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Youth Synod makes a difference

CHRISTYN PERKONS
MINISTRY CONSULTANT

Having been part of several diocesan Youth Ministry programs, Kate Smyth, co-MC of Youth Synod 2010, reflects, "Youth Synod was my first ever youth event. Four years ago, at St. John's Ancaster, as a Youth Synod delegate, I remember thinking that one day, it would be very cool to be part of the staff for a youth event. As Youth Synod 2010 approached, I was invited to be one of the Master of Ceremonies—which I didn't even notice until afterwards was something that I had been hoping for since that first Youth Synod." Kate goes on to say, "The opportunity to be part of Youth Synod has really made a difference in my life. I wasn't one of those people who moved motions or served on Youth Synod Council but having the chance to hear my peers debate motions about the church and the world in which I live; to learn how I can make

a difference has made me see myself as a change maker and has expanded by ideas about the world. I credit my change from a self-centred being to someone who cares about the world to my participation in Youth Synod. It's changed my life in more ways than I can ever describe."

So what happened this year that might have changed the life of a young person in our diocese? Kate (St. James, Dundas) was joined on staff by her co-MC, Stu Armstrong (St. John's, Cayuga) as well as The Rev. Bill Mous as Chair, The Ven. Dr. Steve Hopkins as Chancellor, and The Right Rev. Michael Bird as himself, Bishop of Niagara. This illustrious group, supplemented by The Rev. Matthew Griffin as Youth Synod Council Coordinator and Mary Gordon as Youth Synod Coordinator, supported a weekend full of life changing worship, energetic and dynamic debate over a variety

of motions, fun (and hygiene) at the local pool, burgeoning friendships, and great food (thanks to St. James, Dundas; St. John's, Ancaster; Christ Church, Flamborough; and Dwight Prodder's crew) all in the relaxed and welcoming arms of St. James, Dundas. Delegates met in small groups prior to Synod sessions to learn techniques as well as discuss the motions, guided by Small Group Leaders and Young Adult Mentors (young adult delegates with strong Youth Synod background and leadership skills). The motions ranged from a passionate, scripture-laden debate about piracy to debates about faith-based decision making, accountability, youth involvement in diocesan work, and our call to global citizenship. Almost two thirds of the delegates, many of them at Youth Synod for the first time, spoke to the motions, and the commitment to the process was such that

motions addressing homelessness, violence and celebrating Joyce Wilton's ministry were written at Synod and thoughtfully considered by the delegates. Delegates report enjoying the debates, looking forward to the Chancellor's summation and challenges to them, and appreciating the tools of the process; amendments (friendly and otherwise), referring the question, calling the question, points of order and clarification... all of which they used productively! Like Kate, they left Youth Synod with an expanded world view, an appreciation of themselves as agents of change, a stronger sense of connection between their faith and how they behave, and an affirmation of themselves as part of a larger community of faithful Christians responding to God's mission.

To read the minutes of Youth Synod, go to www.zipsqeal.com/youthsynod.html.

Seeking and serving Christ in all persons | A social audit

COLLEEN SYM

"Stories matter. Telling our stories is important. Hearing the stories [of those living in poverty] is even more important". This is how David Pflimmer, the past chair of the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC) started his theological reflection at the Religious Leaders Forum on June 2. The forum was a provin-

cial gathering to hear and discuss the initial findings from the ISARC community hearings on poverty.

In the winter and spring of 2010, the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC) led a Social Audit for the purpose of assessing the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy. People with lived experience of poverty were invited to come forward to share their experiences and

insights into changes that are required to enable people in poverty to live with dignity. Audits were held in thirty communities across the province.

On April 22 Archdeacon Michael Patterson participated in the Social Audit hearings in Hamilton. The audit day was organized and supported by volunteers from 25 in 5 Hamilton Network for Poverty Reduction.

On April 26 Bishop Michael Bird

participated in the Social Audit hearings in Halton Region. The day was organized and supported by staff of Halton Community Legal Services.

Each responded to the request for their participation with a willingness to serve and the gift of their time. Both the Bishop and the Archdeacon participated as 'Rapporteurs'.

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Lost credit card | A modern parable

HOLLIS HISCOCK
INTERIM PASTOR AT ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, ROCKWOOD

'I lost my credit card'—panic seized my every nerve fibre, disabling all human rational functions.

I searched my pockets—not there. I asked my wife if she had seen my credit card—negative reply.

Maybe it dropped out of my pocket and was lying safely on the floor of my car. After searching every nook and cranny of the automobile, I concluded it was not there.

Rushed back into the house. Asked Helen to phone the credit card company and suspend the service temporarily, just in case someone found it and decided to treat themselves at my expense. She did and they suspended the card for 24 hours.

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Borrowed time

MICHAEL THOMPSON
ARCHDEACON, RECTOR, ST. JUDES, OAKVILLE

It is my great privilege to sit from time to time with one or two people—sometimes more—who have experienced a day or two before the death of someone they love. And whatever the particulars are, these are always conversations about how that person was loaned herself or himself to the fine, fine wind. In that moment, that is the most important story they know. They tell it with tears and laughter, apart from the ordinary world of groceries, banks, workplace, errands whose continuing pulse is astonishing to them from their small hollow carved out of time they inhabit for these days.

They speak—though they wouldn't use these words—of the yielding of a life to the wind of love.

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Holy mystery, here and now

FRANCEAN CAMPBELL-RICH
CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

What on earth happened, that late Saturday mid-April afternoon, when something seemed to go so wrong? The Orthodox retreat had gone well; as always, the Serbian Church of St. Nicholas had made us welcome—we few regulars from the Anglican community. The speaker, Fr. Michael Dahulic, (Bishop, now), had chosen the Bible for his subject—easily holding our attention in his hands for nearly four hours, with a break for lunch—the bountiful lunch of St. Nicholas hospitality, as if the talk were not enough.

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■ LEFT: Poverty Immersion Group sets up a garden bed. RIGHT: Karri Munn Venn from the Housing Immersion Group unloading materials at the Habitat for Humanity ReStore in St Catharines.



Live the change you want to see



CHRISTYN PERKONS
PROJECT MANAGER FOR COMMUNITY JUSTICE CAMP

Community Justice Camp; Live the Change You Want to See has come and gone but the impact continues to reverberate across Canada as well as abroad. Eighty campers spent a week resting their weary bones at the Mary Keyes Residence at McMaster University after days filled with outstanding plenary speakers, experience-oriented site visits in their immersion groups, reflection groups,

and worship. The highlights campers identified were the relationships they developed amongst themselves; the experiences at various sites across the Diocese as well as Toronto and the Kitchener area; the engagement with people who 'get' the integration between charity, justice and community; and a growing sense of the significance of partnering with people in order to change our world. Many campers commented on the depth and breadth of the new knowledge they had acquired as well as the advocacy and community development skills they were taking home.

The Diocese of Niagara shone that week! While campers breakfasted at McMaster, they were fueled on the rest of their justice journey

thanks to the gracious volunteers of the following parishes; St. Luke's, Burlington; St. John's, Ancaster; St. Christopher's, Burlington; St. Paul's, Westdale; Christ's Church Cathedral; St. Alban's, Hamilton; St. Paul's, Fort Erie; and St. James, Dundas as well as The Mother's Union. Volunteers from our parishes chauffeured Camp participants to and from airports, train and bus stations in the wee hours of the morning and the late hours of the evening. Finally, many of the Immersion Groups and Reflection Groups were led by home-grown facilitators who worked with community partners to provide what many campers called a life changing experience.

They headed home enriched

through connecting and learning with those with lived experience of social injustice, those who advocate for justice, and those who reflected with them. Those enlightening experiences coupled with Friday's reflections on next steps have sent campers, ranging in age from 19 to 71, home to engage their communities and partner organizations in justice work; home to Cuba, Charlottetown, Burundi, Montreal, Beamsville, Winnipeg, Peterborough, Halifax, Fonthill, Ottawa, Corner Brook, Nepean, Rockwood, Lachine, Ancaster, Waswanipi, Oakville, Kentville, Toronto, Georgetown, Mississauga, Burlington, Terra Cotta, Toronto and other communities across Canada.

The goal of the planning team

for Community Justice Camp was to enable individuals and communities of faith to become agents of transformation and reconciliation. The Rev. Bill Mous (co-leader of the Environment Immersion Group) observes, "Not only have we equipped and inspired 80 participants from across Canada and the world to do justice in their local communities, but we've also laid the groundwork for establishing a strong reputation for the Diocese of Niagara as a leader in social justice issues by engaging with somewhere between 80-100 social justice organizations in southern Ontario through our immersion experiences." We have planted the seeds—may the harvest transform our world!

Lost credit card | A modern parable

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, I backtracked to the service station where I had last used the card to buy gas. Fortunately the service bay was free of vehicles and I scoured the pump area. I resisted the temptation to overturn the garbage can and rumpled through its content. 'After all', I reason, 'some Good Samaritan could have picked it up and decided the safest action was to get rid of it'.

Rather than perusing the garbage can angle, I wanderer into the service centre, hoping some person had brought it there and the attendant would have it safely tucked away in lost and found.

The attendant gave me that 'how naïve are you' look, when I inquired about my lost credit card. At first he seemed optimistic, until I mentioned that I actually swiped it at the pump, rather than pay inside with one of the clerks. He assured me that none of his employees had seen my lost card. If they did it would be there waiting for me.

I backed out of the store, dejected, upset with myself and ready to abandon the search, return home and order a new card.

While alighting from the car in the driveway, I decided to search the car once more, just in case I missed a hiding place my first time around.

Fifteen minutes later I emerged with empty hands and a frustrated spirit.

Upon entering the house I spilled my anxiety and disappointment with myself to Helen. I had searched everywhere to no avail. The time had come to throw in the towel, phone the company, cancel my credit card and wait seven to ten days to receive a new one. Mentally I was making a list of companies I need to contact to make sure that the services we paid for automatically on our credit card would not be disruptive.

With a sad countenance I started to walk directly to my study to make the final call. On my way I detoured to

the kitchen which meant I had to pass through the dining room to make the phone call.

On the dining room table I glanced upon a stack of rumpled papers which unknowingly I had removed from my pocket, left them there with the intention of sorting it all and returning each to its proper place, be it file, wallet or recycling.

When I lifted the paper, there faced down and camouflaged by the table cloth was my credit card.

Excitedly I retrieved it from its 'lost' location, shouted with triumphant glee and ran to tell Helen that I had found my credit card which had been lost. She shared my joy.

Phoning the credit card company, I was elated to relay my good news to the unknown individual who took my call, made certain he was talking to me and reassured me that the suspension was lifted and the card could once more be used to spend my money.

He ended our conversation with a cheery, 'have a good day'.

'It is, I replied, 'I have found my credit card, which was lost'.

As I placed the phone into its cradle, rejoicing that I had found my lost credit card, the words of Jesus flashed across my mind's teleprompter—'In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents'.

But the greatest of them all is love



CHARLES C STIRLING
RETIRED CANON

I am a little cautious about selecting bits and pieces of scripture to make a point, when perhaps the whole of a piece has something else to say. However, the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians is a perfect model for lifting, and using or applying it to one's life. Its use of the word love makes this chapter seem ideal for weddings. Paul says that a person may possess spiritual gifts, but if they are unaccompanied by love they become useless. Some folk boom forth with confidence of perhaps talking in tongues and say much, but in reality what they say has only the value of the noise of trumpets and cymbals. Love is absent.

A person may have the gift of prophecy, and sometimes prophecy corresponds with preaching. But there are two kinds of preachers. One who attracts people by accents of love, and the other who hangs his or her listeners over the flames of hell. It is this latter kind of preaching, which is certainly more threatening, and clearly it has no love, and can never offer salvation.

If one has the gift of intellectual knowledge, which can produce intellectual snobbery; that person can only hope to obtain a knowledge that has been kindled by the fire of love, which can most certainly, save humanity.

One may have a passionate faith; the caution here is that there are times when such faith can be cruel. And when faith exists there is no love and it can become hurtful as well.

A person may practice what we call charity, the doling out of gifts to the less fortunate, sometimes with contempt, and even a sense of one's personal eminence. This can be seen as pride and pride is cruel for it knows no love.

The next passage is perhaps a little hard to understand in the sense of giving one's body to be burnt. It is easier for us to understand the concept of self sacrifice in this case, either a case of pride or truly one of sacrificial offering. If one decides on martyrdom the choice should clearly be for the love of Christ.

Paul moves along to offer an amazing fifteen characteristics of Christian love. He first talks in terms of love is patient. The word used in early scripture describes patience with people and not with circumstances. Such patience is often used concerning God and his relationship with humanity. Yet we are called to exercise the same patience as God exercises with us. This patience is not of weakness, but rather of strength. It is not defeatism, but the way to victory. In short the patience of love must conquer.

Love is kind means that love is really benign. Much of Christianity is good, yet unkind. Apart from a persecuting spirit, there are many good people in an attitude of criticism.

Love knows no envy. There are two kinds of envy. One desires the possessions of others. Such envy is hard to avoid because it is very human. The other worse, for it grudges that others should have what it does not possess. In truth it does not really want things for itself, but rather wishes that others did not have them.

Love is no braggart. Paul tells us there is a self effacing quality in love, and that true love will always be far more impressed with its own unworthi-

ness than its own merit. Love is kept humble by the consciousness that it can never offer it's loved one a gift which is good enough.

Paul tells us that love is not inflated with its own importance. Generally no one is supposed to like the important person, because what they see is a person dressed in a little brief authority and that can be a sad sight indeed.

He goes on to say, love does not behave gracelessly. It is interesting that in Greek the words grace and charm are the same. There is a kind of Christianity which takes delight in being blunt and brutal. In this is certainly strength, but no winsomeness. There remains in Christianity a graciousness of love which never forgets that courtesy, tact and politeness are lovely things.

Love does not insist upon its rights. We have seen there are in our world two kinds of people—those who insist on their privileges and those who remember their responsibilities; those who are always thinking about what life owes them and those who never forget what they owe life. The key to almost all of life's problems which surround us today would disappear if we could think less of our rights and more of our duties.

Love never flies into a temper. Christian love never becomes exasperated with people. Exasperation is a sign of defeat. When we lose our temper we lose everything. The person who is master of his temper can be master of anything.

Paul says that love does not store up the hate of any wrong it has received. Many people nurse their wrath and keep it alive, they brood over wrongs until it is impossible to forget them. Christian love is the great lesson of forgiving.

Love finds no pleasure in evil-doing. In other words love finds no pleasure in anything that is wrong. It is not so

much delight in doing the wrong thing that is meant, as the malicious pleasure which comes to most of us when we hear something derogatory about someone else. It seems we appear to enjoy hearing the misfortune of others, rather than of their good fortune.

Love rejoices with the truth. This is not as easy as it sounds, for there are times we do not want truth to prevail. Christian love has no wish to veil the truth; it has nothing to conceal and is glad when truth prevails.

Love can endure anything. It is possible that this may mean—love can cover everything that is in the sense, it will never draw into the daylight that faults and mistakes of others. Rather it sets about to quietly mend things that display or rebuke them. More likely it means love can bear any insult, injury or disappointment.

Love is completely trusting. But, this characteristic has two aspects. The first, in relationship with God it means love takes God at his word, and can take every promise that begins "Whoever" and say "That means me." Secondly in relationship to our brothers and sisters, it means that love always believes the best about other people. It is often true we make people what we believe them to be, showing them we do not trust them may make them untrustworthy. Conversely, if we show people that we trust them completely, we may make them trustworthy.

Love never ceases to hope. Christians are never without hope, sometimes for even the smallest things. Hope is our desire and expression of the future. It can and indeed must be a loving hope enabling us to make our way forward in a world that is difficult. Hope will be tested.

And finally, love bears everything with triumphant fortitude. What in

reality it does describe is not the spirit that can passively bear things, but rather the spirit, which in baring them, can conquer and transmute them?

When we think of the qualities of this love, as Paul portrays them, we clearly see them realized in the life of Christ himself. We also need to see them all as ways of our own Christian living and being. Can you imagine the effect on the Church if we seriously lived life according to these fifteen descriptions of love, seeing clearly that each one guides and directs us to being and living in a new and important way—the way of love! There is hardly any passage of scripture that demands such self examination as Paul has given us.

Paul stresses permanency. When all things in which we glory have passed away love will still stand. When love is entered into, there comes into life a relationship against which the assaults of time are helpless and which transcends death. Secondly, Paul stresses completeness. As things are, we see reflections in mirrors. Corinthian mirrors were made of highly polished metal, which at its best only gave an imperfect reflection.

In this life Paul feels we see only the reflections of God and naturally we are left with what is mystery and riddle. We see that reflection in God's world; we see it in both the Gospel and in Jesus Christ. Yet even in Jesus we have the perfect revelation, our minds grasp only in part, for the finite can never grasp the infinite. Our knowledge is still that of a child, but the way of love will lead us to a day when the veil is drawn away, when we will see face to face and will know even as we are known. God is love and only one who loves can see him. Lastly he stresses its absolute supremacy. Great as faith and hope are, love is greater. Faith without love is cold.

The Church Meets!



PETER WALL
DEAN, RECTOR CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

As I write this, the 39th General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, taking place in Halifax, is two days old. By the time you read this, it will be history and you will have read and heard much about it. So I want to reflect on what Synod is and what it feels like.

General Synod is both a meeting, which takes place every three years, and an administration and programme office and staff, located in Toronto, which administers the national affairs of our Church. This is my sixth General Synod, of which I was a member of three, an observer at one, and the fifth in which I have taken an active part in the planning and preparation. General Synod, the meeting, is exciting,

affirming, hopeful, hectic, and deeply meaningful.

Although the official membership of General Synod is only 302 people, it always feels much bigger. First and foremost, it also includes partners, both domestic and international, Anglican and ecumenical, so there is a lot more to it than simply the members. The entire church gathered together also involves many of our national staff members, and a host of guests. A large area is devoted to displays and many church groups and suppliers are also here.

Our General Synod is representative: there is a formula which entitles each Diocese to elect both clerical and lay members—the same number of each, who join with all sitting Bishops in our Church to form the two houses of Synod—the Order of Bishops, and the Order of Clergy and Laity. There are many aboriginal partners, chosen by the Anglican Council of Indigenous People, and partners from churches around the world. This Synod, we are privileged to have the Bishop of Jeru-

salem, Suheil Dawani and his wife, Shafeeqa with us as well as The Bishop of Uruguay and of Cuba, Miguel Tamayo and his wife, Marta. Canon Kenneth Kearon, Secretary-General of the Anglican Communion is here, as is Bishop Susan Johnson, National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. As well, Hellen Wangusa, the Anglican Communion representative at the United Nations and Sooriyakumari Sinnathamby, a member of the Sri Lanka church who works on Refugee Rehabilitation, are also here. The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts-Schori Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church (USA) will also be joining us. It is a very impressive gathering!

General Synod works hard—from around 8:00 a.m. through to 9:00 p.m., Synod meets in plenary sessions, in diocesan and provincial caucuses, in information sessions (here, for this Synod, called 'Ports of Call', in keeping with a nautical theme) and, at this Synod, special discussion groups

on issues if human sexuality and the Church's response.

Members gather each morning in round table groups, called 'Galley Groups', and share in Morning Prayer and Bible Study. Each day also concludes with Evening Prayer in a variety of forms) and the President and Chair of General Synod, The Primate, often calls on the House to sing a hymn, both as a way of transition from one piece of business to the next, and as a way of helping people to stand and stretch!

Because General Synod is a residential event, virtually everyone is housed in a set of university residences, and we eat meals together in a pair of dining halls on campus. As residents of St. Mary's University for this nine day period, we also have access to the health facilities, which are located right outside the plenary hall, so many members have been seen 'working out'!

On Sunday, June 6 we joined with the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island as they celebrated two

important anniversaries—300 years of continuous Anglican worship in this area and the 100th anniversary of the Cathedral of All Saints, in Halifax. The entirety of General Synod—members, staff, partners, volunteers, and guests—joined over 3000 members of the Diocese for a special service of celebration which included historical vignettes, a massed choir and orchestra, and wonderful liturgical dancing. The Bishop of NS/PEI, The Rt. Rev. Sue Moxley presided and The Primate (who was Diocesan Bishop here prior to his election as Primate) preached. It was a glorious (if long!) service, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the experience!

In the days to come we will hear from more of our ecumenical and international guests and partners, we will continue to deliberate over important matters, and we will continue to pray, as we do every day.

General Synod is a tremendous experience—we are blessed in our church in our diversity, our breadth, and our depth. Thanks be to God!

The road to a green parish is paved with gold



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

Our journey to a Gold accreditation began at a parish planning day in January 2001... long before the Diocese of Niagara had a Green Parish Accreditation Program the people of St. John the Evangelist, Niagara Falls committed themselves to being good stewards of creation and all of God's gifts to us.

St. John's was founded in 1820 and like many growing churches a new plant was built in the 1950's to accommodate the booming congregation. By the year 2000 (when I arrived on the scene) the building was showing signs of being much used, much loved, and well worn. At our first parish planning day as Priest and people we decided that we needed to do some much needed renovations, however, we also decided that the premise behind any choices that we made would be to make improvements that would be more than about making the place look nice but would also be gracious to the environment, save energy and make good use of resources.

All along the way this has been at the forefront of all of our improvements. Our first major renovation was to make accessible washrooms. This gave us the opportunity to choose low flush toilets and halogen light-

ing. Our drafty old windows were gradually replaced with vinyl, double glazed windows. Three old furnaces were replaced by two high efficiency furnaces; when the roof's had to be replaced this was an opportunity to install more insulation to improve our heating costs and loss of energy.

Seven or eight years ago the parish supported our efforts to use Fair Trade coffee and tea at all our parish events. Our Youth Group sell Fair Trade products once a month so that we can use it at home too. Looking back it was a 'hard sell' initially as the costs for Fair Trade are always higher than the sale price at the grocery store. Again, education is key so that people can understand why it is that we can get such cheap prices is because the people at the low end of the chain are not being paid a fair price!

About four years ago we decided to go toxin free in the building and so brought in a company to make a presentation at our programme vestry. We purchased toxin free cleaning products and about 15 households bought a starter kit for their own homes. This proved to be one of the more difficult pieces as educating all the groups that use the facility proved to be a huge challenge! We would no sooner clean everything out of the kitchen and then turnaround and find a can of Ajax or a bottle of bleach in the cupboard. That is when we upped the ante and put educational articles in the parish newsletter AND many notices and product information in the kitchen and cleaning areas.

Once we had a Green Team in place they took it upon themselves to be the

'policing' monitors for this piece of the journey. They did the inventory control and continually removed any toxic cleaners. We had to design posters that said things like "Looking for a scouring powder? Then use _____". It took some time and a lot of perseverance but eventually we have prevailed and now everyone 'gets it!' Having parishioners complete the Niagara Home Challenge really helped to get everyone thinking about what we do here and what they do at home and how that all works to help save the planet.

Having the support of Corporation and Parish Council is huge to this endeavour and so many areas are involved. However, two of the main ingredients in our success have been Gary Jenkinson, People's Warden and Kim Martignago our Parish Administrator. Gary has quietly worked away always keeping this mandate in mind when he was getting prices for furnaces, lighting, flooring... and he continues now to look after the property with his Maintenance Group. Kim makes sure that Best Practices sheets are available to all the groups; signs are posted, supplies are ordered, cleaning staff are trained (other duties!) And on and on. Kim created the drop off station for batteries, light bulbs and cell phones. Kim designed the posters and created a feature wall in our busiest traffic entrance so that all the people who use our building see that we are caring for God's creation. I might have the ideas but it takes 'someone' to be listening and make it happen!

Being good stewards of the earth

also extends to how we use the space we have once it is clean and safe! Our plan developed to make our building available to those who would not normally be able to find a place or rent a space, and to those who provide ways for the community to take care of body and soul. Ten years ago we had various 'renters' paying next to nothing to use our building and making it unavailable for our own use too. We made a shift to providing space for God's special people. This was not easy as it meant that we seemed to be turning 'renters' (\$) away while we were encouraging people to come and use out building for FREE! What a concept! Now we have Community Living Night Out for people with special needs; Survivors of Stroke; Al Anon and Narcotics Anonymous, Brownies and Guides; at one time we had a Bridge Programme based here for 3 years; we have Yoga and Tai Chi, ball room and salsa dancing, and most recently Niagara Youth and Children's service have come to us to be a pick up drop off point and a place for supervised visits—among others! Some groups do pay rent, some don't but all the people who use this space fit with our philosophy that we welcome the stranger, and especially the outcasts. We even have a wonderful, energetic cleaning crew who come twice a week who are part of the Community Living programme. They bring sunshine and laughter as they clean our building and we provide simple, repetitive tasks and a great deal of self esteem to a group of people who find it difficult to find work. Win win!

It has taken ten years to get to this place where we have an environmentally friendly building that is welcoming, accessible, safe and extremely busy. I would encourage one and all to go for the GOLD!

Accredited Green Parishes

Bronze Level

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St. James, Dundas
St. Aidan's, Oakville
St. Luke's, Burlington
St. Alban the Martyr, Hamilton
St. John's Nassagaweya
Church of the Epiphany, Oakville
Holy Trinity, Chippawa
St. John's, Burlington
Christ Church, Niagara Falls
St. Elizabeth's, Burlington
All Saints, Erin
St. James, Fergus
St. Michael's, Hamilton
St. Paul's, Dunnville
St. Barnabas, St. Catharines
Our Saviour, the Redeemer, Stoney Creek
St. Cuthbert's, Oakville

Silver Level

St. Jude's, Oakville

Gold Level

St. John the Evangelist, Niagara Falls

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» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

As such, they were charged with listening to the witnesses and writing their reflections of the day. There was an active listening role, paying attention not only to what they heard but also to what the witnesses' stories evoked within them.

After hearing the stories of the witnesses, each acknowledged that they had started the day with the stereotypes that far too many of us share about those who live in poverty as being responsible for their situation.

In his reflection Bishop Bird wrote: "Contrary to the common stereotype of a person receiving social assistance, these individuals would much sooner return to the work force and many are engaged in volunteer organizations and activities that contribute significantly to the well-being of their communities. For the most part they find themselves in their present situation through an unavoidable and calamitous event or series of events that include major health problems, mental health issues, abusive relationships and recessionary employment challenges."

Archdeacon Patterson expressed it this way: "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?"

These are questions that I have asked of others many times as part of the rite of baptism. My participation in the social audit as a Rapporteur requires that now I must again ask them of myself as one of those who shares responsibility for the ongoing deprivation experienced by so many resulting from government policies of the 90's. Before the opportunity to hear directly the stories of those with lived experience did I truly appreciate the implications of the policies and consider the human faces? Did I strive for justice for those oppressed by the system created and sustained

by those who overtly supported it and those who did so through indifference or inaction?"

Did I go into the day of the audit with expectations regarding what I would hear that were impacted by internalized stereotypes, shared by so many, of those living in poverty as people responsible for their situations due to character flaws, laziness or a sense of entitlement? I know that too often our society 'pathologizes' issues as being personal trouble resulting from poor choices or inherent weaknesses of character instead of acknowledging and responding to the structural source of these troubles."

In many instances the stories were heart wrenching as the witnesses described the material deprivation they experienced living on social assistance. Particularly difficult to hear were the stories of the parents, usually the mother, who skips meals so that their children have food. As one witness put it "First priority is children, adults come second. If I have to eat bread and butter so my kids can eat better, that is what I have to do."

Archdeacon Patterson learned that no one social assistance "had any expectation of being able to meet their basic needs of food and shelter from incomes based on social assistance or basic public pensions. The reality of far too many was that "food is at the bottom of the list". A healthy diet is unthinkable on the income left after the cost of shelter erodes it. One mother described the challenges of feeding her fourteen year old son when "some months there is hardly anything left after paying the bills". Asked what was in her fridge and cupboards that day she responded: "Kraft Dinner as they are just a cheap staple; today some baloney, no milk in fridge". Her son likes cereal for breakfast but she doesn't have any; there is no breakfast program at his school, nor a lunch program."

As Bishop Bird learned, charity was essential to fill the gap between what society considers enough and what is really needed to survive. To



him "it is clear that our system of providing social services and assistance still falls short of the mark in some, if not, many cases and it appears to rely upon a common assumption that people have other means of support to call upon (namely family, friends, churches, food banks, etc.) in order to fill in the gaps when the need arises. In an age and society where people are more isolated and cut off from each other than ever before, this assumption becomes increasingly problematic."

But coping with poverty is not only about doing without in the sense of not having enough to eat, it goes far beyond hunger. For the Bishop: "It was particularly difficult to listen to single parents discuss the struggles they have providing for their children on a very limited budget. In particular it was a real challenge to provide adequate winter clothing and footwear, and school trips and activities were especially difficult to deal with."

The Bishop had the experience of hearing from the mother whose

child asks her "when is money day" and hearing from the mother who described how she would "continue to put on a brave face while keeping the depth and breadth of our dire financial circumstances a secret from my children hoping they will play along with me and pretend we are living like everyone else."

Stories are important. It has been said that the first act of justice is to hear the cries of the oppressed. For Archdeacon Patterson, "It was not too long into the day before I saw parts of myself and parts of my story in the experience of the witnesses and it was then that the true listening and commitment to strive for justice began."

As he did, doesn't each of us have to again ask ourselves how we are doing in seeking and serving Christ in all persons, loving our neighbour as our self and striving for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being? Don't we, as Archdeacon Patterson wrote, "have a shared common

responsibility to advocate and engage in radical hospitality of all members of our society; to welcome the stranger, cloth the naked and feed the hungry."

"These responsibilities are not an option and we as individuals, as people of faith coming together as Church and corporately as citizens, must be made aware that as the least of our society is treated, so is the touchstone of how our society will be judged. The fact that there are those among us who live in such conditions and are pushed to the margins, is a blight on us all and a reflection of the just how far we have to go."

The reflections and stories from the Halton and Hamilton audits have been submitted to ISARC. ISARC will be publishing a book on the audit in the fall of 2010 and all Members of the Provincial Parliament and Members of Parliament in Ontario will receive a copy. The results of the audit and the final report should contribute to legislative solutions to end poverty in Ontario.

If there aren't dogs in heaven I'm not going



GRAHAME STAP
RECTOR, ST. SIMON'S

We were lucky and Winnie came into our lives in August 1996. She was a long legged Bouvier totally independent and with the courage of a lion. Nothing daunted her; she became in, short order, queen of the house and a large part of our family. I guess we took it for granted she would always be there. We were

wrong. Whinnied said goodbye on June the first. She had bad teeth, fatty lumps, arthritis and a cyst on the right eye. She was deaf and almost blind. But she never complained she still wagged her short tail and we knew she loved us. I guess there is a reason why dog is God spelled backward. Winnie loved without hesitation, without reservation just as God loves us.

It's quite strange in a way how our pets show us the way it should be. Jesus said a new commandment I give you that you love one another as I have loved you. Winnie fulfilled this commandment; she loved us and allowed us to love her. If we humans

could do half as well this world would be a better place.

I often wonder why it is that we seem incapable of accepting others where they are and not where we expect them to be.

It seems that in this world 'me' is the word that drives us. I believe it is the 'me' factor that separates us from the love of God. Winnie and I guess all dogs are incapable of the 'me' reasoning which infects people to the extent we have lost track of what is important. We look at a big house and say, "the people that own that house must be very successful" a very expensive car and we say the same. We seem to have lost track of

the fact that love of God and others is what matters.

The most successful person I know of is Nelson Mandela and he spent twenty-seven years in Jail because he wanted all people to have the same opportunities. He understood that all people must be allowed to love and be loved.

We are told that the church must stay out of government and what happened? We ended up with Mike Harris who cut personal income tax by thirty percent and decimated our social programs, which separated the rich from the poor even more than before. If we truly understand that the love of God must be for all people

we should call Dalton McGuinty and say please raise our taxes so we can reinstate at least some dignity for all people.

Winnie may be gone but her amazing ability to love will live in our hearts forever I just hope we can learn from her to love as she loved and not count the cost. I hope we will always wag our tails no matter what we encounter in this life and know we love because God loved us first.

In the blink of an eye we will be together with Winnie and walk the green grass of heaven. But if there are no dogs in heaven I'm not going.

But as always it is only my opinion.

PARISH NEWS



■ The Reverend Bob Wright, Rector of St. Mark's Anglican Church, and Atis Banks, Artistic Director of Music Niagara, at St. Mark's Anglican Church in Niagara on the Lake.

Pursuing Excellence | Music Niagara and St. Mark's

This year in Niagara-on-the-Lake, St. Mark's Anglican Church and Music Niagara will celebrate their twelfth wonderful season of collaborating on some of the finest music heard in Canada. Founded by Artistic Director Atis Banks in 1998, Music Niagara presents nationally and internationally renowned artists at its four-week summer festival, representing a range of musical genres from classical and jazz to choral and cabaret. And though what makes Music Niagara special are the several unique venues at which concerts are held, none is more popular and beloved than beautiful, historical St. Mark's. This season, 24 of the festival's 34 concerts will be held at St. Mark's and its Addison Hall. "We are so fortunate to have the long-standing support of [Rev.] Bob Wright and the parishioners of St. Mark's," says Banks. "Our musicians have played in the finest halls the world

over, and they are always impressed with the acoustic quality as well as the beauty of St. Mark's. It is a joy to perform in that space, which is somehow both grand and intimate."

Reverend Wright agrees, and is proud of the productive relationship between the organizations which helps make excellence accessible to the church and the wider community. "Fostering a continuous culture of innovation is a key part of our diocesan vision, and we believe our partnership with Music Niagara does just that. The incredible music arising from our working together, the innovative series and outreach programs which have been established, and more, are gifts not only to Niagara but to the broader community. We're proud to be part of this innovative alliance, and proud of the tremendous quality of art and artist we support."

And quality it is: the calibre of

performers at Music Niagara show they know all about pursuing excellence. The festival opens this year at St. Mark's on 17 July with a concert by Andre Laplante, arguably Canada's finest classical pianist; closes on 14 August with a program of Spanish music and dance featuring the electric Quartetto Gelato; and in between features amazing performers from jazz legend Dick Hyman, to a new series, Niagara Pops, which combines classical and other musical genres—for instance, baroque sacred music and jazz vespers, or classical violin and harp, and Métis fiddle music. For more information about this outstanding festival and its invaluable host, visit them on the web: Music Niagara, www.musicniagara.org, and St. Mark's Anglican Church, www.stmarks1792.com. You are invited to hear the culture of innovation these partners produce this summer.

New paintings at Nativity

JEANETTE PIPER
CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY

On Sunday, May 16th, 2010 at The Church of the Nativity, corner of King Street East and Barons Avenue in the City of Hamilton, we had the privilege of seeing, for the first time, new paintings for our worship space created by our Honorary Assistant Priest, The Reverend Jack Pearce.

The Church of the Nativity was formed by an amalgamation of St. Mary's-Bartonville and Grace Church-Hamilton on February 7, 2007. For the last forty years there have been banners for each of the Church seasons,

lovingly given by Lou and Jeanne Pennick. Thank you for your gift. The banners had to be taken down and stored and were looking tired. After being hung, taken down, and then when the season rolled around again, re-hung, after forty years they needed to be replaced.

"Our" new paintings are permanent all year round and depict each of the Church seasons simply and beautifully. May they inspire us to the truths we hold dear. As Jesus answered His disciples when asked "Where do you live?" We at The Church of the Nativity invite you to "come and see".



Holy Trinity Victorian Tea

Holy Trinity Church Hall was filled to capacity last Friday (March 7) when around 250 people from Welland and surrounding areas came out to the Annual Victorian Tea. It was a wonderful afternoon as people met up with old friends almost raising the roof with their joyful greetings and conversations. Gorgeous period dresses and hats added to the atmosphere.

Seen above is Mrs Ruth LeMay in a lovely chocolate flowered outfit and matching hat. A group of parishioners from residential homes were brought to the tea, and enjoyed visiting the church and reminiscing with old friends. Funds were raised to further Holy Trinity's work in the parish and beyond.



Gloria!

JEAN ROUND
175TH COMMITTEE, CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

GLORIA! A wonderful, joyous festival offering Glory to God and showcasing the work of many very talented people will take place in Christ's Church Cathedral in September as we continue with our 175th anniversary celebrations. Opening with a choral evensong service at 7:00 pm on Friday, September 17, doors will be open on Saturday from 10:00 am until 4:00 pm and on Sunday, the 19th from 12 noon until 4:00 pm.

The focal point of the Festival will be a floral carpet, fifty feet long and almost four feet wide, stretching down the centre aisle. Designed by the very talented Ralph Neal of Upper Canada House in Toronto the carpet picks up the colours and design of the small windows high on the south walls of the Cathedral, it also contains elements of the Diocesan coat-of-arms, such as the trillium, Bishop's crossier and the waters of Niagara. Rich in colour with vibrant reds, orange, yellow and blue the carpet will be constructed under the experienced eyes of Elizabeth Crozier, a St. Luke's, Burlington parishioner and designer from the Royal Botanical Gardens.

Many talented, volunteer flower lovers from the Botanical Gardens and Garden Clubs of Burlington, Hamilton, Dundas, Ancaster and Niagara, parishioners of the Cathedral and St. Luke's, Burlington will weave hundreds of blooms into this glorious carpet.

Displayed around the Cathedral will be vestments representing all the colours of the Church year, some belonging to Christ's Church Cathedral and others borrowed from parishes in the Diocese. There will be a display of wedding gowns from the past 175 years at the High Altar and Christening robes of similar age at the Font on the north wall.

Coffee, tea and lunch rooms will be available all weekend with a reception to follow the opening evensong service.

Please join us as we celebrate the FIRST 175 years of ministry in the city by your Cathedral.

My most grateful thanks go to Dean Peter Wall and Alison Meredith, my fellow 175th committee members and all our volunteers for their interest, support and enthusiasm for this event.

More information is available from the Cathedral website (www.cathedralhamilton.ca)

Comfort and hope | An ecumenical conference exploring Christian responses to suffering

Suffering is an integral element of our human journey. As much as we would wish it not to be so, human suffering seems unavoidable. Does the fact of suffering render our lives meaningless? Is there a faith-path to walk which engages the reality of suffering in a mature, life-affirming way? How do we find the will to move on creatively, meaningfully, spiritually, when suffering enters our lives?

Our conference keynote speakers, Dr. Kathy Belicki of Brock University, ON, and Dr. Matthew Stanford of Baylor University, Texas will guide us into thoughtful engagement with insights of contemporary psychology. These insights in turn will be placed in helpful dialogue within a very broadly defined Christian faith tradition.

Dr. Belicki will offer a two part presentation:

- How Do We Trust God Given the Suffering in Our Lives and in Our World?

- Finding Comfort, Hope and Healing. She has studied and written on the topics of dreams, the impact of childhood trauma on well-being in adulthood, and most recently, forgiveness and forgiveness-seeking. She has a deep passion for identifying and correcting errors which can slip into a Christian's thinking about God; these errors can slip into thinking and become obstacles to our drawing close to a primary faith resource, deepening our pain and sense of alienation in times of suffering.

Dr. Stanford is the author of Grace for the Afflicted: A Clinical and Biblical Perspective on Mental Illness. His writings in psychology and neuroscience are inspired by the many questions he has received from people of faith and the real life struggles he has observed among his friends and the surrounding community.

The heart of our conference is

the hope that all participants will be strengthened and encouraged to seek the healing, compassion and grace which can arise out of engagement with suffering.

In our rich variety of workshops you will meet people who have had significant personal experience of loss and yet have found a way to move forward in an honest and life affirming manner. You need not be a member of an identifiable faith group to benefit from becoming a part of this unique conference experience. Having said that, faith, the resources of faith, the gift of faith and the work of maintaining faith is also at the heart of our gathering.

Three intertwined themes will be presented in a relaxed and informal setting:

- Finding comfort, hope, and strength when we personally suffer, whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

- Finding and providing comfort when we journey with others who are suffering.

- Exploring ways we can reach out to a suffering world.

A helpful choice of workshops and skilled facilitators will augment the insights of our keynote speakers.

Our gathering together is driven by a holistic concern that we address the whole person in our workshops and group talks. As a participant, you will be affirmed in who you are and in the integrity of your experience. Our workshop leaders are well versed in creating a safe, warm, welcoming and respectful environment for conversation and mutual learning. Suffering and grief is a complex and sensitive reality calling for deep sensitivity and mutual respect. Members of the conference community are completely free to choose the manner in which they participate in the workshops. There is time for rest, informal conversation and to follow up on ques-



■ Dr. Kathy Belicki



■ Dr. Matthew Stanford

tions that may arise out of our being together.

We believe this gathering offers a uniquely inspiring and helpful opportunity to safely, creatively and boldly engage one of life's most challenging and yet all too common experiences. We also believe that the very fact of our gathering and the quality of what the conference offers will in itself be an experience of the very comfort and hope we seek.

The conference will also include, for those who so desire, ecumenical prayer, worship, music and the support of an on-site chaplain. See the website (www.comfortandhope.ca) or call 905-945-8894 (St. Andrew's, Grimsby) for detailed info.



■ Rob Fead, Rector of St. George's St. Catharines, prepares children for first communion.



The power of one

PATRICIA LUCY
ST PAUL'S MOUNT HOPE

It's 4:55 a.m., still dark and Jim Morgan is on the road... walking. He's walking 10 km, just as he does every Good Friday; walking the way of the cross and walking with hope.

It all started in 1991, when Jim joined with the folks at St. Mary's, Hamilton on a 10 km route on Good Friday. He thought, "Well this is great, but I could make it a fundraiser." So having a heart for kids, Jim collected pledges for his walk that he donated to St. Matthew's House Summer Camp Program. The first year he collected a modest \$100 in pledges and since then the amount has risen every year. Support for Jim and St. Matthew's House runs far and wide. The youth group from Christ Church Woodburn, where Jim is a member, baked and sold cookies donating \$63.00 to his walk and Sunlife Canada, Jim's employer matches his pledges dollar for dollar

up to \$500. This was Jim's 19th year of doing his Good Friday walk and the pledges totaled \$3600.

When I asked Jim why he does it, he cheerfully responded: "It's something I started and I can't stop doing now. I've been out in snow, sleet, thunderstorms and rain but this year was just perfect". Over the 19 years Jim has been walking for St. Matthew's House Camp, he has raised a total of over \$54,000 to help send kids to camp. This is an amazing testament to what one person can do when they find a cause they are passionate about and to which they are committed. At 66, Jim is committed to marking the 20th anniversary of his Good Friday walk next year. He doesn't know how much longer he'll be able to keep it up but as long as he can, he'll be out there at the crack of dawn on Good Friday walking to support St. Matthew's House Summer Camp.



■ As one aspect of its Green Parish initiative, St. Cuthbert's, Oakville, recently installed bike racks at its front entrance. Claire Floras wanted to support the project so she asked guests attending her birthday party to contribute towards the project instead of buying birthday gifts. She is pictured here presenting \$145 to Canon Joe Asselin, as her contribution towards helping make her parish a little bit greener by encouraging people to bike to church.

Messy Church



■ Participating in Messy Church worship in our tent.

SUE KALBFLEISCH
MESSY CHURCH REGIONAL COORDINATOR

"I found the Messy Fiesta event to be exciting and inspiring. With remarkable joy and creativity, Christian worship/education was offered in an inviting, open-minded atmosphere, with wonderful intergenerational appeal. It has huge potential as a means for inviting and welcoming those who are spiritually hungry, but not attracted to a traditional way of doing church. We are delighted at the prospect of beginning Messy Church ministry at St. John's, Thorold this fall."

These words, from Rev. Cathie Crawford Browning following the Messy Fiesta (Messy Church workshop) on May 15th, capture the essence of Messy Church. Messy Church is a Fresh Expression of church that is drawing families and children to learn about God, as they engage in a faith community in a new and exciting way. Messy Church was developed in the UK as a way of reaching families who weren't part of the 'traditional' church or who due to their busy schedules were unable to attend Sunday worship. As the dynamics of our culture are in constant flux many parents have

only the weekend to spend with their children and don't want to spend it in traditional church while their children are in Sunday School. Messy Church aims to create the opportunity for adults and children to enjoy expressing their creativity, sit down together to eat a meal, experience worship and have fun within a church context, often midweek. Messy Church is a way to reach families who are not in our churches on Sundays.

"Messy Church is a welcome alternative Congregational approach that can stand side by side with a traditional Sunday morning congregation. It accommodates the needs of family life while being innovative and post modern. It may resemble the early church groups with gatherings, discussions and a meal followed by short worship," Annette Hoare, St. Alban's Beamsville.

As co-presenter Rev. Nancy Rowe says, "Part of the format for the Messy Fiesta day was to do a Messy Church so that parish leaders could get a feel for what a Messy Church is like. Messy Church is aimed at young families, and certainly that is the nucleus of our Messy Church at St. George's,

Georgetown. At first it seemed quite strange doing a Messy Church that was adults only, but the energy and spirit of Messy Church is infectious, no matter what the age, the workshop participants were able to enter into the uniqueness of Messy Church to experience the power of God renewing God's Church. I left each Messy Fiesta in awe of God's on-going intrepid plan for us."

As we engage with the Diocesan Vision a Continuous Culture of Innovation is one of the exciting petals where things are indeed happening. With parishes thinking creatively about how to do church differently Messy Church is an opportunity to meet people where they are. It's exciting to know that the Holy Spirit is leading the way.

Thanks to St. George's, Georgetown (April 24th) and St. John the Evangelist, Thorold (May 15th) for hosting the Messy Fiestas and to the 44 enthusiastic participants from the Dioceses of Niagara and Huron as well as from the United Church. For more information about Messy Church, contact Sue at 905-648-0302.

Letter to the editor

I support the activity to develop a vision, because one cannot move forward without a sense of direction. This should be accompanied, however, by attention to some "bread and butter" issues, which can simply turn people off.

From time to time I use the e-mail facility of the Diocesan web site to contact parishes, and most times this is successful. Too often, however, the e-mail will not go, and the probable reason is that there is no connecting email address or the address is not current. In this day of electronic com-

munication, if we wish to be accessible to current and potential members of the Anglican Communion, every rector and every parish should make sure that they can be reached easily by email.

At a number of services to confer the Order of Niagara and confirmation services, I have taken photos of candidates as they kneel or stand in front of the bishop, and then sent them to parishes. My experience is that I receive thanks or an acknowledgement of receipt in about 20 to 25% of cases. In my work environ-

ment, if I prepare and send something to another person, the common standard is that I receive thanks or an acknowledgement in close to 100% of cases.

The church is not a business, but it should be business-like so that one can communicate easily and receive a response. Failure to pay attention to these simple things will simply detract from our ability to achieve loftier goals.

ALEXANDER L. DARLING
Christ's Church Cathedral

Rosa Parks Walks



ELEANOR JOHNSTON
ST. THOMAS' CHURCH, ST. CATHARINES

Have the gays of the Diocese achieved their goals? Not really. Okay, let's be honest, not at all. The Diocese of Niagara has agreed upon and published the Niagara Rite of Blessing of Civil Marriage. Right? No, actually. This document is to be used at the discretion of individual priests to bless, for example, a gay couple already married in the civil courts. Priests have been able to bless most anything (such as furniture, hymn books, pets) and anyone (such as those going on a long trip) so why was all this effort necessary to enable them to bless same-sex unions? Furthermore, is anyone performing this rite?

Everyone's tired of the same-sex topic and wants to give it a rest. But if the churches can drop it with a sense of satisfaction that we've made some progress in supporting our gay friends, we are deluding ourselves. In fact, those I've spoken to feel even more rejected, insulted and misunderstood than before.

And individual gays continue to walk away from our communion. To be told that they can receive a same-sex blessing but not be married in the church is the equivalent of the 1950's blacks in the southern states being told that they could take the bus but not sit at the front. Our fellow Anglicans who are also gay are saying, "Who needs this bus ride anyway? I'm walking." The new status quo reached within our Diocese means well (I trust) but doesn't satisfy anyone, especially those who see the establishment feeling smug that they've done something to placate the gays as they move on with relief to something they consider more important.

Years ago, when I first heard rumblings that the Anglican Church of Canada would suffer division because of the dispute over same-sex inclusivity, I assumed that the minority leaving the church would be the liberals. Actually, the congregations that have left are conservatives protesting what they perceive as misguided liberalism.

But there now is a movement towards the development of a liberal breakaway group. More walking. This concept has matured enough to reach my generally un-political ears. Here is a paraphrase of a recent email:

"The leaders of the Diocese are doing their best but what's happening is that many genuine seekers of God's Spirit are being left on the side of the church's road-way simply because they are homosexual. After years of unsuccessful struggle to

make the Anglican Church of Canada inclusive, there is now a very serious call to begin an alternative (liberal) church that expresses no protest, politics, or need for property. They are people who simply want to worship God together by sharing the scriptures and breaking bread in justice and love."

If this happens, what will the worship groups of those who've walked away be like? Will they do without priests? Will they want to keep any Anglican liturgies and hymns? Will the Cathedral tell them they have no right (rite?) to call themselves Anglican? On what

The awakening of the mind to the sacred is the great adventure.

John O'Donohue

theologians will they base their liturgy? Will non-gay liberals be welcome? Will conservative gays stay in the established church? These potentially painful scenarios represent our human failure to nurture the needs of all those who are presently called to worship together in the Anglican Diocese of Niagara.

After hearing all the arguments about same-sex rights and rites, I've been waiting to meet a newly-ordained gay priest or a newly-blessed gay couple, and so far neither has appeared on my horizon. In fact, I'm starting to worry about comments I'm hearing that sound something like this: "I'm so tired of all the same-sex talk. It's time to move on." Are liberals just turning a blind eye, giving up out of exhaustion, like the environmentalists who have gone strangely silent on the fate of planet earth?

What we believe, think and feel about homosexuality says more about us than about God's will. Being a liberal or a conservative, in theological and ecclesiastical issues, reflects a person's family background, education and character type, not the person's goodness, intelligence or understanding of the Bible. We might as well stop blaming each other for being wrong on any particular topic. Sadly, because our theology is so central to our sense of identity, neither side can give or take and so we find ourselves at an impasse, waiting upon the Lord.

It seems that we need a wider frame of reference than our currently entrenched belief systems. Humor, compassion, education: these are essential; so too are being open to the Holy Spirit and resisting the temptation to use the Bible as a weapon against other children of God. If we can put an end to negativity, then we can have the energy to rebuild the parishes now enduring the vicious downward pull of disagreement. If we can awaken our minds to the sacred, we can undertake a great adventure together.

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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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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

■ The Reverend Dr. Barbara Sykes has been appointed interim pastor at St. Paul's, Shelburne, effective June 6

■ The Reverend Stephen Berryman issued a bishop's permission as honorary assistant at St. Alban the Martyr, Acton, effective June 1, under the direction of the Rector.

■ The Reverend Renee Desjardins issued a bishop's permission as honorary assistant at St. James, Guelph, effective May 30, under the direction of the Rector.

■ Congratulations to the Reverend Tom Wilding who celebrated his 50th

anniversary of ordination on Ascension Day.

■ Congratulations to George and Phyllis Scott, faithful members of St. Columba, St. Catharines, who celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary on May 20

■ Congratulations to the Reverend Cheryl Barker and husband, Francois Doyle, on the birth of their first son, Samuel John Douglas, in early May!

■ The Reverend Jody Medicoff issued a bishop's permission as honorary assistant at St. John the Evangelist, Hamilton, effective April 22.

■ Licensed Lay Readers: Anne Hamilton, Margaret Perry, at St. James, St. Catharines, under the direction of the Reverend Pam Guyatt, effective April 1; Jane Harrison at St. Mark's, Orangeville, under the direction of Archdeacon Peter Scott, effective May 1; Colleen St. Amand at Christ Church, McNab; Ursula Keller at St. George, Homer, under the direction of the Reverend Dorothy Hewlett, effective May 1; Trinette Tomasello, June Robinson, Gary Pollard, Sandra White, John White, at All Saints, Ridgeway, under the direction of the

Reverend David Thomas, effective May 1.

■ Our thoughts and prayers are with the Reverend Jim Styles and family on the death of his brother, Douglas Albert, on June 1.

■ Norma and Ross Zimmerman, members of St. David's, Welland, ON since the church was built in 1949 are celebrating their 90th birthdays this year. Norma on June the 2nd and Ross July 24th. They will be celebrating their 70th wedding anniversary on July 13th. They reside at Lookout Ridge in Fonthill, Ontario.

A letter from Bishop Michael Bird to the Diocese of Niagara

MICHAEL BIRD
BISHOP OF NIAGARA

Dear Friends in Christ

I write to you on the last full day of General Synod where I have joined our Niagara delegates in what I believe has been a productive, informative and important gathering in the life of our Church. These ten days in Halifax have seen us pass a number of important resolutions; we heard about the significant and inspiring work that has been undertaken at the National level over the past 3 years and engaged in a number of helpful discussions. Many of those days were very long - often we began at 8:45 a.m. and didn't conclude until after 9 p.m.

We had the privilege of joining the Diocese of Nova Scotia and PEI in their 300th Anniversary celebration that culminated in a beautiful and moving service in a local arena with thousands in attendance.

You will hear more from our delegates in due course about what they experienced over these days but I want to say a few initial words to you about the report we have endorsed just 3 hours ago entitled "Sexuality Discernment".

It is the distillation of a series of conversations and dialogue that all the members of General Synod were engaged in as a means of articulating the place the Church finds itself in at the present time with regard to the Blessing of Same Sex Unions.

It would be easy to read this report as an indication of a lack of progress in our churches attitude to the full inclusion of gays and lesbians. I know some in Niagara had hoped for definitive, legislative action by General Synod. As we met and talked here in Halifax it became clear that such action would only strain our relationships further. Instead, General Synod opted for a statement that describes where we are as a National Church.

I believe this statement does represent significant movement in the life of our Church. All of our delegates agree that a new spirit of openness and generosity was felt in our meetings and I am pleased with the acknowledgement and the acceptance of the context for the kind of local discernment that we have undertaken. I also need to say to you that this statement and the desire it expresses to walk together bears witness to the



work and leadership that our diocese has offered the wider church.

Coming out of this General Synod I am committed to the journey we have been travelling and I am confident that

we can now give our full attention to the work of responding to God's mission for our common life together as a more inclusive and vibrant Christian community.

Discernment on Sexuality | General Synod 2010

The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada met in Halifax, Nova Scotia in June of 2010. Together we entered into intentional conversations in order to hear where our Church is at this time in its life in relation to the matter of blessing of same gender unions. Our conversations were marked by grace, honesty and generosity of spirit towards one another. There was robust participation in the conversations. In dialogue we shared our passion for the mission of God in the world and our thoughts, feelings and convictions. We were attentive to each others' perspectives, experiences and stories and we shared a commitment to continued theological reflection and scriptural study as a foundation to our ongoing dialogue and discernment.

We engaged these conversations within the particularity of our Canadian context—a country that is diverse and many cultured. Canadians

have been learning how to dialogue across their diversities over the course of our national life. We do so with deeply held commitments to transparency and openness, an approach that is not without risk and that we affirm as a great gift. Often, in processes of discernment, the task is to see our way through a paradox.

Our conversations affirmed the full inclusion of gay and lesbian members in our churches, aboriginal voices in our midst, and the wide range of perspectives on the issue of same gender blessings across all dioceses. Our dialogue has been a positive and helpful step in our discernment. At this time, however, we are not prepared to make a legislative decision. Above, in and through all of this, and despite all our differences we are passionately committed to walking together, protecting our common life.

We acknowledge diverse pastoral practices as dioceses respond to their

own missional contexts. We accept the continuing commitment to develop generous pastoral responses. We recognize that these different approaches raise difficulties and challenges. When one acts there are implications for all. There can be no imposition of a decision or action, but rather we are challenged to live together sharing in the mission of Christ entrusted to us, accepting that different local contexts call at times for different local discernment, decision and action.

We are in a time of ongoing discernment which requires mutual accountability through continuing dialogue, diocese to diocese and across the wider church. It also requires continued theological and scriptural study and dialogue on the wide range of matters relating to human sexuality.

For many members of General Synod there is deep sadness that, at this time, there is no common mind. We

acknowledge the pain that our diversity in this matter causes. We are deeply aware of the cost to people whose lives are implicated in the consequences of an ongoing discernment process. This is not just an 'issue' but is about people's daily lives and deeply held faith commitments. For some, even this statement represents a risk. For some the statement does not go nearly far enough.

In the transparency and openness we have experienced with one another, we have risked vulnerability but it is in such places that we grow closer in the body of Christ and behold each other as gift. Abiding with each other, and with God we are sustained through struggle, patient listening, and speaking from the mind and heart together. We have experienced these conversations as a gift for us here at Synod and hope that they will be a further gift to the Anglican Church of Canada and to the wider Church.

SUMMER EVENTS

Canada Day Barbecue and Fireworks

St. Alban the Martyr, Glen Williams
Celebrate Canada Day in the Glen with all day events including a parade. Finish the evening off with a chicken barbecue on the river bank followed by a spectacular display of fireworks.
Cost: Adults \$14, Children \$7, Tickets at door \$15
July 1

Local Farmers' Organic Market

Christ's Church Cathedral
The Local Organic Farmers' Market takes place on July 2, July 9, July 23, July 30, August 6, August 13, August 20 and August 27
July 2, 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Makers' Market

Christ's Church Cathedral
Handmade goods, local art, local food and vintage items. Free admission and free parking off Hughson Street. Rain or shine!
July 3, August 7, August 21, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Annual Cherry Festival

St. Mark, Niagara-on-the-Lake
Come out and enjoy a great day of family fun, cherry pies, cherry floats, fresh cherries and lots of shopping (jewellery, bake table, silent auction, treasures, garage sale, children's corner, books, CDs, DVDs, etc.). And enjoy a great lunch from the barbecue pit.
July 3 2010, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Land of the Free Concert

St. Mark, Niagara-on-the-Lake
A concert of vocal and instrumental music by American Composers. Wonderful music to enjoy on a Sunday afternoon.
Cost: \$15 per person
July 4 2010, 4:00 PM

Summer Spirit Day Camp

Transfiguration, St. Catharines
A five-day summer event for children ages JK to 11 years old. "We're Goin' Trekk'n" takes place July 5th through 9th, with Camp Sunday taking place on July 11th!

Cost: First Child \$45, Second Child \$35, Third Child \$25
July 5-9, 8:45 AM - 2:00 PM

Vacation Bible School

St. Andrew, Grimsby
It's a Fiesta! Games, stories, crafts. Spaces are limited. Please call the church to register.
July 5-9, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

House of Comedy Fundraiser

St. John the Evangelist, Niagara Falls
Pasta dinner and comedy show at The House of Comedy on Stanley Avenue in Niagara Falls. Half of the proceeds to St. John's. Get your table together and join us for the laughs!
Cost: \$20 per person
July 10, 7:00 PM

Trunk and Bake Sale

St. John's, Stewarttown
Reserve your spot at the Trunk & Bake Sale. For information, contact Maureen 905-873-2216.

Cost: \$10 per person
July 10, 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Summer English Teas

Christ Church, McNab
Each Saturday from July 17 to August 21 enjoy lunch outdoors under the shade trees of the church's lawn. A variety of sandwiches, home-made scones with whipped cream and strawberry preserves plus a refreshing pot of tea make for a very pleasant Saturday afternoon outing. Popular for many summers, this event will be held rain (inside hall) or shine. The historic church is open during the summer teas.
Cost: \$9 per person
July 17, 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Celebration of Seniors' Dance

The Parish of St. James and St. Brendan, Port Colborne
Music by Andy LaMarche in the Guild Hall. Doors open 6:30 PM. Fun for the older crowd. Beach Party theme.

Cost: \$8 per person, \$15 per couple
July 17, 7:00 PM - 11:00 PM

Our Day at the Cathedral

Holy Trinity, Welland
July 25th is Holy Trinity's special day at the Christ Church Cathedral in Hamilton. Watch for more info!
July 25

Skateboard BMX Park

St. Cuthbert's, Oakville
St. Cuthbert's Youth host the YMCA travelling skateboard-BMX park. Free hot dog and drink lunch. Waiver forms need signing. Parents signature needed for those under 16. Those under 10 need parental supervision.
Cost: Free
August 7, August 21, 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Vacation Bible School

St. Jude, Oakville
One week only. For children 5-13 years old.
Cost: \$40 per child (family rates available)
August 23-27, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

A reflection on General Synod



PETER WALL
DEAN, RECTOR OF CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

Through the kindness of time and deadlines, I just have time for a brief reflection on General Synod.

As mentioned in my other column, I was not an elected member of this Synod; rather I had been an member of its Planning Committee and Co-Chaired the Worship Committee. Those of us who spent many months in the planning of this triennial meeting were concerned about how things

might proceed; both Synods in 2007 and in 2004 had been difficult meetings, marked by, at times, angry debate and rancorous legislative conversations over, among other things, matters of human sexuality. We who worked at planning General Synod 2010 wanted, in every way possible, to avoid such stress and tension this time 'round. We hoped to have a gentle, kinder Synod, marked by the presence of the Spirit of reconciliation and peace. A fairly tall order!

From this perspective, the perspective of it now being over, I think that we succeeded. We succeeded largely because of effective and generous chairing by Archbishop Hiltz, the Primate of our Church and the President of General Synod. The Pri-

mate's gentle and easy presidential style, always infused with prayer and good humour, helped the House to be focused but not fussy, attentive but not argumentative.

Many important things we done and said at this Synod and those of us who have been to several Synods were unexpectedly pleased by much of what we did. There was also a tone, a manner, a 'feel' about General Synod that was palpably different from some in the past. Significant actions, such as the full inclusion of the National Indigenous Anglican Bishop as a voting member of Synod; the similar inclusion of partners from the Anglican Council of indigenous People, the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery,

the potential changes given first reading in terms of the composition of General Synod., and the decision to reduce the size of the Council of General Synod. All of these were important pieces of work.

The General Synod agenda item about which there was the greatest concern was the continuing work being done by the Synod on matters of human sexuality. The statement: *Discernment on Sexuality—General Synod 2010* was a result both of a process which enabled members of Synod to hear and listen each other, and which allowed recorders and reflectors to take what had been said and craft this statement. It is not perfect nor is it by all means the last word; it will disappoint many,

at both ends of the spectrum. It is, however, honest and it realistically reflects where our Church is. It neither encourages any one particular point of view or action, nor does it castigate or condemn any part of the church for action or for inaction. It allows the Church to be where it is, to walk together and to continue a commitment to listening and learning. It is, I believe, a good statement and is helpful for our common life.

After all is said, we came home—tired, yes, but inspired as well. We saw old friends and made new ones; the members of General Synod worked hard at the tasks set before them; we worshiped and sang, prayed and broke bread together. We continued on the journey—a journey just begun!

Why are you doing this?



ANDY KALBFLEISCH
MISSION STRATEGY COMMITTEE

When I was in London England a few years ago I met with Ian Mobsby, an Anglican priest who is active in the Fresh Expression movement with his Moot community. As we shared ideas and experiences Ian explained that members of Moot would often participate in London's Mind, Body and Spirit festivals. Members of Moot would give free messages to festival participants. Now, it's not the messages that I want to talk about, but the question that was most

often asked by those receiving the free message, "Why are you doing this?"

This is the question that presents an opportunity to share our Christian story, specifically that we are called to love our neighbour as ourselves. What better way to show love than to do an act of loving-kindness. But wait, we Anglicans aren't always so comfortable sharing our faith journey with others; friends perhaps, but strangers—rarely. Yet that is exactly what we are called to do. As Christians we are followers of Jesus and called to spread His message wide and far.

In many ways I think we are in a liminal space, a place of in-between-ness. Perhaps we feel like the Israelites after they were released from captivity to wander for years

in the wilderness. While in captivity they had structure in their lives, just like the structures that we have experienced in traditional church. You know, a time when most people in society attended church, a time when church finances were never in doubt, a time when we considered the possibilities of expanding our facilities to accommodate our burgeoning growth. But now things have changed and we don't know how to deal with the fact that things are never going to be what they once were. The time when we would open our church doors and people would jostle each other to get in is long gone.

So what do we do? Well for starters we can fret and then after considerable fretting we might find that things have only gotten worse. Perhaps we can sanitize and

secularize our message to make it more comfortable for people who don't know Jesus to understand and assimilate. Or we can do what Christians have done since the time of the early church, proclaim the good news of our Risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Now there is a challenge, especially for those who have oft believed or stated that faith is a private matter; you know hide the candle under the bushel so nobody else can be enlightened by the Gospel message. Or better yet, that's the priest's job! Part of the in-between-ness we find ourselves in is the transition from the Christendom priest-centric model of church to the post-Christendom reality of a lay centric church. Luke tells us that Jesus first sent his disciples into the surrounding communities to teach

and help with his work of healing. Then he sent the seventy-two to help spread the message of love and compassion and to heal the sick. The thing is, when Jesus sent them out He didn't ask them to operate in a few buildings and invite people to come in and hear the message of salvation. No, He sent them out to help Him share the message. Just as we must go out into our own communities to share the good news that we have been so blessed with.

So, back to the free messages. Ask yourself, "What can I do in my community as an act of Christian love?" so that someone might ask me the question, "Why are you doing this?" Then you can answer by telling them the story of Jesus and God's plan for all humanity. What a beautiful thing!

Holy mystery, here and now

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

But for me the treat was yet to come: Vespers, in the Church, to be sung by a visiting choir brought for the occasion from St. Tikhon's seminary in Pennsylvania. Eastern Orthodox chant is not totally foreign to me; composers have long drawn on that liturgy, literally or culturally—Moussorgsky, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Stravinsky, Taverner, et al, and the magnificent Rachmaninoff Vespers. But here and now, in this corner of the universe, way out on Barton Street, the real thing: we were to hear Vespers in its own context—like a benediction on the retreat. I was excited, to say the least. Gathering our papers as the lecture and prayers ended, everyone moved on to the church, a short distance away.

Everyone, that is, except one of our own number, who elected abruptly to skip Vespers and head for the parking lot. I wondered why. It fell to me to drive her home—some 35 kms. I would miss Vespers. Damn. I sensed on the way that she was troubled; I refrained from protest and dropped her off at her home. But it had all been so out of character for her, so unreal, so

unexpected. I mused long afterwards: Did this have to happen? Was there some hidden purpose to it?

By then it was dark; traffic was heavy, I felt empty, bereft, let down; nothing to do but turn and head for the long drive back to the city.

Somewhere in the vicinity of the Royal Botanical Gardens it came to me: why not go back to the church? No special reason. It would be over, Vespers, of course, and the church closed. Something symbolic, perhaps? Something mysterious nagging at me? Not even hurrying, I took my time and suffered each and every red light intersection on endless, boring Barton Street.

The parking lot was empty. St. Nicholas was closed. Nevertheless I climbed the steps and timidly tried the massive front door. It opened! One or two candles flickered in the dark. My eyes adjusted, black vested figures were moving, up near the Royal Doors. One of them came towards me. I found a few words, "...drove somebody home... disappointed, the Vespers..." He left me for a few moments and returned with several more men, eight in all. In silence they arranged themselves to one side. Then, they



sang: for me, standing alone, in the middle of the church, in the semi-darkness. "O Victorious Leader of Triumphant Hosts, We Thy servants delivered from evil Sing our grateful thanks to Thee, O Theotokos..."

It was during the few weeks fol-

lowing, that emails to and from Zorka Djurdjevic of the Church, Fr. Michael, and Derek Schmidt, the director of the choir, filled me in. The song they had sung for me was an ancient melody, arranged by a deacon of the church, commemorating the triumph of Con-

stantinople, saved from invasion by Muslims.

The origin matters little now but the spirit sings eternal. Music can express what words cannot, and kindness prevails in holy mystery, here and now.

Thanks be to God.

Borrowed time

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



If only, most lovely of all, I yield myself and am borrowed
By the fine, fine wind that takes its course through the chaos of the world

David Herbert Lawrence, "Song of a Man Who Has Come Through"

They sketch a life so quickly in their stories, they go so deep so fast that they seem almost to be offering up a beloved *soul* into my care.

It sometimes occurs to me as I receive this extraordinary gift that one day someone will sit with my one or two or more. Their part is to tell that story. My part is to give them a story to tell. They will perhaps, go so deep so fast that they will seem to be presenting my soul to the one who listens. It is my life's work to fashion that soul.

I wonder if that's what we're really talking about when we talk about stewardship. I wonder if we're really talking about what we let borrow us, about what a person yields to that is more than just that person and a bundle of needs and wants. In fact, the fine, fine wind doesn't so much borrow us as borrow us back, since we are in our very selves, "on loan" and "for the time being".

It matters deeply what we do with the time entrusted to us. There is no end of seductive deceptions avail-

able, invitations to spend that time on our own comforts and appetites, to squander it on trivialities, even, God help us, to "kill time". In all of these we yield, but not to a fine, fine wind. We loan our time to activities that do not honour the gift of time and the purposes of Love for which that time is loaned to us. And we act as if we were entitled to the time of others, as if it made all the sense in the world for people in other places to have no economic choice but to spend their time in sweatshops to feed our appetite for cheap consumer goods.

The medium by which most of this time-trading takes place is, of course, money. Money is where we store time. What I call "my money" is a vessel filled with time. Some of it is time I have spent, some of it comes as a gift of time from others, and some of it may be stolen time. One way of thinking about the biblical injunction against usury is that it protects the poor from those who would steal their time by requiring them, out of their labour, to repay more than they borrowed. And even my time is a gift from the hand of the Time-Maker.

So why don't we talk about money in church? It's obviously a matter of profound spiritual significance. Talking about money is talking about time, and time with its horizons clearly identifies us as stewards of and for a time. Stewards fashioning souls out of how we have loaned that time to purposes—noble or not—to which we

yield our lives.

I wonder if we shy away because most of our money talk in churches isn't about any of that, but instead about a fairly desperate attempt to sustain a building and a staff, often the very same staff who are talking about the money. It can all be a bit self-serving.

But if we don't talk about money, we miss a pathway into the place where we fashion our souls. If we don't talk about money we miss an opportunity to invite one another to reflect on what borrows us, what we yield to, what our loved ones will have to offer up as our story when it is no longer ours to tell. What soul will they offer up as they mingle tears and laughter?

So let's talk about money, and about a culture of generous stewardship that is far more than (but not less than) a source of financial support for ministries that serve God's world-changing mission. Let's make sure we talk about how the time stored in our money can be put to work changing lives, healing broken hearts, fostering peace and reconciliation, feeding the hungry, sustaining creation's life and beauty, generating delight and joy. Let's add in the way that time can serve our children a healthy meal, gladden the heart of those we love, and bring us Sabbath rest from the hasty, urgent, unreflective and driven ways we spend the time we can never spend again.

Let's talk about stewardship as the work we do to fashion our souls.

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St. John's Church in Port Dalhousie will be hosting a lecture entitled:

"The Church in the Holy Land"

Father Kamal Farah an Anglican Palestinian Priest from Nazareth will be the guest lecturer. Father Kamal is the past Director of Studies at St. George's College in Jerusalem and a wonderful ecumenist who holds two PhDs from the University of Paris in Law and Languages. The lecture will be held in Smiley Hall at St. John's Church (80 Main St., St. Catharines) on Friday evening August 13 at 7 p.m. A wine and cheese will follow and a freewill offering will be taken with the proceeds goings to aid the education of Palestinian children.

For more information, please contact Canon Gordon Kinkley at 905 934-1020 or kinkley@sympatico.ca

Más que podemos preguntar o podemos imaginarnos | More than we can ask or imagine



CHRISTYN PERKONS
MINISTRY CONSULTANT

The Hot Jalapenos (YLTP 2010 Year 3 group) blitzed Cuba with good will, humility, and enthusiasm this past March! You will remember reading in the Niagara Anglican last winter about this intrepid group of youth from the Youth Leadership Training Program who, with their leaders, Archdeacon Lynne Corfield and Beth Kerley O.N., were planning and fundraising for an education and service trip to Cuba. After finishing the YLTP program on the Wednesday of the March Break, the youth and their parents dined together at St. John's, Ancaster (big thanks for a great dinner!) before the young people traded their YLTP baggage for their Cuba luggage. The seven YLTPers, their leaders and two additional chaperones, Dr. Brian Kerley and Christyn Perkons, Ministry Consultant, took the maximum amount of luggage and the minimum amount of personal 'stuff' with the net result that they brought eleven suitcases to Cuba that were full of recycled clothing, shoes, school supplies, medication, hygiene products, blankets and sheets. These donations were received ecstatically by the staff at our host site, The Christian Centre for Reflection and Dialogue, to be dispersed to the many folks of Cardenas who are served by various programs of the Centre. That was the beginning of seven days of giving and receiving!

The group spent time weeding vegetable beds and harvesting mint on the farm run by the Centre which supplies fruit, vegetables and meat for the meals for the staff and guests of The Centre, for the meals they provide to the community and for neighbours to purchase at reasonable prices. That immersion into the farming culture of Cuba was supplemented by lectures on the history of Cuba, the church's role in Cuban politics and culture, the education system, and the practice of medicine in Cuba, and ecumenism in the church in Cuba. We also explored city life with walking tours of Cardenas and Havana, visited the seminary in Matanzas, and watched with wonder both Cuban and Afro-Cuban dance shows. Nathalie Reid from St. John's, Thorold, and Will Wells from St. Matthias, Guelph both reflected upon their return about how life changing it was to experience how happy people could be without a lot of material possessions.

But as informative as all the lectures were far more transformative were the relationships we built...with youth from a local parish with whom we prayed and played, with the locals (youth and adults) who came to salsa, cha-cha and merengue with us, with our translators, Sterlitz and Raquel, who shared so much about their lives in response to incessant questions, with Rev. Raimundo García Franco and Rita Cabrero, his wife, who founded The Centre in order to promote peace and justice in Cuba, and with Bishop Griselda, who lunched with us at the Catedral de la Santísima Trinidad and shared the struggles of the Anglican Church in Cuba and her life as a new Bishop. We felt part of



■ **Marah Montague (St. Paul's, Caledonia), Jeremy Phillips and Nathalie Reid (St. John's, Thorold), Will Wells (St. Matthias, Guelph), John Lehocki (St. James & St. Brendan's, Port Colborne), Dana Hayward (St. John's, Thorold) and Charlotte Irwin (St. John's, Niagara Falls) after labouring in the fields outside Cardenas, Cuba—ready for more adventure!**

the world-wide ecumenical movement as Canadian Anglicans living and working at a Presbyterian Church centre that received funding from PWRDF, worshipping in Spanish at the local Presbyterian Church, and meeting Cuban Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Says Charlotte Irwin of St. John the Evangelist, Niagara Falls, "I now have a better concept of human connection... I truly enjoyed the friendships we made... everyone was so warm and welcoming, and their positive attitudes and gratitude for

everything is something I would like to adopt for myself." We left Cuba determined to live out the vision of The Christian Centre for Reflection and Dialogue—si no somos parte de la solucion, entonces somos parte del problema (if we are not part of the solution, then we are part of the problem).

What do we bring back—an appreciation for Cuban culture, an understanding of the work of the Church in Cuba, a sense that, in partnership with others, we can be agents of change in

the world, a new awareness of how important it is to maintain deep connections with one another through prayer and telling one another our stories and best of all, new friendships nurtured over the internet and a new friendship with Bishop Griselda who, six weeks after our visit to Cuba, came to the Diocese of Niagara for Justice Camp and Clergy/Licensed Layworkers Conference—all because she connected with Canadian Anglicans from the Diocese of Niagara one Saturday in March.

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