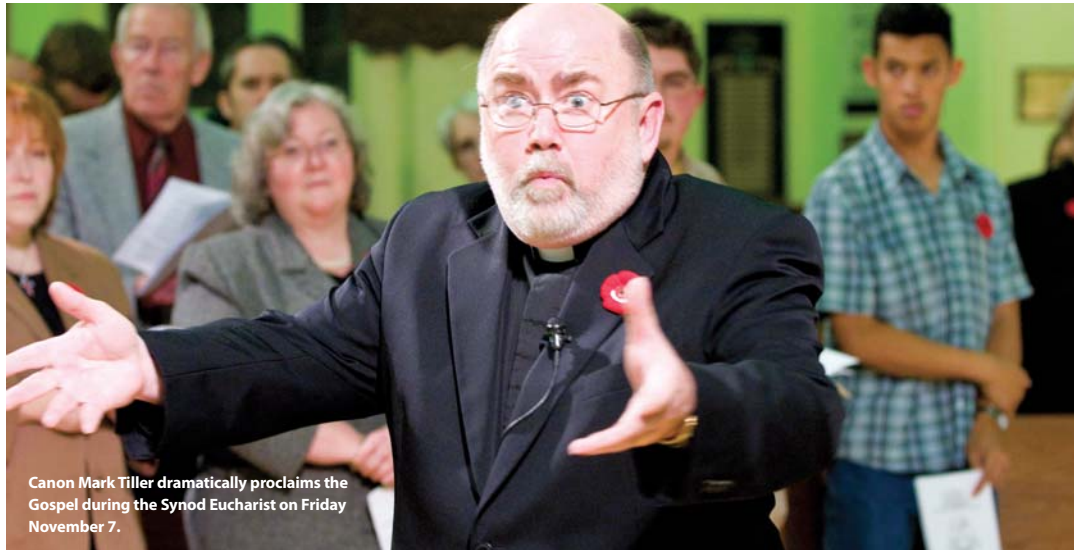




Niagara Anglican

A section of the Anglican Journal

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



Canon Mark Tiller dramatically proclaims the Gospel during the Synod Eucharist on Friday November 7.

The Old Same Prayers

MICHAEL THOMPSON
PRIEST, ST. JUDE'S OAKVILLE

December is an important month for Mary the mother of Jesus. The feast of her nativity comes on December 8, and then, of course, we honour her birthing of Jesus on the Feast of his Nativity.

But Mary is also dear to others, and especially to Muslims. The House of the Virgin Mary in Ephesus is a Christian and Muslim shrine, in which the prayers of Christians and Muslims honour Mary as the Mother of Jesus.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Almost there

NISSA BASBAUM
RECTOR, TRANSFIGURATION ST CATHARINES

Years ago, when I lived in England, I had a friend who described priests by the seasons of the Christian calendar. According to this man, there were four definitions.

The exciting, over-the-top and extraordinarily creative person is an Easter priest. The one who leaves you with the impression that something is about to happen, that he or she is on the cusp of magnificence but hasn't quite arrived, is the Advent priest. The newly-ordained keener is the Christmas priest – just born and raring to go but, like a toddler, likely to get into trouble from a lack of experience.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

Christmas! Whoop-dee-doo

JERRY SALLOUM
RETIRED VICAR

Well, here it is again, Christmas: the trees, the tinsel, the turkeys and the gifts. Sometime in November, the media kick-started our excitement over this historic celebration, reminding us it was a season to be jolly, a season of chestnuts roasting and of Jack Frost nipping. The media told us that Zellers was the place to shop for that perfect Christmas gift.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

To the Clergy and People of the Diocese of Niagara



MICHAEL BIRD
BISHOP OF NIAGARA

I write to you on the Eve of our Synod to indicate to you the next step I am asking us to take on the journey of discernment that we continue to travel as a Diocesan family, with regard to the issue of same-sex blessings. There will be some time set aside to hear from delegates on this matter on Saturday but a large part of the agenda will deal with our vision for the future and so I feel it is important to issue this statement ahead of our gathering.

As is the case with our brother and sister Anglicans in the Dioceses of Montreal and Ottawa, I believe we are among those who have been called by

God to speak with a prophetic voice on this subject. I, therefore, intend to ask for a rite to be developed for the blessing of same-sex couples who have been civilly married, along with a process to enable these blessings to take place that will at the same time honour the diversity of tradition and theology that exists across Niagara.

It is my hope that this process would move ahead as expeditiously as possible and that I will be in a position to report back to the Diocese within the next few months.

I want to assure you and be absolutely clear, that all clergy and all parishes will be fully free to follow their own conscience in this matter, as and when we are able to move forward.

I ask for your prayers for our Diocesan Synod that opens with the Synod service tomorrow evening and for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as the delegates gather in session on Saturday.

Yours in the love of Christ.

Niagara Synod 2008

CHARLES STIRLING
RETIRED CANON, CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

One of this year's special times for Bishop Bird was the Lambeth Conference. In his Charge to Synod the Bishop spoke of this experience, and how his vision for the Diocese emerged.

What has indeed emerged is a challenge to the people of Niagara to begin to develop a new and challenging way to do ministry. The Bishop tells of his daily Bible study with African, English and American Bishops, himself being repeatedly introduced as the Bishop of Niagara Falls. The focus of the study was the series of the 'I am' sayings for John's Gospel. Studying these passages allowed them to be a doorway into some great stories, powerful insights and wonderful fellowship. For him the space was Holy Ground.

As he looked over his eight months as Bishop, he could see the vision beginning to come together. The 'I am' passages seemed to make real the lives and ministry of those Bishops gathered there and for him

there was sense of clarity for his own Episcopal ministry and the work we must undertake together.

One of the Bible studies was based on Jesus' words, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep". There is an invitation to take a journey that involves entering a sheep enclosure and going beyond the sheep pen. All of these gates have two sides, the safe interior, and the other pasture and abundant life. What then does it mean for us to think of Jesus as a gate that invites both the world into the Church and urges the sheep to follow Jesus trustingly into the world?

The Vision Emerges

The vision that has been emerging at regional meetings and clergy gatherings calls us away from survival to a vision of vibrant abundant hope in the life of the Church and invites us to what has become the Bishop's mantra over these months, the Pursuit of Excellence in Ministry.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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SYNOD 2008



Christyn Perkons and Joyce Wilton show their 'Yes We Can!' shakers, which symbolised the Bishop's vision of shaking up the church.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 »

Niagara Synod 2008

It is the opportunity to reclaim our prophetic voice in a troubled world and to lead the fight against poverty, violence and injustice that continues to pervade our communities and society. At the same time there is a challenge to embrace the United Nations Millennium Development Goal of 2001. We all need to celebrate the gifts of ministry we have been given and move ahead with a theological premise of abundance rather than a scarcity in a more effective use of our resources and the practice of good stewardship, sharing and making sure we get the resources into the hands of those who need them.

The challenges of the 2009 budget

The Bishop is seeking changes on the 2009 Budget because of challenges that must be addressed so that we can continue our obligations in payroll and with the bank. There have been both cost and losses in regard to the separated parishes, significant historical outstanding parish receivables, lower return on investment, increasing operating deficits associated with Cathedral Place and deficits incurred by the diocese over the past two years. There is serious work to do. The Bishop believes that we must establish a set of markers or criteria to help make decisions. His expectation was a period of time for further reflection and engage-

ment with our vision, coming back to synod in February or March with a more realistic picture of where we are headed. This will be an interim step toward the hopes and goals we have for the future. We will have an emerging vision and a clearer understanding of what it will take to get there.

The Bishop offered the bottom line that the status quo is no longer an option both in terms of how we function as parishes and how we function as a diocese. He called for us to be united in this firm commitment that we are moving well beyond a position of mere survival and passionately and creatively responding to God's mission in every region of the Diocese.

Wrestling with the duties of a Bishop

Archbishop Caleb Lawrence asked these questions to him at his consecration: "Will you boldly proclaim and interpret the Gospel of Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience of your people?", and "Will you share with your fellow bishops in the government of the whole Church...?" The Bishop has been wrestling with the duty of being both a Bishop in the Church and dealing with same-sex blessings. He ponders how he can keep in balance the responsibility he feels to those who elected him, while at the same time remaining faithful

to the members of the National Church and the Anglican Communion. Bishop Bird has consulted widely in the Diocese, the country, at the House of Bishops and with the Primate. He has now made his response public and responded to the House of Bishops and has outlined the steps as we move forward to Same Sex Unions. He has come to a better understanding of what is at stake and what the implications are on the decisions that are made at this time in our church. There was further time at Synod to respond to these announcements.

Return to a vision

As the Bishop looks back, it is very clear that gifts of God's presence and love have upheld both he and ourselves as we journey together, and he believes there is a profound movement of the Holy Spirit sweeping across our diocese calling us to new vision. He gives thanks to God for this wonderful calling and gives thanks to be serving at our side. We now step forward through the doors together, with a fresh vision and a renewed commitment to God's glorious mission and for the work we will share together. Let us not fail.

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The Bishop's Charge to Synod 2008 can be viewed online at www.niagara.anglican.ca/synod2008.

Compelling vision calls for total support

CHARLES STIRLING
RETIRED CANON, CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

The focus of Synod 2008 was the Bishop's vision: The pursuit of excellence in ministry.

In his opening remarks, Michael Patterson called the Bishop's vision an exciting opportunity in the Church of Niagara to be a vibrant faith community giving witness to faith the diocese.

Lambeth was most formative for our Bishop and he has been sharing his experiences in this regard. But the experience has to go beyond Cathedral Place to the whole diocese. At a meeting at Canterbury Hills in September a group of people met to discuss five priorities, which included prophetic social justice, effective use of resources, life changing worship enterprises, outstanding leadership and cultural innovation. The process has encouraged feedback to assure we are on the right track, and the regional meetings, which have given feedback, were very well attended.

The Bishop then took over and mentioned that at the closing Eucharist at Lambeth a special rite took place, during which the names of the Melanesian Martyrs were received by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The impact was incredible as the question arose "what is our witness" in the face of people giving their lives in the world around us.

The vision is not a project to get people working on new programs, or to get them in pews, or to get money flowing in the synod office. It is a compelling vision that needs to be embraced by all of us.

Carolyn Vanderlip and Owen Nash told us scripture calls us to witness and to be prophetic in our age. To make justice we need to show the world that the Gospel is alive and well in the world and in us. They said we have to commit to Millennium Goals, educate laity and clergy in respect to justice issues and perhaps hold justice workshops. We also need to encourage lifestyles which are consistent with planet sustainability, recognizing our responsibilities as stewards of the earth. The Greening of Niagara is important as might be a Radical Abundance Conference. Perhaps each parish could

undertake a justice issue. Acts of charity are vital and the roots of need have to be examined to ask why people are hungry and homeless.

Peter Wall examined the model of abundance rather than scarcity, noting our God was one of abundance. He felt we need to improve our communication through the web-site, Niagara Anglican, meetings, Deanery gatherings and more. We need to examine our systems to develop economies of scale, sharing and partnerships. There is the need to track, acknowledge and celebrate volunteerism.

Joyce Wilton and Lynne Corfield felt the need to respond to situations, meeting people where they are and to inspire social activism through worship. Christyn Perkons and Cheryl Fricker suggested a covenant partnership with clergy and laity, saying we need to live out our Baptismal covenants in shared ministry, build relationships in the community around us in response to their need. They also suggested creating intentional experiences that relate resources to areas of need.

Stephen Hopkins suggested that we can only live our way into newness. We need to try new ways and accept some mistakes. We need to see more transformed parishes and a more just world, sharing stories of creative innovation and giving permission to celebrate success, together with taking intelligent risks and learning from failure. We also need to look very widely for ideas. He called for new forms and processes for dealing with difficult issues.

Margaret Murray wrapped up the morning by asking questions that were to be discussed in small groups.

After lunch comments were heard, after which Nissa Basbaum and Beth Kerley presented the following motion which was very widely accepted:

That this synod of the diocese of niagara affirm, support and endorse the vision document entitled: 'The Pursuit of Excellence in Ministry'; and

That this synod encourage the bishop or his designate to develop strategic action plans with specific quantifiable objectives; and

That the bishop's vision team report directly and regularly to Synod Council

Provincial Synod Delegates

The following were elected to Synod council, held in Moosonee in November of this year

Clergy: Robert Fead, Lynne Corfield, Kevin Block, Stephen Murray

Clergy Substitutes: Mark Tiller, Margaret Murray, Kathy Morgan, Susan Wilson

Lay: Carol Summers, Susan Little, Ross Gillett, David Ricketts

Lay Substitutes: Patricia Davis, Ruth Anne Martin, Russ Kelk, Paul Holyoke

Youth appointees: Alisha Archbell and Justin Michael

Increasing Financial Challenges

CHARLES STIRLING
RETIRED CANON, CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

The Diocese is currently projecting a shortfall of \$600,000 for 2008. The projected loss for the Cathedral over the next five years cumulatively exceeds \$1,000,000. The loss of and the separation of parishes has contributed to the ascending debt. In addition

the inability of parishes to meet their DMM is increasing.

It was the intention to not bring a budget to Synod, but defer it to January or February. It was then decided to bring the budget forward, but not to pass it until next year. Parishes have a real need to raise their giving beyond the \$1,000 per year average gift.

The synod referred the budget to the budget and finance committees, with reference to the Bishop's Vision. A second motion, somewhat more specific, was defeated and now the budget will again be presented in January or February, when the committee is expected to bring forth a balanced budget.

The status quo is no longer an option



ELEANOR JOHNSON
ST. THOMAS'S ST. CATHARINES

In the "Bishop's Charge" of 2008, Bishop Michael articulated his concern that, because of the same-sex debate, two of the promises he made at his Consecration "need to be held in such a state of tension in this early stage of my episcopacy: 'Will you boldly proclaim and interpret the gospel of Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience of your people?' and 'Will you share with your fellow bishops in the government of the whole church...?'"

Likewise, at Lambeth the choice seemed to be: either stand up for gay rights and tear the church apart, or protect the world-wide communion and put the same-sex blessings issue on hold. The decision at Lambeth this summer and by the Canadian House of Bishops this fall favoured the latter. Hence the moratoria.

I would like to argue that by choosing to proceed with same-sex blessings, Bishop Michael moved beyond

this "either/or" debate to a "both/and" paradigm because by deciding that our diocese will support homosexual rights he both "proclaims the gospel of Christ" and takes a step to preserve the institution of the whole church. The worried conservatism of the anti-same-sex ecclesiologists is misguided. It is their opposition to same-sex blessings that hurts the church.

How so? Let's go back to first principles. Jesus gave us two Commandments: to love God and to love others as we love ourselves. From these hang all the laws and prophets. In other words, love takes precedence over Old Testament beliefs, rules and assumptions. Our instruction is to love. Or look at it this way: when Jesus had to choose between a beleaguered minority and the established priesthood, he would stand up for the victim. He certainly showed more concern for Samaritan women than for the priests of the temple. Church initiatives that evolved from Christ's teachings through St. Augustine's understanding of social justice to the present are Vatican II's "preferential option for the poor and vulnerable" and the Lambeth decision to "to embrace the United Nations Millennium Development Goals."

Ironically, Christian churches in years past have preferred the institution to the outsider. Uppity women,

"witches," were a minority disposed of in medieval times by burning at the stake. The small pieces of wood used to kindle these fires, also used to kill homosexuals, were called faggots. And in times of hardship, racial minorities were victimized, especially Jews. Even in 20th century Canada, many bishops of the priests who abused native children covered up these crimes. We're all still paying for what the priests did in the residential schools, paying money to individuals who suffered and paying the cost of losing believers who have turned away from the church in indignation. It would have been better if the church had, like Jesus, treated all people in their society, especially the minorities and the helpless, with respect, with love.

When, do you suppose, will the institution of the church be taken to court by a homosexual for harassment in the form of a priest's refusal to offer him or her the rite of marriage or promotion to the bishopric, for its insistence on his or her celibacy? To speak pragmatically, it's in the best interests of the church to support minority rights now, before it finds itself in court, arguing ecclesiastical tradition and laws written over two thousand years ago in what we now call the Middle East against the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Change does happen. All around the world, on November 4, people cheered the election of the first black (well, half-black) man to the Presidency of the United States. After centuries of oppression, Barack Obama's success proved that the country's claim that "all men are created equal" was finally true for men of African descent (if not women, homosexuals, and immigrants of other races). Young people, who had not bothered to vote for decades, have returned to involve themselves in the political process. Bishop Michael proclaims, "We witnessed another new door opening and the breaking down of barriers that has sent ripples of hope and promise not only across the United States but around the entire world."

Where are the young people of the Anglican Church of Canada? If the institution is looking out for its best interests, it needs to inspire the idealism of the young by rejecting its mistreatment of minorities in the past. In fact, as our church leaders have formally apologized to natives for the abuse of their children, their next step should be to apologize to the homosexuals and women in our midst for all the rejections they have suffered, and take steps to share rights and power with them. That could inspire our young people and bring them back

to full communion with us.

What came out of Lambeth was a commitment to eradicate poverty. Great, let's do it! But to do so we need all of us, including the young and the homosexual, working together. (Women already have been blessed with more than their share of the work!) As we are now, wasting our emotional and financial resources squabbling over who owns what property and who has what powers, we have no energy left to do God's will in the world.

From what we read in the Gospels, Jesus showed little interest in teaching sexual morality or in the power struggles between Pharisees and Sadducees; he reached out to heal and teach the marginalized of his society. He preached a Kingdom that is now and here; he did not pass resolutions implementing moratoria promising a better future while adding insult to injury. The Anglican Church of Canada is humbly moving towards "truth and reconciliation" with our First Nations. I suggest that now is the time for the Diocese of Niagara to lead the Church in stopping our heartless mistreatment of homosexuals. To paraphrase former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, "There's no place for the church in the bedrooms of the nation."

Evensong at my Favourite Church



ALAN L. HAYES
THE ITINERANT CHURCHGOER

My favourite church in the diocese is my own. I've scarcely mentioned it in the Niagara Anglican over these five years or so, because I've preferred to talk about my experiences visiting new churches. But recently I did simply sit myself in the back of my own congregation at a special evening service, trying to adopt the frame of mind of an ordinary visitor.

St. Simon's, Oakville, like many churches in the diocese of Niagara, was born in the post-war boom. Oakville had been pretty sleepy in the 1940s. Its population wasn't much more than 4000, its northern town limits were at the QEW, and you couldn't order liquor in a restaurant.

When Ford opened its new factory in Oakville in May 1953 and created 3000 new jobs, lots changed very fast. New residential areas were developed, new automobile-related industries took root, and the service sector exploded.

A new mission

In 1954, as new housing was going up north of the QEW, St. Jude's Anglican Church in old Oakville decided to plant a mission up there. They called it St. Simon's. That was cute, since St.

Simon and St. Jude share a feast day, and an early Christian legend identifies them as fellow missionaries to Persia.

The congregation met at first in the auditorium of Munn's School. The neighbourhood grocer contributed prayer books. The theological student at St. Jude's took most of the services, but once a month a priest came to preside at the eucharist. An orange crate served as the first altar.

The mission moved to portable buildings on Upper Middle Road west of Trafalgar. By the end of 1956, the congregation counted 331 souls, an average Sunday morning attendance of 48, and 22 envelope subscribers.

In 1967 St. Simon's erected its first church building on Sixth Line. Twenty years later that was no longer adequate, and the congregation decided to sell it and build a new church in a more central location. In 1988 it moved into its present building facing Trafalgar Road south of Upper Middle Road. Architecturally, it's in a modern idiom, but it has a classical sensibility.

What I like

Well, what do I like about St. Simon's? I like its interesting, kind, talented, authentic, committed people. I like its ordinariness: it's just a neighbourhood church, rooted in its surrounding community, multigenerational, multicultural, without pretension, seeking no theological or liturgical niche, simply trying to be faithful.

On Sundays I like its rootedness in the gospel, its responsiveness to

preaching, its reverent but unfussy worship, its great music combining old and new hymns, and its strong and close sense of fellowship.

In its parish life and ministry I like its commitment to issues of local and global justice, its enthusiasm for outreach, its keen interest in getting to know people of other Christian denominations and other faiths, its fun social events that can be themed Celtic, Caribbean, country club, or something else, and its innovative and creative spirit.

It meets its budget, supports the diocese, runs engaging and effective programs, pulls together in the things that unite it, and agrees to disagree in the things which can be divisive.

It's a perfect combination of good things. You can tell that it has been blessed with a succession of stunningly good rectors and marvelous curates.

Evening prayer

In the past year St. Simon's has added a service of evening prayer one Sunday a month. It was one of these services that I attended as if I were a visitor.

Sunday evening services were once very popular in Anglicanism. A great many Anglicans went to church Sunday morning and evening both. But if you went to just one service, you probably chose the evening one if you were an evangelical Anglican, on the premise that that was the apostolic model (Acts 20:7). If you spent weekends at the cottage, you could drive back on Sunday in time for evening prayer.

In the Roman Catholic world, even-

ing worship suddenly became popular in 1983, when the new post-Vatican II code of canon law provided that the faithful could satisfy their Sunday obligation by attending mass on Saturday evening. In an apostolic letter of 1998, appropriately called *Dies domini* ("the Lord's Day"), the pope explained that the ecclesiastical day begins at sunset of the previous civil day. (That's why the first eucharist of Christmas takes place after sunset on December 24. Clement Clarke Moore notwithstanding, this is not, ecclesiastically, "the night before Christmas".)

Quite a number of Episcopal churches tried the new pattern. My first experience of it was at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church in Palm Desert, California, the home church of President Gerald Ford in his last years. There you can attend a choral eucharist with full sermon on Saturday night and head for the golf links first thing on Sunday morning. Who says you can't have everything?

A lay campaign

Some folks at St. Simon's remembered the reverence, warmth, and peacefulness of the Prayer Book evensong, and mounted a little campaign to restore it. Someone had the particularly good idea that the service would be a great opportunity for ecumenical engagement. After all, most other clergy in town don't preach on Sunday evening, so St. Simon's invited them onto a preaching schedule for Sunday evensong. The evening I attended, the preacher was the Presbyterian minister from the street.

No, evensong doesn't exactly fire you up for work in the world, and maybe that's a reason it fell out of favour in the activist 1960s. But it does re-centre your soul in Christ. The service includes the *nunc dimittis* (Luke 2:29-32), one of the most serene passages in Scripture, and the *magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55), possibly the most subversive. Together, sung prayerfully, they help you see your life in eternal perspective.

Beautifully sung

The new service has struck a chord with people. The evening I attended, I was stunned to find the large parking lot almost full. A hundred people were already waiting inside, including about a dozen Presbyterians.

The service was sung beautifully by the talented curate. The choir led the canticles and psalms in Anglican chant, and sang a sublime anthem by Adrian Batten, who was a vicar choral of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, in the 1630s. The hymns were well chosen, including one in a setting by Graeme Donaldson of Trafalgar Presbyterian Church, who was present. The preacher reminded us that the gospel is primarily about relationship, not busyness. Did she realize how well that would fit the tone of Anglican evensong?

You know, sometimes being a Christian is hard, and being an Anglican Christian can definitely have a wearisome side. But this service of evening prayer in a wonderful church community made me feel very blessed indeed.

One giant step...



JOHN RIPLEY
INTERIM RECTOR, HOLY TRINITY WELLEND

At 10:56 p.m. (EDT) on July 20th, 1969 Neil Armstrong became the first human to set foot on the lunar surface as part of the Apollo 11 Space Mission. Placing

Prejudice comes from the heart, not, from the brain.

his foot on the moon he uttered the now famous words: "That's one small step for man; one giant leap for mankind." I, like many others, sat in front of the television and witnessed that event. Modern history is rife with events that are firmly imbedded into our consciousness through the wonder of television. In my lifetime the assassination of J.F.K. and R.F.K., the tragic 1986 Challenger disaster, the fall of the Berlin Wall are a sampling of some of the profound events that I have shared through images beamed into my living-room. All of us on a personal level have our own array of life changing events that will forever be imbedded on our minds. I suggest that on November 4th at 11:00 p.m. (EST) another profoundly life changing event took place – the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States.

I, like many others, never thought that we would ever see the day that a person of colour would be the President of the United States. The history of the United States has been, since its beginning, challenged by racial tension. From the days of slavery to intentional segregation the prejudices have been deep and profound.

Lives have been lost as a direct result of intolerance and hate. Now we see Obama take the reins of office with a significant majority in the Electoral College and with roughly 53% of the popular vote. In a flurry of hopefulness the citizens of the United States have placed their faith in a man who challenges the status quo. One giant step has been made south of the border. I, like them, hope that Obama will be successful in achieving the high standard that he has set for himself and the citizens of the United States.

In the euphoria of Obama's election we must not forget that nearly half of Americans did not vote for him. Prejudice and hate does not disappear because an election is lost. I was with a group of friends before the election and we were talking about the coming election and possible results. I was shocked when one of our number said that he hoped Obama wouldn't win because "I wouldn't want a black man to be president." The reality of that statement really drove home to me the fact that prejudice is never very far away. My friend's statement was not a statement of hate, but, a statement of ignorance. Prejudice comes from the heart, not, from the brain. The ultimate emotional prejudicial position is hate. That hate comes from deep within us.

In Rogers and Hammerstein's 1949 production of "South Pacific" one of the characters, Lieutenant Cable, says, "racism is not born in you; it happens after you're born." He then proceeds to sing the song "You've Got to be Carefully Taught". The lyrics, with simplicity, speak of how the lessons of prejudice are learned. Yes, we do learn our prejudices, and to one degree or another we all have them. It was to a prejudicial world that Jesus came. To hate just because of a person's skin colour, sexual orientation, gender, religion and/or nationality flies in the face of the message of Jesus to us all – "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you!"

We are mind, body and spirit in one



IAN DINGWALL
RETIRED ARCHDEACON OF NIAGARA

As we strive to consider meaning in our existence, I have noticed an old theme rewritten in different sorts of new ways. We find these 'new' places, reworked and reworded not only in the writings of Communities of Faith but in other diverse spots.

The places to which I refer are "Mind, Body and Spirit". We are invited to consider this "Old/New" subject in different ways. I suggest we might tackle it by looking at each word individually and, even more importantly, as an integral oneness. My argument is simply that the one word must be studied and understood in the context of the other two.

Many Western scholars seem to focus their attention solely on the first two, Body and Mind, while Spirit is very much neglected to a more or less after-thought. Each word is essentially important as we rediscover ourselves along with other people who live with us on Planet Earth. We cannot even begin without appreciating each word carefully but, more to the point, to understand each one as part of the whole thing – a present day Trinity of Meaningfulness.

First, our humanity is embodied and we are physical beings. We are material entities with all the benefits and foibles of that condition.

Second, we appreciate that in each human body there is a Mind that allows us to think and perceive, to reason and understand life and our own existence, at least to some

degree or other.

I am persuaded that it is important for each of us to understand the precious intimacy of our divine/human engagement. We are complex creatures with enormous potential which we neglect at our own peril.

Our task, never taken simplistically, is mysteriously beautiful in its desire to move towards the Loveliness of God, The Holy One. We are constantly to be the receivers of Gift in order that we may glorify God and celebrate our humanity to its full.

There is much here to confound and confuse. Given that we are able to understand this task, what are we going to do about it? How do we accept the challenge and move towards this new creativity of thought and action? How do we fulfill the desire of the Divine Heart to love and perfect our Creation's Story?

In these past weeks, I have received a couple of ways to engage in a process which, although imperfect, could be an option to develop ourselves in more diverse ways.

The first of these was to accept this opportunity as a Religious Quest that is far, far greater than most have ever contemplated. Truth is not found in structures or institutions or 'denominationalism'. Nor will Truth be discovered in the rational thought programs of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. It will touch us as we reflect on being part of a great world-wide ecumenical understanding in which all the world's religions will embrace each other and come to appreciate the uniqueness of spirit that is part of itself and of all those other traditions and truths.

Each religion has a special vocation towards Truth. We will never understand our own persuasion (or bias?) without appreciating all that

the others have that we may have overlooked.

This thought was made available for me through the writings of Thich Nhat Hahn, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk. Hahn not only sees and admires richly his own Eastern Tradition but also appreciates the power of Christianity as he allows it to enhance his own religious commitment. In commending Nhat Hahn and his thoughts to you, I suggest you obtain his book, "Living Buddha; Living Christ".

May it be a blessing to lead you toward understandings you may have overlooked or misunderstood the first time around. You may wish to examine and rethink your personal vocabulary. Words like freedom, need, inclusive, hospitality, radical, friendship, openness and many other words open heavenly vistas and redemptive places to visit.

In conclusion, we are physical/matter just by being human but we are also decidedly Spirit. In the path of this collective understanding, we will find a will that takes us along the Journey to the perfection that God has planned for us.

Therapeutic Touch Ministry, is for many today, being found by many searchers for Truth, Understanding, Guidance and Support. It is a Spiritual Adventure found in some congregations that takes some of this thinking and translates it into a model that enables us to see ourselves as "whole" living persons.

If only we could be brave enough to risk in joining this Journey by laying aside our biased western preoccupation that fragments and alienates us from self and others. Having done that, we once again see our potential in allowing our Spiritual Reality to possess and redeem us. May we accept the God's gift and live it to the full.

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Niagara Children's & Family Ministries Event

The first act of justice is to hear the cry of the oppressed



COLLEEN SYM
SOCIAL JUSTICE COORDINATOR, ST. MARK ORANGEVILLE

On the morning of Saturday, October 18, 2008, a group of about thirty people gathered at St. Christopher's in Burlington to learn about Community Justice Camp: *Live the Change you want to see*. Over the course of two hours, Anglicans from across the Diocese, from parishes big and small and community justice partners representing agencies and coalitions, secular and faith based, big and small got to know each other and with the help of the Venerable Peter John Hobbs from the Diocese of Ottawa, got to know all about Justice Camp.

Then the exciting work began, we started to explore a vision for our camp. By "our" I mean the camp which is hosted by our Diocese, ours to make of it what we will. Back in May, I dare to say, as Bishop Michael had barely begun the process of discernment for his vision for his Episcopal ministry, he must have known that "justice" would become a central theme for that vision and that

Justice Camp would be a way to animate social justice ministry in Niagara.

A few days later, I was back at St. Christopher's for the Trafalgar Regional meeting on the Pursuit of Excellence in Ministry. This was an opportunity to learn more about the Bishop's vision. While the process is still ongoing, I suggest that some themes are emerging relating to a justice focused ministry: themes such as charity vs. justice, education on justice issues, building awareness of the Millennium Development Goals, advocacy, sustainability, poverty reduction, standing in solidarity with the marginalized and a call to take action.

In the book *Justice in an Unjust World*, Karen Lebacqz writes: "To hear the cry of the oppressed is the first act of justice". Bishop Michael heard the cry for justice from the Bishops from the developing world with whom he connected at Lambeth. And, as hearing alone is not enough, he has responded to the cry by calling for action against injustice here in Niagara by charging each parish to undertake a project for justice.

Over the past year, social activists and Minister Deb Matthews, Chair of the Provincial Government's Cabinet Committee on Poverty Reduction and many others have been listening to the voices of those who know the experi-

ence of poverty in their everyday lives in Ontario. Over 75 public consultations on what a poverty reduction strategy should look like have been hosted by the government or a community coalition called "25 in 5".

"25 in 5" stands for the call for a poverty reduction strategy for Ontario that will result in a 25% reduction in poverty in five years, 50% in ten years, with a view to building a poverty free Ontario. As the Millennium Development Goals are a strategy to eradicate poverty in the developing world, Ontario is developing its strategy to eradicate poverty at home.

On November 5, 2008, the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition hosted a forum at Queen's Park - "Poverty, Why have it". The keynote speaker was Peter Clutterbuck, of the Social Planning Network of Ontario and one of the spokespersons for the 25 in 5 coalition. Peter was at the Niagara Justice Camp workshop. The following is a quote from Bishop Michael's June 2008 letter to Minister Matthews endorsing 25 in 5 and advocating for poverty reduction and was included in the keynote address at ISARC:

"In the short term, we realize that charity and compassion are essential when people are suffering and we will continue

to respond to the needs of our neighbours. But for too long, faith and community groups, individuals, volunteers and social service agencies and ministries have carried a disproportionate load in meeting the needs of individuals at the local community level through the operation of community centres, daycares, breakfast programs, thrift shops, food banks, overnight shelters, hospitality programs and other social services.

"These temporary measures have not broken the cycle of poverty nor alleviated the diminishment of people's dignity. To do more than respond to emergencies and crises, more resources are needed in our communities.

"We recognize that we all have a role to play to reduce poverty, however, only government can accomplish the structural changes to law, programs and policies that are essential for a successful poverty reduction strategy. Only government can re-allocate the resources of society more equitably through its regulatory and taxing powers and increase its funding of social programs.

"Please hear our communities' call for social justice."

Be a part of it

- Pray for those in power to show leadership in poverty reduction
- Attend a 25 in 5 meeting in your

community

■ Endorse the 25 in 5 Declaration at www.25in5.ca

■ Go to the next Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC) forum at Queen's Park

■ Form a "community connectors" group in your parish to reach out and connect with those responding to and living with injustice in your community

■ Read *The End of Poverty* by Jeffrey Sachs and *The Bottom Billion* by Paul Collier to learn more about the Millennium Development Goals

■ Explore the concepts of charity and justice through hosting a Charity vs. Justice workshop with the assistance of the diocesan Outreach Committee

■ Go to the Poverty Watch Ontario website to learn about poverty reduction work across the province

■ Collect ideas on community development techniques from sources like *The Troublemaker's Teaparty*, *A Manual for Effective Citizen Action* by Charles Dobson

■ Send a letter to the Premier and Finance Minister demanding a funding down payment for poverty reduction in the 2009 budget

The possible projects that can be undertaken are unlimited.

God's justice begins in response to injustice.

The doll's highchair: A Child's Christmas in 1926



FRANCEAN CAMPBELL-RICH
CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

I wonder if we really understand about Christmas and a child's feelings. I remember a Christmas in Toronto when I was six years old. I wanted a doll's highchair.

I had seen one in the toy department at Eaton's. It was wooden, and you could lift up the little tray and put it over back, like a real highchair. I wanted it more than anything else in the world.

The visit to Eaton's was an annual ritual; then there was the Santa Claus parade, when you were never dressed warmly enough but you didn't say anything about it. If you were lucky, you watched it from on top of a car radiator hood, but mostly you peered through legs or jumped up and down if you wanted to see the clowns or the dancing girls. The floats were easier to see because they were high, with the girls your own age dressed in cuddly woolly things and waving at us, by the time they got to us, at College Street. After a while I got dizzy with all the movement going in the same direction, and looked away until the big moment came. I knew, for a certainty, that Santa Claus up there, at the end of the parade, was going to bring me the doll's highchair. I told my cousin Margann about it.

I did all the right things. I ate what

was on my plate. I said my prayers. I didn't bother Sarah, the cook. I played nicely with Margann and tried not to quarrel with my sister, Macia. I didn't race up and down the halls yelling, if my father was home, or slide down the stairs head first if my grandmother was looking. I drew pictures and wrote poems and made up new pieces to please my parents, and went to bed when I was sent. I drew up a list, with 'Doll's Highchair' at the top, and wrote a letter to Santa Claus by myself. I even tried to give up sucking my fingers. All this, and three whole weeks being good until Christmas.

We lived in my grandparents' house, somewhere in the many rooms at 239 College Street. Great Aunt Martha came out from one of the rooms from time to time, and Mother had her Coming Out party in the drawing room downstairs, Nannie said. Granddad and Uncle Herbert had their medical offices on the ground floor; the patients entered by the side door and waited in a dark room with varnished chairs and the National Geographic. Granddad's office had a great chair upholstered with horsehair filled black leather; if you pushed in a certain way, the whole thing heaved and clanked and rolled back and threw your legs up over your head. There was a roll-top desk where Granddad kept peppermints for us, and there was a cabinet with surgical tools in it. One of them was used to take out tonsils. Everybody had their tonsils out, but I didn't.

The other side of the hallway was where we had Christmas. Aunt Martha and all the other aunts and uncles and cousins gathered in the morning,

but Margann and I had to stay in the upstairs sitting room with the gas fireplace until the proper time. Aunt Annie had delivered me in that room, mother said. And that was very special, because all the deliveries - the bread, the milk, the ice, and Eaton's - came in wagons with baskets and went to Sarah, at the back door, who gave them tickets.

At last we were allowed out. You could smell the tree, but the first glimpse of it was from the stairs, through a crack in the sliding doors, and there it was, lights, tinsel, greenery, and oh joy, under the branches, sticking up from the red and white and green presents around it, like a little throne, the doll's highchair.

Santa Claus had come in through a skylight on the third floor and was thumping down the stairs, ho-ho-ing in a voice like my father's. He had a nose like my father's too - but this was all you could see of him, and I wondered why he needed to come back if he had brought all the presents during the night. Aunt Frances played Jingle Bells, and he made his entrance.

Too slowly, he began to give out the presents, one by one, starting with a little one at the edge of the pile, reading the tag aloud, with great care, pretending not to know how to read, and finally making a fancy presentation to Sarah, who opened it then and there, daintily untying the knot and winding up the ribbon and smoothing out the paper. I was fit to be tied up myself and didn't dare show it.

There were presents for me, of course. A box of plasticine (I only liked

the gold lumps), crayons (I always used up the pink ones first), watercolour paints, colouring books that you 'filled in'; cut-out dolls that you dressed with cut-out clothes with tabs on them; picture books with big lettering, showing ships that I thought reached across the ocean to England; a glass ball with a snowman in it, in a snowstorm if you shook it; celluloid cupie-dolls; sets of doll-house furniture that you traded with Margann. Usually there was something nondescript from a distant aunt that you didn't even know you had to write a thank-you letter (Dear Aunt Nellie, Thank you for the shoe bag. I've always wanted a shoe bag, but not very much...) Sometimes there was an Eaton's doll; the head usually got broken, or the eyes pushed in, before the day was out, and it had to be taken to the Dolls' Hospital. There was very rarely anything like a doll's bed or doll's carriage, because Margann or I usually broke them, trying to get into them ourselves. And never a doll's highchair - until this Christmas.

The ceremony dragged on. I contained my excitement as best I could - politely, on the surface, at least. For a minute I thought he wasn't going to get to it at all. The presents had all been given out. Maybe he thought that if it wasn't wrapped, it wasn't a present. Oh little Lord Jesus.

Then he saw the tag. "What's this?" he said, picking up the highchair and holding it high over his head. "Not for Mother, certainly, ho ho ho...not for Nannie, ho ho ho, not for Towser, ruff ruff, he barked, making a great show

of it all. At last he read the name on the tag, and... it was not for me.

It was not for me. It was for Margann.

He handed the highchair to Margann, and with one more whoop and ho-ho-ho, he took his leave. The clearing up began. There was milling around, gathering up paper and boxes; it was hot and noisy. Margann brought the highchair back to where we had been sitting together on the carpet. She waited for me to say something. Neither of us spoke.

I'm not going to cry, I said to myself. Nobody must see. I'm not going to ask. Mother would say, "Another time, dear..." Macia would say "I can make you one". Aunt Frances would say "Margann will let you play with it." And indeed, after a moment Margann said "You can play with it, Francean". But it's not the same thing. It's just not the same thing.

The time in my story is many years later. JR and I had been married six months. We had told each other lots of stories. He told me about Christmas in England when he was six and the precious chocolate that got thrown in the fire with the wrappings by mistake. I told him about Christmas in Toronto when I was six and about the doll's highchair.

On our first Christmas morning, there was a big bag of Laura Secord chocolate, all for JR. And under the tree, a little wooden highchair, with a tray that you lift up and put over back. The tag, with my name on it, read, "You see, it was for you all along.

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

■ It is with deep regret and tremendous sadness to announce the sudden death of Archdeacon Stephen Witcher on October 27. Archdeacon Witcher served in the parishes of St. Paul's, Fort Erie; St. John's, Jordan and St. James, Fergus. The funeral service was held from Fergus on Saturday November 1. Our thoughts and prayers are with

Carol Witcher and the family.

■ The Reverend Carole Langlotz resigned as honorary assistant at St. John's Church, Burlington effective October 24.

■ Monica Stevenson, O.N., a long-time and faithful member of St. Thomas, St. Catharines, passed away suddenly in St. Catharines. A Memor-

ial Service was held at St. Thomas' on November 22.

■ Canon Paddy Doran will conclude his interim ministry at Waterdown on November 16, and begin his interim ministry at St. Michael's, Hamilton, the week following.

■ Canon Frances Darlington has been appointed interim pastor at St. James,

Fergus, effective November 9.

■ Canon Marni Nancekivell has been appointed interim pastor at Grace Church, Waterdown, beginning November 17.

■ Canon Robert Hudson's appointment as Rector of St. Luke's, Hamilton, concluded on October 24, but he will continue as Chaplain to the Mission to Sea-

farers, part time, within the diocese.

■ The Reverend Hollis Hiscock has been appointed interim pastor at Grace Church, Milton, beginning November 1.

■ Congratulations and best wishes to Faye Shaver, who will step down as organist and choirmaster at St. Mark's Church, Niagara on the Lake, after 31 years!

The high cost of cheap grace

COLIN C. M. CAMPBELL
TEACHER, DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

Advent is the time when we prepare to celebrate the gift of Jesus, who by his Cross and Resurrection, saved us from sin and reconciled us to God. Apart from Calvinists, Christians agree that Christ died for everyone, not just for the

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Although we are saved by grace not works, this does not mean that works are not important.

elect. Apart from Universalists, Christians agree that some may not achieve salvation. If not all may be saved, yet Christ died to save us all, it follows that there is a condition attached to salvation. John the Baptist, who established the first Advent, believed that the condition necessary was repentance. If salvation automatically followed from Christ's will to save, then repentance would be unnecessary and there would ultimately be no disadvantage to sinning. This belief is antinomianism. St. Paul was aware of it, asking rhetorically, "Should we keep

on sinning so that God may give us more grace?" (Rom 6:1) To believe this is to turn grace into a licence to sin. It leads to a doctrine of cheap grace. However, grace is not cheap. It comes at a high cost. It cost Jesus his life and it costs us our sins. A theory is needed which explains how Jesus wins our salvation and how we do not receive it automatically. That is, we need a theory of the Atonement, which is consistent with the facts. One form of the substitutionary atonement theory provides this. However, it needs careful nuancing, if it is not to become antinomian. It is commonly expressed in terms of our penalty being given to Jesus and his reward being given to us. If this is understood as our penalty given to him instead of us, and his reward given to us instead of him, then antinomianism follows. To avoid this error, it is better to express the theory as our penalty given to him, as well as to us, and his reward given to us, as well as to him. In this way, the doctrine of justification by faith does not lead to cheap grace or circumvent the certainty of final judgment.

Most Christian traditions agree that five elements must be present in a valid theory of the Atonement. First, the Law. Fullness of life is conditional on

obedience to the moral law, written on our hearts, and made explicit on Mount Sinai. Second, God's wrath. God sets before us life or death. If we choose life, he will give it to us in all its fullness. If we sin, we shall incur his displeasure. (Romans 1:18) Third, penalty. When we sin, God's Holy Spirit troubles our hearts with guilt and his Providence mars our lives. Fourth, salvation. Christ not only freed us from sin, but from the Law, the wrath, and the penalty. Five, Christ's sinlessness. For Jesus to do this, he had to be without sin.

These five elements operated in the case of the woman taken in adultery. First, Jesus upheld the Law and affirmed that adultery was a sin. Second, the crowd decided to help God out with his wrath. Third, the penalty would be both painful and permanent. Fourth, Jesus saved the woman from the Law, the wrath, and the penalty. Five, He was only able to do this because of his superior powers of discernment. This last point needs clarification. The crowd revered God but did not know who he is. The woman probably feared God but also did not know who he is. Jesus knew not only that God forgives sinners but also that the crowd were sinners no less than the adulteress.

He understood that the Law, wrath, and penalty have their place. However, their purpose is to reveal sin, not to deal with it. God deals with sin by forgiving it. He substitutes forgiveness for penalty.

Jesus forgave the woman unconditionally. He did not question her motives or try to establish extenuating circumstances. He did not try to ascertain whether she felt a true guilt (contrition) or merely fear (attrition). He simply said, "I do not condemn you. Sin no more." If he had said merely, "I do not condemn you," then he would be antinomian and his forgiveness could be taken as permission to sin. However, he added the phrase, "Sin no more." A true antinomian would not have corrected the woman. If the woman had continued to sin, we may infer what Jesus would have done from his instruction to forgive, not seven times, but seventy times seven. It might seem that this does make him antinomian. It is unlikely that Jesus would have said, "If you do this again, do not come back." However, if she did return for forgiveness, he would certainly have corrected her.

This insight helps us to avoid the two extremes, which have divided the

Western Church since the Reformation. One opinion states that those, who die with unconfessed severe sin, go to Hell. The other opinion states that, even if you repeatedly commit severe sin, you cannot lose your salvation. Both sides buttressed their positions from different interpretations of the substitutionary atonement.

The theory of substitutionary atonement is associated with Anselm. However, supporting texts are found especially in the description of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah and in the letters of St. Paul. The theory was elaborated further by Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin and is still with us in popular theology, where it takes the following form. Since God must punish sin, and reward virtue, he must punish us and reward Jesus. However, since he loves sinners, he gives Jesus our punishment and gives us Jesus' reward. The sinlessness of Jesus is necessary, so that he may merit an infinite reward, salvation of the entire world. If we accept what Jesus has done for us, we escape the Law, the wrath, and the penalty of sin.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

The challenges of the Church in the first decade of the century



CHARLES STIRLING
RETIRED CANON, CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

As I look at the Church in 2008 a number of things come to mind. The most important challenge is where have we gone? We are missing lots of people. More especially we have not built a church in some time. In most centres we have fewer churches in our cities and outside of the centres of these cities and towns we have almost none. Any churches we have in these expanded communities belonged to former small centres and have been there for years. Added to the mix we discover most of our remaining folk are largely grey haired and growing more scarce. A few are still wedded to the BCP. The outlook can seem very bleak.

People have indeed left the Church

in great numbers. There are many activities and attractions these days, and as I have said before people tested the water and found that, if they stayed away, God did not get them. Naturally and increasingly many have taken advantage of this. Strangely, at the same time, those of us who remained didn't seem to recognize our commitment to try to attract them back in love and friendship. We also have been slow to seriously move our liturgies along to reflect the present age and our concerns, for every age has new and different challenges that we have to address. We seem to have taken the whole concept of liturgy too far and worship it for itself.

Some few folk have left us, because they believe we have strayed from the truth. But, what is truth but that which each of us has chosen to embrace through God's gifts of memory reason and skill. I have no trouble understanding what these people believe, but at the same time they have to understand what I believe and am committed to. We are created equal. I cannot be told

what to read or what not to read. I make my choices again by God's three gifts. What we really have to do is make an effort to understand one another without the feeling of contamination, or indeed the feeling we are going to get them, or they us. We, after all, are all people of God and pray for his goodness and mercy, and not for someone's conversion to our vision. Even in our separate choices, we are one and must live and act as such.

As the position of the Church continues to weaken, we are faced with too many churches in our downtown areas and none in our newer communities. When we close an inner city parish, we need to take whatever we can get for it, and that is not often very much, and makes it available in one of our newer communities. It could be a beginning in a small way of something that with work and in faith and trust will grow.

Money, like people seems scarce these days. We do not have the well-to-do of a century ago. The well-to-do of the 21st century is not well

acquainted with the church today and a five dollar bill is about as much as they can find when the plate goes by. What can we buy with five dollars? As I read the Gospel messages for mid-day during the week, I am amazed to find much that might help us in our quest along with some serious meditation.

Our obligations are clear; we must again appeal to people in terms of the Gospel message and our need as Christians to minister openly and willingly to all we meet. We also have to teach these people what a gift of money is all about, and that it is more than \$5.00 or \$10.00 a week. It is also our obligation to teach them how it's our collective duty to give as much money as we are able for the work of God. Nothing comes free!

We truly have to seek the way to the building of simple start-up facilities in new area, sometimes sharing space. We need to give up some of our buildings happily and with joy and thanksgiving for ministry completed and join new congregations whose ministry is about to begin.

The Church's ministry is sacramental and social and it never was a series of meetings which fail to solve our challenges. We have seen more gatherings that point to new visions, but not one is alive and well. There are some churches that have been moved to greatness. Let's check them out and see if we can't get an idea or two from someone else's ministry successes.

Having attended one of the presynod meetings, I am convinced that the hope for change and growth we seek lies in the heart and mind of Bishop Bird and others. In this new era let us get together and truly see that we can bring our ideas and our gifts of time, talent and treasure and grow our churches and our ministry to new heights. Of course it will mean change and sometimes sacrifice as some things will become less important, but the gains we can achieve will be outstanding. The church is no longer the repetition and trust of the past as it changes to become the salvation and hope of the future.

The world changed at Imagine Music and Word



CHRISTYN PERKONS
PROGRAM CONSULTANT, DIOCESAN RESOURCE CENTRE

Sophia (aka Wisdom or the Spirit) has been weaving her way through contextual worship in the Diocese of Niagara in many ways; in parishes,

Reactions ranged from 'great' and 'LOVED it' to 'incredible', 'soul-touching' and 'inspiring' and 'life-changing'.

through The Gathering, in the Alternative Liturgy Conversations over the past 18 months, through Road Show and The NYC Band, and most recently, at *Imagine Word and Music*.

It's delightful how the Spirit moves in us! Joyce Wilton, Congregational Support & Development Consultant, suggested hosting a contemporary music conference to Christyn Perkons, the other CSD Consultant, who immediately said 'YES - and it needs to include a contemporary liturgy component as well.' Their passion for music and liturgy that speaks to and from the context (time and place) in which we live reflects an awareness that our culture is struggling with new paradigms of understanding our global village, how we live in changed relationship with each other, and what that means in our relationship with God. Christyn and Joyce share a calling to create new contexts for how we gather as God's people, and how we find our own faith journey; a calling that engages them with churches struggling to create worship experiences that speak to and for a world that has changed and is changing.

A planning team was drawn together from around the Diocese and an ambitious plan emerged from the first meeting that acknowledged the church's rich tradition and tapestry of music and word that has changed and evolved, feeding and responding to

new visions and new directions, while grounding us firmly together as we journey forward as God's people. That plan revolved around:

- Powerful, impactful keynote speakers from away to inject a freshness to our perspective
- Complemented by workshops led by local leaders already doing this in their own faith communities
- Supplemented by practicums in liturgy writing, song writing, and music
- Augmented by time for jamming and sharing of resources
- Highlighting organic, creative worship responsive to the conference culture and the Spirit

Thanks to a grant from Training and Development for Leadership in the Church Fund, the planning team was able to bring in Andrew Asbil, John Campbell and Mike Daley from Church of the Redeemer, Toronto to ground the work of the participants, to teach new skills in both liturgy development and worship music, and to weave a thread through the many aspects of the conference.

Participants poured into the idyllic setting of Canterbury Hills on Friday, October 24 ready for a weekend that promised to bring musicians, songwriters, and liturgists together to harness the power of music and word, providing them with the environment to create, dream, re-imagine, network, and ultimately equip themselves as leaders for a new future of music and worship in our church. They were not disappointed! Observed Janet Hope (Church of the Incarnation, Oakville), "This was one of the most spirit-nurturing, life-giving, and transformative church-based experiences I have had in recent years."

Parish teams from across the Diocese as well as lone representatives of faith communities were engaged by Andrew, John and Mike in plenaries that explored liturgical leadership as a vehicle for "inspiring a community to be shaped and re-shaped by grace week after week". The breadth, depth and variety of workshops caused participants to agonize over their choice for each session e.g. Congregational Song; Leadership without Instruments, Finding Creative Liturgical Resources, Working with Secular Music, Faith, imagination and Possibility in Liturgy, Equipment for the New Para-



digm, Scripture in Song, and Making the Old New; Elementary Arranging to name but a few! Supplementing the planning team in offering workshops were Brian Kerley, Janet Hope, Dave Orrett, Brandon Prodger, Lynne Corfield, and Dale Peters. Following a day filled with the 'how to' of community-based liturgical development, Stephen Hopkins (St. Christopher's Burlington) wrapped the learning aspect of the conference on Sunday morning with a session on facilitating change in the parish. Steve's workshop affirmed the wisdom participants already carry while at the same time, elucidating effective strategies and best practices for change management in faith communities. Several conference-goers remarked that Steve's workshop left them hungry for more; more information and more time in small groups sharing successes and failures in navigating change in the parish environment!

The weekend's worship moved from one created by the plenary team on Friday night to the Saturday night

mélange of offerings of word and song from conference participants that morphed into a liturgical pattern that became WordSong. Without coordinating who did what or controlling what each person brought to the table, "...the Words that people chose to weave the Songs together were incredibly powerful.", commented one of the young adult participants. The community worship culminated with a Spirit-filled liturgical experience crafted by participants through three practicums; liturgy writing, song writing and music. Reactions ranged from 'great' and 'LOVED it' to 'incredible', 'soul-touching' and 'inspiring' and 'life-changing'.

The theme of wanting more pervades the evaluations of the weekend. Conference-goers relished connecting with other like-minded musicians and liturgists, felt inspired by the cross-pollination of ideas and resources, and expressed an intense desire for more time together - creating, sharing, learning from one another, and nurturing each other in this calling to

gift the church in Niagara with contextual liturgy and music. Comments ranged from 'please, more of the same to feed us', 'keep asking me back; this is where I get my inspiration', 'more networking and opportunity to work with liturgical resources' to 'keep the fire burning!' The planning team - Joyce and Christyn; Dwight Prodger (St. James, Dundas), Lindsey Mills (St. David's, Welland), Mike Deed (St. Christopher's, Burlington), and from Church of the Incarnation; Janice Moro, Phil Jones, and Jamie Barnes were deeply moved by the impact on participants, and felt the experience was as transformative for them as for everyone else. The excitement was so contagious that another event is already in the works! If you read this article wishing you had been there, book Sunday, March 1 on your calendar for an afternoon/evening of liturgy, music and songwriting practicums focused on creating liturgical expressions for Pentecost. For details, contact Joyce (ex 430) or Christyn (ex 460) at 905-527-1316.

Bishop appoints lay director for Cursillo Niagara

It is with great excitement that the Niagara Anglican Cursillo Movement announces that Bishop Michael Bird, Diocesan Bishop of Niagara has appointed Ann Grose as Lay Director for the Cursillo Movement in Niagara. Her appointment is effective immediately and will run till September 2009.

Ann, with her husband, Brian, has worshipped at St. Cuthbert's church in Oakville for 33 years. Ann has been

involved in many roles within the church, including Rector's Warden, member of Parish Council, a reader, chalice bearer, and intercessor, as well as being part of a number of special projects over the years.

Ann's Cursillo experience extends over 25 years and has involved nearly all aspects of the Cursillo program, from working on numerous teams and committees to taking leadership roles on Secretariat including a term as Lay

Director. Ann has also been awarded the Order of Niagara for her continuous involvement in and commitment to Cursillo since 1983.

Ann is committed to leading Cursillo in a manner that will support Bishop Michael's pastoral plan for the Diocese, and believes that Cursillo has an important role to play in implementing the Bishop's vision of "excellence in ministry".

Cursillo's purpose is to bring

people to a deeper relationship with God and a stronger commitment to discipleship. These, in turn, will help people to grow in their faith, and as a result influence their environments and the people around them for Christ.

Nancy Harris from St. Jude's, Oakville has been appointed by the Cursillo Secretariat as the deputy Lay Director and will succeed Ann in September.

Anyone wishing more informa-

tion about Cursillo, may contact the Lay Director, Ann Grose at 905-842-1847 or the Spiritual Director, the Rev. Susan Wells at 905-547-8851.

If you would like to be put on the Cursillo Niagara mailing list, please contact the Cursillo Communications Chairperson, Nancy Wood at 905-335-5067.

PARISH NEWS



St. Mark's Orangeville Youth Canoe Trip

REBECCA SCOTT
SAINT MARK'S, ORANGEVILLE

This year the youth from Saint Mark's, Orangeville went north to the Kawartha Lakes. We left with high spirits and high hopes.

The trip itself went smoothly with no more than a minor leak in a canoe.

Unfortunately, the car trip to Coon Lake (our starting point) did not go quite as smoothly. A trip that usually takes about three and half hours with one rest stop, took us about nine! We stayed positive the entire time, although many Halloween candy bars were distributed along the way to keep

us going. The extra six hours added onto our trip were because of flat tires and a leaking transmission.

When we finally arrived we were exhausted after our trip. We put on a BIG pot of spaghetti and had an early night on Coon Lake. The next day we were joined by five more people to

make our total of 16.

On the Saturday, we did many portages and lots of canoeing. That night we put up our tents on Buzzard Lake. Later in the evening we had a large rain storm. It rained for most of the night.

The morning (Sunday) of our final day was beautiful as we canoed down

Long Lake. We did about 5 km of canoeing that day.

The drive back to Orangeville was uneventful. When we arrived back at the church we collected our belongings and headed home to go to bed so we weren't too tired for school the next day.

Mark your Advent Calendar for Lessons and Carols Service



Out of the seeds of summer come plans for candles at Christmas. Several months ago, Sue Anderson, music director at Grace Anglican Church presented the idea of bringing her choir, Boston Presbyterian Church and St. Paul's United Church together for a service of Lessons and Carols in memory of a dear friend, colleague and musician, Bob Argall.

All three choirs and their music directors have been inspired and touched by the gifts that Bob so generously shared. Bob served as organist at Grace Anglican Church for many years where he founded the Handbell Choir and teamed with Sue Anderson as music minister. Bob was also a special friend of choir director Judy Hunter and

accompanist Dawn Brodie and participated in musical events at St. Paul's over the years. Boston organist and choir director, Flora Sloski, long time friend, and the Boston Presbyterian Choir have appreciated Bob's musical gifts in choir concerts and church services spanning several decades.

The Service of Lessons and Carols, slated for December 7 at St. Paul's United Church, will combine the talents of all choirs as well as the Handbell Choir and Junior Choir of Grace Anglican Church. More than 80 singers and musicians will present anthems interspersed with congregational carol singing and lessons around the journey of Christmas. The choirs will be accompanied by pian-

ists Chris Latour and Dawn Brodie and organist Judy Hunter.

When Bob Argall founded the Handbell Choir, he must have been thinking of how Christmas played out in the vaulted churches of Europe that echoed with silver voices and church bells. Who can forget the words: "I heard the bells on Christmas day, their old familiar carols play; and mild and sweet the words repeat, of peace on earth, good will to men."

It is this sense of a storied choral past that will be recreated in the Advent Service of Carols and Lessons. Mark your calendar for this special highlight of the Christmas season. The service starts at 7 pm.

New Harbours

MATT THOMPSON
CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

"you gotta believe that god is just a broken-hearted boy or lady or red-haired dog moaning up or down some worried scale while whole continents spasm, bleed, & slowly groan across the oceans' floor..." and don't we all of us tumble out of our mothers' bellies gurgling & singing & crying? and don't we all still sing, gurgle & cry?"

- Efrim Menuck

When the New Harbours new music series began at the Cathedral in the spring of 2008, we wondered if we would survive the first show. Here was this new music, so different and radical in its non-structure, taking place in a building founded in tradition and the inherit need for structure. We saw the paradox in bringing this music to this place. We, an organizing group from the community, spent the entire first show wondering if our loud noises would not only bring down the building, but if we'd even be allowed back again.

By the time everything packed up and the artists had gone home, we realized that over 250 people had come through the doors of the Cathedral. This was far more than on a regular Friday Art Crawl night, far more than any of us expected, and with far more positive of comments and feedback than expected. So, we were allowed back.

New Harbours is a series of challenges. It challenges our ideas about place. The series takes place during the monthly James North Art Crawl, which is invitation is see downtown Hamilton on a Friday night. This isn't the Hamil-

ton that most people have in mind from the stories they're told. People turn the streets into a vibrant public space, and fill the dozen galleries on the second Friday of every month. The Cathedral opens its doors that night as well. The community is invited to step inside, for a tour and for the music.

The music series challenges people. The artists that played the first round of the series ranged from the improvised piano of Michael Snow to the spacey lap steel of Polaris-nominated Sandro Perri and all out walls of noise from Matthew Boughner and Slither. These aren't the sounds that most people would associate with a cathedral. A few people have even told us that think that they don't belong in such a space.

Yes, this music is a challenge, but it's also an invitation. These artists, with the best of intentions, demand that we reconsider our assumptions of what music is and what it could be. We never planned for this, but the series itself asks something of the cathedral as well. Unintentionally, but with best of intentions, the series asks for a reconsideration of not only what this cathedral is as a place in the community, but to have faith in the possible and to ask what else could this place be?

The next free show in the New Harbours series takes place at 9:00 PM on Friday December 12th 2008 at Christ's Church Cathedral, with Sun Circle, Eric Chenaux and Goatfooted.

For more information, contact www.myspace.com/newharbours.

St. Michael's honours Kay Firth



SUE CRAWFORD
ST. MICHAEL'S HAMILTON

On Sunday October 26th, St. Michael's Church presented Kay Firth, our secretary of 36 years, with a beautiful Swiss watch. Canon Lynda Kealey also presented a delightful bouquet of roses. The main presentation took place in the church at the end of the service. Following the service, parishioners were invited to join Kay and her family in the Parish Hall. A specially decorated cake was awaiting Kay to cut.

How did she become our church secretary? Well, I sent Kay a whole bunch of questions via email for her to ponder about her history as our secretary. She answered a few of them.

How did she become our secretary? At first she was asked to volunteer for three months which stretched into three years. After three years it was decided that we needed a paid secretary. She thinks that the corporation probably took three years to decide if they wanted to give her the job or not! Well here she is 33 years later.

Kay has served no fewer than four clergy over her years. When Canon Lynda Kealey retires at the end of November she will add a fifth to her total. Her first rector was Archdeacon Harold Llewellyn.

The life of a church secretary can be very complex. I asked her what was the most difficult part of being the secretary at St. Michael's and she responded that "trying to please everyone" was not easy. She joked with me that she felt she had "too many bosses" sometimes. I asked her if she had ever felt like quitting. I had a big chuckle over her response. She told me she was ready to quit when we purchased our first computer. I am sure that there are many church secretaries in the Diocese who would probably agree with this. It was a huge change from a typewriter. I have to commend Kay for sticking with it and learning how to use the computer. She said that there were a couple of patient parishioners who stepped in and helped her understand the basics of word processing, how to use the programs and even how to check and use email. I can certainly attest that she is very capable of using the computer now.

It was not easy to encourage Kay to talk about herself. She is a quiet, very modest and humble person. She says this about working at St. Michael's as our secretary.

"I have enjoyed doing the work and feel it is a privilege to be able to help in this capacity. I have been lucky to have very understanding rectors and wardens over the years and that certainly makes

a difference. It takes time to get to know what is expected from me when we get a new rector and wardens."

I can sympathize with her as a relatively new warden. Each of us has our own ideas about what we want and how we want things done. I don't think it helped matters when I introduced our monthly parish newsletter which has to be photocopied and then folded. We do have a network of volunteers, though, who help Kay with folding bulletins and the newsletters.

Church secretaries are on the front line for all of us in our parishes. They field calls to the Rector and are often the first ones to hear heartbreaking or distressing news from parishioners. Grieving people need a caring voice at the end of that phone. Secretaries are the first ones that people outside the parish speak with in order to find out about the church and its programs. Without a knowledgeable and friendly person on the other end of that phone, we can lose potential new parishioners. I am pleased to say that Kay is that caring voice and is that knowledgeable and friendly person.

We appreciate Kay's faithful 36 years at St. Michael's. Thank you to all our church secretaries in the Diocese for the wonderful work that you do for our parishes.

Michael Mouse in the Glen

RACHEL SCHOLZ
ST. ALBAN'S GLEN WILLIAMS

I believe I can date my love of Christmas pageants back to the donning of my first halo at the tender age of 4; how it did shine! Since then I have participated in a few, and as time goes by, I have even watched my eldest daughter shine in her first pageant as one of the faithful sheep.

Last year I found myself volunteering to co-ordinate our small children's worship program which left me responsible for finding the script for the pageant. Luckily for me, I had already met Christyn Perkons (Diocesan Consultant in Children's Ministry) and I wasted no time in asking for her help. Christyn e-mailed me several scripts, and I found Michael Mouse, a truly wonderful version of the traditional nativity pageant.

It's a story of a mouse and his animal friends, all traveling with gifts to meet this new important baby.

So just after Remembrance Day, we started reading over the script with the children and casting characters. I typed out the script; adding in notes about placement of people and props. In the following weeks we practiced and worked out problems. For example, Michael's lines were too long to memorize so we put them in a binder and turned it into a map for his journey to Bethlehem. A lot of costumes had to be made but we kept it simple and stitched ears to headbands, made tails and attached them to belts, and bought foam noses and gloves from the local dollar store.

As we got closer to the big day, we asked the parents for some time after the service to practice in the church. So while

they enjoyed coffee and conversation, we familiarized the children with placement and timing. Unfortunately, the day of the pageant landed right in the middle of a snowstorm and we had to bump it to the following Sunday. Fortunately we had another Sunday before Christmas and everything went off really well. One of our leaders had the fantastic idea of handing out copies of the script to the congregation so that they could follow along in case they couldn't hear properly.

Our congregation truly enjoyed the pageant, as did the children and all of us who supported them. I have already started the search for this year's pageant, and have come up with several scripts. I look forward to another pageant, and perhaps this year I will see all 3 of my daughters don their own halos. May your own Christmas shine.

Four's Company



JANET CRESS
CHRIST CHURCH, WOODBURN

For the past 11 years, Christ Church Woodburn has had an excellent youth leader, Donna Ellis. She took on the duties of teaching Sunday School, leading the youth group and starting the puppet ministry. Under her leadership the youth group successfully contributed to a number of ministries such as The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund and St. Matthew's House, among others. For the past year Donna has been working with the youth at St. John's Church in Ancaster. How lucky they are!

Two special people have taken over the existing Sunday School program here at Christ Church and are looking to improve curriculum and increase

the number of children attending.

We have four ladies that are cooperatively leading the Puppet Ministry here at Christ Church. We all believe in the Puppet Ministry and the joy it brings to the children. We knew that we wanted the children to have the opportunity to continue to enjoy it.

We are amazed at how well this commitment is working for each one of us. I write this article today to celebrate the success of our "4's Company" team.

Each one takes a part of the workload and shares at the following meeting. If someone is unable to be there, then the others will lead the way. The workload is shared and the creative ideas are multiplied. It is a wonderful way to work together and enjoy the benefits, especially the children.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 »

The Old Same Prayers

There are, of course, profound theological differences between Muslim and Christian understandings of Mary's son. Unlike the example of the "holiday concert" that seems to assert that Christmas and Hanukkah are variations on some generic theme, it is wrong to overlook those differences – a dishonour to both traditions and to those who inhabit them.

All the same, when Frank and Jean-Anne came back from Turkey, it wasn't the theological differences that had captivated them. It was, instead, the tradition of leaving written prayers clipped to a mesh wall. Though the rooms inside for Christian and Muslim prayer are segregated, the written prayers outside are integrated. Said Frank, "They're just the same old prayers, you know."

That's what they are. They are the old prayers. And they are the same prayers. They are prayers we have in common, out of our grief and gladness, our struggle and celebration. They probe the fragile edges of our lives – the sick or broken child in some parent's aching arms, the absent, angry beloved, the friend in harm's way, and the persistent aging of our bodies towards death.

They are the prayers we have in common, beseeching the Heart that beats at the heart of the universe for justice, aching breathless begging that the abundance of the earth might overcome the scarcity in our hearts, that the hungry might eat, the homeless be sheltered, and the poor lifted out of the dust and disdain that confines them.

They are the prayers we have in com-

mon, thinking that same generous Heart for the last warm day of autumn, for the silhouette of my beloved against the western dusk, for the sheer liveliness of a healthy child, for the song that carries us, for the water than nourishes and delights us, for every momentary glimpse of the world "thy kingdom come".

They are the same prayers. And they are the old prayers. Whether they go on foot across the heath and through the forest, or on silver wings across the sea and through customs, we pray for their safe returns. Whether on a straw mat on the monastery floor, or in a high-tech bed in the ICU, we pray for their health. Whatever felled them – plague or AIDS or famine; spear, sword or missile; whatever part of them betrayed them – liver, heart, lung, we pray for their safe passage across the threshold we neither see nor understand.

These old prayers, these same prayers hang from the trees and the mesh wall at the House of the Virgin Mary in Ephesus. You would be hard pressed to know which ones are Muslim and which Christian. And you'd have to wonder at the character of a God who looked for the fingerprints, tested the spiritual DNA on these slips of paper – desperate, grateful, or both – you'd have to wonder at a God who would send them to the lab before taking them to heart.

Not for a minute would I say that our traditions of faith don't matter, that their differences are meaningless, that one is just the same as the other. I wouldn't say that because – at least in part – we hold these distinctions dear even within a single faith. It

matters a great deal whether we trust that Jesus is both the divine initiative and the human response, that his death confronts and overcomes the power of death to define our lives. But I don't think it matters enough that people who don't see it can't get their prayers on God's agenda. I won't say "Who cares?" any more than I would say "Who cares?" about a corresponding reluctance within Islam to risk the profound authority of monotheism for the opaque mystery of the Triune God.

My baptism in 1956 has meant that I have sought truth first of all within the Christian faith, in its scriptures, communities, practices, and habits. And because I have not exhausted the depth of those scriptures, communities, practices and habits, I simply have not looked elsewhere. There is enough here for me.

I do, however, wonder what might have happened had my parents initiated me into another way. Would I have sought truth there, and found enough to keep me lifelong searching? I do know that the deepest truth and truest depth disclosed to me in Jesus is the boundless costly compassion of the living God.

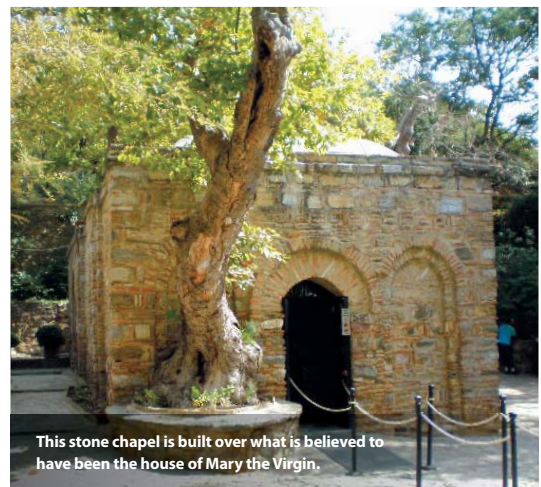
Of the living God who has called me to follow Jesus. Who may for all I know call others to follow other paths.

Of the living God who commissions a people – the church – to bear witness to the truth that is in Jesus, and to proclaim and enact the kingdom he enacted and proclaimed. Who may, for all I know, call others to another sort of witness.

Of God whose aching heart, broken open on the cross, welcomes the old same prayers.



Prayers are posted on a mesh wall leading to the house of Mary the Virgin in Ephesus.



This stone chapel is built over what is believed to have been the house of Mary the Virgin.

At Christmastide whom do we worship: the beast or the lamb?



MICHAEL BURSLEM
RETIRED PHYSICIAN, ST. GEORGE'S, GUELPH

Advent and Christmas are seasons of hope. Not only do we look back to the first Christmas, when we remember the birth of Jesus, our savior, but we also look forward to his second coming in glory. His second coming is more problematic than his first. Not being clairvoyant, we know very little about it. I have always found the Book of Revelation so difficult to understand until I read Barbara Rossing's *The Rapture Exposed, The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (Basic Books, New York, 2004). I read this after hearing her lecture online at http://www.trinitywallstreet.org/calendar/index.php?event_id=40241. This was part of the 37th Trinity Institute, a national theological online conference sponsored by Trinity Church, New York.

Contrary to what some Doomsday preachers tell us, Revelation is not a

prediction of future events. Some would have us believe that the world is getting steadily worse, and will go on deteriorating, until God has had enough, and calls it quits by totally destroying it, if we've not done that already. But in addition, he'll destroy everyone on it, except those who are 'saved,' whom he will 'rapture' off the earth, before he returns to rule the world for 1000 years. This is graphically illustrated in LaHaye and Jenkins *Left Behind* series of novels. Rossing, in her lecture, calls these ideas "just nuts." Her main purport in speaking and in writing is to counteract these, because they have caught hold of so many in the church, and even in the U.S. State Department, so that many innocent people in the Middle East are dying because of them. Here I must confess that I have not read any one of these books, but the excerpts quoted by Rossing were enough to turn me off.

The traditional church, awaiting the second coming of Christ, has taught that we're in the millennium now, not literally a thousand years, nor sometime in the future. Rossing states that Revelation makes the contrast between the two cities, Rome/Babylon, an earthly city, which stands

for the world we live in, and the New Jerusalem, which comes down to earth from heaven, not taken up to heaven; but it's none the less a heavenly city. One we see with our natural eyes, the other only through the eyes of faith. The one is addicted to war, conquest and victory over all nations; the other brings peace and healing to the nations. In one there is a river of blood; in the other a river with trees on either side, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations. One is governed by the Beast; the other by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, which is no lion, but (surprise... surprise) a Lamb, and a slain one at that. She speaks of two contrasting, and conflicting, 'powers' by which we may live; the Beast's love of power and Lamb's power of love. The reader is left to choose in which city we are living, and to which power we are subject.

In contrast to the pessimism of LaHaye and Jennings, Rossing is extremely optimistic. God is doing great things. For those who have the eyes to see it, he's building the New Jerusalem on earth, here and now, not in a never-never land. This is the hope of God with Us, the message of Christmas. This is the "good news

of great joy that will be for all the people,' as the angels proclaimed to the shepherds. Christianity isn't about doom and gloom, but about hope and joy and peace; we don't need to die to see its fulfillment in heaven; we see it right now on earth.

After mulling over the book, though, I did become concerned, lest, we have chosen to lie in bed with the Beast, rather than with the Lamb. That's why the Book of Revelation is so difficult for us today. We're not where we're supposed to be. The popularity of the *Left Behind* novels is that they make it all to appear so easy, which everyone can follow as a guide book into the future. To use the Bible in this way is the Beast's ploy, as it supplants the Holy Spirit, who is the Christian's true guide into an unknown and uncertain future; but he is right there with us, all the way. We're tempted to use physical weapons rather than spiritual ones. Paul says: "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds." (2 Corinthians 10:4) He and his contemporaries may not have used worldly weapons, but I fear that we do today.

This is why we don't see the peace that we all so desperately crave for. We pray for peace, but continue to serve the Beast, who only gives us strife, schism and war.

We're in a terrible bind. I believe we truly wish to worship the Lamb, especially at Christmas time, but end in worshipping the Beast. This was the bind Paul found himself in when he wrote to the Romans; "So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 7: 21-8:1) If Paul had this problem, is it any wonder that we have too? Thanks be to Jesus, indeed, who, enables us all to live with him here and now in his New Jerusalem.

This Christmas, we need to ask ourselves, do we really believe in the love of power, or the power of love?

Bring in the novelties!



SUSAN C. HUXFORD-WESTALL
RETIRED TEACHER, ALL SAINTS HAMILTON

(to) *innovate*, v.i., Bring in novelties; make changes in. Hence or cogn. ~ATION. (Concise O.E.D.)

The season of Advent has just begun. It heralds a new beginning, the coming of a Saviour and, shortly after, the beginning of a secular new year. That new year is still tied to the old Roman gods, for whom many of our months are named. The days of our weeks are tied to Nordic gods. Advent begins the Christian New Year, but how many of us realise that? It is time to wake up!

In his recent meetings with the regions (archdeacons) of the Diocese of Niagara, Bishop Michael Bird introduced an outline for *The Pursuit of Excellence in Ministry* in which he advocated a "culture of innovation". Near the end of the session each attendee received a set of three "Reflection Questions" with the request that they be returned at the end of the session. I determined that "reflection" required more time than was given at the conclusion of the evening and took it home to think about. This article is merely the start of my "reflections"; it constitutes my reflections on the first page of a ten page pamphlet, a page entitled *The Pursuit of Excellence in Ministry -- in our own lives*. (underlining mine).

If "every member" is "to exercise ministry that serves our common life

in the Church" then each member must have the "ammunition" for the battle with the secular world. Our biggest failure to date has been a *laissez faire* attitude to the study of the scriptures. It is useless to think that the scriptures may be studied through sermons which are limited in time and in scope and, if they are scholarly, will often send the person in the pew to sleep.

Are we too wrapped up in liturgy? If church members are to have an adequate knowledge of the scriptures surely more attention *must* be given to instruction during the regular hours of service. We call it "service", but are we serving God by ignoring the fundamental knowledge that is set out in the Bible? I am appalled by the slipshod treatment of the Lectionary.

During this past summer I visited a number of churches in Hamilton during which I heard readings from the Old Testament and the Epistles read very indifferently by a variety of lay persons. How on earth can our congregations become informed (educated) if the reading set for any day is not put in context by the reader, who must him/herself understand what is to be read? Furthermore, *good enunciation* is essential. Too many scripture readings are delivered in a "matter-of-fact" tone of voice as if they were a part of the liturgy that has to be dispensed. The late Professor Roy Wiles, who was Warden of Lay Readers, would be turning over in his grave were he to hear some of the scripture readings today. (It is noticeable that I have omitted the reading of the Gospel, but even here the reader must enunciate clearly. I have heard a preacher repeat all or part of the Gospel reading at the beginning of a

sermon, just in case the congregation missed the point.)

In an article entitled *The Imprisoned Bible* (Niagara Anglican, November 2007) I wrote "We know that many people will not give more than an hour to God once each Sunday. Most will not return for 'Bible Study'. If our people are to become prepared as were those of the Primitive Church, then instruction must be given during the hour of service time on each Sunday. I suggest that we do away with the traditional sermon and substitute three short homilies, each placed immediately following the Bible readings (Old Testament, Acts and Epistles, and Gospels). In that way congregations will receive instruction that they will otherwise avoid and it will be relevant and appropriate. This need not eradicate the opportunity for the incumbent to give the congregation a short pep talk.

"Since the Gospel is frequently read by the parish priest, the opportunity for a brief 'sermon' of encouragement in amplification of the Gospel reading would not be eliminated. I suggest that if explanation of the O.T. and Epistle readings is limited to no more than five minutes each and the Gospel dissertation to ten minutes, the Sunday service would be no longer than it is at present, unless preachers ignore the admonition that 'If you can't get your message across in ten minutes, it's probably not worth preaching at all'. With the increased speed of modern life and the shortening of attention spans many modern listeners are turned off by learned and wordy sermons."

Bishop Michael advocates "renewed emphasis on the study of scripture". The twenty minutes that I advocated last year is not enough; it can only give

a smattering of the glories of the Bible. Our clergy seem to be afraid of trusting their own laity to give instruction in the Bible. Perhaps they think that the *Holy Bible* is too "holy" to be entrusted to the unordained. Thirty years ago I moved from Hamilton to Rexdale and immediately associated myself with my local parish church. I had been there little more than two years before the rector permitted me to conduct a Bible study class one evening a week. I got their interest by presenting the lid of a jar of Lyle's golden syrup and asking them what that had to do with the Bible. There is no prize for this, but it showed a dormant lion with the quote "Out of the strong came forth sweetness". When I returned to Hamilton I suggested to the then rector of my present parish church that we should have a weekly Bible class. Although he knew that I was the former warden of lay readers he shrugged off the suggestion. We still have no formal Bible study except as an adjunct to the Lenten mid-week service.

There is a parish in our neighbouring diocese where there are regular weekly courses on church membership and the Bible. The Bible courses are designed at two or three levels, numbered 101, 102, 103... The cynic may say "But they have a large congregation so they can count on having attendance at these classes" Perhaps the reason that they have a large congregation is because they have the classes and not the other way around. "Where two or three are gathered together...."

Bishop Michael also advocates for the young people of our Church. In my own parish we have a "Kids talk" at the beginning of the Sunday service.

Unfortunately, the active and responsive "kids" are teenagers nearing adulthood and the younger members tend to stare around as if they were wondering what it is all about. When I was teaching teenagers I told them that if they were kids, then I was an old goat. They appreciated it. As a member of the congregation with no family members in the "Sunday school" I have no clue as to what happens in the parish hall while we are continuing with the service. Perhaps that is my own fault. We shall shortly tear down our church and the parish hall in which, years ago, there was a very active AYPYA (Anglican Young Peoples Association). We have an active Youth Synod; can it propose new ways of involving and informing our youth?

Bible study is only one way towards *understanding and articulating our own faith journey*. If we were only *actively* involved, especially in the Millennium Development Goals, we would become more *passionate* in our spirituality. As we become more aware of Church activity in the world around us, we would become more aware of our own *Anglican identity*.

This article only scratches at the surface. Our own individual ministry cannot be developed in isolation. It depends upon our parishes and diocese and the world in which we live. It requires *prophetic social justice-making, effective resource management and outstanding leadership*. These will never be developed without taking risks, without bringing in the novelties, without innovation. Without these we can hardly develop outstanding leadership and we have to take risks in order to uncover it.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 >>

Almost there

And then there is ordinary time – the green priests, my friend used to call them – the ones who least impressed him. In fact, we probably shouldn't go there. He was never terribly complimentary about green priests!

As silly as this game was, I used to think it was fun to listen to this man categorize all the clergy he knew. Somehow, it removed that aura of seeming holiness that many priests adopt and named them as no more than the human beings they really were; not so distant and untouchable. And now that I, too, am a priest I have to admit that sometimes I wonder how my friend would categorize me. While I don't know what he would say, I do know what I would want him to say. I warm to the idea of being an Advent priest – someone on the cusp of magnificence but not yet quite there; someone who has the potential to be there if only I could get my act together to make this happen.

The Season of Advent is where I live – not just for four weeks before Christmas but most of the year. There

but not quite there; dark but not so dark as to be gloomy; unknown but somehow known; not optimistic but not totally pessimistic either; preparatory rather than complete. I recognize myself as definitely on the journey but I always wonder if I'm ever going to arrive, even as I secretly know that I really don't want to arrive because, for heaven's sake, I wouldn't have a clue what I would do when I got there!

Advent is a season of questioning; a season of looking ahead in such a way as to be able to contemplate what might be around the corner. Like Lent, it is a time of reflection but unlike Lent, it is not a time to consider past sins; rather, it is a time to consider future hopes, and it is for this reason that I am at the very least an Advent *person* if not an Advent priest.

At 15-years-old, my father died and my world collapsed. The day before he died, my mother told me, "Where there's life, there's hope." I have vivid memories of hating her in that one moment. Because I was certain there

was no longer any hope, her words felt like a lie. Yet, as I have since looked back on those words, I've come to realize that she was lying neither to me nor to herself. Instead, they were probably an expression of what was at that time her deepest need – to hold on to a last smidgen of hope regarding her husband as long as she was still able to hold on to this. Until he was actually gone, she refused to stop believing there wasn't some light around the corner on which she could focus. This was her last grab at preventing the darkness from engulfing her. This was her John the Baptist.

If he had been a Christian, John the Baptist would have been an Advent priest. Indeed, in the church we have made him thus – not quite the central figure of the story but someone pretty close to the central figure; the prophet who came out of the wilderness to preach to a people who were still in the wilderness; the one person to whom some people then looked and to whom we now look as the harbinger of hope. He it was who

knew that light was around the corner, if only people would open their eyes sufficiently to witness to it. The ones who followed him were not the people who had already arrived nor were they the ones who had given up on possibility. Instead, they were the people who, although uncertain about the destination, nonetheless were prepared to risk the journey, ever hopeful of its outcome. Just before my father died, my mother was one of those people; I, on the other hand, was decidedly not.

Oddly enough, I have since become that person of hope. Perhaps it takes the kind of dramatic life loss which I experienced in order to become such a person – being in a place that leaves one feeling, "I've been down so long, everything looks like up to me." I honestly can't say what changed for me, except that I do know that as cynical as I can get about many things, I never get so cynical as to assume there is no hope for something different, something better just around the corner. (I even feel this way about the church!)

For this reason I would like to think that my English friend would today classify me as an Advent priest – not necessarily a package that has arrived but a package that is at least moving in the right direction, a package that at least conveys that something magnificent is on its way.

The wilderness is a place pregnant with possibilities even as the journey through it can be annoying, risky and at times, quite dangerous. Sadly, so accustomed have we become to the Christmas carols starting right after Halloween that too many of us land in Bethlehem before travelling through this messy place of hope. I wonder if that stable would have looked as warm and inviting to Mary and Joseph if they hadn't been forced to journey such a long distance before arriving there.

Don't get me wrong. I like Christmas but more than this, I like the possibility of Christmas, for as long as the season is just a possibility, then something wonderful will always lie in store for me.

In the pursuit of excellence in ministry

CHRIS GRABIEC
EDITOR

The new guy on the block, Michael Bird, has certainly grabbed everyone's attention these days. It seems like the laying on of hands, might be quite effective! The bishop is calling the church to an excellence that we haven't thought about for a while. Let's take a step back and think this through.

There is no doubt that we are experiencing a decline in attendance in our Anglican churches. We're not alone. Some other denominations have steeper declines and others not so steep. The mainline churches seem to be suffering the most. The fundamentalist versions of Christianity continue to fill their parking lots. Coming to grips with that observation is the subject of another article. Most of us don't believe much of the fundamentalist message and we don't want it as part of our faith journey. Our approach to scripture is careful, methodical and utilizes all of best forms of literary, historical and form criticism that we have at our disposal. So, let just say that we want to continue along our journey but we want to stop the decline in our numbers and we really want to make a difference in our world.

If that's the case then maybe we ought to think a little more seriously about excellence in ministry. But, in order to do so, let's think about what this is not. First and foremost the pursuit of excellence in ministry is NOT a

program. If we try to turn it into a program, we are doomed to fail, as have most of our attempts at programming our faith in the past. Secondly, it is not about clergy. Most of us have resisted the title of "minister" for our clergy for a long time. Anglicans have talked about deacons and priests and bishops, but we haven't called them our ministers. Thanks be to God! Ministry is not the property of the clergy. It is the property of the baptized. Thirdly, the pursuit of excellence in ministry is not a guilt trip. This is not to say that our predecessors were not trying to be everything that God called them to be. The pursuit recognizes that times have changed and that God's Spirit blows in the wind of time asking us to constantly renew our understanding of faith and mission to the world.

Michael Thompson, who is the rector at St. Jude's in Oakville, I'm told, does not put up his license to operate as a priest in his office, but rather proudly posts his baptismal certificate. For Michael, his ministry is a result of his baptismal commitment, first and foremost. I remember when I was rector of the University Catholic Parish in Waterloo; we had a sign-up Sunday every September when the majority of students arrived for the year. There were about 1500 students who signed up as members of the parish each year and beside their name and address was a line that was not optional: What ministry will you exercise in our commun-

ity? They all chose something. Ministry is the property of the baptized.

If in fact ministry is a result of our baptism then it seems that each of us, responding to the call of our bishop need to think about what is it that God asks of me with regard to ministry, and how can I pursue that with some kind of excellence? Here's the crunch. The bottom line of the pursuit is prayer. Every Anglican needs to first of all learn to hear the voice of God speaking within their own hearts. Do we really think that Mary had some miraculous apparition of an angel to speak God's will to her? If she did, then why does it not happen to the rest of us at some point? Mary was a woman of prayer, who took the time to listen to the voice of God. She heard it within and responded generously. Each and every one of us needs to take that time. We need to settle ourselves, perhaps read a line or two of scripture and then simply listen. Will God answer you right away? Maybe not, but who knows? Eventually we will become convinced that God is calling us (like Mary, like Joseph) to minister to the world around us. When we become convinced, then we can move forward.

So what are these ministries that we must pursue? For some of us they will be public and for others more private. Prayer itself is a ministry. Have you ever thought about the ministry of forgiveness? We have wanted to assign that one to the clergy because they can

forgive sins. It is the ministry of every Christian to forgive unconditionally.

It's possible that a good number of us will walk away from this article at this point. We all have people to forgive and we do not feel like doing it. If forgiveness is a ministry then we don't necessarily "feel like it". We are asked to go out and forgive the sins of others and that means all of us. It means that we have to forgive the four parishes that have left the diocese of Niagara. It means that we have to forgive our husband, our wife or our children for whatever we hold against them. We must never allow someone to walk around with the burden of their sinfulness.

It's Advent and Christmas which means that it's a special time of prayer. We cannot let the days go by without listening to the voice of God within. We should not sit around waiting for our clergy to "become excellent". Let's not expect some program that will solve the problems of our church. Instead, listen, hear and respond generously to the voice of God. Know that the call of our Bishop is to each and every one of us and it is to pursue excellence in our ministry. If we only try to enter into this pursuit, then the will of God will be accomplished and God's reign will be established. We do have a clue what our church will look like as we begin this journey, but then again, what will it matter. The will of God is all that counts.

The Niagara Anglican

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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.

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2009 Yukon Canoe Expedition



Canon Peter Scott of St Mark's Anglican Church, Orangeville & Al Pace of Canoe North Adventures, Hockley Valley, present exciting plans for their 2009 Yukon Canoe Expedition. For those of you with a thirst for adventure, we invite you to consider joining what is sure to be an unforgettable wilderness journey. This fourteen day expedition is tentatively planned for July 2009. If you would like information about the expedition, contact Peter Scott by email. ... let the adventure begin ...



Peter Scott 519-942-3551 Al Pace 519-941-6654
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Niagara Cursillo

www.niagaracursillo.org



CHRISTMAS TREE SALE

Buy an "Anglican" tree this year at St. Cuthbert's Church (Maple Grove and Oakhill, two blocks north of Lakeshore Road East in SE Oakville)
#905-844-6200

Sale Hours (staffed by volunteers):

Monday to Friday 1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Saturdays 9:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Sundays 11:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.



Please remember to support
St. Matthew's House this Christmas



St. Matthew's House
Helping People Most in Need Across Hamilton

For more information see the ad on PAGE 14.

EVENTS

Spaghetti Dinner

All Saints, Ridgeway
 Last spaghetti dinner for 2008. Home-made pies and desserts as well as a continuous service and 50/50 draw.
 Cost: Adults \$8.00, Children (5-12) \$5.00, Under 5 Free
 December 3, 5:00 PM-7:00 PM

A Dickens of a Christmas Dinner

St. James, St. Catharines
 A four course Victorian dinner with a reading of Charles Dickens A Christmas Carol. For reservations call 905-682-8853.
 Cost: \$25.00 per person
 December 3, 6:00 PM

Alzheimer Society Concert

St. George's, Guelph
 Come enjoy the Guelph Chamber Choir.
 Cost: \$20.00 per person
 December 3, 7:30 PM

Christmas Potluck Dinner Party

St. Columba, St. Catharines
 All ladies of the parish are invited to attend our Christmas Potluck Dinner Party. Be prepared for a great evening of food and music, a silent auction with some beautiful gift ideas, and singing of Christmas carols. Kindly remember to bring your own dishes and cutlery and your favourite potluck dish. If you need transportation, please call the office to arrange a ride.
 Cost: Potluck dish
 December 4, 6:00 PM

Family Movie Night

St. Cuthbert's, Oakville
 Watch a favourite film on our 8' by 8' screen. Bring friends, parents, pajamas (if you want), sleeping bags, pillows and friends.
 Cost: \$1.00 per person
 December 5, 7:00 PM

Christmas on the Credit

St. Alban the Martyr, Glen Williams
 Please join us for our annual Christmas Bazaar. Baked goods, frozen foods, crafts, penny table sale, silent auction and much much more. The draw for the lottery will be held at 2:00 PM.
 December 6, 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

Christmas Bazaar

St. Paul's Anglican Church, Shelburne
 Annual Christmas craft and bake sale with luncheon.
 December 6, 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

Holiday House Tour

St. James, Dundas
 Tour five Dundas homes and come back to St. James for refreshments. Browse our baked goods and Dickens Lane to shop for Christmas gifts, and spend time in our art gallery.
 Cost: \$20.00 per person
 December 6, 12:00 PM-5:00 PM

An Evening with Canada's Singing Priest

All Saints', Ridgeway
 Presenting the Reverend Mark Curtis for The Churches of the Ridge. You might consider a non-perishable food item. For more information call Judy Young at 905-894-3502.
 Cost: Free will offering
 December 6, 7:00 PM

Don't Wanna Wait

Holy Trinity, Fonthill
 Treblaies Ladies Show Choir presents the Don't Wanna Wait concert. For tickets, call the office at 905-892-6011.
 Cost: Adults \$8.00, Children (Under 13) \$5.00
 December 6, 7:30 PM

Breakfast with Santa

St. John's, Ancaster
 Sing carols and listen to the story of St. Nicholas.
 Cost: Adults \$10.00, Children (Under 11) \$5.00
 December 6, 9:00 AM

St. Nicks Shopping Day

St. Paul's, Fort Erie
 St. Nicks Shopping provides an opportunity for children to make their Christmas purchases in a relaxed and happy atmosphere. Assisted by 'elves' each of the children's gifts is given special attention, wrapping and tagging. This all day event is greatly anticipated by all. Mark your calendars.
 December 6

Christmas in Pelham

Holy Trinity, Fonthill
 The Pelham Business Association, of

which we are a member, will hold a Christmas Artisan and Trade Show at Lookout Ridge Retirement Community (Corner of Highway 20 and Lookout Street). Come and celebrate Christmas and Christ and the Workplace in Pelham.
 December 6, 12:00 PM-5:00 PM

Annual Christmas Concert for Children in Need

St. Luke, Burlington
 This will be our 17th Annual Fundraising concert for children in need in our community. Featuring the Christmas music of John Rutter, the centerpiece of this concert will be Rutter's charming and amusing musical fable "Brother Heinrich's Christmas", which tells the story of the composition of the Christmas hymn, "In Dulci Jubilo". The narrator, assisted by choir, oboe and bassoon will beautifully bring the fable to life.
 December 7

Bread and Wine People

St. Cuthbert's, Oakville
 Join us for an inter-generational worship experience as together we explore our full participation in the Eucharist.
 December 7, 10:00 AM

Advent Lessons and Anthems

St. Paul's United Church, Milton
 A service, in memory of Grace Church Organist Bob Argall, at St. Paul's United Church (125 Masin Street, Milton) with choirs from Grace Anglican Church, St. Paul's United Church and Boston Presbyterian.
 December 7, 7:00 PM

Christmas Bake Sale

All Saints, Hamilton
 An opportunity to shop for Christmas goodies.
 December 7

Emmanuel

St. Columba, St. Catharines
 A 45 minute journey through the Christmas story. Using original arrangements of beloved Christmas songs, classical ballet, live music, and readings from the Gospels and the Book of Isaiah. A modest, worshipful, and artistically excellent presentation to touch the audience with

majesty and mystery of this wondrous Christmas season. Refreshments to follow.
 Cost: \$10.00 per person
 December 10, 7:00 PM

Handel's Messiah

St. John's, Ancaster
 St. John's Presents Arcady, performing Handel's Messiah.
 Cost: \$30.00 per person
 December 12, 7:30 pm

Salvation Army Community Carol Sing

St. George's, Guelph
 Come and spend the afternoon and hear the sounds of Christmas. Coffee and cookies reception to follow.
 Cost: Free will donations
 December 13, 2:00 PM

Christmas Concert with Port Colborne Choral

St. John's, Ridgemount
 Come hear this wonderful concert which will have contemporary and traditional music.
 Cost: \$7.00 per person
 December 13, 7:00 PM

Advent Quiet Day

St. Cuthbert's, Oakville
 Join us for a day of prayerful reflection upon what 'keeping awake' or 'watchful anticipation' may look like for you in this Advent season. We meet at the SSJD Convent in Toronto and carpool out together.
 Cost: \$30.00 per person
 December 13, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Outreach Bake Sale

St. Cuthbert's, Oakville
 Buy all your Christmas goodies at St. Cuthbert's, Maple Grove and Oakhill in Oakville. All proceeds to the Oakville Million or More Stephen Lewis Foundation and Kerr Street Ministries.
 December 13, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Christmas Around the World

St. Christopher, Burlington
 Christmas musical performances. Carols, sweets and hot chocolate in the Great Hall. A gift from St. Christopher's to the Community.
 December 14, 4:00 PM and 7:00 PM

A Candlelight Christmas Concert

St. Matthew on-the-Plains, Burlington
 Variante Harp and Flute Duo perform their magic music at this Candlelight Christmas special. All proceeds go to Partnership West Food Bank.
 Cost: Adults \$15, Children (Under 13) Free with non-perishable food item.
 December 14, 7:00 PM

Queenston Ladies Choir

St. Mark, Niagara-on-the-Lake
 The Queenston Ladies Choir Christmas Concert at St. Mark's with reception to follow in Addison Hall. Please call 468-3123 for tickets and more information.
 December 14, 7:30 PM

Family Christmas Party

St. Cuthbert's, Oakville
 Join us for our annual, family Christmas party. Special guest will be Bernie German, Canada's Singing Cowboy!
 Cost: Donation for pizza and entertainment
 December 19, 5:30 PM

Charles Dickens Christmas Carol

St. Mark, Niagara-on-the-Lake
 A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens presented by members of The Shaw Festival Theatre at St. Mark's. A great way to get into the Christmas Spirit! Reception to follow in Addison Hall. Call 905-468-3123 for tickets.
 December 21, 3:00 PM

Christmas Carol and Candlelighting Service

St. George's, Guelph
 There is nothing more beautiful than St. George's decorated by candles at Christmas.
 December 21, 7:00 PM

Community Christmas Dinner

St. Alban the Martyr, Glen Williams
 We would like to extend an invitation to join us for a time of community fellowship and Christmas Dinner at St. Alban's Church Parish hall.
 December 25, 1:00 PM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6 >>

The high cost of cheap grace

This theory is not congruent with the case of the woman taken in adultery. Christ confirmed the woman's sin and upheld the Law. The crowd believed that their anger was morally appropriate. They also believed that it was their duty to stone the woman. This theory would change the ending. God would require that the crowd stone Jesus, instead of the woman, and set the woman free, instead of Jesus. Barabas was indeed freed instead of Jesus but this was Pilate's idea, not God's. In a German concentration camp, when a priest volunteered to be shot instead of another prisoner, it was the Nazis who accepted the proposal, not God. To use these examples as analogies for the Cross is to equate God's thinking with that of Pontius Pilate and the Gestapo. This should give us cause to rethink

such ideas about the Atonement!
 One person may indeed pay another person's penalty. However, if another always pays my speeding ticket, there would be no disadvantage to my speeding. If the taxpayers always bail out the banks, there would be no disadvantage to being fiscally irresponsible. If Jesus had been stoned and the woman freed, then the penalty would have been paid by him, instead of her. However, if Jesus had been stoned along with her (a more reasonable possibility) then Jesus would have suffered her penalty with her for her sake, and she would have experienced his "reward," through union with him in death. On the Cross, Jesus suffered the penalty of sin for our sake, along with us not instead of us. The just did indeed suffer for the unjust for their sake, but along with them not instead of

them. God did lay on his Anointed the punishment of us all for our sake, but along with us not instead of us.
 At the Reformation, the substitution theory gave rise to two warring camps, associated with the terms "imputation" and "infusion." One group believed that, when the merits of Christ were imputed to us, we were saved once for all time. This event is justification, received by faith, not works. The other group believed that the merits of Christ were infused over a whole lifetime. These events constituted the process of sanctification and, this group believed that we would not know whether we would be saved until the Final Judgment. With the benefit of the story of the woman taken in adultery, it is now possible to advance a theory, which embraces the

best parts of these two positions. The purpose of Law, Wrath, and penalty is to reveal our sin so that we may seek God's forgiveness. However, because sinners understand neither themselves (Rom 7:23) nor God, they are unable to make an accurate confession. By being sinless, Christ can. He can confess to God for us and pronounce forgiveness for God to us. His is a priestly role. What he does indeed we cannot do for ourselves. The merit of his action is imputed to us, and we receive the benefit by faith, not by works. We are justified by faith and forgiven. However, we still sin. In one sense, we are Christians since we belong to Christ. In another sense, we are not, since we do not always act like Christ. Throughout our lives, we must continue to return for correction and forgiveness so that

grace may be infused in us and we may be sanctified.
 Although we are saved by grace not works, this does not mean that works are not important, as James insisted in his Letter. Justification by faith does not mean that we shall escape the Final Judgment, when it is our works that will be judged. If we submit to the judgment, we have the assurance of Christ's forgiveness. This insight is important. To set justification by faith over judgment produces the smug complacency of God's antinomian elect. It is a very great sin to opt out of the battles of life by relying on the merits of Christ. Seeking to avail ourselves of cheap grace comes at a high cost. By neglecting to develop our full potential, we cheat ourselves out of the abundant life, which God intends for all of us.

Loving Our Limits



MARTHA TATARNIC
PRIEST-IN-CHARGE ST. HILDA'S OAKVILLE
PASTORAL CARE COORDINATOR, ST. JUDE'S OAKVILLE

It's not easy being back at work after maternity leave. It's good, but not easy. I thought that my life was full in the pre-Cecilia days when I was simply working full-time as a priest. Then I thought that life was full post-Cecilia with the constant whirl of activity of a new baby and the sharp learning curve of having no clue what I was doing in the parish department 95% of the time. A new definition of 'full' naturally happened when I started back to work last May. And then when I received my new appointment to St. Hilda's, while continuing to work part-time at St. Jude's, with the full-time parent part a non-negotiable, I realized that I had reached my limit long ago and something would have to give.

As the people who care about me often do, someone asked me one day how I was managing my various commitments. I said that it was challenging but that the fact that I am now a mother was preventing me from over-working. "I have to be home at a reasonable time for Cecilia. I have

to take my day off. I can't be out every night," I said. "There's enough work at the two parishes to keep me busy twenty-four-seven. But I can't do that. So every day is a reminder of my own limits. I do what I can do. I can't do everything."

Shifting priorities

I thought about that conversation afterward. It sounded so negative! *I can't do everything. I'm busy. Boo hoo.* Why didn't I spin my limitations around? Say something about God's power? *'Every day I realize that I can't do everything. But that just gives me a chance to recognize God's power.'* Why didn't I say something like that?

For one thing, this statement didn't feel negative when I made it. And it still doesn't. When I said, 'every day is a reminder of my own limits,' the words came out of my mouth with a sense of buoyancy and hope. As someone who is a perpetual over-achiever, who behaves as if every responsibility entails a referendum on my self-worth, and who is rightfully accused on a regular basis of setting my expectations too high, slamming up against my limits has been a positive development. It is good to realize that there is more that I could do, and infinitely helpful to simultaneously realize that my priorities have shifted and I can only do so much.

Gregory of Nyssa, an early Orthodox theologian, had some enlighten-

ing things to say about human limitations. It was my husband Dan who brought his words to my attention. Gregory says that as human beings, we are limited. We may be created in the image of God, but whereas God is eternal and unbounded, we are mortal, we are locked into particular bodies, particular consciousnesses, particular expressions and modes and perspectives. Although we chafe up against these limitations, and in many cases attempt to transcend them all together, our limitations are in fact what make us beautiful. It is the limits of our body and our soul and our spirit and our minds that give each and every one of us form. In fact, it is what gives each of us a unique, a specifically individual, form. The uniqueness of each living human form has been the inspiration for countless expressions of art, of music, poetry, and literature for thousands of years. It is what makes this human journey so interesting, what brings to our encounters with one another so much joy, mystery, adventure, and wonder. We may find ourselves standing before the majesty of the 'More than we can ask or imagine' God with our jaws dropped to the floor, but so too do we stand in amazement at the beauty of the flawed and frail reality of mortal life.

Dreaming expansively

Perhaps there are people who will read this article and will relate in some

sense to this revelation. Who will find, as I did, some delight and joy and hope in loosening their grip on the elusive trophy of accomplishment. But it occurs to me, on reflecting about the wider life of our diocese right now, that my experience might open some wider points of consideration as well.

We are beginning some lively and imaginative conversations right now in the Diocese of Niagara as Bishop Michael invites us into shared consideration of where God might be calling us to journey. We are dared to dream expansively, to think widely, to creatively and boldly venture 'outside of the box' of what has always been done, what we think we need to look like, what church should be.

In that conversation, however, there are some limits. There are some limits, and it is not settling for less, or shutting the conversation down, to acknowledge them. It is instead being clear about the form, the particularities of our context, within which God has asked us to offer something beautiful and life-giving to the world. It is, in fact, only in acknowledging our God-given, blessed and blessing, limitations, that we can then truthfully, with integrity, honesty, vision and a sense of delighted anticipation, re-new the offering of who we will be as God's church.

Looking inside the box

So. What box, what limitations, do

we want to think outside? We want to think outside any box that might prescribe who is and who isn't welcome in God's Kingdom. We want to think outside the ubiquitous cultural box of consumerism, of the messages of 'more, more, more', 'bigger, faster, newer, better', or 'you are not enough, you do not have enough, you need to have more in order to be enough'. We want to think outside the box that all of us can find so seductive, the knee-jerk-reaction box of 'we've always done it this way,' and therefore, 'this is the only way it can be.'

But if we are going to make the choice of intentionally and thoughtfully looking outside such boxes that can be stifling and imprisoning, we can also creatively and joyfully look inside the box. Inside the box of Anglican identity. Inside the box of a centering and binding tradition of common prayer, common prayer that has much greater elasticity and flexibility than we sometimes give it credit. Inside the box of table fellowship, which is our primary symbol, and I would even say source, of unity.

God has given particular gifts, particular form, particular beauty to our Anglican church. These particulars must be honoured, must shape and guide our conversation with one another. I can attest to the fact that there is joy to be found in loving our limits.

Make a real difference - share your Christmas with a family in need...

Christmas is coming but it won't be an easy time for hundreds of families that will be registering with St. Matthew's House Christmas Adopt-a-family program early in November. If you, your family, parish, choir or group are looking for a special way to share your Christmas with a family experiencing hard times, St. Matthew's House offers you an opportunity to make a real difference.

Last year St. Matthew's House Christmas program helped **4,285** family members and individuals. Based on the numbers of families suffering from the impact of poverty in Hamilton - at least one in five -, unemployment and financial hardships, we expect to help as many or more families to enjoy a happier Christmas. Too many of them are at risk of becoming homeless.

Three ways you can sponsor a family:

- Provide the food for Christmas dinner for a family of two to five people or for a larger family.
- Or, provide new unwrapped toys for children or gifts for teenagers.
- Or, sponsor a large or small family by supplying Christmas dinner as well as one new gift for each child according to the size of family chosen. St. Matthew's House suggests gift certificates from A&P, The Barn, Food Basics, Fortinos or No Frills to cover the cost of meat or main course (for the size of family chosen.) You can also supply potatoes, vegetables and dessert.

As a suggested guideline, you should be able to sponsor a family of four for \$150. - \$175. If it is not feasible to provide food or gifts, you can help sponsor a family by giving a donation to:

St. Matthew's House Christmas Adopt-a-family Program
St. Matthew's House
414 Barton Street East, Hamilton, L8L 2Y3
Income tax receipts will be provided



St. Matthew's House provides sponsors with first names of family members, plus ages and sizes of children. Sponsors will bring the food and gifts to the Christmas program site located at: **The Wentworth Campus, Mohawk College, 196 Wentworth St. North, Hamilton on December 10, 11 and 12** for distribution to families.

Families registered at St. Matthew's House are eligible for assistance from only one agency, thereby avoiding duplication.

Please call **Debra House** at St. Matthew's House (905) 523-5546 until October 31. After November 3, please call the Christmas Program (905) 522-4584 if you wish to sponsor a family or to obtain more information. Thank you for remembering children and families most in need at St. Matthew's House this Christmas. We send our best wishes for every blessing to you and your loved ones this Christmas season.



St. Matthew's House
Helping People Most in Need Across Hamilton

SHOOT READY AIM »

All I want for Christmas is forgiveness

HOLLIS HISCOCK
RETIRED PRIEST - BURLINGTON

SHOOT - The photograph

The Shack, a novel by William P. Young, captivated my reading time this fall and forced me to ask, 'was forgiveness present in the manger when Jesus was born in Bethlehem?'. The attached photo shows our former cabin, which until this summer was part of our lives for over 35 years.

In our Newfoundland neighbourhood, there were three categories of summer dwellings, referred to humorously as cottages, cabins and shacks. The latter were considered the lowest classification. When I began to read *The Shack*, my thoughts were transported along three decades of time as I relived our happy memories, our sad occasions, our struggles and our eureka moments which we experienced in our cabin in the woods.

READY - Words behind the photo

In *The Shack*, William Young relates the story of a man who received a personal invitation from God to spend a weekend in a cabin, where four years earlier his young daughter is believed to have been murdered after being abducted during a family camping trip.

The story is compelling in itself, but two special themes jumped out for me.

Firstly, it is the best description of the Trinity (three persons and one God) I have ever read. The Athanasius Creed (Book of Common Prayer page 695) may provide the skeletal outline of the Trinity, but this author adds physical attributes, personality, emotions, intellect, spirit and other God/human components which blend effectively to explain the interpersonal relationship among the three persons and one God, and how the Trinity

works together to become a living force in the lives of people.

The second message, so powerfully presented, revolves around our understanding of and application of 'forgiveness'. It deals not only with our inner cleansings, but also our external healings and renewing of relationships with other people.

At that juncture I posed two questions, namely, 'was forgiveness present in the manger, stable or shack where Jesus was born?', and, 'did forgiveness occupy a status equal to or just as important as the angels' pronouncement of peace and good will for all God's people?'. If so, it is not readily apparent. We do not sing about forgiveness at Christmas. My quick survey among Church musicians and others drew a blank when I asked if they could name one Christmas carol or song in which 'forgiveness' is mentioned.

Yet, I am intrigued by the notion that forgiveness was there at the first Christmas, and that we should restore it to its rightful prominence. One of the gifts presented to the newly born child by the astrologers was myrrh, a resin substance used in medicine and known for its healing powers. Myrrh symbolizes healing, and forgiveness of oneself or another person is often a prerequisite before healing can take place. These wise men had travelled for several years, enduring every imaginable situation, including strained relationships with their companions, their long absence from their families, and their frustration in not knowing where their ultimate destination would be. However, when they looked into the face of Jesus Christ, I wonder if they felt the power of forgiveness flowing from the baby's eyes.

Those vagabond shepherds, after hearing the angels' message on the hillside, rushed to THE SHACK where they found Jesus lying in the manger. Could it be they were enthralled by the heavenly announcement, or that they just wanted to see a new born baby? Could it be they expected more? They were considered outcasts from their religion and society, so maybe they viewed the whole experience as a form of redemption. Perhaps the reason they returned to the hills 'glorifying and praising God' was that, in addition to the marvellous event they had witnessed, they also felt the inner cleansing brought about by a baby's gift of forgiveness.

Chances are the wise men and shepherds did not live long enough to hear Jesus preach about or offer 'forgiveness' to a variety of individuals. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus reminded His followers that to receive forgiveness a person must also forgive (Matthew 6:9-15); when a woman was brought to him and accused of committing adultery, He forgave her and told her



to 'go and sin no more' (John 8:2-11); and when some men busted a hole in the roof of a house and lowered their paralyzed friend at the feet of Jesus, He healed the man's physical illness with the words, 'your sins are forgiven' (Luke 5:17-26).

Today, in addition to a myriad of problems confronting us as individuals, our world is shaking and quaking at its very foundations. With the global economy faltering, and with recessions, wars and violence depleting our limited resources and straining our relationships, perhaps the time is right to introduce the powerful instrument of forgiveness into national and international diplomatic situations. If applied according to God's prescription, with people practicing forgiveness with one another, we cannot foretell what impact it would have on poverty, conflicts, AIDS, ideological differences, etc.

Soon we will be celebrating Christmas by hearing the timeless Gospel

accounts of Jesus' birth and singing the ageless carols of love, peace, joy and hope. But this year include something extra to the words you hear or say or sing, make a deliberate effort to add forgiveness not only in your thoughts, but also in your actions.

It may change your life and help usher in a new world order.

It may change your life and help usher in a new world order.

AIM - Questions and actions for you

- Read a copy of *The Shack* by William P. Young.
- Where do you place forgiveness in your preparations for Christmas?
- How viable is 'forgiveness' in solving problems on the world stage?
- Hollis would appreciate your feedback on this series.

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The Reverend Hollis Hiscock, a retired priest, lives in Burlington. He is available to do multimedia presentations on spirituality, the Bible and the Christian Faith.

What has happened to our moral code?



GRAHAME STAP
RETIRED PRIEST

Is it just me or is there something really wrong with our scale of values? We can find hundreds of billions of dollars to bailout companies that only needed a bailout because of the enormous greed of the executives that were, in one case, paid fifty million dollars for one year's work; in another case, a signing bonus of eighteen million dollars, then laid off

after three weeks and received a twenty million dollar payout package.

I am not talking just about the U.S. but the whole world - Canada four billion, U.K. eight hundred billion, France four hundred billion... and so it goes on. We cannot imagine the enormity of the total bailout package caused mainly by the greed of maybe .000001% of the world's population who could not care less about the real plight of the people of the world.

One child dies every three seconds of starvation, AIDS, Malaria etc. and we do very little to help. A young girl lies dying on the streets of Toronto and young people stand around taking pictures with their cell phone cameras.

Young men are gunned down and no one comes forward as a witness because they are scared and frankly you can't blame them. The Anglican Church argues as to whether two people who love each other should be allowed to marry in the church.

I wonder why we who call ourselves Christians do not rise up on mass and tell our politicians that if things do not change we will not vote for them in the next election. I know church and state are, and must be, separate but surly the main reason for this is to allow the church to disagree with the state and stand up for the abuse of power.

We just spent three hundred million on an election that was a waste of

time and money. If we had taken this money we could have hired two hundred and forty doctors and paid them two hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year for five years. Many who do not have a family doctor would now have health care. I realize this is too simple a comparison but it makes you think. Out of a population of thirty three million, I suspect there are at least three million that go to all denominations of the church each Sunday, if somewhat irregularly, and most of us have a vote.

Perhaps it is time we stood together and did as Jesus asked us to do and put the need of the hungry, the sick, and the lonely first and not the

needs of the few who take without a thought as to what pain their actions cause.

Since the time of Moses, we have lived by a code of moral behavior - The Ten Commandments - and there were consequences for ignoring the code. It seems this has now all changed and there is no moral code other than the laws imposed by government and the only sin is being caught.

Perhaps it is time to replace the prayers we have taken out of schools with a moral code of behavior and make the consequence of moral injustice count.

However, I realize it's only my opinion.

Refocusing the Advent/Christmas season for families

JANE ROKEBY
DEACON, ST. MATTHIAS, GUELPH

Years ago, when our oldest son was a young boy, this was very stressful time of year for him. As soon as the first Christmas advertising appeared on television and the toy catalogues were delivered, he would begin to worry about what he wanted to get for Christmas, and whether he would get what he wanted — and whether he would like it if and when he did get it! He was not much fun to be around, and his mood affected us all. Perhaps you too experience this with your children!

One year I decided to do something about it, and it was such a success that I want to share it with you. We decided as a family to change our focus from "What do I want for Christmas?" to "What can I do for others to make them happy during this season of joy?"

We made an Advent wreath with four purple or dark blue candles and a white Christ candle in the centre; we started a project called "Krist Kandle" — doing something thoughtful *in secret* for another member of the family each day during Advent (the four weeks leading up to Christmas). Picking a new name each evening was best for us. We used an Advent Calendar along with some Bible readings to help us understand what this season is all about; we built a manger out of popsicle sticks and, using strands of wool as straw, we were able to prepare for the Christ Child by putting a "piece of straw" into the manger each time we did something nice for someone else; we lit lots of candles on our supper table to bring light into the darkness of the December days; we baked Christmas goodies as a family project; and we looked for ways to help make Christ-

mas happier for children who might not have much Christmas without our help - Family and Children's Services could help you out there or perhaps the Salvation Army or St. Matthew's House in Hamilton.

The good news is that it worked! The focus began to change. The whole family began to look forward to the weeks leading up to Christmas with a new and different kind of anticipation and, one year, David (the one whose worrying had got us started) announced that he had "decided that getting ready for Christmas was better even than Christmas day!" It has become such a tradition in our family that when our youngest moved into his own home, one of his first requests was, "Mom, would you make me an Advent Wreath?"

I hope your Advent is full of joy and light and expectation — and a little less stress!



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 >>

Christmas! Whoop-dee-doo!

And it did all this persuasively, with attractive images and sentimental music. And so, by Christmas Eve, after about 7 weeks of a steady diet of all this, our homes will be ready, our gifts purchased, our children will be at the end of yet another endless wait for that old man on his sleigh, and we will be broke. Though expensive and exhausting, it's nevertheless fun. And next year, it will all be repeated.

But just what is all the hoop-la about? We know it's not all about



Behold this Child and you discover all for which the human heart deeply longs...

someone who hand delivers presents to the entire world in a single night. We know it is not merely about sentimental music and nice feelings. We know it has something to do with a sleeping baby in a manger. Recently, the TV ran a commercial for a diaper product featuring a number of sleeping babies. As the camera scanned their beautiful faces, a soft female voice sang: "Silent Night". It was all so lovely. I thought, "Finally, a commercial that will hint at the true meaning of Christmas". However, the words, "All is calm, all is bright", were followed by "Sleep in heavenly peace". Words about a virgin and a "holy infant so tender and mild" had been completely dropped from the song. With many of us not noticing, a much-loved Christian Christmas carol had been altered and secularized and used as an effective tool, not to unwrap the true reason for the season, but rather to sell diapers. Its clear message? With a certain make of diaper, all babies can sleep in heavenly peace.

But regardless, it is Christmas yet

again! Hooray! What joy! Just for the moment, scratch away all those negative aspects associated with this occasion --your exhaustion and disappointment and all those warm and cozy feelings we are all somehow required to experience whenever we mention snowflakes, Santa Claus and Christmas morning. Just for the moment, discard all the clutter now firmly entrenched within the Christmas packaging --all that fluff n' stuff and those human fabrications which have effectively buried the Mother of all Events in a pit of hopeless confusion. Just for the moment, turn away from the FORM of Christmas so that you may behold its SUBSTANCE, the only thing that can cause any of us to "repeat the sounding Joy".

Central to Christmas is nothing silly, nothing we could ever fashion, and nothing merely sentimental. We who were destined to occupy mansions and feast at banquets with Royalty for eternity were never meant to be satisfied with fairy tales or trinkets. Christmas is a treat because, rather than being given things most of us don't really need, we are offered something we all desperately need: something that satisfies our deepest longings; an indispensable something without which we cannot function; something that no amount of money can buy; something we have tasted thus far in only minuscule amounts.

Unwrap The Gift of Christmas and you find a simple, yet confusing and mysterious gift --in the form of a naked and fragile Child who probably began his life crying. Behold this Child and you discover all for which the human heart deeply longs: forgiveness; intimacy; belonging; home; reversal of tragedy; release from captivity; endings to alienation, to sorrow and to hostilities. Behold this Child and you are gripped with a deep sense

that there is Someone out there in the blackness who hears OUR crying and who has acted to do something about it. We were made for nothing less.

Holy Scripture does not tell us that Santa is coming. Rather, in Isaiah 9, we are told that LIGHT is coming. We are described as people for whom a mysterious flash of brilliant light has suddenly penetrated the darkness of lives residing in the shadows of death. In Isaiah 40 we read that GOD is coming. Isaiah 40 also declares that PEACE is coming. In words saturated with great comfort, the prophet declares that the state of war which has existed since the Fall has been terminated. God has acted to end our alienation and to pardon our iniquity. In Zechariah 2, we are told that HOPE is coming. And again, in Zechariah 9, we are called to rejoice greatly, because SALVATION is coming, and also, because a KING is coming. The coming of LIGHT; the coming of PEACE; the coming of HOPE; the coming of SALVATION; the coming of a KING; the coming of GOD himself. Packaged together, we discover all these comings within the person of Jesus Christ, our God, our King, our Hope, our Peace, our Salvation. He is the mother of all Christmas gifts. Much much more than a fictitious person in a red suit; much, much more than a mere cuddly baby in a feeding trough. The one who fashioned the constellation Orion, the One who conceived of you and me before the foundation of this planet was formed, and then meticulously assembled each one of us with his fingers, slipped into our world as God in miniature to pitch his tent among us. What a Story! What a reason to celebrate. Whoop dee do!

"And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Caralei Peters MSc, ND
DOCTOR OF NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

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