

Beauty of 1662 service

IT is the timeless beauty of the language that attracts many people to the Book of Common Prayer.

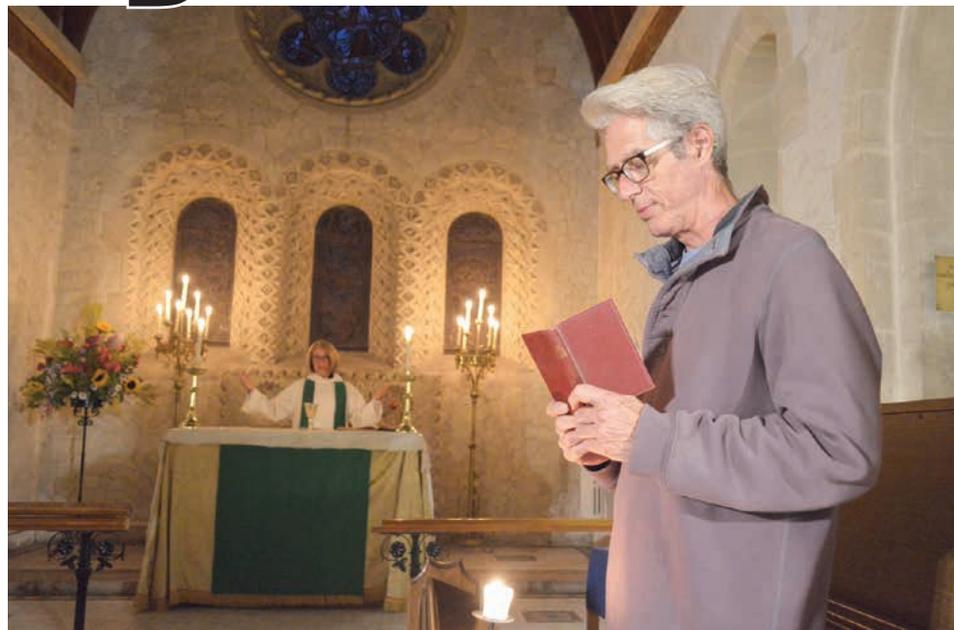
Worshippers who learned the rhythm and cadences of the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) in their youth can often still recite complete passages by heart.

And the version published in 1662 still remains the official prayer book of the Church of England, although many churches now use the alternative Common Worship liturgy more often.

Some worshippers still prefer to attend Matins, Evensong and Communion services using the BCP liturgy. In many churches, these tend not to happen as the main Sunday morning service.

St Blasius Church in Shanklin recently discovered that it was the only church on the Isle of Wight offering Matins regularly. It holds the BCP service on the third Sunday of each month at 10.15am in place of the weekly Parish Eucharist – unless it clashes with a major festival.

Worshipper Pam Dana said: “The strong sense some of us have that the Book of Common Prayer is God’s treasured gift granted to the



The Rev Rona Stuart-Bourne leads a BCP service in Hawkley Church

Church of England should need no defence by those brought up with the services. Well-meaning people claim the language is not that of the later 20th century, when most of the simplifications have been made. But the Prayer Book language, being 17th century, was also not current even in my youth, in the 1950s.

“Matins – with Communion following about once a month – was the usual main Sunday service in the C of E and we, old and young, more literate or less,

coped with it perfectly well. It became familiar and understanding came with that familiarity. The richness and beauty of the prose seeped into our consciousness and I believe evoked responses that flat modernity will never achieve.

“A further rich gift to us is the language of the Psalms, of which Matins gives us experience. Good poetry communicates before it is fully understood, or reaches parts of our spirit plain language doesn’t touch. We hope more churchgoers

may learn to love this service, which link us to our forebears in an unbroken stream of worship.”

She has invited worshippers to join them for their regular Matins service. For full details, see www.st-blasius-church.org.uk.

And the Rev Rona Stuart-Bourne, vicar of Empshott and Hawkley with Priors Dean, near

Petersfield, has invited parishes to consider offering BCP services at more convenient times.

She said: “There are many of us who enjoy the beauty of the flow and language of the older service. However, it is very disappointing to see that it is regularly consigned to the 8am slot, and almost never given pride of place among any parish’s service patterns.

“The service itself is reflective, and creates the opportunity for us to come before God, as individual Christians and sinners. As we hear

God’s word, reflect on it, pray for ourselves and the world, and then see God’s sacrificial gift to us in the Communion; we reach a crescendo of feeling in our faith and connection to God in the Gloria, before finishing with God’s peace being channelled to us, to take out into the world

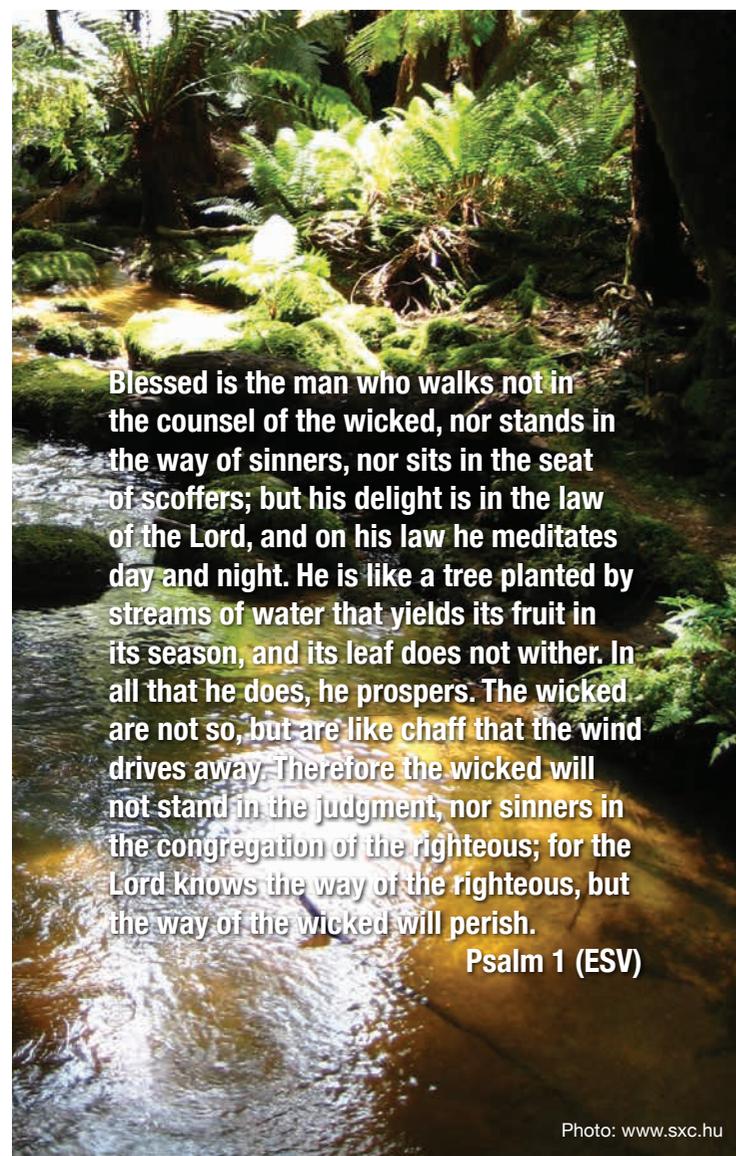
“My challenge to all in the diocese: if we have BCP Communion Services, could they replace the 10am service once a quarter, and include teaching about the spiritual gifts this service can bring?”

“Is there an opportunity once a month for a quiet BCP communion in an evening with reflective music?”

“And finally, can we begin to ‘rebrand’ this service in our own thinking as one which can help us to deepen our personal relationship with God, and therefore must be celebrated and preserved as a pearl of great price?”

You are welcome to join BCP services in Empshott Church every Sunday at 9.15am, in Hawkley Church on the Friday before the second Sunday at 9pm, and at Priors Dean on the third Sunday of each month at 8.45am.

More details can be found on www.hawkley.org/church.



Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 1 (ESV)

Photo: www.sxc.hu

Why truth does matter

THERE has been a lot of attention recently given to the subject of ‘fake news’ and ‘alternative facts’, with an increasingly widespread assumption that ‘truth’ doesn’t matter any more.

The perception is that we are all free to decide for ourselves whatever is ‘the truth’ in a given situation, or concerning a particular event, depending on our perspective, our preferences, or our opinions and view of the world.

Some of this can be fairly benign. I love the BBC panel show *Would I Lie To You?* – it’s often one of the funniest programmes on TV as contestants struggle to identify the unlikely truths hidden among unbelievable tales.

But the unthinking acceptance of ‘alternative facts’ can be really dangerous and harmful: when politicians hide behind made-up statistics instead of being accountable for facts, or when businesses ignore the real impact of their activities and soothe us with false advertising images of ‘the perfect family or lifestyle’.



the last word

by the Ven Gavin Collins
Archdeacon of the Meon

In matters of faith, ‘alternative facts’ can be common and often appealing, but ultimately just as dangerous and harmful: the preacher who promises that if only you trust in God, you need never have any financial or job worries ever again; or the pastor who says that if only you pray hard enough and have enough faith, then every illness will be cured, and all pain will be removed.

The world simply isn’t like that. Instead, we have in Jesus the One who assured us that he is “the way, the truth and the life”, and who proved that by stepping into our world with all its hurt and pain and struggle.

Instead of trying to deny the reality of loss and death with

false comfort, Jesus allowed himself to go through death for us – proving the confident truth of God’s great love for us and the newness of life that he offers to us.

So when you face tough times and are tempted to find false comfort in easy explanations that gloss over the hard realities of the world, my encouragement is for you to look to Jesus. Look to the one who faced the reality of sin and evil, pain and suffering, death and loss, squarely head-on.

And with Jesus we find the ultimate truth: that death need never be the last word, but that, with Him, we are brought through death into eternal life and security with God.