionary-progressive divide—more political than theological. And this divide is not limited to the Anglican Communion; it pervades all of Christianity. Still, we have our own peculiar difficulties, resulting from the paucity of legislated precision in doctrinal matters, the collaborative nature of this communion of separately autonomous churches, and the ethos of our common identity resting on the book of our common prayer. This last characteristic may prove the most difficult hurdle to overcome, since "an ethos tends to be intractable because it consists of underlying assumptions and feelings, and because they are underlying they go unchallenged and thereby dominate the group."⁷²

The Future of Liturgical Revision

This essay seeks not to challenge the underlying assumptions of Anglicanism, but simply to bring them to light as a helpful guide for future revision. By careful examination of the principles that have guided liturgical revision in the past, and by consultation with our liturgical scholars and our ecumenical partners, Anglicans may become less uncomfortable with the idea of continuing the reformation—seeing change as an opportunity for new growth, instead of lamenting the death of cherished old texts. Lee Mitchell presents change in this light, saying:

One of the advantages of new liturgical texts, especially those which use different images, is that they disrupt our easy familiarity with traditional phrases and challenge us to think afresh about

⁷¹ Stephen Fielding Bayne, Jr., *An Anglican Turning Point: Documents and Interpretations* (Austin, Tex.: Church Historical Society, 1964), 99.

⁷² Stevenson, "Lex Orandi—Lex Credendi," 177.

what we really mean by the words we use. They call us not to abandon traditional faith, but to look and see what new and enriching patterns of devotion which our present rite does not afford us are offered by the supplementary texts.⁷³

Whether the average Anglican is ready for further disruption of accustomed familiarity with the texts of our rites remains to be seen. For some, even the smallest change to the texts of our worship can be threatening, causing comforting theological structures to crumble. This perhaps helps explain the conservative character of liturgical reform. When doctrinal claims are enmeshed and enshrined in liturgical texts, as they are in Anglicanism, faith itself is threatened by change. And yet, some of the “unchangeable deposit of tradition” may, in fact, be not so immutable as we think. That one book, effecting “but one use”—this was a new phenomenon in its time. According to Colin Buchanan, “The uniformity of worship which we accept as part of the Anglican tradition was an entirely new idea when it was introduced in the sixteenth century.”⁷⁴ So, perhaps we can persuade folks to see liturgical innovation as a change back to the tradition from which we have since deviated? We should, at least, be able to revel in what Bryan Spinks calls the “luxury” of liturgical revision. “It requires peace, stability, freedom, and finance, and good educational resources,” he writes—an important point that we often overlook in our pain over changes to cherished texts.⁷⁵

However we proceed, it is self-evident that there really are few things about which human nature is so conservative as worship and prayer. As Fenwick and Spinks put it, “From certain perspectives it can appear that the Christian faith itself is undergoing a process of redefinition—a process which some would want to hasten, and others to resist strenuously.”⁷⁶ My hope is neither to hasten change, nor to resist it—but to help ground the conversation in principles that will, I pray, help to make the struggle worthwhile. At the same time, I must

⁷³ Leonel L. Mitchell, “Background,” Appendix A in Standing Liturgical Commission, *Supplemental Liturgical Materials* (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1991), 62.

⁷⁴ Colin Buchanan, “Liturgical Uniformity,” *Journal of Anglican Studies* 2, no. 2 (December 2004): 41–57.

⁷⁵ Bryan D. Spinks, *Western Use and Abuse of Eastern Liturgical Traditions* (Rome: Centre for Indian and Inter-Religious Studies, 1992), 144.

⁷⁶ Fenwick and Spinks, *Worship in Transition*, 196.

acknowledge that these principles for liturgical revision may not achieve general acceptance in the Anglican Communion. The very concept of “core doctrine” has proved a problematic one for Anglicans.⁷⁷ The term was introduced by the court for the trial of a bishop in the Episcopal Church in 1996, and today it represents an ongoing effort by liberals and conservatives alike to legislate doctrinal conformity. The principles I have identified are neither so narrow as conservatives insist nor so broad as progressives might wish. They are, however, our inheritance, the tradition now handed over to us—and we are called to receive these gifts, and to employ them as best we can to foster the mission of the church and the church’s liturgy.

For the church’s confession of faith to continue to be “renewed repeatedly in response to new encounters with God’s mystery,”⁷⁸ we must be willing to engage in such encounters and the uncertain outcomes they may allow. This insight should make us open to considering emerging issues—something we should understand as integral to the historic Anglican ethos. As Rowan Williams put it about Anglicanism, “There is a certain unselfconsciousness about the governing lines of classical doctrine, a willingness to see these as simply the basic map of the territory the Christian lives in.”⁷⁹ Since we risk losing our historic identity as Anglicans if we stray too far off the map, our challenge is to expand the boundaries without leaving the territory behind.

We can acknowledge the traditional sources of our doctrine in Scripture, the creeds, authorized liturgies, the ordinal, and the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, as Christopher Brittain has proposed.⁸⁰ If so, we need to come to some understanding about the content of authorized liturgical texts. This essay attempts to lay out some suggestions for doing this, by applying classic Anglican principles and emerging scholarly and ecumenical consensus to the ongoing process of revising liturgical texts. To do so would require us to reexamine whether Elizabethan language can be retained in a culture that finds it distant and foreign, if the concept of any realm having only one liturgical use ever came to fruition (let alone whether it is helpful

⁷⁷ See Christopher C. Brittain, “Confession Obsession? Core Doctrine and the Anxieties of Anglican Theology,” *Anglican Theological Review* 90, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 777–799.

⁷⁸ Brittain, “Confession Obsession,” 797.

⁷⁹ Rowan Williams, *Anglican Identities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cowley Publications, 2003), 5.

⁸⁰ Brittain, “Confession Obsession,” 798.

today), and how the people of God can be invited into more authentic participation in the mystery. Beyond those considerations, there are:

- the extent to which our new rites can be enriched by the diverse heritage of the early church (Cranmer);
- consideration of the uniqueness of each church gathering (IALC, *Principles for Worship*), appreciation of the infinite majesty of God (Hooker), the church's authority to make decisions in a new context (Lambeth, IALC), and striving for excellence in every context (Hooker);
- promotion of greater elasticity and enrichment, while reducing redundancy and the use of obscure vocabulary (Cranmer, Lambeth);
- encouragement of community, ecumenicity, and social involvement (IALC, *Principles for Worship*), along with an acknowledgment of the Eucharist as the principal Christian act on Sundays (Liturgical Movement, IALC);
- a willingness to engage in contemporary struggles, including but not limited to power, privileging of the clergy, homosexuality, sexism, racism, concern for the fragile environment, and the recognition that we are no longer and exclusively an English-speaking denomination (contemporary society, IALC); and
- remaining open to the ongoing revelation of God (*Principles for Worship*)—whether we like the issues this presents or not.

It is a tall order, and it will likely produce no confessional document or covenantal text of any integrity, let alone one to which many would subscribe. Yet, as Brittain has written, “The most faithful way to live as disciples through these interesting times is to nurture a willingness to walk together, while refusing to indulge in a consoling but shallowly reactive confessional obsession, or in panicked declarations that the sky is falling.”⁸¹

This mindset of willingness to be open to the call of discipleship represents a way forward with regard to the revision of liturgical texts as well. So often, however, our polemically charged times lead faithful Christians of every stripe to hinge their beliefs on a particular outcome, rather than ground them in shared principles. Understanding

⁸¹ Brittain, “Confession Obsession,” 799.

the inherent and immeasurable value of our Anglican unself-consciousness, we can truly listen for and follow the leading of the still small voice of God—instead of being browbeaten by the shouting of extremists. The *via media* is the broad avenue that lies ahead of us. Let us begin to walk together—not knowing the outcome of specific issues nor clear how much of the past we can drag along with us, but confident that based on a shared understanding of common principles we are following the leading of God in Christ.