



# Niagara Anglican

A section of the Anglican Journal

NEWS • PERSPECTIVE • REFLECTION • FOR A GROWING CHURCH • JANUARY 2007

## Celebrating thirty years



### BIRTH AND DEATH the cycle of life

LYNNE CORFIELD  
RECTOR, ST. JOHN'S, NIAGARA FALLS

"For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven. There is a time to be born and a time to die... I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. I know that whatever God does endures for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before God" (Eccl 3:1-2, 12-14).

On April 18, 2006 my Mom had "a massive stroke with extensive damage." For several days she lay in a coma as her brain continued to swell; Mom's Doctor's advised us that she really had extensive damage to her brain and her chances of survival with any quality of life, with all this and her other health

complications, was negligible. After a family conference we decided that Mom would not want to continue her life like this and we, like many other families in this situation, chose to make Mom comfortable and to sit with her 24/7 while she died.

#### Her birthing bed again

During this crazy time of sitting with Mom through the night and through the day, being sleep deprived and on a roller coaster of emotions, I also had time to reflect and pray. This was not the first time I had been at someone's death bed. As a parish priest I have shared this journey with many families and it always feels like a sacred place and I feel honoured and humbled to be invited into such an intimate time of sharing, sometimes with complete strangers. This was the first time however, that I had sat at my own

mother's death bed, and yes, it did seem different.

As my Mom struggled to die while her husband and 5 daughters took turns attending to her bodily needs, it seemed to me that when we were born she had struggled to bring us into this life—and now as she struggled to die, we were struggling to let her go, so that she could be at peace. In actual fact it dawned on me that this was for Mom, a struggle to be born into new life, eternal life... this was in fact, her birthing bed again. Life and death are so intricately connected. Mom had other ideas and after 4 more days she woke up and began her struggle back to life from death's door. On November 18 she attended my daughter's wedding. Although an invalid, she is very much alive!

#### Learning the Gospel from the margins

I was reminded of this scene last week when I became part of a group of 70 women who gathered at the Sorrento Centre in BC for the 30th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood in the Anglican Church of Canada. The opening eucharist was presided over by the Reverend Patricia Reed who was one of the first women to be ordained on November 30, 1976.

Our powerful and thought provoking preacher was The Reverend Dr. Wendy Fletcher, who reminded us that women have been standing at the edge of the life circle for two thousand years and while we have been there we have been learning; we have trained our eyes to see from a place of exclusion, from the margins. Women, she said, are uniquely suited to leadership, not as biological determinism, not even with gender as a social condition, but rather with gender as a social location! While we have been located at the edge, on the margins, in this social location, women have been present at births, and deaths, watching and waiting for the time to lead from

See THIRTY YEARS on page 11



### LETTER FROM THE BISHOP

THE REV. D. RALPH SPENCE  
BISHOP OF NIAGARA

Dear friends in Niagara,

I would like to take this opportunity to wish one and all a very happy and holy Christmas Season. It is during this time of year that we seem to most recognize the presence of Christ within each and every one of us.

During this past year we have seen a number of parishes successfully pass from death to life. The decisions to close buildings and amalgamate parishes into much stronger communities has been difficult for many. I have noticed, though, how many people have worked so positively and diligently to create new parishes. These parishes have emerged with strength and unity and I know that they will succeed and grow as time goes on. I have watched as people have laid down their fears and suspicions and decided to trust one another in love. The consequence has been the birth of new Anglican communities of love. It has been wonderful to witness.

Fear can paralyze our response to the situations of life we find ourselves dealing with on a daily basis. Our church will deal with the matter of blessing same sex marriage at general synod. This discussion can be life giving if we listen to and respect each other's views on this subject. We must be encouraging people who are willing to embrace differences

and continue to grow in faith together. We must continue working towards building a true community of faith comprised of good and holy people of differing views and opinions.

In a matter of days, we begin a new year and enter into the celebrations of the Epiphany of our Lord. The Epiphany is a celebration of the manifestation of God among us. May we celebrate that God among us, acknowledging our various ministries.

We have just completed a radio campaign that has invited people into our parish communities. At synod, I asked you to welcome our visitors wholeheartedly as they responded to this invitation. Now, I am asking you to show them that we are church based on love. These people will not necessarily have the same views as we do. We cannot expect to mold them into our own image and likeness. We can expect to sit down with them and share our ideas and listen to theirs, all the while growing in the spirit of Christ.

It's time now to be a 'real' church, to live the "epiphany" and to be Christ to the world. Let's take up this challenge as our New Year resolution and walk together as brothers and sisters in the Lord, with differing views, but united in God's Spirit!

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# PARISH NEWS

Niagara Anglican - January 2007



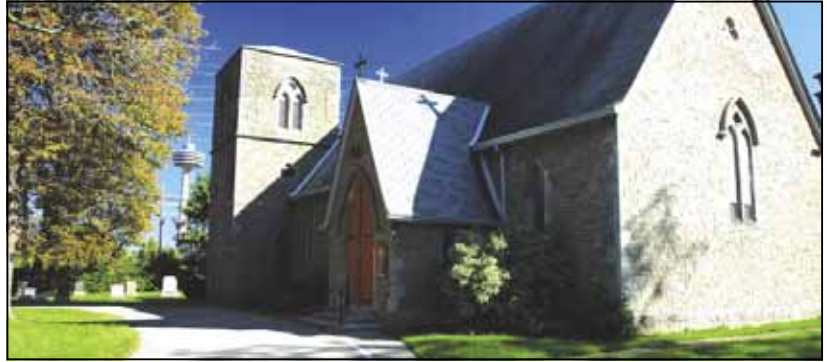
## OPEN HOUSE AT CHRIST'S CHURCH PORT MAITLAND

F. HILL KING  
DUNN ANGLICAN PARISH

Christ's Church, Port Maitland held an Open house to give parishioners and residents of the area an opportunity to view the newly renovated place of worship. An estimated seventy-five people attended!

A year ago the interior of the Church was much improved when new carpet was laid and new curtains were hung. This past summer's renovations included new steps leading into the Church, ones which resemble the original steps. We are awaiting new wrought iron railings for the front steps. Further renovations include the installation of the new cement sills for the windows and refinishing the basement.

The community has taken pride in this church and many appreciated the opportunity to view the interior from where the beautiful stained glass windows show up so well. The original church was built in 1843, and was struck by lightning in 1926. Consequently it was rebuilt in 1927 with a tower which was replaced in later years with a steeple. It is one of the two churches in the Dunn Anglican Parish, the other being St. John's Church in South Cayuga.



## Celebrating 150 years

On Wednesday, November 15, members of All Saints Church, Niagara Falls, celebrated the 150th Anniversary of their historic building. Bishop Ralph Spence gave the sermon at a Service of Evensong, which was lead by our Diocesan Administrator, Rev. John Ripley. Bishop Spence also dedicated a Fair Linen Altar cloth, which had been commissioned in memory of her parents by Patricia Midford. After the service, the congrega-

tion moved to The Old Stone Inn, a neighbour on Robinson Street, Niagara Falls, where close to 100 people held a celebratory Dinner.

The people of All Saints Mission were joined by Bishop Spence and his wife Carol, Archdeacon Marion Vincett, Edith Austen of the Niagara Altar Guild of Embroidery, past and present priests from our sister churches, members of the All Saints Management Board and fellow Anglicans from all the

churches in Niagara Falls. Bishop Spence cut the Anniversary Cake with the help of Larry Webster, at 90 years the oldest member of the congregation present, and then gave a short address. The evening was a great success. This was the final event marking the 150th Anniversary; a calendar and a new updated history of the church had also been prepared for the people of All Saints. A copy of the history was presented to the Bishop.

## Going forward in faith

St. George's Church plans to celebrate its 175th anniversary

MARK AND WILDA WALDRON  
ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM PLANNING COMMITTEE

It is only a matter of days before St. George's Church begins to celebrate its 175th Anniversary. New Year's Eve, the celebration year of events will be heralded with a midnight concert on the newly refurbished and expanded carillon for all of Guelph to enjoy. On New Year's Day, St. George's joins Bishop Ralph Spence in welcoming the community to St. George's for the annual Bishop's levée preceded by a celebration of the Eucharist. Throughout the year there will be music, speakers, church tours, a magnificent exhibit of liturgical fabric art and visits from former clergy. It promises to be a special year, not only for St. George's people, but for everyone in the community.

The highlight of the music program will be a concert of anthems to be held on Saturday, February 17 with the combined St. George's Choir and the Guelph Chamber Choir presenting the première of the St. George's 175th anthem. This anthem, "Eternal God," was commissioned to Mark Sirett of Queen's University in Kingston, an award winning choral composer.

The 175th Anniversary Week Celebrations begins April 21 with church tours open to the community, and the gala dinner and entertainment at Guelph Place that evening. Sunday, April 22, at 10:00 am, a ceremony will recognize the

site of the first two St. George's Churches located in St. George's Square followed by a procession along Douglas Street to the current church where, in recognition of the 175th Anniversary, a memorial tree will be planted. Bishop Ralph Spence will be the celebrant at the church service. The actual St. George's Day, Monday, April 23, will be recognized with a noon hour carillon concert by carillonneur Don Hamilton and an organ concert by Dr. Gerry Manning, organist and Director of Music at St. George's. A celebration of the Eucharist will follow.

Wednesday evening, April 25, we are pleased to welcome guest speaker, Craig Kielburger, the 2006 recipient of the Children's Nobel Peace Prize and spokesperson for children's rights around the world and author, with his brother Marc, of *Me to we: Turning self-help on its head*. He will recount his experiences of building the Free the Children international program which he started at the age of twelve.

Our Anniversary Week will conclude with *Doors Open-Guelph* visiting St. George's on Saturday, April 28. Sunday, the community will be honoured by a visit from the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Rt. Rev. Andrew Hutchison.

October 3rd, we welcome Kim Phuc as our guest speaker. Kim is the child in the Pulitzer prize winning photo of the young girl running

down the road on fire with napalm—the photo that has changed the way the world looks at war. Kim's presentation is titled *Forgiveness*.

A major art exhibit titled *Threads of Praise*, made up of liturgical fabric art from across Canada created by Canadian artists will be displayed throughout the Church from October 13 until October 21.

Saturday, October 27, a special concert by the Nathaniel Dett Chorale, Canada's first professional choral group dedicated to Afro-centric music of all styles. The Chorale's vision is to build bridges of understanding among people of all cultural backgrounds through the medium of music and have gained international attention. This concert will be a never-to-be-missed event.

In celebration of the Anniversary, "A Window into our Future" will be installed in April, 2007. The commemorative window designed by the Robert McCausland Co. portrays the three St. George's Church buildings that have been part of Guelph's history for the past 175 years. This window will be dedicated on April 22 by Bishop Ralph Spence.

A complete calendar of events is available from the church office, 99 Woolwich St. and is on the church web site at [www.saintgeorge.ca](http://www.saintgeorge.ca). The people of St. George's look forward to welcoming the entire community of Guelph and area to join us as we honour our past and go forward in faith.



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# The bumpy road of Epiphany



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

Almost all Christmas tree decorations have memories and these two are no different; two ancient days china ornaments—one an angel, the other a bell.

They aren't large nor are they particularly beautiful, yet each year when we decorate our tree, these two ornaments always make the cut, and this past Christmas was no different.

Interestingly enough, they have no family history. Usually, the not so pretty things are on the tree because they have some intimate connection to previous or future generations, but the bell and the angel claim no such connection. Instead, they were gifted to me by a parishioner during my curacy at St. Jude's in Oakville. Sad to say, I can't remember the name

currently as an honorary assistant in a parish, but recently, coming close to returning to full-time ministry. He tells me he can't get the church out of his system—another one of those back-handed compliments. "I think he's saying something positive here about the church," I reflect to myself, "but why doesn't it sound like this is the case?"

My own relationship with the church is so incredibly ambivalent. Every time I think I'm going to walk, I encounter someone who makes me want to stay. It might be a newcomer; it might be a long-time member of the church; it might be someone who struggles with all the changes from within, or it might be someone who sits on the edge of the community, unable to remain inside yet, at the same time, clearly unable to depart.

"If the church didn't have all these people in it," I think to myself, "I could happily pick up and leave." The truth is, though, there is no church without all these same people, so my logic is pretty bankrupt.

I daresay that's why Mrs. So and So from St. Jude's stayed, even as she stewed about women priests, and it's probably the reason that my English friend cannot

**FOR MANY OF US, OUR EXPERIENCE of the people makes us hang in and hang on and ultimately, it is this experience rather than any objective set of beliefs that enables each of us to stay.**

of this person even though I can see her face as clear as day and can remember her exact words as she presented me with the present.

"I've always been dead set against women priests," she said, pointedly, "but you've changed my mind." Definitely one of those back-handed compliments—you know, the kind that leaves you scratching your head as you walk away. "I think someone's just said something good about me so why don't I feel like this is the case?"

This particular woman was a widow, the wife of a former Anglican priest. She was, at that time, probably in her early 80s, crusty as French bread and, at times, quite dour. Church had always been a part of her life and church was serious business. She worshipped at the mid-week Wednesday service—never on Sunday—and undoubtedly, had a good deal of difficulty doing this once I was ordained a priest and presiding at the Eucharist. Yet, she didn't leave the church and, in spite of the fact that she clearly questioned the validity of my orders, she still continued to receive communion.

Then, one day, close to Christmas, she invited me for a visit to her home, served me some tea and presented me with two china ornaments which she took from her own tree. She pronounced them as mine, as a gift from her, because I had changed her mind about women priests. Every year, as I hang them on our tree, I smile to myself as I recall the woman who gave these to me and the circumstances under which they were offered. And, as I do this, I always find myself saying, "This is the church and this is why I stay."

I have a friend who I met in England years ago. A former Church of England parish priest, he is now a full-time psychotherapist with a practice in New Zealand. Over the years, he's probably come close to leaving the church more than once over the issue of homosexuality. He, himself is gay and living with someone in a committed relationship. However, he continues to remain an active member of the church,

completely free himself of the hold that the church seems to have on him. As much as the system doesn't seem to function in the way we each might believe it should (or should have), for many of us, our experience of the people makes us hang in and hang on and ultimately, it is this experience rather than any objective set of beliefs that enables each of us to stay.

As simplistic as it seems, I can't help but feel that it is, in fact, a false notion of some objective reality that is currently tearing the church apart, something 'out there', which is completely unattached to our experience 'right here'. Reflecting on the parishioner from St. Jude's who gave me the china Christmas tree ornaments, it would seem to me that if she had been absolutely committed to such a notion, she would have got up and left as soon as I showed up—and perhaps many others did. Instead, she decided the whole body was more important than its individual parts and, because of this, today I have the privilege of decorating our tree with some unusually beautiful memories and, beyond this, I am still here to tell the tale.

Recently, I have found myself pondering the story of the magi in light of these memories. The three wise men, so the tale goes, made the effort to trek all the way to Jesus' birthplace in order to see for themselves what the excitement was all about and, on the way back, they "left for their own country by another road." In contrast, Herod never left home. Instead, he gathered people around him to confirm his worst fears and then he acted on these. While the magi were busy rethinking their universe, Herod was consolidating the universe he already knew, never allowing himself to communicate with the possibility of something new.

Today, in the church, I think we are confronted with the same choice. We can remain at home, comforted by familiar surroundings and wedded to some ostensibly objective reality, or we can leave home and return by another road. Which will be more life-giving?

# A reflection on Synod 2006



**BILL MOUS**  
DIVINITY STUDENT

I have a confession to make. When, at Synod, we got into groups to discuss our fears around sex gender blessings and the church, I subtly glanced around the table looking at the name tags of each person for their parish. I stopped abruptly when I realized what I was doing: trying to gage the range of comments we might get at our table.

What is it about our human nature that we try to 'box' everything into neat little categories? Jew or Gentile, married or single, rich or poor, urban or rural, good or bad: in all these boxes there is very little room for one to exist outside one's box. For example, the government recognizes only married or single for information purposes. Hence if you are dating someone, you are considered single even though the reality is that it fits somewhere in between and thus room for a spectrum of 'being' is nonexistent. Perhaps that is the very reason why sexuality is such a frightening and deeply personal issue to discuss. We as humans attempt to categorize something into two distinct categories—homosexual or heterosexual—when such a categorization is actually artificial.

## We live in a grey world

The categorization is artificial because human sexuality is more accurately described as falling somewhere on a spectrum between heterosexuality to homosexuality. So does our discomfort in discussing issues of sexuality stem from our inherent knowledge that even though society demands us to live in a black and white world, the reality is that we live in a grey world that is somewhere in

between? I wonder.

Nevertheless, I appreciated the opportunity for discussion as it seemed that some parishes haven't spent much time in dialogue on this subject. While I appreciated the format Rick Jones used, the optimist in me wished that we had spent some time discussing our hopes too. It seems to me that while discussing our fears is important, Christianity also calls us to look at the hopes which we as a Church have around this issue.

That said, our table's discussion was quite frank and I very much appreciated the honesty and level of intimacy that was developed among the delegates at our table in such a short time. There was no doubt, however, that a cloud of heaviness and seriousness hung over our conversation. I wondered to myself whether a decision, whatever its outcome, would relieve some of these feelings caused in part from living with uncertainty. The conversation's structure reminded me of a time when I attended a First Nations sharing circle in Keewatin. Instead of 'doing' via persuading our fellow table delegates, we were 'being' via listening, sharing and building relationship.

## We closed in prayer

Then I observed an interesting movement in our discussion. For the first part of our dialogue, we used a plush flower, as a talking stick, to share our fears. This worked well and by its very nature limited the conversation from becoming a debate between participants at the table. When, however, the flower was put in the centre of the table because we had finished our assigned task and consequently opened the floor up, our dialogue moved from that of listening and learning to that of debate. It seemed that left to our own devices, we returned to our normal pattern of discussing everyday issues.

As we did to begin our discussions, we closed in prayer. Not only did it allow us to bring our dialogue—our hopes and fears to God—but it also rooted the entire room in our common Christianity.



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# Getting to know you

**THE REVEREND SUSAN WELLS** Spiritual Director, Niagara Anglican Cursillo

**FRAN DARLINGTON**  
HONORARY - ST. JAMES, GUELPH

Since 1993, the Cursillo movement has enriched spiritual development in the Diocese of Niagara. In 2003, Bishop Ralph Spence appointed the Reverend Susan Wells as Spiritual Director of the Diocesan Cursillo.

Originating in 1940 in Spain's Roman Catholic Church, Cursillo spread rapidly to many countries and denominations. Its aim is to provide a safe, nurturing environment in which people are enabled to reflect on their faith in new ways, to discover their individual uniqueness and creativity, and to confidently live and share Jesus' teachings with the world. Bishop Ralph describes Cursillo as "A rekindling of the lamp of spirituality in our Christian pilgrimage. A chance to go to the well and be refreshed."

Involved in Cursillo since 1990 as a lay person and since 1999 as a priest of this Diocese, Susan Wells is well-qualified to guide and support participants and explorers. She explains, "Cursillo, at its roots, functions under the Bishop's pastoral plan for the Diocese, which is currently centred on evangelism. I see Cursillo as one way in which we can support the Diocese as it moves ahead in that direction. [Cursillo teaches on] the Christian faith in the sacraments, grace, faith, and the role of the laity, and creates in us the heart of an evangelist by giving us a safe and supportive environment in which we can explore our faith."

## Another three-legged stool

"Cursillo has a three legged stool: Faith, being where we see God in our lives; Study, what we're doing to increase our knowledge of God and how to live out our faith, our baptismal ministry; and Action, what we're doing to share God's love with others." She chuckles, "Everybody has a three-legged stool, but we had it first!"

Describing itself as a "method," Cursillo begins with a three-day weekend retreat, led by both lay people and clergy. Participants are then invited to "group" weekly for

about thirty minutes, to share their faith with up to five other Cursillistas, those who have experienced a Cursillo weekend and are living the Cursillo method. A larger, regional group, called Ultreya, meets monthly.

Participants are encouraged to find a personal Spiritual Director, with whom to reflect on their Christian life. Susan does not do individual spiritual direction, but a list of qualified Directors is available from the Diocesan Resource Centre.

## Cursillo brings new Life to the Parish

What makes Cursillo different? "When we group, we are encouraged to talk about our Faith, Study and Action each week, which is [not customary] to Anglicans. That may be a bit harsh, but it's generally a fact.

"People who go on a Cursillo weekend go back to doing the same things as before, but what is affected is their ability to reflect on and articulate why they're doing what they're doing. As people increase their own ability to share the faith, they encourage others to bear witness to the Gospel." Susan grins, "That's a two-hundred-word-or-less view of Cursillo!"

As Spiritual Director of Niagara Cursillo, Susan is the Bishop's representative, responsible for "ensuring the spiritual integrity of the Cursillo movement, and that it aligns itself with Anglican teaching." She is also "to promote Cursillo among Diocesan clergy, and encourage them to learn more about Cursillo; to see the benefits and how it can change [parish] dynamics as a tool to help people reach out and share the good news."

As an example, Susan describes the Breakfast Ministry at St. Philip's Church, Burlington. Each weekday, parishioners, and many Cursillistas, provide a healthy breakfast for up to 120 local school children, Feeding empty tummies has also energised the parish, for which the future is presently uncertain.

Currently, over forty Diocesan clergy have participated in Cur-

sillo. Bishop Ralph and the former Suffragan Bishop, Clarence Mitchell, were the first bishops to do so. Susan encourages clergy to become involved, not only for their own spiritual benefit, but also to support parishioners who become Cursillistas. "Clergy need to be involved with Cursillo, to enable people when they come back [from a weekend], because they don't want to be blindsided by the enthusiasm. As much as Cursillo should be invisible in a parish, when people go back and do their thing [and live their 'method'], lack of clergy support can dampen their enthusiasm. Debriefing is important" to guide the new energy people bring to the parish.

Susan explains that clergy "experience [the weekend] differently from lay people, and often see God transforming the lives of fellow participants. At the centre of that is a safe, loving, supportive community, away for three days with the same people, that is different from church study [groups]." She offers this wisdom: "People want others to experience Cursillo as profoundly as they did. We need to realise that God touches each of us in different ways."

Ruefully, Susan admits that "some clergy are intimidated by empowered laity, and one of the things Cursillo does is empower laity." Also "a change of clergy can get in the way because of a change of focus." If newly appointed clergy have experienced Cursillo, that focus is more likely to include supporting parish Cursillistas in their ministry.

## Frequently asked questions

Addressing common questions about Cursillo, Susan emphasises "Cursillo is not now nor should it have ever been about secrets and surprises. It straddles the theological divide [and] is part of mainstream Anglicanism, not a cult or left or right wing. It is about experiencing the love of Christ; not an end in itself but rather one of many methods for renewal and revival in the Anglican Church."

Currently, Niagara Cursillo is taking a year to consider the future



of its ministry. Susan describes "a three-pronged approach for next year." Planning a Renewal Weekend in November, 2007, "we're endeavouring to contact anyone who has had a Cursillo weekend, and seeing what type of support they require from the movement. Because some of the old ways of doing things no longer work, we're looking at all aspects of the Cursillo weekend to ensure that we are still in line with the original purpose and method of Cursillo."

A Cursillo weekend is planned for spring, 2008, with several lay people and three clergy on the leadership team.

Susan attends many meetings, promoting Cursillo, planning weekends and encouraging participation. The governing body, the Secretariat, meets monthly. The ten lay and ordained members are elected for three year terms by Cursillistas at the Annual General meeting. Anglican Cursillo in North America functions under the guidance and licence of the National Episcopal Cursillo in America and the Canadian Anglican Cursillo Secretariat.

## Susan's journey

Growing up in Hamilton, Susan attended Hill Park School with Bishop Ralph. She joined St. Michael's Church even before it was built, often taking her younger brother Stephen Wilson, still a parishioner there. After training as a medical technologist, she married James Wells, and became the mother of James, eventually mother-in-law of Karen. Susan is now the proud grandmother of Stephen (2) and Jonathan (1), all

parishioners of St. Paul's, Caledonia.

During twenty years at Welland's General Hospital, Susan served in many ways at Holy Trinity Church, and represented the parish as a director of the local food bank. She also enjoyed ten years as a Cub leader.

Moving to Burlington in 1993, Susan joined St. Philip's Church. She began divinity studies at Trinity College, Toronto, in 1995, was ordained in 1999, and served as Deacon/Priest-in-Charge of St. John's, Nassagaweya, until moving to St. John's, Rockwood, in 2000.

Diagnosis with breast cancer in 2003 and subsequent treatment meant leave from St. John's, and Susan "was almost ready to go back to work when I broke my ankle!" Not one to feel sorry for herself, Susan earned her licence for Interim Ministry, and is now Interim Pastor at St. Philip's, Burlington.

She admits, "I'm not a reader. My mother raised me to believe that if you sit still, you're idle, so if you don't sit still, you can't read!" Her grandchildren and four-legged companions, cats Smudge and Baby, and Pomeranian-Collie Buddy, create plenty of exercise, and Susan proclaims herself "an avid Tiger-Cats supporter!"

## Contact information

With Zandra Pennylegion, Lay Director of Niagara Cursillo, also appointed by the Bishop, Susan brings wisdom, warmth and compassion to her ministry, and invites inquiries about Cursillo in Niagara through [www.niagaracursillo.org](http://www.niagaracursillo.org) or the Diocesan Resource Centre at 519-527-1316.

## SERVERS' FEST

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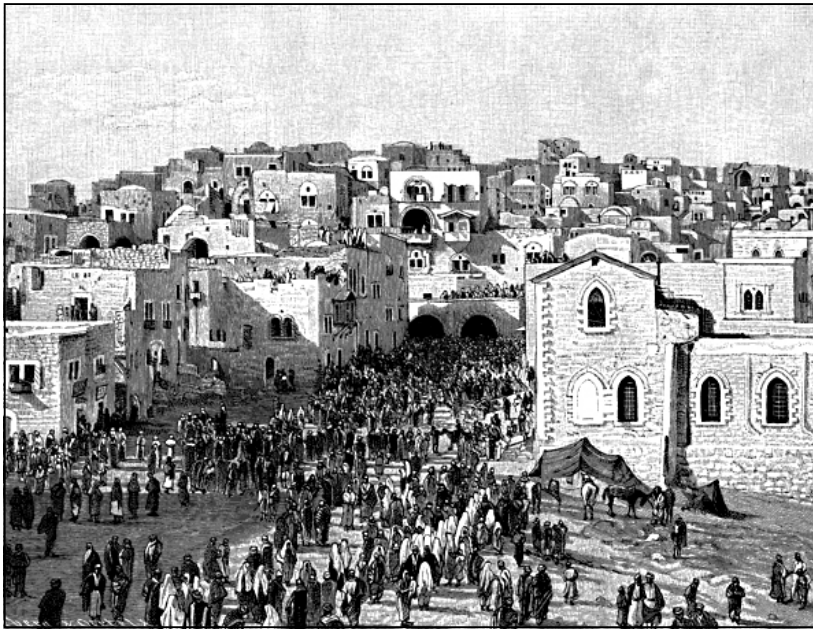
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The Reverend  
**D. Linda Corry**  
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## On the way to Bethlehem

ANDREA ROWBOTTOM  
GRACE CHURCH, MILTON

In an effort to keep Christ in Christmas Milton Area Christian Churches Working Together (MACCWT) have undertaken the production of a Nativity pageant, *On the way to Bethlehem*. The pageant has experienced five successful years and been witnessed by over 25,000 visitors. The pageant takes place at Country Heritage Park. The rural setting of the park with its dirt roadways and rustic buildings provides an ideal setting for the journey to Bethlehem. As visitors assemble in Gambrel Barn—the large structure that accommodates 400 comfortably—they are warmed by the joyous music of a massed choir. As the people make their way to the far exit of the barn they form groups of 25-30 people; they are given a passport in preparation to travel to Bethlehem as a family, lead by their guide.

*On the way to Bethlehem* is an outdoor Nativity pageant. The group travels first to Mary's home where she is visited by the Angel Gabriel. This scene sets the story in motion and the journey begins. Visitors will witness King Herod's Court, Roman soldiers who stamp the passports, shepherds and their flock, magi and pages with their camel, innkeepers and fellow travelers walking with their donkeys. As you turn the corner you will see a giant star in the sky. It is high above a lovely old log barn. As you enter you are a guest at the manger scene with Mother and Baby, Joseph, the Little Drummer Boy and Little Angels singing and signing their gentle verse. Take a silent moment to take it all in.

At the end of the journey visitors take a short walk along a lantern lit walkway to the refreshment area. There they will be offered a hot drink and cookies, have their passports stamped and the children will receive a small remembrance of their visit. Giving each child who visits *On the way to Bethlehem* a small remembrance plants

the seed of the true meaning of Christmas. Visitors have an opportunity to contribute to the free-will offering—as there is no charge for this event. They will then be given a tractor-pulled wagon ride back to the exit.

There are over 175 cast members in the pageant each with a distinctly individualized costume depicting their role or rank in society. This in itself is a huge task and responsibility. In addition however there are over 500 volunteers who give of their time and talents to a myriad of jobs including sponsorships, advertising, publicity, deliveries, church suppers for the visitors, choirs, tractor drivers, props and lighting, set-up and take-down crew, reception and refreshment committees, graphic design, computer work, answering calls and managing the website.

How did all this begin? With God's guidance and intervention I was compelled to initiate the plans for the first production six years ago. MACCWT had just formed and I was a founding member. I had an idea but was reluctant to sell it to the group unless I had firm specifics as to how this would work. I approached the manager of Country Heritage Park with my concept. He invited me to the park to talk. We got into his truck and drove a proposed route on the grounds. Between the two of us we could see the journey to Bethlehem unfold. "This would be a perfect spot for the shepherds, and we could put our sheep in the field with them." Then I saw the inside of the century-old log barn. I was struck with excitement and awe all at once. "This humble setting was meant to host the 'manger scene.'" In a matter of minutes *On the way to Bethlehem* seemed a reality. I could hardly wait for the next MACCWT meeting. On faith alone, as we had no money to invest, we began to work towards our goal. We organized committees focused on costuming, where we

asked people to donate draperies

and fabric, and fund-raising, where we asked each member church for \$100 and sponsorships were obtained from local businesses for goods, services and financial support. We were Christian churches working together therefore it was imperative that each committee be representative of various churches and that no church work alone as one committee. In a similar fashion the core organizers formed a group called the Nativity Team, comprising of 5 people representing 5 member churches.

Although *On the way to Bethlehem* is the child of Christian Churches Working Together, it is very much an Anglican experience right from the beginning. Grace Church Milton was very active and supportive of the pageant. Of the over 500 volunteers, 126 are Grace parishioners; some are cast members, others deliver posters, some sew costumes, several sing in the massed choir. Grace is involved in every aspect of the Nativity pageant including parking, reception and refreshments. Another member of Grace organizes the turkey dinner, which is available with advanced bookings to visitors to the Nativity. Our rector, Father Mark McDermott is an enthusiastic supporter and cast member. Grace Church is integral to the pageant's success. As well, some cast and choir are members of St. George's, Lowville and St. Stephen's Hornby and St. George's Georgetown.

*On the way to Bethlehem* is now a Milton tradition built on faith, love and cooperation.

The pageant runs for four nights from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm. The dates for the 2007 presentation are November 30 and December 1-3. Make it a family tradition; mark your calendar now in preparation to journey to Bethlehem. Book dinner at one of the four churches and enjoy a wonderful full-course meal prior to your *On the way to Bethlehem* experience." For more information, see [www.onthewaytobethlehem.ca](http://www.onthewaytobethlehem.ca).

## An interfaith journey



SHARYN HALL  
PRIEST, ST. LUKE'S, BURLINGTON

On the feast of Epiphany, we read again the story of the magi who followed a peculiar star to find the infant king of the Jews. What a strange story this is! What a contrast to the visit of the shepherds!

In Luke's gospel, we have the full narrative of the journey to Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus, and the angelic appearance to the shepherds. In Matthew's gospel, the birth of Jesus is told in very few words and then there is the story of the wise men.

All the people in the Christmas story in Luke's gospel are Hebrew, but the magi in Matthew's gospel are Gentile from a priestly class of a Gentile religion. They worship other gods and foretell the future in the stars; they are mysterious figures.

We picture them as kings clothed in rich fabrics of many colours. We call them wise men or magi, which is closer to the Greek word in Matthew's gospel. Magi were magicians and astrologers. In the ancient world they

were held in high esteem, but the Hebrew people were suspicious of the practice of magic and the study of astrology.

So why is this story of the magi included in Matthew's gospel?

There are several layers of meaning in the story of the magi. It is a story of contrasts. They are rich and respected for their wisdom, but they are humble before the divine child of a peasant woman. They are Gentiles coming to pay tributes to the Son of the Hebrew God. They symbolize the human search for a divine presence in the world.

When the magi returned to their own country, did they adopt the Hebrew faith? We do not know, but it seems unlikely. Yet their long journey confirmed to them that the God of all creation could be present with people of another race, another nation and another religion. The magi returned to their home with respect for another path to God.

Some Christians insist that the only way to God is the way of Jesus, but we cannot isolate ourselves from the reality that millions of people worship God in different ways. The mysterious magi from a distant land show us how to honour other faiths which seek to know and serve God. Our journey of faith calls us to greater understanding and respect for the journeys of others.

## A new year and time for change



MARNI NANCEKIVELL  
DIRECTOR OF TRANSITIONAL MINISTRY

As you read this, the shopping will be done, the wrappings will be undone, and the Christmas turkey will likely already have been transformed into soup. Just around the corner we leap from 2006 to 2007. New Year's Eve, the time for resolutions. What are your resolutions this year? Have you made decisions about losing weight? Exercise? Self care? Quitting smoking? By their very nature, all of our New Year's resolutions are about change—from one kind of behaviour and to another.

It sounds simple, doesn't it? Yet so many of us struggle with the idea of change. In my work as Director of Transitional Ministries, I work with many parishes that are coming to terms with the necessity to change. There are times when change is welcome. Some parishes are ready to embrace new ways of doing things. Other times though, change is thought of as a kind of 'enemy force'. Some parishes will change if they think they can get something in exchange for a change (i.e. Entertain giving up

the BAS page 230 service if we can draw more newcomers). But if the change doesn't appear as if by magic by some unarticulated inner deadline, the pressure will be on to revert to business as usual. A parish or an individual that approaches transformative change that way will never see it fully realized.

During the year 2006, the Diocesan landscape has changed appreciably. Parishes have amalgamated, and new ministries have been formed. Properties that formerly housed Anglican churches are on the real estate market.

Those decisions to change have not been realized easily. Much prayer and ground work have prepared the way for those changes. No, not all of those involved have liked the idea of the change, but in the end, those changes have been entered into with a 'no escape clause'. With true transformative change, there is no going back.

I suspect that is why so many folk struggle with the New Year's Resolution. It is so easy to revert to the comfortable known ways, even if those behaviours are not healthy for us. Many years ago, that kind of non-change was labelled for what it is: Backsliding.

The life of faith in the 21st Century does not include room for backsliding. Our decisions and our behaviours, whether personal or corporate must embrace both firm resolve and action. Only then, can we truly experience new life.



# The present of possibility



LINDA MOORE  
CENTRE FOR LEADERSHIP & HUMAN VALUES

In order for us to fully understand and appreciate the present of possibility, we can draw on the knowledge and wisdom within the writings about the Christian time of Epiphany. They are filled with metaphysical symbolism and rich spiritual texture that can give us deep insight, regardless of our personal religiosity or spiritual beliefs. Those who contributed to the stories of the life of Jesus were trained in this metaphysical discipline and so there is much to gain from their writing if we look just through and beyond the obvious. So much of this knowledge and symbolism has been lost and yet it holds keys to living more fully.

Within Judaic scholarly traditions words are not considered the truth. Rather words merely point us to the essence of truth which cannot be described by words. Words are symbols and interpretations along that path towards what is

ent of possibility lies within us, we enter each day awake and alert to whatever gifts and opportunities the day may bring.

The Wise Men themselves also brought very specific gifts with them, gold, frankincense and myrrh and these gifts exist for us all.

Gold represents spiritual gifts. The gold that the Wise Men brought the Christ child was a consciousness of the omnipresent richness of substance. To manifest prosperity we must charge our minds with wise and rich ideas. Instead of squandering precious time and energy on negative thoughts and the futility of thinking about all we lack, we nurture our abilities to first consider what is possible in the present.

Frankincense represents our transformation from material consciousness into the spiritual. Simply put, we live in more possibility when our world is filled with the desire to be more as a human being and contribute more to others. It is the gift of moving beyond the momentary happiness of material possessions into a realm where our happiness and possibilities are found within our relationships.

Myrrh represents the eternity of Spirit, rebirth, an ointment of love. In love we allow ourselves and others to make mistakes, to fail, to

## EACH OF US IS ON THE SAME and yet an infinitely unique journey...

true. So what new awareness can be gained regarding the present of possibility? Let's consider the town of Bethlehem in Judea and the gifts of the Wise Men.

Bethlehem means "the house of bread" symbolizing the abiding place of substance, while Judea means "praise" or spiritual recognition. At Bethlehem, the substance centre of human beings, a union of love and wisdom takes place. The gift is the presence of the Divine manifest within us. This wisdom is the recognition of possibility beyond understanding; the "present" of possibility.

The Wise Men of the East who came to visit baby Jesus may be likened to the stored up resources of our soul that can rise to the surface when its depths are stirred by a great spiritual revelation. East means "within" us. We have all experienced those moments when we come fully alive to the potential held in a moment and are set afire by an idea or a possibility. Within us lives these "wise men" or resources. Through the discipline of daily acknowledging that this pres-

fall short of the mark. Why? Because we know that in any moment we can renew our path, get back on course and move forward. We can turn once more to the present of possibility. There is a life force in us that is ever present waiting, willing, wanting to express.

Each of us is on the same and yet an infinitely unique journey. This richness of metaphysical symbolism does not even scratch the surface of the knowledge and wisdom available to us to guide us back to ourselves.

As we begin a new calendar year may we each accept the present of possibility into the deepest place in our being. May we develop the disciplines and daily habits that support us in expanding the gifts we have to share with one another. May we truly know that all things are possible when we are present to them. As human beings we are manifested miracles charged with a life force that knows no bounds. Each of us has the opportunity to contribute and to create and recreate a world of possibility each day, every day.

# The children have come... now what?



CHRISTYN PERKONS  
DIOCESAN RESOURCE CENTRE

Jody is a seven year old Sunday School student who has anger management challenges. Her social skills are immature and she is in need of constant supervision around her peers. Her reading and comprehension skills are difficult to assess since she responds negatively to situations that require reading. Jody has difficulty focusing on a task for more than a few minutes. She does not follow oral instructions well and is disruptive in the class.

Dawn is a young parishioner who begs her parents to bring her to church on Sunday mornings. She loves being with other children her age and is quite engaging with adults. Dawn loves to draw and frequently presents the teacher and Rector with artwork. She enjoys singing and listening to music, and loves crafts.

I know, Dawn sounds like a wonderful addition to any Church School group while Jody reminds you of your biggest challenge! You probably wonder how you and Jody could survive every Sunday morning. The interesting thing is that these two examples both describe Jody Dawn—one description focuses on her weaknesses; the other on her strengths.

Therein lies the key to successful integrating or including all children in your Church School program; assume that every child can learn and teach to each child's strengths. How to do that? While each disability brings particular challenges and may require specific techniques, there are general guidelines for including children of challenge in your Sunday morning program:

■ **Adopt the attitude that all children can learn.** If you approach children with this attitude, your actions will reflect this mindset. Your commitment to sharing our collective experience of God and engaging everyone in a transformative experience will translate into a persistence in finding a way to connect every child. Each child—and their parents—will know that you and your faith community will not give up on them; will not let them drift away.

■ **Pay attention to them.** It's easy to ignore children of challenge; it's an experience that's all too familiar to them and to their families. Children are rendered visible to themselves and to others when people pay attention to them; when the people around them acknowledge their contributions to the faith community—including the gift of their presence. Smile at them; make comments about positive behaviour; call on them when the situation will enable them to be successful; and find ways to include them in all of the activities.

■ **Help them see the connection between effort and success.** Challenged learners often find it difficult to see how they have control over what happens to them and over the consequences of their actions. This may manifest itself as learned help-

lessness or apathy—both a manifestation of perceiving that their efforts have nothing to do with their success. Church School leaders can empower them by showing them where they have control; demonstrating to them that their efforts, when appropriately directed, are clearly related to their successes. This will require research on your part, creativity, and willingness to start with small steps to ensure that the child experiences success. It's important to identify the specific action that led to the success so the connection is made in the child's mind between cause and effect.

■ **Help them connect learning to life.** Children will be motivated if they are clear about the usefulness or pertinence of what they are learning. Don't make the Sunday morning experience about what happens in the classroom. Connect the God-story of the lesson to their lives; use activities that relate what they have learned to who they are when they leave your classroom. Encourage them to bring their world in the Church School, and help them to integrate their experiences and background into a world view that connects God's transformative power and their faith to action.

■ **Maintain high expectations.** We know that most people tend to function at the level expected of them. Challenged learners often do not learn something the first time because the information is not presented in a way that is accessible to them, the materials used are inappropriate or the teaching technique does not fit their learning style. We are quick however to blame the learner and to respond by lowering our expectations. Lowered expectations feed into low self esteem for the learner and create a diminished sense of the person for the teacher. To see Christ in each person is to see and honour their unique strengths and gifts, and to assist them in living their best life.

■ **Teach to a variety of learning styles.** Research has shown us that students learn in many different ways. Alas, most challenged learners have learning styles that differ from styles valued and utilized in most classroom settings. Learners who are challenged need approaches that play to their strengths; that may be "hands on" experiences, auditory presentations—music, taped readings—and tactile activities. Not only can we facilitate their learning by utilizing different teaching styles but we can make them cognizant of the ways in which they learn most effectively which will increase their experiences of success.

■ **Use student-mediated teaching techniques.** Cooperative learning helps everyone in the learning situation. It frees the teacher to work with others, it develops compassion, empathy and self-confidence in the students and it teaches positive social skills. Children who are part of cooperative learning groups, consisting of three to six children, learn the value of interdependence, share a sense of responsibility for the learning goals, learn to maintain trust, communicate effectively and manage conflicts; they are becoming the adults we want them to be. Cooperative learning tasks allow each child to make a contribution. Use fluent readers to coach those who aren't. Pair a child who learns tactilely with one who can verbally share the story using a

flannel graph. It's the difference between giving each child a picture to colour and giving the group the supplies from which to create a group expression of the story.

■ **Vary evaluation method.** Effective teachers use varying forms of evaluation to guide instruction. If you are constantly assessing your students to see who is learning what, you will know which of your methods are effective with which students and can make adjustments. Paper and pencil tests are not the appropriate vehicle for this feedback; rather find ways for children to demonstrate what they've learned. Use your powers of observations to see who is engaged by different styles of learning. Try using a checklist of your learning goals to measure what has made an impact. The more feedback you get, the easier it will be for you to create learning situations that enhance everyone's ability to succeed.

■ **Use positive, proactive behaviour management strategies.** "Discipline is primarily what we do for children to help them develop positive, healthy attitudes and behaviors." It's critical that we understand the behaviour; what is the child trying to tell us? Once we understand the need, we can create a situation that makes it less likely that the child will need to behave inappropriately. The more frequently a child engages positively with others, the more likely it is that the positive behaviour will continue.

■ **Be aware of the time factor.** In general, when we plan a lesson, we allocate a given amount of time to convey the material. It's important to remember that challenged learners may take longer to process some concepts or to complete tasks. Allowing all children enough time to master a skill may mean that you have to allocate different amounts of learning time to each student. Those who grasped the concept more quickly can be kept engaged with more complex explorations. Time is a gift if we give each child enough and an enemy if we are impatient.

Successful inclusion of all children is about attitude; it's about assuming children with disabilities will participate in all activities and then making modifications or adaptations to make that happen. Inclusiveness is about connecting children who develop typically in the rich experiences of challenged children.

Think this doesn't apply to you because there are no special needs children or adults in your parish? They won't come if you don't invite them into an atmosphere that welcomes them and commits to meeting their needs. The parents of special needs children are in dire need of community. They need people to affirm them as members of Christ's family. They need adult time to learn and connect with other adults. They need safe, affirming care for their children. They need reassurance that they are doing a good job of parenting, and that their children are valued and their gifts are affirmed.

Your parish could be exactly what they need! And they are exactly what we need—a circle drawn wider!

(Some of this material is adapted from *Let All the Children Come To Me*, Breeding, Hood & Whitworth; Cook Communications Ministries, Colorado Springs, CO 2006)

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## CHRISTMAS IN HISTORY

Egeria, a nun from Spain who visited the Holy Land about 385, found that the Nativity of Christ was celebrated in Bethlehem with a nocturnal vigil and a eucharist on January 5-6. Unfortunately, the leaves in her diary which describe the service have been lost, and we can only pick up her narrative at the point where she was in the procession accompanying the bishop back to Jerusalem on the morning of the Epiphany. She tells us, however, that "in Bethlehem through the entire eight days the feast is celebrated in festal array and joyfulness by the priests and all the clerics there and the monks who are stationed in that place."

When Jerome settled in Bethlehem in 386 he brought with him the Roman custom of celebrating the Nativity of Christ on December 25... But in spite of the presence of westerners like Jerome, Jerusalem followed Alexandria in not immediately copying the feast of December 25. The Armenian Lectionary, which reflects the use of the church in Jerusalem a hundred years after Egeria's pilgrimage, mentions casually that "in other towns is kept the Nativity of Christ" but that in the Holy City December 25 is a commemoration of "James and David." It was not until the second half of the sixth century that Christmas Day was observed there.

John Gunstone

# The human face of God



MICHAEL THOMPSON  
RECTOR - ST. JUDE'S, OAKVILLE

The arrival of the magi—gentiles, pagans, stranger than mere strangers—is hardly good news; hard on their heels come Herod's storm troopers, and what began in the night with the child's first cries ends with mass murder, and the last cries of all male children under two.

They had no idea what they were setting in motion when they asked Herod where the new king had been born. "New king!" he splutters, wine down the front of his shirt and all over these foreigners with their funny hats and far-away eyes. "Outlandish! Impossible! No." But he feels the cold wind of coup d'etat blow under the door, and sets out to do whatever it takes to neutralize the threat.

Joseph, warned in a dream, spirits the Holy Family off to Egypt—hospitable, safe, and nurturing Egypt—and the magi go back to wherever it is that magi come from. It is both Epiphany and Apocalypse. "We three Kings of Orient are, Tried to smoke a rubber cigar. It was loaded, it exploded..." Our silly song is truer than we ever thought or knew, and truer than the harmless story in the Christmas snow-globe.

Epiphany: To appear. Apocalypse: To uncover. They seem to travel together, though epiphany gets all the good reviews. Apocalypse all blue and purple and forboding, hooded scythe-bearing wraiths and brimstone. Epiphany brimming with insight, effervescent with newness and surprise. "Look, Billy! Magi!" But brewing maniacally, just below the surface, all manner of unintended consequences that will, in time, be uncovered. Shadowy truths about power; how to get it, how to keep it, who counts, who doesn't. Herod counts, but dozens of dead toddlers don't. Oil counts, but hundreds of thousands of dead Iraqis don't. Darfur and Rwanda don't count as they have nothing we need. But the Congo has minerals, South Africa has gold, and Mexico has beaches and cheap labour just next door. The same ugly arithmetic has haunted humankind since Cain decided Abel didn't matter, since Eve and Adam put themselves in the middle of the story in that first, most tragic coup.

I suspect the headlines in Bethlehem the next day were about the mass murder of the children. Like the headlines on September 11, 2001, or December 7, 1941. Like headlines on September 1, 1939. Armenia. Eastern European ghettos. Deliberate famine in Ukraine, pogroms and genocides and ecocides. There is more than enough bad news to keep us aware of Apocalypse.

At the same time, we seem to find ways to hold that awareness at

bay. Apocalypse is often 'then and there', not 'here and now'. We lack, sometimes, the capacity to stay attentive to what is broken in our midst. We find ways to avoid the squeeze kids and panhandlers, to explain that man on the heating grate as something other than a massive tear in our common life. Even the homeless and the hungry we make, somehow, into something 'other', not quite part of 'us', not like 'us'.

And so Apocalypse is how God counts what we don't, and does it in public, visibly, and insistently. Uncovering what we have swept under the rug, buried in the yard, or relegated to some corner or another. "Look! Look! This person matters. Count her. Count him. He is part of the 'you' I mean when I say I love you. Look and see what I see," says God.

We cannot. Not without epiphany. Epiphany makes it possible for us to witness Apocalypse, makes it possible for us to look without cringing and turning away at the harmed and shattered world, at its harmed and shattered creatures. Epiphany—"to appear." What is it that appears? A child, a man, a human. Spirit-driven, greeted by magi, sheltered in Egypt, baptized in the Jordan, healing and teaching and living as if the Kingdom he proclaimed were already established. As if lepers could be touched, and women regarded as persons. As if sin could be forgiven and the hungry crowd fed with a few fish and a bit of bread. As if people who don't belong together, who aren't 'us' to each other, could feast at the same table, as if the Samaritan could be the hero of the Jewish rabbi's story. And living like that, making it so. The Kingdom of God has come into your midst, he says.

And if this is what a human is, full-grown, it is what we may become. There is in us some as-yet unfinished form of this compassion, this hospitality. We can be porous to the Spirit, porous to the other who turns out to be "us" after all. God's Spirit blows across our dreams and bones and makes us human, makes us persons, makes us servants of the great and healing Love that Epiphany makes apparent in the life of Jesus.

There are days when all we can see is the soldiers breaking down the peaceful innocent doors of Bethlehem. There are days when all we can hear is the cries of their victims. But in the same night that the soldiers tramp into town, a holy family, Spirit-led and Spirit-sheltered, sets out for the unexpected haven of Egypt.

The last time we looked Egypt was not a good place for the Hebrew people, but now it is different. Even Egypt is made new by Epiphany. This child of hope is alive. We are alive. We can stare at the grim face of brokenness and know that there is another face. And in Epiphany, if we look closely, we can see something of that Face in the mirror, for we are creatures in the image of that Face, made to see what that Face sees, called to shine with compassion and healing as that Face shines. That human Face of God.

# Developing a parish profile



JIM NEWMAN  
DIRECTOR OF STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT

If your parish is typical it's probably doing well in some areas and not so well in others. That's to be expected; all parishes experience cycles of growth, stagnation, decline and renewal. But how is your parish doing in terms of mission, finances, and leadership? That's a more specific question, and much more difficult to answer.

### The Parish Assessment Tool

The Parish Assessment Tool was developed in 2005 by the Bishop's Task Force on Parish Viability. Originally developed for senior Diocesan staff it was, not surprisingly, initially viewed with some scepticism. That's not unusual either; assessments and evaluations can be somewhat distressing as well as beneficial. And at the outset it was suggested that there might

be a tendency to use the tool to define parishes as either viable or not viable. But parishes are far too complex to be labelled so glibly or superficially. They are constantly changing entities—full of spirituality one month, and weary the next; financially sound one quarter and struggling after that. The objective of assessment is not to be punitive but to answer with some certainty "How are we doing?"

### Why bother?

You might be thinking "Why bother with a formal assessment? We know our own parish, and sure, some areas are troublesome but we're doing okay. And besides, God will provide." God will provide more than we could ask or imagine. But is your parish being all it can be to its people, its rector, and its community?

The Task Force looked for a process that would be comprehensive, fact-based, objective and participatory. Considering the extent of the task, the tool is remarkably easy to use. It guides the users through a seven-step process and the creation of a Parish Profile and a roadmap to areas that might require attention. And like your annual check-up with your physician, parish as-

sessments are not one-time events. They should be regular periodic evaluations to illustrate trends in vital areas like mission, finances, and leadership.

### Logistics

The assessment process shouldn't take more than an evening or two including discussion about problem areas identified. The parish corporation might wish to handle the entire assessment, or a subgroup of the parish advisory council could be designated to handle the mission and financial aspects. The parish treasurer will find the financial section virtually identical to the statistics requested by the Diocesan Resource Centre at year end.

Developing a parish profile is sign of maturity for any parish. It makes a statement about your parish's desire to be all it can be. It identifies areas that can be improved, it sets a baseline for future assessments and trends, and it provides a foundation for positive change.

So, how's your parish doing? Find out by downloading the Parish Assessment Tool at [www.niagara.anglican.ca](http://www.niagara.anglican.ca) under "In the News", or by calling the Diocesan Resource Centre at 905-527-1316.



# Diocesan Mission and Ministry

## PROPOSAL RECEIVES MIXED RESPONSE at Synod 2006



PETER SWIRE  
ASCENSION, HAMILTON

Speaking as one of the proponents of reforming the Diocesan Mission and Ministry (DM & M) formula, I found the outcome at Synod rather perplexing. For those who were not at Synod, the new formula would have been a simple affair of taking a mere 20% of the parishes operating income for the most recent fiscal year. The definition of operating income was presented to Synod as being those receipts necessary for the day to day operation of a parish. Income for furtherance to other charities; building repairs, etc. were deemed to be as accountants call it "balance sheet" items. This would have replaced a myriad of deductions that many parishes do not properly utilize. Given the fact that every parish spends their financial resources in the same manner and we collectively do not run surpluses, the proposed formula would have eliminated the inequity amongst parishes.

At the floor of Synod, a number of speakers spoke both for and against the proposal.

Those for the proposal appreciated the simplicity and equity. Regrettably, those against the proposal had expressed a more narrow perspective. During the discussion, it was decided that the motion be split into four motions. The elimination of the three year trailing average and the provision for transitional debt relief were approved. The motion for the 20% fair share levy formula was narrowly defeated. It was subsequently moved that the matter be referred back to Synod Council with a view that it will come back to Synod in November 2007.

### Total income for DM & M may rise

The approval of moving to the most recent fiscal year as opposed to the trailing three year average will better match each parish's ability to pay. However, as Bob McKinnell advised the floor of Synod, there may be some unexpected increases and decreases as a result of the collective decision made. Subsequent to Synod,

more detailed analysis does confirm some rather significant changes—plus and minus—to about one sixth of the parishes in the Diocese. Overall, the total income raised from the DM & M may rise.

It does, however, raise an interesting question if Synod approved a formula that resulted in an unexpected increases can Synod Council or FAC immediately following a Synod defer or veto the democratic process as a means to soften the financial stresses? This is a discussion for others to thoughtfully and prayerfully consider.

The failure to adopt the simplifying process will result in some results that people will not expect. Parishes that presently have curates, priest associates and lay workers will see an increase in DM & M billings over the proposed model. Only those very few parishes anticipating staff additions will see some relief. Smaller rural and inner city churches that do not have the volunteer resources to complete the forms properly will continue to pay disproportionately higher DM & M. In order to curtail the under or over-reporting of exemptions on the existing returns, the deductions for rental costs will be better defined. Unfortunately, this will increase the length of the return by two pages.

### Audit guidelines will be developed

There are other advancements in parish accounting that we will be introducing shortly. There will be a requirement for the 2006 reporting period that parishes will need to produce a balance sheet which for some parishes will be a first! The Treasurer's Handbook will be updated to show parishes how to report operating income. New audit guidelines will be developed during the year. Parishes will be strongly encouraged to use an off the shelf accounting software package to streamline their routines. Hopefully the latter will eliminate some of the reporting inequity between the parishes.

At Synod, I mentioned that "fair" was defined in most parishes when their DM & M goes down and they do not concern themselves with the other parishes. As long as this philosophy is predominant, it will be very tough to amend the current formula above and beyond some better definitions and forms design. Perhaps by upgrading parish accounting and reporting systems, we may be able to narrow the inequities and give us a better chance of reforming the formula.



## THE JOURNEY OF THE MAGI

STUART PIKE  
ST. ANDREWS, GRIMSBY

It's about the journey. Most of the great stories of faith have that in common. The journey of Sarah and Abraham from Mesopotamia to the land which God would show them. The journey of Joseph to Egypt. The forty-year journey of the forming nation of Israelites. The journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. The journey of the Magi. All the stories of healing and reconciliation which happened while Jesus was on the way to somewhere. The woman at the well, the ten lepers, the Syro-Phoenician woman, the blind beggar, Bartimaeus. The list goes on.

Most people just want to arrive. We want the right answer. We want the stability of a sure place. That's why we build our Church buildings with their solidity and title. We want the proof of sight and touch and place, and yet, we seem to get only a glimpse, as in a glass, darkly, of what we seek. And so, never completely satisfied, we need to journey still.

### The deepest truth is in the metaphor

Many people have wondered who those seekers were: Magi from the East who seem to appear for their amazing moment and then disappear again into the ether. Some legends make them Kings. Some give them names. Some legends tell of their origins: perhaps Arabia, Persia and India. We don't hear of these legends in the Bible though. We hear little of their journey. We do know that they watched the stars and that they were seekers after wisdom and truth. Was that their driving force?

As is so often the case in Holy Scripture the deepest truth, the holiest insight, is in the metaphor. Who are these Magi and why did they journey? Well, they are you and I and they journeyed for the same reason, ultimately, that we journey: to seek for the King, the Lord of life.

My journey has taken me far. Perhaps the fact that I have lived in so many places in my life makes this metaphor resonate with me. I was born a traveller and I suppose I'll always be one. Yet, my glimpses of the King haven't always been in far-off lands. I meet fellow seekers and sojourners who stay, physically, pretty close to home.

### Our imagination is extinguished

The trouble with the journey, is that many people get tired with it. Will it never end? Can I not just stay here and rest? And yet, as St. Augustine says in *Confessions*, "Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee." There seem to be two main reasons why we might not continue our journey. The first is that we think we have found our

King and our truth, and there is no need to seek further. The second is that we think we will never find our King and the truth and, therefore, the journey is futile. We stifle our restlessness and pretend it is not there, or we despair of our restlessness and just try to ignore it. In both cases our imagination is extinguished, as is our vision. We can feel aimless and useless. It is easy then, to keep our eyes downcast, not to hope, not to expect.

The Magi's way was followed, not with downward gaze, watching stumbling feet, but with heads up, watching the poetry of the cosmos and the one bright star which drew them on. This star brought them, eventually, to a meeting and a relationship with their King; in a humble place where they would have least expected. They can do nothing more than to fall forward in ineffable joy and scatter their treasures before him. But then, astonishingly, they journey on! Their world is forever changed, but they go on to do all that we do not know.

### The journey continues

The Magi do not think they have arrived and, thus, stop. Likewise, they never lost hope and stopped trying. Their travelling just continues. What is the rest of their story? We do not know. T.S. Elliot gives one Magus a voice and a memory in his, *The Journey of the Magi*. Perhaps their journey continued to be a struggle. Perhaps their restlessness continued. Perhaps the gift of Christ to the Magi was that they could never be satisfied again.

The rock group, U2 sing in their Song, "I still haven't found what I'm looking for." "I believe in the kingdom come, when all the colours bleed into one... but I still haven't found what I'm looking for." I really don't think the arrival is our purpose. I think that continuing the journey is the essence of faithfulness. We always have more to learn and new ways to experience our King, if only fleetingly. There is always room for growth in our journey. There is always a chance at being awed by the presence of Christ. Again and again.

My parishioners at St. Andrew's Church know that my favourite story of Jesus is another story of a journey. It happens on Easter day, when two of Jesus' disciples, stricken by grief, and fleeing Jerusalem, share their story of confusion and fear and dashed hopes with a stranger. It is only when they break bread together that they realize that Christ was with them the whole time.

It is Epiphany, the season which celebrates newness: new insight, new awakening, and the rush of new relationship. Let's raise our heads and be star-struck and continue in our journey. Companionable to your journey might be some of the writing of T.S. Elliot, and *The Joshua Tree* by U2.

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# BISHOP'S CHARGE

Niagara Anglican - January 2007

## THE HOPE THAT IS IN CHRIST

The following Charge was delivered to our Diocesan Synod in video format. DVD's are available for our parishes. Throughout the text of this charge we have interspersed photographs of the synod to which Bishop Spence delivered this charge.

**H**ello. I am happy to be able to offer my charge to you in this manner once again this year. After my 'experiment' last year of putting my charge on a DVD, many people let me know how effective they thought it was at reaching a broader cross section of the diocese. I was told that the many, who rarely have an opportunity to hear the Bishop, appreciated receiving first hand, what the priorities and vision for the diocese would be for the upcoming year.

I had considered going back to the old way after having heard from my children about how none of my many gifts were fashioned for television. However there was great support for continuing in this manner so here we are.

I am speaking to you from atop the escarpment in Hamilton; a glorious place where you can see for miles. From this vantage point I can look out over a great deal of our wonderful diocese; Greater Wellington to the north, Dundas, Hamilton, Burlington, Oakville, Stoney Creek and then the Skyway bridge, the gateway into the Niagara peninsula.

There is no doubt in my mind that here, in the Diocese of Niagara, we live in one of the most advantaged places in this nation. We have a standard of living second to none of anywhere in the world. We are rich in industry, commerce, tourism, and transportation (the port of

God has blessed me with the opportunity to travel and experience first hand the richness of our diocesan home. The dedication and faithfulness of thousands of people who make up this Anglican Church of ours is truly amazing. The Diocese of Niagara is perceived within national church circles as a leader and as a place of innovation in ministry and worship. We receive countless inquiries from people outside the diocese who wish to be considered for ordination here and as I travel throughout the country, I am always being asked about how we do the things we do. Up until recently we had the only full time children, youth and family ministry department in the country. Dioceses throughout our nation want information and resources from us around evangelism, outreach, worship and stewardship because they themselves cannot afford to offer such support. Many dioceses are just struggling to survive. I have had many late night conversations with colleagues in the House of Bishops whose dioceses are in crisis unlike anything we have ever known and some are facing very uncertain futures.

I highlight this reality because, as I travel throughout Niagara, I often hear similar tones of uncertainty and gloom; fear about the future, the lack of resources, declining numbers, conflict and debate. Sure these are



Hamilton is the busiest port on the Great Lakes). The soil of this area lends itself to outstanding agriculture with some of the finest wines on the globe. Our economy is healthy and vibrant; we have access to the finest medical care; the educational resources are world class with three top notch universities in McMaster, Brock and Guelph. We have many superb colleges and private schools to support the public school boards and there are countless opportunities for recreation, relaxation and fun. We are truly some of the luckiest people to have the opportunity to live and work in this place.

In this, my tenth year as Bishop,

anxious times; you read the papers, you know the statistics, our church is not growing; does that worry you? Of course it does. But what worries me the most is when I hear a sense of hopelessness. Why? Because we are followers of Jesus Christ and as followers of Christ we are and must be people of hope. Our God is the God of hope; "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

Without hope there is only darkness and in the midst of life we are in death. Without hope we are not the Church of Jesus Christ; without



the hope that is in Christ we will continue to diminish and die. God has blessed us abundantly; our faith is grounded on the hope that is in Christ, so we have a choice of what we wish to be!

You and I are called into communities of hope in this region of immense opportunity. Of course there will continue to be challenges and things to make us afraid. We are an imperfect people; we have imperfect ways of doing things. Yet, imperfect as we are, we are still the vessels that are adequate to be bearers of hope.

We are hopeful people who therefore can be inspired and energized, with a sense of purpose and direction. Because that's what hopeful people do. So that means that we have and will continue to face the difficulties and challenges and to proactively respond. This fall we are going to do so in a new and creative way. There has begun, this week, a radio and newspaper campaign covering our entire diocese utilizing 5 radio stations and as many newspapers. These ads will pronounce our Anglican Church as a place of hope, a place where the true meaning of the Advent and Christmas season may be experienced; where everyone may come as they are and be welcomed and cared for. It is my hope and my encouragement, that all parishes will prepare themselves to welcome our guests. Let your people know that we are doing this; ensure newcomers' information is up to date, and offer hospitality like you would in your home. This is a wonderful opportunity for evangelism. Let us ensure we are true to our word!

In my time as Bishop, a number of churches have closed and it is inevitable that there will be more closures in the future. Other churches have successfully amalgamated to share ministry and pool resources. We have examples like Church of the Resurrection in Hamilton, St. Brendan's and St. James in Port Colborne, the Niagara Falls ministry team and, as we speak, the amalgamation between Our Saviour and Church of the Redeemer

in Stoney Creek. Presently there are discussions going on in downtown Hamilton amongst T.H.E.M. (The Hamilton East Ministry), Grace, St. Mary's, and the Faith Lutheran.

In each of these cases, the resources borne from the closing of one church has provided the foundation and support of new and exciting ministries. Yet sometimes, we allow fear to dictate what our priorities should be. We fixate on the negative, with what is wrong and we spend too much energy and time in trying to 'fix it'; or make the problem go away. We allow our buildings and structures, our personal preferences, or our preconceived notions of Church to get in the way. We become possessive and short sighted. Communities are not built upon a mentality of surviving or preserving the institution and the buildings.

In such an atmosphere we cannot expect to build up the body of Christ. We cannot expect people to experience the life giving message of hope in the Gospels.

A community of hope looks out beyond itself. Because the hope that is in us is not for ourselves but it is for the world. Being a community of hope is about being compassionate along side those who suffer. It is about giving up one's self for the sake of others, as Christ gave up His life for us. It is about being a community that responds to the needs of those around us. It is offering worship that is well done, lively, and creative; it is providing a community that meets spiritual needs, it is providing compassion and care, and it is about building bridges between us and the society in which we live.

So what does hope look like for us? It is living out the Gospel faithfully even in the midst of the challenges and fear. And throughout our diocese there are wonderful stories of hope.

■ In Fergus, the parish of St. James' operates a chip wagon in the community for special events. Not only does this raise funds for a variety of parish and community initiatives, it becomes a visible presence of this

Christian community in the town. The people of St. James present a hopeful image of the church beyond itself.

■ Number of parishes in our diocese offer wonderful programs within their communities. For example, St. Simon's, Oakville and Christ Church Cathedral are meeting a tremendous need within their neighbourhoods by offering breakfast programs to young children each day of the week. The Cathedral has created the Jamesville Community Centre, a place where neighbours can gather and engage in a variety of social, cultural, and recreational activities.

■ St. George's, St. Catharines feeds between 75-125 disadvantaged men breakfast every morning, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. This is a vitally important ministry. It is one that provides a little sense of hope for people who might otherwise live in despair.

■ Two years ago after a devastating fire, St. John's Thorold is emerging from the ashes with a renewed sense of hope and mission about what God is calling them to now. Not only did this tragedy draw the people of St. John's together, it drew the bonds of community around the entire town of Thorold in an atmosphere of compassion and strength. Out of this tragedy was formed a wonderful working relationship with Knox Presbyterian Church which continues to this day; the Church at its best

■ A number of parishes have engaged in building programs to meet the ever growing needs within their communities. If any one of you has ever been involved in a building program, you know how costly such projects can be in terms of time, money and energy. St. Cuthbert's, Oakville, St. John's Port Dalhousie, St. Matthew's, Burlington, St. John's, Ancaster, Christ Church Flamborough, St. James' Fergus. All these parishes have not engaged in these massive undertakings for their own good or glory. They have expended vast resources in order to build upon the foundation of hope

See BISHOP'S CHARGE on page 15



## The wonderful thing about tiggers

"The wonderful thing about tiggers, is tiggers are wonderful things, their tops are made out of rubber, their bottoms are made out of springs."



GRAHAME STAP  
ST. ALBAN'S, GLEN WILLIAMS

Our five year old grandson, Tanner, loves this song and always giggles as we sing it, but then he giggles about most things.

Life for Tanner is simple. If you want to know how it works just take it apart. He learned this from his mother, who did the same thing at his age. If you are hungry, eat. If you want something, ask—and if the answer is no, pout and glance up out of the corner of your eye to see if the pout is being noticed. For Tanner Christmas is a wonderful magical time with more toys than can be played with and there is more love from more people, than he can understand. Deep inside Tanner has the sure knowledge that he is secure and safe and loved and everything in his world is just as it should be.

We adults know this is not the case and unfortunately all in the world is not as it should be. The pain and suffering of the world is seen on television or read in the newspapers everyday. We know many suffer from hunger, thirst, AIDS, war, and loss of dignity, and many natural disasters of the world.

In our own parishes, families suffer from uncertainty regarding health, finance, family wellbeing, and many other symptoms of today's society. Some suffer because of the loss, or pending loss, of a loved one. Some suffer from depression, from the overwhelming

pressure of work, demands of family life. The list could go on and on and Christmas is, for some, only a reminder of the pain in their lives.

Through it all there is a light at the end of the tunnel. A great and glorious light that shines brighter than the brightest star of heaven. The light of God whose power working in us can do more than we can ask or imagine, a light born in our hearts and minds to help us overcome the problems of our lives. A light that allows us to reach out to others even when we are in need ourselves. A light to bring the peace we so desire.

Yet we sometimes hide from the light not allowing it into our hearts—not quite accepting that the love of God can and does make all things right. We worry and fret; of course we do, we are human beings. However if we let go and let God deep inside, we too can feel just as Tanner does, the sure knowledge that we are secure and safe and loved even though everything in our world is not as it should be and we are not without worries, not without the answer sometimes being no, but with the sure and certain knowledge that we are loved by God no matter what. So let us, this Christmas do two things. Thank God for loving us so much that He sent his only son to show us the path to God is what counts; invite at least one other person to come with us to a Christmas service to experience the presence of a totally awesome God that created all things. Then we too can giggle just like Tanner and understand the fun that can be in our lives knowing that God loves us and we all can sing at the top of our voices, "The wonderful thing about tiggers, is tiggers are wonderful things, their tops are made out of rubber, their bottoms are made out of springs."

# The story ends well



MARTHA TARTARNIC  
ASSOCIATE RECTOR - ST. JUDE'S, OAKVILLE

Holding a synod meeting is a risky thing. Let me clarify: gathering together a large group of clergy and lay leaders engaged in parish ministry is a risky thing.

The risk is a risk of anxiety. Of anxiety getting wildly out of control. Of anxiety paralyzing us, corrupting us. Of anxiety turning us against one another. Anxiety defeating any of the purposes for which we gather in the first place.

The problem is that everyone in parish ministry in North America in this century has been trained, at least to some degree, to be energized by anxiety. From the moment that anybody enters a seminary door to begin training for the priesthood, we are taught the familiar mantras, "there may not be a job at the end of this," or "the future of the church is uncertain," or "if this generation of clergy don't get out there with energy and creativity, there won't be a church."

And parish lay leaders have similar driving storylines. They have been through the ups and downs of membership and activity in their own parishes. Or they have heard the stories of the church just down the street that used to be a thriving congregation and is now closing its doors.

### Anxiety is present during the Synod

The bottom line, we've all read the statistics, we've all heard the stories. We all know that we no longer work with a previous generation's comfy assumption that churches are built to stay open. And we all feel we have something invested in those churches staying open.

We come to synod then with a whole variety of places into which this anxiety gets located. We have our collective questions and fears: Will the Anglican church split? How will we deal with schism? Are more people going to walk away? Or, do we have enough money? Are we using our money properly? How can we get more money? Use more money better? What do we do when there just doesn't seem to be enough?

We have our questions and fears on the parish level: Can we make

budget? Can we afford to grow? Can we afford not to grow? Are we growing enough? Why aren't we growing? How are we doing in comparison to everyone else?

And of course we have our questions and fears on an individual level. I can tell you that in my three years in ministry, there is one area of ministry that continues to keep me up at night, one area of ministry that has become my catch basin for all of the uncertainties and trepidations I encounter in doing what I do. And that is youth ministry. I can fill my mind with a merry-go-round of despairing analyses and projected catastrophes of youth ministry in my parish. I have become an expert at interpreting anything that I do, anything that happens in our ministry with young people in our parish, as not enough, not good enough, not all that it should be.

### We are formed around hope

Given this reality, we do pretty well. We mostly continue to function, even if every now and then we have a bit of a limp. We can mostly keep a lid on the anxiety levels at our meetings, even at our annual synod. We may have learned to be energized by anxiety, but we've also learned some pretty good diffusing techniques along the way, some pretty important methods for keeping ourselves on the saner end of the spectrum. We gather first and foremost around prayer. We laugh. We practice looking for and naming to each other the signs of hope, the signs of renewal and grace in our midst. We remind ourselves of that most important fact, that we are an Easter people, that we are formed as a community around the hope and good news of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus.

And this year, we had an extra stroke of luck in the management of anxiety department. This year, our synod met on the eve of the feast of the Reign of Christ.

I love the feast of the Reign of Christ. I love it, not because I admit to taking great pleasure in all of the big, fat hymns of our tradition—although that is the case—but rather because the thing that we celebrate at the heart of this feast is what keeps me from succumbing to complete nuttiness. On the feast of the Reign of Christ, we get to remind ourselves that we know how the story ends. We know how the story ends.

### Jesus removes the stakes

We read the story of Jesus, captive and on trial, standing before Pilate, standing before the nation's anxiety

and fear and questions directed full force toward Jesus, and it appears that there is something at stake here. That Jesus' ministry, his teachings, his band of disciples, his good work, his very life, is at stake. Is on the cutting block, destined for an embarrassing and messy extinction. Pilate believes he's got a hostage, because he believes that Jesus will accept these terms, that Pilate holds Jesus' life and work and future in his hands.

And Jesus upends the terms. Jesus makes null and void the anxiety and fear directed toward him. Jesus removes the stakes.

Because Jesus knows where this story ends. And it ends in the same place that is the source and reason of his life and ministry. The love of God. In that moment before Pilate, in the questions that he turns upside down, in the silence which is his ultimate answer, Jesus flips us to the back page of the book and shows us this fact that we forget, or ignore, or can't believe. The power of God does not hang in the balance. This is not a race to the finish line, it's not even a cosmic battle. There actually is nothing at stake.

Love that draws all of creation back to its Creator. That's where this is going. That's how this story ends.

### We're stuck with each other

This is an opportunity then to we remember that it's actually not up to us. To take a deep breath and remind ourselves that the future of the Church doesn't depend on our performance in youth ministry, in diocesan politics, in worldwide statistics, that the communion that we worry is so fragile and so easily broken is actually not ours to break. We're heading somewhere, and contrary to how most of us operate our lives most of the time, we're actually not steering the ship.

Let's this sound destructively passive, apathetic, or even worse, lazy, by no means does that moment Jesus stands before Pilate nullifying the stakes Pilate so confidently holds mean that we don't have a job to do. We certainly do.

But the job has a lot more to do with when, rather than if.

When do we want to love and look after when another? Because the unsettling good news is that we're stuck with each other!

When do we want to creatively and passionately engage, discern, get on board with, the love and life of God? Because the love and life of God claims us all in the end anyway. It claims even synods and youth ministry too, by the way.

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# Celebrating thirty years



Pictured, from left, are Niagara Clergy, Susan Wells, Val Kerr, Carol Skidmore, Lynne Corfield, Kathy Morgan and Fran Darlington while attending the 30th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood in the Anglican Church of Canada.

Continued from page 1

the centre of the life circle when the time is right, and that time is now! And when women do step into the centre of the life circle to leadership, they need to do so with the eyes and memory of life at the margins. We have spent 2000 years learning the gospel from the margins. When will it be time? What time is it in this story, my sisters? The time is now! Dr. Fletcher described the ordination of women as a rupture—giving life and dying is messy, and bloody, hard and complex, beautiful, generous and unending. Birth and death is risky business.

## Still difficult

Over the course of the two day conference we heard many incredible stories of courage and survival, of trials and triumphs. We were reminded how challenging it was for those first women who blazed the trail! Some were spat on, had male clergy turn their backs on them, leave the room when they were present, refused to take communion from and with them. Some women shared that it is still this difficult for them in 2006; depending on where you live in Canada attitudes are slow to change. Some lesbian women clerics shared the story of their pain at being shunned by the church; and a native woman cleric shared her own story of conversion when her own child "came out"—a story where she herself learned of God's unconditional love for all people, including her daughter.

Many woman clerics commented that it is common place for people to make personal comments on their size and weight, their hair style and colour; their dress or shoes—remember Jesus probably wore open toed sandals... probably no nail varnish though! And sometimes these comments are meant to pay a compliment which is graciously received, but frequently the intent is to be derogatory, and somewhat dismissive of the woman, and her ministry.

It has been a difficult journey, as it has always been so for all women who were the first in their particular profession. The conference was not at all negative. Rather it was a time for truth telling. The conference was an incredible cel-

bration full of honesty, and much laughter, wonderful worship, incredible speakers, fabulous food and hospitality. There was time for topics like "Our Identity as priests and women" with Bishop Ann Tottenham, "Rekindling our passion for Ministry" with Bishop Victoria Matthews; "International perspective" with the Reverend Alice Medcof, "National Perspective" with the Reverend Canon Dr. Linda Nicholls and "Honouring those who led the way" with the Reverend Margaret Waterchief.

## Archbishop John Bothwell

There was time to lament the unfortunate comment from the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Catholic Times, where he was quoted as saying, words to the effect that the ministry of ordained women has not made much difference to the church. There was even some suggestion that this decision might be re-visited. Oh, my goodness, how unfortunate! There was however, also time to give thanks for the men of courage and conviction who were willing to take the risk to use their position of power to make the changes necessary so that women could be ordained, like Primate Ted Scott, Archbishop John Bothwell, and in our own time, Bishop Ralph Spence.

Looking at leadership roles is a significant indicator of how well we are progressing, 30 years after the ordination of women. Is it time? In the Anglican Communion we have a total of 17 women bishops comprised of: New Zealand with one retired woman bishop, Canada with one retired and two active, and the USA with 3 retired, 9 active and one Primate, for a total of 12 active woman bishops in the World Wide Anglican Communion. We have 38 Primates in the Anglican Communion and only one of these is a woman—this being a very recent development when Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori was invested on November 4, 2006 as the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, with mixed reactions. When the Bishops meet at Lambeth in 2008, we will likely have about 10 active women bishops of a total of approximately 800 bishops. We have a ways to go as popular opinion states that in order to have any impact or affect any

change, a critical mass of one third needs to be achieved.

## Gender-balanced ballot

We have only one female Dean of a Cathedral and only three female Bishops in Canada—two active and one retired. We are making progress as women have now been ordained for a significant number of years, and a maturing and experience base is obviously necessary before we can see a shift in leadership representation. The Diocese of Niagara is seen to be a progressive Diocese with many women clergy, perhaps about one third now; and maybe coming close to one half of the active clergy and we were indeed one of the two pioneering Dioceses in 1976.

In Niagara we have one of the few, and maybe the only, woman Executive Officer in Canada. Archdeacon Marion Vincett was also a Regional Archdeacon prior to becoming the Diocesan Archdeacon. Bishop Ralph has appointed women to significant leadership positions, including myself as Archdeacon of Brock in 2003. Bishop Ralph has had the courage to choose the right person for the job and take the flack when some people might say "there was a more senior man available." In the Diocese of Niagara we also have a Canon that calls for a gender balanced ballot in lay and clergy nominations for elections to Provincial and General Synod and Episcopal elections which has helped to make sure that qualified women as well as men are considered for significant positions. This provision does not exist in other Diocese.

## Thanks be to God

"Fire in the deep water, fire in the deepest heart" culminated in a wonderful Eucharistic celebration at the Cathedral in Kamloops where Dean Louise Peters and her congregation hosted the 70 participants for a wonderful meal and service of celebration. This conference was a time for rest, a time for renewal, a time for making connections, a time for dreaming and holy listening, a time for sharing stories and for prayer, a time to gain strength for the journey ahead, a time for laughter and more laughter, eating and sharing, walking and talking. It was a time of Celebration. Thanks be to God.

# The Woman's Drum

A reflection from Sorrento

VAL KERR

FIRST NATIONS - ST GEORGE'S, ST. CATHARINES

Last week I had the privilege of attending a conference celebrating the thirtieth year of the ordination of women which was held at the Sorrento Centre in British Columbia—this is where we heard the poem below. You can read more about this wonderful conference in the article by Archdeacon Lynne Corfield but what I would like to share is part of my perspective looking through the eyes of a First Nation's woman.

## The silence of the woman's drum

It was really exciting for me to connect with other women priests of course but I was pleasantly surprised to meet seven other First Nations women who are priests. As you might have guessed I don't have much of a chance to do this in our diocese as I am the only First Nations priest here. I was even told by an elder that she believes I am the first woman from my own reserve to become an Anglican priest! So you ask, "What's your point?" Well as I pondered this I began thinking about an article someone had given me a few years ago that had been cut out of the newspaper. This article spoke of the very subject the poem *The Woman's Drum* talks about: The silence of the woman's drum or as the article stated the silence of the woman's voices in our First Nations Communities.

The writer of that article had taken a look at the traditions of the Iroquois Confederacy and had found that women in our history had a very strong voice and were treated with the utmost respect in our communities. Women were actually the ones who would elect our Chiefs! So what has happened through the years? Not only have the voices been silenced but also the woman's drum.

It has always been interesting to me when I hear any First Nations person stand up and speak for all our communities as if they are the authority and we all speak with one voice from one heart.

I need to say that while I am not an authority and I can only speak for myself, I do know that I hold different perspectives on some issues than some of my First Nations brothers and sisters. Let's take a look at the subject of people who are gay. I have heard time and time again how we—meaning First Nations People—would never agree with the blessing of same sex unions and further more we don't have any gay people on our reserves. Right! To this I say is it any wonder that more and more of our young people are leaving our reserves, the highest population of homeless people on the streets of Toronto are First Nations, and we have such a high rate of suicides among First Nations People?

## Some thoughts to ponder

Who is it that silences the women's voices and the women's drum? Sometimes it is the very people who claim to speak for our First Nations communities. For in my experience not all the First Nations women or in fact all First Nations men I know hold the views expressed on our behalf. As a matter of fact I have a cousin who is gay and all my family accept her and love her for who she is, an intelligent, strong, beautiful person.

In our culture it is considered disrespectful to speak against someone, so it's not just the women who can be silenced but all voices who speak up for any kind of justice or equality. Is this something we learned long ago? The disturbing thing for me is some of our own people want to silence all our voices and want to control our reserves continuing an abuse started long ago. Bottom line is we have our own abusing our own.

So the next time you hear someone claiming to speak for their whole community or reserve remember that we don't always think with one mind or speak with one voice.

I believe Jesus calls us all to join our hands, hearts and voices working together for justice, equality, peace and abundant life for all and for this I say thanks be to God.

So long, the Woman's Drum has been quiet while woman looked to the men for the teachings.

Now, the realization comes to seek women for the Sacred Teachings of the Creation.

Women, search out the sacred teachings of our grandmothers.

Take up the drum sing women's songs of the Healing Ones.

So long, the woman's drum has been alone kept in the back of minds silent in the Spirit.

Now, comes the time to pick up the drum to sing the healing songs of the woman's way.

Women, sing out the healing songs of the women's teachings.

Take up the drum sing the honour songs of the Traditional Ones.

Too long, the woman's drum has been silent.

Skyblue Mary Morin

# Prayer and praise



ANNETTE HARRIS  
ANGELICAN FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER

A resolution for the beginning of the New Year...

"My praise shall be continual of thee" (Psalm 71:6) or "commit thy way unto the Lord trust in Him" (Psalm 37:5).

Holy God, almighty Father of all mercies, we come to you early this day with prayers, praise and supplications; in this early hour receive this prayer, through the merits and death of your Son, Jesus. Be with us all the day, go before us, come behind us, be over us and above us; that way we shall fall into no sin or run into any kind of danger, come about us with your three-fold energy and light our way, guard our path, as often the way ahead is cloudy, the devourer ever ready to confuse and confound us.

We thank you for our home, and all the comfort that surrounds us. For all the tokens of your love, Lord of life, your amazing mercy that daily refreshes us. Be with all our dear ones, near and far away, our friends, especially our Christian brothers and sisters, our ministers and their families also. We thank you for them, and ask your

peace and blessing upon them at every hour. May Jesus be their hope and health continually; may He teach all trust and perseverance, and we ask that His leading be as real to us as to His disciples long ago.

Our Lord's journey led Him to the poor and unloved, His rest often broken into by the needy, the sick, the hungry or the lost. We who live in such goodly contentment, and have been blessed with so much, must be aware of the needs of others. Jesus himself told us this.

Whoever passes by and ignores this charge, has forgotten the second commandment. We are told directly that we must 'care' for others as well as for self. We have to pray also for these needs, and be humble in our walk and kind in our judgments and never forget the witnesses from all the ages, from our own lives and from the bible which is a constant refreshment to us; it will surely lead us in prayer and praise, thanksgiving and adoration.

Further Lord we would ask for wisdom, make us wise with your wisdom, strong in your strength, prayerful, as you would have us be. Let us always keep you as 'Morning Star', our guide and direction; a most precious gift that the Holy Father gave to us. Lastly, that the Holy Spirit of God will accompany us all our days. So ask, seek, and be alive to all that was bestowed upon us. Amen.

# Finding the peace of Christ

Editor's Note: This article was accidentally not published in the last issue. The points are still relevant as we continue the Christmas Season.

BILL MOUS  
DIVINITY STUDENT

Another busy semester at a seminary is drawing to a close. Niagara students, studying at Wycliffe and Trinity colleges, have had many happenings—apart many new insights resulting from the exciting array of classes we're all taking. Some have continued their discernment process by way of the diocesan candidates committee or ACPO (Advisory Committee on Postulants for Ordination), many attending The Leadership Conference (TLC) in Burlington as a 'divinity team,' and almost all joined the Bishop for dinner at the Duke of York for his annual pub visit to Toronto.

## A busy time

As the semester draws to an end, Christmas approaches—both of which bring a great amount of joy to the hearts of divinity students. Yet, the end of term is a season of chaos. Term papers, field placement evaluations and final exams crowd one's schedule. For a divinity student, it is a season of hope and anticipation in ways exceeding the normal understanding of Advent. For a divinity student—and many other students too—one is also hopeful that the fruits of one's labour will produce

the passing B grade and full of anticipation for the end of term whereby an unaccustomed sense of peace will permeate one's life.

As this collision of Advent/Christmas and the end of term takes place, it is sometimes challenging to fully engage in either. With a fifteen page paper on the theology of Paul and a multitude of other deadlines and exams looming over our heads, Advent can be relegated to the back burner of one's consciousness. I wonder whether Joseph had similar trouble being joyful when the responsibility of raising the Messiah loomed over his head.

## A heightened awareness of God's presence

Advent for all of us as Christians living in Canada is a time marked by busyness. There is the frenzy of Christmas gatherings, shopping expeditions, and even special worship opportunities and parish activities can add to the busyness. Some try to avoid the over-commercialization of this most sacred season, others actively join in. It seems to be an endless struggle between entering into the season of Advent amidst the demands of everyday life. Sometimes I wonder whether monastic communities have it right after all... but that thought

fades rather quickly.

It fades because I recall that no matter how much life gets in the way of my entering into the season of Advent, the busyness seems to end. In recent years it was after my last exam with two weeks still to go before Christmas. A deep sense of peace knowing that the semester has drawn to a close and what I learned, I had learned, and what I haven't, I hadn't. Some years, however, the peace didn't set in until I finished work at 4pm on Christmas Eve. This peace derived from the completion of my societal obligations is quickly replace by a sense of peace whereby there is a heightened awareness of God's presence amongst the community in which I am present—whether that be my family, friends or Church—as we come together in joy and hope to remember the birth of Christ and look forward to Christ's coming again.

Advent moves us away from the chaos that can overwhelm our lives and into the peace of Christ. Whenever and wherever you find your peace, I wish you the best in your pursuit of a deeper understanding about Jesus' presence amongst us and deeper hope that we might strive to realize God's reign on earth this Advent season.

# Purposeful Interim Ministry benefits St. John's, Burlington



ALAN L. HAYES  
THE ITINERANT CHURCHGOER

Seven churches in the diocese of Niagara are looking for rectors as I write this. That's probably an average number at any one time.

Like most things in life, the time between rectors can be used well or used badly. Recently I visited St. John's, Burlington, where this time of transition is being received as a blessing and an opportunity.

Our customary Anglican nomenclature can throw us off here. We call a church that doesn't have a current rector 'vacant.' This evokes an image of a church that's deserted, dilapidated, and boarded up. But many 'vacant' churches bubble along very happily—more happily than some with rectors!

## Visiting St. John's

St. John's has a small whitewashed wood-frame building on Dundas Street west of Guelph Line. On the Sunday I attended, it felt close to full, which means about seventy people.

This area used to be the thriving

village of Nelson. Today almost all its historic buildings are gone, other than St. John's and another church. On the other hand, over the past two decades some very significant housing developments have appeared between Walker's Line and Brant Street. Many at St. John's come from these neighbourhoods.

Some began coming because it was close. Some joined after meeting the previous rector through a funeral. Some came because they had friends in the congregation.

Others come from a greater distance—Oakville, Hamilton, Stoney Creek. They like the cozy fellowship, the country feeling, and the friendliness.

Before the service began, people chatted, because they like each other. At some churches, the custom is to be quiet before the service, to prepare for worship. I like both styles. It's a diversity that Anglicanism can easily accommodate. To the side of the chancel, a play area has been arranged for small children, which helps give the service a family feeling.

People love announcements at St. John's. They treat it like sharing news in the country store, and they joke and kibbutz.

When you go up for communion, the sides people are armed with bottles of Purell hand sanitizer which you can use. I hadn't seen

that practice before, and thought it was a good idea. You can bet that Jesus' disciples, being Jews, washed their hands before a meal (though not with Purell).

## Interim priest

The interim priest was ordained only recently, but he's a long-time professor who's extremely accomplished at speaking engagingly to groups, and who knows a thing or two about leadership. He also really likes people. And he preaches "Christian beauty, not Christian duty," to use his words.

For all these reasons he's very popular. In fact, some members who had wandered have returned, and some new folks have joined. "He'll be a hard act to follow," one parishioner told me.

But the big point I want to stress is that his main contribution to the church isn't being popular, although that helps, or even being a highly effective preacher, although that's vital. His main contribution is guiding St. John's through its transition.

That's why, above, I called this time at St. John's a blessing and an opportunity.

Actually, the interim priest was intentionally trained for interim ministry. The diocese sent him to Kingston for an intensive course, consisting of a first residential week, an independent project, and

a second residential week.

The course teaches the "five developmental tasks for the interim period." This is an approach constructed several years ago by Loren Mead, the founder of the Alban Institute, a pastoral research organization. If you 'google' those words on the Internet, you can find further information.

## Transitional tasks

Mead's five tasks for the parish in transition are:

- Coming to terms with its history.
- Exploring its identity and direction.
- Letting new leadership emerge.
- Renewing links with the diocese.
- Getting excited about life with the rector who is coming.

So this is what folks at St. John's are doing, under the guidance of their interim priest. The parishioners I talked to were very upbeat about it.

For instance, during coffee I talked to someone who had lived through an interim ministry many years ago, and recalled it as a kind of holding operation. It was discouraging.

The difference between that experience and this one is night and day, he said. St. John's is sorting out things that need to be sorted out. People are infused with hope, and are enjoying Christ and one another in the process.

I've been told, though I haven't verified it, that the diocese of Niagara is the only one in the Anglican Church of Canada that requires training for interim ministers. The course costs the diocese a modest fee, but what an excellent investment in the future.

## Bishop commended

How fortunate is St. John's in its diocesan leadership! My visit here made me think of at least three particular things to celebrate.

First, what fine clergy Bishop Ralph Spence and Archdeacon Marion Vincett have found for this diocese! As a theological educator in Toronto, I know that they have picked some of the best and brightest graduates that Trinity and Wycliffe have to offer, including the interim priest at St. John's. And by no means are these clergy cast from the same mould.

Second, I thank God for the bishop's and archdeacon's creative and unconventional thinking. Taking a new priest out of a curacy in order to put him into such a strategic situation might have seemed risky, but they did just the right thing.

Third, how respectful they are of parish life! Insisting on a solid interim ministry for parishes in transition will certainly, under God, benefit St. John's. It will also strengthen our diocese's ongoing mission and ministry for Christ.



# EDITORIAL

Niagara Anglican - January 2007

## Tired of fighting about Christmas



**CHRISTOPHER GRABIEC**  
EDITOR

A number of years ago when I graduated from Notre Dame University and considered myself a professional liturgist, I was jettisoned into a very large parish community that was really ripe for becoming a liturgical model for the local church. The problem was that they hired a liturgist. You know what they say, "the difference between a liturgist and a terrorist... you can negotiate with a terrorist!"

I had all kinds of ideas that I decided I would implement, among them a strict observance of the season of Advent leading to the Christmas festivities, which of course would be celebrated until the Feast of the Epiphany. It actually wasn't too bad. We had no decorations in our church, except for a massive Advent wreath suspended above the assembly, banners and empty Hawthorne trees. We certainly did our share of preaching against the 'commercialism of Christmas' and looked down at all the Santa Claus stuff that was going on in society around us. Do I think that my 'liturgical terrorism' was successful? Not at all. The fact is that people had their 'Christmas' parties during Advent, shopped until they dropped, and decorated their houses with all kinds of Christmas decorations. Oh my, they didn't wait until Christmas Eve to decorate! It seems like they lived—and continue to live—in two different worlds. At Church, it's Advent and as soon as they leave the building, it's Christmas time.

There have been many more complications since those days. Even our secular Christmas season appears to be threatened by our multi-cultural and multi-faith approach to this season. After all, the Jewish

community and the Muslim community both have holiday seasons as well. Many Christians get up on their high horses and claim that we got here first. We own the month of December and so we can have Christmas and the rest can fall into the background. I suppose most of us know that there's not much future in that. We all have a right to this holiday season. That doesn't take away from our faith; it just acknowledges that there are folks out there that see it differently from a religious perspective.

That brings me to my main point. I'm tired of fighting about Christmas. I'm tired of trying to tell folks that they have destroyed Christmas with their secularization of the feast. I'm tired of telling other faiths that we have priority. In fact, I don't know if I believe any of it any more.

Let's face it, Christmas predates Christianity. In the Christian Church there was no celebration of Christmas until the 3rd century and it was only in the 4th century that anyone paid any attention. Long before the Christian era, a festival was celebrated on the 25th of December in honour of the Roman Sun God and his mother. The Christmas tree that we love, was common in pagan Rome. We could go on, but no need. The point is that we really are not the originators of the Christmas celebration, but the church has chosen to celebrate the birth of Christ at this time. The Jewish community celebrates Hanukkah. Everyone has a claim on the time.

So why not adopt another solution. What goes on in our secular world at Christmas is not all bad. The excesses of the season should be avoided by people of common sense. Most of us truly enjoy the festive spirit. We love seeing the decorations in public places

and in stores. We love the Christmas music on the radio. We might even like some of the Christmas parties and the Christmas gifts. I don't think that we're ever going to see it go away. Spending our time fighting it perhaps does nothing more than divert our attention from the parallel celebration that is happening in our lives. That celebration is the feast of the incarnate God that we know to be Jesus Christ.

I am beginning to wonder whether or not we should implement our multi-tracking skills and understand that it is possible to celebrate more than one thing in a given period of time. The secular feast of Christmas is about Santa and lights. It's about joy and light in the darkness of the winter. It's good stuff. Our feast of Christmas is about the fact Christ is born in this world and continues to be incarnate among us. That is truly something else to celebrate. Other faith communities can celebrate what ever they choose. We should all be able to rejoice with each other. Instead of imposing our celebrations and views upon everyone around us—as if we still live in the period of the crusades—we should be content to celebrate among ourselves. We should also be content to let others celebrate as they want, and join them when it's appropriate.

I'm only now realizing that I was a 'terrorist'. I wasn't even really dedicated to my cause. Secretly, I loved Christmas tinsel as much as anyone; and frankly, I loved it all through the Advent season. Today, I realize that I can multi-track. I am happy to do my Christmas shopping—what little I do—and to enjoy the festivity of the secular holiday season. I can also at the same time continue my spiritual journey by observing a hopeful season of Advent. I am also content to say "Happy holidays" if that makes everyone happy. If it amounts to respecting the fact that we all have a special season at this time, then so be it. To my Jewish friends I wish a "Happy Hanukkah," and I know they wish me a "Happy Christmas."

There's really no need to fight about it, because in the fighting we lose our cause. Christ is born and he calls us to live in justice and in respect of every human being. He also didn't invent an Advent that calls us to deny the festivity of a loving and caring season. I've had a great December. At our house we had a kick-off Christmas party the day before Advent started. It was fun and very secular. My journey in Advent is a wonderful and hopeful time. Christmas reminds me of the life of Christ, so real, so true in my own experience. It also reminds me of the respect I have for folks of other faiths who are celebrating their goodness during this significant and joyful time.

## A Synod for the history books

**RICHARD M. JONES**  
SECRETARY OF SYNOD

This high energy day saw delegates very focused on the proceedings. There was little room for extra motions or discussions surrounding memorials; however, we did manage to incorporate several motions from the floor into the day's work.

The Bishop's Charge was inspiring and available again this year for all the parishes to use as they see fit.

A budget for 2007 was passed, Synod Council representatives were elected, General Synod Delegates were elected and routine elections to various positions and boards were completed. In addition, a Roundtable discus-

sion on the blessing of same-gender unions was undertaken with good dialogue reported from all the tables of Synod. The full documentation for the day will be available soon on our website at [www.niagara.anglican.ca](http://www.niagara.anglican.ca)

Thank you to all who participated in making this Synod a productive and high energy day.

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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.

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# EVENTS IN THE DIOCESE

Niagara Anglican - January 2007

## Bishop's Diocesan New Year's Levee

St. George, Guelph

Join us as we begin our 175th Anniversary Celebrations by hosting the Bishop's Diocesan New Year's Day Levee. Preceding the Levee, Bishop Spence will preside and preach at a Choral Festival Eucharist at 1:00 pm. All are welcome.

January 1, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

## Epiphany Party

The Parish of St. Luke, Hamilton

It's the season to be jolly and Saint Luke's has a jolliest time right after the 9:30 am Mass when we get to put on the feed bags at the Annual Epiphany Pot Luck Dinner in the parish hall. You can leave your festive delight off at the hall kitchen where it will be tended with care. Don't forget their will be a piñata for the kids and as always great times for the rest of us.

January 7, 9:30 am

## Committee Meeting

Children and Family Ministries, Hamilton

This group of dedicated children's ministry volunteers meets bi-monthly at the Diocesan Resource Centre to share news of children's ministry in their regions, to share new resources, to offer support to the work of the diocesan consultant and to suggest new

programming and resources. Anyone interested in attending the meeting should contact Christyn Perkins at 905-527-1316 (ext. 460). All Children's Ministry parish volunteers are welcome to attend.

January 9, 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

## An Evening with Margaret MacMillan

St. John's, Ancaster

The Canadian Federation of University Women-Hamilton and Bryan Prince, Bookseller present an Evening With Margaret MacMillan, reading from & discussing her latest book.

Cost: \$10.00 per person.

January 11, 7:30 pm

## Organ Recital with John Tuttle

St. Christopher, Burlington

An Inaugural Organ Recital featuring the new Casavant organ with John Tuttle from St. Thomas Anglican Church and Trinity College Chapel in Toronto.

Cost: \$25.00 per person.

January 14, 3:00 pm

## Euchre Night

St. George's, St. Catharines

Come and join us for a night of euchre.

Prizes will be given for first and second place as well as Most Honest Player. The Euchre Night will be open to anyone 16 years or older. For more information please contact Lydia or Doug Galloway at 905-934-4816.

Cost: \$5.00 per person.

January 18, 7:00 pm

## Prayer Book Society Meeting

The Parish of St. Luke, Hamilton

The Greater Niagara Branch of the Prayer Book Society of Canada will be having their Annual General Meeting in the Parish hall. Our Rector Fr. Bob Hudson will be the guest speaker. The meeting will end with the beginning of the St. Luke's Spaghetti Dinner and Salsa Dance to which the members of the society are invited.

January 27, 4:00 pm

## Dinner and Salsa Dance

The Parish of St. Luke, Hamilton

Dinner and salsa dancing are on the menu. There will be all the usual high-jinks as Saint Luke's and the North-End party until midnight. 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.

January 27, 6:00 pm - 12:00 am

## Social Night

St. Columba, St. Catharines

Another night of cards, fun & laughter, snacks & prizes. Couples and singles welcome.

Cost: \$2.00 per person.

January 27, 7:00 pm

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)

## The challenge of Epiphany



SUSAN C. HUXFORD-WESTALL  
ALL SAINTS, HAMILTON

What is the Epiphany? My Concise Oxford English Dictionary tells me that it is the "manifestation of Christ to the Magi; [the] manifestation of a superhuman being." What do we mean by "manifested"? To the dictionary again: "to show plainly to eye or mind; be evidence of, prove; display [quality] by one's acts."

What was shown plainly to the eyes of the visitors at the first Epiphany? What was the evidence? What was proved? At first glance we can only notice that three travellers showed by their act of having travelled a long distance from the East that something significant had occurred. One modern version of St. Matthew's Gospel calls the wise men "astrologers"; they had read in the stars that this child was very special, and they followed their Star. Their own knowledge was their evidence; their visit confirmed to the child's mother what she already knew; but what was proved? The very visit served to prove to early believers that something very important had happened, but to us the life that the Child was to live becomes the proof.

The "wise men" of the Bible were known in their day as "Magi," a word associated with magicians. We come across them

at other times: Nebuchadnezzar called the wise men together to interpret his dream (Daniel 2:2); Daniel was among them. These magi could be considered the scholars of their time and they came from what is now Iran - the former Persia.

How confusing! Wasn't the Christ child visited by three Kings? We sing "We three kings of orient are". Aren't they the Magi? Time has converted the "wise men" into three kings, so that the "uneducated" masses could understand how important this visitation was. We need to remember that until William Tyndale translated much of the Bible into English our forbears were at the mercy of whatever they were told by the clerics, the clergy, who were among the few who could read. (I have used the word 'clerics', from which the word 'clergy' is derived, because the clergy were until very recently known legally as "clerks in holy orders" and could wear the two white tabs at the neck worn by lawyers in court.)

If we have an Epiphany Pageant, how come one of the kings is black? Surely it has got something to do with the Church's teaching. Let's go back to the story of the Flood. If all humankind was washed out with the exception of those in the ark, how did we finish up with Semitic, Negroid and Aryan people? The easy explanation is that they are the descendents of Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. The Hamitic people are black—notice that there was no knowledge in Biblical days of 'yellow' people from the Far East.

We are taught that Epiphany is

the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. The Magi were certainly Gentiles (i.e. not Jews), but how much better to have three kings to represent all the non-Jewish people of the known world? So the Feast of the Epiphany becomes associated with Three Kings.

Is the Christ, the Messiah, the Saviour, revealed to us, or is it just a pleasant story of three kings coming to present gifts to a baby in a cradle? And if the Christ is made manifest to us, what are we going to do about it? That first coming happened over two thousand years ago, but Jesus has been with us ever since (Matt. 28:20). We may anticipate a second coming, but what is our responsibility to him in the meantime? We profess and call ourselves "Christians," but do we live a Christ-like life?

As I read November's *Niagara Anglican*, wondering how I could best answer that question, I recalled Jesus' own quotation of Psalm 8 (Matt. 21:16) telling us that youth should not be ignored. I was reading the article by Bill Mous entitled "Spirit of Cooperation" and I wondered how the early church could ever have survived without such a spirit. Bill concluded "I think that if our Church is to continue we need to put our resources in the [spirit of cooperation] and tear down structures that encourage the [spirit of competition]. For we are all working towards the greater purpose of the realization of God's Kingdom, aren't we?"

One of the kings was black; the Magi came from Iran; can we cooperate with all those who appear different or threatening to us? Let us reveal Christ to today's world!

## ST. PHILIP THE APOSTLE BURLINGTON ON A JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM



Pictured above as spectators from bottom to top are Garrett, Gabriel and Olivia Kirkwood, Sharon Thompson, Jody Kirkwood and Tracy Freeman.

SUSAN WELLS  
ST. PHILIP'S, BURLINGTON

On Monday Evening December 4, 2006, a group of parishioners from St. Philip's Burlington took a bus to visit On the way to Bethlehem, the live outdoor Nativity Pageant at the Country Heritage Park in Milton. On arrival they were ushered into a reception barn where they were entertained with music from a massed choir from churches of all denominations in Milton. They were then escorted by Anna, their guide on a journey towards Bethlehem and the place where Christ was born. On the journey, which took approximately 40 minutes, they encountered an angel proclaiming to Mary that she was to bear a child, an angel proclaiming to Joseph that he should take Mary as his wife, they also visited King Herod's

Court, interacted with Roman soldiers, shepherds, magi, innkeepers and fellow travelers to reveal the Christmas story. On the journey they encountered many live animals including sheep, goats, camels, and donkeys. The journey culminated in a visit to the stable where they encountered the new-born baby and were serenaded by young angels.

It was a very moving and joy-filled journey to Bethlehem. After seeing the newborn baby, who was a real 7 week old child, they moved further down the road to a reception area where they were treated with hot chocolate and cookies and then boarded a colourfully decorated hay wagon pulled by a tractor to return to the parking lot.

It was a great way to prepare our hearts for the coming of the Christ Child.



# Bishop's Charge to Synod

Continued from page 9

that is in Christ; they have struggled in order to find new ways to be the heart of Christ. Without this foundation, such energy and sacrifice would be misguided and ill conceived. So whether we take on such vast building projects or whether we are changing the nature of the way we do worship or whether we are building upon peoples' lives, it will be require sacrifice and pain. However, we must enter into such times firmly grounded in the hope that is Christ Jesus.

In order to build up our Church as a community of hope, we need solid and effective leadership. To be a leader in today's Church can be a taxing and stressful responsibility to say the least. I have been and will continue to be committed to supporting and assisting our leaders, both clergy and laity, to be the best they can be. Only when our leaders are spiritually and emotionally healthy, can they effectively proclaim the Gospel. It is only when our leaders are passionate about their faith and about God, can they effectively build up the Church of Jesus Christ. This is why one of the largest expenditures in our annual budget is within Clergy in Transition.

Let me break this down for you. Clergy in Transition is broken down into three particular areas.

■ Interim or transitional Ministry- this is the cost associated with the diocesan commitment to this important period between rectors and the related expenses. It allows for a Interim director and also in some cases it is necessary to financially support a parish in this transitional time as they prepare to begin a new chapter in their history.

■ Often clergy and laity are called to specialized forms of ministry that do not or cannot support an individual on their own. It is in these times that the diocese will 'top up' a person's salary or entirely support this ministry initiative. Most often such commitments are for a finite period of time

■ This last area is what I refer to as Clergy Wellness. As I mentioned previously, ministry in this day can be very stressful and difficult. Of-

ten time's clergy and licensed laity are in need of care and comfort for themselves and/or their families. It is in these times that we the Church are called to be the compassionate heart of Christ when people experience crisis in their lives.

When we are dealing with such anxious times, we have a responsibility to care for and be the community of hope for those amongst us who cannot find hope within themselves.

In June of next year our General Synod will once again convene in Winnipeg. Once again there will be a number of major issues that will have to be addressed, two of which will be:

■ We will be asked to elect the new Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada. We ask your prayers for those who believe they are being called to this ministry.

■ We will again be asked to consider a resolution authorizing the blessing of committed same sex unions.

As you may remember, I withheld my consent to allow such blessings to occur in our diocese in 2004 and promised at that time that no motion would be addressed on the floor of our diocesan synod until following the general synod of 2007. I did however and continue to encourage you to examine, discuss and pray about this issue within your parishes. There has been a very effective series in the Niagara Anglican this fall addressing all sides of this issue.

Bishop Victoria Matthews was here in September to lead us in a discussion of the St. Michael's report (November Anglican gives an account of that day as well). Later today at this synod we will once again have an opportunity to have a round table discussion together to discuss our hopes and fears about what this issue means to us. I know this is a very emotional issue for many people. But as a community of hope grounded in the death and resurrection of Christ, I pray that we may have the hope of Christ guide us to a place where we may each respect the dignity of one another and live together in this Anglican community of faith regardless of where we are led.



ALL IN THE DIOCESE ARE INVITED

## BISHOP'S LEVEE

St. George's Church will begin celebration of their 175th Anniversary with this event!

St. George's Church  
99 Woolwich Street  
Guelph Ontario

Monday January 1, 2007

Eucharist (Bishop Spence) at 1:00 pm  
Bishop's Levee from 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

## TOP TEN

Most common New Year's resolutions

1. Lose weight.
2. Stop smoking.
3. Stick to a budget.
4. Save more money.
5. Find a better job.
6. Become more organized.
7. Exercise more.
8. Be more patient with others.
9. Eat better.
10. Become a better person.

What are yours?

## A NEW YEAR'S PRAYER

Dear Lord, please give me...  
A few friends who understand me,  
and yet remain my friends  
A work to do which has real value,  
without which the world would feel the poorer.  
A mind unafraid to travel,  
even though the trail be not blazed.  
An understanding heart...  
A sense of humor.  
Time for quiet, silent meditation.  
A feeling of the presence of God  
And the patience to wait for the coming of these things,  
with the wisdom to know them when they come.

W.R. Hunt

## VISIT IRELAND



June 20, 2007 July 05, 2007

Experience Ireland from her very green landscape; to her Celtic heritage; to the warmth of her people.

**Highlights include:** A Literary Pub Crawl in Dublin; A Jaunting Car Ride in Killarney; An Irish Banquet at Dunguaire Castle; and a visit to Causey Farm to make traditional Brown bread and learn traditional Irish dance.

For brochures or further information contact:  
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**Early booking discount: Save \$200!**

## Niagara Children's and Family Ministries Event

Mark your calendars!

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



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

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



## TODAY'S SHUFFLE



**ELEANOR JOHNSTON**  
RETIRED TEACHER

If in the past the word 'shuffle' referred to an old person's slow and awkward walk, today's 'shuffle' is much more nimble. It seems to me, moreover, that our young people use religion the way they use the iPod Shuffle.

The iPod is highly popular because of a number of features. Most innovative is its Shuffle feature. When you choose it, the iPod plays hundreds of downloaded songs in random sequence, liked shuffled cards. This is a totally different experience from that of a generation past who heard only the music of the few albums we could purchase and the hits played by the few radio stations we could reach; the order of performance was predictable and the number of songs limited.

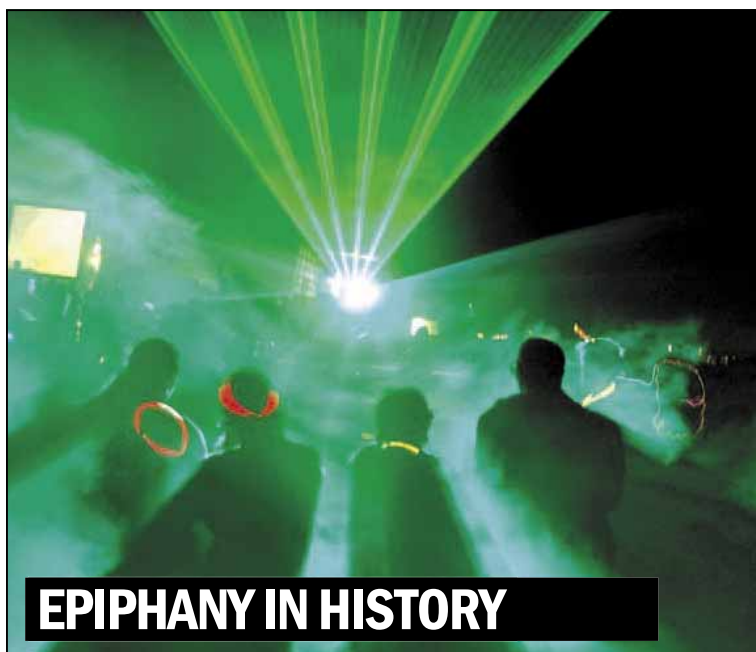
Compare this evolution to that of religion. A generation ago, for most of us, there was little choice. We attended our family's church that wasn't all that different from the other denominations on our town's Church Street. Now there's a world of religions available in our multicultural society. It's not just that Anglicanism is one option; Christianity is one option. Young people 'shuffle' their religious experiences and values, choosing one

practice here and one moral value there. Their experience of God might be expressed in monotheistic terms but their essential moral determinant might be karma and their ethical role model might be the Dalai Lama.

Another feature of the eminently portable iPod is that it enables individualistic engagement with music. Unlike the radio that was played for everyone in the house or the car to hear, often to the irritation of the parents, the iPod is plugged into one person's ears. Many young people today, likewise, ignore the Christian experience of fellowship since they find the church obsolete; they have as much community as they need at school, at work or in their real and virtual neighborhoods. Why attend a regular, prescribed service that proclaims one predictable theological system? Why not take a walk through the woods, "down to the river to pray," on Sunday mornings? Why not do one's own spiritual thing?

Those of us who still see value in traditional church practices need to address these questions in a way that will make sense to young people. Our first step might be to try to understand what they, by their absence from our churches, are telling us.

Although the sound quality of the iPod is excellent, the one concern young people have with this ubiquitous toy is that its small earplugs, by focusing sound waves intensely on the eardrums, actually endanger hearing. There's a metaphorical application here but I'll leave it to the reader.



## EPIPHANY IN HISTORY

The Epiphany is the true "Festival of Lights," the name given to it by St. Gregory Nazianzen as far back as the fourth century. Various explanations for the name have been proposed, none entirely convincing. It would seem that once again we have to look to Egypt. The description of the Coptic celebration of the Epiphany given by Al-Maqrizi, ten centuries later, shows how faithfully these customs have been preserved. He calls it the feast of the Immersion or Baptism (Denh):

"This feast is celebrated in Egypt on the eleventh day of the month of Tuba. The origin of the feast is that Yahia ben Zakaria (John son of Zachary), blessed be he, whom the Christians call John the Baptist, baptized the Christ, that is washed him in the lake of Jordan. And when the Christ, blessed be he, emerged from the water, the Holy Spirit came down upon him. This is why the Christians immerse their children and themselves in water on that date. This ceremony always takes place at the coldest time of the year. It is called the feast of the Immersion, and was formerly celebrated with the greatest solemnity. Al-Massoudi (in 942) describes it in these terms: The night of the Immersion was a very great feast for the inhabitants of Misr (old Cairo). No one went to bed that night. It was the night of the eleventh day of Tuba. Mohammad ibn-Toghj Ilkchid was in his palace in Misr, built on an island surrounded by the Nile. He caused a thousand torches to be lit by the people of Misr. There were thousands of people there on the banks of the Nile that night, Moslems and Christians, the former in boats, the latter in houses along both banks of the Nile. Nothing that could make a show was omitted: food, drinks, clothes, gold and silver musical instruments, jewels and trinkets, music and good cheer. It was the greatest night Misr had ever seen, the night of most pleasure. The roads were not closed that night. Most of those present immersed themselves in the Nile; they claim this is a safeguard against bodily ailments as well as a talisman against sickness."

Irenee-Henri Dalmais

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

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## People in the news

■ Derek Niels Anderson (St. George's, Guelph), Ray David Glenn (Lowville and Nassagaweya), and Paul Matthew Tinker (St. Luke's, Burlington) were ordained to the Priesthood at St. George's, Guelph on Sunday, December 10, 2006.

■ Bahman Kalantari (St. Mark's, Orangeville) was ordained to the Diaconate on Sunday, December 10, 2006 at St. George's, Guelph.

■ It is with sadness that we announce the death of the Reverend Dorothy Barker, in Kelowna, BC, on November 11. Many will recall her ministry in Niagara with the University of Guelph. The funeral was held at the Cathedral in Kelowna on November 18.

■ The Venerable Robert Leckey retired from full time ministry and as Rector of Church of the Redeemer, Stoney Creek, effective January 1, after 40 years of ordained ministry. Wishing the Leckey's well in retirement.

■ The Reverend Trish McCarthy has submitted her resignation effective January 31, from the parish of St. John the Divine, Cayu-

ga and St. John's, York. Trish has accepted a parish position in the Diocese of Qu'Appelle, working under the direction of Bishop Greg Kerr-Wilson as Rector of All Saints Church, Regina.

■ Canon Patrick Doran has been appointed Canon Pastor, part time, at Christ's Church Cathedral, effective November 15.

■ The Reverend Elizabeth Steeves and the Reverend Barbara Sykes have been appointed co-interims at Redeemer, Stoney Creek, beginning January 1.

■ Congratulations to the Reverend Joe Edwards and Mrs. Dorothy Edwards on their 50th Wedding Anniversary which was celebrated on December 8.

■ Happy 90th Birthday to Edna Moore, a resident of the Rosslyn Retirement Home and former faithful member of the parishes of St. James and Grace in Hamilton.

■ A special welcome to Sophia Elizabeth Hurkmans, born November 24 to proud parents, Sally and the Reverend Rob Hurkmans of Port Colborne.