

# EXPLORING OUR FAITH

## A Walk Through the Sunday Service

### Session 6 – A Look at Rite I

*This is an installment in a series, adapted from notes in the Sunday bulletins at St. Andrew's, that is exploring our Sunday worship. What we do. How and why we do it. History, theology, the way worship connects us with the mystery of God in Jesus Christ. Questions and comments are welcome.*

**Rite I in the Book of Common Prayer.** These notes have concentrated on the Rite II Eucharist, the one attended by most worshipers at St. Andrew's. But this morning we take a look at Rite I, a form of which we use at 8:00. When the Book of Common Prayer was revised, in 1979, the decision was made to retain as options traditional forms of the Daily Office, the Eucharist, and the Burial Office. Partly this was an accommodation to those who might have resisted transitioning to the contemporary language of Rite II. But also it was an acknowledgment of the beauty and important history of the traditional Prayer Book language, which goes back to 1549. The 1979 Book was the first to depart from that "thee/thou" tradition. While the 1979 Book led the way to contemporary language reforms across Anglicanism, the older forms still have a beloved place in our liturgical treasure house.

**More than language is involved.** While the change to contemporary language may have been the most notable difference in the 1979 Book, more important were theological reforms. The Rite I prayers trace back to the beginning of the English Reformation, and the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time, Thomas Cranmer. Cranmer and his fellow reformers wanted not only to move from Latin to the vernacular, but to incorporate Calvinist and other Protestant theological thought that had been spreading on the Continent of Europe. Fundamental to that theology was belief that faith, not works, was the path to salvation; that Scripture, not ecclesiastical authority, was primary; and that human sin was a strong and ever-present force to be contended with by appeals to Christ's atoning sacrifice.

**Marks of Reformation thinking.** We see this theology throughout Rite I: a form of Confession (we usually use a contemporary alternative) that "acknowledges and bewails our manifold sins and wickedness"; a eucharistic prayer that stresses Christ's "death upon the cross for our redemption"; the statement that this death was "his one oblation of himself once offered," not a repetition to gain merit by works but full "satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." "Humbly beseech" and "earnestly desire" stress the need for subjective faith, not just outward performance of a ritual.

**Tradition.** The Rite II forms recover a more ancient and comprehensive view of sin, salvation, and the Paschal Mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. It is not that Rite I is wrong, but rather that it should be prayed with an understanding of its context in the greater Anglican tradition.