

# MERRY CHRISTMAS



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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 2014

A Christmas message from Bishop Michael

## Making room for Christ

**“She gave birth to her firstborn son, wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”**

The account of the Saviour's birth in Luke's Gospel is at the centre of all our prayers and praises, our hymns and carols, our joy and celebration at Christmas.

These passages have inspired countless people down through the ages to pen profound pieces of writing, to create glorious compositions of music and to craft countless and beautiful hymns and anthems.

It is my prayer that as we hear all these familiar passages from scripture once again, our lives will be touched with the gifts of God's comfort, hope and peace that we find in the simple beauty of the birth of the Christ Child in Bethlehem long ago.

This year marked my 30th year in ordained ministry and like many of us I have witnessed my share of wonderful Christmas pageants, and in my childhood days I appeared in a few of them as well. I have had such starring roles as the third shepherd on the left, the inn keeper and in my very early days I am sure I remember being a very convincing sheep. (Strangely enough I was never given the role of an angel!?)

However, I remember one more serious pageant, enacted by a youth group. As the scenes were presented a line of scripture was repeated over and over again: “There was no place for them in the inn.”



Bishop Michael and Susan Bird

Photo: Submitted

On the other side of our thoughts and reflections in this holy season we remember that the nativity story also offers us a window into the reality of human life, with all the struggles and the challenges, the pain and the injustice of what it sometimes means to be human.

As I have traveled around this diocese over the past year and as I hear reports from every corner of Niagara, what I am so profoundly grateful for is the fact that in every parish and ministry WE ARE MAKING ROOM for Christ and for all who have been pushed aside and marginalized in this generation.

Here are a few examples:

- Over the spring and summer months, St. Alban's Beamsville made room for Christ and migrant farm workers by building relationships within their community. They rented a bus to bring up to 60 people each Sunday for a worship service in Spanish, offered food and fellowship, and even ESL classes. In opening their doors, St. Alban's became a safe and welcoming spiritual home to many local migrant workers.
- Our ecumenical university chaplaincies at Brock, McMaster and Guelph, each in their own way, are making room for Christ and for students, faculty and staff on campus by creating space—through small groups and simple chats over coffee—to explore life's big questions in a safe and intentional way.
- St. Alban's Glen Williams has responded to the busyness and noisiness of our everyday lives by making room for Christ, and for those seeking a space for quiet and contemplation, by developing a service called Candlelit Church. Through the deep peace and wonder cultivated in the silence and sounds of the simple liturgy a new way of encountering God has been offered.
- In a world where there are nearly 17 million refugees, who have fled for their lives from their home country, St. Columba's St. Catharines is making room for Christ and a refugee family of six. They eagerly look forward to

extending a warm welcome, along with care and support, as this new family settles into Canadian life.

These are just a few of the many ways Christ's transforming grace is enfolding our ministries as we make room for God's mission.

I hope this Christmas we will hear the story of the nativity with fresh ears and open hearts, so that we will find new ways of making room in our hearts, our homes and our lives for the miracle of Christ's coming once again.

**Perhaps amidst the growing crises in Iraq and Syria, your parish might consider sponsoring a family in 2015. Or perhaps you might consider other ways of making room for Christ and our many neighbours who have been relegated to the margins of our society.**

Regardless of how you make room, may the precious story of our Saviour's birth be a blessing to you and yours in this holy season.

Susan and I wish you every blessing.

+Michael Bird



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The Right Reverend Michael A. Bird  
Bishop of Niagara

The Very Reverend Peter A. Wall  
Rector of the Cathedral and Dean of Niagara

<b>SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7</b> ADVENT II	<b>8:30 am</b> <b>10:30 am</b>	<b>Holy Eucharist</b> <b>Choral Eucharist</b> <i>Presenter: The Dean</i> <i>Preacher: Rev. Canon Dr. Sharyn Hall</i>
	<b>4:30 pm</b>	<b>Jazz Vespers</b> <i>featuring the James Sandilands Ensemble</i>
<b>SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14</b> ADVENT III	<b>8:30 am</b> <b>10:30 am</b>	<b>Holy Eucharist</b> <b>Choral Eucharist</b> <i>Presenter: The Dean</i> <i>Preacher: Rev. Canon Dr. Sharyn Hall</i>
<b>SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21</b> ADVENT IV	<b>8:30 am</b> <b>10:30 am</b>	<b>Holy Eucharist</b> <b>Choral Eucharist</b> <i>Preacher: Rev. Canon J. Lefebvre</i> <i>Presenter: The Dean</i>
	<b>7:00 pm</b>	<b>Music for Christmas and Lessons and Carols</b> <i>featuring the Cathedral Choir, Michael Bloss and David Low</i>

<b>WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24</b> CHRISTMAS EVE	<b>4:30 pm</b> <b>9:30 pm</b> <b>10:00 pm</b>	<b>A Family Christmas with Blessing of the Crèche</b> <b>Music for Christmas</b> <i>for organ with congregational carols</i> <b>Choral Eucharist with Procession</b> <i>Preacher: Bishop Michael A. Bird</i> <i>Presenter: The Dean</i>
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<b>THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25</b> THE BIRTH OF THE LORD CHRISTMAS DAY	<b>10:00 am</b>	<b>Holy Eucharist with Carols</b> <i>Presenter and Preacher: The Dean</i> <i>The Wall Family Singers and Michael Bloss, organ</i>
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<b>SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28</b> CHRISTMAS I	<b>10:30 am</b>	<b>Holy Eucharist</b> <i>Presenter and Preacher: Bishop D. Ralph Spence</i>
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**EUCHARIST** Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 12:15 pm • Tuesday 7:30 am

# Electronic waste diverted from landfill

**LESLIE GERLOFS**

As you know brothers and sisters, stewardship involves more than our pocketbooks. Further to this, stewardship of the environment involves a faithful response to God who calls us to care for creation. Responding to this call St. John's Winona hosted its first annual Environment Awareness Day on September 27, 2014.

The event was organized in two parts: an open house with local organizations focused on the environment and an electronics recycling component in co-operation with OES (Ontario Electronic Stewardship). Collection efforts resulted in 1.48 tonnes of electronic waste being diverted from our landfill!

The parish hall buzzed with the sounds and energy of eco-conversation. Vendors taking part in the event included the great ecological organization Arocha, Hamilton's Public Works Department (Water and Organic Waste), Clean Air



Hamilton, Hamilton Victory Gardens, Bay Area Restoration Council, Hamilton Conservation Authority, Norwex Cleaning Products, Ontario Electronic Stewardship as well as our own Greening Niagara.

Building on this year's event and looking to the next, our hope is to involve more participation from the Winona community, heighten awareness and increase the number of organizations engaging us in conversations that lead us to environmental action.

▲ (Left) Volunteers bring a large screen television to add to the electronic recycling bin (right).

► Vendors and participants engage in conversation at the Environment Awareness Day.

Photos: Pam Spencer

*The Reverend Leslie Gerlofs is Priest-in-charge of St. John the Evangelist Winona.*



## The Popcorn Beat

# Radio

**GORD JACKSON**

Whoever receives this child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. For the last among you all is the greatest. (Luke 9:48)

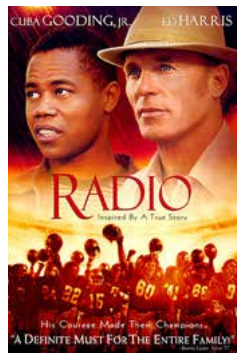
Radio is not about "all of the hits, all of the time!"

Radio is not about biased broadcasters whipping it up for the home team.

Radio is not about football!

Radio, starring Cuba Gooding Jr., Ed Harris, Debra Winger and S. Epatha Merkerson is a 2003 film inspired by the true story of the developmentally delayed James Robert 'Radio' Kennedy (Gooding Jr.).

Living on the outskirts of town with an overworked/underpaid single parent (Merkerson of "Law and Order") Radio is a lonely, isolated man/boy sometimes subjected to the cruel jokes and boorish behaviour of local townfolk. After a particularly sadistic incident perpetrated by a few members of the local high school football team, coach Harold Jones (Ed Harris) takes



Radio (so nicknamed because of his love of radios) under his wing.

But the relationship isn't easy for either man.

How does Coach Jones balance his time-consuming mentorship of Radio with urgent responsibilities to his family, school, young athletes and the small community's high expectations for their football team's success?

Radio! How does he reconcile the coach's outreach with local bigotry, systematic exclusion and an over-zealous cop who nearly blows everything?

How would we?

In the wrong hands, Radio could have been just another cliché-ridden, inspirational sports movie. Thanks to Mike Rich's

spare screenplay and Mike Tollin's unobtrusive direction, it's not.

Instead, Radio is rich in nuance, foreshadowing and symbolism. Radio's confinement behind a fenced-off practice field, his pre-occupation with radios and what makes them tick, and the pushing of a supermarket cart along the town's railway tracks visually remind us of Radio's estrangement from the mainstream. He can't connect with his community, most of it doesn't want to connect with him and Coach Jones has his own communication issues.

A character-driven film, Radio promotes full acceptance and inclusion of the "different" among us. But it also uncomfortably challenges our own communication skills, mindless bigotries, intolerances and depth of Christian commitment when faced with "the different."

A journey into courage, principle, atonement and reconciliation, James Robert 'Radio' Kennedy became the gift no one expected.

But only for those with eyes to see and ears to hear!

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HOLLIS<sup>St</sup>orial

# A young girl finds Christmas

**HOLLIS HISCOCK**

I could not sleep. The sounds outside my window were deafening. I wanted to join the merriment. Papa said, "It's not safe for an 11-year-old girl."

When Mama tucked me in several hours ago, I asked why so many people were in our little town. She replied "everyone must return to their birthplace for registration by the foreign government to pay taxes". Mama was not happy about paying more taxes.

I really tried to sleep but the whooping, laughing, cheering, shouting, squealing and even taking the Lord's name in vain prevented my eyelids from closing.

Even when Mama came to kiss me good night, I kept my eyes shut tightly, pretending I was in dreamland.

I listened until I heard the musical notes of sleep coming from my parents' bedroom, then slipping from my cosy bed, I tiptoed to the front door. Gingerly

I turned the key, made sure the rusty hinges didn't squeak, and stepped into the darkness.

The cool night air forced me to wrap my shawl more tightly and I covered my face so nobody would recognize me and send me home.

Blending in with the crowd, moving in the same direction, I asked a lady where we were going.

"To the stable," she said. Before I could ask why, a booming voice chided, "Make way for the stinking shepherds!"

Now shepherds rarely came to town at night—they stayed on the hillsides protecting their masters' sheep from wild animals and thieves.

I watched the crowd; some were holding their noses, others just pointed and jeered.

The shepherds kept smiling, laughing and singing a joyful song about praising God and encouraging people to be full of peace and goodwill towards each other.

Intrigued, the crowd followed

them; everyone seemed to be going in the same direction as we were.

While yawning for the 100th time and running to keep up with the adults, I was almost bowled over by a herd of camels.

They came barrelling through, ridden by men dressed in royal clothing. They sat upright, looked straight ahead and held what look like precious packages.

They swept past us—heading toward the same stable as we were.

Minutes later we all stood before the stable. I tried to sneak in but the doorway was blocked with people. Since we played there almost every day, I knew another way in, so I ran around to the back to find the opening where the animals roamed freely between the barn and the pasture.

Inside the lanterns cast a dim light and I could see people gathered around a certain stall; something special seemed to be happening.

I edged closer but could see

nothing. I climbed up to the hayloft, found a spot just above the stall, looked down and saw a baby!

The shepherds were there, telling everybody what had happened to them. While guarding their sheep on the hillside angels appeared in the darkened sky, sang to them and told them about a special baby being born in a stable in Bethlehem. "We had to come and see for ourselves," chimed in another shepherd.

They seemed so excited because God had revealed this miracle to them. They taught the crowd the song sung by the angels. I sang along with them, "Glory to God in the highest and peace and goodwill to all people on earth." No one was holding their nose now.

When someone shouted, "Make way for the astrologers from the east," everything went quiet. They walked briskly towards the stall, approached the baby's parents and said, "For two years we have followed God's star to this stable."



I watched as they approached the manger, bowed to the baby and seemed to be praying to him. "Jesus is his name," said his father Joseph, and his mother Mary remarked that an angel had appeared to her, and told her that she would be the mother of God's child.

The visitors placed gifts next to the child. A woman whispered, "They are giving him gold, myrrh and frankincense."

"Why are they giving these gifts to baby Jesus?" I inquired.

I felt a hand on my shoulder. I knew my mother's touch.

Frightened I looked up, but she was smiling. So was my father.

"We have waited many centuries for this night," she told me.

I asked what it meant.

"It shows God still loves us," she replied.

Later, walking home we heard people talking, and I am certain I heard angels singing.

## Tonight, Everywhere Is Bethlehem

**ALLISON LYNN AND GERALD FLEMMING**

Burlington

There's a boy in the African desert  
Who is watching the skies tonight  
He knows that two thousand years ago  
A child was born from the light  
And his heart beholds that beautiful sight

Tonight, everywhere is Bethlehem  
Children are praying for peace and love  
And whispering "amen"  
In their dreams they see the manger  
And the Saviour who Mary tends  
Tonight, everywhere is Bethlehem

There's a girl singing carols in Times Square  
Collecting spare change for the poor  
She sings "no crib for a bed"  
To remind us what Christmas is for  
And her voice rings out so sweet and so pure



Tonight, everywhere is Bethlehem  
Children are praying for peace and love  
And whispering "amen"  
In their dreams they see the manger  
And the Saviour who Mary tends  
Tonight, everywhere is Bethlehem

Do not be afraid. There is great news, for all the Earth.  
A child is born. He's Christ the Lord. Hope of the world.

Tonight, everywhere is Bethlehem  
Children are praying for peace and love  
And whispering "amen"  
In their dreams they see the manger  
And the Saviour who Mary tends  
Tonight, everywhere is Bethlehem

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## NIAGARA ANGLICAN

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## Book Review

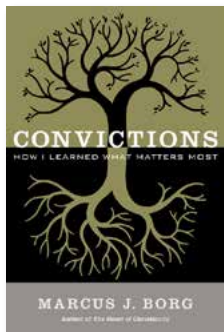
## On a deepening relationship with God

**Convictions: How I learned what matters most** by Marcus J. Borg (2014, Harper One)

## ROB ROI

Borg is a New Testament scholar who has written several books including *Meeting Jesus Again For The First Time*, and *Putting Away Childish Things*. He was also a member of the Jesus Seminar.

I can relate to Borg – not only because we were both raised Lutherans and married an Anglican, but because our faith



journey is similar. Our youth believed the Bible "was the word God" and it was totally true—no questions asked. He notes that it

was the Protestant Reformation that insisted the Bible had more authority than the church.

"Conversions: major understanding of the Bible and God and Jesus and what it means to be Christian. Convictions: the affirmations that have flowed from these changes. Three conversions and convictions have shaped my life: intellectual, political and religious," Borg states.

He points out the Bible has political issues, which are also religious, and are about economic justice and fairness, peace and nonviolence. Borg mentions

for the first three centuries of Christianity, Christians refused to take part in war, and that early writers attribute this to the teachings of Jesus.

Borg is convinced that salvation as mentioned in the Bible is not about an afterlife, but about changing our ways in this life—so Christianity and salvation are mostly about this life not the next. He reminds us that Jesus' message was not about "how to get to heaven," but about the "kingdom of God."

I found it very helpful in his dealing with the Bible's metaphors, Jesus' parables, birth

stories and the crucifixion.

Borg claims the decline in church attendance can be blamed on television and radio that broadcast evangelical and fundamentalist programs.

I think it can be summed up nicely when he states "Being Christian isn't primarily about having a correct theology by getting our beliefs right. It is about a deepening relationship with God as known especially in Jesus."

*The Reverend Rob Roi is a parish deacon at St. James Dundas.*

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*In the next Niagara Anglican*

*What was said and done at Synod 2014*

*Let's Dance! A Murray Bland reminiscence*

## From the website ...

## Bagnall Lodge to be sold to school

At the end of October the Board of Canterbury Hills formally returned Bagnall Lodge and the land upon which it sits to the Diocese.

The move comes after thorough discernment in which the Board decided to refocus its mission on the camping ministries of Canterbury Hills with an eye towards sustainability.

A previous agreement will also see a separate parcel of the Canterbury Hills property, some 60 acres of environmentally sensitive land, formally transferred to the Hamilton Conservation Authority in 2015, for continued enjoyment by campers and other users.

With the knowledge that the lease of this part of the property would be ending, Synod Council voted to consider offers of purchase for the five acre Bagnall Lodge parcel of land on the Canterbury Hills property. A conditional offer of purchase from the Dundas Valley Montessori School has been accepted by Synod Council. The School plans on using the existing building and surrounding land for its secondary school program.

Canon Christyn Perkins, the diocesan representative for this matter, commented that the agreement was "quite exciting for both the School and the Diocese because of our shared values and commitment to see the site offer quality educational programming that supports intellectual and spiritual growth while preserving the ecological integrity of the property."

The sale is expected to be completed in the spring of 2015.

A service to deconsecrate the chapel at Bagnall Lodge will take place in mid-November. At that time Bishop Michael Bird will give thanks for the conference ministry of Canterbury Hills and the many ways it has served to further God's mission in our diocese.

The Canterbury Hills property, located in Ancaster, Ontario, is part of the Dundas Valley Environmentally Sensitive Area, and the Provincially Significant Sulphur Creek Valley area.

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*In conversation with ...*

# Regan O’Callaghan

Priest and artist Regan O’Callaghan spent September as artist-in-residence in Niagara Diocese. The Niagara Anglican conversed with him as he was starting his final hectic week with us.

**NA: Who is Regan O’Callaghan?**

**RO:** I am originally from New Zealand. I have mixed Maori and Irish heritage which has influenced me in my art practice as well as my faith.

I was an artist before I was ordained into the Anglican Church in London, U.K, where I have mostly been living for the past 23 years. I am licensed to the Diocese of London as a self supporting priest/artist.

The ministry I am involved in has taken me to some wonderful places, including being artist-in-residence in Saint Paul’s Cathedral London, a project in Israel and three months in the Amazon.

**NA: You describe your work as an “Art Ministry”—what do you**

**mean?**

**RO:** Before I was ordained, a group of us who were artists and from the same church, set up a community art project. Our aim was to encourage people to explore and be creative through the arts. We worked with faith groups, community organizations, schools and people on the fringes of society.

This work has continued in ordained ministry, where I see art as the facilitator to encourage people in their worship and their faith/life journeys. I believe we are all creative and that our faith challenges us to think outside the box. Art is a great way to inspire and nurture this.

**NA: You brought your ministry to Niagara Diocese for a month; what have you been doing?**

**RO:** Visiting different parishes in the diocese and meeting lots of lovely people.

I have been preaching and giving presentations on the work

that I do, as well as leading icon writing workshops and a youth gathering where we created a paper sculpture inspired by the theme “home.”

I was also based in the Cathedral and involved in Supercrawl in Hamilton. What an amazing event this is! A real opportunity to meet lots of different people.

**NA: What do you hope parishes and groups will learn from your time here and apply to their own situations?**

**RO:** Well if we believe in a creative God who created us and the universe then surely we ourselves must be creative.

I hope our shared time together has inspired people to believe in their own innate creative abilities. I always feel I have gained something.

I also hope that people have experienced a deeper understanding of religious icons and how they can enhance prayer life.



Regan O’Callaghan  
Photo: Submitted

explore. Seek understanding by challenging perceptions, especially the negative ones! Creative exploration and expression are great tools to help with this.

**NA: Thank you for sharing your ministry experience with us. Blessings for the future.**

**RO:** Thank you and big thanks also to the team who organized my residency here in the Diocese of Niagara. I have been shown wonderful hospitality, met lots of lovely people and have been incredibly privileged to join churches in worship and see how they serve their communities. I hope to visit again. Peace and blessings.



► Regan at The Gathering youth event at St. John’s Ancaster.



► Participants show off their handiwork at an icon class at St. George’s Guelph, organized in partnership with The Sacred Wisdom Centre. Regan O’Callaghan was the leader.  
Photos: submitted by Regan O’Callaghan

## The impact of an artist-in-residence in Niagara

MATTHEW GRIFFIN

We live and delight in creation. And we, who are made in the image and likeness of God, share in God’s creative work in myriad ways in our lives. That looks different for each of us: for some, it’s cooking; others, music; others, reading. Whether we give ourselves credit for it or not, we live creatively.

Bringing an artist-in-residence to the diocese is about responding to that creativity. It helps us to ask questions of ourselves about how we’re nurturing that creativity, how it’s part of our faith journeys and what it looks like when we gather as God’s people for worship.

Regan was a great choice for our first artist-in-residence precisely because he lives in that space not only where he pays deep attention to art and faith, but also his ministry is about welcoming others (including those who’d never call themselves artists) into that reflection and engagement by exploring what it means to follow Christ passionately in our lives.

We’re thrilled to have hosted him. As we work on future projects, we’ll be excited to involve other media—be it music or sculpture or something else—to welcome even more people into the question of how to join more deeply into the Creator’s work.

*Matthew Griffin is the Rector at Church of the Nativity Hamilton. EMAIL: rector.nativity@gmail.com*

## An iconic reflection

STEVE HOPKINS

In addition to Regan’s gentle guidance and deep skill, I appreciated the technical process and the internal dialogue it provoked.

Our icons were painted on wood in egg tempera, the same technique that yielded some of the most beautiful works of art from the Byzantine era, through the Middle Ages, into the Renaissance. Immersing myself in the medium, I felt a profound connection to that heritage, to those who have made images for worship, and those who have contemplated them.

My own subject was the Pantocrator: a classic image of Christ the Ruler of All, his right hand raised in blessing, a closed book of Gospels in his left.

My meditation focused on his face: is he stern or compassionate? Does this image reflect the incarnate one who shares our suffering and redeems us or the transcendent one who sits in judgment? Or both? And why does it matter to me? I’m still contemplating that puzzle.

*Archdeacon Steve Hopkins is Rector of St. Christopher’s Burlington.*



# CHRISTMAS MEMORIES AND MORE

## Greatest gift

### LEE STEELS

Oakville  
retells a famous Christmas story

Give what you have; to some it may be better than what you dare to think (Longfellow).

Once upon a time in a small town, people lived in various conditions, just as they do today.

This town had the largest church in the country, with a huge belfry and the most magnificent bells. These bells were so many and so large that nobody had ever been able to ring them to their full potential.

There was, however, a rumour that the greatest gift given at Christmas Eve would please God so much that God would ring the bells. Although it had never happened, each year the people lived in anticipation that this year the miracle would occur.



Now this particular year had been tough. People needed a miracle like never before. At the Christmas Eve service, the church was packed.

At the offertory, gifts were stacked on the altar. Rich people offered fortunes, but no bells rang. After everyone had made their offerings, an old woman hobbled up and quietly placed something very small on the altar. People paid her little heed. She was the local bag lady. Folks

avoided her.

The priest was about to continue when suddenly the bells began to ring.

The miracle had happened—the tolling of the bells was the most beautiful sound people had ever heard.

Everyone strained to see what the old lady had given. What was her great gift? Only the priest was close enough to see what it was—a dirty old penny! How could this be? How could this penny bring the miracle when all the riches had failed? Simple! The woman had given a penny—but it was all she had.

(See Mark 12:41–44 and Luke 21:1–4 for *The Widow's offering*.)

## A Christmas memory

### CARLA ANN KUCHARD

St. Catharines

When I was a little girl, Christmas couldn't come fast enough. As the colder weather approached, I'd run to the bedroom window each morning to see if any snowflakes had accumulated on the windowsill overnight.

Soon the house would be filled with delicious smells coming from the kitchen. Mom was baking her big, beautiful light and dark fruit cakes. Many batches of delectable shortbread cookies would follow, all cut in lovely shapes of angels, holly and bells.

A Christmas pudding would always be sent to us by Aunt Helen from Charlottetown, along with several presents all nicely wrapped, for each of us. We'd eagerly place them under the pretty Christmas tree in the

living room. I was positively dying to know what was in those boxes. When no one was around I'd undo the tape and wrapping at the end of each gift box, and try to see what it contained!

Curiosity also got the best of me on the top shelf of mom's side of the bedroom closet – that's where the gifts from Santa were hidden. As Christmas Day drew nearer, the pile filled up with paper dolls, colouring books and crayons, little brooms and small toys. What a treasure! What wonderful Christmas stockings appeared on Christmas morning!

Finally after all the wonderful preparations, Christmas Day would arrive, along with aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

That's when I knew what the best present of all was, a house full of love.



### Coming Event

## Famous story to be retold

A dramatic reading of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* will also be a fundraiser for the Achievement Breakfast Club Program in Hamilton.

The Church of the Ascension celebrates the Christmas spirit with its presentation of the famous story on Sunday Dec. 7 at 3:00 p.m.

Musicians Brenda Uchimaru and the Kokoro Singers, readers Bishop Ralph Spence, Judy Maddren, Jason Farr, Matt Hayes and Anne Bokma with MC Connie Smith promise an afternoon of great entertainment.

"This is the last venture in our Festival Series," reports Heather Oliver, Chair of the Festival Committee. "It has been an exciting year to celebrate the renewal of our worship space and share it with the community."

Tickets (\$20.00 – students \$10.00) and information are available from the church office at 905-527-3505.

## A special Christmas

### LOIS FILCE

Beamsville

Seventy years ago I was facing my first Christmas away from home. Home was in Ontario, but my husband and I were now living in a converted summer cottage in Boundary Bay, Washington, USA.

Bert had completed a tour of duty with the Royal Air Force (RAF) in Egypt and Malta, and had been posted to this station as a wireless instructor.

The war in Europe was winding down, and most stations were being moved to the west coast to prepare for action in the Pacific.

Boundary Bay was a Royal Air Force station, but it was also a summer resort for Vancouverites. To ease the housing shortage, owners rented to service personnel. Our landlord was a teacher in Vancouver.

Decorations in our cottage were simple. We walked out into the surrounding woods to cut down the perfect tree. All ornaments were handmade. Two weeks before Christmas two big boxes

arrived from Ontario, containing not only gifts but a homemade Christmas cake, pudding and cookies.

We invited a couple from Alberta to have Christmas Eve supper with us before walking to a local hall at the end of our road. Here the officers from the station had arranged a Christmas Eve service; a small organ had been moved in to provide music.

As we left our cottage to walk to the hall, huge snowflakes began to fall – such a magical surprise! Snow in the area was rare, and this was the only snowfall we experienced that entire winter.

Everyone came in a mood to sing carols. The padre from the station gave an inspiring message to this group of homesick worshippers.

I did miss my family, but that was a Christmas I would never forget.

As "Peace on earth" echoed throughout the building, little did we know then that peace would come very soon, and we would spend Christmas 1945 in our own homes.





# CHRISTMAS MEMORIES AND MORE

## Death could not stop the Christmas spirit

**HELEN HISCOCK**  
Burlington

Christmas 1970, almost six months after my father's death, our first Christmas without him. Our tradition, like that of many people, had always been to attend the midnight Eucharist. After the service, my parents' friends always came to our house for late night drinks and food. That year, my mother said she didn't want anyone to come back to the house after church, she was still grieving, and was not in the mood to entertain. She suggested we would leave

as soon as we had received Communion, go home, turn out the lights and go to bed. We had barely arrived home and had a snack ourselves, when there was a knock on the door. When we opened the door, there were all the friends who had always been there! They knew how my mother felt, but were determined not to break the tradition. They came in; we had the usual refreshments, and shared memories of past Christmases. Their true Christian and Christmas spirit touched our hearts and our souls, and shone a light into our darkness.



## My most meaningful Christmas service

**DAWN MINOR**  
Wainfleet

It was Christmas Eve 2012 and we had the Venerable Ken Cardwell as our Interim Rector. Particularly hidden on the altar was a tray of frosted cupcakes, each with a candle. The Reverend Ken was concentrating on the children that night – calling them to all come up around the altar.

He proceeded to question them about being invited to their friends' birthday parties. We then sang two rounds of Happy Birthday to Jesus, accompanied by the organist Geo Wyatt. Each child got a cupcake to take home. It was the most meaningful Christmas Service I have ever attended in my 60 years as a member.

## The straw—what was it for?

**B-J MILLER**  
Guelph

One Christmas season in the early 1970's, when my daughters were four and six, I bought a small bale of straw from a local farm. Then gathering my family around the kitchen table, I explained my plan. Starting on the first day of December, each person would secretly do one good deed or

chore for another member of the family every day. This was to be done as an honour system. The first day started off well as our six year-old skipped downstairs to brush the snow off the side steps while her dad was still in the bathroom. Her sister ran to pull up the bed covers as neatly as she could for her sibling. Each morning the girls, full of glee, looked forward to surprising each other or one of us.

The straw—what was it for? After each good deed was completed, we were allowed to place a handful of straw in a small wooden box I had put near the Christmas tree. December 24 arrived and already there was a full manger—a warm and cosy bed prepared with love for the soon-to-arrive Christ child!

## A Childhood Christmas in Cape Breton

**HEATHER-JOY BRINKMAN**  
Stoney Creek

As sisters in the early 1950's, Joanne and I, a two-year old and a four-year old, enjoyed the snowy days of Christmas in the hills and countryside of Cape Breton Island. We lived in a rectory, a two-storey shingled house with a veranda wrapped round the front, on a wide country snow-ploughed road, with rolling hills a good walk away. The slopes were perfect for tobogganing and skiing with mom and dad.

We had moved to Coxheath, Cape Breton, from our father's first three-point parish in Alberton, Prince Edward Island, where every Christmas he had travelled by horse and sleigh over fields and frozen rivers to a waiting congregation. I remember Mom pushing us in a Christmas red wooden sleigh, handcrafted on solid wood runners, with us sitting in wool blankets deep within. How we loved our daily push down the snow-packed road, tasting the snowflakes on our tongues and our cheeks reddened by the wind. With Dad I remember tramping through the snow in the woods behind the rectory searching for a Christmas tree, a lovely balsam fir if we were lucky. Decorating that tree as

high as I could reach was always my joy, while Joanne creatively set up the Manger Scene with the only limitation the Wise Men had to wait until later. (Little did we know our youngest sister, Catherine Merri, would be born 10 years later in Merriton, Ontario, and no one could stop her from hiding the Wise Men in the stable.) After church on Christmas Day, we could hardly wait for our festive meal round the old oak pedestal table, often with snow swirling about and building

up against the window panes. Joanne and I loved the taste and texture of our mother's roast turkey dressing, even more than the dark juicy meat or the potatoes mashed with turnip or the oven-baked squash or even the homemade apple and cinnamon pie. After saying grace, we could all pass the food around to the left and dig in. Sharing that meal together was the best thing that Christmas could bring!

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Readers  
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# CHRISTMAS MEMORIES AND MORE

## The Carpenter

**ANGELA RUSH**

Burlington

Nestled in His heavenly manger,  
Carved from the finest lumber.  
Lay our Saviour our newborn King,  
To awaken all from slumber.

From the East and from the West,  
So many travelled to see,  
This tiny babe, the Prince of Peace,  
Destined to set us free.

A Carpenter by trade,  
His hands did more than create.  
A Carpenter for our souls,  
Nailed to timber was his fate.

In wood His life began,  
Heaven's Carpenter He would be,  
On wood His life would end,  
The Carpenter's covenant for you and me.

Angela Rush copyright ©2003. Used with permission.

## Top 10 Ways to Keep Christ in Christmas

**THE REVEREND MICHELLE, MIKE, NATASHA, TAYLOR AND CONNOR STANFORD**  
Oakville

In 2003 we came up with this list which we handed out as bookmarks at the Oakville Santa Claus parade ... my kids and I have updated it a bit.

- 1 Commit to gifting local food banks the type of food they need throughout the New Year.
- 2 Write a thank you letter to Jesus for all the blessings gifted to you this year.
- 3 Select a local community service agency and "GIVE" them 52 hours of volunteering throughout the New Year.



Photo: submitted

- 4 Read the story of the birth of Christ on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.
- 5 Have a birthday party for Jesus—sing Happy Birthday and have a cake.
- 6 Display a nativity scene in your home ... wait until Christmas Eve night to put baby Jesus in the manger ... set the

Wise Men far away from the house and have them travel towards Bethlehem, arriving at your manger on Epiphany (12 days later).

- 7 Wish people a Merry Christmas right through Epiphany ... tell them WHY you are saying this.
- 8 Sing "Joy to the World" as loud as you can.
- 9 See Christ in someone you have been estranged from - call them, invite them to share a meal with you.
- 10 Let all you meet see Christ in YOU—smile, offer to help, be patient, be graceful, forgive, share.



## 'Twas the night before Christmas

**DIANA DUNCAN-FLETCHER**

Carrying Place

Christmas Eve 1981 was a memorable one.

Our family had recently moved into a new rectory which was not located anywhere near our church, St. John's Port Dalhousie.

With our three children, five and under, very wired up, it seemed impossible to get them settled and ready for bed before the sitter came. We had just returned from the Family Service where all the children had participated in a nativity pageant.

As anyone married to a priest knows, Christmas and Easter are not without extra stresses, and now my spouse was definitely not around to help with getting our children under control. I also needed to get ready to go to the late service where I would be

singing in the choir. But things were pretty chaotic and, by then, I had a splitting headache so it seemed unlikely I would be going anywhere.

Then the telephone rang. A parishioner, a lovely Irishman, was calling to find out the service time. Without missing a beat, I said into the receiver: "Oh Santa, I am so sorry that you felt it necessary to call. Jennie, Sarah and Bobby are still up and ..."

The response was reassuring: "Shall I have a word with them and see if I can settle them?"

"Oh, Santa, I would appreciate that so much," I said, "as I am trying to get ready for the 11:00 p.m. Christmas Eucharist."

At that point my son suddenly became very quiet. I handed him the phone.

I have no idea what "Santa" said to him, but it certainly made a difference. He and his older

sisters scrambled into bed in no time flat. The silence was deafening, and then I heard whispers coming from the girls' room.

"Santa told Bobby that the next time he circled the house if he saw any of us out of bed and not fast asleep, he would not be coming down our chimney! So he does know we moved here! We'd better get to sleep right now."

After that there was no noise. I had time to relax and prepare for the service. The sitter came and marveled at the quiet house. I filled her in on the evening's proceedings and she laughed and told me that one day I would look back and laugh too.

That was 33 years ago and I have often looked back at that night and remember the late Dennis Crothers who made such a wonderful Santa Claus.

## Share your Christmas Happenings

Christmas brings extra busy days, exciting events and occasionally the unexpected in the Churches and parishes around Niagara Diocese.

We want you to share your "Christmas glad tidings" with the readers of the *Niagara Anglican*.

Send us photos (caption, photographer's name, permission to publish children's pictures from parents or guardians, etc.) and short articles (200 words or less) about what you experience this Christmas.

Because of our deadline dates, timing is crucial. We will need to receive your Christmas items by **January 6, 2015** at the absolute latest (earlier would be much appreciated).

Send items to [editor@niagaraanglican.ca](mailto:editor@niagaraanglican.ca)

**Thanks and have a fantastic Christmas!**





# CHRISTMAS MEMORIES AND MORE

## My first midnight service

**GRACE WHITTLE**  
Hamilton

I remember my first Christmas midnight service.

I attended a small church in the far east of Hamilton. It was surrounded by open fields and a few buildings.

It was a clear beautiful night, and as I sat in the quiet church I felt I was far away, outside the manger.

The said service was so beautiful.

I went the next year, it was music and singing and the magic was gone, but I still remember the blessing I got that night.

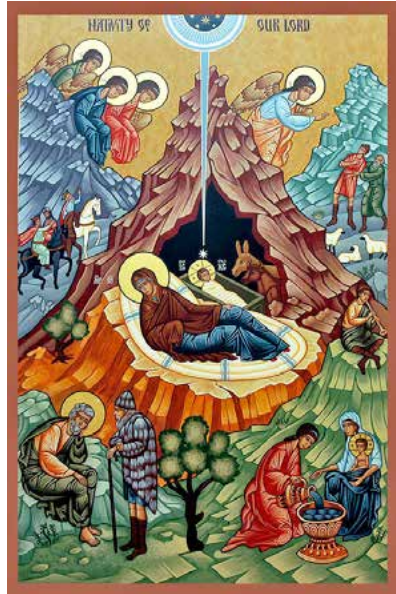


Image: orthodoxroad.com

## Reflecting on a Christmas Icon

**MATTHEW GRIFFIN**  
Hamilton

At first glance, it might seem confusing and cluttered. As you gaze at the icon, notice Mary at the centre, resting in a cave; beside her is Jesus, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

It's not a typical Western Christmas image. Icons aren't about representing what things looked like, but are meant to draw us into the reality of God's presence, and into prayer.

And so as you look longer, you'll begin to see that into the midst of the darkness and the chaos of the world, God comes to live as one of us. The icon depicts both beginning and end, as the manger looks like a casket and the swaddling clothes look like grave clothes.

High above Mary and Jesus is the star that we'll remember at the Feast of the Epiphany, delighting in his birth and

calling midwives, angels, shepherds and magi alike to rejoice in the good news of God coming into the world. The tree, the ox and the ass all point to where the story started—the shoot that will spring from the branch of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1–2)—and how even the animals will know him (Isaiah 1:3). Joseph is off to the side, protecting the newborn and his mother; above are the angels, some speaking to the shepherds and others singing and glorifying God.

Into darkness, in the frailest and most mortal of ways, comes God in all of God's fullness—wrapped in vulnerability, utterly dependent, and yet the source of joy and delight for all the world. I'm caught, each time I see this icon, by the way the space around Jesus and Mary seems to be a rupture of the world around them: what happens in the Nativity rends the old and is the beginning of the making of all things new.

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### Deadlines and Submissions for Niagara Anglican

**Deadlines –**  
January 2015 – November 25  
February 2015 – December 30  
March 2015 – January 25

**Submissions –**  
**News** – 500 words or less  
**Articles** – 750 words or less  
**Letters to the Editor** – 300 words or less  
**Reviews (books, films, music, theatre)** – 400 words or less  
**Original cartoons or art** – contact the Editor  
**Photos** – very large, high resolution, action pictures (people doing something). Include name of photographer.

**Questions or information:**  
contact the Editor at [editor@niagaraanglican.ca](mailto:editor@niagaraanglican.ca)  
or 905-635-9463



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# Scattering garden transferred to cemetery

**HOLLIS HISCOCK**

George Lyall brought his beloved wife Louise home to Grace Church Waterdown to be her final resting place.

Louise died in 2009 and her ashes were interred in St. Christopher's Garden of Memory Burlington.

Three years later new legislation regarding scattering gardens and cemeteries came into effect in Ontario. The new law required all scattering gardens to be provincially-licensed operations.

Because the Garden of Memory was not a licensed cemetery the parish had to examine several options before making a decision.

They decided the garden would be moved from its present site, and began to explore suitable locations.

The final decision was to relocate the Garden of Memory to a new St. Christopher's Garden within the licensed cemetery at Grace Church Waterdown.

On October 4, 2014, families and friends of the 39 people interred in the Garden of Memory gathered at St. Christopher's Burlington. Following an inspiring thanksgiving worship service families collected soil from the garden and placed it in individually labelled containers. Then the procession weaved its way to Grace Church Waterdown where the soil was re-interred in the newly designed garden.

George and Louise Lyall lived



Top left: Following prayers, family and friends gather at the Garden of Memory scattering garden at St. Christopher's to collect soil to be taken to Grace Church.

Top right: Fran and Bill MacLean receive the box for Carole Don, Fran's sister, from the scattering garden.

Lower left: The new St. Christopher's Garden, in the cemetery of Grace Church Waterdown, is ready for re-interment of ashes.

Right: Fran and Bill place the soil at Grace Church.

Photos: Hollis Hiscock

in Waterdown and attended Grace Church for approximately 27 years before moving to Burlington in the mid-nineties, when they began attending St.

Christopher's. As George scattered the earth from the container, he was bringing Louise home to rest in peace.

## Book Review

# Citizens of Churchland

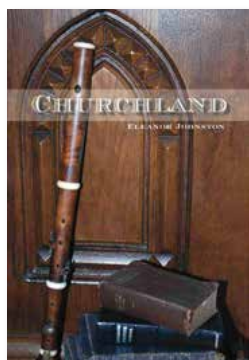
**Churchland**  
by Eleanor Johnston  
(2014, Hearth Publications)

**MAX WOOLAVER**

As we all know, Churchland exists.

And, when we visit real places, we like to have a well-informed, intelligent and witty guide. Dr. Eleanor Johnston, in her well-informed, intelligent, witty and warm novel, *Churchland*, is just such a writer and just such a guide.

Johnston is herself a citizen of Churchland. She has heard the music; she has prayed the prayers. Eleanor has heard the



language spoken in this, her chosen homeland. She has breathed the air of Churchland's worship, argument, theological discourse and longing. She translates all

this into a cogent plot, taut prose and entertaining, imaginative scene setting.

I have no doubt other "citizens" of Churchland will find the novel compelling reading. Eleanor possesses that rare gift of enabling folk who think they know their country well, to see it again. There is then, a frisson of curiosity which is aroused through the reading of a novel set in your own "country". There are regular moments of delight and at times, a gentle anguish, as we hear words we have heard before and perhaps have spoken ourselves! I expect that church-goers of all stripes, especially Anglicans, and especially Diocese of Niagara

Anglicans, will hear voices they have heard before.

The world of this brave novel revolves around the spiritual, emotional and intellectual life of a freshly ordained, young, female Anglican priest, the Reverend Marcia Peters. She meets the contemporary Anglican Church in all its stable, tender glory and its defensive pettiness. The novel moves alertly along through a fine cast of well drawn characters immersed in the emerging complexities of ongoing relationships. I can't help but think of the old adage: "We can choose our friends, but not our family".

The adage leads me to offer what I feel is the secret at the

heart of Johnston's novel. The novelist's "warts and all" perspective is more than tempered by her devotion to the revelation at the heart of her book: *Churchland* is all of us. This novel is in itself a labour of love and is about the labour of love which, in turn, is the labour of *Churchland*.

I have no doubt a reading of *Churchland* will inspire discussion among thoughtful readers as to how well we behave at the table to which we are all invited. Heartily recommended!

*The Reverend Max Woolaver is Rector of St. Andrew's Grimsby*



# New legislation impacts communications

**BILL MOUS**

On July 1, new federal legislation came into force to help combat the proliferation of spam messages. Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) requires all organizations that send "commercial electronic messages (CEM)" to obtain either express or implied consent of the recipient. Most messages our churches send do not fall into the CEM category, but advertising for an event or selling a product or service would normally fall within the definition of a CEM.

As with many pieces of new legislation, we are in a bit of a transition period with regard to how best to adhere to the requirements of the law. As such, there seems to be a variety of approaches to this matter. What's more, our context in the church is unique from business and other non-profit organizations. Given this, the advice the Diocese has received is that implied consent can be used to communicate with people who have an existing relationship with the church.



This is defined as someone who has been connected to our ministries within the previous two years (through membership, volunteering or a donation). For instance, a person who attends church on a monthly basis and who has made a few donations in the past two years can continue

to be on your email list, even without asking. Of course, that's provided they have not explicitly requested to be removed from the list. People new to the parish would either have to give their consent to be added to the list (perhaps included as part of a parishioner information form)

or only once they have met the requirements for implied consent.

With properly maintained lists and databases, implied consent can alleviate the onerous task of obtaining express consent from everyone in our circles of ministry. That said, if you're starting a new mailing list or database or starting up a new ministry, it seems as though the best practice going forward would be to obtain express consent before adding people to a mass-distributed email.

CASL also requires that all messages – regardless of the consent mechanism employed – contain the following information: the sender's identity and address along with a telephone number, email or web address, and a clear unsubscribe mechanism which the recipient can use to withdraw consent. Many free newsletter services are available to help meet these requirements of the legislation, with MailChimp being among the most popular and used by many faith groups, like the Anglican Church of



Canada and KAIROS for their monthly communications.

Communicating the gospel and the story of our faith tradition across the many and varied media platforms available today is both a challenge and a gift; it requires intentionality, focus and persistence. CASL presents some specific challenges in our attempts to communicate, but it also seeks to reduce spam from our inbox and ensure the email we receive comes as a result of a relationship we share with the sender. For more information, go to [fightspam.gc.ca](http://fightspam.gc.ca).

*The Reverend Bill Mous is the diocesan Director of Justice, Community and Global Ministries. EMAIL: [bill.mous@niagaraanglican.ca](mailto:bill.mous@niagaraanglican.ca)*

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