

low income an opportunity to read and study classic texts in the humanities and perhaps offer them a way into university studies.

A fuller text of this new article by Mr. Russell can be found on the Diocese of Saskatchewan website at: <http://saskatchewan.anglican.org>

**For your diary:** Interested in what is wrong with the *da Vinci Code*... Come and hear the Rev'd David Curry at 7pm on Thursday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2006  
Location will be confirmed...Please check web site or phone.  
Questions from the floor will be encouraged....



A new Anglican newspaper has recently entered the Canadian scene. *The Anglican Planet*, a monthly news journal published by St. Peter's Publications in Charlottetown, PEI. TAP contains a balance of national/international news of interest to Canadian Anglicans as well as theological/devotional articles which grapple with issues facing each of us on a corporate and personal level. Some of the best minds from around the world have contributed to the publication: J.I. Packer, David Curry, Michael Hawkins, George Sumner, John Stott, Oliver O'Donovan, Robert Crouse and Paul Zahl just to name a few. In its first six months TAP has seen tremendous growth. Having begun in May of this year, the paid circulation has soared already to over 5000, made up of parishes and individuals from all parts of Canada.

Individuals can subscribe to TAP for only \$18.50 a year. Parishes can subscribe for a monthly bundle of 50 copies for only \$99 a year. Visit [www.anglicanplanet.net](http://www.anglicanplanet.net) to find out more, or to subscribe online.

**The NS/PEI Branch of the Prayer Book Society needs your continuing support**

All our projects....the printing and postage for the Newsletter, the Prayer Book Institutes, Support for St Michaels Youth Conference, the Atlantic Theological Conference, our encouragement of both clergy and students committed to Prayer Book worship; and, most recently our immediate response to a request for a cash donation to purchase prayer books for use at All Saints Cathedral ..... Please help. And remember, receipts for income tax returns will be issued as soon as possible.

**THANK YOU!**

**It is important that we keep in touch** Please send us your new postal or e-mail address, or phone number. Know someone we should add to our list? Let us know. See front panel for specifics on how to contact us.



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**Branch**

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**ADVENT  
2005**



**Thoughts on  
Advent Wreaths**

By Bruce Russell

Many familiar observances of the Church Year are very recent, as anyone investigating the customs we associate with Advent will come to realize. Looking for an Advent wreath blessing, for example, in *The Canadian Book of Occasional Offices* will be a disappointment, although the blessing of the Christmas Crib is given. A search in Percy Dearmer's *Parson's Handbook*, will also draw a blank. This supposedly ancient observance seems unheard of by either of these authorities. That they fail to mention it might well arouse one's suspicions, as indeed it should. Dearmer does mention what were known as trendles or rowells. and cites as his source J.T. Micklethwaite, *Ornaments of the Rubric* (1897) who explains:

The Rowell and the Trendle were I think the same thing. It seems to have belonged to

Christmastide and to have been used in many places, but not to have had any special ceremony connected with it as the paschal candle had. It should perhaps be regarded more as a piece of decoration, such as the wreaths and banners which people put up now, than an ecclesiastical ornament. Each word means a wheel, and the thing itself seems to have been a hoop with candles fixed to it which was hung up in the chancel from Christmas to Candlemas, and was intended to represent the star of the Wise men.” (p. 44)

It is possible that Micklethwaite was mistaken and that the rowell or trendle were what we know as Advent wreaths, but I suspect he is probably right. More recent English liturgical manuals are equally silent. Cyril E. Pocknee’s 1965 “revised and rewritten” 13<sup>th</sup> edition of Dearmer’s classic, or Archdeacon Michael Perry’s *A Handbook of Parish Worship*, from 1977, a work much influenced by liturgical modernism, make no mention of Advent wreaths, although they were widely used in North American Anglican churches and cathedrals well before their time.

Advent wreaths, like Christmas trees, are not ancient observances amongst English speaking peoples, both having been transplanted in relatively recent times. The Christmas tree was brought to England by the Prince Consort Albert in the early years of Victoria’s reign and its independent use in North America may possibly have spread from German and Scandinavian immigrants to their neighbours even earlier. The popularity of Advent wreaths can with certainty be traced to the post-war American Liturgical Movement, drawing on both German Catholic and Lutheran influences. When I was a child, they were being promoted as a novelty by the publications of the Liturgical Press, the American Benedictine publishers of the journal *Worship*, but how exactly the tradition emerged and spread is difficult to trace.

None of the suggested origins of the Advent wreath withstands much scrutiny. In Sweden, it became the custom in the 1920’s to light a candle weekly in anticipation of Christmas, but some years passed before these candles were mounted in wreaths. The possibly related practice of the crown to which are attached five candles worn by the girl chosen to represent St. Lucy on Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> (the *hussegubbar*) can only be traced back to the eighteenth century. Another common theory is that the practice originated among Germanic tribes who lit wheels of fire at the winter solstice and that St. Boniface Christianized this practice, inventing the Advent wreath in the eight century, but there seem to be no reliable or ancient sources to back this up. More likely the practice had its origin in Denmark where they are common in homes and deeply rooted in national culture. I suspect the usage spread from Denmark through European Lutheran connections in the early twentieth century, and was adopted by German Catholics from their Lutheran neighbours, and immigrated with the Liturgical Movement to North America. Incidentally, the Danes use white candles with red ribbons, or sometimes red candles. The purple and pink candles are an even more recent innovation, and might well be thought inappropriate in churches, where only pure wax should be used.

Should we be suspicious of Advent wreaths as another fad of the Liturgical Movement falsely marketed as a venerable and universal Christian antiquity? Good ideas are good ideas, regardless of their origin. Every generation contributes to the development of liturgical tradition, and the liturgy of our times, even the conservative liturgy of our times, is marked by changes which we may not recognize. Those which are of lasting value survive, the others are forgotten. The Anglican

Liturgical Movement grew from the Ritual Revival and was in many ways its legitimate child. Most conservative Anglo-Catholic parishes have adopted perhaps more than they realize from the Liturgical Movement, practices that are worthy additions to worship such as offertory processions and a greater degree of lay involvement in worship. Perhaps its most significant Christian spiritual development of the twentieth century was the introduction of more frequent communion, championed among both Anglicans and Roman Catholics by the Liturgical Movement.

Advent wreaths serve as a fitting visual expression of our expectation, of a growing presence of God’s light amidst the growing winter darkness around us, and of the coming of “a light to lighten the Gentiles”. The blessing of the wreath on the First Sunday, with the lighting of each successive candle as the weeks pass, can fit nicely into the Prayer Book Holy Communion between the weekly Collect and that proper for the season. There is a Blessing of Lights in *The Canadian Book of Occasional Services* that can be employed (p. 54). Each new candle can be lit during the reading of the Advent Collect, underscoring the words” cast away the works of darkness and put on the armour of light...” A short reading from Isaiah might be interposed between these Collects. In my parish in Prince Albert, we used: 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday Is 60:1-5; 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Is 61:1-6; 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Is 35; Ember Days Is 58:6-8; 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Is 7:14-17. These draw together the sense of the day’s Gospel lection with the theme of expectation, and in several instances, the theme of dawning light as well. This simple rite of Collect, reading, Collect can be said as a station at the candle or read from the steps of the altar, with the candle of the day being lit from either a taperer’s flame or the preceding Sunday’s candle, by the celebrant, a server, or a child from the congregation. The previous weeks’ candles should be lit before the service.

Given the degree to which secular society ignores Advent, with a proliferation of Christmas ornaments appearing shortly after Halloween, it is preferable for the Advent wreath not to look like a Christmas wreath. The wreaths of dried grape vine available in crafts stores are especially suitable, reminding us of both the Israel vine motif of Psalm 80 and Christ’s own words in John 15. Dearmer’s suggested revival of the use of rosemary for its association with the Mother of God is attractive. The rosemary becomes brittle as it dries, but no more than evergreens. The fragrance is pleasant and the silver-green needles are not reminiscent of the Christmas tree.

The degree to which this custom has spread suggests that Advent wreaths can serve as a fitting sign of our expectation of the Incarnation of the Word made flesh among us. Our challenge is to find ways to integrate this observance within the spirit and form of Anglican traditional liturgy while avoiding the trite language and clichéd typologies of many of the rites that are in circulation. Often the simplest solution is the most appropriate in Liturgy, allowing signs and gestures to speak for themselves. Once again the Book of Common Prayer can accommodate thoughtful innovation that respects and compliments its integrity



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## This year, the NS/PEI Branch of the PBSC provided bursaries

up to a total of \$525, or the equivalent of full registration fees for three people, for Anglican teens in financial need from this diocese. In the end, \$514 went to support four young people: two receiving full bursaries and the others receiving partial bursaries to supplement funds from their parishes. Two of the teens were attending the conference for the first time, and two were returning for their second year.



Third year instructor, The Rev'd Dr Ross Hebb (a Nova Scotia native now serving in the Diocese of Fredericton), writes of St Michael's Youth Conference:

"So much talk within the church these days about 'youth' assumes that they, as a group, need to be treated as a very different class. The assumption seems to be that, since youth are young, listen to different music and are so techno-savvy, (computers and the Internet, you know) they must require an entirely different ministry. St Michael's Youth Conference, which just celebrated its 19<sup>th</sup> season, reveals just how different today's youth are - they dare to defy all such stereotypes.

At St Mike's, youth return, year after year, many of the older persons (15 to 19) on their own hard earned coin, to participate in mandatory BCP daily Morning Prayer (7:30 AM) and Evening Prayer and three 50 minute classes each morning. Classes cover the categories of Bible, Theology and Spirituality and for the first two years the classes in each category are obligatory. While commentary on present controversies is avoided, traditional Anglicanism is taught clearly and unapologetically. Third year and up conferees, (and there were many of them this past August), choose between an offering from each category which this year included such course names as religion and science, Christian decision making, Life in the early church (Patristics) and a study of the images in the Apocalypse of St John.

One might expect such a place to attract over-bearing, over-protective parents carting unwilling charges to a week of 'what's good for them', but such is decidedly NOT the case. Rather, one sees friendships renewed as willing, excited youth exit vehicles for another week at St Mike's. At week's end, bewildered and amused parents find smiling and teary-eyed conferees, amazed that a week of classes which do not soft pedal the Faith combined with plain Prayer Book worship has produced such an outcome. Such is the wonder and the ongoing success of St Michael's Youth Conference."

*Dr Hebb is Rector of the Parish of St Peter's Springhill, in Fredericton NB. His daughter, Sarah, has attended the Conference for the last four years.*

### Directors and friends of the NS/PEI branch of the Prayer Book Society

met at the home of the Rev'd David Garrett in the Annapolis Valley for a time of fellowship this past September. This was the first time the group had met for this annual social gathering in over five years. The get-together had been held regularly from 1995 to 1999 when Fr. Garrett was rector in the Parish of Seaforth. The branch decided it was time to restart the popular annual tradition and what better setting than the backdrop of Fr. Garrett's new rectory home in the Parish of Cornwallis near Port Williams.

Thus it was that an enthusiastic group of about 25 gathered in late September for a time of worship, fellowship and business. The event began at noon with a social time and then convened for the business portion of the day. Fr Curran, President of the branch chaired the meeting and thanked people for coming. He made mention of specific members of the executive who had worked hard in keeping the branch going over the past year- the treasurer, the secretary and those who had produced the newsletter among others. He gave an update on the Prayer Book Society scene at the diocesan level and outlined some ideas and plans for the coming fall and winter. Susan Harris, who had traveled to Saskatchewan for the National Council Meeting and the AGM of the Prayer Book Society of Canada in early May, gave an update on happenings at the national level. Questions were invited and a lively discussion followed. A most enjoyable lunch was generously catered by the Parish of Cornwallis, followed by more time for socializing and a service of Evensong concluded the memorable day.

Rumour has it that there has been a tentative invitation to Upper Granville for next year's social. I am sure that those who were able to attend this year will join me in urging everyone to put the Directors' Social on their calendars in 2006. A big **thank you** to all who helped to make this year's gathering such a wonderful occasion.

Diana Shelley  
Parish of Cornwallis