



# Niagara Anglican

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## A transformative encounter

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

Of the five priorities in the emerging diocesan vision for ministry, the one that stirs me strong and stirs me deep is "Life-changing worship experience". The language worries me a bit, because it can sound like one of those grim attempts to change people in which the church has been tangled up in every age. In modernity, those attempts were often framed in terms of worship techniques or mechanics that drive the emotions of participants in the desired direction.

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## Renewed, inspired and nourished

**PETER WALL**  
DEAN, RECTOR OF CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

In the Diocesan vision statement being introduced throughout the Diocese, which forms a significant part of our Synod on March 28, one of the petals of the vision flower is life changing worship experience. This is within the overarching vision statement: Following Christ passionately, we pursue excellence, practise justice, and grow.

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## Justifying justice

**ELEANOR JOHNSTON**  
ST. THOMAS, ST. CATHARINES

In 1824, a Scottish shepherd and man of letters, William Hogg, wrote a satiric novel, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, in which the main character steals, rapes and murders his way through life, confident that his sins will be forgiven on Judgment Day. Claiming to be saved by Jesus, believing himself to be of the elect, justified by faith, sanctified, and predestined to eternal joy, he was both extreme Calvinist and madman.

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# The status quo is *not* an option



■ Michael Patterson and others from Diocese of Niagara join together in a vigil of prayer for the poor and those affected by the recession held at Queen's Park.

**MICHAEL PATTERSON**  
EXECUTIVE ARCHDEACON, DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

Early in the spring of 2008, Bishop Michael Bird stuck his head in my office and stated, "I have an idea." "Say more", I said. The Bishop then went on to articulate a sense that he was beginning to feel that business as usual within the life of the church was no longer working. He believed deeply that the Church was being called by God to something new but, at that time, was unable to really discern what that "something new" was. What Bishop Michael was able to do was to identify through the personal experience of his family and ancestors, that the status quo is no longer an option. We, the Church, needed to re-claim the place of justice making and again be the voice for those who could not speak for themselves. We needed to be, once again, advocates for the poor and the marginalized. And' equally, we have an innate responsibility as Christians to look after our environment and find all means and ways to reverse the damaging effects of climate change for which we are all responsible. The Bishop knew that the

Church had to change; he was passionate about that, there was no doubt.

What began to emerge was not unlike a gathering wind. Soon thereafter the Bishop, with the help of Susan Graham Walker and John Winnup (Anglican consultants), gathered together thirty members of our diocese who assisted in fleshing out the Bishop's emerging vision. It did not take long before those involved recognized that something different and unique was beginning to emerge. There was a commitment and passion from those involved that we needed to set a new agenda as a diocese, find new priorities and return to a place where the Church played a pivotal role in our society. Over the succeeding meetings, there were five priorities that were identified that served to inform this new diocesan priority, (each being addressed by others in this paper); Prophetic Justice Making, Cultures of Innovation, Effective Leadership, Life Changing Worshipping Experiences, Effective Resource Management

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# There is no turning back

**CHRISTOPHER GRABIEC**  
EDITOR

As you can see from this edition of the newspaper, the unending journey has begun. The Diocese of Niagara has a relatively new pastor/leader and he has declared the headline that the status quo is not an option – we are journeying toward "excellence in ministry". Like the Israelites in the Old Testament we are now officially in the desert. The journey will be long and arduous and we will at times question the leadership and wonder if we would have been better off staying in Egypt – but there will be no turning back. Like the Israelites seeking the Promised Land, many of us – in fact all of us - will never see the end. Unlike the Israelites seeking the Promised Land, not seeing the end is a good thing. It's the journey that counts.

Michael Patterson makes reference to Pierre Berton's book "The Comfortable Pew". Undoubtedly, a human and

an ecclesial reality, we love the comfortable pew. I remember once going to a Roman Catholic Church and choosing my seat at a Saturday evening liturgy. A middle-aged couple came up to the pew, stared at me, then told me that I had taken their seat. They had been sitting in that pew since they got married! I politely moved.

I also remember two Christmas' ago attending St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue in New York for the Christmas Eve midnight Eucharist. We had walked many blocks to get to the "world famous" church. When we arrived we discovered a line-up that wrapped around the building. (I detest lining-up to get into a church!) As we stood in line, I noticed a good number of people going in the side-door. I was annoyed, thinking that they were allowing the "privileged" into the church while the rest of us stood in the cold.

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## PARISH NEWS



**ST. SIMON OAKVILLE**, Padre Steele Lazerte, a Priest from the Diocese of Niagara currently serving with the Canadian Forces recently received a CEF/COM Commendation from Lieutenant-General Gauthier, Commander of Canadian Expeditionary Forces in Afghanistan, presented by 4 Wing Commander, Colonel St-Amand (Cold Lake, AB). The Commendation is signified by a silver bar bearing 3 maple leaves and is worn when appropriate, on the left lapel below any medals. Padre Lazerte was the Battle Group Chaplain for Joint Task Force Afghanistan from February to August 2007.



## Bishop kicks off 50th anniversary celebration at Transfiguration

On February 22nd, Church of the Transfiguration, St. Catharines was delighted to welcome to the parish for the first time since he was ordained, Bishop Michael Bird. The bishop presided and preached at both regular services. The occasion for his visit was the inauguration of Transfiguration's 50th anniversary celebrations, for which several events are planned in 2009.

Members of the parish, in particular those who have been at Transfiguration since the beginning of the ministry in 1959, are looking forward to a visit by the Rev. Ted Heaven, who will preach at the 10:30 service on Sunday, April 26th. The service will be followed by a lunch in his honour. Mr. Heaven currently resides in Port Hope, Ontario and will be making the

trip to St. Catharines on that day from his home in that city.

On May 2nd, an afternoon tea will be held at Transfiguration at which we hope to see many old friends and acquaintances. For complete details of the year's events, please visit Transfiguration's 50th Anniversary blog at [www.transfiguration50years.wordpress.com](http://www.transfiguration50years.wordpress.com).



■ Men's cake decorating contestants Canon Fred and Al Olsen.

## Cards, cakes and cookies

We mixed fun and laughter with outreach once more

**SUE CRAWFORD**  
ST. MICHAEL'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

In February, the Fellowship Group of St. Michael's met for an evening of culinary creativity. Originally the date set was February 14th to coincide with Valentine's Day but a few of the key players needed to run the evening were away that weekend celebrating Family Day. The event was headlined "Men's Cake Decorating Contest". But we couldn't let the women just sit back and watch the men have all the fun so we had them creating something as well. Tucked away in the kitchen (oops that sounds awfully like stereotyping), some of the ladies decorated heart-shaped cookies that Anne Young had made. Anne had ingeniously devised coloured icing sacks for easy application. She had also brought some nifty decorations to add as well. The result – some extremely fancy cookies were created. Although the cookies were not judged for prizes as were the cakes, many cookies were certainly worthy of praise.

Out in the main hall some of the other ladies took advantage of the materials provided to create St. Patrick's Day cards. This activity had been changed from Valentine's Day cards. Shirley McGill, one of the planners of the evening had suggested this as an alternative and it worked out really well. The cards were made for our Macassa Lodge volunteers to take to the seniors in March. It just so happens that one of our volunteer teams will be at Macassa just prior to March 17. Hopefully the creations will brighten up the residents' day.

Now for the main event - the men's cake decorating contest. The team responsible for the evening had pre-baked 12 cakes. We did keep the cake shapes to hearts (shamrock shapes would have been a little tricky!) We were really pleased that all the men who came out took part in the decorating. Certificates were designed and

awarded in twelve categories. The judging team really had to stretch their imaginations to come up with the twelve categories, but they did. We didn't want any man to feel their cake was not worthy of an award. A couple of the men made a team and worked really well together to win the most professional looking cake award. (Matt Farrell and John Lintack). There were a variety of talents shown. Kudos to Bruce Honeysett who designed the Theme Award Cake. His cake was a tribute to the Tiger Cats. Canon Fred Roberts was awarded the "Fortino's" Gourmet Cake Award for his delicious looking cake and hats off to Gerry Wase, (most resource Award) who brought some of his own decorations to put on his cake. The best cake went to Gary Miller who also took the certificate for most original. His prize – a year's supply of cake mixes – no just kidding he was awarded a bottle of wine. From the positive feedback to the evening it sounds like people hinted at this becoming a yearly event!

Following the awarding of the certificates, each cake was auctioned off to the highest bidder. A maximum amount was suggested and once that amount was reached the bidding closed. With the exception of a few, I believe that most of the designers of the cakes bought their own! Most cakes went for the maximum amount (\$5.00). The total amount collected was \$57.00. The Fellowship Group conducted a vote and it was decided that the money would be sent to St. Mathew's House.

A simple idea, yet it was a great deal of fun and fellowship and for us at St. Michael's still another way for our church to show its support to two of our Outreach Projects. Thanks to the team of Ellie McAughy, Joyce Russell, Shirley McGill, Hyacinth Wood (who unfortunately was unable to join us for the evening but she did call her list) and the writer of this article.

# An Oakville response to baptismal vows

ROSEMARY ANSTEY  
ST. SIMON'S OAKVILLE

At every baptism held at St. Simon's church where I am a member, we renew our baptismal vows including:

■ Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself?

■ Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Bishop Michael Bird has been reminding us of our responsibility to strive toward the Millennium Development Goals, and these vows resonate within me as we affirm our baptismal promises to our God as they so reflect the aims of the MDG.

The people of Africa are our neighbours, but they have little experience of justice or peace and are forced to live lives of poverty and hunger with a high risk of death from many infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS. In Oakville a group of concerned Christians formed the \$Million or More Oakville fundraising campaign for HIV/AIDS in 2007 with the objective of raising awareness within Oakville and coordinating efforts to raise at least one million dollars for the relief of the suffering of those with HIV/AIDS and those impacted by the disease.

Stephen Lewis, the UN Secretary-General's special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa gave the 2005 Massey lectures entitled "Race against Time." He reported visiting a hospital in Malawi in 2002. Every patient was a near cadaver; there were two people to every bed and, in most instances, someone under the bed on the concrete floor. On the ten-hour night shift there was one nurse to care for 60-70 patients. In 2003 he went to a village in Uganda where he found there a family consisting of the blind 86 year old patriarch, his two wives who were 76 and 78 years old and 36 orphan grandchildren aged from 2 to 16. The older children were out of school

because they could not afford the fees and they all survived on just one meal a day.

Why is the impact of AIDS so great in Africa? Before AIDS, Africa was dynamic, hopeful and joyful, even though many of its residents were poor they were not starving and dying. Now virtually every country in East and Southern Africa is a nation of mourners.

In the 1980s and 1990s the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank lent money to African nations – but with conditions. The conditions ranged from the sale of public sector corporations including water supplies, to the imposition of user fees for health and education, and to savage cut-backs in social services including a ban on hiring additional professionals in health and education. In 2002 Malawi was refused permission from the IMF to hire more doctors or nurses or pay better salaries even though they had only one third of the nurses needed and only 10% of the doctors. There were 300 doctors for a population of 12 million – meanwhile there were more Malawi doctors in the UK than in Malawi. According to Lewis one of the critical reasons for Africa's inability to respond adequately to the AIDS pandemic can be explained by user fees in health care and education. The poor cannot afford treatment and are without education.

We have become prosperous through trade. The commodity in Africa is food, but they cannot export at a profit. This seems preposterous, but the farmers in Europe and the United States are subsidized in the amount of \$350 billion (US) a year. In the European Union every cow is subsidized with \$2 per day, while between four hundred and five hundred million Africans live on less than \$1 per day. With so many of the AIDS victims being women, much of the starvation now is due to the fact that the infected women no longer have the strength to farm – why are they not receiving treat-

ment? There is a lack of funds, of health care workers and infrastructure.

An autoimmune disease, later called Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome or AIDS was first described in North America in 1981. When the causative virus of the illness was identified and named Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) in 1984 a test for the virus was quickly developed.

Meanwhile in Africa a new illness had been noticed since the 1970's, named 'Slim disease' because the illness caused extreme weight loss before death. The world-wide medical community took little notice of this disease, the reasons why can only be surmised as due to a lack of concern for deaths in a non-American or European community. Once a test for HIV was available, patients in Africa were tested and Slim Disease was confirmed to be AIDS. Researchers, using the known data of the rate of virus mutation have shown that the virus jumped from a chimpanzee to a human about seventy years ago and had been spreading amongst the population since then. Can you imagine how many people in North America would be infected if the virus of HIV had been around untreated and unchecked for so long here?

Stephanie Nolen, in the introduction to her wonderful book '28 Stories of AIDS in Africa,' states "I know something about what makes news. In the fifteen years I have worked as a journalist, I have reported on some of the biggest stories in the world. There is an undeniable thrill that comes with being in the centre of a big story. But nothing I was sent to cover anywhere in the world compared to what I saw AIDS doing in sub-Saharan Africa. And yet this story never made the news at all."

Various groups in Oakville had been raising money for the Stephen Lewis Foundation prior to 2007, but the efforts were not coordinated. Beginning with a dream of raising a few thousand dollars and inspired by the example of the

oomama group and York Region a core group of members from St. Simon's and St. Jude's Anglican Churches and Walton Memorial United Church was formed. Additional members were recruited and the team agreed on our mission with an emphasis on building awareness of the situation in Sub-Saharan Africa. It was also made clear that this campaign was asking for donations over and above the donations already being made by each resident. An ambitious target of \$1 million donated to any organization for the relief of those suffering the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa was declared. The campaign was launched in late 2007 and will conclude at the end of 2009.

With our campaign now at the half-way mark we are convinced that awareness has indeed increased. The oomama group (Grandmothers to Grandmothers) of the Niagara area have been conducting education in many of the Oakville schools and service organizations. Oakville citizens have together contributed over \$330,000 to projects in Africa. Fund-raising events have been held by churches, schools, the Engineers Union, oomama, Oakville artists and individuals. We pray that 2009 will be full of fund-raising events in order for us to reach our financial target.

Funds raised during events organized by the Million or More committee are donated to the Stephen Lewis Foundation. The Foundation was chosen because of their objective of easing the pain and giving dignity to those suffering the effects of HIV/AIDS and low operating overhead of less than 10%.

The Foundation provides care at the community level to women who are ill and struggling to survive, so that their lives can be free from pain, humiliation and indignity; assists orphans and other AIDS-affected children in every conceivable way from the payment of school fees to the provision food; bolsters the unsung heroes of Africa,

the grandmothers, who bury their own children and care for their orphaned grandchildren; and supports associations of people living with HIV/AIDS – courageous men and women who have openly declared their status so that they can educate themselves and share information with their broader communities on prevention, treatment, care and the elimination of stigma. The projects funded by the Foundation work because they are designed and run by the people of Africa for the people of Africa and they strive to become self-sustaining.

The finest outcome of the campaign has been the cooperation of many schools and different community groups in Oakville including the faith communities. A recent fund-raiser was held in a United church with volunteers from five of the Anglican churches and two United churches. Many of the Oakville churches have held fund-raising events and much of our printing has been provided free of charge by a member of the Zoroastrian faith. The spirit of cooperation between the faith communities will surely remain after this year and give us strengthened ability to confront the many issues of injustice in our local communities, aboriginal communities and throughout the world.

Through the \$Million or More Oakville campaign we have the opportunity to serve Christ in all persons and love our neighbour as we strive for justice and peace for the people of Africa and respect the dignity of every human being.

**Recommended reading (I found both in my local library):**

- Race Against Time by Stephen Lewis (book and tape)
- 28 stories of AIDS in Africa by Stephanie Nolen.

**Recommended websites**

- [www.millionormoresf.ca](http://www.millionormoresf.ca)
- [www.stephenlewisfoundation.org](http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org)
- [www.giveaday.ca](http://www.giveaday.ca)

## Food for life | Parish-level social justice initiative

BLAIR RICHARDSON  
ST. JUDE'S OAKVILLE

Food For Life is a "food recovery" program started by George Bagaco in 1995 in Oakville. He would stop at a friend's bakery on his way home from work, and fill his trunk with baked goods, for distribution to needy families in his neighbourhood. George said, "No man, woman or child should have to go to bed hungry while stores, restaurants and other food suppliers are tossing food into our landfills. Food for Life has grown, with help from many, including Rotary clubs, which donated a vehicle and the Kerr Street Ministries, which provides garage and storage space for freezers and coolers. Food for Life is incorporated, a registered charity and a United Way funded agency. We operate seven days a week, picking up surplus food from grocery stores and restaurants; mostly baked goods, fruit and vegetables, but also meat, dairy and prepared foods, too. We deliver the food same day

to over 40 community agencies and 25 outreach programs, located in Hamilton, Burlington, Oakville, Milton, Acton and Mississauga. The outreach programs are located in social housing complexes and low income neighbourhoods. Here a trained volunteer coordinator receives food deliveries, promotes the availability of the outreach program and ensures that food is distributed equitably to families and individuals in need. The number of outreach programs has more than doubled in the last 12 months, and we are working with new partners, including Tapestry Church, Clearview Church, and the Halton Children's Aid Society.

Volunteer involvement continues to grow: almost 5,700 volunteer hours were contributed in 2007/08. In addition, a significant contribution comes from volunteers with special expertise. Pigeon Design in Oakville produced a new logo for Food for Life. Insite Design in Burlington gave us the new name, logo and tag lines for our new

regional program. Strategic Objectives in Toronto advised on fundraising events and media relations.

To measure outputs accurately, we gathered statistics on the weight of food delivered to agencies and outreach programs in 2008. The daily average weight was 754 pounds. A survey was done on a randomly-selected day to determine the retail value for all the food donated; it was almost \$3.00 per pound. By extension, in 2007/08, Food for Life delivered food worth approximately \$825,000, for an expenditure of about \$85,000. This calculation of costs and benefits omits the value of waste disposal costs and landfill fees which were avoided.

In 2008, the Centre for Community Based Research conducted an evaluation of our outreach programs. The results were very positive indeed. For example, one volunteer coordinator said: "One thing that Food for Life really stressed to us which we were totally on the same

page is that you want to instill a sense of ownership... it's really something for the people in the complex, it's run by the people in the complex, we're not service providers, we're coming together and we're working together."

There was significant progress with our new regional program, ReFresh Foods. In October 2007, the report on the feasibility study was distributed to stakeholders. It recommended the establishment of a central warehouse and refrigerated transportation to bring a fresher and more nutritional mix of food to food banks and front-line social service agencies. It also recommended collective solicitation of food targeted at the corporate food sector in Halton Region. The Food for Life Board volunteered to lead the project to full implementation and this offer was accepted by stakeholders. To date, \$500,000 has been raised, including a grant to buy our new hybrid refrigerated truck. A volunteer with

the Georgetown Bread Basket Food Bank was hired to solicit corporate food donations, and a Program Director was hired in September, 2008. An agreement was signed for Burlington warehouse space and related services. The Ontario Association of Food Banks has given its permission, so that ReFresh Foods now participates in the Provincial Food Distribution Network and in the National Food Sharing System. ReFresh Foods was officially launched in December, 2008. In two months, over 30,000 pounds of food has been donated.

With its outreach program model, requiring no new infrastructure costs, and offering ease of access to families in need, Food for Life is a worthy candidate for parish support. This parish-level initiative would fit neatly in the prophetic social justice making component, which is a part of the plan entitled "Pursuit of Excellence in Ministry" of the Diocese.

## The parishioners of St. George's Lowville wish Reverend Susan Wells a Happy Birthday

While Susan counted her 65 years on February 25th, we at St. George's (Lowville) were counting our blessings.

Susan: Our Priest, Servant, Friend and Leader—always at work on our behalf!

She is a fair-minded, non-judgmental woman who cares about each of us—in any time of sickness, loss, or hurt, we can expect a house call. Susan is ever ready to serve as our priest and friend—sometimes this has meant to just stand alongside. She is always ready

to celebrate Holy Communion or pray a simple prayer for healing and comfort.

Susan is a faithful fan of the St. George's baseball team—rain or shine (second only to her beloved Hamilton Tiger Cats). She is a fun-loving person and does much to bring us together, e.g. regular Sunday morning breakfasts, picnics, monthly get-togethers for the whole church family at a local pub.

For Susan, her 'calling' includes the whole package: shovelling our church

walks before we arrive on Sunday mornings; mopping our church floors when the plumbing freezes; building maintenance when the wind blows the shingles off. She makes sure that all the little corners of the church (cupboards included) are being kept clean and tidy—bringing honour, respect and order to God's house.

A proven-to-be wise, honest, plain-spoken and fearless leader, Susan does not procrastinate. With her innate com-

mon sense, business acumen and experience, she evaluates a situation and moves into decision making mode with ease. We trust her and respect her and are proud to be associated with her at all times.

With a great love for her son, daughter-in-law and the little grandsons (and playful pet 'ball-chasing' Buddy) Susan has a great heart for Christian ministry. The example of her life is having a compelling impact on us. She inspires all of us to participate in ministry and assures

us that we are all called to serve—always ready to reach out with love everywhere just as Jesus Christ taught us to do.

Susan may not be described as "tall" physically but we know her to be very 'tall'—from sermon to sermon, crisis to crisis and in times of pain and happiness, we get to experience her great gifts.

On February 25th, we counted our blessings while Susan counted her birthdays. Many happy returns of the day, Susan! Let's celebrate!

## The church on the Corner

ETHEL PELL  
ST. ALBAN'S, HAMILTON

The Church on the corner is situated on Cope and Britannia Streets and named St. Alban the Martyr. It is surprising how many people say they did not know it was a church. Many times during my hospital ministry, I would tell people from the East End of Hamilton about St. Alban and describe where it was situated. It does not have a steeple or large bell tower and before my time there it was just a basement.

My late husband Reg and I were looking for a new parish home in the 60s after St. Matthew's was destroyed by fire. It was not easy to start in a new parish after being at St. Matthews for twenty years, but the welcome we

got was very warm and friendly. You know, we are not angels and like most parishes have our disagreements, but then we are a family!

If you like daffodils, then come and see, St. Albans next spring. Thanks to a parishioner and some of the young people and the years, our garden is a show place and as good as the RBG... or as I see it, even better. When the daffodils are finished summer and fall flowers are in bloom and the lawn looks its best. The garden reflects what goes on inside. Your warm welcome, joyful worship and 'get together' for coffee after the service. Old and young can feel at home. The largest part of our congregation at the time of writing are thirty nine years plus and many are on pensions, but we

collect for St. Matthew's House weekly. PWRDF and Bequia Mission are also part of our outreach.

We have over the years sponsored four students on the Island of Bequia and now help the Sunshine School which is for children and young people with disabilities to help them develop what skills they have. At Christmas we have our 'Jessie tree' and the gifts collected would bring tears to your eyes when you see them around the altar. We also have a family from St. Matthew's House.

We have had good Rectors who by their gifts have helped St. Alban's grow in the faith and we pray that God will help the Church on the corner grow. We need a few more people less than thirty nine years.

## Amateurs | Step up to the Plate



IAN DINGWALL  
RETIRED ARCHDEACON DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

"If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly."

I remember commending that piece of advice in a sermon and receiving quite a spirited critique at the coffee hour following the Service. My critic was disturbed that I seemed to be promoting a compromised work ethic.

The quotation is from *What's Wrong with the World?*, a well received book written in 1910 by G. K. Chesterton. But, returning to 2009, what was my sermon critic so worried about?

As I stated above, her fear was that if one took the advice literally, it would produce shoddy results. But, in fact, Chesterton's suggestion, if taken in the way he perceived it, would do the opposite. The following are a few of the points he made in his own defense. He stated that the people who found his words dangerous were trapped by a fear of failure. They would accept a challenge and because their fundamental concern was that it might (or would) fail then that, at all costs, was to be avoided. They rejected the theory that risk is almost always present in any worthwhile endeavour.

Chesterton however would challenge us to proceed and, if we seem to be failing in the task, then resist being crestfallen for "If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly". That advice, well taken, should give us courage to tackle difficult tasks (knowing we might not succeed) but the more we attempt, the more we will succeed.

From Chesterton we learn that perhaps the amateur is more important, at times at least, than the professional. The amateur attempts to do good out of love and not remuneration, as does the generalist compared to the specialist. The amateur's love accepts the risk of failure and moves ahead. In this we find the importance of ordinary people called to accomplish extra-ordinary things. Surely

there is something of immense importance here for the Community of Faith (we call it Church). For years and years we have talked about the ministry of the laity but, at least from my perspective, it is just that: talk.

The laity are still, to a great extent, a frozen asset. Instead, we place our trust in the specialists. Sometimes these specialists are called Vicars. A Vicar is one who does a task for someone who cannot, or doesn't care to, do it him or herself. Sometimes they might be tagged with the title of Rector. Here's a word that originally meant "ruler"; the idea being that we have a whole group of congregants who meet together and wait to be told what they must do if they wish to further the Kingdom. I acknowledge that we have improved somewhat from the image of being God's Frozen People which was the title of a 1950's book which contended that the Laity were bottled up in a system that was hierarchically paralytic. Improved somewhat: but not enough.

We need the "amateurs" to step up to the plate and assume leadership. And, as they do their job, allow the "specialists" (vicars, rectors etc.) to be resource people who are ready and able to assist. That would mean a real change for the church for it would involve all of us to adjust our priorities. For example, our congregational life would change with the laity as the vanguard leaders who make the decisions along with the clergy and other full time paid ministers. The change would also affect the church outside the parish. The diocese would see itself as a family of churches bound together by our common allegiance to the Gospel with the bishop as the community's symbol of unity and purpose. The governing synod and its working arm in the synod office would become a center that exists solely for the benefit of the parishes. We would become a servant church, not only in the "talk" but also in the "walk." And we could do all this because we'd dare to take risks remembering... "that if a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly".

Thank you Gilbert Keith Chesterton for your helpful advice!

## Lessons from my garden



MARNI NANCEKIVELL  
DIRECTOR OF INTERIM MINISTRY

I am what I playfully call a "theoretical gardener". As winter turns to spring, I can imagine how exciting it would be to plan my garden for the coming year. Having a Garden Center down at the end of my street, and having lived in our current house for fifteen years, I know well which plants do best in our eastward facing house, where the front lawn gets relatively little sun, and the back yard gets a great deal. So it is easy for me to take a jaunt down to Cudmore's on Lakeshore and breathe in the inspiration of fresh seed packets, shiny new tools, garden accessories and the icicle pansies and imagine with renewed enthusiasm just what I can do with the garden *this* year.

But then, reality strikes me. The lawn which as I write is losing its snow cover of winter looks none to promising. There are sticks and dried leaves to gather up still. There are mushy spots where the backyard is at its lowest. The lawn will need rolling and feeding. Quite frankly, I lose heart. It is all too easy for me to sigh and go inside, where I don't have to think about pruning and trimming, planting and aerating.

This year especially, my beloved

father-in-law, who has loved gardening, and has often pitched in when I have stalled out is very ill, and I am missing his wisdom and practised experience about just to what level our roses prefer to be pruned. I have lost over the winter too, another valued friend who had a passion for gardening and an artist's eye, and could imagine and inspire me with what kind of a silk purse might be made out of the sow's ear of our little lot.

So there is no doubt that this year, I will have to rely on my own devices in order to maintain what we have, and to create a little more than what we had last year in our domestic plot.

It seems to me that our inner life is a lot like that. We can appreciate the support, encouragement and wisdom of others (aka: the saints), but when push comes to shove, what we make of our spiritual journey is often up to us.

The lesson of Easter though is that out of deadness comes life, out of hopelessness blooms hope and joy beyond our imagining.

Elsewhere in this paper, you will read that "what has been" is not enough neither for us as individuals, nor for our church as we live and minister in these difficult waning days of this first decade of this millennium. We can no longer rely on ways of being, models of ministering that have been tried and true. There is no doubt in my mind, as we look at our balance statements, and the increasingly empty pews in many of our churches that our imaginations must

now stretch beyond reverie into action.

In the Diocese of Niagara, we are blessed by the visionary leadership of our Diocesan Bishop Michael Bird who is firmly helping us to encounter why "what has been" is no longer sufficient, and who has the imagination, faith and will to challenge us into enacting what might be. I am profoundly grateful, both as a person of faith, and as one who is engaged in ministry for the model he is living out in our midst. Our Bishop is living out the Easter message; that out of the risks that surround us can come the power of vibrant life, as certain as the New Resurrection Life of that first Easter Day.

This year as I contemplate my garden, I promise you that my contemplation will be translated into action. I can rely only on my own will and muscle. For what has been is no longer possible – and I know through experience that new life dwells below the surface of the earth that surrounds us. This week, I hope to see born into our garden the tulips and daffodils that I planted on a particularly sad, cold fall day in 2008. They will be a reminder that all that is required on my part is a bit of faith and action. Out of that venture, I trust, will be borne something beautiful and new.

May you too have a blessed and life-filled Easter, rich beyond all imagining. May you too recognize all that is necessary for each one of us is a little faith, and a lot of action, as we cultivate the Garden of Life.

# Understanding the fall

**COLIN C. M. CAMPBELL**  
TEACHER, DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

The traditional doctrine of original sin states that the human race fell from a state of original perfection in which there was no suffering, conflict (not even among animals) or death. God inflicted these evils on everyone as a punishment for the sin of Adam. As well as being historically untenable, this viewpoint has always been beset by theological problems; such as, if everything was perfect, what could have tempted Adam to sin? Is it not unjust to punish everyone for one man's sin? Then, there were the issues of the salvation of the heathen and the fate of unbaptised babies. It is time to restate the doctrine in a more acceptable way. To jettison it, however, leads to other difficulties, such as establishing the necessity of Christ's death, traditionally viewed as required to atone for Adam's sin. The present article will present a view of original sin, which is compatible with historical anthropology, resolves the theological issues, and is consistent with Scripture, though not with traditions which are derived ultimately from St. Augustine.

Augustine believed that, once upon a time, a perfect couple lived in a perfect world, with an eating prohibition, imposed by God. When Adam sinned, at Eve's prompting, God not only afflicted the world with disease, natural disasters, animal conflict, and death, but also withdrew the gift of integrity from Adam's soul and from the souls of all his descendants, so that everyone now necessarily sins. According to Augustine, this fault was transmitted, like any other genetic characteristic, by sexual intercourse, making sexual intercourse sinful, in his view. This is his explanation for the universality of unhappiness, despite his belief in a mysteriously loving God. A survey of the Latin and Greek Fathers reveals that not one of them held Augustine's views. Regrettably, the Western Church adopted them, admittedly in a milder form. The Eastern Church never accepted them.

It is helpful to consider the reality of original sin separately from theories, which explain its cause. It is a scientific fact that happiness depends on having successful relationships. Human beings are genetically determined to need people. Mutual love and respect are the basis for successful relationships and healthy parental conditioning teaches children the memes necessary to accomplish this. (I am borrowing Richard Dawkins' term, meme, as a synonym for a rule of conduct.) Memes shape, as "shoulds," the need for friends, coded in the genes. Human beings share with animals such basic instincts, as the need for food and shelter. These are coded in the genes, as "wants." A person's genes may urge conduct, which the memes forbid. In mentally healthy people, however, there is no conflict between shoulds and wants. Such persons want to do what they should. In theological language, they have the gift of integrity.

Memes represent a contract between society and the individual. If the memes are defective, the individual will break the rules and follow his animal instincts for emotional or physical

survival. In our economically divided world, the rules, which we live by, fail us all. Based on growth and consumerism, our developed society motivates by pride and greed; and the fear of unemployment, if we lose our marketability. In the developing world, fear of poverty is the norm. When it is to their benefit and there is no rule against it, people sin quite readily. When the rules threaten their survival, people also sin quite readily. They create a class of "bad" people. Fortunately, in Canada, the rules work for enough people that our society coheres. Law-abiding citizens create a class of "good" people. However, if the rules cease to work for them, they quickly become "bad." If the marginalized plead that they need special rules to help them, "good" people respond with token support and so show that they are "bad," in a different sort of way. With the current social norms, individual sinlessness is impossible. Fallen memes and healthy genes lead to social Darwinism, with self-centred winners and embittered losers – hardened sinners both.

The genes were created by God and are not "fallen." Memes were created by society and are! Human beings need to receive their memes from God. Jesus reveals who God is, what he expects from us, and how he helps us to find happiness. He lives out "the way, the truth, and the life," which God requires of every person. No one can come to God in any other way. This is the standard by which all other faiths must be judged.

Although there never was an original perfection, as Augustine understood it, it is reasonable to believe that God used evolution to create human beings with the capacity for sinlessness. Animals and children are not held accountable for their actions. When human beings act like animals or adults act like children, they are. Human beings retain instincts, which enable animals to survive. However, their capacity for advanced cooperation gave them an evolutionary advantage, which required them to discipline their animal instincts. God evolved in them the genetic ability to "love [him] with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and their neighbour as [themselves]."

Traditionally, Anglicans have believed in the inspiration of Scripture. If we look beyond its mythological imagery, Genesis explains the origin of sin and its consequences. We find there that basic sin is the desire to usurp the place of God and to live without reference to him. God's punishment for sin is exile from fullness of life, but he cares for sinners by protecting them. These elements must have operated in the past, creating a state in which society could no longer correct itself, requiring God to do it in the person of Jesus Christ.

A major difference between the theologies of the Western and Eastern Churches is their interpretation of original sin. The Western Church has traditionally believed in an inherited guilt, inflicted on us all, as punishment for the sin of Adam. After the Fall, the soul was different. The Eastern Church teaches that the human soul, at birth, is

as excellent as it was in the first human beings. However, due to ancestral sin, it now has a "propensity to sin." It is possible to reconcile these viewpoints. God has assigned responsibility for a child's moral development to its parents and society. Ancestral sin results in faulty conditioning. The Eastern Church is correct. However, since God cannot work perfectly through flawed parents, he is unable to infuse the grace necessary to accomplish his purposes. He "punishes" all for the sake of "Adam." The Western Church also is correct. To be able to infuse grace perfectly, God would have to create a new humanity. That is what he does in the person of Jesus. By adoption, as we surrender our wills to the operation of grace within us, our psychological integrity is restored.

Shifting the effect of original sin from the genes to the memes is important. If our genes were fallen, then our very nature would have been fallen. If Jesus took on that nature then he could not have been sinless. On the other hand, if he was sinless, then he could not have taken on our supposedly fallen genes and so could not have redeemed our nature, since his nature would have been different from ours. We could never become like him and he would become merely a device used by God to justify us. On the other hand, if it is our memes, which are fallen, then Jesus could battle against them with our nature, just as we have to. Paul does not shrink from this conclusion, saying that Jesus "was made sin for us." Whereas we lose the battle, he wins the victory, creating new memes – God's memes, which are counter-intuitive to the ones, which are "natural" to us. This means that he had to be radically different from us, in one respect. The Holy Spirit was able to operate perfectly in him, unlike in us, making him "a new creation" and "the first-born of many brethren." This is the difference between Jesus and us, which Augustine and the Western Church sought to affirm, without the help of modern psychology and genetics, echoing Paul's words, "As in Adam all fell, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." Paul probably believed in a literal Adam. He had no reason not to. We do! Our new understanding does not affect Paul's central point - that "all fall short of the glory of God" and that in Christ "all shall be made alive."

Theologies, which insist on a literally perfect couple, living in a literally perfect world, with an eating prohibition and a talking snake, are anachronisms, which are best abandoned. Once this is done, a new understanding of God's purposes becomes possible. Whereas suffering used to be seen as a sign of sin and alienation from God, it may now be seen as the companion of all adventure and achievement. When I want excitement, God gives me setbacks and the courage to persevere. When I want wisdom, God gives me problems and inspires me with insight. When I want friends, God gives me broken people to help. When I want God to help me, he asks me to help him. In other words, God has given me everything that I wanted but nothing in the way that I wanted it. Thanks be to God!

# Whose vision is it anyway?

We are all invited to Catch the Vision...



**LYNNE CORFIELD**  
ARCHDEACON, RECTOR, ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST,  
NIAGARA FALLS

"Twentieth century Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci discussed the relationship between those who lead and those who follow in his *Prison Notebooks*. He argued that in any revolution there is intellectual elite which leads the mass of the population forward into its next stage of historical evolution... In other words, the successful leader has a vision with which he/she will take his/her people into the future which is simultaneously visionary and grounded in the passion and experience of the people." (Quoted from 'Beyond a Walled Garden' by Wendy Fletcher-Marsh)

What this means is to affect change there needs to be a leader who can articulate a vision and a grass roots movement who are working to bring about the same end. Wendy's book tells the story of the successful movement for the ordination of women in Canada versus the long and arduous struggle for the same end in the Church of England. The premise of her book lies in Gramsci's theory... to affect change there needs to be a leader with a vision and a grass roots movement working towards the vision. We are fortunate that in the Diocese of Niagara we have that in place and the grass roots movement is beginning to grow. There are other articles in this issue of the paper that will explain the evolution of the vision that began with Bishop Michael but is now much bigger and more widely owned.

We will only be successful in Niagara with this new culture of innovation if we all get on board, get behind, join the movement, rejoice in change and the opportunity for growth... ultimately the opportunity to share the Good News... isn't that our reason for existence?

At the parish level it is important that we provide many and multi-layered opportunities to speak of the vision and to encourage people to share in the vision. At St. John's in Niagara Falls we held a Parish Planning Day in January which is a hang-over pattern from the days of the David Gordon Stewardship campaign. This year we dedicated our time together to focussing on The Vision for Niagara and asking ourselves where our work as disciples of Christ supported this Vision and where we were challenged.

A simple format began with looking at the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion: 1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom 2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers 3. To respond to human need by loving service. 4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society 5. To strive to safe-

guard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth. Then we reviewed the eight Millennium Development Goals, and our Baptismal Covenant's five 'will you questions. After this important ground work was laid we moved on to spending in-depth time on the five buckets or petals of The Vision. It is possible to download a PowerPoint presentation from the Diocesan website which makes for an easy presentation! In small groups with each group looking at a different petal we worked for about 45 minutes asking where do we support this vision and where are we challenged? We allowed lots of time to hear back from each group and it was surprising for us to realize how much we were already doing, but also how many places we faced challenges.

After sharing a nutritious lunch we gathered for a time of brainstorming. The participants were invited to dream big dreams and to wonder - if time and money and resources were no problem what could we do, with God's help? Many more great ideas were generated and shared with the larger group.

We ran out of time with so much energy and enthusiasm in the room so we decided that we needed round two. Another group met in February with a facilitator who helped us to choose two or three projects that were manageable and would have a significant impact for our ministry together. The facilitator of our part two visioning day, Brian Lloyd, who is a professional project manager developed these ten commandments of running a project.

## Ten Commandments of Project Management

1. Set a clear project goal (begin with the end in mind)
2. Determine the project objectives (goals)
3. Establish checkpoints (milestones), activities, relationships (how tasks are interrelated), and time estimates
4. Draw a picture of the project schedule
5. A project is as much about people as it is a goal
6. It is important that everyone believes in the goal(s)
7. Keep everyone connected with updates about progress
8. Build a plan that vitalizes (win/win) team members
9. Empower yourself and others involved
10. Encourage risk taking and creativity but manage it closely

We are pilgrims on a journey and our work has only just begun. In following this simple format in a four hour time frame we discovered how much fun it is to be part of this grass roots movement that can and will affect change, together!

If anyone would like help with facilitating a Visioning time such as this please contact me and I will be happy to assist in any way that I can as we pursue excellence in ministry together.

# Our God is too small



Humanity has a propensity for belief in the Divine and is taking a very long time to come to terms with it.

**SUSAN WESTALL**  
ALL SAINTS, HAMILTON

What a challenge the *Niagara Anglican* presents us! I have not found a single article during the past three or four years that has not given me some food for thought, and yet I have not found that much discussion of the articles. Last month I welcomed the comments of Roger Tulk; this month I find inspiration, not for the first time, in Michael Thompson. Our editor deems it unnecessary to identify the clerical authors as "Rev.", as many of them are. I hope that I may raise the voice of the laity. Our Primate is asking for our Anglican dreams for the church of the future; I believe that he may find them in these pages.

Is there a rosier side to this "vale of woe", to this "republic of pain"? Can we accept a god that has set out on a great adventure to find out what may happen—a god who has not decided in advance to impose a godly will upon the creation, but is instead letting that creation find out what that will is? It seems to me that that is the very essence of the Lord's Prayer—*thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*. Humanity is responsible for bringing that will to earth.

Humanity seems to have been endowed with the sense that this earthly life is not the whole story. This is fundamental to the believing Christian: Jesus died and rose again. As St. Paul reminds us *If in this life we who are in Christ have only hope, we are of all men most to be pitied* (1 Corinth. 15:19). There is a purpose in life and that is to do the will of God. How do we know what is the will of God? Why have we been given that annoying and disturbing thing that we call a conscience? Unfortunately, it follows "why do some people seem to have no conscience?"

Is it possible that the conscience is an echo of some purpose that we were given before we left the "heavenly home" to which we are destined to return? Is it impossible that God has a purpose for each one of us that we can choose either to pursue or to reject, in whole or in part? As Michael Thompson reminds us, *God endows humanity with freedom and power*, but that freedom and power involves the use of *freewill* and humanity's self-interest invariably leads to selfishness and lack of concern for others, resulting in pain on earth and the destruction of our environment.

What of this god who has given us the choice of doing as we like in his creation? I have called it a Great Adventure. Where would have been the adventure if we had all been puppets on strings, predestined to do just what this authoritative god demanded of us? There would be no need for religions of any kind; we would know who (or what) is in command and would have no choice but to obey. I would imagine that a god like that would be a very uninteresting character and life might very well be exceedingly boring.

But humanity has this propensity for belief in the Divine and is taking a very long time to come to terms with it. Inevitably it has had to start simply, for humanity's concepts are limited and take time to develop. Somewhere in the cradle of civilization people began to think of powers beyond their control. Since learning begins from the known and proceeds to the unknown, the interpretation of these powers had to be put in terms well-known to the people trying to understand them. They therefore imagined them in the form of creatures with whom they were familiar, in human and animal form. We peoples of the so-called Western World have been so conceited as to think that this god spent time revealing the godhead to us without any consideration that there are others, living in other parts of this world, to whom the godhead was also being revealed. Different cultures inevitably envisioned the Godhead in different forms.

After millennia there arose a people in what we now call the Middle East who came to believe that the true God had been revealed to them. Of course, they suffered from the human weakness of self-interest and therefore claimed that this was *their* God and that they were therefore God's chosen people. They were not the only people to believe this of their own particular god, but it stuck.

What was this god like? Well, to start with "he" was a very natural, human god; he enjoyed taking a stroll around his garden in the cool of the evening looking for the creatures that he had created. His self-interested creatures promptly decided that their god looked like them and proclaimed that they were made in the image of this god. In actual fact the created

creatures had created their god in their own image because that was the only "thing" with which they could compare the godhead.

This was not good enough for God, who was (and still is) trying to reveal the Godhead to the Creation. Early in the Old Testament God reveals himself in human form to Abraham and Lot, where God may be confused with the accompanying angels. As humanity becomes more sophisticated God's appearance changes and, by the time that Moses comes into the picture, God is revealed as something much more powerful. The Godhead is now fire as revealed in the Burning Bush—a fire so powerful that the very ground is holy and yet the bush is not destroyed.

God's relationship with fire continues in the Old Testament, as witness the pillar of fire that led the Israelites into the desert by night and the pillar of cloud that led them by day, the chariot in which Elijah is carried away into heaven, but as time passes and as the Children of Israel learn of other ways of picturing the Divine as the result of their exile in Babylon, God is transcended into a heaven full of cherubim and seraphim. Cherubim may be seen in the ancient statues of Babylonia and they are no innocent little cherubs as seen in mediaeval paintings. By the time of the Book of Daniel, God has become the "Ancient of Days" on a throne of fiery flames and "a stream of fire issued and came forth from before him" (Daniel 7:10)

When we enter New Testament times the image of God changes again as Jesus opens up a vision of Love and of Light, which is further developed in the Gospel of John. God is now the Light of the World—

a light that had previously been seen in the so-called heresy of Akhenaton, a Pharaoh of Egypt, who had tried to turn the whole religious system of Egypt upside down by proclaiming a monotheistic religion represented by the symbol of the sun

Where are we going? Our God has been revealed as human in form, carried to extremes by Michelangelo's painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. The Godhead has been portrayed as Fire, as the Sun and as Light. Jesus is portrayed as bringing Light into the world, the knowledge of God. What are all these but examples of pure energy? From whence comes our strength? God is all-encompassing.

Surely, St. Paul had a revelation when he proclaimed the god remembered as "unknown" on an altar in Athens is indeed the God *In (whom) we live and move and have our being* (Acts 17:22-28). Our God encompasses *everything*, that is, all of Creation, our Universe and others that may yet be revealed. Our human nature finds such a concept beyond our comprehension, but in this 21st Century, with all the recent discoveries since the Renaissance (re-birth), the Industrial Revolution and the recent Scientific Revolution, have we not learned that God is everywhere—the Godhead's energy is even in the rocks, for there we have discovered radio-activity? The atom was considered indivisible when I was born; today we study nuclear physics.

If these thoughts are just a bit too much, perhaps we should settle for Michael Thompson's conclusion "it is enough that he is with us, that he teaches and heals us, that he allows us to lament what is broken and dream of what is whole."

## Answering Bishop Michael's Call

The team saw children who are classified as being the poorest of the poor brought to El Hogar to break the cycle of poverty and become transforming agents for change in Honduras.

**ROSALIND REYCRRAFT**  
MISSION TEAM LEADER, ST. LUKE'S BURLINGTON

A team of parishioners from the Parish Church of St. Luke's in Burlington has responded to the Bishop's call in the area of prophetic social activism in his vision for the Diocese of Niagara. Members of the team have seen the results of the commitment to the Millennium Development Goals in action.

In early February, the team of nine joined with three others from

two other parishes to spend a week in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, working with El Hogar Projects which comes under the auspices of the Episcopal Diocese of Honduras.

El Hogar de Amor y Esperanza, (The Home of Love and Hope), now in its thirtieth year, responds directly to most of the eight goals which the nations of the world have promised to accomplish by 2015:

- reduce poverty and social exclusion,
- achieve universal primary education,
- promote gender equality and empower women,
- reduce child mortality,
- improve maternal health,
- combat HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis,
- ensure environmental sustainability, and
- partnership for development.

These goals are far from being

accomplished worldwide but for El Hogar they are its reasons for being.

The team saw children who are classified as being the poorest of the poor brought to El Hogar to break the cycle of poverty and become transforming agents for change in Honduras. Through education in a loving, Christian environment, these children learn that God loves them and that anything is possible.

The team worked on the unfinished dormitory for the children which should be ready by April. Since the school year starts in February space was at a premium for returning children. The first lot of children had to move into the only completed room. Team members painted, lugged wood, took down construction fences, cleaned the site to make it safe, assembled fourteen metal bunk beds and generally did whatever was needed to make this happen. By 9 o'clock on Sunday evening, an excited group of

25 little boys tried out their new beds for the first time. There were smiles everywhere, not to mention a few tears.

Days were long; the work at times challenging but each morning the team was eager to get on with the work knowing how anxious the rest of the children were to get into their new rooms.

It was a joy to spend time at the end of the day with 107 wonderfully energetic children, who to our standards have so little but knew that caring people from far away, who did not speak Spanish well, were working hard for them. Playing soccer-baseball after a tiring day was a challenge which the younger members of the team took on without a second thought.

To get a complete picture of what El Hogar is accomplishing, time was taken to visit the other two centres – the technical institute, (Instituto Tecnico de Sta Maria), in the

Amarateca Valley and the agricultural school located in Talanga. With ninety and sixty boys respectively, these two centres provide much needed skills along with three years of high school education so that the students may obtain gainful employment at the end of their time at El Hogar Projects.

Each evening before falling into bed, team members got together to share thoughts about their day and to examine one of the eight Millennium Development Goals. To be in such an environment gave a new perspective on just what the MGDs are meant to accomplish. How satisfying it was to see what a difference a few people taking those goals to heart can make.

St. Luke's team was challenged and transformed by time in El Hogar. They now challenge other churches to see how they can answer the Bishop's call to prophetic social activism.

More information is available at [www.elhogar.org](http://www.elhogar.org).

# Resurrection | The ultimate challenge to the Christian believer

**JERRY SALLOUM**  
RETIRED VICAR

Recently, I turned on the car radio for some music and heard pop singer Cher lamenting her regrettable behavior toward her lover. Repeatedly, she expressed her wish, "If I could turn back time!"

Many of us wish the same thing: "If I could turn back time ... if only, in relation to our serious car accident, our children, our health, our missed opportunities, or our financial decisions. If we could only rewind the film of our life story to that spot before regrettable events occurred so we could bring about a more acceptable ending".

But Cher's lament for a turning back of time, though wishing for the impossible, yearns for very little! Hidden in a secret room of the human heart is a longing for far more than this -- a turning back of time not to before a single incident in one's life, but rather a turning back of all time, to when Life worked the way it was meant to work, when there was no slow deterioration of our bodies, no disappointment, no warfare, no loneliness, no pain, no crying, no death. And because of this deep universal yearning, we are arrested by those Bible stories that declare that the restoration of what was lost is more than merely the vain cries of the human heart for something that this world cannot provide.

Our minds are drawn to biblical stories of restoration. Blind from birth, a man suddenly receives his sight. Dead for four days, Lazarus walks out of his tomb. At the command of Jesus, a distraught father sees his dead daughter stand up. In a garden, a mourning woman hears her name called out by the very One whose death she had witnessed three days earlier. Fictional stories? I wonder. If they are, then we must explain why such longings are so universal and so persistent in the human heart. However, if such stories actually happened, then we must conclude that the very thing that is our deepest longing, namely that pain will stop, that loneliness will cease, that suffering will be terminated, that death will be no more, is God's longing as well. At the center of God's heart is the desire to do the very thing we long for, namely to set right what is wrong. Cher's song is not-

ing but a vain lament. Humans cannot "turn back time". But an omnipotent God can. God runs one huge restoration business. Each example of human restoration recorded in scripture is a window through which we are permitted a glimpse of how it was in the beginning before the Fall in that Garden where nothing went wrong with our sight or with our hearing, and where there was no death. Each example of human restoration recorded in scripture is also a preview of a glorious cosmic restoration promised by our Father, but is yet to come.

To believe in Christ's resurrection is to link up with something altogether unnatural and other-worldly. Yet certain people in the Bible did just that. Many believed, not because they heard about it, but because they were witnesses to it. People who were initially skeptical had their skepticism smashed. Mary believed after she heard the Lord call her name. Thomas believed after he saw and felt Jesus' wounds. Two disciples on the road to Emmaus believed after Jesus opened to them the scriptures and after He broke bread with them. And other disciples believed during a fishing trip.

But despite what we declare publicly each Sunday during the Creed, we struggle to believe an event that, though recorded in Holy Scripture, has never been a part of our experience. On this topic, it is natural to be skeptical. Nobody has been successful in escaping death. Death is inevitable. Death is irreversible. While people have been resuscitated after cardiac arrest, nobody to my knowledge has come back to life after being dead 3 days. Given the nature of Nature as we know it, the grip of death is too strong to permit release. And so, while we give polite assent to the resurrection of Jesus Christ in church, most of us, like Thomas, have doubts that are legitimate and that must be addressed. We need convincing that the supernatural is real. Or we search for some natural explanation of an event that is so UN-natural.

I have never witnessed a resurrection. I saw my father 3 days after he died. But I saw him dead. The same with my mother, my sister and my mother-in-law: I saw each of them dead. None came back to life as did Lazarus or the

son of the widow of Nain or the daughter of Jairus, each at the command of Jesus and each in an instant. If we are to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, we must do so 2000 years after the alleged incident, without hearing Him call our names, without being able to feel or see his wounds, without him treating us to breakfast by the shore of some lake. You and I are in that category of people who cannot look to our senses of sight, touch, hearing or taste to add credence to the resurrection. We are in the category of people to whom Jesus referred when addressing doubting Thomas:

"Because you have seen me, you have believed;

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

And so, without the tools I normally use to authenticate truth, namely intellect and my senses, why would I or anyone else accept as true the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ? How is it possible to believe it without "seeing" it? Consider the following three personal reflections on the issue:

## TRUTH always travels in the company of GOODNESS

When all is said and done, belief is ultimately a matter of choice. I choose to believe in the resurrection, but not merely because it is recorded in all four Gospels or because I was taught it as a child. I choose to believe it because I believe it to be true. But how does one know that something is true? This is a good question! If I desire to know if something is true, I investigate the company it keeps. Truth always keeps good company. It has matchless companions. And Truth's best companion is Goodness. I look for ultimate Truth in the place where I find ultimate Goodness. There is reliability to Goodness that cannot be found in evil. At the heart of evil is malevolence. Evil's intent is to twist, to confuse, to cause discord, alienation and ultimately death. At the heart of Goodness is benevolence. The intent of Goodness is to generate harmony, wholeness, intimacy and Life. Goodness is on my side. Evil is not. I trust the One who is on my side, not the one who is my adversary. For this reason, I trust Christ in whom there is no evil,

no lies or deception. Everything about Him must be true. And that includes His Resurrection.

## In this world, hints of another world abound

I recall an old tune made popular by Peggy Lee: "Is that all there is?" This depressing lament confronts the disappointment that many feel about this life, namely its inability to satisfy. Is this life "all there is"? Is this as good as it gets? But the song, "Is that all there is?" does not answer the question it asks. Rather it makes an important statement. With uncertainty, the singer concludes, "If that's all there is my friend, then let's keep dancing, let's break out the booze and have a ball!"

As we hear the lyrics, we wonder, "If this is all there is, how can anyone keep dancing? Do you recall those brief cartoons that used to begin the Saturday matinee at the local movie theatre? In its final seconds, Porky Pig would appear and stutter those final words, "Th-that's all folks". For many of us, Porky Pig's statement answers Peggy Lee's question. With the myopic vision that seems to characterize our world, there appears to be nothing more. Death is the end and no one survives the grave. But at the cinema, we all knew there was something more. That eagerly-awaited something was the feature film, still to come after the cartoon faded to black. The cartoon was never meant to satisfy. It was never intended to be more than the lead-up to the main attraction. The scriptures offer repeated hints that this world, though resplendent in the beauty of its many patterns and processes, is not the main attraction. Though glorious in itself, this world testifies to another world, an invisible world of greater Glory of which this present world is a mere foretaste.

## Resurrection is not restricted to God's Son

In contemplating Easter and the Resurrection, we might well ask God, "Is restoration, a new beginning, reversal of death, in fact, RESURRECTION, something you reserve only for your SON? Is He the only one who is the recipient of the mother of all treats, the

only one who benefits from your power to raise the dead? Echoing the psalmist, we cry out, "Lord ... do you show wonders to the dead? Do those who are dead rise up to praise you?" (Psalm 88). The answer from Scripture is clear. Jesus is NOT the only beneficiary of resurrection. But he is the first. A hole in the ground was not the final resting place for the Son of God. And God will not allow it to be the final resting place for anyone else. All will be raised. This remarkable truth is found in both the Old and New Testaments. Listen:

"Your dead will live; their bodies will rise.

You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy!" (Isaiah 26)

"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake:

some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens,

and those who lead many to righteousness,

like the stars for ever and ever." (Daniel 12)

The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." (1 Cor 15)

The testimony of Easter (and Christmas) is that a new and fresh purifying wind has blown through the Cosmos. Shafts of radiant light have penetrated every nook and cranny of our planet. We who live under a menacing shadow of death and have long endured the influence of a foreign presence in our midst have been visited by Goodness itself. A cosmic battle has taken place between Good and evil. The occupying power has been struck a fatal blow from which it will never recover. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's declaration in advance that death and evil have been vanquished and that the end is NOT death, but life, not unspeakable sorrow, but everlasting joy. Resurrection is NOT for Jesus only, but for all believers. Death is dead. Cher's yearning for reversal has been achieved, not by human effort or by wishful thinking, but by God's action on behalf of his children. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

# Parishes should build on strengths, not weaknesses



**JIM NEWMAN**  
CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

I think often about a conference I attended several years ago. Dr. Kenyon Callahan, a researcher, professor, author, and internationally known church consultant, spoke about Twelve

Keys to an Effective Church. Callahan is brilliant, instantly likeable, and disarmingly direct. He sees the role of the church through the lenses of community, compassion and hope. Community, he says, is good fun, good times, belonging, and family. Compassion is sharing, caring, giving, loving, and serving, and hope is confidence and assurance in the grace of God.

Callahan began his presentation with this advice: build on your strengths, not your weaknesses. Here's an example. As he defines it,

stewardship is clearly about compassion. But if a parish's stewardship campaign is not scripturally related to compassion, it's attempting to build on an inherent weakness, and that increases passive aggressive behaviour, anger, and subliminal resentment. Meanwhile in the secular world, charitable giving has been increasing as people give to causes that stir their compassion such as tsunami relief in South East Asia.

So how can a parish build on its strengths? It starts with lots of scrip-

tural references and solid preaching about stewardship. It "prays the campaign" with active prayer about stewardship. It recruits parishioners to write a newsletter based on compassion and people news, and expands it into a long range plan and a narrative budget built on compassion. Then it finds others who speak passionately and often about their own particular area of ministry and why it's important to support it. It utilizes a "compassion card" rather than a commitment card, with wording like this: "we are

grateful for the compassion and generosity of God's gifts in our lives... we are thankful for the hope which God blesses us... we generously pledge \$\$\$ to advance God's mission in 2009".

Strong parish leaders are able to associate compassion, community, and hope with challenge, reasonability, and commitment. Callahan says think about what your parish has fun doing, and about your strengths, gifts, and competencies. According to him, that's the mission to which God invites you.

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## The status quo is *not* an option



■ Michael Patterson, Archdeacon of Niagara and Colin Johnson, Bishop of Toronto prepare for Interfaith Prayer Vigil.

"The status quo is no longer an option" – this expression has become a mantra in my reflections and thoughts. In 1964, the great Canadian icon Pierre Berton wrote the remarkable book, *The Comfortable Pew* at the request of the Anglican Church. I do not think our church expected to get what Berton offered; he was prophetic. The social/ethical issues he raised were real and most of them are still with us. What is the church's role and record with respect to Canada's first nations? How free are churches, locally or their hierarchies, to be critical of prevailing economic institutions and practices? What about homophobia? Berton saw it as a scandal on the same level as the most blatant forms of racial discrimination but, in his view, the churches were totally unwilling to face what we now call different sexual orientations. The Church had to move

from the 'comfortable pew' to a place of activism and response, effectively motivating and equipping its' members to a place of impatience with the social ills of our culture. Berton was well ahead of his time and the questions he raises are no less relevant today than they were 45 years ago.

The church is called to be the prophetic and moral voice of society and what we have in this emerging vision is a means by which we can begin to corporately and individually get back to the biblical imperatives to 'love your neighbour'. That is to respond to the local needs of the neighbourhoods in which we live, worship and be in community. We are called to listen to the narrative of the neighbourhood and effectively utilize the resources that God has given us to be innovative, take risks and encourage

and support effective means of leadership. It is the hope of the Bishop that over the coming months and years, we may create covenants between parishes, priests and the Bishop that clearly articulate the expectations and direction of where the parishes of this diocese are called. We will outline how and what may be achieved in a given period of time and ensure that the resources necessary to get there are made available.

As difficult and challenging as this new vision may feel to us, I trust that God is calling us to a new beginning, a new reality. The challenges are great, the risks are immense however the call is clear and we are not given an option but to re-think what Jesus had in mind when He commissioned us to 'Go into the world and make disciples of all people.' – Mt 28:19

## Life changing worship



CHRISTYN PERKONS  
ST. CHRISTOPHER'S, BURLINGTON

What will worship in the Diocese of Niagara look like in 2012? People across Canada will be talking about the breadth and depth of worship experiences to be found in this corner of the Anglican Church. What will people be saying about those experiences?

'A welcoming community for my partner and me from the first time we encountered this church at the local Greening Our Town fair, and then again at a demonstration supporting a living wage! What they say when they gather together is reflected in how they live their lives.'

'This church that seemed irrelevant when I left in my teens is talking my language about the issues that concern me and my kids - fair trade, human rights, the environment, and purpose-driven living.'

'Our lives felt empty until we stumbled across a group in our neighbourhood pub watching movie clips and exploring the relationships that give meaning to our lives. After joining in a lively and engaging discussion, we prayed and ate together – we were hooked!'

'My friends and I were walking home after a party last Easter weekend, and stopped to check out a fire burning in a park. We ended up staying all night – at first just watching and then walking a candle-lit labyrinth, listening to people tell

stories about Jesus around the fire, enacting the story of Noah with animal masks, creating a 'joy' mural, blessing each other with presence and prayer, and ending with a commitment to life/renewal of baptismal vows at sunrise. And now we're part of this church's Facebook prayer group!'

'My parish offers so many ways to worship – on Sundays, a traditional Eucharist and a contemporary Eucharist with lots of music and storytelling; a Saturday evening prayer created by a team of interested people over dinner before the service starts; a week-day participant-led morning prayer at a restaurant near the GO train station; 'messy church' where families gather for activities and simple worship around a Bible story and have dinner together; two youth transitional housing residences where we offer life skills classes that now begin and end with the residents' prayers...it's amazing how many different people God connects us with!'

'Taking advantage of the liturgy conferences and the days on liturgy the Diocese offered, we developed a worship planning team that frames all our worship around the question 'where are we encountering God? We've changed some of what we do but more importantly, we've changed the intentions we bring to worship – and that has transformed us!'

By 2012, the Diocese of Niagara will be recognized for offering worship experiences that make the Gospel accessible to the wider world both by using the diverse range of available technology and by connecting with people where they are; engaging the heart, the head, the body and the soul.

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## There is no turning back

They eventually opened the doors and we entered. By the time we got into the building we were relegated to the gallery. When the rector began the homily, he started by saying that those of us who stood in line may have noticed all the people who came in early and were seated in the good seats (aka "comfortable pews"). He proceeded to tell us that they were the people who had made donations to the church in advance. If we did not want to stand in line next year, he concluded in an unapologetic manner, then we could make a donation and get in early. I stood up and walked out. This was not my church.

Opening doors, ridding ourselves of comfortable pews, removing all the barriers between privileged and not-privileged people, walking an authentic Christian journey that only sees the

goal in the distance and yet continues faithfully no matter what obstacle is before us – is what this is about. The "comfortable and reserved pew" has only served to empty our churches and to create a society that feels that those who still walk through their doors belong in a reliquary or museum.

It is Easter-time. What a wonderful time to set ourselves upon this journey together. Think about the life of Christ. He did not have a home that we know of. He did not own anything more than the clothes on his back. He lived for others and never, ever claimed any glory or privilege for himself. In fact for those of us who may have our noses in the air feeling some kind of superiority over others in society because of our income level, status in the church, sexual orientation or anything else – he stood against us.

He criticized the very people that so many of us have become. The comfortable pew is nothing new. Jesus saw it and fought it.

The difference in his day was that those who he called to renewal and change turned on him. They put him on trial and executed him. The wonderful good news was that they were all delusional. There was no stopping the work of God. Instead the real message was that no matter how hard we try to preserve the status quo, God's work will continue. Jesus conquered death and lives in a way that has turned the world upside down from that moment on. This common crucified criminal would stand on top of this world as a symbol of life, while all of those comfortable people who struggled to preserve their lives in dignity and comfort – at the expense of others – are dead,

buried and forgotten.

Easter teaches us that God's work goes on and on and on. It also beckons us to consider our part in that work. The Bishop's message about the status quo and the journey toward true and authentic ministry is nothing more than a call to cooperate with Easter and hence baptismal faith. The moment water was poured on us – we were called to die to our temptation to complacency and to rise to the difficult and yet rewarding journey toward justice and renewal in our world.

You're going to read about the five petals – or put more simply for some of us – five areas that we need to consider as we move on this corporate journey through the desert of our lives to the reign of God established on this earth. They are the guideposts – but they are only starting points. The important

thing is for us to realize that the time has come for change. Undoubtedly, we will not like someone sitting in our pew and we will not like giving up our delusion of privilege. But as we do let go, we will experience a reformation beyond any reformation that this world has known.

The journey has begun and there is no turning back. We can fight or we can walk. We can close doors or we can open windows. We can die or we can live. God's work in the world will continue – with or without us. Our leaders in the Diocese of Niagara are challenging us to change so we be part of God's work in our communities in this day. It won't always be a comfortable journey, but I believe that each of us will choose the journey through the desert knowing its rewards and the life that it will produce for all time.



# Claiming our gifts | A flourishing culture of innovation



**NISSA BASBAUM**  
RECTOR, TRANSFIGURATION ST CATHARINES

In John's Gospel, it isn't until Jesus says her name that Mary is able to recognize him as anything but the gardener. Once he calls her by this name, she encounters the resurrected Christ, and because of this, we have been blessed to inherit the celebration of Easter.

Our names are hugely important to us, perhaps for no other reason than they have a way of symbolically proclaiming our individuality. Often, one of the difficulties with an institution like the church is the loss of this individuality. Instead of welcoming the possibilities which each person in a community offers, churches define and encourage a kind of lowest common denominator approach to worship

and ministry, with this lowest common denominator usually expressing what has always been done. For the church to try and accommodate individual needs and regard with excitement individual gifts is too often considered to be impossible. The institution lacks Jesus' ability to recognize the importance of calling people by name, thereby acknowledging the holiness each one of us possesses.

A vision of people who come together to form an institution in contrast to a vision of an institution that has formed and continues to form these same people, describes the intention behind the phrase "a flourishing culture of innovation," the fifth petal of the bishop's vision. For too long, our church has functioned without an acknowledgement of the individuality of the people who walk through our doors. Instead of offering what is for the moment being described as "fresh expressions" of church, we have settled for one – at most two – articulations of church, neither of which seeks to engage

individuals where they are but rather seeks to make these same individuals conform to one or other of these two moulds.

For an institution that is almost 400 years old, the bishop's vision is extraordinarily scary. Even for a diocese that is less than 150 years old it is rather frightening, as it asks us to stop functioning like church and to start acting like Jesus. It begs us not to operate in just one or even two ways in order to proclaim his original message but in a multitude of ways.

In the document that describes the bishop's vision, the word repeated many times over is risk and, indeed, it is risky to fly in the face of a history that has often denied our individual goodness and has forgotten how to allow that goodness to flourish. I look forward to this actually happening.

Indeed, I look forward to a diocese comprised of parishes that are made up of people who reflect the face of Jesus, a face that has many more expressions than we have yet to encourage or experience.

# Effective management of resources

**WILLIAM CONNOR**  
ST. ANDREW'S GRIMSBY

There are many challenges to be overcome if our vision for the diocese, 'Pursuing Excellence in Ministry' is to be realized. I think we would agree, given the financial challenges confronting the diocese at this time, that the most immediate and critical issue to be addressed is the effective management of our resources. To achieve this, the diocese must develop a realistic and sustainable budget that not only accurately reflects anticipated revenues and expenditures, but also makes the case for increasing stewardship capacity throughout the diocese. We do well to remind ourselves that however diligent we are in establishing priorities and developing a comprehensive action plan, we may be required to make difficult, perhaps even painful decisions regarding programs and initiatives that have served us well in the past, but now have to be set aside in the interests of accomplishing something else that needs to be done. It is also acknowledged by those who have been directly involved in the process that it will be necessary, particularly in the early stages of implementation, to identify and encourage alternative forms of ministry and where feasible to reallocate existing resources to bridge the present budget short fall. As in any endeavor, there will undoubtedly be issues that are more urgent than others, some more easily accomplished, while others will

require a greater expenditure of time, wisdom and effort.

Effective management requires an ongoing commitment on the part of all who share oversight responsibility, clergy and laity alike, to communicate to the fullest extent possible not only what the vision is, but how it can best be accomplished. It requires too, a readiness to listen, to seek advice, and where necessary to reassess the viability of a direction or a decision that has previously been taken. Additionally it will require the development of a collaborative diocesan ministry strategy that attempts to share and utilize resources in the most efficient and cost effective manner.

In our individual parishes perhaps an important first step is to determine to what extent our vision of ministry and outreach is consistent with the wider vision of the diocese and what opportunities exist for us to more effectively use the resources that are at our disposal. I am told some parishes have begun the process of reassessment and are already exploring opportunities for greater collaboration and shared ministry.

I would stress that if we are to succeed, the laity have a special obligation to assist the diocese in obtaining the financial and human resources necessary to support this journey of faith and renewal. Increasing our financial support for the diocese in the midst of a serious economic downturn is not something to be taken lightly

and for some it may not be possible, but for others it is something that can and should be done. And if we agree that we need to embrace a theology of abundance rather than scarcity as Bishop Michael and others have stated, the time has come for all of us to reconsider what we are willing to give of our time, our talent and our treasure. It is a sad commentary that other denominations often appear to have less difficulty than we do in financially supporting the work and ministry of their respective churches. The challenge before us is to develop an effective stewardship program that touches the minds and hearts of our brothers and sisters in Christ, an initiative that draws people and resources together in support of our common vision and ministry.

Some months ago I asked the question, can we do this? My answer was a resounding yes. Over the past few months I have no cause to believe otherwise. On the contrary, I am persuaded more than ever that it can be accomplished if we are willing to rise to the challenge and accept our share of the responsibility. And in the process we may arrive at a deeper appreciation of what discipleship is really all about and the demands it places on each of us. But I am also aware that unless we believe God is leading us to a place where we need to be, it will not happen. May God help us find within ourselves a spirit of joy and wonder that compels us to act.

# Outstanding leadership for ministry

**JEFF WARD**  
ST. LUKE PALERMO

Leadership is an elusive term. In their book, *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*, Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus reported at least 850 definitions for leadership. We share the same struggle in the church. We demand effective leadership, but we are challenged to articulate what we expect of ordained leaders and lay leaders alike.

Outstanding Leadership for Ministry is one of the elements, or "petals", of the Diocesan Vision. If we struggle with how to define leadership, we are hard pressed to determine what outstanding leadership looks like or how to measure it. Leaders in the church are first, and foremost, called to be spiritual leaders—to follow God's agenda. Though leaders are required to offer a vision—that is, foresight for the future as well as perception of the present—they are also called to manage the affairs of the parish effectively and efficiently. Bennis and Nanus remind us that "Managers do things right. Leaders do the right thing."

Our vision for leadership articulated in "The Pursuit of Excellence In Ministry" offers five criteria for achieving Outstanding Leadership For Ministry:

- Create covenant partnerships among bishop, clergy, and laity
- Intentionally live out our baptismal covenants in shared ministry
- Support and encourage initiative and

creativity in the whole people of God

- Build relationships in the community around us & respond to their needs
- Create intentional experiences that relocate resources to areas of need

Gilbert Rendle (*Leading Change in The Congregation*) defines Covenants of Leadership as a means of offering "goals that are in keeping with the values and teaching of our faith." "They give us a way to talk about the behaviour and practices that we adopt in our work together." They are not rigid rules, but a framework that guides us in our work together. For ordained and lay leaders in the Diocese of Niagara, the values that shape our actions are those offered as the basis for our vision. The desired outcomes of our vision for leadership are:

- Diocesan-wide Vision-based covenanting process for Bishop, clergy and parishes
- Empowered clergy and laity who lead creatively
- Education resources available to support training in the covenant and vision

The vision is the touchstone that directs decision making in all aspects of ministry. Effective church leaders keep people focused on the vision. They also assist people in identifying and developing creative methods for living out baptismal ministry in a manner that is tailored to the situation in each worshipping community and is consistent with the vision.

# Prophetic social justice making

**BILL MOUS**  
ST. JAMES, DUNDAS

Prophetic Social Justice is at the heart of who we are as a people of faith. It flows from the words of the prophet Micah to "act justly", from Jesus' commandment to love God and our neighbour, and from the waters of our baptism where we commit to strive for justice and peace among all people.

The pursuit of excellence in ministry calls on us to renew our commitment to seek the development of a just society. Our strength as church is our capacity to bear witness and give voice to the injustice and suffering that surrounds us in our communities whether that is in our neighbourhoods or as members of the global community. God's justice requires a response from us; standing idly by in the face of injustice is not an option.

Through a process of discernment, Bishop Michael and our diocese have come to identify two areas of focus for this work: poverty reduction and the care of creation.

Bishop Michael has already spoken out for the need of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy for Ontario, committed us to the Millennium Development Goals, and called upon all of us to be better custodians of creation. To add to this, he has also

committed both himself and the Diocesan Resource Centre to speak out more often on these issues and to be an example for the rest of the diocese.

The vision is already giving new life to other initiatives. The Greening Niagara committee is working on a Green Parish Accreditation program to animate and affirm parishes in their Greening work. A coordinating committee has been formed to organize a national Community Justice Camp, which will gather Canadian Anglicans of all ages together in 2010.

But the vision of excellence in ministry calls for much more. It calls us to develop tools and training to integrate justice-making into the lives of our congregations and their members. It challenges every congregation to take on an additional initiative related to prophetic social justice making, be that an act of advocacy, an event or an educational project. The vision also calls for an animator to be recruited in the coming years to assist us as we live out the vision.

By pursuing excellence in prophetic social justice making we have an opportunity to more fully live out God's reign on earth. The result? People's lives and God's creation will be transformed and Niagara will be recognized as leader with regards to poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

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# A transformative encounter

In worship, we encounter the otherness of God, who seeks our transformation, and the otherness of those with whom we gather...

But the idea that something happens in worship that changes our lives is a powerful idea with deep roots in our Jewish and Christian heritage.

The agent who changes lives in worship is not the leader, the planning team, the choir, the preacher or the intercessor. The agent who changes lives in worship is God, who promises to be present to us as we hear and respond to scripture enlivened by the Spirit, as we receive, bless, break, and share bread in the name of Jesus, as we reset our intentions to align our lives with God's purpose – with God's mission in and for the world. And when our worship is transparent to that presence, transformation follows in the lives of those who encounter it. A life-changing worship experience is possible when we actively foster the encounter with Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

Last summer, our young adult daughter, Rachel, celebrated a birthday. As a surprise, we invited Paula, who cared for Rachel – and our other children – from infancy through much of childhood, to join us for the party. When Rachel stepped out the patio door, it took her some time to see Paula there, maybe five or six feet away and right in front of her eyes. Then with great shouts of joy, she ran and embraced this woman who has, over time, moved from care-giver to friend and confidante in our daughter's life.

It took her some time to see Paula, as it took Cleopas and his companion some time to see that the one who walked with them was Jesus. Perhaps Paula made some characteristic gesture – a smile, the promise of embrace, just as the characteristic gesture of Jesus – blessing, breaking and sharing bread – allowed those Emmaus disciples to see him.

How we will fashion worship that fosters encounter with the life-transforming God who waits to meet us there? What practices of word and action, song and story will make that presence evident? What dye in the tissue of the church's life will help us to see what is always there, to see who is always waiting to meet us, to heal and renew us, to confront and challenge us, to draw out of the depths of our lives the truth about us, and to call that truth into action?

These are not questions for a few, for a little group – sometimes a group of only one or two – who make liturgical choices on behalf of others. These are questions for a community to probe together. As long as there is a relationship of production

and consumption between a group called "leaders" and a group called "members", we will not be able to give these questions the thoughtful consideration they deserve. Instead, the producers/leaders will be locked in a cycle of surveys and defensive self-justification, and the consumers/members will be locked in a cycle defined by the satisfaction or disappointment of their expressed preferences. The Book of Common Prayer has something to say about this, so it's obviously not a new problem:

*And whereas in this our time, the minds of men are so diverse, that some think it a great matter of conscience to depart from a piece of the least of their Ceremonies, they be so addicted to their old customs; and again, on the other side, some be so newfangled, that they would innovate all things, and so despise the old, that nothing can like them, but that is new: it was thought expedient, not so much to have respect how to please and satisfy either of these parties, as how to please God and profit them both. ("Of Ceremonies, 1549)*

Those who compiled the Book of Common Prayer could not have foreseen the church we are today. So, while a caste of scholars, clerics, and civil servants might have been trusted in that age to fashion worship that would "please God and profit them both", in our time that work is the work of the whole community.

"To please God and profit them both" means, I believe, to shape together practices of common worship in which the presence of God at the heart of our common life becomes apparent. It is not our errand, but God's, to invite participants into transformation, into the process by which our lives deepen into our own heart's desire, and into a growing capacity for God's mission of love and justice. It is our errand to create conditions in which God's invitation can be heard.

A transformative encounter with God in worship is not a promise we can make. But some things might increase the likelihood of such an encounter. The first is our own willingness to enter into such an encounter. Am I the only one with a sneaking suspicion that one of the reasons for arid worship is that we like it that way. After all, the God whom we encounter is not a tame God, and Jesus who stands at the door and knocks has a pickup truck in the driveway and a crowbar in his hands. About our expectation that we would meet God in worship, Annie Dillard has this to say:

*Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, making up a batch of TNT to*

*kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies hats and straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake someday and take offence, or the waking god may draw us out to where we can never return. (Teaching a Stone to Talk)*

It seems likely, then, that only out of a profound, relentless discomfort with things as they are could we ever be willing to run the risk of embracing things (including ourselves) as God would have them be, and the volatile process by which the one is transformed into the other. We cannot easily wish for ourselves an encounter with God without first telling the truth about our heart's desire. And we cannot with integrity offer others what we will not embrace for ourselves.

God is as hungry as we are for a different world. God is at least as sick of a planet governed by fear, hostility and indifference, by our heedless unconcern for one another, for the creatures among whom we live, for the creation whose oceans, winds, and continents are expressions of God's truth and beauty. Human transformation isn't an advertising jingle to lure consumers into our religion shop. It is a vital part of God's mission in and for the whole creation, which "waits with eager longing" (Romans 8) for a real – transformed – human being to show up for a change.

Beyond our willingness to embrace such an encounter are matters of hospitality, matters which are not, as it turns out, exhausted by a warm welcome and directions to coffee hour. Real hospitality encompasses a willingness on our part to be disrupted not only by the presence of God, but also by the presence of the friends he has invited to meet him in our church (or what we thought of as "our church" until God broke in) this Sunday. Their desire may be less refined than ours, their hunger more obvious or angular. They may just be different and therefore discomfiting.

It is, of course, their difference and our discomfiting that vindicates our worship as something more than the activities of a religion club designed for the pleasure or comfort of members. To welcome the difficult, challenging presence of the other is what makes us a church, a community of the disciples of Jesus.

In worship, we encounter the otherness of God, who seeks our transformation, and the otherness of those with whom we gather, who may well be the instruments in history by which God works our transformation. And around our worship, the universe waits expectantly, with eager longing, and with hope for its future and for ours.

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## Need Assistance with Parish Accessibility?

In the spring of this year the Federal Government made available funds to assist large and small organizations with accessibility.

If you have any intentions in improving your accessibility issues in the parish please contact Ken Schroeder, Bishop's Advisory Committee on Church Buildings, at 905-561-7023. He will be pleased to help you with the process.

# Mixed Economy Church



**ANDY KALBFLEISCH**  
MISSION STRATEGY COMMITTEE

Today, more than any time in recent memory, the economy seems to be foremost in our collective thoughts. We worry about it, we know people who are hurt by it, and we pray for its recovery. So let's keep that thought, but instead of worrying about something we have little or no control over, let's worry about our churches. Let's worry about the decline in attendance; let's worry about closures; and most importantly let's worry about how we have failed to do what God has called us to do – spread the Gospel and the good news about Jesus far and wide.

Have you ever wondered where all the newly baptized children and their parents have gone after we, as a Christian community, celebrate the sacrament of Baptism with them? Parents and sponsors answer the question, "Will you be responsible for seeing that the child you present is nurtured in the faith and life of the Christian community?" with a resounding "I will with God's help" and then we don't see them again. Have you ever wondered if they are being unfaithful to God?

Judy Paulsen, rector of Christ Church Oshawa, wondered and she decided to find out what was going on. For her it was the first step on a fresh expression journey. Judy began by contacting the parents of children who had been baptized at Christ Church, but didn't bring their children to worship or attend themselves. Parents were asked a variety of questions about their relationship with God and with the church. Many of the answers suggested that the status quo was no longer an option. "Sunday doesn't work for us; we don't like the traditional worship styles; we work all week and don't want to come to church and be separated from our children; when the kids make a noise in church it bothers the seniors and we feel embarrassed" and so on. Many church leaders would say well, that's how we do things here, we're sorry if it doesn't work for you.

Harold Percy, author and rector of Trinity Streetsville, says it best, "Whenever Anglicans gather to reflect upon the ministry of our church, we congratulate ourselves on the nature and quality of our worship. Nevertheless, people continue to stay away from our services with amazing consistency."

After carefully listening to what the people said, and prayerful discernment of God's call to reach out to all, Christ Church Oshawa started a Messy Church for families with young chil-

dren (2 to 6 year olds). Messy Church at Christ Church is a once-a-month hour on Saturday mornings, when parents and their kids can worship and learn together about the great stories of the Bible through songs, games, storybooks, painting, crafts, and DVD clips. Parents get to stay and learn with their children. And to reach out even further, a Contemporary Eucharist (at 11:15 Sunday) was developed which most of the families with Sunday school age children now attend. A BAS service at 9:15 continues to serve the traditional Anglican community.

By adding these innovative worship communities, Christ Church now has a mixed economy church embracing not only traditional Anglican worshippers, but inviting those who are uncomfortable with tradition to become followers of Christ in new and different ways. Judy Paulsen says, "I believe the 'mixed economy church' is not only here to stay but is a gift from God, so we can connect with more people where they are at."

Sam Rose, the Mission Priest at The Parish of St. Michael & All Angels in St. John's Newfoundland, started a Messy Church, once a month on Saturday afternoons, some years ago for the same reasons. When parents asked for more 'church' he started a Saturday afternoon Family Worship gathering that reaches out to those who, for whatever reason, find it difficult to be a part of the traditional Sunday

morning faith community. Now there is some form of family worship every Saturday afternoon. The Parish of St. Michael & All Angels has become a mixed economy church by listening to what God was calling them to do in their community.

Why is it so difficult for us to listen, to look at things from a different perspective, to accept that God calls us to find new ways to reach out to his people? Why do we try to force square pegs into round holes? Isaiah 43:18-19 says, "Forget about what's happened; don't keep going over old history. Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new. It's bursting out! Don't you see it? There it is! I'm making a road through the desert, rivers in the badlands."

Mixed economy churches aren't just about Messy Church or Saturday BCP service or a choral BAS service for traditional worshippers and a service designed to meet the spiritual needs of those who are not comfortable with traditional Anglican worship styles. They may be in a pub, a café, a parish hall, or someone's living room. They may include a band or different styles of music from jazz to contemporary to rock. They may include a liturgy or just a meditation and prayer or the reading of scripture and conversation. Whatever form they take, these services or worship gatherings reach

out to the unchurched or dechurched who are uncomfortable with traditional or inherited church.

One of the great fears we face during this current economic crisis is the possibility that countries will raise protectionist trade barriers and further exacerbate the recession we all find ourselves in. Yet we don't think twice about the barriers we place in front of those who have yet to know Jesus. Perhaps it is time to look at things differently and find new ways to provide opportunities to welcome and embrace the unchurched and dechurched into our faith communities. If they are searching – and indeed they are – they will find a spiritual home somewhere.

One way of doing this is to attend a Fresh Expression Vision Day. The Diocese of Niagara is sponsoring a Fresh Expression Vision Day at St. James Dundas on Saturday May 9 from 10:00 to 4:00 at a cost of \$20.00 per person. For more information and to register visit [www.niagara.anglican.ca](http://www.niagara.anglican.ca). You may wish to bring a team from your parish. Space is limited to 60 so register soon. Your mixed economy church is just around the corner!

As they say in the infomercials: "But wait, there's more..." Developing Fresh Expressions of Church is an integral part of the Vision of the Diocese of Niagara to create a flourishing culture of innovation. So join us on May 9 and learn how Fresh Expressions can inspire your parish.

## God bless aunts | Easter in the Great Depression



**FRANCEAN CAMPBELL-RICH**  
CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

It was March 24th, a big day in the life of Adele, 13. She wrote in her diary, in pencil: "I didn't go to my fiddle lesson today because Mr. Knox isn't giving us a lesson any more in the afternoon..."

Mr. Knox was the beekeeper in the village of Orono; he also taught an orchestra of kids in the United Church. Adele learned to play "Holy, Holy, Holy" in the key of C. And it was a big day for another reason: she had become a woman that same day; she recorded it in her diary, but she wasn't sure how to spell it.

Easter was coming soon, and with it, a visit from Aunt Mary, who would bring her an Easter present – she always did. And her father was coming, with her sister, too. As always, she was glad to see him, but he seemed to be so sad, these days...

It went back to that day in March, two years ago. She had watched as her father drove off in the back seat of a car, with two men, one on each side; his head wagging gaily, as though he was singing a little tune. He was being

taken to jail. Adele went up to the room on the top floor that she shared with her little brother. She stood in front of the mirror, combing her hair and weeping, alone. Aunt Frances came up the stairs, saw her, and said, "Don't worry, Adele, it's going to be alright..." Reassuring words to a little girl of eleven, who didn't understand what was going on. Bless Aunt Frances.

The Great Depression had hit, hard. It was not even called that until many years later, looking back on it from the perspective of the 1930's and on. It was just 'hard times'. Nobody had a job. Men came up from the Union Station, men who 'rode the rails', on foot to Rosedale, they had seen the name in chalk on a post, where they might get a meal in exchange for a little work, or no work. Families pooled their food and shared what they had, making a party of it, if they could.

Adele remembered the day when her mother told George, the chauffeur she had to let him go. They were on the way to her ballet class at Casa Loma. The next school year they took her out of Branksome and sent her to Miss Raitlon's school; she could walk there.

Of course it was the brokers' fault, the stock brokers, all nine of them. Everybody said so, especially the newspapers. Everybody lost money – whole fortunes. In the frenzy of the post Great War and the Roaring Twen-

ties everybody had bought stock on margin. There had to be a scapegoat.

It came one early morning, in the dark. Police did a raid on the brokers, in their homes, Adele's home. Rounded them up, from their beds. The Daily Star had the headlines ready, big success story.

Adele heard nothing, yet. She was only nine. Soon after, they moved in with her grandparents down on Huron Street. Adele didn't mind; she took the streetcar to school; the music lessons continued and there was the Children's Library nearby. She played the part of Ellen in *The Lady of the Lake*, at the library; Lou Applebaum was Roderick Dhu. And there was always Aunt Mary.

Her mother seemed too distracted to pay much attention to anything; they called it being 'absent minded', but her life had changed. Her friends had drifted away, her social framework collapsed. In time she became ill; Adele went to visit her in the Western Hospital. They called it a 'nervous breakdown'. And all this time, Aunt Mary kept things going, good spirits and good music. She took Adele to hear Paderewsky; the great Polish pianist who became president of his country. He played the famous minuet. He patted Adele on the head and gave her a little doll that was being sold to raise money for Polish relief. Bless Aunt Mary again.

Then the diary, that March 24: "I did a lot of washing and mending..."

Adele was used to taking care of her clothes – usually hand-me-downs from her sister. She was living on a farm now and going to a village school two miles away; some of the girls wore dresses made by their mothers from flour sacks. "I went for a ride on Sandy with the dogs...", leftovers from happier days. "I am going to throw out my toothbrush because I dropped it in the toilet", she wrote. Big deal; she might be able to buy another in the village. She went to school on her bicycle, or on Sandy, or the cutter in winter, with the buffalo robe, or walked.

Hard times continued; architects were selling apples on the street; doctors were paid in produce, if they were lucky. Adele's sister, a medical student, sold her blood, waited on tables, anything else for tuition and a microscope. Marg Grinstead's father, an Irish immigrant, rode the rails, and when, for a family, the Salvation Army offered a Christmas basket, he politely turned it down.

Adrienne Marks's mother regularly marched her five children to Goodwill Amity to pick out necessary clothing from neatly arranged piles. At the movies, and in print, there was a touching story called *How Green Was My Valley*: a young miner and his wife, too poor to take chances of pregnancy,

sleeping separately, unable to comfort each other.

Adele's second cousin had a clothing allowance, and a new party dress every year; Adele was the beneficiary of last year's, and from time to time her Aunt Jerry in Chicago sent her lovely, smart castoffs of her own, while Aunt Mary managed to pay for the music lessons.

Adele's mother had by now found the heat in the kitchen too much, took off to the USA, got a Reno divorce and married a younger man. As a social consequence of that day, the two parental families were split for years to come. Enter Adele's aunts once more – Aunt Mary and her mother, Aunt Jean, moved in, held the family together, and carried on – generously, and with affection. And like a blessing from above, Adele had a call from her Aunt Edna, on her mother's side, who had shepherded Adele to Sunday School, assuring her that she was always welcome in that family.

It was now 1934. The depression was deeper and more severe, but Easter was nigh, with the message of joy and hope. Thanks to Aunt Mary, Adele had been confirmed by Bishop Renison at St. Paul's on Bloor Street. All would be well after all. God bless aunts.

(Very thinly disguised, 'Adele' was me. And the little diary reads, "Got a new toothbrush.")

## PARISH NEWS

### Monthly Dinner

St. James, St. Catharines  
Chicken a la king, cold pea salad, pineapple upside down cake.  
Cost: \$5.00 per person  
April 1, 5:00 PM-7:00 PM

### Spring Card Party

St. John's, Ancaster  
Lunch, cards, prizes. Come enjoy the afternoon. Bring along your friends. Tickets can be purchased at the office.  
Cost: \$13.00 per person  
April 3, 12:00 PM

### Palm Sunday Choral Evensong

St. Cuthbert's, Oakville  
Join us in marking the beginning of Holy Week with a BCP Choral Evensong.  
Cost: Donation for choir robes  
April 5, 7:00 PM

### Palm Sunday Cantata

Grace, Milton  
"Once Upon a Tree" by Pepper Choplin. This is a Palm Sunday Cantata including anthems and the story of Christ's journey from Christmas to Easter.  
Cost: Free will offering  
April 5, 7:00 PM

### Film, Faith and Food

St. Paul's Anglican Church, Shelburne  
An interactive Lenten Series which uses feature films as a basis for our conversations about faith and life. Pre-registration is appreciated but not necessary by calling 519-925-2923. This week's film is *The Prince of Egypt*.  
Cost: Please bring a dish to share

April 5, 3:00 PM

### Christian Education

St. George's, Georgetown  
The Book of Genesis. Do you ever wonder what the Bible says? This week, Joseph's Final Years, Genesis 50. Afternoon session will be repeated in the evening.  
Cost: Price of materials and handouts  
April 7, 1:30-2:30 PM and 7:30-8:30 PM

### Community Potluck

St. Matthew on-the-Plains, Burlington  
Bring your favourite dish to share and make new friends.  
April 7, 6:30 PM

### Messy Church

St. George's, Georgetown  
"This is not your Granny's church!" Come and share a meal, meet new friends and create wonderful crafts. Music and worship for all ages.  
Cost: Free will offering  
April 8, 5:00 PM-7:00 PM

### Sedar Meal

St. John's, St. Catharines  
Authentic sedar supper followed by foot washing and stripping of the altar.  
April 9, 5:30 PM

### First Annual Anniversary Lecture

St. George's, Guelph  
Dr. Gabor Mate, physician, author and public speaker, will give the first Annual Anniversary Lecture. Mate is widely recognized for his unique perspectives on

hol/drug addictions, workaholism. He firmly holds the belief in the connection between mind and body health. Support for this lecture is being provided by Guelph's Homewood Health Centre, an internationally recognized mental health facility. Tickets available from church office. Call 519-822-1366 for more information.  
Cost: \$10.00 per person  
April 14, 7:30 PM

### Annual Dinner and Silent Auction

St. Columba, St. Catharines  
Beef-on-a-bun, salads, dessert, beverage and entertainment.  
Cost: 15.00 per person  
April 18, 2009 - 6:00 pm

### Annual Treasures Sale

Holy Trinity (Chippawa), Niagara Falls  
Come and check it out. Yard sale, bake table, and lunch consisting of peameal bacon on a bun will be available in the parish hall.  
April 18, 8:00 AM-1:00 PM

### A Dramatic Presentation

St. Elizabeth's, Burlington  
Mark Tiller will present St. Paul's First Letter to the Christians in Corinth. Come watch as Mark Tiller brings to life the 2000 year-old biblical texts and shows the timeless nature of these scriptures. "There is passion, understanding and deep sincerity in his performance. It is captivating."  
Cost: \$10.00 per person  
April 21, 7:00 PM

### Parish Dinner

St. George's, St. Catharines  
Our annual Parish Dinner for the Feast of St. George. Our guest speaker will be Bishop John Bothwell. For more information please contact the office.  
April 22, 6:00 PM

### 60th Anniversary Parish Dance

St. David's Parish, Welland  
Come and celebrate with us at the Lion's Community Centre (414 River Road, Welland). There will be a DJ, finger food buffet, cash bar, door prizes, raffle and more. Everyone welcome!  
Cost: \$15.00 per person  
April 24, 7:00 PM-12:00 AM

### Dessert and Card Party

Christ's Church Cathedral, Hamilton  
Hosted by the Anglican Business and Professional Women's Association. Join us for great desserts, good prizes and lots of fun!  
Cost: \$8.00 per person  
April 25, 2009 - 1:00 PM-4:00 PM

### Penny Sale

All Saints, Hamilton  
Doors open at 10:30 AM, draw at 12:00 PM. The kitchen will have hot dogs and pies for sale.  
April 25, 10:30 AM-12:30 PM

### Murder/Mystery Fund-raiser

Holy Trinity (Chippawa), Niagara Falls  
"Beyond the Grave" - Join us at 5:00 p.m. for a wonderful roast beef dinner. The murder begins promptly at 5:30 p.m. Call Sue Hicks at 905-374-6841 for ticket info.

Cost: \$16.00 per person  
April 25, 5:00 PM

### Ham Dinner

St. John's, Ridgemount  
Wonderful ham dinner with all the trimmings and a 50/50 draw.  
Cost: \$12.00 per person  
April 25, 5:00 PM

### Newfie Night

St. Paul's, Dunnville  
A Newfoundland themed dinner with screech, humour and song! And a celebration of all things "Newfie!"  
Cost: \$15.00 per person  
April 25, 7:00 PM

### Road Hockey Sunday

St. Cuthbert's, Oakville  
Join us for our annual road hockey game when we take over our church parking lots. Four games underway with different ages of players. Adults and youth playing together!  
Cost: Donation for pizza  
April 26, 11:15 AM

### 1st Letter to the Christians in Corinth

St. Paul's, Fort Erie  
A dramatic presentation presented by Mark Tiller.  
Cost: \$10.00 per person  
April 29, 7:30 PM

Could you reach out to make a real difference in a child's life this summer?



Please support **St. Matthew's House Camp Fund** for disadvantaged kids.

With your help **St. Matthew's House** hopes to send at least 75 children who face daily challenges of living in poverty to camp this summer. The average cost is approximately \$350 per child for one week residential camps. Individuals, parishes, groups and organizations can make summer camp a reality for kids whose families cannot afford camp fees. Campers' families contribute what they can.

If you wish to help sponsor a child, please send your donation to:

**St. Matthew's House Camp Fund**  
St. Matthew's House  
414 Barton St. East  
Hamilton, Ontario L8L 2Y3

Every donation is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for reaching out and making a difference in a child's life.

Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$10 or more.



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

## Watch your step

JOHN RIPLEY  
MISSION STRATEGY COMMITTEE

Dealing with the truth can sometimes be a challenge. The challenge is particularly formidable when the truth that one believes is called into question. As a former elementary school teacher I was responsible for sharing truths with my Grade seven and eight students that may have had a grain of plausibility, but a modicum of certainty. I remember, for example, teaching my charges the spelling rule—"i" before "e" except after "c". Now, this "rule" does not always work. Often my daily crossword puzzle demands a word that simply does not follow that simple rule—for example feisty, height, reign, veil, etc... Now I am aware that there are other rules that trump the "i" before "e" rule, but, it was always taught with the certainty that it was a truth.

I have a series of books that are very informative and somewhat authoritative. Their name belies their value as a source of information. They are called "Uncle John's Bathroom Readers". These books are packed with a considerable amount of information specific to a whole variety of different topics. Often they twig the "I didn't know that!" response.

American history for example has taught as a truth for many years that Young George Washington chopped down a cherry tree. Apparently when his father found out, as the story goes, George stepped forward and confessed to the dastardly deed. As late as the 1950's this story was being taught in American schools as a fact. The truth is that the story was fabricated by the writer of a book about George Washington named Parson Mason Locke Weems called *The Life of George Washington with Cur-*

*ious Anecdotes: Equally Honorable to Himself and Exemplary to His Young Countrymen.*

This story was first published in the fifth edition of his book published in 1806. Apparently Weems's only supporting documentation was his own statement that the tale was "too true to be doubted." There are many other examples, in life, where what is accepted as a universal truth on further examination is not quite what it was. Revelations about historic events are often turned upside down as the facts are known about specific events that are a part of the historic record.

What we cannot accept as fact we accept in faith. Faith is fundamental to who we are as a Christian people. Fundamental faith does not depend on fact. The sense of the ultimate truths of our faith come not from a handbook, but, from our personal understandings of our relationship with God. Faith is a function of conviction, not of coercion. The convictions that are essential to our faith are shaped by Scripture, Tradition and Reason. Each of us faces the daunting task of trying to give shape to our faith through our experiences in life.

Some need the certainty of scripture to be comfortable with their faith convictions. Others can live with ambiguity. Whatever your source of faith the reality of the spirit of the risen Christ can exist, and does exist, within the hearts of believers – not because they fear, but, because they trust. The journey of faith is not a sidewalk but a rugged trail through the woods. Each step is fraught with the potential of a twisted ankle. We must walk focused on the next step. Faith is not a mindless encounter with God, but, an active engagement of the totality of who we are. Watch your step!

# Easter victory over evil and death



Resurrection is to be found in surprising places; in people whom we would least expect.

**MICHAEL BURSLEM**  
ST. GEORGES, GUELPH

Easter is the season when we celebrate God's victory over evil and death, through the death of Jesus Christ at Calvary and his resurrection. Easter comes and Easter goes, and yet with our natural vision so little has changed. If God really has conquered evil and death, why are they so prevalent? What could, or should, we do to confront them? In mulling this over my thoughts go, not this time to the Bible, but to Leo Tolstoy's story *The Forged Coupon*, and in particular to the central figure, Maria Semenovna.

Maria Semenovna is a widow caring for her alcoholic father, a useless sister, as far as help is concerned, and her alcoholic husband, all living off Maria's meager pension. An itinerant tailor doing some work in the home observes how she is treated by her family and tells her, "You alone do the work, and you are so good to everybody, but they don't repay you in kind, I see."

He then says that books say that she will be rewarded in heaven, to which she replies, "We don't know that, but we must try to do the best we can." She then reads to him the Sermon on the Mount, and Tolstoy notes, "...the tailor was much impressed.

When he had been paid for his

job and gone home, he did not cease to think of Maria Semenovna, both what she had said and what she had read to him."

I too was impressed by her, because up to that point there had been a litany of one aggressive act committed, one after another, ending in murder, not one, but several, and they are so gruesome that one wonders why Tolstoy is telling this story.

It starts with a father, Fedor Mihailovitch Smokovnikov, being so infuriated with his boss that his whole family suffer, especially the son, Mitia. He asks his father for some extra money to return to a friend with whom he had gone to the theatre, and from whom he had borrowed the money, and the friend has sent a letter requesting its return.

This request is instantly denied, but his father grudgingly gives him his monthly allowance of three roubles, a coupon of two roubles and fifty kopeks with fifty kopeks change.

Mitia, in desperation, goes to another friend who forges the coupon by putting a 1 before the 2.50. (I suppose the coupon was a kind of cheque, but was not signed.) Together the two boys pass this onto the unsuspecting wife of a photographer, and the debt is paid.

The photographer, when he returns to his shop, discovers the forgery, and after cursing his wife, passes the coupon on in payment to a peasant for a load of wood. He in turn loses his whole livelihood, as he is accused of the forgery. From there on it is just a cascade of one crime after another, which makes very depressing reading.

Then Maria is introduced. She herself is murdered by a man who has committed five previous murders. With her hands not trying to resist, sighing heavily, her last words, to her assailant, Stepan, were, "Oh, what a great sin! How can you!

Have mercy on yourself. To destroy somebody's soul... and worse, your own..."

He couldn't block these words from his mind, as he's haunted by her face and demon faces taunting him. He gives himself in to the police, but in prison he meets a man influenced by the tailor who had worked for Maria, clearly a God-incidence. This man teaches him from the scripture, and he repents in prison and his life is completely and utterly turned around. Long before in his childhood he had learned the Lord's Prayer, though he was illiterate. A prison guard kindly shows him the place in the Bible where it is found, and he teaches himself to read by comparing the words of the prayer with the words on the page.

Then thereafter every day he reads from the Gospels to his fellow inmates, and this changes their lives, such that when they are released there is true reconciliation all the way up. There is even a priest, who had totally lost his faith but continued to practice the empty religion of Tsarist Russia, of which Tolstoy is very critical. His life is turned around by observing other lives being transformed. In the final chapter there is even reconciliation between Mitia and Fedor. Maria, and not the priest, is the pivot around which the story is told. She is the Christ-like figure who stands tall over everybody.

How do we confront evil? The short answer to that is that we don't. We just continue doing our best in all circumstances we find ourselves, no matter how adverse. No doubt Maria prayed, as the psalmist, for "wings of a dove." No doubt she felt useless and helpless in her effort to change her lot.

However, she persisted to serve her family in spite of so little thanks. She received her inspiration from the scriptures, and especially the

Sermon on the Mount. And yet what did she gain? She was brutally murdered in cold blood. We expect life to be fair; to receive only justice. She received neither fairness nor justice.

In her death Maria offered no resistance, but she did speak to her murderer about what he was doing to his own soul, rather than to hers. Stepan killed no one after Maria. He had killed five before her, and if she had resisted he may have continued his killing spree. To one who loves the Lord Jesus, and who tries to follow his example, self defense is no option; no justification for taking life. To have killed Stepan would have blocked God's marvellous work of sanctification in him.

In the face of evil we should never underestimate that God can still perform miracles. This is what brings tears more than the barbarism in the story. It's the resurrection to New Life in Stepan that I find so thrilling, which brings the Easter story to life for me; perhaps more than in another of Tolstoy's novels, aptly called *Resurrection*. In that a young nobleman tries desperately to atone for the evil he has committed, and at the end of the very long novel that takes us into the highs and lows of Tsarist Russia he discovers that it's been done for him. That's another aspect of the Easter story; but in *The Forged Coupon* it is that resurrection is to be found in surprising places; in people whom we would least expect.

We need to fully understand that the Lord does indeed fight our battles for us, and we should leave it to him, and not muddy the waters ourselves with our petty crusades. Then only can we have "peace in our time," "the peace that passes all understanding." But, once again, we need eyes of faith to really see the victory over evil and death that God has indeed won for us through his son's death and resurrection.

# Is out of sight always out of mind



**GRAHAME STAP**  
RETIRED PRIEST.

Ina and I have just returned from St Simons in Temagami where we attended a wonderful ecumenical service World day of Prayer.

We prayed for the women of Papua New Guinea. It truly was a moving experience; Anglicans, Catholic, and United were all represented. We sang hymns, held hands and shared the love God has for us all.

However, one speaker struck a chord I have not been able to shake.

She first said, "We have come together today to pray for a country torn by strife. Where between 60 and 85 percent of the women are illiterate and violence against women is a way of life and where HIV and AIDS are becoming an epidemic. Today we pray, and we know the power of prayer is incredible, for peace and understanding and an end to the violence that causes so much suffering."

Then came the challenge: "What about tomorrow? We will leave this place and go to our warm and comfortable home. When we wake tomorrow will we think of the women of Papua New Guinea?"

The answer is probably not or maybe for a day or two. Then it will fade to the back of our minds where it will be out of sight out of mind.

Surely as Christians we must take a stand not just against the violence in the world but also against the greed which seems to be invading every level of society but most acutely investment bankers who began packaging mortgages and offering high returns to all who jumped on the band wagon to reap the high returns offered.

The consequence of these actions is the resulting world economic crisis in which we find ourselves. I am sure all of us, one way or another, have been affected by the recession caused by the greed of a few.

Jesus did not throw the sellers out of the temple because they were selling but because they were taking advantage of others.

Whether it is the violence of Papua New Guinea or the greed of some of

the wealthy of North America I am sure Jesus would not have taken kindly to a few taking advantage of others.

We as Christians cannot put these things out of our minds. We should and must be the voice of reason in, if not the world, at least our own communities. One of the cornerstones of the ministry of Jesus was social justice and the rights for all to be received into the love God offers. To Jesus it was never out of sight out of mind. So let us not forget the women of Papua New Guinea or those who suffer at the hands of others.

Let us, as the letter of James suggests, not just pray but actually do something by reaching out to others and letting our government know how we feel. But as always it is only my opinion.

## 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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| AGED RECEIVABLES AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2008 |            |             |            |             |            |              |
|--|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
|  | PAYROLL    |             | DMM        |             | MISC       | TOTAL        |
|  | 2008       | Prior Years | 2008       | Prior Years |            |              |
| St. Alban's, Acton                       |            |             | 15,044.10  |             |            | 15,044.10    |
| Canterbury Hills                         |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| Canterbury Hills Camp                    |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. John's, Ancaster                     |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| Grace Church, Arthur                     |            |             | 6,471.22   | 17,253.92   |            | 23,725.14    |
| St. Alban's, Beamsville                  |            |             | 8,571.84   |             |            | 8,571.84     |
| St. Christopher's Church                 |            |             |            |             | 13.55      | 13.55        |
| St. Elizabeth's, Burlington              |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. John, Burlington                     |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Luke's, Burlington                   |            |             |            |             | 1,025.06   | 1,025.06     |
| St. Matthew's Church                     |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Philip, Burlington                   |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Paul, Caledonia                      |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. John The Divine, Cayuga              |            |             |            |             | 377.00     | 377.00       |
| St. John's, Cheapside                    |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. James Church, Dundas                 |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| Dunn Parish, Dunnville                   |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Paul, Dunnville                      |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. John's Church, Elora                 | 7,139.28   |             | 5,214.79   |             | 409.10     | 12,763.17    |
| All Saints Church, Erin                  |            |             |            |             | 84.00      | 84.00        |
| St. James, Fergus                        |            |             |            |             | 963.07     | 963.07       |
| Christ Church, Flamborough               | 162.31     | 4,801.40    | 1,351.30   |             |            | 6,315.01     |
| Holy Trinity, Fonthill                   |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Paul's, Fort Erie                    |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. George's, Georgetown                 |            |             | 3,127.24   |             |            | 3,127.24     |
| St. Paul, Glanford                       |            |             |            |             | 189.26     | 189.26       |
| St. Alban's, Glen Williams               |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Alban's, Grand Valley                |            |             | 2,028.84   |             |            | 2,028.84     |
| St. Andrew's Church, Grimsby             |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Philip, Grimsby                      |            |             | 12,819.84  |             | 300.00     | 13,119.84    |
| St. David's & St. Patrick's              |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. George's, Guelph                     |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. James The Apostle, Guelph            |            |             | 61,417.80  | 29,670.66   |            | 91,088.46    |
| St. Matthias, Guelph                     | 7,620.04   | 46,297.07   | 2,278.58   | 26,998.16   | 182.00     | 83,375.85    |
| All Saints, Hagersville                  |            |             |            | 29,845.79   | 145.00     | 29,990.79    |
| All Saints, Hamilton                     |            | 10,963.86   | 21,769.08  | 23,078.64   | 25,999.59  | 81,811.17    |
| Church Of The Ascension                  | 76,743.28  |             |            |             |            | 76,743.28    |
| Christ's Church Cathedral                |            |             | 64,719.70  |             | 43,542.06  | 108,261.76   |
| Holy Trinity Church, Hamilton            |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| Church of the Resurrection               |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Alban, Hamilton                      |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. John The Evangelist                  |            |             |            |             | 8,075.65   | 8,075.65     |
| St. Luke, Hamilton                       |            |             | 15,041.84  | 82,000.00   |            | 97,041.84    |
| The Church of The Nativity               |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Matthew's House                      |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Michael's, Hamilton                  |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Paul, Hamilton                       |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Peter's, Hamilton                    |            |             |            |             | 70.00      | 70.00        |
| St. Stephen, Hamilton                    | 25,293.87  |             |            | 1,110.11    | 1,134.43   | 27,538.41    |
| St. George's, Homer                      |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Stephen, Hornby                      |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Paul's, Jarvis                       | 19,611.45  | 19,586.48   | 14,162.40  | 27,087.59   | 474.43     | 80,922.35    |
| St. John's, Jordan                       |            |             |            |             | 604.76     | 604.76       |
| St. George's, Lowville                   | 36,405.52  | 2,484.56    | 7,772.32   | 3,002.73    | 13,003.14  | 62,668.27    |
| Christ Church, McNab                     | 2,806.85   |             |            |             | 150.00     | 2,956.85     |
| Grace Church, Milton                     | (250.61)   |             |            |             |            | (250.61)     |
| St. Paul's, Mount Forest                 |            |             | 2,203.40   |             |            | 2,203.40     |
| Christ Church, Nanticoke                 |            |             | 5,620.80   | 3,648.60    |            | 9,269.40     |
| St. John, Nassagaweya                    |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| Christ Church, Niagara Falls             |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| Holy Trinity, Niagara Falls              |            |             |            |             | (58.10)    | (58.10)      |
| St. John's, Niagara Falls                |            |             |            |             | (971.10)   | (971.10)     |
| St. Mark's, Niagara on the Lake          |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Paul's, Norval                       |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| Epiphany, Oakville                       |            |             |            |             | 269.08     | 269.08       |
| Church Of The Incarnation                | 38,297.96  | 5,250.75    |            |             | 1,295.10   | 44,843.81    |
| St. Aidan's Church, Oakville             | (218.91)   |             |            |             |            | (218.91)     |
| St. Cuthbert's Church                    |            |             |            |             | 300.60     | 300.60       |
| St. Hilda's, Oakville                    | 5,575.51   |             | 5,760      | 22,098.60   | 325.47     | 33,759.08    |
| St. Jude's Church, Oakville              |            |             |            |             | 339.39     | 339.39       |
| St. Simon's, Oakville                    | 32,637.80  |             |            |             | 976.30     | 33,614.10    |
| St. Mark's, Orangeville                  |            |             |            |             | 600.00     | 600.00       |
| St. Luke's Church, Palermo               | 6,179.54   | 10,995.30   | 2,340.39   | 44,794.11   | 327.92     | 64,637.26    |
| St. James, St. Brendans, Port Colborne   |            |             | 399.83     |             |            | 399.83       |
| St. James, Port Colborne-Youth           | (20.25)    |             |            |             |            | (20.25)      |
| St. Paul's, Port Robinson                | 8,155      | 25,359.57   | 3,717.48   |             | 487.68     | 37,720.16    |
| St. Saviour's, Queenston                 | 2,021.95   |             |            |             |            | 2,021.95     |
| St. John's, Ridgemount                   |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| All Saints, Ridgeway                     |            | 28,387.42   |            | 43,194.15   |            | 71,581.57    |
| St. John's, Rockwood                     | 11,523.91  |             |            |             | 300.00     | 11,823.91    |
| Church Of The Good Shepherd              |            |             | 373.90     |             | 413.96     | 787.86       |
| Grace Church, St. Catharines             |            |             |            |             | 156.96     | 156.96       |
| St. Barnabas, St. Catharines             |            |             |            | 63,242.18   |            | 63,242.18    |
| St. Columba, St. Catharines              |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. George, St. Catharines               |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. James, St. Cath. (Merriton)          |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. John, St. Catharines                 |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Thomas, St. Catharines               |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| Transfiguration Church                   |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. Paul's, Shelburne                    |            |             | 2,500.56   | 23,019.96   | 247.00     | 25,767.52    |
| St. Luke's, Smithville                   |            |             | 2,285      |             |            | 2,285.22     |
| St. John's, Stewarttown                  | (3.95)     |             |            |             |            | (3.95)       |
| Our Saviour The Redeemer                 |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. John's, Thorold                      |            |             | 15,616.50  |             | 4,114.32   | 19,730.82    |
| Christ Church, Wainfleet                 |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| Grace Church, Waterdown                  |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| All Saints, Welland                      |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| Holy Trinity, Welland                    |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| St. David's, Welland                     |            |             | 4,256.28   |             |            | 4,256.28     |
| Christ Church, Whitfield                 |            |             |            |             | 120.00     | 120.00       |
| St. John's Church, Winona                | (46.04)    |             |            |             |            | (46.04)      |
| Christ Church, Woodburn                  | (10.01)    |             |            |             |            | (10.01)      |
| St. John's, York                         |            |             |            |             |            | -            |
| MISCELLANEOUS                            | 5,658.27   |             |            |             | 62,360.66  | 68,018.93    |
| SUB-TOTALS                               | 285,283.20 | 154,126.41  | 286,864.75 | 440,045.20  | 168,347.34 | 1,334,666.90 |
| TOTALS PER CATEGORIES                    |            | 439,409.61  |            | 726,909.95  | 168,347.34 | 1,334,666.90 |

## PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

■ The Reverend David Hamilton passed away on February 6. David was ordained in 1977 and served in the parishes of St. Mark's, Orangeville, St. Paul's, Shelburne, St. James, Dundalk, Christ Church, Whitfield and St. James, St. Catharines. Funeral service was held on February 13th at St. James, Merriton (St. Catharines). Deepest sympathy to Anne, and the bereaved family.

■ The Reverend Patrick Blagrove passed away on February 20. Funeral service was held in New Brunswick on February 23.

■ Erika Massimi was issued a bishop's permission as Coordinator of Children and Family Ministry at St. James, Dundas, effective date was January 1.

■ The Reverend Robert Brownlie was issued a bishop's permission as Honorary Assistant at St. John the Divine, Cayuga, and St. John, York,

effective date January 1.

■ The Reverend Mark Gladding has been elected Regional Dean of Brock Region, effective February 11.

■ Congratulations to Susan Graham, Administrative Assistant at St. George's Church, Georgetown, who celebrated her 20th anniversary of employ on March 1.

■ The Reverend Nancy Moffett issued a bishop's permission as associate priest at Grace Church, St. Catharines, on a part time basis, effective March 1.

■ Elspeth Newton, O.N., a long time and faithful member of St. James the Apostle, Guelph, as well as former President of Mother's Union, passed away on March 4. Funeral service was held at St. James on March 7.

■ The Reverend Aaron Orear has accepted the appointment to be Rector of St. Alban the Martyr, Glen Williams, effective May 4.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Thank you

I sat down for my usual read of the *Niagara Anglican*, and I thought the March issue was especially good! On the first page I noticed two articles, one by Bishop Bird on his trip to England and visit to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the other about "Spirit Quest" After reading the bishop's account, I was proud to be a member of the diocese of Niagara; what a good bishop we have! And after reading about SpiritQuest, I wished there had

been that kind of event when I was a teenager.

Then later I found "Which God is it?" by Nissa Basbaum and the one on "St. Elizabeth's parish pays off its debt", which was inspiring, and others which were encouraging in a way we all need in these days of much doom and gloom.

So I just wanted to write and say a big thank you to all involved, including the paper itself.

JOAN BOTHWELL  
Burlington, Ontario

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

### General Synod 2010 Volunteer Opportunity!

The Synod of the Diocese of Niagara is calling for nominations to the General Synod which will be held at St. Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, from June 3rd to 11th, 2010.

The Diocese of Niagara is entitled to elect five (5) lay delegates and five (5) clergy delegates. Those nominated that are not elected to General Synod as the delegates from Niagara will become the alternate delegates to General Synod 2010.

- Individuals must be members of the 2009 Diocesan Synod in order to be eligible for nomination and members of Synod may self-nominate. The consent of a nominee must be given prior to his/her name being submitted. A 60-word biographical sketch will be requested of each nominee after the deadline, in point form. Only biographies received by September 18th will appear in the Convening Circular.

Deadline for nominations is August 21st, 2009, and nominations must include name, parish and location (city/town), gender, email address (if available), and phone number(s). The ballot will be presented to the November 2009 Diocesan Synod.

This is a terrific volunteer opportunity for members of Niagara's Synod who wish to support the work and life of the Anglican Church of Canada. Further information about this volunteer opportunity is available upon request.

Please send nominations to:

**Mrs. Karen Nowicki**  
Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of Synod  
252 James Street North  
Hamilton, ON L8R 2L3  
karen.nowicki@niagara.anglican.ca  
905-527-1316 ext. 380  
905-527-1281 fax

# Shoot Ready Aim | These boots were made for walking...

**HOLLIS HISCOCK**  
INTERIM RECTOR, ST. GEORGE'S GUELPH

**SHOOT - The photograph**

Ash Wednesday morning, we drove into the Church parking lot for the beginning of Lent service, where our foreheads would be marked with ashes to symbolize our mortality, and where our bodies would receive the Holy Communion as a sign of our eternity. Near a chain link fence shadowed by mighty cedars were two abandoned shoes, one with its sole covered and the other with its sole exposed. They were probably tossed by their owner last autumn, then enveloped by fallen leaves and blanketed by winter's snow, until the warmer days of the approaching spring melted their tomb like-existence, leading to their resurrection.

Two days later, I returned to photograph the scene, which by then had been washed with torrents of rain, making the shoes appear even more forlorn. My camera caught the moment for posterity.

Why a picture of shoes? Recently, the lowly shoe has soared to prominence on the world stage. We watched the former President of the United States play a game of 'throw and duck' to avoid a shoe thrown by a protesting reporter; we noted the look of unbelief on the face of the President of China as a student hurled a shoe at him, but the projectile did not have the velocity to reach the intended target; and we can only imagine the surprise and shock to the prosecutor's system when a robbery suspect flung his shoe, in court, and hit her in the back of the head. These events bring new meaning and application to Lee Hazelwood's hit song, 'These boots are made for walking...

one of these days these boots are gonna walk right over you'.

**READY - Words behind the photo**

In the Bible foot apparel performs a myriad of functions which have varied meanings. Here are some examples for your consideration.

**LEGAL TENDER** (Ruth chapters 1-4). Ruth, after following her mother-in-law to a new found land, captured the affections of Boaz, a wealthy land owner. In order for him to take Ruth as his wife, he had to purchase a plot of land (Ruth would come as part of the deal). With 10 elders as witnesses, Boaz and the man who was next in line to buy the property negotiated a deal in the 'meeting place near the city gate'. The deal was finalized when the man removed his sandal and gave it to Boaz. According to their custom, 'in those days, to settle a sale or an exchange of property, it was the custom for the seller to take off his sandal and give it to the buyer. In this way the Israelites showed that the matter was settled' (Ruth 4:7). Previously in Canada, such deals were settled with a handshake; today they are completed with a legal document, signed and witnessed.

**SIGN OF RESPECT.** When Moses (Exodus 3:1-20) met a talking, burning bush in the desert, where he was tending his family's sheep herd, he was somewhat surprised, awed and amused. His curiosity forced him to move closer to examine and understand this strange phenomenon. He froze in his tracks, when the 'bush voice' commanded him to 'take off your sandals because you are standing on holy ground' (verse 5). He removed his sandals as

a sign of respect, being in the presence of God.

**MARK OF HUMILITY.** People heralded John the Baptist (Matthew 3:11) as the coming Saviour because of his riveting preaching and ceaseless baptizing. He quickly dampened their expectations by issuing a statement denying the fact, and reassured them that he was not worthy enough to carry the sandal of the Messiah. John was placing himself lower than the lowest slave, whose task it was to carry and clean the smelly sandals of his owner.

**SYMBOL OF PEACE.** When Paul compared the clothing and equipment of the soldier's armour with the components of the Christian virtues, he reserved special attention for the feet. He explained to the Ephesians (Ephesians 6:10-20), that their shoes were to be always ready to 'announce the good news of peace' from the one who called Himself the Prince of Peace.

**TOKEN OF RESTORATION.** When the prodigal son (Luke 16:1-32) returned from squandering his inheritance and being reduced to eating what the pigs refused to consume, his father restored him to a place of respect and dignity by, among other actions, asking the servants to 'put shoes on his feet'.

Foot coverings have been employed as outward, visible, human signs of God's inward, spiritual meaning and grace.

**AIM - Questions and actions for you**

■ Reflect on the variety of shoes you wear during any seven day period and what significance each has for your physical, spiritual and emotional development?



- What actions can you take to ensure that feet around the world can be the best that they can be?
  - Sit and contemplate the well being and purpose of your feet, then stand and walk or run to where your feet want you to go.
- .....

The Reverend Hollis Hiscock, a retired priest, is presently serving as Interim Pastor at St. George's Parish in Guelph. He is available to do multimedia presentations on spirituality, the Bible and the Christian Faith.

The Reverend Hollis Hiscock, a re-

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 »

# Renewed, inspired and nourished

I do know that liturgies which include well done music, powerful preaching, and sincere praying can move me very much.

We further inform the petal with five affirmative statements: We aim to

- respond to different expectations, meeting people where they are
- inspire Christian social activism through worship
- engage clergy and laity together in the creation of life-changing worship for the congregation and the wider community
- initiate and communicate a diocesan-wide vision of hospitality
- encourage a positive, inclusive, and diverse participatory environment

These are important and lofty goals - goals that will call for much

from us, and goals which will both stretch and empower us as worshipping Anglicans in this diocese.

Most of us (I hope all of us) can probably remember a time when we experienced worship which was deep, transforming and, yes, life-changing. It might have taken place when we were particularly open or vulnerable; it may have taken place in the context of one of life's great passages - a wedding, a funeral, a baptism. It might have taken place at a time of deep darkness and need in our own lives; it might have taken place at a time of inexpressible joy and hope. It may well have taken place at your Church, it may well have taken place in another church. You may well find every Sunday morning to be a time of life-changing worship for you! Would that that were true for us all.

What can be said about these experiences is that they were not defined by a choice of rite or book, by any one particular kind of archi-

ture or church building, by any one specific type of church music, nor by any one particular type of liturgy. They were, in all probability, defined or shaped by the care and preparation which were taken with the liturgy, by the authenticity of the worshiping experience, by the spiritual care shown by those who led the worship, and by the nature of the worshiping community. These deeply moving experiences may have happened on a beach, at a camp, in a Cathedral, at a parish church. They may have happened at the early service or the main service; they may have happened at a darkened evening vespers service. They may have involved a 'normal' Sunday or they might be associated with high feasts and holy days. They could have involved deeply physical acts, such as washing of feet, or marking with ashes; they could equally have been at the simplest and most regular of church services.

There is a temptation to see life

changing worship only in terms of that which is new or different; as only happening when we are experiencing something which is a departure from the familiar. But our own experience tells us, of course, that oftentimes we can be deeply moved by that which we know well, by that which is well known and comfortable. I have been aware of deep transformations in my life at the most traditional of Book of Common Prayer liturgies, just as I have been powerfully moved by large and diverse contemporary liturgies, sometimes taking place in non-traditional places and spaces. I do know that liturgies which include well done music, powerful preaching, and sincere praying can move me very much.

If the church is to grow and deepen faith, if the church is to reach out to the world, if the church is to gather in both friends and strangers, it needs to take seriously the role and the power of its liturgy. For most of us, our single most meaningful inter-

action with the Church takes place on Sunday mornings, in the context of public worship. That means that we hope that people leave church refreshed and renewed, inspired and nourished, re-claimed as God's people. That means that careful and sensitive planning, well prepared and thoughtful preaching, uplifting and appropriate music, a gracious and enthusiastic welcome, and a real appreciation for the beauty that is (and always has been) Christian worship all must be integral parts of what we do. Liturgies which seem stale and unexciting; services which seem to be simply dull and rote repetition, music and preaching which are only 'ho-hum' simply no longer are acceptable.

The vision of Niagara, through its people, is that worship should (indeed, must) be life changing. That gives us much to ponder and much to do. It is what we as Anglicans have always done best. May it continue to be so!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 »

# Justifying justice

We are criticized as the hypocritically soft glove of the hard hand of the colonialism and capitalism that have triggered our present economic and environmental crises.

Let's look at the Christian church. How do we describe and understand it today? Usually we start with the somewhat worn labels, "liberal" and "conservative," "left-wing" and "right." Although familiar, the argument between these two traditions is the spark that can ignite quarrels within a congregation as well as wars between tribes and among nations.

In our global village today, all wars are civil wars. To compound this irony, in war civility is inevitably lost. All wars are just (only) wars; there is no just (good) war. If you find this play upon the meaning of words intriguing, you may be interested in a concept that is quite puzzling: post-modernism. The term itself, "post-modernism," seems illogical. It provides, nonetheless, a frame of reference that may throw some new light on the familiar arguments between left- and right-wing belief systems.

Post-modernism began in Europe as an early 20th century reaction against "modern" arts and was applied more widely after the world wars, after Hiroshima. It has now

permeated all academic disciplines, including seminaries, causing confusion but also excitement. Here is an attempt to explain post-modernism as it affects our church.

It is, in a theological context, the search for love before truth. Traditional theology concerns itself with correct belief and creed; post-modernism looks to one's relationship of love with God, other people, and the earth and to the work for peace and justice. Post-modernists conclude that what you see and what you believe and think are shaped by your point of view and your source of information, yet there's no justification for sinful actions. Post-modernists assume that the mistreatment of any individual or group because of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc. is wrong, and that world faiths, including Christianity, have acted badly over the years.

Church energy audit: What topic drains the most energy from your church? Something meaningful such as the length of the drapes in the rectory, the volume of the sound system, the power of the parish vs the diocese, the superiority of cradle Anglicans to converts? Absorbing ourselves in these predictable squabbles, we snipe away and the unchurched, watching us, grow more disenchanted. As a church, we are spiritually energy-inefficient.

Why is this a problem? Read on.

Earth energy audit: To keep human economies working, we have to exploit the earth more, take more oil, more water, use

more genetically modified foods, overfish another species, cut down more trees, pump more toxins into our soils, rivers and skies. The underlying reality causing the stock market's collapse is that the planet is finite while capitalism is predicated on growth. Continuing to damage the earth as we do is our species' compulsive addiction to more, more, more. The environment is still a low priority because it requires long-term thinking and most people think short-term.

Political audit: Americans, however, have come to realize that their last eight years were tremendously destructive. Their former President, a devout, born-again Christian, was content to make the rich richer, to make war on other peoples, to turn the clock back on social justice. Wars on everything from terrorism to drugs pulled the US further into debt. He told his people to keep shopping, but consumerism, the fun face of capitalism, is implicit in our systematic (Aren't you glad I didn't write "systemic"?) destruction of planet earth and draws us further away from the simplicity and integrity of spiritual life, away from doing justice.

Motivational speakers are another greedy twist on Christianity with their message to workers chasing the American Dream: believe in yourself, work hard, you'll get rich, you'll be "self-made." Their empty clichés are traditionalist Christianity at its most blatant.

The conventional profession of Christ as personal savior is no

longer enough. We can't simply claim, like Hogg's character, to be saved and thus justified in committing injustice. Our actions matter as well as our claims of what we believe. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu famously said, "When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. When we opened our eyes from praying we had the Bible and they had the land. Now on the basis of this Bible you have given us, I call you to give us back our land." We church-goers are slow to give up power and amazed to realize that we are criticized as the hypocritically soft glove of the hard hand of the colonialism and capitalism that have triggered our present economic and environmental crises.

Traditionalist theology, searching to articulate truth and orthodoxy, is largely irrelevant to the person without clean water, without a home, a job, a friend. Because we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers and so many of our siblings lack these essentials, the only viable theology teaches how God wants us to establish his kingdom of justice here and now. Any other theology is as self-indulgent as the medieval debate about the number of angels that could dance on the head of a pin.

Who are the new theologians? J. Dominic Crossan argues that both Old and New Testament writers proposed radically liberal economic systems and opposed the top-down capitalism and colonialism of empires such as the Roman. Jesus and Paul advocated a kind of social-

ism and at the time of King David all debts were forgiven every fifty years. Is this not the kind of compassionate justice that the world needs, that God calls us to?

There are many great contemporary theologians who focus less on the economics of biblical societies, but they too see God in ways that a thoughtful citizen of today does not consider antediluvian. These theologians, including Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry, Hans Kung, Matthew Fox and Marcus Borg, do not yell or threaten but rather offer the reader intellectual challenge and inspiration.

Finally, there are the contemporary theologians who seem compelled to challenge the establishment: J. S. Spong, Tom Harpur and, most recently, Brian D. McLaren. Like Martin Luther five centuries ago, they are lightning rods drawing the fury of those who stand to lose power. The 2007 book by McLaren, *Everything Must Change*, is the wake-up call of an evangelical turned post-modern prophet.

The active membership has been shrinking at Kleinburg United Church where Pierre Berton's family worshipped when he published *The Comfortable Pew* in 1965. Recently they had trouble deciding what percentage would be needed to close: a simple majority, 60%, 80%? They could have skipped that discussion: when it came to the vote, 100% chose to close. How have churches changed since 1965? Pews are no longer comfortable.

PS: Were they ever?

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