



Niagara Anglican

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NEWS • PERSPECTIVE • REFLECTION • FOR A GROWING CHURCH • FEBRUARY 2011



■ 125 QUILTS OF VALOUR are made and donated to our wounded soldiers. A ceremony of blessing took place at St. John's in Winona. Read more on PAGE 4

No heat in the church

GRAHAME STAP
RECTOR, ST SIMON TEMAGAMI

Ina and I arrived at the little church in Temagami at about six thirty on Christmas Eve to get ready for our seven o'clock service. As we entered the church I knew something was wrong; no lights and very cold. The lights were an easy fix; just flick the switch and our darkness became light. Heat, however, was another problem.

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Moving into the neighbourhood

EILEEN HENDERSON
MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE ONTARIO

For many, the month of December is difficult! Not the usual kind of difficult, too many things to do, not enough time, but difficult in a deeper more painful kind of way. Memories of loss, feelings of despair and isolation, reminders of betraying and being betrayed, often are at their peak in the month when others are singing about joy, peace and a world filled with hope and new beginnings.

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The heartbeat of tradition

MICHAEL THOMPSON
RECTOR, ST JUDE'S OAKVILLE

In May 2007, a reindeer herder discovered what at first appeared to be the carcass of a reindeer. When he approached, though, he noticed that it had a trunk. What he had discovered was a baby mammoth, preserved in the Russian permafrost for over forty thousand years.

We saw "Lyuba", named after the herder's wife, at the Field Museum in Chicago last summer, part of an exhibit that detailed how different species thrived or failed in changing conditions.

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Blair vs Hitchens | Who really won?



FRANCEAN CAMPBELL-RICH
CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

Roy Thomson Hall was sold out hours in advance of the debate, last November. They say scalpers did a lively business. Who would have guessed that a has-been politician, a Roman Catholic convert from the U.K. and a sceptic journalist of ephemeral note from New York, would draw such a crowd? The brains at the Munk Centre certainly knew, and were ready for it. They had chosen a provocative title: Is Religion a Force for Good or Evil?

It had been a busy year for atheists. It was fashionable to know who had said what, and when—the more outrageous, the better. Christopher Hitchens had written a book entitled

God is Not Great and erudite Richard Dawkins had already produced The God Delusion. There had been no lack of spokesmen and comment to support the atheist view. The talk show folks had a field day. Fundamentalism might well have been struggling for survival, for once. As for Tony Blair, it had not been much of a year at all for the former prime minister of Great Britain, who had been in the news for little more than trying to defend his position while he was in office, and for his conversion to the Roman Catholic faith. Chosen, probably, as easy bait for the Hitchens tongue.

I can't recall just whether I watched the original debate, whether it was a newscast replay, or whether I saw the whole thing or parts of it on the internet. One thing is certain now: the debate has been withdrawn from public view by the Munk Centre, for copyright reasons, leaving one with what is etched on memory alone.

It was all very civil. Bare stage,

simple stand and chair each for the combatants and for the moderator. Not much of a show, had anyone expected a show. The first surprise was that Tony Blair held his own, thank you very much, and with no small grace. Just when one might have expected a volley from Hitchens to have leveled him with a devastating accusation, Blair calmly responded in agreement followed by a measured statement in defense—a tactic that he repeated more than once throughout the debate. Hitchens, on the other hand, never lacked a smart retort—a witty shot that always brought the house down—a scriptwriter's dream.

Mr. Hitchens' had the house in his hands from the first: his ready wit, honed from an upbringing in speech and journalistic arts, and further, it was common knowledge that he had for some time been suffering from esophageal cancer; an unwelcome but sympathetic effect in his favour; one had to admire his spirit.

The win was 6 to 4 for Hitchens. Does all this decide the undecided—that religion is a force for evil? For the undecided, I have one or two observations gathered not so much on the issue itself but for the subject of atheism. First, in spite of the emphasis on atheism as fed and nurtured by press and platform in recent times, atheism has always been with us, out in the open, or under the rug. Look it up on the internet and find the list of writers and thinkers, artists and philosophers, famous in their own right—the list goes on, and on, and on.

Second, it's great fun to examine the words of atheists such as "God is not great", and note that the statement acknowledges that God exists, if not great. My own favourite is the argument behind the title of an autobiographical book by the Canadian writer David Adams Richards, who won a long struggle with himself over his faith, and finally came to the conclusion that GOD IS. (The period is part of the title). So there.



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Marcus Borg | New Christian



**ELEANOR JOHNSTON
WAYNE FRASER**

ST. THOMAS' CHURCH, ST. CATHARINES

We met a fascinating and inspiring theologian, Dr. Marcus Borg, at a weekend lecture series hosted by the First Congregational Church of Canandaigua. His theology gives hope for the future of our faith and our church.

First impression: like the Dalai Lama and David Suzuki, Borg has an impish but strong appearance. He laughs easily and speaks with the intelligence, confidence and clarity of scholarly authority.

Mindful of the premise that the Christian Church has reinvented itself every 500 years and that our current upheaval could well be as momentous a change as that experienced in Martin Luther's time, the people attending the weekend caught the urgency of Borg's call to reform.

Most have been reading his books and pondering his ideas for years. So why did we come to hear him, spending all that time and money to listen to what we already knew? We went to reinforce our understanding by hearing the main points clearly articulated. And, by listening and talking to Borg

and the like-minded Christians in attendance, we felt encouraged as we realized that many others are committed to exploring the implications of his new ideas.

Most clergy and laity who feel drawn to progressive theology grapple first to understand it and then to learn how to communicate it successfully when challenged by non-believers or conservative believers or when queried by other forward-focused believers. We heard Borg explaining the new ideas skillfully, giving us an approach to better articulate our faith. His goal that weekend was for his audience to absorb, in order to become equipped to share, his new ideas.

We sometimes wonder why we need to bother our parishes with new theological ideas that inevitably cause disagreement. It's tempting to think that the wise Christian is the one who keeps out of theological discussions, who simply worships and who worships simply. Wrong. That's not the way Jesus showed us.

Jesus summarized the Law in two commandments—to love God and to love others as oneself—and this was his challenge to the theology of the Pharisees who he realized missed the point of God's will. They were fixated on the letter of the law and on sacrifices, the priestly rituals. He taught non-clergy by parables and metaphors, a deceptively minimalist approach, and he lived his Way by loving, healing

and teaching. His behavior was radical and disruptive because his theology was radical and disruptive. It still is because today's Pharisees still miss the point.

Second impression: what Borg believes and says is exciting and also essential for the survival of both the Church and the world. God calls us, in our time, to return to Christ's Way of love, and Borg and his fellow theologians are leading a new Reformation, based on love, toward justice and peace. They are constantly pointing out that our times are in many ways similar to life under brutal Roman rule. Will our society tomorrow be the Empire of the Plastic Dollar or the Kingdom of God? Which is it, today?

Borg's four lectures examined Christian language in order to see God, Jesus and the Christian life in a refreshingly liberating way, liberated, that is, from traditional metaphors that do not resonate in our time. In this new vision, God becomes a presence, rather than a person. God ceases to be "a randomly active God who relates to the world through interventions" and is perceived as an "encompassing Spirit who pervades all that is." This new language calls us to action and speaks to believers of other faiths as well as to the secular soul yearning for a God he can believe in. This new understanding of God can free the world from its old evil masters.

Borg focused our attention on the chief characteristics of God as "gracious, compassionate and loving." For Christians, it is Jesus who demonstrates this vision of God to us and asks us to follow his Way. Christianity is less about "believing a set of statements to be true," and more about a "relationship with God that transforms us." Thus transformed, we can take the necessary actions and become doers of the word, and not hearers only.

When Borg meets a person who objects to his theological views, he asks, "Do you believe that at the heart of Christianity exists a relationship with God? If you do, then why don't we share the experience which we have in common, rather than argue about our differences?" This seems a useful way to find common ground among differing Christians, indeed, among different faith traditions. And clearly, we need to work together at this time.

And what does a new theology church look like? Are prophetic voices beginning to resonate with the needs of contemporary society and of planet earth? Do we answer the calls of victims of disaster, war and poverty? Is God calling us to re-articulate the language of our faith? Responding to such questions is precisely what Borg and his contemporaries are doing.

Borg's theology is certainly not just an abstract argument. He

repeated over the course of the weekend his concern about the widening gap between the rich and the poor in North America, between trickle-down economics and distributive justice. We must change from our economics of over-consumption and environmental destruction, the financial system that continues to allow the rich to get richer at the expense of the poor. Implicit in Borg's critique is the call to do God's work of saving God's creation: the earth and its people.

Listening to and worshiping with Borg strengthened our faith and gladdened our hearts. Oh, his Sunday sermon? Pick up his book, *The Heart of Christianity*, and read chapter 8. It's all there.

Meanwhile, we can be certain that what we are doing is of God if it is done in faith, hope and love. However difficult it is to articulate a new theology in the midst of a time of change, we should try to persist with contemporaries who do not yet accept the value of this message.

Last impression of Borg: what came across most powerfully was his compassion for all people, his realistic discernment of what the church must do to regain its legitimate leadership role, and his devotion to God. He is an inspired prophet, a necessary voice in our wilderness, a Biblical scholar who speaks the Word for our time.

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The old Lama and the Christmas story

BAHMAN KALANTARI
RECTOR, ST. JOHN'S BURLINGTON

Fifteen years ago, I was in Katmandu, the Capital of Nepal—a very beautiful and very strange country, a country which is engulfed by India and Tibet and embraces the Hindu, Tibetan, and local religions.

Every day, from the balcony of my room, I would see gurus and mystics in the city square. One day, I told my Nepali friend that I would very much like to talk to these individuals. He said: "No, not in the street, they don't like it. I will take you to the Monkey Temple". And, two days after this, we drove to the Monkey Temple, a temple which is located on top of a mountain. Here, there were hundreds of stairs, and it took more than one hour to reach the temple itself. The stairs were surrounded by beautiful trees and wild flowers, in the midst of which, live a number of angry, aggressive monkeys. I, however, tried to be nice to them. I offered them some seeds and candies. But, instead of offering me a friendly smile, the monkeys screamed at me and took up threatening stances. After this incident, they sat along the edge

of the stairs and gazed at me with the same angry expressions.

Finally, I reached the temple. Alone, I was welcomed by the old Lama. He gave me a tour and after about one hour he asked me: "Sir, are you here for fun or for wisdom?" I answered: "wisdom". Then he pointed to a group of Lamas who were sitting around in a circle in the temple's courtyard and said: "go and talk to them". Some distance from these Lamas, I noticed a holy man wrapped in a red robe with closed eyes sitting on the lawn meditating. I asked the old Lama if I could go and talk to that holy man. The old Lama stared at me and instructed me to sit on the lawn and wait. I saw the old Lama approach the holy man, sit across from him, and close his eyes. After five minutes, he stood up and returned to where I was waiting. I asked him: "can I go now?" The old Lama said: "I see that you are very persistent. But I should tell you that this holy man is a sulky holy man. He does not like persistent people. Once a week, he opens his eyes for one hour and eats something. He cannot read or write but he knows something of languages and from the age

of six he has been here and has never left us". After this short warning, the old Lama took my hand and led me towards the holy man. He ordered me to sit in front of him. I sat and waited. Amazingly enough, the holy man opened his eyes after only fifteen minutes. I was scared. I didn't know what to say. When the holy man opened his eyes, I saw the monkeys rush towards us. I noticed, with surprise, that the monkeys brought fruits and seeds for the holy man. They put the seeds and fruits on the holy man's lap, tapped his back, stopped only to scream at me once again, and left.

After this, the holy man looked at me, nodded his head, and without any introduction asked me "how did you and your people find your liberator?" I tried to concentrate. I told him about the Holy Family, the birth of Jesus, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, and the Wise Men. Then I stopped. The holy man closed his eyes for a few minutes and then opened his eyes again and said: "So your liberator never dies". I became surprised. How, exactly, did he draw this conclusion? I asked the holy man: "How do you know about the death of my liberator? The holy man answered:

"You told me how this Son of the Heaven came to this world through a modest mother, through birth pains. You told me about the angry prophet and the wise men of another land who paid homage to your Liberator because they knew that he was the Liberator of the world. Now, I can see that your liberator came from heaven to earth through pain and modesty and he rises to heaven through pain and modesty; there is no death in Him, He is life. He is the Avatar."

When he mentioned the word "avatar", I was amazed because "avatar" means savior in Hindi. I wanted to ask more questions, but the old Lama showed up and asked me to leave. But, before I stood up to go, I asked the holy man to give me some advice. He said simply this: "Just hold onto the birth story".

Throughout the years, I have often wondered to myself what quality enabled that holy man to visualize the passion, resurrection, and triumph of Jesus over death simply by listening to me narrate the story of Jesus' birth. Now, after all of these years, I think I may have some understanding of how he achieved this.

For the holy man, the crucial question was how I found my liberator. He defined me not by my age or language, but by my liberator. I believe the holy man followed a kind of systematic spirituality. Now, this is a complicated subject, but it is enough to say that one of the aspects of systematic spirituality rests in the idea of the Holy Spirit in Motion. We read in the Gospel that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby moved within her. The Holy Spirit came upon Elizabeth and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. I believe that when I concentrated in order to tell the holy man Jesus' birth story, the temple, the holy man, and I were overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit's presence. This was the Holy Spirit in motion.

The Holy Spirit in Motion guides us in every aspect of our life. It is a wonderful idea that the Holy Spirit is always active, moving in us, and revealing herself to others. On this truly joyous occasion, when we as Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us take the holy man's advice and 'hold on to the birth story', celebrate it, and allow the Holy Spirit to move and live within us that we might share the story, with words or without words, with others.

Epiphany, and a good long one too!



PETER WALL
DEAN AND RECTOR, CHRIST'S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

As I write this, we have just celebrated Epiphany and begin what is this year one of the longest Epiphany seasons possible. Easter Sunday in 2011 is April 24, just one day shy of its latest possible date, April 25. Easter can be as early as March 22; indeed, in 2008, it was on March 23 and this year it is a full month later, on April 24.

The Council of Nicaea, meeting in 325 CE, set the date of Easter as the 'first Sunday after the full moon fol-

lowing the spring equinox on March 21. If the full moon occurs on a Sunday, then Easter is the following Sunday.' So, our Easter (in the Gregorian calendar) can fall anywhere over this 33 days period (March 22 to April 25) and, in the Orthodox church, using the Julian Calendar, Easter can fall between April 4 and May 8.

Interestingly, there was no occurrence in the twentieth century of Easter on March 22—the most recent was the year 1818. However, in 1913 and again 2008, Easter was on March 23. Similarly, the most recent time that Easter was on the latest day possible—April 25—was 1943 and it will happen again in 2038. The last time that Easter was on April 24 was in 1859, but it will happen again in 2095!

This is all based, of course, on the at times equally inexact science of

lunar cycles, inexact given that some years the equinox does fall on March 21 but some years it occurs on March 20. Time zones also affect these dates, so it is all a very interesting—what—art? or science?

While a late Easter clearly affects all that follows—so that Pentecost some years is long past the time when Ontario cottages are opened and many people have gone into summer mode, it is in the Epiphany season that we seem to feel most keenly the difference in length. The season can vary from four weeks to nine weeks in length, and takes place when we are usually 'around' and active in our parishes. In a very short Epiphany year, it seems that we go from the arrival of the Magi in Bethlehem to the Temptation of Jesus on the mountaintop at Lent One in undue haste; in a more

relaxed year, there are more interesting Sundays of more interesting teachings and stories and hence, perhaps, a better sense of being 'prepared' for the Lenten journey which follows.

I know that, for me as a liturgical planner (and those of us who do this are always working some way into the future), the short Epiphany season seems breathless and fleeting; the longer seasons have a much more relaxed and settled feeling to them. So, this year, Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, is not until March 9!! Easter taking place in late April also usually means somewhat better and more spring like weather, for us in the north, than late March can sometimes mean! It used to be that some Easters would be after daylight saving time had kicked in; those concerned about darkness being dark

wanted always to make sure that the Great Vigil did not start so early as to be 'spoiled' by too much daylight. Alas, those days are gone, since recent changes in North American daylight savings commencement mean that Easter Eve always will be threatened by too much daylight and (some are happy about this!) the Great Vigil must always start later than might otherwise be so in order to enjoy the darkness.

But I digress (as I am occasionally wont to do...)—there will be ample opportunity to speak of Vigils and such in the months to come. In the meantime, enjoy a relaxed and luxurious Epiphany season. Hear the great teachings which are ours; prepare to be transfigured yourself as we end this season very early in March.

And, hey, keep an eye on the moon.

Ten simple things



JIM NEWMAN
DIOCESAN STEWARDSHIP CONSULTANT

Is your parish stuck in "nearly there"? Want to make a breakthrough? It doesn't have to be complicated. There's a popular workshop going around the Diocese and it's called "Ten

Simple Things to Increase Your Parish Income". In 2010 it played at parishes in Dundas, Grimsby, and Erin. At least two more repeat workshops are planned—the next one on January 22, 2011 at St. James Anglican Parish in St. Catharines, followed by another in late February or early March in the Hamilton area. There will be more if interest continues to remain high.

The response has been exceptional and the credit goes to the Generous Culture of Stewardship Team. Their resourcefulness identified the best

stewardship practices available, and the result is a workshop that's about more than stewardship; it's about Living our Vision. It's not about paying the bills, or keeping the church afloat; it's about helping others to see that Christian stewardship is about our relationship with God, and by extension our parishes and communities, the wider church and each other. It's about our own generosity, advocacy, and ensuring that ministries at all levels can be adequately and fairly resourced.

Practical topics deal with parish health, building on strengths, focusing on mission and ministry, optimizing your narrative budget, connecting generosity and spirituality, analyzing parishioner giving, shepherding, demystifying DMM, and encouraging clergy, gift planning and much more.

Who should attend? Everyone is welcome, especially those who understand the need to cultivate a generous culture of stewardship in Niagara—clergy, stewardship chairs and committee members, parish wardens and

treasurers, and other parish leaders. The workshop features a high degree of interaction among participants, a comprehensive handout, and computer templates to make your parish applications manageable. Attendees report a wealth of information, openness for discussion and sharing of ideas.

There's no charge to participants but to ensure adequate materials and arrangements please register online prior to the workshop at www.niagara.anglican.ca and follow the links. It's time to get 'unstuck'!



Quilts of Valour

JACK COX
RECTOR, ST JOHN'S WINONA

On Sunday, November 14, at St John's, Winona, we celebrated with a blessing of Quilts of Valour. This is the third time we have done this. The 1st time we had 23 quilts, the second time we had 57 quilts, and this time we had 125 quilts. The increase is due in large part to the work done by Alison McDonald, a parishioner who is the contact and spokesperson for Quilts of Valour Canada in South-western Ontario. Alison speaks to quilt guilds, and has had a booth or display at several quilt shows, all to make people aware of the work of Quilts of Valour Canada. She says she only has to make people aware of the need and what they can do to help, and quilters respond with amazing generosity.

The quilts are made and donated to be given to our wounded soldiers as a concrete gesture of appreciation and gratitude, as well as offering comfort and care for all that the soldiers have done and endured.

On the 14th, the quilts were hung on all available wall space, on the altar rail, on the altars, on the organ and on the keyboard... the church ablaze with colour and fabric.

Our guest speaker was Capt. Joelle Beaudoin, a Canadian Forces nurse who had served in Afghanistan and is presently posted to the Aeromedical Evacuation unit at Canadian Forces Base Trenton to accompany injured soldiers on their flight back home.

She spoke to us of the pain and suffering that is a part of the reality of our efforts in Afghanistan to bring justice to people who have been denied such basic rights as access to fresh

water, safe roads, education, a voice in the direction of their own villages and country. She also told us of the efforts of the Canadian military medical teams to bring healing, not only to our wounded soldiers but also to Afghani soldiers and civilians.

It was a very moving, emotional celebration of the planting of seeds of the kingdom of God and the price people are prepared to pay to see that kingdom grow—even if they wouldn't quite name it that way.

Typical of St John's hospitality, a wonderful reception with good food and lots of conversation followed the service.

If you would like more information or would like to participate in Quilts of Valour Canada, please feel free to contact Alison by calling 1-905-385-2014.

Lessons restaurants can teach churches



HOLLIS HISCOCK
INTERIM PASTOR, ST. JOHN'S ROCKWOOD

My eyes did a somersault... my brain plunged like a roller coaster.

The announcement, in our community newspaper, confirmed that one of our favourite restaurants was closing... for ever!

Our stress levels skyrocketed when we realized that we had not used the gift certificate (dinner for two), which we had won at a Church Christmas bazaar in late autumn. We planned to wait until spring, partake of the scrumptious dinner and then stroll along the nearby lakeshore to gaze at the boats waiting to dock at an unfinished pier, and to watch the antics of adult men maneuvering their remote controlled toy power boats across the human made cement lake next to the children's playground.

But such was not to be our fate. Instead we were given about two weeks to rearrange our future and make a reservation to, what the announcement said, 'savour our signature entrees and desserts one more time'. We made reservations immediately, knowing that tables would soon be at a premium.

We would have preferred more time to relish the expectations of our last meal in an establishment which had somewhat become part of our social fabric in recent years.

Our relationship with this pearl of a restaurant started less than five years ago, a mere 20% of its own life span. Yet our memories are many, celebratory and enriching. This 'Little Restaurant with the Big Reputation', a winner of 'more than 50 Readers Choice Awards', would always be etched in the annals of our life history.

So here I am, writing as if I were sitting in this historic building enjoying my last feast, asking myself the question, 'what pearls can I glean from my association with this restaurant that we could apply to my parish Church worship on a Sunday morning? Here goes.

Whenever I arrived at the restaurant I was greeted with a big hearty hello and welcome. I felt like somebody who had just returned home from a long, arduous, dangerous safari. Sometimes, as a newcomer in a Church, I have felt 'left out' and 'alone'. On one occasion, I stepped into a room and 160 male eyes and half as many tongues stopped and stared. I felt like an intruder and was contemplating my retreat, hoping that the door behind me was not self-locking. Then, I heard footsteps echoing on the hardwood floor. I turned and focused on an outstretched arm extended to welcome me and bring me, as one bishop said, 'in from the wilderness'. At Church we may ask ourselves, 'what are we supposed to do when a

stranger comes through the door?' The answer, my friend, is not blowing in the wind, but is found in the first sentence of this paragraph... read on.

'Where would you like to sit?', the waiter of the restaurant always asked, even if only one table was available. On your first visit to a Church, if you are asked that question, never answer, 'anywhere'... you may end up sitting in the front pew, or singing in the choir, or relegated to the seat reserved only for the guest preacher.

When comfortably seated, the server always handed me a menu and rattled of the daily specials for the umpteenth time. In Church, we call the menu 'the bulletin', and may add a prayer book, a hymn book, or on special occasions even include a candle or palm branches. The specials are called 'the announcements'.

The waiter provides ample time for me to survey the gastronomic landscape before settling on my journey of gourmet discovery. Granted, in worship the selections may seem more limited, but as a worshipper I can decide what verses of the hymns I prefer to sing, what prayers I wish to sponsor by saying 'AMEN' (so be it) and which part (if any) of the sermon I want to retain for future consideration and application.

Several times, throughout the evening, the server returns to inquire about my degree of satisfaction and asks cheerily, 'can I get you anything else?'. Unfortunately, in worship such behaviour would be disruptive and frowned upon, even by the most flexible and liberal. Yet those specially skilled observers, who occupy seats facing the congregation, are trained to scan faces, read body language and interpret messages of satisfaction, boredom or 'I should have gone golfing'.

When the bill arrives, usually shrouded in a plastic folder or face down to avoid any sudden panic attack, the waiter reminds me to pay at my pleasure, but assures me in the next breath, that when I am ready to give, the server is ready to receive. In Churches, with more pomp and pageantry, we pass the plate in one form or another. Then we parade to the front, give thanks to the one we acknowledge as the source of all that we have ('all things come from you, O Lord'), and remind ourselves that we are giving back to God a bit of what God has loaned to us ('and of your own have we given you').

As we say our goodbye and head into the darkness of night, our waiter sends us on with a chipper 'enjoy the rest of your evening' and with a sincere invitation to 'come again' (unless your restaurant is closing for good, then it's simply 'goodbye'). Churches send us out with a challenge to 'go in peace to love and serve the Lord'; maybe we should add 'and come again'... chances are we will.

I am sure there are other lessons I learned at restaurants that could be modelled by the Church, but I feel too stuffed, satisfied and nostalgic to even think about anything else.

No heat in the church

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

No matter what we tried nothing worked. It looked like we were in for a very cold service as the outside temperature was about minus eight and even with the candles lit we were not much better.

As people arrived I advised them to keep their coats on and just hoped they would stay. Most of our parishioners like most churches nowadays are not exactly young and their ability to withstand the cold is not what it used to be.

Rather dispirited I went into the little side office to robe. As I dressed I could hear laughter coming from the church so I peeked around the corner and much to my surprise not only was the church full but people were hugging each other and some were bringing chairs over from the legion. As I looked on in amazement I could see that there were people from the Catholic church (they don't have a Christmas Eve service just Christmas day) and from the United church which

had unfortunately recently closed and our own parishioners plus others I had never seen before. The little church on the hill holds about thirty-five people if we use a shoehorn. That night we had forty-seven people.

Just before the service started Sue, our musician, whispered to me that Michael was there and would be playing his violin also Fay and Carolyn would be singing O Holy Night right after the sermon.

We opened with O Come all ye Faithful and I almost cried. If ever there was a time when all the faithful came and shared the love of God it was that Christmas Eve. Soon the body heat overcame the cold and everyone started to take off his or her coat.

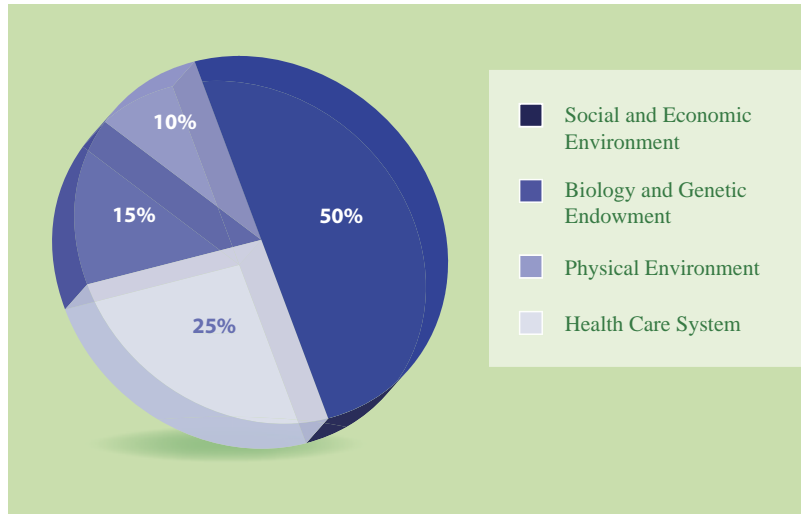
After the collect a lady rose to read the first lesson. I had never seen her before yet here she was standing and reading. The psalm was read and followed by the second lesson this time read by one of our own parishioners. As the lesson ended Michael stood up and started to play Silent Night. The congregation started to sing and magic

filled the air. I am sure even the angel chorus could not match the sheer joy felt by all that night. Outside I could see the lights of the church sparkle on the snow. It is hard to describe the feelings that were filling the hearts of us all but I think we all knew that Jesus was born and the world has never been the same. This feeling resounded even more as Fay and Carolyn sang. Probably it was the wonderful atmosphere but as their voices rang out you could have heard a pin drop.

It was a shame that our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters did not feel comfortable in coming forward to share in the Holy Eucharist and I pray that there will come a time when all people can come to the table of the Lord regardless of denomination but until that time we can, as we did, come together as children of God and feel the wonder of the presence of God and not care if the heat is on or not. The love of God will, as God did that night, always keep us warm as long as we share it together.

But as always it is only my opinion.

HARRRP serves children of God!



■ Source: Estimation by the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research. Graph reproduced from the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, *The Health of Canadians - The Federal Role, Volume One: The Story So Far*, March 2001.

SUE-ANN WARD
 PRESIDENT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HARRRP

As I sit on my couch this New Year's Eve with the companionship of my beloved husband and our furry "best friend" Joey, I am feeling nostalgic and fortunate. The New Year on the secular calendar falls in the midst of the Christmas season of the Christian year. We have waited and prepared for the coming of the Christ child and celebrated his birth for seven days. The Magi are drawing near to the Holy Family. Christ is made manifest. It is a time for reminiscing and for making resolutions.

As I reminisce, I am aware that one of the blessings that I have experienced in my life is a sense of purpose. Even during times when I have felt overwhelmed or despondent, I have always felt that I had a reason to get out of bed in the morning. For as long as I can remember, I have felt a need to do my best to make Christ manifest in our world in whatever small way I can. I have had daughters and sons to nurture, foster children to care for, students to educate, and parishioners to pastor. And I have been fortunate to have friends and family who support, encourage, and prod me (not always gently) as required.

Not everyone experiences the feeling of purpose, the sense of support, or the awareness of opportunities that I have enjoyed. The absence of social comforts is a form of poverty. It diminishes the human spirit, damages families, and fractures community. Poverty is not only a condition of not having enough income for essentials such as food or shelter; it is also a condition of deprivation of healthy social networks, choice, and opportunity. It negatively impacts health and well-being. There are a number of factors that impact health. The pie chart above demonstrates that the social and economic environment is the most powerful determinant of health.

HARRRP, the charitable organization that does outreach and community development on behalf of Christ's Church Cathedral, works to eliminate poverty and promote health and well-being. Since 2006, HARRRP has been creating and operating community centres in challenged neighbourhoods in the City of Hamilton. Recently, HARRRP opened a community centre in the St. Peter's Church building near Main and Sherman. Many residents of this neighbourhood experience poverty.

Let me provide you with some Statistics Canada data for this particular neighbourhood.

31% of residents between 25 and 64 years of age have not completed high school. The rate for the City of Hamilton as a whole is 13%. The median (after tax) income is \$17,292. In this neighbourhood, 58.9% of children live in low income households (Hamilton 15.9%). In other words, sixty percent of the children living in the neighbourhood experience economic poverty.

The social poverty is more difficult to measure but is at least as profound. Parents have little education and insufficient income. Employment, housing, and food choices are limited and not very good. Parents have to choose between paying rent or buying food. Music lessons, recreational sports, summer camp, travel, visits to museums, zoos, the theatre etc. are all luxuries that are out of reach. Hopelessness and helplessness lead to high rates of physical and mental illness. There is a 16 year difference in life expectancy between this neighbourhood and other Hamilton neighbourhoods. The life expectancy is lower than that of some third world countries.

In one apartment lives Patricia, a depressed single mother trying to raise three children. Pat works full time at \$12/hr for a gross annual income of just under \$24,000. The children can't pay attention in school because they are not well nourished

and because the bedbugs keep them awake at night. They may never know that they have an aptitude for music, art, skiing, journalism, tennis, etc., because they may never get the chance to try their hand at much of anything except video games, drugs, and graffiti.

In another apartment is Doug, a senior living on a government pension. He is unable to afford needed medications and has been wearing the same eye glasses for 12 years. As a young man, Doug had always been careful about his hygiene; now he only gets to bathe twice a week when the caregiver comes to his apartment to help him. These are often the only visitors he has. Many of his friends have moved away or died. His daughter and grandchildren live in Vancouver. Despite having his apartment fumigated and all linens replaced three times in the past eight months, he too lives with the bedbugs and the cockroaches that infest the building.

These are two of the precious children of God who HARRRP serves. HARRRP provides bright, clean, beautiful, safe, resourced places where people like Doug, Patricia, and her children can engage in activities that enrich their lives. HARRRP works to nurture hope, opportunities, social connections, and a sense of purpose. We encourage young and old alike to dream bigger, to get to know their neighbours, to discover their gifts, and to use them to benefit others. HARRRP projects promote health and wellbeing within individuals and within neighbourhoods. By helping people create their communities, HARRRP makes Christ manifest to many Hamiltonians.

Enough reminiscing! Here is my resolution: I resolve that I will regularly update you on wonderful HARRRP happenings through our *Niagara Anglican* newspaper (the best darn diocesan newspaper on the planet). Happy Epiphany!

Voices from the margins



COLLEEN SYM

I hear voices. More than that, I listen to the voices. These are not voices in the sense of Joan of Arc or schizophrenia. They are the voices of those in our society who are too rarely heard. Voices that describe a reality far removed from mine where things such as a healthy diet, personal safety, access to a vehicle, warm well maintained housing and a job that pays a living wage are the things that mark me as the 'other'.

A vision of prophetic social justice making with a dominant focus on leadership in advocacy risks overlooking the need to start down this path with humility, becoming allies with those whose lives are touched by injustice, marginalization and oppression before we seek to be leaders. Authenticity and credibility as advocates requires first that you become an ally—that you too hear the voices and act with those who are the true experts on justice making and whose lead we ought to be following.

Over the past two years the distinction between being an advocate and an ally has been the emergent lesson and theme in the social justice conversations, activities and reflections that I have shared with Bishop Bird and Archdeacon Patterson. Gary Warner a professor at McMaster University, Order of Canada Inductee and member of the Hamilton Poverty Roundtable, who served as a rapporteur in the Hamilton Social Audit with the Archdeacon explains why this is so important.

"It is easy, even for well-intentioned people, indeed especially for well-intentioned people, when dealing with issues of poverty, to fall into the trap of paternalism and objectification of people living in poverty. How often are anti-poverty strategies, policies and consultative bodies established without direct and meaningful participation by people living in poverty, without serious consideration of the impact of policies on their lives, without a genuine understanding of their experience and of the challenges and options available to them?"

When Professor Warner listens to the voices he also recalls the words of the Australian aboriginal academic and artist, Lilla Watson, as she addressed a group of social workers who had come to investigate the needs of her village: "If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

Bishop Bird's recognition of the importance that the principle of *solidarity* must play in living out the vision is evident in his reflection on his experience of sharing, albeit imperfectly, and for only a brief period of time, what it is like to have to rely on a food bank diet.

"Our Diocesan Vision challenges us to move beyond the four walls of the church in love and humility to lis-

ten to and engage with the people of this generation. It seems to me that a good place to start would be to do some serious listening and engaging with those whose lives are touched by poverty and to stand with them and to add our voices to theirs as we strive as Christians to fulfill the sacred promise made at our baptisms to: "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being."

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 Archdeacon Patterson acknowledges that his experience of listening to the voices required that he ask again of himself "as one of those who shares responsibility for the ongoing deprivation experienced by so many". Before the opportunity to hear directly the stories of those with lived experience of poverty he also questioned whether he truly appreciated the implications of the policies and considered the human faces.

Such *critical self-reflection* that leads to an understanding and awareness of our personal and collective responsibility for the structures of society that cause injustice is a skill that is foreign to many and one that is uncomfortably exercised by us all. But justice from the perspective of those of us whose actions contributed to the creation of the unjust structures of society, those of us who took advantage of those structures and benefited from them or those of us who supported them through indifference or inaction, "requires recognition of wrongs, responsibility for them, respect for others as a person, repentance and reparations".

At the end of January, Bishop Bird and Archdeacon Patterson may have the opportunity to appear before the provincial Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs as part of the 2011 pre-Budget Consultations to speak to the injustice of the current social assistance system.

That they are able to do so is only due to their having personally engaged in poverty reduction activities over the past two and a half years and having developed an understanding of the importance of building relationships with those with lived experience and becoming their allies. This enabled them to achieve a degree of credibility and authenticity that permits them to now participate as advocates in the transformation of society to create communities where domination and exploitation do not exist.

Acts of credible advocacy undertaken with integrity are only possible if you are willing to act with those whose voices you must hear. To help you hear the voices start by reading ISARC's book on the Social Audit, *Persistent Poverty: Voices from the Margins*. *Persistent Poverty* sells for \$19.95 and is available from Between the Lines Publishers (1-800-718-7201) and from the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition 519-884-0710 x 3927).

The Human Condition | Poverty, vulnerability and fragility



MARNI NANCEKIVELL
PRIEST, DIRECTOR OF TRANSITIONAL MINISTRY

I work at Cathedral Place. That means that I work in one of the poorest areas in Canada. In comparison to the rest of the Province of Ontario, property values are lower, and there are a higher percentage of female headed households.

I live in Oakville. This means that I live in one of the wealthier areas of Canada. In some ways, there is great contrast between where I live, and where I work. In the past 24 hours, I have witnessed three different episodes in my work neighborhood that have touched my heart:

While walking down the street, I saw one street person give his meal ticket to another street person, saying: "Today, you need this more than I do, buddy".

I saw a cashier at Giant Tiger, a neighborhood Discount Department Store treat a middle class white woman, an immigrant with little ability to speak English, and a person who appeared to live on the streets with equal courtesy and honor.

In a local nursing home, I witnessed a woman who had great difficulty walking, working as a nurse with patients, many of whom were marginalized.

Perhaps it was seeing that nurse, working with patients who also had difficulty with their mobility that really stimulated my thinking about fragility and the human condition. That vulnerability that we all share is not limited to people of a certain community, locale or economic bracket, as much as we would

like to persuade ourselves as it is. You see, it is too easy for we human beings to categorize people into worlds of 'the haves' and 'the have nots'; those who are able and those who are disabled; those who were born in Canada, and those who are immigrants; those who have white skin, and those who are people of color; those who are gay and those who are straight. It is as if that in order to value ourselves as human beings, we have to be able to align ourselves with the "haves". We yield to the temptation to see ourselves as able, or empowered, or valid in ways that others are not. In Luke 18: 11, we hear Jesus remind us of our tendency to value our own 'goodness' and our inclination to look down on others: "I thank thee, O God, that I am not as others; robbers, evil doers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector!" Yielding to that temptation, letting that voice within our head have its

way, is a shameful secret in which many of us indulge in our 'self talk'.

The truth is that all of us are strong and weak, gifted and inept, fragile and robust. "All or nothing thinking", about us or about others is not productive to growth in wisdom or in spirit. God's perpetual invitation is for us to return to the Source that made us, that Source, (which some of us call God) is loving and kind, and not exclusive in any way.

When we put people into camps, and polarize them into groups, we do ourselves and God a great disservice, for we truncate human interaction. In doing so, we limit our openness to God's presence and action in circumstances and within our own hearts.

As a person who works with a cross-section of parishes and clergy at times of transition, as a resource person to congregations in conflict, and in

my work with the Safe Church committee, I see how frequently we reduce our life as a Christian community to a story of 'us' and 'them'.

We are particularly likely to yield to that temptation when we ourselves are feeling particularly anxious or vulnerable. Rather than take responsibility for what is going on within us, we project the "fault" onto someone else. For example, when things are shaky in parish life, it is easy to point our fingers at someone else. We find someone to be the scapegoat. Perhaps it is the Rector's 'fault'? Or perhaps the problem is "those people at the Synod Office, who (we assume) want to close our church"? Indulging in that kind of thinking truncates an examination of what is happening and why it is happening? What are the patterns that are months, years, perhaps even decades old. This is pattern is true for institutions, and it holds for individuals as well.

The heartbeat of tradition

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Lyuba, who died suddenly at six months of age, was a member of the latter sort of species, unable to adapt in the face either of climate change or of some new disease against which its immune system was ineffective. Something changed and the woolly mammoth could not adapt.

As a result, the closest we can come to the real thing is a forty thousand year-old carcass of a young mammoth preserved in permafrost.

What happens to species of animals also happens to species of human community. My grandfather's village of Lucan included a vibrant Orange Lodge, not least because the continuing tension between Protestant and Roman Catholic Ireland transplanted rather well to Bid-dulph Township. But in multicultural and multi-faith contemporary Canada,

there are very few signs of life in what was once an imposing bastion of Protestant Ontario. The world changes and species either thrive or fail.

In the vision of the Diocese of Niagara, one of the key elements is "a continuous culture of innovation." For some, the language brings to mind someone like Doc Brown in Back to the Future, a kind of madcap garage inventor prone to innovative mishaps. I wonder if the idea of innovation is frightening for some of us because we associate it with irresponsible or disrespectful attitudes to tradition.

I would argue that a culture of innovation is the only responsible or respectful way to relate to tradition, because a tradition is a living reality encountering changing conditions in the face of which that tradition will either thrive or fail. What we call tradition is often more likely a matter of

habit, preference or custom, human artifacts that trap or weaken tradition. So we stick with the habit, placate the preference, enshrine the custom, all in such a way as to render the tradition less adaptive to changing conditions.

And lest we think this is a new, a contemporary problem, here's what the prefaces of the 1549 Book of Common Prayer have to say "Of Ceremonies, Why Some Be Abolished And Some Retained":

And whereas in this our time, the minds of men are so diverse, that some think it a great matter of conscience to depart from a piece of the least of their ceremonies, they be so addicted to their old customs; and again on the other side, some be so newfangled, that they would innovate all things, and so despise the old, that nothing can like them, but that is new: it was thought expedient, not so much to have respect

to please and satisfy either of these parties, as how to please God and profit them both. (BCP p. 717)

The preface continues with an exploration of the basis for making such decisions about customs. It occurs to me that we need a similar conversation in our churches about what constitutes the heartbeat of tradition that remains from one generation to another, and what are the customs, habits, and preferences that must be negotiated so as to ensure that the tradition can thrive in changing conditions.

Let me be so bold as to make a start. The heartbeat of tradition emerges, I believe, out of the proclamation and enactment, in the life of Jesus, of the Kingdom of God as a living option for our loyalty and service. We are asked to offer to God a church that is ready to proclaim that Kingdom and shape lives in service of its citizenship and its ethic.

God needs a church that God can put to work transforming the world. What any of us wants or prefers, or is used to, or even what makes any of us comfortable, is surely a secondary consideration to that primary matter of tradition.

So what if, instead of asking people in our churches what they want, or even what they need (often the same thing in many imaginations), we were to ask people to read the prophets and the gospels (for a start) and engage in a conversation? A conversation about how that church could grow in faithful response to God's need for a church that can proclaim and enact God's Kingdom.

God's name for us is "my people". I can't imagine we want some reindeer herder somewhere down the line to find a well-preserved specimen of the extinct species once known as "my people" and name us after his wife instead.

Moving into the neighbourhood

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The contrast between what life is and what life should or even could be if different choices had been made, if other events had not taken place, often weigh heavily and leave little room for other voices to break in and tell a new or different story.

For the past 10 years, I have been living through the month of December (as well as the other 11 months) with an incredible group of staff and volunteers who have committed themselves to being "other voices" for a group of men whom many consider to be the lepers, the outcasts of our society. For us, the words of Jesus to visit those in prison have been used as an imperative to respond to those same prisoners once they have been released back to the community. For us at Mennonite

Central Committee Ontario, through Circles of Support and Accountability, our response has been to a specific group of men who are returning to our communities after having been charged, convicted and sentenced for sexual offending. Our commitment to walking with these men is based both on our commitment to the call of Christ as well as to the belief that the risk to reoffend decreases when individuals are both supported and held accountable for their choices and actions. Indeed, research has demonstrated that our communities are safer when individuals who have offended sexually are included in safe and healthy ways rather than being marginalized and isolated. Not an easy task, nor one that is taken lightly and without concern and care for all who have been impacted by sexual offending, those who have been

victimized, communities that live in fear and the offender himself.

For me, the month of December has become a month that I both dread and look forward to with a sense of hope and expectancy. I dread the increased anxiety and despair that the concept of Christmas brings to many, yet I look forward with hope to a very tangible reminder that the light of Christ shines in even the darkest places of not only our world but the lives of individuals. Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of John 1 of the Word "moving into the neighbourhood" is one that I find myself quoting over and over again. Each time I think of Christ "moving into the neighbourhood", I am reminded of each of our new arrivals into our communities. Their arrival is often marked by fear and anger within the community and in the lives of the individuals whose

lives have been turned upside down by the choices they have made. Yet, at the same time, they are coming back; they have served their prison sentences and are now returning to our families, to our communities and to our neighbourhoods. Can there be a place of welcome for them? Should there be a place of welcome for them? The Christmas season is a reminder that Christ was born for all, that no neighbourhood or person is beyond his care and concern. I have been reminded of this many times over the past few weeks as we have gathered as communities of individuals who are committed to working together, some who have created great harm and pain for others, but all of us in need of the redemption and hope that only the incarnation offers. I am reminded of the voice of Christ that we need to hear, not only for ourselves, but also for those

who have offended in ways that are often beyond our imagining. That there is a love that goes beyond our deepest fears and pain, that we are loved even when we cannot love ourselves and that even our worst actions cannot separate us from the love of Christ. I have seen the impact of the incarnation in the lives of the men we work with who are visible reminders that light can break through darkness and that change and new life are possible. I have also heard the voices of staff and volunteers echoing my own thoughts, that we too have been changed and have seen God at work in ways that we could not have imagined.

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Eileen Henderson makes her home in Oakville and is a member of the Board of Trustees of Wycliffe College, Toronto.

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Insha'Allah



MICHAEL BURSLEM
ST. GEORGES GUELPH

The freshly canonized, the Reverend Canon Paul-Gordon Chandler, rector of St. John the Baptist Church in Ma'adi, may not have actually stated that unless we read the great Russian novels we're illiterate; but he has implied it—sort of. He uses them, as he does other works of art, poetry, music and painting, to emphasize the point of his sermon, and as a peg to remember it on. A year or so back he used the Grand Inquisitor of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* to illustrate how no one living would recognize Jesus on his expected return to earth, for the more we study Him, the more we realize we don't know Him. In a recent sermon he likened the disreputable Marmeladov in *Crime and Punishment*, who could steal from his wife, after beating her, and send his daughter into prostitution, to support his addiction to drink, to the Publican who was justified more than the Pharisee. Dostoevsky puts into Marmeladov's mouth, "Come to me! I have already forgiven thee once... I have forgiven thee once... Thy sins which are many are forgiven thee for thou hast loved much... And he will forgive my Sonia, He will forgive, I know it... And He will judge and will forgive all, the good and the evil, the wise and the meek..." So despicable a man; and yet through the eyes of God, and Dostoevsky, so much loved.

Only on retirement, thirteen years ago, did I start to read Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. I can now tell teens not to put off reading them till then.

They're missing a pearl of great price. No one describes a triangular love affair as poignantly as Tolstoy in Anna Karenina and War and Peace. Added to that, though novels, they're great history of everyday life in Russia, certainly the latter.

War and Peace, Book 9, Chapter 1 describes the start of the Franco/Russian War of 1812 which Tolstoy describes as "an event... opposed to human reason and to human nature. Millions of men perpetrated against one another such innumerable crimes, frauds, treacheries..." and so on. Reading this chapter I thought how relevant it is today and every statesman should read it before dragging his or her nation into war. He lists all the causes historians have suggested for the 1812 War in Europe, but concludes that none are the cause, but "we are forced to fall back on fatalism as an explanation of irrational events (that is to say, events the reasonableness of which we do not understand). The more we try to explain such events in history reasonably, the more unreasonable and incomprehensible do they become to us." Certainly the war in Iraq would fit that bill, and possibly even the war in Afghanistan. Many more have died since its declaration than died at 9/11. Does yet more killing atone a heinous crime such as 9/11? I think not, and think Tolstoy would agree.

Shortly after reading that chapter a New York Times headline, "Obama Invokes Gandhi, Whose Ideal Eludes Modern India" jumped out at me. The article, written at the time of President Obama's first visit to India by Jim Yardley, goes on to say that not only has Gandhi eluded a modern, industrial and prosperous India, but he has eluded Obama himself, who "too, has experienced the clash of those lofty expectations with political realities. When he accepted the Nobel Peace

Prize, even as he was conducting two wars, he described himself as "living testimony to the moral force" of the nonviolent movement embodied by Dr. King and Gandhi. "But as a head of state sworn to protect and defend my nation," he continued, "I cannot be guided by their examples alone." Leaders know what is morally right, but can't do it. What a trap we're all in! It's as though our lives were predetermined by someone, or something, some unreasonable and incomprehensible force outside ourselves. We confess that, "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us." We can only throw ourselves before an infinitely loving and forgiving God, as Marmeladov did.

This reminded me of a recent talk given by Michael Slackman, then New York Times correspondent in the Middle East, at St. John's Church. He was speaking about his work in the Middle East before leaving to become correspondent in Europe. Among other things he spoke about the fact that peoples' lives were transitory and predetermined, so that no one could rise above the ceiling to which God had called them. Hence the frequent use of Insha'Allah, if God so will. He was speaking about Muslims. I've seen many here in Egypt caught in monotonous jobs, such as selling fruit or newspapers, or endlessly ironing shirts, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. Many have no job and are reduced to begging on the street. But I believe it's also true for all of us, to a greater or lesser extent. We're all stuck in a rut, not of our choosing, unreasonably and incomprehensibly. Our only hope for a change is to plead to Allah; if He so will.

But God has so willed. He has sent us Jesus Christ to show us the way, not out of the rut, but through it. This both Tolstoy and Dostoevsky so ably illustrate. It's not a way of self-indulgence, but of sacrifice and self-restraint. Paul-Gordon recently spoke of E. Stanley Jones, Methodist bishop in India and great friend of Gandhi whom he once asked how Christianity could become more acceptable in India. The reply was to live more like Jesus Christ, to love others more, and to study other religions less judgmentally. This is good advice, because we're all in the same soup together. Though Jesus is God's only answer, we're certainly not, nor is Christianity. If Gandhi could understand that, why can't we? I sometimes wonder whether those who no longer attend church understand it better than we.

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Editor Comments
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Dr. Michael Burslem is a member of St. George's in Guelph. He spends much of his year (with his wife) in Egypt. His experience is around the tensions between Christianity and Islam. His articles and his prayer are about improving relations between these two communities. He was very close to the recent bombing of a Christian Church in Alexandria. His heart is truly in this ministry of reconciliation. Although the tensions between these two great religions in the world seem distant much of the time, most of us realize that they are closer than we think. Michael's observations and conclusions are very important to us in Canada and in Niagara. He recently received a pacemaker and now feels that he has a new lease on life. We are thankful to Michael for his profound thoughts and we join him in thanksgiving for renewed health.

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St. Matthew's House needs help of parishes and individuals

WENDY ROY
PRIEST, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

For more than 47 years St. Matthew's House, an outreach ministry of the Diocese of Niagara and charitable non-profit multi-service organization has been a place of hope where families, children seniors and individuals most in need and living in poverty across Hamilton receive help to improve their lives and build their capacity to participate in the community.

What began as a store front ministry on Barton Street known as The Compass that provided emergency food and counselling services, St. Matthew's House has grown over the years to provide a range of supportive services in locations across the City of Hamilton. In 1966, when St. Matthew's Anglican

Church, also located on Barton St., was destroyed by fire, it was decided not to rebuild the church but to purchase the present main location and extend the work of The Compass under the name St. Matthew's House.

Today, St. Matthew's House serves in a riding in Ontario that has one of the highest levels of poverty in the Province and in one of the wards that has the highest poverty rate in Hamilton.

Some of St. Matthew's House services include: basic needs and practical assistance i.e. food, meals and other practical assistance at three locations to people living in poverty and at risk of homelessness who have exhausted their resources; a child care centre for preschool children some of whom are at risk; a Community Family Support program for families in crisis; special

needs resourcing services to preschool children; a Health Intervention Program for the Prevention of Homelessness of Older Persons; a Home Support and Outreach program providing social support services to older adults and seniors living in poverty including a seniors' drop-in that offers light breakfasts and lunches, on-site interventions, friendly visiting and opportunities for recreational and social activities; Mental Health Outreach to adults living in the community with mental illness who are at risk of homelessness; Transitional/supportive housing and outreach for male adults unsuccessful at living on their own; a Senior Centre in the east end of Hamilton; an Early Years neighbourhood drop-in family resource centre offering other supports operating at St. John's Anglican Church

in Winona; Christmas Adopt-a-family; a summer camp program for kids from disadvantaged families; legal aid and no charge income tax clinics; social action, advocacy, community development and community education.

More than ever, St. Matthew's House needs the help of parishes, groups and individuals across the diocese. The demand for services is greater than ever as the number of persons requesting help reaches all time high levels. This past year, for example, St. Matthew's House provided emergency food, other basic needs and practical assistance to 22,470 families, seniors and individuals representing 42,386 family members. 5,518 meals were provided to seniors and older adults at the Seniors' Drop-in.

How can you help in 2011? Provide donations of nutritious non-perishable food, gently used clothing, bedding and household items as well as financial contributions. Consider a legacy to St. Matthew's House. Consider volunteering, holding a food drive and participating in letter-writing campaigns about poverty reduction. Please remember St. Matthew's House, the people we serve, our volunteers, board and staff in your prayers. Above all, please become more informed about the impacts of poverty and act to reduce poverty in your community.

For more information or to make a donation, please contact St. Matthew's House by calling 905-523-5546.



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