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Introduction

This volume, *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*, is a further step in the development of liturgical commemorations within the life of The Episcopal Church. These developments fall under three categories. First, this volume presents a wide array of possible commemorations for individuals and congregations to observe. Recognizing that there are many perspectives on the identity and place of exemplary Christians in the life of the Church, this volume proposes that the metaphor of a “family history” is a fitting way to describe who is included. As such, the title of this volume is drawn from the Epistle to the Hebrews, recalling that “we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1). The people found in this volume are not all definitively declared to be saints, but are Christians who have inspired other Christians in different times and places.

Second, it represents a refinement of the core Calendar of commemorations for The Episcopal Church, which centers on the feasts of our Lord and other major feasts listed in the Book of Common Prayer (pp. 16–17). The calendar in *A Great Cloud of Witnesses* does not purport to be a definitive collection of saints, but rather an additional calendar of optional commemorations that represent the breadth of the Christian family story.

Third, materials for weekday celebrations during seasons of the Church are located in a separate volume, *Weekday Eucharistic Propers 2015*.

On Commemorations and the Book of Common Prayer

The Book of Common Prayer proclaims in the ecumenical creeds and in our prayers its belief in the “communion of the saints.” We speak of the saints as “chosen vessels of [God’s] grace and the lights of the world in their generations.”¹ The “obedience of [God’s] saints” offers the Church “an example of righteousness” and gives us “in their eternal joy a glorious pledge of the hope of our calling.”² The canticle *Te Deum laudamus* (Canticle 21, “You Are God”) calls out some specific categories of saints in classical terms, contiguous with both the angels in heaven and the Church on earth, when it speaks of “the glorious company of apostles,” “the noble fellowship of prophets,” and “the white-robed army of martyrs.”³ Too, our prayers speak of the role of the saints within our baptismal community:

O God, the King of saints, we praise and glorify your holy Name for all your servants who have finished their course in your faith and fear: for the blessed Virgin Mary; for the holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs; and for all your other righteous servants, known to us and unknown; and we pray that, encouraged by their examples, aided by their prayers, and strengthened by their fellowship, we also may be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.⁴

The saints encourage us; they pray for us; they strengthen us.

Despite these affirmations of the saints as constitutive members of our baptismal community, the Prayer Book shows a great reluctance to define the term or to make specific identifications. The Catechism touches on this issue only briefly, identifying the communion of the saints in broad relational terms: “The communion of saints is the whole family of God, the living and the dead, those whom we love and those whom we hurt, bound together in Christ by sacrament, prayer, and praise.”⁵ In Christian language throughout the ages, “saint” has carried two referents, a general one that applies to the whole Church—which is the meaning invoked here—and a more specific one

1 Preface for a Saint (1), BCP, 348 / 380.

2 Preface for a Saint (2), BCP, 348 / 380.

3 BCP, 95 / 53.

4 BCP, 504 / 489.

5 BCP, 862.

that applies to individuals who have been identified as “chosen vessels of [God’s] grace and the lights of the world in their generations” from among their fellows.

The Calendar in the Prayer Book contains a number of names. Of these, the term “saint” appears only a handful of times and always in connection to a limited set of people who appear in the New Testament: Mary and Joseph, John the Baptist, the apostles, the evangelists, Paul, and others such as Mary Magdalene, Stephen, James of Jerusalem, and Michael.

The state of additional persons not given the title of “saint” is ambiguous. These are the commemorations permitted within the Days of Optional Observance as described in the general rubrics of the Calendar (BCP, 18). A clear definition of the status of these persons is absent.

This ambiguity is appropriate to the range of theologies around sainthood and holiness within The Episcopal Church. While some Episcopalians actively venerate the saints, others hold positions proceeding from Reformation desires to reform the cults of saints, such as those found in the Thirty-Nine Articles (Article XXII, BCP, 872). In other words, the ambiguity exists for the sake of inclusivity and maintains the Anglican tradition of a comprehensive approach to questions not decisively settled by Scripture and the teaching of the received ecumenical councils.

In 2003, the 74th General Convention of The Episcopal Church directed the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to “undertake a revision of *Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2000*, to reflect our increasing awareness of the importance of the ministry of all the people of God and of the cultural diversity of The Episcopal Church, of the wider Anglican Communion, of our ecumenical partners, and of our lively experience of sainthood in local communities,” and to focus reflection upon “the significance of that experience of local sainthood in encouraging the living out of baptism.”⁶ That, in turn, led to study and discussion resulting in *Holy Women, Holy Men*, which continued in a state of trial use through 2015.

The reception of *Holy Women, Holy Men* and additional commemoration requests brought to General Convention since 2009

⁶ General Convention Resolution 2003–A100.

suggested that the range of sanctoral theologies (that is, theologies of sainthood) within the Church remained as broad as ever, resulting in disagreements concerning who does and does not belong in the Calendar. At the same time, many people have expressed appreciation for the expansion of the Calendar because it has broadened their knowledge of the Christian family story.

In order to maintain a comprehensive stance toward differing theologies of sainthood and to recognize the desire to remember people important to the Church without passing judgment on their sanctoral status or requiring them to fit within a particular mold of saintliness, we have created this new resource entitled *A Great Cloud of Witnesses: A Calendar of Commemorations*. This resource recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to our understanding of our calling as the Body of Christ within the complexities of the twenty-first-century world without making a statement one way or another on their sanctity. It serves as a family history, identifying those people inside and outside the Episcopal/Anglican tradition who help us proclaim the Gospel in word, deed, and truth.

Holy Women, Holy Men, and Lesser Feasts and Fasts before it, also included liturgical material for weekday celebrations during the seasons of the Church year. To streamline our liturgical resources, this material is now located in a separate volume, *Weekday Eucharistic Propers 2015*.

On the Making of Saints

While *A Great Cloud of Witnesses* does not intend to be a calendar that presents a definitive list of saints, there is no doubt that many of the people within it will be recognized as saints. In its call to revise *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, General Convention emphasized the importance of the local recognition of sanctity. As we look across the Church's broad history, this is, in fact, the predominant level on which sanctity has been identified. Local communities celebrated local heroes. Too, local communities gave special emphasis to those fellow, yet heroic, members of the Body of Christ with whom they shared a special bond—whether through a common occupation, a common circumstance, or through their physical presence in the form of relics.

Saints were declared by parishes and by dioceses. In most places and times, there was no formal set of criteria that had to be met. Instead, the local communities operated on a broad basic principle: that Christ was known more intimately through these individuals, and that the holiness of the person was both evidence of their participation in the greater life of God and an inspiration for those around them to “go and do likewise.”

The process of declaring saints was centralized within the Roman Catholic Church with the *Decretals* of Gregory IX in 1234, asserting that canonization could only occur with the authorization of the pope. This was part and parcel of the centralization of authority to the papal office in the high medieval period. Over the following centuries, bureaucratic regulations and a specific legal process were created to ensure a formal process. Only at this point were specific criteria drawn up, including the requirement of two documented miracles. In other words, this curial, top-down, centralized approach to naming saints has only existed in one part of the Church for less than half of its existence. Conversely, some of the most beloved saints within the Roman Catholic Church, such as Benedict of Nursia and Augustine of Hippo, never went through this process!

The Calendar of the first American Book of Common Prayer, authorized in 1789, contained most of the feasts now recognized as Holy Days and no others. In this regard, it follows the example of the earliest Anglican prayer books. The same Calendar appeared—with a few additions like the Transfiguration in 1892—through the 1928 Prayer Book. While some had argued for the inclusion of post-biblical saints in the Calendar of the 1928 Prayer Book, this did not come to pass; however, a Common of Saints was provided, officially permitting the local eucharistic celebration of saints, while still retaining an official Calendar obligating only the universally acknowledged saints of the Apostolic Age. The publication of the supplementary *American Missal* in 1931 by noted church musician and liturgist Winfred Douglas containing an expanded Calendar of saints demonstrates the local desire for such celebrations during this time; the official condemnation of this work by some thirty bishops of the day testify to the differences of opinion regarding the expanded Calendar as well as many other matters.

In the first stages of revision leading to the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, the Standing Liturgical Commission appointed a Calendar committee headed by the Rev. Dr. Massey Shepherd to study the issue of the Calendar once again. The process of additions to the Calendar has been a piece of the broader development of the Book of Common Prayer. Additions to the Calendar typically begin with recommendations from individuals and dioceses, reflective of local commemoration practices, made to General Convention, which then asks the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to review the proposals and make a recommendation to the next convention. This process of proposal based on local commemorations and affirmation by General Convention represents the baptismal ecclesiology of the Book of Common Prayer, in which constituent members of the Church contribute to the wider vitality and mission of the Church.

In responding to the diversity of theology of sainthood in The Episcopal Church, it seems best to identify two calendars: a core calendar of commemorations around which there is general consensus and a long tradition of observation, and a broader calendar of commemorations that represents a wider family history that people and congregations will engage. The first, the core Calendar of The Episcopal Church, is defined as those Holy Days listed on pages 16 and 17 within the authorized Book of Common Prayer:

Feasts of our Lord

The Holy Name	Saint John the Baptist
The Presentation	The Transfiguration
The Annunciation	Holy Cross Day
The Visitation	

Other Major Feasts

All feasts of Apostles	Saint Mary the Virgin
All feasts of Evangelists	Saint Michael and All Angels
Saint Stephen	Saint James of Jerusalem
The Holy Innocents	Independence Day
Saint Joseph	Thanksgiving Day
Saint Mary Magdalene	

The second, *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*, provides a broader calendar, consistent with the call of the 2003 General Convention for a revision of the Calendar of the Church that reflects the lively experience of holiness, especially on the level of the local community. In this way, *A Great Cloud of Witnesses* is a tool for learning about the history of the Church and identifying those who have inspired and challenged us from the time of the New Testament to the present. Some of the individuals within it are recognized as saints in many parts of the Church universal today. Others are not. Some present special challenges—whether from their mode of life, what we now perceive as misunderstandings of the Gospel call, a lack of charity toward others, or other reasons.⁷ We intend *A Great Cloud of Witnesses* to serve several purposes. First, it is a catechetical tool to educate the faithful about the breadth of witness to the transforming work of God in Christ Jesus. Second, it is a collection that provides a range of options for commemorations in the form of eucharistic celebrations, prayer offices, or individual devotions.

Following the broad stream of Christian tradition, there are no formal criteria for defining saints. Rather, holiness and faithful witness are celebrated locally by a decision that individuals so honored shine forth Christ to the world. They illuminate different facets of Christian maturity to spur us on to an adult faith in the Risen Christ and the life of the Spirit. As illustrations, they mirror the myriad virtues of Christ in order that, in their examples, we might recognize those same virtues and features of holiness in people closer to our own times and contexts. And, seeing them in those around us, we may be better able to cultivate these virtues and forms of holiness in the life of the Church—through grace—as we strive to imitate Christ as well.

How to Use These Materials

Each entry includes a biographical narrative of the person or people, highlighting the significance of their life and witness. A devotional collect is provided in both Rite I and Rite II language. Tags “for liturgical celebration” identify Commons and Various Occasions related to the life, work, or impact of the occasion. When

⁷ To name one challenge, the anti-Semitism/anti-Judaism of some pre-modern writers and teachers is a significant stumbling block to celebrating them as saints.

a local community decides to commemorate a person or group, the appropriate propers are selected from the Common of Saints. Alternatively, a Eucharist celebrating a related Various Occasion might include the devotional collect as the conclusion to the Prayers of the People. The Common of Saints from the Book of Common Prayer has been enriched, particularly through the addition of more options for biblical readings, to allow a community to more closely tailor the set of readings to the witness of the person celebrated. The “New Commons for Various Occasions” first appearing in *Holy Women*, *Holy Men* are also included here.

November 17

Hugh, 1200,

and **Robert Grosseteste**, 1253

Bishops of Lincoln

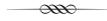
Hugh was born into a noble family at Avalon in Burgundy (France). He became a canon regular at Villard-Benoit near Grenoble. About 1160, he joined the Carthusians, the strictest contemplative religious order, becoming the procurator of their major house, the Grande Chartreuse. With reluctance, he accepted the invitation of King Henry II to become prior of a new foundation of Carthusians in England at Witham, Somerset. With even greater hesitation, Hugh accepted the King's appointment to the See of Lincoln in 1186. He died in London, November 16, 1200, and is buried in Lincoln Cathedral, of which he laid the foundation.

As a bishop, Hugh continued to live as much as possible under the strict discipline of his order. His humility and tact, his total lack of self-regard, and his cheerful disposition made it difficult to oppose him. His people loved him for his unrelenting care of the poor and oppressed. Steadfastly independent of secular influences, he was never afraid to reprove his king for unjust treatment of the people. Hugh refused to raise money for King Richard's foreign wars. Yet Richard said of him, "If all bishops were like my Lord of Lincoln, not a prince among us could lift his head against them."

Robert Grosseteste was a distinguished scholar of law, medicine, languages, sciences, and theology, having risen to prominence from humble beginnings. He was a commentator and translator of Aristotle but sought to refute many of Aristotle's ideas in favor of those of Augustine. Because of Grosseteste's influence, Oxford began to give greater weight to the study of science, particularly geometry, physics, and mathematics.

Roger Bacon, an important progenitor of scientific method, was a pupil of Grosseteste, and John Wyclif was strongly influenced by him as well.

He became Bishop of Lincoln in 1235. He is remembered for the diligence with which he visited the clergy and people of his diocese, teaching, preaching, and celebrating the sacraments, thus refusing to be isolated from the lives of those under his care. He was a steadfast defender of diocesan prerogatives whether against the papacy or the state.



Rite I Holy God, our greatest treasure, who didst bless Hugh and Robert, Bishops of Lincoln, with wise and cheerful boldness for the proclamation of thy Word to rich and poor alike: Grant that all who minister in thy Name may serve with diligence, discipline and humility, fearing nothing but the loss of thee and drawing all to thee through Jesus Christ our Savior; who liveth and reigneth with thee in the communion of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Rite II Holy God, our greatest treasure, you blessed Hugh and Robert, Bishops of Lincoln, with wise and cheerful boldness for the proclamation of your Word to rich and poor alike: Grant that all who minister in your Name may serve with diligence, discipline and humility, fearing nothing but the loss of you and drawing all to you through Jesus Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you in the communion of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

For Liturgical Celebration: [Common of a Pastor, A14] [For the Ministry II, A50]

November 18

Hilda

Abbess of Whitby, 680

“Hilda’s career falls into two equal parts,” says the Venerable Bede, “for she spent thirty-three years nobly in secular habit, while she dedicated an equal number of years still more nobly to the Lord, in the monastic life.”

Hilda, born in 614, was the grandniece of King Edwin. She was instructed by Paulinus (one of the companions of Augustine of Canterbury) in the doctrines of Christianity in preparation for her baptism at the age of thirteen. She lived, chaste and respected, at the King’s court for twenty years and then decided to enter the monastic life. She had hoped to join the convent of Chelles in Gaul, but Bishop Aidan was so impressed by her holiness of life that he recalled her to her home country, in East Anglia, to live in a small monastic settlement.

One year after her return, Aidan appointed her Abbess of Hartlepool. There, Hilda established the rule of life that she had been taught by Paulinus and Aidan. She became renowned for her wisdom, eagerness for learning, and devotion to God’s service.

Some years later, she founded the abbey at Whitby, where both nuns and monks lived in strict obedience to Hilda’s rule of justice, devotion, chastity, peace, and charity. Known for her prudence and good sense, Hilda was sought out by kings and other public men for advice and counsel. Those living under her rule devoted so much time to the study of Scripture and to works of righteousness that many were found qualified for ordination. Several of her monks became bishops; at least one pursued further studies in Rome. She encouraged the poet Caedmon, a servant at Whitby, to become a monk and to continue his inspired writing. All who were her subjects or knew her, Bede remarks, called her “mother.”

In 663, Whitby was the site of the famous synod convened to decide divisive questions involved in the differing traditions of Celtic Christians and the followers of Roman order. Hilda favored the Celtic position, but, when the Roman position prevailed, she was obedient to the synod's decision. Hilda died on November 17, 680, surrounded by her monastics, whom, in her last hour, she urged to preserve the gospel of peace.



Rite I O God of peace, by whose grace the abbess Hilda was endowed with gifts of justice, prudence, and strength to rule as a wise mother over the nuns and monks of her household and to become a trusted and reconciling friend to leaders of the Church: Raise up these gifts in us, that we, following her example and prayers, might build up one another in love to the benefit of thy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Rite II O God of peace, by whose grace the abbess Hilda was endowed with gifts of justice, prudence, and strength to rule as a wise mother over the nuns and monks of her household and to become a trusted and reconciling friend to leaders of the Church: Raise up these gifts in us, that we, following her example and prayers, may build up one another in love to the benefit of your Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

For Liturgical Celebration: [Common of a Monastic or Professed Religious, A20] [Common of a Theologian and Teacher, A17] [Of the Incarnation, A39]