

Questions received fell into three categories

1. About the Worship Services
2. About the Clergy
3. About Faith and Theology

1. About the Worship Services

What about the Agnus Dei? BAS p230 Eucharist? The Psalms? Singing the Lord's Prayer? OT, NT and Gospel Readings?

All of these questions, I think, come from people who are missing the richness of their past worship practices. There is something about the old and familiar which seems to be getting lost in trying out other patterns of worship.

These are really good points to raise. After all, most of the folks here grew up with this older pattern of worship, and it works for us.

The counter to this is that we all know that practicing these older patterns, while rich for us, was not serving newcomers, younger people or seekers trying out our churches. All four traditional churches were shrinking and ageing.

But the counter is not the answer, just an observation.

Here is a first step to an answer.....

In many churches dealing with change, more change and faster change, the way they do things is to have a "twin track" ministry. They have one service which is *traditional*, and another which is *contemporary*.

25 years after the BAS appeared we think that the old BCP is *traditional* and the BAS is *contemporary*, but for most people under 40, looking for a church, both are really *traditional* services.

We probably need to think through what we plan to do about the way we do worship in today's language, culture, music and style, and how we do the worship of our past, which fed us then, and actually would feed us well now. The third Sunday "contemporary" service has been our attempt to try out a more 21st century style of Anglicanism. However it is actually fairly dated too and needs to be worked on.

Should we have a full, old-fashioned Morning Prayer and Eucharist pattern with old hymns and all the readings, chants and bells and really celebrate our heritage?

We would then also have something like the Third Sunday every week for New Anglicanism. But what would the times be for these services?

2. About the Clergy

Should priests be called "Father" or "Reverend" or "Brother"? What about women priests? Did the hierarchical structure of the Anglican Church help in the spread of the church over the world? Am I a professional priest or a spiritual leader? Do I believe we will be a vibrant spiritual community moving forward to the new site?

Jesus said, "Call no man Father. You have one father in heaven" Mt 23:9 I have always found it troubling that Jesus's church flatly disregards his teaching. The Early Church acknowledged no hierarchy or distinctions but the one which distinguished those who were "in Christ" from those who were not. Only the Society of Friends, the Quakers, have managed to hold on to this. Hierarchy is like a compulsion among our species, and when the Roman Empire decided to use Christianity as the state religion it simply overlaid the Imperial pattern onto the church. Bishops in cathedrals in fortified cities acted like governors in palaces. Priests in towns acted like magistrates. Congregations mirrored the peasantry. This, in turn, was the basis for English life in the time of the Empire. Church and empire expanded hand in hand backed by development and salvation and enforced by a harsh military and the fear of damnation. Anglicanism spread all over the globe, but only where the Empire went. I am a product of that Empire, as are you all. And so is Canada, a land taken by force and by trade, by selfless service and faithful evangelism. It is a mixture of good and bad.

So it is hard to break a life-long habit of addressing a priest as “father”, which is a designation of both respect and affection. But it is not a practice I teach. In baptism we are all given “Christian Names”. Mine is David, and that is how I introduce myself in the Christian Community.

In the Church I am also a priest. It is a professional title and I am trained to be a professional. Bishops control priests and can move them around like a contractor moves plumbers around different sites. We are required, by canon law, to be professional in our relationship with individuals and the community of the church.

I am a spiritual leader in as much as people chose to follow the particular understanding of Christ’s call to discipleship and apostolate that I teach and work from. But I do not seek a personal following. Priests come and go, the church continues. We must not become too important.

3. About Faith and Theology

Passages from the Bible are often addressed to “the Romans” or “the church in Corinth”. Were they written specifically for them or for us?

Are we supposed to forgive and forget? Or is forgetting something different?

As a new Christian I find the church has lots of customs. Do I need to know them all?

When we say “The Word of the Lord” after reading from the Bible, regardless of which part we read, it means that we can find the Word of the Lord in texts written specifically for someone else. The Word of God is not the Bible. The Bible is just a book. The Word of the Lord is living and sharp, it cannot be contained or packaged. It is the Word of God to you! The Word of the Lord comes in dreams and in newspaper articles and from ads on the side of a bus. Looking for the Word of the Lord is like looking for gold nuggets, but you open your heart more than sharpening your eyes. The Bible is the collection of writings in which we, the long-loved community of Jewish and Christian peoples, have found there to be an abundance of gold nuggets. You find more gold in a gold rich area. The Bible is a book through which we have found God speaks to us. It is a rich place to go to if you are wanting to be open to God’s voice in your heart.

Forgiving and forgetting are different. “If someone strikes you on the cheek, offer him the other.” Jesus here teaches that if someone hurts you, show them the hurt, allow them to hurt you again. This teaching on undefended vulnerability is about forgiveness. Forgiveness is letting go of the desire to be revenged, or the right to hold a grudge. It is deciding not to judge another, or assume you know their motives.

But it is not about being a doormat, pretending that you were not hurt. It requires you to show the other person that you were hurt by them, and doing that generally makes you feel even more vulnerable to hurt.

Pretending you were not hurt is a lie. Forgetting you were hurt is a self-deception. Forgiving is choosing not to carry around anger, enmity and hurt. In forgiving you give these to God to carry, and you remain living in open truth.

The customs of the church, standing here, sitting there, coming to bake sales, trying to follow plainsong chants are not necessary to becoming friends with Jesus. Jesus does not know about these things!

But like joining any family, you will need to get to know its peculiarities if you want to fit in. There is a pleasure in mastering the oddities and quirks of a church, and these should be considered fun, not arduous work. And those inside the church, who are so at home they don’t even know that Anglican aerobics are strange, or that running meetings by rules of order is actually unnecessary, need to be light about these things too. It matters that you know what is about Jesus, and what is about the Church. The two are not the same. The Church is the vehicle, Jesus is the journey.