

**Interview with The Rev. Sam Dessórdi Leite of the Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil**

SDL=Sam Dessórdi Leite

DMB=Deã Marinez Bassotto

DA=Devon Anderson

DK=Drew Keane

DA: Hi, Sam.

SDL: Hi, how are you?

DA: Can you see me?

SDL: Yes, I can see you.

DA: Hi. I'm Devon Anderson, and I'm the chair of this committee. It's been nice to see you on Facebook. So, what I want to do is just ask you questions that I can remember, the questions that I sent you a couple weeks ago, and if you don't remember those I will try and recreate those for you. But what we'd like to do is learn a little bit from you about the Anglican Church in Brazil and about your process of revising the prayer book there.

SDL: Okay.

DA: So what we'll do is I'll just kind of ask you questions and if you could talk to us a little bit about that and tell us what you know, and then we'll have some question and answers from some of the people that are here from the Standing Commission on Liturgy.

SDL: Okay. I also want to say that Reverend Marinez from Brazil who is the current custodian of the BCP, she just texted me saying she's arriving home and she's going to come talk with us on Skype. So if she shows up on Skype, you guys know who she is.

DA: So, why don't we start by, why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself, and you served . . . you were in Brazil, and what was your role there and what committee did you serve on and if you could just give us a little feedback about that and some little information about yourself and your role in that province in the Anglican Communion, let's just start there.

SDL: Okay. Dessórdi Leite, that's my name. People call me by Sam. I came from a Roman Catholic family, but when I was a teenager I decided to be part of the Episcopal Church when I was thirteen years old. It happened because I went to a church and I fell in love with the liturgy and the community. So very early in life I made the decision to become Episcopal because the church was making some profound significance for me in my context. That had to do with the love the community had for liturgy. Most of my period as a young person I did work with youth ministry in liturgy and spirituality. When I was 18 I went to theological seminary, and that was also the period Reverend Marinez went to as well, so she and I we are from the same period of the Episcopal Church in Brazil for ten years, the theological seminary was closed, so when we are ordained, I was 23 years old, she was probably 25, and we had a gap between our generation . . . was a generation of young clergy, and a gap of ten years for the older generation, who was a generation who grew up with the Book of Common Prayer from 1930. Actually, I had also when I

was a teenager we used the book from 1930, which probably is the translation from your book 1928, I think. So one of the major differences for us was the fact that Reverend Marinez and I were living during the liberation theology period, which was a strong invitation to be more . . . to pay more attention to enculturation. And the way we did the liturgy in theological seminary was using worship daily as a laboratory and experience the traditional liturgy on the parishes on the weekend. So both of us were very connected to liturgy. We had four years of theological studies. I was ordained while I was 23 years old, and I was a member of the National Liturgical Committee for probably twelve or thirteen years. In 2003, if I'm not wrong, I was called by the House of the Bishops to be the custodian of the Brazilian BCP, and I was the custodian for probably seven years. So in that period, what we did on the committee was to look what is missing in the book that we were using during 80s and 90s and try to fulfill those needs creating like a . . . we had booklets, we had two booklets, that was . . . what is the word . . . like alternative liturgies and rites, but actually the new Book of Common Prayer during 80s was a really bad reproduction of the BCP in the United States, so that book was missing the morning prayer, evening prayer, was missing all the rites, the special liturgies for Holy Week. We didn't have Ash Wednesday, so a chunk of the original book was missing.

DA: Can I just stop you for a minute and make sure that I'm following what you're saying?

SDL: Yes.

DA: So, you said that the Anglican Church in Brazil had a Book of Common Prayer in 1930 and that it was patterned on the 1928 Book of Common Prayer in the Episcopal Church, is that right?

SDL: That's correct.

DA: Okay, and then there was no revision until the 1980s?

SDL: That's correct.

DA: Okay, so when was that prayer book finalized?

SDL: So, we had one in 1930 which was the population of Europe, and then we had another one in 1984 which was a translation from the . . .

DA: '79 prayer book?

SDL: Perfect. And then we had the recent one from 2014, if I'm not wrong, which is the one where I participate in the beginning of the process and then Marinez, she's the one who currently helped.

DA: Okay, great. So I'm clear on that. So the 1984 Brazil prayer book was the translation of the 1979 one in the Episcopal Church, is that correct?

SDL: That's correct.

DA: Okay. And then, you also mentioned an alternative services book?

SDL: We had in the end of the 90s 'til 2006 two short booklets with some liturgical resources. So one was actually some of those rites that were missing, they removed from the book, from the 1979. In the second booklet was like a selection of alternative rituals that sometimes were necessary,

the clergy had no idea where to find, things like which ritual for a graduation. I think we had some popular religiosity rites on that one, but those two books was mostly in the hands of the Liturgical Committee, and of some bishops and people didn't think much of that, so unfortunately.

DA: You mean it wasn't widely used?

SDL: Not widely.

DA: Okay. So focusing on the book that was finished in 2014, so . . . I have some questions about it.

SDL: Yes, okay.

DA: So, my first question is, when did that start and why? Why was there the sense of call that there needed to be a new prayer book?

SDL: The conversation on revising the book was going on for a while. When I was nearly ordained in my twenties, which was during the 90s, people would make comments that we need to make changes. One of the major things were the gender language. But it's interesting that people would be more comfortable changing the words of the Bible than changing the words of the BCP. Especially when they talk about the Eucharistic prayer, everything else was kind of . . . we could imagine, but touching the Eucharistic prayer was sacred. In 2003 when I was appointed for the . . . to be the custodian, I remember that some of the bishops coming to me and saying, now we can move on with the revision. So that first committee was kind of collecting what we have out there. We talked about the need, mostly on the morning prayer and evening prayer, because during 80s, before 80s we had a lot of use of the Daily Office, and then I think when the new book came, and the morning prayer and evening prayer was combined, was just one prayer, we lost the strength on that, and also in 80s had the switch in the Brazilian church of putting much more attention on having Eucharist, Eucharistic liturgies weekly, than having Daily Office. The second thing was the need for the Holy Week liturgies. I remember the first conversation, people were resistant and saying, we're going to look like Roman Catholics, but then the generation that's my generation, Marinez' generation, we were keen to use much of the material that is actually from the BCP, from the Book of Common Prayer, and actually that's one of the reasons why I came to the United States. It's because in the Brazilian context I wouldn't have any way to go deeper on my studies on rituals and liturgy, so that's why I ended coming to California. But had a profound need for the Holy Week liturgies, Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday the church was using the ritual from the Portuguese book from Portugal.

DA: So it wasn't because the 1984 book was the translation of the Episcopal Church book, and there is an Ash Wednesday service in there.

SDL: Yeah, let me tell about the 1984 book.

DA: Okay.

SDL: The book in '84, they . . . I would say the House of the Bishops, they say the Synod at General Convention, they agreed of doing the translation but they said we don't have enough money, so if you're going to publish a book, we need to remove rituals that are less important and keep the

Eucharist and the prayer. So several things were removed from the 1984 book, and that's why for this one we have now, we went back and brought it back to life.

DA: Can you talk to us a little bit about . . . so the Book of Common Prayer that was finalized in 2014, when did that process start and how did it start, who started it, and could you tell us a little bit about the process that you followed to develop liturgies?

SDL: So that's why . . . that's a piece I was kind of waiting for Marinez to . . .

DA: Okay.

SDL: . . . talk about on Skype, because she has the most recent . . .

DMB: Hello, I am here.

SDL: Okay, she's there. (laughs) So would you mind repeating the question?

DA: Welcome. My question is about the 2014 Book of Common Prayer in your province in Brazil. Would you tell us about when that process happened and how that started? And then describe for us what is the process that you developed that liturgy?

(SDL and DMB speaking Portuguese)

SDL: So she says the process in her opinion started thirty years ago in the moment that the 1984 book was published.

DA: Okay. (laughs)

SDL: People were saying, this is not good.

DMB: (speaking in Portuguese)

SDL: Yeah, so the General Convention elects the members of the liturgical committee and that committee should have been working in some of these changes continuously.

DA: Sam, I believe that you were still there at that time, so if you were the custodian of the prayer book from 2003 to 2010, maybe you could give us . . . maybe you could comment on that. Do you know how they began the process and what they began with?

SDL: One of the main things was, we had what we call the regular meetings, which was actually twice a year, and we called the diocese and asked for them to send to us all the liturgies they've been using and whatever adaptation they made for certain rituals that we considered important. So in Brazil the adaptation didn't happen necessarily in local places, didn't necessarily happen in the text, but happened in the way people did things and the symbols they brought in so they kind of start enculturating with the text they have. We had a couple, one or two diocese, which were more brave and created rites like the Diocese of Recife that was a little bit controversial had . . . they created a rite for divorce. If a couple would . . . agreed in ending their relationship in peace, they would have a ritual for that. So we've got things like that as well. What I can tell you that wasn't observed from the very beginning was the importance of keeping the next book with ecumenical sense. When I did my masters in CDSP with Ruth Meyers in Lizette it looks . . . that was one of the things that I spoke about. So currently in the new book, for example, we have

the Our Father prayer is not the traditional Our Father that was brought from the Episcopal tradition, but is the Our Father that's use in the ecumenical level in Latin . . . in Brazil, among the national what we call the council, the National Council of Christian Churches. So that was one of the things—is Marinez back?

DMB: Yes.

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: So, they chose some main lines to work in the revision. One of those main lines is the emphasis on getting closer, or approximation with churches that are open to ecumenism. So the Our Father was one . . .

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: So the second thing they did, so the Our Father wasn't the only change. The second thing was, following the recommendation the ACC—

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: --our recommendation that came from ACC, Anglican Consultative Council of the observance of the Nicene Creed and perhaps removing the filioque quote—I'm not sure how to say that in English, but you probably guys know, had a recommendation recently as a . . . to get closer to our sister church and apparently they removed the filioque.

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: Okay. So they did for the new book . . . the Nicene Creed doesn't have the filioque, and the intention is to a proximity with the Orthodox Church.

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: Okay. So the third thing they did based on that line of ecumenism was the adoption of the ecumenical lectionary.

DMB: (speaks in Portuguese)

SDL: They adopted the full lectionary for Sundays, Eucharistic Sundays, as well for the feasts, and also Daily Office.

DA: Sam, is the ecumenical lectionary the revised common lectionary or is it different from that?

SDL: When you say common revised lectionary, is that the one that is in use here?

DA: The one that's new there? Is it the same thing? We use that here in the United States, the revised common lectionary. So our question is, is that the same thing that you're talking about that's the ecumenical lectionary that they're using now in Brazil?

SDL: Let me check.

(SDL converses with DMB in Portuguese)

SDL: Well, the translation we're using is in international use, apparently the first church to use it, the first church in the Anglican Communion to use that lectionary was Ireland, and is probably the same but I can't guarantee. I can ask her to send me the resources, if it's helpful.

DA: So the three . . . what you've been itemizing or what you've been listing are the major changes or thematic changes in the 2014 Book of Common Prayer, is that right?

SDL: Yes, that's correct.

DA: Okay, so it was the Our Father, the Nicene Creed, and the ecumenical liturgical calendar.

SDL: Yes. These three under the umbrella of ecumenism. There are other changes in the book.

DA: Okay. Can you speak a little bit about that? What was the need for . . . the cultural situation or the national situation that made the need for more ecumenically focused liturgical resources needed? Why was that needed?

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: So the first thing is, Martinez just said, is part of a ethos, America-Latina, we had during the end of 60s in the . . . to 70s. Several countries live under dictatorship, which led us to more shared liberation theological experiences and that period in Brazil an organization was formed, became stronger and wider during 80s, we call CONIC, which is the National Council of . . .

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: . . . the National Council of Christian Churches. And . . .

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: So when I was in Brazil, it used to be seven churches, including one of the churches was the Orthodox Church, one of the other churches. But mostly Lutherans, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Anglicans . . .

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: Yeah. So the Syriac Church, and for about 25 years for sure we've been producing events and religious stuff--when I say religious stuff, like rituals--workshops where we bring people together, so it's very strong, their ecumenical relationship in Brazil. We had some damage when the German Pope became the Pope because he was against liberation theology, so they made some major changes in the Roman Catholic Church that affected the way ecumenism was going on in Brazil. But even though it's still very strong, it's something that I miss a lot. And every time we had celebrations together, the Our Father would be one of the things that had no discussion about, we would say the ecumenical. So it was already in the body of the church the experience of choosing, are we going to do the Episcopal version or the ecumenical, so it's going to be the ecumenical. So that was kind of a natural move. The filioque situation was something new that came from the top down, came from the Anglican . . . consult?

DA: Consultative Council?

SDL: Yes. And the other thing, I forgot, what is the other thing? Oh, the lectionary. The lectionary actually we've been using for a while, but was never, we never made formal until this book came out.

DA: Okay. Were there, in addition to these ecumenically focused changes in the lectionary, how else did this prayer book depart from your previous prayer book?

SDL: Oh, so many ways.

DA: All right.

SDL: It was a dream coming true.

DA: Oh, good, why don't you tell us about some of them?

SDL: I think the major concern of the clergy, the clergy from my generation, was we are basically using the US book in our language, so there is nothing in this book that would make a difference of being down here or in the United States. So the concern was to make it more relevant for the people there, which is one of the major fundamentals of the Book of Common Prayer is to be relevant for the local people. So some of the changes that we did was the language, and that discussion was always there from the very beginning to make it gender inclusive. And Reverend Marinez was saying today, you know how difficult it was, it was not an easy task. Words that in English is just like if you say, saints, whereas we have two words for that. And then on and on we have more. So one of the changes was, the ancient forms like the Gloria Patri we would keep as it is, but prayers that can be considered more contemporary or not so from the early church would be adapted to be gender inclusive.

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: So, when they did the revision, considering the gender, everything was, so it was a full revision. That means including the Psalms.

DA: Oh, okay. Okay, what else do you want to tell us about?

SDL: So the other thing about inclusion and that was something that I mentioned in my work in CDSP was inclusion of national martyrs or people who we consider important in the history of the church. So the current, the new book came out not with the collects, but in the Calendar of the Saints brings names of local martyrs. Some from Brazil, some from the United States. So like Mary Packard, she was one of the missionaries who came from VTS in the very beginning of the church, and she wasn't ordained but she basically had much of the diaconal ministry in Brazil. So she is on the calendar, there is a date for her. Dorothy Stang, the nun that was murdered in the rainforest who was very outspoken about the environment, she is also in that calendar. So we had also care to create a balance between men and women to be on that revised calendar.

DA: Okay. I think we have about ten more minutes and then I'm going to ask my group if they have questions for you.

SDL: I do have a list of things.

DA: Yeah, I want to hear as many as you can tell me.

SDL: Okay, let me tell you what works.

DA: Yeah, we're interested.

SDL: I'm going to tell what works. So one of the first concerns was during our generation the Book of Common Prayer was in church all the time. Before 80s, people would use the book in home. And that's because it had much more resources. One of the concerns we had is to be used in church but also to motivate people to start using among the laity in church homes. The second thing was bringing back the morning prayer and evening prayer in separate bodies. Because the 1984 prayer book melded the two in one and you lost the richness of the Daily Office. So the current book has now morning prayer and evening prayer. And we do have new, four new Eucharistic prayers. Aside of the old ones from 1979. Four Brazilian theologians wrote four Eucharistic prayers. Two of those prayers was done by Reverend Marinez. A third one was done by . . .

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: A third one was done by Luiz Coelho, and the fourth one was done by . . .

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: Okay, the fourth one was done between two people, Bruno is a priest from the church in Bahia and Steven Taylor, who is a missionary from England, was working in Bahia. So those are four prayers.

DA: Can you talk to us a little bit about cultural and ethnic diversity within your province of the Anglican Communion and how those considerations were folded into your conversations and your writing and your development of the new prayer book?

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: Okay. Do you mind if, before I answer that question, there are three things that I forgot to mention. Okay, so the ritual for matrimony, the ritual for matrimony was revised and the language is all neutral gender, or gender neutral. So whoever is leading the liturgy into Hamadan, is gender neutral.

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: They designed that to be sure in the future, in the moment that becomes formal, we can also use as a same-sex . . .

DMB: Marriage.

SDL: The second thing is . . .

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: So the baptismal covenant was redesigned to include the five marks of mission.

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: For the third thing that was revised and is new is the litany for ordinations. It includes people in language that fights injustice.



DA: Oh, that's lovely.

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: Okay, so back to you.

DA: Well, thanks, I'm glad you added those, those are very interesting additions.

SDL: Do you have a copy of the Brazilian book? The commission has a copy of the new book? No.

DA: No. No, is it online?

SDL: I don't think so.

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: No, it's not, but if you need she can provide it.

DA: Okay. Would I be able to read it? (laughs) My Portuguese isn't very good. So just shifting gears, I do want to ask you about cultural and racial diversity in your church and how those, how that was addressed in your process of developing the new prayer book and, kind of, where are points of diversity in your community and, you know, how did you work your way through that?

SDL: So, first I want to say, Brazil is very mixed ethnically. It's a country that initially had a large native Brazilian population and was invaded by Europeans and then later had all Africans brought to the country as slaves, so the country's a melted pot. I used to say one of the major differences between us and the United States is we are very proud of being mixed. And I grew up knowing or listening people saying that more mixed we are, stronger we get. So that piece wasn't much a concern. I would say that the major, the two major concerns that you can see in the book is the gender issue, the church became very outspoken about empowering women from the very beginning. And the second thing is social injustice. And that has a lot to do with the liberation theology movement during 70s and 80s. For example, if you look in the calendar, names that were chosen, one of the names is Zumbi dos Palmares. He was one of the Afro-Brazilians who led the revolutions to set free the slaves. The other name that shows in the calendar is Sepé Tiaraju which was an indigenous leader, so some of these names has more to do with social justice and liberation than ethnic, or not necessarily ethnic, background. What else were you asking? I forgot.

DA: Well, that's what I was asking, and . . .

SDL: Oh, and the diversity in the church.

DA: Yes.

SDL: So basically we are all mixed. It's true that . . . so the problem is the concept of what is Black and what is White in Brazil. So many of us it just makes it hard to say if there is a larger presence of Afro-Brazilians. I remember when I was in CDSP we had a panel and the bishop from Panama was sitting next to me while we are doing a presentation, and he turns to me and says, "you guys don't have any Blacks as bishops." And I said, "Actually, we do have two, since we have just nine bishops in the country." So it's a good number. But that's because the understanding of what Black and White means up here, and in Brazil some of the indigenous . . . one of the

bishops, he is Afro-Brazilian and indigenous, so it's just the understanding is different of racial issues.

DA: So was that a dynamic when you were developing the liturgies? Were there different needs that came from different cultural perspectives?

SDL: I would say no, but I can ask Marinez since she was in the years that they finished the book.

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: So a slight change has to do with the language. So to avoid words or expressions in the book that would lead to racism or prejudice, and that has a lot to do with the language. Like in Portuguese if you use the word "clarear" which means to clarify, it means to turn something that was dark or black in white. So in Portuguese that can be a racist expression. So any language or word that would lead to a double understanding they tried to remove from the book.

DA: Thank you. I'm going to ask my colleagues for questions in a moment, but my last question to both of you is, what advice do you have for us and what I mean by that is what do you wish that you had done differently early on.

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: So the first thing I want to say, it's very brave, and I'm so proud of you. It's much, much in need. The gender language is one of the things that we always care about. Something that I . . . in my period that I missed and I wish we have done more was to give back to the communities. Some . . . enough time to try the new language. So we didn't . . . the window of trial was very short. We didn't have the chance to listen back from the communities to say this is working or not. So most of what was done is based in the materials that we asked them to send to us. So based in the way those liturgies and those rites were done, we recreated the language in the revision. So from my point of view, from the period that I was working there, I really miss the fact of sending back for trials.

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: I'm just going to explain quickly so she doesn't need to say the same thing I said.

DA: Okay. (laughs)

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: So she agrees with what I said and . . .

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: So because they didn't have the chance to do the back and forth or rituals, some rituals were left out. And now what's happening is certain communities are writing back to the liturgical committee and requesting if they can access to those rites. She mentioned some rites for Advent, Epiphany, and Christmas.

DA: Thank you. Questions? Yes, Drew.

DK: I wonder if you could say more about how long the trial period was, how the trial rites were distributed and how feedback was solicited.

DA: So the question is if you could say, if the two of you could say a little bit more about the trial use period and how long—how did you distribute to everybody and how long was the trial period and did you get feedback that you could use back?

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: So first thing first, it was actually the book's 2015. I said 2014, it's 2015. I forgot we are already in 2017. So answering Drew's question, the more formal period was one year. But she said it took a little bit longer than that because people keep exchanging documents in the half of the following year, so it's approximately between one to one and a half years. Until the conclusion that was six months later after they collected everything.

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: Okay, so they created a site as a main resource so people would go, the diocese would go to that website and collected the liturgy they needed or they want to use, so that was the way they distributed the material.

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: Okay. So the website was open for everybody and they had clergy and laity writing back their perceptions, their comments, and after they got that, the commission—the liturgical committee took one year to go through all the revision based on the comments they did.

DA: And then how did they distribute? Was it online, or . . . ?

SDL: It was online, they had a website and their website contained all the resources. So if your parish wanted to use it, they would download and experiment and write back saying how did it go.

DA: Did that answer your question? Okay. Another question?

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: She mentioned something that I said in the very beginning, which was through these past years, which was about thirty years, members of the liturgical committee collected and produced liturgy that they also used in their communities and somehow part of those liturgies are also present in the new book, the new revised book. Considering language, that's the main thing. Yes.

DA: Okay. All right, Drew? Thanks. So Sam, how did you manage conflict, particularly with disagreements around theological approach?

(SDL and DMB converse in Portuguese)

SDL: So yes, we had a conflict. The major one was the fact that the current book today brings—refers to God as a father and a mother, so that was the major conflict that some parts of the church had a hard time to accept or embrace that image of God as mother. So one thing is changing the language to be gender inclusive, but when changed it . . . the changing God. So the solution for

that piece or the response for that piece was first go back to the Bible and work with the church at a national level themes where the motherhood of God, so working on the motherhood of God. And the second thing was also going back to the roots in the Celtic church and bringing some theology from the Celtic church where God is presented as a mother. She also mentioned Julian of Norwich. So providing a space for discussion and nurturing with theology that's not necessarily new, it's actually ancient theology.

DA: Thank you so much for all this information, and if you think of something, Sam, if you think of something you know how to find me.

SDL: Okay, yeah. I'm sorry I couldn't be . . . I wasn't able to be there today.

DA: That's fine, we understand and we really appreciate that you could set some time aside for us today to answer all our questions. And thank you for interpreting.

SDL: Thank you for having us. And it's great, great work you're doing. I'm so proud of you.

DA: Thank you. Well, hopefully we benefit from these conversations so they help us a lot. So really grateful for your time.

SDL: Thank you.

DA: Okay?

SDL: Have a good evening. Good work.

DA: Okay, thank you.

SDL: Bye.

DA: Bye, thanks.