

**SPECIAL AGENDA IV**

**DIOCESAN SYNOD MOTION**

**EUCCHARISTIC WORSHIP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

**A background paper from the Liturgical Commission**

**Previous consideration by the Synod**

1. When the Synod debated Children's Eucharistic Prayers in February 2008, Canon David Bird (Peterborough) moved an amendment seeking to broaden the request so as to include Eucharistic Prayers for young people as well as children. Six members contributed to the debate on Mr Bird's amendment, none of whom spoke in favour of it. The amendment was lost on a show of hands.
2. In the debate, Mr Richard Whitmill, a representative of the Church of England Youth Council, asked for more clarity as to the age of those for whom the material would be written and pointed out that many young people had no difficulty in understanding the existing Eucharistic Prayers. He also asked for consultation with young people before a decision was taken to set such work in train.
3. Speaking on behalf of the Liturgical Commission, its Chairman accepted the need to look at young people's worship and undertook that the Commission would do that.

**A need for the drafting of texts?**

4. The Commission's view continues to be that preparing new liturgical texts, and in particular Eucharistic Prayers, for synodical authorization is not the best way of engaging with the needs of young people with regard to worship. There are a number of reasons for this.
5. With children there are issues of comprehension, and in its work on Eucharistic Prayers for children the Commission is aiming to provide a 'scaffold' to lead children into understanding of the adult Eucharistic Prayers. By contrast, the Commission is not aware of evidence that teenagers lack the inherent ability to understand the existing Eucharistic Prayers (though teaching may, of course, be needed – as it may be by adults unfamiliar with elements of the Christian faith).
6. Teenagers are as diverse in their tastes and interests as adults are, and this makes it difficult to conceive of Eucharistic Prayers written specifically for teenagers. Furthermore, where there are no issues of comprehension, the desirability of writing Eucharistic Prayers for particular groups of people within the church is questionable.
7. In so far as there is a distinctive 'youth culture' and language, this changes rapidly. The process of drafting, trialling, refining and authorizing the Church's liturgy is a long one. There is a real danger that anything tailored closely to the culture of the current generation of teenagers would be out of date almost as soon as it was authorized, if not before.
8. In the Common Worship liturgy, authorized texts are required to be used at certain key points. It is important that in every act of worship some of the texts used are common to the wider Church and not simply reflective of the particular congregation gathered for

worship. At many points, however, there is flexibility for a variety of texts to be used – either locally composed or from a variety published sources. *New Patterns for Worship* offers many suitable resources (and also envisages local composition of Eucharistic Prefaces – though not, of course, of the main body of the Eucharistic Prayer). It is not clear to the Commission that the wealth of material that is already available needs to be supplemented by further officially commissioned texts.

### **Guidance and training**

9. What *is* needed is guidance on what is available and on the selection and composition of such texts. Arguably even more important, in the context of young people’s worship, is not *which* of the available texts are used but *how* they are used. It is possible for the same ‘script’ to be delivered in a way that is flat, monotonous and uninspiring or in a way that is varied, creative and uplifting. This is why the Commission is trying to concentrate, in this quinquennium, on its Transforming Worship initiative, which aims to raise the standard of the preparation and conduct of worship, rather than on producing even more liturgical texts to add to the wealth of provision that is already available.
10. As part of the Transforming Worship initiative, the Commission is committed to engaging with the issue of young people’s worship and to offering guidance on the creative and appropriate use of the Church’s liturgy in that context. As a basis for that work, the Commission has already received a presentation of recent research on young people, their spirituality and their involvement in the Church.
11. Meanwhile, existing initiatives of the Commission are already contributing to addressing the concerns that underlie the Peterborough motion:
  - The Resourcing School Worship Group, established by the Commission and the Board of Education, involves Commission members, teachers, school chaplains, a Diocesan Director of Education and staff members from the Commission and the Division. Another group of Commission members is engaging in dialogue with representatives of Fresh Expressions (both members of the core team and practitioners). Both of these groups are concerned to develop worship that will engage with the spiritual needs of young people and will help to form them as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Commission will be happy to engage with other groups working in this area.
  - Each year the Commission stages a number of regional Transforming Worship ‘roadshows’ in which training is delivered by the National Worship Development Officer and members of the Commission. The roadshow planned for 2010-11 will deliver training in the planning and leadership of worship in schools, both primary and secondary.
12. The Commission is committed to taking forward these initiatives with regard to worship in schools and to producing guidance on young people’s worship more generally. The drafting of liturgical texts for synodical authorization and steering them through the synodical revision process are labour- and time-intensive tasks which could only distract the Commission from this important work.

On behalf of the Commission

✠ **STEPHEN WAKEFIELD**  
Chairman

22 January 2009