

## GENERAL SYNOD 2015

### REPORT OF THE LITURGICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Proposer - The Revd Dr Peter Thompson (Diocese of Armagh)**

**Embargoed until delivery**

**Check against delivery**

Your Grace, members of Synod,

I'm told that there is a very simple test which is used to choose new members of the Liturgical Advisory Committee. All of the prospective candidates are brought to the cinema to watch one of the Star Wars movies. When it comes to the infamous line "May the force be with you," those who respond "And also with you" are co-opted automatically to the LAC.

Whatever you may say about liturgists, we are at least able to laugh at ourselves. Having been a member of the committee for quite a few years now, I've noticed that there is always a good deal of laughter around the table, as well as a good deal of hard work going on to equip the church for its primary purpose, the worship of almighty God.

The Liturgical Advisory Committee isn't just about compiling Prayer Books and Orders of Service for special events and occasions, it's remit is wide and varied, as this year's report shows.

While work has been undertaken on many areas, I would like to focus on one in particular, the production of *Thanks & Praise*, the supplement to our *Church Hymnal*. 21 years ago the General Synod established a Hymnal Revision Committee to produce a new edition of *Church Hymnal*. When that book was published at the start of the new millennium, the committee's working life came to an end, and the LAC was tasked with the remit to monitor developments in hymnody and bring suggestions to Synod about the resourcing of the Church with new material. I am delighted that the work which we have reported on to Synod over the last number of years is finally coming to fruition and that *Thanks & Praise* will be available in September.

When the idea of a hymnal supplement was proposed at an LAC meeting some five years ago, it seemed like a good idea. The intervening years have seen thousands of hours of work by the committee, as well as countless thousands cups of coffee, and I won't speculate how many bottles of wine and gin. On a very serious note, I must pay tribute to the committee who have worked tirelessly. The whole church owes a debt of gratitude to Alison Cadden, the Revd Julie Bell, Jacqueline Mullen, David O'Shea, Derek Verso, the Revd Alan Ruffli, the late Donald Davison, and, of course, the chairman, the Bishop of Down and Dromore. It is hard to quantify the time and effort they have put into this project, or even to describe the range of tasks undertaken, all voluntarily, all in addition to their paid employment, and all done graciously and willingly.

Initially I thought it was a simple task of reading through a few hundred hymns and keeping those we liked or which were already established as popular. With over 1500 suggested items it was no mean feat keeping focused on analysing and comparing texts. Because of the limitations of space many fine hymns could not be included, and tough decisions had to be taken - none were taken lightly. That was only the starting point. Words had to be edited, checked against other published versions, formatted into a house-style. Authors names, spellings, dates all needed to be checked and double checked. Issues of copyright needed to be clarified. Tunes needed to be found for many of the texts, sometimes established pairings, sometimes new and innovative ideas. Often tunes were submitted as melodies which needed to be adapted, arranged, harmonised, endless late nights and early mornings for the music sub-committee.

Then there were the days and nights spent pouring over proofreading, checking dashes, commas, semi-colons and colons, formatting, spelling, guitar chords, copyright attributions, sharps, flats and naturals.

Alongside the production of the music and words editions, there are several other editions - there are two electronic editions, a kindle and an e-pub edition; there is a Braille edition, beautifully produced in three volumes by the Braille unit at Maghaberry; there are recordings of most of the hymns made available through the new Recorded Church Music Committee; there is a *Companion*, a book which gives the background, the story behind the hymn; and after all of that, Bishop Ned Darling has completely revised and updated his *Sing to the Word* to include the hymns from *Thanks & Praise* alongside material for the second service lectionary, producing a most comprehensive volume.

The plan for a supplement to the hymnal has grown into a very deep and rich resourcing of our corporate worship, one which I believe will bring new life and vitality into our worship for the next decade or two.

Over the next weeks we are intending to go 'on the road' with local 'come and sing' events in towns and cities across the island, using the sampler which we sang from at the opening Eucharist to introduce *Thanks & Praise* to churches, choirs, select vestries and others. We have a very generous offer of 15% discount off all of the books in the series, but this offer only runs until next month - those who sign up in advance of publication will be much better off, and so we do hope that you will take advantage of the roadshows, and encourage your churches, rural deaneries and dioceses to support them also.

The formal launch for all of the series is being planned for Friday 11th September in the National Cathedral, St Patrick's in Dublin. If you would like to see, feel and touch the book, there are blank mock-ups available on the LAC stall. You will also be able to inspect the Braille volumes there, and collect additional order forms and fliers with prices and information.

Each day in morning and evening prayer we say 'O Lord, open our lips: and our mouth will proclaim your praise.' As we open our copies of *Thanks & Praise* each week in worship, may that thought be ever in our minds. May we speak, and sing, God's praise with a new heart and a new confidence.

Your Grace, it gives me great pleasure to propose that the of report of the Liturgical Advisory Committee be received.