



Niagara Anglican

NEWS • PERSPECTIVE • REFLECTION • FOR A GROWING CHURCH • OCTOBER 2006

It is right to give God thanks...



...but how?

How thankful are we anyway? The deep well of gratitude

JOHN BOTHWELL
RETIRED BISHOP OF NIAGARA

In this Thanksgiving season, does God see Canadians as being really thankful?

In our harvest liturgies we Christians certainly 'talk the talk' of gratitude, but in our every day living do we really 'walk the walk'? In chapter 17 of St. Luke's gospel, there is a story about the healing of ten lepers who cried out for mercy, and when Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priests, they obeyed and were healed. But when only one returned to say thanks, Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? Where are the other nine?" I wonder, does God have similar thoughts about us Canadians?

Social scientists say that human needs can be arranged into an hierarchy, and that food, water, health and shelter are the most basic ones. But once we possess all those basic needs, we often forget

the multitudes who do not, and go on pursuing more and better things for ourselves. Is this not a sign of ingratitude similar to those nine lepers? To explore this question, I want to point out a mistaken idea that lies behind our apparent indifference and its long-run implications for our own lives, as well as those of our needy neighbours both overseas and here at home.

Typical of failed societies

In his best-selling paper-back, *A Short History of Progress*, Canadian author Ronald Wright points out that "the idea of material progress" is a modern invention barely three centuries old, but it has become almost a secular religion in prosperous, nations like Canada. He also warns that our expectations of an ever increasing standard of living is typical of failed societies in the past, and gives specific examples from different times and places to prove his point.

Another best-selling author, Jared Diamond makes exactly the same point in his book *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. And Diamond asks, "What will happen when it finally dawns on all those Third World people that the current living standards in the First World are probably unreachable for them?" Some scholars estimate that it would take at least one and probably several more planets the size of our earth to produce enough for Third World people to live as we do. Yet most middle-class Canadians would find it extremely difficult to share our personal and national wealth, especially if that meant higher taxes or a reduction in our own standard of living! Human nature seems to favour short-term gain over long-term stability as long as the destructive consequences seem dis-

See **HOW THANKFUL** on page 11

LINDA MOORE
CENTRE FOR LEADERSHIP AND HUMAN VALUES

Two friends sit on the side of a hill silently watching a gold and rose sun set over an Albertan sky and smile. A thoughtful stranger hands a half loaf of bread to a small and hungry child on the streets of Mumbai and watches in wonder as she then distributes pieces of it to several others that surround her. A beggar in Bangkok puts his withered and worn hand on the shoulder of a distraught woman comforting her. A young business man in Prague walking to work with a whistle on his breath takes time to wish others a good day. A farmer in Botswana holds a sheaf of grain in his arms and weeps for joy. A Tibetan monk in New York stops and offers a prayer in a park.

All across our globe in every minute of every day individual human beings are expressing their gratitude for their own prosperity

and good fortune and passing it on to others. It is an eternal cycle of joy that is open to all.

An immense imbalance

This way of being in the world does raise a number of questions. How does this welling up of gratitude begin? Where is its source? Since it does not seem to have anything to do with observable economic prosperity, how little do we need to be fulfilled and appreciative? Why do some give so freely while others do not? What do we fear that stops us?

At first glance we see in our world an immense imbalance between those that have and those that have not, based solely in the material and economic sense. Arising out of this perspective of disparity many emotions emerge; anger, fear, envy, outrage and deep

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PARISH NEWS

Niagara Anglican - October 2006



A new bell for the Plant Quiet Garden

It's an Absolute Blast at St. Matthew-on-the-Plains, Burlington!

This is what two parishioners of St. Luke's Hamilton do when they're not at worship! They're sandblasters, or in this case, bell blasters! Wayne

Nusko (left) and Walter Raybould (right) have refurbished the 1892 historic bell for St. Matthew-on-the-Plains. It hung in the bell tower until 2004 when the front of the church was re-designed. Its new home is

in The Plant Quiet Garden, which was dedicated by the Bishop on the patronal Feast of St. Matthew. The garden is open to the community for everyone's enjoyment. Please drop by and take a look.



Summer Club in new hall at St. Luke's, Burlington.

Parish hall open for business

KEITH BRAITHWAITE
ST. LUKE'S, BURLINGTON

It seemed fitting that the first events in the newly renovated hall at St. Luke's, Burlington were the Annual Summer Club and the Annual Friends of St. Luke's Day. Last year both events had to be held at other Anglican Churches in Burlington.

The summer club with a theme of Treasure Island attracted an attendance of 73 children who came

from four Anglican churches in Burlington: St. Elizabeth's, St. Matthew on the Plains, St. John's and St. Luke's. As well there were several kids with no church affiliation at all, which is very exciting. Families have already started to ask what dates next year's Summer Club will be so that they can plan their summer vacations around them!

The first Friends of St. Luke's Day was held in May of 1972 with attendance of about thirty seniors

and has been held every year since then. This year's Friends of St. Luke's Day was held on August 30 and close to 130 nursing home residents and shut-ins attended a service in the newly painted church followed by a reception in the new parish hall. As in years past there were several ladies in their 90s. There was much rejoicing and pride as church members and visitors enjoyed the ambience of the new auditorium.

The genesis of the Jamesville Community Centre

SUE-ANN WARD
ASSISTANT CURATE, CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

In an effort to meet some of the needs of the Jamesville neighbourhood, St. Mary's School, Christ's Church Cathedral, and the Jamesville Children's Centre established a partnership that worked to create a breakfast program for neighbourhood children. After a number of months of preparation, members of the Jamesville Breakfast Club sat down to their first morning meal together on March 20, 2006. Each day, an average of 70 children and 10 volunteers gather to fuel up for the day. Together, as neighbours, we are growing in health and in relationship. The program and the partnership have proven to be very successful.

In recent months, the lack of recreational activities and community space available to people living in the Jamesville neighbourhood of Hamilton has been identified as a concern. In order to address this situation, a group of folks from this neighbourhood undertook a project, spear-headed by Christ's Church Cathedral, that created a community centre with and for Jamesville and Beasley neighbours.

The positive relationship developed through the creation and implementation of the Jamesville Breakfast Club made it possible for Christ's Church Cathedral to approach the Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board about transforming a portion of one of their school sites into the Jamesville Community Centre. We have created a hub for the community in the physical plant of St. Mary's Catholic Elementary School. It is now a place where neighbours can gather to engage in a variety of social, cultural, educational, and recreational activities.

Creating opportunities

We have entered into partnerships with individuals and organizations in order to provide programs, activities, and opportunities to people of all ages free of charge. We are building relationships among members of the community and breaking down barriers that prevent some Hamiltonians from participating in sport, recreational, artistic, and community opportunities. Our goal is to create growth opportunities for people of all ages, ensuring that there is a particular focus on children and youth.

None of the organizations involved in the partnership possessed all of the resources necessary to undertake the project on its own. Each entity was able to

provide some of the required resources to launch and sustain the project. Christ's Church Cathedral provides the rent, a portion of the insurance, wonderful volunteers, and coordination of the partnership. The Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board provides the space, and insures and maintains the physical plant. The City of Hamilton, the YMCA, SISO, Hamilton Artists Inc., and other community groups provide the programming and program leaders. Now, our neighbours in Hamilton have a community centre where they can learn, socialize, and recreate. We could not do this alone, but as partners we were able to put existing space, skill sets, and resources to use for the benefit of the community.

A safe place

At a meeting in June, parents from the neighbourhood identified a need for summer time activities for children. A free drop-in program offering games, crafts, sports, and special events seemed like a good starting activity for the Jamesville Community Centre. The City of Hamilton hired, trained, and supervised the staff. Christ's Church Cathedral paid the staff. The Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board provided the site. Many neighbourhood children made new friends and engaged in fun activities in a safe place.

During the school year, the YMCA of Hamilton / Burlington is running a Virtual YMCA in one of the classrooms. The program provides a nutritious snack, access to a variety of books, activities suitable for the children's level of development and interest, curriculum that focuses on building children's literacy skills through fun and interactive activities that motivate children to read, write, and communicate, and integration of literacy into programs that centre on the arts, health and recreation, values, and academic enhancement. The program runs from the close of the school day until 6:00 pm.

SISO is now running their client service programs from the Jamesville Community Centre. SISO provides trained staff, volunteers, equipment, and materials. Volunteers from Christ's Church Cathedral and McMaster University have partnered to provide child minding on site during the SISO educational sessions. This service is provided to ensure that all parents are able to take part in the opportunities that SISO provides.

See JAMESVILLE on page 3

St. Matthew-on-the-Plains, Burlington



John and Mary Rowe celebrated their 66th Anniversary of Marriage on September 20, 2006. They have been members of Anglican Churches all their lives. They were married at St Bartholomew's in Forest Hill London on September 20, 1940. Since then they have attended St. James, Humber Bay; St. Simon's, Oakville; St Columba, St. Catharines; St. Giles, Barrie; and are presently members of St. Matthew-on-the-Plains in Burlington. We wish John and Mary the very best on this special occasion!

St. James' Church, Fergus



Bishop Ralph and Carol Spence visited St. James' Church, Fergus on August 17 to participate in the celebrations for the 105th birthday of Mary Clunes ON. A celebratory tea was provided by the St James ACW, and attended by a large number of parishioners and friends. In addition, Bishop Spence offered Holy Communion to Mary in honour of this milestone. Fittingly, the *Gospel* reading for the day was *Matthew 22:1-14*, the Parable of the Wedding Banquet. Bishop Ralph noted that whereas many are called only few are chosen; Mary is an example to all the parish of those who are chosen through her lifetime of faithfulness. In offering thanks to all who had made the festivity possible, Mary remarked that it is God's grace that has allowed her to live such a long and fortunate life.

Jamesville Community Centre

Continued from page 2

Hospitality, supervision and security

Hamilton Artists Inc. is teaching art classes in cartooning, animation, and mural design. A group of Sudanese-Canadian women are in the process of establishing a sewing club. We are in the process of organizing a number of drop-in sports programs and fashioning an arts and crafts room, a games room, a computer room, and a homework club.

The Jamesville Community Centre includes a gymnasium, washrooms, an office, a seminar room, a kitchen, and four classrooms. These are all located on the lowest level of the three floor building. Staff and volunteers are on site to provide hospitality, supervision, and security. The Jamesville Community Centre hours of operation are Monday to Saturday from 10:00 am until 10:00 pm.

If you are interested in volunteering as a hospitality provider, a program leader or assistant, a homework helper, or in some other capacity, please contact Sister Michael at 905-527-1316 (ext. 250). The Jamesville Community Centre would be enhanced by your donation of any of the following items: gently used or new games, sports equipment, art supplies, craft materials, storage containers, CD players, sewing machines, new or relatively new computers—less than five years of age—and office supplies. Monetary gifts may be made through Christ's Church Cathedral, 252 James Street North, Hamilton, Ontario. A charitable receipt will be provided for donations of \$20.00 or more.

What a trend we have in Jesus

The annual T.W. Smyth Memorial Lecture at St. John's, Elora, will be delivered by Professor Terence L. Donaldson, who holds the Lord and Lady Coggan Chair of New Testament at Wycliffe College, Toronto while also serving as the director of Advanced Degree Studies at the Toronto School of Theology.

Under the title, "Coups, conspiracies and the cover-ups: Decoding the popular fascinations with Jesus and Christian origins," his particular interest will be the

thesis found in different forms in the Jesus Seminar. *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Pagan Christ*, and to a certain extent, in the way the *Gospel of Judas* has played in the media. These well-publicized works have in common the claim that they have uncovered the real story of Christian origins; that this story is quite at odds with traditional Christianity; and that orthodox Christianity became dominant precisely by eliminating its rivals, suppressing the real story, and covering up the truth. Of the

more outlandish versions of this thesis, Dr. Donaldson will argue that in mainstream Christianity there is a core or centre of gravity whose presence can be discerned from the beginning. However, he will also argue that this core allows for greater diversity than some conceptions of orthodoxy envision and that the Canon, in other words, canonizes a gospel-centered diversity.

The lecture will be held at St. John's, Elora, at 4:00 pm on Sunday, October 29, 2006. All are welcome.

Thanksgiving grounded in covenant

MICHAEL THOMPSON
RECTOR - ST. JUDE'S, OAKVILLE

It's pretty easy to be caught up in 'stuff' these days. There's more and more of it, and invitations to acquire it are more and more invasive. On the phone, at the front door, on your web browser, on billboards, through the mail, on television, radio, and even at the cinema, it's as if someone is afraid our acquisitiveness might atrophy if it weren't regularly stimulated. Evangelists of "salvation through stuff" mount a tireless campaign for our hearts and minds, and many, if not most, of us have signed up.

So if, at Thanksgiving, we simply sprinkle a garnish of gratitude over our stuff, there's a very real risk that we are simply dragging the Holy One in like a kindly, if not terribly bright, uncle to bless our stuff and leave our souls alone. We credit our kindly uncle God for the wonderful appearance of all this stuff in our lives, and set out tomorrow to acquire even more of it. Only mildly put off by what this or that relative did or didn't say at the family party, we put Thanksgiving behind us and get on with the real business of our lives.

How stuff matters

But if our thanksgiving is grounded not in the stuff for whose appearance in our lives we occasionally give thanks to a vague and distant God, but in the covenant that a living and present God makes with us, then our celebration of Thanksgiving can take on a vitality and power that will at once astonish and worry us. It can have the sturdiness and stamina to stand in contradiction to this sad world's self-defeating trust that more stuff means more life.

It isn't that stuff doesn't matter. Only someone who never runs out can be cavalier about stuff—about clothing that keeps a body warm and dry, or shelter that keeps that body safe, about food that keeps a body fed or water to answer that body's thirst. But to understand how stuff matters, we might want to consider the covenant by which its Creator freights it with meaning.

As I reflect on that covenant, I sit on a bench near the lake. The bench was given in 2001 by the family of a citizen of this town, born in Cardiff in 1924. The bench is given "in memory" and "with love." Its presence here is admittedly useful, but it is more than useful. It speaks to a memory, and to the primal covenant of a family,

a household woven together by and for the purposes of love.

A covenant of belief

Our Hebrew ancestors received a covenant at Sinai—ten commandments by which the living present God might be honoured and served by those he calls "my people". One of those ancestors, Jesus, brought that covenant to astonishing new expression by defining the range and depth of both human and divine life in a single moment of costly love on a cross. In our baptism we enter that covenant by belief in ("holding dear") this triune God of Father, Son, and Spirit) and by the intentions that shape belief towards faithfulness. Will you...

- Continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
- Persevere in resisting evil?
- Proclaim good news by word and example?
- Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself?
- Strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being?

These are more than obligations to a distant and demanding God. They are more like marriage, a life together shaped and gifted for love and service. Not an obligatory thank-you note to a great-aunt in the old country ("Bible-land"), but a searching conversation about what we and God will get up to together in caring for the earth and its creatures.

Our true and holy selves

If in our thanksgiving we make only passing reference to some God in the misty distance, and do not understand that our endowments, including the stuff in our care, are for a purpose we share with God, then our thanksgiving risks mere sentimentality. But if our thanksgiving is grounded in a covenant—a common cause we share with the One who gives—then the world is a new place, and we are a new people. If we go still deeper, and give thanks that in gathering for worship and growth, in resisting evil, in telling the world good news, in serving and in honouring each human person, we are discovering our true and holy selves, and then we have come close, I think, to the heart of this festival.

And if we could dare to believe that, by living into that covenant, we might bring the universe to praise and thanksgiving to God for

inventing humankind as partners in finishing the work of creation, we might hear the first haunting notes of the love song God sings for us and for all creation.

This wisdom is hard. It asks us to strain for our best, not to settle for something less than that. It settles into question all our strategies towards an easy life. It flies in the face of all the propaganda of consumption, all that would shrink our humanity until we are simply consumers, or taxpayers. It asks us to think long and hard about what we mean by "the economy", especially the questions of "What counts?" and "Who counts?" It challenges the spiritual lassitude that leads us either to the self-indulgent contentment of the winner or the self-defeating despair of the loser. Neither contentment nor despair will strengthen arm and heart and brain for the work to which our covenant with a living God calls us.

A covenant of hope

A covenant is memory; our ancestors—by saga and sacrament—have drawn us into this covenant. Their response to God's faithfulness invites us to respond in the circumstances of here and now. The covenant of our baptism is meant to be the shape of our lives, a hard life-giving endowment from our ancestors and the God who moved among them.

And a covenant is hope; hope that our lives can mean something, add up to something, and write a new chapter of faithfulness towards God's dream for the earth and all its creatures. When our thanksgiving acknowledges our gracious entanglement with all living creatures, and with the living earth itself, thanksgiving becomes a relationship not only with a living God, but with all that the living God has called into existence and blessed. Hope invites us to believe that we can bring gifts of healing, justice, and stewardship to that relationship. Hope contradicts every "just the way things are" and "nothing can be done" that tempts us away from the full, demanding depth of our humanity in God's image and our life together in covenant with God and with creation.

In our baptism we joined the world-redeeming work of God. At thanksgiving we encounter the rich generous bounty of God's earth, and wonder if it might be that we are not only to eat our fill, but to fill the hungry with good things.

DIALOGUE TASK FORCE

Niagara Anglican - October 2006

Authority of scripture

THE DIALOGUE TASK FORCE continues their discussion from last month by talking about the authority of scripture

Please join the online discussion at www.niagara.anglican.ca if you would like to comment on either of the articles.

Speakers: Judy Steers, Peter Wall, Kevin Block, Susan Wells, Sandy Copland, John Bowen, Christyn Perkons.

Observers: John Penneylegion (St. Philip the Apostle, Burlington), Margaret Biebert (St. Luke's, Hamilton), Wendy Newman (Christ's Church Cathedral, Hamilton), Geraldine Wilson Black (Christ Church, Niagara Falls)

Kevin: I want to say a bit more about the Anglican Communion. There is the great advantage of being in communion with many parts of the world in that we have opportunities to learn from other people and other places, other cultures, other Christians enduring other circumstances. That is the idea of being catholic, coming together as a very broad church, and making decisions together as a broad church. And if our communion breaks, our relations with other denominations such as the Roman Catholic Church will be that much more complicated and we veer that much farther from true Catholicism.

Judy: I think the difficulty lies in where we then have allegiance? Is it to the relationship that extends outward from us to other places in the world or is it to the relationship that we have to the milieu in which we find ourselves? In other words, is it more

I SUSPECT THAT MANY PEOPLE on both sides are coming to the conclusion that time will not change anything in this instance.

John Bowen

important for us to be relevant to the other members of the family who might live far away or is it more important to be relevant to the people in our neighbourhood? I think that is a question that needs to be addressed. Is it a matter of recognizing that different parts of the family think very differently about their relationship with God and saying that my primary goal is to keep that family together? Or is my primary goal to live in relationship with the community in which I find myself and to speak the truth about our relationship with God as that community understands it? And I think we are irrelevant to the people in our society if we ignore this reality in order to maintain a unity with people who live in a very different reality. And if we keep the family together at all costs, I fear that the cost to our community within and right outside our doors is much too high.

Susan: My thought is that we are in communion with the Anglican Church around the world and that is a richness that I would never ever want to see go away. But this issue seems to be asking at what cost unity. It is for me a God thing so at what cost do I sacrifice what I believe in and where the Gospel is calling me for the sake of unity. That is the question that I struggle with.

Christyn: Before we move on to the topic of

the day, does anyone need to say anymore about this?

John P: I will give you what I sense at the parish level. I think most people see themselves as part of the Anglican community. And as Anglicans, I think we see ourselves as part of a world-wide community. They may be different in Kenya and in New Zealand and in Chile but they are still Anglicans and we share that sense of identity. If there was a schism or a break, I think people would sense they have lost part of their identity. I think it is at that level. I don't think it is one of these great momentous events in people's lives; I just think it is part of who they see themselves being.

Judy: I understand that at the World Council of Churches meeting in Brazil one of the topics of conversation was the struggle to understand the definition of breaking communion and what that means. What does that look like? Breaking communion is one thing when one group of people says "I cannot agree, therefore I must leave" and an entirely different thing when the words are "I disagree with you therefore you must leave." So who is defining what the communion is? Who is defining who is breaking it?

Kevin: Why does it have to be an "either/or" thing? Why does it have to be "I disagree, I am leaving" or "I disagree, therefore you

better leave"? Why can't it be a matter of "we disagree, so we need more time"? We need to be patient with each other until we come to some kind of consensus. I might have to take some time and I might have to do some compromising and you might too. Why is it about leaving? Why isn't it about time?

John B: I suspect that many people on both sides are coming to the conclusion that time will not change anything in this instance. One time-limited factor is the question of who the Archbishop of Canterbury asks to the next Lambeth conference. Because if Group A is invited then Group B probably won't go, and if Group B is invited then Group A will be unhappy.

Christyn: Let's move on to the authority in the scripture.

John B: My hunch is that our differences are not so much to do with what the Bible says. We could argue about the interpretation of specific verses of scripture until the cows come home. It is more a question of what we mean when we say that something, in this case, scripture, has authority over us. For instance, if Jesus had said, "Thou shalt not have same-sex relationships, in any culture, in any century," what would we do with that? I suspect we would still be looking for a way around it!



Peter Wall



Judy Steers



Sandy Copland



Christyn Perkons



Susan Wells



Kevin Block



John Bowen

Kevin: For me though, it is important that Jesus didn't talk about homosexuality. I mean he just didn't, and that means that it's not this hugely important issue. It's probably not nearly as important an issue as affluence and greed, for example. That is why for me as a conservative, there is room for compromise on this issue—because Jesus did not spend time on this subject.

Sandy: I would challenge that from the perspective of the Jewish background of Jesus He said clearly that he came to fulfill the law and the prophets and not abolish them. He uses words like "porneia," which is a catch-all word for sexual immorality. I am sorry, but I am challenging your idea that Jesus would have not thought that homosexuality wasn't important. He thinks adultery, for example, is so important that he says don't even think about it. He tightens up the standards from committing adultery, for example, to even thinking about it. So for me, it's back to the trajectory thing. In some areas Jesus tightens the standards, in others he challenges or invites thought. That's why we need to look at the whole scope of scripture.

Judy: How do you get a trajectory from adultery to the blessing of same gender unions; from an activity that fractures relationships to an activity that enhances relationships?

Susan: Sandy just said she saw the trajectory coming from the Jewish background of Jesus and I have trouble with that because I see Jesus as the one who was telling the Pharisees not to be hypocrites. He did not always follow the rules as is evident by the way he lived and the way spoke to the Pharisees. I don't think that Jesus supported all the rules; only those which bring us closer to God. He put aside the importance of the laws, choosing to concentrate on how God transforms your heart and how you act towards other people. For me, that is the Gospel. I have difficulty with imposing beliefs on Jesus that Jesus didn't specifically address. The nature of Jesus is to be and do the unexpected.

John B: But he quotes almost every book of the Old Testament, and treats them as having divine authority, and this is odd because he is a person who is not afraid to confront religious traditions when he thought they were out of order, so we can't just say he set the Old Testament aside. It's not as simple as that. This term Sandy has quoted for immorality is one place where he seems to be agreeing with Jewish tradition and the Old Testament.

Wendy: I ask myself, what does all this mean? What does the ministry of Jesus say and mean? It seems to me that he was clearly a man in faith and well instructed. But in his ministry, his example was clear. Whenever he was dramatically confronted with a choice between the rules and a compassionate response that was deeply understanding, "über-understanding" of the nature of people and their longing for relationship with God, Jesus chose the revolutionary compassionate response. And to me the essence of Jesus trumps every verse that tends to be repeated and heralded about this issue. For me, the life and ministry of Jesus is far more authoritative than any particular culturally centered book of the Bible

John B: I think that both 'sides', if I can use that language, tend to take things from the Bible out of context and just throw them at one other. In Bible Interpretation 101, you learn that it's important to interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, and the New Testament in the light of Jesus. So I think you are sending us in the right direction Wendy. But one reason that people like myself want to say the Bible is authoritative is because Jesus clearly understood himself as living in the light of his scriptures, the Old Testament. He quotes the Old Testament and speaks of it as conveying the voice of God in a way that challenges our cultural assumptions about the Bible. So, for example, he understands his mission in terms of what the Old Testament requires of him: "... the Son of Man must go as it is written." As though he is saying, "I don't have any choice about where I am heading because it is there in the Old Testament." That is where the conservative concern about being obedient to scripture comes from: we're trying to follow Jesus' leadership. And his example is the "über-scripture."

Judy: Who gives scripture its authority?

John B: I would say God. And that the church, in talking about authority of scripture, hasn't invented it, but rather has simply recognised that, by saying, in effect, "Wow, we think this is something that God is speaking through." I think this has been the consistent testimony of the church.

Judy: So if we say "wow, this set of writings is something that God is speaking through," don't we give it the authority to speak?

Kevin: The church gives it the authority.

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Dialogue Task Force discussion

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John B: If I go home and say "Judy Steers said this," does that mean I am giving authority to your words? No, your words have their own authority. I'm just the vehicle.

Judy: I'm not sure that's true. I believe in the authority of my own words but you indicate that you have given them authority when you say to someone else, "Judy Steers said..." Does the church give God the authority and accept scripture as the word of God? Or, is this the book that we have all decided that we will turn to as a Christian community and use as authoritative for us?

Kevin: I think Christ gave authority to the church which then recognized the canon of the scriptures as the word of God. But it was through the church that we received the Bible. It is through the church that the Bible has au-

and utter free will; we were given free will and it's up to us to make choices and decisions. God doesn't make us do things. So I think this comes down to the basics; theology of creation. How does creation work? This is something we work out with each other. How do we do that work of creation in humility, responsiveness, interpersonally? How do we understand ourselves as servants as you mentioned and hold that accountability to scripture, to the community, the church, to our history, to our future?

Kevin: I agree with what you are saying about creation and freedom. God used evolution to create the world; freedom is part of it from the beginning. However, when it comes to how we make decisions - in a church, it is not just us deciding. I think it is the Holy Spirit guiding the church and that is why

it needs to happen within a larger

Judy: It is far more helpful for me to see scripture as being written by somebody like me. If I see Paul as a pretty intense, slightly neurotic and ADHD individual who is hugely driven and hugely passionate (where would the world be if we hadn't had those throughout history), then it is a whole lot more real. I can give that a whole lot more authority if I understand the author as a person in a community of people writing about that particular time and place because he is telling the story about what happened then. It was a huge transformation for me when I found out the Gospels were written decades after Jesus' life; probably not by eye witnesses but by people who were hearing stories handed down through the community.

I think that makes a whole lot more sense. I can grasp the concept of a story being passed down, and a writer borrowing what this person says and incorporating what someone else has written about the same event. I allow the stories of God's people to inform how I shape my life, my actions and my response to the world around me.

John B: I don't see any discrepancy between everything you said about it being a human document on the one hand, and on the other hand saying that this is a document which God has somehow supernaturally brought into being, and used to help spell out the story and how we are to live in it. The church has traditionally affirmed both human and divine authorship.

Sandy: There's a sense when you are reading a passage from the Bible that you have read it 101 times before. Then suddenly, it rearranges itself in your heart and in your mind. That is the Holy Spirit at work, giving the sense that there is something very special about it, something powerful about it. And so yes, the context and human authors are there but there is something more, and that is where God is in it; that is where the authority is in it; it comes from God.

Susan: Is the authority of the words that are written on the pages more valid than the actions and the compassion and the human interactions that Jesus had with the people to whom he ministers?

Sandy: I think that asking whether the living word or the written word is more important, is the wrong question. And if you ask the wrong question, you get the wrong answer. The living word comes out of the written word. The Holy Spirit who is the living word today confirms the written word. We learn about Jesus through the written word. God is not in conflict with God's self. The written word tells us about the Incarnate Word, Jesus, and is confirmed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Susan: What about when the actions of Jesus go against the words of Leviticus; for example, when

I AM CHALLENGING YOUR IDEA that Jesus would have not thought that homosexuality wasn't important. He thinks adultery, for example, is so important that he says don't even think about it.

Sandi Copland

thority. And in part, the authority comes through the church's interpretation. That is a catholic view of things. The traditional answer is that the Holy Spirit is guiding the church in its recognition of the canon of the scripture.

Sandy: I guess the other part of it that would be important for me is this whole sense of who is in charge? And that is an authority question. How do we determine that? Well, one of the attitudes that is prevalent in the life of Jesus and in the life of other New Testament writers, in the life of the prophetic writers, is the word servant. We serve, and a servant is under somebody else's authority. And so as I try and serve, I am trying to serve the authority that I see on multiple levels, whether it is my bishop, my church, scripture, but ultimately God. As my life comes into congruence with scripture that is where I find the peace.

Susan: Sandy, I would have to agree with you on absolutely every point that you made except that I don't know how it applies to what we are discussing. I believe in the authority of Scripture. I believe in God's transformative power. I believe in all of those things but our interpretation of all of those things takes us to two different places. The challenge is that we each need to honour that people on both sides of the issue believe in the same Scripture, the same transformative power of grace and so on. Neither side has an exclusive on these beliefs.

Judy: Who is in charge is a key question. My response is that we are because we have complete

context than just our own individual opinions. That is why the Archbishop of Canterbury has asked us to be in a dialogue so that we can be supporting a church-wide decision on this; a church-wide compromise rather than an individual response. I believe and hope and pray that the Holy Spirit will guide the church.

Judy: And so this comes back to the authority of scripture; who gives it the authority? What authority do we give it? Or do we see it as intrinsically having authority? You see it as having an intrinsic authority. I see it as having an extrinsic authority.

John B: I'm still not clear then what it means to say that the Bible has authority in our lives. I would put it this way: we all live by our stories. To be a Christian, is to be invited to play our part in the story that God is writing about the human race, and to be faithful to the story as we know it from the Bible. Certainly this includes a strong doctrine of creation, but it also includes a strong doctrine of sin. So for me, to live with the authority of scripture means to live in a way that is faithful to the story. But at the same time, I agree that I can exercise my free will and my creativity, but in a way that honours the story that God is writing. Sometimes that means doing things that I don't want to do and sometimes it means not doing things that I do want to do. Sounds like the General Confession, doesn't it? Funny, eh? Sometimes, as I try to follow, I have a sense that my true self, whatever that is, is being fulfilled, but at other times I have a feeling that what I thought was my 'true self' is being crucified, so that something truer can emerge.

Did you know that?

CHURCH OWNERSHIP Who is the legal owner of the property and buildings of the parish?

RIK JONES
RECTOR AND SECRETARY OF SYNOD

This is the first in a series of articles about the Canons and Policies of the Diocese and how they may affect your parish.

The answer to the question, "Who is the legal owner of the property and buildings in the parish?" has implications in many areas of our parish life. It affects parishes in their activities of purchasing or selling property, mortgaging property, leasing agreements, granting of right of ways or easements, entering into heritage designation agreements or considering memorial gardens or major building projects.

It becomes an issue when parishes amalgamate or disestablish. We have seen it become an issue in other parts of the Canadian Church when parishes strongly disagree with their Synods and attempt to claim ownership of property. Some of these issues will be the topics of subsequent articles but let us just try and answer the basic question, "Who is the owner?"

To do this we need to travel back in time to the beginning of the Diocese. The Diocese of Niagara was incorporated by an Act of the Province of Ontario, assented to February 10, 1876. At that time property that had belonged to the Diocese of Toronto was conveyed to the new Synod of the Diocese of Niagara. The Synod was given the right to govern itself through the establishment of Canons and in section 7 "... the Incumbent and Churchwardens appointed under the rules and regulations of the said Synod, may hold such real estate as may be given granted or devised to them for the use of their Church." In 1891, 1892,

1898, and 1902 there were a series of Amendments to the original Act of Incorporation and in 1923 there was "an Act to Simplify the Sales of Property Held in Trust for the Church of England in Canada in the Diocese of Niagara."

In this amendment it was made clear that Vestries of parishes must be involved in decisions to sell property, as must the Synod of the Diocese. Finally, on June 14, 1979 The Anglican Church of Canada Act received assent. Herein it says, "land shall not be sold or leased, mortgaged or otherwise encumbered... except with the consent of the vestry of the church or congregation interested therein and of the bishop of the diocese and the executive committee of the synod of the diocese, and the consent of the vestry given in accordance with the rules and canons of the church shall be deemed to be the consent of the congregation" (Section 2:1).

In discussing the concept of ownership with our Diocesan Chancellor Rob Welch, he defined it as follows, "Ownership is seen as the unrestricted right to sell, lease or mortgage land. Given the legislation of Ontario and the Canons of the Diocese, it is important to note the important roles and responsibilities of the Bishop and Synod in these conveying matters. They, as well as the Vestry of the Parish, must be involved in these issues." Our Canons have been revised recently to reflect the present state of Provincial legislation in this regard. If you would like to read more about this, and see this principle in action, see Canon 4.7 available on line or perhaps available from your Parish Office.

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See DISCUSSION on page 6

Perspective from the United Church Discussion continued

JACKIE HARPER is an ordained minister who is currently the program coordinator for Family and Seniors Ministries for the General Council Office of The United Church of Canada.



JACKIE HARPER

Probably at no other time in recent history have there been so many conversations about marriage in the United Church of Canada as there has been in the last few years. What has precipitated this discussion about marriage?

In August of 2003, the 37th General Council, the policy and decision making body of the church, asked the federal government to recognize same-sex marriage in the marriage legislation. Many have wondered how the United Church could make such a request. This decision is grounded in a history of seeking justice and inclusivity for all God's peoples.

■ In 1984 we as a church affirmed that all persons are made in the image of God.

■ In 1988 the General Council decided that sexual orientation was not a determinant in one's suitability for ordered ministry.

■ In 1988 we affirmed that God's intention for all human relationships is that they be faithful, responsible, just, loving, health giving, healing, and sustaining of community and self.

■ In 1992 it was mandated that resources be produced to help congregations engage in study around the blessing of same sex unions and to provide blessing resources.

■ *Together in Faith* was developed offering both a study and blessing resources.

■ In 2000 the General Council affirmed all sexual orientations are a gift of God and committed itself to work for the civil recognition of same-sex partnerships.

■ *Of Love and Justice* was developed offering four workshops to help

congregations explore issues related to the recognition of same-sex marriages from a faith perspective.

In our church we have come to recognize that some gay and lesbian members want to make life-long commitments and to make their solemn vows with communities of faith who will support them in their commitment. They have come asking for blessings of unions and now marriages.

In our tradition we understand the marriage ceremony to be a service of worship. Our polity ensures that each congregation is responsible for the worshipping life of the congregation. Thus each congregation has the responsibility for determining policies related to services of worship and this includes marriage. Though the United Church of Canada has asked the government to recognize same-sex marriage, and it is now legal in Canada for same-sex couples to seek marriage, each United Church has the right and the responsibility to determine with whom they will celebrate the ceremony of marriage.

Many United Church congregations have chosen to engage in a study process to explore their understanding of marriage and with whom they will celebrate marriage and what commitments they are prepared to make in the support of the life-long commitment of marriage. Presbyteries and conferences have offered workshops for congregational leaders to help in these discussions. One conference gathered together and trained a group of leaders who are available to facilitate conversations in local congregations.

In many congregations these conversations have given expression to deep feelings, hearing deep joy that a relationship that has been a source of life is finally being recognized, great pain as people struggle with interpretation of scripture and their understanding of marriage.

In the United Church of Canada some congregations have chosen to offer marriage ceremonies to same-sex couples, some have chosen to limit their marriage ceremonies to

heterosexual couples, some congregations limit marriage ceremonies to members—both opposite and same sex couples—while others have not made a decision, and some are in the process of exploring possibilities. Whatever the decision of the local congregation, all congregations are asked to help couples seeking the blessing of their marriage to find a church who will officiate.

For me, this discussion has helped to identify some areas where we in the United Church need to continue to engage in conversation and theological reflection. I believe we need to identify the qualities of marriage we want to affirm, and to address how we support these qualities of relationship and how we support and call one another to be accountable for living into such relationships. I also believe we need to continue to explore and affirm how we understand our sexuality as one of God's wondrous gifts.

By engaging in these conversations about marriage, many congregations have been able to affirm what is good about marriage and strive to address that which diminishes life for any of God's creation. For all it has been a time of listening and discerning.

One of the learnings from our experience is the importance of taking time, to encourage people to express their concerns, to have ample opportunities for people to share in small groups. It is also important that facilitation of discussion includes perspectives not necessarily shared by all.

I have certainly found grounding the discussion in our understanding of marriage has added depth and also called us to be accountable for this ministry in our church.

A helpful story, I hold close through all these conversations is: A minister was asked "what would Jesus say about same-sex marriage." The minister responded that he wasn't sure what Jesus would say as he doesn't say a lot about sexuality or marriage, but he would guess that Jesus would encourage the person to turn the other cheek so that the listening ear was closest to the other's heart.

This is a conversation that requires that we listen to each other's heart and together seek to discern where God is calling us to celebrate and affirm life in all its wondrous diversity.

Continued from page 5

Jesus heals the lepers or actually even talks to them? I would then interpret the actions of Jesus as being more important than the words of Leviticus.

John B: This is why I said it seems to me that you interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, and the New Testament in the light of Jesus. We have to notice what Jesus does with the Old Testament. So yes, there are some things in the Old Testament he says we can do without—Mark has Jesus saying that the food laws don't apply to his disciples—but there others which are essential, like "love your neighbour as yourself," for instance, which is also in Leviticus.

Susan: I wasn't talking about food laws. I don't think it is the same principle. The examples I gave are about people being different and because of that difference, being isolated and set apart. So for me, Jesus is saying we have a mandate to include the different people in our society. And that to me is what the blessing of same gender unions is about. The 10% of our society who are gay and lesbian are who Jesus would consider to be the people who are marginalized and outcasts, and so therefore they are the people that I would think Jesus would include.

John B: Yes, of course Jesus includes the marginalized, the poor, the unreligious, the women, the lepers, the Gentiles, and the tax collectors. That's not at issue. But the inclusive invitation is an invitation to discipleship, to learn the way of Jesus and what it means to live as his follower in this world. So the question for a gay or lesbian person, as for anyone else, is what does it mean to follow Jesus? And that is where the difference comes. Nobody is arguing about whether we should be inclusive.

Kevin: Can I nudge the conversation just a little? We are talking about authority and so far we have focused on the Bible but we also have tradition and reason, the other legs of the Anglican three-legged stool. Reason and tradition are also a basis for authority and authoritative decisions within church. So what about tradition and reason and their role in this argument?

Peter: The church has always had some sense of authority; that is what I think we really mean when we talk in the Anglican world about the leg of the stool called tradition. The authority of the church has developed and grown; been buffeted, changed, broken apart and reconstituted. I think we do live under that degree of authority in the church just like we live under the authority of scripture. The authority of the church is quite an ephemeral kind of authority because it is very easily subjected to a whole range of interpretations. It is less tender, perhaps, than the discussion that we get into about the range of bib-

lical interpretations but there is that authority in tradition as well as there is the authority of reason. I don't think any of us is going to disagree with the notion that we live under the authority of all those things. The challenge lies in that we struggle—and I think to struggle is a virtuous verb—both with the meaning of scripture and the meaning of authority in the church. After all, the words of the Bible are the record of an oral tradition which were then translated and retranslated repeatedly, and the Council of Nicea made some autocratic political decisions about what would become the tradition of the Church. So I think we do live with different kinds of authority and we have different ways of interpreting and understanding those authorities. That's the magical part of Christian life; how we interpret personally and corporately those authorities.

Kevin: What you are saying confirms for me that we need to be patient as a Communion because this is where decisions are to be made. None of us needs to figure this out alone. Rather, we need to wait for each other and wait for councils or whoever gets together to make the decisions that I think they have authority to make.

Peter: But that doesn't remove from you or from me the responsibility to argue with each other as part of that decision-making process.

Kevin: Argue but...

Peter: In love.

Kevin: In love but not with the threat of leaving or separating from or excommunicating...

Peter: I agree. It is playing the game of 'not waiting' or 'making threats' that is totally destructive of the discernment of the body. Certainly we have to wait to act until we make a decision; I absolutely respect that.

The challenge is to weigh the cost of dragging out the discernment process until everyone is in consensus. There may come a time when the cost of waiting for consensus becomes too high. That's what happened at the Reformation. That's what happened when the church in the East and the West split. It happened over heresy after heresy in the third, fourth and fifth centuries. Our problem is that, on the one hand, we hope that we can stay together in the way that we have heretofore understood ourselves to be a Communion while on the other hand, there is a sense that we may not be able to stay together in that way while still honouring what we feel we are called to do.

The final installment of this discussion will be featured in the November issue of the Niagara Anglican. If you have questions about the work of the Dialogue Task Force, or queries about creating an opportunity for a parish-wide discussion about same gender blessings, please contact Christyn Perkons at christyn.perkons@niagara.anglican.ca.

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Reflecting on the Beatitudes

PASSAGES FROM MATTHEW 5:1-10

ROGER HARRIS
ANGELICAN FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him. And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying.

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus has often compared high and low, rich and poor, but although he made no distinction between any in his ministry, he was open on what was desirable for access to the kingdom of heaven. To be poor in the spirit, or to be of humble nature is a blessing that Jesus puts a great deal of emphasis on. Humility is inclined to caring and giving, where pride is synonymous with arrogance and acquisition, things that would upset the harmony that God has created in His kingdom.

Blessed are that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

When the word mourning is mentioned, we automatically tend to think of loss of life. This need not be necessarily so, for we can at any time experience sadness for something that we have had, which through the passage of time has been replaced. Things that we have felt comfortable and secure with are suddenly no longer there or no longer available, and we feel like a half empty glass. This is where the supportive nature of Jesus rests with us and fills the empty space until the glass is full again and we are able to move ahead.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Meekness (i.e. gentleness, kindness, docility), is not something which is in vogue in this modern age. The changing structure of society, dictates that aggressiveness has to be the order of the day, and to achieve fulfillment, one has to be ruthless and hard in life. To be mild natured is considered to be a weakness, and to love thy neighbor becomes less and less important in the drive for self-satisfaction. We, as Christians, know that this is on limited time, for Jesus has told us that he will return, and at that time a new world order will begin, and those of meek nature will realize their inheritance.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for

they shall be filled.

Part of our journey in life is a constant search for a righteous fulfillment to our existence. To be morally upright, free of guilt or sin, and virtuous, is the goal that we strive for, but frequently we take two steps forward only to take one step back. The challenge that God gives us though, is to keep trying, for it is at the journeys end that the results will manifest themselves, and the fulfillment on reaching that place which has been prepared for us will be our reward.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Once more we return to the second of the two great commandments, in which we are told to 'Love our neighbors as ourselves.' Mercy comes in many forms of acts of kindness, not only of the flesh, but also in the spirit. From giving water to the thirsty, or sparing the life of an enemy, to comforting the sorrowful and forgiving offences, we are using the nature of Jesus. These qualities are part of the order of things, which God has put in place, and which maintain the balance and symmetry of His creation.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

One thing is sure; we will never be able to refine ourselves to the point where all the impurities have been removed. God knows us far better than we know ourselves, with His constant access to what is in our hearts. Although we stumble and fall, our willingness to stand up and still have the desire to do His will, maintains the purity of what we desire. The forgiveness that is given to us through His grace, cancels sin, so that purity is maintained.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Peace could be described as a wonderful state of mind, which only a limited number of us are able to attain. Peace is obtainable through oneself for oneself, or through oneself for the benefit of others, and the results may be for resolution or compromise. There are many facets of peace, which can be elusive or just downright unobtainable, but even if peace is not attained, those who work for it will be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

In many parts of the world, Christians have been and are being persecuted for their affinity with the Lord Jesus, many losing their life. It has been said that Christians are the most persecuted group of people in the world today, but true or not, we may at any time be called upon to be accountable for who we are and what we believe, whatever the cost. God gave us a blessing for giving our all for Jesus, whatever form or depth this may take.

Jesus gave us this knowledge for the here and now, as a preparation for the hereafter. When we walk through the narrow gate, there will be just enough room for the shoulders to pass through and all that is outside of our bodies will be denied entrance. All that we will be able to take with us is what we have inside us; and the beatitudes are the preparation for our spiritual entry to God's kingdom. Jesus has given us the beatitudes to guide us on our way, and to let us know what is desired for a safe passage.

We may not be able to meet all the requirements of the beatitudes all of the time, but that does not exclude us from trying. They are not listed in order of importance; therefore we need not feel inadequate with what we are blessed with. We only need to travel in faith and trust, and a prayerful communion with God.

The beginnings of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer go back to the Second World War, when a small fellowship of Episcopalians met for prayer on the second floor of St Thomas' church in New York City. It became an official organization in 1958, under the leadership of two ladies by the name of Helen Smith Shoemaker and Polly Wiley, Bishop Austin Pardue of Pittsburgh, Bishop Frederick H. Wilkinson of Toronto, and Bishop Cuthbert Bardsley of Coventry England.

Should you need prayer, a request line is available at prayer@afprayerniagara.ca. For all who wish to include these in their prayers, a site is available at www.afprayerniagara.ca. Confidentiality is assured.

Limping with each other



SUSAN C. HUXFORD-WESTALL ON
ALL SAINTS, HAMILTON

How glad I was to read "Walking with each other" in the September *Niagara Anglican*—although it turned out to be an important and timely lesson on the Anglican Communion. It is high time that we were instructed in the fundamentals of Anglicanism; we've had too little of fundamentals from the pulpit.

But what a mess we can make when we attempt to discuss human sexuality! I was amazed at Judy Steer's closing comment that we couldn't find an openly gay or lesbian person who is involved and deeply connected to the church, and who wants to be in a discussion like this? You can't find them in this diocese. It makes me suspect that not one of them was approached personally. In fact, since I first read the panel deliberations on the diocesan website I have become aware of an active lesbian in my own parish who would gladly have accepted an invitation to participate.

People do not want to approach the subject

The trouble is that Anglicans, indeed churchgoers as a whole, are inhibited when it comes to discussing sex and sexuality. Plenty of people in this diocese know that I am transsexual (see "To whom do I belong" in the September *Niagara Anglican*) and that I have been very active in the diocese over many decades, yet nobody has approached me concerning human sexuality, although I am listed as a sexologist in international *Who's Who in Sexology*, 1986. I have the impression that people do not like to approach the subject with me in case it hurts my feelings!

I believe that most people think that, because I am transsexual, I must be gay. Well, I never was. In the male role I was completely

heterosexual. Gender identity and sexual orientation are different conditions. Unless a person has bisexual inclinations, sexual orientation does not change with surgical sex reassignment. If I were sexually active at present I would be considered a lesbian. As it is, I have a low libido and am not sexually active. Some would say that is not surprising considering my age! In spite of all this, it is a fact that genetic males who consider themselves to be "transsexual" find a home under the "pink triangle." This can hardly be surprising when 60-65 percent of gender dysphonic males, who consider themselves to be transsexual, are also homosexually oriented.

God is still revealing himself to humanity

The last thing in the world that I would wish of anybody is that they should be transsexual, especially if one has also been brought up in a traditional religious faith. One has to become a Wrestling Jacob. I "have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed" (Gen 32:28) and I was "put out of joint" until such time as I had had surgical correction. Now I know that we are all God's creation; gays, lesbians, transvestites, transgendered, true transsexuals and, of course, 'normal' people—whatever it is to be 'normal'.

We have only to look at the amazing progress made in human knowledge during the past century to realise that God is still revealing Himself and His universe to humanity. We have also learned so much about what it is to be human from the scientific viewpoint. "Why do we still kick against the pricks?" (Acts 9:5, KJV). Why do we still reject people on grounds of colour, race, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental state, personality, etc.

Is it still because we do not know the "God in whom we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28)? In reading "Walking with each other" I have failed to find any mention of Him whatsoever, unless John Bowen's ref-

See LIMPING TOGETHER on page 13

People in the news

- The Reverend Alan Whitton, retired priest of this diocese, and Honorary Assistant at St. Paul's, Fort Erie, died on Friday, August 18. Our deepest sympathy and prayers to his wife, Elizabeth, and family. A Memorial Service was held on Thursday, August 24.
- The Reverend Keith Morrison was issued a Bishop's Permission as honorary assistant at Church of the Ascension, Hamilton, effective September 1.
- The Reverend David Thomas was appointed interim pastor at St. James, St. Catharines, effective September 4.
- Our deepest sympathy to the Reverend Ann


Macdonald and family on the sudden death of Ann's father, Lloyd Hart, in Toronto. The service was held in Toronto on September 8.

■ The Reverend Vickie Edgeworth Pitcher began a new position in Huron effective September 15. She will be half time associate at St. Mark's, Brantford and half time Chaplain at Laurier University

■ The Reverend Stephen Murray submitted his resignation as Assistant Curate at St. James, Dundas, and has accepted the position to be rector of Church of the Resurrection, Hamilton, beginning on October 1.

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Eucharistic celebration at Niagara Aware 2006 weekend.

Courage to risk

NIAGARA AWARE 2006 Discovering passionate and sincere worship, biblical teaching, prayer, and fellowship

JUDE GARRIERE

I found it interesting that the word 'retreat', as a noun, is defined as a place. The first definition, from the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* says retreat is "an act or process of withdrawing especially from what is difficult, dangerous, or disagreeable." It is further defined as "a place of privacy or safety; refuge." The final definition is most apt for our purpose: "A period group withdrawal for prayer, meditation, study, and instruction under a director." We all need retreat at some point, and the women of Niagara offer such a place, act, process, and period every spring to any woman who wants to come for a weekend of rest, prayer, and praise.

Courageous women

Our theme for the weekend was "Courage to Risk." During several sessions of Bible teaching with the Reverend Sandy Copland we learned about Deborah (*Judges 4*), Esther (who has her own book), Huldah (*2 Kings 22*) and Lydia (*Acts 16*). We learned about the ways in which they were courageous and inspired others like us.

Carole Ann Stephen led us through several sessions helping us to understand why we may lack courage. Working through *2 Tim-*

thy 1:7 and *Psalms 73* we had a wonderful opportunity to contemplate and better understand how fear and rejection can stand in the way of courage.

The theme song for the weekend was well chosen. The chorus of "You Shine" by Brian Doersken asks: "Why should I fear man when You made the heavens? Why should I be afraid when You put the stars in place? Why should I lose heart when I know how great You are? Why should I give up when Your plans are full of love."

On Saturday evening, after another wonderful meal and some marvellous worship under the leadership of the incredibly talented Ruth Wright and her gifted worship team, we broke up into groups of various sizes. With about 45 minutes of preparation time, one group wrote a new psalm, another wrote a poem based upon worship theme, some wrote a prayer, and a pair wrote new lyrics for a familiar hymn. A group prepared a dramatic reading of a Bible passage, and another practiced a skit.

Offering worship to God

A large group choreographed a flag dance, and another created an artistic visual representation of a worship theme. Then we presented our creations to the entire gathering

and offered our worship to God. It was a wonderful experience that enabled many that don't have the time or opportunity in our daily routines to explore our creative talents and find new ways to offer our praise to the Lord.

This was my third Aware weekend, and I have gone from being a new Christian discovering passionate and sincere worship, biblical teaching, prayer, and fellowship, to being on the planning committee and having the honour of offering retreat to others.

Finding Peace

When I first became involved with the committee, I thought I was giving up my personal experience of rest and being 'filled' in order to serve. I was surprised and humbled to discover that I found my peace and restoration in service. I felt filled with the Holy Spirit and was aware of Him working through me during the retreat. It was another enlightening weekend where I learned more about my faith, God, fellow Christians, and self. I came away from the Guelph Bible Conference Centre feeling renewed and knowing that I had grown as a woman of faith with a deeper, more passionate relationship with God and confidence that I have a place and a purpose in the body of Christ.

Four P's of evangelism

MICHAEL PATTERSON
DIOCESAN RESOURCE CENTRE

When we suggest that as Christians, each of us is called to evangelize, we often are stopped short. This is a pretty formidable task that intimidates many people. We may protest that we are deliberate about spiritual disciplines, active in our churches, and intentional about living responsible lives, but the designation evangelist still frightens us. Why? Often we are unsure what it takes to evangelize. 'Doing evangelism' requires neither a minimum of forty years on a faith journey nor a seminary education. Anyone, with God's help, can be an effective evangelist. I have found that there are four cornerstones that have enabled my ministry: Passion, Prayer, Perspective and Persistence.

Passion

The first thing a person needs to evangelize effectively is a passion about Jesus the Christ. The Great Commission calls us to make disciples. It is both a responsibility and a privilege to invite others to know Christ. When we increase our knowledge of the good news of the gospel and deepen the relationship our heart has with Jesus Christ, we cannot help but be inflamed with a passion. Anyone who has ever fallen in love has experienced the exhilarating exuberance that accompanies the relationship. Evangelizing for Jesus Christ and telling others about his love for us takes that same type of passionate enthusiasm.

Prayer

Prayer is an essential discipline for the effective evangelist. Just as Jesus 'refuelled' on the mountain with intimate conversation with His Father; it is imperative that we, too, as the ministers of evangelism take that time to commune with our Father and reconnect with His plan. The parishes in the diocese that have embraced the ministry of evangelism and have made it a part of the fabric of their communities are the ones that have been intentional and systematic in their personal and private prayer lives. Evangelism does not happen in isolation but must be approached with the clear understanding that God is in charge and without God in the mix, our efforts are in vain.

Perspective

This is particularly important at this juncture in our history. It goes without saying that the place of the Church in today's culture has radically changed in a relatively short

period of time. What we have always known, cherished and have taken for granted in our society as members of the Church, are sometimes treated with disdain, cynicism or at worst, indifference. As we attempt to make the gospel relevant to many we must put into perspective the nature of the hearer, the prevailing conditions and

**LET YOUR LIGHT
so shine before
others, that they may
see your good works,
and glorify your
Father in heaven.**

Matthew 5:16

influences and the environment in which we reside. Jesus always adapted what He said and how He said it depending upon His audience and the circumstances surrounding them. Likewise, we must be clear about what it is we are trying to say to people and why. Why would someone want to join your church? What is your offer? How will involvement in your faith community make a difference in people's lives? What are the needs of your neighbourhood? How will you respond?

Persistence

The results of the efforts of evangelism usually are not instantaneous. We can become discouraged and think our energy is for naught. God does not have a day planner system with a list of deadlines. The pace at which God works in people's lives can be bewildering to us. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell the parable of a sower who went out to sow seeds. Some fell among thorns, others among rocks and still others on fertile ground. In the parable, Jesus challenged the hearers to sow the seeds. He did not tell them they were responsible for the condition of the ground. It is God who prepares the ground. The sower only needs to be persistent in sowing the seeds.

As Christians, we can have no greater purpose than spreading the gospel of grace and the love of Jesus Christ.

So in this month, as we celebrate Thanksgiving, we must remember that we are called to share the gifts that God has given each of us. God has provided us all with the gift of faith, the gift of the Church and the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ. No better gifts to share with others than these.

How will decisions made at General Synod affect the Diocese?

PETER WALL
DEAN - CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

As events unfold around us—the general convention of ECUSA this last summer, comments by the Archbishop of Canterbury, a planned meeting of Primates for early in 2007, and various statements by some Primates and some Bishops—there is great speculation about what the Anglican Church of Canada might or might not do at our General

Synod in June of next year when we meet together in Winnipeg. Not unlike our American cousins, we will be under a close microscope and, also, like their convention, we will have the added political dimension of the election of a new Primate. Thus it is not unreasonable to wonder what the implications of certain actions could be. I write this as a close observer, and sometime participant, in the process. If I am elected as a delegate

to General Synod, it will be my fourth consecutive Synod—third from this Diocese—and I have the privilege of serving both on the national Faith Worship and Ministry Committee, which has dealt with many of the issues around human sexuality at the committee level, and I have also been the Niagara member of the Council of General Synod, a kind of national executive body, during this triennium. However, I am neither a canon,

lawyer, nor a particularly political person, so I can only offer these personal observations and opinions from my somewhat distinctive vantage point.

■ What if General Synod accepts the findings of the *St. Michael Report*, which says that the blessing of same-sex unions is a matter of doctrine, but not of core doctrine? The General Synod will then have to decide, with advice from its Chancellor, whether or not this is

a matter of doctrine sufficient to change church Canons. This would take at least two successive meetings of the Synod. Thus no action could happen until at least 2010. As a matter of doctrine, it is quite clear in our church that no local option could exist until such time as a national decision would be made. Presumably some 'escape' clause would be needed for the Diocese

See SYNOD DECISIONS on page 15

YOUNG AND PROPHETIC

Niagara Anglican - October 2006



Kyle McCooey



Kristi Boulton



Barbara Jean Lick



Cole Sutton-Greenhalgh



Nick Head-Petersen



Katie McCann



Let's do the time warp again

NIAGARA YOUTH CONFERENCE bonds young Anglicans

CHRISTYN PERKONS
DIOCESAN RESOURCE CENTRE

The Niagara Youth Conference is the pinnacle of Niagara youth events. It totally rocks! Twenty three volunteer staff members spend eight months planning the conference around a theme—Let's Do the Time Warp Again for 2006—and then give up one week of their vacation to staff the event along with the Diocesan Program Consultants.

Bonding with friends

Eighty seven youth from all across the Diocese descend on Canterbury Hills in the last week of August ready to rock with the tunes of the NYC Band, explore issues and questions of faith in small group sessions, experience activities like The Crusades, look at issues affecting

the church in large group plenaries, and bond with old friends and new.

Guests this year included Bishop John Bothwell who spoke to the delegates about change agents in the church. Archbishop Andrew Hutchison led the delegates on a Spiritual Time Trek around Canterbury Hills, and then joined them for dinner, during which our beloved Bishop Ralph instigated his traditional NYC foil fight. (Foil balls from the potatoes are flung with abandon at delegates and bishops alike!) Pictures from this awesome week can be found at www.zipsqueal.com.

What delegates say

Says Kristi Boulton (St. Matthias, Guelph), "NYC is unlike anything else you'll ever do. If you have ques-

tions or doubts about your faith or spirituality, this is the place to be. NYC gives you the opportunity to be who you really are; you're free to be the person God meant you to be!"

Nick Head-Petersen (St. David and St. Patrick, Guelph) adds, "the experience is incredible; freedom of expression, thought-provoking discussions, and an unbelievable sense of peace, love and understanding."

"This is my first time and I loved it. First of all, you get to explore and learn more about yourself and your faith through many great activities and discussions. Secondly, you make so many great friends that you can see at NYC in the future and at other youth ministry events like Youth Synod, YLTP and SpiritQuest. Most of all, it's just a blast," comments Katie

McCann (Holy Trinity, Fonthill).

Cole Sutton-Greenhalgh (All Saints, Hamilton) echoes those sentiments about friendships, deepening of faith, and spiritual growth, and adds, "NYC has helped me to expand and grow my faith in ways I hadn't even considered before."

The same deepening of faith was remarked on by Kyle McCooey (St. Paul's, Fort Erie) who also adds that "the base groups create great opportunities to share anything without feeling judged. The best part of NYC is the bond of the base group. You become a family and feel safe and cared about."

Kristi reiterates the importance of that feeling. "The best part of NYC is definitely the people. You will never find a more open, safe or inviting atmosphere. Everyone connects with someone, and that's amazing to see."

Barbara Jean Lick (St. Thomas, St. Catharines) is an NYC veteran and comes back each year because it "has a big impact on my faith, and shows that a group of strangers can come together as one in faith."

After NYC, Nick feels "rejuvenated spiritually and ready to tackle the challenges of the world; challenges within our parishes, our country and our world as well as in your own community. At NYC, you are able to live each day with your faith intertwined in the day's activities among people who love and care deeply about you. The challenge is to take that faith and that sense of being loved out into my everyday life."

Katie adds, "back at my home church, there aren't a lot of teenagers so coming to NYC shows you that there are lots of people your own age who believe in God. The whole NYC experience is life-changing."

Kristi sums it up; "there's a magic at NYC that sets off a spark inside you. That spark is the flame of your faith. That flame is fanned and grows with the rich spiritual and emotional experiences you participate in. Every year, the staff makes the experience new and fresh. You can always count on your faith being rekindled and that's why I keep coming back."

Niagara Children's and Family Ministries Event

Mark your calendars!

Love is... a retreat for families
February 16-18, 2007
Canterbury Hills Camp, Ancaster



This retreat is a gathering that creates opportunities to enrich faithful, nurturing relationships and homes. This year's theme is based on the book, "Love Is..." by Wendy Anderson Halperin. There will be campfires, workshops for children, youth and adults, hearty meals, tobogganing, lively music, creative worship times, puppet shows, family crafts, and time to connect with loved ones. Everyone welcome, please join us for a fun time.

For registration and information, please contact Christyn Perkons, Consultant in Children's and Family Ministries at 905-527-1316, ext. 460 or email at christyn.perkons@niagara.anglican.ca

Children's Festival 2006

Theme:



10:00 am - 3:00 pm

\$5 per person

Trafalgar Region
Saturday, October 21, 2006
St. Simon's, Oakville
1450 Litchfield Rd.

Register by phone or at 9:30 am on October 21

For more information contact
Rev. Paul Tinker: 905-634-1826
or Rev. Jeff Ward: 905-845-8351

Supported by the Children & Family
Ministries Advisory Committee
Diocese of Niagara



Thanks-living



MARNI NANCEKIVELL
DIRECTOR OF TRANSITIONAL MINISTRIES

"We thank thee Lord, for this our food, for life and health, and every good. Accept our thanks, for Jesus sake, Amen"

So goes what is known by our friends and extended family members as the "Nancekivell Grace." Introduced to my father's family over seventy years ago by my late great aunt, Mona Johnson, it has stood the test of time for our family. In our household, we say it at every meal.

Twice blessed

As a priest, much like Margaret Visser, I am curious about what 'depends on dinner' when it comes to asking a blessing at either end of a meal. In my family, we hold hands at the beginning of the meal, and if one of our cats presents themselves at the dinner table, they too are included, by touch in our family circle. Our eldest cat, DC comes running when we say what must sound to his feline ears as "the food chant," hoping for a scrap to be slipped to him under the table. When our nephew, Mitchell began to learn a grace, in larger family gatherings, he led us in his grace, then our daughter, Amanda would lead us in our family blessing of the food. We were indeed, "twice blessed!" And even though the kids in our family are now teenagers, we still use both blessings when my husband's family gathers, to honour the different traditions in our extended family. I rather like that.

What does your family do by way of thanksgiving at daily meal times? One friend of mine, who is German in origin, links hands with her partner and their children and says, "guten appetite." Another dear friend looks appreciatively at the food and those around and says, "I am thankful for this food and this time together."

There are those who "ask a blessing" on major events, Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving and perhaps birthdays, and those who do nothing at all.

Thanks for life, health and every good

Giving thanks is important to me. Not just at meal time, but every moment of every day. Perhaps I have been positively influenced by the expansive theology of the "Nancekivell Grace," but I truly give thanks for "life and health and every good." For me, Thanksgiving is about thanks-living. Every moment of every day for me is linked to an "attitude of gratitude." So, please indulge me as I tell you that for which I am personally thankful in Transitional Ministry this past year:

■ I am thankful for the parishes with which I have shared Christian community since I began the work of Director of Transitional Minis-

try: The Church of the Incarnation, the Parish of St. Stephen's, Hornby, the parish of St. John's, Stewarttown, and the Church of St. John the Evangelist, on Locke Street in Hamilton. Although I began my work in Interim Ministry with an objective 'body of knowledge', those parishes have helped me to discover the 'art' that is part of the application of Interim Ministry.

■ The Fresh Start team in the Diocese of Niagara is another group of individuals for which I am deeply thankful. Fresh Start, as you may know, is a two year program of transition for clergy and congregations as they begin their ministry together. Both lay and clergy folk are trained volunteers on the Fresh Start team. They bring knowledge, enthusiasm and wisdom to parishes that are moving into a new relationship with clergy. I thank members of the Fresh Start Leadership team for their generous sharing of both their time and experience.

■ The Diocese of Niagara has a number of trained interims who walk with congregations, as I have, during the time between one incumbent and the next. Interim Ministry is about far more than "keeping Sunday services going." There are specific developmental tasks connected to discerning identity, ministry and direction in the time between pastors. This Diocese has a number of experienced parish priests who have offered themselves for training as Interims. I thank these people for their willingness to expand their ministry skills into a new discipline, sometimes after they could be enjoying retirement.

■ I am thankful especially for my colleagues at the Synod Office (aka. Diocesan Resource Centre), under the leadership of Bishop Spence. Alas, in the minds of some, the Synod Office is thought of as the "enemy" to the parishes of this Diocese. That dynamic comes from an unfortunate "them and us" kind of thinking that is such a waste of our time and energies. I can tell you that I respect the knowledge, skill and dedication of those who work at the Diocesan Resource Centre. We continue to learn from one another and work with one another in a concerted effort to expand the message of God in the parishes of this Diocese. For the liveliness, creativity and dedication that I experience in my colleagues daily, I thank God.

■ Finally, I am thankful for you. You who read the Niagara Anglican, members of the church who live out the ministry of the baptized. In terms of Transitional Ministry, you are aware that while the truths of the Christian tradition are eternal, the Body which lives it out is constantly changing. I think that as followers of Jesus we are realizing that "change" isn't unusual, but change is the norm. Constant evolution is normative for a human body, and it is so for the church.

So it is that this Thanksgiving, and every day, I pray.

For more about Interim Ministry and Fresh Start, visit our Diocesan Website at www.niagara.anglican.ca, click on "Programs" and search under Fresh Start and Interim Ministry.



BRIAN A. BURROWS
INTERIM RECTOR

What is an Interim Pastor? It is the person who ministers in between two pastors; the last one from the past and the next one in the future. When Bishop Andrew Attagotauluk asked me to go to Kangirsuk in Arctic Quebec, I knew that this particular placement would be a little different! I think, though, my experience there has some relevance to interim pastors everywhere.

The way we speak

A vital part of interim work is communication. I arrived in Kangirsuk in late January and startled the community by speaking their own language, Inuktitut (Eskimo). It was made very clear to me that hardly anybody from the English or French culture bothers these days to speak the language of the people.

Everyone asked "who taught you?" I would reply, "Joanasie Qinnuajuaq, Joanasie Appalirag and Joe Talirunilirq when I was in Povirmituq in 1962." It was then that I began to really feel like an interim—an 'in-between' person straddling two distinct time periods.

In my early days as a missionary, the expectation always was to speak the language of the people. The lay reader would come to the Mission house and lessons would begin. Joanasie spoke no English and I could hardly understand a word in Inuktitut. There was though, another teacher, of a kind, the late Rev. E. J. Peck, in the shape of his Eskimo-English Dictionary, published by the Church of the Ascension Thank-Offering Mission Fund, Hamilton. It was these resources which helped me to conduct services, preach, and later, teach in the local school.

Forty or more years later, the children of Kangirsuk School considered me a novelty—the latest entertainment in town. There was, however, a more serious side to the way I was speaking. I could not hide my English accent, nor the fact that I was quite rusty, not having spoken the language for years. However, the way I spoke connect-

ed them with the past. Speaking a language introduces one to the thoughts and dreams of a people, and brings with it, the names and the memories of the past.

I know that mine was an extreme experience in communication in the Arctic, but there is something here which can be applied more generally even in unilingual situations. The way we speak is a critical factor in the work of interim pastors. There should be an effort to communicate clearly the vision the Diocese has for the parish and vice versa what the parishioners are saying to the Diocese, should be clearly understood by the interim pastor.

The way we live

Language of course reflects the culture of the people and the changes they are going through. The pace of change in the Arctic has been very rapid and again I found myself feeling like an in-between person, an interim. In my time, people had lived in igloos during the winter, travelled by dog-team and in the summer, and fished using kayaks. Our family had lived through that era, marvelling at the scarcity of wildlife and admiring the resourcefulness of the people in the face of great need.

Now in Kangirsuk there was no lack of food. Whereas before, people had committed the terrain to memory, now the hunters were using global positioning devices and calling for help by cell phones. The people of my generation noted the changes, but the young people simply accepted what is available as normal. I remember the young man who asked me if it were true that people from my culture actually had televisions in their over-night cabins!

It is noteworthy to point out that people who had lived in the past were strongly affected by the Christian faith. Their respect for the forces of nature heightened their dependence upon God. Now the newer generation, as the older people told me, do not have the same need for God. In the old days, there was always a space in the grub box at the end of the sled for the Prayer Book and the New Testament. Now with skidoo travel being so much quicker, hardly anybody stops overnight to say Evening Prayer as was the custom.

Every community has its own distinct way of living and the interim pastor does well to comprehend the rapid changes which

have taken place since the start of the last Rector's ministry. Even in our southern culture, there have been dramatic changes in the way people live to which many older people can attest.

The way we believe

I was privileged to be taught by people who heard the Gospel message for the first time from missionaries. In a deep sense, I felt I was again an 'in-between' or spiritual interim, bridging the gap between the first believers and the present. They told me how the Reverend E. J. Peck would shout words of encouragement to the families returning home after hearing the message of Jesus. He wanted them to keep on in the faith.

In the same way as I preached and taught the children choruses and action songs in their own language, the leaders felt encouraged in the great task of spreading the faith. Interim pastors should not just keep things as they are, they should encourage others to reach out in faith. I was able to introduce and facilitate training for the leaders so that over twenty children could enrol in the Boys' and Girls' Brigade. The elders had been apprehensive about this new direction, but realized that the faith has to be proclaimed afresh to each generation in an exciting way. Reaching out to children and young people in the name of Christ is new and old at the same time!

It was made clear to me by the Parish vestry that many people had given up going to church. We talked about putting notices in the local stores, using the local radio station to inform the community of what the church was doing. Above all we talked about the encouragement noticed by those who had been visited in their homes.

An 'in-between' pastor's calling is a challenge. In one sense, interim pastors are the 'in-between' people who minister Christ to the people at the time of a vacancy. As Christ, taught, performed miracles, died, rose again, ascended and will come again, so interims work to encourage the people to be ready.

In-between people witness to this great truth. Parishes may be without Rectors but they are never without Christ. Those of us who are used as interims should take seriously God's call to minister in the 'in-between' times, praying that Christ will come again and that His life and message continue to be faithfully proclaimed everywhere.

This is my story

YVONNE SKREPNECHUK
ST. JOHN THE DIVINE, CAYUGA

I was born in Meadows Bay of Islands, Newfoundland, the seventh child in a family of fourteen children. I was raised in an Anglican family, able to trace five generations of membership in the Anglican Church, through my father's line and so I was immersed in the Anglican doctrine from infant baptism to confirmation, to teaching Sunday school. God was talked about a lot in my life. At school Morning Prayer and Evening prayer were part of the curriculum. My first Bible carried the written words on the inside cover "Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest." The inwardly digest part did not take place until many years later. I realize now that I knew about God but I really did not know Him.

After graduating from a Church of England school I became a teacher at one of these schools located at Isle aux Morts. I needed to spread my wings and so I moved to Cartwright, on the coast of Labrador. I was there for a year and it was here that I felt called to teach blind children. On my holiday at home my parents told me they were uncomfortable with me being in such an isolated place and felt I should try Toronto as I had family there and communications would be much easier. So off I went to find a school for the blind in Toronto.

When I arrived at the Beverly Street School for the Blind it was to find that it was being taken over by the Metropolitan Toronto Association for the Mentally Handicapped. As I was being given a tour of the school I knew this was where I was meant to be, so I started work there the next day.

Good times and bad times

During my time in Toronto I not only found my vocation but my future husband, Peter, who was at

college training to become a radio-telecommunications officer. He went to work for the ministry of transportation and they sent him to British Columbia, so I followed him out there. We married and began our life together in Terrace.

I became involved in setting up a school for special needs children but before it opened we were sent to Prince George. I loved living there, as it was a beautiful, vibrant city. By now we had our first baby, Nyle. However my health was not good and I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. I was dumfounded and I couldn't really take it in. I was a young mother who was told that my "life is on a question mark". I spent quite a while in hospital in Vancouver, having all kinds of tests and eventually was sent home to Prince George to try to cope with MS and my baby. There were good times and bad times. I think I was in a kind of denial, refusing to let my life be controlled by the disease. I believed that if I didn't dwell on my difficulties I removed the threat of depression from my life. It worked well enough for me as we were moved to Vancouver Island, to Comox and I was able to go back to work and again establish a small school for special needs children.

Our next posting was to Cranbrook and we lived there for about twenty years. These were very fruitful times for me. I went to work establishing a highly successful programme of individual education plans at a school for special needs children. (Editor's note: Yvonne was named Cranbrook Centennial Citizen of the Year in 1980 because of this work. The following year she was named Lady of the Year).

I really got to know God

When Peter retired, due to ill health, the two of us opened a motel. I continued to teach and our second



Peter and Yvonne Skrepnechuk share a happy moment together.

child, Peter, was born, much to our surprise. We had been told that there would be no more children for us after I had Nyle. We ran the motel for 12 years and in 1991 I was faced with another medical crisis and was overwrought with the burden of facing it and having no control over the situation. I knew that I could no longer handle things alone. I knew all that was to be learned in a catechism, collects were memorized and even many Articles of Religion. I learned about the Trinity, creeds and the litany. However, when a crisis aroused in my life, it was difficult to call upon all that I had learned or recited and find strength to cope. I had a faith but perhaps not faith; at least not a personal relationship with my Redeemer, Jesus Christ. I did know He was God's only begotten Son who was crucified dead and buried and rose again. But I did not know the joy of turning my burdens over to Him with trust and faith that He would carry them for me. I barely knew the lover of my soul. Somehow, words from a Billy Graham crusade that I had seen months before crept into my terror

stricken mind and being. "Give your life and heart to Jesus and rest your burdens on His shoulders." I did that very thing. I gave myself to Jesus. I let Him take my fear and He did. I simply believed by "faith" that He would carry that fear and terror for me and I was delivered safely from a threatening breast tumour. Since then my faith journey has been progressive with Jesus as my lifeline, friend and Saviour.

We eventually moved to Cayuga, Ontario where Peter and I intend to stay. Our children and grandchildren live near here and we attend the local church, St John the Divine, and are still busy people.

Through knowing Christ and reading His Word I have learned to understand the need to forgive others as perhaps the most important key to being able to walk closely with Him. Giving without counting the cost and seeking to do His will is necessary for Christian growth. Yes, there are days when I cannot always clearly see Him, but that is generally because I forget to put Him first.

I have learned that there is beauty in all of God's children if

you look for it. I have also learned that without a flip side it would be difficult for us to appreciate the experience of life.

What I would do differently

If I could live my life over again I would start as soon as verbalization skills were in place to openly and exuberantly confess my love for Christ. I would shout it from the hilltops and the valleys and the rooftops. I would have dealt with my loved ones with more Christ-like attitudes. I would serve Him better much sooner.

Advice to new Christians

To new Christians starting out in life I say never to be afraid to confess the caring, crucified Christ. Read, read, read the Bible. Pray for His help in understanding and digesting what you read. Find a loving church, sensitive to the needs of others. Praise your Saviour by letting the world see that your face tells the story that you carry His love within. Never cease to pray and thank Him. Adore Him, confess to Him, thank Him and ask for His help and blessings for others.

How thankful are we anyway?

Continued from page 1

tant and a few sceptics still dispute them. Thus the ideal "to whom much is given, of them shall much be required" is entirely forgotten!

Religion of material progress

But the idol of unending material progress has serious implications for many of our friends and neighbours right here in Canada as well as for the Third World. Seventeen years ago, all the political parties in our federal parliament voted unanimously to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. Yet to-day, Canadian poverty rates are still substantially unchanged! For example, Hamilton's Social Planning Council reported early this year that even in prosperous Burlington and Oakville, child poverty is still at least 10 percent, and in Hamilton itself one in five children live in poverty.

Meanwhile, in recent years Norway, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden

and Finland have all reduced their poverty rates to between 2 and 5 percent. Many economists insist that Canada can't afford the higher taxes those countries have because that would hurt our national productivity and Gross National Product. But the fact is that the Finns, Norwegians, Belgians, Swedes and Danes, during the same years that they drastically reduced poverty, also matched or outperformed Canada in economic productivity too!

Well then, what might Canadians do about this threatening challenge, The Religion of Material Progress?

For starters, those who are not yet convinced of the danger, could read the two books by Ronald Wright and Jared Diamond that are mentioned above, or some of the literature that is available on climate change, or go to see Al Gore's great movie, "An Inconvenient Truth". It is also about climate change, offers a critique of our obsession with material progress, and demonstrates

very graphically the discontinuity between many of the habits and attitudes we take for granted and the future well-being of all humanity.

Sacrifices over time

But let's face it, although the consequences of doing nothing about this challenge are certainly drastic, it will not be an easy one to tackle. It will require personal inconvenience and real sacrifices over a prolonged period of time, and with no clear Five Year Plan, or even a Five Hundred Year Plan to guide us, results will come very slowly.

Still, in this Thanksgiving season, if we really are grateful, let's remember that every act of genuine gratitude and compassion has a ripple effect, like a pebble being thrown into a calm pool. Or in Jesus' metaphor, like the mustard-seed which is very tiny, but grows into something really big, or the kind of yeast that could leaven the lump of our prosperous indifference and inertia!

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60th Anniversary Celebration
The Anglican Business & Professional Women's Association of Hamilton

Sunday November 19th @ 8:30 a.m.
Corporate Communion Service & Breakfast Christ's Church Cathedral

Monday, November 20th @ 6:30 p.m.
Dinner Meeting at the Coach House, Dundurn Castle

Dinner: \$15.00 for paid up members
\$35.00 for others
Admission to the Dinner by ticket only
Tickets available by calling 905-575-9878

Well of gratitude

Continued from page 1

unhappiness. In fact, the uneasiness goes much deeper. Spiritually and emotionally the disparity lives within us as well.

We may believe we are not loved, have no friends, or can find no joy. We can feel we are somehow denied the gifts life has to offer. As a collective human race it is this disparity and belief in "lack" that makes us poor of pocket, poor of heart and poor of soul. Even for those of immense financial wealth a belief in lack of a different kind creates a series of thoughts that keeps an attitude of poverty alive. Somewhere in our hearts we hold out a faith that we all could live in abundance while simultaneously fearful of lack. Without this belief in abundance, the sense of gratitude eludes us. This is not the natural state of being. It is simply the outcome of not being awake to the unlimited prosperity within us and within our world.

Sharing all we have

At some point each of us makes a decision to see lack or to see abundance when we look at our world. This view can be profoundly influenced by our environment and those around us and yet it is we who make the decision in the end. My friend, Marianne Knuth is a living example of this choice. In an African landscape of a crippling AIDS pandemic, immense social unrest, political violence, and a devastated economy, she has started, in Zimbabwe, a new community called the Kufunda Learning Village, dedicated to assisting others redefine their understanding of success. She is helping others to reclaim their sense of wealth and possibility.

In the midst of this wasteland she expects only to be a pinpoint of light and for her that is enough to begin a transformation. She has chosen a world view of prosperity and possibility. She has chosen a perspective of appreciation for the immense "source-fullness" of the human spirit. She sees only glorious human beings all around her. She shares all she has, effortlessly and joyfully, and so can we!

Deep within our souls we are

simply 'love'. Our deepest desire is to express that love through our thoughts and actions. The only barrier to living this way is our own selves, not anything outside us. It is our own set of fear-based beliefs and sense of 'lack' that holds us back. The process of transformation from this state of being is simple.

Discipline

We need only awaken and see all that we have already. We need only to pay attention. This state of appreciation and gratitude simply needs to be cultivated. It requires only the discipline of daily awareness and action.

■ Each morning before rising from our bed, we can take a few minutes to list off all we are grateful for and give thanks.

■ During the course of the day, in any moment of frustration or anxiety, we can stop in that moment and consider something to appreciate and give thanks.

■ Throughout the day, we can stop occasionally and pay attention to an act of another, a scene in nature, a thought of a loved one and give thanks.

■ Before drifting off to sleep at night we can recall the joys of the day, the people we love and who love us, the talents and skills we have to share with the world and give thanks.

This deep attention to our prosperity at every level and in every nuance leaves no room for greed, envy, selfishness or despair. It leaves no room for fear. It leaves room only for generosity of spirit and the expression of love. Once we live from this expression we are open to more possibility, more abundance and thus the circle of prosperity and joy grows.

Place of gratitude

In a world fraught with the artifice of complexity, the simplicity of gratitude and appreciation can open our hearts to the transformation of thankfulness. And so I invite you to live in this place of gratitude, moment to moment, day to day with me. Together in this community of appreciation, we can join Marianne in being that pin point of light that begins a global transformation.

Getting to know you

COLLEEN SYM Social Justice Coordinator for the Diocese of Niagara



FRAN DARLINGTON
CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

Human beings are products of Hour heritage and experiences. The new Diocesan Social Justice Coordinator Colleen Sym brings a gentle, caring personality as well as years of observation, training and experience in supporting disadvantaged people.

Colleen identifies this time as "a learning process for everyone involved," including members of the Diocesan Outreach Committee (PWRDF), who liaise with national Anglican church organisations such as the Partners in Mission (PIM) and Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, and work on issues of refugee sponsorship and other supportive efforts within the Diocese of Niagara. Even her daughters, ages seven and nine, are involved: "The girls are getting an education on what's important. Kids are observant; they see what's going on."

Remembering growing up at St. George's Church, Crescentwood, in Winnipeg, Colleen reflects "back to that period when it wasn't relevant," and confesses to identifying with "that typical Anglican demographic (of being) raised in the Church, confirmed, having your wedding, and then going back with the children. I'm guilty!" She smiles. "For me, (I ask) what's the relevance of it, and then how do I make it relevant for the kids? That got me to St. George's (Georgetown) in 2002." After attending St. George's "for a year to see if it was a fit, we had the girls baptised, and now they're doing their First Communion. We didn't want to get the girls baptised; that was a one-off. If they were baptised, we had to make a commitment to follow through."

An ad in the bulletin of the Georgetown parish, inviting applications to share the Diocesan Outreach Committee's work in social justice, seemed to answer Colleen's concerns about finding her place in the Church's efforts to live as Christians are called to do. "I didn't want to do the Sunday school thing, in part because we have two small children. Bake sales stress me out! I'm glad there are people to do roofs and so on. Gardening was good. I've realised there's a tension between mission and maintenance; I'm more of a mission person."

What makes faith relevant?

As a lawyer and as Executive Director of the Halton Community Legal Services, Colleen has a strong connection with Kerr Street Ministries in Oakville, providing

support for low income people. "(Our) mandate is for public legal education, law reform and community development."

Originally an outreach from Chartwell Baptist Church in Oakville, Kerr Street Ministries now involves over forty churches, including St. Aidan's, St. Jude's and St. Simon's Anglican Churches. Colleen comments, "Out of Kerr Street, I could see it was possible to have a partnership between a secular organisation and religious establishments... You could see the relevance of people's faith in the work they were doing."

Considering her current commitment, Colleen asks, "What makes your faith relevant? Is it just being in Church for an hour on Sunday, or more?" She answers her own question, "doing this, I'm offering transferable skills to make a difference."

Faith in action

She continues: "To be a resource to the parishes is a piece I'm really interested in... The other piece is to bring different issues to the attention of the Diocese, where it would be appropriate for the Diocese to take a position or to get the word out. This article is a piece of how we get the word out to parishes."

Ruefully, Colleen acknowledges, "there's a lot of commitment and dedication out here, but not resources." Realistically, she comments, "grass-roots work in the parishes will be to help them develop what they want to do at the local level. Needs assessments, outcomes measures, and funding or grant applications are what secular non-profit organisations have done, but they are new concepts for parishes; an area of support parishes need."

"Managing expectations is important," Colleen explains. "So often I've heard, 'Can you do it for me?' Yes, I can do that, but I'm more than happy to review what you've got; review applications, and help to make connections with other groups that are doing the same thing you want to do." She smiles, "most conversations begin with 'Marion (Marion Vincett is the venerable Executive Archdeacon of the Diocese of Niagara) told me I should talk to you.'"

Colleen's commitment reaches beyond the Diocesan connection: "Seeing funding applications for endowments go through the Committee helps make connections. That capacity building piece is where I can help... (and) tie (a parish's application) in with a national campaign of the Anglican Church of Canada,

the Canadian Council of Churches, or the World Council of Churches. I've spoken with Maylanne Maybee (Coordinator of Justice Education and Networks) at the National Office, but we will discern what kind of relationship "will develop."

Family ties

Born in Winnipeg, Colleen is the middle of three sisters. After earning a BA in Political Science and Sociology at Carleton University in Ottawa, and two years in law at the University of Ottawa, Colleen took third year of law studies at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, then articulated for one year in the Attorney General's Office there.

Moving back to Ontario, she articulated with the Crown Attorney's Office in Peel, staying there for six years, handling mostly child abuse and sexual assault prosecution, demanding work which hazards "vicarious trauma... a burnout field." Joining the legal clinic in Georgetown in 1994, Colleen has been Executive Director for the past eight years.

With her partner, Mark, who is in sales, and their two daughters ages seven and nine, Colleen relaxes hiking the Bruce Trail, reading, doing yoga and going to concerts. The girls enjoy dancing and swimming, and one is very interested in art. Three cats complete the family.

Mission all around

Mission happens here at home and around the world. Pragmatically, Colleen admits "In a perfect world, it would be nice if I could get out to the parishes, but in reality most communication will be by telephone and e-mail. I'm one person (doing) one job."

That "one job" has many facets, currently developing communication on a World Day of Prayer for various campaigns. Colleen says, "World issues resources are there for all ages. The relevant question is 'How does your faith help you to make a difference to the world?'"

Colleen has a suggestion: "Get to know someone you're helping, the clients at the food bank for example. Are they regular clients, or just in a moment of crisis?" Such personal contact takes effort, perhaps courage to overcome long-held ideas, and a will to personally bring change to the world, even just a local fragment of it.

Graham Kerr, "The Galloping Gourmet," offers another idea. He and his wife examined their lifestyle, considering where they could reduce luxury items. As an example, he explained their decision to eat two cookies instead of four, deliberately figured out how much those two extra cookies would cost, and regularly deposit that amount into a bank account specifically set up for the purpose. Other items were similarly adjusted, and with the money they set aside, the Kerrs have fostered a young man who is now beginning university studies.

Jesus said, "When you do it to one of the least of these, you do it to me" (not "for me"); Colleen's mission is to encourage and guide the rest of us into fulfilling that advice.

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Christian marriage under attack

CHRISTOPHER M. GRABEC
EDITOR

On September 18, Charles McVety, senior director of the Defend Marriage coalition—an alliance of 13 traditional marriage, family and religious advocacy groups—kicked his campaign into gear on Parliament Hill. His goal is to sway members of parliament to re-open the debate on same-sex marriage and to once again make certain that the legal definition includes "one man and one woman." All of this is justified in these groups by the Sacred Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church. It is one way of looking at things. It seems to me that there are far bigger fish to fry when it comes to Christian marriage, but starting up that fish-fry might open some unpleasant doors and odours, even for the Defend Marriage coalition. It's much easier to point fingers at a small group of people who want to be recognized in their committed journey, rather than to look at the inherent problems in the church's relationship to the structure itself.

Of course this fishing expedition would take much more space than this paper would allow, but perhaps scratching the surface would be helpful. Has anyone noticed how many marriages are now occurring outside the Christian church? There are now ministers and officiants across the province who do large and growing numbers of weddings in homes, halls, restaurants and gardens. At one time this was unheard of; save the odd wedding that ran off to Vegas, or the very quiet wedding that might occur at city hall perhaps due to a surprise pregnancy! Many people are beginning to think that marriage celebrations either belong outside the church, or worse, they simply do not want the church to interfere. So while the Defend Marriage coalition is fighting to preserve its understanding of marriage—or should we say fighting to keep homosexuals out of marriage, and perhaps out of main stream society—people are walking away from the church's control and involvement in marriage.

It's sad that this is happening, but perhaps those zealous people in Defend Marriage, might want to consider the possibility that

they are driving more people away from the Christian celebration than they are saving!

The expediency and legalistic approach of the civil marriage verses, the in depth understanding and principles offered by a more 'sacramental' approach must not be overlooked. It would seem that in our society we as a church need to help people understand the difference. Of course we need to understand the difference ourselves in the first place if we are to show anyone else that we have something to offer. We are unfortunately, the beneficiaries of ancient and antique arguments about the nature of marriage. These range from the Roman insistence that marriage is one of the "seven sacraments instituted by Christ to give grace" to Luther's assertion via his two kingdom's doctrine, that marriage is relegated to "an estate of the earthly kingdom... subject to the prince and not to the Pope!"

Most of us who are involved in either presiding at marriages, or who live in one believe that there is a truly spiritual dimension to marriage. We believe that the day we entered into marriage our lives were changed. I preach this all the time: "You will know that something is different the next morning!" Couples will often tell you that this is true. Marriage is like any other rite of passage; it is intended to move us from one place to another in our lives, and indeed it works. Symbols have enormous power. Words are a very basic and yet powerful symbol. We can use them to destroy and we can use them to build people up in love. The fact is that when we use words, they really work. When a couple speaks the words that we call vows, they are undoubtedly the most important words that they will ever speak. When they pass through the ceremony they come out the other side, changed or altered. How this happens and what it is that happens is difficult to put into a few words, but we all know it is true. Perhaps Dietrich Bonhoeffer knew it best when he said that it was not love that sustained marriage—and we know that this is true—but rather marriage that sustains our love. What can sustain love in this world? What symbol has that power? Most of us



in our heart of hearts believe that marriage has that ability.

Within marriage the symbols of love have an incredible affect on our lives. Martin Buber, the great Jewish philosopher in the last century said, "I kiss my wife, not only because I love her, but in order to love her." A kiss is not only an expression of what is, but it has the power to create what is not yet complete!

This discussion of the power of symbol and the 'sacramental' of marriage could go on forever, but suffice it to say that most of us are believers in Christian marriage and believe that it has the power to sustain our love and bring it to places that we have never known before.

Frankly, it doesn't appear that Charles McVety and his troop have any concerns about dealing with the real issues of Christian Marriage. Our society is walking away from a gift that it cannot see because of the ecclesial blocks that we put up in the interest of preserving tradition and in a true spirit of pettiness.

Does the rite of commitment that we call marriage belong only to one particular group in the world—male and female couples? Perhaps it does if all we think about is legality, rules and regulations. Oh yes, perhaps when we equate marriage to genital expression we might also reason to believe that the only right way to live out marriage is in the interaction of male and female; after all this produces children. But when we see it as a rite of passage into a new way of living out love on this earth—the love that was intended by the creator—it seems that limiting the symbol to any particular group is ludicrous. After all there are now thousands of gay couples in this country and in other countries who have entered into the journey of marriage and are living it out with a deep and living spirituality.

Sadly, there will always be those bent on "the rules" and "the way it's always been" in their minds. Unfortunately, in their zealous guardianship, they will only push people farther away from the very gift that marriage is intended to be.

Limping together

Continued from page 7

erence to "God's story" can be counted as such. Christians as a whole are so hung up on the Bible that God's revelation finished two thousand years ago.

The only rules I recognize are God's rules!

How many Bible readers ask themselves, "If I were selling the Jesus story today, how would I present it so that many people would be drawn to it?" The apostles were human beings like ourselves with an urgent product to sell. God did not dictate the New Testament verbatim to them any more than Moses took dictation of the Pentateuch sitting on God's lap.

John Bowen talks of the "rules of the Anglican game." The only rules I recognize are God's rules and they are revealed in the process of time. Jesus taught us that we are all brothers and sisters, children of "Our Father who art in Heaven." It is high time that those who profess and call themselves Christians recognized the fact, even when it includes Jews, Moslems, Buddhists, Hindus, gays, lesbians, mentally handicapped, etc.

Peter Wall talks of the "filioque" clause. Here's a pretty howdy-do! Canadian Anglican theologians cannot make up their

minds, so we play it safe (see pages 189 and 234 of the BAS). I know what I believe; I hold to the Eastern Orthodox, not the Roman version. My Essentials friends may consider me a heretic.

Unity

Sandy Copland might remember that, in spite of Philemon, apartheid found plenty of Biblical evidence for the superiority of the white races, just as Orthodox Jews can justify their hatred of Arabs on the basis of Isaac and Esau, or Shem, Ham and Japheth. I would ask her "why was homosexuality anathema to the ancient Hebrews" (Look at Canaanite Baalism)? Incidentally, I have not really researched the Bible to find any reference to lesbianism; women were not expected to be sexual beings (except for whores)!

Elsewhere Kevin Block pleads for the "Unity of our Church" (September issue, page 10). So do I, but I recall with Bishop John Bothwell that at another critical time Gamaliel said, "Let them alone; for if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail (September issue, page 17); but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" I am always amazed at Gamaliel's wisdom!

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Northern lights



JIM NEWMAN
DIRECTOR OF STEWARDSHIP AND
FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT

There's a natural sense of stewardship in the far north. My daughter and her family live in Old Town in the City of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. It's an eclectic mix of hunter's cabins and modern houses. There's little wasted land as the back of their home rests on the top of a steep rocky slope, and the front is perched on stilts. That style of architecture is not unusual in the north, and it affords three magnificent views of the float plane basin, Yellowknife Bay, and Great Slave Lake. It's quiet and idyllic but for the occasional raucous roar of a float plane.

Late August mornings are cool and fresh, and the afternoon sun is cheerful and warm. The community gardens have grown like wildfire during the long days of summer. Their plot is lush with large red beets, tender carrots and potatoes, dill weed, and leafy lettuce. We enjoy them served with fresh whitefish from the lake.

The first snow could fall in late September and the winter will be long and bitterly cold so people make the most of every summer day. There's something especially resilient about "Yellowknifers," the adventurous souls who arrived and stayed years longer than they

expected. The local economy is on the upswing again as new diamond mines come into production.

Good stewardship is evident

I've watched good stewardship in the progressive modernization of Yellowknife's facilities over the last decade. I see it in their sensible disposal of waste products and the local production of electricity. I see it in the clear streams and lakes, the regulated fishing and hunting sectors, and in the clear nights that are devoid of excessive light pollution. The heavens come alive there in ways that most of us have forgotten!

"Yellowknifers" are friendly and helpful. Sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks abound for good reasons. It's a place of elegant soapstone carvings, winter roads, moderately expensive groceries and fuel, and unlocked doors.

Meanwhile here in the south

Our four lane highways are clogged, our rivers are polluted, our televisions are getting larger, and our children are at risk. Parishes struggle to stay afloat amidst a cycle of rampant conspicuous consumption. What a paradox! Struggling parishes in this land of abundance!

We must create a strong culture of stewardship in Niagara. That means taking excellent care of our parishes, our environment, our communities, ourselves, and each other. We know that strong spiritually healthy parishes are beacons of Christ's light in the world. So let's give thankfully and realistically from our God—given store of time, talents, and treasure. It's the right and just thing to do.

An interesting conversation



GRAHAME STAP
RECTOR - ST. ALBAN THE MARTYR,
GLEN WILLIAMS

I had an interesting conversation the other day with an old friend, a person who is having a very difficult time with the institutional church and in particular the Anglican Church. When I say conversation I use the term loosely as the person refused to discuss any aspect of the church and muttered something about religion being the cause of all the wars and problems of the world.

Problems of our own making

I must admit that I was saddened by this as I know the person had, in the past, been very active as a warden, a choir member and leader of the church as well as being a generous steward.

I started to try and figure out any reason for the change. At best I had only the history between us

to go on and quickly realized that I would be largely guessing. It could be the tension surrounding same sex relationships and the conflicting attitudes within the church. It could be the financial woes of the church in general. It could be then I stopped and realized all of the problems I was thinking of were of our own making. We are responsible.

Then I started to think of priorities and wondering if we placed too much emphasis on maintaining what we consider to be the right things of the church, how we should or should not do something. This brought me to 'New Niagara' and all the wonderful ideas, deep thoughts, and dedication that came into being through the process of New Niagara.

What happened to New Niagara?

Along with the obvious desire of all those that attended to see our churches not only alive and well but also full of the Holy Spirit loving and serving God; accepting people where they are and not where we expect them to be, I wonder what happened to this 'new beginning' and all the work so many people put into it. This brought me back, full circle, to

the person I had been talking to.

As a church we have lost this person because, obviously in many cases, we have not accepted people where they are but try to mold them to our own image.

In our travels this summer my wife and I visited many churches. We saw quite clearly that churches that had started to do new things, or were doing old things in a new way were the churches that were at least three-quarters full. These churches were truly bringing the Holy Spirit into the hearts and minds of the people. The service was lively and upbeat and we were invited to share in both worship and hospitality.

Filling pews

Others that were still in the same old rut were nearly empty and we were not invited to share because there was nothing to share in. My old friend's church was one of the latter. Congregations across this great land are growing. However, it seems that it is only the churches where all the people of the church know that the love of God is the greatest power in the whole world and are reaching out to others that are taking advantage of this turn around and filling their pews.

Interpreting the word



AUDREY CONARD
ASSISTANT - ST. CUTHBERT'S, OAKVILLE

Over the years I've heard many questions about the Bible, and I've had many questions about the Bible:

- Was every word written by God?
- Is every part of the Bible equally important?
- How do I know which parts are eternal and which limited to the ancient world? What authority should the Bible have over my life?
- Must I do everything it says?
- When I have an eruption on my skin, go to the priest?
- Why do some parts of the Bible contradict other parts?
- How was the Bible written? Is it historically and factually true? Is it literally true? How shall I use the Bible?

God stirs up the questions

Here's what is primary for me as I approach those questions. The Bible is for us a means of grace. Through Scripture God comes to us and speaks to us, the way Christ comes to us in the bread and wine. God is alive and continues to engage with us through the Biblical texts.

My experience is that God is the one who stirs up our questions about the texts, about the authority of scripture, and about our lives of faith. I believe God does that to intrigue us, draw us nearer, and to stretch us.

I have a very precious letter sent by my grandfather to my grandmother in 1914. It's a love letter in scratchy, sepia script on drying yellow paper. Very clearly the purpose of the letter is to persuade my grandmother to marry him. Facts and descriptions of his past and current situations were true as he saw them, as he was writing. They mean little to me now. Many of his expressions are quaint. I don't know the people that he mentions, but I've always meant to do a little research, not just about my grandparents, but about the years before World War One in mid-America as well. I want to know why his engraving trade was not popular. I wonder why with his German-sounding name, he might have had to move to Canada for a while.

The intent of his letter is clear: "Love me, here's who I am, throw in your lot with me." However, I will know my grandfather more fully when I can round out his setting and background. My grandmother shared his world, so her understanding would be natural and immediate. All these years later, I have to make an effort to gain a background setting.

The larger story

I suppose I don't have to. It's enough to be moved by his love. But my love for him makes me curious. Where does this one small man fit in history? Have things changed so much in these short years that he and I couldn't today have a fine conversation? Would his assumptions seem strange to me, and mine baffle him?

I think my grandfather's letter is a fair parallel, if not a perfect one. When we learn how the books of

the Bible were composed over a great sweep of history, with many authors, viewpoints, and genres—letters, chronicles, poetry and prayers, folk tales, a novel, stories and sermons, etc.—and as we see the Bible as a human library, the larger story of how God works with humankind emerges with clarity.

We can then spend less time arguing about the surface as if each word were equal, and more time cooperating with God's overall intent.

Biblical study groups in our parishes can be helpful. We can learn the literary and historical skills that can help us to better understand the context in which the scripture was written. These skills are not, as we might say 'fancy-schmancy'; they are sensible and logical; they enable us to answer for ourselves:

- What was going on at the time this book of the Bible was composed? What is the underlying history? Why and for whom was it written? I'd feel differently about my grandfather if the letter I have was addressed to a woman other than my grandmother.
- Was the material of this book originally passed on orally? Why does it take the form it takes? Why did our faith ancestors think this material had to be preserved? What were our ancestors like? Engaging our texts enables us to speak across time.

Our sense of Christ's reality and God's loving mystery can grow and deepen through engaging with our sacred texts. We will not find ourselves hooked to specific words, perhaps taken out of context. We will clearly hear the voice of God in our own hearts speaking in our own day and age.

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Advocacy Justice Camp

EXPERIENCES that will last a lifetime

SARAH KOSLICKI
INCARNATION PARISH, OAKVILLE

On the morning of Sunday, May 7, I gathered up all my bags and headed out to the Via Rail station where I would await my train to Ottawa. Not really knowing what to expect, I promised myself that I would try my best to keep an open mind whatever may happen. My destination? The Anglican Advocacy Justice Camp for young people being hosted by the Diocese of Ottawa.

I woke early Monday morning and headed down to the lobby where I met up with all the other anxious Advocacy Justice Campers who were ready to begin day one. When I first stepped foot in Church of the Ascension, I looked around frantically for a familiar face. Thankfully, I spotted Evan Rudderham whom I had known from other Niagara youth ministry events. Needless to say, Evan and I pretty much clung together for most of the day still unsure of what to make of the whole situation. One thing we did know: we had both been placed in the Development and Aid group. I was ecstatic considering development and aid had always been something I wanted to learn more about.

Focusing on poverty

Throughout the course of the week, our group attended many

scheduled events and meetings all around the city. The most memorable meeting for me was with a man named Mr. Joseph Kahigwa. Joseph is the Deputy Ambassador of Uganda who was visiting the High Commission office during the time of Justice Camp. We walked into his office where we were greeted by tons of food awaiting us on the table. We were thrilled because by this time we all needed a little snack! Joseph was a kind man who truly cared about his people and was overjoyed that we had come to speak to him on behalf of anyone who wishes to help.

The next day while Evan was meeting with Liberal MP, John McCallum, I had the opportunity to sit down with Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance). Although we were supposed to be talking about development and aid issues, Ablonczy seemed more focused on the issue of poverty. According to her, stability within the family is the key to defeating the cycle of poverty. Whether or not the group agreed with her statement, we were very grateful that she had taken time out of her schedule to meet with us.

Encountering homelessness

As the week went on, we met with many more important individuals

such as the Vice President of CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency), Kathy Vandergrift from the Make Poverty History Campaign, Joan Broughton of the United Nations Association of Canada and many others who had come to share their own personal experiences with us.

Whenever I share my experience of AJC with others, they always get the impression that it was all work and no play, which is definitely not true! There was always plenty of time for the regular tourist activities and opportunity to socialize with people from other groups. One evening I managed to sneak away and join the Homelessness and Poverty group for their night walk around the city. This night walk turned out to be a real eye-opener. The amount of homelessness I encountered was unbelievable and really showed that homelessness is a national disaster and must be dealt with immediately.

Experience of a lifetime

Overall I believe that my experiences at Advocacy Justice Camp will remain with me forever. I wish all the delegates the best in their day to day lives carrying out the lessons we all shared together. As for now, I look forward to the Environmental Justice Camp held in BC next year. See you there!

General Synod Decisions

Continued from page 8

of New Westminster, which has already approved a local option.

■ What happens if General Synod does not accept the findings of the *St. Michael Report*? One would assume that, if the Synod rejected the *St. Michael Report*, then Synod is saying that the blessing of same-sex unions is quite clearly not a matter of doctrine in any form, and local order could prevail, in other words, a local option would be virtually assured. In this case, like in others, each Diocese would need to consider the matter at its own Synod, subject to the consent of the local Bishop.

■ What does General Synod do about the deferred motion from 2004 calling for a so-called diocesan local option? The Synod will need to deal with this deferred motion. Presumably, it will, at some point, be before the House. If passed—there is the potential for some procedural actions which could call for a 2/3 voting majority requirement—the matter would, in all likelihood, devolve to local Diocesan decision, with the concurrence of the Diocesan Bishop. My personal sense is that this would then come to Diocesan synod in 2007 or a local decision. If this deferred motion from 2004 is defeated, then another motion could be put to the House, although in all likelihood, unless it were significantly different in content, it would be ruled out of order. Also, the rather complex system by which resolutions get to the floor of General Synod would probably

mean that no new resolution would be considered until 2010.

■ What else might happen in this matter? One would want to be very careful about speculating what might happen on the floor of General Synod. One inescapable change in the landscape since General Synod last met is the nature of civil marriage in this country. In all jurisdictions now "marriage is a union of two persons," irrespective of gender. There doubtless are those who would want General Synod to affirm in the strongest possible way that marriage in the Church can only happen between a man and a woman. There are others who would want to have the Church make the relatively simple changes to *Canon XXI*, on marriage in the church, removing references to "a man" and "a woman," thereby canonically allowing the marriage of same-sex persons. Feelings are strong enough that there is also the possibility of virtually endless procedural 'wrangling' on all sides and other dramatic actions by members of Synod on the floor.

■ What can we do in Niagara? Depending on what decisions, if any, General Synod makes in 2007, there will be implications for our Synod in the fall of 2007. We all need to hold our General Synod delegates and particularly our Bishop in our prayers as we move forward to the spring of 2007. We also need to read, study, and discuss these matters in our own parishes as we prepare for our own Diocesan Synod this November.

Worshippers pray for healing in Caledonia controversy



ALAN L. HAYES
THE ITINERANT CHURCHGOER

Most Anglican worship services are scheduled according to the calendar, with various daily services, weekly services, and annual services. This scheme is sometimes called "the sanctification of time."

But sometimes we gather for worship according to providences revealed in history. In centuries past, if a king died or a prince was born, people went to church. In case of plague or healing, famine or bountiful harvest, threat of war or victory over the enemy, people went to church.

Recently we've had an historical moment in our own area that called out for a special season of confession and prayer. It's had a lot of attention from the media.

Caledonia conflict

It's a dispute focused on a parcel of land in Caledonia which happens to fall in our diocese of Niagara. The property was claimed by two different groups: white developers, and natives in the Six Nations reserve located directly adjacent,

which for Anglican purposes is in the diocese of Huron.

The legalities of land ownership along the Grand River have been controversial for over two centuries. A good brief introduction, written by a lawyer who hasn't taken sides, is available at www.lawnow.org—click on the free September-October issue, and look for "aboriginal law." A lawsuit about some of the issues has been in process for years.

Last February native protesters began occupying the disputed site. Counter-protesters gathered and maybe made racist remarks. Things escalated. The protesters began blocking traffic on the road into Caledonia, in effect holding the town hostage. Some local white officials got huffy and made inflammatory comments. Violence occasionally erupted. The law courts got involved. A local judge who fulminated against native lawlessness had to be told by the Court of Appeals that he might be playing a little loose with the law himself.

In June, the conflict was abruptly defused when the provincial government agreed to pay the developers for the (disputed) land title and for their expenses. Construction stopped, and the protests de-escalated, but ill-will and mistrust remain.

Seeking healing

It was past time to think about healing. Enter an Anglican lay-

woman on the Six Nations reserve, an elder of her people. Her name is Nina Burnham.

She got in touch with her priest and bishops. She called the Anglican primate in Toronto. She talked to community leaders and ordinary folks both in Caledonia and on the reserve. And pretty soon she had arranged a service of prayer and reconciliation for Wednesday, August 30, at 1 pm.

Her rector tells me that she is probably the only person on the reserve who could have arranged this. She's a person of spiritual authority.

About 300 of us met on a lovely late summer's day on the banks of the Grand River, where Pauline Johnson's paddle once sang. Native and non-native Christians from the area and from afar were there. The primate was there, as well as the moderator of the United Church. Pastors from Caledonia and Six Nations were there. The bishop of Niagara, the bishops of Huron, and the president of the Hamilton Conference of the United Church were there.

Prayer on the Grand

We prayed. "May we forget our pride," prayed a pastor. A Roman Catholic priest prayed a searching confession of the bitterness that comes when injustice wears us down; it sounded like one of David's psalms.

We listened to some people's reflections. I was mightily impressed with the primate's message, which

was simple, true, and effectively delivered. Reconciliation and healing depend on acknowledging guilt and seeking justice. And that's the vocation of the Christian, summed up in our baptismal covenant.

We sang hymns in many languages. We enjoyed some pretty wonderful gospel bluegrass music from a quartet which, improbably, had seven members. We exchanged words of respect with our neighbours.

I think many of us experienced some healing grace.

At the end, Arnold Jacobs, an Onondaga artist, offered a painting to Jan Watson. She's a friendly Caledonian who leads a group that wants Canada to respect its treaty agreements. She has been accosted in the streets of Caledonia by white mobs armed with iron bars and baseball bats, and at night thugs have tried to kick down the door of her house.

Not perfect

While it was a very good afternoon, there were a few things I might have done differently. I might have reminded the organizers of an iron-clad principle of human nature: if you invite a large number of clergy, civic leaders, and amateur musicians to make brief appearances on a program, you can bet that the event will go on for a long, long time. Consequently, many of those attending couldn't stay around to mingle afterwards, which was a shame.

Also, as the primate noted, reconciliation requires confession of guilt, dialogue, and an awareness of other people's points of view. I didn't see so much of those things, outside the Roman Catholic priest's prayer.

But then many of us didn't feel like antagonists. We were mainly folks who have been caught in the middle or outsiders who just wish the best for both natives and non-natives.

Lessons from history

Sometimes in history, when local government has given up moral leadership, responsibility has fallen on the church. For instance, in occupied France in World War II, the parish priest often assumed civil roles, such as settling disputes, distributing welfare, even making sure the aqueducts were repaired. And in Selma, Alabama, in 1965, when a clique of red-neck leaders used dogs, water-cannons, and prejudiced judges to keep racial minorities in their subordinate place, Christians from across the country marched peacefully to remind them, in the language of the Prayer Book, whose ministers they were.

No, things haven't gone that far in Caledonia. But I left the healing service reflecting that this is a conflict where some of our worldly principalities and powers have failed to offer much healing, help, or hope. The Church has some work to do.

Giving thanks is more than just words Poetic justice

TYING ACTION TO YOUR WORDS of gratitude this harvest season



BILL MOUS
DIVINITY STUDENT

What does it mean to give thanks? Most of us give thanks for something at some point during our days, whether for the opportunity to go to school or work in a safe country, to have enough on our plates in the evening or simply to wake up and greet another day; we give thanks for many things and for many different reasons.

In this harvest season, we are particularly mindful about the gifts of the earth. Fresh sweet corn, golden delicious apples and Italian blue plums are some of my favourite harvest time foods. Each year the earth provides us with a wealth of resources which we use in our everyday lives and so we set aside a day each year, both in the Church calendar (Harvest Sunday) and in our society (Thanksgiving Day), to be grateful for all we have received from creation.

Using Creation Wisely

The BAS Collect for Harvest Thanksgiving reminds us of God's action as creator of the fruitful Earth but also our own role as stewards of all things. The collect implores us to utilize God's creation responsibly, so that successive generations might also give thanks for the riches of the harvest. But are we, as the whole human family, really using

our creation wisely?

For example, our economy now provides year-round access to many crops, but this comes at a significant cost to the environment not only in the form of increased use of fossil fuels for the transportation of produce across great distances but also increased pressures on farmers throughout the world to grow a limited number of "marketable" crops instead of the full diversity of local produce.

I wonder how many families will celebrate Thanksgiving this year by giving thanks for the harvest of farmers in California or South America—sure sometimes our crops cost slightly more and are not available year round—but what is the cost both economically and ecologically of sustaining such practices? Is it not worth the prices to support local farmers? If we don't how can we expect to maintain one of the most precious resources God has entrusted to our care: the land.

Stewards of creation

Moreover, are we being stewards in such a manner as to permit future generations to inherit an earth which can still provide such bountiful harvests? Our current ecological crisis seems to suggest that we are not being, nor have we been for a while, stewards of creation in a way that will allow our descendants to celebrate the Harvest Sunday for generations to come. The destruction of agriculturally productive land, the move towards industrializing agriculture and climate change all are significant obstacles to humanity's fulfillment of God's charge in Genesis to be good stewards of creation.

With this seemingly enormous task lying ahead of me, I often ask myself how I might

be a better steward of God's creation. After a reflection during an ecological retreat this summer, one change I have made in my own life was to scrap the gel I used to put in my hair. Sure it's not a big change—as I doubt that the water treatment plants hardly noticed the resultant decrease in hair gel chemicals flowing into them—but it was symbolic and a reminder about my need to be a better steward of creation.

Fair trade

While I've been writing this article I've been pondering what would it look like for our parishes to celebrate Harvest Thanksgiving outdoors, in green spaces, the edge of a cornfield, a park or a natural area, and amidst creation and the community instead of isolating ourselves from creation in wooden or stone structures. Might our understanding of the relationship of God and creation change and thus appreciation for the gifts of creation increase?

There are many other ways of course: to begin using organic waste bins, carpooling, or buying local fruit in season. One common approach parishes take is to switch from regular trade to fair trade coffee. How many parishes use the excuse that fair trade coffee is too expensive? Sure it's \$8.25 for a pound of coffee beans. Yet we have no qualms about paying \$1.25 for a large double-double at Tim Horton's. So why do we need a cup of coffee that costs pennies at Church? Is this striving for justice?

So I think to give thanks means to tying action to the words of gratitude. If we are to be truly thankful to God for the harvest this season, we must not only speak the words of the collect for Harvest Thanksgiving, but live them through our actions.

SUSAN C. HUXFORD-WESTALL ON
ALL SAINTS, HAMILTON

The radio is full of September 11, 2001 and has been harping on it for the last few days, but nobody recalls August 6, 1945. I was in London having just completed my repatriation leave after four years in India and Burma. I knew that the Japanese were in full retreat. I was with my father when we heard the news that the atomic bomb had been dropped on Hi-

VENGEANCE IS MINE, I will repay, says the Lord

Rom 12:19

roshima. Nagasaki followed three days later. I said to my father "It shouldn't have happened. It was not necessary." Truman's excuse—the American excuse—was that it would save allied lives by ending the war more quickly. Of course, it did, but at what a cost!

Ever since that day the words of St. Paul, repeating words to be found in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 32:35), have been ringing in my ears. The dropping of the atomic bomb was a crime against humanity, not just against the Japanese. It caused death and agony to countless non-combatants. It is politically correct to remember and respect the holocaust of the Jews during World War II, but it is politically inconvenient to remember the holocaust of Japanese civilians that ended it. What goes round must come back. It took 56 years.

When will we learn to listen to the command to forgive our enemies? When will we learn the true meaning of "Thou shalt not covet"? How can we pray "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us"? Only when we can show understanding and love for those who do us wrong can true peace be established in the world. Neither militarism nor pacifism is the answer.

Forget the fuss and worry about all you need to do to get ready for the Holiday Season!

Let us do it for you!

For your secretary,
your boss, your
neighbour, your
babysitter — or any-
body on your list —
one of our themed
gift baskets may be
the answer!



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didn't make it,
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Hors D'Oeuvres, Elegant Sweet Trays,
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TLC: A Great Opportunity

TLC or The Leadership Conference is coming to Niagara on Saturday, October 28.

Your Diocesan Resource Centre team has been busily seeking out talented individuals to lead workshops on a variety of leadership topics and we are thrilled with the response. We think you will be too.

The Leadership Conference will be launched by lively worship and by a short plenary session with our Bishops, Ralph and Ann. These two popular and entertaining characters will share their thoughts on leadership in today's Church from their perspectives on the front lines in two dioceses. They are excited to have been given this opportunity to reflect publicly on this crucially important topic for the Church.

And the NEWS gets even better; this conference is being largely funded by the Survive & Thrive Education and Training Endowment Fund and will have something for everyone. There will only be a small charge (\$10 per person) to participants for lunch and refreshments.

TLC is capturing much interest from our neighbouring dioceses and we have been turning back requests for visiting registrations since we have determined that a conference primarily financed by Survive and Thrive Funds should be first and foremost a conference for Niagara delegates. However, if the registration targets have not been met by October 2, we shall open the floodgates!

So, Niagara parishes, please get your registrations in as soon as possible and, no later than October 2nd, in order to be sure of spaces for October 28.

To register online go to www.niagara.anglican.ca/leadership/ and click on the right hand side of the page!

For more information, please contact:

Karen Nowicki
Administrative Assistant
905-527-1316 (ext. 380)
karen.nowicki@niagara.anglican.ca

For the three-hundredth time

Peter Wall, Dean of Christ's Church Cathedral, donates blood for the 300th time.



In thanksgiving for good books



PETER WALL
DEAN - CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

I have the enormously satisfying privilege of being able to get away during at least a portion of my summer vacation. For good or ill, I am one of those people for whom actually having a vacation necessitates being out of touch with the office, with the 'day-to-day' and even with home. Our family has a cottage in a beautifully idyllic place called McGregor Bay, with only water access, and a good hour by boat and car to the nearest store; There is no hydro, no telephone, no cell service, no cars, no traffic, and no laptops—at least until they invent a propane driven one; just loons and stars, the sounds of wolves howling at night, woodpeckers doing what they do to the trees, the odd bear seen from time to time, those who like to fish catching some and, this year at least, lots and lots of blueberries!

It's a time when I 'get off the grid.' I eat wonderful meals which we cook together in wonderful kitchens with propane stoves and fridges. I make bread—happiness, you know is being kneaded—and pies, and sample the odd fruit from the vine. I go to a packed little summer Anglican parish with folks from all different denominations, occasionally preside at the Eucharist, where there is usually a seminarian there as the Student Minister, and joyfully avoid their Vestry meetings! All in all, it is a most important part of my summer.

Abundant harvest

Since I am not a fisher, kayak only

occasionally, and am quite happy to simply be, I read, and I read, and I read. I try to get caught up; a hopeless task. I read *New Yorkers* which have been waiting, browse through the *Times Literary Supplement*, tackle lots of cross-words, and usually read a balance of fiction and non-fiction, some of it even church-related! Rarely am I reading the latest or hottest books; by the time I get around to them, many are long past the best seller list. But this year, as I give thanks for the abundant harvest which is my life, I am thankful for two particularly engaging books I read this summer, both published within the last ten years. One was an important book which I have been trying to read for awhile, and which I deliberately took to the cottage to get through! The other was a completely serendipitous find, brought by a relative's friend. I want to say a little about each of them and commend them both to all. They would both even make a good parish study book!

Relaxing with good books

The first is Thomas Cahill's *The Gifts of the Jews*. Published in 1998, this is not a new book, and is part of a series by the author, which he calls *The Hinges of History*. Many will be familiar with the first book of the series, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*; others will already have read *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*, which deals with Jesus and the beginnings of Christianity. Cahill is an engaging, witty, and delightful writer. He is an accomplished scholar, but is neither a theologian nor a biblical scholar. *The Gifts of the Jews* is sub-titled "how a tribe of desert nomads changed the way everyone thinks and feels." It is a very good read, with some very profound moments. Starting more than five millennia ago, Cahill traces the development of what we now know as the Bible and with the peoples

we call "the Jews." His opening sentence, "The Jews started it all—and by 'it' I mean so many of the things we care about, the underlying values that make all of us—Jew and gentile, believer and atheist, tick," draws the reader into a erudite and involving examination of ancient history, religious development, biblical politics, and human nature. Cahill is at times wickedly funny, deeply moving, significantly insightful, and gently convincing. I highly recommend it as a good read!

Looking forward to next year

Then I picked up *Keeping Faith*, a novel by Jodi Picoult, a New England novelist. A complex and engrossing book, it centers on a little girl named Faith with no religious background at all, having never been 'churched' in any way. With a non-practicing Jewish mother and an equally non-practicing Episcopalian father, Faith is living through the painful disintegration of her parents' marriage, and suddenly begins to hear the voice of God, to recite biblical passages, to develop stigmata, and to miraculously heal. Sounds awful, right? Wrong. Picoult writes very well, and the book has just enough interesting twists and turns, and a cast of just eccentric and charming enough characters to make it a good and satisfying read. Almost a 'can't put down' book, it is a treat and a thought provoking read; not so much in terms of whether or not people can have these mystifying experiences, but much more in terms of how we in the world both react internally and externally to those around us who possess such gifts.

I was not prepared to enjoy this book as much as I did, so it was a nice little bit of serendipity to go from Cahill to Picoult!

So, as fall nips the air, relax with a good book. I'm already looking forward to the cottage next year!

A cultural mosaic



MATT ARGUIN
ST. CHRISTOPHER'S, BURLINGTON

Well, another summer has come and gone. It seems surreal that I'm back in the classroom again so soon. I'm definitely excited to be back. Not only do I get to attend some interesting lectures, I also get to see my friends again.

One thing that has always fascinated me about university is the sheer diversity in the student population. Altogether, McMaster enrolls approximately 22,000 students per year, and you are bound to meet someone who has an interesting story to tell!

People come from around the country and all over the globe with the common goal of higher education.

In many ways, I think the university/college atmosphere serves as an excellent microcosm for Canadian society. I mean, think about it: At university, each student brings with him/her a different cultural, economic, and "religious" identity; and yet we are all united as part of the whole student body.

As a country, we too strive for this kind of "cultural mosaic." It is a system in which people of various backgrounds try to co-exist amicably with each another in mutual respect.

By and large, the idea of multiculturalism has become synonymous with the Canadian identity. So much so that it is an integral part of our legal system via *The Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

The charter and the definition of marriage

While it is true that, legally, the rights of one group cannot supercede those of another, *The Charter* ensures that the Canadian government cannot withhold certain privileges and benefits from its citizens based on gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, culture etc.

The legal definition of marriage was amended in 2005 to include same-sex couples. This change was not a moral stance taken by the government, as much as it was

a Constitutional issue that had to be resolved.

The main purpose of the amendment was to extend the same benefits of heterosexual married couples to same-sex couples. Primarily, this meant equal access to income-tax deductions, inheritances, and the fair division of spousal property.

Beyond the legal stuff

Now, I know what you're thinking: the idea of a multi-cultural Canada has been around since the early 1980s. So has *The Charter*. Why does it warrant any discussion in a local diocesan newspaper?

Since 2002, the Anglican Communion has been struggling with the blessing of same-sex unions. While many churches accept gays, lesbians, and transsexuals as full members of the Christian community, they are not comfortable extending the institution of marriage that far.

I think a crucial point is being overlooked on both the local and international levels. Part of the reason this debate is so painstaking for us is because we're not just Anglicans, but we're Canadians too!

As children—particularly those educated in the eras following *The Charter*—we are taught that, as Canadians, we have to respect the diverse cultures of everyone. We are constantly encouraged to look above and beyond issues of race, gender and sexual orientation. It is all part of the process in giving birth to the cultural 'mosaic'.

For many in the Church, the issue of same-sex unions is not simply a moral one. It is also inextricably linked with our heritage. If we can overlook the stigma of sexual orientation as Canadians, why can't we do the same as people of faith?

Looking towards the future

The General Synod of 2007 is the proposed council-date to reach a decision regarding same-sex blessings in Canada. Just like the return to school after the summer break it will be here before we know it! My hope is that this article will shed some light on one of the many factors which may contribute to the decision. Regardless of your position, remember that we are all part of a fantastic and unique country; but perhaps more importantly, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ!

Caralei Peters MSc, ND
DOCTOR OF NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

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They are coming home in body bags

CHRISTOPHER M. GRABIEC
EDITOR

When I was a young and idealistic Roman seminarian in the early seventies, I studied the scriptures voraciously, and took in every bit of church history that I could. In my own heart, I was determined that I would minister in a church that would be different; different, in the sense that it would be something like the group that Jesus was part of, rather than the historical church that was still influencing my life. I loved the fact that Jesus turned over tables in the temple, and that he challenged so many of the religious practices and traditions in his day. I loved that he was so against the established government and church because he believed that they severely oppressed the people. It was change that I was looking for in my life, in my church and in my society.

I even joined a social justice group of religious across Canada. I remember so clearly the time that we bought shares, and then went to an annual meeting of the Noranda Corporation. We were there to protest the injustices in which Noranda was involved in South America. I remember an elderly and wealthy man standing up at the podium. He had a very angry voice. He told us all that he was a faithful Anglican and that the clergy that were present should get out of the room and back into their churches, worrying about empty pews rather than a business world about which we knew nothing.

I was a Roman then and now an Anglican. The question that nags me consistently, derived from what this old man said, is what do we believe as a church? Do we really think

that we should continue to shut our mouths and not speak loudly and clearly against the injustices that exist in our society and in our churches? Well, let us take a risk, just like our teacher and founder Jesus of Nazareth did, and speak to a few issues.

Our young men are coming home from Afghanistan in body bags! Does anyone really stop to think about what is happening? This current government has gotten us into something that we as Canadians have never wanted since the Second World War. We are more peaceful than almost anyone else in the world. Now we're fighting wars. Has anyone said anything about this? In our silence, does our church even appear to care that we're being led down this horrific and regressive path? Of course we know that the Middle East is unstable, but they absolutely hate our interference—particularly American. How much longer until we become the targets of hatred as well? Enough is enough and the church should cry out in a loud voice that God does not want war and killing! Maybe the church should try to broker a peaceful settlement, no matter who we need to talk to. It's time to turn over the tables of our government and act more like Christ in the world today.

On Labour Day we were driving through Toronto and saw a portion of the International Air Show. Above us flew a monstrous Boeing C-17 cargo plane—one of the largest planes on the planet. Canada is planning to buy four of these war machines at \$250 million dollars each. Isn't it time for Christians to stand up and say we don't need military toys? We need help for the poor in this country. We need better education and medical care for our children. We need to fund AIDS

research to help folks throughout the world overcome this horrendous disease. We need to fund a real cleanup of our environment so that our children and grand-children have a chance to live!

How about the same gender blessing debate? Are you sick of it? I am. How long will it go on? How long will it be an excuse to not deal with the bigger issues? One warden called my office and said, "Chris they are all leaving!" I responded by asking "Who?" and he said, "The gay people. They've all left our church! While we sit around and discuss and do nothing, they are all leaving." His heart was heavy.

Here we are with a fundamental issue of justice. Our society (in Canada) has already passed us by and enacted laws which prevent discrimination against gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people. Today the greatest resistance to same sex marriage comes from the Christian community. Whatever is going through our heads? Does anyone really believe that Jesus would be fighting against the fullest inclusion of faithful and caring gay or lesbian people in the church? Wouldn't Jesus be turning over the tables in our churches?

Thanksgiving it is... or is it? Body bags, hurting people at our own hands, fear of speaking against the horrid injustices in our society and in our churches. How can we be thankful without acting in justice? Thanksgiving isn't about turkeys, it's about living out our call to be ambassadors of God in world that seeks and needs our help.

My early dreams of a church that would really make a difference in society have not been fulfilled, but on this thanksgiving I will continue to hope!

Mailbox

JUDY ROBERTSON
HAMILTON, ONTARIO

The parish church is the basic unit of Christianity. If it isn't present, then Christianity is losing its presence in today's life. The parish church needs to be about people, not finances. Finances are a given to be handled by some skilled parishioners in that field.

The parish church must exude openness, welcoming, friendliness, freedom of speech by all and with its clergy, wardens, parish council as the facilitators for the people.

The feeling of belonging; being respected as individuals and each of having an equal say in our parish church is being lost and people are staying away; leaving or just giving up. We need to have a purpose in attending and supporting our church; this needs to come from the people, not from above.

There is no room or place for intimidation, sarcasm, cliques, or "if you don't like it go elsewhere" attitudes. Our parish churches are where we are and where we want to be, to be with our Lord Jesus Christ in worship and activity.

From thanksgiving to justice

KELLY WALKER
AUTHOR AND SINGER/SONGWRITER

Thanksgiving is the ultimate Christian attitude and gesture. I always thought that with Jesus of Nazareth's insistence on washing one another's feet, that action would have won out. But even that was proclaimed within the context of Passover, which is ultimately a gesture of remembrance within a context of thanksgiving.

The gathering of Christians, since the beginning, has been associated with an action that we have called Eucharistia. The assembly or ekklesia gathered regularly to proclaim the marvels of God and God's actions in a prayer—pre-eminent in Jewish worship—called berakah. Its form is simple and, as I explain it, you might realize that it is a prayer-form which you recognize from your own Christian assemblies.

God's wonders are great

It begins with a "blessed are you..." followed by some attribute of God... Lord God of all Creation, gracious giver of life... whatever. Then it continues with some gestures of God that we remember; you give us food in all seasons, you saved us from peril, you did this or that. These are called mirabilia dei, or, in Jewish terms represent the hagaddah or the wonders of God that we remember in this prayer. Then the prayer ends in a simple, "Blessed be your name, forever." In some forms of this prayer there was a petition added, like in the Our Father which is one such

prayer, "Give us today the bread for today."

The physical gesture that generally accompanies this prayer is that of raised hands. It signifies that God's wonders are great and we stand in awe and admiration before them.

The Christian Eucharist is traditionally acclaimed standing. It begins with the invitation, "Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God." And the response is, "It is right to give our thanks and praise!" Then the presider continues proclaiming the great and sometimes long berakah, recounting the marvels of God which include the marvel of Jesus of Nazareth and all that God has bestowed on us through this sacred Jesus-event. At the end of this prayer, which we proclaim every Sunday, we all shout "amen!"

This is the under girding of all Christian life. We are formed by it and define our gatherings by it. It is accompanied by the traditional food which fills us with the energy of the prayer. Unity and action are the accompanying gifts. But they are rooted in the attitude of thanksgiving

A sacrifice of praise

So, this season which is full of harvest and autumn colour and smells, is one we associate with the Eucharistia of our lives. Be grateful. Offer this sacrifice, not of the killing of animals as in the temple, but a sacrifice of praise, the way of the new covenant. Walk within the mystery of this season which magnifies our God. Smell the scents

of the season, taste and see how good our God is, eat and drink abundantly for our God is a gracious one whose dream for humanity is abundance for all.

It is a special time to be conscious of this attitude of thanks and praise. Go for long walks and breathe in the beauty of the season. Take in the new air and breathe out the old. Re-introduce your being to the rhythm of the seasons and realize that you too, earth creature that you are, live within the same rhythm of life, death and constant new beginnings and endings.

Giving God thanks and praise

In your meandering through streets, woods, cemeteries, or wherever you walk, remember the mirabilia dei for which you could have a grateful heart. Think of the gifts you have received, the people who have graced your days and nights, the four-legged friends who have accompanied you on many a walk throughout your life. Rejoice in them and be glad.

It is indeed right that we should give God thanks and praise. It is our heritage. It is how we are formed not as a small and scrupulous people but a large and generous population on the face of the earth. If we build up our people in thanksgiving and praise, then we will readily wash feet, comfort the needy and assure peace and abundance for all in a weary world.

To learn more about Kelly, visit his website at www.kwalker.com.

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Let Your Voice be Heard

The Niagara Anglican welcomes submissions from readers as Letters to the Editor. All submissions must include a name, telephone number, and e-mail or physical address of the author for verification purposes. The newspaper reserves the right to edit submissions.

Reflections on Hospice Ministry

RONALD PINCOE
DEACON - ST. MARK'S, ORANGEVILLE

The question that I am asked the most often about my ministry in palliative care is "How can you do that?" "You must be a very special person" they will say "to be able to sit with someone while they die!"

Not so special really. It's just a matter of first realizing that God has a role for you to play in His grand scheme of things and to stop fighting it and let the Holy Spirit guide you along the path leading to the fulfillment of that role.

Feed the hungry, heal the sick, and comfort the afflicted. That's the simplified job description for a deacon from Reader's Digest; nothing special just the usual raising the dead kind of thing that goes on inside and outside the church all the time.

It's the 'outside the church' part of the equation where the deacon fits in most comfortably, out in the larger community where the parish priest and curate, if the parish is lucky enough to have one, quite simply do not have the time to go.

I had already begun some volunteer work with Hospice Dufferin when I heard that gentle whisper in my ear. "Get back to school" the voice said. "Theology is good."

One thing led to another and the next thing I knew Bishop Ralph was handing me a Bible and telling me to get out there and take the gospel to the people.

Hospice work is more than simply sitting beside a terminally ill person and holding their hand. It is sharing their journey with them. Giving them emotional support and the assurance that their life has made a difference and that their life's work has been important and meaningful.

I have found that a special re-

lationship with the dying person will usually develop. It can be a more trusting relationship than they possibly may have with their own family. Family tensions may be revealed in conversation, secret wishes and desires mentioned and they may also need assurance of God's forgiveness for past indiscretions. Discussions in any of these areas may continue on beyond one visit and indeed some issues may never be resolved; but, they are talked about and that is the important thing.

They will have found a non-judgmental ear to hear their concerns in the assurance that what is being said is just between two people. A healing of the spirit can begin.

Coping with the weight of all this confidential information on your shoulders, not to mention that the person revealing it is on their way to becoming one of God's special angels, can be a heavy load for the caregiver to carry. Hospice workers will periodically talk things out with their case manager and also have support groups of their own to talk things over with. Did I do that right? What could I have done differently?

One thing that every palliative care support worker learns very early in their training is the difference between empathy and sympathy. Experience has proven that when a support worker begins to sympathize with a client and family and shares their concerns they will become a basket-case themselves and be of no use to anyone. During support group sessions this problem, if it is there, will usually surface and the person may end up on the receiving end of grief counseling rather than giving it.

As the dying persons' journey

progresses, the role of the support worker may gradually begin to shift towards the needs of the family. It has been my experience that whether people have a strong religious faith or not we all seek assurance that life in one form or another continues after death.

About a year or so ago I received a call that a young man in hospital was dying and the only family he had, apart from an estranged father, were a few friends who were with him. These friends all appeared to be the types you would say as being on the fringe of society, somewhere on the bottom rung of the ladder.

While I spent some time talking with his lady friend who told me that she was his prime caregiver, the others would alternate between hanging around in the room and going out to the garden for a few puffs of something I was sure didn't come from the corner store.

The young man was in a comatose state and so all I could do was to give his lady friend some words of encouragement and then leave. Later that day while my wife and I were eating dinner the phone rang. It was the lady friend calling from the hospital. His buddies had got together and told her to call to see if that nice minister would come back and say a few prayers for their dying friend.

These people were a family, not by blood, but by a common bond, and what they really needed was some assurance that one of their own was going to be cared for by a greater power.

Feed the hungry. Heal the sick. Comfort the afflicted. Raise the dead from their grief and despair and give them hope and new life. That is all this one Deacon is trying to do.



Alison D'Atri is a person in the diocese who works behind the scenes to keep our bishop on track! Bishop Ralph often acknowledges that he wouldn't be able to stay organized without her. Alison has recently celebrated 20 years of service to our diocese at the Diocesan Resource Centre. Our congratulations and thanks to her for a job well done.

Help Wanted

MUSICIAN An energetic and versatile musician to coordinate the music ministry and direct the senior choir of approximately 25 voices at St. Simon's Anglican Church in Oakville.

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visit us online

Our diocesan website is full of information and insight.

NEWS Local, national and international news of concern to the church.

EVENTS Anglican events including a schedule of great harvest dinners.

RESOURCES Diocesan resources with several links to inspiring social justice websites.

www.niagara.anglican.ca

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»» Please join us ««

Calling all Anglicans

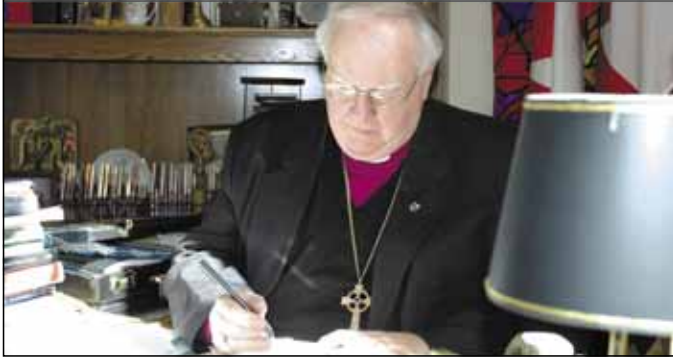
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Order of Niagara



The Order of Niagara was created by Bishop Ralph Spence for the laity of the Diocese of Niagara. The first group of recipients were installed into the Order at the Service of Jubilation, at Hamilton Place, on Sunday, May 28, 2000. All licensed clergy are invited to nominate one person from each parish who has given of themselves to the parish, diocese and the Church. It is a way of honouring the laity of the diocese and is the responsibility of the clergy to put forth nominations.

This year the order of Niagara was celebrated on September 17 for the Greater Wellington, Lincoln and Mohawk Regions and on September 24 for the Brock Trafalgar and Undermount Regions. The celebrations took place at Christ's Church Cathedral in Hamilton Ontario.

Order of Niagara recipients

Frank Ernest, St. John's, Ancaster
David Davies, St. Alban's, Beamsville
Elizabeth Coombs, St. Christopher's, Burlington
Evelyn Harris, St. Elizabeth's, Burlington
Mabel Smith, St. Luke's, Burlington
Ian McLean, St. Matthew on the Plains, Burlington
Rhonda Patterson, St. Philip's, Burlington
Joan Lawrence, St. Paul's, Caledonia
Yvonne Skrepnechuk, St. John the Divine, Cayuga

Walter Court, St. James, Dundalk (deceased)
Audrey Nicol, St. James, Dundas
Alexander Urquhart, St. Paul's, Dunnville
Ronald Stevens, St. John's, Elora
Tim Powell, All Saints, Erin
Ruth Sproul, St. James, Fergus
Betty White, Christ Church, Flamborough
Doris Yungblut, Holy Trinity, Fonthill
Marilyn DeBeau, St. Paul's, Fort Erie
Betty Parry, St. George's, Georgetown
Evelyn Bolton, St. Paul's, Glanford
Cathy Bouskill, St. Alban's, Glen Williams

Marion Menary, St. Alban's, Grand Valley
Alfreda Jeffries, St. Andrew's, Grimsby
Arlene Book, St. Philip's, Grimsby
Peggy Johnson, St. George's, Guelph
Francine Campbell-Rich, Christ's Church Cathedral, Hamilton
Myrta Wheeler, All Saints, Hamilton
Margaret Gordon, St. Alban's, Hamilton
John Kelly, Grace Church, Hamilton
Joy Sharpe, Holy Trinity, Hamilton
Roy Turvey, Resurrection, Hamilton
Margaret Firth, St. John's, Hamilton
William Tindale, St. Paul's, Hamilton
Marlene Minken, St. Peter's, Hamilton
John Romaniuk, St. Stephen on the Mount, Hamilton
Ann Whaley, St. Stephen's, Hornby
Rosemarie Hilton, St. Paul's, Jarvis
Bessie Robinson, St. Mark's, Louth
Elva Middlebrook, St. George's, Lowville
Solweig Austen, Grace Church, Milton
Nova Evans, Christ Church, Nanticoke
Doug Reece, Christ Church, Niagara Falls
Douglas Hicks, Holy Trinity, Niagara Falls
Kim Martignago, St. John's, Niagara Falls
Ethel Winzer, St. Aidan's, Oakville
Paula Valentine, St. Hilda's, Oakville
Margaret Brockett, St. Jude's, Oakville
Rosemary Anstey, St. Simon's, Oakville
Margaret Marie Milson, St. Mark's, Orangeville
Evelyn Oates, St. Luke's, Palermo
Florence Gallinger, St. James and St. Brendan's, Port Colborne
Charles Campbell, St. Saviour's, Queenston
Patricia Jenkins, St. John's, Ridgemount
Trinette Tomasello, All Saints, Ridgeway
William Martin, St. John's, Rockwood
Robert Atkinson, St. Paul's, Shelburne
Joyce Pearce, Grace Church, St. Catharines
Sharon Grimstead, St. Columba, St. Catharines
Janet Veale, St. George's, St. Catharines
Denise Chuchman, St. James, St. Catharines
Betty Storosko, St. John's, St. Catharines

Monica Stevenson, St. Thomas, St. Catharines
Lillian Packham, Redeemer, Stoney Creek
Wayne Thorsteinson, St. John the Evangelist, Thorold
Thomas Weatherall, Grace Church, Waterdown
Josephine Davies, All Saints, Welland
Diane Katch, Holy Trinity, Welland
Cecil Mitchell, St. David's, Welland
Gordon Gwynne-Timothy, Christ Church, Whitfield
Mildred Bartczak, St. John's, Winona
Cecily Hey, Christ Church, Woodburn
Susan Kolne, St. John's, York

Bishop's appointees

Andrew Brockett
Beverley Davies
David Davis (deceased)
Ann Grose
Norman Haac
Clebert Halliday
Eithel Harris
Anne Hay
Bob Haynes
Elizabeth Kay
Ross Kelly
Wilma Lazenby
Peggy Lewis
Paul Mansfield
Norma Marsh
Florence Meares
Lewis Menary
Fred Neale
Audrey Page
Geoffrey Purdell Lewis
Allan Rathbone
William Robertson
Ed Storosko
Dan Tregunno
Margaret Vance
Judy Watson
Bruce Wilson
Shirley Woodburn (deceased)
George Wyatt

Thanksgiving



So, to become a human being and a Christian... is not to separate ourselves and work to become holy in a space that is defined and protected by religious convention; nor is it to seek for perfection by ordinary social or political activism. It is to be present with Christ in the world. It is to be there in God's name and God's presence in both confusion and order alike, standing with Christ, standing in that place in the world where God has chosen to be. And this is not a place of power or influence; it changes the world not by force but by patient endurance, by making room for the truth of God's alarming compassion to be there in the midst of everything.

Rowan Williams
Archbishop of Canterbury
February 2006

The multitude of your sacrifices, what are they to me? says the Lord. I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.

When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts?

Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New moons, Sabbaths and convocations, I cannot bear your evil assemblies.

Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.

When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen.

Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right!

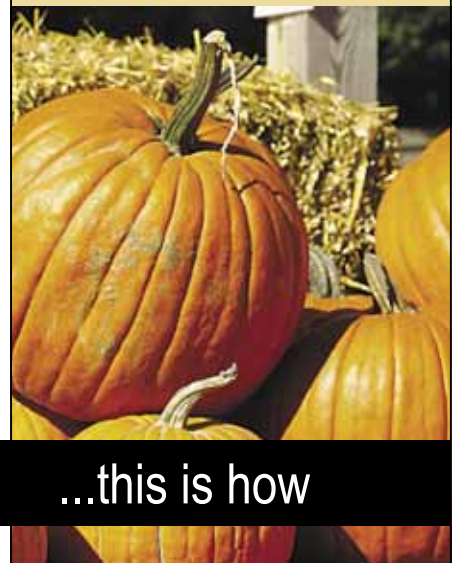
Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.

Isaiah 1:11-17

I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them.

Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Amos 5:21-24



...this is how