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ST JOHN'S CHURCH, WASHINGTON,
CONNECTICUT, OCTOBER 2013
(AMERICAN SARUM II CONFERENCE)

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THE
EXPERIENCE
OF WORSHIP
IN LATE MEDIEVAL
CATHEDRAL AND
PARISH CHURCH

The Andrew Institute for Anglican Music and Spirituality

American Sarum II

INTRODUCTION

A gathering of clergy and musicians took place over the weekend of October 11 to 14 in Washington, Connecticut, under the aegis of the Andrew Institute for Anglican Music and Spirituality. This conference, following in the footsteps of the American Sarum conference held in Bronxville, New York, in January of 2011, was aptly titled *American Sarum II*. The conference brought participants from three countries and all across the United States to an idyllic New England village to examine the profound beauty of Sarum liturgy, its influence on the *Book of Common Prayer* in all of its manifestations—English and American, and the opportunities for practical application of the transcendent properties of Sarum Use in liturgies of today. The eponymous Canon John G. B. Andrew was a constant presence and a delight to all throughout the weekend.

Over the course of the weekend we experienced wonderful fellowship, extraordinary food, beautiful liturgy, hard work (the 1552 service of Holy Communion—knees on a hard stone floor—comes to mind), and great refreshment of body, mind, and spirit. The Rev'd Hal Weidman and the Very Rev'd John Downey read the Office of Terce beautifully on Saturday and Monday mornings and Canon Jeremy Davies was the exemplar of an excellent celebrant and officiant throughout the conference. Presentations by Prof. John Harper, Canon Davies, the Very Rev'd Dr. Jane Shaw, and Bishop Keith Whitmore were fascinating and sparked lively group discussion for most of the day on Monday. John Harper prepared two evening services—Vespers and Compline—drawn from the ancient rites and translated into contemporary English. These liturgies were stational and the entire worshipping group moved around St. John's Church; physicality of worship figured prominently in the weekend's liturgies. We celebrated Holy Communion according to the orders of 1552 and 1549 and sang Evensong according to the order of 1604.

On two occasions over the weekend the faculty met together to discuss what comes next and I'm happy to report that all are excited about the future of the Andrew Institute and all that it has to offer. The next conference is already taking shape and the faculty has scheduled subsequent meetings to shape an ongoing program. It is an exciting time! My great thanks to the Rev'd Susan McCone, rector of St. John's Church, Washington, and to Dr. Harper, Canon Davies, Dean Shaw, and Bishop Whitmore for making this weekend such a resounding success.

— Robert Lehman



Choir members, participants, and clergy at the American Sarum II Conference

REFLECTION

Episcopal parish churches built after 1900 may seem surprising spaces to explore sixteenth-century worship before and after the Reformation; but that was the case at Bronxville in January 2011 and at Washington, Connecticut, in October 2013. At Bronxville, I found myself asking, "Just how did they do solemn ritual at the end of the Middle Ages?" At Washington, the question was, "Just how did clergy and people familiar with Latin forms of worship set about the new services of the reformed *Book of Common Prayer*?"

Thanks to the vision and persistence of Rob Lehman and the generosity and hospitality of the rector and parish of St. John's, we were able—with excellent choral resources—to go on a series of musical and liturgical journeys. An opening concert took us on a sonic expedition through the long century of Reformation from Taverner to Tomkins; from the musical richness of early sixteenth-century polyphony, through the diverse influences (musical, aesthetic, theological, and liturgical) of that century, to the stability and accomplishment of the early seventeenth century, right up to the end of the monarchy and of cathedrals in 1649. Ritual explorations (and removal of chancel furniture!) enabled us to encounter the physical, sensory, emotional, ritual, and theological differences between the forms of Holy Communion of the 1549 and 1552 *Books of Common Prayer*. In a space of comparable volume to the Chapel Royal, we were able to encounter the sounds of a Christmas Day Evensong as it might have been heard at the King's Chapel Royal in around 1630, crowned by a rare performance of Tomkins' magnificent setting of the Christmas Day collect.

This was not just a delightful cultural weekend in beautiful surroundings; it was a serious engagement with the living actuality of worship of the past, which advanced our experience, our understanding, and our spiritual awareness. It raised important questions about the nature and qualities of worship in which the Anglican Church is rooted, and what bearing those qualities might have on our own practice and experience of worship today. It also allowed us to explore experimental forms of Evening Prayer and Compline that drew on some of the characteristics of medieval liturgy in a twenty-first-century context; worship which was liturgical,

but which had space for individual and collective stillness, reflection, and careful listening to the word of God.

What a privilege it was to be able to plan these liturgies, and then to witness such total engagement and commitment from singers, clergy, conference participants, and parishioners in their enactment. This was far from liturgical archaeology; this weekend allowed us to engage actively with the early years of the formation of Anglican identity rooted in public worship. It enabled us to begin to consider what this might contribute to worship now and in the future; worship that is decent, holy, enriched by the creativity that comes from the Spirit; worship simply focused on God.

— John Harper

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11

The second American Sarum Conference began Friday evening at St. John's Episcopal Church in Washington, Connecticut, with a concert, *Church Music and the English Reformation*. The Conference Choir, under the direction of Dr. Robert Lehman, sang an ambitious program of works by John Tavener, Christopher Tye, Robert Parson, John Sheppard, Thomas Tallis, William Byrd, and Orlando Gibbons. Alan Murchie, organist of St. John's, accompanied and played sections of the *Organ Mass for Trinity Sunday* by Philip ap Rhys. The program was divided in three sections, organized by the succession of monarchs. Dr. John Harper introduced each section describing the circumstances of each era, how the changes the Reformation brought influenced the church music of the time, and gave specifics about the repertoire performed. The concert choir was a superb group of fifteen singers formed specifically for the conference. Although rehearsal time was short and the repertoire challenging, the singers had no problem in forming an elegant ensemble and provided an excellent and stylistic example of choral music of the English Reformation.

— Sharon Downey

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12

The first full day of the Conference began with the office of Terce in the Nave of St. John's Church. That liturgy, which correctly occurred at 9:00 a.m. and consists mainly of psalms, was derived from the Sarum Breviary.

Shortly after followed Lecture 1 by John Harper, entitled *The English Reformation Journey c. 1533-1553*. Professor Harper is research professor in music and liturgy and director of the International Centre for Sacred Music Studies at Bangor University in Wales. (Harper is also known to many in the USA as emeritus director of The Royal School of Church Music.) He is the principal investigator of the ongoing research project, "The Experience of Worship in Late Medieval Cathedral & Parish Church."

He began his talk by proposing that we not simply look back at (and copy) what the liturgical practices were in the Middle Ages but, rather, bring the knowledge of those

practices forward as a way of informing our contemporary worship, setting the tone for the entire conference.

Toward that end, Harper's talk and accompanying video presentation included images of the historical documents and texts which he has examined—which inform about the ancient liturgical practices—and diagrams of the layout of both Old Sarum and the current cathedral at Salisbury, which show how the physical plant informed how processions were designed and performed. Continuing, he outlined the political ramifications of the English Reformation and ensuing results of liturgical practices and adaptations through to current days practices at Salisbury Cathedral.

Included in his presentation was a video of the enactment of the Saturday Lady Mass at a small rural parish church to which the liturgies were adapted—in this case St. Teilo's Church, now reconstructed as it was c.1520 in the grounds of St. Fagan's National History Museum, near Cardiff. As the project website states, that enactment, as well as others, "attempts to recreate the full sensory experience of medieval experience (including smell, sound, and touch).... All of this has enabled us to discover much more about the reality of medieval worship through the interaction of text, ritual, and space, and about the experience of all the participants (not merely clergy, ministers, and musicians, but also the congregation)."

Following this first lecture, those in attendance had the marvelous opportunity to put into practice a portion of what had just been presented by participating in "The Order for Administration of The Lord's Supper or Holy Communion (1552)." The Liturgy, which, at the time, "represented a significant shift in form, theology, and ritual practice from the first *Book of Common Prayer* (1549)," was both fascinating and meaningful. Notable aspects were the use of a wooden table placed lengthways in the chancel (replacing an east end stone altar) around which the congregation knelt on the bare pavement, the lining out of psalms for congregational singing at the beginning and end of the service, and likewise, the recitation—line by line—of the Creed and



The Rev'd Canon Jeremy Davies



The Rt. Rev'd Keith B. Whitmore



The Very Rev'd Dr. Jane Shaw

Lord's prayer, necessitated by the historical congregation's lack of access to written texts.

Following lunch in the Parish House Hall, the assembly reconvened for Lecture 2: "That within which passeth show": The Texts and Ceremonies of Common Prayer in the Plays of Shakespeare," presented by Jeremy Davies. Canon Davies was, for twenty-seven years, precentor at Salisbury

Cathedral, where his innate creativity allowed him to adapt modern liturgical trends, informed by historic practices, for contemporary use in the medieval surroundings of the Cathedral. His eloquent talk illuminated the influences of Prayer Book texts on the works of William Shakespeare who "discovered the theatrical value of sounding like a rite." Included were excerpts of the 1549 and 1552 Baptismal rites, the prose of George Herbert and, of course, the dramatic writings of Shakespeare himself.

Lecture 3 was presented by the Very Rev. Dr. Jane Shaw, dean of Grace Cathedral, San Francisco. "Reviving the Use of Sarum, the Book of Common Prayer and the Formation of 'English Use' in the Early Twentieth Century" gave Dr. Shaw the opportunity to guide us through mile markers that influenced continued liturgical development in the last century. Topics included the founding of the Alcuin Club to promote the study of the history and use of the *BCP*, the distinction between "English Anglo-Catholics" and "Roman Anglo-Catholics," scholarly publications on Sarum Use and the Prayer Book, the publication and influence of *The Parson's Handbook* of Percy Dearmer, the revival of interest in Sarum Use, Church of England prayer book revision, and other literary writings in the twentieth century.

Late on Saturday afternoon, the conferees utilized an exploratory form of Evening Prayer devised, and with many musical settings, by Professor Harper. As evening began to fall, two wonderful social and gustatory experiences were enjoyed. Following a short walk from the church, we gathered at a local home for cocktails. The house was designed by eminent New England architect Ehrick Kensett Rossiter, who also designed St. John's. In addition to libations, attendees enjoyed the artwork and beautiful surroundings, the lovely gardens and

outdoor areas, and the chance to reflect on the day's events. Dinner followed at the Rectory and, once again, all enjoyed the culinary talents of our host priest, Susan McCone. Thus ended our full and rich Saturday!

— David Brensinger

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13

The Lord's Day began with Eucharist among the parishioners of St. John's. Bishop Whitmore celebrated the fairly broad, Anglican service and extemporaneously preached a sermon more eloquent than most scripted ones. He reminded us, through the parable of the ten lepers, that a life of faith necessitates our hands and feet to make it real in the world. Dr. Lehman expertly led a combination of parish singers and conference participants through Byrd's *Mass for Four Voices*, his own striking setting of Psalm 111, and anthems by Byrd and Henry Loosemore. Parish organist-choirmaster Alan Murchie delighted with improvisations from the organ.

Prof. Harper and Bishop Whitmore presented two lectures in the afternoon. The former lecture enlightened participants about the sometimes unexpected Sarum attitude on tangible elements of worship—vestments, service books, use of organs, etc. The latter stirred participants to take the precepts of Sarum worship and apply them in our modern context, particularly demonstrating with data that the Church's future (that is, the Millennial generation and beyond) values medieval mysticism coupled with active outreach. He encouraged us, clergy and laity alike, to embrace our function as teachers of the faith and to adopt an "encounter attitude."

The afternoon finished with Choral Evensong, as would have been observed in Hampton Court on Christmas Day in 1604. Assembling the conference choir from around the area, Dr. Lehman brought the disparate singers into an impressive unified whole. Of particular note was Tomkins' rarely heard anthem, *Almighty God, Who Hast Given Thine Only-begotten Son*. David Brensinger played the organ in a very convincing historical fashion. Canon Davies demonstrated in this service the very model of officiating and chanting an evening service.

After cocktails, supper, and an impromptu sing-along around the piano, we gathered for a simplified version of Compline as adapted by Prof. Harper in his work at Bangor. In this, he coupled principles of Old Sarum and early Reformation practices with modern translations, congregational movement, and chant. This was quite enlightening about the application of our historic legacy with a modern countenance.

— Charles Hogan

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MONDAY, OCTOBER 14

Monday began, as did Saturday, in the Chancel-quire of the church with a simple spoken Office of Terce, adapted and derived from the Sarum Breviary by Dr. Robert Lehman. The simple form of Opening Versicle, Psalmody, Chapter, Responsory, and concluding Collect was a wonderfully meditative and prayerful way to begin the day.

Three sessions of discussion and Q & A punctuated with coffee breaks and a delightful “indoor picnic” lunch, filled the mid-morning and early afternoon. Bishop Whitmore, Professor Harper, Canon Davies, and Dean Shaw all offered their thoughts and invited discussion on an array of topics that ranged from the comprehensiveness of printed worship bulletins to the placement of the Announcements and the Peace in Sunday liturgies. The discussion also touched on the continued activity of the Andrew Institute and thoughts about how a “Sarum III” conference might look.

The highlight of the day—and, at least for some of us, of the conference—was the liturgical celebration of “The Supper of the Lord, and The Holy Communion, Commonly Called the Mass” according to the order of the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer*. Following the third discussion session, Professor Harper led us through a preliminary overview of the celebration of the upcoming 1549 Holy Communion service. Much like the 1552 celebration on Saturday, we walked through the components of the liturgy and had a chance to briefly familiarize ourselves with what was to follow. The Mass was ordered in anticipation of the feast of St. Luke (October 18), providing the opportunity for the observance of a major feast with choir, who sang a setting of the Ordinary by John Taverner (*Mass for a Meane*, in a mid-sixteenth-century English-texted adaptation, with an anonymous *Kyrie* from the *Wanley Partbooks*), as well as three simple anthems (Tye’s *Give Almes of thy Goods*, and two anonymous pieces from the Wanley MS: *Do Ye not Know* and *If Any Man*

Will Follow Me). The entry point for the reconstruction and celebration of the liturgy was the significant lack of ritual rubrics in the 1549 *BCP*, and the correlative hypothesis that celebrating clergy would therefore have continued “by instinct... to employ those actions, gestures, and movements which readily suggested themselves” from the earlier pre-Prayer Book Sarum Use. (John Harper, “The Supper of the Lord, & The Holy Communion, Commonly Called the Mass (1549): People’s Book,” introductory notes, 2.) The resulting liturgical experience was revelatory, for me not so much in its external differences (men and women sitting apart, lack of spoken congregational elements, 1547 homily), but rather in its essential similarity to the solemn High Mass as celebrated in many churches today. As John Harper had promised, the celebration was not merely an historical exploration or an enacted museum piece, but instead was a true experience of Eucharistic worship, in an immensely and immediately relevant and vibrant way.

The celebration of the 1549 Holy Communion was the formal conclusion of the Conference; following some photographs and farewells, a number of conference attendees met for dinner at the Mayflower Inn in town.

— Mark Ardrey-Graves

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