

Christmas greetings...

From our Bishop, Michael Bird

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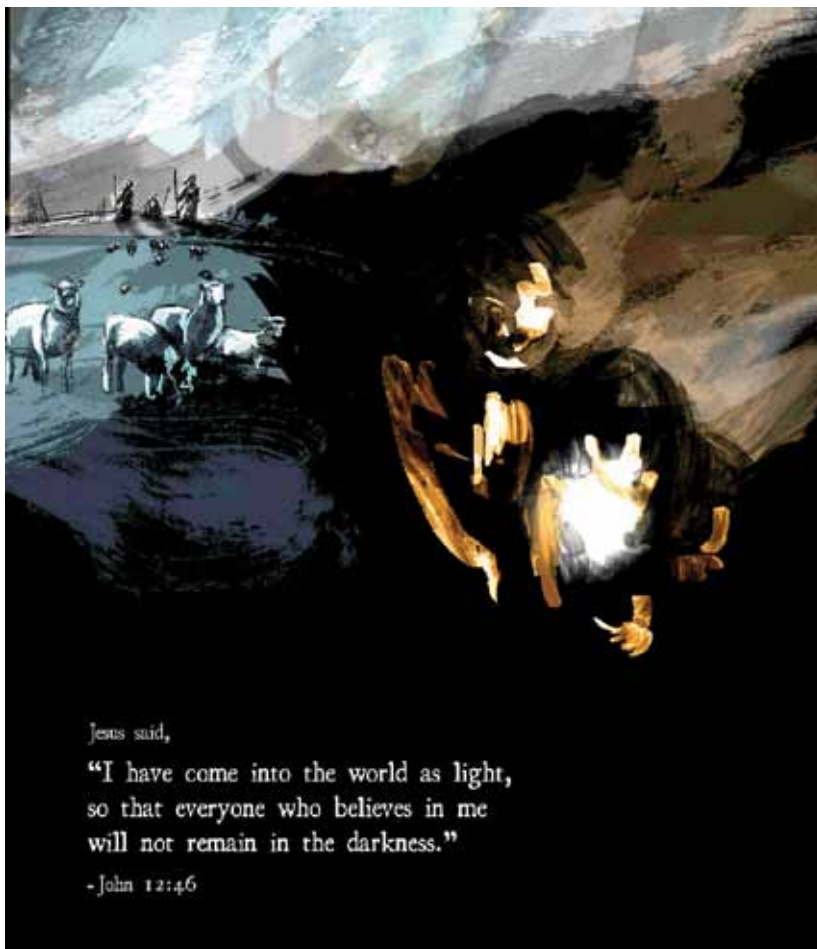


A section of the Anglican Journal

NIAGARA ANGLICAN

A Gathering Place and a Sounding Board for the People of the Diocese of Niagara

DECEMBER 2011



Jesus said,
"I have come into the world as light,
so that everyone who believes in me
will not remain in the darkness."

- John 1:2:46

The Art and Words of Christmas

HOLLIS HISCOCK

Editor

The annals of history indicate that creative individuals have employed their artistic talents to express the physical birth of God as Jesus Christ in a new light.

Artist and designer Jay Blackwood from Hamilton, Ontario entered that illustrious circle with his drawing, featured on our front page this month. Jay, who has been involved for years with Niagara's Canterbury Hills camp and the Diocesan Youth Ministry programs, gave us permission to use his image in our print and online versions of our December 2011 paper. Queries regarding further usage should be directed to Jay at jason.blackwood@gmail.com. We thank Jay for this special Christmas gift to our readers.

How It Developed

Following a recommendation, I approached Jay about a Christmas drawing for our

December issue. He asked about our expectations. I suggested it could be traditional or contemporary, depending on his style and interpretation of the Gospel records.

He chose to bring together two Gospel accounts. On the left side of his portrayal is Luke's (2:8-20) description of the shepherds hearing about the Saviour's birth from the angels, whereas the right side depicts John's (1:1-14) version of the coming of the Messiah as the light of the world. The quote (John 12:46) from Jesus, spoken some 30 years later, brings both together.

I checked with our printer to ascertain if the darker images would reproduce on newsprint. She made lighting adjustments, and assured me that, even though it was a dark drawing, it would print well.

Several members of our Publications Advisory Board reviewed the illustration. One commented that he liked the Impressionist (next to near

—See CHRISTMAS Page 2

Seasons of the Church Year

Advent, the beginning of the Church's year, heralds a time of preparation for the second season of the Christian calendar, Christmas. The fourth Sunday

before Christmas Day is the first day of Advent, which this year is November 27 and Advent runs until Christmas Eve.

Christmas, a season to cel-

brate the Birth of Jesus Christ, begins on December 25, 2011 and continues to January 5, 2012.

Hymn writer Katherine Hankey, 1888, wrote this in her

teaching hymn about the seasons of the Church Year:

*Advent tells us Christ is near;
Christmas tells us Christ is here!*



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Thoughts of Christmas

Christmas in Art and Words

continued from page 1

abstract) style, the light across the top and the sheep and shepherds because they are important Christian symbols. Another pointed out the difference between the abstract and less abstract style, and said, "Overall, I like it."

I made my decision on Sunday morning, at worship, when our priest introduced the Sacrament of Baptism as an occasion when one "will receive the gift of light."

My reflections

I spent several hours reflecting on Jay's drawing.

I noted the "darkness changing into light" as a re-telling of the old creation story (Genesis 1:1-2:3), and the ushering in of the new creation at the birth of Jesus Christ as the "True Light coming into the world to give light to every person" (John 1:9).

My mind focused on the shepherds, awestruck and frightened, as they heard the news about the Saviour's birth, a short distance from where they were standing, and wondered what it meant and how to respond.

The sheep provide the bridge between the concrete and abstract interpretations. As they move from the messenger to the

message, they symbolize the hopes of humanity waiting for "peace on earth and good will for all people."

I suggest, during Advent, that you read the gospel writers' accounts of Jesus' birth (Matthew 1:19-24, Luke 2:1-20, John 1:1-14) in conjunction with Jay's drawing, as a preparation for Christmas. You may want to share your reflections with us.

What others write in the Niagara Anglican

Susan Crawford observes children recreating Jesus' birth in a live performance (page 7).

Bahman Kalantari and Derek Anderson converse about a star guiding the Magi to the new born king (page 5).

Elizabeth Whitton describes how different cultures present the birth of Christ (page 11).

George Suba reminds us that the light is needed to live "in peace and harmony" (page 3).

Bishop Michael Bird advocates listening to that "longing deep within" and deciding how God wants us to respond (back page).

Bringing it all together

Nearly 20 years ago, my daughter and I wrote *The Real*

Christmas Story – A Walk Through, a play to be performed outdoors in December in Canada. In the final scene, the audience gathers around the manger and the narrator proclaims:

"This is a wonderful day for us who live here in Bethlehem;

Our God has been born as a baby in this very stable;

Look! There are his earthly parents – Mary and Joseph;

And look, there is the baby, Jesus Christ!

We have all seen the star;

God said, 'I am the light of the world,' and there is the light;

It shone through the ages past;

It guided the astrologers and shepherds to this place;

It guides us today and into the future.

God has become a human being and dwells among us.

Let us celebrate the holiest of miracles."

May Jay's drawing and our Christmas experiences bring us into an enhanced understanding of our relationship with God and other parts of the created universe.

In my little tin box

JUNE, MARK & MURRAY BLAND

Burlington

It started with a small notice in the paper, asking for volunteers to come to a church in downtown Toronto to help provide a Christmas turkey meal for the homeless – many living on the streets.

My dear wife and son wanted to be part of it. I provided the Christmas music, my wife helped to serve the meal and our son circulated among the people. Our son later told us he talked with a former classmate – an alcoholic at a young age and now with AA (Alcoholics Anonymous).

The event went on for 4 hours and hundreds came. I noticed my wife taking a break from serving and talking with several men. The day finally drew to a close. The volunteers, tired and happy, were cleaning up and leaving. After loading up my sound equipment, I headed for the door.

Ahead of me at the door, one of the homeless men stopped my wife, spoke to her and then we all headed for the car. When we got into the car, she showed me what he had given her. It was a cigarette, his LAST cigarette. It was all he had. He wanted to give her a gift to thank her for talking to



him. "Please take it," he said, "you were so kind. I wasn't always on the street you know. I was a police detective before I was an alcoholic."

I keep that cigarette in a little tin box, along with several other things connected to events in our lives. They are of no value to others, but they bring back a flood of good memories to us.

Unique gifts for Christmas

Christmas is a good opportunity to get right with God and to establish better relations with other human beings in our global community.

In addition to all the material gifts we may give or receive, perhaps some of these suggestions may help during Advent, as we prepare for Christmas.

- Mend a quarrel
- Pray daily for "peace on earth"
- Encourage young people
- Renew a friendship
- Be gentle
- Examine your demands
- Try to understand
- Resist evil
- Go to public worship
- Make a child happy
- Seek out a friend
- Welcome a stranger
- Forgive
- Think of others first
- Express appreciation
- Apologise
- Forego a grudge
- Be sympathetic
- Learn to listen
- Help someone in need
- Wish people "Merry Christmas"
- Phone, email or write
- Add your own suggestion here:

Make a real difference

Share your Christmas with a family in need

Christmas is coming but it won't be an easy time for hundreds of families. Your family, parish, choir or group can share Christmas in a special way.

Sponsor a family this year:

- Provide the food for Christmas dinner for a family, *or*
- Provide new, unwrapped toys for children or gifts for teenagers, *or*
- Sponsor a family in full with Christmas dinner PLUS one new gift for each child, *or*
- Donate to the Christmas Adopt-A-Family program (Tax receipts issued)



We provide first names plus ages and sizes for children. Drop off of gifts and food is **Dec. 9, 12 or 13**. (You will be told the drop off location when you register to sponsor.)

**For more information or to register:
Call Debra House at (905) 522-4584**

**Send tax-receiptable donations to St. Matthew's House,
414 Barton Street East, Hamilton, ON L8L 2Y3**



St. Matthew's House
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Christmas Tree Sale

Buy a quality "Anglican" tree this year at St Cuthbert's Church
(Maple Grove and Oakhill, two blocks north of Lakeshore Road East in SE Oakville)

905-844-6200

Sale Hours (staffed by volunteers):

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

Christmas Eve Worship

4:30 p.m. "The Wonder"
Family-Friendly Communion Service
8:00 p.m. Candlelight Choral Eucharist

Thoughts of Christmas

On Christmas

GEORGE SUBA, *Niagara On The Lake*

O holy night
 Be peace on earth
 Goodwill towards all men!
 For to see the light, and to know
 Why we call ourselves Christians,
 For many haven't been answered
 As yet.
 As we are about to receive the
 Blessing of God
 At this time of year,
 My memories take me back in time
 And how it really was
 Back in those days
 In my father's home
 On the Holy Night.
 When I was a child,
 What was it like?
 Food, presents, or drinks
 Were the priority of the night,
 Or rather the gratitude
 And giving thanks to God,
 The Creator,
 For the blessings we have.
 Why this was so significant,
 I didn't know
 I didn't know
 Why so many have forgotten

How it really was in that manger
 So many years ago.
 But now that I have traveled
 Through the world,
 And I have seen a multitude of
 Nations, Catholics, Muslims,
 Buddhists, Protestants, and Jews.
 Their cultures, their food,
 Their colour of skin,
 The shape of their skull,
 Their thoughts within.
 How were their minds programmed?
 Why are beliefs so varied?
 One believes it one way,
 Some believe another way,
 And still others believe
 Differently,
 Everyone to his own convictions,
 To the traditions,
 The customs, the habits, that
 Their forefathers believed in,
 Those who still wait for the
 Messiah, those who received the
 Messiah
 And still hope for the Second
 Coming.
 So, let's all give thanks

To whomever you may choose,
 For God has a hundred names.
 But I love my life
 And I love my Lord
 And I do hope
 You may feel the same.
 They now hope and pray,
 Some asking, others demanding,
 Some give thanks
 Hopefully to the same God,
 The Creator, The Almighty,
 Who created the universe
 And the human mind
 For us to believe
 That we all exist.
 Hope!
 Hope is the energy of life
 Behind the emergency wall
 For the ill to regain health,
 For the hungry to eat again,
 For the lost to find his way,
 For the imprisoned to be freed.
 The human mind's desire to
 Satisfy

Must be the most difficult task
 In a man's life
 Some can control it,
 Some do not,
 And the battle of life goes on
 And the one who has not enough.
 So what is the most important
 On this Holy Night?
 Food, drinks, presents,
 Being merry, or
 To understand the concept of it?
 Give thanks for what we have,
 And not reach for things
 That we cannot have
 Or have not got.
 "It may destroy the mind"
 But to hope and to work
 For a better tomorrow
 Where all mankind,
 Black, yellow, or white,
 Catholics, Muslims, Buddhist,
 Jews, and Protestants
 Will find the way
 To live in peace and harmony
 In this beautiful world of God.
 Otherwise we may not survive!

Sermon inspires givings from book sales

One Sunday morning Frances Tyrrell sat in her parish church, Epiphany in Oakville, listened intently to the sermon and wondered how she could respond.

The preacher was Canon Wendy Roy, Executive Director of St. Matthew's House, Hamilton. She spoke about their work and the needs of the people who come there for help in coping with the struggles and crises in their lives.

Frances thought about the 2000 books recently retrieved from their book publisher who

had gone out of business.

In 1999, she and her mother Avril Tyrrell had published the *Woodland Nutcracker*. Avril said she wanted to retell the "Christmas classic - in a new light."

"The book has a Canadian forest setting with a family of Black Bears, and is in keeping with today," she continued. There is also a switch in the story when a truce is called between the invading mice and the defending soldiers, since "no one fights on Christmas Eve," pronounced a

bear cub named Clara. "We have plenty of food, help me fill their sacks", she ordered, "the mice are hungry, the food is for their children."

Frances illustrated the *Woodland Nutcracker*. Reviewer Patricia Morley wrote, "her highly detailed, brilliantly colored illustrations are full of humour, whimsy, love, and the spirit of joy."

Sharing is a theme for Christmas, as it is for the ministry of St. Matthew's House. Frances and Avril decided that

they would share a portion (\$2.00 for each copy sold) of the sales of the *Woodland Nutcracker* to support the work of St. Matthew's House.

If you would like to purchase a

copy, you may get one in person at certain Christmas bazaars or go to their website, www.francestyrell.com for details about purchasing this unique gift for somebody this Christmas.

PARISH EVENTS

Special Christmas Concert for Children in Need

Wednesday, December 14 at 7:30 p.m.

St. Luke's Church, 1371 Elgin Street, Burlington

This 20th Anniversary edition of the concert features the Three Cantors. The Cantors have been singing in concert together since 1996 to provide funds for the Hunger Fund of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund. Tickets are \$20 by contacting

905-332-0837 or the.skafels@sympatico.ca

Parish Events will appear as space permits. Submissions about your event will appear on a 'first come, first served' basis. Check the paper for submission deadlines. Include name and details of event, location with street address, date and hours, prices, contacts (telephone and e-mail). We reserve the right to edit to fit space.

For more parish events, visit www.niagara.anglican.ca and click on "Events."



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Thoughts of Christmas

Lesley, the Christmas angel

CANON GORDON KINKLEY
Port Dalhousie

Almost ten years ago, Lesley Osmond, a physiotherapist and member of St. John's Church, Port Dalhousie, was the subject of my Christmas homily.

Lesley had been doing some work with special needs students. One boy about 18 years old, from a special needs class, was severely challenged mentally and unable to speak. A particular joy in this boy's world was a stuffed Thomas the Tank Engine toy that he carried with him everywhere. Well, one day when the boy was being helped into a taxi, the driver set the stuffed toy temporarily on the roof of the cab and then forgot to retrieve it before driving off. As a result Thomas was lost and the boy was

devastated.

Lesley, the care giver, wanted to make things better. So she spoke to another member of our parish, Roger Daniels. Roger was a toy salesman. If anyone could get another stuffed Thomas the Tank Engine it would be Roger, Lesley thought. Roger, however, wasn't selling this product and in fact – at that time - he didn't even know that the product existed. He told Lesley that he was sorry but he couldn't help.

Then, a few days later everything changed. Roger received a package in the mail from someone who had sent it to him by mistake. In fact the woman wasn't even his customer. And what was sent along? – Are you ready?

Roger received in the mail that day a stuffed Thomas the

Tank Engine toy. Roger couldn't believe his eyes. He immediately called Lesley and delivered the stuffed toy to her. Lesley told the boy's teacher and the teacher insisted that Lesley give the gift to the boy herself. Not surprisingly this special needs boy was ecstatic. He now had another toy just like the one he had lost; and he walked around kissing it and hugging it.

The boy's mother called Lesley the next day and told her that Lesley was her son's Christmas angel.

Lesley Osmond was a remarkable young woman. She died last year of breast cancer; and was an inspiration to everyone who knew her. Truly, I have never witnessed courage greater than she displayed. Cancer ultimately took her life but never her spirit.

PATRICIA HEMINGWAY
Burlington

A young Parisian man worked with my husband for a French firm. Jerome was alone in Canada. He was invited to stay with us for Christmas Eve. He met the various people enjoying our annual Open House, and helped serve food and wine. Jerome came with us to the Midnight Service. We had a

snack before going to bed.

My husband and I awoke in the morning to the sound of the kids with Jerome. We came downstairs, and there he was by the tree sorting the packages.

Jerome had a different invite for Christmas Day, and we took him to the train.

We were happy to welcome a visitor to Canada at this special time of year.

Would you like to be a reporter or writer for the *Niagara Anglican*?

We can help. Contact the Editor for guidelines on writing, photos, etc.

Hard times made me strong

BETTY BAKKER
St. Catharines

I was born in 1926.

My father served in the First World War, was gassed in France and returned a broken man

We lived in Toronto and I went with my mother many times to Christie Street Hospital to visit him. I did not have a lot of love for my father as he drank to kill the pain and as a result, we had to go without.

I used to watch my mother wring her hands in despair, afraid we would be put out of our home and on the street. That thought was more than I could bear as across the street a doctor had a lovely house, a big car and all the lovely things that we did not have.

One Christmas, we were told that we would not be receiving any presents. I was in such a low state of mind and not able to do anything about it. Suddenly there was pounding on our front

door. We opened it to find two young women, bearing the biggest basket of food and presents I had ever seen. They smiled and wished us, "Merry Christmas." They were the daughters of my father's sister, whom we never met. My father never kept in touch with them, they were prosperous and we were not. However my aunt knew our situation and had sent the girls over. We were just about to take the gifts, literally jumping with joy, when from the back of the hall my father said "You can take your food home...we don't need your charity." I ran upstairs and threw myself on the bed sobbing because my father was so rude and we were all hungry. My mother never said a word, she went to the kitchen and made a cup of tea. One did not cross my father!

I told my mother that when I grew up if the only thing I owned was a little shack, it would be mine, and I would never have to worry about being evicted.

I left school at 16, went to work to help my mother out and at night went to Shaw's School of Business. I got a good job with the Government and never looked back. I married a good man, moved to St. Catharines, worked with an insurance agent, bought a home, and had a son. I have two beautiful granddaughters who are both successful. I belong to Grace Anglican Church, and sing in the choir.

I often think of the hard times but I realize it made me strong and gave me the strength to push on and do well.

I thank God every night when I go to bed. He has guided me and led me down the right path. My husband had a stroke and is in a retirement home. I am able to stay the course in our home and pay for things myself.

I will enjoy Christmas with my family and pray for those who are not so fortunate to have a loving family to celebrate with.

Christmas Music At St. John's

An Angus Sinclair Christmas

The Great Hall
Sunday, December 4

3:00 pm

An afternoon of by-request Christmas music with sing-along, delicious holiday treats, and a decorated Christmas Tree silent auction.

Tickets \$20

"Be We Merry"

Friday, December 9

7:30 pm

The inaugural concert of the new choral group Ensemble Lyrica will take place in the church under the direction of Brent Fifield. The programme will feature sublime Christmas music by Palestrina, Sweelinck, Mendelssohn, Howells, Byrd, Holst and Gabrieli.

Free-will donation



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Traveling East and Searching West

BAHMAN KALANTARI &
DEREK ANDERSON

Bahman: Derek, you and I have talked a great deal about Christian Mysticism and decided to invite readers of the Niagara Anglican to eavesdrop on some of our conversations. As we approach the Christmas season, I want to ask you a little bit about the mystic elements in the Christmas Story. First, I would like to share some mystical elements of the Christmas Story that come from the Eastern tradition.

Christian Persians owe their Christianity to the Magi and to St. Thomas. I would say that Christian Mysticism on the one hand is an awareness of Christ's immediate presence, and on the other hand it can be described as walking with Christ Jesus all the time. This definition is linked to the Magi's story.

According to some Eastern Christians, including many Persian Christians, a pre-advent season begins on the 20 Sunday after Pentecost and ends on the Last Sunday of Pentecost, the Reign of Christ. To these Christians, the four weeks are called preparation month. This time is spent in remembrance of the journey of the Magi. During

this month, people meditate on the importance of the coming of the Messiah. They also reflect on why the whole world needs the Messiah and encourage one another to find ways to visit with the Messiah in their daily lives.

The Magi were restlessly awaiting the advent of a new saviour of the world. They were Zoroastrian priest-kings who lived in ancient Iran. Their Holy Scripture said that a glowing star

finally found the newborn saviour. And again, it was this same guiding star, which led them towards the baby Jesus. At this point the Magi realized that their guide, this shining star, did not have a separate identity but was the very presence of the new saviour, drawing all those who seek him towards himself. The Magi came to his cradle to observe the human face of light. The Magi came to believe that

*The new Saviour ... would bring light to
remove the darkness of the world.*

would be their guide to find the new saviour. They were driven by their love to embrace the new saviour. The saviour would bring justice, wisdom, and righteousness through the truth of His presence and message. He would also bring light to remove the darkness of the world.

On the basis of the promise that the Magi found in their scripture, they recognized their guiding star. Theirs was not an easy journey and danger lurked around them. But their guiding star shed light on their hearts and on every place through which they travelled. The Magi

the new saviour was moving, that is to say walking, with them all the time during their journey.

Now, Derek, can you please share some of the Western traditions with me in this respect?

Derek: Bahman, you know that searching occupies a significant place in spirituality of Western Christians in the seasons of Advent and Christmas. For instance, preachers and authors in the ancient church sought language adequate to express the mystery of God's birth as a human baby. In one sense the creeds of our faith tes-

tify to their struggle to relate this mystery in words. Writings from this time sometimes describe Christ's work as the mission of God's Son in the world, or God sending the Son to humankind. There is biblical warrant for thinking in these terms. In Luke, Jesus describes his purpose using the language of searching: "For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost" (19:10). Think also of the lost coin, the lost sheep and the spendthrift son in Luke 15. In the incarnation, God is searching for us.

Western authors also think in terms of humans searching for God, and finding God in the nativity. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 – 1153) authored a moving prayer for Christmas, which concludes, "You have come to us as a small child, but you have brought us the greatest of all gifts, the gift of eternal love. Caress us with your tiny hands, embrace us with your tiny arms and pierce our hearts with your soft, sweet cries."

Bernard expresses a desire characteristic of medieval Christian mystics for an encounter with God that is personal and tangible. Roughly two centuries later, the German mystic, Meister Eckhart (c. 1260 – c. 1329), reflected upon the

mystical union of the soul with God. In his German Sermon 6, Eckhart declared: "the Father gives his Son birth in the soul in the same way as he gives him birth in eternity." In other words, searching for Christ might turn the searcher inward to the life of prayer.

Closer to our own time, Evelyn Underhill (1875 – 1941), the British mystic and scholar, put her own stamp on the inner search for the newborn Christ. In her little book, *The Light of Christ*, she wrote that "human nature is like a stable, inhabited by the ox of passion and the ass of prejudice; animals which take up a lot of room, and which I suppose that most of us are feeding on the quiet. It is there, between them, pushing them out of the way, that the Divine Child is to be born, and in their very manger He will be laid."

In the spirit of the Magi, as we search for the God who comes to us as a baby, may you and our readers have grace to encounter God anew at Christmas.

The Reverend Bahman Kalantari is the Rector of St. John's, Burlington. pupak96@yahoo.ca. The Reverend Derek Anderson is the Rector of St. Matthew's, Burlington. derek.anderson@stmatthewburlington.ca

Concerts will get you ready for Christmas

Two concerts during Advent at St. John's Church, Ancaster should help people prepare for their Christmas celebrations.

On Friday, December 9, 2011 at 7:30 pm, Ensemble Lyrica, a newly-formed group of singers from the greater Hamilton area brought together by their interest in and love of fine choral music, will present their inaugural concert, *Be We Merry!*. Admission is by free-will donation, of which a portion will be donated to a local charity.

Directed by Brent Fifield, the concert will feature Christmas music by Palestrina, Sweelinck, Mendelssohn, Howells, Byrd, Holst and Gabrieli.

Fifield, a graduate of Western Ontario and Toronto Universities, has been the organist and choir director of churches in his native Newfoundland, as well as Ontario and Nova

Scotia. He has taught music at the elementary, high school and post-secondary levels, and is a freelance performer, teacher, accompanist, examiner, and choral clinician. From 2001 to 2010 he was Organist and Director of Music at Christ's Church Cathedral, Hamilton, and since then serves in a similar capacity at Trinity Anglican Church, Cambridge. He also conducts the Pro Musica Choir of Burlington, and sings baritone with the Exultate Chamber Singers in Toronto.

Five days earlier, on Sunday, December 4, at 3:00 pm, St. John's will welcome Angus Sinclair to The Great Hall for an afternoon of by-request Christmas music, with a sing-along, holiday treats to munch on and a decorated Christmas Tree silent auction. Admission \$20.00.

Sinclair, a versatile and gifted musician, arranger and composer, is at home with many musical genres, and plays many instruments ranging from the grand piano and digital keyboard to the pipe organ. A graduate of Wilfrid Laurier University and an Associate of the Royal Canadian College of Organists, he is chair of the Diocese of Huron Organ Committee. Although he performs around the world, he is probably best known as the "Fourth Cantor," the accompanist to "The Three Cantors" www.3cantors.com, who have presented over 160 concerts in aid of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund.

More information is available at www.ancasteranglican.org.

Angus Sinclair



Brent Fifield



**Meets 2nd Thursday
of every month**

King's Christian College
Burnhamthorpe and
Neyagawa Roads
Oakville, Ontario 7:30 pm

*In Essentials, Unity; In Non-Essentials, Liberty;
In All Things, Charity*

EVERYONE WELCOME

Looking for a New Year's Resolution?

Look no further

If you are looking for a New Year's Resolution for 2012, then the Reverend Susan Johnson, National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, has a fantastic one for you. In fact, she has seven suggestions that could improve your life tremendously.

Speaking at the 2011 Niagara Bishop's Company dinner, she asked participants to give up, what she called "Christianity Lite.", that is our giving in to "the demands of our consumer culture", and concentrate on our spiritual renewal by applying our faith to 7 areas – "pray, read, worship, study, serve, give, tell". Even though she thinks that

"that many people in the church have forgotten or have never learned how to pray", she told the 250 people at the dinner to follow Jesus' example to pray daily, and accept Paul's invitation to "pray without ceasing".

"Many people in our church", she continued, "confine their experience of scripture to what they hear on Sunday morning." Her solution is to read the Bible regularly, so that like Jesus we can know the Gospel well and "speak about it and teach from it".

Over the last 4 decades worship patterns have changed, said Bishop Johnson, and more people are seeing Sunday worship as an "optional activity".

However, her third proposal for spiritual renewal encourages people to attend Sunday worship more frequently.

Study is important, claimed the Bishop. By continuing to study and learn about our faith we may find the answers to life's "new challenges, new questions, new situations where we need a deeper faith understanding in order to function", she suggested.

Bishop Johnson, who lives in Winnipeg, recommended that "many of us need to hear again, in our hearts as well as our ears, Jesus' call to follow him into service with those who are in need". She suggested that people get involved in "hands on ministry" in serving others, as well as providing funds and facilities for professionals to get the work done.

Today in the church it is easier to talk about sex than money, and when Jesus spoke about money, we think it does not apply to us, advised Bishop Johnson, but we must give generously to support the work of the church and also transmit this attitude of generosity to others.

She concluded her 7 areas of spiritual renewal suggesting that we tell the story, by being "prepared to share the story with those whom God puts in our paths".



Bishop Susan Johnson shares a moment with the Reverend Suzanne Craven and Jane Wyse

Bishop Johnson told her audience that spiritual renewal is not for the faint of heart, and like New Year's resolutions, we may continue to keep them or fall off the wagon, but we should "take heart" because help is available at www.elcic.ca. Her Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada has prepared various ideas and programs for individuals and congregations; just go to the website, she suggested, look for Call to Spiritual Renewal in the dropdown menu titled What We Do.

She ended her remarks by urging the members and guests of the Bishop's Company to "Listen! Jesus is calling! Let us joyfully

follow!!!".

The Bishop's Company, established in January 1951 by Bishop Walter Bagnall, is a discretionary fund to assist clergy, licensed layworkers and their families through times of crisis and turmoil, as well as to provide for medical and dental needs, counselling, education and other extraordinary expenses. In addition to the Annual Dinner, the Bishop's Company is also supported by a yearly Curling Bonspiel and Golf Tournament.

For more information please contact Karen Nowicki, Bishop's Company Registrar at karen.nowicki@niagara.anglican.ca or 905-527-1316 ext. 380.



Savouring the moment

Estelle Baxter, Chub Baxter and Wilma Lazenby from St. John's Church Winona enjoyed the Bishop's Company annual dinner.

Gifts that keep on giving

JOANNE MCINTOSH

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Church of the Ascension and the Church of the Nativity for their ongoing support of the students at Queen Victoria Elementary School.

As the principal of this wonderful school I am indebted to so many parishioners for your ongoing support of our children and community. We are a high needs inner city multi cultural school. Students face the challenges of poverty daily. *You help them to overcome these challenges through your generosity.* Over the years, you have supported us in so many ways – funds for various programs such as the Achievement Breakfast Program (ABC), Art Club, library sup-

port, gently used books, school supplies, memory sticks, graduation clothing and accessories, underwear for our youngest, mitts, hats, slippers, hygiene products, funds, etc.

I have served as principal of several very high needs inner city schools. No matter what I have mentioned that our students need to be successful at school, you have always been there for us and then some. As an educator, I am passionate about providing the best learning environment possible for our students and you are constantly feeding my enthusiasm and supporting me in these endeavors.

To those of you who have committed to volunteering in the school on a regular basis you know the difference you make

in supporting a staff member to provide a service for a group of students or a child who needs that personal attention to be successful. Please consider volunteering some of your time to support preparation of a snack program or a youngster in their acquisition of literacy skills. There are so many ways in which educators can use your help. Volunteers have commented on how much they get back from our students when they become involved in their lives.

Our vision is now reality and we continue to appreciate our partners and celebrate our successes as a learning community. *Joanne McIntosh is Principal of Queen Victoria Elementary School, Hamilton.*
joannemcintosh@sympatico.ca



What Christmas means to me: Family

SUSAN CRAWFORD

Manger scenes from dolls to human form!

The meaning of Christmas to me is quite simply wrapped up in one word – Family! Throughout my entire life I have been fortunate to have been surrounded by family at Christmas. These gatherings may not always have been the traditional image of the family unit – father, mother, husband, wife, brothers and sisters, children; but to me those gathered to celebrate the birth of the Christ were family!

Always a part of these family celebrations was the nativity scene. When I was younger,

manger scenes were created from my collection of dolls. Later commercial nativity scenes were at the centre of the household decorations: the Wise Men very carefully spaced a distance away until Epiphany.

The best Christmases were celebrated when my girls were younger with our extended family – the Campbells. Sometimes as many as 14 people crowded around our table. But time marches on. A personal lifestyle change occurred; the children grew into adults, formed their own relationships and eventually had their own families.

Today I celebrate the real meaning of Christmas with a

different family – the family of St. Michael. At the early service on Christmas Eve we celebrate the birth of Jesus with family and friends watching the children recreate the Christmas Eve gospel. The nativity scene, so important in my Christmas, is now a live performance. The doll in the manger is replaced by a human form. We are truly blessed at St. Michael's where great talent and leaders prepare the children for this meaningful performance.

... and my immediate family? They may not celebrate the birth of Christ at church but my two daughters and their family always ensure they invite me to a



Children at St Michael's modern nativity scene

festive dinner early on Christmas Eve or later on Christmas Day, thus giving me the joy of sharing Christmas with my grandchildren.

*Susan Crawford is Editor of the parish newsletter – St. Michael's, Hamilton.
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Tool Lending Library: Making a Difference

SUE-ANN WARD

Several years ago, I purchased a caulking gun to seal some joints in the pillars holding up our front porch roof. After much time trying to do the job, neatly and completely, I sat back and admired my work. I felt something that I have rarely felt before in my life... handy. As much fun as it was to undertake this small task on a sunny fall afternoon, I wasn't planning to put the caulking gun to use anytime soon. So its fate became like other tools that have entered my home... a dusty existence on a shelf in my basement.

During my ministry at Christ's Church Cathedral, I saw the need for a tool lending library. The Cathedral, a big old Gothic-style church, is in constant state of refurbishment. Consequently, the property manager's office and the crypt are replete with all sorts of tools. Many are lent out to our neighbours to fix their home.

While the Cathedral never had a problem sharing them, it was not an ideal situation. Sometimes tools could not be loaned because they were being used; sometimes we haven't known if we had a tool that was requested; and sometimes tools were loaned out and never returned. We believed that a tool lending program was needed, but we did not have the folks or resources required to

make one a reality.

Last summer this situation changed. Niagara Diocese hosted a social justice conference called "Justice Camp". Christians, from across Canada and abroad, gathered in Hamilton to learn how to right the many injustices in our world. Participants engaged in immersion experiences, and my group spent one day in Kitchener visiting a not-for-profit organization called "The Working Centre". One of their many projects is "Community Tools". Because I knew there was a need for something similar in Hamilton, I paid attention and asked a lot of questions, so that if there was interest in the Jamesville neighbourhood, I would know how to develop and launch a similar project.

At the next Jamesville Community Planning Team meeting, a monthly gathering of people who want to make their neighbourhood a better place to live, work, and raise children, I described the Community Tools program. I asked if we needed a simi-

lar program in Jamesville and whether there was interest in working together to develop one. There was much enthusiasm for the project, and several people, residents and agency staff, stepped forward. The primary drivers of the project were Julia Kollek of Environment Hamilton and Lorna Shaw of HARRRP.

A small storage room in HARRRP's Jamesville Community Centre (JVC) was cleaned out and had shelving installed by neighbourhood volunteers. Tools, like my dusty little-used caulking gun, were collected, cleaned, catalogued and organised on shelves and in the bins in the new HARRRP Tool Lending Library. Sign out agreements were developed, and a computer database was created that would allow staff and volunteers to know what tools were available and where they were located, so that inquiries could be responded to efficiently. Posters and email invitations were produced and guests were invited to the grand opening held

September 30. The project was pulled together on a shoestring budget.

Those who contributed to this new Hamilton resource believe that it will have three main benefits.

Firstly, the sharing of tools will help us be good to our environment. When people share material resources, fewer items need to be manufactured, which means less garbage going into landfills. Less manufacturing means smaller amounts of waste materials from the manufacturing processes. Fewer items requiring transportation from source to manufacturing sites, retailers and consumers, mean less environmental damage from truck and airplane fuel emissions.

Secondly, the sharing of tools will have a positive economic benefit for those participating. The tools are lent out free of charge. When people have access to tools at no cost, the money that would have been spent on their purchase can be allocated to other areas of the household budget, e.g. rent, food, tuition, healthcare and recreation. It improves quality of life, and means more living and less storage space in our homes.

Thirdly, tool sharing can have a positive social impact on our neighbourhoods. People need to visit the JVC to sign out

their tools. When visiting the centre, people will meet their neighbours, get to know the staff and volunteers, and learn about other programs in which they may participate. People borrowing tools may choose to share "how to" knowledge or work on projects together. As I write this article on Thanksgiving Monday, my husband Jeff, my son Zachary, and our neighbour Basal are building a new gate for our backyard. They are talking, laughing, teasing, and getting to know each other better. As other neighbours walk by, they stop to chat. Miguel, who lives across the street, even offered to help. He said he would come back later in the day to undertake the necessary task of "inspecting" the completed gate. There is a job for everyone!

Please dust off and donate those tools that are sitting in your basement, garage or shed, and bring them to HARRRP's Jamesville Community Centre, 209 MacNab Street North, Hamilton. If transportation is needed, a volunteer will pick them up. And, for the reasons mentioned above, please use the Tool Lending Library. For information, contact Lorna Shaw at 905 525-3069 or jamesvillecc@gmail.com.

*The Reverend Sue-Ann Ward is Co-Rector of Grace Parish, Waterdown and St. Luke's Palermo Parish, Oakville and Executive Director of HARRRP.
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Jesus: his Matrix is his Message

WAYNE FRASER &
ELEANOR JOHNSTON

On the weekend in mid-October when the Occupy Wall Street movement appeared in cities in Canada and around the world, a Biblical scholar explicated the timeless message of God's will, as taught by Jesus, Paul and the Old Testament prophets, for distributive justice for all peoples.

His key phrase, distributive justice, refers to a peaceful, democratic community with an economy characterized by a just distribution of the essentials of life, as opposed to the injustice that characterizes a military dictatorship claiming to bring peace through victory.

John Dominic Crossan's three lectures marked the 20th anniversary of the St. Mark's lecture series that has brought to that historic church so many leading edge theologians rearticulating the western Christian tradition for thoughtful and idealistic believers. The Reverend Rob Wright and his assistants provide a unique and valuable ministry to the Niagara Region.

Crossan, an Irish monk become a leading American biblical scholar, summarized

the ideas of his book, *The Greatest Prayer: Rediscovering the Revolutionary Message of The Lord's Prayer*. The necessary revolution in our age, as in Jesus' time, is to create God's kingdom of distributive justice in our earthly societies. This is also the primary message of the Bible. From its Old Testament history, praise and rules to Jesus' parables and Paul's instructions to the new churches, the overall plea of the book is: "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven."

Crossan's upcoming book, *The Power of Parable: How Fiction by Jesus Became Fiction* about Jesus, explains how Jesus' way of teaching was to use images in the form of metaphors and stories in the form of parables. Both metaphors and parables tease listeners out of their ordinary, rational understanding into a creative, intuitive state in which they become, hopefully, ready to meet God. Incarnation is here and now.

A metaphor, for example, "You are a rose," is illogical but clear, with a poet's freedom of expression and a child's delight in incongruity. A parable is an extended metaphor, designed to

surprise and engage you, to lead you to wisdom beyond expected social restrictions. Even the phrase "The Good Samaritan" was a contradiction in terms to Jesus' tribe. Yet little in his teaching is simple. Rather, Jesus upset conventional wisdom not only to teach the way of freedom from the powers of Rome and the temple authorities, but also to make his followers think, wonder and experience God for themselves.

Crossan took the literary form of parable to another level of complexity when he described the gospels as well as many Old Testament books (eg, those of Ruth, Jonah and Job) as parables. Luke told his understanding of what Jesus meant and who he was by telling the gospel as a parable. Then Mark retold it, then Matthew and John, each in turn revising some aspects of it and repeating others, expressing their points of view, their matrix.

Crossan emphasized the concept of matrix as the milieu of a person's time and place. Jesus's ministry incarnated God's healing and teaching power in an historical context ripe for his message. Shortly before, his people had been in exile, and not

long after the Romans destroyed the temple and the religious and tribal structures of the Jews.

In answering questions from the audience, Crossan demonstrated the amazing depth and breadth of his biblical and theological knowledge. One or two questioners used a rudely dismissive tone that Crossan answered by drawing on his immense knowledge of the Bible and Christian history. Most of the audience seemed to enjoy being in the presence of a speaker who cares and knows so much about the languages and theologies of the Old and New Testament peoples as well as of other world religions through the ages. And we felt a sense of awe listening to a person who has devoted his life, so humbly and so brilliantly, to articulating the will of God.

If you want to explore Crossan's theology, his books are easily available: just drop a hint for the perfect Christmas present. As well, you may want to explore, as a Bible Study course, various seminars available for church groups. "Living the Questions" features a variety of progressive American preachers and is a liberating series for parishes oppressed by literalism.

Crossan is excited by the cutting edge technology used in the production of his most recent clip that provides video accompaniment to promote his books.



Canon Robert Wright, St. Mark's Niagara-on-the-Lake, guest speaker John Dominic Crossan and Bishop Michael Bird share a moment at the Lecture Series.

For an 8-minute preview, google youtube and "John Dominic Crossan presents the Challenge of Jesus." That may lead you to a study of modern theologians that in turn may lead you to a better understanding of your faith and to a more confident articulation of the issues seeking to be expressed in the streets of the world's cities today.

When asked why the church is not helping the protesters articulate their message, Crossan said that we are called to do just that. As the churches of the UK and the USA led the marches against slavery and racism, our prayer is "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven." Christians are shareholders in the earth's and the public's business, and should speak out for justice for all.


Eleanor Johnston and Wayne Fraser can be reached at eleanorjohnston@gmail.com

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Three Ministries and Two Ministers

Wife and husband ministers, the Reverend Sue-Ann Ward and the Reverend Jeff Ward, have begun a new ministry combining the parishes of St. Luke's Oakville and Grace Waterdown, and the HARRRP ministries. In a press release, the Wards said that, "bringing these three ministry entities together will provide a breadth and depth of resources that will enable a more impactful and innovative ministry."

"The faithful and courageous Christians of these faith communities have supported our Bishop's call to take up a new more collaborative form of ministry aligned with the diocesan vision," they added.

The vision calls for ministries that are collaborative, inclusive,

innovative, generous, and contextually appropriate, in serving the needs, spiritual and others, of the community. In addition, in a faster smaller world, fired by rapid social and technological changes, the Church must respond with fresh expressions to deliver the Gospel message more effectively.

"We have begun sharing an office at Grace," explained the Co-Rectors, and they are working to develop a vision and a plan for the shared ministry.

"It is a great privilege and an awesome opportunity for us," said the Wards in reiterating their gratitude to all for accepting the new ministry in Niagara Diocese.

Thinking about Christmas

JIM NEWMAN

Thoughts of Christmas as a young child evoke bittersweet memories of life on a farm. Money was tight, but we were warmed by a wood stove, well fed from the larder and loved by family, friends and generous neighbours. There were always some gifts under the tree. And what a tree! It wasn't a carefully manicured, imported from Nova Scotia tree; or the wire and

plastic variety – the type often required by today's fire codes. This was a rough cut cedar culled from the edge of the orchard by my father. It was tall, too thin, and not very green, but that didn't matter. We fastened it upright with some string and a homemade stand, and the aroma of fresh cedar filled the house. Then we embellished it with a single string of lights, some ribbons and hand tied bows, a few simple glass ornaments,

and a hand coloured cardboard star. I thought it was the best Christmas tree ever.

That is, until I saw our neighbour's tree. It was perfect. It was wide and perfectly proportioned and how could there be so many lights? The ornaments were lavish and plentiful, and the drape of the white beads was unflawed. Their tree was topped with a tiny perfect angel, and surrounded with perfectly wrapped gifts. It formed a scene directly out of

Eaton's Christmas catalogue. I think it was my first brush with envy, and maybe a little resentment.

But now as Christmas approaches yet again, I recall the scene much differently. I know that when decorated, our own Christmas tree will resemble that neighbour's tree. Our tree is made of plastic and wire, and it's stored in a box - not because of the fire code, but because of a relative's allergy to conifers. I



know it will be exquisite, but it won't be perfect. I'm reserving that description for the tree from my childhood – rough cut, held up by string and topped with a hand coloured star.

Jim Newman is the Stewardship Consultant for Niagara Diocese. jim.newman@niagara.anglican.ca

Hands reaching inward and outward

DEREK ANDERSON

Long-time readers of this newspaper will be familiar with the Anglican Appeal. Supporting the ministry of the National Church within Canada and around the world, the Anglican Appeal was replaced this year in our diocese with a new and revitalized program: Hands Across Niagara.

There is good news for us with this change. Hands Across

Niagara includes a new focus on providing resources for ministry in our parishes. One third of each gift to Hands Across Niagara goes directly to the donor's parish, where it can be used to support justice and servant ministries. Another third will be held by the Diocese and will be available to parishes who apply for grants to fund partnerships with community organizations. Eligible projects will focus on vulnerable children and

youth, secure access to nourishing food, affordable housing, and ecojustice. The final third of each gift supports ministries of the National Church previously funded by the Anglican Appeal.

I think the focus on nurturing partnerships between parishes and helping agencies in our communities will be fruitful. Such partnerships already exist. At our recent Diocesan Synod, delegates heard stories from churches where food cupboards are mak-

ing a difference in people's lives, while also breathing life into their parish's identity as a source of compassion and hope within their neighbourhoods. These parishes, and others, will be able to apply for Hands Across Niagara grants to support their work in partnership with these feeding programs.

Here's what this means for you. The Anglican Appeal will no longer seek donations from members of our Diocese. Donors

who presently give to the Appeal through a pre-authorized, automated transfer will need to authorize a change in their donation if they wish their gifts to go to Hands Across Niagara.

The Rev. Derek Anderson is Chair of Hands Across Niagara and Rector of St. Matthew on-the-Plains Church, Burlington. derek.anderson@stmatthewburlington.ca

Beatle "McCartney" visits parish



The Beatles' Song "all you need is love" highlights a quilt made by Debbie Cockburn (right) for the Paul McCartney evening. Susan Rhodes and Beverley Nelligan smile their approval.

Paul McCartney sang for 150 people at St. Stephens On The Mount Church in Hamilton. Actually impersonator Yuri Pool entertained by singing many of the songs McCartney had written, and were made famous by the Beatles. The evening also included a meal, dancing and other activities.

The church has sponsored similar fund raising events, including an Elvis Presley night.

Church member Beverley Nelligan said the event was very successful and it shows that "Anglicans do have fun."

A monthly luncheon, open to the general public, attracts approximately 140 people on a regular basis. "We now charge a dollar," commented Nelligan, and added, "when it was free, nobody came."

Nelligan hopes that the Niagara Anglican can be the place where churches share information about what they are doing. "It makes for great reading," she concluded.



Glorious local organic food

Following their regular morning worship on Sunday, October 23, 2011, thirty parishioners from All Saints Church, Erin, shared a potluck luncheon featuring local organic foods, sourced from within 100 kilometres.

"It may have been a first for all of the churches in the Town of Erin," said correspondent Liz Armstrong, "and All Saints Anglican sure hopes it will be repeated many times over!"

Who's In and Who's Out

Something to Think About at Christmas Time

MICHAEL BURSLEM

Without having read a word of John Calvin I'm at heart a true Calvinist. I believe in TULIP (the five points of Calvinism) and all that, although, to be honest, I don't remember what the letters of the mnemonic stand for, except the L is Limited Atonement. I too believe that only a few are, or will be, saved. That few, however, is every soul who has ever lived, is living or will live, on this planet. All the rest of 'humanity' will go to eternal damnation. They would be, I say facetiously, E.T. and other intruders from our universe or other parallel universes. There are many more of them than there is of us.

On retirement, my wife and I took a course in basic astronomy at the University of Guelph in preparation for the commemoration of Frank Drake's 70th birthday. He's the husband of my wife's niece and we were invited to attend the special commemoration at Harvard. This would include several lectures from top notch world astronomers interested in S.E.T.I. (the Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence), Frank's dream and life's work. Such an invitation we couldn't turn down. We didn't want it all to go over our heads, so we took Astronomy 101.

Shortly after that we had a visit from Eric Zaslow, a cousin of mine by marriage. He's on the maths faculty of Northwestern University, and a string theorist. In our kitchen he tried to explain the intricacies of String Theory, and finally gave up, saying, "I

can't make it any simpler than that." From discussion of parallel universes he was called to a more mundane matter, his infant son's dirty diaper.

Eric introduced us to the Perimeter Institute in Waterloo and since then we have been mind boggled by lectures and displays that have expanded our knowledge of God's universe, or universes. However, if there are any extraterrestrial intelligences in parallel universes, I believe

don't meet our narrow definition of a Christian. We put up "For Christians Only" signs on the lawns of heaven and believe there are special perks and privileges for Christians only.

But, just as my mind expanded in conceiving the size and nature of the universe, so did it expand in perceiving the love of God. It changed my whole theology by 180 degrees. Some friends have commented on it. (Others have called me an apostate.)

Just as my mind expanded in conceiving the size and nature of the universe, so did it expand in perceiving the love of God

they're not included in our 'limited atonement.'

Our rector, the Reverend Ralph Blackman, however, would disagree. He frequently asks the question, "Is anyone outside the sphere of God's love?" He answers his question negatively and adds that even E.T. would be included.

All this, he said, raises further questions, "Who's in?" and "Who's out?" If Christ's atonement is for all creatures on terrestrial earth, and maybe beyond, that would include many whom we tend to shun—atheists, gays and lesbians—not to mention those of other faiths, like Muslims. This is really a hot topic these days, when there's so much fear around; homophobia and Islamophobia. Both are of xenophobic. There are those who would exclude all who

But God's love is far, far greater than anything I had ever conceived before. It's so great that it includes those who don't ever love Him back.

Ralph does speak, however, of the need for metanoia, or change of heart leading to change in direction. For example, two people engaged in an altercation and one was seriously injured. The attacker was sentenced to a short prison term. I can't help thinking that if he didn't have a metanoia experience in jail, thus coming to know God's love for even him, when he's released he'd have difficulty living with himself, his neighbours and with God. That, to me, would be a far worse hell than anyone could face after this life.

There's also the need to forgive on the part of the victim, though he may need more than human



love to do it. But if there's both metanoia and forgiveness, hell would give place to heaven. This is what we pray for when we repeat in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Hell and heaven are both present realities. God wills that no one should perish in any present hell, which we may avoid by putting our whole trust in Him. (John 3:16)

Exclusion of others, even those we find unlovable, is tantamount to saying that God doesn't love them either. We exclude them first, then, to justify ourselves, we say God doesn't love them; therefore they should be excluded. We throw the Bible at them to prove it. I have written earlier that one reason our churches are more empty than full is that we interpret Scripture too literally. Perhaps exclusion of others is another reason. Who of the younger generations will ever take us seriously if all we do is argue about who's "in" and who's "out."

Let's celebrate this Christmas by acknowledging that there is indeed, as the angels sang, "good news for all people;" that's everybody. At Christmas, churches are always full. Everyone is inclusive then. Let's continue being so after Boxing Day no matter what Calvin said.

Michael Burslem is a member of St. George's Parish, Guelph. m.burslem@sympatico.ca

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www.niagara.anglican.ca

People

CONDOLENCES

Deepest sympathy is sent to **Tish Jones**, Archdeacon **Rick Jones**, and family, on the sudden passing of Tish's mother, **Elizabeth Gaydon**, on October 22. Funeral service was held at St. Luke's, Brantford.

CONGRATULATIONS

Forty-one lay people were inducted into the **Order of Niagara** at a special afternoon service held in the Cathedral, Hamilton. Of those, 34 were

nominated by their respective parishes and 7 chosen by the Bishop. The Order was established to honour lay ministry in Niagara Diocese. Each parish can nominate one member of the laity each year, and the Bishop also makes appointments annually.

BISHOP'S APPOINTMENTS

The Reverend **Kevin Bothwell** resigned his ministry at St. James the Apostle Parish in Guelph to become the Rector of St. Thomas,

St. Catharines.

The Reverend **Cheryl Fricker** transferred from St. Aidan's, Oakville, to become the Vicar of St. Luke's Church, Burlington.

The Reverend **Trevor Jones** is the Interim Pastor at St. Aidan's, Oakville.

The Very Reverend **James Merrett**, retired Rector of St. Paul's Cathedral, Regina, and Dean of the Diocese of Qu'Appelle has been appointed the Interim Pastor of St. Jude's, Oakville.

The Reverend **Rene Desjardins** concluded her ministry as honorary assistant at St. James the Apostle, Guelph, and becomes an honorary assistant at St. David and St. Patrick's Church, Guelph.

The Reverend Canon **Susan Wells'** mandate has concluded at St. George's, Lowville, and the Rev. **Nigel Bunce** continues his ministry there.

Carol Summers is the new Lay Director, and the Reverend **Stephanie Pellow** the new

Spiritual Director of Cursillo Niagara.

John Douglas Lennerton, St. Luke's Church, Hamilton, and **Marjorie June Latimer**, St. Luke's, Burlington, were appointed as Licensed Layreaders for their respective parishes.

Permission to administer the chalice was given to **Howie Micks** and **George Williams**, at St. Luke's Parish, Burlington.

HOLLISTorial

A Perfect Christmas Eve

The moon skipped across the waves in the harbour of Canada's most easterly city.

Snowflakes, dancing in the streetlights, descended to transform the brown earth into a glistening white.

Over 1000 people cheerfully filed into the old wooden church which had survived two great city fires and countless devastating wind storms.

St. Thomas' Church, St. John's, Newfoundland was in readiness to celebrate its 147 Christmas.

As Rector, I exceed a 20 minute carol sing-a-long where people requested their favourites and warmed up to worship.

The choir, in full procession, led the congregational singing with a rousing "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

The deacon, after explaining the message of the Christ Candle as changing "darkness into light," lit the candle and paused for us to savour the special moment.

She blew out the taper, and, at that second, all the lights in the Church went out as well!

We were in shock and disbelief. What a time to lose the hydro!

After a minute of "in the dark

contemplation," I signalled to the organist who felt his way to the piano, as I went to the podium.

I said, "the lights will come back in a moment; meanwhile, let's sing some well known carols."

We sang the first verse (or maybe the first line) of our well known carols. Ten minutes (or an eternity) later, I suggested, "since we came for our Christmas worship, let's begin. If you don't know the responses make them up."

I cautioned people not to use matches or lighters in our nearly 150 year old wooden building, and said encouragingly that the churchwardens were attempting to bring hydro power from an adjoining source, so the lights would come on shortly.

The glow from the street lights shining through the stained glass windows illuminated the Church's interior and created a magical setting.

People, adapting quickly to the unexpected ambience, followed the familiar Gospel version of the Birth of Jesus Christ (read in semi darkness) and concentrated intensely on the Associate Priest's Christmas message

(about peace and hope for a troubled world), his first experience at delivering a sermon without a written script or detailed notes. Following the worship, people, some joking and others serious, told him, "best sermon you have ever preached," and "maybe we should turn out the lights every Sunday."

When the lights were restored midway through the service and the church became brighter than a sunny summer afternoon, people asked if we could dim the lights for the rest of the service. We did.

After the service, as individuals, couples and families headed in all directions to continue their Christmas festivities, they realized that they had experienced a unique happening, which would be recalled many times in the annals of future Christmases at the church affectionately known as "the Old Garrison Church."

A week later, one woman admitted that she was troubled when she came to St. Thomas' on Christmas Eve. She was torn between being in her home church or going with her parents to their church. When the lights went out, she interpreted it as a

sign from God, so she left and went to worship with her aging mother and father. I responded that maybe next time God could send a more subtle message to her. We both laughed, knowing that God does work in mysterious ways.

Years later, I am clinging to a bouncing camel, riding up Mount Sinai to await the coming dawn, as Moses had done centuries earlier. Here the moon reflected off rocks, not water, and the snow rarely puts in an appearance to cover the land many call "Holy."

My camel preferred to walk centimetres away from the sheer edge of the 100 metre crag. As I leaned away from the calamitous cliff, the guide ordered me, "sit up straight, you'll scare the camel." I was the one scared and wished that we had safety harnesses or at least rails. Then it occurred to me that these creatures had walked this walk a thousand times without incident, so I should relax, enjoy the ride and view the scenery in twilight.

As I looked up and down the mountain, a hundred camels, carrying their precious gifts to "God's mountain," were silhou-

etted against the backdrop where God had delivered the Ten Commandments, the foundation stones upon which God's society would be erected. It reminded me of Christmas cards, where the wise men or astrologers clung to their bouncing camels searching for the light of a special star. Their journey would end in a stable in the small village of Bethlehem, where they would bring gifts to the newly born saviour, who would change the course of human lives and history.

I bring these two memories together to remind us that even though Christmas may be remembered and celebrated in a myriad of locations, traditions and circumstances, its message of "Glory to God in the highest, and, on earth, peace and good will to all people" is as relevant and important today in people's lives as anytime in the past or future.

Merry Christmas from all of us associated with the *Niagara Anglican*.

Christmas In Baker Lake

Editor's note: The Reverend Alan and Elizabeth Whitton, came to Canada in 1963, and served for nearly nine years in St. Aiden's Mission in the Diocese of the Arctic. When they moved to Stoney Creek, Ontario, Alan started a parish magazine and Elizabeth wrote a series of articles about what it was like in the north. Here are excerpts from her Christmas memories.

The real Christmas tree, the first and only one of our time in the north, was smelled, stroked and exclaimed over, then set in a small hole chiselled in the church ice-porch and frozen in with a cup of water. The children decorated it with silver cardboard stars and it stayed with us until June.

Christmas really began with a carol service in the community hall on the Sunday afternoon before Christmas Day. The lessons and carols, read and sung in Inuit and English languages, brought all who shared life in

that small isolated settlement very close together. Between three and 500 voices sharing the same story was a moving experience, though getting a church organ, lectern and boxes of English books from the Mission House over a mile of snow banks in a sled-box behind a skidoo, was a moving experience of a different kind.

One year some very enthusiastic singers decided to go carol singing around the settlement before the midnight service on Christmas Eve. After putting two small children to bed I went outside to see if I could hear or see the carollers, but they were too far off. On this calm -42° Fahrenheit degree night I stood and watched the most spectacular display of northern lights ever seen in Baker Lake. It was truly a night to remember, the whole sky rippling with curtains of greeny light, shot here and there with pink and flowing out

to the horizon. It was so bright that I was sure they must be reading carol sheets.

On Christmas Eve the church



"I stood and watched the most spectacular display of northern lights ever seen in Baker Lake."

was decorated. Silver coloured cardboard stars with clusters of shiny glass baubles at their centres were hung, one in each window. In the Sanctuary stood our nativity created by the youth group.

The stable was a white semi-circular dome, an igloo. Mary and Joseph wore traditional eskimo clothing, the shepherds were hunters arriving with dog team and sled, bringing gifts of fish and furs to the Holy Family; a unique expression of the youngsters taking the Christmas story and making it theirs.

Christmas Day was a long day, celebrated with joy and exuberance by the Inuit community as a community. The white people celebrated as families in their own homes, and for us, our part was to make sure that the strangers also found room in the inn.

ELIZABETH WHITTON
Ridgeway

Next Month in the Niagara Anglican...

What happened at Synod 2011

- The Bishop's charge
- Introducing JUSTFood: the food security campaign
- Vision for our Diocese

Christmas greetings from our Bishop

DEAR FRIENDS:

Susan and I live close to Lake Ontario and one of the amazing things that we see and hear overhead each year are the flocks of Canadian Geese preparing, in the fall of the year, for their migration to a warmer climate. In the case of many of these birds, something triggers an instinct, an urging buried deep within them, to journey to another place. Soon the air is filled with the sound of their calls and those magnificent V-formations begin to take shape as they answer that longing.

I believe that the Advent and Christmas seasons touch a longing deep within us to journey to another place . . . to answer a call that is buried in the very fiber of our being. For many of us that place is Bethlehem and we are transported there by the carols we sing, the Christmas cards we receive, the manger scenes we gaze upon and the precious

scripture passages that speak of the Holy Family, the shepherds, the appearance of the heavenly host and the magi who followed a star.

At Christmas we also read from the first chapter of John's gospel and here we are presented with very different images that touch our longings and our searching in a different way. John talks about a light breaking through into the darkness. It is a light that brings comfort and peace and a new sense of hope that reaches out and embraces a truth beyond what we see and experience as real in the lives we lead. "But to all who receive him, who believe in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12-13)

As we come to celebrate this Christmas season together across the Diocese of Niagara many of us are experiencing a long-

ing to journey to another place. Gatherings and protests that are common across North America and in the Arab world these days are pointing to the fact that the things that we have so willingly placed our trust in—financial, political and technological solutions—have proven not to be the source of truth and light that we seek.

I encourage you, this year, to respond fully and wholeheartedly to that longing deep within. St. John tells us that the Word, the light, the power, the hope and the truth live among us and within us, in this beautiful and compelling passage: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) It is this grace and this truth that we place our trust in and that we joyfully acknowledge as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ in services of worship across our diocese.



Susan and I wish you and yours a blessed Christmas and a very happy New Year,

Bishop Michael

We make a *living* by what we get . . .
but we make a *life* by what we give

— WINSTON CHURCHILL

Have you ever wondered how easy it can be to make a difference? Or how you may support your community? Maybe you want to support those around you who are the most vulnerable, or you may want to simply be remembered. Everyone wants to *do* or *give* more, but just don't know how easy it is to achieve.

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