

What young people look forward to at a diocesan youth event ...

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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

FEBRUARY 2014

A cry for **BOLD ACTION AGAINST POVERTY** has reached Queen's Park —Promise made, promise kept



◀ Betty Denny, Paul Miller, Leslie Gerlofs and Bill Mous at their meeting in Stoney Creek.

Photo: Submitted by by Bill Mous

the Gospel call for justice and compassion.

The Reverend Leslie Gerlofs is Priest-in-Charge, St. John the Evangelist Winona.

In 2014 will you join me in the chorus?

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Member's statement made by MPP Paul Miller on December 10, 2013 in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and recorded in Hansard ...

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise today to support the efforts of members of the Anglican Church across southern Ontario who are meeting with their MPPs as part of a non-partisan campaign to help people hit hard by poverty, hunger and homelessness. With over 400,000 Ontarians turning to food banks each month to ward off hunger, they are calling on MPPs to take bold and urgent action to address poverty in our province.

I recently met with a delegation from St. John's Anglican Church in Winona in my riding to discuss the campaign. Their priest reminded me that in Hamilton alone, the number of children using food banks would fill 370 classrooms.

Five actions are proposed as a pathway to dignity for all Ontarians:

- to immediately increase social assistance rates by \$100 would be the first step;
- invest \$120 million in funding for new affordable housing;
- raise the minimum wage to 10% above the poverty line, with an immediate increase to \$11.50;
- index minimum wage and social assistance rates so that they keep pace with inflation; and
- set targets to reduce poverty for all Ontarians.

In the words of Anglican Bishop Michael Bird, "a socially just society is one in which all citizens have enough to flourish." The Anglican Church is doing its part to help our province move towards this vision, and I ask all MPPs to join me in supporting these non-partisan efforts to assist those living in poverty in our province.

LESLIE GERLOFS

On a cold and blustery Friday in late October, Betty Denny, Bill Mous and I set out to meet Hamilton East-Stoney Creek MPP Paul Miller at his constituency office in Stoney Creek.

The point of our visit: as part of the Gospel call for justice and compassion, we hoped to lend our voices to advocate for poverty reduction in Ontario.

Until this visit, I customarily advocated from pen and paper or more often these days from computer email. Meeting face to face would somehow be differ-

ent. Betty, a parishioner from St. John the Evangelist Winona, was excited and grateful for the opportunity to meet with Paul. To prepare for our visit, Bill—Director of Justice, Community and Global Ministries for the Niagara Diocese—provided resources and a little coaching, after which we were ready to go.

So there we all met. There we all listened. Paul did most of the talking, until his attention was captured by the advocacy platform many Anglicans across southern Ontario are using to see an immediate reduction and future eradication of poverty in

this province. We all agreed that more had to be done to get at the root causes of poverty.

Paul made a promise on that cold and blustery Friday. He agreed to voice our concerns in a member statement at Queen's Park supporting Anglicans in their effort to reduce poverty and the bold action that must be taken to do so.

On Tuesday December 10, 2013, Paul Miller delivered on that promise. Read the accompanying statement Paul shared with fellow constituents at Queen's Park, allowing our voices to be raised in proclaiming



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10:30 am Choral Eucharist
sung by the Cathedral Choir

9:45 am Lectio Divina
an ancient practice of sacred reading
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SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2014 - THE FEAST OF CANDLEMAS

8:30 am Said Eucharist
10:30 am Procession and Choral Eucharist
4:00 pm Organ Recital - DAS BACH VI
Michael Bloss, organist

4:30 pm A service of Choral Evensong
Guests: The Choir of St. John's, Elora; Noel Edison, Director of Music, and Canon Robert Hulse, Rector Emeritus

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2014

9:30 am Choral Eucharist
followed by
Annual Vestry Meeting

What young people look forward to at a diocesan youth event ...

ALICIA ARCHBELL

For the past few months I have been working as a volunteer to market diocesan youth events to the young people of our Diocese.

I have been interacting with them on all forms of social media. One of the ways has been through opinion polls on Facebook.

While these started as fun and silly questions, they began to be more meaningful as I dug deeper for answers. Some of these answers need to be shared with the Diocese as reasons why these programs are important.

This particular poll was asked of all delegates and event volunteers to answer together.

Opinion Poll # 25: As a team, name 25 different things you look forward to for a diocesan youth event.

1. Seeing the returning delegates and welcoming the new ones
2. coffee always available
3. laughter

4. reconnecting with friends
5. live music
6. alternative perspectives
7. the atmosphere, it's really positive and uplifting
8. leaving my home life at home
9. to dance during worship
10. to experience the caring community
11. to learn about myself (yep, still more to learn)
12. to be recharged by the energy
13. making a difference
14. that "home" feeling that kicks in the minute I arrive!
15. the Peace
16. the closeness I feel to God, that I don't feel anywhere else
17. while at Canterbury Hills, the scenery
18. calm down and energize
19. self-reflect - in turn, grow, learn, direction
20. the love and support everyone gives
21. the ability to just let go and have fun. Socials are always a highlight!
22. feeling emotionally safe—a



place to be authentically yourself

23. to be around people that make you smile so much, your face hurts when you leave
24. chubby bunny
25. variety: variety of worship styles, variety of activities and socials and, of course, variety night.

Alicia Archbell attends St. Elizabeth's and St. Christopher's Burlington on a regular basis, serves on several diocesan committees and has been a delegate and staff member for many diocesan youth events. EMAIL: aliciatowncrier@gmail.com

A toast to the church for vestry 2014

The Church
 Founded by Christ and given to St. Peter's care.
 The Church
 That great mystery of faith in which is found Word and Sacrament.
 The Church
 Both the witness of the saints through the ages and a destination where we come together to pray.
 The Church
 The shared vehicle of our faith and of our ministry.
 The Church
 Purveyor of many a bake sale and a community potluck.
 I propose a toast to the church ... our spiritual and sometimes temporal home in which together we find community, spirituality and mission.
 The Church.

(Canon Darcey Lazerte, Rector of St. Simon's Oakville proposed this toast at the Bishop's Company annual dinner on September 30, 2013. The Niagara Anglican suggests that you use it as a toast or prayer for God's church in your own community and around the world)



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To the Editor

Re: Rethinking suffering and violence in the legacy of ancient Christianity (December 2013)

There is a muddle at the centre of this piece.

Ignatius of Antioch (c.35-c.107) seems to have been confused with Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), founder of the Jesuit Order.

The "how-to manual" *The Imitation of Christ* attributed to Ignatius (whoever he is thought to have been), was written in the first quarter of the fifteenth century by Thomas à Kempis (1379-1471).

What any of this, or the 30 years of peace "during the Enlightenment Era" has to do with martyrdom or Professor Karen King's lecture or her book (the title of which appears nowhere in the article) remains a mystery, as does the point of the article.

Ronald Vince
 Flamborough
 ronvince@hotmail.ca

Rethinking suffering and violence in the legacy of ancient Christianity ... another aspect

JOHN BACHER

The Niagara Anglican's recent article on suffering and violence and ancient Christianity (Rethinking suffering and violence in the legacy of ancient Christianity — December 2013) is certainly thought provoking.

There is however one aspect, which I believe if we think about it more carefully, will help affirm and deepen our Christian faith.

One interesting fact in the article is that the longest period of peace in Europe was a 30 year stretch during the Enlightenment. I am a historian by training and this fact is accurate. One aspect that could be elaborated upon is that the remaining wars during these years however, notably the forgotten war of Bavarian Succession, were virtually bloodless. Armies, following carefully prescribed rules of conduct, would simply march and fire and then withdraw.

The origins of the situation of relative peace in Europe however, and what came afterwards, are not at all outlined in the article. The 30 years of peace appear to have been between 1759 and the abrupt end of the era in 1789. What this shows is the impact of the culminated centuries of the Holy Spirit working through the Church to transform European cultures, and the abrupt weakening of this salutary influence through the anti-Christian excesses of the French Revolution.

Before the eruption of the French Revolution there was an impact of Christian belief in limiting wars. The 30 years of relative peace was a time of course, where there were a lot of sceptics and mockers of Christianity in influential places. The Church however, as it always had, incorporated whatever good ideas came out of a potent brew of debate by its critics. One positive impact was a curbing of

state violence. There was a reduction in torture, capital crimes and religious persecution. This was also the period of the birth of the abolitionist movement, itself deeply shaped by Christian belief.

The French Revolution saw a fierce persecution of Christianity on a scale not seen in Europe since the conversion of Constantine. Another terrible invention of the conflict was the invention of total war, a total repudiation of Christian norms of limiting state violence. This total war was most ruthlessly applied to commit genocide against areas of Christian resistance, most notably the French department of the Vendee.

Since 1789 there has been no consensus regarding Christian faith among the educated elites of European influenced cultures. Both the Nazi and Communist movements attempted to destroy Christianity and left horrific war, genocide and violence in their

wake. This is one of the most toxic by-products of the weakening of Christian faith.

Dr. John Bacher sings in the choir of St. Barnabas St. Catharines and is currently a correspondence student in theology at Thorneloe University. EMAIL: pals@becon.org

TIPS for CONTRIBUTORS
 #3 in a series

**Big photos are good.
 Bigger photos are better.
 Action photos are better still!**

HOLLISStorial

If Christmas is a time for *getting*, Epiphany is a time of *giving*



HOLLIS HISCOCK

Calendars provide frameworks to calculate time, observe significant milestones and organize activities into manageable units.

The Christian calendar is no exception. It sets aside six months for adherents and seekers to learn about Jesus' life and then an equal amount of time to read, understand and apply his teachings to their own lives, their communities and the wider world... some overlapping may occur.

Advent started the Christian year by giving people approximately four weeks to prepare for the coming of the gift—God being born as a human. The gift arrived at Christmas, with only 12 days set aside to celebrate before the Epiphany challenges us to begin using *the* gift to assist people and make the world a better place.

Epiphany seems like a forgotten season, probably due to freezing, snowy winter conditions or our preoccupation with paying off overwhelming Christmas debts.

Generally Epiphany surpasses the combined days of Advent and Christmas. Its importance must be recognized and emphasized, as we devote time and energy looking for openings to

be more creative and productive in putting the true gift of Christmas to use. Sometimes opportunities are presented in unusual ways and unexpected places.

If Christmas shopping took you to retail or spirit filled stores, chances are you were asked to donate to a specific charity. Some people find this to be intrusive. I had similar feelings before my conversation with a cashier. I enquired how many times per day she repeated the question and how people responded. She replied "it's part of my job," and added 16-25 year olds seemed the most generous, even expressing genuine pleasure for the opportunity to donate. Clerks may have every right to invite one to participate, individuals possess the free will to be positive, negative or noncommittal.

The same applies to social media. Charities request individuals to click a button and send a donation to alleviate the horrors of war, the ravages of hunger, the devastation of natural disasters, etc. Even though the giver may never have any personal interaction with the receiver, the latter's situation can be vastly improved because a stranger was motivated to assist.

Good King Wenceslas of Christmas carol fame is an

"Epiphany person" we can emulate in caring for other people not as blessed as ourselves.

He is not alone. Numerous Epiphany people let their gifts shine out for others, often without them knowing their benefactors.

Jesus expressed it this way—by showing kindness to a less fortunate traveller on the highway of life one is actually doing it to God.

Governor General David Johnston forwarded this theme in his New Year's message. Calling Canadians "compassionate and generous," he encouraged us to use our time, talent and money to make a cash donation, volunteer with an organization or help a neighbour rebuild a fence in order to strengthen "our culture of generosity" and create "your own giving moment."

Good Riddance Day, December 28, was organized to help people purge themselves of bad memories and happenings, whether physical, mental or spiritual. Then they could begin the New Year with a clean slate and have a fresh start.

A Facebook friend introduced me to the "suspended coffee" movement, which started in Italy and has spread to many countries, including Canada. A customer in a participating

shop purchases an extra coffee and leaves it "suspended" until someone, without money, comes along and asks for and receives a free coffee.

In a supermarket, several customers were talking about kindness at Christmas. One lady said when her friend drove up to the pickup window at a takeout restaurant, the attendant told her the bill had already been paid by the previous customer. I explained these random acts of kindness were happening around the world, and the receiver is expected to do an act of kindness in return. The Random Acts of Kindness website (randomactsofkindness.org)

states its purpose as "inspiring people to practice kindness and pass it on to others." Feb 10-16, 2014 is Random Acts of Kindness Week... so why not do a random act of kindness for a stranger?

What is your Epiphany action this year? Tell us about it so we can share your good news with our *Niagara Anglican* readers.

Canadian singer-songwriter Bryan Adams wrote in his song, Christmas Time: "there's something about Christmas time... that makes you wish it was Christmas every day."

If we cannot have Christmas every day, perhaps we can have Epiphany.

Tell us where you shine your light

Most Christians practice their faith and action outside the walls of the church building.

Sometimes they do not see this as part of their commitment to Jesus Christ.

We do, and we would like to share your "faith in action in the world" story.

Your light may be seen helping in a community group, educational setting, different country, non-church organization or group dedicated to improving society and the lives of people.

Jesus said that we should let our light shine before others, so that they could see our good works and glorify God.

Let the *Niagara Anglican* shine your light.

Forward your story (max. 300 words) to editor@niagaraanglican.ca or Hollis Hiscock, Editor, 710 Ashley Ave, Burlington, ON, L7R 2Z3.

A work of art in progress

SAMANTHA WAKE

Holy Trinity Church Welland is like a work of art, where the painter is the rector, the canvas is the Church and the art comes alive through the people.

Even though I'm only 15 years old, while attending Holy Trinity for four years now, I have been

involved with so much that has to do with helping others like the Food-Hygiene Pantry and other events like apple dumpling selling, bazaars and luncheons.

There are things I have also joined for fun and because I enjoy doing it, like singing in the choir and serving.

I originally started helping

only to get the volunteer hours I needed for school, but since I enjoyed helping and still do, I continue with the things I do at Holy Trinity Church. I have met so many people who are really nice, and have got me interested in the things that take place.

I love being at Holy Trinity Church because it is very

welcoming and, along with the people, is like a family rather than just a congregation.

Samantha Wake is a teenager at Holy Trinity Church Welland. EMAIL: holytrinitywelland@cogeco.net



Samantha Wake

Photo: submitted by author

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Making time for contemplation

BRIAN REUSCH

When's the last time you took some time from the busy-ness of life for some contemplation?

It's a word rich in meaning. As one might expect, Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines contemplation as "concentration on spiritual things," and "mystical awareness of God's being." But then it also lists additional meanings: consideration, regard or expectation. This is rich ground. What or who do I consider or expect?

Most of the time, I don't think I am intentional about setting aside time for this kind of mindfulness. But last fall, I was visiting my brother in the states when my cell phone quit working. Initially I was frustrated. But over the next few days (until I was able to get a new phone!), it was liberating to break free from my usual addiction to my cell phone. I experienced being present to my brother, my own thoughts, the people and the environment around me.

Since this experience, I've given some thought as to how

I might cultivate this kind of intentional contemplation. Maybe another way to say this is how might I be fully present to others and life unfolding around me?

Here are some suggestions for nurturing a mindful spirit in the midst of our full lives.

Unplug. You don't have to wait for your cell phone to break down. Just turn it off... the television, the radio and computer too. Pay attention to what feelings and thoughts arrive.

Similarly, make space for silence. Maybe during your commute? Or book a retreat for yourself. Camp Five Oaks in Paris, Ontario, has a range of offerings for this winter: Silent retreats, Courage and Renewal retreats around professional renewal, Male Spirituality Circle, Day Away or Personal Retreat or training in Spiritual Practices. See <http://www.fiveoaks.on.ca/main.cfm> for more information.

Or simply, go outside. I know I feel better when I take a walk to Lake Ontario. Elizabeth Barrett Browning writes in the poem "Afire": "Earth's crammed

with heaven, And every common bush afire with God" (*The Godbearing Life* p. 71). If you know a young person (ages 16-25), invite them to consider attending aWay... an annual diocesan youth ministry retreat at CrieffHills Community in Puslinch, Ontario, this winter January 31-February 2, 2014.

Opportunities abound. *Lectio divina* is the Christian practice of slow, reflective reading of scriptures. Or there is the capacity of music to inspire. Is there time in your day to play music that helps you to relax and be present? Moving the body, whether through yoga or walking a labyrinth (available for use at the Diocesan Office) may help.

For further reading, consider the following books available to you at the Diocesan Lending Library (contact me at 905-527-1316 x 430 or brian.reusch@niagaraanglican.ca) for details.

- *Go Deep: Spiritual Practices for Youth Ministry* by Doris E. Kizinna (Copperhouse, 2009).
- *Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice* by Stephanie Paulsell (Jossey-



Bass, 2002).

- *Practicing our Faith*, ed. by Dorothy C. Bass (Jossey-Bass, 1997).
- *The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry* by Kendra Creasy Dean and Ron Foster (Upper Room Books, 1998).

People's spirits are fed in different ways. Why not treat yourself this winter and experiment with a new way to contemplate and nourish your Spirit?

Brian Reusch is Program Consultant, Children, Youth and Family Ministry for Niagara Diocese.

The Lord's Prayer

COLIN C. M. CAMPBELL

Prayer is the lifeblood of the Christian life. If we do not know how to pray, we will not know how to live. God will seem remote and silent.

A lady rages in frustration to me, "I can no longer walk with an omnipotent God, who says yes or no in ways that can only seem arbitrary to us. I cannot offer submissive love to some power who chooses to heal those we love or lets them die!" This cry shines with integrity.

We, who claim to follow traditional Christian orthodoxy, owe her an answer. Without one, she will be an easy mark for bitterness, cynicism, agnosticism or a revisionist form of Christianity, such as process theology or nontheism. Those who find their prayers to be ineffective usually pray in a way which Jesus strongly condemned. "They think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not pray (this way!)" Instead of natural (pagan) prayer, he gave us the simplicity of the Lord's

Prayer.

Unpacking it gives us the key to praying successfully and so to have the fullness of life that our Saviour promised to his followers.

Rambling petitions and running off at the mouth to God are wholly ineffective ...

The Lord's Prayer is structured in three parts.

The first asks us to pray for God's Kingdom of justice to come on earth as it is where he is, and for the "bread" of daily grace. Although this is phrased as a petition, it is wholly unlike a pagan petition. It is one through which we give God permission to do what he promises, if we allow him. If a person has difficulty in prayer, we should ask them how they see God. God promises light for the mind, love for the heart and a place in his Kingdom of light and love. Does the person believe this? Jesus promises, "Believe this and you shall live!"

The second part builds on the first, with a promise that God will remove whatever blocks his grace from working in our lives. For this to happen, however, we are required sincerely to repent

of sin and forgive others. God guarantees grace to one who tries to live the Christian life. This means trying to make the world a better place, by doing God's will and building his Kingdom. Neglecting to do this will surely block grace. This second part is discernment and is vital if prayer is to be effective.

The last part builds on the second, returning us to the first. Once we surrender our wills to God's grace, he will deliver us from evil and his Kingdom will have been built by our prayer, just a little more.

The key to effective prayer is discernment. Rambling petitions

and running off at the mouth to God are wholly ineffective, as we all know—or as those who practice this kind of all too common prayer, need to know.

The words of the Lord's Prayer are so simple that their profundity is often missed, particularly when they are said with a rote formality. Yet they contain the secret to effective living.

Prayer is not us trying to convince God to change his mind, as pagan prayer and process theology affirm in their very different ways. Prayer is not so that God will give us what we think that he would give us, if he really loved us. It is so that God can convince us to change our mind, so that he can give us a life that is much more thrilling and exciting than anything that we could ever think of for ourselves.

And so we can say with the apostle: "Glory be to God whose power working in us is greater than we could ever ask or imagine."

Praise be to God!



Dr. Colin Campbell teaches school in Hamilton. EMAIL: cccampbell@gmail.com

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever.

Amen.

Scattered Seeds 7: Friendship and Faith

C.T. (TERRY) GILLIN

Good news!
I have been restored to health. I am cancer free. The “irritation” has become a pearl. After my life has revolved around illness for the better part of a year, the good news stuns me. I am overwhelmed as well as delighted. And foremost, I am grateful. The underlying question for me is, in faith, how ought I respond to the gift of renewed life? And, for all of us, how are we to respond to the daily gift of life?

We are called to live our faith. Doubt, it seems, is an integral part of the faith journey. To transcend our doubts, faith requires a “leap.” Jesus challenges his disciples in their moments of doubt. Perhaps the simple act of faith is not so easy because it calls us to respond to the gospel challenges.

In my recent experience, faith becomes more real when seen through the experience of friendship. I suggest faith is daily participation in friendship. To

understand this, consider three kinds of friendship that I experienced while ill—interpersonal, spiritual and transcendent.

Natural friendship finds expression in our interpersonal

friendship. So, I seek to become a more faithful friend, more responsive to others, listening thoughtfully, laughing, crying and celebrating together.

A second kind of friendship

... consider three kinds of friendship that I experienced while ill—interpersonal, spiritual and transcendent

relationships. We are drawn to one another as friends, spouses, family and peers of common needs, experiences, interests and commitments. To be sustained our friendships, like our faith, must be nurtured. Sharing, respect, openness, humour, loyalty and working together are just a few of the ways we build and strengthen both. I am grateful beyond measure for the wonderful support given by family, friends and strangers throughout my illness. In their care and love I experienced the power of their

I experienced was spiritual companionship—an extraordinary grace. A deeply spiritual friend and I accompanied one another on our cancer journeys. We offered each other encouragement, challenge and hope—sharing our medical experiences, identifying the Spirit in our health journeys, imparting prayers and music, humour and poetry, and a great deal of the deeper parts of our selves. Via emails, notes, exchanges of books, articles and movies we explored many of the issues that

matter most: how to recognize the loving presence of God, how to search for meaning and fulfillment in suffering and everyday life and how to offer compassion and gentleness to all we meet and ourselves. This spiritual friendship sustained me in darker moments and continues to encourage me to listen to the whispers spoken in prayer and to love and serve others. So, I will continue practices that open my heart to the faithfulness of God.

My experience of illness is also a powerful reminder that God’s love is found in all things. In moments of distress as well as healing, with friend and stranger, I have become more aware of the acute presence of Christ. Here is where friendship enlivens faith and faith friendship. A relationship with Christ calls us to bring love to fruition in our world (e.g., John 15:12–15).

I have come to see faith as the courage founded in friendship to live the gospel challenges. Jesus dies on the cross because his



Kingdom threatens the powers of this world, and as his friends we are called to extend his Kingdom. Friendship with him involves interpersonal and social action. We are called to embrace the message of peacemaking in a world full of wars, to stand with the poor in an age of deeply divisive inequalities, to work for justice amidst many injustices, to empower those who are socially marginalized and to offer love and mercy to all, even enemies. So, I will find new ways to serve my neighbours faithfully.

The challenge to make God’s love real in the world is daunting. Yet as a community of faith we can do this. Friendship bids us to live our faith more fully, and faith calls us to bring God’s Kingdom into the present moment.

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Christmas in Niagara—A roundup

St. John's Burlington

Rector Bahman Kalantari sent the photos from their Christmas pageant, where children from their parish re-enacted the real story of the birth of Jesus Christ. No doubt, similar dramatic presentations were performed by millions all around the globe.



Angels deliver the news of the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem.



The Magi have an audience with King Herod.



Mary and Joseph care for the new born Jesus in a stable, because there was no other room available.



Peter de Groot of Rockwood wrote, "This Nativity scene was in the public park in Bayfield. My wife Lori and I stayed in an inn there for our 18th anniversary. It was a wonderful trip. The Nativity scene added something special for us."

*I will sing with the spirit,
and I will sing with the understanding also.*



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St. Paul's Dunnville

Doctor Peter Dunlop sent these photos of his parish church decorated for Christmas. The photographer was Kerri Allison from New York State who, with her family, was visiting her parents in Dunnville at Christmas.



Christmas in Niagara—A roundup

“No one should be alone on Christmas Day”

CONNIE PHILLIPSON

A year ago a parishioner asked what we were doing for people on Christmas Day because she was alone. We told her about our Christmas Day morning service, but she clearly was interested in more than worship. She needed fellowship with other Christians on Christmas Day. Her words haunted me and as Christmas approached, I kept thinking that no one in our community should be alone on the day of our Lord Jesus’ birth. No, not one.

Fortunately, St. Mark’s always rallies to help others, and once again they exceeded expectations. Under the leadership of Ronnie Inglis, over 20 volunteers from the parish and wider community came together to prepare a feast of abundance for people who were in need or just wanted to be in fellowship with others on Christmas Day.

Thanks to the generosity of multiple individual and corporate donors in Orangeville, it was a feast of plenty! Individuals sat at colourful tables adorned with fresh red floral arrangements and party crackers. The delicious home-made squash and apple soup whet the palate for the traditional Christmas dinner that followed. People delighted at the generous servings of turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, turnip, rolls and salad. A buffet of desserts—including home made fruit cake, shortbread cookies, 100 mince meat tarts, white cake, dessert bars and chocolates—tempted us. Volunteers served about 80 meals and then pack-

aged up another 26 meals for those in need to take home.

One woman wept throughout the entire meal; another embraced me crying “I am so overwhelmed. I don’t know what to say.” Forcing a couple of bills into my hand she said, “I wish I could give more.”

The youngest in attendance was a three-day old baby, Matthew. This was significant since this year we read from the gospel of Matthew. What a gift of the Christ child to all present, and it was just that, a birthday celebration of abundance for the baby Jesus.

When Pam Claridge, our choir director and organist, confided that her family was coming to help out, I knew this would be a memorable day for all. Other choir members and musically talented people from the community uplifted spirits with a medley of carols supported by piano, guitar and harmonica!

As mid-afternoon approached, people lingered as though to savour the joy of fellowship with others they had never met before. In the true spirit of God’s gift of the Christ Child, people from all walks of life had gathered to break bread with one another.

One by one, they left physically fulfilled, and we hope and pray, spiritually as well.

The Reverend Connie Phillipson is Assistant Curate at St. Mark’s Orangeville. EMAIL: connie.phillipson@zing-net.ca



▲ Lights brighten the room where people gathered for the Christmas Day festivities.



▲ Volunteers with team leader Ronnie Inglis (inset) prepared and served over 100 meals.



▲ Baby Matthew with his dad Johnathan.



▲ Nancy Claridge (left front) and mini choir singing Christmas carols.

Photos: submitted by Connie Phillipson

THE AFTERGLOW MURRAY BLAND

When my wife June and I walked our dogs, we never knew what adventure awaited us ...

We were walking our three dogs along the strip of land by the lake in Oakville, just back of the houses. Coming towards us was an elderly lady assisted by, we assumed, her daughter.

As they drew near, the lady

saw our dog Sparky. We saw her eyes light up. She stopped and her arms started to come up. I immediately picked up Sparky, walked over and put him in her arms and she hugged him to her.

Sparky turned his head and looked at me, as much as to say ... What? What?

The daughter told us that her

mother had recently lost her dog. She missed him so much, and he looked a lot like Sparky.

We talked for a while and then I took Sparky back. He ran on ahead to be with his buddies, but ever so often he would stop, turn around, sit down and look at us. I swear he was thinking, “what was that all about?”

Never mind. We knew and the daughter and her mother knew.

We continued our way – basking in the afterglow.

Murray Bland lives in Burlington



Church Wardens – let’s hear your stories

February is Vestry month for parishes in Niagara Diocese.

Generally these annual meetings receive various reports, approve budgets and set goals

for the coming year.

It also means Church Wardens complete their tenure – some with sadness and others thinking “thank God it’s over.”

Either way, if you are completing your term as a Church Warden, the Niagara Anglican would like to hear about your experiences.

Some questions you may want to address are...

- What did you learn about the Church or the Christian faith from being a Church Warden?
- What were your biggest highlights?
- What were your most pleasant surprises?
- What challenges did you face?

- What advice or suggestions would you have for incoming Church Wardens?
- Any other thoughts you want to include?

Send your article (maximum 400 words) to editor@niagaraanglican.ca or Hollis Hiscock, Editor, 710 Ashley Ave, Burlington, ON, L7R2Z3.

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Group looking for new members

The Outstanding Leadership for Ministry Vision Group is recruiting new members to help us pursue our goal, which reads:

Lay and clergy leaders in the Diocese of Niagara, working together in partnership, grow missional communities, nurture disciples and make new disciples who follow Christ passionately and live out God’s mission in the world.

We are seeking passionate, committed leaders with skills and experience in the following areas:

- Disciple making
- Covenant crafting

- Leadership training and development
- Organizational learning and cultural change
- Accountability
- Event planning

We are looking to assemble a team that is diverse with respect to skills and geographic location.

If you are interested in this ministry, contact Terry DeForest at terry.deforest@niagaraanglican.ca or 905-527-1316 (340) or Cathie Crawford Browning at rector@stjohnsthorold.com or 905-227-5431.

From Niagara’s website ...

Canterbury Hills land transfer

The Anglican Diocese of Niagara is collaborating with the Hamilton Conservation Authority regarding a mutually beneficial land transfer of a portion of the Canterbury Hills property.

This arrangement seeks to ensure that this unique part of



God’s creation continues to be enjoyed by all, and is protected and managed well in perpetuity through the expertise and resources of the Hamilton Conservation Authority.

As Bishop Michael Bird stated in his charge to Synod, Canterbury Hills faces significant challenges but its board “is committed to re-imagining their mission and programs.”

This arrangement would not impact the usage of the Canterbury Hills site, including the existing camping program which is already accepting registrations for the summer of 2014.

(Posted December 18, 2013. For more web news and announcements go to niagaraanglican.ca)