



The Epistle

May/June, 2015

Father Bob's message:

Summer is usually a somewhat more relaxed period here at St. Stephen's. I thought that it would provide a good opportunity to introduce on an experimental basis some changes during Sunday morning liturgy. This trial will take place during the period from 31st May through the 13th September.

Now I want to emphasize that these changes are experimental and are not meant to be permanent changes. At the same time, I am not excluding the possibility that they could be permanent in the future. Whether they are or are not will be based upon your input to me or the Senior Warden and subsequent discussion of all or a particular change. Liturgy is the work of the people. It means that you as worshipers have or should have an interest as to the why we do what we do in the liturgy and the meaning for us as individuals and as a called and sent community. There are no unimportant or meaningless aspects to the liturgy or at least there should not be, but there is a living action liturgy which changes as the church changes seeking to be a witness in a world that is not

frozen in the 1st century CE. As the Priest-in-Charge, I am solely responsible to the Bishop for ensuring that the liturgy/worship of St Stephen's follows the Canon of the Church and rubrics of the BCP to which I am bound by my ordination. I am also very mindful that you as members of St Stephen's have a right to know what is behind any changes that are made and to be able to discuss these changes with me and others in leadership roles such as members of the mission committee. And I hope and encourage you to do so if you have any questions and concerns about some or all of these changes.

In this article, I want to address what I feel is the most obvious and probably most significant experimental change. It concerns the part of the mass that is identified in our Sunday bulletin as "The Presentation of Alms and Oblations", the bread and wine and money. I would emphasize here the use of the word "presentation". The use of this word is in keeping with the Anglican-Episcopal tradition that holds the "offering" of the alms and oblation is made by the priest during the Eucharistic Prayer. The presentation of the alms and oblations is a preparatory event...preparatory to Holy Eucharist. It is not an event in and of itself.

As you know the bread and wine are presented at the altar at the beginning of the singing of an appointed hymn. The money is then collected while the hymn is being sung. At the end of the hymn, the doxology is sung as the money is brought forward to be presented at the altar.

The liturgical working group and I have discussed the issue of this order. I did some research on this issue. What I found was that in previous editions of the BCP specifically stated in the rubrics

that the money was to be presented before the bread and wine were presented and placed upon the altar. The present BCP rubrics do not specifically mention an order in which the bringing of the bread and wine and money should be presented. Indeed the present rubrics make no mention of an order at all. The wording of the rubric is "Representatives of the congregation bring the people's offerings of bread and wine, and money or other gifts to the deacon or celebrant." (BCP page 361) This has led some to assume that the wording of this rubric is suggesting an order in which "the people's offerings" are to be presented at the altar.

In doing some further research on this, I found that this was apparently not the intent of those who wrote the rubric. According to Howard E Galley who was the working editor of the 1979 revision of the BCP the intent of the rubric was not to suggest an order of presentation but to note that which is essential and required at every celebration of the Church, the "bread and wine" and then those which may or may not be presented at any given service, "the money and other gift."

I then turned to previous editions of the BCP that I could find and found that in previous rubrics, it was specifically stated that the money was to be presented before the bread and wine were placed upon the altar.

I have the sense that the order in which the presentation of the bread and wine were brought forward first was to facilitate the preparing of the table for Holy Eucharist while the money was being collected.

The concern that I have with the present order of presenting the bread and wine first and then the collection of money is presented seems to suggest that these

presentations are two distinctive acts, separate from one another and not the single act of the community presenting the bread and wine and money as one presentation of the people to be offered in the Eucharist. It is almost as if the bread and wine are not seen as a part of the offering of the people but simply a means of getting the bread and wine to the altar so that the altar can be prepared while the monetary offering is collected. Indeed this impression is highlighted by the money being brought forward while the people are singing the doxology. This suggests that the money presentation is being given more importance and significance than the bread and wine.

To correct this misconception, during the summer months both the bread and wine and money will brought forward to the altar at the same time to be presented to the either myself or the Eucharistic Minister.

As I have studied this more and more, I have also become aware that the singing of the Doxology as the money is brought forward is a questionable practice in the present Episcopal Church liturgy. While I have not had the opportunity to examine this more closely, it would appear that this might be something left over from previous editions of the BCP where the doxology was sung at presentation of the monetary offering. But in those editions, the liturgy had the offertory separated from the Eucharistic prayer by a series of other devotions, but in the present liturgical form the effect of the doxology at this point suggests a sort of false climax. In the present liturgy, the presentation is a preparatory event of Holy Eucharist and not an event in itself.

The present BCP rubrics support the singing of a hymn or instrumental music

during the presentation of the bread and wine and monetary offering; it does not mention the singing of the Doxology. Indeed Galley suggests that the signing of the Doxology at this point detracts from the musical high point in the Eucharist which is the singing of the Sanctus. I will be discussing this with our Organist and the liturgy committees about this in the near future so please do not be surprised if some Sunday the Doxology is not sung. And again I would ask for your response to this change.

Why am I making such a point of this? I am sure that some will think that we have always done it this way, why change it now? Because we need to understand that while there is some latitude in the present rubrics, every action associated with Sunday liturgy should have both meaning and purpose that draws us deeper into an understanding of how and why we worship this way and what each action within the liturgy has meaning for us and should seek to draw us deeper into worship that we might be empowered as a Christian and an Episcopal community to love and serve the Lord.

You will note some other changes during this period. One of these is the use of the hangings in the sanctuary and chancel area. While the dossal will remain, the superfrontals and the lectern fall will be removed. Why? To remind us of the beauty of the building where St Stephen's meets to worship and especially our altar and lectern where so many of our faithful have knelt for Holy Eucharist and to hear God's word proclaimed.

Fr. Bob

Senior Warden Update

The Mother's Day brunch was enjoyed by all. For those who missed it, maybe you will be able to attend next year. A special thanks to all the men who helped put the feast on. Carter Siegling did his usual fine job of getting photos of the festivity. Thanks to him for providing the photos. For the last few years the Saint Stephen's lawn and cemetery have been maintained by Nick Ruggiero. All good things have to come to an end and Nick will be leaving the job the end of May. We will be looking for a new grounds keeper and wish to thank Nick for all the work he has done for St. Stephen's. He will be greatly missed. Thanks again Nick for a job well done!

DID YOU SIGN UP FOR HOSPITALITY SOON?



MAY

5/03	Donna Guess
5/10	MOTHER'S DAY
5/17	Koenig/Berk
5/24	No hospitality
5/31	Ford's

JUNE

6/7	Dee Dee Branham
6/14	OPEN
6/21	FATHER'S DAY – ECW
28	OPEN

JULY

7/5	OPEN
7/12	OPEN
7/19	Donna Guess
7/26	Paula & Frank Spinale

*Please wish the following people,
a Happy Birthday*



May

5/01	Michael Rowe
5/02	Robert Arndt III
5/03	Michael Autry
5/07	Donna Guess
5/12	Jenna Upchurch
5/15	Ryan Floyd
5/15	Greg Koenig
5/17	Jeremy Maglio
5/18	Karen Kuehner
5/22	(Michael) Reese Addison
5/23	Catherine Beale
5/28	Derek (& David) Montrose
5/29	Rebecca Ford

JUNE

6/3	Beth Arndt Owens
6/3	Brenda McGrew
6/3	Rhiannon McMaster
6/4	Patti Earle
6/4	Emily Catoe
6/16	Kyra Davis
6/20	Chad Langdale
6/20	Carter Siegling
6/21	Erin McMaste

JULY

7/9	Mack Upchurch
7/14	Bonnie Bryant
7/17	Bitsy Milling
7/24	Kellie McGrew
7/24	Haley Autry
7/30	Laura Langdale
7/31	Phyllis DeLoach
7/31	Mike McMaster

Check out all of the fun we've
been having!



Hey guys, we need to hurry



The feast is displayed. Waffles,
sausage, bacon and sparkling
orange juice.



This is good!



Are you sure Michael?



We have to plan a great Father's Day feast!



It's fun to be on the Mission Committee