



Niagara Anglican

NEWS • PERSPECTIVE • REFLECTION • FOR A GROWING CHURCH • APRIL 2008



More on Bishop Michael Bird's new ministry, PAGES 8-9

David danced before the ark



FRANCEAN CAMPBELL-RICH
CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL, HAMILTON

And Michael Bird danced and sang before us all. He even joined the band and belted out an invitation to "Change the World," climaxing his homily. Our newly chosen, consecrated, installed, enthroned (take your choice) Eleventh Bishop of Niagara was shown to his seat amid cheers and applause—and even a bit of whistling—at Christ's Church Cathedral.

It was clear from the beginning that this was not going to be a solemn affair—not with great bunches of balloons arranged around the nave. Not even "Zadok the Priest" appeared in the service leaflet, but new names, new texts, more than a hint of youth, of adventure, and above all, celebration.

Perhaps the greatest surprise came smack at the start when the NYC Band launched into its role as what might be described a warm-up—loud, noisy, great fun, incidentally expert, if hardly what one would be called a prelude. It was impossible to feel anything but

profound happiness. I observed a row of nuns up front joining in the spirit; it was too loud to talk anyway.

Nor was that all, or even half, of what was yet to come. This was to be an important Anglican ceremony. In spite of carefully planned surprises, at no time did the popular touch intrude on Anglican liturgy and custom. The next tone was set at the entrance of the choir, guests, clergy, officers and others with the hymn tune "Here in This Place New Light is Streaming," with its engaging motif "Gather Us In" (No. 465 in Common Praise; note the flattened seventh, borrowed from blues), a dramatic choice to underline the knock at the door and the welcome of the new bishop. He told us later that he had a momentary thought his knock might not be answered.

Word had gotten round that there would be a Beatles tune; not a few of those in the know were a bit apprehensive: Just how far can the recent charge of Anglican liberalism go? (Peace to you, Network; more is yet to come). "All You Need is Love," sang out that crowd of young people, and we all joined in, "Draw the circle wide."

The renewal of baptismal vows, the Apostles' Creed, and the bishop's vows passed in quiet, or if there was music, it was discrete and moved smoothly into the Iona Boat Song,

"From the falter of breath through the silence of death... God has woven a way..." and on to more vows of the new bishop to the retiring bishop, to clergy, and people, leading Bishop Michael finally to the cathedra—and the roar of the grandest, noisiest fanfare to end all fanfares.

There was more, much more, of both genres, rock and classic, but "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" (Cwm Rhondda) reassured us with the loved and familiar, raising the many hundreds of voices from all over the diocese and afar. The same for the offertory, "King of Love, O Christ, We Crown You" (Hermion), and the Sanctus, Psalm 91 got a novel treatment by Matt Redman, with the refrain "Blessed be your name" rising in a crescendo, or seeming to.

The music of the Communion of the People suffered almost from an embarrassment of riches, lost in the confusion of access to stations, and the same for the choir motet, "O Sing Joyfully," by Adrian Batten. So too was the closing hymn, "You Call Us Out to Praise You," by one Briggs, unknown to me. In fact, had I to do it all over again, I would try harder to know ahead just what music, and by whom, we were to hear. It was worth the research. But then, it would not have been the glorious surprise that it was. Thanks be to God!

Child poverty is our problem



IAN DINGWALL
RETIRED ARCHDEACON OF NIAGARA

This month I have chosen Child Poverty as my topic. And I do so for two reasons:

My first reason is that at the moment our beloved Anglican Church in Canada appears under siege. It would be wrong, in my opinion, to exaggerate the dimensions of this siege, and equally wrong to become preoccupied with ourselves and our problems.

We ought not to succumb to such lesser things because the Gospel of Christ is far bigger than churches, parishes, dogmas, liturgies, etc. The Gospel's concern, bottom line, is not about the Church as a sociological

structure; rather about God and God's unconditional, all-inclusive Love for all creation and humankind.

We need to move from our current focus with structural matters which at times seems somewhat narcissistic. The Faith Community's agenda ought never to be concerned with ourselves as "church" but, instead, to remember that we are a community of believers whose primary concern is for other people who need to be served and cared for.

My second reason for writing is that I wish to use this opportunity to help direct us away from "churchiness" toward a concern for the poor, the alienated and the disadvantaged people of our society.

Child Poverty in our society is not just a problem; it is in the opinion of knowledgeable people an epidemic! And there is undeniable data to justify using the word Epidemic.

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Coming out of the closet



MARTHA TATARNIC
PRIEST-ST. JUDE'S, OAKVILLE

I am coming out of the closet. I refuse to hide any longer. I am just going to come right out and say it...

I am a Meatloaf fan. Yes, I admit it. I love Meatloaf. (I'm referring to the singer—the dish is a favourite of mine too, but that's an admission I can make without hesitation).

There is a reason why Meatloaf fans opt for secrecy. Meatloaf is bombastic, outrageous, overly-ambitious. There is nothing subtle, nothing understated, nothing modest about him. He claims to be a rock star, yet

his arrangements are nothing short of orchestral. He is a stocky, balding, currently middle-aged man, posturing as a rebellious motorcycle guitar hero, and he unabashedly prides himself, unlike so many other rock stars, on actually singing, displaying great feats of strength and range in his songs, showing off his pipes like an operatic prima donna. He sings lyrics like,

There's always something magic. There's always something new. And when you really really need it the most, That's when rock and roll dreams come true.

and you suspect that he is sincere, that this isn't meant to be ironic.

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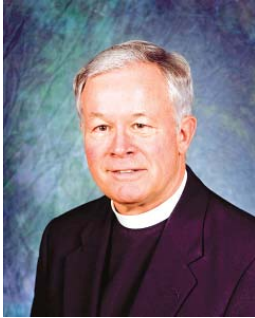






PARISH NEWS

Archdeacon Thomas Greene retiring



MARK WALDRON
ST. GEORGE'S, GUELPH

Archdeacon Thomas Greene is most familiar to the congregation of St. George's, Guelph, as he leads the worship on a Sunday morning. On January 13, there was an audible gasp throughout the congregation as he announced that he would be retiring with his last Sunday service at St. George's on May 4. It took a few weeks to realize that Tom as priest, friend, advisor, listener and facilitator meant what he had said. After 38 years of ministry, he is on his way to a new lifestyle, a lifestyle that will see him

end his 5:30 AM Sunday rising time to meet the needs of his busy parish.

"After sixteen years, the parish needs new leadership and energy to effectively serve today's people," says Tom. He adds, "St. George's has only had 10 rectors in 175 years and I have been here longer than my three immediate predecessors."

Bishop Ralph Spence, preaching at St. George's at his last Sunday service before his own retirement on February 29, commented on how both he and Tom would have time for different forms of ministry, possibly by visiting famous Toronto tourist sites and restaurants!

Tom was born in Toronto and grew up in Grimsby. It was there at St. Andrew's Church that he was influenced by a key mentor in Canon Arnold Brooks who set him on his ministerial path. Initially, Tom obtained his B.A. degree in English and History at the University of Western Ontario in 1965. He then moved to Trinity College in Toronto for two years with a two-year detour to Oxford University for another B.A. in 1969. From Oxford he returned to Toronto to complete a degree in sacred theology at Trinity followed by an M.A. from Oxford in 1973.

Ordained in 1970 by Bishop Bag-

nall in the Diocese of Niagara, Tom first served as curate at St. John's in Kitchener and then at St. George's in St. Catharines. One day he received a phone call offering him the post of senior curate at St. Thomas's Church on Fifth Avenue, New York City. "It was a real surprise," he said, "but when I was a student at Oxford, I had met Canon John Andrew, then-chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who later became St. Thomas's rector in New York." It was a great opportunity for Tom as he faced the challenge of a very diverse congregation serving Manhattan and the New York boroughs. "Experiencing midnight mass on Christmas Eve in Manhattan was a magical experience," adds Tom. He also enjoyed the cultural life of the city and the music at St. Thomas's which has the only residential choir school left in North America.

In 1977, it was time to leave New York and became the rector of Grace Church in Markham. After eight years there, he moved on to be rector of All Saints on the Kingsway in Toronto. With all this preparation, he was a natural to take over the reins at St. George's, Guelph in 1992. "It is such a beautiful church with outstanding architecture

and a history linked to the very founding of Guelph," remarks Tom, and adds, "the people are so energized and have so many gifts that can be shared to help in a ministry that reaches a very diverse and caring community."

Tom's retirement plans include moving back to his birthplace of Toronto where he can enjoy the museums and art galleries, the University of Toronto lectures, the theatres and, if he has time, the many churches located in the downtown area. "I want to travel and explore so many places that I haven't had time to visit in the past. I plan on attending the International Eucharistic Congress being held in June to mark the 400th Anniversary of the founding of Quebec City by Champlain. I want to improve my computer skills, enhance my piano and organ playing, learn to play bridge and perfect my fluency in French," adds Tom.

"We're going to really miss Tom at St. George's," says Bill Parker speaking for many of the St. George's congregation. "He responded to our diverse needs. He has a remarkable memory for names as he can call hundreds of people by their first names without a moment's hesitation. He developed many new programs,

orchestrated pastoral occasions with symphonic precision, and even had time to work out at the Y!" Others emphasize Bill's comments and add how Tom's personal connection with so many in the congregation has deep meaning for so many.

To recognize Tom's retirement and his many years of ministry, a Retirement Dinner will be held in his honour at Guelph Place on Friday, April 25 with a reception at 6:00 pm and dinner at 7:00 pm. Tickets are \$35.00 each and are available from the office (519-822-1366) at St. George's Church. Everyone is invited to attend, extend greetings to Tom, and enjoy an evening of fellowship and fun.

Tom's last Sunday services will be on May 4. There will be a celebration of his ministry followed by a reception at 12 noon in Mitchell Hall.

"I've been blessed with a very supportive group of wardens, staff, clergy, volunteers, musicians and faithful parishioners. I hope and pray that St. George's will continue to be the loving, caring community that it has always been," concludes Tom.

All at St. George's are still wondering when Tom will be holding his garage sale!

St. Cuthbert's Oakville signs agreement



Corporation members David Shuter, Reverend Canon Joseph Asselin and Frank Rae receiving signed Agreement with Dick Beaumont looking on.

DICK BEAUMONT
PARISH PLANNED GIVING REPRESENTATIVE

The Corporation of St. Cuthbert's Oakville was one of the first to enter into an agreement to establish a permanent endowment fund with The Anglican Church Ministries Foundation, Niagara. A permanent endowment fund is one for which the capital is kept in perpetuity to provide investment income for the benefit of a specific charitable cause.

The Foundation holds five Funds for St. Cuthbert's viz:

■ **Worship and Music Fund:** Which

should include the possibility of additional clergy.

■ **Children's Ministry Fund:** Which includes the Christian education of the children of our parish.

■ **Youth Ministry Fund:** Which includes the Christian education of youth in our parish.

■ **Outreach Fund:** for outreach in the broad neighbourhood surrounding St. Cuthbert's.

■ **General Fund:** for discretionary use by Corporation. For example, repair and maintenance of the fabric of St. Cuthbert's building.

The late Joan Lee's generous gift of \$60,000 which she named to be directed to support youth work with an emphasis on spiritual development, is in the Youth Ministry Fund and earned revenue will begin to flow to St. Cuthbert's in 2009.

Annual drawdown is limited to 5% of earned income with any excess held to offset the effects of inflation or economic slowdown.

Parishioners are being urged to consider an investment now, or in a bequest, to one of the five funds listed above thus ensuring long term financial stability of the parish.

Provincial Synod of Ontario Diocese of Niagara nominations

The Synod of the Diocese of Niagara is calling for nominations to the Provincial Synod which will meet October 14-16, 2009, hosted by the Diocese of Moosonee.

Niagara is entitled to elect 4 clergy delegates, 4 lay delegates, and 1 youth delegate. Youth Synod will be the nominations committee for securing the Youth Delegate names on the ballot.

Individuals must be members of the 2008 Diocesan Synod in order to be eligible for nomination. Members of Synod may self-nominate. The consent of a nominee must be given prior to his/her name being submitted.

Deadline for nominations is June 15, 2008, and must include Name, Parish and Location (city/town), Gender, Email address (if available), and Phone number(s).

The ballot will be presented to the November 2008 Diocesan Synod. Further information about this volunteer opportunity is available upon request.

Please send nominations to:

The Reverend Canon Dr. Richard Jones
Secretary of Synod
252 James Street North
Hamilton, ON L8R 2L3

Fax: 905-527-1281

The good guys and the bad guys



MARNI NANCEKIVELL
PRIEST - DIOCESAN RESOURCE CENTRE

If there is anything about which I am certain it is that human nature leads us to the temptation to reduce people in any given situation to the 'good guys and the bad guys.'

I write this as the Diocese of Niagara is involved with a dispute with three specific parishes that have sought Episcopal oversight elsewhere. There are some individuals who reduce even this situation to 'the good guys and the bad guys,' and who you think is 'good' or 'bad' depends on your understanding of a variety of issues; faith, theology, morality, justice. In other words, it is about how we understand the call of Jesus in the Body of Christ and in our individual lives.

Simplistically put, for many of us, the 'good guys' are people who agree with us (or our opinions). However, I see this way of thinking as both regrettable and inadequate. It is the part of human nature, which we meet in scripture in the brothers Cain and Abel, which reminds us of our tendency to cast one another in the graven images we see fit.

Jesus names this 'unfortunate tendency' as 'sin.' In the recent best seller by Eckhart Tolle we are reminded that in translation from the Greek, not only does sin mean to miss the mark, but "it is to miss the point of human existence. It means to live unskillfully, blindly and thus to suffer and cause suffering... it points to the dysfunction inherent in the human condition" (Tolle, p. 9). If we are missing the point of the essential parts of our relationships with one another in Christ, we are indeed in deep trouble.

Children and adults alike are taught that 'God is Love.' Therefore we can assume that if love is not present in

a relationship, God is not present. I would argue that God's desire is always to be present in human lives. The issue is whether we are letting God be present in our thoughts and actions. For me a test of how present I am allowing God to be in my life is how I'm doing with those who I relegate to 'Bad Guy' status in my life. Do I love my enemies? Do I relate with those who oppose my values or my opinions? Does my love really embrace the perspective of others? This is a narrow and difficult path to walk—but then, Jesus warned us about that, didn't he?

This week, I was talking about a friend who was asking me what I was intending to write about for my next *Niagara Anglican* column. When I told him, his reaction was the same as mine, in my heart of hearts! "Don't tell me that I have to be compassionate with those with whom I disagree." That is exactly what I am telling him—and that is exactly what I tell myself. Because, after all, "What would Jesus do?"

The Liberation of Hell



NISSA BASBAUM
RECTOR, TRANSFIGURATION PARISH, ST. CATHARINES

Jewish rabbi and writer, Harold Kushner, tells a story about watching two children on a beach, building a sandcastle. Suddenly, the tide comes in and completely washes away all of the children's efforts. As he observes the scene, what Kushner expects to see is a torrent of tears at the loss of the castle. Instead, the two children link hands and, laughing delightedly at the huge wave that has just destroyed their creation, they run away to a place a little further down the beach and begin to build another sandcastle. His conclusion?

"...All the things in our lives, all the complicated structures we spend so much time and energy creating, are built on sand. Only our relationships to other people endure. Sooner or later, the wave will come along and knock down what we have worked so hard to build up. When that happens, only the person who has somebody's hand to hold will be able to laugh" (Harold Kushner).

In a mirror image sort of way, this same sentiment is expressed in the Gospel of Luke. The evangelist tells the story of the Parable of the Rich Fool. Jesus relates the tale of a man who is so successful in his farming that he has an enormity of crops. Not having any place big enough to store these many crops, he decides to build an especially large barn to house them. Unfortunately, upon completion of the barn, he is visited by the angel of death who informs him that his time has come: "This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" In one swift moment, a huge wave renders this man's possessions worthless. Of what value to him are they now?

Well, they were all my Niagara Anglican articles; all the written notes for every study I've ever done in the parish for the last 10 years; all the Advent, Christmas, Holy Week and Easter dramas, monologues, stories and themes we've ever created at Transfiguration in that same time span; all the sermons I've preached for difficult funerals... Need I say more?

I travelled to Montreal for three days near the end of February. On Saturday evening, upon returning to St. Catharines, I was greeted with the unhappy news that my computer hard drive had crashed. Robin got on the internet on another computer in the house, only to discover that there is even a name for what the laptop was doing. It's called the "click of death"—the sound, apparently, of a hard drive that once was but is no longer. No fear, I thought. Only last summer, we had purchased a pocket-sized portable hard-drive to back up all our data which, of course, I knew Robin had done. Apparently not. It had been done, but not all the data would fit on this portable hard drive so Robin had wiped it clean and was planning to start over. It's just that he hadn't yet got around to it.

The "death click" had just become my entrance into hell and it left Robin

wondering if he was going there with me. It was as if my worst nightmare had been realized. That Saturday evening, I walked about in a daze, not fully conceiving what, in fact, had hit me.

The reality of the situation seemed to come in waves—not unlike the feelings of nausea I remember from my second pregnancy. And, like those feelings of nausea, all I wanted was for those waves to go away.

One of the things I inherited from my mother is a bad temper. Thankfully, I'm a wee bit more controlled than she was, but my family would tell you that there are still times when "getting out of the way" is the most sensible thing to do. Under the circumstances—the loss of my hard drive and the discovery that there was no back up when I had assumed there was one—it might have been safe to say that this was one of those times.

Surprisingly, though, this turned out not to be the case. Instead, I found myself speechless (shocking!), unable to say anything. Later on in the week, Robin told me he would have preferred a bit of yelling. "At least, then," he said, "I would have known there were still some feelings. Instead, the silence was deadly."

This story's tide turned the following Monday morning when I went on another computer in the house in order to send an email. I plugged in the name of the person to whom I was writing, wrote the message and pressed *SEND*, only to have the program reply to me that there was no address for this person in my contacts. I shuddered. Another wave came at me. I had forgotten that my address book had, of course, been wiped out.

Oddly enough, the cloud began to lift as I started to type in the information for the contacts which I could remember by heart. It was like starting a new filing system, the only part of the job I had ever enjoyed in some of my worst student summer employment placements. There was something extraordinarily freeing about starting from scratch. I had a clean slate, as it were. The address book that had, in fact, become filled with all sorts of people and places I no longer needed, no longer existed. At that moment, I realized it wasn't just the important stuff that was gone; all my junk was history, too, and the recognition of this made me feel lighter than air. Like those two children on the beach, starting over was beginning to look like a new adventure. Like the message in the Parable of The Rich Fool, it's all just material things, really, and of what value are these things in comparison to the relationships we have with one another?

My story is neither new nor particularly unusual. Most of us have at one time or another found ourselves in the same spot. It's the very place that the disciples discovered themselves to be following the death of Jesus—wandering aimlessly, wondering how to go on when all that we regard as important seems apparently to have evaporated. Only by grabbing the hand of someone else—like those two children on the beach did—are we able to realize that "death" often carries with it not just loss but also opportunity. What appears to be hell may hold within it the key to our liberation.

Now I find myself wondering if I might be able to make crash the "hard drive" that we call our basement...

The joy of being



LINDA MOORE
CENTRE FOR LEADERSHIP & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

With the renewal of spring and the rebirth of the natural world around us, we are also blessed with a heightened awareness of the joy of simply being alive. In fact we ARE life!

Whatever our philosophy or belief system, there is an acknowledgement that each of us knows the difference between something that is alive and something that is dead. There is a force that energizes people, plants, trees and animals that makes this noticing particularly obvious to everyone. There are many names for this. Life Force, Source, Energy are simply a few. From ancient to modern times wise individuals have shared their knowing of this sacred "Being", this "I AM" within us and our need to honour and live life from this place.

This Being, this I AM, is beyond our physical body, beyond our emotion and beyond our thinking mind. It transcends understanding. It transcends words and yet is always accessible. It exists in the moment of now. It exists in us all. It interconnects us all and verifies we are part of "One". It affirms our interdependence.

We feel it as a quickened heartbeat, an internal glow, a tingling sensation throughout our body. We feel it in the moments of overwhelming love we have for our partners, children and dear friends. We feel it in our awe for a beautiful sunset and a full moon. In fact it never leaves us because it is us. It expresses as our sense of peace and fulfillment. It expresses as our joy.

Millions of people all over the world comment on the aliveness in the eyes of the Dalai Lama. People speak of the warmth, love, compassion and joy he exudes. This is the I AM. This is Being expressed through him. He

understands that all life is sacred. All life is to be honoured, loved and cherished. It is living from this knowing that brings the joy of being. Regardless of what he experiences in the world he continues to discipline himself to live from his I AM.

The truth is that each of us has this exact same essence within us. It is us! Our adventure is to discover how to express fully and consistently. Our challenge is to peel away the layers of our self created thoughts to live in this place of Being, this place of I AM.

Although I AM, Being, is always present and accessible we need to be conscious and awake to fully experience the truth of who we truly are. It requires an abiding and dedicated vigilance of our thoughts. It requires us to pay attention.

Many thoughts detract from this sacred acknowledgement of Being. Each time we judge ourselves or another we cloud our access to I AM. Each time we speak an unkind word we lessen our expression. Each time we take personally the words of another and each time we make assumptions of another the awareness of our deep joy fades within.

Through our thoughts we create our judgments, ideas and beliefs. We become attached to our thoughts and we harden in our viewpoints. We convince ourselves that we are right and another who shares a different perspective is wrong. We give our attention to our thoughts and not to the truth of who we are. We suspend our knowing that we are all One and interconnected by Being, by the Life Force.

Instead of satisfying and fulfilling us, our self created thoughts divide us from one another. In our attempts to prove we are right, we stop holding one another sacred, we stop cherishing one another, and we stop loving. Instead we become antagonistic, angry and violent in our thoughts and words. We even escalate our need to be right into conflict, murder and war. In the end it simply saddens us all. Our

joy becomes deeply buried under our suffering and pain.

There is literally only one way for this to be different. Each of us individually must turn our attention to the sacredness of Being. Each time our thoughts turn to judgment and the need to be right, we must remember in the moment that these thoughts are not the truth of us. Each of us must turn our attention in gratitude and generosity to the Life Force that unites us. Each of us must turn our attention to kindness and to compassion. Each of us must uncover the I AM.

Does this diligence take effort? You bet it does! Moment to moment each and every day the vigilance of thought is revisited. Each and every day, we need to find the space within us to move beyond our self created thoughts, judgments and perspectives. Each and every day we need to find the generosity of spirit to accept one another as we truly are. It is all that Buddha, Jesus, Mohamed and all other great spiritual teachers have asked us to do. It is very simple. It requires great attention. It holds abundant reward.

As we practice this discipline the truth of our world unfolds more and more. The magic in each moment is revealed. We become fully alive! We start to notice what is around us and our gratitude for everything in our world increases exponentially. Magic happens and life becomes radiant. Our generosity towards ourselves and others expands and a lightness of spirit emerges. Our world view of possibility and fulfillment overflows. We live in the joy of being.

Let each of us take a moment this day to loosen our hold on our thoughts and judgments. Let us take a moment to be grateful for all we have. Let us take a moment to acknowledge the sacred in ourselves and one another. Let us reengage in a generosity of spirit. For just a moment let us each simply experience the joy of being. And then let us continue this in the next moment, and the next moment... and the next moment...

ANGLICAN ESSENTIALS

We are one in the spirit, we are one in the Lord

PETER WALL
DEAN AND RECTOR, CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

There is no time more central to the fundamental message of Christianity than the Easter season. Easter, after all, is *the* defining moment of the Christian faith—the amazing, incomprehensible love that God has for us; love so deep that he gives us the gift of eternity in the resurrection of Jesus. It was Easter which transformed the disciples into a real community; it was Easter which galvanized a group of passionate followers into a 'movement', which would go on to become the Church. It is Easter which transforms us, over and over again, into a new people, a new creation.

Easter is also the essential embodiment of Church unity—even though dates differ between East and West, *all* of the Church keeps Easter—without it we are not Christians at all. While traditions and practices about other things in the Church year and in the doctrines and discipline

of churches vary greatly, Easter becomes central to who we are and how we view ourselves. We call ourselves, after all, an *Easter* people; we call to remembrance the mighty acts of Holy Week and Easter each and every time we celebrate the eucharist; we *proclaim* Christ crucified and resurrected in all that we say and do.

Focusing not on uniformity but unity

Thus it seems to me that the Easter season provides us with an opportunity to focus on the unity of the Church. Not the *uniformity*, but the *unity*. Uniformity implies a kind of hide-bound sameness and bland lack of diversity which stifles the spirit. Unity implies a common vision and sense of mission; a shared focus on the 'basics'. We find ourselves in the church currently caught in a struggle between the grace of unity and the fetters of uniformity. The church has, throughout its history, always been a body which has rejected uniformity in favour of unity.

Look at how St. Paul writes to vastly different communities, living and being faithful within the diversity of geography, ethnicity, and local norms. Even through the most difficult and divisive moments in church history (and there are many one could cite) the church has worked hard to hold diverse groups together through the central tenets of the faith—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the giving of the Spirit to enliven and strengthen God's people.

And so we have found ourselves, even in our part of the Church—the Anglican Church, and even in our small part of the world—Canada—struggling with the tension, often creative, sadly sometimes divisive and destructive—between *uniformity* and *unity*.

Unity through diversity

We can let these tensions and disagreements overwhelm us and isolate us from each other; or we can see the

richness and diversity of our church as great and grace-filled gifts. Some of us remember all too well the arguments over liturgy in the 60s and 70s (has it gone away?) and the deep divisions over the ordination of women, over the re-marriage of divorced persons, over the admission of children to communion. We can and have disagreed mightily on some issues. However, we also have moved on and lived together—not always agreeing on all of these matters, but always holding to the unity of the church—i.e. that within the diversity of the gifts which we have been given, the central message of the Gospel and the Lordship of Jesus Christ, through his death and resurrection, gives us unity *through* diversity.

One in the Spirit

It is always easier, alas, for humans to allow themselves to exert enormous amounts of energy on those things

which divide us, rather than celebrate those things which unite us... Whether it be how we read and interpret scripture; how we understand the nature of authority in the Church, the many different ways in which we pray, the varieties of liturgies and style of liturgical expression, we can (and often do) find those matters upon which to argue and to exclude. Imagine how much better it can be if we see those matters as things which give the church a variety of expressions and yet enrich us. How wonderful it would be to value all of those things which add to the rich palate of the church rather than fight over which ones (or who) is *right* or *wrong*.

As we keep this season of Easter, and mark those things which are foundation to us and to our faith, let us once again commit ourselves to the strength of unity—being one in the spirit and one in Jesus.

The sellers in the temple



GRAHAME STAP
ST. ALBAN THE MARTYR, GLEN WILLIAMS

We are asked to have compassion for those who have voted to leave the Anglican Church of Canada and I do. I pray we can learn to accept each other's point of view and work together to build our church into a better place allowing diversity and differences to flourish. I pray for those who are searching their consciences to find answers to very complex questions and for those who feel abandoned and let down.

However, I find myself wondering about the leaders of these churches and just how they are leading their congregations? Are they telling the whole story? Or just the part that illustrates their point of view. It is true the Hebrew Scriptures do say that homosexuality is an abomination before the Lord. It is also true the Hebrew Scriptures say, "If a woman is unfaithful to her husband she should be brought before the priest so that he may curse her" (Numbers 5:11-31). Also, "If a man works on the Sabbath Day he should be stoned to death" (Numbers 15:32-36). There are many other examples in the Bible of situations that today we find to be outside the code of, not only, society but also the church.

Thomas Cranmer, when formulating the basis of the Church of England, gave us three tenets:

- All we need for salvation is contained in the Holy Scriptures.
- God gave us the ability to reason within the scriptures.
- We need to honour our traditions.

If we have the ability to reason within the scriptures we can say slavery is not acceptable, stoning is not acceptable and we can reason that men and woman are equal in all respects in the sight of God. We can also reason

that those who wrote the Bible had their own agenda as well as the power of God working within them.

If we are going to take a part of the Bible as our reference point, why not take the letter of James 4:11-12. "Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters. Whoever speaks evil against another or judges another speaks evil against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy. So who, then are you to judge your neighbour?"

I also find it difficult to understand how it can be said that it is the rest of us who have left the Anglican Church because we have strayed from the doctrine of the church. My first question is who is responsible for the evolving doctrine of the church? I do not think it is parish priests.

My second question is, if the doctrine of the church is evolving—and we know it is because if it was not we would not have woman priests, children would have to wait until they were confirmed before they could partake in Holy Communion, and the B.A.S. would still be a dream—why would it stop short of including all people?

When Jesus saw the money changers and sellers using the house of God to defraud the people, he threw them out of the temple. He did not throw out the people who were trying to do their best to worship God and who were perhaps confused at what was going on around them. He only threw out those who were furthering their own ends and agendas.

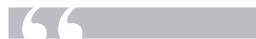
So let us be very compassionate to those who are struggling with this difficult time facing our church. Let us also allow all people to have their own opinion and not try to change their minds. Let us enrich the diversity that has always been a hallmark of our church but at the same time realize some among us will use their position to further their own ends and let us treat them in the same way Jesus did and ask them to leave the temple.

Slogans on a Bracelet: Looking for ways to love



JOSHUA MORRISON
CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION, HAMILTON

My first thought about what to write this month was to give my political opinion on the happenings of the church recently surrounding the Province of the Southern Cone, the Network and the recent court cases regarding the ownership of property. But then I realized that everyone else



Religious matters are integral matters of the soul, which is why it hurts so much when they are derided or scoffed at.

was saying that right now, and I was sure lots of people would write similar articles in this issue of the paper. There are going to be enough differing opinions without me throwing mine in too. So then I didn't know what to write, and I decided to listen to music and think, ponder while walking from my residence to classes, consider events while washing my hair and do the other things one normally does to pull a spectacular idea out of the ether.

Somewhere along the way I was remembering my time working as a clerk at the Canadian Bible Society in Hamilton during high school. One thing we used to sell in droves were little bracelets. You know, the ones with FROG, WWJD and other faith-based acronyms on them. Such a deceptively simple question: What Would Jesus Do in this circumstance? The answer seemed so obvious to me; he would love everyone involved in the debate. But, not being of divine ancestry myself I knew that to be able

to actually try and love those in this argument, I needed to do my best to put myself in the shoes of those who I disagree with politically.

I've put my mind to it as much as I can, and the following letter is what I've come up with.

Dear Canadian Anglicans who have chosen to join the Province of the Southern Cone:

Much of this revolves around politics. And politically, I disagree with you. I do not agree with the theology you have used to justify leaving the Anglican Church of Canada, or the influence people outside of our province had had in this matter, or the actual act of leaving, or the decision to take this battle out of the church and into the secular courts.

But even with all of that disagreement, I do not feel the anger I thought I would as I read about all of this in the media and in press releases from both sides of this debate. I thought that I would be furious about what is happening; that as a gay Anglican I would be filled with righteous indignation at my church being torn apart. But after getting over the initial shock and frustration at the situation, I am surprisingly devoid of these emotions. What I do feel is grief and a hope for the best for all of us.

When I first heard about the parishes of St. Georges, Lowville, and St. Hilda's, Oakville in my home diocese of Niagara voting to leave, I thought about the youth I have met throughout the diocese who share your beliefs. And I made a connection I never had about how they are treated at youth events. Religious matters are integral matters of the soul, which is why it hurts so much when they are derided or scoffed at. At youth events right wing youth are in the severe minority, and often speaking their hearts gains them that derision and scoffing, which is exactly what I sometimes get for being gay at a conservative university. I find that I can't be angry at them for wanting to defend what they see as their right to express what they believe, just as gays want

to defend what they see as their right to have their unions blessed in their church. In Niagara, the three parishes that have opted to leave thus far are also in the minority in our diocesan family and perhaps they feel the same way the orthodox youth do, or I do at university, and they feel the same burning drive to defend what they believe in that I do every day.

So to The Reverends Masters, Charbonneau, and all other clergy who have felt they must leave the Anglican Church of Canada, I respect your decision. I do not agree with you politically or theologically, but I do respect you for standing up for what you believe in when you are in the minority. It's a position I have been in before, and I don't envy anyone who has to face it. I also know from times that I have regretted not standing when I should have that you had to make this decision for yourselves.

To the people of the congregations who have decided to leave, though I don't know you personally, I will sorely miss you. I am sad that your talents, gifts, passions and faithfulness will be walking a different path from me for it means we may not ever be able to meet, and have our lives enriched by each others' faith. I hope that you are all kept in the Lord's heart and that God's love will continue to enfold you.

Through all my reflection on the events to date, I have seen that in many ways I think I understand some of what you might be feeling right now, and because of this I hope it will allow me to love you the way I think Jesus would have if he were here. In this way I am also reminded once more how alike we all are, even when we disagree, which gives me hope that weeks, months or years down the road, when the politics of this situation have been stripped away, that we can find a loving, Christian solution to it.

Until then, may the peace of the Lord be always with you.

Sincerely,
Joshua Morrison

Lamb: Sacrifice or Scapegoat

SACRIFICE means sacred deed, or performance of a sacred rite. Scapegoat has two contradictory meanings: The sacrificial goat that escapes and the person or thing blamed for the sins of others.



ELEANOR JOHNSTON
ST. THOMAS, ST. CATHARINES

Many Old Testament stories recount sacrifices to the God of Israel. In the most horrifying, God told Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, as a burnt offering and, only at the last minute, had him substitute a ram. Throughout the Old Testament priests killed pure lambs or goats on the high altar to appease God and gain his favor. Such stories seem primitive as they tell of a powerful human need for sacrificing innocent victims to a God angered by the collective sins of his chosen people.

In the New Testament, Jesus, the Son of God, is not shown participating in this form of worship. His memorable involvement in the temple tradition of sacrificing animals was to overturn the tables of the temple that, according to Marcus Borg in *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary* (2006), had become a "den of robbers... because it had become the center of an oppressive system that did not practice justice, but exploited the most vulnerable in society" (page 235).

Jesus, the Lamb of God, has, himself, long been seen as the scapegoat who suffered and died for our sins. One might think that Mel Gibson's motivation for making "The Passion of the Christ" was to portray this understanding of the Crucifixion. I think that he was exploiting the human desire to watch others suffer by selling a kind of violence pornography. I see no justification for Christians or anyone else to wallow in imagining the gory details of Christ's painful execution.

Furthermore, thinking back to the story of Abraham and Isaac, it is difficult to believe that the God of love required his own son to suffer and die as a substitute for sinful humanity. Borg argues that it was not until 1097 that Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, articulated, as a central tenet of Christian theology, the interpretation of Jesus' death as a substitutionary sacrifice (page 268).

As this theory became popularized, it connected Christians with very destructive behavior. Throughout the history of European Christendom, in times of hardship victims were sacrificed. The Nazis' targeting of the Jews in their midst during the 1930s and 1940s economic depression and war was but one of the many pogroms long endured by this group. Christians such as Gibson have blamed Jews for killing Jesus; the convoluted ironies inherent in blaming our victims for victimizing our "King," who is also our sacrificial "Lamb," boggle the mind.

Fortunately, recent biblical scholars have challenged Anselm's inter-

pretation of the central New Testament story. Borg explains that none of the Gospels mentions the Crucifixion in terms of substitutionary atonement. Paul does, but it is "one of several images" he uses to find "meaning in Jesus' death... the language of sacrifice does not intrinsically mean substitution" (page 269). Would Gibson have made so much money from a movie that celebrates Jesus in terms of love and grace instead of as a victim tortured to death? No, but it would have been a more useful theology.

Unhappily, our church is still locked into what we've learned to call systemic violence. Christians in Canada were for centuries the dominant race, abusing natives and nature. As the scandals of abuse, for instance in residential schools, were publicized, churches lost the trust of secular society. Our preachers used to have the option of threatening fire and brimstone to individuals challenging their theology but that doesn't work anymore; it simply encourages people to skip church. Today's priests and bishops must feel demoted from the respect and social status they once enjoyed.

Even as our numbers dwindle, we find ourselves still arguing about equal rights for two "minority" groups: women and homosexuals. We debate, in the courts and in the media, what are seen outside the church as straightforward justice issues. (And I thought the conservative parishes were leaving over same-sex blessings. Where did the ordination of women issue come from? Wasn't that resolved years ago? Obviously not!)

And within most congregations there are conflicts that confirm the decision of non-believers to avoid churches. Power struggles that victimize scapegoats will continue in our congregations until we examine our ancient need for misusing others. We are told by experts in the new academic field of peace studies that wielding hurtful power over others is exciting for people who have themselves been bullied in the past and now feel powerless. Sarcastic put-downs, rumors, gossip and scandal thrill us. We need to acknowledge and confess our terrible pleasure in hurting others and then stop this behavior that is so abusive to our victims and that brings such discredit to us as Christians.

In the past, in many a schoolyard, work place and church, victimization was tolerated, seen as inevitable. The teacher, employer or priest would turn a blind eye, agreeing that the victim was irritating, had it coming to him. A whisper campaign could drive the victim out or justify emotional and physical abuse: we've all seen this happen over and over. In the present, however, there is hope for justice in some of the values of our secular society. Teachers and others in authority are now attempting to prevent the suffering of potential victims by anti-bullying lessons. Students are taught that bystanders have

the power either to condone or to put an end to bullying. Adults seeing or even suspecting abuse are required by law to intervene and report it. At the international level there is, for the first time in history, a United Nations with international courts and laws. Post-Christian society is, in this respect, at times more ethical than the church. For now, Christians are seen as intolerant and out-of-date. If we could get over our propensity for arguing within the church, we might be able to attract others into our midst.

And we need to regain the ability to publicize a viable theology. That God should become incarnate and then be sacrificed is a concept we can barely grasp let alone explain to the society around us. To return to Borg: "Was Jesus' death a sacrifice? Yes. But affirming this does not thereby imply that... he died as a substitute for somebody else. In the Bible, sacrifice is most commonly associated with a gift and a meal... The giving of a gift to God makes it sacred which is the root meaning of the word sacrifice... His death has become sacred for us... The Passover lamb was not a substitution, but food for the journey... Therefore, let us share the meal" (page 269-270).

Such focus on God's love for us instead of on the violence of the crucifixion is a more liberating theology for churchgoers as well as for our secular contemporaries. Unfortunately, few people have even heard of Borg and other progressive theologians. Everyone knows about Mel Gibson.

Our problem, I suspect, is that we don't yet understand Jesus. In his years as a wandering teacher and healer, Jesus chose to side with the victims of his society. We, along with his disciples, would probably have denied him during that first Holy Week. Our understanding that Jesus stood, and died, for love and justice rather than for power and might is crucial to healing the divisions in our church and to regaining our moral influence in society.

Our church needs to look for individuals and groups we have excluded, apologize to them, and invite them back. The national church and our diocese are doing their best with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and with their determination to accept homosexuals and women as equal to heterosexual men. There are two opposing forces: inclusive and exclusive. Which will succeed?

Christians should lead society to end our profiteering from the business of war that is so destructive to God's creatures; at present, Canada is the world's sixth largest arms producer. We should lead society in ending the exploitation, through consumerism, of God's creation. We should lead society in stopping all abuse and in helping victims to freedom from this role.

More difficult to grasp than the old, dysfunctional theory of Jesus as a scapegoat is something much better: his new kind of sacrifice, his new kind of love, his new kind of greatness. Sadly, his way was so radical that, two millennia later, I and probably most Christians can grasp it only dimly. Praying, as we struggle to understand, is an ongoing pilgrimage.

Our Church Wrangling



MICHAEL BURSLEM
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, MAADI

During Lent this year at St. John the Baptist Church, Maadi, we studied the Coptic Church in Egypt, with videos and teaching by Jos Strengholt, a Dutch scholar of Middle Eastern religions, a deacon at St. John's, soon to be priested, and Abouna Makarios, the priest of St. Mark's Coptic Church in Maadi, with our rector, Paul-Gordon Chandler taking a back seat. In the first two sessions we dealt with the Ecumenical Councils that decided the dogma of the church, and where, after the year 451, the Coptic Church differed with the majority decision at the Council of Chalcedon, and was expelled by the Orthodox Church. What I drew from it was that though the church fathers tried to define what Christianity was, they demonstrated through their actions what it was not. Whether the Emperor Constantine or Athanasius was responsible, Christianity emerged from the councils as just another religion, with scriptures and creed, which had to be swallowed whole, the very antithesis of what Jesus taught us in the Gospels. Religion was not the way to God; He was.

Fully God and fully human

After the Arian controversy was settled at the Council of Nicea, 325, though it wasn't finally put to rest till after the second Council of Constantinople, 381, everyone regarded Christ as fully God and fully man. It would have been better, I thought, to have left it there, and not try to fine tune it further. However, disputes arose over the nature, or natures, of his Godhood and manhood, and bitter rivalries developed between the churches of Constantinople, where their patriarch, Nestorius, said that Christ has two separate natures, and Alexandria, whose patriarch, Cyril, said that he only had one, but he used the word 'mia,' which means one in duality, rather than 'mono,' meaning plain one. Why all the fuss? Strengholt quoted one Coptic historian who said that Alexandrines were used to having their way, and would not be governed by the council. Is this pride? But Abouna Macarios passionately defended Dioskorus, the patriarch of Alexandria at Chalcedon, by pointing out, it was so vital to have an accurate definition of Christ, as it affected our eternal salvation. There wasn't a moment when Christ's nature was not wholly God and wholly man, not even for a twinkling of an eye, as stated in their liturgy. It also meant that his own (Macarios') physical body was acceptable to, and redeemable by, God.

Chalcedon is a bad word to Copts, as they feel misunderstood and misrepresented by the remainder of the church. Out of deference to them we speak today of miaphysitism, ('physis' being Greek for 'nature') rather than monophysitism, as they have previously been termed. However, after 451 the church was permanently divided into Chalcedonian, the churches in the Roman Empire, and non-Chalcedonian, miaphysites, those outside.

Such church wrangling didn't go unnoticed, even before the internet.

By the early 7th century it even made it into the Koran:

"...to Jesus the son of Mary we gave clear signs, and strengthened him with the holy spirit. If Allah had so willed, succeeding generations would not have fought among each other, after clear signs had come to them, but they chose to wrangle, some believing and others rejecting. If Allah had so willed, they would not have fought each other; but Allah fulfills His plan" (Surias 2:252f).

Suffering, at the hands of fellow Christians

Would Islam have arisen had the prophet seen real Christianity; church leaders resolving their differences amicably and not anathematizing one another? The Copts suffered greatly as a consequence of the Council of Chalcedon. (The Nestorians suffered a worse fate. After the Council of Ephesus, 431, Nestorius was deposed, and his followers exiled to Persia.) Copts were persecuted, not by pagans, but by their orthodox brethren. These they termed Melchites, a Syriac word for Royalists, followers of the Roman emperor in Constantinople; the arm of the state, so much so that at the Persian occupation of Egypt (604-620) and following the Arab invasion, 640, Muslims were seen as liberators of the Christians in Egypt.

As an antidote to all this, I read *Gardens of Delight*, by Idris Tawfiq. This is a very readable, beautifully written, story of Islam, its history, the prophet, and the Five Pillars of Islam. It answered many questions I had, such as what Muslims did on the Hajj, and why. Tawfiq is a graduate of the University of Manchester in English Language and Literature, and of the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome in Sacred Theology. He was a former Roman Catholic priest but he writes now as a Muslim. He says that humankind doesn't need a savior, because Allah is by nature merciful and compassionate. I think this an oversimplification of God's grace. I can understand, after all the wrangling of the 4th and 5th centuries, why Mohammed stressed the infinite greatness of God and reduced the whole creed to the *Shahadah*, the statement that there is no god but God, and he, Mohammed, his prophet. God is so infinitely greater than us—*Allahu achbah*. We need to regain this concept of the greatness of God. But when Tawfiq claims all Muslims are brothers and sisters, I would answer, *Bilfikr*, a loose translation of which means, 'You've gotta' be kidding.' I observe them to be just too much like us.

The bible cannot cause separation

Why is there such tribalism with humans, noting our present schism over the Same-Sex issue? Can anyone who claims a high authority of scripture say to another, "I have no need of you," and cede from his fellow Christians? They ask who ceded first. But it all seems so pathetically childish. I wonder what effect it will have on future generations, both inside and outside the church. I think our God is just too small, and we a bit too big, if we allow the Bible to separate us from others. Only in seeing them, and ourselves, as God sees us, will we, though we disagree, be able to live and love as the one body of Christ, and demonstrate orthodox Christianity to those who come after us.

A service at my mother's deathbed



ALAN L. HAYES
ITINERANT CHURCHGOER

Usually I talk to you about worship services around the Diocese of Niagara. But this month I'd like to talk about a deathbed service in Boulder, Colorado. The deathbed was my mother's, and the service took place a few weeks ago.

The service was led by the chaplain on a hospice team. Hospice, you probably know, has come to denote a humane approach to care for the terminally ill and their families.

My mother was 94 years old. In February when she could hardly move and could no longer swallow, she became a candidate for hospice care.

Old-style dying

A generation ago, my mother would probably have been sent to a hospital for heroic intervention. Since she couldn't drink water, intravenous tubes would have been poked into her to hydrate her. Naturally she would have tried to pull the tubes out, so she would have been strapped down. The IV fluids would have unsettled her stomach, so nasogastric suction tubes would have been inserted. The fluids would have made her urination unmanageable, so catheters would have been introduced. Fluids in her

lungs would have made her cough and choke.

Actually, that's more or less how my father died thirty years ago. It was pretty awful. It was like medical care designed by Dick Cheney.

Hospice care was developed in England in the 1960s, led by Dame Cicely Saunders. It came to North America in the 1970s. Its main principles are simple. When death is sure to come, you want to enjoy your last few days; you don't want pain; you need to do some emotional and spiritual processing; you want to be at home or somewhere comfortable; and you prefer the people around you to be honest and in touch with you, not anxious or evasive.

Hospice care is now funded by OHIP and US medicare. Why not? It's a lot less expensive than dying without dignity the old-style way.

Hospice team

The hospice team that looked after us in Boulder included a nurse, a nursing assistant, a social worker, a chaplain, and a volunteer musician. A nursing assistant was on duty several hours a day; the others generally visited once a day.

The chaplain was a Lutheran pastor who was really, really helpful. He had been visiting Mother for some weeks before her situation became *in extremis*. When my brother and sister and I came together by Mother's bed in her last week, he built a relationship with us too.

When he was with us, he spent much of his time speaking with

Mother directly, even though she was usually sleeping, and even though, as a dementia victim, she hasn't been able to have a conversation in many years. But, then, who knows what she was taking in? Anyway, he had a gentle and open manner with her, and was able to bring her, and us, the assurance of the gospel.

He offered what he called a service of blessing—a nicely unthreatening term for a kind of Protestant last rite. We welcomed his offer warmly.

A last rite

"Margaret," he addressed her, and he reminded her of the story (in John 14) that Jesus towards the end of his time with his disciples knows that he has to leave them, and tells them, "Let not your heart be troubled," and explains that he's going to the Father's house of many mansions, and promises to prepare a place for them. The chaplain knew the passage by heart, and recited it in a way that was very immediate and affecting.

Then he spoke briefly and articulately about it, bringing out the good news of God's care for us, and of our hope as we approach death. He assured Mother that she was much loved by Jesus, by us who were there, and by those who had gone before. With an exceptionally good voice, he sang a couple of verses of "Softly and tenderly, Jesus is calling." He stroked Mother's forehead, and bade her be peaceful and confident in being called home where many were waiting for her with love.

We had questions, such as, "How and when will our mother die?" As a hospice chaplain for five years, he knew that dying is both universal and unique. There are some general and recurrent signs of impending death, and yet each person has a different way of dying.

Whole patient

He wasn't afraid to talk about things physiological. As it happens, my wife interned with Cicely Saunders at her hospice in London many years ago, and one of its fundamental principles was that every member of the care team treated the whole patient. That meant that chaplains changed bed pans and nurses said prayers. This has been a very hard principle to implement in the professionalized, specialist ethos of North America, but our hospice chaplain in Boulder came close. He was helpful about hymns and theology, but he was helpful about medicine too.

He lent us a Lutheran hymnal to add to some other music books we had, and we sang a lot at our mother's side. As he warned us, though, modern hymn books tend to repress references to dying. Years ago, in the English evangelical revival and in the Victorian period, hope in the face of death jumped out from lots of hymns, especially the last verses of hymns. By contrast, modern editors usually excise that theme. For instance, as the chaplain pointed out, the Lutheran hymnal eliminated the wonderful last verse of "Amazing Grace" (Our

red hymn book of 1971 dumped the whole hymn).

Modernity and death

Why have modern mainstream denominational hymnals avoided the topic of death? Does death embarrass the editors? Is death a problem that people of modern sensibilities would rather forget? (It reminds us harshly that science can't solve everything, and it subverts the bourgeois imperative of getting and spending.) Or is it that mainstream Christians have been losing their confidence in the resurrection? Or is it that they have been socialized to focus on the this-worldly? Or maybe the deletions are part of the familiar pattern that people who revise liturgies and hymnals like to feel superior to their elders and forebears? I don't know.

But the hospice movement has brought us a more realistic, candid, compassionate, and hopeful approach to death. In that respect, it's very much like Scripture.

So our chaplain's bedside service represented the best of both worlds, gospel and hospice. And after his "service of blessing" it was with joy that my sister and brother and I sang together, in Mother's last hours:

*From the church in the valley by the wildwood,
When day fades away into night,
I would fain from this spot of my childhood
Wing my way to the mansions of light.*

Sundays for children



ALAN COOK
PRIEST - AUGSBURG FORTRESS

If you enter 'Sunday school curriculum' in your computer search engine, you'll get over 250,000 options in 0.13 seconds. There is a lot of it about! I have now talked to many churches about their Sunday School experience, and despite the array of choices, many still make up their own. At Anglican Book Centre and Augsburg Fortress (AF) we sell a selection that meets a variety of needs and helps teachers keep their focus and energy, and keeps the children nourished. Still, you need to make choices. How do you choose?

First question: what is your theological stripe? Some curricula have a strong denominational bent or theological focus. For example, some churches appreciate having the learners' attention drawn to the justice, peace or ecological implications of the story. 'Seasons of the Spirit' makes a particular point of doing this. 'Seasons' is very popular with Anglicans who also appreciate an emphasis on the mystery of faith, and helping people draw their own conclusions.

Many parents say that they don't want so much for their children to

be 'instructed in the faith' so much as to have the children be able to make their own decisions later on. 'Seasons' and others like it, hope to infuse in the learners a sense of awe and reverence as well as some head knowledge. Marcus Borg gives a big endorsement to the 'Seasons' product, but more conservative congregations will find great material there, too. You might decide you prefer a more 'traditional' kind of curriculum. ABC and AF carry *Witness*, which has sold well for 20 years and focuses on Bible stories and associated Christian 'character traits'. 'Know—the story; Grow—in faith; Show—the gospel in the way you live'.

Next, how many children are coming? Half a dozen? Twenty? Is it worth dividing into separate age groups, or is it better staying together in a multi-age, one room school? What is the physical space available? Are you in kitchen, or the choir-room (only able to set up when the choir has processed up to church) or in dedicated class-rooms? If you have dedicated space, you can afford to split into groups, to decorate your area and put in computers. You might look at some 'rotational workshop' curricula. At the stores, we recommend 'Firelight II'. Rotational workshops work with children's 'multiple intelligences', which assumes the reality that we don't all learn the same way and that there are other ways of teaching than with a book and a teacher. Cooking, science

experiments, puppetry, computers, drama and games are some modes of learning the gospel and applying it to life.

One Bible story or theme is chosen for a number of weeks and then explored in the different modes. It really brings the lessons home. You can see samples on the 'Firelight' website. An advantage here is that different adults or youth could be enlisted to teach one unit just for a month; to teach one story in the kitchen, for example. But you need a coordinator to recruit and organise the volunteers.

Many curricula divide the material into age groups so that the material is covered in age-appropriate ways. Several have 'multi-age' material so that all the children from 5-12 can be taught in one group, either in traditional or rotational settings.

How important is it to your church that the children and the adults are 'on the same page' and follow the lectionary? If they are, then you can all talk about the theme of the week over lunch or during the week and the children can share the sense of the liturgical year.

'Seasons' follows the lectionary. Most curricula sit loose to the actual lectionary, but most do pay attention to the major seasons; and if you are not lectionary-linked, and none of the children show up one Sunday, you can use the material you had prepared the following week!

'Akaloo' (from the Greek, 'akalouthein' or 'to follow') is a new curriculum from AF that has a focus of discipleship. Rather than the lectionary, it follows themes that every member of the congregation needs to learn about to be a disciple of Jesus. The Bible, God, Discipleship, Church and World are approached systematically at every age level through to adult study groups.

Akaloo has a strong online presence. Most of the prep work requires access to a computer and a printer. 'Seasons' has loads of resources online too. A subscription gets you access to the sites. Many standard curricula have online support or resources and ABC-AF are currently investing a lot in the future of online products. One big advantage of this is that you can carry on the learning at home with online games that reinforce the lesson in church. Research into how Christian faith is best taught show that ideally a combination of home and Church is needed. Most curricula give the learner something to take home. More and more, that 'take-home' piece is going to be found online.

Finally: budget. Assuming you are willing to pay people to produce the material, most churches should reckon to spend at least \$250 a year on curriculum and that will go up according to your numbers. An important point on pricing: 'Seasons of the Spirit' has over 20% off if you pay before May 1st. Tell your treasurers! And please,

don't leave it till August to place your order if you want to get your curriculum in place for September.

Still need help deciding? Most curricula have a website that allows you to see sample pages or access their site for a few days. ABC and AF also conduct workshops in the stores or in parishes/deaneries. We are doing this at AF in Kitchener on the evening of Weds April 9th and at ABC in Toronto on April 12th. Listening to trained staff and meeting teachers from other parishes can help you make the best choice.

Recently I went to see a play about a one-room schoolhouse in 1930's rural Canada. I was struck that they had daily Bible reading, prayer and constant biblical allusions in the dialogue as the characters discussed their daily lives. That support for the church's mission has largely gone from the culture. I teach Sunday School myself. I feel the pressure to try to pass on our faith in 30-40 minutes per week, and few children are there every week. It can be discouraging. But professional educators, creative editors and faithful witnesses are creating great materials to help us bear witness to our faith to our children in a challenging time. I hope that something here will have encouraged you to think about what will help the children, what your parish can work with and what will best equip your teachers. If you need more help, call me. I'm your priest in publishing!

Getting to know you

The Reverend Bahman Kalantari Assistant Curate, St. Mark's Church, Orangeville

FRAN DARLINGTON
PRIEST - ST. JAMES, GUELPH

Christianity's ultimate message is Christ's resurrection. Called "The Greatest Story Ever Told," it echoes in countless other tales of new life. "The Adventures of Bahman Kalantari," Assistant Curate at St. Mark's Church, Orangeville, is just such a story.

Born in Tehran, Iran, Bahman proudly claims Persian and Orthodox Christian heritage. Two centuries ago, an English missionary converted Bahman's paternal ancestors to Anglicanism, but "half the family converted to Islam. I have uncles and cousins who are Shia Muslim, but don't practice, (because) their business and jobs are better, and success and a higher level of society are easier to reach."

Bahman explains, "(Iran) was called Persia until 1935, when the king asked the United Nations to call (it) Iran, a local and inclusive name from 'Aryan' (Caucasian), the Iranians, Armenians and Indians from the northern part of Iran. ('Iran' includes) Arabs, Hebrews, Assyrians and Semitic people, with Parthians, Medes and Elamites. Persia is the southern part of Iran. Tehran is ancient Media. Persian is the country's formal language, but there are local dialects."

His first spiritual teacher

Bahman's maternal ancestors were Ukrainian Orthodox, "all priests! They were allowed to marry, unless they wanted to become Archdeacon or Bishop." Bahman's maternal grandmother escaped from Ukraine after the Bolshevik Revolution; she became his first spiritual teacher. "She was very devoted, (especially) to the theology

of the Holy Spirit. I see Jesus Christ present in all religions, through the Holy Spirit. So when I see a good Jew or Muslim or Buddhist, I see Jesus Christ in them. It makes it easier to love them, to work with them towards a free democratic society."

A teacher in seminary and Sunday School, Bahman's Grandmother explained the historical role of Christian women: "Because of what she told me of the role of women in the early church, in Jesus' time, I love liberation theology. (It liberates) the mind from prejudice." Bahman calls the Samaritan woman (who met Jesus at Jacob's well) "a hero for my Grandmother, (who said the woman) was called immoral because she had five husbands and was now living unmarried with a man, but in Jesus' time a man could say to his wife "You are not my wife," give her a paper and leave. Those women ended up begging, but the Samaritan woman was a revolutionary because she married five times (to avoid that fate.) She was a special person, because men wanted to marry her, but then couldn't tolerate her liberation and divorced her. For the sixth time, she asked herself 'Why marry again? I can take care of myself.'"

Growing up—the hard way

Bahman followed Iranian tradition, respecting his older (by three years) brother and caring for the younger (by thirteen years) who seemed "more like a son than a brother. I took him everywhere with me, to soccer, volleyball, parties. Most of the time you forgot about what you want to do or say," smiles Bahman. But "my older brother was always supporting me, especially my studying. I never liked

school, except history, literature and religion; I hated everything else!"

The Islamic revolution erupted when Bahman was fifteen. He finished high school at seventeen, as Iraq attacked Iran. "As a young man I had to decide what to do. I didn't like the revolutionary regime, but my country is important to many, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Shia Muslims." Bahman chose to join the Iranian classical army "to defend my country and my people." He admits "it's hard for Christians to justify taking part in war. I believe that as a Christian if there is no way to compromise talking about peace, then defence is justified. So I got involved, trained in reconnaissance as a 2nd Lieutenant." Pain crosses Bahman's expressive face: "It lasted eight years; I lost cousins, best friends, people I grew up with since I was five years old, all smarter than me, all A+ students—I never got A+ in my life!"

Bahman was devastated: "During the first half of the war, I lost my faith, stopped attending church." Then, thoughtfully, "I was more angry with God, not denying God. I was so angry I didn't want to talk to God. I couldn't tolerate everything about God, peace, humane values. I saw..." Bahman's voice softens as memories return.

A Ukrainian-Russian Orthodox nun, "my second spiritual teacher" rescued him. After reading Bahman's angry letters to his parents, "Sister Mina came to the front to see me. The officers and the whole town were telling me 'A very holy woman has come to see you.' She talked to me for seven days and nights, and gave me an amazing book, the Persian translation of the writings of Florence Scovel Schinn" (a missionary in America in the 1920s). This book changed me



for life. It is a practical Christian spirituality. I still read some pages of this book every night. I wish all Christians would realise that we have an ancient, practical Christian spirituality—in English!"

Bahman continues: "Then I came to be a friend to God again, and use Jesus Christ as a link to God the Father. I was never angry with Jesus Christ; I see him suffering, in pain, but spreading joy also. I became a Christian man, because of Sister Mina and the book." He pauses, "Then I felt a holy transforming strength, and came to believe that the war was a transforming spiritual strength for me, I would survive. My change was a change for my comrades also, because this pessimistic atheistic person became a nice smiling person!"

On the way to Canada

It was also a transitory time in the war. Now twenty-three, Bahman decided to leave the army and the country, but was caught near the Turkish border and sent to prison for twenty-nine days. "It was a political prison, not for criminals. I met communists, socialists and nationalists, all intellectuals, partisans, and the young people like me... One night the communist leader asked, 'Why don't you tell us about your ideology?'" Quoting the Sermon on the Mount, Bahman explained that "Jesus believes in non-violence, and Christianity grew from his peaceful mind and behaviour.

All of a sudden I said 'I want to be at Jesus' service.' I don't know where it came from! Instead of the usual attack, after several minutes of just looking at me, the communist leader said, 'I'm tired; it's time to go to bed.' End of discussion!"

Because his Father was a university professor of geology, and his Mother argued with the judge, Bahman was released and sent back to Tehran, where he began teaching logic and western philosophy in the classical army school, subjects he studied while earning a teaching diploma, and studying to complete his B.A. A year later, his military service and studies completed, Bahman began working for a Danish shipping company as a freight cashier accountant, though "I hate math!" For five years, Bahman was sent to company branches around the world, "with everything paid! Everywhere I went to religious groups; I wanted to know about their religious life, how they did it."

Bahman decided to follow his older brother to Canada. "I decided that to be at the service of God meant seminary; I had money, I could afford it. My Father found Trinity College (Toronto) on the computer. When I resigned, everybody told me I was stupid, but I said 'Better things to come!' This stupidity led me to real life!"

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

Moving forward in joy and celebration



CHARLES STIRLING
RETIRED PRIEST - DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

Well, here we are, still working at living our faith in the early years of the 21st century. Sometimes that is a tough go! In my nearly 72 years, I am happy to say that much has changed in the Church. And, I have to admit it has been very largely a good run. The Church is not perfect, but then it never was, for it has to deal with the highs and lows of humanity with all of their vagaries. My middle son, who is not an attender, says the church is full of hypocrites and he is better off not going, and I tell him there is always room for one more... and surely there is! God is calling us to ways that reflect the future, not the past, and is calling us to witness and to work diligently for others, immigrants and those not as fortunate as we may be.

These works must be the major

focus of life and we need to follow the Gospel message fully in order to make a difference. Many Anglicans seem to have an attachment for the Church I really can't identify. It seems unreal and unfocused. I hope the whole flavour and the music of Bishop Michael's Installation will loosen them up and help draw them into the true reality of Church life. Indeed, if this is where the Church was on Sunday, then that is where I truly want to be.

Looking for a new order

We do have our challenges which test our faith and our witness these days. But, when one looks over the years, the changes we have undertaken were necessary, since we for the most part, have matured as a society and we have changed, and we are looking for new and vital revelations that will keep our faith alive and challenging. Most importantly, however we must look to the full inclusion and wellbeing of all people in our midst. This is a joy and a responsibility for each one of us.

I, for one, am anxiously looking for a new Order of Service for the Eucha-

rist; it's been over 20 years since the last one. It is time! The pace of life changes and so must we. There now is no hope of spanning centuries before revisions to Prayer Books as in the past. The advances and good things we have created for the past now cannot and really must not carry us into the future. We have new and greater creations to attend to. I have even wondered, for some time, about hearing a genuine Epistle from the Church in the Sudan, or some other place where living our faith is at best tenuous!

Having said that, I am more of a mind, at this time to look at the past and give thanks that I am not now living the way we all did, as good as it may have been then. Clearly I am addressing folks whose memory approximates my own. I hope others will understand and perhaps follow along in the reflection.

We really wouldn't want to go back

Looking back to the past can offer a reflection on some levels of comfort on a number of fronts, but in reality we wouldn't want to go back. Let me provide just a few examples;

Who remembers the milk that used to come to our bread boxes? There was always cream in the top that one could use for coffee or shake-up for richer milk on our cereal or in our glasses. I remember it more specifically in winter, when on a cold, cold morning, the cream might be up above the bottle top an inch or inch and a half. I am now quite content to bring it from a store and put it, plastic bag and all, in the fridge. Life is much better in the milk department! Life is generally better for many of us.

I can recall mother, almost daily shopping in a small corner store and meat market, which generally seemed to limit our choices for meals. I cannot to this day abide bologna which I used to take for lunch, when I walked to school. On the other hand Kraft Dinner somehow remains a favourite. Today many of us have choices and eat things that were never on most menus. This is good, although I wish kids still walked to school, a little leg work is great for one's health and cuts down on all the auto traffic around our schools. I certainly did a lot of walking to and from school!

Life offer so much more today

While we contemplate all that has changed in our lives, who of us would like to be medically treated in the ways and means of times past? We have some fairly extensive medical practices in our time, and if we are going to have longer life with reasonable health, there should also be plenty of times for thanksgiving and a joyful participation of faith and worship. It is all up to us!

Each of us in our time can look back at the way we were, so to speak and think life offers us more today. But, again what it offers has to be appreciated with thankfulness and gratitude. The issues that divide us today are really personal ones and that is O.K. We have always differed on ordinations, liturgies and what have you, so what is new. What we need to do is move in faith and in trust that God will show us the way we need to go in full unity, some disagreement perhaps, but no certainly no acrimony, and in the usual Anglican way. Failure to participate in this way will in the end destroy a truly great Church and its ability to shine and glow, as it did at Bishop Michael's Installation.

CELEBRATING BISHOP MICHAEL'S NEW MINISTRY



Stand up and change the world



BILL MOUS
DIVINITY STUDENT

Isn't it interesting how sometimes in the midst of our most difficult moments in life, God gifts us with moments that nourish us enough to carry on through those challenging times. In our recent life as a diocese, there is no doubt that we're in a difficult time; one of challenge, uncertainty and struggle. Yet in the midst of all of this we were able to come together as a diocese and for a few hours to celebrate not only the ministry of Bishop Michael as our newly installed Diocesan Bishop, but also the ministry of the entire diocese.

And celebrate we did. The liturgy

was beautifully crafted to bring to life what could be considered three simple rituals: knocking on a door, passing a stick, and sitting in a chair. However, these rituals became much more than just their action; they became symbols of a living and Spirit-filled church. Bishop Michael not only knocked on a door, but opened for us a plethora of possibilities for our future ministry together. Bishop Ralph not only passed on his crosier, but gave us pause to reflect upon all the memorable ministry moments that have happened during his leadership of our diocese. And when Bishop Michael sat in his cathedra, he did so not only as Michael Bird, but as a symbol of unity, hope and promise for our church.

Leaning on one another

All of this, however, seems to pale slightly in comparison to two other memorable moments from that ser-

vice. The first came as the song *Lean on Me* was proclaimed by the NYC Band before the service began. Off in a corner of the cathedral, twenty or so youth stood up as they sang the song with their whole being. For a few minutes the other seven hundred and thirty people in the cathedral remained hesitant and firmly seated in their pews. Then a person on the opposite side of the cathedral stood; and then another; and another. Before long, the entire congregation—all seven hundred and fifty people—were standing and “leaning on each other” to the melodic musings of the song.

This was truly a manifestation of the body of Christ—the living church. Even more inspirational than that, was how it began. A group of young leaders in our church deciding to go against the established order (not to stand before the processional) and do what they knew: responding to music and lyrics

by standing is well engrained summer after summer at the Niagara Youth Conference. Imagine the possibilities for the church, if each one of us lived out our calling—what we know—and brought others through that calling to recognize God in our midst.

Transforming the world

The second moment occurred when Bishop Michael joined with the youth of the diocese and the NYC band to sing the Eric Clapton song: *If I Could Change the World*. How wonderful to start one's episcopacy with such a hope-filled song; one which both recognizes love within—and offers to share that love with another. It seems to me that that this is the essence of the gospel. To recognize God's love for each one of us, while at the same time sharing that vision of love with all. The theme of love was certainly present throughout the service, and it

was clear that this love, in this church, will indeed transform and change the world.

As I left the installation service, I wondered how we might go about transporting the energy, hope, love and joy that filled the cathedral and overflowed onto James Street. No doubt times like these are one of the gifts of community; nourishing us and reminding us of the power of the Spirit in our midst. In times of challenge, my sense is that humans have a tendency to take fewer risks. I'm convinced that it's the exact opposite that we're being called to do. Instead of playing things safe, what if we took the energy and passion expressed so palpably in this installation service, and boldly proclaimed our faith and took risks in living out that faith? One by one, community by community, we will—both now and in the future—stand up and change the world.

Easter came early this year



RICK JONES
RECTOR - ST. PAUL'S WESTDALE

Easter came early for some of us attending the amazing Installation Service for Bishop Michael Bird. Joyful music from Organ to Band, liturgy ancient and modern, and the theme of opening doors! Next to my ordination service which was special for personal reasons, it was the most exciting service I have attended at the Cathedral in over 20 years. A key piece for me was Michael's

first major address to us in which he talked about Opening Doors, doors of mission and evangelism, doors of social justice, and doors of ecojustice to name a few.

My first parish in this diocese was Christ Church, Flamarough and after I had been there for a number of years we began to seek the answer to a basic question: What is God calling us to be and do in this community? Why are we needed with so many other churches including Anglicans a short drive away? These were not easy questions to answer honestly.

The parish council struggled to answer these questions for over two years. In that time we looked at demographic information, did questionnaires to the parish, attended seminars

about church mission and growth, read books together, prayed and discussed this basic question over and over again. In the process of the dialogue I think we began to change and become more outward looking. The time came to give the task of drafting some words to our thoughts and in good Anglican fashion struck a subcommittee to do this work. They brought to Parish Council a couple of statements but none of them seemed to capture the visions we had discussed.

Finally, one night after another failure at Parish Council, two of the members of the drafting committee had an amazing experience. One had been a kindergarten teacher and the other a professor. They both had sleepless nights. The kindergarten

teacher kept feeling the urge to draw and cut out models of the magnificent oak doors at the entrance of our church, the professor kept thinking about words to describe our parish, open minds, open hearts and open doors. In the morning each called the other excitedly to tell them of their experiences of passionate conviction that this had something to do with our mission. I believe the Holy Spirit was at work and the mission of that parish was and is, “Open Doors, Open Hearts and Open Minds.”

Over the next two years the parish was to act on these themes by totally renovating the hall and church, paying for the renovation and growing the congregation with new members of the community. The image of being Open

in these ways and really delivering on the promise made all the difference.

As I listened to Bishop Michael my heart sang as I heard a similar articulation of what we are called to be and do in our diocese: Opening the doors of our churches to our communities, opening our hearts and minds to the issues of poverty, social justice and environmental concern. Working together to “push hard” with excellence in ministry and passion for the good news of the Gospel of Jesus, this is a powerful vision of the potential of the church we are being called to be and the tasks we are called to do.

The empty tomb and those open doors are a powerful symbol for us this Easter as we are called to follow the Risen Christ in this new time.

Through water and the holy laughter



STUART PIKE
RECTOR - ST. ANDREW'S, GRIMSBY

There is a wonderful Anglican tradition which we only do on special occasions, such as at the Easter Vigil or at the installations of bishops and things like that. It makes me glad to be an Anglican. The liturgical act is called asperging. The celebrant takes an evergreen branch—yew works best—and dips it into water from the baptismal font and sprinkles it on the congregation. The response from the people is always laughter.

Water intersects our liturgy with surprise: it stops us short and brings us back to the beginning of things. Our bodies remember. Drops of water spray across the side of my face and I remember the long trek in the desert. We thought we would die of thirst. Then the rock was struck and water gushed out: bubbling and gurgling: we heard the noise of it and drank in this water which saved our lives. We filled our canteens. Women and children, waiting in line before the stand-pipe. It's the only clean water around. Each one takes their portion and hoists it up to rest on their head. They will carry their heavy burden along the dusty road in Tanzania to their home because this water means life.

A drop of water clings to my eye-glasses and rests there, bending light. The colours from the stained glass windows turn and curl, repenting. I remember the line up of people waiting before the Baptist, turning their

path, changing their direction, aligning with God's will. We must return: get back to our beginning: our creation. And everyone was there: the wealthy, the poor, the mean, the lowest and the lame: the worst sinners you could imagine. The pastor, the naval officer, the drug user, the prostitute. They were all there to be made clean, to start again, to be recreated.

The water sprays across the Cathedral hymnal open to "From the Falter of Breath." It will leave its mark on the onion-skin paper: curling it, bubbling it, marking this instant for hands to feel in some future moment: perhaps at a funeral. It is like my prayer book so marked on the pages of the service of committal, from so many burials performed under rainy skies. So many holy moments. Yes, this water also means death. It is going down under the surface; it is drowning. It is Jesus descending down into the darkness, feeling the river-weeds close around his face, seeing his life-breath bubble away; choosing this, to risk what is beyond. It is my friend who cannot swim running out across the cracking river ice, trying to save me.

Water sprays on the ancient woman opposite me. She knows it's coming, shuts her eyes and braces for it. She is so wrinkled and frail: is her Order of Niagara medal heavy on her neck? Perhaps the cold will shatter her. How will she react? After the splash she straightens, her eyes open, and there it is, the corners of her mouth curl up and she joins in the laughter. They never did this when she was a girl. Who could have imagined such an indignity? Nor could she have imagined herself laughing this way in Church. How much longer does she have in this world? Yet, her laughter proves



she is already living beyond it. Her laughter unites with the kid's behind her, with the tattoo and the hardware in his face.

The space is well-watered. We have all been touched. We have all remembered. We have revealed our baptismal covenant. We believe in God the Father. We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We believe in God the Holy Spirit, the breath of God which blew over the water at the beginning of everything. Again we have committed ourselves to worship and repentance and returning. Again we have committed ourselves to Christ: to proclaiming his way and

his hold on us; to searching for him in the people around us and to striving for justice and peace among all people; to respecting the dignity of every human being. We are doing this together and we represent all people, whoever they are. God made us all: the proud, the broken, the pure the sinner, the lost. We all belong here. We can leave out no one. We have remembered what water means to us. The scenes of our lives have flashed before our eyes as they do just before our death. We have descended with Jesus under the surface.

But, of all miracles, we, with Jesus, burst back up through the sur-

face of the water and catch a deep breath. Breath of the Spirit. We are alive! Hair wet, beard wet, shaking the water off like a shaggy dog—asperging everyone around. What else is there to do? There are no rubrics at this point in the prayer book. It is too obvious, it is the natural response of a people filled with life. But, if they were there, those red italicized letters would print out simply one word: laughter.

Asperging: what a wonderful way to remember Jesus' resurrection: what a wonderful way for bishops to begin their new ministry. Hallelujah!

We're all in this together



CHRISTYN PERKONS
PROGRAM DEPARTMENT

Sunday, March 2 was a crucial moment in the life of our Diocese. The Celebration of New Ministry and Seating of Bishop Michael Allan Bird marked not simply the start of a new ministry but a fresh start for all of us. Like all that is innovative and creative, this new episcopal ministry will be grounded in and built upon the faithful witness and service of those who have gone before. The seed of what is to come is clearly rooted in our identity developed under the able leadership of Bishop Spence (and the nine preceding Bishops) but a different facet is refracting on our diocesan family today, and the emerging light reveals something of its direction.

Sunday's service illustrated for me some of the early emerging beams. What did I see? The decision to invite the families and the young people of the diocese along with the clergy and the parish elders—with no reserved

seating—illustrated Bishop Michael's commitment to a ministry of the people. I saw a vision of a diocese where clergy and laity work hand in hand; both equally vital to the work God calls us to as the church—a commitment to honouring the presence and ministry of all of us.

We were all included

Standing outside the Cathedral doors with Bishop Michael Bird and accompanying him to the chancel steps was a delegation that clearly represented the breadth and depth of our diocesan community—a diversity of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, region, theology, and order of ministry. What a visible sign of Bishop Michael embracing and including all of us in his pastoral care!

The Bishop's invitation to the NYC Band to play before and during the service indicated to me a desire to connect with and make worship meaningful for young people. It also spoke to a generation of middle-aged people like me who love rock and roll and want to see more of it used in the places we connect with God. The energy in the nave was palpable as the young people, middle-aged and seniors swayed together and sang along with "Lean

by Me". I love the acknowledgement that music seeming to belong to the secular world can actually speak of and to what is holy and sacred, and has a place in our worship! Coupling the organ, hymns and the fabulous Cathedral choir with the rocking-out tunes of the NYC Band also felt like a definitive "yes" to "We're All in This Together," an acknowledgement that being in community is about being both/and not one or the other—in a variety of ways.

Engaging more young people

What a powerful impact it was to have laity from across the diocese so involved in the liturgy—readers, intercessor, servers, diocesan representatives (including a father and son, and a mother and daughter) passing the crozier, and as communion ministers! Staffing those communion stations were two young men and their mother; a mother, father and young daughter; a young adult woman, her mother and her friend; a young girl, her former Camp Canterbury Hills director, and her friend from Youth Synod, and a diocesan staff team. We were graced by an incredible array from across the diocese—a visible symbol to me of the Bishop's commitment to an empow-

ered laity who shine the light of the Gospel with joy in community—and to engaging families and young people in the mission and ministry of the Church.

Of course, Bishop Michael touched on much of this in his sermon as well. He challenged us to be excellent in how we care for one another, in how we relate to one another, and in how we develop passionate and creative disciples and leaders. The Bishop's vision promised new initiatives and ideas that would empower us as spicy, salty and joyful Christ-bearers to "...engage more effectively in the work of bringing the gospel message to bear in the lives of people everywhere." Bishop Michael cast an inspiring vision of us as change-makers: "...growing our present congregations, planting fresh expressions of the church, engaging more young people in parish life, providing leadership in the fight against poverty and hunger, addressing environmental concerns, restoring our prophetic voice and our profile in our communities and beyond, to name just a few." He shared a starting place for the transformation and invited us to take an active role in fleshing out the dream.

Standing beside us

Did it work? Did the symbolism apparent throughout the Celebration of New Ministry speak to us? Did the vision-casting capture anyone's imagination and heart? It got me! I have never left a diocesan service feeling so excited and so bonded to my community. I loved seeing all the young people, the families and the seniors singing, clapping and dancing. It brought to mind David dancing before the Lord. And I can't wait to be part of developing new initiatives and new ideas to support parishes and parishioners in their call to be Emmanuel.

I am thrilled to be acknowledged, affirmed, encouraged and challenged. And I am delighted that Bishop Michael committed himself to stand beside us and journey with us as we respond to God's call to move to a new level of growth and vitality. I heard some great comments as I was leaving the Cathedral... "so authentic," "I've never felt so connected to my diocesan family," "that was a great blend of contemporary and traditional," "I had goose bumps at some points," "I can't wait to hear what's next." And that's exactly how I feel—I can't wait to be a part of what's next. We're going to change the world!

OUTREACH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 » Child poverty is our problem

We are being informed that this "Child Poverty Epidemic" is a universal reality and that it certainly is present in our own Province. Let's remember that Ontario includes the Diocese of Niagara and all its communities. Please note that "ALL" is the operative word here. All communities without exception are involved, even the most affluent of them, such as Burlington and Oakville. No village, town or city is exempt, in spite of the fact that some local politicians here in Burlington

where I live would like to deny the truth and be ostrich-like in their opinions and actions.

"The Church that lives to itself, will die by itself" is a truth we would do well to heed. The Gospel of Christ demands from the Church, called by his name, to get our priorities straight. This Gospel Challenge calls us to resist introversion and instead prods us towards a vigorous concern for all people, most especially the underprivileged and needy.

In identifying this core element

of our Christian vocation we need to remind ourselves who it is that needs to be involved in this enterprise:

- Each individual (that is You).
 - Each congregation/parish (that is You also).
 - The entire Diocesan Family of Niagara (that's all of us).
- Our Calling and Agenda needs to consider carefully all the dimensions of this enterprise, so:
- Become acquainted with the facts of Poverty.

- Talk to others about it.
- Determine to do something, however small or large, that will help other people in tangible ways.
- Call on your parish church to consider and commit to this challenge.

You may find that this activity leads to political involvement. Take a deep breath and get active.

If Religion and Politics don't mix then one or both are deficient.

My intention here is to simply

raise the subject. The next step is for action and following my words are those of two members of St. Christopher's Parish in Burlington, Drs. Lee and Anthony Ford-Jones. Both are pediatricians, and by profession and Christian vocation are deeply involved in ways that their words will explain and confirm. I commend them, their thoughts and commitment to each reader of the Niagara Anglican. Let us all become absorbed in a "Bias for the Poor."

Child poverty from a physician's point of view

LEE FORD-JONES WITH ANTHONY FORD-JONES

I have worked for 30 years as a paediatrician specializing in infectious diseases, most recently as a professor at The Hospital for Sick Children and University of Toronto. The field of infections and their prevention is characterized by prompt implementation of new treatment and control strategies when supported by irrefutable evidence. Even into this second millennium local children were dying, crippled, or more commonly severely sickened (e.g. bacterial meningitis, pneumonia, bone infection, etc.) by microbes now very successfully prevented by vaccines routinely used, the result of truly wonderful product development and local program implementation.

Recently I made a major career change when asked to head up a new initiative of Social Paediatrics at my hospital. In this I join an extraordinary number of volunteers and professionals including community physicians and public health experts, teachers, community workers, social workers, even provincial lawyers and judges, all trying to do the same work—improve opportunities and outcomes for local disadvantaged children.

Within the walls of the hospital, all children look the same and there is no question asked as to what we will do—it is simply everything the child needs, equally offered. Outside of the hospital walls it is a totally different situation, where even what we know to work is not applied, from components of healthy active living, to supporting development of literacy, to home visiting of at-risk families, to purchase of car seats for use with intermittent car transportation. Our schools, unless funded to support the pre-school years, after-school times, weekends and summer activities between school years, are anything but "the great levellers" in our communities, much as they may try to be. We believe they are our children's best hope when supported and partnered with recreation and arts/music experts.

Many children in poverty are invisible

There are many similarities with my former work. This is an epidemic and the numbers of disadvantaged children and youth are terrifying. The epidemic remains uncontrolled as yet another report, the United Way's "Losing Ground" last month, showed the per-

sistent growth of family poverty in Ontario and the City of Toronto. Hamilton has 25,000 children under age 18 years living in poverty and half of the 100,000 poor are families with children. In half of those families, at least one person is working full-time!

Your Medical Officer of Health will have your community's poverty numbers and further details related to disadvantage such as number of calls and charges laid for domestic violence.

The children and families are *invisible*, like microbes, in their high density housing, not going to the hockey, soccer, dance and piano activities that our children enjoy, nor our grocery stores or our cottage country. You can compare the number of trick-or-treaters in a leafy neighbourhood with those near apartment buildings. Clothing and backpacks are rustled up by communities to make the children in poverty stand out less, and children themselves also hide it as those without lunches to bring to school are known to stay away from school rather than feel the shame; teachers and physicians know who is poor.

Statistics are not numbers—they are faces

My husband, Anthony, a paediatrician in Burlington who works with me on this initiative, sees disadvantaged children in his office every day, much of it the result of stress on the child's family and inability to provide the recreational and school support opportunities. Scientific information exists locally to show each of our community's truths. There is local correlation of address (postal code, income) and birth weight. There is correlation between address and readiness to enter kindergarten using the Early Development Instrument (EDI). A staggering 25% and in some Ontario communities more than 50% of children are without the necessary language skills and self-regulation on entry to kindergarten! Projected prison needs in at least one U.S. city are being based on current Grade 3 literacy testing results!

Untreated early disadvantage, like an untreated infection, progresses on a trajectory. The children who are not ready to learn at school entry, are less likely to be able to read by the end of grade 2, a fact that educators tell us puts them at high risk of dropping out of school before completing high school. Despite high quality schools, Hamilton's dropout rate is estimated at more than 30%! These are not just

numbers. Each is a face, a person with less hope than we should ever accept, and... a future parent. That they will become parents is assured, be it a result of the innate human optimism that this partner and child will be the ones who bring happiness and love, or as an attempt to hang onto this partner, or because there isn't much else to do.

Levelling the playing field

Like polio, disadvantage *cripples*. Even our local and provincial lawyers and judges, seeing the circuitous effects of generational poverty, are now, respectively, offering more pro bono neighbourhood work and actively working in programs such as "Helping Babies from the Bench" through parenting, support and substance abuse programs for the accused.

As the old story goes, a dose of generosity is like a vaccine, preventing people from catching the real thing. Maybe that is what our Christmas toy-giving does. These children do not need plastic toys which capture a few minutes interest (although the brief connection to the "haves" of society must be somewhat helpful). They need play-based learning, and regular sports, music or arts to enjoy and develop competencies, and help with social skills, numeracy and literacy; this is generally school-based, such as the brilliant Hamilton Virtual Y-school partnership, offered in extended school days and summer school programming. Unfortunately, supported only by donations, these programs are offered to only a few children. Our own Hamilton Child Psychiatrist, the late Dan Offord said, "You can change the odds for any at risk child by levelling the playing field. Give that child access to the everyday experiences we know help to grow healthy kids." These experiences are the vaccines administered, and boosted, at all ages and stages of the childhood trajectory.

Epidemic to pandemic

In infectious disease, we always look for a *compelling sentinel event*, a sign of something new, like Kaposi's sarcoma, which in 1981, turned out to be the first North American manifestation of AIDS. Is the rampant alcohol and drug use we see in our affluent young people locally a sign that we are not rewarding personal dignity, real helpfulness, handiness, and skill development, service and contribution to social capital but rather accumulation



of wealth at the expense of others? Do we not know the science that happiness is dependent simply on "respect and regard" not massive accumulation of wealth? I am reminded on Sundays too, of the love of the One who made us, as are doubtless, faithful people of all religions on their holy day.

Then there is the question of allocation of *program funding* in controlling an epidemic. Why are our university professors so much better paid than the early childhood educators when all of the finest science in the world is telling us of the critical importance of education and learning in the early years in defining a child's life trajectory? People tell governments what to do. What are we saying about every last child and youth in our region? Are we

going to continue to have thousands of stalwart souls, many our Anglican and other Christian brothers and sisters, continue this vital work while the epidemic grows to a pandemic, when we have vaccines to avoid it?

Long term thinking and sustained action

The number one determinant of health is a job. Do we really want to continue to maximize our personal gains by cutting jobs and pay to the unliveable level? Do we want capitalism with or without social accountability? Henry Ford is reported to have said "I do not believe that we should make such awful profits on our cars.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

The homeless poor are brought into their own house



COLLEEN SYM
SOCIAL JUSTICE COORDINATOR

As Christians the phrase "no room at the inn" should resonant strongly with us. Almost instantly we form a mental picture of countless church school pageants portraying the arrival of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem, ending up in a stable where Jesus is born and laid in a manger.

The phrase has a different impact on the individuals and families experiencing homelessness who when shelters are full to overflowing are turned away because there is no room. A report *On any given Night: Measuring Homelessness in Hamilton, 2007 edition* indicates that the number of people accessing shelters in Hamilton on a given night in November has doubled since 1995. In 2006, one emergency shelter for women experiencing homelessness turned away women 878 times due to the shelter being at full capacity.

In Halton, with a much different demographic from Hamilton, 1402 requests were received for emergency housing, a 119% increase since 2002. The Halton Region Annual Housing Report 2007 notes that emergency shelter options are almost always operating a full capacity. In 2006, the emergency shelter for women and their children turned away 480 women due to a lack of space.

If Mary and Joseph were homeless today they might very well have ended up in a stable because there was no room at the shelter.

Anglicans all across the country have taken notice of the housing situation and their faith is calling them to take action, and speak up and ask their politicians to take action to address the issues.

The affordable housing campaign in Niagara

Here in Niagara we have completed six visits with MPPs. The visits were done to assist the Toronto Diocese with their affordable housing campaign. We were able to meet with all four of the Halton MPPs, Kevin Flynn, Joyce Savoline, Ted Arnot and Ted Chudleigh as well as with Hamilton MPP Andrea Horvath and the Hon. Ted McMeekin, MPP for Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough, Westdale and Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

On February 14, I was joined at my meeting with Joyce Savoline by Kathleen Szoke of St. Luke's Burlington. She is a member of that parish's outreach committee and an expert in affordable housing issues in Halton.

On February 15 we were able to put together a delegation from the diocese. Four of us met with Minister McMeekin: myself, Sue-Ann Ward, the vicar at the Cathedral, Bill Mous a third year theological student who works at St. James Dundas and Susan Andrews, a parishioner at the Cathedral with a long history of involvement in social and supportive housing in Hamilton.

Kathleen and Susan became involved in the visits after reading my article on affordable housing in the Niagara Anglican. Several others also contacted me after reading the article but were unable to join in the visits. I thank them for their interest and assure them that the work is not over, their help is still needed.

At all the meetings, we were graciously received by the MPPs. Assisting in the Toronto campaign was an opportunity for members of the Diocese to participate in the meetings to raise support for policies and action on affordable housing but was also an opportunity to raise awareness of the MPPs that Bishop Bird has indicated that outreach will be a priority under his leadership. It was also an opportunity to establish our bona fides as social justice advocates.

Minister McMeekin was especially gracious in that he provided us with advocacy workshop materials for a workshop he had once done for the Toronto Diocese.

Diocese of Toronto visits report

In Toronto, by mid-March, 20 such meetings will have been held, involving more than 100 people, and more meetings were in the works. Colin Johnson, Bishop of Toronto, met with the Hon. Jim Watson, Ontario's Minister of Housing in December, while Bishop George Elliott and Bishop Philip Poole also met with MPPs. These meetings focused on specific proposals to provide 20,000 affordable housing units during the government's four-year mandate, to provide housing for the frail elderly, to repair rundown non-profit housing, and to help the working poor through a \$10 per hour minimum wage.

Many of the meetings involved members of other denominations, thus signaling the wide range of voices alarmed at the suffering endured by our poorly-housed or homeless neighbours. Several delegations included



FROM LEFT: Ted McMeekin, Susan Andrews, Colleen Sym, Sue-Ann Ward, Bill Mous.

low-income people who could speak from experience, such as a Cobourg women who's been waiting 44 months for subsidized housing.

Meanwhile a Youth Synod for the Diocese of Toronto April 26-27 will focus on housing and homelessness issues. To expand their awareness for Synod, young Anglicans in Toronto and Peterborough will get a first-hand experience of housing and poverty issues through tours of youth shelters, public housing buildings, and through meetings with low-income tenants.

National campaign announced

The Anglican Primate and the Lutheran National Bishop are calling on the members of their respective churches to advocate for affordable housing solutions for the homeless with letters and visits to their Members of Parliament. The joint initiative is modeled after the Toronto campaign encouraging Anglicans to visit their local MPP to express concerns about housing and poverty.

They launched the initiative by sending a letter to the Minister of Human Resources and Development Canada, Monte Solberg, requesting the government "to address homelessness in Canada as part of a comprehensive

poverty reduction strategy."

The letter, delivered on February 27, 2008 follows the tabling of the federal budget which left the estimated 150,000 to 300,000 homeless people in Canada out in the cold, and another 1.5 million Canadians in desperate housing need without relief.

The joint Anglican-Lutheran initiative takes inspiration from the prophet Isaiah who asks what true religious observance is: "Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house?" (Isaiah 58:7).

"Our vision is to go beyond the prophet's call, to create a society where the hungry are able to eat their own bread, and the homeless poor are brought into their own house," the leaders' letter concludes.

"Being in full communion means more than worshipping together," says Archbishop Fred Hiltz, the Anglican Primate. "Members of both our churches give generously of their time and money to help people who are homeless. They run thrift shops, food banks, overnight shelters, and hospitality programs. But they know that charity isn't enough. Advocating together for justice is also part of being in full communion."

Hiltz and Johnson are inviting Lutherans and Anglicans to write or visit their federal MP, and where possible, to do this jointly. The purpose is to ask the Government of Canada to:

- Renew and increase the affordable housing funding which is set to expire at the end of 2008.

- Join with the provinces to develop a comprehensive housing strategy as part of an overall national poverty reduction strategy.

Online resources are available to help people participate in this initiative:

- "Bringing people who are homeless into their own house"—a resource that explains this initiative and gives tips for writing and visiting with your MP.

- A bulletin insert for use in church bulletins, encouraging congregations and parishes to become involved.

- A copy of the joint letter from The Most Reverend Fred Hiltz, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, and The Reverend Susan C. Johnson, National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, Monte Solberg.

Materials for use in Niagara are posted on the diocesan website www.niagara.anglican.ca.

The Reverend
D. Linda Corry
B.A., B.Th., Dip.Min., OACCP
Psychotherapist

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Waging Peace, the 2008 TrueCity conference

JUDITH PURDELL-LEWIS
ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, HAMILTON

The TrueCity conference, held on February 22-23, 2008 at Philpott Memorial Church in downtown Hamilton, was a gathering of over 350 people, from 90 different local church congregations. This included members from at least three Anglican churches. The goal of the conference was to broaden and deepen the work of the church's mission by strengthening relationships and learning together how to make a tangible difference in Hamilton after the conference.

The theme for the 2008 TrueCity conference, "Waging Peace," was inspired by 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

As a fairly new member of a Hamilton church, I found it very exciting to be at an event like this where Christians, from many denominations and churches across the city, gathered to learn from each other about sharing the love of God in very tangible and practical ways in the city of Hamilton.

What is TrueCity?

TrueCity is an emerging movement of churches in Hamilton working together for the good of the city. Its supporters are committed to living out the good news of peace, justice, mercy and reconciliation that we have in Jesus. The congregations involved are committed to involvement in their own neighbourhoods and in the city as a whole. They also work together with

other churches on specific projects which express their shared calling to be a blessing to Hamilton, believing that as we become more involved we shall see our neighbourhoods and city transformed.

TrueCity was founded in Hamilton by Hughson Street Baptist Church and Philpott Memorial Church together with the Hamilton TrueCity International Team in the summer of 2004. The purpose was to initiate a movement that creates opportunities for churches to learn from each other and work together for the good of the city. These two churches, together with others, were already involved in caring in practical ways for the disadvantaged of Hamilton. The first TrueCity conference was held in April 2005 with more than 120 people from over 20 Hamilton area churches attending. From that conference four working groups, composed of members of different churches, were formed to explore opportunities to learn and cooperate together.

The TrueCity movement believes in being congregation based—engagement in the neighbourhood, active cooperation, humble orthodoxy, putting the marginalized at the centre, having a whole city view, and growth through participation. Now six churches have agreed to the TrueCity Church Covenant and Statement of Faith. These churches, working with International Teams Canada staff in Hamilton, have initiated projects that include the arts, church planting, the environment, mental health and refugees.

2008 Conference

The 2008 TrueCity conference purpose was to provide a time and place

where churches from across the city could learn ways to collaborate and be equipped to more effectively seek the "shalom" of Hamilton. Time was spent in prayer and worship before hearing the main speaker on the first evening. Bruxy Cavey, the Teaching Pastor of The Meeting House, challenged us as he spoke on ways that Jesus cared for people in the face of "religious" objections.

On the second day I particularly appreciated the opportunity to learn what others were doing in their neighbourhoods in the two workshops I attended. The first was "TrueCity Basics: Why are churches getting involved and what are they doing?" The second was "Churches As Good Neighbours: Growing Relational Connections with our Neighbourhoods." I am looking forward to hearing, from other members of my church, what they learned at the workshops they attended.

The conference closed with more prayer, worship and a final talk from Bruxy Cavey, who opened my eyes to the story of the mustard seed and the Kingdom of God. God honours our willingness to follow his leading into areas that are unfamiliar and seem strange. We will see miraculous things happen!

.....
Judith Purdell-Lewis attends St. John the Evangelist on Locke Street in Hamilton, which is active in supporting Hamilton's Out of The Cold Program, St. Matthew's House, and Micah House, amongst other programs. Individual members are also active with other agencies that support the disadvantaged. Much of the information in the above article was gleaned from the TrueCity website, www.truecity.ca.

A holiday gamble

SUSAN C. HUXFORD-WESTALL
ALL SAINTS CHURCH, HAMILTON

Early in February I celebrated my birthday by flying to the Turks and Caicos Islands. They are still relatively unknown except among scuba divers. Nevertheless, the Air Canada flight on which I travelled was full of pleasure seekers searching for sun and fun. They were travelling to Providenciales—Provo, for short—taking advantage of package tours for a week or so of escape from the cold Canadian winter.

The island of Providenciales is one of a group of coral islands, the Caicos, at the extreme south-east end of the Bahamas chain, separated from two other small islands, the Turks, in the Atlantic. The travel industry has labelled them "Caribbean", but they are not; they are north of the large island of Hispaniola which houses Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Jamaica, Cuba and Hispaniola mark the northern edge of the true Caribbean. So we go to the TCI for a "Caribbean" holiday.

Not! I was destined for one of the other less developed islands. Providenciales was once a quiet island, but it is now a pleasure dome, occupied by transient pleasure seekers and get-rich-quickers. Casinos and crime have followed as the search for escape from the trials of this life have triumphed. Developers are exhausting the resources of a small tropical island and the inhabitants of the other islands in the group, except those concerned for their own immediate profit, are praying that the same sort of development will not spread to their own island. Alas, Carnival and other cruise ship lines have other ideas.

I took my copy of the Bible Reading Fellowship's Guidelines with me so that I would not miss my daily Bible reading and the morning after my arrival I opened my Bible at the third chapter of the book of Esther to find myself in the middle of a kingdom full of graft and pleasure-seeking where the common folk counted for nothing, but power was everything. The author of the notes, Paula Gooder, makes the interesting comment that God is never mentioned in the whole book, although God's influence is reflected in chapter 4:14. The salient factor, so far as I am concerned, is the central theme of Pur (the lot), the origin of the Jewish festival of Purim. The villain of the story is Haman, who is appointed his deputy by a weak king who seems to be under the influence of any strong character who can exert influence over him.

The Persian court is full of pleasure-seekers and power-seekers and Haman seems to be both. We read that "In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is the lot, before Haman day after day; and they cast it month after month till the twelfth month." At the end of the month Haman came to a fatal decision, which my reader may read for him/herself.

The point is that Haman was so full of pleasure-seeking that he exerted his power in gambling. If I read this passage correctly, he was throwing die, or having somebody do it for him, every day of the twelfth year of the king's reign. His decisions were governed by the result of the throw. The fate of many depended upon the throw of a die. Haman's own fate was the result of his lack of responsibility; he didn't care about the result of his own activities.

I lay in bed the morning after my arrival in the islands and reflected upon Haman's activity and the parallel between

his actions and those pleasure-seekers whom I had left behind on Provo. I knew that many of them had come for a well-earned rest after months of hard work, but I could not avoid the sense that some would let themselves go with little or no sense of responsibility. Are we in the Affluent West acting irresponsibly? I was also aware that the need for relaxation has spurred a powerful greed in those who know how to benefit from the needs of others. There is no throwing of die there; there is just deliberate calculation. Real estate in the islands has sky-rocketed unreasonably. The profit from hotels and condominiums leaves the country for other affluent areas or remains for the benefit of a few who showed foresight in the early days of development.

Providenciales is an island heading for disaster. My last night in the islands was spent in a hotel close to the international airport. I turned on the shower in the morning of my departure to receive a feeble trickle of water, sufficient to wet part of my body. In spite of that, I had cause to congratulate the managers on the improvements made in the structure of the building since my previous visit two years ago. The Turks and Caicos are in a region of low rainfall. Water is precious. Some hotels have asked their guests to be careful in the use of water, but this often has little effect. Once development started the ground water was speedily exhausted, the rainfall has to be collected in cisterns and is insufficient. A Middle Eastern Emir planned a golf-course which required plenty of water for the greens so a reverse osmosis plant was built to desalinate sea water. Much, if not all the fresh water on Providenciales is now supplied by reverse osmosis. Why is this? Because humans insist upon living in areas where nature does not provide for large populations. Southern California is another example and they envy Nature's bounty in Canada.

Large populations, especially itinerant populations, produce large quantities of garbage. Small densely populated islands have little room for garbage disposal. What is to be done with discarded pop cans and other refuse? What about sewage? Landfill is inappropriate; dry climates will not permit of rapid deterioration although insects will dispose of much of it. It cannot be thrown into the sea because the islands are surrounded by a great coral reef and the local government has had the wisdom to protect the reefs. Tourists are forbidden to take bits of reef as souvenirs.

In our pleasure-seeking, what are we doing to ourselves when we ruin the earth upon which we depend for life? Our biggest concern at present seems to be with global warming. The Turks and Caicos are just a small proportion of low-lying islands around the world. An increase in sea level as a result of the melting of the polar icecaps can drown all low-lying coastlands, especially in the event of hurricanes, and condominiums now being built for over a million dollars per unit will be inundated.

Are we worried about global warming, or are we inclined to think it's okay and won't happen in my lifetime? Are we gambling with the fate of future generations? Are we stewards of God's Earth or are we preoccupied with our own self-interests? The Jews still celebrate Purim, the result of Haman's gamble. Haman came to the breath-taking end that he had intended for somebody else. Are we gambling, or do we have a sense of responsibility to God and our fellow beings?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10 » Child poverty

A reasonable profit is right but not too much." As the founder of the *Toronto Star*, Mr. Atkinson, said, "There are words to describe the accumulation of great wealth; 'earned' is not one of them." What are we willing to pay to control this epidemic? The cost of letting it continue unabated is the loss of our civilized society.

This situation is exactly equal to the environmental challenge facing us—it requires long term thinking which previous generations have shown in the past. It requires sustained, unprecedented action by people like you and me.

The terrible shame of local disadvantaged children can be prevented or ameliorated by prompt implementation of proven scientific strategies, supported by irrefutable evidence. With centralized funding and programming, interventions can be offered, as they are brilliantly in Niagara, for a relative handful of those needing them, or we can continue this piecemeal approach, although I think we may be drowning.

What are your community's rates of low birth weight, kindergarten readiness (EDD), Grade 3 literacy, and high school dropout? What are your com-

munity's rates of food bank use, provision of school breakfast and lunch programs, good after-school programming, extended school year, opportunities for regular sports, arts or music for each child (and transportation to the same)? How does your community support young mothers and fathers trying to stay together without succumbing to depression when faced with job uncertainty, inability to meet simple loving needs of their families amidst the intrusion of technology with advertising and associated violence? These are the real indices of livability of a community and the real wait times!

Each and every one of us is involved

The situation for the poor elderly has improved enormously in recent years under serious public pressure. The situation for adult health care is extraordinarily generous (and will prove to be unsustainable) with nearly 50 cents on the Ontario tax dollar going to adult health care. Do we want to address the epidemic of local disadvantaged children? What will make the scales fall from our eyes?

We are, each and every one of us, involved, whether we have found out

the local truth by obtaining our local figures related to the invisible children and youth, whether we have their parents clean our offices, serve us our coffee, drive our cabs and try to support a family on low income and the current minimum wage, whether we are cutting jobs and incomes directly in our work or indirectly through our massive accumulation of personal wealth so that we can enjoy over-the-top luxury and years and years of labour-free comfort.

As my great colleagues in the Niagara Public Health Department remind me "It all works out in the end. If it hasn't worked out, it isn't the end yet." Our great friend Archdeacon Ian Dingwall encouraged Anthony and me to write this, citing the benefits of "destructive creativity". So, in challenging norms, which we too regularly follow and buy into, we can only say, we write this for the tens of thousands in our Niagara community (and hundreds and hundreds of thousands in our beloved Ontario) who have no voice, no face, precious little hope except for the basic human drive to have children and are not at the same discussion tables as we are.

EVENTS

Monthly Dinners

St. James, St. Catharines
Next month's menu includes Swedish meatballs, boiled potatoes, coleslaw, rice pudding.
Cost: \$5.00 per person
April 2, 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Via Media

St. Simon, Oakville
Over a period of five weeks, St. Simon's church is offering a series of Christian education sessions called Via Media and it's open to anyone who has ever been curious or interested in the Anglican tradition. Our objective is to create an open and inclusive environment that appeals to people wondering about the Anglican Church, the Christian faith, or St. Simon's, as well as to our existing congregation members. We encourage people to bring their ideas and questions, and we'll provide the informational resources and a place to exchange your thoughts and voice your opinions in a safe environment. Five consecutive Wednesdays commencing on April 2, and ending April 30. To registration and for more information contact The Reverend Jeff Ward by telephone at 905-845-835.
April 2, 7:30 PM

Spring Garden Parish Adult Dance

St. David's Parish, Welland
Come join the fun at the Lion's Community Centre in Welland. There will be a DJ, finger food buffet, cash bar, door prizes, 50/50 draw and Highland Dancers. A

prize will be awarded for the best theme outfit. Everyone is welcome!
Cost: \$12.00 per person
April 4, 7:00 PM - 12:00 AM

Penny Sale and Bazaar

St. Alban the Martyr, Hamilton
Our bi-annual penny sale and bazaar. Come for an afternoon of fun.
April 5, 12:00 PM

Youth Dance

St. David's Parish, Welland
Dances are held every other Friday for those in grades 5-8. Pizza and pop will be available.
Cost: \$5.00 per person
April 11, 7:00 PM - 10:00 PM

Hamilton Children's Choir

St. James, Dundas
St. James presents the Hamilton Children's Choir, directed by Zimfira Poloz, for this must-see Friday evening concert.
Cost: Optional donation to Amnesty International
April 11, 2008 - 7:30 PM

Spring Rummage Sale

Grace Church, St. Catharines
Join us for our Spring rummage sale consisting of clothing and assorted 'treasures'.
April 12, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

The Three Cantors

St. James, St. Catharines
St. James Anglican Church presents The Three Cantors. Reception to follow per-

formance. For tickets contact our office at 905-682-8853.
Cost: \$20 per person
April 16, 7:00 PM

Roast Beef Dinner

St. David's Parish, Welland
Enjoy roast beef, mashed potatoes, vegetables, salad, rolls, tea, coffee and cookies served up by Francesca. All are welcome.
Cost: Adults \$10.00, Children 3-10 \$5.00
April 17, 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Garage and Rummage Sale

St. Alban the Martyr, Hamilton
One person's garbage is another person's treasure. Come see what treasurers you may find.
April 19, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Bridal Memories

St. James, Dundas
A bridal show in the Dundas Room featuring wedding gowns from the 1930s to today! Proceeds will go towards the Greening St. James campaign.
Cost: \$15.00 per person
April 19, 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Annual Dinner and Silent Auction

St. Columba, St. Catharines
Come for our ever popular beef-on-a-bun, salads, and scrumptilicious desserts. If you can donate wine, a door prize, gift certificate or a new item for auction, please bring them to the church office. Tickets will be available late March from the church office.

Cost: \$15.00 per person
April 19, 6:00 PM

Earth Day Observance

St. David's Parish, Welland
Come and see *The Inconvenient Truth* on the big screen in our worship space. Please bring a non-perishable food item.
April 20, 7:00 PM

Retirement Celebration And Dinner

St. George, Guelph
This celebration and dinner is in honour of Archdeacon Thomas Greene's retirement. Following the dinner, there will be a time of light entertainment and an opportunity to convey your good wishes to Thomas. Reservations can be made by sending a cheque (made payable to St. George's Church) to Retirement Dinner, c/o Canon Jean Mitchell, St. George's Church, 99 Woolwich Street, Guelph ON, N1H 7G6 by Friday, April 18. Upon receipt of cheque, reservations will be confirmed by telephone so please be sure to include your telephone number.
Cost: \$35 per person
April 25, 6:00 PM

3rd Annual Dinner and Silent Auction

Holy Trinity (Chippawa), Niagara Falls
This year our Social Committee has planned another fun evening where roast beef on a bun will be served, along with beverages and delicious dessert.
Cost: \$5.00 per person
April 26, 5:00 PM

The Niagara Anglican

The official publication of the Anglican Diocese of Niagara is published ten times a year from September to June by The Dunham Group in Hamilton, Ontario.

Editor: Christopher Grabiec

Phone: 905-312-8444 (ext. 101)

Advertising: Ted Manning

Phone: 905-680-0615

Publishers Advisory Board

Pam Claridge
Phone: 519-941-6804

Geoffrey Purdell-Lewis
Phone: 905-628-4176

Charles Stirling
Phone: 905-383-1088

Carol Summers
Phone: 905-772-5641

Staff

Design/layout: Kayn Leduc
Proofreading: Bryan Stopps

Submissions

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The Diocese of Niagara

The Diocese lies at the western end of Lake Ontario, and is defined roughly by the Niagara Escarpment from the Niagara River in the east to the Dundas Valley in the West and north to Shelburne, Mt. Forest and Orangeville.

Bishop of Niagara: Michael A. Bird

Phone: 905-527-1316

Administrative Assistant: Alison D'Atri

Phone: 905-527-1316 (ext. 310)

Executive Officer: Michael Patterson

Phone: 905-527-1316

Program Department

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

Joyce Wilton
Phone: 905-527-1316 (ext. 430)

Contact the Diocese

Cathedral Place
252 James St. North
Hamilton, ON L8R 2L3
Phone: 905-527-1316
Website: www.niagara.anglican.ca

How much help is out there?

CARL SNEYD

DIRECTOR OF STEWARDSHIP & FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Volunteer ministries are frequently acknowledged but the full extent of these gifts is not necessarily fully recognized. The great number of volunteer hours that are freely given to the operation of our churches is just one aspect of the time and talent portion of our church life.

We will often publicly say thanks after the fact to those who helped with the funeral tea, the bake sale or the large community dinner, but do we really know and are we able to express the true value of the number of hours given in service to the church on a regular on-going, short term, or one time basis? Are our parishioners aware of the amount of work that goes into making our church a successful community and continuing the development of the kingdom here on earth?

Reporting volunteer hours

Why would we want to report volunteer hours? For one thing, reporting this gift can and should be part of your narrative budget and your successful year round stewardship program. For another, exposure of this information gives a different, broader picture of your parish and through that, a deeper understanding of how your congregation works. That deeper understanding often brings a greater commitment to the community.

On the Stewardship page of the diocesan website, there is a sample Volunteers Hours Excel spreadsheet that you can download, adapt to your own situation and use as a basis for calculating volunteer hours.

Where to start collecting the information? There are two ways you might begin. One, use your parish job descrip-

tions as a good starting point for finding out what hours are being actually given to the work for your church. Each parish has these job descriptions on hand and reviews and updates them on a fairly regular basis. Each job description should have a time component attached to it. If this number is fairly accurate, the number of people involved and the number of hours in the description can be entered in the Volunteer Hours spreadsheet and totals calculated easily. These can then be split up between the various narrative budget areas.

The second way will probably be more common. Take one of the five or six broad areas of ministry from your narrative budget and deconstruct it a little, and collect some data.

Numbers are staggering

For example, one of our most often used and largest areas of expenditure in our narrative budgets is, naturally, worship and music. Our regular worship usually has a great deal of volunteer lay participation, a lot of it behind the scenes, virtually unseen and often unknown. Consider the Sunday service with the largest attendance. What needs to happen for worship to occur as well as it does? Is there a group that helps plan the liturgy, did someone help fold the bulletins, how many altar guild members are involved in set-up and clean-up, how many greeters and sides people are at the doors, how big is the choir, how many servers are lined up, are there one or two readers, does someone different lead the prayers of the people based on a roster, how many offertory bearers bring our gifts to be blessed, are there one or two chalice bearers, how many people are involved in accounting

for the monetary offering, how many are involved in hospitality before or after the service? Even in a small parish, the numbers can become quite staggering when multiplied out. Even without a choir, there may be as many as 20 or more folks involved. And this goes on every week! What a wonderful gift!

How to calculate the hours? Here's an illustration. Breaking the jobs or responsibilities down by groups is probably easiest. One group that is highly visible and whose time commitment is reasonably easy to calculate is the choir. For each choir member, there is often a commitment of at least 2-3 hours a week for services and practice times for 9 months of the year and often at least 1 hour for the balance of the year; and then there are the special practices and services for Christmas and Easter. A choir member may look after gowns and other accouterments, a librarian might keep the music library straight, and another couple of members could help herd the junior choristers when necessary. All in all, it adds up. An average choir member may be donating more than 125 hours per year. That's more than 3 weeks of full time work each year, all freely given to the glory of God, the building of the kingdom and for the enjoyment of communal singing. Multiply that by the number of choir members and you can see that the time commitment for just that one area of worship and music is huge! Entering the data in the Volunteer Hours worksheet shows just how big this can be very quickly.

Awareness will encourage growth

Making the congregation aware can go a long way to explaining to the folks

in the pews just what goes on in the parish. Some of our church language, even outside of liturgy, can be pretty confusing. Use the narrative budget, newsletters, bulletin announcements or a poster campaign to inform. It will help members who may be new to our community, or even those who have been around for awhile, understand exactly what or who does the rather arcane term "altar guild" refer to and what it does and when it gets done, or what door greeters do and how often and why and what exactly is a "sides person" anyway.

A lot of all-round benefits are provided by making the congregation aware of ministry opportunities through the narrative budget, newsletters, bulletin announcements or a poster campaign. Awareness can open up new possibilities for additional volunteers to get more involved in their church life. A lot of new people don't always know that a particular group is open for new members and that (where appropriate) training and support is provided. Awareness can lead to familiarity and when someone is approached directly to help, it's a lot more difficult for them to plead ignorance and not accept doing a job you know they would have fun doing. Awareness can encourage personal growth and leadership development, giving people the opportunity to try something new, and to use their God-given talents in new and different ways.

Using the Volunteer Hours worksheet will help foster that awareness. And anything that encourages growth of the kingdom and awareness in our parishes is always a good thing.

EASTER

The Triduum: Aching wounded love bears Holy Power



MICHAEL THOMPSON
RECTOR - ST. JUDES, OAKVILLE

I wonder how many people paid any attention at all. Not many, I suspect. Those events we remember in this season, well, I wonder if they had any real impact. A diversion for some who were



...having offered ourselves in our bodies of so-so bread and not-the-finest wine, an offering as broken as the world that breaks us, we have become what God offers the world—the Body of Christ.”

nearby, and for the rest, a rumour, or less than that. Things weren't, mostly, any different on Monday morning than they were on Thursday night.

And for people for whom things were different, they were different in ordinary ways. Somewhere the expected new baby arrived, and at that moment, somewhere else, the expected death intruded. A man packed his belongings together, along with a bit of food, and set out for new work in another town. Were there weddings in those three days? As the body of Jesus was laid in Joseph's tomb, did a young woman and young man celebrate a new beginning in marriage?

The people of Jerusalem got on

with life as Jesus was executed. They did not break with one voice into the "Hallelujah Chorus" as the angel addressed the women at the tomb. On Monday, everyone did pretty much what they had been doing every Monday for a while now. The clergy still ran the temple, and the Romans still ran everything else. The "rule of law" still meant "the rule of power". Hungry people were hungry again, or still.

As the church gathers from Thursday evening through Sunday morning to remember the events of the Great Three Days as the fulcrum of history, the world will not, in fact, be diverted from its agenda. Kind people will continue to be kind, and ruthless people ruthless. In the corridors of power, the unmasking of power will pass pretty much under the radar. People will suffer the consequences of others' use of power. Compassion will move others to address that suffering. The world will continue to wobble. Sentimentality will anesthetize some, creating the illusion that what is most important is the tear in the corner of the eye at the end of Bambi. A few will realize that Bambi is not brought back to life by sentimental tears, and impolitely remind us that there is a hunter with a gun still out there. People will patch together some version of the world that makes enough sense to hold at bay the sneaking suspicion that this is no way to live. And we will do anything to distract ourselves from the convicting truth that this is the way we live.

Some beautiful things will ease us. Children will be born in places where they can thrive. Years later, one of them will generously share her lunch with a hungry stranger. In an unfathomable act of courage, another will dive into cold water to rescue a stranger. Another, still a child, will wander into

a bevy of elders and kindle both memory and hope for them, and for a few moments, they will shine.

But all of these things were going on before labouring Mary gave birth, before Bartimaeus received his sight, before the parable of the prodigal, the Samaritan, the mustard seed. They were going on—were, in fact, what people thought of as life—as the life ebbed out of Jesus on the cross, as he burst out of the tomb before dawn on Sunday. That is to say, the world has pretty much remained unchanged by any of the events we remember in the Great Three Days.

When I look through one eye, that's what I see—a world not much changed by those events we hold so close to our own hearts at this season. But through the other, I see a world entirely made new, a world one can enter, choose, inhabit. The Kingdom Jesus proclaimed, in which he abided, out of whose ethic he taught, in whose power he offered healing, in service of which he confronted death and was destroyed—the Kingdom vindicated not only as a future hope but as a present truth, available for choosing now.

This is not the fantasy world of gradual perfectibility. God knows, and so do we, the sorry truth that we are helplessly flawed, and that any world we fashion—including the bread and wine we, offer as symbols of our life, at the altar—will reflect those flaws. This is the honest world of the Kingdom of God, who welcomes our frail selves and makes them new. When we inhabit this kingdom, our pilgrim feet stir up eddies of dust in the world we called "real" until now, our compassion heals and restores what is broken in that world, our very lives become, in that world, a parable of the Kingdom, a witness to a "better country"

of which, by our baptism we are citizens. The child illuminating a group of elders, the woman risking life for another, the generosity of a stranger—all are symbols of that other country, and of a hunger in our world to live by its habits here, now.

Alan Ayckbourn's play, *How the Other Half Loves*, features the three couples at dinner parties on successive nights in two homes. The living and dining rooms of those two homes overlap on the stage. The play unfolds in one long scene that jumps back and forth between Friday's dinner party and Saturday's. You can tell from the furniture the characters use, from the curtains they draw, from the table at which they gather, which night it is and in whose home the characters have gathered.

On Sundays, we assemble in places—public places with street addresses, fire numbers, postal codes. If you look through the windows and doors you see the same people you see at the supermarket, the hospital, the school. This drama is complex. It takes place in one long scene that jumps back and forth between time and eternity, between the world and the Kingdom of God. You tell where people are by their actions. When they greet one another with the peace of Christ (though they belong to opposing sides in the latest debate) they are in the Kingdom of God. When they bring the bread and wine to the table, they are bringing what they can muster in the broken world into a transforming Presence in eternity. A minute before it was so-so bread (or worse) and not-the-finest wine. Blessed, broken and shared, the indifferent loaf becomes the bread of heaven. Poured out and shared in compassion, the indifferent wine becomes the cup of salvation.

If, as we return from the table of eternity to the streets of time, we set our hearts to address the hunger of the world, it is not because we believe that we can offer enough to the world to overcome the greed that causes that hunger. Instead, it is because, having offered ourselves in our bodies of so-so bread and not-the-finest wine, an offering as broken as the world that breaks us, we have become what God offers the world—the Body of Christ.

What Easter will not do is change the world without changing us. In *The Last Week* John Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg describe two processions entering Jerusalem at the same time—the procession of Jesus and his disciples, and the imperial procession coming into the city, a procession of soldiers and their commanders, to secure the city against insurrection during a festival. The imperial procession comes with a theology of the Emperor's divine, absolute and terrifying power. The messianic procession comes with a theology of God's reign of peace with justice. Servants of God's kingdom enter one gate, and servants of the empire of Caesar through the other. Borg and Crossan suggest that everything hinges on which procession we join. But as Jesus dies on the cross, one of those who entered with the empire catches a glimpse of the kingdom of God, the centurion who utters this confession: "Truly this man was God's son." In that moment, he sees what we so often fail to see—that aching, wounded love bears holy power. Whether we enter the city with the servants of God or the servants of Caesar, that truth offers itself to us on Friday, and if we can choose that truth, then Jesus bursting from the tomb before dawn on Sunday morning changes everything. It changes us.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 » Coming out of the closet

Whereas everyone my age left Meat-loaf where he belonged, at Grade 10 high school dances, I continue to secretly indulge in the dubious pleasure of keeping him front and centre on my iPod. Okay. So no big deal. I'm coming out of the closet. So what? I might get laughed at a little. I might drop points in a few people's esteem. I might be labelled a sucker for tasteless, cheese-ball music. I can live with that.

So what if I came out of the closet about something incomparably more bombastic, outrageous, and overly-ambitious? What if we all came out of the closet, threw down the gauntlet, and collectively admitted we are Easter People? Believers of the Risen Christ and all that the Risen Christ stands for?

Of course, we have. On one level, anyway. We do call ourselves Easter People.

But the Easter language can be tossed around with great casualness, with empty regularity. We speak the words and forget how radical, how extraordinary, how preposterous, the claim: Life is stronger than death. Love is stronger than hate. Truth is stronger than Lies. Yeah, yeah, yeah. We know, we know.

But on what basis do we speak these words? On what basis can we claim the impossibility of Easter?

Lent, that's an easy sell—there is ample evidence for human brokenness, for our need to be healed. Advent, there is sense to that—we are waiting, we are stuck in the quick sands, and we are waiting for deliverance.

Easter, that's another matter. For starters, we might point out all of the ways that we as individuals experience ourselves prisoners of patterns, of behaviour, of choices that bring harm and hurt. Or we might go with a more public experience, noting how the Anglican Church is experiencing gut-wrenching, soul-destroying division, how our differences make us easy prey for a scandal-thirsty media, for manipulative political maneuvering, for gossip and anger and backstabbing and hypocrisy amongst people who all count themselves followers of Christ.

But let's cut to the chase. Let's be honest about just how deeply humanity can be locked in the grasp of lies, hate, and death. My husband Dan and I have been watching *Karol: A Man Who Became Pope*, a CBC miniseries on the life of Pope John Paul II. The first quarter of the movie nightmar-

ishly depicts Karol as a young man living in Poland during World War II, witnessing inexplicable acts of violence and hatred as Nazi Germany's agenda of domination and conformity sweeps through Europe, and thousands of "normal" "everyday" people numbly succumb to the lie that our fellow human beings are disposable.

The most shocking and difficult realization in watching this movie is that *this is still going on*. In our world, as I write this, as you read this, human beings are being brutally slaughtered for the sake of various monstrous agendas—calculated efforts of violence and murder in order to win arguments, power, money, land, superiority, oil, resources, compliance, homogeneity.

In the face of this reality, what right do any of us have to stand up and claim the Gospel of Easter: Christ is risen! and with that rising, death and destruction and hatred have no power? We might as well go back amidst the coat hangers and mothballs with all of the other ridiculous people who still want to sing their hearts out over hopelessly romantic high school music and anyone else who has a weakness for the grandiose over the safely cynical.

It is easier, cooler, more appealing,

and infinitely more acceptable, to give in to the cynicism, to keep our claims modest, unpretentious. Love exists in places. Truth wins out sometimes. New life makes appearances. Those are things we can say without blushing, without stretching.

But God invites us, God calls upon us, God claims us, for this Easter Truth. To blush and stammer and wildly, ludicrously, shout it out. To point it out. To live it out. To actively, creatively, imaginatively, relentlessly, be people who name this deeper, beneath-the-surface-reality, that Love and Truth and Life, that Easter, either conquers or we are sunk. That the only possible answer to our hatred and destruction and greed and fear is Love. That there are, in fact, people throughout history who have given their whole beings to the project of Truth-telling, to the art of responding to the world with Love, and no power can silence the Life that flows out of that offering.

That single, solitary, fragile, mortal individuals have risen against every seemingly omnipotent expression of institutional and private evil, and whether those individuals live or die, are forcibly silenced, ridiculed, or even killed, their witness transforms

landscapes, births hope, crumbles previously impenetrable fortresses of oppression. That the Truth they find the courage to speak, on the face of things a faltering and powerless drop in the bucket, ends up being powerful beyond all measure. That whenever we find the courage to speak the Truth, we are promised, we are guaranteed, that our words, our actions, our witness, will not be lost, will participate in bringing about The Reign of Love and Life.

Everything that Jesus claims on the cross is true. And the cross is not the end of the story. The ways in which we are scattered and forsaken, heartbroken and fearful, callous and destructive, this is not the last word. Against all odds, it is not the last word.

The last word, outlandishly, unbelievably, ridiculously, is instead about a God who so loved the world, about a God who gave and gives everything that we might know who we are—people created for and by Love, about a God who is bringing all of creation to the great Banquet of Life.

Here is the most preposterous part of it all: the last word can be spoken by us. Can we open the door and come out?

The Easter Faith

Moving from desolation to consolation



COLIN C. M. CAMPBELL
DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

The goal of the Christian life is to build the Kingdom of God, through communion with the Spirit of God. The Kingdom is built by turning desolation into consolation, by acting in the power of prayer. Without prayer, people are unable to sustain communion with God and may be compared to a barren tree, fit only to be cut down and thrown into the fire (Matt 7:19). Desolation affirms the reality of sickness. Consolation affirms the reality of God's love. The Easter message is that, in Christ, we are able to defeat sickness through the love, which God's Holy Spirit pours into our hearts as we pray, provided we know how to pray correctly.

Sickness has an ontological reality. When things go wrong, there could be no freedom or responsibility if God were simply to restore the situation to the way that it was before things went wrong. Suffering proceeds from God's letting-be of his creation, so that it may participate meaningfully in determining its future. God takes a risk with us. Instead of imploring God to fix things when they go wrong (or even worse, expecting things not to go wrong, simply because we are Christian) we must avoid all denial, bargaining and cynicism, and embrace our desolation. As twenty-first century people, used to the quick fix, we find it natural to ask God how long he expects us to live with unhappiness. God's love also has an ontological reality. It is not an illusion. If we are not familiar with it, we can expect sickness to win. Once we move beyond denial, bargaining, and cynicism, we are ready to experience the love of God.

Healing prayer confronts the reality of desolation with the reality of consolation. Both realities must be respected. God wills our desolation to affirm our responsibility. Our pain will last until we have fully accepted our loss. This is the grieving period. The running off at the mouth type of prayer will not help. Responsibility cannot be short-circuited. God wills our consolation to rescue us from desolation. When we accept our suffering and seek his will, our redemption begins.

Just as the grieving period takes time, prayers for healing may be protracted. Jesus ridiculed "vain repetition," as being the prayer form of the pagans. However, this is not the same as praying for different facets of a complex problem. Once, there was a woman who prayed that God would put an end to World War II. Not surprisingly, her prayer (as she expressed it) was unsuccessful. Such a problem is too complex to be healed by a single prayer. Too many variables must be brought under God's authority. The most effective prayers deal with a simple problem. Complex problems take several sessions. We pray through a problem in which emotional, spiritual, and physical aspects are intertwined, as the Holy Spirit leads us. If we do so, we shall see healing happen.

There are three stages to effective prayer for healing. First, you get in touch with the presence of Jesus, usually by praying into a text of scripture, until you are "in the Spirit." Second, you bring the situation requiring healing into this Presence. Third, you go with what happens, keeping the Spirit and the issue together until you receive peace. Rambling, waffling prayers are ineffective, depressing, and a waste of time. Specific, focused, informed prayer is always fruitful. As an Easter people, let us be God's sacrament of consolation in order to extend his Kingdom by making full use of spiritual resources, known only to us, which are "not of this world."

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

■ The Reverend Derek Anderson has submitted his resignation from St. George's, Guelph, as assistant curate and has accepted the position to be rector of St. Matthew on the Plains, Burlington, effective June 1.

■ Diocesan Administrators appointed at St. Hilda's, Oakville (Dr. Brian Rutan), St. George's, Lowville (Reverend Susan Wells), and Good Shepherd, St. Catharines (Archdeacon Bruce McPetrie).

■ The Reverend Canon Rob Fead, rector of St. George's, St. Catharines, was elected Regional Dean of Lincoln on February 12.

■ Irene Walback (All Saints, Erin), Sheila Plant (St. Luke's, Burlington)

and Ron Vince (Christ Church, Flamborough) will be ordained vocational deacons on Thursday, May 1 at 7:30 PM. The preacher will be the Reverend Anne Crawford, Deacon.

■ The Reverend Sue-Ann Ward, Assistant Curate of Christ's Church Cathedral, has accepted the position of Executive Director of The Hamilton Association for Recreational and Residential Redevelopment Programmes (HARRRP) on or around April 1. HARRRP was founded by the Cathedral, in partnership with St. Mary's School, the YMCA, SISO, and other partners, as an arm's length corporation managing out important outreach activities at the Jamesville Community Centre, the McQuesten Community Centre, our breakfast club programmes, and

other activities. The Board of Directors of HARRRP (which includes several parishioners) has done amazing work in the last year.

■ Our sympathy to the Best family on the death of Robert Best, long time and faithful member of Christ's Church Cathedral, who died on February 18. A memorial service was held at the Cathedral on February 24.

■ Congratulations to Wendy Duncan, Diocesan Controller, on the birth of her grandson, Nolan, born January 19 to proud parents Steve and Suzy.

■ Our sympathy to Canon Beverley Shanley on the death of her father, Edward, in St. Catharines. Funeral service was held on Friday, January 18.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

You don't own the ball

The battle over same-sex blessings continues to divide our wonderful church and I guess I still just don't get it. We liberals (I guess that's what we are) continue to affirm Paul's contention that "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

As all of us are *one* in Christ, we (liberals) continue to ask for and vote on the notion that people should have the ability to bless same-sex unions if they desire to do so. No one is forcing anyone to do so if they do not desire to do so! This is where the break down in the logic of the other side (conservatives?) comes into play. We (liberals) are saying to you "You don't have to if you don't want to" but you are demanding that "we can't even if we want to."

So now it's gotten to the point where you want to take your ball and

go home. Trouble is... you don't own the ball.

CANON MARK TILLER
St. Alban the Martyr, Acton

Church Polity vs Secular Court

The recent intervention of a judge in a secular court passing judgment on a situation arising in congregations of two Anglican Churches in the Diocese of Niagara is both inappropriate and unnecessary. The polity of the Anglican Church of Canada is such that it can deal with such matters internally.

Every priest or cleric in a parish or congregation is there by appointment by the bishop of the diocese. The appointment is based on a contractual relationship of obedience. If a cleric decides she or he can no longer remain obedient to the bishop and what the bishop stands for in the diocese, that cleric is clearly in breach of contract.

As such, the cleric is open to discipline by the bishop or by the bishop together with the diocesan disciplinary committee. In severe cases such discipline can mean dismissal. At which point the cleric and those members of the congregation who are of like mind are free to follow whomsoever else they choose. In doing so they have no claim on the church's real property: its ownership has always been in the name of the diocese.

This is not a case of right or wrong. It is simply a matter of people accepting the consequences of their actions according to the agreements they have made. To seek an outside judgment that obscures this responsibility and choice is ludicrous. Naturally disciplinary measures involving dismissal can become delicate: they are nonetheless possible to arrange.

If we are clear about what it is we are dealing, the way forward, though difficult, can be found. It may even include a way to return.

THE REV. DONALD C. BROWN
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The Reverend Dianne Distler
200 Cope Street
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Phone: 905-549-9636

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7 » Getting to know you

On the way to Canada, Bahman worked in Germany as a clerk for his Uncle, a merchant for Persian carpets. Again his work led to exotic travels. In India and Nepal, he met Buddhist lamas; talking and meditating with them "helped me become a deeper Christian."

Arriving in Canada on January 2, 2001, as a landed immigrant, Bahman began divinity studies at Trinity College. "I loved Trinity College. It was my home; I not only studied there, I worked there." Work in security and the College's photocopy centre, where he trained on modern photocopy machines, was "very helpful because I could get to know everybody." Bahman worried about his accent, but "a teacher said, 'No, this is Canada, keep your accent. Here you can be your-

self.' I don't have to deny myself. It's a beautiful thing to say!"

Faith, love and commitment

In 2002, Bahman met a classics student named Tricia; three months later, they entered a five year engagement. In 2005, Bahman graduated and went to Iran to visit his ill Father, a two week trip that lasted a year. Controversy had arisen over family land, and Bahman's lack of Iranian identification papers was an excuse for his arrest, but "I was a Canadian citizen and that helped me. After a one year fight in court, our lands were returned and I got (Iranian identification)."

Across the Atlantic, Tricia, who grew up at St. Cuthbert's Church, Oakville, "showed me a lioness, the symbol of perseverance, love and support; she never doubted about my call

and encouraged me even on the worst days in Iran." Returning to Toronto on August 12, 2006, Bahman was welcomed by Tricia and his brother, with his family.

After two months service at St. Mark's Church, Orangeville, familiarizing himself with the people and parish staff, especially the Rector, the Reverend Canon Peter Scott, Bahman was ordained as transitional Deacon in December, 2006, then Priest in June, 2007. Tricia, who studied tourism at the University of Western Ontario while Bahman was trapped in Iran, "amazingly found the job she wanted. Tricia is always helpful, especially with my sermons." They "do serious walks" and read together, especially about other religions. Bahman also enjoys short stories and history, makes Anglican rosaries,

and finds the army discipline of regular exercise "helps my spirituality."

Bahman declares, "I love this country! I have been in many countries, and Canada is the best democratic country in the world. Here you can have free speech, you can grow in many ways. It's the first time I've had living with Christians. The hardest part is I miss my parents and younger brother in Iran." Reflecting on modern Iran, Bahman says, "Iran is a culture more than a country, with rich poetry and literature. Over 1000 years, there have been many attacks, but Iranians survived! A professor who is a friend wrote a book explaining Iranian culture called "Achievement from Adversity."

Bahman acknowledges God's blessings in the unfolding of his story: "I believe it comes from Jesus Christ.

I didn't do anything to deserve that... Because of (him), I have Tricia, the family at St. Mark's, the Diocese of Niagara; I can pray and be happy! I love Jesus, Son of God; he's not waiting for people to come to him, but he goes to them. Even just saying his name, I feel his presence. We can share the love; with love we can do anything we want. It's not a competition between religions, but between people who care and don't care."

With such vibrant commitment, unique life experiences, and his beloved Tricia, "The Adventures of Bahman Kalantari" will enrich the Christian life of St. Mark's and any other parish to which he is called to serve, and the new life promised in the Resurrection story of Jesus Christ will be revealed in countless ways for all to see.

READY SHOOT AIM » Life is like a body of water



HOLLIS HISCOCK
RETIRED PRIEST - BURLINGTON

SHOOT - The photograph

The photograph is of Ocean Pond, Newfoundland, which is neither an ocean (salt water) nor a pond (small body of water). Be that as it may, so was it named sometime in antiquity and so shall it be called.

At midnight, as we sat on a neighbour's dock and watched the moon's rays dance on the gentle rippling water, he philosophized, 'on a night like this, there is no better place to be'.

Maybe Jesus and His followers echoed similar sentiments as they sat in Peter's boat awaiting the arrival of the great catch of fish (read Luke 5:1-11) or before the huge storm hit when Jesus and His friends were crossing the Galilean Lake (read Mark 4:35-41).

After experiencing the ebb and flow of winter, summer, spring and fall at Ocean Pond, I began to compare its life with our own experiences as we journey through the seasons of our human lives. I wrote this poem, which was originally titled 'The Pond', but was changed to 'The Lake' to ensure a better understanding for a wider Canadian audience.

Read the questions first, then read the verses and explore their relevance in all facets of your own personal life,

your Church, your community and our global village.

READY - Words behind the photo

Yesterday...
The Lake is an anaesthetized calm...
The water smooth like glazed glass...
Ripples churned by the boat extend into eternity...
Reflections mirror cottages, rocks, trees, clouds, every image...
Blue dragonflies hover aimlessly, lighting on rod, boat, sneaker...
Birds glide o'er watery playgrounds, chasing shadows, soaring...
Silence wraps the visitor in soothing, rapturous magic...
Lilies float on crystal surface, sunken garden, insect pad...
Solitude, stillness, tranquility, recreation...
Creation harmonized, unified and intimately entwined...

Today...
The Lake is furiously angry...
The waters swirl in seething, unrelenting passion...
Boaters remain shore locked, honouring the lake's authority...
Murky, threatening, perilous whitecaps lash eroding terra...
Animals, birds and insects remain hidden, nuzzled in burrows...
Humans solicit refuge in metal, canvas or wooden shelters...
Lily pads strain endlessly, anchored

to subterranean holding ground...
Survival, exacerbation, tumult, desecration...
Creation clashing, dividing, declaring hostility...

Tomorrow...
The Lake is an unknown abyss...
Waters reacting to winds, tides, solar configurations...
Humans respond to plans, necessities, conditions, time factors...
Animals instinctively follow the dictates of inbred sonars...
Birds soar graciously or are grounded in nest, crag or cave...
Plants strain or bob lazily according to climatic proviso...
Unknown, uncertain, unpredictable, inexperienced...
Creation developing, unfolding, responding to nature's order...
The Lake mirrors Life and Life images the Lake.

AIM - Questions and actions for you

- Where do you see your life experiences mirrored in the poem?
- What messages does the poem have for the Church today?
- What lessons can be drawn from the poem and applied to the wider world situations?
- Hollis would appreciate your feedback on this series.

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Children's Festival 2008

Mark your calendar for the 2008 Children's Festival. This year's theme is *Me?* The planning committee is hard at work on developing the program for this fun event. There will be worship, music, drama, crafts, games and more for children aged 5 and up.
Cost: \$5.00 per person
April 26, 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Lincoln and Brock Region
St. John's, Niagara Falls
For more information, contact Beth Kerley at 905-685-1286.

Undermount and Mohawk Regions
St. John the Evangelist, Hamilton
For more information, contact Susan Little at 905-528-3326 or Susanne Adams at 905-575-1815.

Trafalgar Region
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