



What Does That Mean?

As we celebrate the 2019 Book of Common Prayer, it seems an appropriate time to review some of the vernacular that we use in our worship service. Here's one of those terms.

What is "Kyrie Eleison"? Why this term?

The expression, *Kyrie Eleison* (pronounced, "kir-ē- ā-ə-'lā-[ə-],sän"), is Greek for "Lord, have mercy." It is based on Psalms 6:2; 9:13; 30:10; and also the New Testament. It is among the oldest and most used prayers in our liturgy.

The Kyrie

The Celebrant and people pray

Lord, have mercy upon us.		Lord, have mercy.		Kyrie Eleison.
Christ, have mercy upon us.	or	Christ, have mercy.	or	Christe Eleison.
Lord, have mercy upon us.		Lord, have mercy.		Kyrie Eleison.

Its use in the Eastern traditions can be traced back to the second century, according to the Greek historian and philosopher, Aarian. The Roman Mass adopted its use in 529AD where it was sung in three, six, or ninefold form in the liturgy.

Thomas Cranmer inserted the *Kyrie* in the 1552 Book of Common Prayer after the Decalogue in the Holy Eucharist. Our new 2019 BCP places the Summary of the Law as a response of praise and worship. One alternate response may be substituted: the *Trisagion*. Both the *Kyrie* and *Trisagion* are prayers for God's mercy.

Reciting the *Kyrie* in Greek unites us with the millions of believers who preceded us in faith because we are reciting/singing it the same way they did. We say these ancient words to proclaim God's grace and mercy as demonstrated on the Cross.



Sources:

- *The Anglican Way*, (2014)
- Holy Trinity Parish of Ocean Beach
- *Anglican Services*, 1953
- *The Worship of the Church* (1952)

