

Prince Charles praises winning Norfolk pupil at awards contest

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The Prince of Wales presents a certificate to Joseph Oxtoby. Picture: Darren Fletcher

A Norfolk schoolboy was praised by Prince Charles who presented him with a top prize for his skill in speaking from the Book of Common Prayer.



Joseph Oxtoby was praised by the Prince of Wales. Picture: Tim Stanley

Joseph Oxtoby, 15, from Paston, was presented with the senior first prize at the national final of the Prayer Book Society's (PBS) 30th annual Cranmer awards competition at Lambeth Palace in London.

The awards introduce young people to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer (BCP) created by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury.

Prince Charles, who is patron of the society, which encourages rediscovery and use of the BCP, handed prizes to six winners and certificates to 22 other finalists aged between 10 and 18.

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More than 300 pupils entered local heats and 27 competed in the finals at Old Palace in Worcester.

The contestants memorised and spoke by heart passages from the book in front of an audience of parents, teachers, clergy and society members.

Joseph, a pupil at Gresham's School in Holt, chose the Collect and Gospel for Christmas Day and Psalm 133.

Judges looked for competitors able to demonstrate they understood the words they were speaking while communicating them in a style similar to that of a well-conducted church service.

Commenting on the BCP, Prince Charles told them: "It is a crucial part of our heritage and this is, I think, the particular point; we mind about our churches, our cathedrals, our buildings but also our language is important.

"When you think how much importance, fortunately, is paid to Shakespeare, the Prayer Book Society still works so hard to spread the word about the Prayer Book and its value."

He added: "And as I'm sure many of you understand, as I do, as you get older, the words in the Prayer Book mean more and more and more."

First, second and third junior and senior winners received cash prizes – £200, £150 and £100 – as well as a commemorative certificate and a copy of the BCP.

Schools and churches keen to take part next year can obtain more details from the Prayer Book Society at The Studio, Copyhold Farm, Lady Grove, Goring Heath, Reading RG8 7RT, call 0118 984 2582, email pbs.admin@pbs.org.uk

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