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## Eating my way to Heaven



**NISSA BASBAUM**  
RECTOR - TRANSFIGURATION, ST. CATHARINES

Some things have a way of never leaving you, and sometimes you just wish they would! Like one particular recorded message from my childhood that seemed to rewind and play each time my relatives would get together for family gatherings.

If you know anything about some of the stereotypes of Jewish people, you'll know we like to eat. In fact, when I was younger, I remember reading some bizarre statistic about the percentage of Jews in Canada who were alcoholics: Somewhere in the neighborhood of .003 percent. You only needed to be Jewish to understand why this figure was so low; in my family, we were too busy eating to have enough time to drink! Yet, as much as food was relished and its place central in our lives, there were so many mixed messages about the pleasures of eating.

### Familial mixed messages

Perhaps it wasn't every family gathering that I heard these words, but it sure seemed like it. I'd arrive for a meal and social time with aunts, uncles and cousins; enormous amounts of food would be piled on my plate and everyone would encourage me to "Eat! Eat! There's plenty to go round." Then, in what felt like not even a minute later, the same people would happily ask, "So, how's the diet? Have you lost any weight lately?"

Talk about a mixed message. To this day, it sits uncomfortably on my hips and thighs.

I love everything about food. Cooking it, eating it, the tastes, the textures, the gathering of people around a table, and the new kitchen gadget I ask for and receive every Christmas. Food is central to all that I do. Feeding people is what I do best. Fall canning produces winter gifts. The essence of presiding at the Eucharist is, for me, the act of feeding those who hunger.

Yet, at the end of the day, I am forever looking in a mirror and wondering if I've lost any weight lately. I seem destined to live forever hating one of the things I love the most.

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## Voices from the fringes



**MARTHA TATARNIC**  
ASSISTANT CURATE - ST. JUDE'S, OAKVILLE

It's a wonderful thing to have family members who hold opinions different than your own. It's wonderful because they can challenge you on your own opinions and beliefs, you have to talk to them whether you'd like to or not, and you can't just dismiss them and walk away. Well, you can,

but they're still going to be there, and their opinions will come to haunt you.

The bottom line is you're going to have your worldview stretched. You're going to have to become more clear and articulate about what you actually believe. And you might even have your mind changed altogether.

### Unnerving our parents

I was lucky enough to grow up with a brother who held very different opinions than my own. When we were teenagers, we especially liked to get into raging capitalist vs. socialist, right-wing vs. left-

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Chris McMaster and four-legged friends, Abby, minister to Hilda at Riviera Retirement Lodge.

## A call to peace in our hearts

**CHRIS MCMASTER**  
RECTOR - ST. PAUL'S, CALEDONIA

On December 18, 1990 my brother Pat was tragically killed in an accident at work. It was a day that was to be his last before the holidays. It was freezing rain that day. He was 40 feet up in the air with another guy, attempting to dismantle the top of an asphalt plant in preparation for winter. This was a job Pat had done numerous times before. There was a crane operator helping them and it was all rather commonplace until that moment when my brother fell. He was reaching for a tool. He lost his footing. He simply slipped and fell. In that moment, lives changed forever.

Just the night before, Pat had been putting up the tree, with his two kids, a four-year-old and an eighteen-month-old. They decorated it and were feeling the excitement of the season as they prepared their household for Christmas. His wife, fortunately, had taken numerous pictures of that moment. These were the pictures on display at Pat's funeral. My brother, in his long underwear, hugging his kids and simply beaming, seemed so incredibly happy. They were so proud of that

tree and all the energy it had taken to get it decorated just right. And anyone who looked at those pictures could see love shining through.

### Relationships were difficult

I was at work when I was called. I can still remember just walking out the door and going to the hospital. Pat was gone and none of us had the chance to say thanks or goodbye. Relationships in our family were difficult and Pat and I had only in recent years gotten to know each other as adults. Next to my grandmother, he was my biggest hero in those early years of my life. I was a caregiver at the time of his death for our grandma. When I broke the news to her, a woman in her 90s, she wished she could have taken his place. Her health was so delicate as it was and just over a month later, she died. My world changed again. Two of the greatest influences in my life were dead. That time has marked me forever.

My brother was married in the Anglican Church. It was his wife's denomination and where they made their church home as a family. Although my roots were Presbyterian, I was a Christmas and Easter person in

the United Church. They had a wheelchair ramp so my grandma could go there. After all, God was God so that was that. On the day of Pat's funeral, I remember being in the Anglican Church, staring ever so intently at the crack in the back of the pew ahead of me and fighting back tears because I had promised myself I would not cry but be strong for everyone else.

### How could a loving God do this?

Many of us 'stuff' our emotions when times are tough. On the day of my brother's funeral, I refused to go forward for communion. I was not in relationship with God anymore. I remember making that very distinctive choice. I did not figure it all out until much later but I knew something had changed in me that day. Although I blamed God for everything at the time, as I have aged, I have learned much more about life and how I was living it. I have learned about my values, hopes and dreams for myself and the world in which I live. I get it. I want us to live our best life. I understand God's grace and what that means in my life now.

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## THE BISHOP'S DIPLOMA COURSE



The Bishop's Diploma Course Graduation took place on December 6, 2006 at Christ's Church Cathedral, Hamilton. This biennial event—a special Eucharist celebrated with Bishop Spence followed by a dinner—was in celebration of 16 graduates who completed the required six courses and attended a retreat. Congratulations to the Graduates!

Back Row: John Palmer, Bishop Spence, Lynda Mee. Middle Row: Jean Coleman, Rosemary Horsewood, Thomasina (Ina) Holland, Jean Ross, Clint Fox, Lorrette Shermet.

Front Row: Oretha Tyrrell, Marie Allardyce, Lorraine Sinclair, Mary Lou Campbell, Beverley Paquette, Tony Marriott.

Absent: Cathy Horton and Marilyn Robbins. Many thanks to our leaders: Rev. Haynes Hubbard, Rev. Canon Dr. Mark McDermott, Ven. Bruce McPetrie, Rev. Canon Barry Randle, Rev. John Ripley and Rev. Paul Whitehouse.

## Eating my way to Heaven

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I guess that the recorded message from my childhood has always had the capacity to eat away at me.

### Altered but staying the same

You might think that the post-Christmas "Oh my gosh, I don't know how I ate so much," blues has inspired this latest food and diet dilemma. In fact, it was a glance forward in the calendar, not backward, that provoked these musings, a glance forward to the Feast of the Transfiguration, celebrated in some churches on the last Sunday before Lent and, not surprisingly, a fairly significant feast for me as one of the rectors of a church named for it. But there's more to this than just the place where I serve. It was in 1978, on the Feast of the Transfiguration, that I was baptized, confirmed and took first communion.

The word transfigure is an interesting one, having within it the notion of being altered yet ultimately staying the same. According to one of the dictionary definitions, it means "to change in outward form or appearance." Don't I wish! A second definition says "to change so as to glorify or exalt."

Although different, there is actually something quite similar about these two meanings. In neither case does the change turn a person into someone else. If we think specifically of the story of Jesus' transfiguration, the presence of Moses and Elijah sends a powerful message about how, even though "the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white," Jesus was still the same person he had always been. Moses and Elijah are a testament to his heritage,

and our heritage is a strong part of who we are as individuals.

### Given a new purpose

I've probably spent much of my life trying to be someone else. Not surprisingly, that someone else is a whole lot thinner than I am! It's a little scary for me to consider the possibility that my conversion to Christianity was not unrelated to this lifelong quest. Years later, however, I think I have finally come to realize and accept that even converting to another religion hasn't changed who I am. Instead, I guess you might say it has "transfigured" me—kept me the same yet given me a purpose.

This, I think, is the message of the scriptural story of the transfiguration, which ends with the voice from the cloud saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" In fact, this is the message of the entire gospel. The disciples and Jesus walk back down the mountain and, henceforth, their friend's meaning begins to crystallize; the things which will take place, the things which will, in effect, demonstrate his purpose in life, now are strongly conveyed to them through his words and actions. Jesus does not become someone else; Jesus becomes fully who he already is.

I know myself well enough to realize that I will never stop trying to accomplish my family's impossible goal of eating what I want and losing weight at the same time. I'm sure it's destined forever to make me just a little bit crazy. But maybe, just maybe, next to feeding people, being a little crazy is what I do best, and my own transfiguration is about sharing this "dazzling white" craziness with others in order that together all of us might, like Jesus, become fully who we already are rather than trying to become something that we likely never were.

## Retrouvaille: A lifeline for troubled marriages

For twelve years, Catherine Doyle and Steve Peers of Waterdown, lived in an increasingly difficult marriage. When they married, they thought theirs would be a marriage filled with intimacy, happiness and love until "death do us part." It seemed so for a little while, but as disillusionment set in they began to pretend to their family, friends and more seriously to themselves, that

Steve admits, "We hid our problems so well, that while we were living our lives physically together, yet emotionally miles apart, we were able to help and care for everyone but each other. There was little or no communication and a great deal of avoidance and sheer tolerance."

"The most I had expected was peaceful coexistence under one roof, with a wall between us," Catherine

admits, "We hid our problems so well, that while we were living our lives physically together, yet emotionally miles apart, we were able to help and care for everyone but each other. There was little or no communication and a great deal of avoidance and sheer tolerance."

Despite years of anger and hurt, there was something in both of them still wanting to make it work.

Then Catherine heard about Retrouvaille, a Catholic based program but non-denominational, open to people of all faiths with a focus on rebuilding troubled marriages. Steve didn't want to go in-

our children. Saving our marriage meant saving our family and that was the greatest gift we could give each other and our boys."

Steve agrees, "A bad marriage gets passed down from generation to generation, and it has to stop," he says. "Programs such as Marriage Encounter, LifePartners and Alpha Marriage are meant to make good marriages better," says Catherine and Steve, who are now the Retrouvaille Hamilton Co-ordinators. But Retrouvaille is designed to resuscitate dying and troubled marriages. "Its success rate is 80 percent," Steve says, "if both parties want it to work. It's been 8 years since we made our weekend and I am happy to say that this past June, we celebrated our 20th wedding anniversary."

Retrouvaille is open to all couples experiencing marital breakdown—those living together in married isolation as well as separated, even divorced couples wanting to reconcile their marriages.

The Retrouvaille program begins with a live-in weekend at a hotel, Friday evening through Sunday. It is not a miracle cure. "We recognize

that damage to a marriage occurs over time. It takes time for it to heal as well," says Catherine. Then come six weeks of Saturday afternoon Post sessions. And later, for those who are interested, there are regular support meetings, keeping people committed to communicating.

The Retrouvaille program was developed in Quebec in 1977. It has since grown to a worldwide program, now offered in more than 150 communities in over 20 countries. Retrouvaille weekend programs are held across Canada. Anyone interested in attending is urged to register early as the sessions fill up quickly. The next session in the Hamilton area is scheduled for April 20-22, 2007 at a Burlington Hotel. A fee is requested when you register to confirm meals and accommodations. More information can be found online at [www.retrouvaille.org](http://www.retrouvaille.org), by emailing [retrouvaille@cogeco.ca](mailto:retrouvaille@cogeco.ca), or by calling 905-690-1260.

"No one is ever turned away for financial reasons," notes Catherine. "If you are living in a troubled marriage, please call us. Retrouvaille can help."

### SAVING OUR MARRIAGE MEANT SAVING OUR FAMILY and that was the greatest gift we could give each other and our boys.

they had the "perfect marriage."

Unfortunately, that was just the beginning of a long road of tension, bitterness, resentment, hostility and deep loneliness. "Our difficulties multiplied," Catherine says, "and became insurmountable. While blaming each other for our unhappiness, we continued to hide our struggles from everyone. We had four young boys and we knew the emotional and financial burden would be overwhelming for all of us if we separated."

says of their marriage. "We were both very stubborn, and we were increasingly angry at each other."

Steve says they'd gone to marriage and family counselling, which in their situation, only served to deepen the problems and increase the blame. Separation seemed inevitable. "But we knew the problems wouldn't end with the marriage; there are the children and their emotional well-being, the financial strain of two homes, etc." Steve says. "We both want-

ingly. Catherine didn't pressure; she prayed. Eventually he agreed to try it. It worked. Over a single weekend Catherine and Steve learned how to talk to each other again. More importantly, they learned how to forgive, trust, and love each other again.

"In the end, the best thing about the program was showing our kids that we could resurrect our marriage, that we could live together," says Catherine, "because we'd really been a terrible example for

# Setting prisoners free

COLLEEN SYM  
DIOCESAN SOCIAL JUSTICE COORDINATOR

As I write the celebrations of the previous weeks are fresher in my mind than they may be in yours when the paper arrives at your house—unless you are in grade two.

I am repeating grade two vicariously this year. A big part of the curriculum in grade two is celebrating. You can learn a lot about your own and other cultures, religions, people and places by learning about celebrations. One of the first homework assignments this year was to make a list of all the celebrations our family participates in over the course of a year. A tradition time line was created for the class with traditions and celebrations from other countries mixed in with the more familiar Thanksgiving, Remembrance Day, Christmas, New Years etc.

## Celebrating with other cultures

Through crafts, snacks, and stories an appreciation of the similarities and differences between many cultures and people was developed. A paper Chinese lantern came home after the observation of the Moon Festival. A permission slip was signed to allow henna tattooing as part of celebrating Diwali. There were snacks of apples dipped in honey for Rosh Hashanah. Over the Christmas holidays we played with a dreidel. A craft paper menorah is taped to our fridge in recognition of Hanukkah.

There was a celebration that I was invited to attend in November. It was not one observed in grade two. It was one that was totally unfamiliar to me. I had never heard of it before. It was The Bridge Celebration.

## A bridge celebration

To attend, one Thursday night under the cover of dark I had to cross the diocesan border into the Diocese of Toronto, and to gain access to the ceremony I had to go through heavy security. Fortunately my name was on the list and once in, I was escorted to room that had been converted for the evening's festivities.

The place was the gymnasium of the Ontario Correctional Institute in Brampton. The Ontario Correctional Institute is not your run of the mill prison. It is a prison with a

difference. It aims to have inmates take responsibility for their actions, and for their lives. This involves more than just some extra counselling. The OCI has pioneered a unique program structure and prison culture that focuses on rehabilitation. The residents at OCI are violent or sexual offenders.

The celebration was in honour of the residents of the institution who had completed a cycle of the Bridge program. For the evening I was welcomed into the prison community to share the experiences of the residents who had embarked on a journey of restorative justice through peer groups lead by volunteers.

## Poverty, deprivation, physical and sexual abuse

It was not an easy evening. The stories that were told through the display of visual art, testimonials, poetry and songs by the residents are ones no one wants to hear. Or I should say, the first parts of the stories were. And I also need to clarify that in each participant's examination of how they ended up where they were it was not about the crime for which each was serving a sentence. Insights and reflections on who they are went way beyond that. Poverty, deprivation, physical and sexual abuse, neglect, violence, addictions, mental illness and cognitive impairments were all around. At the point where each got to the part where they described what their participation in the Bridge program meant to them in the development of faith and acknowledgment of spirituality and how this started a healing within them, it was powerful stuff.

What was really remarkable to me that night was how grateful the residents were that people from the "free world" acknowledged they existed simply attending the celebration. Mere attendance at the ceremony seemed to communicate to them that they were not forgotten and they could still have a place in the outside community. I cannot tell you how many times my hand was shaken and I was thanked for attending. Tributes to the volunteers of the program were heartfelt. Many volunteers with the program have been involved for years. It was easy to

understand why when the appreciation of what they do by the residents came through so loud and clear.

## Welcoming the prisoner

After the experience I had a debriefing with the Director of the Bridge, Gary Glowacki. We talked about how simple "I was in prison and you visited me" is and how profound its impact. However, he also challenged me that the harder part for the guys comes after release when they are the 'stranger'. Who is there to 'welcome them in'?

To learn more about prison ministry I spent an afternoon with Canon John Roberts who for many years was the prison chaplain at the Ontario Correctional Institute. Every contact he had with a resident he saw as an opportunity to minister to them. He never stopped modeling appropriate responses and behaviors while in the institution. My impression was that a large part of the ministry was sharing the concept God's Grace to a population that wanted to know "what's the catch."

I asked Canon Roberts about "welcoming the stranger." We do not live in simple times. We need to get to know who were are welcoming and where appropriate communicate rules, boundaries and limits to support participation in our community as well as to show acceptance of a former prisoner as they are.

## With education comes tolerance

By chance at Synod, one of the first people I met was Ron Crawford from the Bridge Hamilton. His advice on welcoming the stranger was to learn more about restorative justice and one way to start was to invite a speaker to your parish.

With education hopefully comes tolerance and the development of skills to welcome the strangers like ex-prisoners to our church communities and help their reintegration into the broader community. In a time when privatization and super jails is the norm being a society focused solely on retributive justice is easy. Reformation and restorative justice is the bigger challenge. We could do more to support the Bridge programs and the ex-offenders. Gary and Ron can help you find a place to start.

## A prayer for prisons and correctional institutions

Lord Jesus, for our sake you were condemned as a criminal: Visit our jails and prisons with your pity and judgment. Remember all prisoners, and bring the guilty to repentance and amendment of life according to your will, and give them hope for the future. When any are held unjustly, bring them release; forgive us, and teach us to improve our justice. Remember those who work in these institutions; keep them humane and compassionate; and save them from becoming brutal and callous. And since what we do for those in prison, O Lord, we do for you, constrain us to improve their lot. All this we ask for your mercy's sake. Amen. (The Episcopal Church BOCPP, p. 826)

## A matter of choice



LINDA MOORE  
CANADIAN CENTRE FOR LEADERSHIP AND  
HUMAN VALUES

For those of you who have read my articles in the past, you know that my young friend Meghan is already a true global citizen with a high social consciousness. Her ability to see all life forms on this planet as sacred and her mobilization of that into action, through her gifting to a girls' home in India brought me to my knees. Once again she has humbled me.

As a much loved child and grandchild she was given quite a significant sum of money in cheques and cash over Christmas. Through the holiday season she had been watching the pleas from various world charities to donate to those children

and despair of the world.

As adults it takes courage to consistently imagine, dream and manifest a life of wonder. Often our perceptions and beliefs have been tainted by a series of life events and messages that deprived us of the possibility for "heaven on earth." Each day we read the newspaper, watch television and are inundated with information and images that deny the reality of hope. We shrink into ourselves, become defensive and feel ourselves victims of a world on the verge of chaos and collapse. We lash out at one another, making hurtful remarks and cutting comments. We diminish our existence through anger and even at times hate. Wars are started when resentment and ideology supersede a common bond of humanity and intimacy for one another.

We are traveling together on this planet. There is a sacred life force that we share, capable of magic beyond measure; capable of sharing and serving the highest good for one another. It is also a choice that can carry as much energy and

## AS ADULTS IT TAKES COURAGE to consistently imagine, dream and manifest a life of wonder.

less fortunate. After Christmas she informed her dad that she wanted to give the money she had received to a girl somewhere in the world. A girl who was a bit younger than her and could best use the resources she had to give. Her dad suggested she could give more to the girls' home in India. All last year Meghan inspired people to give. She said she felt that she had been able to engage a number of people in supporting the girls' home and that now she wanted to expand her giving. Together she and her dad reviewed her options and she settled on where she wished to make her contribution. Having done this she continued with her day. From her perspective when you know the "accomplishing power" of the mind, you can do anything. For her, all things are possible. Meghan is seven years old.

As we settle into another year, we too have the opportunity to consider our own choices in how we live our lives. According to Buddha, happiness comes when our work and words are of benefit to ourselves and others, so it is not about martyrdom or dutiful sacrifice. It is about choosing to move through each day in a way that brings hope and love. It is a choice to ensure we are not adding to the fear, suffering

as much impact as all the hate and despair on earth.

Each day we make a choice to mobilize our love or not. Each day we make a choice to learn the disciplines that bring us closer to peace within us or to continue a frantic life style leading to who knows where! Each day we make a choice to honor our own selves or to continue our self deprecating ways.

Love and hate, hope and despair, healing and suffering; each of these states start within us as individuals. A collective war or the rebuilding of a village, each is a choice that begins within the heart of the individual. Collective purpose is only possible when intention has been set by the individual. Violence and love both are born within us, not outside of us.

As strong advocates of nonviolence Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mandela have all left an indelible footprint. They have provided the foundation for imagining a different world. Our spirits yearn for love, acceptance and hope. Our planet requires our attention. We need one another. Do we cringe in fear as victims of life? Or do we take our lead from Meghan and commit our lives to something bold and beautiful; beyond our deepest imaginings? In the end it is simply a matter of choice.

### The Bridge Prison Ministry

As a Restorative Justice Ministry, the Bridge's responsibilities and programs extend to both in and outside of institutions. The original concept of the Bridge was to undertake the 'Bridging' of the gap between the institution and the street. This vision calls for a diversity of special programming, all designed toward fewer victims and a lesser recidivism rate.

Our belief in a justice that heals, demands that we work directly with all of the parties involved; the offender, the victims, the judicial and correctional system and the community at large. It is through our cooperative community and institutional partnerships, our direct connections with the various Faith communities, our volunteers and our constant and deliberate aim to do 'the right thing' that we are able to provide the programs that we believe heals both offenders and community.

Contact Gary Glowacki by telephone at 905-789-9577 or by sending an email to [garry@golden.net](mailto:garry@golden.net).

### The Bridge From Prison to Community, Hamilton

The Bridge Program offers self-help programs to prisoners in Hamilton Detention Centre. The Discharge Planner refers offenders to community agencies in order to meet practical needs and for many rehabilitation and counselling issues. Separate weekly meetings offer motivational support, both to ex-offenders and to family members of those who are in prison. Individual counseling is available for those affected on all sides of the crime situation. The Bridge Program uses a restorative justice approach to offer self-help support with professional supervision.

The Bridge offers transitional housing for ex-offenders following incarceration and restorative justice, community conferences are also facilitated.

Contact Ron Crawford by telephone at 905-522-0283 or by sending an email to [hamiltonbridge@netscape.net](mailto:hamiltonbridge@netscape.net).

# A call to peace in our hearts

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At the time however, I remember being so angry with God that inside, my whole body was screaming at God. Outwardly, everything seemed just fine. I went through the motions. I know now when my brother died, on the day of his funeral, I did two things where God is concerned: I challenged God that day and I abandoned God that day.

Just like I believed God had abandoned my brother and his family, I told God, I did not believe. How could a loving God do this? How could I have anything to do with a God that would destroy a happy family for no reason? It did not make sense. If this was supposed to be my faith, I wanted no part of it. God must have been a truly vengeful, wrathful God I thought. Distance was a good option. I ran away by working two full time jobs and generally keeping very busy. I tried hard not to look back at the values, beliefs and teachings my grandma and the church had instilled in me.

Yet, something kept drawing me back and caused me to pause and to think. Even though I spent the next year and a half trying to prove to myself that God really did not exist, I was drawn back. Even through university and then theological college, I still challenged, questioned and wondered. I discovered I was on some sort of weird spiritual quest to find the bigger answers to life's questions. In the process, I found God. I found peace.

#### God is with us when we are most vulnerable

As the Anglican priest in this parish of Caledonia, which encompasses the Douglas Creek Estates, I struggle to be a pastor to people on both sides of the land claims issue which has gone on for a year now. These people are all grappling with anxiety, fear, depression, anger, sorrow, and bewilderment. I believe that the most prevalent emotion is fear; fear of the unknown, fear of losing something precious, fear of the future, fear of a repeat of Ipperwash—a situation that remains unresolved years later.

Fear is a terrible way to live. Fear calls out the worst in people.

From outsiders trying to prove a point by using and abusing our community to vandals wreaking havoc on the lives and homes of people who are well beyond the breaking point, we might wonder where God is in all of this. I guess I would say that God is on the edges. God is in the small details and moments of our lives, particularly when we are afraid and uncertain. God is with each of us when we are most vulnerable. In my heart I know God is with each of us, walking every step of the way with all of us in our fear and our anxiousness.

Someone said to me awhile ago that this way of living was the 'new normal'. What does that 'new normal' look like? For many of us, it is easier when asked how we are, to say we're fine when life gets tough isn't it? Quite a number in town are simply getting on with life. They recognize that traffic has lessened, businesses have closed and others will be closing this winter but their own lives are not directly impacted. Some are simply desensitized to what is happening here; they've become so overwhelmed with all the media coverage that they have just shut down in terms of attending to the issue.

Others, living on the edges of the disputed property, are very much living in the thick of it still. So it is for St. Paul's. We have natives in our congregation. We have natives and non-natives in our families here and on Six Nations. We have friends on both sides. Each is part of us in some way or other and many relationships continue despite the current struggle. There is a long history of good relationships. One day, there will be great relationships again.

#### We need action

Time and again, I have said that I can not even begin to understand the breadth and depth of native land claims across Canada. I do however understand justice and freedom for all. Somewhere in this journey we are all on, there will be truth and understanding and eventually healing. I believe it. Maybe that seems like a small start but small starts can be powerful. A

new year is upon us. The negotiations continue to drag on with the government. We can impact this. We all need to take a firmer stance with regard to connecting with our elected officials.

We need to use those channels to flood their offices across Ontario and this country with requests to get moving on native land claims. In particular, we need to urge our government to settle the Caledonia land claim so that we can move to a place of healing and peace. Caledonia and the people of Six Nations cannot continue to live in fear, anxiety and anger. The financial, emotional and social costs are crippling us. We need action and we must press our elected officials to move now. I ask you to write to your elected officials, federal and provincial, urging them to be strong voices for a speedy resolution to the land claims; most of which have been lingering in the system for years.

#### Risk love, risk living

At the same time, we are called, no matter how tough it is, to share compassion, justice, love and care for each other because we are all human beings. How we act and who we are as people matters regardless of what side of the issue we are on. This is about people. This is about fear. This is about trust. We want and hope to see the best in someone else just as they need that from us. The story is ours to tell. How we treat one another, especially when we are hurting and afraid really does make a difference. Who cares? I do because I know that love starts with us.

We are called to live our best lives; to love each other just as we are loved by God. As this new year begins, I pray we will each let love shine through. God calls us to live out of grace and hope. Risk love. Risk living. This time will mark us forever but as we find peace in our hearts and homes this year, so will joy find us.

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Since May 2006, the Reverend Chris McMaster has been posting updates about the Caledonia situation on the Diocese of Niagara website, [www.niagara.anglican.ca](http://www.niagara.anglican.ca).

# The waiting game

CLARE STEWART  
CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION, HAMILTON

For many parishes, the experience of Interim Ministry may seem like a time of recovery from an amputation. For the Church of the Resurrection, Hamilton, however, Interim Ministry was more like a first pregnancy—our sense of anticipation and excitement culminated in the arrival of a new father! All joking aside, though, the parishioners I spoke with offered insightful reflections on our experience with Fran Darlington.

To set a little bit of background, let me say that Rick Jones, who left us at the end of January 2006, was one of the main reasons that Resurrection exists at all. He and Jack Cox pulled together two groups of very disparate people and brought us through the trauma of losing our beloved St. Bartholomew's and St. Timothy's parishes. After Jack moved on, Rick continued the job of blending us together, and thanks to his personal appeal attracted many newcomers. By the time Rick left, the three groups had become a united parish. Rick's leaving made us sad but we were, on the whole, neither traumatized nor devastated.

#### A sense of bereavement

One parishioner, Barb Walker, however, did describe the sense of great bereavement she felt when Rick left. Irene Campbell, our treasurer, was also hard hit. She was coping at the time with the imminent death of her husband; she says, "I was upset because I knew my husband was dying and now we did not know this new person, [Fran Darlington]. I could not imagine this new person doing my husband's memorial service because she did not know him." Both Barb and Irene were quickly won over by Fran's ministry to us all. John Campbell's memorial service far exceeded Irene's expectations. Irene describes it as having been "exceptional" and goes on to say, "If all of the interim ministers are like Fran Darlington, parishioners do not need to worry about weddings, burials, memorial services, etc. The interims can seamlessly carry on. They are very well trained."

Many of us at Resurrection felt that we did not need a recovery time after Rick left. We were confident that we had already been through our mourning period when our parishes closed. We were well aware that nothing lasts forever. Because of this, we questioned why we needed to go through the exercises imposed on us during the interim ministry such as the townhall meeting, and the "sticky note Sundays" when we had to review our history and list our hopes and wishes for our parish.

#### Thinking about what we could give

I'll clarify the sticky note process by detailing three of the exercises. One Sunday Fran directed us to write down three important things that had happened in the history of our parish. These were then sorted into chronological order. This exercise would give the incoming rector a comprehensive picture of what went on before their arrival. On another day, we had to list the qualities we would like to see in a rector. As a

parallel activity we then listed the qualities that we felt a rector would like to see in us. These gave direction to the Parochial Committee in their selection process. I should mention that all of the comments were anonymous and available for reading by the entire parish.

When I was gathering opinions for this article, two months after the end of the process, I found that people kept mentioning how helpful the various exercises were. The sticky notes in particular were praised. Barb Walker said that they got us thinking, not just about what qualities we expected to see in our Rector, but also what we could give to a new rector. Jeannie Hrycenko, who as Lay Delegate to Synod was part of the Parochial Committee, found that the information they received from the sticky notes helped them to formulate questions for the candidates they interviewed. She also felt that the facilitator provided by the Diocese was very helpful to the committee. Maureen Godden, our parish secretary, felt that the sticky notes were a lot of work for Fran, who had compiled them all, but that they were worthwhile and interesting to read.

#### Missing our interim

And what about our perception that we did not need a recovery time? The consensus is that this time of rest was helpful. Carolyn Anderson made the point that the interval between rectors meant that the new person would not have the handicap of taking over immediately from someone who was so popular. Several people referred to this interim period as a breathing time that gave us room to think about losing Rick, and to consider what new ministry directions we should take with a new rector. On the whole, people felt that the length of the interim period was just about right. Jeannie Hrycenko said that by the time Fran left, we were no longer missing Rick, we were missing Fran.

Steve Swing, Rector's Warden, pointed out that the interim ministry experience is also good for the interim minister. It gives him or her a chance to enjoy ministry without the full-time commitment required of a rector. Fran heartily agreed with this when I spoke with her about it. It may also give the interim an opportunity to experience a different style of worship from what they are used to. This was certainly the case for Fran when she was with us at Resurrection.

Is there a down side to interim ministry? I have heard comments from other parishes that they had a bad experience with this in-between time, mainly due to personality clashes with the interim minister. It goes without saying that no interim minister is to everyone's taste, and that adapting to someone else's style of worship takes work and good will on both sides. But the same applies, of course, to the rector of the parish.

On the whole, though, it's fair to say that most parishioners at Resurrection enjoyed the interim ministry process and enjoyed worshipping and working with Fran Darlington. Irene Campbell sums it up: "I feel that I have gained another good friend. I wish her well."

## Niagara Children's and Family Ministries Event

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Love is... a retreat for families

February 16-18, 2007

Canterbury Hills Camp, Ancaster



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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](mailto:christyn.perkons@niagara.anglican.ca)

# Sharing, learning and support come together

## THE ANNUAL STUDENTS' CONFERENCE

Hosted by the Canterbury Hills Conference Centre



**BILL MOUS**  
DIVINITY STUDENT

Shortly after the start of the new year there is an annual migration from all across our diocese to the beautiful Carolinian forest of Canterbury Hills. This annual migration has been happening since the days when Bishop Spence was a young divinity student and continues to this day—even though the lack of winter weather might confuse some migrants into thinking it was still too early to go! Nevertheless, about twenty divinity students and their spouses made the trek from their homes throughout Niagara to the annual two-day Students' Conference hosted by the diocese at the Canterbury Hills Conference Centre.

According to Bishop Spence, the Students' Conference was a first in the Canadian Church. Beginning in the mid-sixties, the entire senior staff of the diocese would be present to meet and interview prospective ordinands from Niagara. It is no wonder that the conference was given the nickname "Postulants on Parade," a title that has waned in its use but is still mentioned from time to time.

While many dioceses have followed Niagara's lead and hold similar conferences, many others do not. In speaking to divinity students from two other dioceses, it was clear that they were quite envious of the time students in Niagara get to spend with the bishop and executive officer. For some in other dioceses, it is considered fortunate to briefly meet their bishop once or twice before their ordination.

Archdeacon Vincett reflected that "each of the bishops and executive officers has brought with them their own view of the importance and value of the conference but, in the end, the fact that it has continued for all of these years says something, I think." Along with those differing values which each bishop and executive officer bring, the tone of the conference no doubt changes. In recent years the conference has become much more informal than it once was, mirroring a change in our understanding of ministry. Where the ministry of a priest was once understood to be a lonely, isolating and emotionally-distant, our current view holds that the parish priest should be part of the community of a parish, a team member and emotionally involved.

In its current form, the conference can be summed up most simply in three words: sharing, learning, and support. Archdeacon Vincett adds that "Niagara has always made a sincere attempt to connect with prospective ordinands, to assist them with their discernment process by giving them as much information as possible, and, by encouraging their spouses/partners to be informed also, to enable the family to make a good adjustment to the realities of parish ministry."

There are several components to the sharing aspect of the conference. First and foremost is sharing in the liturgy as prepared by the divinity students and staff. Worship in various forms takes place throughout the conference and at its beginning and end. Additionally there are opportunities to hear students share their experiences of ministry. This year Sheila VanZandwyk and Sue Channen shared with the group their experience of the Anglican Church of Kenya. Finally, there is the always candid and illuminating sharing during the "Bishop's Hour" in which the bishop shares with stu-



dents some of the realities of ministry in Niagara, reflects on his experiences in ministry and shares the expectations that he has of students on the path to ordination. All three of these components not only inform students about life in ministry but aid in one's continued discernment about ministry.

As students are eager to soak up new knowledge and information, the learning component of the conference is always quite well received. This year's workshops included presentations on spiritual direction and the diocesan companion program, in addition to a panel discussion entitled "vision versus reality" that explored the experiences of recently ordained priests.

Outside of the formal learning, there is of course the informal learning which takes place. Here students get to know their fellow students and their spouses and learn from one another about their experiences of the divinity life. This is a rare opportunity because there are two schools which currently have Niagara students

and also because of the widely different schedules students have. It seems to me that this is one of the most important parts of the conference because it begins a network of people in whom one can draw support from in ministry. It is here at the conference that the seeds of cooperation and team ministry begin to take root.

The development of such support is enhanced by the ministry of the chaplains to the divinity students. The Reverend Lucy Reid, chaplain to the Trinity Students, and the Reverend Canon Robin Graves, chaplain to the Wycliffe students, meet with students throughout the year and especially during the conference to check-in with them about their experience of seminary and life in general. Their listening ears and reflective observations are most helpful through the ups and downs of divinity life.

Finally, support also comes in the form of individual meetings with the bishop and executive officer. Although there is clearly a nervous anxiety that permeates the

air outside their meeting room, it is a time that most students look forward to. Many things might happen during the course of the meeting—from sharing the highlights of one's ministry experience in the past several months, listening to Bishop Spence's thoughts on one's continued discernment, to learning about practical matters such as prospective parish placements or ACPO dates. In all this both Bishop Spence and Archdeacon Marion are supportive as they try to listen and discern with the student God's call in their life.

With the end of the conference, the students leave to make yet another migration. This time the migration is, for most, further a field to the metropolis of Toronto where they will learn side by side at Trinity and Wycliffe colleges in the Toronto School of Theology. Others, however, will be heading to new parishes to complete their full-time internship. Be sure to read next month's column as it will feature the adventures of these five students.

## CREATION "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1)

**ROGER HARRIS**  
ANGELICAN FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER

As I sit writing this, coupled with thought and contemplation, the sun is shining and the wind is gently moving the branches of the trees outside the window. I see how much this small corner of my existence is filled with so much creativity and structure. It is not so much the man made objects like houses and fences, but the God made elements like grass and plants, that even in their forlorn state seem to provide a message that says although we may look dead, we are just sleeping, and will once more awaken to show you our tribute to the glory of God.

Creativity, a word that these days is more inclined to arts and crafts, does not seem to have a great deal of focus on the Master Builder as it once did. These days the word evolution is providing an alternative voice to the creativity of

God, and in an attempt to subvert the power of God, is trying to dilute the Master Builders work or eliminate Him altogether.

### Evolution is part of God's plan

In the beginning God created everything, the land, the sea, the air, and everything that is in them. This included ourselves, to whom God gave ascendancy over the rest of His works. With this came freedom of speech, of thought, of actions, and of choice, things that God knew would cause change. He put the building blocks in place, knowing that we would move forward and develop in our own way, and as with us, but at a slower pace, follows the rest of His creation here on earth. Evolution does not have to be spectacular, but in its natural state is part of God's plan for all that He has created and continues to create.

Evolution is a natural part of God's plan for us, but because of

our nature we are not maturing, as He would want us to. We are moving away from His values and desires and substituting our own, so falling into the trap of being self-sustaining without accountability to the cost. Because of our need for progress, we are changing our environment from a natural God provisioned evolution, to a man made progression that is becoming increasingly difficult to control. We are creating the means for our own demise, by decimating the ecosystem that God has put in place for our very survival.

### The creativity of God has no bounds

Although there may be evidence to the contrary, there are those who consider that we are the only intelligent life forms in the universe. Understanding God's creativity, and being told that the universe is constantly expanding, we can assume that God is

still molding, fashioning, changing and creating. It is difficult to imagine Him not bringing to fruition other examples of His works and His craftsmanship. We can only wonder about what other forms of beauty and magnificence that He has formed with His hands, and how they have stood the test of time in comparison with ourselves. The creativity of God has no bounds, and He may well have fashioned life, which is eons ahead of us in maturity, or even come into bloom and withered away. One thing is for sure, all will be in harmony with creation, for only progress by, and in the will of God, will be allowed.

In the all-embracing plan of God, mankind is still in its infancy. We consider ourselves intelligent yet we are unable to love our neighbor, provide for each other, or live together in peace. God has created the heavens and the earth

and all that is in them. Humankind has taken all this, and by his own volition has upset the delicate balance of what God has put in place, and through climate change and genetic engineering is creating his own evolutionary process. If we were evolving to God's will, we would not be having the problems that beset us now.

Whatever the future holds for us, what more can be said than thanks be to God that we have the knowledge and comfort that we are part of His plan. Whatever changes take place in our small corner of His creation, we have the assurance that we will not be separated from Him. As long as we keep the focus, tread the path that Jesus has set before us, maintain the scriptures and communicate with Him in prayer our destiny will be fulfilled.

"And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

# The amazing power of a circle of faithful women



**STUART PIKE**  
RECTOR - ST. ANDREW'S, GRIMSBY

It was a typical scene for an annual Anglican Church Women (ACW) meeting in a rural parish, except that the meeting had been postponed for months due to inclement weather. Having been invited as the Rector of the parish, I was the only male person in the room. And what a room it was, illuminated by the intensely clean light of full sun reflected off the fields of snow sculpted by the storm the previous day. Everything was perfect. Not a speck of dust would dare enter that room. Sofas—crocheted lace on the arms—and chairs were arranged in a circle. Small tables were interspersed here and there to hold fine bone china cups of tea.

And the ladies, too, were perfect. They wore their best Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes—even Ada, who was the cattle farmer among us and had never been in a dress in her life, was wearing crisply pressed slacks instead of her usual rough jeans. We had finished with the business of the meeting. As so many circles of ACW ladies do, these ladies had disposed of thousands of dollars, supporting several charities including the Church itself, the missions to seamen, sleeping children of the world, foster

children, well-drilling in Africa and a women's cooperative in India. The prayers had been said. It was now time for my favourite part of these meetings: the edibles.

## We howled with laughter

Several large, heavily-laden platters were making their way around the room with rich, dark fruit cake reeking of rum, shortbread, squares and cakes of all descriptions, both maple and chocolate fudge and even some home-made chocolates. One plate had travelled half-way around the room and I was just reaching for it, trying not to drool in anticipation. Lois was handing it to me as she said, "What a pity. It all looks so good, but I have given up sweets for Lent."

That's when pandemonium broke out! Several pairs of eyes widened in horror and there were sharp gasps as dear, demure Elaine, in her pale green cashmere twin set and her simple necklace of pearls, loudly hacked up her chocolate cake, mid-swallow, into her empty Royal Crown Derby teacup. Then she dove for the coffee table, grabbed several napkins from it and proceeded to furiously wipe out her mouth and tongue and ending up with a couple more spits into the cup for good measure! "I forgot it was Lent," she said. The stunned silence was finally broken when Ada slapped her thigh and howled with laughter, setting us all off.

## Any benefit to Lenten discipline?

It had been a long time since I had seen an intense display of Lenten discipline. In many ways

Lent seemed to have fallen out of fashion. Even in seminary, most people were rather bemused by the question: "What are you giving up for Lent?" There had been another trend which had developed for a while: "What are you taking on for Lent?" It seemed somehow more sophisticated to add something positive, rather than to negate anything.

In my experience of Lent I have come to appreciate more fully the value of actually giving something up: something that will be felt in my day to day life. That day, Elaine reminded me in a very powerful, if humorous way, that there are people who take their discipline seriously. Why do they do it? Is it just superstition? Is there any real benefit to such a discipline?

## Solidarity with those who don't have

I think taking on a discipline for Lent can really add to our spiritual experience of Lent and Easter. I also think that giving up something in our lives can be such an important part of that discipline. It has got to be something that will be missed. You need to feel the lack of it. I remember in high school discussing the problem of choosing what to give up with one of my best Catholic hoodlum friends, Danny. Our relationship seemed to consist of a never-ceasing series of slightly violent but friendly acts. His uncanny ability to spy a Volkswagon "punch buggy," of being the first to count to ten when we both said the same thing at the same time, and of a hundred other obsessive-compulsion-inducing silly rules earned

me and most people around him countless punched arms, stamped feet and tweaked ears. His answer to the Lent problem was a simple: "Oh I'll give up cod liver oil, or broccoli or something like that." I thought that giving up pummeling would be a better idea.

In the years since then, I have found that giving up something more meaningful than what Danny had thought up was not only a way to be reminded of ones faith, but was also a way to stand in solidarity with others who do not have the same luxuries which I take for granted.

## Fear replaced with courage

I remember another group of faithful women sitting in a circle in another hemisphere of the world: las Viejitas (the little old ladies) in my parish placement in Uruguay. We met each week to discuss how the Gospel could make a difference in their day to day lives. We drank yerba-mate tea together and I learned something of their stories. I learned how it was the courage of the women of Uruguay which started the downfall of the Dictatorship there a few years earlier.

The popular South American singer, Mercedes Sosa sings of las Marias del Uruguay. As in many Roman Catholic countries, many of the women's first names are Mary or Maria. In the darkest days of the dictatorship there was no free press. There was a strict curfew and those who were caught outside after darkness would be taken and locked up. Perhaps they would never appear again. The dictatorship pretended to the outside

world that all was fine.

One night after dark one Maria decided to protest their situation by clanging pot lids together. Her neighbour heard her and followed suit. Soon the cacophony filled the whole neighbourhood, and then the whole city. This continued night after night. There could be no cover up of this phenomenon. The international press picked up the story. The protest of the people of Uruguay could not be stopped. Paralyzing fear began to be replaced by courage. Eventually the dictatorship fell.

## Growing in faith

Las Viejitas told me how their faith had to make a difference in their lives. What was the point otherwise? When I give up something for Lent I see it as but a symbol of solidarity which I have with people of faith and courage and with people who lack much of the stuff which fills my life. It is also a tiny symbol of all that Jesus gave up for me. A Lenten discipline is not just a mindless rule to be diligently followed: it is something which connects people together into circles of relationship. Sometimes those circles encompass the world.

In the couple of weeks before Lent begins think about what discipline you want to follow during Lent. What can you give up? What will remind you daily about your discipline? How might something you give up stand you in solidarity with other people of faith? With people who lack? What can you do that will bring you into a circle of faith?

**Caralei Peters** MSc, ND  
DOCTOR OF NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

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## Leaving Church: A Memoir of Faith

Barbara Brown Taylor  
Harper Collins, San Francisco  
May 18, 2006

**CHARLES STIRLING**  
HONORARY - CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

Barbara Brown Taylor, recognized as one of America's most renowned and beloved preachers was ordained in 1983 in the Episcopal Church. She served in a large parish in Atlanta before becoming rector of an historic church in Clarksville Georgia. In her own words, she now says she is as likely to spend time with Quakers, Presbyterian or Congregationalists as she does with Episcopalians, who remain her closest kin.

She even admits to sitting on the porch with Assam tea. She also admits earning a living teaching school, and not leading worship and dreams of opening a small restaurant in Clarkesville, or volunteering at an eye clinic in Nepal. She claims there is no guarantee that she won't run off with the circus. It is a kind of unplanned life, not recommended to others, but rather one that has turned out to be hers, and the central recommendation in it, for her, is the call to serve God and to be fully human.

To the parish of the seldom, or sorely, or no longer 'churched' to the doubting, dumfounded and vexingly blessed, she offers an elegant epistle. Part guide, part confession of faith in the wilderness, *Leaving Church* is a canticle of praise to both creator and creation. It is a beautiful book, rich in wit and humour. It is about being alive in our time and it is about the wonderful and the terrible things that happen to us, and about the dream of God. This is a book in which the author states that she has learned to prize holy ignorance more highly than religious certainty and because she writes so enchantingly, out of her own deep truth, she helps us keep in touch with ours.

We are fortunate that Taylor is here to remind us the call to serve God is first and last the call to be fully human. The book is full of surprises to those who may have grown tired of the Church. It is a story of life told with clarity, beauty and honesty, as Taylor describes doubt, faith and vocation, their limits and how the Church blesses them and muddies the waters. Those who attend Church, those who do not and everyone in between will find a feast and the satisfaction of an eloquent voice speaking the truth. *Leaving Church* is an important book for our time.

**Clarification**  
Contrary to some media reports, Barbara Brown Taylor remains a priest in good standing in the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta, where her primary ministry is college and seminary teaching.

[barbarabrowntaylor.com](http://barbarabrowntaylor.com)

# Port Colborne Anglicans launch new church



ALAN L. HAYES  
THE ITINERANT CHURCHGOER

Recently I visited one of the newest churches in our diocese of Niagara. It's called St. James and St. Brendan, Port Colborne, and it opened just last July.

True, it takes some imagination to think of this as a new church. The people you see there are mostly folks who last June were going to either St. James, Port Colborne, or St. Brendan, Port Colborne. But, technically, both those two churches closed one day last June, and a new church opened which just happened to combine their two names.

The former St. Brendan's, a 1964 building on two acres of woodland on the north side of town, has been deconsecrated and is for sale. The former St. James', a 1917 stone gothic church, is where Anglicans in Port Colborne are meeting for worship now.

## Not an amalgamation

So why not just say that one church closed and the other is carrying on? Or why not say that the two churches amalgamated? Well, one answer, people there tell me, is that the diocesan authorities preferred this approach. It has maybe minimized potentially fractious local debate. And it has given the diocese more control over funding during the transition.

More long-term, the people I talked to seemed optimistic that this was the best way into the future. That's because the new church isn't seeking just to adapt long-established patterns with a few strategic compromises. Instead, as the new rector told me with a lot of excitement and conviction, the congregation has been discerning a fresh vision.

You'll see signs of this as soon as you arrive on Sunday morning and receive the service bulletin. It's headed *A New Church... A New Vision*. The five points of the new vision are summarized on the parish webpage at [www.niagara.anglican.ca](http://www.niagara.anglican.ca), and the rector gave me a fuller statement in a brochure called *Sharing Life*. Put simply, it's "reaching outward, building inward, lifting upward, digging downward, moving onward." That means caring for the world, building a church family, worshipping God, growing in faith, and planning for the future.

Look for some serious renewal of physical worship space in the next year or two. That will be a concrete statement that at St. James' and St. Brendan it isn't just 'business as usual,' but is venturing forth in faith.

Moreover, look for more reaching out to lapsed members and prospective members, which has already begun. And watch how new opportunities are found to extend the special strengths of the former congregations, such as the men's breakfast group at St. Brendan's and the choir at St. James'.

## Strategic strengths

Is the church on the right track? I think so! An American congrega-

tional statistician and researcher named Deborah Bruce has found that there are four predictors of congregational growth:

- Children and youth are cared for.
  - Visitors are welcomed.
  - Members are willing to participate.
  - The sermon is high-quality.
- St. James' and St. Brendan seem to me well equipped on all counts. These include:
- Energetic and effective youth ministry has had many successes.
  - Regular dances that attract 250 teens to the parish hall.
  - People are friendly.
  - Laypeople are actively involved in implementing the five points of the parish vision.
  - The rector's sermon is unusually creative and engaging.

As in most places, the churches here have been influenced by their larger community. Unfortunately, Port Colborne has navigated some really tough years recently. People I talked to on a recent Sunday recalled these years feelingly. But they expressed hope for the future too.

I had never even visited this small city of 18,000. Civic leaders describe it with the damning phrase "Niagara's best-kept secret."

Port Colborne is at the southern end of the Welland Canal, with a marina on Lake Erie. The canal splits the city in two.

Until the 1960s this was a thriving industrial town, taking full advantage of its proximity to hydroelectric power at Niagara Falls and its strategic location on the Great Lakes near the US border. It milled more flour than anywhere else in the British Empire, and it refined more nickel than anywhere else in the world. Shipping companies,

marine salvage, cement works, and a large steel plant operated here too.

## A faulty assumption

St. Brendan's was built in 1964 because many assumed that Port Colborne would grow and prosper forever. But then, for a number of reasons, the industries downsized and the economy dried up. Today Port Colborne has become mainly a distant suburb of St. Catharines and a retirement community.

It's also working hard to develop tourism, but all those former factories have left terrible scars. As Inco has acknowledged, its smokestacks contaminated about thirty square kilometres of soil with nickel, cobalt, copper, and arsenic. That has all but destroyed farming, and developers can't build houses on poisoned land. Moreover, the once beautiful Gravelly Bay, a resort destination in the 1890s, is badly marred by an unsightly slag landfill courtesy of Algoma Steel. Meanwhile, international shipping has brought botulism into the Great Lakes, and the Bush administration has inconvenienced cross-border tourism.

Civic and regional leaders are doing what they can. Port Colborne is quite an interesting place! Where else can you watch ships chugging through the middle of the city? You'll find an arts centre with a festival theatre, a historical and marine museum, good restaurants, quaint shopping districts, bike and hiking trails, and beaches. Canal Days in August attracts 150,000 visitors. The west-side harbour front is being revitalized, and there's hope for

the east-side harbour front lands currently controlled by the government of Canada.

## The church contributes

But you need more than an economic base and interesting entertainment to give a place quality of life. You need people who celebrate the life-changing truth that the cosmic meaning of things is God's sacrificial love. That's where the church comes in.

Call me old-fashioned (I grew up in the 1950s), but I've seen it: a faithful church fellowship, recognizing its dependence on God's grace, can elevate an entire community. And the gospel can give you just the healthy scepticism you need when faced with the short-sighted materialism of large industrial corporations and, for that matter, tourism consulting firms. The new Church of St. James and St. Brendan, with its vision for reaching outward and inviting in, is ready to make Port Colborne a great place to call home.

.....  
The Reverend Canon Alan L. Hayes, who has taught at Wycliffe College in Toronto since 1975, has been appointed director of the Toronto School of Theology (TST). He will continue at Wycliffe part-time.

The TST claims to be the largest ecumenical centre for theological education in the English-speaking world. It is a federation of Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and United Church of Canada schools, with close connections to Mennonite, Christian Reformed, and Lutheran centres. It works within the University of Toronto.

Most priests in the diocese of Niagara are graduates of either Trinity or Wycliffe Colleges in the TST. Alan will begin his duties on March 1, 2007.

# Amalgamations bring new life to parishes



RICK JONES  
RECTOR - ST. PAUL'S, WESTDALE

It had been a long and difficult congregational meeting discussing the future of the small Hamilton Mountain Parish. The options for the future were very limited and everyone was feeling sadness or anger or disappointment.

A break-through came when a long time older member of the parish broke the silence and said, "It seems to me we have a choice before us, we have tried our best and have nothing to be ashamed of, we belong to a big C church not just a little c church, we can walk out of this building, which we love, with our heads held high. It's the people and the community that's really important!" That vision of the big C church and of community and cooperation with

others carried the day. The congregation went on to successfully amalgamate with another mountain parish, taking with them all their amazing gifts of community, spirituality and all their ministries. The new amalgamated parish has blossomed with the infusion of all these gifts and is healthy and growing.

## Sunday attendance measure of health

Amalgamation of parishes has been the biggest congregational news of the past six years. Beginning on the Hamilton Mountain, St. Augustine's merged with St. Michael's, St. Bartholomew's and St. Timothy's became the new Church of the Resurrection. Christ Church St. Catharine's merged with the Transfiguration. Port Colborne has seen the amalgamation of St. Brendan's and St. James. In Hamilton and Stoney Creek we have seen Grace Church and St. Mary's come together in the past year, and now Our Saviour and the Redeemer are amalgamating. In Niagara Falls, Hamilton and other areas, less formal realignments of parishes have

taken place, with groups of Anglicans from disestablished parishes making commitments to more established ones.

The initial results of all these amalgamations have been very encouraging. In no way can we minimize the grief and pain that comes with leaving a sacred church home and disrupting a community, however the vision of new possibilities with others has inspired congregations to move through the pain into the future. One feature of the new amalgamated congregations is that Sunday morning attendance has been greater than the sum of the attendance at the former parishes. Attendance at worship is not the only measure of a congregation's health but there is something happening now on Sunday morning that is attracting others. In the case of the Resurrection, Hamilton, attendance doubled in the first three years.

A similar trend is emerging with the others. Canon Bill Thomas reports that as soon as Grace and St. Mary's joined together attendance increased beyond the expected faithful of the former parishes. Pt.

Colborne is seeing renewal. The new rector Rob Hurkmans reports that the congregations are coming together to reorganize their many gifts into five key areas of congregational life under the new vision of "Sharing Life."

## Exciting new ministries never before possible

One of the many benefits has been that a men's group ministry started at the former St. Brendan's is growing with members from the former St. James. Youth ministry has been renewed and the parish is looking to a bright future with many initiatives underway. There are many stories that can be told of the sharing of gifts in these new parishes. Sometimes they are very tangible. St. Augustine's brought with them financial resources that made a new parish kitchen possible at St. Michael's. Christ Church, St. Catharine's has made a similar positive financial impact on their new home at the Transfiguration.

As this is being written, our newest amalgamation of Our Saviour and the Redeemer, is working

with Canon Michael Patterson on an exciting new ministry plan that couldn't have been conceived of by either parish independently.

## Vision, hope and sacrifice

I wonder if these new churches are growing because people are attracted to courage, vision and passion. In every case these new parishes are talking about the future with hope and expectation. This energy is producing new ideas for ministry and renewing existing ministries.

As we look ahead to Lent we will probably be hearing this sentence quite often, "Let your Church be the wheat which bears its fruit in dying." This has become the lived reality for many of us who have gone through this process of disestablishment and amalgamation. There is no parish in the diocese that doesn't face challenges in our current ministry context. Many face significant difficulties, perhaps one lesson we can take away from these new ministries is that vision, hope and sacrifice for the future can be transformative.

# How's it going in your parish?



**CHRISTYN PERKONS**  
CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRIES

As I write this, we have just begun a new year, and the focus in the media is on reflection about our journey—okay, they don't put it in quite that way but that's really what it's all about. How have things gone in the past year and where are we going in the year ahead?

## Asking difficult questions

This seems very relevant to children's ministry. It's mid-program year for us and that's a good time to assess our ministry. What's been going well in children's ministry at your parish so far this year? What hasn't worked as well? How do you answer that? Well, one way to assess this is to ask your program volunteers; those who volunteer on Sunday mornings and those who volunteer at mid-week programs. Another way is to ask the children what's working for them and which parts don't engage them.

But there's one difficulty with this: Do your volunteers and your children know what your children's ministry program is about? What's

their framework for deciding what's working well and what isn't? Is it the number of children who come each week? Is it about the number of new children who come? Is success measured by the number of Bible verses memorized? Do your volunteers and children know the mission for your parish's children's ministry? Do you?

Many parishes find themselves providing programming for children on Sunday mornings because that's what the church has always done. Others provide activities to entertain children while their parents enjoy the Sunday morning service because there's a belief that if there isn't something entertaining for children, then families won't come to church. It's essentially childcare. For some churches, Sunday morning programs are designed to teach the rituals and traditions of the faith so that those rituals and traditions will continue. There's more to ministry than that!

## Children need the space to worship

So why do we have children's ministry in our parishes? Why do we provide programming that's specific to children? Because God's unconditional love and forgiveness is for our children as much as it is for the adults in our parishes! And because our children need the opportunity to grow in their faith and in their relationship with God and Jesus just as much as we do! And

because children need the chance and the space to worship God just as much as we do!

In Matthew 19:14, Jesus urges us to let the children come to him and not to hinder them. If we truly believe that children have as much kingdom potential as we do, then we have to create a faith community experience that doesn't get in their way; that enhances their ability to embrace what God is offering them.

Children would be deeply hindered in their God-relationship if their only learning, their only space, their only worship opportunity in the faith community were in a service that was wholly designed for adults. They would be left out if their only hearing of the Word came in readings written for adults. They would be stuck on their journey if their only teaching about how to live as a Christian were from sermons designed for their parents.

We get out of the way and we let the children come to Jesus by:

- Creating a learning and worshiping space that reflects and honours who they are.
- Telling our faith stories in ways that engage and speak to them.
- Guiding them to an understanding of how to apply the message of the Bible faith stories to their everyday life.
- Sharing our love of God and Jesus by shepherding them in relationships of love and caring.

■ Modeling what it means to live out the call of Jesus to come and follow him.

## Developing a mission statement

If we accept those givens, how do we get to the place where we can assess what's working well and what needs work? We begin by creating a mission statement for children's ministry that reflects our understanding of our purpose and goals, and then we use that mission statement to develop some simple guiding principles against which we can measure every aspect of our ministry.

Mission statements are clear and short statements of what we're about and should be developed in consultation with people who reflect every aspect of children's ministry; parents, children, volunteers, clergy and paid staff. Your aim is to develop a statement reflecting your parish's mission statement as well as the particular aspects of serving children that everyone can own—for example, "to love children into a responsive and maturing relationship with Jesus and God."

From that mission statement, you develop three to five guiding principles that are used to assess each aspect of your ministry. What would be the primary indicators of success for your mission? These guiding principles may include children's understanding of their relationship with God and Jesus,

children's participation in the life of the faith community, children's willingness to share their children's ministry experience with their friends, children's interest in outreach activities, and children's and parents' stories about their children at home and school—are they acting on the messages they learn?

## Children living a joyful life

Once volunteers, parents and children understand the mission and guiding principles of your children's ministry, they will find it easy to share with you what aspects of the programming work well and which ones seem to be getting in the way. Your planning team will be able to assess new curriculum or ministry opportunities by considering how they reflect your mission and principles. Volunteers will find it easier to see where their gifts fit into the overall scheme of things, and parents will know exactly where the children's ministry journey is taking their children.

Children's ministry is about the littlest among us becoming faith-filled children of God who feel loved and cherished by God and by us. Children's ministry is about our children feeling safe and secure in the knowledge that their mistakes are forgiven; they are free to boldly try again. Children's ministry is about each child living a joyful life that reflects God's call on that child's life.

# Hearts, flowers, toilet paper and toothpaste



**MARNI NANCEKIVELL**  
DIRECTOR OF TRANSITIONAL MINISTRY

Perhaps it was the arrival of the February magazines at our home, heralding the arrival of Valentine's Day. Perhaps it was the sudden realization that my husband and I will soon be celebrating another wedding anniversary. Or perhaps it was just a series of moments of reverie, but I have been thinking a great deal about the early days of my marriage lately.

Of course there is the hearts and flowers stage of most relationships. I can remember spending an entire day when we were first dating making my husband an exquisite heart shaped flourless chocolate cake. At the same time, I recall the gorgeous roses that arrived for me that year. But courting days are quite different than the early days of marriage.

Relationships are hard work. Marriage, at any stage, is hard work. However, aside from the myriad of tasks that are necessary in setting up housekeeping together, what I remember most about our early domestic relationship are

the issues through which we had to work. Now, I want you to understand that these were important issues such as, "Does the toilet paper go over or under?" and "Must the toothpaste be squeezed from the end, or is it acceptable to squeeze it from the middle?" There was also the matter that I can recall surveying my friends and family about: "Does one have to have a particular side of the bed, or do couples switch about?"

Now, of course, with the wisdom of over twenty years perspective, I reflect back on those days and roll my eyes at what were such crucial issues for the two of us early in our marriage. However, upon second thought, something deeply significant was at work as we merged our lives. What was healthy about how we dealt with these issues was the way in which we found our way through them. We decided that whoever put the toilet paper on had it stay that way, and yes, we would actually switch the toilet paper on one another in our earliest days, so it would be hanging in what we considered to be the right way.

We found a compromise around the toothpaste issue as well. Being a confirmed "middle squeezer" which evolved simply by how I picked up the tube of toothpaste, eventually I saw my husband's logic about squeezing from the end. So although I con-

tinued to "middle squeeze," about once a week, I would take the time to squish the tube of toothpaste around and roll up the ends. Ah, the consequential and inconsequential issues of early domestic relationships!

I tell you about all of that because I think that there is some significant learning for us as the church at the core of my reveries about our early marriage. All of us want to have things, whether in marriage or in our local parish, the

are many competing voices to be heard. At times, the voices represent different perspectives, and when those perspectives cease to be dynamic, as with the 'give and take' of healthy domestic life, they devolve into factions. But there are times in church communities when different perspectives are held and to honour one means that the other must be dishonoured.

Once upon a time, I worked as a consultant with a parish where it became clear that there was an

## Communication and compromise can only be arrived at when each voice is both respected and heard.

right way, which usually translates into the way to which we have become accustomed. Not only do we find comfort in having our preferences met, but it is also, dare I say it, a manifestation of power. I'm not talking about power as much as being a win/lose proposition as I am about a sense of having a voice. It is important, whether in a family, a job or in parish life to not only have one's voice heard, but to have it taken seriously. When we become voiceless, we become marginalized. And that is very much a matter of 'power.'

Parish life is more complex than married life, however, as there

overwhelming desire to grow. Because of the demographics, it was obvious to all of us that there needed to be ministry that was more hospitable to young families. There were, after all, a number of young families in the area, and the church school staff was flexible and creative in their approach to helping children and their parents grow in the faith. It seemed like an easy task, at first. But there was a problem.

The style of worship in that community was not inviting to young families. Not only that, but there was a significant mass of people that wanted to maintain

the "traditional worship" style of the parish for very good reasons of their own. So, tensions evolved between one set of values and another. The course of action which would result in growth was full of tension for the existing members of the parish. Fortunately, that particular parish was large enough to sustain two services, and agreement was reached that one service be traditional, while the other service was oriented to a more contemporary, participatory, and emerging worship style. Same God, two different ways of approaching the Divine.

Not all such conflicts are so easily addressed. That parish was blessed with resources that many smaller communities are not. However, I think that the lesson that I remember from this set of circumstances was how important it was for all voices to be heard. We need to honour our relationship with one another in God. We need to respect one another's integrity. And we need to be willing to yes, make changes. Communication and compromise can only be arrived at when each voice is both respected and heard.

Whether the challenges in your primary relationships are about toothpaste or about worship style, my prayer for you is that your voice will be heard into being. Only then can the real give and take of living in community begin.



# PARISH NEWS

Niagara Anglican - February 2007

## Boar's head arrives at St. James, Dundas



Rob Roi processes in with the boar's head.



Serving wenchers Marlyne Sergeant, Lynne Morrow and Jennifer Southall-Evans assist revellers with their meal.

### ROBERT MORROW ST. JAMES, DUNDAS

On December 29, the Boar's Head Festival marked the arrival of the traditional boar's head to the Christmas pageant at St. James Anglican Church in Dundas. According to musical director Douglas Brownlee, "the tradition and festival date to around 1340 and celebrates the birth of Christ. The presentation of the boar's head symbolizes the triumph of the Christ

Child over sin." The lore is that the wild boar, a ferocious beast, in medieval England, was choked in an attack on a young Oxonian on his way to church on Christmas Eve. The boar was choked by the metal-bound book he was carrying. "Later that evening," according to Douglas, "the head of the beast, finely dressed, was carried in procession accompanied by carollers."

Apparently the tradition spread to great manor houses of England;

this year, the event was celebrated for the second time at St. James. The evening began with a concert attended by nearly 200 people. They were entertained by the Rosewood Consort under the direction of Marsha Taylor and by the Waterloo County Carollers, Jennifer Spaulding, Suzanne Langdon, Daryl Roth and Kirk Lackenbauer.

Then, in true Anglican tradition, came the feast—sold out to 140 people in November—in the new

Dundas room at St. James. The meal could be eaten using only one instrument, a wooden spoon, and was accompanied by camomile tea, mulled cider or wine. Empty mugs were provided and a stone was used as currency for the first drink. Thereafter, revellers could purchase additional "tots" with pieces of silver. The traditional "bill of fare" included royall stew, herbd chicken, taste o'porc, bashd neeps, brusl sprouts, bakd onions,

and sor dugh bread, followed by queen o' puddings, minze tarts, oats 'n apples and nuts and fruits. Those in attendance were encouraged to "eat up hartily and noysily" and were entertained by serving wenchers and the Waterloo County Carollers, before adjourning for the night.

The Boar's Head festival is one of several events planned around the music program at St. James, and dubbed "Musica at St. James."

## Outreach takes a new twist

### RICK JONES RECTOR - ST. PAUL'S, WESTDALE

Outreach to the Mc Master Student Community has taken a new twist at St. Paul's, Westdale. In September the Outreach Committee met with the leaders of a campus group called Open Circles. They sponsor and facilitate many spirituality groups on campus open to all faiths and students who are searching for a safe place to explore their questions about spirituality and religion. This group also organizes over 300 students who wish to volunteer for social action in many agencies in the Hamilton area. The leaders of this group were facing a crisis due to a lack of workable office space on, or near campus. St. Paul's decided to provide that space at the church located two blocks from campus.

Since this partnership began at least two significant events have occurred. The first was a "hungry for change" dinner to demonstrate the inequality of food resources globally and raise awareness of options for change. This event, covered in detail by the Hamilton Spectator, attracted over 140 students, parishioners and members

of the Westdale and McMaster Communities.

Members of St. Paul's worked alongside students and Open Space staff to facilitate this event and new friendships were forged. These friendships led to better understanding the lives and needs of students. One of these needs was for quiet and safe study space in times of extra work stress.

When Christmas Exam week began and the libraries and other campus spaces became seriously overcrowded St. Paul's was ready. The main hall was converted to a quiet study space open 12 hours a day with free internet, fair trade tea and coffee and all the church baking you could eat. The hall was well used and volunteer hosts from the parish received many heartfelt expressions of gratitude from harried students.

Outreach to McMaster has become a real priority because of new friendships and a better understanding of student lives.

Another Outreach surprise this year was the annual reading of Dicken's *Christmas Carol* by celebrity guests hosted by the parish. The reading itself was not the



PHOTO: GARY YOKOYAMA, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Celebrity Christmas Carol readers Jeff Mahoney (The Hamilton Spectator), Sunni Genesco (K-Lite FM), Connie Smith (CHTV), Jeff Goodes (CBC) and Matt Hayes (K-Lite, CHTV).

surprise; the reading was well attended and raised close to \$3,000 for St. Matthew's House.

The surprise came after the fact when we received a special donation from someone who had heard Rob Howard, one of St. Paul's Wardens, promoting the event on the local television. When Rob

was asked how much he hoped we would see from the event, he picked a number, "\$4,000."

The letter attached to the special donation to St. Matthew's House basically said, "I couldn't attend this worthwhile event in person but here is a donation of \$4,000. I know you wanted to

raise at least this much!" What a generous gift! St. Paul's and St. Matthew's House are very grateful but expect that next year when Rob is asked, "What do you hope to raise for St. Matthew's House through the Christmas Carol?" he will probably say, "Let's hope for at least \$8,000!"

## A contemporary pageant



TANYA PACKER  
ST. JOHN'S, ELORA

This year the young people at St. John's in Elora decided to try something a little different for the Christmas pageant! With a little creativity they managed to put two skits and the song/expanded story version of the Friendly Beasts, together in order to maximize the number of young people that could take part.

Our play opened with Holly and Katie discussing the wonderful world of the Internet and how it portrays Christmas through dancing candy canes, singing jingle bells and Santa Claus. Riley and Antonia narrated the true, wonderful meaning of Christmas while other young people actively joined in explaining their part in the Biblical story!

Our band of Angels (Mhari, Anna, Erika, Lindsay and Hilary) sang the joyous news of the birth to our little herd of sheep being lead by Reed and Darren our Shepherds and their faithful sheepdog that protected Baby Jesus, Spencer. Our sheep (Delaney, Mimeo, Steve and little Tori) were very excited to share their wool with Baby Jesus!

Gabriel (Gavin) announced very boldly the great news to our Wise people, played by Maggie, Michaela and Izzy! Their talking Camels were Laura B., Bianca and Stacey.

Joseph (Curtis) and Mary (Calee) arrived with their donkeys (Conner, Erin, little Elsa and little Madison) and watched proudly as each Friendly Beast shared in the awe and excitement of the birth of Baby Jesus!

The Doves (Avery and Lisa) cooed Baby Jesus to sleep, while the Spider (John) spun Him a halo of silk! Hanna played our cat that curled at His feet to keep Him warm, while the mice (Laura and Haley) the poorest of all brought Him their love! Erik, our cow shared how he gave up his manager and hay for Baby Jesus.

Even King Herod (Adian) made an appearance to announce his part in the story!

Everyone had a great time from the littlest sheep to the congregation! The pageant ended with the young people singing the expanded version of the Friendly Beasts!

As tradition would have it the small group relaxed for a bit before taking their show on the road to the Wellington Terrace, where they delighted the residence!

## Music is more than notes

HUGH SPENCER  
ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, GUELPH

The first major musical event of the 175th anniversary year at St. George's, Guelph will be held on Saturday, February 17 at 8:00 pm and will feature the combined voices of the Guelph Chamber Choir and St. George's Choir, a total of about sixty singers. This concert will present a variety of choral music, including favourite traditional anthems, like Parry's "I Was Glad", as well as celebratory works by composers of our time.

In this connection, a highlight will be the first performance of a new anthem by renowned Kingston composer, Dr. Mark Sirett—a piece commissioned by St. George's entitled, "Eternal God." We are delighted that this anthem will be published by Boosey and Hawkes in their sacred music series edited by Philip Brunelle.

For six years, Mark Sirett served as Organist/Choirmaster at St.

George's Cathedral, Kingston, during which time the Girl Choristers under his direction won the 1996 CBC Choral Competition in the church choir category. Dr. Sirett is currently the Artistic Director of the Cantabile Choirs of Kingston, an award winning multi-choir educational program that records and tours internationally. He won the International Jury Award at the Cork International Choral Festival in Ireland in 2002.

Dr. Sirett is also an award winning composer with over forty published choral works. His compositions have been performed by some of Canada's leading choirs including the Toronto Children's Chorus, the Amabile Youth Singers, the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir and the Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto.

"We are very much looking forward to the opportunity of joining with a distinguished group like the Guelph Chamber Choir,"

states Dr. Gerald Manning, Organist and Director of Music at St. George's Anglican Church, Guelph. He adds, "I'm also delighted that Mark Sirett was willing to accept a commission for a new anthem. His expressive handling of expressive texts has impressed me for years, and this new piece is a treasure."

The award winning Guelph Chamber Choir, founded in 1980, is conducted by Dr. Gerald Neufeld and the Organist and Director of Music at St. George's is Dr. Gerald Manning, in his 20th year at the church. This programme will include works for unaccompanied choir, for choir and organ, and for choir and brass. Tickets for the concert are available from the church office at 519 822-1366. The admission price is \$20.00 general and \$10.00 for students. Our thanks for concert sponsorship go to The Co-operators and to Patricia and John Rennie.

## The Bishop's Levée

The Bishop's Levée at St. George's, Guelph launches the 175th celebrations

The 175th anniversary celebrations at St. George's, Guelph started New Year's Eve with a bang! At the stroke of midnight, the fireworks in downtown Guelph exploded as carillonneur Don Hamilton played "Auld Lang Syne" on the newly refurbished carillon. Several hardy souls enjoyed the snow free street to stroll and listen to the half hour concert, others sat in the comfort of their cars and others actually celebrated the midnight hour in the cloister of the church.

New Year's Day, Bishop Spence celebrated the Eucharist and delivered a powerful message to a congregation of more than three hundred. The service was followed by the Bishop's Levée at which Bishop Ralph and Carol Spence with rector of St. George's, Tom Greene, welcomed the community to St. Georges.

"We had prepared for two hundred and we estimate that there were

between three and four hundred at the levée," according to Lloyd and Eleanor Hicks, co-chairs of the organizing committee for the event. People attended from throughout the diocese to join in the first day of St. Georges 175th Anniversary celebrations.

Historical photos dating from 1832 are displayed in Mitchell Hall. Portraits of all ten clergy that call St. George's their ministerial home are also displayed.

"That was a great party; maybe we should have a levée every week," joked Duncan Macdonald, a long time St. George's parishioner whose great grandfather, Archdeacon Alexander Dixon, was one of the first clergy.

The carillon concert and the levée began a year-long series of events celebrating the 175th anniversary. A complete schedule of events is available from St. George's web site at [www.saintgeorge.ca](http://www.saintgeorge.ca) or by calling (519) 822-1366.

## St. Cuthbert's, Oakville



CHRISTMAS EVE - Like many churches, the Christmas service that is 'growing' is the 4:30 pm Children's Eucharist. This year Cuthbert's KIDS presented the story of the birth of Christ in dramatic form to a filled church. Aaron Orear, a Divinity student from Trinity College, wrote and directed the play.



FAMILY CHRISTMAS PARTY - Members of St. Cuthbert's in Oakville met for their annual Christmas party where the festivities included tree ornament making, pizza and a visit from our friends at Reptile Party who shared with the group a whole collection of snakes, lizards and spiders! It was a wonderful, if not unusual, way to begin our celebrations of Christmas.

# The true meaning of Christmas at St. Michael's



**SUE CRAWFORD**  
ST. MICHAEL'S, HAMILTON

On one of the streets in Hamilton, a lonely sign stuck on a front lawn announced, without lights or gaudy decorations, "Keep Christ in Christmas." Yes, we need more signs like this. Recently a friend told me of a teacher in the

public school system who was reading a story to her students about a birthday. In an effort to stimulate the children to make connections to their lives she asked them whose birthday was shortly to be celebrated. Not one child could think of the answer the teacher was looking for. It will not be long be-

fore all that Christmas will mean to children is Santa Claus, presents and shopping!

**Tangible gifts**

I was feeling particularly depressed this Christmas because I am no longer in a position to buy big expensive gifts for my family.

Then I saw that sign. What had I been thinking? What is Christmas? What is the true meaning of Christmas? Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus. Christmas is family and friends; getting in touch with those with whom we have lost contact over the year. Exchanging gifts is just a small part.

God gave us the gift of his son to show His love for us. Somehow the tradition of exchanging gifts has escalated into a giant retail frenzy. But do we need tangible gifts? We have the greatest gift that anyone could ever want right in our hearts, love and the power to give of ourselves.

**Impressing our children**

Perhaps the only way to impress on our children the true meaning of Christmas is to convince them that they have the ability to give something that does not come in a huge box with a large bow and fancy, curly ribbons. I believe we have created this atmosphere at St. Michael's for our children and youth. On Christmas Eve at the family service at St. Michael's a cast of more than 25 children, several teen and many adult assistants presented to the congregation a visual and musical version of the gospel. They gave their time, their voices and mostly their talents. Angels of

all sizes and shapes and shepherd boys enacted the scenes like pros.

**What Christmas is really about**

The Christmas story was narrated by Paul Clarke and Mathew O'Connor. Major speaking parts were confidently portrayed by Matthew McDonald playing John the Baptist and Kelsey Fedus playing Angel Gabriel. Other children took turns with smaller speaking parts. Solos by Christy Charters, Carrie Charters, Matthew McDonald, Kelsey Fedus, Sarah McDonald and Laura Robson added to the presentation. Anne Young accompanied on her guitar.

The entire production was overseen by our Parish Kids co-ordinator Janine Charters with tremendous support from her husband Terry. The entire congregation was inspired by the event. St. Michael's would like to thank St. Christopher's Anglican Church, Burlington for once again loaning us their donkey.

As I quickly snapped pictures of the children, I realized that this is what Christmas is all about. I saw it in the faces of the little angels, the shepherds and the feeling they gave in the finale as they all sang exuberantly, "Go tell it on the Mountain." Even the smallest child's voice could be heard. Our children gave the gift of themselves and at the same time discovered the true meaning of Christmas.

## Two great parish events sell out



Vito Marzoli, one of the event planners, serves up the roast pork.

**SUE CRAWFORD**  
ST. MICHAEL'S, HAMILTON

St. Michael's Parish tried something new this year for a social event: A Pig Roast. On Saturday November 18 at 7:00 am a galvanized metal trailer arrived in the parking lot. Inside two fat pigs lay on spits. Once connected to the propane the long processing of barbecuing started. The event didn't start as a fund raiser. However, over \$1500 was raised for the fundraising budget. The organizers, Vito Marzoli, Gina Newhall and Charlie Holman were really looking for an evening of fun and friendship. But at the last minute more tickets were sold and the room was filled to capacity on the night of the Roast.

Participants could arrive any time between 4:00 pm and 7:00 pm. They enjoyed great fellowship sitting and talking together and savouring the barbecued pig and other delicious food that was served.

**Lunch with Santa draws even bigger crowds**

Lunch with Santa at St. Michael's has always been a big success. It is an excellent opportunity for families to join together in fellowship and food. It is a wonderful chance for grandparents to show off their grandchildren and families if they are not already members of the parish. The event was held on the first Sunday in December following the 10:00 am service. Even parishioners without children or

grandchildren love to attend. To coincide with our 50th anniversary celebrations we had a 50's theme this year. Members of the parish youth dressed in 50's style to act as hosts and hostesses. The small ticket fee covered admission, hot dogs, pizza, chili (regular and vegetarian), veggies and ice cream sundaes. Loot bags are filled with neat items for Santa to give out at the end. The tickets were then placed in a basket and many lucky children left with a great prize. The event was sponsored by the Parish Kids ministry under Janine Charters and a cast of 'thousands.' As with all St. Michael's events, everyone gave of their time and pitched in to make the event a success.

**SERVERS' FEST**

Saturday, February 24, 2007  
Christ's Church Cathedral, Hamilton  
For Servers of ALL ages

Join us for Fun, Fellowship, Workshops and Worship

Registration: 9:30 am  
Program: 10:00 am - 3:30 pm  
\$10 per person (lunch provided)

Please register with your parish's server contact

For information  
Christyn Perkons: 905-527-1316 (ext. 460)  
christyn.perkons@niagara.anglican.ca

Registration Deadline: February 14, 2007

**Calling all Anglicans**

Across Canada,  
Anglicans just like you  
are making a difference  
by providing assistance to  
children and families affected by  
the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa.

We're calling on you to support the  
Partnership for Life Campaign for as little as \$10 a month.

Primate's World Relief and Development Fund  
Sign up now at [www.pwrdf.org/lifetime](http://www.pwrdf.org/lifetime),  
or contact PWRDF toll-free at 1-866-308-7973.

**PARTNERSHIP FOR LIFE  
AIDS PWRDF**

# OUTREACH

Niagara Anglican - February 2007



## Help is just a neighbour away

**DENISE ARKELL**  
NEIGHBOUR TO NEIGHBOUR, HAMILTON

Love of reading, pride in earning an A on a class test, satisfaction in having aced a job interview, and confidence in knowing exactly how to find decent housing. These are some of the everyday expressions conveyed among the people who walk in and out of the doors at Neighbour to Neighbour Centre.

It's a place where immediate problems are adeptly handled with emergency food, supplies for newborn babies and one-time subsidies to prevent utilities from being cut off.

When the short-term needs are taken care of, long-term solutions are tackled, such as securing a better job for mom and dad, improving learning for their children and providing information about other community supports.

### Twenty percent live in poverty

For many people, the Dickensian image of poor people with scowling faces and children tagging along behind their inadequate caregivers in ragged, dirty clothes, and rotting teeth is a stereotype that has yet to be shaken.

On any given day, a tour through Neighbour to Neighbour reveals a far different picture, of loving families and hard-working, decent people whose goals are to overcome their current financial struggles.

To be sure, recently released data does suggest that the poverty rate among marginalized groups is much higher. An estimated 50 per cent of recent immigrants, 37 per cent of natives and 34 per cent of visible minorities live in poverty here.

However, of the 95,605 people living in poverty in Hamilton—20 percent of the city's population of 483,150—very few fit the stereotype.

Poverty is the result of myriad circumstances: illness, disability, minimal education, resettlement and family strife, to name a few of the contributors.

### Addressing the roots of poverty

Neighbour to Neighbour Centre volunteers in the Resource Counselling Program understand these social and personal dilemmas well. Each new client to the Centre initially meets with a counsellor, to dissect their current situation and help address any immediate legal, financial, housing, educational or parenting issues. Some of the concerns can be handled in-house. Neighbour to Neighbour Centre administers the one-time utility subsidy program called Share-The-Warmth, provides about 15 sacks full of baby supplies to newborn babies each month, and hands out blankets donated by local knitters and crocheters, as needed. Often, resource counsellors also make referrals to other community services and programs that are better equipped to handle specific issues.

Where some may think poor people just need to get a job to pull themselves out of their quandary, statistics and anecdotal evidence proves otherwise.

To that end, Neighbour to Neighbour Centre has addressed employment deficiencies with its Job Finding Club, which is funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

Three-week long workshops held each month over the past year have taught a total of 166 registrants how to: hone their job search skills, put their best abilities forward in presentable resumes and conduct themselves well in job interviews.

Its success is measured from the number of people who found work afterwards and typically the program does well by its stu-

dents. Among the recent spate of Job Finding Club graduates, 94 percent, or 156 registrants, found work.

It comes as a surprise to many that the working poor are the second largest user group at Neighbour to Neighbour Centre, comprising about 23 percent of its clients. Single parent led families are the largest and disability is third highest.

It's the proliferation of meagre minimum wage work, currently at \$7.75 per hour jumping to \$8 on Feb. 1, 2007, that keeps income levels among the working poor low.

At that rate of pay and despite putting in fulltime hours of 40 or more each week, the money made sits well below the national poverty line.

### Foodbank is experiencing an influx

According to 2004 figures from Statistics Canada, a single person living in a city the size of Hamilton would need \$17,515 to meet their basic needs. As a result, 46 percent of single people living in Hamilton are poor, as are 56 per cent of single-parent families. A family of four requires \$32,546 (before taxes) to make ends meet, according to Stats Canada.

It is little wonder that Neighbour to Neighbour's Foodbank has experienced an influx, filling the kitchen cupboards of more than 1,100 households each month with nutritious food.

At Christmas more than 750 families also found a wellspring of spirited support through the Centre's distribution of hampers, which are amply filled with festive food and gifts of toys, hats, mittens and toiletries.

Poverty preys disproportionately on the old and the young in Hamilton. 24 percent of the city's children and a similar percentage of seniors are living in poverty.

To address the former predicament, and help stem the cyclical nature of poverty, Neighbour to Neighbour Centre embarked on an innovative Children's Tutoring Project in September 2003. It operates on the belief that early intervention in learning fosters a better future for children.

The program started with one school on the city's West Mountain, three tutors and 15 children whose reading abilities fell below their grade level. These students are from low-income families where money to pay for extra academic help is just not an option.

Trained volunteers headed into the school three times a week to meet with the Grade 2 and 3 students one-on-one for about 30 minutes each time. The result at the end of that school year was spectacular. Reading scores jumped and word of its success quickly traveled to educators in other area schools.

Currently, with funding from the Halo Foundation, David's Learning Fund and AIC, Neighbour to Neighbour's Children's Literacy Program has expanded into five schools and a total of 55 volunteers meet with 123 students.

### Eradicating poverty in our city

Over the complete span of Neighbour to Neighbour Centre's 20-year history, donors have always been its backbone, carrying thousands upon thousands of residents through tough times with food, information, assistance and guidance; and making Christmas more joyous, summers less stressful, Thanksgiving more bountiful and winters warmer.

The triumvirate of the ongoing support of donors, Neighbour to Neighbour's innovative programs focused on fostering self-sufficiency and the diligence and effort of clients who are determined to improve their circumstances is bound to eradicate poverty in this city. Help is just a neighbour away.



# Where, oh where have they gone?



**MICHAEL PATTERSON**  
DIRECTOR OF EVANGELISM

As I travel across the diocese and beyond, the single most common mantra I hear about why parishes want to initiate an evangelism initiative is because "we have to attract more young people!" The reasons parishes offer as to why this should be a priority are varied. However, as I see it, for a parish to have young people and children in their congregation would be an outward visible sign of health and vitality. Yet more and more parishes are attracting congregations whose average age is well above 50, so it was no surprise to discover that the segment of the Canadian population that is the most under represented in our Anglican pews are people between the ages of 30 and 45. It leaves us scratching our heads to understand why people of this demographic no longer attend our churches and yet we carry on the way we do as if someday all these folks will wake up some Sunday morning and show up at our doors. I think it is safe to say that we have paid little attention to the spiritual, emotional and practical needs of this segment of the population and frankly, there has been little research available for this demographic even if we did want to focus our energies into this segment of the population. That is until now!

The United Church of Canada in conjunction with Environics research released a detailed study in 2006 outlining key attributes of the Church that may or may not

be attractive to people between 30 and 45. They surveyed this segment of the population to discover what was most important to them in their lives, how do they perceive the Church, and what would the Church have to do for them to consider participating in the life of a faith community. This work was specific to the United Church but the results still have significant implications for our Anglican community. If we want to seriously consider evangelizing to this underrepresented portion of our society, then we must listen and learn.

When asked to discuss their values and beliefs, the survey found that by far the most important things to those in the 30-45 age group, who don't already attend church, are their children (74%) and family (71%), followed by friends (34%), their job (27%) and finances (27%). Only (24%) said that faith and religious practice were very important but of this age group 64% did claim some religious affiliation.

Environics found that, perhaps contrary to what is commonly thought, people in this demographic do not identify worship styles or time constraints as prime barriers to joining faith communities. More than anything, it is the perceived content that they think they will find at church that puts them off. The vast majority (73%) believes that "organized religion tells you what to believe" and they say that they would rather work out their belief systems by themselves or with those close to them. This segment believes that churches make life too 'black and white' and although the majority believes in God, they do so in a non-traditional sense. In fact 59% of 30 to 45 year olds said that "if Jesus were alive today, he would not be associated with an organized religion." Half of those surveyed said that the music, im-

ages, and practices they associated with church are 'totally alien to my life and style'.

#### Attendance discussion insights

Discussions regarding organized religion and church attendance solicited a number of interesting insights:

■ Going to church has overtones of duty. If one does not attend there is an uncomfortable feeling of guilt which is difficult to ignore. Church communities project, consciously or not, that to not attend is a sin. Thereby, returning to church carries feelings of a student possibly being reprimanded by the teacher for truancy.

■ The Church is considered judgmental. In the minds of non-attenders, even asking the question about why they do not attend church is perceived as being judgmental. The perception of organized religion has reinforced the feeling that the faithful will be rewarded and the unfaithful will be damned.

■ Intimidation/not belonging is a key obstacle. Even for those who are not defensive about church attendance, there is still a psychological barrier. They worry that they won't fit in. The fear of being judged, not by God, but by the 'regulars' was big issue for people. In many ways, people feel they have to prove they are serious about church attendance before they are fully welcomed. There is clearly a perceived 'clique' within church communities.

■ The physical space and style of service are daunting to many. Participants commented that churches are usually built to inspire and humble and that the worship often reinforces a feeling of superiority and judgment. One participant put it this way: "Churches can be intimidating, they are built that way." For many the style of the clergy can go a long way to either reinforce or

remove these anxieties. A friendly and conversational tone makes all the difference for some people and sends a strong message about the style of the church.

■ Religion has a telling and controlling nature. The perception is that most religion is about being told—it is a one way and one sided delivery of a message. There is no room for dialogue, conversation, or questioning. In this day and age when people are encouraged to express their feelings and views, no matter how different or controversial, the telling style rarely compels. The 30-45 demographic believe that their opinion should matter, they do not like feeling unworthy and they say "I am entitled to my own views."

■ There is a need for spiritual leadership. Despite all the fears of dogma and judgment, many voiced the need for spiritual leadership. They wanted someone not to follow but to be inspired by; someone to challenge them. True leadership is hard to find and they want a spiritual leader who is authentic and accessible and who walks beside and not ahead of his or her community.

#### Choosing a church

When this chosen population segment was asked about what attributes within a faith community would be important for them if they sought to choose a church, the responses fell into three major themes:

■ Achieving personal faith. This would be a place where one could build deep personal relationships in a safe and trusting environment. It would be a community where not only did your opinion matter, but your opinion was sought out and encouraged. This community would offer the possibility of personal transformation and would engage both the emotional and intellectual side of people.

■ Connecting and reaching out. This community would value all ages, it would reach out to the needy, translating one's personal faith into action. It is a community that works for justice and the poor, welcoming everyone. It is a community that respects the earth and the environment.

■ Questing and embracing. This is a spiritual community that encourages questioning and respects the personal freedom and choice of all people. It seeks to build relationships with other traditions and is open to take risks and change its culture. And it celebrates all people, including gays and lesbians.

It is very interesting in this analysis to discover that the nature and role of worship and liturgy does not play a significant role in someone's determination to become a member of a faith community or not.

Much of this data and research is not new to us. What it does is to confirm that there is indeed a deep spiritual yearning in our nation particularly in this 30-45 age segment. It reinforces for us the absolute necessity to reflect and review our ministries and mission in light of the deep spiritual needs that exist. It will mean no longer assuming that these people will find their way to us in some fashion. Instead of "come and find out what we are all about," we have to deliver the message that says "we want to know more about what you are all about—your views, your challenges, and your wisdom." And our parting words should be, "Thanks for coming; if you want to know more, we're here for you!"

Where, oh where, have they gone? They have gone no where. They live with us, and beside us; they work with us and play with us, they laugh with us and cry with us. Now it is up to us to listen and learn and invite them home to a place that they know.

## You want us to assess our parish?



**JIM NEWMAN**  
CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

An excellent Parish Assessment Tool is available free of charge directly from the Diocesan website or the Diocesan Resource Centre. It's designed to be self-guiding, self-documenting and easy to use. If required, assistance is also available free of charge!

Don't be surprised if initially there is some resistance in your parish. Every experience I've ever had with assessment of any kind has been at least a little disconcerting. However it seems to me that clergy and parishioners in Niagara should be much more alarmed if such a process were not available.

#### Mission, Finances and Leadership

The Assessment Tool covers three critically important areas: mission, finances, and leadership.

The first section focuses on Parish Mission, and asks assessors to score criteria in the following categories:

- Growth Potential In The Community
- Location, Access And Parking
- Vision For Ministry
- Age Of The Congregation
- Average Weekly Attendance
- Outreach
- Buildings

The second section reviews Parish Finances, once again asking assessors to score criteria in the following categories:

- Current Operations
- Sources of Income
- Donor Base
- Identifiable Givers

Note that the emphasis in this section is on trends, and absolutely no confidential details are revealed.

#### Parish Profile

The resulting scores in these two areas are plotted on a Parish Profile Matrix which indicates where a parish ranks on a scale between 'low mission, low resources' and 'high mission, high resources.' A directional arrow is added to the plot to indicate whether the

current trend of the parish is increasing or decreasing, and to form a baseline indicator for future comparisons.

#### Clergy and Lay Leadership

The final section is about clergy and lay leadership. Some parts of this section may require confidentiality as it investigates such areas as:

- History of Parish Leadership.
- Ability of the leadership team to meet parish challenges.
- Energy and commitment levels.
- Concerns about workload and burnout.
- Resolving Conflict.
- Specific skills required by the job.

#### The assessment team

The Parish Corporation should take the lead in bringing about parish assessment, and it is recommended that they invite members of the congregation to participate. All should be made to understand that their participation in the realization of the new vision is not only welcome but expected.

For more information about Parish Assessment, contact the Diocesan Resource Centre at 905-527-1316.

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# Deeply challenging time Voices from the fringes



**PETER WALL**  
DEAN - CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

In the second Chapter of Matthew, we read, "they set out; and, there, ahead of them, went the star... until it stopped over the place where the child was." The Kings, the wise men, the magi—call them what you will—were on a mission. They had a job to do, and they had some directions as to how to do it. Their directions were fairly simple: Follow a star, pay a child homage. One can say the same about much of scripture: Go somewhere, do something, do it well, remember where you came from, remember who you are. Move from one way of being to another way of being. That, it seems to me, is also the story of the Church and is our story; otherwise, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and Epiphany are all moot!

Leo the Great, a fifth century Pope, wrote "The gifts of God are multiplied, and we in our time experience all that the first believers did. For though the gospel account tells us only of the days when three men, untaught by prophetic preaching or the testimonies of the Law, came from the distant East in order to know God, yet we see the same thing happening now even more clearly and on a far larger scale in the enlightenment of all who are called."

#### A Church in mission for others

Indeed, the gifts of Epiphany do become strengthened as we live out our mission as church. Our Lutheran brothers and sisters of The Eastern Synod have adopted the phrase "a church in mission for others" as part of their renewed vision. They further give legs to this statement with phrases like, "Passionate about our relationships with God, in Christ, work in partnerships with others, reflect the diversity of our society, generous, engaged by challenging questions."

We, too, I believe, need to be a church in mission for others. Mission will always imply motion, an outward focus, and being concerned with others. If we use those kinds of measures, and are brave enough to

put ourselves under that kind of microscope, how do we fare? In what ways do our liturgies, our gatherings, our deliberations, our decision making processes, our governance structures help further our mission?

To use one of the significant issues on Anglican radar at the moment, how do we let being in mission inform and invigorate our discussions, as opposed to trying to dictate morals? It seems to me that a fresh look at our foundations—scripture, tradition, and reason—a fresh look which is as free as possible of the polemic, from all sides, of the last decade, a fresh look might just show that the endeavour of the Church has less to do with morals than it does with mission. From one perspective, at least, morals are always specific to a time and place, to a particular set of circumstances. Mission, on the other hand, moves outward to people in whatever place or position they find themselves.

#### Mission will transform us

My customary interest in this column is liturgy, so how do our liturgies further our mission? In what ways do we fashion liturgies which are always outward looking and include the other, the stranger. In what ways can our liturgies reflect the direction and the motion of those Kings from long ago who followed a star. It seems to me that the longer we hang on to our cherished past without looking at a promising future, the longer we excuse the unacceptable theology of many of our hymns and prayers as part of our tradition without looking critically at how they inform our mission. The longer we focus our attention on the remnant which might remain as opposed to the many who want to come in, the more potential, I believe, for the mission to be lost.

These are deeply challenging times, and we can only meet them by asking deeply challenging questions. We must do so absolutely committed to everyone in the church, of all opinions and positions. If, however, we turn inward too much, the Light of this Epiphany-tide will be hidden from others and might even be extinguished for lack of air. By turning outward in mission, the Light of Christ will shine brightly in the world and will, indeed, further the mission of the Church.

The Magi of long ago went on a journey, held to their mission, and were staggeringly transformed. May it be so for all of us this Epiphany.

#### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

wing debates at the supper table, unnerving my parents with the worry of permanent family rifts. Of course at that stage in our lives, our opinions were naively formed and probably pretty humorous in their idealism to any outside observer. There is no doubt that we've hurt one another at times along the way. But speaking for myself, our disagreements have also been an important growing experience.

Since we both moved out, went away to school, and began our adult lives, our disagreements have taken on a different quality. My brother has made a serious and thoughtful effort to read some of the books and articles that I have found personally formational and has then made a point of talking them over with me.

#### Atlas Shrugged

And this past Advent, for my fun reading, I decided to pick up one of his recommendations and give it a try. He passed along to me *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand, one of his favourite pieces of fiction.

I had no trouble figuring out what he found so enthralling about the book. It's a page-turner, filled with adventure, mystery and romance. And it's philosophical and

But there is an amazing thing which fiction, the telling of stories, has the power to do. We tell, write, and share stories with one another, and we find that there is indeed a deep and vibrant common ground at the core of our humanity. We find ourselves looking through the eyes, tangled in the thoughts, walking in the shoes, of characters to whom we assumed we could not relate. We get dropped into unfamiliar situations and circumstances and find our perspective shaken. Perhaps that is why we also find, at the heart of our faith, a God we come to know primarily through the telling of stories, even stories of the weirdest characters and the wildest circumstances imaginable.

In fact, although *Atlas Shrugged* denies the existence of a supreme being and reserves some of its harshest criticism for what it calls "the mystics" (in the book this refers to religious philosophies that deny the use of our rational faculties as a means of gaining knowledge) there are parts of the book, glimmers of the characters, that provide piercing and hopeful insights into the tenets of our own Gospel.

To begin with, the characters in Rand's novel mercilessly expose a lot of the good deeds that we do for others, a lot of the welfare systems of care and service for those in

**NO PERSON IS AN ISLAND... we find our deepest identity as persons in relationship with others.**

thought-provoking to boot.

The thing is that the philosophy and the provocative thoughts that it propounds are dramatically different than anything to which I would have ever subscribed. For those of you who are not familiar with Rand's work, let me give you a quick low-down. Rand is what you might label a hardcore right-wing capitalist. *Atlas Shrugged* is a novel about Dagny Taggart, the vice president of operations of a transcontinental railway, and a group of her peers.

This group of people, one by one, decide to go on strike from society as a means of saying "no" to the ways in which that society is set-up, as they see it, to punish those who are most productive and best-suited to the business of making money. They advocate a laissez-faire government, believing that the tax system is an unjust looting of their money to support those whose only basis for deserving help is need. If the producers of society are left to do their job, they believe, then everybody in the long run benefits. Robin Hood is the fairytale that most offends them, and one member of their group in fact takes on the job of being the anti-Robin Hood—robbing the poor to feed the rich, or as they would see it, taking back what is rightfully theirs. The motto of this elite group is "I will not live for the needs of any other person, nor will I expect any other person to live for my needs."

#### Shared responsibility

Needless to say, this philosophy runs directly counter to a lot of what I believe our Gospel holds to be true: That we all bear responsibility for the welfare of one another, that we cannot love and serve God without loving and serving the poor, the lonely, the hungry, the sick, the disenfranchised. That service is a significant part of our calling as followers of Jesus, the one who taught us how to serve, and that in fact, this service leads us down the road of knowing a full and joyful life. That sacrifice is a part of living in loving, committed faithful relationships. That no person is an island but that in fact we find our deepest identity as persons in relationship with others.

need, as being supremely flawed in that they unwittingly maintain the status quo. They are set up in a way that keeps the needy needy.

In fact, the model of Jesus shows us one who was fearless in empowering those who had been enslaved, outcast, dismissed. In practice, however, we have had a condemnable tendency to be uncomfortable with the freedom our Saviour offers us.

Along those same lines, the most endearing quality of Dagny and her cohorts is their inability to be any less than they are, their utter refusal to concede to mediocrity in order to appease the powers that be.

#### Characteristics of Jesus

Again, surprising as it is to discover, the characters take on characteristics and stances that are reflective of Jesus at his most infuriating and wonderful in our Gospel accounts. Although Jesus is classically labelled as a martyr, dying for the sin of the world, he can also very much be seen as going to the cross for refusing to be, or to stand for, anything less than the truth of the powerful, creative, transformative life God calls us to know, proclaim and inhabit.

Ultimately, as Rand's core thesis is this startling claim: humankind is heroic. While she is neglectful and impatient with the ways humanity is also broken and mortal, this claim too stands as a reminder of a central part of our faith that has typically made Christians uncomfortable. God inhabited our humanity, and in doing so showed us the beautiful and life-giving potential of who we are invited to be. We are saved, not by transcending our humanity, but as we most deeply learn what it is to dwell in that humanity.

I could go on about the book, about its strengths and weaknesses, what inspired me and what enraged me. But I'll bring this now back to where I started instead. A vibrant faith requires openness to voices from the fringes, or even the outside, of where we believe we stand.

As Christians maybe an appropriate New Year's resolution would be to get into a conversation with someone with whom you don't see eye to eye, or read a good book!




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# Getting to know you

THE REVEREND CANON ELAINE HOOKER Veritas Labyrinth Facilitator

FRAN DARLINGTON  
HONORARY - ST. JAMES, GUELPH

Ancient humans developed patterns of meditative walking to reflect on life's twists and turns, to search for healing of memories and a new way forward. Called labyrinths, some in Egypt and Greece are over 4000 years old. Others have been found in Scandinavia, India, Peru and the American Southwest.

Unlike a maze, a labyrinth has no tricks, blind alleys or dead ends. Known in almost every religion, the patterns and circuit numbers may vary, but there is always only one path, one way in and out—you cannot get lost.

In the Middle Ages, Christians adopted the labyrinth as a metaphor for "the one true path to Christ," a substitute for pilgrimage, a questing journey in hope of coming closer to God. The labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral, France, dates from the twelfth century. Eleven circuits link into a single path, divided into quadrants forming a cross. This pattern has been revived, as the modern Christian community seeks to enable the human search for peace in chaos, healing of body and mind, and like those long-ago pilgrims, a deeper relationship with God.

## Niagara's Lady of the Labyrinth

In this Diocese, the Reverend Canon Elaine Hooker has been studying and leading the labyrinth ministry for several years, and continues to offer guided walks. Committed to this ministry, Elaine explains "What I want people to understand is we bring who we are to it. There is no magic, no superstition. As in all prayer, we come expecting nothing, and expecting everything."

Elaine discovered labyrinths while visiting her brother in Vancouver. Like most clergy, Elaine loves books, and finds it difficult to resist yet another purchase. Despite deciding "I'll never need another book," and walking firmly past a tempting display, Elaine found herself turning back to purchase a copy of *Journey to Avalon* by Jean Shinoda Bolen. Elaine's childhood was "full of stories of Camelot, Avalon, Glastonbury and the Holy Grail, so I've always been interested." Bolen's pilgrimage included a stop at Chartres Cathedral, where she removed chairs from the labyrinth to walk it. Bolen's journal caught readers' attention, particularly Jean Huston, who "brought the labyrinth to North America."

When her brother died in a sailing accident, the memorial service was at St. Paul's Church, West Vancouver. After the service, following a sign to the parish labyrinth, Elaine walked it for the first time. "I'd read about them for years, but my first full walk was there, on a full size Chartres replica. I've been doing it ever since, one way or another."

North America's best-known labyrinth is at Grace Episcopal Cathedral in San Francisco, where the Reverend Canon Lauren Artress leads retreats and trains labyrinth facilitators at Veriditas, a non-profit organization dedicated to sharing the healing powers of the labyrinth. Elaine has studied there with Canon Artress.

In 1994, "I began putting down masking tape labyrinths. You begin in the middle. It's not that difficult! In

the mid-1990s, St. George's, St. Catharines, purchased a forty-foot (canvas) labyrinth, which now lives in my trunk, as they have given me gracious permission to take it wherever it's needed."

Elaine comments, "Wherever you see a revival of interest in Celtic Spirituality, you will see the labyrinth arise again." She introduced the Reverend Canon Paddy Doran (then Rector of St. Paul's, Westdale) to the labyrinth, and "he picked it up and ran with it!" offering it monthly. A staff group from St. Joseph's Hospital, Hamilton, walked the labyrinth there, and two labyrinths have now been established at the Hospital, with Elaine as a facilitator.

Elaine designs retreats with or without the labyrinth, and says her favourite response from participants is "I never thought about it that way."

## Saving grace

In the early 1980s, studying at Toronto's Centre for Christian Studies, Elaine focused on Pastoral Care, Social Issues, Experiential Education and Feminine Theology. "I was there because I wanted to be an educator. They sent me for career counselling, because they thought I was making a mistake—I should be in the ordination stream." Elaine agreed to explore the option, but "I didn't want to be one of those funny people in black. I grew up in a thoroughly modern home, where ministers were people who couldn't get a decent job, but there was a saving grace. My mother was an artist, and my father both an inventor and a musician, so the house was filled with colour and music." Between those influences, and family near Guelph, where her grandfather grew flowers, "therein lie the seeds of my spirituality."

As a child in Hamilton, Elaine accepted a friend's invitation to come to All Saints' Church: "But we sang 'God sees the little sparrow fall.' I asked the teacher why God didn't save the sparrow, but was told 'You're too young to understand.'" Elaine is emphatic: "Never tell a child they're too young to understand."

When Elaine was ten, her mother died, and she lived with her grandparents in Arthur for four years. "My grandmother had no use for the church, but every Sunday night we had what I now know as Compline. We had readings, never from the Bible but poets, Shakespeare, whatever she thought would give a proper education in English." Elaine also remembers her grandmother deciding "I should be confirmed. [After] the first class, my Grandmother asked, 'What was all that about?' When I told her, she said, 'Obviously the man's an idiot.'" The "idiot" became Niagara's Executive Officer, the revered Homer Ferris!

On November 30, 1976, Elaine was at Grace Church, St. Catharines for the ordination of Mary Lucas and Bev Shanley, among the first women ordained to the priesthood in the Anglican Church of Canada. "It was a very exciting time; the change drew me."

Ordained Deacon in 1988, Elaine was Assistant Curate at St. James', Dundas, before becoming Rector of St. Alban's, Beamsville, in 1992.

## Family matters

Leaving home at sixteen, Elaine got a

job demonstrating wallpaper all over Hamilton. At eighteen she married Gordon Hooker, and, with their four children, Stephen, Edith, Jeanette and Melanie, worshipped at St. Alban's, Hamilton. Gordon unloaded oil tankers for thirty-five years, always in the same yard but, as company ownership changed, for seven different companies. Now grandmother of five, and happily anticipating the birth of her first great grandchild, she says, "My grandchildren are just my joy and delight; They help to keep me sane!"

Despite death's frequent appearance in her life—her other brother at sixteen, her sister as a 'blue baby,' her Father when she was twenty-four, and twin baby grand-daughters—Elaine accepts that "death is very much part of life," but explains "I come from a family that died young. I passed that a while ago! I have an overall plan for my life, to end up in Beamsville, return to my first love, art, and be buried there next to my husband and baby granddaughters."

## "I really want to live until I die!"

She then proclaims, "I really want to live until I die! I really feel good about what I've done with my life. I figure I need to live 150 years more, or to come back!" Elaine describes her current acting career as a student at Brock University: "I'm slowly learning about the use of drama." In January, Elaine qualified as a Reiki Practitioner: "I'm very interested in how energy works, but not planning a profession. The energy force is what we call God. In your heart and body, you decide how to use it."

Elaine's enthusiasm is contagious: "I like to teach and research different projects and produce creative programs." Her program on heresy was inspired by Dan Brown's book, *The Da Vinci Code*: "The whole *Da Vinci Code* thing, all the churches trying to deny it—the search for the Holy Grail is a search for nurture, wholeness. We're all searching for the Grail!" She also does dialogues on Galileo, Martin Luther and others.

She reads, "Oh, read, read, read! I don't have enough books, I read everywhere and everything! I'm now reading about the Goddess, the Divine Feminine, including [the Reverend Canon] Lucy Reid's new book, *She Changes Everything*. I want to go on learning."

## Explore the labyrinth

The Oxford Dictionary defines a labyrinth as a "complicated irregular structure... hard to find way through... without guidance." Doesn't that sound like life itself? With Elaine Hooker's dedicated and enthusiastic ministry as a guide, everyone in this Diocese has the opportunity to use this ancient tool to make a modern pilgrimage to new understanding of their life and to new closeness with the Creator of all marvels.

Thus says the Lord, "Stand at the crossroads and look, and ask for ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16, NRSV).

Anyone interested in contacting Elaine can call her at 905-643-7095 or send an email to ladyelaine7095@yahoo.ca.



Where two or more are gathered...

## Prayer For Our Church

... in my name, I am there...

Matthew 18:20

Join together on Sundays at 7:00 pm

Feb. 18 St. Hilda's, Oakville 905-827-3711

Mar. 18 Grace, Milton 905-878-2411

Mar. 25 St. Paul's, Dunnville 905-774-6005

Apr. 15 Good Shepherd, St. Catharines  
905-934-9672

May 6 St. Peter's, Hamilton 905-544-7710

Prayer for National Synod and its delegates  
Praise for our loving Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
Fellowship with our brothers and sisters

Sundays at  
7:00  
pm

For more information contact  
St. Peter's 905-544-7710  
or www.essentialsniagara.ca



# EVENTS IN THE DIOCESE

Niagara Anglican - February 2007

## Men's Lunch

St. Cuthbert's, Oakville

Good food, community and a break at the end of the week! Sharkey's Restaurant, East Dorval Mall. All welcome!

Cost: Price of meal

February 2, 12:00 pm

## Candlemas

The Parish of St. Luke, Hamilton

It's the last service of Christmas and Saint Luke's is having another of its high festival Evensongs as we celebrate the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary. The service starts at seven with the Angelus and gets really going with the acolytes and servers, the cantors and contrix, the clergy, the guest choir, and the entire congregation processing around the inside of the church each with their own candle. Then its billowing incense with formal ritual with sights and sounds only Saint Luke's can achieve. It all leads up to the grand finale, Solemn Benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament. We all get to unwind afterwards in the parish hall at the reception and relive the whole event. Everyone is welcome and we ask that visiting clergy in mufti make their presence known to the head thurifer or the ceremonarius so we can honour your presence.

February 4, 7:00 pm

## Parish Vestry

Grace, Waterdown

Archdeacon Michael Bird will chair the annual meeting this year, following the retirement of Canon Laurie Duby.

February 4, 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm

## Dinner and Trivia Night

St. George's, St. Catharines

Join us for a fun filled evening of good food and team trivia. Everyone is welcome. Teams will be formed during the event. Please call the office for tickets at 905-682-9232.

February 9, 6:30

## The Great Bobolini

St. Alban the Martyr, Hamilton

A magic show that will dazzle you and your family. Draws for both the adults and children. There will be a 50-50 Draw as well. Only a limited amount of tickets will be sold for this event. Don't miss out! Call 905-549-9636 for your tickets. No reserved seating. Light refreshments will be served prior to the event.

February 10, 7:00 pm

Cost: \$10.00 per adult, \$5.00 per child

## Viva Espana

St. Luke, Burlington

An evening of Spanish Entertainment featuring the flamenco group Solazul. Evening includes a glass of sherry and tapas with a cash bar and cash Spanish Desserts.

February 10, 8:00 pm

## Family Winter Retreat

Children and Family Ministries, Hamilton

A weekend gathering for families that allows lots of time for family fun as well as workshops and large gathering times, creative worship, hearty meals and evening campfires.

February 16, 7:00 pm until February 18, 2:00 pm

## Dinner and Salsa Dance

The Parish of St. Luke, Hamilton

It's Carnival time and Saint Luke's is having a Dinner and Salsa Dance. Dress up carnival style and compete to win prizes for the best costume! No bar so the kids can come, no dress code so the teenagers can feel comfortable and the music just a dull roar so you can still talk. Proceeds will go to the Saint Luke's Neighbourhood Assistance Program.

Cost: \$5 per adult, \$3 per child under age 10

February 17, 6:00 pm

## Dinner to Remember

St. Columba, St. Catharines

Another very enjoyable dinner experience in

Iona Hall followed by surprise entertainment. All dinner preparations will be done by our very own talented men. Remember to watch for tickets as reservations will be limited.

Cost: \$15.00 per person

February 17, 6:00 pm

## Mardi Gras Party

The Parish of St. Luke, Hamilton

It's the Mardi Gras otherwise known as Shrove Tuesday and Saint Luke's is inviting the neighbourhood in for the most delicious pancakes, sausages and tea or coffee. To really make it a festival, we'll also be having another one of our famous Salsa Dance Nights.

February 20, 4:00 pm - 12:00 am

## Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

St. Columba, St. Catharines

Join us on Shrove Tuesday for the best pancakes in town.

Cost: \$5.00 per adult, \$3.00 per child

February 20, 4:30 pm - 6:00 pm

## Fish and Chips Dinner

The Parish of St. Luke, Hamilton

Ash Wednesday services all finish off with the traditional Fish and Chips Dinner after the evening service. We are toddling off to the Fisherman's Pier Tavern to stuff ourselves and cheer each other up with our usual great times. It's a family place and the young people are always included.

February 21

## Lenten Study

St. Cuthbert's, Oakville

Come explore the book of Job in an interac-

tive bible study with group discussion supported by video resources and a chance to build community. A seven week session co-facilitated by the Reverend Joseph Asselin and the Reverend Audrey Conard beginning Ash Wednesday and continuing until Wednesday of Holy Week. Everyone is welcome.

Cost: Donation for materials

February 21, 7:30 pm

## Social Night

St. Columba, St. Catharines

Another night of cards, fun, laughter, snacks and prizes. All couples and singles are welcome.

Cost: \$2.00 per person

February 24, 7:00 pm

## Servers' Fest

Children and Family Ministries, Hamilton

Join servers of all ages from across the Diocese at Christ's Church Cathedral for a celebration of your serving ministry. The day will include workshops for all ages, worship, fun, lunch and snacks. Please register through your parish server's contact or contact Christyn Perkons for more information at 905-527-1316 (ext. 460) or christyn.perkons@niagara.anglican.ca

Cost: \$10.00 per person

February 24, 9:30 - 3:30

## Movie and Lunch Fest

The Parish of St. Luke, Hamilton

The Young People's Group will be having a movie/lunch fest at the Mission to Seafarers for their friends and acquaintances. It is right after the morning service and will have lots of food. Let us know how many you will be bringing.

February 25, 9:30 am

Looking for a **PARISH MEETING, PARTY, FUNDRAISER** or **YOUTH EVENT** in the Niagara Diocese?

Find a complete list of the events and more at  
[www.niagara.anglican.ca](http://www.niagara.anglican.ca)

# Christmas Day is a Christian holiday



**GRAHAME STAP**  
RECTOR - ST. ALBAN'S, GLEN WILLIAMS

During the months of October, November, and December my wife and I searched for an outdoor manger complete with Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus. We wanted to put it on the small balcony on the front of our house, after all we are Christians and we do celebrate the birth of the Son of God. We also understand that others in this wonderful country of Canada are of different faiths and

do not celebrate Christmas for the same reasons we do. This does not make us or them right or wrong; it just makes us different. All of us have the right to celebrate in the way that fulfils the greatest need within us.

Both of us were really bothered by the response we got. We were told in some cases that the store we were in did not carry nativity sets of any kind. Some carried small sets. None of the stores we tried, and we tried many, carried an outdoor set. We even stopped at a house where a very attractive nativity was displayed to ask the owners where they purchased their set. They were very nice and gave us the name of the store. Two days later we went, full of hope, to purchase a set and were told, "We haven't carried one of those in three years."

I think that perhaps the time has come for those of us that believe that the most important value in life is the love of God to stand and be counted.

Hanukkah, the Jewish holiday celebrating the oil, enough for one day, lasting eight days, begins, this year, on December 16 and ends eight days later on the December 23. Feast days or holidays scared to other faiths come at other times of the year according to their calendar. Moslem and Jewish calendars work on 12 month basis consisting of a 355-day year and coincide occasionally with Christian celebrations. However the December 25 is, and has been since the fourth century, Christmas Day. Surely Christians can have one day in December and three days in the spring to call

our own and be acknowledged by others.

Of course there are people in Canada who refer to themselves as either atheists or agnostics; although this saddens me as a person, I must acknowledge their right to not believe. However, they in turn perhaps should acknowledge our right to believe, especially since the Supreme Court in 2002 decided that atheism and agnosticism are belief systems as is religion and therefore religion cannot be excluded from society. Perhaps it is time for us to say to stores that carry other symbols of Christmas and do not carry symbols of our Christian faith that we are not going to buy anything else from them until they do. And perhaps we should say to our government that continue to cut social programs that they will not get

our vote in the next election unless they start thinking of the dignity of every human being as being important within society and that anyone living below the poverty level in this land of such abundance is unacceptable.

Christian values are not outlandish or demanding. We only ask for equality and acceptance for who we are within society; but this won't happen if we stay quiet and accept being relegated to the back benches of society. 43 percent of all Canadians have attended church in the last six months not including holidays, funerals and weddings and 82 percent of Canadians say they believe in God.

I am not militant in any way but maybe there is a reason why Onward Christian Soldiers is still in our hymn book.



# Anglican essentials revisited



**JOHN BOTHWELL**  
RETIRED ARCHBISHOP OF NIAGARA

In a story entitled Pigeon Feathers, John Updike depicts a young man who encountered doubt about God for the first time and one night in bed conducted an experiment. Although it felt frightening, he lifted his hands high into the darkness and begged Christ to touch them, believing that even the faintest, quickest touch would be enough to last a lifetime. So his hands waited in the air as it moved through his fingers, but eventually he returned them beneath the covers feeling uncertain whether he had been touched or not, for would not Christ's touch be infinitely gentle?

To me, that young man is typical of a lot of modern people—the ones who long for "spirituality" and yet have a lot of questions about traditional beliefs. Christians who are committed and confident may wonder about people like this, but perhaps it is the over confident who should beware, for as Madeleine l'Engle has pointed out, "those who believe they believe in God without passion in their hearts and anguish of mind, without uncertainty, doubt, and even at times without despair, believe only in the idea of God, not in God himself."

### Pillars of Anglican Christianity

With this in mind, I want to explain my own understanding of the four pillars of Anglican Christianity, the Bible, Creeds, Sacraments, and three-fold Ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons. Traditionally, these have been called "The Lambeth Quadrilateral" but also are referred to as "Anglican Essentials"—very appropriately, as long as they need not be understood in only a strictly literal, conservative, manner. For the Mysteries of God are ineffable, far too great to be expressed in words alone, and a metaphorical or allegorical understanding often can enrich our understanding of them.

Let's begin with the Bible. Christian fundamentalists often claim that "it was written by the finger of God," and is infallibly true from cover to cover. Other conservative Christians are more modest in their claims, but still insist that the Bible is infallible in all matters of faith and morals. But this means that some particular Biblical texts which seemed reasonable long ago, in their ancient historical contexts, are still considered to override modern scientific insights in such matters as evolution and homosexuality.

### Understanding Divine inspiration

However, there are still other Christians, of whom I am one, who believe that although the Bible is often called "the Word of God," it is more accurate to say that "it contains the Word of God." For Saint John's Gospel (1:14) makes it clear that Jesus Christ is the Word of God, so logically, the Bible is the record of

how God prepared for His coming, and for Jesus' life and work and its immediate consequences.

Certainly, the Biblical authors were inspired by God, but they wrote in many different times and places over several centuries, and sometimes they recorded their own opinions or made normal human mistakes. A good example of this is St. Paul's assumption that God created males to be the dominant gender—an idea that many modern Christians cannot accept. Still, the Bible as a whole makes it very clear that Jesus Christ is "the true light that lightens everyone" (St. John 1:9) and its record of his teaching, death and resurrection truly are a revelation of God's nature and our human potential according to God's Plan.

### Creeds are not simply an intellectual commitment

Now let's consider the Creeds. The Apostle's Creed is the simplest and most popular one here in Canada, but it has never been fully accepted by the Orthodox Christians of Eastern Europe or Russia. So the Nicene Creed is more universally recognized, but contains a lot of obscure wording that was agreed upon over 1500 years ago in order to refute false teachings that were current then. But times and language have changed, and as a line in one of our hymns suggests, "time makes ancient good uncouth."

The word creed comes from the Latin for "I believe", and the Christian Faith is not just a matter of believing in certain theological ideas like the resurrection of the body, or historical events like Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate. The key phrase in the creeds is "I believe in God," because our faith is a matter of trust in God, not simply an intellectual commitment to certain facts. For as Archbishop Ramsay of Canterbury once wrote: "In the knowledge of God there is a certain 'beyond-ness', for no image, no parable, no dogmatic definition, no words suffice to convey God's reality."

Our traditional creeds therefore, are like road-maps—they record what early Christians discovered on their spiritual journeys, and we would be very foolish to ignore that, or fail to treat them seriously. However, God calls Christians in every age to embark on their own journey in faith, guided by the Holy Spirit; so from time to time we may need to develop new statements of faith, not to refute the ancient ones, but to supplement them in the light of new knowledge and experience.

### All life is a sacrament

Now let's move on to consider the Sacraments. A sacrament is an outward sign—like the water in Baptism or bread and wine in Holy Communion—through which God gives us inner grace and strength, and for centuries Christians have debated how many sacraments exist. Is Confirmation a sacrament? Is Marriage? But since we Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is present everywhere at all times, even when we are not aware of her, then truly, all of life is a sacrament! God is present, in a glorious sunset, a caring relationship, a demanding job, and even in our unpleasant experi-

ences with conflict, defeat, sorrow or pain.

In our ego-centricity and self-concern however, we forget! Perhaps this is only human, because when something is invisible and intangible, like the air we breathe or the Spirit of God, most of us do tend to take it for granted. And that is why we have sacraments. Just as on a day of brilliant sunshine, a child still needs a magnifying glass to focus the sun's rays to create fire on a scrap of paper or some dry leaves, so God uses the sacraments to kindle the fire of faith with us!

### All views are partly correct

Finally, a word about the "three-fold Ministry." Many Anglicans, Lutherans and all Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians believe in "The Apostolic Succession." They believe that it began when Christ's Apostles, the first bishops, then ordained new priests and deacons, as well as their own successors as bishops. This practice continued through hundreds of years, until many Protestants began to deny that the Bible supports this particular understanding of apostolic succession, abolished the Holy Orders of bishop and priest, and began to describe all clergy simply as "ministers." Some sects today go even further and refuse to ordain anyone at all, because every Christian is called to a minister in Christ's name.

And do you know what? All these views are partly correct! For today, most Anglicans recognize more fully, that although bishops, priests and deacons do have important roles as leaders and enablers, through Baptism God does call every Christian to be "a minister." So let's banish that frequent, disclaimer, "I'm only a lay person!" In olden times, God inspired ordinary people to write the Bible and create the creeds, and to-day God will use every Christian, both clergy and laity, in some special way. But only if we are willing to be used!

### Anglican essentials

The Bible, Creeds, Sacraments and Ministry. These are the "Anglican Essentials," and understood generously, they are essential for all Christians. Some may understand them as simple, literal truths, while others feel that "full truth" is beyond the ken of us humans, and sometimes must be expressed through parables and metaphors. The most important priority for all Christians is not between those who believe this and those who believe that, but between those who "love others as Christ loved us"—faithfully, through suffering if necessary—and those who do not!

For as Dr. Marcus Borg has reminded us, "It is trust and loyalty that transform us. Beliefs may precede, or follow, or remain unconnected to them. But beliefs do not transform us, trust and loyalty do!"

.....  
The Niagara Anglican congratulates Bishop Bothwell. Recently, he (along with many others in Canada) celebrated the 30th anniversary since the ordination of women. Bishop Bothwell was one of the bishops who ordained the "first" woman to the priesthood in Canada.

## THE ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN

This past Advent/Christmas season the Diocese of Niagara engaged in a radio and newspaper advertising campaign; the first of its kind in recent memory. The purpose was twofold. First, given all the negative publicity that the Anglican Church has experienced in recent years, we thought it would be important to tell the world that, regardless of what they may hear, our Church is alive and well and still a wonderful place to worship. Second, we thought it would instill a sense of joy and pride amongst present members of our Anglican family to hear our Church advertised across the airwaves. In a subtle form of evangelism, to hear our Church on the radio, we thought, might encourage more people to invite guests to church over the holidays. Likewise, to feel better about the faith community in which we worship, does by extension, translate into creating healthier more vibrant congregations.

However, it is very difficult to assess how successful such a campaign may have been without soliciting feedback from those who it may have affected the most. Below you will find a brief survey that we ask you to fill out and send in to the Diocesan Resource Centre at the address listed below. This survey may also be found on the website at [www.niagara.anglican.ca](http://www.niagara.anglican.ca).

By participating in this survey, you will assist us in determining if it was a success or not, whether we should consider doing it again, and what did and didn't work. We thank you for your participation and if you have further questions, you may contact me directly at [michael.patterson@niagara.anglican.ca](mailto:michael.patterson@niagara.anglican.ca).

Reverend Canon Michael Patterson  
Director of Evangelism  
C/O Christ's Church Cathedral  
252 James Street North  
Hamilton, ON L8R 2L3

Please provide us with the name of your parish.  
\_\_\_\_\_

How was your attendance over the Christmas season?  
 Increased significantly  
 Increased moderately  
 Remained the same  
 Decreased

If you could provide a percentage, what would it be?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did you receive any feedback regarding the Christmas advertising campaign? If yes, what did you hear?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Can you attribute your in attendance to this campaign?  
 Yes  
 No  
 Uncertain

Have there been any other changes that you would attribute to the campaign? If yes, please describe them.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate this campaign?  
 Very effective  
 Good  
 Minimally effective  
 Not at all effective

Would you like to see out diocese repeat similar campaigns in the future?  
 Yes  
 No  
 Uncertain

Please provide us with any additional comments.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

# Smearred with the sign of ashes



**MICHAEL THOMPSON**  
RECTOR - ST. JUDE'S, OAKVILLE

Like most people of a certain age—not so old as it once seemed, I remember winters as seasons of snow, bright in moonlight, blinding in daylight. I remember winters as seasons of cold, cold enough to freeze a skating rink for weeks at a time. I do not remember winters as seasons of green grass and ten degrees on New Year's Day, and I cannot quite make peace with a drive through the Allegheny mountains at the end of December in which there is absolutely no chance whatever that we will have to contend with cold, or snow, or any other element of winter.

#### Avoiding the issue

I've driven through some pretty hair-raising winter weather in my life, not only in the years we lived in Central Alberta and I traveled forty miles to a second point, but also getting from Kingston to Toronto or London to Sarnia. I don't miss the risk to life and limb, the actual harm that cold and ice and tons of sheet metal can accom-

plish. But something is not right. For the past month or so, everyone who talks about the weather says how wonderful it is, and there's some part of me that remains deeply suspicious.

Suspicious because some of the delight of the season has always had to do with having the right combination of coats, hats, mitts, scarves and boots—with having to be ready for conditions. Suspicious because winter is, in my experience, more or less the price we pay for spring, and suspicious because we think somehow we can avoid that price. Suspicious because when we say, "What a wonderful day!" there's something we're not talking about.

What we're not talking about is 'global warming.' For Canadians, even the name is a bit of evasion. Something like 'catastrophic climate change' might get a little more attention. If you don't ski, or depend on winter conditions for a livelihood, if you're not caribou or polar bear or Inuit, 'global warming' doesn't actually sound that bad.

#### Feeling helpless

And global warming is just one of the things we're not talking about. Maybe it's because we don't feel there's much or anything at all we can do to address it. Like genocide in Darfur, like the deaths of children in Gaza, like the plight of First Nations within Canada, like a

thousand things that can come out of the blue and ruin everything, we don't talk about things we can't change.

Except that not-talking about them is part of how we end up so helpless. So helpless we can't even talk about helplessness. As we downshift through late Epiphany into Lent, and as Lent pushes us relentlessly towards Calvary, helplessness is on the agenda of faith, and lament is part of that agenda. Lament is what our ancestors did when there was nothing they could do. The rending of clothes and the imposition of ashes, lament becomes the foundation for a journey to Jerusalem and beyond, a curriculum in the wilderness of the spirit, in the face of hunger and pain and broken hearts.

#### Demanding a God that we can see

We enter that journey at Ash Wednesday, accompanied by the wisdom of our ancestors and the promise that God meets us in this wilderness. A penitential litany that leaves nothing out, that draws a line under the column of our failure and foolishness, adds it up, and tells us a number so big there's nothing we can do but let it break our spirits.

Our self indulgent appetites and ways, our exploitation of other people, intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, waste and pollution of God's creation and lack of concern for those

who come after us, blindness to human need, indifference to suffering, and contempt toward those who differ from us. All of these gathered up in ashes and smeared on our foreheads because with the sign of ashes on our foreheads, God can find us, can follow our lament into the wilderness, and can take the action only God can take to accompany, heal, and redeem us as servants of earth and earth's creatures.

Somehow in the details of our journey, we have lost some of the power of these ritual actions, of the lament that our ancestors commend to us. Perhaps it was when sin was somehow reduced to moral failure, and morality shrunken into keeping the rules. Like the people of Israel at the foot of Sinai, we demanded "a god we can see," and someone provided a quite serviceable golden calf—hard work, temperance, moral and physical courage, filial duty and sexual fidelity. None of them objectionable. Quite the opposite, in fact. Such values contribute a great deal to a good and decent common life.

#### A healing and transforming journey

But as a replacement for the living God, a bit thin. "Silver and gold, the work of human hands" (Psalm 115) they cannot speak, cannot utter a word into the wilderness, cannot give the law from Sinai or usher in the Kingdom by the cross.

They cannot do what we cannot do, and cannot change what we cannot change. Our gods are as helpless as we are, and so, like Boxer, the old horse in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, we just try harder and fall down exhausted.

If trying harder worked, that would be one thing. But it doesn't. It erodes us in the service of idolatry; it indentures us in servitude to gods who cannot save us, while the God who can and does waits to meet us in the wilderness. And it renders us mute about the shadows, and about what lurks in them.

Ash Wednesday: February 21, 2006. The beginning of a journey through Lent that can heal and transform us, it is a day to tell truth, about the predicament we're in, about the foolishness that brought us here and about the faithful God who hears the call of our lament as a summons to walk with us, to limp and struggle and hurt with us, and to welcome us home, we prodigals who have spent our inheritance in a far country of conspicuous consumption and waste. Ash Wednesday, when we recite Psalm 51 and release our tenacious illusory trust of the gods we can see, "The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

It isn't easy, but when we tell truth, hard truth, our ears open to the word that God utters into the wilderness. Let's talk.

## All My Relations: The Journey Continues

Agape Education Event for all ages

**Sunday, March 4, 2007**

3:00 pm - 7:15 pm

St. George's, St. Catharines  
83 Church Street

Workshops presented by First Nations people including the Medicine Wheel teachings, hand drumming, story telling, indigenous cooking and a children's craft.

Enjoy a First Nations dinner of dry roasted corn soup, scones and fry bread, wild rice with cranberries and pine nuts, blueberry dumplings and more!

\$7.00 per person (ages 5 and over)

Questions: Call Christyn Perkons 905-527-1316 (ext. 460)

Name .....

Phone Number .....

Number Attending (ages 5 and over) .....

Amount Enclosed (\$7 per person) .....

Deadline is Wednesday, February 28, 2007. We are unable to accept registration after the deadline. Cheque payable to Diocese of Niagara and mailed to the address below:

Diocese of Niagara, Program Department  
252 James Street North  
Hamilton, ON L8R 2L3

## People in the news

- The Reverend Bahman Kalantari was licensed as Assistant Curate at St. Mark's, Orangeville, effective December 11.
- Belated Anniversary Wishes to Mary and Bob Atkinson, faithful members of St. Paul's Church, Shelburne, who celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary on December 28. A celebration was held at the parish church
- Mr. Carl Sneyd has accepted the appointment as Director of Stewardship and Financial Development, on a part time basis, for the diocese effective January 2.
- The Reverend Elizabeth Steeves and Dr. Barbara Sykes have been appointed interim pastors, jointly, at Lake Avenue Anglican Ministries, Stoney Creek, beginning January 1.
- Our deepest sympathy to Jim McPetrie, Archdeacon Bruce McPetrie, and the bereaved family on the death of Bruce's mother, Bette, on December 21. A Memorial Service was held at St. Christopher's Church, Burlington, on January 8.
- The Reverend Canon Alan L. Hayes, who has taught at Wycliffe College, Toronto, since 1975, has been appointed director of the Toronto School of Theology. He will continue at Wycliffe part-time.
- Canon Elaine Hooker will begin a short term interim appointment at St. John the Divine, Cayuga, and St. John's, York, on February 1.
- Birthday wishes are extended to Betty Smith ON, a long time and faithful parishioner at St. Luke's Church, Burlington, who will celebrate her 80th Birthday on February 2.
- Our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Enid Jones, parish administrator at Christ Church, Niagara Falls, on the death of her father, Calvin Fletcher, on January 3. A Memorial Service was held on January 13.
- Permission to administer the chalice at St. Paul's Church, Shelburne: Wayne King; Anne Gould and Connie Phillipson, effective January 3.



## Teach us to celebrate



**CHRISTOPHER GRABIEC**  
EDITOR

I remember back to 1976 when I was ordained to the priesthood. There were two of us along with some 150 priests and the bishop. It was such a very solemn occasion. The music was hardly festive; in fact it was typically dreary music that I remember was more reminiscent of a funeral than a occasion of what should have been joyful festivity. And of course it was all men! Alright, there were women in the pews, where they were believed to belong. This reminds me of a story

told to me by Bishop Bothwell. He was once invited to the Roman Cathedral for some special event. He was relegated to the third or fourth pew and not invited to vest. An older nun was sitting behind him and tapped him on the shoulder. "Bishop," she said, "now you know how we've felt all our lives!"

A number of women priests gathered at Sorrento Retreat Centre in BC to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the ordination of women in Canada. The picture included with this column was one that was sent to us. The message

in this picture is strong in light of what so many people feel about the "solemnity" of liturgy. Whatever has made us think that our liturgies and our prayerful celebrations have to be solemn and sombre?

When I look at this picture I also look back to a time that as a man trained to preside at liturgies and conditioned to understand participation in liturgical rites, I felt that liturgical festivity needs to be solemn or reserved. I feel that way no longer. I was able to attend the Christmas Eve liturgy at St. Thomas on 5th Ave in New York

just a few weeks ago. I sat in the gallery with a very good view of the entire church. The first thing I noticed was that there was absence of women among those who were ministering at this service. Even the choir was men and boys. There was not a woman to be seen in the procession. I watched the procession from above and behind and began to chuckle at what I called the "liturgical waddle." Just watch sometime when only men clergy are involved—they waddle down the aisle from side to side. I know, I've caught myself doing it! This, sad to say, was pretty much the only festive movement that I could observe that evening.

Did God really create us to take ourselves so seriously? Did God really want all of our services of prayer and celebrations of faith to be so solemn? Is laughter, dance and outwardly celebrative activity only a part of the bar-room or dance floor? I don't think so!

In my own case, I know that I take my life too seriously and that I tend to feel that religion is a "serious" business, and in some ways I suppose it is. But, when I see the religious expression in this picture, I can only say to those who understand it, "teach me to celebrate!"

For centuries the church excluded women from leadership. In some cases when they exercised religious leadership they were burned

at the stake. By the grace of God a little more than 30 years ago in this diocese, this crime of exclusion was banished for all time. Women became deacons and priests, bishops and archbishops. The United States now has a woman as primate and perhaps Canada will as well. Who knows? The most important thing is that women of faith, who understand how to celebrate that faith as human beings and who long to be joyful, must take upon themselves the responsibility of teaching the church how it is that we can honour God with all our gifts. These gifts include laughter, dance, and any kind of festive activity that we can dream of.

As a young ordained Roman priest, I remember when Bishop Bothwell ordained Mary Lucas and Beverly Shanley, I was horrified. I thought he was so wrong and that the church would be so divided. It was I who was wrong. Women have brought gifts to the church that I could never imagine. Together ordained men and women can combine their unique gifts and enhance their mutual giftedness, creating a church that can really teach us how to live and how to celebrate the lives that we do live.

I now know that the "liturgical waddle" isn't all there is to celebrating faith! I still can't dance my faith the way that folks in this picture do, but I am certain that I want to learn... and I will.

## Change, lost sheep and a hope for the future



**CHARLES STIRLING**  
HONORARY - CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

Perhaps it comes with more retirement time. On the other hand, it may come when we seem to lose a sense of our once held responsibilities and purpose. Again it many come with when we look at what we are doing and it simply seems empty and void. There are lots of people, some of them clergy, who seem to drop away from the Church and not many of them are really missed. We are too busy to miss them as the life of the Church grinds on and we have much to accomplish, whatever that may be.

### Change is good

Certainly many of us today, it may be supposed, are somewhat more curious and not necessarily content to accept things as they were, and largely still are. To be perfectly blunt, many things that seemed to have held complete and absolute authority simply don't seem to matter anymore. The reality is things do change, and we either come to accept them continuing to work on in faith, or we disappear. Liturgies change, and there is growing acceptance of those who live and love differently from most of us being welcomed and accepted. These changes are good and these are the most positive aspects of the Church of today, but they are not enough. Many folk are convinced fundamental change must

come to the Church or it will surely die. In this age, one cannot imagine Prayer Book liturgies and an attempt to see the world, as it was, in the model of 1549. Indeed the liturgy of 1549 is one of the most beautiful works ever written, but it speaks to sixteenth century people and their values. It has very little to say to people in the twenty-first century, yet it persists in the minds of some as a most sacred and God given rite. It was not, or indeed ever was.

We live in a time of fast growing revelation, in communication, in medicine and a whole host of things. The Prayer Book has needed steady and consistent revival, if for nothing else but keeping up with language changes, and assuredly language does change.

### The lost sheep

Historically the Church has been in charge, but that is not true today, and perhaps no one has told the Church, as it plans, at the upcoming General Synod, to "make the circle wider still." One gets the sense that there are new breakthroughs in store for same sex people coming at general Synod. Not so! The odd thing is, that in the face of global change, the Church continues on its dubious path. Furthermore, it seems to have adopted every term and many of the practices of a modern, but rather flawed business world, for the last 30 years. Does anyone remember belonging to a cluster? When did you last hear that one?

We have become too political, and have ceased to look for the lost sheep, as was once our charge. In fact we would rather they didn't come by, because they get in the way and interfere with a very busy days of meetings and consultations. In short we have lost the reason for being, and perhaps this is the

cause, we not only lose people, but we don't attract them either.

The concept that we offer precious little in terms of agencies and centres of rehabilitation and renewal is appalling. More appalling is that our people do very little to support and sustain what we do have. We persist in the knowledge we are located at the corner of this and that street and Anglicans will find us. In truth, they are no longer looking and we are closing churches. In reality, all denominations are really in the same boat. There has to be a new sense of Christianity and a new sense of looking for the lost sheep. Until the reality of a new vision takes hold, we are going to lose more and more people and fulfill the prophecy of disappearing in thirty to forty years.

### New sacramental focus

It is beyond time to be looking for the means to preserve the past, we need some very serious attention around the issues of life and living in the twenty-first century, and how to celebrate and support them. We need to make people truly welcome. We need to bring them into a comfortable place where they can come to know and love God and follow the teachings of Christ, and offer themselves in service. We need lives centred on the Sacraments in new and exciting ways that speak to people where they are. What we do not need is a small portion of our people clinging to the past, and indeed willing to separate themselves from the company of others. If one thing the Anglican Church has been, it is comprehensive. Not everyone agrees with every aspect we face, but we allow space, and people have moved well in relationships and understanding. Now it is time for radical change, or, if you will, it is time for death. The choice is yours!

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### Editor

Christopher Grabiec  
905-312-8444 (ext. 101)  
newspaper@niagara.anglican.ca

### Advertising

Ted Manning  
905-680-0615  
advertising@niagara.anglican.ca

Layout: Kayn Leduc

Proofreading: Bryan Stopps

### Mailing Address

Cathedral Place  
252 James St North  
Hamilton, ON L8R 2L3

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### Publishers Advisory Board

Pam Claridge: 519-941-6804  
John Janisse: 905-312-8444 (ext. 102)  
Geoffrey Purdell-Lewis: 905-628-4176  
Canon Charles Stirling: 905-383-1088  
Carol Summers: 905-772-5641

### 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 email or physical address of the author for verification purposes. The newspaper reserves the right to edit submissions.

# On religious burnout



SUSAN C. HUXFORD-WESTALL  
ALL SAINTS, HAMILTON

It must be obvious to those who have read my recent articles that I have been through a "critical crisis of identity." What a shocker, then, to find these words used in connection with the clergy. Or is it?

Writing in the *Anglican Journal* of December 2006, Marites Sison records that many clergy are in a quandary: 77% state that they "feel more like a CEO than a pastor." It gets worse: 70% do not feel fulfilled in ministry, 60% have "considered at some time leaving ministry," 60% indicated that social evenings usually involved "church talk" and nearly half of them could count no more

days and forty nights. For years I gave up chocolate and alcohol. As I have matured, I have repented; why give up God-given pleasures when my days must be numbered? So what is the use of Lent?

Let us strip away the concept of "messiahship" from the child whose birth we celebrated just weeks ago. We must assume that Jesus was brought up in the Jewish faith; his parents came to Jerusalem for Passover yearly. He seems to have been a precocious child judging from his encounter with the teachers in the Temple at his Bar-Mitzvah (Luke 2:41-49).

Let us put him among today's teen agers and ask what might happen to a precocious child as he enters those tumultuous years. In the past many of them have considered Confirmation to be Graduation and have dropped away from the church. They have failed to make the Faith their own and have discarded something that was superimposed upon them. Personal integrity requires that our faith be

Jesus, as he prepared for his ministry, I was in the 'wild.' Surely Jesus, as he pondered his mission, said to himself, "I've got to do some serious thinking. I must answer the questions 'Who am I?' and 'What is God's purpose for me?'" Christians know how Jesus answered those questions, for he showed us the answers when he came out of the wilderness. He had taken the time to meditate upon his life's purpose. He committed himself.

How often have we expressed the wish to get away from it all? We need to retreat from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Lent offers us that opportunity. Let us give up the stress and strain that we constantly encounter in this North American economy. Let us find a retreat, slow down and contemplate our lives in the faith that God does have a purpose for each one of us.

Which brings us back to the clergy quandary. I have had the privilege of knowing a number of priests well and I particularly remember one with whom I was able to go out to lunch while he was my rector. On such occasions it became very clear to me that our clergy need companionship in which they can let down their defences—it is unhealthy to keep it all bottled up inside. No wonder they feel a need to escape periodically! The big problems are confidentiality and trust. I became aware of circumstances about which I would still prefer not to talk. I am also aware that my rector had only two, perhaps three, members of his congregation with whom he could let go. We need to remember that the clergy, too, are human.

It is a tragedy that nearly nine out of ten clerics can find little time for personal prayer. This indicates that parishioners put so many demands upon them that they have no time for themselves. I have often answered the telephone on a Monday when somebody wanted to talk to the parish priest. Fortunately I have usually been in the position that I could tell them to call back on Tuesday; the priest was having a well-earned day off. Perhaps the clergy need to avail themselves of a sabbatical whenever they can—not for study, but rather for contemplation. There is not one of us, clergy or laity, who can claim to really know God (see I Corinthians 13:12).

our own and the true seeker after God realizes that this is a lifetime pursuit. Surely Jesus, like so many young people, struggled with his faith. "What is this indoctrination with which I am being deluged?" he might well have asked.

I was confirmed when I was sixteen after a rather desultory encounter with the Catechism. Many questions were still chasing each other through my mind. Three years later war broke out and I volunteered for military service. On a troopship bound for India I struggled with the Nicene Creed and I meditated upon two Penguin paperbacks by John Hadham entitled *Good God* and *God in a World at War*. In India I attended Anglican Church services in numerous places, still asking myself questions. On one memorable occasion in Burma I visited the ancient capital, Pagan, with its numerous step pyramid shrines, each with a Buddha inside. I was impressed by the faith of the builders. I also became acquainted with James Moffatt's translation of the New Testament.

This proved to be my Lent. Like

It is a tragedy that nearly nine out of ten clerics can find little time for personal prayer.

than two friends with whom they could open up. A whopping 86% state that they "pray with others, but rarely have time for personal prayer."

The final complaint is a real shocker if it includes Anglican clergy when the *Book of Common Prayer* contains the following instruction in the Preface of 1662: "And all Priests and Deacons are to say daily the Morning and Evening Prayer either privately or openly, not being let by sickness, or some other urgent cause."

It was that instruction that made me decide that I could not enter the ministry. I tried it for some time, but concluded that it became merely a troublesome routine. Of course, it was not the only consideration; I had a wife and family to include and I had my own integrity to worry me.

We are entering the season of Lent—the season when Jesus was "fasting in the wild" to quote a well-known Lenten hymn, and a church imbued with penitential inclinations promptly dictated that its adherents should also fast for forty

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If you wish to receive more details, please contact Ian Dingwall by calling 905-637-3449 or sending an email to [idingwall@cogeco.ca](mailto:idingwall@cogeco.ca).

Everyone is invited to attend an information gathering at 10:00 am on February 10 at St. Christopher's Church, Burlington (662 Guelph Line, south of the QEW).

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