



Niagara Anglican

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NEWS • PERSPECTIVE • REFLECTION • FOR A GROWING CHURCH • MAY 2009

The marriage of the sacred and the profane

NISSA BASBAUM
RECTOR, TRANSFIGURATION ST CATHARINES

Any practicing Christian would be hard-pressed to refer to Jesus as profane. Yet, a quick glance at the dictionary tells me that there are a number of definitions for this word, and while some of these certainly don't describe him, others unquestionably do. In fact, it is more likely our misuse of the words spiritual and religious that would lead us to conclude that Jesus could not possibly have been profane.

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Fighting madness

ELEANOR JOHNSTON
ST. THOMAS' CHURCH ST CATHARINES

Righteous indignation is something of a specialty for church-goers. What if we were to take the energy that we now devote to little issues and dedicate it to curing the madness that underlies the big problem threatening all life on planet earth? This problem is the madness of war. A person or a society at peace is sane, blessed, living the kingdom of God on earth.

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Thumbprints of Easter faith

MICHAEL THOMPSON
RECTOR, ST JUDE'S OAKVILLE

Of the four gospels, three provide accounts of meetings with Jesus after his resurrection. The fourth, Mark's gospel, originally ended at verse 8 of chapter 16—"So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." This gospel offers only one reference to encounter with the risen Jesus, and that reference comes in the future tense—"he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him."

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■ Members of Synod discuss the diocesan budget which was passed at the second session of Synod on March 28, 2009.

Bishop calls church to steady growth

MICHAEL BIRD
BISHOP OF NIAGARA

Tomorrow is the Fifth Sunday of Lent and the readings appointed for the day focus upon the upcoming death of Jesus that is the fulfillment of the "new covenant" that the prophet Jeremiah speaks of in the Old Testament reading: "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke... But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

In the 58th Chapter of the Book of Isaiah, we hear the prophet's response to the people's complaint that God had not shown mercy even though, in their estimation, they had been faithful to the will of God in the form of their outward rituals and liturgies: "Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on

high... Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard."

In each one of these readings from scripture God's people are called to reexamine their role in participating in God's mission for the world. Time and time again throughout the Old and New Testaments there comes a challenge to see our lives and our ministry from a different perspective; not through our own eyes but through the eyes of God.

Tomorrow we will hear Jeremiah call the people of his generation to look at their covenant relationship in a new way; through a new set of lenses; a relationship with God and each other that is far more than a set of rules and regulations... a covenant written on stone tablets... this is a covenant that penetrates deep into the

very fiber of their being... it is written not on stone but on their hearts!

Most importantly, however, as we focus upon the foreshadowing of Jesus' ordeal upon the cross in John's gospel, as we reflect upon all that Christ's death would mean and would accomplish; it is true that his life and death provides us with a new set of lenses to view our own lives and our own ministry. Never again, can we contemplate human power and authority in the same way... never again, can we look upon human suffering and need in the same way... and how clearer in the wake of the crucifixion is our call to move beyond our own inward looking and self-serving wants and desires. Time and time again we are called to look at the world not through our own eyes but through the eyes of God.

Over the past several months a strong sense has begun to emerge that God is calling us as a diocesan family to look upon our life and work through a new set of lenses.

We are beginning to dream and imagine a church in such a way that when people throughout Southern Ontario think of the work of Poverty Reduction, or Environmental Sustainability... they

think of the Anglican Church and the Diocese of Niagara.

It is a Church where every congregation has a ministry covenant in place that highlights the partnership that exists between the congregation, the clergy and the bishop as we strive to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

We can envisage conversations being facilitated in parishes across the diocese about what it is in worship that changes people's lives and about making the Gospel more accessible to people who presently see us as boring or irrelevant. We want to embrace the work of Fresh Expressions and encourage, in significant and tangible ways, innovation and new ideas and we want to provide the resources and the inspiration to allow these things to happen.

One of the commitments I made as I accepted this Episcopal role was to listen carefully to people across Niagara as we looked to the future and I want to take a few minutes to tell you what I have heard in the regional meetings and in the many other ways that pieces of communication have come my way:

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PARISH NEWS



■ **ST JAMES DUNDAS**, Christopher Herrick, world renowned concert organist—a virtuoso, indeed—was part of the Musica St. James program at St. James Anglican Church, Dundas. He played to a packed house of over 310 people on the new pipe organ. The Musica St. James series continues on May 29th with 'An Evening with Mozart', starring Ian and Catharine Sadler.

Pressure cookers



JOHN LAYFIELD
ST. JOHN'S, ANCASTER

Once upon a time, some people were invited to the house of a friend or family member for a party or celebration. As they arrived, food and drink were served. While the party started in the largest room of the house, eventually bodies drifted into the kitchen where much discussion took place. Family, friends, politics, religion, the economy... yes, the usual stuff was discussed. Soon the kitchen was full, and the large room was empty. Strange? No! Because the food and the action were all in the kitchen!

The making and baking and sharing of food create strong fellowship. But it goes further than that in the kitchen at St. John's, Ancaster. On almost any day of the week, many of the ladies (and a fair few gentlemen) in our parish, led by three "gems" in particular, can be found leading the way to outreach within and outside the parish. Family anniversaries, funeral receptions, special musical events, FUNdraising activities, all tumble over each other. Community at its best. If you want to see and hear a sense of humour and faith operating with purpose, it can be found in the kitchen at St. John's.

The latest expression of that purpose began almost two years ago. In pursuit of excellence in ministry and responding to the initiative and creativity existing within the parish, we acted eagerly upon the suggestion to create a men's cooking club. It is aimed espe-

cially at, but not limited to, those men in the parish who, for various reasons, are now living and cooking alone. Cooking classes began. (Locating the cooking tools in the kitchen was part of the necessary basic training before action could begin.)

Once a month at the beginning, and now twice a month, "The Pressure Cookers" gather, complete with special aprons. Two days before, menus for three course meals are discussed with our teachers and guides and the food is purchased. The purchasing of the food allows opportunities to discuss the work of St. John's with interested staff at the local Fortinos.

On the day of the lunch, we start preparation: cutting, washing, slicing, peeling, under strict health department guidelines. While the food cooks, the tables are properly set and a serving area established. After a prayer of thanks the meal, naturally, becomes the focus of the day and the talking takes off. Fellowship blooms under these conditions, bringing us closer in our faith and as a community, as we share together an oasis of peace in a busy world. Each of the diners pays a reasonably small fee to cover our costs, with the number of diners ranging anywhere from 15 to 25. Regular participants often invite a friend to join them for lunch, thus building relationships in the community. We do not leave until the dishes are done and put away. Any leftovers are usually taken to St. Matthew's House.



■ A light moment between Bishop Michael and Reverend Ellie during the service of her induction and celebration of new ministry for the Parish Church of St. Luke's Smithville, on March 29, 2009

St. Luke's Smithville celebrates its new minister

JIM HIGGINSON
ST. LUKE'S, SMITHVILLE

For a while, the members of St. Luke's had been anxiously waiting for March 29th to arrive. Ever since early September 2008 when Reverend Eleanor Clitheroe-Bell, better known to everyone as Reverend Ellie, became its minister, members had been anticipating the Bishop's visit to the parish for the formal installation. When it finally happened on March 29th, the wait was well worth it. The ceremony was delightful. Outside it was rainy and overcast, but inside it was bright and upbeat. Bishop Michael was present along with Regional Dean Reverend Robert Fead and Rev. Canon Paul Whitehead from St. Andrews, Grimsby.

To share the special event, there were over 130 guests in attendance. Guests included past and present parishioners and Ellie's family members and friends. To see that many people in the small church was almost unbelievable.

The ceremony was inclusive involving as many people as possible. One of the highlights was Reverend Ellie's children, Jacob and Faith Bell, performing a violin duet. Another highlight was a surprise presentation from the congregation of a chasuble especially made by members of the congregation for her to use at future St. Luke's services. Overall, the ceremony was very impressive and moving. The Lord's spirit was in the air.

The Bishop's presence was inspiring. This was the first time that most of the congregation had a chance to meet Bishop Michael. He didn't dis-

appoint because he brought along his sense of humour and his natural ability to motivate.

He told the story of Noah's Ark to all the children. His sermon was not only about his vision for the future of St. Luke's but also the overall church in Niagara. He reflected on the importance of the role that God has played in his life; and he spoke of the unique role of small parishes like St. Luke's in the future of the church. As he indicated to the children, being the Bishop allows him to wear a funny hat, wear a colourful chasuble and stole, wear a special ring and carry a shepherd's staff or crozier. As he explained, these are all symbols of God; and this aspect contributed to the special status and feel to the service. The ceremony was delightful.

Throughout St. Luke's 125 years it has always been associated with another parish, up until this important point in its life. Most recently, St. Luke's was twinned with St. Philip-by-the-Lake in Grimsby for more than thirty years. Rev. Trevor Jones ably ministered to both parishes from 1993 until he decided to retire in 2006. His retirement gave St. Luke's the opportunity to reflect on its future in a different way. With the wise guidance of Interim Ministers Susan Wells and Jim Powell along with the cooperative and courageous support of the wardens of St. Philip's, St. Luke's, in 2008, embarked on its important and daunting soul-searching journey.

It was realized that Grimsby's demographics were changing in a different way from Smithville's and that St. Luke's future would be better

served as a stand-alone parish. This recommendation was made to Bishop Michael and Executive Archdeacon Michael Patterson who quickly agreed with the approach and gave their unconditional support to achieving this goal.

In due course, Reverend Ellie became interested in the challenge. The Parochial Committee recognized immediately that Reverend Ellie was the one God had chosen for St. Luke's. In early September 2008, Reverend Ellie became St. Luke's very first stand-alone minister. Although Ellie is part-time, it feels, with everything she does, that she is there all the time.

St. Luke's is truly blessed. The Parish enters 2010 observing its 125th year of celebrating Christ in Smithville. For this year and next the Parish has adopted the slogan: "St. Luke's, a part of the community for 125 years". Some of its commemorative plans for next year include having Bishop Michael return again around St. Luke's day in October, as well as having former parish ministers and parishioners return at various times throughout the year to celebrate this important milestone—a stepping stone to the future.

The Wardens see a promising future for St. Luke's in Smithville and recognize continuing the important role it plays in the social fabric of the community. The journey continues as the Parish continually strives to be an active and productive participant of the important community of Smithville.

Reverend Ellie is now officially in place to lead St. Luke's important journey into its next 125 years.

Lunching and learning with fair trade

ANNE WASHINGTON
ST. JAMES DUNDAS

The Lunch 'n' Learn session at St. James' Church, Dundas was intended to heighten the awareness and importance of fair trade practices and to motivate us as a community of faith to purchase fair trade products.

Such products are hand crafted by individuals employed by companies that are guided by the fair trade ethic, and enable us to more fully live out our baptismal call to strive for justice and peace, and to respect the dignity of every human being. Who better to help promote this message than Ten Thousand Villages, an agency known for its sourcing, supporting and marketing of items that have been crafted by people from Developing Nations (Third World).

Many fine examples of those fair trade products were available for sale, brought in by Frieda Kehler, Manager of the Ten Thousand Villages store in Oakville and volunteer Lynde Smith. Interest was high and business brisk as parishioners perused the beautiful scarves, purses, ornaments, jewellery organic foods and other items available. The sales apparently provided enough income to support extended needy families for several months in a Developing Nation.

People could have shopped longer but time rolled around for the speaker,

Ingrid Heinrichs Pauls, Education and Media Coordinator for Ten Thousand Villages, Canada. Her presentation was peppered with anecdotes, and personal experiences supported by concrete materials gathered in her travels to places supported through Ten Thousand Villages endeavours.

This receptive audience was engaged. People listened attentively to Ingrid's moving and informative presentation as she told of the valuable contribution made by non profit organizations such as The Juke Works in Bangladesh, the Kisumu Innovation Centre of Kenya (KICK) and Rehabilitation Craft Cambodia, organizations initiated and developed to provide fairly paid employment, training and counselling for disadvantaged people living in the poor areas of their respective countries.

Ingrid shared some of the sadness she saw but also the joy she felt when she saw the difference made in the lives of impoverished people when they were employed, respected, well treated and paid a fair wage. Like Ria, a mother who was able to send her six year old daughter to school, an experience that she never had as a young girl.

The group learned about the waste paper, used pop cans and bits of wire scrounged by people from mounds of garbage, which are recycled and made

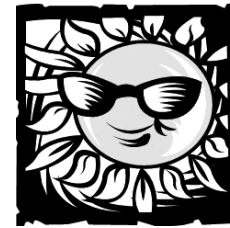
into cards, bookmarks and whimsical items for sale. This is an unpleasant task but it generates the income which holds at bay the effects of grinding poverty which Ingrid has seen firsthand.

In keeping with the international flavour of this Lunch 'n' Learn, the menu focussed on recipes from around the world like, Indian Bean Curry, Cucumber and Yogurt Salad, Jasmin Rice, Nan Bread, Ginger and Molasses Cookies, Fair Trade Chocolate Easter Eggs, Fair Trade Tea and Coffee, and fresh fruit.

What then must be done in regard to fair trade and economic justice? Perhaps that can best be summed up by one of our guests, Freida, from Ten Thousand Villages, "I also believe that rich countries of the world need to be honest about acknowledging the difference between the price we pay at the store versus the true cost in terms of the economic cost, the social cost and the environmental cost of the products we buy. Only then can we hope to bring justice to Third World peoples so that they are not merely surviving, but living."

How very true that is! Are our practices then, part of the problem? If so, must we not act toward being part of the solution?

Freida can be reached at 905-337-2377.



The June issue of the Niagara Anglican will be the last before we take our summer break, returning in September.

The June issue will be the one in which to advertise the summer and early fall events in your parish.

Contact Colin Jacobs at 905-526-0154 for rates and information.

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A day in the history of St. John's Ridgemount

LISA PUNCH
PEOPLE'S WARDEN, ST. JOHN'S RIDGEMOUNT

This historical country church is one of the oldest in the Stevensville, Town of Fort Erie area. Constructed in 1840 it takes us back to pioneer times when Rev. Anderson saw the need for another church to serve the rural township of Bertie. Wardens Henry Teal and Adolphus Meyer helped him find a location half way between the River Road and Stevensville on Ridgemount Road just off Bowen Road. Reverend John Anderson was the first rector, and in his memory, the Good Shepherd stained glass window behind the altar was made.

The first confirmation was conducted by Bishop John Strachan on June 18, 1846 when 63 candidates received the rite. In 1842, as Bishop of York responsible for all of Upper Canada, he travelled over 2500 miles by carriage and wagon to confirm 756 candidates. His visit to St. John's was most certainly a historic event.

From the opening in 1840 until 1954 the church was served by the rectors of St. Paul's, the mother church. In 1954 St. John's and All Saint's (Ridgeway) combined to form a separate parish. Rev. John Gerard was the first to serve as a rector.

The main portion of the church has seen little change from the days of the horse and buggy when members

housed their traps in the huge barn at the rear. The chancel was added in 1910 and the church hall in 1957.

In May of the year 2000 the church celebrated 160 years of worship and service to its parishioners, many of whom are descendants of the original members of the congregation. Next May St. John's will be celebrating 170 years and this year the church will receive Historical Designation by the local Heritage Committee as a long standing memorial to Fort Erie's past.

The cemetery, a major responsibility for those who serve as trustees, was opened in 1841. The first burial was that of Elizabeth Miller UEL, wife of Andrew Miller, October 20, 1841. It also contains two significant memorials marking the graves of a mother and daughter who survived the sinking of the Titanic. From 1982-84 a study of the cemetery was conducted by the Ontario Genealogical Society. Results are available to anyone doing historical or family research.

On May 24th, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. St. John's will be celebrating their annual Memorial Sunday Service to honor the families and their loved ones that are buried in the cemetery. The United Empire Loyalists will be joining the congregation for a little ceremony in the cemetery before the service. A plaque from the Loyalists

was presented to St. John's indicating the interment of those who came to the area following the American Revolution. Following communion a luncheon put on by the Ladies of the congregation will be enjoyed and an opportunity for all to view a display of pictures and documents that cover the history of the church will be available. All are welcome to attend.

In the past year St. John's has joined All Saints and St. Luke's Lutheran Churches in joint ministry with Rev. Joanne Beacon. This is the first time that the Anglican and Lutheran Churches have shared ministry, but with the low attendance and lack of full time ministers it was a way of keeping the church doors open. St. John's is honored to be apart of this new adventure.

St. John's stands today as evidence of the faith and support of a devout congregation, the pews filled with descendants of the original members along with those who have joined them in worship. The doors are open to all. We love to see visitors and give them a tour of our little country church. Sunday services are at 9:00 a.m. To reach St. John's from the QEW, take Sodom Road through Stevensville to Bowen Road. Make a left turn onto Ridgemount Road. You cannot miss the quaint white structure on your left.

The 175th anniversary committee of the Parish Church of St. Luke, Burlington invites all people of the diocese to

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Fighting madness

War and destruction are the behaviors of a civilization in a state of insanity as surely as selfish and compulsively violent behavior characterizes a psychotic person.

What are Christians called to do? It is easy to find quotations in the Bible that justify almost any opinion or action, but if one looks at its overall message, the Old Testament shows that God values justice and the New has Jesus consistently challenging the powerful by taking the side of the outcasts and by teaching peace and love. Most saints throughout Christian history have helped the poor while living his Beatitudes and Commandments. How can we continue in this mission?

In our time the unemployed, the disabled, the poor and the environment suffer most from war. Those who profit are the greedy rich. Most of us, if we look honestly at ourselves, fit the category of "rich" simply by being citizens of Canada in the early 21st century. What about "greedy"? That's harder to see. Our great difficulty, as individual Christians and as a church, is the unacknowledged disconnect between what we profess as loving Christians and law-abiding citizens and what we do as members of a violent, me-first society.

What's warlike about our society? We like to think that Canadians are peace-keepers and environmental leaders. Perhaps we were, in the time of Lester B. Pearson, but not now. Avner Mandelan, author of a recent

article, "The Buy Side" in *The Globe and Mail's* "Report on Business," suggested that the time has come for investors to profit from the manufacture and sale of military weapons: "If the 'big change' forecasters are right, and large-scale military conflict is coming our way, it's a good time to buy into U.S. defence suppliers." He is cheerily advising us, in the *Saturday Globe*, to buy "defence" stocks.

This is madness. For us to buy American "defence" stocks is to be either blindly short-sighted or consciously profiting from war. The first lie is the term "defence," doublespeak that thoughtful Christians need to challenge. Secondly, what Mandelan does not mention is that as his readers rebuild their investment portfolios by profiting from "defence" stocks, they will grow rich while soldiers and civilians die. What is more, he ignores the inevitably huge environmental damage of war. Surely Christians should not only refuse to purchase such stocks but also protest their sale.

Mandelan specifies "the fast-deteriorating situations in nuclear Pakistan" and its neighbours. When considering the possibility of nuclear war between any two countries, sane people should make every effort to prevent it. If a nuclear war were to escalate, involving Russia, China and the United States, the resulting pollution could destroy all life on this planet. This would be the ultimate environmental damage and humanity's suicide.

Mandelan hesitates: "the 'big change' forecast... is the scariest for the forecaster, because, if wrong, it can make the forecaster appear foolish." Is appearing foolish by making the wrong prediction his biggest worry? Seriously? To promote investment in war suppliers is to encourage war. To profit from war is both sin and insanity. Here is an issue that merits our righteous anger and leads us to protest war, to teach peace, with urgency.

If we want to learn what is really going on in terms of war, economic exploitation and environmental damage, what media can we trust? A respected non-governmental organization sponsored by the Anglican Church of Canada is Project Ploughshares. According to its website, it is "an ecumenical agency of the Canadian Council of Churches established in 1976 to implement the churches' call to be peacemakers and to work for a world in which justice will flourish and peace abound."

In "On the record: The first public audit of a federal report on Canada's military exports" in the Spring 2009 edition of *The Ploughshares Monitor*, Kenneth Epps notes: "Canada takes seriously its role as a responsible arms exporter and endeavours to ensure that Canadian military goods are not used illegally or irresponsibly." Ok, what does the legal, responsible use of military goods look like? Not much different. One of Epps' talents is to involve his readers in interpreting his data.

Epps continues, "Recently Canada endorsed the negotiation of a legally binding international arms trade treaty, to be based on principles drawn from existing international law and state responsibilities. These principles include a higher, universal standard of transparency that would cast a brighter light on a notoriously secretive trade and hold states more accountable for their military export decisions." If Canada endorsed a new treaty, did we know about it? Probably not, since our news media feeds on the predictable mix of human violence and natural disasters, wars and rumours of war.

Epps keeps digging for information: during 2003-2005 "Saudi Arabia was the top reported recipient [of Canadian arms products], importing armoured vehicles and other equipment worth almost a quarter of the global total... This suggests that Canada does not always adhere to its own control guidelines—in this case the close control of exports to states where human rights abuse is a serious concern." Is it acceptable to us, as Christians, that we profit as arms dealers to any country?

Finally, Epps, in his measured, factual tone, leads his reader to the sad conclusion that Canada uses a special deal with the U.S. to sell, through the U.S., even more, unreported, arms to countries with terrible human rights records: "the Report includes no data on military transfers to the United States because the US is exempt from the export control process under

unique U.S.-Canada defence trade agreements. The estimated value of Canadian military shipments to the U.S. is twice the value of shipments to all other recipients combined, yet no information on this trade is available from the Report." The lie we manage to ignore is our country's underhanded complicity in profiting from war.

A related deceit is that a war can jump-start an economy in depression. The truth is that fighting a war costs money as well as lives. In World War I, for example, the Canadian government instituted income tax and bonds to finance the training, deployment and maintenance of fighters who would otherwise, in time of peace, have been productive civilian workers. It is the same for any war. Armed Forces personnel need uniforms, food, guns, transportation, medical treatment and pensions for their families. All this costs taxpayers money. The only people profiting are the suppliers, including the arms dealers; the country as a whole loses.

War is madness, especially when seen as legitimate business. "Love your enemies" is a difficult but wonderful commandment, a first step to using our righteous indignation for God's peace. In times of economic turmoil, it is easy to vent our troubles by hurting others. But all forms of violence, from bullying to bombing, are wrong and all victims, from abused children to endangered species, deserve protection as the beloved creatures of God.

Book Review | Parent-Teacher Interviews



CHARLES C. STIRLING
CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

Our readers will certainly, by now, have encountered Eleanor Johnson as a regular Niagara Anglican columnist. I am pleased to have the opportunity to introduce to you her new book *Parent-Teacher Interviews*. I have read this book through twice and am pleased to have had the opportunity to review it. It must be said that, I am delighted; I am more or less past all of that anxiety and the trepidation of raising my children. However in reality, I wish that I had had this book to see me through the process. We had four children in the system, and in interests they ranged all over the place. Amazingly they have found employment in areas that seem to suit them best. Now, my hopes are for the next generation of ten.

Not an outsized book with all sorts of references, footnotes or loaded with the opinions of many numbers of spe-

cialists, this book is centred on just seven chapters. It is set in a series of Saturday lunch meetings at the homes of staff and family members of the fictional day/boarding, secondary Bench Road School, an Anglican institution. The purpose of these gatherings was to integrate into the staff a new Art teacher, Jacques Tamarack who joined the staff just after the Christmas break, and specifically to answer his questions and calm his anxieties.

I was very impressed with the language. It is modern and up to date with helpings of current slang cast here and there. It reads so well. I had sort of a hankering to join these lunchtime dialogues sharing in the talk and getting to know all of the characters more completely. It is no secret that we are led to the proven fact that if parents and teachers interact through the children, with respect and consideration, they will teach social skills by example, while providing the children with positive learning environments.

Each chapter has a base from which the dialogue seems to emerge. The circumstances are as varied as the stars, with opportunities for making sure teachers are on line and aware.

In addition there are suggestions for dealing with the range of parent attitudes, and of course for encouraging and supporting the children.

The nature of the book helps it move along, with some of the staff and their families involved in the weekly conversations. It is all dialogue, and this tends to increase the focus on the numerous subjects that come up, and the ideas that come forward help solve those issues. It is very wise to note that teachers often feel overwhelmed by the changes they face, and by cutbacks in supplies and preparation time. Society seems to expect much of teachers who have the impossible task of teaching material to classes that contain some students who are for whatever reason, not disruptive to allow even the most diligent students to concentrate. Teachers work with the knowledge that many parents do not accept that their children may have average or below average academic abilities. If a child does not achieve the parent's goal and become a doctor, it is the fault of the teacher. Not so, a good teacher's best hope is that he/she can do much to help parents and children to a truer understanding of the children's opportunities and goals.

It might occur to some that an independent school does not offer the same model as a public institution, but, in reality it does. Parents, teachers and children are just what they are and the same kind of work and effort will apply to the same varying degrees to establishing a working order.

In her own words, drawn from the preface, Eleanor Johnston states, "helping a child grow up is both the job of the parent and the teacher. If life has given you one or both of these jobs, then this book is written for you. In it you will find what I have learned, over more than three decades as both teacher and parent, about how to guide the emotional, spiritual, intellectual and physical development of the most precious gifts in our lives: children. The people of Bench Road School and the staff in the Niagara Region are, again, fictional. In using characters' conversations and anecdotes, their thoughts and feelings, I hope to engage readers, both teachers and parents, in a greater understanding of each other's assumptions, hopes and fears so that teachers reading this will become better teachers and parents, better parents. You will be pleased

to know, this is certainly what our fictional new teacher Jacques was to discover."

Eleanor Johnston brings decades of experience to these topics. Two of her three children are teachers married to teachers. With her husband, the Reverend Dr Wayne Fraser, she has recently retired from work in private schools in the Niagara Region. They now devote themselves to delighting in their grandchildren and contributing to the liturgy and music of the Anglican Diocese of Niagara, delighting in the Carolinian forest, creek and fields of their farm, reading and writing sermons, novels and articles.

I have found the book has the very real possibility of changing our day-to-day living, as adults, if we follow the kind of advice that could allow improved relationships by way of reasonable discussion with all persons we meet. I'm for giving it a test.

To order your copy of *Parent Teacher Interviews* online (\$19.94 US, plus shipping and handling), visit lulu.com or amazon.com. To order direct from Eleanor Johnston (\$15.00 CDN), contact her by sending an email.

Changes 'R' Us?



Young people tend to go to places where authentic community is involved, not just in shepherding their own, but affecting the local and global communities as they follow Christ's message.

ANDY KALBFLEISCH
MISSION STRATEGY COMMITTEE

Spring, Easter and Pentecost are synonymous with birth, re-birth, resurrection, re-formation and change. So it's a good time to talk about the great emergence that is underway all around us. For some time now we have read, in this paper, articles about fresh expressions of church, emergent church and so on. All these articles address one thing: Changing Church for a Changing World. This is not the first cycle of change nor will it be the last. In her book 'The Great Emergence', Episcopalian Phyllis Tickle traces the changes or upheavals that seem to occur with some frequency every five hundred years or so since the birth of Christ. Most of this change revolves around truth and authority—what is true and who is the arbiter of this truth? Ms Tickle contends that with every cycle old, disproved and perhaps dysfunctional concepts are replaced by new understandings of what truth is—old becoming new in dif-

ferent ways than were previously considered. And, with each cycle of upheaval and transition, the Gospel message is spread further and wider.

One of the early upheavals was recorded in all four Gospels; when Jesus went to the Temple in Jerusalem and chased out the merchants and overturned the tables of the money-changers. His point was not to destroy the temple, but to purify it from what it had become. To challenge what the Temple had become over time and return it back to the purpose for which it had been intended, a place of worship and prayer. In other words, he was defying the status quo to bring about change.

Five hundred years ago Protestantism was not yet known, but the seeds had been planted, were being cultivated and in time took root. In 1492 Columbus proved that the world was not flat and in 1514 Copernicus suggested that the sun was the centre of the universe, not the earth as had been previously believed. These significant upheavals in established thought had serious repercussions for the church since much of their theology, at the time, embraced the ideas that the earth was flat and that the earth was the centre of the solar system. If what the established church had endorsed as truth had been, or was being, proved to be untrue what else that they were saying was open to question? The problem was, and in many cases remains to this day, that authoritative religious leaders make pronouncements that may be based on interpretation of existing knowledge and/or assumptions that may have nothing to do with scripture. When scripture is not available to the common man then they only

know what they are told through the filters of church leaders.

In 1440 Johannes Gutenberg created his printing press, which permitted the mass distribution of books and improved public literacy. The Gutenberg Bible, printed in 1455, was the first Bible ever printed and the first book ever printed in Europe.

It was in this environment and with the translation of scripture into local languages that scholars such as Martin Luther advocated 'sola scriptura, scriptura sola'. For the first time since early Christianity a direct link between the people and God was available without the filters of Popes, Bishops, magisterium or any other intermediary confessor. Changing church for a changing world.

It is nearly five hundred years since the 'Great' Reformation and we are nearing the end of another cycle of change. During the last five hundred years we have heard from Darwin, Freud, Einstein, Faraday, Jung and many others who have contributed to the reshaping of thought in the same way that Columbus and Copernicus did. Although most of the change in the 1500s was doctrinaire there should be no doubt that the rapid dissemination of information made possible by the Gutenberg press was a catalyst to speed up the process.

Today the Internet has become the Gutenberg printing press of the twenty-first century. Information and critical comment are only a click or keystroke away. Blogs, websites and podcasts—both audio and video—provide a rich and diversified environment for both the church and unchurched to seek answers to their questions about faith and explore their own spirituality. You can pray online, walk a

labyrinth online, read scripture and biblical commentary online, listen to homilies online, watch entire worship services online, share faith stories online and build community online through a variety of Christian networks. The Gospel message is again being spread far and wide.

But, at the same time, the limitations of trying to develop authentic communities and relationships, much less of Christ-followers, online have begun to be seen—are we what we say we are? Do we truly respect each other? What are the true motives behind any community building—Christian or otherwise? Discernment is harder without face-to-face community.

And that brings us to another point. Many lament the lack of young people in church. But it isn't true that young people have given up on church as evidenced by many 'nontraditional' worship gatherings. Young people tend to go to places where authentic community is involved, not just in shepherding their own, but affecting the local and global communities as they follow Christ's message. Connections made in small groups are a vital part of this. The 'Millennials' (people born 1980 to 2001) are strongly rooted in a need to affect change in a real way.

Developing both intimate community and a sense of purpose tied locally and globally is the challenge we, as traditional church, face moving forward in the third millennium. Can we say, with any degree of certainty, that we are providing an opportunity and environment for young people to build authentic Christ-centred community within the context of our existing structures? In a changing world we must be a changing church.

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Thumbprints of Easter faith

That we read even that much means, of course, that the women somehow overcame their terror and amazement. Facing the presence of a young man in white who has apparently rolled away the stone, who calmly tells them something that can't be true but somehow might be anyway, terror and amazement seem like the right response, at least in the first instance. We are not told how it is that they found their voices and first spoke of the victory over death. And we do not hear, in this story, about any specific resurrection appearances. Mark's gospel leaves us with an inference (the women overcame their terror and amazement) and a promise (you will see Jesus alive in Galilee).

If we remember that this was not, for Mark's community, one of four canonical gospels, but *the—singular—* gospel, we are mindful of a community of disciples who functioned without apparition stories, whose faith was sustained by inference and promise. Perhaps these are the disciples of whom Jesus says to Thomas—in John's gospel—“Blessed are those who have not seen but who have come to believe.”

On the other hand, the community for which Mark's gospel was written, some forty years after the events it describes, might well have included an

eyewitness—someone who had “been there”, someone who could fill in the gaps with oral testimony. For Matthew and Luke, ten years later, and for John, thirty years on, eyewitness testimony was less likely.

Whatever the reason, the written accounts of Jesus' resurrection appearances in Matthew, Luke, and John help give form to the promise in Mark—“You will see Jesus alive in Galilee.” They help us to know what a living encounter with Jesus might be like.

First things first, though. This only works if we can figure out where Galilee is. The Galilee of Jesus' time was, I am told, an edgy sort of place, where poverty and great wealth lived side by side, where Jewish and Gentile communities rubbed against one another. A socio-economic fixer-upper, neither abject in its poverty nor thriving. Many of its residents were peasants—often working for hire at subsistence wages for large and wealthy landowners. Galilee wasn't destitute, but it would be eligible for equalization payments. In Galilee, healing and reconciliation, justice and equity—and just plain kindness—were the stuff for which people hungered.

In Galilee, Jesus proclaimed and enacted a Kingdom that fed such hun-

gers. In that Kingdom, wounds were mended and people healed. In that Kingdom, the demons that possessed human lives were cast out. In that Kingdom, people who didn't belong together shared a common meal. In that Kingdom, people who could not muster a nanogram of entitlement were showered with gifts of forgiveness, renewal, and hospitality.

To Galilee the angel sent the disciples in search of Jesus alive. Behind them those disciples leave the stories we scatter on the surface of life to find Jesus' thumbprints touching the world. Where we find these thumbprints, we are in his living presence.

The first thumbprint—a woman confused, grieving and in pain hears her name spoken in love. In John's gospel, Mary encounters Jesus outside the empty tomb, but does not recognize him. Her grief pours out to this man she supposes to be the gardener, and she asks if he has disposed of Jesus' body somewhere else. Then Jesus speaks her name—“Mary”. Just that, and just once, and it is all she needs to know in whose presence she weeps.

The second thumbprint—two frightened disciples “head for the hills”, setting out from the violent intrigues of Jerusalem for the safety of their

suburban home in Emmaus. Along the way, they are joined by a stranger who walks and discusses with them, who, as night falls, accepts their hospitality. Entering their home, he acts as host, takes up in his hands their bread, blesses, breaks and shares it. In that moment, they recognize him, and in that moment he vanishes. They return to Jerusalem, to the epicenter of harm and folly, because that is where their community has gathered. They receive the stories others bring of a living Lord, and in turn they offer their story.

The third thumbprint—Jesus is present when love appears where it cannot possibly be—through locked doors and shuttered windows. Jesus' presence is love where it is needed, not where it is easy, or convenient, or even sometimes where it seems possible at all. Despite locked doors and shuttered windows Jesus appears—love incarnate—in the midst of a community of disciples huddled in fear. (John 24).

The fourth thumbprint—Jesus is present in the wounds of love. Those wounds are not alien to love, but somehow part of it. To love in this sharp-edged world will bring trauma to bodies and souls. Sometimes it is the routine trauma of anticipated losses—of aging bodies, say, or the chronic harm we

bring out of our imperfect wills and selfishness on one another. Sometimes it is acute, out of the blue—and knocks us off our feet. Love bears these wounds because love is a practice in the sharp-edged world among flawed and sometimes dangerous human beings, not a lacy romantic illusion for perfect people in a perfect world.

Finally, a fifth thumbprint—Jesus commissions us to continue and extend the work of love. He commissions us to speak a name in love, to bless, break and share bread in such a way as to turn those with whom we share it from fear to hope. He sends us through obstacles to the place where our love is needed, and invites us there to embrace the practice of love that will bring us buckets of tears and fountains of joy. In a way, that sending is the most redemptive thing of all; it sets us to our useful human purpose with a confidence that we cannot always feel ourselves. It trusts that in the power of the Spirit and the infinite grace of God, there is indeed more to us than meets the eye.

In this Easter season, we sprinkle stories of faith on the surface of life, and find the thumbprint of a living Jesus still touching the world to accomplish God's great work of love.

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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
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The marriage of the sacred and the profane

According to the dictionary, profanity is described by “an irreverence or contempt for God or sacred principles or things.” Undoubtedly, Jesus wasn’t irreverent or contemptuous of God or for that matter, even sacred principles, since he clearly said he had come not to abolish the law but to enhance it. However, the dictionary then goes on to say that profanity is “not devoted to holy or religious purposes,” and here is where we begin to mix up our metaphors. Holy and religious do not necessarily describe the same things and Jesus, I would argue, did not subscribe to the necessity of being religious, even as he most certainly assumed holiness.

Then, we come to the kicker definition: to be profane is “to be common or vulgar.” Well, perhaps some of us would be prepared to say that Jesus was common—after all, he was a peasant—but vulgar? Somehow, I doubt it. And, yet, he was this, for

isn’t it interesting that one of the ways that the dictionary describes vulgarity is to refer to “the ordinary people in a society, the *vulgar* masses, a *vulgar* peasant?” In terms of who he hung out with, who he ate and drank with, who were his friends, Jesus was certainly not courting the nobility.

Apparently, by our own definitions, the human Jesus, the one who walked on this earth and ministered among the masses, was vulgar... profane and vulgar. And, for this, I will always be grateful because it means that I can consider myself without derision and disdain. I can look upon myself as God would look upon me—as a product of the divine creation, someone to be celebrated rather than to be scorned. Jesus, I guess, spent his time among all these profane and vulgar people in order that they would come to realize this, too. Sadly, the church has spent more than two centuries undoing this

message and, while many within the church have begun to wake up to this reality, we have such a long way to go before we will truly recognize the wisdom that exists in marrying the sacred with the profane. In Jesus, this is precisely what God did; it is the essence of our understanding of him as both human and divine.

All these musings about profanity came to me during a recent fundraising event at Church of the Transfiguration; a beer and blues evening that took place not in the parish hall—we don’t have a parish hall—but in the sanctuary, the only space in the church large enough to hold over 100 people. Everything in this sacred place except the lectern is movable, including the pews, which is a bit of a bind for newcomers who unfortunately learn the hard way that they are not nailed to the floor.

Because the sanctuary is the only

space that we have for large gatherings, parishioners have grown accustomed to *everything* happening within these four walls. On Sunday mornings and during festivals like Christmas, the altar stands at the centre, bearing the bread and wine that symbolizes the people of God. On Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, on Friday and Sunday nights, at any other time during the week, the pews are moved aside; the altar may be moved aside. No stone is left unturned, so to speak, and because of this, there has come to be a strong recognition amongst us that everything we do at Transfiguration—sacred or profane—is, in fact, holy. Not religious, perhaps, but definitely holy. It is for this reason that children are not regarded as a distraction; that blue, pink or green hair receives only the slightest of looks; that what one wears to church is of no consequence; and finally, that all the sacred symbols are sacred to us not just on Sunday mor-

ning but every day of the week.

While Jesus recognized the holiness of the temple in its place as the centre of worship for his people, his act of turning the tables over in that same temple was not a message that *selling* was profane and, therefore, did *not* belong in this place of worship. Instead, what he did not consider to be holy was the money-changers’ blatant disregard for the well-being of God’s people; that is, the abuse of those vulgar peasants, of which he was one.

In some way, shape or form, we need to let go of the narrow images of Jesus which have been handed down to us, images that describe his holiness in only regal—and, therefore, “proper” terms. We need to marry the sacred and the profane that describes our entire existence, as it has already been married in Jesus the Christ. Only in this way will we truly come to recognize God’s holy presence in our lives.

Sounds religious



PETER WALL
DEAN, RECTOR OF CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

If we were each asked about recent worship experiences and what most influenced us, many of us would formulate answers that relate to *sound*—the music, the talk, the words of prayer and preaching, the sounds of bells pealing and choirs singing. Many of us worship in buildings which were built and indeed conceived at a time when the nature of *sound* was as different from today as it could be. Let me try to explain:

I work in a building—the Cathedral—which is large and cavernous, involving a huge volume of air which is an ingredient in the sound one hears in this building. We all have stories of being at the Cathedral when the sound was a ‘problem’—this because it is a very challenging acoustic space. Designed in a different time, it ‘works’ best acoustically with a male voice facing the east wall, standing at the altar, back to the nave and back to the people. This, after all, was the only way it was used originally—only male voices, only eastward facing, and all in a time when the silence surrounding this church was, compared to today, deafening! There were no motorized vehicles, no radio, no stereos, no cell phones, no iPods, no PDAs, no blackberries, no computers! There were no buses rumbling up and down James Street; there was very little of the ‘ambient’ noise with which we all now live. It is certainly true that what most people ‘heard’ then were live

human voices—not recorded music with adjustable volume, not pictures accompanied by a soundtrack, but simple, human speech. Those who would have spoken in this building originally - or in many other churches across the Diocese - built were people who had been schooled in projection, careful oration, and elocution—all sadly diminished qualities in our current world. There was no question of not being heard—for everyone listened. They *listened* because there were so few ‘aural’ distractions - so unlike today. They were not necessarily more interested or more committed—they just had, arguably, more reason to listen, or perhaps fewer reasons *not* to listen.

Those who prefer to include periods of intentional silence in worship also know how difficult it is to find *real* silence. It is not just because Anglican liturgy, so well *organized* for so many centuries, is so concerned with ‘getting on to the next thing’ but also because we are so enveloped with sound all of the time, that finding silence is a difficult task indeed. Those who are fortunate enough to have vacation properties in isolated places—away from highways, railroad tracks, flight paths, and shopping malls, even better away from industry—know how much they value the ‘sounds of silence’, as Simon & Garfunkel called it.

We also know that, in our time, hearing loss is a very real and present phenomenon—one which will affect more, not less, of us as time goes on. More and more we see people constantly ‘plugged in’—while walking and jogging, while shopping, while riding the bus or the train—always being ‘on’. So, there is a significant degree of counter intuition involved when we seek to create silence in our

churches, and, moreover, to involve people in soundscapes with which they are more and more unfamiliar—choral song, unison prayer, choral speech. And yet, as I said above, so much—virtually all—of the sensory experience of liturgy in church is wrapped up in *sound*. How critically important, therefore, that we pay attention to the sounds we make and the ways in which they can be heard. Many of our larger churches *require* a sophisticated, high quality sound system, largely because of their size and that quantity of air, again. Still others, possible more modern building, require sound system assistance because of their acoustical properties—too many ‘soft’ and absorbent features—deep carpet, upholstered furniture, low ceilings, etc.

Even more importantly, however, sound systems are needed so that *all* may participate in worship—both leaders and congregations. We still have those in our congregations who will say; ‘I don’t need a microphone—I will be heard’, but in lots of cases—I would say most—that just ain’t so!

The sounds we make in worship—from beautiful music to well articulated proclamation and prayer to thoughtful and provocative preaching to generous and loving presiding—all benefit from careful preparation, study, rehearsal and sensitive and expert ‘performance.’

Silence—real silence in the midst of the cacophony of contemporary life—must also be prepared and lovingly created, for silence is a sound all in itself—for many, the sound which brings God closest. As we keep our rounds and our rituals, let us be aware of the sounds—both out loud and inside—which make up our ‘music of the spheres’.

Hang in there...



JOHN RIPLEY
INTERIM RECTOR, HOLY TRINITY WELLAND

On occasion the word resonates with us, on other occasions, the word becomes a significant challenge.

JOHN RIPLEY
INTERIM RECTOR, HOLY TRINITY WELLAND

I live very close to the Bruce Trail. The trail in my area runs along the Niagara Peninsula part of the escarpment. Although probably not as rugged as some other areas it does have its areas that provide the hiker with a challenge. In those places a misstep could lead to a sprained ankle or a broken limb at worst. It is an area for a delightful walk in what is as close as one can get to a natural setting in an urban center.

On those occasions when I can muster up enough energy to go for a hike (that’s what a walk is when you’re not on a sidewalk) I marvel at the rocky outcropping and the vegetation that finds a foothold in some rocky crevice. I am sure that botanists must have a name for those hearty plants who against all odds have managed to survive. You know the kind I mean—the seed that has landed in a little bit of earth in a crevice and has taken root. Even after taking root it defies the laws of nature and begins to grow and flourish. Initially the plant growth is stunted by its unnatural environment, but, in time these little plants

have been known to grow with enough vigor to reshape the environment that has been theirs. The mighty rock gives way to the incessant expansion of the root system—truly a remarkable sight to behold.

This brought to mind the parable, familiar to us all, of the sower of the seed. As Jesus tells the story the sower scatters his seed with some falling in less than hospitable places—so inhospitable that the chances of survival are next to none. The seed, the word of God, is with varying degrees of success planted in the mind and hearts of the recipient of the word depending on their space. Some, of course, hear and completely understand and are consequently transformed by the Word. The fate of other hearers is less than satisfactory because of their space. They are not transformed.

I wonder if there needs to be such a fatalistic and deterministic view to the encounter with the Word. There seems not to be much hope if your space is the rocks, or thorns, or the wayside. I believe that we all can be rocks, or thorns, or on the wayside in our faith journeys. On occasion the word resonates with us, on other occasions, the word becomes a significant challenge. Our space changes, so also, I believe does our relationship with the word—our faith.

I for the most part characterize my encounter with the word as that being similar to the seed that has by chance fallen into the rocky crevice. In some mysterious way the word that I have encountered has taken a hold on my life and struggles to gain a strong foothold on my being. Sometimes it isn’t pretty, but, in the face of life’s challenges it still struggles to be a significant part of my identity. Sometimes it feels like I’m just hanging in!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 »

Bishop calls church to steady growth

■ We need to slow the Vision process down. People in parishes are not clear about what some of the material means. There are many questions about what the implications of the vision will be for them and for their communities.

■ That we need to share stories and to continue to communicate what the elements of the vision could look like and what are the opportunities that our vision offers.

■ At the same time, people seem to have heard and responded to my desire usher in a new sense of partnership between the bishop and the parish and this now has to be applied to bringing the vision forward

■ That I need to take more time personally to engage with smaller groups across the diocese and to allow people to hear about what I believe it means and why I am so committed to seeing a vision articulated.

■ There is a great deal of concern around parish finances and around the financial challenges we face at a diocesan level and, particularly, at Cathedral Place.

■ The work of Stewardship and making available stewardship resources will be critical to our future work and ministry together.

■ People are concerned that this will end up as just another program to be downloaded on the local church.

Having heard all of this, it is clear to me and to others that we need to slow down the process of visioning and to move into a new phase of communicating and engaging with clergy and people at the parish level.

When we began this process, the first round of feedback that I heard was the feeling that we have invested in these kinds of processes before and that nothing ever seems to come from them. In an attempt to demonstrate a strong inten-

tion that this would not be the case this time, I can now see that we may have erred on the side of pushing too quickly. Having said that, I think it is also safe to say that no one can doubt my sincerity and my determination that the status quo will no longer be an option. For this vision to be fulfilled, I hope and pray that each one of you will come to believe that God's Holy Spirit is at work in this. It is my prayer that you too begin to believe passionately that this vision is the will of God for the Diocese of Niagara.

Just over a year ago I accepted the call from God and the invitation from you to the work and ministry of the Diocesan Bishop. That calling has changed my life dramatically and I am still very enthusiastic and optimistic about the ministry that we are sharing in together. What I have absolutely no interest in, however, is a ministry of rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. I need your commitment, your willingness to journey and take risks, your capacity to dream and think outside the box, in order to build upon and grow the work and ministry of this diocese in the days to come.

I am therefore inviting every parish in the diocese of Niagara to make use of the vision as it now stands, as a lens, through which you will review and reflect upon your own life and ministry. Let me assure that the same process will be undertaken as we reflect upon our work at Cathedral Place and as I review my own ministry as your Bishop.

It may be that one piece of the vision speaks to your congregation at this particular moment or perhaps a discussion around several of the areas of focus can serve as a springboard for some new initiatives. There will be opportunities to celebrate and acknowledge the things that you are currently engaging in.

I want to hear about the journeys that these conversations have launched. I want to know how the vision can be given more clarity and what is missing. Most importantly I need you to tell me what resources you need from the synod office to allow an intentional reflection of this kind to happen. Some of you have communicated this to me already.

The 2009 budget acknowledges the role of Cathedral Place and the Cathedral itself as one of the centerpieces for our new vision. We have begun the work of addressing the financial challenges we face in operating Cathedral Place and the Cathedral property but far more will need to be done in this calendar year to develop a plan for long-term sustainability. We are no longer contemplating the formal Diocesan wide Cathedral campaign that had as a target 4 million dollars. I have, however, given my support to the effort of adding significantly to the outstanding total that has already been raised by the Cathedral congregation and I want to acknowledge with profound gratitude all those who have donated to the Preserve to Serve Campaign.

The Dean, the Cathedral Wardens and I have agreed to set up a task force to explore the entire spectrum of possibilities around the future of Cathedral Place that will include governance options, property use, and new models for ministry.

I am pleased to announce that Rob Reid has accepted my appointment as the chair of this task force and the goal is to have an interim report available for the Members of Synod in November of this year. We now have a plan in place for addressing a deficit position in the short term, but I am more concerned about making sure that the solutions we arrive at are sustainable well into the future and,

at the same time, support the goals and objectives of our new vision.

The second piece of the budget that is important to me is the acknowledgement it offers that some of our parishes are struggling under the current economic hardships and other unique situations that present a real challenge. We have freed up \$150,000 dollars to offer parishes some much needed relief in this area and we have earmarked a further \$150,000 reduction for 2010. What we have heard in the regional meetings is that this may not be enough. We have also been given a small preview of the challenges and the incredibly difficult and painful decisions that will need to be made to allow those cuts to the Diocesan Mission and Ministry to be possible.

It seems apparent now that in slowing down our visioning process, that even in 2010 we will be looking at a transitional budget. Let us be clear, however, that our goal in the very near future will be a vision driven budget that acknowledges the realities of the ministries that we are called by God to engage in and will be in keeping with the resources and the financial realities we face. Someone mentioned to me that the changes we have made over the past several weeks with regard to the agenda of Synod makes it look like we don't have our act together... well I am here to say to you that in some sense we don't have our act together but the pledge I am bringing to you this morning is that we are getting our act together! I am so very grateful for all the many hours of work that has brought us to this stage in the journey. Let me give you an exciting example of this!

Following up on the commitment which I made just prior to the first session of Synod in November, and in light of various conversations which have

taken place since, especially my meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury in January, I have asked the Dean to facilitate the work of a small group of laity and clergy from across the diocese in bringing to me suggested rites for the Blessing of Civilly Married Same-Sex Couples. You will recall that Synod in 2007 asked the Bishop to allow clergy, whose conscience permits, to bless the marriages of civilly married same-sex couples, where at least one of the partners is baptized. I anticipate that these rites will be prepared by later this spring, and that I will be able to present them to the clergy of the diocese at the Annual Clergy and Licensed Layworkers Conference in May. I will be giving my permission to proceed shortly thereafter.

"Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard."

I invite you all to join with me in lifting up your voices and shouting out for joy because I believe that a light is dawning upon the Diocese of Niagara and that that light is allowing us to see the beginnings and the glimpses of a new and exciting path ahead. It is my privilege and my great pleasure to walk along beside you as we strike out upon this new adventure. May God's richest blessings go with us all in the days and years to come.

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