

Church @ Home 9th October a reflection by Revd Tim Vickers

I wonder how often we stop to think about the words we use when we are worshipping God? Each Sunday, and for some of us each day, the church gathers together to worship using set words and set phrases. And when we stop to think about it – which I'll be honest I don't that often – it's quite amazing.

Even within a Sunday service we find writing from scripture which are a minimum of 1,900 years old. We have these translated into English at various times. Then we have our special prayers – our collects and post-communion prayers, which could be anything up to nearly 500 years old. Let's also not forget about our music – we regularly sing music which dates from the modern day to the early Christian era.

And that's not even mentioning the main bulk of what we say each time we gather – the liturgy. Literally the work of the people in its fullest sense (i.e. not just us here present). We have a set recipe of gathering, of hearing God's word and responding, of Praying, of the Eucharist and then the sending out.

What we say to God in worship matters. The difficulty we have is that as many people as there are present, we all talk to God in different ways.

We very rightly as the church try to worship in common – to know that we are using words in common with our sisters and brothers in Christ across the world. Tried and tested words and phrases which talk truth about God, which challenge us, and which through saying them often enough will help us in our relationship with God.

Of course, the church has been around a long time. Ideas change and not all liturgy is helpful to everyone. One size rarely fits everyone. So, it's also right that in the Church of England, we also try to give variety to what we can say when we worship, and even the same words can be said and used in different ways.

The 8th October is the 50th anniversary of the Prayer Book Society. A Society committed to the encouragement and use of the Book of Common Prayer. It's probably our most common liturgical language across the Anglican Communion with it (or variations of it) being used in 50 countries and translated into over 150 languages.

It is a book that perhaps more than any other has shaped our identity as Anglicans, our understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus that draws on both the reformed and catholic nature of the church, being worked on at various times in 1549, 1552, 1559 and 1662.

You might be surprised to know that there is only one authorised form of service in the Church of England and that is still the BCP, everything else is allowed as a supplement. Although these rules are very rarely enforced these days it's still quite an incredible fact that millions of people each Sunday worship in roughly the same way.

When I was licensed as your Vicar just over a year ago I made an oath 'to accordingly declare my belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the

historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness; and in public prayer and administration of the sacraments, I will use only the forms of service which are authorized or allowed by Canon.'

As the church, we need to avoid any sense of legalism that one way of worshipping is going to bring in more people than another, or that one form is old and nor right. Yes, we may have our own personal preferences, but we always need to be thinking about what is good for the whole Body of Christ, not a part of it.

Instead I think what we need to see is this great treasure trove of riches, which help us build and nourish our relationship with Jesus. A library of texts which give us the words even when we don't have them ourselves. A never-ending resource which we should all be encouraged to tap into, whether it be our 8am, 9.30am, Evensong or something else?

So, I encourage you, if you have never been to an 8am BCP service, a Common Worship Eucharist, Sung Evensong, or Taize or something else – why not give it a try? Why not explore the great variety of our liturgy? You have nothing to lose, but you might discover an encounter Jesus as many others have done through the ages.

And as we do so might we say again those words from the Book of Common Prayer collect for the 17th Sunday after Trinity

LORD, we pray thee that thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen