

Q. Sometimes our worship uses a traditional version of the Lord's prayer, sometimes more contemporary words. Why the switch? Being used to the older version, I feel goofy stumbling over the newer words!

To begin with, some context: The Lord's Prayer comes to us from the outline Jesus gives to his followers when asked for advice on how to pray. He spoke it, not in the King James' English 'thou' and 'thine' and 'art', but in the vernacular language of the peasant population he was addressing. Throughout his ministry -- and this prayer is no exception -- Jesus amazed people by his ability to speak in concrete, earthy terms, to put the language of faith into imagery and examples of issues and worries closest to the people's hearts.

Another piece of context: the traditional language of the Lord's Prayer was, at its conception, not traditional at all, but radical in its moving the Lord's Prayer out of Latin and into the people's everyday language. *The Book of Common Prayer* --out of which comes the version of the Lord's Prayer so comfortable and familiar to so many of us (myself included) -- very clearly indicated its mandate and mission, not to produce poetically beautiful texts that could be used in perpetuity, but to be the start of how Christians would now practice the faith in words in ordinary language, the vernacular.

At St. George's, we are in the practice of using the more contemporary version of the Lord's Prayer, for this exact reason. *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.* Our 8am service continues to offer space for prayer in the more traditional style, allowing people for whom these older forms are most comfortable to worship this way.

Neither is more right or holy than the other. But that word 'comfortable' is worth noting. It is helpful for all of us, regardless of which worship service we most often attend, to note our comfort levels. Comfort in worship can allow us to let go of our worries and burdens and to connect with God. Comfort can also *prevent* us from being able to connect. In one version or another, many of us can rattle off the Lord's Prayer without giving it a thought. And while doing so can offer solace and peace in our lives of prayer, it can also mean that we are missing out on the truth, the beauty, the power, not of the particular words, but of their meaning. The Lord's Prayer is surrender before God, asking for our lives to be in right relationship with our Creator and the world around us, of seeking justice, healing, and reconciliation in our relationship with ourselves and one another. It is worth pausing over these words occasionally, or to be confronted with a version with which we're not as familiar, in order to allow our prayer to truly join with Jesus' prayer once again.

Even newer versions of this special prayer continue to be written. One from the Anglican Church in New Zealand begins with the words, "*Eternal Spirit, Earthmaker, Pain bearer, Life giver, Source of all that shall be. Father and Mother of us all. Loving God, in whom is heaven*". Other versions take time to open up each phrase of the Lord's Prayer to a deeper exploration. Sung versions of The Lord's Prayer (we'll look at introducing one of these in the fall) can allow us to go deeper with the words through the power of music. You may wish to seek out some of these other translations/paraphrases. You may wish to occasionally pray a version different

from the one with which you are most familiar. Or you may choose to sometimes take time, savour and digest, these well-worn words. If you are newer to the Christian faith, you may want to seek answers and understanding about the source and meaning of this prayer so central to our faith. Any way you approach it though, there is much to be gained in scratching beneath the surface of even our most time-tested-true expressions of faith!