Real Presences: The Eucharist in the Anglican Tradition

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 March 2017

Preacher: Dr. Shaun Ross

[0:00] So today it's my privilege to talk to you about the Eucharist, which can be kind of a thorny or tricky thing to talk about. There's probably no other Christian practice that has been so wrapped up in controversy and conflict, even violent conflict.

Certainly lots of antagonism, and there still is. This is something that's immediately apparent, even when you decide what words you're going to use to talk about the Eucharist.
There are lots of names you can use, right? Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper, the Mass, the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, the Blessed Sacrament, the Sacrament of the Altar, and so on.
The Eucharist. So all of these terms have a certain amount of baggage. The reason that I'm using Eucharist is primarily because it's the most generic.
It's the one that kind of everybody uses, and we all sort of know what we're talking about. I recognize that even the word Eucharist, though, if you come from a low church background, can sound a little high or fancy or have certain kinds of expectations.
[1:21] So keep in mind that that's the reason I'm using the term Eucharist, is mostly because it's generic, not because I'm trying to import some theological content.

Yeah, Eucharist can sound a little smells and bells. That's not my intention. The conflict over what to call the Eucharist reflects a larger conflict over what the Eucharist is and does.
And so it shouldn't really be all that surprising that there's a conflict over what to call the Eucharist and over the Eucharist itself, how to practice it. In some ways, even more than baptism, the Eucharist is the central ritual expression of Christian belief.
It's at the heart of how you express your faith. And because it's occupied this role, his central role historically, the details of different Eucharistic traditions and practices say a huge amount about the differences between different traditions and sets of beliefs, what they value, what they emphasize, how they interpret scripture, so on.
In the Protestant Reformation, when the liturgy we use at St. John's was first composed, the debate about the Eucharist was at the heart of debates about other major theological issues going on between Roman Catholics and Protestants.
[2:49] Differences of opinion about the nature of the priesthood, the authority of the priesthood, the authority of the church, the value of tradition, the particular responsibilities of every Christian believer.

All of these debates found their expression in debates about how to practice and celebrate the Eucharist. One of the challenges that faces a church like our own, which uses a liturgy that was produced during the Reformation, is that our liturgy was designed to respond to a context that we no longer inhabit.
That is to say, we can sometimes be a bit deaf to the points that it's trying to make because it's responding to or was written in a historical context and responding to theological ideas that we don't necessarily understand or take for granted.
So part of what I want to do today is to give some explanation of that context, and specifically focusing on the 1552 Book of Common Prayer, which is what was used as the basis for the Akna and the Anic communion liturgy, so that we can engage more faithfully with the purposes of that text today.
So, maybe we'll just pray quickly and then we'll get into it. Heavenly Father, help this talk to be edifying and help us to afterwards celebrate the Eucharist with gratitude to you.

[4:31] Amen. So, the title of my talk suggests that I'm going to reflect on the Eucharist in the Anglican tradition. That is a lie. I can't do that because that's 500 years.

I'm not going to have time to cover that. So, I'm going to give a couple of sort of key moment snapshots. A particular focus on the 1552 Book of Common Prayer, which, as I said, is the one that was used as the basis for the Akna Anic liturgy.
So, I want to kind of break down this talk into three main sections, nicely Trinitarian, typical preachers strategy.
First, I'm going to give a broad overview of the medieval Catholic Mass. This will help us understand what it is that Thomas Cranmer was responding to when he wrote the 1549 and the 1552 Books of Common Prayer.
Basically, what the Anglican liturgy was coming out of. Secondly, I'm going to go through some of the highlights of the major ways Cranmer reformed the medieval Mass in England and clarify what those changes were trying to do or say theologically.
[5:50] And lastly, I'm going to make some suggestions about how knowing all this might have some devotional applications for us today. And I'm also going to conclude by briefly reflecting on what kind of problems or risks or dangers there might be in using a text like our own.

And maybe give us a way to kind of head off those dangers. So, let's begin by talking a little bit about the medieval Mass. Why is this important? Well, one of the main reasons is that our liturgy is responding to a Roman Catholic context that no longer exists.
Many of the things that Cranmer's liturgy is consciously trying to adjust or respond to are no longer features of the medieval Mass.
So, the main Mass in Cranmer's day in southern England was called the Rite of Salisbury or the Sarum Rite.
And it's important to remember that there have been two major liturgies in the Roman Catholic Church since then. First of all, what's called the Tridentine Mass, which was instituted at the Council of Trent after the Reformation.
[7:06] And then the more contemporary Mass, which was introduced after Vatican II, which is, as probably most of you are aware, in the vernacular. Catholics now celebrate the Mass in their own languages.

So, in some ways, Cranmer's liturgy is responding to and trying to correct a Catholicism that no longer exists. Though, of course, there are still some differences between Roman Catholicism and the Anglican liturgy that are important and that are significant.
Okay, so we could spend a whole session discussing the medieval Mass because it's wonderful and weird and bizarre and complex. So, again, I just want to highlight a few key things that are really important for our discussion today.
So, most of you will be familiar with the Roman Catholic belief of transubstantiation. The idea that the bread and wine are actually transformed somehow literally into the body and blood of Christ.
Obviously, this remains a point of difference between Catholics and Protestants. But in some ways, that difference is not as important as other differences between the medieval Roman Catholic Mass and what Cranmer was trying to do.
[8:27] Or it might be better to say that that difference about the real presence of Christ or the bodily presence of Christ was connected to a whole host of other important differences.

So, it can't be underestimated how much the Mass was the religious center of Christian life in the Middle Ages. Everything revolved around it.
And that makes sense. If you think that Christ is literally present in the elements, it makes sense to order your society around Christ's presence. However, contrary to the idea that there was a kind of monolithic or uniform medieval church, it's important to remember that the celebration of the medieval Mass was not uniform.
You would get very different expressions of celebration and worship going from parish to parish, from diocese to diocese, and certainly from country to country.
So, in England, the two main rites were the Sarum Rite, which is sort of from Salisbury, and the York Rites, which was celebrated in northern England.
[9:34] But you can still, if you go to a Roman Catholic church in Aberdeen, they still have their own special version of the Mass that is only celebrated in Aberdeen that they're allowed to.

If you go to Milan, there's a special Milanese Mass, and it's distinct from each location and can vary quite a bit. Cranmer used the Sarum Rite as the basis for the Book of Common Prayer's communion liturgy, which is, so that's where my focus will be, is on the Sarum Rite, because it was probably the most used in southern England, and it was the one that Cranmer used as kind of the framework or the scaffolding for his communion liturgy.
One of the things that's kind of another sort of surprising thing for people who aren't so familiar with the Middle Ages is there's this strange paradox in the Middle Ages. The Eucharist is the absolute center of culture.
It's the focus of life. But celebration, so the celebration was frequent, daily even. Sometimes multiple times a day there would be celebrations of the Mass.
But the weird thing was, it was very unusual for people, for lay people, to actually receive communion. They only received it once a year when they were legally required to.
[10:50] Now, why is that? Usually what would happen is that the priests would celebrate and the priests would have the elements, and everyone else would just watch.

One of the reasons for this is that people were afraid to receive. There was a strong belief that unless you had kind of created a kind of perfect contrition, that you had confessed all of your sins perfectly, that the Eucharist would actually hurt you, maybe even physically.
So there were common stories, for example, about unrepentant scoffers taking the Eucharist, and then the Eucharist swelling up in their throat and choking them to death in the middle of church.
So you can imagine why there might be some trepidation. So it's kind of interesting that in the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, there is a dictate that goes out that says believers have to receive once a year.
So people, and that was usually Easter. Other than that, mostly it was just priests who communicated. But there are sort of two key things, I think, that if this audience were to go back and participate in a Serum Mass, that would seem very strange compared to our celebrations of the Eucharist.
[12:09] The first is how much the Latin Mass emphasized visual spectacle and sensory accoutrements rather than verbal expression of theological content.

So it was more visual than oral. Some have said that the Protestant Reformation is defined by its emphasis on the ears rather than on the eyes, and nowhere is this more evident than in the differences between the Serum Mass and the 1552 communion.
First of all, as most of you are aware, the Mass was in Latin, which meant that most of the congregation could not understand what was being said. In smaller parishes, especially in early medieval England, this might also be true of the priests, many of whom only had a very rudimentary understanding of Latin.
So they would know the words but not necessarily have a deep understanding of their meaning.
What some of you may not know is that significant parts of the liturgy were said secretly, that is, whispered by the priest under his breath so that no one else could hear them.
So one of the strange things that would be weird to us if we went and sat in on a Serum Rite is that most of the, or significant portions of the ritual would be totally quiet. We'd just be sitting there watching the priests do things.
[13:29] So it's much more about watching the elaborate performance than hearing and understanding the words. So we've got all kinds of things that do this.

Some of you may have been to a service that has a sacring bell, a bell that you ring when the host is elevated. The host is elevated, for one thing. You look at it. There's incense.
There's elaborate liturgical gestures. I think there's something like 200 crossings of the self in the Serum Mass. There's gorgeous and ornate buildings and candles.
And there's, of course, the elaborate vestments that the priests would wear, and usually quite a few priests, so sometimes as many as five or six priests celebrating. These are all designed to create a sense of holy awe, which is in and of itself a good thing.
And the visual is emphasized. Standing in adoration of the blessed bread was actually seen as probably the most important regular activity that laypeople could do in order to have a kind of devotional encounter with the Eucharist.
[14:41] It was more about looking at the host than receiving the host, because receiving the host was scary for most people. Now, as I describe this, good Protestants that you are, you can see why reformers might be anxious about some of this stuff.

It can seem almost like a kind of magic. And the reformers had a point. Some of you may know that the phrase hocus pocus comes from a kind of confusion or misunderstanding of what the priest says when he lifts the host.
Hoc est corpus meum. And somebody who doesn't know Latin says, oh, that's the thing that the priest says, like hocus pocus up there. And so when you cast your own spells at home, you say the same thing.
So visual spectacle rather than theological content. The second thing that would seem very strange to us if we went back and participated in one of these services is the absolutely stark division between the clergy and laypeople.
We've already sort of seen that to a certain extent. Not only was it common for clergy to communicate alone, sometimes you'd have only one priest who would celebrate the mass by himself on behalf of others with nobody present.
[16:02] Even when laypeople did receive communion, they were not allowed to drink the wine. Wine is dangerous for the poor, which was reserved for clergy alone.

There's lots of other things that really make this clear distinction between clergy and laypeople. So Latin, the elaborate vestments that the clergy are wearing. And in most churches in this period, there was actually an elaborate wooden screen called a rood screen that partitioned the altar from the rest of the church.
So you'd actually have a kind of visual barrier between the laypeople and the clergy. So you can just... There's an example of a rood screen in Nottinghamshire, the late medieval rood screen.
So you can see if you're on this side of it, your view is occluded. You can see through, but there's this kind of visual barrier between you and the clergy. Okay.
The other thing that makes the difference between the clergy and the laity clear, if you do know the Latin, is the fact that in the Serum Rite, the priest always speaks in the singular. I do this. I do that. It's very clear, therefore, that the priest has this special representative role.
[17:18] He stands in on behalf of the congregation, much as Christ acts as a mediator for believers. So, the big thing, though, probably the main theological difference, and this is sometimes not very well understood by Protestants, between the Serum Eucharist and sort of the Anglican tradition, is the doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass.

So, lots of Protestants know about this idea that the bread and wine actually become Christ's body and blood. But a lot of, though, and this is obviously connected to the idea of the sacrifice of the Mass, but this doctrine is that, and it probably remains the primary dividing line between Protestants and Catholics.
It's the sticking point in many ways. This doctrine says that when the elements become the literal body and blood of Christ, they are able to re-perform Christ's atoning work on the cross.
So, in the interest of fairness, we should state this as charitably as possible. It would be more accurate to say that from a Catholic way of thinking, the Eucharistic elements are the material agents by which Christ has chosen to extend his atoning work on the cross through history.
To the Protestant reformers, however, this notion was abhorrent because it implied that the ceremonial action of the Eucharist actually atoned for sins, actually forgave sins, something which is quite explicitly stated in the Serum Mass.
[18:58] So, here's the prayer that begins what's called the canon of the Mass, the main Eucharistic celebration. Receive, O Holy Trinity, this oblation, he's holding up the elements, which I, notice the I, an unworthy sinner, offer in honor of thee, of the Blessed Virgin and all the saints, for my sins and offenses, and for the salvation of the living and the rest of all the faithful dead.

So, somehow there's this idea that the elements are a kind of atoning sacrifice to God, that kind of recapitulates the atoning sacrifice of the cross. And here's how that prayer ends.
Let this new sacrifice be acceptable to the omnipotent God. Okay. So, those are the kind of key features of the medieval Mass I want to highlight. It was in this theological context that Cranmer and the other Anglican reformers, and in fact the continental reformers, we had a great presentation on Luther not too long ago, were engaged.
And we can see throughout Cranmer's versions of the Book of Crom and Prayer an effort to reject a couple of those key features we just identified. The doctrine of the sacrifice of the Mass, the identification of the elements with Christ's literal body and blood, the radical distinction between clergy and lay people, and the emphasis on visual spectacle rather than audible and comprehensible theological content.

Basically, in every single way, Cranmer's liturgy is designed to kind of steer us to the opposite of that. Atoning work of the cross, the elements are not literally Christ's body and blood, a less clear distinction between clergy and lay people, and an emphasis on understandable, comprehensible theological content rather than visual spectacle.
[20:45] So, we'll have a brief look at these features in turn in a second, but now it's important to kind of give a brief history of the Book of Common Prayer. So, the Book of Common Prayer was born under King Edward VI, the first truly Protestant king in England.

We won't go over Henry VIII and the schism from England. There's enough good TV where you can see that. It will distract from some of the main points, but as you pointed out a couple of weeks ago, Sheila, you said that Henry was Protestant only insofar as he didn't like the Pope.
Everything else was pretty much, let's keep the Catholicism, let's just make me the Pope. Sounds good. Ascension of the boy king Edward VI, though, had these Protestant advisors, and Protestants became politically ascendant in England, gave Cranmer his chance to institute thoroughgoing Protestant reform.
And the 1549 Book of Common Prayer was the first effort. Now, Cranmer was trying to do a big project. He was trying to unite all of England together in a common vernacular, shared Protestant liturgy.
You can imagine there might be some bumps. So, the 1549 is quite conservative in some ways. It retains a lot of things that are designed to make Roman Catholics or people who are sort of shifting out of Roman Catholicism recognize things they're familiar with and kind of convince them to come along in a kind of persuasive way.
[22:26] It's vernacular. There's no more sacrifice of the mass. That's gone. However, there are saints mentioned and there are prayers for the dead. Also, the basic structure of the Sarum Rite is retained.

Okay. 1552 was just at the end of Edward VI's reign and it was sort of Cranmer's, okay, we're going to get real Protestant now.
And it's possible that Cranmer decided to stop trying to, you know, please everybody because the 1549 Book of Common Prayer basically annoyed everyone.
Nobody, nobody was happy with it. For the Puritans, it didn't go far enough and for most Roman Catholics, they were dumb.
They recognized that there was no more sacrifice of the mass. It actually led to armed rebellion in Devon and Cornwall. And it's probably not terribly surprising that an English liturgy would not be all that well received in Cornwall, not only because they were very staunchly Roman Catholic, but because they didn't speak English.
[23:36] Um, so you can see why they wouldn't have been all that happy about that. Cornish, they would speak Cornish. And it's actually probably mostly the Book of Common Prayer's fault that Cornish is a dead language.

Um, so we have that to apologize for. Um, okay. So, 1552 is more consciously reformed, explicitly in a kind of Calvinist tradition.
Um, and that's, so when Anik and Akna identify the 1552 version of the Book of Common Prayer as the one on which we're going to base our communion liturgy, it's a way of announcing, uh, a Calvinist reformed allegiance.
Um, so the order is highly revised and it's sort of the most reformed version. The one thing that's kind of weird about the 1552 is that we're really the first people to use it.
Um, you probably didn't know that. Um, but, uh, Edward died in 1553 before the book had a chance to really get any kind of play and then we had, uh, the Catholic Queen Mary take over for a couple of years and so we went back to the Sarum Mass in England, that is.
[24:51] Okay, so in 1559 Elizabeth, uh, comes, well, Elizabeth is now queen and we have Protestant England again and then we have the Elizabethan prayer book.

This is one that lasts sort of, most of sort of the English Renaissance, late English Renaissance and it's basically the 1552 with some very slight revisions for conservatives.
So, kind of, gives us a couple of gestures to make people who are more conservative religiously feel a little bit better about it. Um, we won't go through the whole history of the English Civil War but after the English Civil War in 1662 we have the Restoration prayer book which again is mostly 1559 and there are compromises in both directions at different points some to conservatives some to

evangelicals.
Uh, that's a thorny history and I've got some suggestions for some books to read if that's interesting to you. Okay. It's extremely important to point out though that within the history of the Reformation Cranmer stood out compared to many other reformers for his refusal to throw the baby out with the bathwater.
We see this explicitly in the preface to the Book of Common Prayer which explicitly warns against a tendency either to cling to tradition for tradition's sake or to abandon tradition entirely for the sake of innovation.
[26:20] When I read this I am struck by its applicability to contemporary debates even some within this church. Some think it a great matter of conscience to depart from a piece of the least of their ceremonies they be so addicted to their old customs and again on the other side and this is just a great archaism some be so newfangled that they would innovate all things and so despise the old that nothing can like them but what is new.

Uh, this is the history of Protestant ceremony right here. Um, so, it was thought expedient not so much to have respect how to please and satisfy either of these parties as how to please God and profit them both.
Interesting idea, I think. Um, yeah, I'll just say that again. How to please, it was not so much to have respect how to please and satisfy either of these parties as how to please God and profit them both. It must be said that this preface was accurate because of course Cranmer didn't please anyone. Um, though hopefully he did them some good. Nevertheless, Cranmer's desire to take what he saw as the best of tradition is not only evident from the very fact uh, that he structured the prayer book out of the Sarum rite, but the fact that the whole Book of Common Prayer, almost nothing is original. It's assembled out of scripture, out of prayers from different traditions from the continent. Very little is Cranmer's original wording. Um, it's usually adapted. But it's something that we also see in the 1549 Book of Prayer, the title uh, for the communion service.
[28:10] The Supper of the Lord and the Holy Communion commonly called the Mass. Notice how we got three different names for the Eucharist in the title. So like much of Cranmer's liturgy, this heading both pointedly announces the text theological reforms and presents it as continuous with the traditions of Catholic practice deeply rooted in the lives of the English faithful.

So the capitalized Supper at the top of the page emphasizes the Eucharist as a shared meal and as a memorial activity. Um, so here we, it's saying Protestant in capital letters.
Yet Cranmer makes a subtle appeal to readers ambivalent about his goals in this edition commonly called the Mass. This is partially a practical addendum.
For the, for the priests that he was hoping to lead this, many of them were not particularly literate. and so having the title Mass makes them go, oh, I know what this is now. Um, on the other hand, it's also a way of suggesting there's a kind of continuity between what was happening before and what's happening now.
the text is implicitly corrective, right? The Eucharist is only commonly called the Mass. It's not actually the Mass. Even so, there still suggests a basic sense of continuity between the Latin Mass and the New Communion Liturgy.
[29:43] The heading does not reflect a desire felt quite strongly by many Continental Reformers to make an absolute distinction between the Mass, which for folk like Calvin is a kind of Roman heresy and the Lord's Supper, which many Continental Reformers saw as something else entirely.

So, even in the 1552 version, which is more reformed, it's important to remember that the text is trying to do that, trying to take the best of tradition and keep what is good and valuable about tradition at the same time as it edits it and makes it subject to Scripture.
So, let's have a quick look at some, oh, and here's just a picture of an early printed edition where you can see the heading, The Supper of the Lord and the Holy Communion commonly called the Mass.
So, let's have a quick look at some of the key changes that happen in the 1552 version I'm going to focus on. So, let's start with performance.
What's different about what you actually see in the 1552 version? So, the big one, obviously, is everyday English language. Unless you're Cornish, then it's some weird foreign tongue.
[30:57] So, the idea is, of course, that it could be understood by everybody. Instead of just being a select few of the priests up at the front who understand what's going on, people in the pews can understand what's going on.

Second thing, uniformity. All of England was legally required to follow the same liturgy. you can see why this, I mean, imagine the problems that Anik and Akna will have as we try and enforce uniformity, whether we even want to do that.
You can see why that might have led to some irritation. But the idea is that you can go anywhere in England and celebrate the same liturgy.
There's little emphasis on the bodily actions of the priest. There are almost no instructions in the 1552 about how you move, when you cross, what cartwheels you have to do at what time.
In this period in the English church, a communion table, a wooden table, was placed at the center of the church, and when you came for communion, you came to the middle of the church and received it there around a common board.
[32:09] The lay people received wine. There's no elevation of the elements, and the bread is, the one instruction that there is, is that the bread is supposed to be every day, leavened bread, such as is eaten at table.

And I'll talk a little bit more about what that might mean in a second. And another important factor, the priest cannot communicate unless there are, quote, a good number to do so with him.
The priest can no longer communicate alone, and we've got much less distinction between the clergy and the laity. Okay, so those are kind of the big visual changes, and they are profound.
In some ways, maybe even bigger than the content ones. But what kinds of changes in structure and content do you see? So the ministry of the word and the prayers are much more interwoven with the celebration of the Eucharist.
In the Roman rite, there's sort of two key sections, kind of beginning setup section, and then the Eucharist stands by itself.
[33:15] In Cranmer's version, there's much more kind of blended sense of hearing scripture, receiving the sacraments, praying. These all are kind of interwoven as a single act, rather than a sense that there is sort of one distinct activity that is the Eucharist, and a whole bunch of other things like listening to scripture, praying.

The Gloria is moved from the beginning of the service to the end of the service. And one of the main reasons for this is that the idea that you were no longer singing the Gloria to the elements, but to God, as gratitude afterwards.
So this is actually one of the things that people from a Lutheran tradition might notice as being a big difference between the Lutheran service and the Anglican service is the placement of the Gloria towards the end rather than towards the beginning.
It depends obviously on the Lutheran tradition that you come from, but Cranmer's idea was that we don't want to give anybody the sense that they are singing to the elements, we're singing to God. All the references to the saints, to Virgin Mary, and prayers for the dead are totally cut out.
And the Eucharistic prayer is edited so that reception happens directly after the gospel narrative. So we're all familiar with that. The cup, Jesus took the cup and then we received the cup.
[34:44] What's called the prayer of oblation, that is the prayer of offering this sacrifice to God in the Sarum Rite, which is the one that follows the consecration, is that usually followed and then you would receive the elements.

That's chopped, put after the reception of the elements, and basically totally rewritten. And so you can see how all of these changes are designed to communicate those things that were most important about the Eucharist for the Protestant Reformers.
Christ's presence is not located in or as the elements per se, but in the celebration as a whole. He is there in the word, he is there in the elements, he is there in our brothers and sisters, he is there in our prayers together.
His presence cannot be controlled or isolated, and yet he offers it to us in manifold expression with the intent that we take comfort in and receive nourishment from that presence.
so the act of receiving Christ's word and receiving Christ's scriptural word, sorry, the act of receiving Christ's word in the scripture and receiving Christ's sacrament happen in parallel fashion.
[35:59] You hear the comfortable words, you eat, which means comforting, you hear the comforting words, you eat the comforting food. They happen together. The nourishment of the sacrament amplifies and analogizes the nourishment that we get from scripture.

And this is something that the collect for the second Sunday in Advent makes quite clear. Blessed Lord, who has caused all holy scripture to be written for our learning, grant us that we may in such

wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.
So we receive scripture as we receive the Eucharist. In many ways, though, this specifically Protestant revisions Cranmer made to the Serum Rite all come together in the way that the word oblation and sacrifice are changed in the 1552 version of prayer.
So some of you may have wondered, especially if you're used to the sort of older version before it's been slightly updated, why the liturgy harps on about oblation in the prayer of consecration, especially this weird archaic word, right?
In the prayer of consecration, for example, it is repeated twice. Almighty God, our heavenly Father, which of thy tender mercy didst give thy only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who made their brackets, by his one oblation of himself once offered a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and did institute in his holy gospel, command us to continue a perpetual memory of that his precious death.
[37:31] So why does oblation show up twice? Well, oblation is the word used in Roman Catholic theology to describe the sacrifice of the mass, this idea that the elements actually kind of pay for sins.

And this offering was made by the priest to God on behalf of the congregation. So Cranmer goes to great lengths to insist that what he means by oblation is not something we do, but something Christ did for us upon the cross.
So this is an oblation once offered. It's perfect, it's complete. It doesn't happen again and again. It's full and sufficient. Forgiveness of sins does not depend on any ongoing liturgical action.
It's not in the power of the church or the priest to forgive you. It's in the hands of Christ. The idea of sacrifice is also given a further amendment in the prayer that follows the reception of the elements.
So this is the text that after you receive or sort of that becomes the prayer that we pray after the reception of the elements. Not only, so here's how it goes.
[38:44] Accept the consecrated bread and wine even as this is to God. Even as thou didst vouchsafe to accept the gifts of thy righteous servant Abel and the sacrifice of our patriarch Abraham and that which thy high priest Melchizedek offered to thee a holy sacrifice an immaculate host.

So we get the sense that the elements are offered as a sacrifice to God which atone for sin in the same way that the Old Testament sacrifices atone for sin. If you look at the 1552 Book of Common Prayer you see that there's an important change in what sacrifice means.
It's no longer something that we do in order to earn God's favor. O Lord and Heavenly Father we thy humble servants entirely desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.
So that's the major shift. Instead of offering a mass a sacrifice of the mass we offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. And secondly here we offer and present unto thee O Lord ourselves our souls and bodies to be a reasonable holy and lively or living sacrifice unto thee.
Humbly beseeching thee that all we which be partakers of this holy communion may be fulfilled with thy grace and heavenly benediction. So this idea is we offer the sacrifice that we offer is our love and gratitude and ourselves in obedience to Christ rather than any kind of purchase or sacrifice that kind of earns for sins.
[40:17] we do not offer the host to win God's favor we offer our gratitude and our very selves as a profound response to the forgiveness we have already received and the favor we have been shown by being given the physical and spiritual nourishment of the sacrament.

God gives himself in his love to us on the cross first and by faith through the sacrament where God can God continues to offer us the assurance of his favor which was already granted to us.
Okay. So that's in some ways the big change of the 1552 Book of Common Prayer. So let me wrap up by suggesting a couple of devotional and doctrinal applications.
What can we do with this old piece of liturgy now? How does it still inform our faithful reception of the sacrament today? Let me start with a kind of short list of applications that really come out strongly from our liturgy and our liturgical tradition.
And the first one I would say is what I might call liturgical vigilance. This idea is that liturgy is never the things the way that we worship is never inert.
[41:30] It shapes us for good or for ill. And our strongly worded confession reminds us of our tendency to sin. Our worship in other words should be shaped by our willingness to repent of our sins, especially as those sins infect our worship.

We should not seek out what makes us comfortable, but rather what makes us better Christians and what brings glory to God. So what does that mean practically?
Well, that means that we need to be careful in terms of thinking about how we worship and what that worship means and that there's no, nothing that's going to, just saying the right words, doing the right things is never going to guarantee for us that we are in the right place with God.
The liturgy is an aid, but it's one that is always in need of kind of a continuous reformation. The second thing, respect for different liturgical voices.
This is a quote from the end of Cranmer's text on ceremonies, of ceremonies. And Cranmer is explicit that the Book of Common Prayer is not intended to be the final or universal word on Christian doctrine.
[42:47] Scripture is. So even in the context of the Reformation, where so much was obviously in need of change, Cranmer still listened to the tradition and took what was best from it.

Especially at first, Cranmer also tried to make as much room for differences in temperament and taste as he could, though he didn't live up to that as much later on. So what does that mean for us?
We should be willing to have our worship informed by the best of other traditions, ancient and modern, remembering that our own are not perfect and neither are theirs, and that we are to engage in a kind of hospitable, listening to other Christians and how they worship and how they practice and let that inform us.
Okay. Three. I have to do more than Trinit. I have to do more than three because I couldn't boil it down. But reverence for the material world and the human body.
Okay. This insistence in the 1552 Book of Common Prayer that the bread was everyday table bread had important, had many important significances for Cranmer.
[43:56] For Cranmer, the material pleasure we take in the bread and the wine in particular was to be encouraged. It gives us a kind of bodily analogy for understanding the pleasure we ought to take in Christ.

For Cranmer, if the bread doesn't taste any good and the wine isn't really wine, gives you a nice little warm feeling, it can't teach you about Christ. That's the feeling you're supposed to get from Christ.
Kind of intimacy, physical closeness. At the same time, it says that God values the body. He engages our tastes, our senses with the pleasure of the bread and the gustatory satisfaction of the wine.
So it reminds us that Christ came in the flesh, that our bodies are temples and will be resurrected, and that even the everyday material of the world, even the food we eat at our tables, is blessed by God and valued by God.
So, along with reverence for the human body, we've also got reverence for the spiritual body of the church.
[45:06] We do not receive communion except with others. Our Eucharist reminds us that Christ is present not only in the elements and in the prayers, but in the body of the church.

We cannot love him without loving our brothers and sisters. We cannot receive Christ unless we receive those who we worship together with. Five, gratitude for the cross.
We are not doing something to earn God's favor. We are responding graciously and out of joy and love for the fact that Christ has forgiven us on the cross and that God continues to feed us through the sacraments and through the church.
Our emphasis ought to be on our grateful response to what God does rather than any sense that we are doing something that pleases God or earns his favor.
We are given this as an opportunity to be thankful. Six, intellectual engagement with liturgy. By putting the words in the vernacular, Cranmer is saying, understand what you're doing.
[46:14] Think about, engage intellectually with the meaning of the words that you participate in, whatever they are, whether it's in this tradition or in any other tradition. Think about how your minds are part of the gift God gives you in your person.

Value them, stimulate them, engage them in your devotion. And finally, this idea that the Eucharist ought to spill over into our lives.
Cranmer encouraged frequent reception because he saw the Eucharist as empowering Christian obedience because it reminded us of God's love for us. God gave the Eucharist to nourish you spiritually.

Let it feed your whole life. One of the reasons that we pray that we offer ourselves as living sacrifices is that we continue after the service to love God in our obedience to him.
So, let the Eucharist feed your whole life. Let it become the spiritual staple it was intended to be.
Finally, some dangers, some warnings, some caveats.
[47:23] Any liturgical tradition is going to have some advantages and some things that we ought to be wary about. And I think the Anglican tradition has a couple.

And I'd just like to offer a few. So, the first one is liturgicalism. This idea that the right liturgy will save you. It's a great irony because, of course, of ceremonies is reminding us that we shouldn't value tradition too much and we shouldn't value innovation too much.
And yet, the history of Anglicanism has tended to be an oscillation between these two sins. First is kind of traditionalism.
The traditional way is best. In evangelical versions, often it's the second one. Innovation is best. The new thing is great, right?
Even if it's uncritically new. So, those are sort of two dangers of liturgicalism. Either tradition or innovation. But what shares, what connects these two is this idea that the right liturgy will save you.
[48:27] The right liturgy cannot save you. Christ alone can save you. That's the whole message of the Anglican liturgy. The other one is becoming sacramental-ish, as I like to call it.

Treating the sacrament with indifference or failing to receive it regularly. So, Cranmer had this strange problem of trying to convince people to take the Eucharist because they put too much stock in the elements themselves.
So, there's an exhortation in the Common Book of Prayer that says you must come and receive. So, in fact, the English church instituted a requirement that you receive the Eucharist three times a year. Big time up from...
But Cranmer's hope was that people would receive weekly. And he had trouble because people put too much stock in the elements. We tend to have the opposite problem. Now, sometimes Protestants have misunderstood the idea that because we do not believe the elements are literally Christ, the whole of communion really isn't that important.
Or, if it's important, it's only really important for a kind of elite group of educated Christians who are spiritually mature and know what they're doing. Not something we can really expect new Christians to do regularly or understand.
[49:38] This often expresses itself in sort of seeker-friendly churches or services that treat the Eucharist like it was a kind of optional extra rather than a command of God.

Or, by decreasing its frequency. Or, even worse, doing a kind of crackers and grape juice version designed to empty out the ritual of its intended goals. And what are those intended goals?
Creating a holy sense of our sinfulness and the need to repent. An overflowing gratitude for the grace of forgiveness. And a reminder of God's continued presence and favor for us.
Another problem. Potential risk is a kind of mental or intellectual goal for its own sake. One of the things that Roman Catholics do well is recognizing all the ways the body shapes us and can be participating in worship.
And a healthy emphasis on understanding can easily slip into an unhealthy worship of intellectualism. This idea that you must understand everything about the Eucharist to participate in it fully.
[50:44] This is especially important to remember and to guard against if we want to include the mentally disabled in our worship. We need to think about our whole bodies when we worship as well.

And we might learn from Roman Catholics, especially now when we do that. Another one is overemphasizing the difference between Roman Catholics instead of difference with the world.
We have a tradition that was written where we did not have a secular culture. And in many ways we find ourselves having more in common with Roman Catholics now than with the world around us.
So it's important for us, even as we, this is not to say we should paper over the differences between Roman Catholic belief and Anglican belief, but it's important for us to cultivate a sense of hospitality and to understand what the Roman Catholic practice and belief is trying to do, especially as we create a greater sense of our shared heritage in response to a secular world.
And then lastly, we move away in the Anglican tradition from a required priestly confession, this idea that you confess your sins to the priest.

[52:08] And that's a good thing. Corporate confession before the Eucharist was designed to de-emphasize the authority of the priesthood and to remind us that God forgives, not priests.

But again, in our contemporary time, the lack of priestly confession can play into a culture of liberal individualism, where my sins are just between me and God, not between me and the community. So it's important for us to remember the seriousness with both scripture and the liturgy itself asks you to approach the communion table. You cannot be in communion with God unless you are at peace with your brothers and sisters, and you cannot be at peace with them unless you are confessing your sins in concrete ways to real human beings.
I think we are usually surprised when we actually confess our sins to other human beings, both how much we have to confess and how much relief there is to be found in making that confession in a concrete way.
So, in short, our liturgy does not provide a venue for individual confession. So find one. Find someone you respect, spiritual advisor, spiritual mentor, make sure you're confessing.
[53:19] So, I'll kind of end there. And the best way I could think to end was just to read out loud this prayer from the liturgy itself, which I think in many ways kind of captures a lot of the key themes I've been talking about.

Almighty and ever-living God, we heartily thank you for your promise to feed us, who have faithfully received these holy mysteries with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.
And so assure us by your favor and goodness towards us, that we are true members united in his mystical body, which is the blessed company of all faithful people, and are also heirs through hope of your everlasting kingdom, by the merits of the most precious death and suffering of your dear Son.
We humbly ask you, Heavenly Father, to assist us with your grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship and do all those good works that you have prepared for us to walk in, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever. Amen. Thanks. So, question. Yeah.
[54:38] Thank you for this. I think this has been really very helpful. I'm aware, as you were talking, of the via media, that it was the policy of Elizabeth I with regard to the Reformation, and probably, well, in my view anyway, a very good idea.

I mean, she was reigning at a time where religious wars were breaking out, and very, really vicious things going on in continental Europe, and I think the idea of avoiding that was good.
But the striking the middle way was really fairly clear in some of the things you said. I worked in a Catholic hospital for 20 years, and the whole tradition bit really got to me, because I discovered some...
Talk about hocus pocus. Right. Really funny things that seemed to have a lot of meaning for some of the nuns there, and others who were really very enlightened people.
But could you comment about, since the time that you are describing so well to us, in your view, where has the Anglican Church gone from that beginning to where we are now?
[56:02] That's a long and complicated story. And it's got... Oh, just 25 seconds. I guess the history of the Anglican liturgy is one that in many ways has been a kind of pendulum between people.

As much as we like to think of ourselves as via media, it tends to be actually people yelling at each other and then some kind of compromise being struck. So, you know, you can see it, like, in the Books of Common Prayer, kind of a backing and forthing with each of the versions.
And just keep doing that every 10 years for the rest of the history of Anglicanism, and that's pretty much where we find ourselves now. So, I mean, some of the theological issues change.
So, for example, in the revisions of the Book of Alternative Services in Canada, for example, people who were critical of it were more concerned that it de-emphasized sin rather than other things.
So there's been a kind of ongoing history of negotiation. How much... And I think that's healthy. I think that's a sign that people are taking Cranmer to heart, right?
[57:22] That there's no liturgy that can just stay fixed and settled and that's going to solve all our problems. We need to think about the ways that our liturgies are contextual and respond to the moments that we live in now.

I don't know if that's helpful. So, yeah. So when we say that to eat the flesh of Christ at communion and to drink his blood, is that more from the Roman Catholic tradition?
Well, here's the answer is that Cranmer was wisely vague in a lot of his language because for him, the point is not to try and dissect the nature of Christ's presence in the elements.
He would acknowledge that Christ is present in the elements in some sense, but he would just say not physical. But for him, that's not the main point. Christ's presence is not there.
Christ's presence is in us and in the action that we do together. So in some ways, Cranmer uses language like that because it makes us take the liturgy seriously, but he also avoids trying to turn it into a theological discourse on sacramental theology.
[58:44] The main point is to be there together to worship and to acknowledge Christ's presence in the elements, but also in each other. So, like Cranmer, I'm being vague.

Yeah. I found it interesting about the bread and the wine that it should be actual wheat bread that you can set on the screen.
And why? Because it should be voiderful because we need to enjoy it because we need to enjoy Christ. So how did we get to these little plasticky wafers?
Well, I may have betrayed my opposition to the wafer. There is... I mean, the wafer was originally a response...
There are two reasons for the emergence of the wafer in the history of the Christian church. One is lovely, and that wafers look like coins, and originally the wafers were stamped with the image of Christ to remind us that Christ is our king, not Caesar.
[59:51] So this is the currency with which we live. We have the currency of the sacraments, not the currency of the world. That's quite lovely. The other reason for the wafer is that it doesn't crumb.

And if you believe that the elements are actually Christ's body and blood, then it's really important that they don't crumb because, you know, you don't want to be leaving bits of Jesus around for the rats to eat.
So the wafer is... has been a historical point of controversy in the Anglican tradition. And tradition... Sort of the... The more... In the early versions of the Anglican church, the more evangelical you were, the more likely you were to eat bread. Specifically, they would say, the same kind of bread that you eat with meat at table.
So it's supposed... And for Cranmer, this was this... For him, it's kind of interesting. It was this emphasis that the body is good. And that this is something to be valued and the pleasure is good.
[60:55] I personally have a kind of... Enjoy that devotional encounter. I mean, it's not... There's nothing wrong with the wafers. It's just that I think the bread gives us more of that reminder that this is a staple.

This is something that we enjoy on a regular basis. And it's something that acknowledges the goodness of our bodies. Could you? Yeah, I assume you'd be a little bit vague about the difference between Christ's presence in the Eucharist and, say, a Kranmer, or I suppose you could say a Baptist communion.
Sure. What, like, how is Christ's presence there? Well, so here's how Calvin put it.
So, when a king puts his stamp on a coin, that has the effect of his authority, of his presence, even though he's not literally there.
Now, in some ways that's arbitrary, but that does not mean that you can just pick up something else and have the same effect as the coin, right? It's not real in a kind of physical sense, but it's real in its effect, right?
[62:12] The authority of the sovereign or the state is stamped onto that coin in a way that affects its usage. For Calvin, that's how we ought to understand the sacrament, why it can't be replaced, right?

Christ is present in a different way. He has stamped his seal on that coin. And he's not there physically, because for Calvin, Christ is physically present in heaven.
But the effect is real. And it's an ordinance of Christ. He orders us to do this. So, it's different than a prayer meeting because it's specially ordained and has that kind of, I guess, administrative oomph would be a way of thinking about it.
Do you transfer the same to a Baptist ceremony, crackers and grape juice? Yeah. Yeah, I mean, I don't think it's, for Cranmer, the elements themselves aren't so important.

When I made the crack about crackers and grape juice, I was more thinking of like a Doritos and soda kind of logic. I've heard, I think, learned Catholics say, well, what goes on in a Protestant communion service?
[63:20] They say, well, exactly what the Protestants say, they're trying to remember Jesus. Right. He's not there. They're remembering him. So, Cranmer would say, remembering is a kind of divine remembering.

The spirit, it seems sometimes absent from liturgy. The spirit is our rememberer. Would that be a Cranmer insight? Yeah, I mean, the remembrance is of Christ's sacrifice.
Neither Cranmer nor Calvin would say that Christ is absent from the Eucharist, that he's not there. Neither of them would say that. They would say that he's, yeah, absent through the, present through the spirit and through faith.
Right. So, so, Richard Hooker, a famous Anglican theologian, says, the presence of Christ is not to be sought in the elements, but in the worthy receiver of the elements. So Christ is there in reformation thinking, but he's not there.
He's in us. He's not in the elements. Does that make some sense? Yeah. Somebody mentioned that. Sorry, was this just, just someone else behind you hasn't had the chance to ask yet.
[64:32] Oh, sure. Okay. On the question of the, of the bread and communion, I mean, my guess would have been that Cranmer's logic was a little bit different, that he didn't want the bread to be some sort of special food, you know, some special holy food.

So he wanted ordinary bread. And then once you've got ordinary bread, you know, just, Don't be superstitious about it. Just for respect purposes, it should be good ordinary bread, not bad. Right. And that's, I mean, that's certainly part of it, but in his, in his actual theological expressions of the sacrament, he goes on at great length to talk about how one of the big differences between, he defends the use of, of his understanding of the Eucharist because he says it's actually more body honoring than the Roman Catholics because the Roman Catholics have to make the bread go away in order to make room for Jesus.
And he says, no, the bread is good. It doesn't have to go away in the same way. The body is good. It doesn't have to go away. So for example, you see this in the way that in, in sort of Protestant expressions of the sacrament, you're encouraged to chew and enjoy the bread.
Whereas Catholics up until Vatican II were forbidden from chewing the host. It was supposed to just dissolve on your tongue. It's not really supposed to, it's supposed to be mental rather than physical engagement with the host.
[65:51] So yeah, I mean, you're right. Absolutely. It's to discourage a kind of veneration, but it's also, Cranmer goes on at great length and outside of the Book of Common Prayer that this is a body honoring strategy.

Yeah. Yeah. Well, a question I've always had in my mind since I was 10 years old is, and I thought it was too stupid to ask, what is the origin of calling the waiter a host?
What's that word all about? Yeah. We don't really know. It's a sort, it's sort of like where does mass come from? So like, there are, these words kind of emerged out of, I mean, hostum is a Latin word, so that's, it comes from Latin just like mass, but it's not entirely clear.
If you look it up in the dictionary, you'll find sort of like four or five different explanations as to where the host comes from. I mean, some people think it just has something to do with this idea of like being a host in the sense that it hosts the presence of Christ, but it's not entirely clear.
So, one of the great things about not being 10 is that you realize that there aren't that many stupid questions, and that's actually a really good one that we don't know the answer to. Yeah.
[67:09] I read in the Anglican Journal years ago that about Cramer, he was in, they said he's an evolving evangelical along Lutheran lines, and I've read about Luther, and once the other, we had a fellow that attended our church from a United Church background, he pointed the fingers at me, he says, I'm in bondage with ritualism influenced by the Roman Catholic Church, and I was to denounce it, and he said, I will rebuke you in the name of Jesus, and my mother's family is Roman Catholic, so it's just, but the Anglican Church is very similar to the Roman Catholic Church, but in bondage with ritualism, what would cause a person to think along those lines?

Well, ritual's dangerous. I mean, Cranmer knows this. Ritual, but there's no, there's no non-ritualistic worship. We're ritualistic people. We are sinners, and our rituals reflect the fact that we are sinners, so that's why Cranmer says, don't value it too much or too little.

It shapes you whether you like it or not, so be thoughtful about how you engage with it. Don't treat it as the gospel. It reflects, it should reflect the gospel in scripture. But yeah, liturgy of any kind can be used for abuse and power and obfuscation, and it can be a source of bondage, absolutely.
So sometimes I think it's a source of bondage, and I think that's one of the reasons it's important to be liturgically respectful of traditions that are suspicious about order and to listen to them.
A person can get compulsively addicted to rituals where it's unhealthy. Sometimes you need to escape. The rituals can have stability, but there can be too much of it too.
[68:51] Well, that's the word that Cranmer uses exactly, addiction. You can get addicted to your rituals, so don't. You know, watch it. Yeah, but it's true of any religious practice, but it sounds like we're, it looks like we must end.

I guess they're not as engaged as we are. I just want to, a couple short, just say thank you so much. What a wonderful opportunity to reflect on our faith and reflect on the words of our liturgy.
Thank you. Thank you. I think we can all agree that Sean's choice of teaching as a career is a good one. What a gift. Thanks. It's been a pleasure to be here.
Thank you so much.