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What is Praxis?

Praxis was formed in 1990, sponsored by the Liturgical Commission, the Group for the Renewal of Worship (GROW) and the Alcuin Club to provide and support liturgical education in the Church of England.

Affiliation

The work that Praxis does is supported mainly by affiliation. If you are not an affiliate, why not consider becoming one?

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Worship Transforming Communities

Liturgy Conference 2013 July 16 to 18 in Birmingham

EVERY FEW YEARS in recent history, the Liturgical Commission has organized a national conference inviting a wide variety of people from all dioceses to participate, to learn and to share, with a view to keeping alive the best practices and new ideas in the world of liturgical worship. This time there has been a seven year gap, but we are delighted now to set out the details of the next conference which is offered as part of the ongoing commitment to the renewal of worship in the Church of England under the Transforming Worship project. We hope that this gathering will enrich and inspire the liturgical life of the Church.

The aim is to bring together all who are committed to furthering the mission of the Church through inspirational worship.

Speakers

- Ed Foley from Chicago
- Nicholas Holtam from Salisbury
- Jessica Martin from Cambridge
- Will Todd (composer of *The Call of Wisdom* commissioned for Queen's Diamond Jubilee service).

Worship and workshops will include contributions from Tim Lomax, Sophie Hacker, Chris Irvine, Christopher Woods, and many others.

Venue

The conference will be held in the excellent venue provided by the University of Aston and the worship will be in Birmingham Cathedral. Both the Dean and the Canon Liturgist have been more than helpful in their willingness to accommodate and facilitate us at what is a busy time for them. The space in Birmingham Cathedral is ideal for worship: it is manageable in size, it is flexible yet it presents some challenges like many of our parishes and worship settings. We hope that we will

be able to show how transformative and uplifting worship can always be achieved in our liturgical spaces.

Delegates

The conference is open to everyone and while each diocesan bishop has been approached to nominate five people to attend, members of Praxis are especially encouraged to sign up. It may be that your bishop is looking for people in your diocese to nominate, so do keep in touch with your bishop's office, alerting him to the fact that you are a member of Praxis and that you are keen to help renew the worshipping life of the diocese. If you know of anyone who could act as future 'ambassadors for worship' in your diocese, then do alert them to this conference and encourage them to sign up. We want to have a healthy balance of old and new faces.

More

Further details are available at www.worship2013.org and this website will contain up-to-date details of the conference, its themes, speakers and how to book places. The cost per delegate is a very competitive £295. This cost is fully inclusive of 3 nights' accommodation at 4* Conference Aston Hotel & Residences, with full English breakfast, plus conference documentation, admittance to all working sessions, buffet lunches, dinners (including gala dinner), refreshments between working sessions, drink receptions and full use of the leisure club and swimming pool facilities.

We do hope you will support this important event by signing up now and encouraging others to do so. It will, we know, be the liturgical gathering of the decade.

✍ *Christopher Woods*

Reports

Faith for the future: creating worship for the Diamond Jubilee

At Leicester Cathedral we had approximately eight weeks to devise a programme for the first royal visit in the Diamond Jubilee Tour. We knew that the Queen would be accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh and by the Duchess of Cambridge. The Palace had indicated their desire for a party atmosphere.

We are a small cathedral that has a growing role in a very multicultural city and a very rural county. We wanted to find ways in which we could use the visit to develop our mission further, so rather than using our usual departmental approach, we created a team of cathedral and diocesan staff to deliver a programme that included a 30 minute service and lunch. This approach allowed everything to be planned with a unified purpose including the placement of barriers, the lunch menu, and the multi-cultural entertainment outside the Cathedral, the flowers and banners, as well as the music and liturgy.

A local university and the City Council were to be part of the day but what was our special contribution? We decided that faith for the future was our focus. This led us to explore the Church of England's particular role in the nation with Her Majesty as Defender of the Faith. The Queen had recently articulated how she sees her own personal faith and how that can create a climate in which people of other faiths can also flourish. We had a growing sense of the Cathedral as a focus of faith and as a place where a modern English identity is explored.

I had the freedom to write a liturgy. Thirty minutes meant that every word mattered and each section explored another dimension of faith and identity. It was not a multi-faith service but a Christian liturgy which began with 'Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' and concluded with the blessing in the name of the Holy Trinity. However, we used young people (signalling the future) from Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Christian communities, each offering a kind of midrash on the role of faith from their scriptures. The central Bible reading, Hebrews 11.1-13, 8-18, gave a distinctively Christian vision of faith.

We also planned for TV to beam live pictures onto screens across the city so we needed a strong visual approach. This included the commissioning of a corona

which was made from live willow – an organic material and hung as a meditation on the place of monarchy for those serving Christ the King. The outside of the building was flanked in banners with the word peace in English, Arabic and Hindi. An Urdu Kyrie eleison sung as a refrain by the choir with short spoken biddings created a still praying heart to the worship, as young Christian people from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds danced carrying lights to the high altar.

The official Church of England resources for the Jubilee are diverse but perhaps don't major on exploring the modern contours of monarchy – they helped us see we needed to set a different tone. We did include the new Collect written for the Diamond Jubilee but we struggled with its theology. The prayer suggests that Jesus reigns 'as servant, not master' when actually he redefines 'mastery as service'. This also exemplifies the Queen's reign and, at best, the Church's role in society. However, we decided to leave it unaltered and to let the other parts of the liturgy sit in dialogue with it.

We came to be blessed as words and music, colour and art, silence and speech combined for a transformative encounter with God and with each other. The Palace staff had joked in the planning about inventing a new verb – 'to jubillise'. That really did happen.

✦ *David Monteith, Canon Chancellor & Acting Archdeacon of Leicester*

The Michael Vasey Memorial Lecture 2012

Given by Mark Earey at St John's College, Durham, on 7 March 2012

The Revd Mark Earey is currently Co-Director of the Centre for Ministerial Formation and tutor in Liturgy and Worship at The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham, but I remember him in his former role of Praxis National Education Officer. Using his background in sewage engineering, Mark helped me to understand the complexities of *Common Worship* (CW) using flow charts and pipe diagrams. He taught me to read the notes and guidance material before reading the text, and to imagine using the liturgy creatively before putting texts on paper.

It has been twelve years since CW was authorised, and yet there is a ready market for Mark's new book, *Finding Your Way around Common Worship*, published by SPCK this year. Why do we still need books

explaining CW? Why, he asked in this lecture, is liturgy so complicated, and what might be done to simplify it? There are two options. Either the rules governing worship and the use of liturgy could be gathered together in one place, or the rules could be changed to make the boundaries larger and less well defined.

Liturgy over the last fifty years has become less bounded. Where once the *Book of Common Prayer* offered little scope for creativity, the introduction of alternative texts like *Patterns for Worship* in 1989 blurred the edges of a set liturgy where texts are held in common, with common rules for their use. Just as the physical boundaries of the parish remained the same, but the actual catchment area of any congregation has expanded as people travel to another church which meets their specific personal needs, so too the physical boundaries of authorised liturgy have remained largely the same, but the authorised, commended and gathered liturgy of the church is drawn from ever more diverse sources.

Imagine, then, a liturgical approach that has more in common with hymnody than the current rules-based bounded set, with a core of Christian texts and supporting guidance relating to values and frameworks. Anglicans would share a liturgical core, a centred set of texts, much like the Methodist Church, instead of the plethora of texts held together by the rules of the bounded set that we currently struggle to communicate beyond the liturgical cognoscenti.

The structure, use of common texts, emphasis on reading Scripture, centrality of the Eucharist and concern with the form, brevity and dignity of our words reveal our Anglicanism. Some form of accountability needs to be maintained, so that we can verify that worship is in keeping with the faith of the Church of England.

Each new group that enters training for ministry, either as clergy or Readers, seems to struggle with making CW work within the rules as they have been taught to understand them. The freedom that Mark proposes would release those who lead worship to recognise what is essential to our Anglican identity, without binding them to what seem to be hidden rules. Whether Synod and bishops could countenance such liturgical freedom and could trust those who lead worship quite that far is another matter.

✦ *Dana Delap, Curate, St James and St Basil, Fenham*

Now thank we all our God

A Praxis Training Day on the new Additional Eucharistic Prayers

Common Worship has provided the Church of England with a great wealth of liturgical resources. Amongst these are the eight authorised Eucharistic Prayers to be found in the rite of Holy Communion Order One. Despite their great variety it has been acknowledged that they do not provide the best resources for use when significant numbers of children are present; as at school Eucharists or all-age Eucharists offered on Sundays in parish churches.

In response to this challenge the Liturgical Commission began the task of drafting two new 'Additional Eucharistic Prayers' some three years ago and all being well the prayers will be authorised for use after the General Synod in July. The Praxis training day in Cambridge on 20 June provided a very helpful and welcome introduction these new prayers.

Anders Bergquist outlined the process that has led to their creation and explained the theological thinking behind the wording and structure. Gill Ambrose went on to share valuable insights about the best way to use the prayers, giving helpful practical tips. Before lunch we were able to experience a Eucharist for the feast of the Birth of John the Baptist incorporating one of the new prayers. Afternoon workshops enabled participants to explore the use of symbols of the Eucharist and the use of space and signs to help children engage in worship. There was a chance to try out some musical settings and the creative use of the Bible was explored. There was also a workshop on writing short Proper Prefaces for use with one of the additional prayers.

It came as a surprise to many of us present that the rubrics of *Common Worship* permit the writing of appropriate Proper Prefaces to suit special local celebrations. However, having been given the chance to try this, one was made aware that this is not as easy as it sounds. The day contained some lively discussion about the various contexts in which the prayers may be used and debate about what may be meant by the phrase 'significant numbers of children' in the guidance notes. It can be argued that one child present at a Eucharist is significant, and the question must be addressed for each specific situation in which the prayers may be used. This was a helpful and inspiring day and I am looking forward to opportunities to use these new prayers.

✉ *David Ridgeway, Vicar of St Stephens, St. Albans*

Events

Initiation

4th September

Praxis South West – Exeter

This is the launch event for the newly reformed *Praxis South West*. The day will be chaired by the Bishop of Exeter and Tim Stratford will be the keynote speaker.

The Chapter House, Exeter Cathedral
9.30 till 3.00

For further details, please contact Perran Gay (perran@perrangay.com).

Liturgy and Lament

20th September

Praxis Midlands

The speakers will be Gordon Mursell who is a former Bishop of Stafford, and John Bell of the Iona Community.

The Cathedral Church of St Philip,
Birmingham
10.30 till 3.30

For further details, please contact Janet Chapman [canonliturgist@birminghamcathedral.com]

Make a Joyful Noise

Saturday 27th October

Praxis North West

Manchester Diocese is holding its second *Make a joyful noise!* music day at Manchester Cathedral and other city centre venues. It is a day to encourage and equip all who want to see music flourish in their church worship. Offering a wide range of workshop choices, this day offers something for everyone! The day ends with a combined act of worship in the cathedral, at 3.30 pm.

9.30 till 4.30

Full details will be released nearer the time: please contact Colin Randall [colinrandall@mac.com]

Introduction to Liturgical Studies

Monday 22nd – Thursday 25th October
Sarum College, Salisbury

An introduction to the sources and methods used by liturgical scholars. This is the core module for the Christian Liturgy postgraduate programme and is open to those not enrolled on the MA.

To book contact courses@sarum.ac.uk,
01722 424800

The BCP from the Outside

An Ecumenical Symposium to Celebrate the 350th Anniversary of the 1662

Prayer Book

Thursday 15th – Friday 16th November
Sarum College, Salisbury

Leading denominational representatives will consider how the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* has influenced public worship in churches beyond the Church of England. A unique opportunity to listen to lectures given by scholars and leaders from a variety of traditions (including Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Reformed) and the wider Anglican Communion.

Convenor: James Steven, director of Liturgy and Worship at Sarum College. Contributors include Chris Ellis, vice-president of the Baptist Union; Susan Durber, principal of Westminster College, Cambridge; Norman Wallwork, Methodist minister and member of the Joint Liturgical Group; Alan Griffiths, lecturer in Liturgy at St John's Catholic Seminary, Womersley.

To book contact courses@sarum.ac.uk,
01722 424800

Sarum College 2012-13 course brochure out now. Email info@sarum.ac.uk to receive one by post. For details and booking information, email courses@sarum.ac.uk

Worth Abbey weekend

The National Network of Pastoral Musicians, an informal group from various denominations, welcomes all to a weekend conference (20-22 July) or a single day of workshops, worship and song (Saturday 21 July) at Worth Abbey in Sussex. Under the title, 'Let the peoples praise you, O God', the event will focus particularly on using the Psalms in worship, including a keynote address from John Bell of the Iona Community and a Big Sing with Geraldine Latty (both on Saturday). The workshops cover a range of subjects, led by speakers such as Stephen Dean (40 years of responsorial psalms), Richard Hubbard (music from Taizé) and Gary O'Neill (all age worship). For further information and an application form, follow the link from the NNPM homepage (<http://nnpm.org>).

Book reviews

Lost in Wonder: Essays on Literature and the Arts

Aidan Nichols, *Ashgate*, 2011, ISBN 978-1-4094-3161-9 pp. viii + 184 £45

This collection of essays written at various times is brought together, as the Preface describes, under the rubric of Christian aesthetics. Through explorations of the liturgy as the most direct aesthetic encounter with the beauty of God, the architectural, decorative and musical setting of worship, and the literary response to the divine, Aidan Nichols experiments with the idea of that 'lostness of ecstasy' (p. vii) which characterises profound, and profoundly beautiful, religious experience.

Each essay is fascinating in its own right and several of them address subjects which are interesting because they are well out of the range of the general reader. How many have heard of the émigré Russian literary critic Weidlé, whose work is discussed in the final piece, for example? Yet even with Nichols's confident organising rationale, it is not always easy to see a genuine continuity. The strongest connecting thread is probably also the most contentious: a clear preference for the Mass of Pius V, the mystery theology of Odo Casel, and trends in Church music before Vatican II. The give-away is a quotation from (the then) Joseph Ratzinger in the chapter on music:

One shudders at the lacklustre face of the postconciliar liturgy as it has become, or one is bored with its banality and its lack of artistic standards. (J. Ratzinger *The Feast of Faith* San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986, p. 100 – English translation)

In one way, therefore, this is a distinctly nostalgic collection, but not one to be written off impatiently by those who are optimistic that beauty and wonder might still be found in liturgies that have emphasised assembly over sacrifice, and participation over mystery. The subject matter and quality of the writing in each of these essays remind us that there are wells that should be regularly tapped in contemporary thinking about worship. We might resist Nichols's thinly

disguised disappointment in current norms, but we would be wrong to hold out stubbornly against his insistence on setting the highest standards if we are serious about finding the beauty of God in our own worship.

✉ *Bridget Nichols, Ely*

Singing the Faith

Canterbury Press Norwich; Music edition, 2011, ISBN 978-1848250673, £30

Singing the Faith is the new hymn book authorized for use in all churches in the Methodist Connexion. In appearance it is very like *Hymns Ancient and Modern New Standard*, and is a handsome volume. The typeface used is not, in my opinion, very attractive, but nor is it unclear.

The structure is helpful, and the book opens with hymns about the Holy Trinity, the first three of which comprise a Scottish metrical psalm, a song from the last decade, and a modern hymn – an indication of the book's breadth.

This breadth is both a joy and a frustration. There are some exciting new tunes, for example *SACRISTA* by Guy Turner to 'Author of life divine' (572). Two songs about Scripture by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend (156 and 161) may prove liturgically helpful in a preaching service. There are hymns which use feminine imagery to striking effect, not least 'She sits like a bird' (393) by John Bell and Graham Maule. However, some of the new material will sound insubstantial except in places where there are instrumentalists of semi-professional standard. Other texts moralise, which, in a denomination which has traditionally prized the doctrine of justification by grace, is unfortunate. At least one text is frankly heterodox ('God weeps', 700). Perhaps more hymns by the Wesleys would have helped: their work accounts for 28% of the 1933 *Methodist Hymn Book* and 21% of the 1983 *Hymns and Psalms*, but only 11% of *Singing the Faith*.

Although metrical psalms are included among the hymns, the section of Canticles and Psalms provides no

music. This probably reflects the way the texts are used in Methodist churches; but a denominational hymn book which simply reflects normal practice and does not implicitly encourage something better has missed a trick. Strangely, the canticles use the texts in *Common Worship*, not the *Methodist Worship Book*. This may prove helpful in LEPs, as may the provision of James MacMillan's *St Anne's Mass*.

Overall, *Singing the Faith* brings together some useful material. The book is less aspirational than *Hymns and Psalms*, and this is reflected in the lack of Wesley material, the less adventurous choice of tunes (it is, for example, a shame to lose *FAIREST ISLE* to 'Love divine'), and the inclusion of some items which feel rather lightweight. The book probably does hold up a mirror to Methodist congregations. Whether they like what they see remains to be seen.

✉ *Liam Beadle, Curate of Enfield*

Gender Differences and the Making of Liturgical History: Lifting a Veil on Liturgy's Past

Teresa Berger, *Liturgy, Worship and Society Series, Ashgate*, 2011, ISBN 978-1409426981 £19.99

In this fascinating and scholarly book, Teresa Berger analyses the many and varied ways in which gender identities have been understood in, and contributed to, Christian worship.

The book is in two parts. The first discusses her methodology and the idea of investigating concepts of gender in liturgical history. Speaking of gender is not simply a matter of speaking about men and women. Berger is interested in unveiling the full complexity of gender and worship through history: she carefully distinguishes several different masculinities and femininities, and explores how each has been constituted in Christian theology and liturgical practice. For example, women are not simply women: they are consecrated virgins, orders of widows, pregnant, lactating, menstruating and so on. Men are not simply men: they are boys, young men, adults or elders, married or

Book reviews

unmarried, celibate or sexually active, eunuchs of various different types, and so on. Gender history is not just about women.

The second, larger, part consists of four case studies which make fascinating reading. The first is about gendered liturgical spaces, the second about Eucharistic practices. This second case study includes, for example, a discussion about the Eucharist conceived as mother's milk. The third analyses gendered presence at worship by looking at how bodily flows (such as menstruation or nocturnal emissions) have been constructed as liturgical impediments. The section concludes with a survey of the developing link between liturgical presidency and a priestly (celibate) construct of masculinity. This developed in a culture in which virility was understood in terms of control, and in which the male ejaculate was conceived as holding a man's vital spirit – so a man who retained, rather than emitting it, was more powerful. There is also an impressive and enlightening discussion about eunuchs (castrated men), and the ways in which they were discussed, and admitted or excluded from worship, in the early Christian centuries.

Berger is very clear about why this project matters. Liturgy, she points out, has a 'commitment to truthful anamnesis': 'narrating the past is a fundamental liturgical act'. Since history and remembrance lie at the heart of Christian liturgy, it is important that we get the history right. The history of gender identities provides a clear example of how we can become so used to things just being as they are, that we forget to question how they came to be that way. There is also, of course, a contemporary ecclesial and pastoral commitment behind this project: 'out of what is visible of the past, the church continues to lay claim to a particular construal – tradition – understood as spirit-inspired and spirit-sustained.' But this can't safely rest on unsafe readings of the past, and Berger is clear that unmasking half-truths is Spirit-inspired and important. She hopes to unveil

the history of liturgy as being 'filled with gender as both a fundamental given and deeply contested', as a useful background contribution to current debates about (for example) female and homosexual identities and priesthood. It is an impressive feat of scholarship, and certainly succeeds in making it clear that our gender categories and how they relate to worship, both now and historically, have never been a simple matter.

✦ *Miranda Threlfall-Holmes is Chaplain & Solway Fellow of University College, Durham. Her latest book, Essential History of Christianity, is published by SPCK in October 2012.*

Ministry without Madness

Gordon Oliver, SPCK, ISBN 978-028063642 £9.99

Ministry without madness is a rich account of one man's experience of ministry and ministry education over a number of years. Gordon Oliver uses his knowledge and awareness of parish ministry to examine the way in which we are called to serve. It was easy and engaging to read. The examples used are the kind most of us would come up against either in our own ministries, or those of our friends and colleagues.

At the end of each chapter there are questions to consider further. This is the sort of book that could usefully be used in a CME 4-7 group to tease out what might be happening in a curacy. How does the reality of our ministry feature in that spiritual encounter we had with God in our call to ordination or indeed the theology we learnt in our course or college? It might also be fascinating to get churchwardens and other congregational leaders to read and talk with us about what might be going on in our environment.

I found the chapter: 'Called to lead' particularly interesting as I had just preached a sermon on friendship and leadership. Gordon Oliver takes freedom, loyalty, love, knowledge and wisdom, love and reflects that these are essential to the friendships or relationships that we will have with

the people we both serve and lead. Taking Jesus' example of his disciples – soon to be leaders of his people – as friends (John 15), he encourages us to consider the possibility that this might open up new understandings of a more management style of leadership: identity, purpose, authority, motivation, direction, resources and cost.

Luckily the next chapter is 'Called to rest and wait'. We have probably all had those frenetic times when we've rushed around and achieved probably not a lot. It was good to see that sitting and waiting on God is something that we need to practise both for ourselves and as a model for others. Finally we are called to be fools, and to remember that it is, of course, the strange, daft, extraordinary person we are that has been called by God to serve in our current place of ministry. This is a book that offers useful insights for a time of reflection.

✦ *Christine Hall, Assistant Priest, St Dunstan's, Stepney*

Worship and Freedom in the Church of England: Exploring the Boundaries

Grove Worship Series, number 210

In this booklet Ian Tarrant clarifies the freedom available under *Common Worship*, reflects on the interaction between worship and discipleship, and asks for further worship freedom.

New mission contexts raise the question as never before: what exactly is allowed within Anglican worship? How flexible can we be? This intensely practical guide sets out the boundaries of Anglican forms of worship, but also describes the considerable flexibility that there is, and offers examples for deploying this flexibility in different situations.

Musical news

Beyond our Dreaming

The eminent hymn-writer Timothy Dudley-Smith celebrated his 85th birthday on Boxing Day 2011 and continues to devote time and energy to his craft. *Beyond our Dreaming*, the most recent supplement to his collected hymn texts (published by OUP), contains 36 new hymns written between 2008 and 2011. As with earlier collections, there are full notes describing the circumstances in which the words were written, suggesting tunes, explaining biblical references and so on. There is also some useful cumulative index material, covering *A House of Praise* (2003), *A Door for the Word* (2006), *Praise to the Name* (2009) and this latest volume.

The introduction presents some fascinating reflections on the creative process, quoting a wide range of writers, particularly poets. The author comments on the 80/20 principle, often known as Pareto's Law, which he says can be applied in many fields: for example, 'in any school, 20% of the pupils cause 80% of the disruption; 20% of his or her patients take up 80% of the doctor's time.' He suggests that, on the evidence of CCLI returns, about 20% of his hymns are sung far more often than the remaining 80%. So one reason for going on writing is the possibility of producing another text which will join that 20% in serving the Christian community well – although he knows that a 'singable tune' can make all the difference.

Perhaps my favourite in this new collection is 'Come, learn of God's kingdom, the kingdom of light', for which four possible tunes are suggested – the metre is 11 11 11 11.

Those who value well-crafted words for worship and are also fans of the musicals written by Roger Jones may like to know that he has produced a collection of 32 of Timothy Dudley-Smith's hymn texts set to music in a song-like style. *Seasons and Reasons* (published in 2011) is available as a spiral-bound book, priced £10.99, from Christian Music Ministries (www.cmm.org.uk). A double CD of the hymns costs £12.99, and backing tracks (also on double CD) may be purchased as well.

Hymns for the Christian life

Keith and Kristyn Getty (originally from Ireland but more recently based in Nashville, Tennessee) have been sharing material from their current project, 'Hymns

for the Christian life', during a tour which has seen them visiting Scotland, Northern Ireland, Liverpool and Gateshead in May and June. Singers from local churches have formed choirs for the evening concerts, while other musicians involved (varying from place to place) have included Stuart Townend, with whom they have collaborated on many of their most widely sung hymns, such as 'Behold the Lamb who bears our sins away'. String players from the All Souls Orchestra, which celebrated its fortieth birthday with a concert in the Royal Albert Hall on 21 April, have also been among those taking part.

Daytime events for church leaders in each locality have provided the opportunity to learn more about the vision behind the Gettys' latest hymns, which reflect on everyday aspects of Christian living – the Gospel should touch every part of life, but practical discipleship has perhaps not been a prominent theme in recent songs for worship. In 2013 the Gettys will return to the UK for a further tour which will include dates in southern England (details will be posted in due course on www.gettymusic.com).

Diocesan music days

The Diocese of Salisbury will be holding a *Music in Worship* Day on Saturday 10 November in Bradford on Avon, with Andrew Maries as keynote speaker. Andrew will also be helping to lead *Make a Joyful Noise!* in Manchester Cathedral on Saturday 12 October, when other speakers and workshop leaders will include Stuart Townend and Sue Wallace.

Celebrating the BCP

In many places, the 350th anniversary of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* will be celebrated with a service of Choral Evensong or Holy Communion according to the BCP. An alternative approach is suggested in a new publication from the RSCM, compiled by Peter Moger (Precentor of York Minster).

At All Times and In All Places provides the framework for a festival service celebrating the ways in which the BCP has nourished generations of Anglican Christians and inspired composers of liturgical music, as it continues to do today. Appropriate hymns described as being from the 'prayer book tradition' are included ('Praise, my soul, the king of heaven' and 'Ye watchers and ye holy

ones' are offered as alternative gathering hymns, for example). Choral resources include Purcell's 'Remember not, Lord, our offences', versicles and responses by Peter Nardone (who recently became Director of Music at Worcester Cathedral), a *Sanctus* by Harold Darke, Britten's *Jubilate Deo*, and a setting of a BCP collect for three-part choir and organ by the young British composer Thomas Hewitt Jones.

The RSCM have published a second volume supporting the organists' strand of the Church Music Skills programme. *The Complete Church Organist: Level Two* includes advice and practical examples to assist in the accompanying of hymns and worship songs, anthems and chanted psalms. Technical exercises and some simple solo repertoire are also provided.

Blog-watching

James K. A. Smith is Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College (a Christian college in the Reformed tradition based in Grand Rapids, Michigan) and author of *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Baker Academic 2009). He recently wrote an 'open letter to praise bands' on his blog (<http://forsclavigera.blogspot.co.uk>, post dated 20 February 2012). Several points may be worth pondering by church leaders and musicians in contexts where the band leading worship is heavily amplified and has a prominent place visually in the liturgical space. Do we make assumptions about some of our worship practices without submitting them to rigorous biblical and theological evaluation?

Smith has recently completed another book, provisionally titled *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*. He believes passionately that we need to be 'theologically intentional' about worship as 'a communal, congregational practice that brings us into a dialogical encounter with the living God'.

More MacMillan

In Issue 30 of PNOW we mentioned some fairly complex choral music by James MacMillan, but this distinguished Roman Catholic composer has also written simpler music for parish use. 'Think of how God loves you', a short baptismal song written in 2010 for unaccompanied mixed voice choir, was first sung at his granddaughter's baptism. It can be heard on the CD *Who are*

these Angels? (CKD 383 from Linn Records, based in Glasgow) sung by the Scottish choir Cappella Nova, directed by Alan Tavener.

The sheet music of 'Think of how God loves you' is published by Boosey & Hawkes, priced £1.10. The melody (according to the CD liner notes, available online at www.linnrecords.com) also appears in the treble part of the *Gloria* of MacMillan's *Missa Dunelmi*. This choral Communion setting for Durham Cathedral has recently been recorded by James Lancelot and the Cathedral choir, and the CD is expected to be available by the end of the year.

RSCM changes

The leadership structures of the Royal School of Church Music are being reconfigured, with plans to appoint two Deputy Directors (new positions) to work alongside the Director who will succeed Lindsay Gray. The opportunity to rethink how the organisation can best serve its affiliated churches, voluntary Area committees and individual members was created in part by the decision of Sue Snell, currently Head of Education, to resign from her Salisbury-based post in order to look for work nearer to her home in Bath.

The RSCM is also preparing to appoint a new Regional Adviser for the North of England, following the retirement of long-serving staff member Gordon Appleton. His many years of service were celebrated at Choral Evensong sung by a special RSCM choir in York Minster on Saturday 30 June.

Young Voices Festivals

One way of encouraging children of primary school age to sing is to bring them together for a large-scale event. The RSCM's Young Voices Festivals include a wide range of music for Christian worship, drawing on a particular theme each year. The latest resource is *Bread of Life*, celebrating God's gift of food, both physical and spiritual. For further information visit the RSCM website (www.rscm.com/education/youngVoicesFestival.php). Some festivals are already organised (e.g. in Ripon and Birmingham in October), but a guidance pack is available for those considering putting something on in their own area.

Sign as a language of worship

I am a student again, a 'later in life learner', but this time I am studying British Sign Language to become an interpreter. What a journey! God's idea, but my willing response! At times it's as if I have been climbing a rocky mountain in bare feet. Plateaux of rest and regeneration keep me going for times of reflection with my Lord ... why me on this journey? It has been tough. I will be close to 70 when I qualify! What do the experts say about the best age to be learning a new language? It is between 0 and 5, not 60 and 65! The best bit has been all my deaf friends who continue to encourage me.

I never realised what an impact this journey would have upon my understanding of worship. Combining the spoken with visual signing has taught me, blessed, challenged and changed me in ways I never could have imagined.

So prepare to be taught, blessed, challenged and changed!

British Sign Language – the language of the Deaf Community

BSL (officially recognised as a complete language since 2003) is the native language of around 70,000 deaf people in the UK. The Deaf Community has a rich culture and its language is sophisticated. It is a visual language that uses reference points, mouth patterns, facial expressions, head, eye and eyebrow movements, body movements and range of hand shapes to convey meaning. It is not structured like spoken or written English and has its own grammar.

The impact of face-to-face

Signing is a visual language, seen and not heard. It requires good light and face-to-face encounter to pick up full meaning. Similarly the covenant of the New Testament is a face-to-face encounter of light and freedom. God chose to send his Son to be with us face-to-face; a humble baby, a Saviour meeting and communicating salvation; dying, rising, forgiving and ascending face-to-face with people.

I had never given thought to a face-to-face gospel before I learnt BSL. Face-to-face means we cannot be passive; we must be proactive, we must interact, take our turn in communication in our worship, giving our all in worship, responding with our all to convey the meaning of our true worship. Responding to God's call to worship him face-to-face means he is near to us. He can see us and we must seek to see him. He is fresh every time.

Why is it that we close our eyes and bow

our heads to say the Lord's Prayer? Where in Matthew 6 does Jesus tell the crowd to close their eyes, bow their heads and speak 'Our Father'? He stands where he can be seen face-to-face. Deaf people who use signing as their language of worship and prayer rarely close their eyes; their language of worship is a visual one, seen not heard. It is face-to-face with one another and with God.

A renewed desire to worship and a deepening understanding of sign language and its visual beauty draws me to God so that somewhere deep inside my spirit I feel drawn to respond with my all through a visual language. I believe God is raising up men and women to learn BSL later in life to be renewed in visual, face-to-face worship, respected in their own churches and becoming accepted amongst deaf worshippers to be part of his oiling of relationships between deaf and hearing people in the context of finding ways of worshipping God side by side. You may have people in your community who are being challenged to learn about signing. How can we identify and support them? Do parish mission action plans (MAPs) include worshipping with deaf people, supporting those whose calling is to learn BSL? Chaplains or diocesan workers for deaf people in your dioceses, when did you last have a conversation with your Bishop?

Find out more

Type 'BSL SHINE JESUS SHINE TONI' into a search engine; next try 'DEAFCLERGY.ORG.UK - SILENT NIGHT'. Watch, listen and be blessed. If there is a signer in your service watch them. Do not close your eyes when they interpret prayer and worship. Watch for how expressive the signing is and how it matches the passion of the words. If you want to find out more about how Deaf people themselves worship read Gill Behenna's article www.resource-arm.net/pdf/behennaworship.pdf. Dip into www.christiansigns.co.uk.

If you need to use an interpreter in your church then contact your local chaplain for deaf people or 'Signs of God' [www.signsofgod.org.uk/] Signs of God manages the Christian Interpreters' Network (CIN) – a list of interpreters who are willing to make themselves available to interpret Christian events around the country. Finally read about the translation project to translate the bible into BSL [<http://bslbible.org.uk/>]

God might be calling you to learn BSL. You might think you are too old. You are not!

✉ *Judy Burgess, Howiton, Devon*

In Times of Trouble or of Triumph

Stephen Shipley offers the second article to mark the 350th anniversary of the Book of Common Prayer

'Thank God for the BBC's longest running show!' read the headline in the London Evening Standard's arts page over ten years ago in November 2001. And what is that show? Not *The Archers* nor *Desert Island Discs* but *Choral Evensong* – first broadcast on Thursday 7th October 1926 from Westminster Abbey where it remained as a weekly transmission for ten years. It then moved to St Paul's Cathedral as well, then to York Minster and eventually to most of the other cathedrals and college chapels in the country. The programme now has over 80 venues including regular visits overseas, and it's listened to all over the world by nearly 200,000 people each week, either live on a Wednesday afternoon or the recorded repeat the following Sunday afternoon or at any time for seven days via the Radio 3 website. The response is remarkable; nearly always very appreciative, although it can get quite agitated, especially when we stray from familiar territory such as the three or four occasions we've dared to broadcast a jazz service!

The essence of Choral Evensong, though, must always be the liturgy which is its foundation. As Professor Edward Higginbottom, Director of Music at New College Oxford, said so eloquently

in a recent article: 'Evensong provides an environment in which all manner of people may confront, in an enquiring mode, the scriptures and doctrine on which the Church is built. Such people may be communicant members of the Church, or agnostic, or atheist, since the context of Evensong is more often the context of listening, and not the context of commitment or evangelisation.'

Professor Higginbottom sees Evensong as an unusually enabling liturgical environment within the contemporary Church - and I would agree with him. When I was a cathedral Precentor, I marvelled at the numbers who would come to Evensong regularly, maybe sit alone and slip away quietly afterwards. For them – indeed for so many listeners to our weekly broadcasts – the beauty created by the combination of profound and dignified prose and poetry set to sublime music unlocks the spirit.

The response to our programmes is, as I've said, mainly encouraging and revealing. Yes, there are complaints from time to time about the more esoteric musical settings, although there's much acknowledgement of the amount of new compositions which are based on BCP texts. But above all,

there's appreciation of the contemplative stillness created by ministers and choir sensitively speaking and singing the evening office in a building hallowed by prayer. As one listener wrote recently: 'I turned on Choral Evensong by accident one afternoon a year or so ago and I've been listening ever since.' The music is beautiful, but the special quality of Evensong lies in other places too – in the paradoxical contrast between the sinewy intricacy of 16th century language, and the simplicity of the thoughts it expresses: prayers for courage, for grace, for protection from the dark, for a good death. These are things to which our minds may particularly turn in the aftermath of personal or community tragedies, but they were there all the time in the psalms and collects of Evensong. For almost 500 years the same words have been repeated by people in times of trouble or of triumph. The presence of that cloud of unseen witnesses lends an intangible quality to Choral Evensong. You could call it calm or spirituality. You could call it holiness. But it's very precious.

✉ *Canon Stephen Shipley, Series Producer Radio 3 Choral Evensong, BBC Religion and Ethics*

Colin's column

I was leaving a famous evangelist and his minders recently. They asked: 'Would you anoint us?' I don't argue with such requests, and I did my best, unsure whether ministering to the sick – for God to make good any shortcomings – or commissioning for service. So I harbour much more wariness about oiling than Anglicanism generally displays, and I submit that it is a cultural fashion (like communion with everyone in the 1960s, and candles for everyone in the 1990s). But a fashion needs theological analysis – except, of course, among sacramentally inclined romantics, for whom, if oil is around, we use it. Oil thrives in the Middle East, and the Old Testament appoints by anointing priests (Ex.29.41) and kings (1 Sam.10.1; 2 Sam. 2.4; 2 Kings 9.3). There is a metaphorical use (Jdg. 9.8,15; Ps. 23.5); not least in Is. 61.1, which Jesus quoted of himself in Lk.4 18. Yet, although Jesus was the Messiah, 'the anointed one', he was nowhere physically anointed; he referred anointing to either his incarnation, or possibly his baptism and commissioning.

The New Testament records anointing

the sick (Mk.6.13; Jas. 5.14), though with the verb *aleipho*, suggesting embrocation, rather than with *chrizo*, as in the Septuagint verses and the title 'Christ'. Commentators generally reckon that anointing in 2 Cor.1.21 and 1 Jn. 2.27 is metaphorical. And that is the sum total. The Bible of itself would hardly warrant religious uses for oiling beyond anointing the sick. The fashion has developed within the Church of England from Roman practices embellished by charismatic romantics.

Anointing came into initiation rites from the third century onwards, in the East originally given before baptism as exorcistic, in the West found after baptism – betokening the Holy Spirit. In Rome it drove out the laying on of hands, and oil (aromatic, called 'chrism') is the 'matter' of Roman confirmation to this day. Chrism is also used in ordinations. The Church of England allowed anointing in baptism and confirmation through anglo-catholic pressure in Synod in 1978; the Maundy Thursday 'blessing of oils', in imitation of Rome, in the 1970s a side-chapel specialism for those 'that way' inclined, 'came out' in

the early 1980s; and the anointing of the newly ordained (priests – not deacons) also began with individuals asking their bishops to anoint them privately after the ordination rite. Bishops were taken by the renewal of ordination vows and enjoyed the Maundy Thursday event. Now oil is everywhere, its theological content spread pretty thin – useful for almost anything!

I am more wary still. When I was anointing folk in need after the cathedral rite in Bradford, a colleague asked 'Why don't you use cotton wool in your oil stock?' Well, I was getting oil on my fingers, but the alternative, the dab with minimally oiled cotton wool, is a bare apology for anointing. Fashions have delivered ordinary bread at communion; and much water at baptisms; but oiling has regularly no 'outward and visible' sign whatsoever. It looks (and often feels) like a dry signing with the sign of the cross. But romantic fashions rule OK among quasi-sacraments, so why be wary?

✉ *Colin Buchanan is a former Bishop of Woolwich*