

BIBLE VERSE OF THE MONTH

LOVE ...

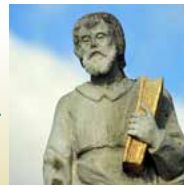
Is patient, kind;
 Always protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres;
 Rejoices with the truth; Never gives up;
 Is the greatest of all.

1 Corinthians: 13



Spend LENT with MARK

Pages 5-8



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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 2015

Better know your partners

Iglesia San Pablo, Bolondrón, Cuba

**GARDENIA ALFONSO
 ROSABAL
 TRANSLATION: LEONEL
 ABAROA BOLOÑA**

(This is the first in a series we are hoping will be a regular feature in the Niagara Anglican. It seeks to provide you with first-hand information on parishes of the Iglesia Episcopal de Cuba, with which Niagara Diocese has been in a mission partnership since 1999.

This "Better know your partners" column comes from the parish of San Pablo, in Bolondrón, a southern town in the province of Matanzas.)



▲ Iglesia San Pablo (St. Paul's)—exterior and interior.

► The Hut Chapel

Photos: Larry Sides



The church of Saint Paul has been a member parish of the Episcopal Church of Cuba since its founding as a congregation, back in 1890. The church building was erected in 1902, and was meant to witness to the glory of God and become the house of prayer for the first constituted congregation of the Cuban church. Since then, it has been a living witness to the Gospel and a stalwart of service and well-being for the whole community of Bolondrón.

Presently, this congregation has 80 active members, close to half of which are young people.

For the better development and deployment of its ministries,

our membership is organized into four pastoral areas, corresponding to each area of our town. The main goal for each of these pastoral areas is to provide better opportunities for the evangelizing work, a more accurate means for stewardship and self-support and more efficient

means for our work and witness in the wider community.

San Pablo seeks to promote lay ministries, more specifically our stewardship and service. Most of the parish initiatives are being developed by lay members of the community. As one example of this, we have a regular program

through which the parish makes possible for a psychiatrist to travel from Havana and, together with our rector, offer psycho-pastoral therapy and training to lay

leaders, church members and members of the community at large.

Also, our parish runs a Sunday morning breakfast program, for the benefit of those members of the church who need this service the most, but also as a means for fostering friendship and mutual support among the whole community. This breakfast program is supported by the Niagara parish of St. George's Guelph, which is already in a partnership relationship with the Cuban parish of La Trinidad (Trinity), in the neighbouring town of Bermejas.

Liturgically, San Pablo cultivates traditional, "high" modes of worship and ritual. Our main Eucharistic celebration takes place on Sundays at 9:30 a.m. The Sunday school functions at the same time, and at the time of communion children are brought to gather with the whole church.

On Wednesdays in our Hut Chapel, built in an area close to the church proper, we celebrate a morning Eucharist. This is

a service animated mostly by our youth, who also gather on Thursdays to reflect and learn about their faith, and just about every topic connected to their lives as Christians. At some points in the year, we offer other learning spaces concerning the Bible, Latin American theology and spirituality.

Our church community strives to support the life and ministries of the parish. Although our members dutifully fulfill their financial commitments, we have found this is often not enough to provide for all the expenses and initiatives embraced by the parish. That is why we also have a group of brothers and sisters who, trained by our diocese in the management of community projects, helps to promote the betterment and self-support of our church.

Our community gives thanks to God for the ministry of our Rector Andrei Diaz Orta, and for the commitment and energy displayed by our lay leaders in attending to the spiritual, sacramental and stewardship life of our church in Bolondrón.

Dr. Leonel Abaroa, from Cuba, is the Ministry Intern at Church of the Ascension Hamilton. EMAIL: labaroa@yahoo.com



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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

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1
 THE FEAST OF
 CANDLEMAS
 8:30 am Holy Eucharist
 10:30 am Procession and
 Solemn Choral Eucharist
 Presider: Bishop D. Ralph Spence
 Preacher: The Dean

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8
 EPIPHANY 5
 8:30 am Holy Eucharist
 10:30 am Choral Eucharist
 Presider: The Dean
 Preacher: The Rev. Canon Dr. Sharyn Hall

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15
 THE LAST SUNDAY
 AFTER EPIPHANY
 - TRANSFIGURATION
 8:30 am Holy Eucharist
 10:30 am Choral Eucharist
 Presider: The Dean
 Preacher: The Rev. Dr. Eric Griffin

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18
 ASH WEDNESDAY
 7:30 am Services of Eucharist
 12:15 pm with imposition
 7:30 pm of Ashes

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22
 LENT 1 - VESTRY SUNDAY
 9:30 am Choral Eucharist
 Presider & Preacher: The Dean
 followed by
 Annual Vestry Meeting

4:00 pm Organ Recital
 Michael Bloss

4:30 pm Festival Evensong
 with Installation of Canons
 and Collation of Archdeacons

WEEKDAY EUCHARIST
 12:15 pm Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays
 7:30 am Tuesdays

Bishop Michael's Book for Lent

Treat the Bible “as if it were a parable of Jesus”

Being Christian; Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer, by Rowan Williams

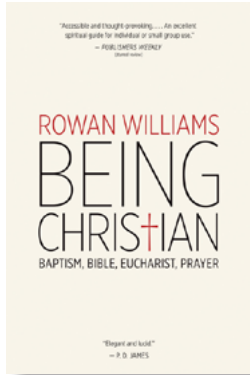
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2014

CONNIE PHILLIPSON

“One of the great privileges of my time as Archbishop of Canterbury was being allowed to go and see some of those places at close quarters where people live in dangerous proximity to Jesus; where their witness means they are at risk in various ways.” Rowan Williams (p.9).

Great thinkers ask great questions.

Questions that provoke thought and reflection, discussion and debate. True to form, Rowan Williams begins with the question: “What are the elements of the Christian life?” It’s the perfect question for a discussion series during Lent. How might



young people respond? Would their response differ from that of their parents? Add newcomers to the group and we are ready to accompany Rowan Williams on a journey exploring the Christian faith.

Williams begins his exposition with baptism, hence his second question: “Where might you expect to find the baptized?” That’s easy, in church! Well, it’s

never that simple with this spiritual guide. Christians are found in the “neighbourhood of chaos” —“where humanity is most at risk ... disordered, disfigured and needy”—the very place where Jesus is restoring humanity.

He reminds us that our path as baptized Christians is “transfiguring, exhilarating, life-giving and very, very dangerous.” Do we think about our baptism into Christ as a dangerous path to walk? Do we witness to Christ in our community? Does the Anglican Church mend broken relationships and build bridges between people and between groups in our communities? If not, why not?

Rowan Williams moves on, so we best keep up with him.

Baptized people are recognizable because they read the Bible and listen to God. He suggests we approach the Bible “as if it were a parable of Jesus.” Whatever is in the Bible is what God wants us to

know. God also wants us to ask ourselves “Where are we in this story?” If we struggle to locate ourselves in the biblical story, how do we respond faithfully to the love of God in Jesus Christ?

Being Christian also means sharing in the Eucharist which makes no sense if you don’t believe in the resurrection. We take Holy Communion not because we are doing well, but because we are doing badly, are confused, wrong and human. Is that how you feel when you come forward for communion? Afterwards, do you feel thankful and spiritually transformed to live the new life?

Through reflections on the Lord’s Prayer by Origen, Gregory and Cassian, we gain new insights on William’s fourth element of the Christian life—prayer. To grow in prayer is to grow in Christian humanity.

If I were leading this Lenten series, I would begin this way:

“Faith is all about seeking to understand. In the former Archbishop of Canterbury, we have the best teacher and spiritual guide during Lent. Let us pray ...”

The Reverend Connie Phillipson can be reached at connie.phillipson@zing-net.ca

BIBLE VERSE(S) OF THE MONTH

You may have noticed that we have now included on the front page a Bible verse of the month.

Tell us your favourite Bible verse and why.

Send it to the Editor. Contact info on page 3.



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HOLLISitorial

Hot humour ... cold month ... no excuses

February is probably Canada's coldest month.

Humour often adds warmth to frosty situations.

Excuses—an attempt to lessen blame for not doing particular or correct actions—play a dominant role in human interactions and behaviours.

This HOLLISitorial combines all three, hopefully to make you smile, thaw your winter blahs and put excuses in their rightful places.

Jesus centred several parables around excuses and their impact on human lives. More about this later, but first people's humorous excuses ...

Insurance companies documented these excuses to describe the causes of accidents.

"I collided with a stationary truck coming the other way."

"The telephone pole was approaching fast. I was attempting to swerve out of its path when it struck the front of my car."

"The guy was all over the road. I had to swerve a number of times before I finally hit him."

Excuses parents provided

to school principals to explain their child's absenteeism.

"My son is under doctor's care and should not take physical education. Please excuse him."

"Dear school: please excuse my daughter for being absent, due to illness, on January 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33."

"**No excuse Sunday**"—probably developed by a minister who had heard every excuse in the book—recommended these changes to offset excuses put forward by people when asked why they did not attend Sunday worship. Here is a sampling.

"Cots will be placed in the foyer for those who say, 'Sunday is my only day to sleep in.'"

"There will be a special section with lounge chairs for those who feel our pews are too hard."

"Blankets will be furnished for those who think the church is too cold and fans for those who say it is too hot."

"The sanctuary will be decorated with both Christmas poinsettias and Easter lilies for those who never have seen the church without them."

Back to Jesus who encouraged excuses in a multitude of situations.

One man said he would love to follow God, BUT before doing so wanted to return home and bury his father. Jesus responded with humour and sarcasm; "Let the dead bury the dead, but you go and proclaim the Kingdom of God."

On another occasion Jesus invited an individual to join his ministry team. The man agreed but wanted to say goodbye to his family. Jesus retorted, "Anyone who starts to plough and keeps looking back is of no use to God."

But Jesus' best excuse parable is the great feast ... to summarize:

A person decided to have a fantastic gourmet banquet, complete with something for everyone. When the specially chosen guests received their gold plated invitations they RSVP-ed with the lamest creative excuses. One had bought a piece of land and was so immersed in business matters he just had to go and sign the legal papers to prove ownership. The second, after purchasing five pairs of oxen (could

have been a new car, truckload of lobsters or some other commodity), could not delay taking possession and "trying them out."

The third person, meanwhile, blamed his new wife, and felt he should follow the dictates of Deuteronomy (24:5): "when a man is newly married, he is not to be drafted into military service or any other public duty; he is to be excused from duty for one year so that he can stay at home and make his wife happy." Probably eventually developed into the maxim "happy wife, happy life".

To read the exciting ending, including Jesus' message for us, read Luke's gospel (14:15-24).

These illustrations confirm the excuse ridden days encountered by Jesus as he attempted to build God's community on earth. Maybe we should take solace in this when we get frustrated with people's reactions to our invitations.

Now I'm not suggesting we start a new holy day called "no excuse Sunday", but if we were to designate several strategically placed Sundays throughout the



year, it may bring people back to worship, or we could have fun trying. It works for libraries; their "waving of late fees" allows patrons to return books and other materials they forgot to bring back.

But I am proposing that we become "no excuse" people, parishes, dioceses or any other religious communities dedicated to follow Jesus without restrictive or limiting conditions.

Perhaps this little prayer may help ...

**Spirit of God;
Come sweeping through us -
revive us, your church, with life
and power;**

**Come cleanse us - renew us
and fit us, your church, to meet
this hour.**

Amen.

Feedback to the Editor, Hollis Hiscock, always appreciated—contact information elsewhere on this page.

Bishop rejoices at re-establishment of relations

BILL MOUS

Following news of the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States of America and Cuba, Bishop Michael Bird wrote to Bishop Griselda Delgado del Carpio of the Diocese of Cuba, with whom Niagara has a companion diocese relationship.

In his letter Bishop Michael noted the Diocese "rejoices at the transformational opportunities that this announcement holds for the Cuban people and the ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Cuba."



The Reverend Bill Mous with the Bishops of Cuba and Niagara during a partnership visit to Cuba.
Photo: Submitted

While much remains unknown about how this shift in policy will be played out on the ground, it is a potent reminder that God's work of reconciliation and peace

continues. In a statement signed by Bishop Griselda, the Diocese of Cuba prays that the Spirit would "weave concord among the two peoples and affirm our commitment to the truth, justice and peace that come from the immeasurable love of the triune God."

The Diocese of Cuba also expressed gratitude for the release of prisoners from both countries. The Secretary General of the World Council of Churches, the Reverend Olav Fykse Tveit, commented "the fact that the long-held hope seems now to be reflected in politi-

cal action – and long-detained prisoners are now released to their families – is a sign on our pilgrimage of justice and peace: a sign that despite long and bitter divisions, peace and reconciliation are always possible."

Moments like this highlight the importance of global ministry partnerships. The Episcopal Church of the United States of America played an important role through companionship and advocacy with the reinstatement of diplomatic relations. The Anglican Church of Canada, in part through our companion diocese relationship, has also

offered the Diocese of Cuba signs of hope and solidarity throughout Cuba's time of global isolation. This happens in a variety of ways at the diocesan, parish and personal level, through prayer, projects, people exchanges and shared ministry.

To learn more about our relationship with the Diocese of Cuba, visit: niagaraanglican.ca/ministry/companion

The Reverend Bill Mous is the diocesan Director of Justice, Community and Global Ministries. EMAIL: bill.mous@niagaraanglican.ca.

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Dinosaurs or birds?

MICHAEL BURSLEM

This past summer I visited friends in Rothesay on the Isle of Bute on the Clyde estuary.

Besides the rugged beauty of the hills, visible only on a fine day, I was impressed by the town itself, isolated from the mainland, accessible only by ferry.

Behind it stands Canada Hill, from which in times past people waved to the ships carrying their loved ones to these shores. There has been much migration from Rothesay, so that today there are four kirks, whose congregations have left them; they're just falling down.

In one steeple, Christmas spruce trees have seeded themselves, but the building is too unstable to decorate for Christmas. I first thought it a sad commentary on the church today; the faithful vacating the buildings which they've built and maintained for so many years, but can no longer afford to keep up. They've become redundant.



Abandoned churches: a sign of the times?

An empty church in Rothesay, Scotland is sprouting trees on its steeple, making it too unstable to decorate for Christmas. Photo: Michael Burslem

Will there be more?

Migration, I'm sure, isn't the only reason for four empty churches in Rothesay. As everywhere else the newer generation is just not going to church. I've heard many of my age complain their children aren't being married in church; not being married, their children are not being baptized. Sunday Schools

are a tenth the size they were. At the other end of life people are not having funerals in church, but "celebrations of life" in golf clubs or sports stadiums. Why? Is it because we haven't changed enough with the times?

No doubt, congregations have been resistant to change. It's been said that which was in the beginning, should be now and

ever shall be. We do complain about the *Book of Alternative Services* replacing the *Prayer Book* and call for the rector's dismissal if pews are removed.

Thankfully, there have been changes, but accepted only grudgingly.

I recall when the red *Prayer Book*, which we so dearly wanted to hold on to, replaced a Canadian version of the 1662 *English Prayer Book*, and the words in the Communion confession—The remembrance of them (our misdoings) is grievous; the burden of them is intolerable—were omitted. I remember one lady questioning whether our sins should be less grievous to us, and their burden more tolerable.

However, I don't believe the lack of change in any way explains the absence of the vast majority of young people. Few young people, often from Evangelical churches or with no church background, are awe struck by the solemnity and dignity of our worship and the grandeur of our Gothic churches. But for the majority of their generation God just isn't on their radar. How come?

Progressives, such as Bishop Jack Spong, would argue it's because the church has held to fundamentalist teaching far too long. The Bible needs to be understood metaphorically, not literally. He has a point, and I tend to agree with him. But it is the churches that do interpret the Bible literally that seem to be more full, so much so that they're buying up old downtown church buildings vacated by mainline

congregations or building new ones and filling them. Is it their loud music? I find that an offence to my ears, but they obviously do not. Do they find our music too funereal? Is it because they're more chummy with the Lord and with one another? They even hug one another. We may shake hands at the Peace, but not at other times, if we can avoid it. How often do we get to know our fellow Anglicans by reading their obituary? Are we too snobbish? Are we God's dinosaurs, ready for extinction?

There's one thing new about dinosaurs I learned at a recent Nature Guelph lecture. They didn't become extinct. Instead they morphed, or changed their bodily shape, into birds. There's a spiritual parallel here. Though we may now appear to be dinosaurs, one day in God's timing, we're going to look like—and even sing like—birds. Those who choose never to darken our door may judge us to be dinosaurs, but I see the transformed Anglican Church. God isn't finished with us yet. But, if we're happy being dinosaurs, and constantly resist change, we'll probably never learn to fly.

So, when I see empty church buildings, as in Rothesay, I see God reshaping the church. It's not something to get depressed over. It's rather something to sing praise for, to glorify God—with the birds.

Michael Burslem is a member of St. George's Guelph. EMAIL: mchlbrslm@gmail.com

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Spend LENT *with* MARK

As much as I love the gifted storytelling of Luke, Matthew's narrative style and John's uniqueness, I enjoy reading Mark most of all.

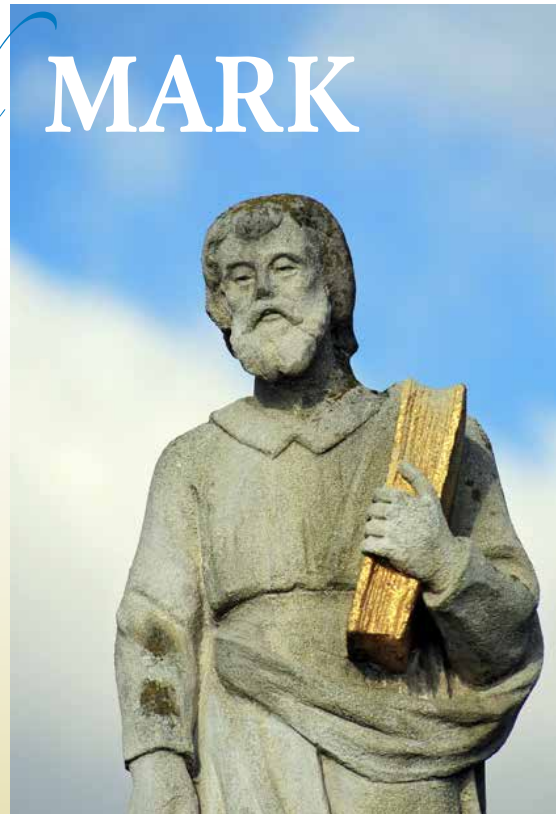
He has a way of telling the story of Jesus that keeps the reader focused and moving, and because it can be read easily in one sitting. Indeed, not only can it be read silently by oneself in one sitting, it can be read aloud by a small group in just under two hours; or, as was the case last year, it can be told aloud by 29 different tellers in just over two hours. A single teller can usually proclaim the whole gospel of Mark in about 90 minutes. Doing so helps us to hear the story of the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus as a single narrative rather than in the small segments we hear each Sunday in church.

As we prepare for our Journey with Mark, I encourage you to first read the whole gospel, out loud and with someone else if possible, in one sitting. And then, each day, follow along with the various people, lay and ordained, near and far, who have reflected on a short passage. Journey well.
Susan Wilson

You will notice that there are no readings for Sundays, which traditionally are not part of Lent, so you can follow the Bible readings at Church or read any you missed during the week.

Feedback ... We appreciate your comments, suggestions or questions. Contact Hollis Hiscock at editor@niagaraanglican.ca or 905-635-9463 or 710 Ashley Ave, Burlington, ON, L7R2Z3.

Remember, the newspaper is available for download from www.niagaraanglican.ca/ newspaper so you can have this feature handy on your favourite device.



Part One – Ash Wednesday, February 18 to Saturday, March 14, 2015

Ash Wednesday, February 18 Mark 1:1-20 Baptism, Temptation and Calling of Disciples

Mark jumps right into the story of Jesus' ministry beginning with his baptism by John. There is no doubt about who Jesus is and what he is going to be all about. A voice from the heavens confirms his identity and assures him of God's love and pleasure in him. He is tempted in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights, and although Mark doesn't elaborate on what those temptations are, apparently Jesus passes the test and needs angels to minister to him. Affirmed in his identity and calling, Jesus begins to gather his own disciples, whom he will teach and who will carry on his ministry after his death and resurrection.

Reflection on the purpose of our lives is one of the most significant and challenging tasks that we as human beings engage in. At points along our journeys, we are just as certain of what our identity and purpose are as Jesus appears in this opening passage. But along the way, our certainty of these things shifts and changes, grows and matures. Alas, the experience can be confusing, frustrating, depressing or exhilarating. Where are you today with that question? Do you have clarity about your life and purpose? What if you don't, where can you go for help?

Regardless of what we see as our purpose in life, or our role in the world, or our vocation in the community, everything comes back to rest on who we are in the eyes and heart of God. We are God's beloved. You are a special child of God, deeply loved by God. When we are not sure of what to do or why, it is always good to remember this truth. On the spiritual journey it is important to seek out companions on the way – a pastor, a mentor, a soul friend, a spiritual director – who will help to remind you of this truth when life gets a bit fuzzy or uncertain.
Susan Wilson, Rector, All Saints Erin

Thursday, February 19 Mark 1:21-45 Beginning of Jesus' Ministry

Jesus worked and rested. Jesus worked and rested. Notice the pattern? Probably Jesus learned this lifestyle from his parents and religious traditions.

The Ten Commandments had recommended people should rest after working six days straight.

Mark put Jesus to work immediately after Jesus made his own commitment to God, selecting followers who would bring God's mission to fruition.

Then he healed people and preached God's good news ... afterwards he found an alone place to pray, think, reflect and recharge before resuming his work.

That is Mark's message to us as we study his gospel about Jesus Christ this Lent.

WORK for us may mean our daily labours, our volunteer endeavours or whatever else occupies our time, talent and resources in our everyday living. REST means what we do when we get away from our WORK to become rejuvenated physically, spiritually, mentally and emotionally.

Our REST could take place in a quiet room, in public worship, during travel or eating or any other situation where we can retreat into ourselves and be alone to communicate with God.

This Lent let Mark lead you through your WORK and REST to a new or renewed relationship with your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
Hollis Hiscock, Editor, Niagara Anglican

Friday, February 20 Mark 2:1-12 Healing of Paralytic

There is a fascinating thing at work in this story. Although there were many people seeking help and healing from Jesus, the focus is on one person – the paralyzed man whose ingenious friends find a way to get him into a place where he will experience the power of being in the presence of Jesus. He says and does nothing to receive forgiveness, but simply responds to the words spoken by Jesus to him, "Your sins are forgiven ... Take up your mat and go home".

We see also the struggle of the Pharisees present; they were seeking to keep the religious institution alive and well. How often do we miss the experience of being in the presence of the Divine while seeking to maintain the status quo and the rule of law?

What about sin? It means to miss the mark. When we miss the mark, accept it with a change of heart that we are forgiven. Receiving forgiveness is truly a powerful and most liberating moment. We are

realigned with our true self and can live again.

Elizabeth Heuther, Rector, St. Matthias' Guelph

Saturday, February 21 Mark 2:13-17 Calling of Levi

It always strikes me, the people Jesus calls directly and they come. They just drop their current lives and come. A whole wealth of thoughts go with that; it just isn't that simple. Perhaps those were simpler times. Perhaps not. What you did for a living was who you were.

I am also struck by the polarity of the passage. On one hand there is the tax collector, reviled by his society; on the other there are the scribes being offended.

Jesus does not "call" the scribes but they are around, watching everything. Do the scribes offer him food and drink? Do they bring him home? Do they drop their lives to follow him?

Jesus' final line of the passage - that he came to call sinners, comparing himself to a physician for the sick - resonates down through time. If we are to follow Jesus, we must seek out the ones who truly need us. Christ is not just for the righteous but for those who need him. The sick in body and mind, the ones who struggle day by day to get through, to think well of themselves, the ones filled with anger, wanting to lash out. There are so many; he calls them all.
Anne Gould, Treasurer, St. Paul's Shelburne

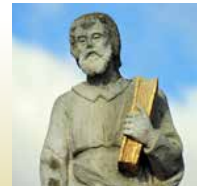
Monday, February 23 Mark 2:18-28 Questions of Fasting and Sabbath

As I was researching my UK family and understanding how they lived, and what if any hardships they endured, I ran across this story.

A councillor was walking home on a Sunday and suddenly pointed his gold topped walking stick in the direction of the river. "You two, what are you doing fishing on a Sunday? You are breaking the law. You will each pay a fine of 5 shillings."

No amount of pleading, of hungry children and just getting enough for a family meal was listened to. The law was broken. (The Sunday Observance Act 1780 [Eight sections long])

Spend LENT *with* MARK



The disciples with Jesus, while walking through some wheat fields on the Jewish Sabbath, gathered and crushed some grains between their fingers. Immediately they were criticized by the Pharisees for breaking the law. Jesus answered that the law was made for humanity, not humanity for the law. Almost 2,000 years of Christianity later, the British parliament had not learned that.

I am reminded that the word lent is an ancient word for spring. Springtime sees much activity underground, the plants are pushing down their roots as they prepare for new life, so Lent is a time for us to push down our roots into deeper nutritious soil of love and compassion ready for new life in Christ, where love is above law and compassion is above rule.

Easter and resurrection only come through the cross, but wood and nails could not have kept Jesus on the cross had Love not held Him there. *Muriel Hornby, former Honorary Assistant, All Saints Erin*

Tuesday, February 24 Mark 3:1-19 Appointing the Twelve

One theme running through this passage is Jesus' moral authority over all powers of evil. The Pharisees are condemned for their "hardness of heart" in not encouraging the healing of the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath. Their evil intentions are indicated when they go off to the Herodians, clearly a group associated with the hated Roman state, to plot against Jesus.

Great crowds are then attracted to Jesus' healing powers but it is the powers of evil, the "unclean spirits", who realize that a spiritual revolution against evil is going on, not just a wonder-worker healer in action. "Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, 'You are the Son of God!'. They recognized one who operated by divine moral authority, not just good healing techniques. And they fell down before him in fear, recognizing his authority.

Finally, in choosing the 12 apostles and sending them out, Jesus sends them not only to proclaim the message of Jesus as the Son of God but to have "authority to cast out demons."

As we are called to participate in God's Mission in the world, it is good to be reminded that we are given a divine moral authority over the powers of evil in the world and we should not be afraid to invoke it. Jesus had it and God gives it to us.

Terry Brown, Co-Rector, Church of the Ascension Hamilton

Wednesday, February 25 Mark 3:20-35 Jesus, Beelzebul and Family

True confession. When I first reviewed this segment of Mark's Gospel, the word "Beelzebul" glared at me. Not through Mark's words, but through the lyrics of the singing group, Queen. Bohemian Rhapsody played in my head, "Beelzebub has a devil put aside for me." Another discussion, perhaps...

The second word that stood out prominently was "family." Jesus exclaimed, "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." Family. What are your thoughts? Do you think of the nuclear family - mother, father and birth siblings - or a newer definition?

A couple of years ago, our Church borrowed a toy "Nativity Scene" from the Diocesan Resource Library. Inside were all the standard pieces, including the adoring parents, Mary and Joseph, and their lovely white-plastic baby Jesus.

Consider the definition of "family" today. In the future, will this toy company include same-sex parents gazing upon their intersexed baby? Not likely, by toy manufacturer's standards. How about you? If you were to design your manger scene, what would it look like? During this Lenten season, let us continue to consider Jesus' words: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." Amen.

Joan Dunn, Priest Associate, Halton Cluster of Parishes, Georgetown

Thursday, February 26 Mark 4:1-20 Parable of the Sower

In this season when gardeners are only beginning to contemplate what they want to plant in their gardens, Jesus' parable of the sower reminds us deeply of the significance of the seeds we plant not only in the ground, but also in all the lives we touch.

Jesus describes the seed as God's word, scattered by the farmers to produce a crop, and that the environment or soil of the ground makes a difference in whether or not that which was sown grows and produces a crop.

Like the soil, all souls receiving the word are subject to their environment for nurturing what is planted inside of them. It is important to listen for truth, and to not allow worries, distractions, trouble or suffering to delay or prevent spiritual growth in our lives, that we might share it with others - 30, 60 or 100 times!

What should strike us most is Jesus' statement, "Those who have ears should listen." As gardeners, in the right season we look for where we can best plant seeds in order to produce a good crop. Perhaps we need to do more listening and learning to help others cultivate their soil so that the seeds we all scatter land in good soil.

Ruth Reid, Pastoral Assistant, Youth and Family Ministry, St John the Evangelist Thorold

Friday, February 27 Mark 4:21-34 Parables of Lamp, Growing Seed & Mustard Seed

As a former teacher of literature, I have always enjoyed the ambiguity of Jesus' parables.

In the Parable of the Lamp, we hear the well-known instruction "Don't hide your light under a bushel" with the warning that we must "pay attention to what we hear." At the end of this passage we are told that Jesus spoke in parables to all, "as they were able to hear" but he explained them to his disciples - a rather mysterious comment that seems to round out the warning to listen carefully.

The Parable of the Growing Seed and the Parable of the Mustard Seed both offer comparisons to the Kingdom of God in terms of earthly activities like planting, growth, harvesting and shelter - activities familiar to an agrarian society. These seem to be simple lessons about the importance of care and faithfulness. But they might also suggest the possibility of God's kingdom here on earth. Certainly, the stories imply the power of growth and development from the smallest of beginnings.

These parables have always suggested to me the possibility of God's kingdom here on earth and the need for each of us to contribute to its growth.

Elizabeth Hopkins, Parishioner, All Saints Erin

Saturday, February 28 Mark 4:35-41 Jesus Calms the Storm

When I read this story about Jesus it made me remember a time or two when I was much younger and still living in Upper Island Cove, Newfoundland. When I first met Mabel, who would later become my wife, my friend Ray Barrett also had a new girl named Olive and the two of us fellows decided to take the girls for a ride across the Bay (Conception Bay). It was about 3 km in a 12 foot punt (that's a row boat for mainlanders) to go from Bishop's Cove to the Mad Rock in Bay Roberts. We packed a picnic lunch and got aboard. About half way across the swell came on. Now, you must know that this swell comes into Conception Bay from the Atlantic Ocean. This swell of water out in the middle of the Bay was very frightening when you were sitting in a small row boat. Well, my buddy Ray had all the confidence and he got us to the other side just fine. Ray said that in another few hours it would be fine for our return trip. We enjoyed our picnic lunch with our gals and then got aboard the boat to head back home. We made it safely back to the Rocky Land at Bishop's Cove shore and all was well.

I think that Jesus had his hand on our boat, and on the wind and the water that day back in 1956.

Despite the somewhat scary adventure, the girls later decided to marry us and the four of us remained dear friends for more than 60 years.

What memory comes to mind when you read this Gospel story?
Douglas Mercer, Lay Reader, All Saints Erin

Monday, March 2 Mark 5:1-20 Jesus Heals a Demoniac

This passage from Mark's Gospel about the healing of the demoniac speaks to me about liberation. Not a liberation theology per se, but a liberation from all that binds us body and soul, and chains us down.

The key to the story lies in a part of the question that the possessed man puts to Jesus: "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"

We may well ask the same question of Jesus when we are feeling chained down by our own demons. It may seem that every time we feel that we have freed ourselves all on our own the demons return, weighing us down even more.

The demons were still there after Jesus commanded them to leave the demoniac. They had only been set aside to another place until they ultimately destroyed themselves.

All Jesus asks of us is to lay all our cares at his feet and he alone will remove the chains.

This invitation is a common thread that weaves its way through the Gospels.

The most poignant to me can be found in the comfortable words of the Holy Communion as found in the Book of Common Prayer: "Come unto me all that labour and are heavy laden and I will refresh you." (Matthew 11: 28) These words can liberate us from our demons and set us free to be our true selves.

Ron Pincoe, Vocational Deacon, St Mark's Orangeville

Tuesday, March 3 Mark 5:21-43 Girl Restored, Woman Healed

A man of prominence publicly requests Jesus to heal his young daughter and a woman comes silently for healing without even asking. One story embedded within another, but both about faith as well as anguish relieved by Jesus' healing touch. Jairus came to Jesus in the midst of a crowd. He humbled himself, bowing at Jesus' feet and "begged him repeatedly" to come and heal his young daughter. Jairus laid his faith out for all to see the extent to which he trusted Jesus. Then the news came that his daughter had died. We are not told if Jairus wavered in his trust because Jesus so quickly responds, "Do not fear, only believe."

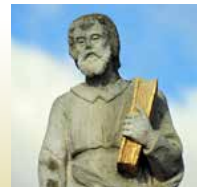
Silently, without wanting anyone to know, the woman who had suffered for many years approached Jesus to gently touch his clothing hoping to be healed undetected. She was granted her unspoken request, but was not allowed to remain anonymous. Realizing she had indeed received healing she felt compelled to come forward when Jesus demanded to know who had touched him.

Like that of Jairus and the woman, our faith becomes a witness when others see it and recognize the difference it makes in our lives.
Stephanie Pellow, Rector, St. Alban the Martyr Grand Valley and St. Paul's Shelburne

Wednesday, March 4 Mark 6:1-13 Jesus is Rejected, Mission of the Disciples

This passage from Mark is a remarkable passage about faith. In the first part, we learn that the teaching of Jesus is rejected in his home town, Nazareth, and Jesus is amazed at the lack of faith. This should be a significant blow to Jesus because, according to

Spend LENT *with* MARK



Mark's account, he is becoming well known. However Jesus does not quit –instead he sends the 12 disciples out, two by two, to teach and to heal. The Holy Spirit is with them; they teach and they heal.

Rejection is part of life and God is very aware that it will occur to all of us.

The disciples must have headed out in some trepidation having seen what had happened to Jesus in Nazareth, but they went and let the Holy Spirit guide them.

Sometimes we feel that nothing will work and there is no point trying to live out our baptismal role of being the church in the world. But if we, in faith, can accept the power of the Holy Spirit, then God can and will work through us.

Rod McDowell, Vocational Deacon, St John's Niagara Falls

Thursday, March 5 Mark 6:14-29
Death of John the Baptist

Ever found yourself blurting something out without first engaging your brain? We've all done it—spoken the first thought without considering the potential consequence. As soon as the words left our mouths we wish we could roll back time and retract them. But the sad reality is, we can't and now it's time for damage control. It usually goes something like this, "Hi guys, good to see you again. You wouldn't believe how well my division has done this quarter, record sales and profits; I'll eat my shoe if anyone in the company is even close to what we've achieved. How are things in your neck of the woods? Oh, you don't say?" Suddenly you have a decision to make. Whether to lose face and in humility say you're sorry, you didn't actually mean it, OR you can choose to eat your shoe, thinking you are retaining the respect of others, but in reality you will be remembered for being even more foolish.

Herod chose to eat his shoe. Grieved at the thought of losing face in front of others, he decided he had no choice other than give Herodius' daughter whatever she asked for after she danced for him and his guests. After all, he blurted out what he would do without first thinking about the potential consequence. When she later asked for the head of John the Baptist, a man whom he feared as a righteous and holy man and a man whom up to this point he had protected, he chose to value the opinions of others, above his own beliefs and values. It was a foolish decision that haunted him for the rest of his days.

As Christians we are not immune from blurting something out that we wished we hadn't, and then be challenged to set aside our own beliefs and values, in order to save face in front of others. We can choose to eat our shoe or we can stick to our beliefs and values by apologizing and retracting our words. In the long term we will avoid being haunted by our actions and we may just attract the admiration and interest of others through our Christian witness.

Brian Galligan, Rector, St Alban the Martyr Acton

Friday, March 6 Mark 6:30-44
Feeding of 5000

This well known story is like a three act play.

The first scene reveals Jesus' compassion for the crowd (verse 34), not only in their hunger for that food that was nourishing their souls, but also for food to nourish their bodies.

Jesus' resolve not to send them away hungry opens the middle scene. He is calling the disciples to work with him in meeting the needs of the people. There is movement from invitation to charge to a pointed question and bidding, "How many loaves have you? Go and see" (verse 38)

Their bringing of five loaves and two fish opens the third scene. Jesus takes their offering, looks up to heaven, blesses it, breaks the bread and gives it to the disciples to distribute among the people. Miraculously all eat and are filled. (verse 42)

This story moves me to give thanks ...

For all the hands across Niagara, making breakfast for kids before school, soup for the homeless, community suppers for those living in poverty.

For the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund and its abiding commitment to food aid and food security (see fredsays.ca).

For all of the world leaders who labour to eradicate extreme poverty among the nations.

Fred Hiltz, Primate, Anglican Church of Canada

Saturday, March 7 Mark 6:45-56
Jesus Walks on Water

So many of us live our whole lives in our own little boat. Understandably, as there is comfort and safeness staying there and most times we cruise along and the sailing is smooth. But at other times, a fierce wind storm arises and the sky around us turns black and we are tossed about with little sense of where we are or in what direction we are travelling. In those moments, the tempest is our only focus; we wonder how long it will last and if we will even survive.

The disciples probably thought the same thing.

Exhausted from rowing against the adverse waves, they frantically searched the horizon for a break in the storm; for hope and relief. When a figure appeared out of the darkness moving toward them, they cried out in terror, "It's a ghost!" Fear often makes us see things not as they really are.

Jesus came to them, walking on the water, coming to calm their fear and ease the storm. He tells them "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." He got into their boat, the winds ceased, peace and calm resumed.

When the storms arise in our lives, and they will arise, it does not matter how big our boat is. What matters is where we are looking. Do we focus on the turbulent seas, the crashing waves and wicked winds threatening to capsize us OR do we search the horizon for Jesus to come and get into our boat with us?

Jesus does come to us. He comes to us and enters our boat and calms the waters, and by doing so, he calms our hearts also. We don't need to expend our energy rowing in circles or bailing water. We need to wait and keep watch and trust that Jesus will come to us.

Don't look at the storm. Look out into it and watch for Jesus making his way to you. He brings you peace and calmness. He enters your boat and never leaves you alone. And for that, we too are "utterly astounded!"

Holly Klemmensen, Postulant, Diocese of Niagara

Monday, March 9 Mark 7:1-23
Tradition of the Elders

It is easy to get used to doing things because that is what has always been done. We kneel here, stand then and speak these words at this point. Most long-term Anglicans can, without any effort, hear "and now, as our Saviour taught us, let us pray" and immediately launch into the Lord's Prayer. Why?

It states in the Bible that Jesus spoke that prayer as an example, but says that prayers should come from the heart and not be said by rote. Jesus often tells the people around him to not follow tradition so strictly; that love of God is more important than following the way it has always been done. In this case Jesus is confronting the tradition of cleanliness, which in itself is a good thing ... washing hands and keeping clean have many benefits and should not be forsaken! However, in that time it had taken on a life of its own and following the "elders" was more important than anything else.

Scribes, always looking to complain about something, jump on the disciples for not washing their hands before eating. Not for basic sanitary concerns, (Do you know what those hands had been doing? Could have been anything!) but for the lack of following the elders' ways. And even after Jesus has rebuffed them for not loving God with their hearts by being so focused on man made rules, the disciples need another explanation. One cannot help but feel for Jesus as he probably sighs and settles down to try to get yet one more seemingly simple thought through the dense skulls of his followers. The gist: love God with your heart, pray, worship, share as feels right in your heart, when it feels right and how it feels right ... not just when the elders/institution/society

decrees or how it decrees. The little prayer for safe travels as the weather turns bad on a Wednesday is just as correct as the prayers for peace during the 11:00 a.m. Sunday service, and probably a more heart felt prayer than the Lord's Prayer ever has been!

Trish Gould, Parishioner, St. Paul's Shelburne

Tuesday, March 10 Mark 7:24-30
Syrophenician Woman

This is a shocking story for many of us to read as Jesus appears to be speaking in a very harsh, disrespectful way to this woman who is seeking help ... perhaps as a last resort she comes to him because she has heard of his reputation. Is this really about Jesus or about us and our perception of him? We do not want to hear him speak with such disdain, sounding sexist and racist in one statement. It disturbs our image and ideal of who Jesus is.

So what is the point of this story? Perhaps, it is a wonderfully clear reminder that all are part of the kingdom of God and that we need to respect and accept diversity and difference. We need to see that each one is a part of the whole of humanity. All are welcome at our table. Can we appreciate that we are different and love it—and each other?

Elizabeth Heuther, Rector, St. Matthias' Guelph

Wednesday, March 11 Mark 7:31-37
Healing of a Deaf Man

Jesus caused the deaf man to hear and speak clearly. However, before doing that, Jesus withdrew with the man to a private place, and performed the healing there.

This is one of several times we see Jesus withdrawing from the crowd to a more private place—to heal, to pray or just to be alone. Lent is the season in the Christian year that especially encourages us to cultivate our own private times and places—to carve out space in our busy lives, to meditate, to pray and to listen to God. Private time with God can be achieved during a quiet walk, while listening to music, by contemplating a line of Scripture such as "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10), or in prayer, to name a few. It is not so important how we achieve it, but rather the fact that we do achieve it.

Do you have a private place or time that allows you to withdraw from the busyness of the day to spend time alone with God? Lent is an ideal time to develop such a practice. May this quiet time be a blessing to you!
Shirl Christian, Rector, Grace Church Arthur and St Paul's Mount Forest

Thursday, March 12 Mark 8:1-10
Feeding of 4000

"In those days ..." In these days, the story is one of the most familiar and the most controversial of Jesus' ministry. How did he do that? Did he do that? Or did the gathered crowd, moved by witnessing his giving thanks and blessing the seven loaves of bread and the few small fish, simply share with their neighbours what each had brought?

Ultimately, at this distance in time and geography, we simply cannot know. Does it matter?

What does matter is that in this story we see Jesus fulfilling the ancient Hebrew tradition, even obligation, of feeding others, a tradition that became and remains central to Christians in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

I invite you to take time through this Lent to reflect on what the simple meal of bread and wine shared in our churches every Sunday really means to you. Is it just routine, and coffee time afterwards is more satisfying? Or do you come to be fed, body and soul, by the love of God manifested in Jesus the Christ, and given freely to us in that bread and wine, as he said, "Do this to remember me?"

In these days, let us remember ...

Fran Darlington, Honorary Assistant, St. Matthias' Guelph

Spend LENT with MARK



Friday, March 13

Mark 8:11-21

Conflict with Pharisees

As one who has made his living at the craft and spiritual discipline of biblical storytelling, I am glad when the lectionary's Gospel of Mark rolls around—not just because Mark was the first book of the Bible I learned by heart, but because I relate to Mark's very human Jesus. I look at the text as a musician studies sheet music and ponders how to "perform" it. Here my eye falls on Jesus' reaction to the Pharisees: "He sighed deeply in his spirit."

What does that sound like? The Greek verb means something like "grunt," a sound of painful exasperation, utter frustration—"hrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!" It's also how Jesus might sound with his dim-witted (an alternative translation to "hard-hearted") disciples, who misconstrue their master's venting about the Pharisees and Herodians as a criticism of their failure to bring sufficient bread with them.

They have just witnessed Jesus' feeding 4000, preceded by his having fed 5000. An exasperated Jesus surely "sighs deeply in his spirit" at them, when he asks, "Don't you get it?!" The audience always laughs at this point in performance—but then I can hear them thinking, "No, we don't get it either; we're just like the disciples."

St. Paul tells the Romans that the Spirit helps us pray with "sighs too deep for words"—the very root word Mark uses. In this season of the Christian year when we take stock of ourselves, I am comforted by that grunting Spirit, by the company of those dim-witted disciples, and by the love of the Lord, who, though no doubt exasperated with us, cares enough to have offered his life that you and I might have life abundant.

Dennis Dewey, Mentor, Academy for Biblical Storytelling

Saturday, March 14

Mark 8:22-26

Jesus Heals a Blind Man

On Blindness

What are these shadows around me?

Moving

Laughing

Crying

Singing

Living

Shadows seething with Life.

What do they mean?

What do I mean?

Am I a shadow too?

Then the Light

Shines

On Everything

In Everything

Through Everything

No more shadows.

Only One.

Owen Ash, Rector, St James' Guelph

A personal letter from Mark

(Dictated to Hollis Hiscock)

I understand you are "marking" the words I wrote in my gospel during the season you call Lent.

So I thought I would write to introduce myself and tell you why I wrote about the good news from our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Being a Jew and serving as a minor minister in my local synagogue, I was very familiar with our customs, traditions and religious practices.

My mother Mary was a devout follower of God and believed Jesus to be the Messiah; in fact the first Christians (as followers of the Christ later became known) met and worshipped in our house in Jerusalem.

As an apprentice Christian missionary, I was thrilled and excited when Paul, probably our most famous convert, invited me to accompany him on his first journey visiting the cities and towns around the Mediterranean Sea to spread the teachings of Jesus Christ. But I quickly became bored, some say homesick, and abandoned the group, returning to Jerusalem.

Later I changed my mind and coaxed my cousin Barnabas to take me on his missionary journey. At first he said NO, and then relented after I convinced him I could be helpful.

I was. I began collecting stories and documenting eye witness accounts of happenings passed along by Paul, Peter and others who were making Jesus' life and teachings well known throughout the world, as we knew it then.

About 65 years after Jesus' birth, I began compiling everything into what is now known as the earliest and shortest of the four gospels; Matthew, Luke and John would write theirs years later.

Since I wrote my gospel less than a generation after the actual events and many of the eye witnesses were still alive, I could frequently consult with them to ensure the accuracy of my facts and details. I was very confident my account was as true as humanly possible.

I wanted to describe the life and teachings of Jesus, as well as to show that he was indeed the Saviour or Messiah foretold in the ancient scriptures you call the Old Testament.

William Barclay—author, radio and television presenter, Church of Scotland minister and Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at Glasgow University—said my gospel is the "nearest thing we will ever get to a report of Jesus' life." I appreciate his observation; I did try to describe the human picture of Jesus without forgetting his divinity.

As you read my gospel, particularly with the reflections provided by your fellow Christians, you will be taken through the three years of Jesus' teaching and accomplishments.

You will celebrate his baptism, struggle with his temptations, listen with the crowds as he relates his life—moulding parables, be awed by his miracles, saddened by his rejections, tortured by his suffering and death and finally be restored to new life as you experience Jesus' resurrection.

I hope you will experience a growth in your faith as you journey with my gospel.

Your friend in Christ,

John Mark

Thank you to Canon Susan Wilson and her team of commentators.

PART TWO: Monday, March 16 to Saturday, March 28 (the Saturday before Palm Sunday), appears in next month's issue.

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Diocese to train 12 new youth ministry leaders

DIANA SWIFT

Starting this spring a dozen trainees, two drawn from each of the six regions of the diocese, will enroll in a new program designed to foster the ministry of young-adult Anglican leaders, ages 18 to 30. Supported by a grant of \$8,000 from the Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC), the program will be supervised by the Diocese of Niagara's new youth ministry consultant, Su McLeod, who comes from the Diocese of British Columbia to join Niagara's staff.

"We worked out our costs and they totalled \$7,890, so we were quite happy to get \$8,000," says Christyn Perkons, diocesan director of congregational support and development, with a laugh.

Each region will have two expert mentors to guide trainees and help them organize events. "The specific process will be laid out in March in a general orientation at the cathedral," says Perkons.

The AFC grant comes from a new category of projects designed to train youth in mission, ministry and evangelism. The funds will be applied toward such expenses as mentors' honoraria and youth events (coffee houses and worship experiences). Each of the six regions will get \$300 for three youth events at \$100 each.

The grant will also underwrite a central component of the program: subscriptions to the national church's online interactive training resource "Trailblazing: Theological Formation for Youth Ministry." Developed and tested by youth ministers for the 21st century, this resource offers a broad array of pertinent topics from theological discourse to practical skills. Support from the AFC was

essential for launching this program, says Perkons. "One of the biggest challenges for young people in this age group is that they are in university or just starting work and they don't have money to put toward this kind of training. And their parents, who have been spending money on them till now, are saying, 'We're done with that!'"

Diana Swift is a contributing editor with the Anglican Journal.



Photo: Submitted

Su McLeod, Program Consultant for Children, Youth and Family Ministry

Meet Su McLeod

Su McLeod (SM) begins a new ministry as Program Consultant for Children, Youth and Family Ministry in Niagara Diocese. The Niagara Anglican (NA) welcomes Su and introduces you to the person and her ministry.

NA: Who is Su McLeod?

SM: I grew up in the North West of England on the Welsh border in a small town called Little Neston, on the banks of the river Dee. Free time was spent outside adventuring and exploring, climbing trees, helping Dad in the garden, tending to a small collection of animals or tinkering in the garage.

After attending the University of Central Lancashire I went back to school at the University of Chester to study what I really felt called to do and that was Youth Ministry.

I was inspired by David Attenborough, through his various wildlife presentations, and vowed from a young age to visit Canada. Halfway through studying youth ministry I decided to combine the two and contacted British Columbia (BC) Diocese with my

resume, and offered to work free for a year in a parish, and that brings us to today.

NA: You are described as a person who "brings with her a wealth of youth ministry experience; parish, diocesan and national." Can you elaborate?

SM: I was blessed in my formation to have the spiritual and faith guidance of some fantastic mentors, who demonstrated the importance and value of the wider church. That is something I hold on to today and share through the ministry I am involved in. It is one way we can understand who we are as Christians and as members of Niagara Diocese and the Anglican Church of Canada. It is important to me to continue that learning and understanding to remain involved and engaged in all levels of our community and provide opportunities for others to do the same.

I have been in parish based ministry in Canada for five years in BC and seven years in the UK—three years included working in a community based program in a low income neighbourhood.

For the past four years, I was BC's Diocesan Family Ministry facilitator, served as a member of the Diocesan Response team—a team coordinating the response to sexual misconduct allegations—a trainer for the Safe Church training and a member of Diocesan Council.

Nationally I have been a mentor for Ask and Imagine programs, Youth, Young Adult and Practitioners, a member of the planning team for Stronger Together and currently a member of the Youth Secretariat.

NA: Elsewhere you were introduced as having "an abundance of spirit-infused creativity and passion." What does that imply?

SM: Over the past three years I have been guiding BC as it explores how it continues to do Summer Ministry without a residential camp facility. This has been a fantastic opportunity to engage in conversation and demonstration about how we do ministry with and among children and young people.

This has been achieved by using pop culture (for example) the Lego Movie) and a contemporary theological reflection of Nehemiah.

Using the wealth of natural and people resources that surround us and establishing a relationship through a cross cultural camp, with the 'Namgis Nation in Alert Bay, Cormorant Island.

NA: You have a long job title, covering a wide range of age groups and interests. What will be your focus during your first 100 days?

SM: Learning the geography, what is happening in Niagara and start meeting individually with practitioners and young people across the diocese.

NA: What is your approach or philosophy of ministry?

SM: My philosophy in ministry is one of accompanying, in the same way young people are innately spiritual and our ministry is to journey alongside them—accompany. Those of you in ministry and parents and grandparents among us, you are the experts in your own context. I want to listen and hear your story, offer support and guidance where and when needed, and celebrate the ministry and the people.

I also hope to have an open and ongoing mutual dialogue.

NA: Blessings as you begin your ministry in Niagara Diocese.

Deadlines and Submissions for Niagara Anglican

Deadlines:
 April 2015 – February 25
 May 2015 – March 25
 June 2015 – April 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 or 905-635-9463

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A story ... told thousands of years ago ... sounds familiar today

SHARYN HALL

In our Bible there is the story of a beautiful and virtuous married woman, Susanna, who was secretly desired by two prominent judges. One day they conspired to find her alone and demanded she satisfy their desires. She was trapped. If she gave in to their demands, she would be stoned to death for adultery. If she refused, the judges declared they would condemn her with a false story about her unfaithfulness with a stranger.

She knew no one would believe her, but she refused the judges' demands. The two judges used their power to bring her to court. They told their false story about her unfaithfulness, and condemned her to death. The people believed she was innocent but did nothing to help her. Then a boy named Daniel called on the people to stand against the treachery of the judges. He proved the two accusers of Susanna were lying. Susanna was set free to return to her family.

Susanna's story is thousands of

years old, but it sounds familiar to us today. We know stories of women who are threatened with violence or shame if they do not satisfy the desires of aggressive

In Canada, 50% of women have survived at least one incident of sexual or physical violence.

men. Those women also assume no one will believe them because their attacker is a public figure, their employer or a trusted family friend. Like many women assaulted, they remain silent.

The story of Susanna shows us violence against women has existed within cultures for centuries, because of the belief that men are superior to women and therefore are entitled to power over them. This belief still exists to varying degrees in different cultures around the world. When we read statistics, revealing 30% of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual assault in their lifetimes, we might assume this is not true in Canada, but we would be wrong.

In Canada, 50% of women have survived at least one incident of sexual or physical violence. Every minute of every day, a woman or child in Canada is sexually

assaulted. Statistics are helpful to determine the prevalence of violence against women and girls, but statistics do not reveal that the harm done to the human dignity of one woman or one girl affects us all. Violence in any form is a threat to human dignity.

As people of faith, as Christians, as Anglicans, we are called to seek human dignity for all people. Our baptismal covenant declares that we will strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being. This includes people of all races and religions and makes no distinction between male and female. Violence against women and girls

is a lack of human respect for an adult or a child simply because she is female.

Every November we begin the White Ribbon Campaign and the Sixteen Days of Action to Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls. When it concludes on December 10 - United Nations Human Rights Day - posters and ribbons are put away, but the work for human rights and the protection of women and girls does not end. We need improved laws so that women will feel encouraged to end their silence and speak out against their assailants. However, a law is only as strong as cultural attitudes will allow it to be enforced.

The greatest hindrance to protection for women and girls is the cultural attitude that they are not as entitled to respect and justice as men. This attitude has deep roots in our ancient past, as Susanna's story illustrates, but similar attitudes persist in every culture today.

Men and boys can do a great deal to overcome such attitudes by insisting that their language and behaviour toward women

and girls are respectful not degrading, compassionate not condescending. Women and girls can support women and girls who have suffered abuse by listening to their stories and standing with them when they seek protection and justice.

The White Ribbon Campaign's pledge is to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls. That is a good resolution to honour all year and every year for the sake of females everywhere.

What can one person do?

Challenge inappropriate language and behaviour toward women and girls. Support local organizations, which help those who have been assaulted. Raise awareness of the vulnerability of women and girls to violence and injustice in Canada and around the world.

*Canon Sharyn Hall is an Anglican Delegate to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.
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Christmas Tales

Warmth and love from mitten tree

The Mitten Tree near the front in Christ's Church Cathedral Hamilton was filled with new or gently used mitts, gloves, hats and scarves for men, women and children in need of a little warmth during the winter.

In response to an inquiry from the Niagara Anglican, Anne Berryman explained:

"My Ma, Christine Berryman, and I operate the prayer shawl ministry, which distributes shawls to folks who need a little extra TLC, whatever the circumstance.

"We have a group of women who meet weekly to knit said shawls, and chat about world issues and irreverent stuff. We have distributed almost 200 shawls since we've been 'in business'.

"In the fall we tend to forego the shawls (some of us), and knit hats and scarves, and generally invite donations of mitts and



The Mitten Tree decorated and ready for distribution in time for Christmas and the cold weather

Photo: Hollis Hiscock

gloves from the parishioners.

"They are then donated through various avenues. Men's hats, gloves and scarves go to the "off the street" men through the out of the cold program. Women's and children's stuff tends to go to different agencies every year. Whoever steps forward with a significant need gets some goods. Ma and I really take on production. Jenny

Street, David Savage and others look after distribution. All of the warm winter gear gets well distributed and appears to be quite well received and appreciated by all.

"We just want to keep folks warm and feeling a little bit of love along with it."

A Charlie Brown Christmas



Photo: Hollis Hiscock

For the second successive year, the story and music of A Charlie Brown Christmas came alive at Christ's Church Cathedral Hamilton in December. Stacie McGregor (piano), Jim Sandilands (bass), John Veretta (drums), Bill Thomas (narrator) and William Carn (trombone) delighted the audience at the Christmas Vespers.

Float in the Santa Claus parade

Grace Church Waterdown graced the town's Christmas parade with a float depicting the Nativity and the mission of the parish.

Photo: Contributed by Sue-Ann Ward



One Christmas happening

All Saints in Dain City went all out to give a needy family a Merry Christmas through the Welland Salvation Army's Adopt A Family Campaign.

Organizer Michelle Gibson said the congregation donated over \$400 to help this family: "I am overwhelmed by the generosity of the people of All Saints." She continued, "We were able to provide very nice gifts for the whole family and also able to help out with their Christmas dinner."

The local Salvation Army



Photo: Michelle Gibson

expected to prepare approximately 800 Christmas hampers and had 300 families in its Adopt A Family program, which is an increase of 100 families from 2013.

(Contributed by Michelle Gibson)

Parish Roundup

St. Paul's Westdale partners with university



▲ Churchwardens Marianne Vespy and Sandi Harper with Dr. Fred Hall of McMaster University (right) toured the newly renovated facility with the Archbishop Fred and Bishop Michael. Photo: Helen Powers

St. Paul's Westdale (Hamilton) hosted an event to discuss the church's new partnership with McMaster University.

Churchwardens Marianne Vespy and Sandi Harper, with McMaster University's Fred Hall, toured Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate of Canada, and Niagara's Bishop Michael Bird through the newly-created state-of-the-art office space for the university's use.

They also saw the sanctuary, which was renovated to accommodate diverse uses and community needs by replacing the pews with chairs and reconfiguring other areas. The Primate

was intrigued with the possible options for creative expressions of worship.

The courtyard garden, a shared space, is ideal for people to de-stress and offers opportunities for working together.

The church has also invited McMaster staff to lunches and other events.

This redevelopment enables St. Paul's to live more fully into the Diocesan vision, allowing for more life giving worship while reaching out to the community more effectively.

Contributed by Helen Powers.

St. George's Lowville supports hospice foundation

Townsend Smith Foundation President Lin Backer and founding member Janet Townsend received a cheque from Peter Mercer, a member of the Organizing Committee of the Locavore Dinner sponsored and held at St. George's Lowville.

The aim of the Townsend Smith Foundation (www.townsend-smith.ca) is to raise enough money to build and run a hospice in Milton.

Correspondent Peter Mercer wrote, "We at St George's are pleased to be able to support them in this small way and plan to join with them in future fund raising events and wish them success in this huge task."

► Lin Backer and Janet Townsend receive a cheque for their foundation from St. George's Peter Mercer as Layreader Jan Savory looks on. Photo: Maureen Mercer



St. George's Guelph celebrates clergy milestone



▲ Jean Mitchell surrounded by bishops and rectors with whom she has served during the past quarter century: (l-r) Archdeacon Peter Moore, Bishop Clarence Mitchell, Bishop Ralph Spence, Archdeacon Tom Greene and present Rector Ralph Blackman. Photo: Franki Robinson

Over 200 well-wishers joined Canon Jean Mitchell to celebrate 25 years of her ordination.

Jean worked as an elementary school teacher for over 30 years. As her career was winding down, she became a deacon in 1986 and then a priest in 1989.

She has spent her entire lay and ordained ministry serving at St. George's Guelph. She has served in many areas of ministry, but her special interests have been in pastoral and geriatric care.

Jean has also been a facilitator of spiritual retreats at the Ignatius Centre in Guelph.

At the celebration on November 30, seven clergy—representing over 60 years of service to the St. George's community—were concelebrants.

Contributed by Franki Robinson

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