

From our Bishop  
Renew our commitment to the  
One who is coming.

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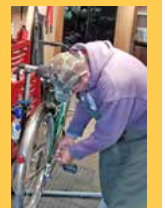
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# NIAGARA ANGLICAN

A Gathering Place and a Sounding Board for the People of the Diocese of Niagara – Since 1955

A section of the Anglican Journal



DECEMBER 2019

## St. George's Takes another **STEP** on a Missional Journey



The ribbon cutting ceremony on September 29th brought together parishioners, civic authorities, other agencies, it was filmed so this big STEP can be shared widely.

St. George's and Grace Church (St Catharines) merged in early 2018. Their vision was that together they could do more than they could do separately. That vision was confirmed in a big way with the official opening of the Supporting Teen Empowerment with Purpose (STEP) Youth Support Centre.

STEP provides individualized support to youth in peril. "This program was born out of a love for our Community and those within it, the pain in our hearts with the increasing number of youth on the streets and the belief that supporting our youth today to choose a constructive path will, in turn, create supporting citizens of our Community in the future" said Suzanne Court, principal of the RRPC Innovation Foundation that funds the program. St. George's worked with the foundation to design the program.

STEP resides in a purposely renovated 1000 square-foot

area of the church complex. An earlier decision by the recently merged congregation to reserve space for an undetermined future ministry, rather than extend an existing lease, meant that there was room when the vision of STEP was presented to the church.

"It is inspiring to consider how our acting in faith, and our intention to be available for God's purpose, have been used by God" says Rev Michael Mondloch the Director of Social Justice and Outreach at St. George's and former Rector of Grace Church.

Mondloch draws on a broad network of connections to tap into what God is already doing in the community. One connection is with Mike Lethby, the Executive Director of The RAFT, a local agency focused on responding to, and the prevention of, youth homelessness. When Lethby heard the germ of an idea for STEP he immediately lent his support. "I encourage

you to be the church and to bring your natural supportive community and spirituality into the program" said Lethby.

Supporting youth in peril is challenging and complex. So St. George's and the RRPC Innovation Foundation were selective in hiring a lead counselor to head the program. Louis Muscat was chosen from a field of over 100 applicants. Muscat has extensive knowledge of addictions, wisdom born from helping people in recovery, and a warm and approachable demeanor. Muscat feels called to the work of mentoring young people. "Without mentoring a young person becomes a wanderer in a strange part of their young life. The STEP program is here to guide them to improve their quality of life, personal well-being, body image and self-esteem."

STEP is unique in several ways in the field of working with youth in peril. STEP has a parish lending it support

through prayer and volunteers. Spiritual conversations are welcome and encouraged. And STEP's want to work with other agencies and sees itself as a part of the wider community's response to youth in peril.

Adrianna Cervoni, a StreetWorks Outreach Worker recognizes what STEP has to offer. And so she has referred clients to the STEP program. She states the program "provides a safe comfortable space where youth are treated with respect and kindness and where support meets them where they are at." She also says that "as a service provider, it is helpful to have a youth focused centre where we have the opportunity to connect and meet the needs of the young people in our city, particularly those whose oppor-

tunities are limited and whose wellbeing is at risk."

The STEP program is open from 8:30am to 4:30pm from Monday to Friday. STEP has its own entrance so that young people can simply "enter through the rust door". While the target age is 14-24, STEP doesn't check IDs.

When Mondloch looks back over the last 6 years he recalls reminding some anxious people at Grace Church of Jesus' instruction to seek first the kingdom of God. "We've tried to do that. Now as I see lives being transformed through STEP, I think God has done an amazing work, one step at a time."

Louis Muscat, Lead Counsellor, is ready to welcome youth to the STEP's Youth Support Centre



# KEEPING ADVENT

The secular world brings Christmas into our lives very early (some stores started selling Christmas items in September). Consider the following exercise to help you “Keep Advent”

- ✦ Begin on December 1st
- ✦ Read one chapter of Luke's Gospel every day
- ✦ With only 24 chapters, you will finish on Christmas Eve

Having read this entire gospel in Advent, you will be ready to joyfully proclaim GLORIA at Christmas.



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# They Wore Purple

BY BETTY SLEEP

At the end of September, Bishop Susan came to St John's Church (Winona). In their usual welcoming style she was greeted like a favourite member of the family whom they had not seen in a while. The congregation all wore purple, the service was upbeat, we enjoyed a true celebration of the Eucharist, with joyful hymns, percussion band and congregation participation.

Bishop Susan took time with the children to explain the role of the Bishop. She described each of the symbols of her office, sharing them with the children, with one holding her crozier and others wearing her mitre, pectoral cross, and ring. It was as enlightening to the adults as it was the children. The following week, one of the children was heard saying “the bishop gave me her ring...but we are NOT going steady”.

Her visit coincided with the last Sunday of the Reverend Dean Cormack's term as Rector of St. John's. It was a joint celebration lunch held in the hall after church. Our reputation of having “good food and lots of it” was certainly upheld with all we had to offer.

When we realized that it would be Dean's last Sunday at the same time as Bishop Susan's visit it made the day a happy event instead of one that might have been sad. We sent Dean off with a BANG. A fireworks cake



Bishop Susan leads the congregation in a spirit-filled Doxology.

Parishioners gathered outside to watch the fireworks display, offered in celebration of their retiring rector Dean Cormack (right)

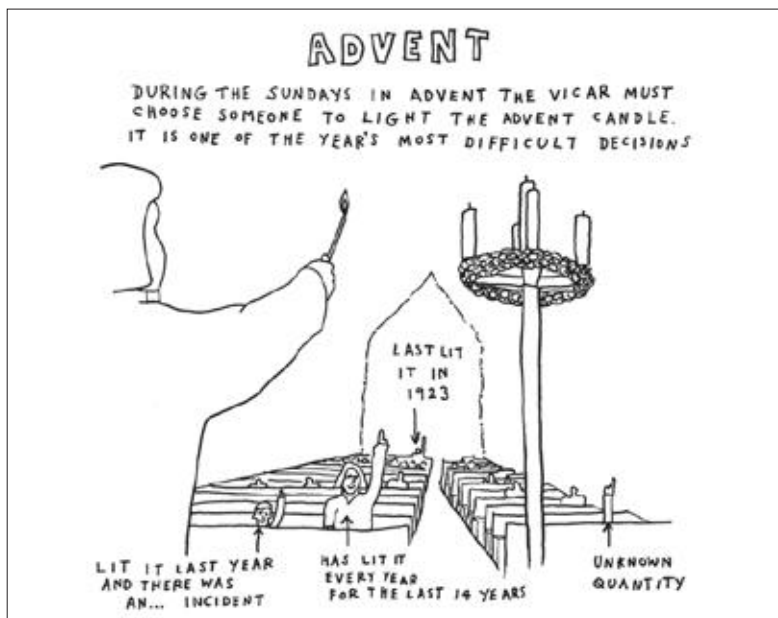


was delivered and set off to wish Dean the best as he takes a position in the diocese of Cuba.

It was our honour to have Bishop Susan visit St John's. As our thanks we sent her home with a sampling\* of the goodies our Tuesday cooks make to sell at both our Farmers Market (Tuesday in the parish parking

lot June to September) and through the parish kitchen store.

\*The sampling included: cabbage rolls, perogies, meat pies, chicken pies, peach & blueberry pie, sticky toffee pudding and assorted relish and jams.



Copyright © 2015 Dave Walker. This cartoon originally appeared in the Church Times.

cartoonchurch.com



## From Our Bishop

Here we are again in the season of waiting: Advent.

Of course the rest of the world waits too at this time of year. Our shopping begins earlier and earlier in anticipation of Christmas day. So do our parties and our gift-giving. But our waiting is a little different: it's pregnant with meaning. It's active, filled with hope and most of all, it's formative.

Very early on in the life of the church, Christians made their own calendar, based on the life of Jesus—one that offers a different rhythm of life and reminds us of the Gospel. It's a powerful tool of discipleship, because it runs alongside our lives—forming us and reminding us that we are in the world,



but not of it. It speaks the language of heaven into our ordinary days.

So, while the rest of the world gets their retail on, Christians seek to unplug and try and do this different thing. We get out the beautiful Sarum blue—the same Advent blue which signifies hope—and as we read lessons full of warnings to be ready

for the second coming of Jesus, we remind ourselves that just as we had no idea when and how God would send us a solution to our disorder and disconnection the first time, the Lord will do it again, in God's own time and in God's own way.

This time is active because, during Advent, we enter an intentional time of introspection and preparation and examination: a time to mull over and renew our commitment to the One who is coming: Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. It's important for us to be reminded, from time to time, of who we are and to whom we belong. It also reminds us to loosen our conformity with the world. As disciples, we are to further God's

mission, to be the hearts and hands of Jesus Christ, and to do our best to work for transformation in this world by loving each other as we would be loved.

The scale of such an effort—to love all people as ourselves is huge. It may even seem at times, given our propensity to sin and violence and to be dishonest with ourselves, never mind our neighbour, to be near impossible. They say we are fools to hope for the best in humanity when only the worst is on display.

But this is the story the world tells, not ours. To quote the late, great Leonard Cohen, "There is a crack in everything. It's how the light gets in." Our story is hope-filled; it's about being compelled

to love because we wholeheartedly believe that by the grace of God we can lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.

The Gospel of this Advent season bids us not just to wait and watch but to be prepared for the cracks and break them open with love.

God extends the invitation to us in Niagara once again: to see the world differently and to walk in the light of the Lord, more deeply, more fully, more faithfully as believers in the One who is coming.

May we do so this Advent, as we look towards the celebration of Jesus' birth and all the wonderful promise it holds for our world.

## From The Editor

It was Christmas Eve. There was a gentle December snow falling out side. Not enough to stop traffic...just enough to make things pretty...not too cold. It was a typical Christmas night. The church was decorated with gold and white hangings and dozens of candles. The altar was embraced by greenery and poinsettias. The clergy wore gowns with silver and gold threads woven into them. The congregation joined together in some classic Christmas hymns and a large choir performed several beautiful anthems. The lessons were read, and then I climbed up into a huge pulpit to deliver my first Christmas sermon... My legs shook, my knees knocked—I took a deep breath, and began.

That was the dream...the reality was somewhat different.

To begin with it wasn't even December, it was August 31, 1988. I was on staff at the Niagara Youth Conference and we had chosen that day to be a celebration of Winter. When night came, we had a Christmas Eve

service, followed by a New Year's Eve party.

It was night time, but there was no snow...it was about 18 degrees. There was a gathering but not in some large church...it was in a camp dining hall. And it was decorated—with lasers, spotlights, glitter balls and a few pyrotechnic flash pots. There was a lot of music...music pumped out on guitars, synthesizers and drums...and we all sang and a few even danced. And I was the one chosen to preach the sermon. There was no high and exalted pulpit, just the plain wooden dining hall floor. And no gowns of silver and gold...just my best friend presiding in a black tuxedo with a tie that flashed on and off...and me in a black tuxedo with a red tie and bright red high cut running shoes.

Still, my legs shook, my knees knocked—I took a deep breath, and began.

It was a beautiful service—different from what I had dreamt my first Christmas

sermon would be like, but still very beautiful and very special.

Life is like that. It has a way of taking our plans (even our dreams) and tossing them off to the side.

My first Christmas sermon didn't come the way I dreamt it would be. But I wouldn't change it for the world. And while the settings for the 31 Christmas sermons that followed have never lived up to that dream, I wouldn't change any of those either.

Our dreams rarely do come true as we expected.

The journey though Advent and Christmas is about another dream, the dream of a whole nation of people. They dreamt that someday a warrior would come who would help them out of their suffering. This mighty warrior had been predicted for centuries, and they were anxiously awaiting the arrival of this new king.

Then the news came... he had arrived.

But instead of a mighty

warrior, they found a tiny baby. The most helpless creature in all of creation. He couldn't stand or walk, couldn't talk or feed himself, and had no bowel control...he was a baby.

But they didn't let this surprise fill their lives with disappointment. They didn't say "he should have been this" or "God should have done that" or "why did we get stuck with this?"...

Mary and Joseph loved and cradled him (just as any new parents would). We hear how the shepherds and magi came (to honour and worship the One God had sent, not to complain that this wasn't what they had asked for).

And in the life that followed, Jesus turned the world upside down. He had us look at ourselves and our world through his eyes, and ask if we were really living and thinking and being the way God wanted us to be. He challenged society at every turn. He chose the poor, the simple, the sinners, as his colleagues (rather than the



wealthy established members of society). And in doing so—showed us that our God is a God for everyone.

Jesus helped us to find God in all things, and in every person, and in doing so transformed our hearts and our world. Turning it upside down.

Turn the world upside down.

That is what we are called to do—turn the world upside down.

The baby whose birth we celebrate wasn't what we wanted...but he was everything we needed.

And so in addition to celebrating the birth of Jesus, let us also celebrate the surprises in life—and at this time of year there are many. Because surprises do leave a mark on the world; the unexpected can lead to good, even when it upsets our original plan...



## NIAGARA ANGLICAN

The official publication of the Diocese of Niagara, published 10 times a year from September to June as a supplement to the *Anglican Journal*.

The Diocese of Niagara lies at the western end of Lake Ontario, encompassing the Niagara Peninsula, Hamilton, Halton Region, Guelph and portions of Wellington and Dufferin Counties.

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Printed and mailed by:  
Webnews Printing Inc., North York, ON

Available online at:  
[niagaraanglican.news](http://niagaraanglican.news) (blog)  
[niagaraanglican.ca/newspaper](http://niagaraanglican.ca/newspaper) (PDF)

Subscriptions: \$15/year.

Submissions:  
Submission information and deadlines are printed elsewhere in the paper.

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# Private Jacob Hess Memorial Dedication

**BY CLARE STEWART & IAIN SNEYD**

A service of commemoration was held at the Church of the Resurrection (Hamilton) on Sunday October 6, 2019. Archdeacon David Anderson presided at the service, during which a memorial stone was dedicated in honour of Pvt Jacob Hess.

Hess, who served in the 5th Regiment Lincoln Militia during the War of 1812, was commemorated with an 1812 Veterans

stone and a historical plaque. The event took place in a space adjacent to the cemetery where Hess is buried.

Approximately 70 people attended, including descendants of the Hess family, veterans, and a current serving member from the parish, as well as re-enactors from the 2nd Regiment Lincoln Militia.

After the event attendees were invited to view displays which had been set up in the Fireside Room of the church which included the remnants of Jacob's

gravestone and information about the Hess family. There was also an information display by the Hamilton Branch of the United Empire Loyalists.

As a lead-in to the event, local author John Terpstra delivered a talk in September about his recent book *Daylighting Chedoke* which deals with the history of this area and the importance of the Hess family to the west mountain area of Hamilton.



Reassembled gravestones for Charity Hess, Jacob Hess, and Michael Hess. Charity and Michael were Jacob's parents. The gravestones were vandalized in the 1990s and are now kept in the church building. Photo © CCI Images 2019

The monument in recognition of Jacob Hess. In addition to the War of 1812 Veteran's stone there is a historical plaque about Jacob and his family.



Photo © Steven Thacker 2019

Descendants of the Hess Family unveil the monument to Jacob Hess. In the background are Re-enactors of the 2nd Regiment Lincoln Militia, led by Capt Raiffe Sculthorp, far left. Photo © CCI Images 2019



Participants in the service. L to R: Clare Stewart, ON, MA, Chair of Church of the Resurrection Archive Committee and 4th/5th great granddaughter of Jacob Hess; Hon L/Col Glenna E. Swing, ON, CD, Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (Wentworth Regiment) delivering the Call to Remembrance; Mr. Frank Arnold, 2nd World War and Korean War Royal Navy veteran; Mr. Dunstan Jordan, ON, Royal Engineer veteran, who laid the wreath; Mr. John Dolbec, Canadian Grenadier Guards veteran, who read the scripture passage. All are parishioners of Church of the Resurrection. Photo © Steven Thacker 2019



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“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” —Luke 2:10-11



**BY THE REVEREND  
DEACON PAUL K. BATES**

A poignant event occurred at the end of a lecture that I had given to a second year undergraduate commerce class at McMaster University, about two weeks before exams.

There were some two hundred and fifty students seated in a steeply banked auditorium. The goal of the lecture, among other things, was to inspire these young people to be encouraged, dedicated in their studies, and prepared for the world. The lecture continued as an encouragement to seek one's own path, concluding by affirming that every human being is a unique and special person.

My time came to an end and I made my way out of the auditorium, looking at my watch and thinking about where I needed to be next. As I made my way to the exit, a student moved into my path and asked me a question. The student went on to say that she did not feel very special, and became quite emotional.

I knew right away that nothing else in my day mattered more than stopping to talk with her. I saw her. We stood there together in the entrance to the lecture hall for some time. She told me about her studies, her aspirations, and her challenges. The clear message that I received from God was that my only task from that moment on was to be with this student, for

as long as it took.

As a teacher, I was being prepared for diaconal ministry. Working with Reverend Sue-Ann Ward, and in my adjacent life as a teacher and consultant, I am brought to the hospital, graveside, classroom and boardroom. While some words are required in every situation, I have learned that it is the sacred call to simply "being with people" that is frequently the most critical of our roles.

I have often said that after nine years in grad school, the most important thing I have learned is when to shut up!

I have learned that sometimes, perhaps even most of the time, our simple, quiet and attentive, presence is enough

to make a profound impact on people. We must listen but we must listen knowledgeably. In other words, we must explore and understand the epistemological perspectives that will frame a person's dialogue with us.

The challenge of course is, that before we can listen, we have to meet them.

Beyond Sunday morning, Sue-Ann and I seek ways to enter into dialogue with people.

My ministry is grounded in the belief that these interactions give way to opportunity for soul care.

Ministers are called, gently and lovingly, to disrupt the struggles and difficulties of daily life. We witness the essential moment of soul care—the moment of soul-full rebirth

and restoration, when the overwhelming love of God can and will reverse the effects of living in the world, wiping away anxiety, sorrow, anger, and disappointment.

*The Deacon's Bench is a new feature in The Niagara Anglican. Each month we will hear from a Deacon serving a parish under a Bishop's Letter of Permission. Each will inform us about the ministry s/he conducts in their parish and the wider community. This month's columnist is The Reverend Deacon Paul K Bates, of Christ Church (Waterdown).*



**BY: THE REV'D DR. DANIEL  
TATARNIC, (CHRIST'S  
CHURCH CATHEDRAL)**

## And the Life of the World to Come: Prologue to a Future Theology of the Body

Every week, and we cross ourselves saying it.

Words so meaning-full we can't say them without invoking a silent prayer: I believe (Latin, *expecto et*) in the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come; thus we conclude the Nicene Creed and express our Christian hope. We live our lives, our bodied lives, looking forward-in-expectation to that day when God will fill all in all.

The body matters, Tertullian says, because "the flesh is the hinge of salvation".

The sanctity of the body was a doctrine that early councils of the Church were quick to affirm. Why do we cross ourselves as we conclude the Creed? I suppose we wouldn't cross ourselves if our self, our bodied-self didn't matter.

In spite of the proliferation of questions, theologies of the body have been almost exclusively the purview of Roman Catholic and Evangelical authors, who haven't been (how to say) very

well received by Anglicans.

Frankly, Anglicans find the voice of magisterial teaching difficult to reconcile with the 'Anglican way'. Notwithstanding, dismissing Catholic and Evangelical theologians without offering an intelligible presentation of one's own theology isn't any better a position than saying it, even magisterially.

There's been a lot of ink spilled over human sexuality recently; maybe you've noticed?

Throughout the Church, painful questions have been publicly debated. But decades of debate have become a scandal, and scandal need not be the legacy. It is time for Anglicans to articulate to the world what they've learned. It's time to say something deep, comprehensive, and theologically intelligible about what personhood means. What does my / your / our bodily existence mean in God's plan of salvation? What exactly does it mean to be a bodied-person?

How / why is it an event of

grace?

A recent book by Antonia Fitzpatrick, Thomas Aquinas: On Bodily Identity (Oxford University Press, 2017), is a fine example of a non-polemical, non-partisan, non-political (gasp!) contribution to body theology. It's a dense read, but a worthwhile challenge.

The introduction is a stand-alone piece and worthy of consideration. What Fitzpatrick achieves is remarkable: a fresh re-presentation of the work of Aquinas (and his interlocutors) on the body; what does it mean to be a bodied-person.

You cannot call medieval theology dull: the issues are colourful, the debates passionate, the outcomes wide-ranging. But still, why Aquinas? What practical advice does a medieval theologian, long dead, offer the Church today? Consider these questions: In a world where gender reassignment is possible, what is the relationship between the body and personal

identity over time? When does life begin, and how does that inform reproductive ethics? When does life end, and how does that inform doctor assisted dying? What is consciousness, and do I (or some part of me) survive bodily death? Does my DNA define me?

These are today's questions. Yet they swing on the hinges of medieval theologians, and disputed questions about the relationship between body (what I am), and identity (who I am)! This is what Fitzpatrick does in her book and it's refreshing; it's also what we should strive to achieve in Anglican theology. If (and I mean if) Anglicans are planning on remaining actors on the world stage, offering the world a theological vision of what it means to be a bodied-person isn't a bad place to begin. Until then, because it'll take time, let's at least continue crossing these disputed bodies of ours.



# Building Understanding

**BY THE REV. JOAN DUNN**

**Priest :** And lead us not into temptation  
**Imam :** Show us the straight path. The path of those whom Thou has favoured  
 Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger. Nor of those who go astray.  
**Priest :** For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever.

On Sunday September 29, this combination Christian/Muslim

prayer was said to a congregation filled with Anglican and Muslim workers. Two Imams and thirty Muslim worshippers had walked from the newly opened Erin Islamic Cultural Center to All Saints Anglican Church (Erin).

This relationship began during the warm summer months. The Reverend Joan Dunn met with people from the Islamic Center to discuss what could be done to foster a positive faith community through education of each others faith principles.

And so it began...Muslims were welcomed into the congregation, where they witnessed a eucharist at All Saints. After final prayers were said, all gathered informally for refreshments. Imam Moulana Norrudin then answered questions from the people. These ranged from "why do women worship at the back of the room" to "these prayers sound familiar" (a reference to the *Book of Alternative Services*).

When All Saints parishioner Lynne Dole asked about the

word "jihad", the Imam said that for many in the West this word means war or aggression against "infidels" (those not of the Muslim faith). He explained that the word itself means effort, striving, struggling to become a good Muslim and informing others about their faith.

Following the gathering, Muslim Sister Tricia sent a note to the people of All Saints:

*Salam Alaykum.  
 The warmth, openness, and kindness of all your congregation was felt by all of us, especially those who stayed behind for the refreshments and desserts afterwards during the question and answer period. May the days efforts lead to greater and better things to come for our community and lead to an even greater understanding that we are all believers though we may practice our faith in different ways. My only hope is that the members of the Erin Islamic Centre do as well of a job welcoming your church members and make you feel as equally comfortable in a future*



*gathering in our Masjid.*

The success of this gathering occurred as a result of the willingness of both faith groups to learn from one another. A positive space provided an open dialogue for all to share.

There is much work to be done to continue the positive outcome of our time together. Unfortunately not all in the village (or in the global village) feel as open and encouraging. By our demonstration of love and freedom of faith, All Saints Anglican Church and the Erin Islamic Cultural Centre will continue to share together for the freedom of faith for all.



# Building the MAP

**BY ALLAN MAGNACCA, ON**

When asked by our Bishop Susan Bell to join our diocesan vision and mission project (MAP), my first reaction was: Here we are, making another attempt to move our diocese into a three-to-five-year strategy. Rework the old, with perhaps a few new ideas, and try to sell it to the parishes.

However from Day 1, I was overwhelmed by the passion, enthusiasm, commitment and freshness of what Bishop Susan was thinking! It was not about doing things better or different—not about "we need a vision," not about a "mission." It was fundamentally about bringing God and Jesus to the forefront of our lives, living the Jesus-life, starting with each of us searching for our own commitments and how we can share them. I could hardly wait for the next sessions!

It is infectious, another way for looking at where we are as Anglicans and in our diocese.

This is an open process. Talk to the unchurched; those who have never had the opportunity to hear about Jesus and his message of God's love.

Talked to the de-churched. Why did they leave? What was missing in what the church offered or seemed irrelevant in today's environment.

We have done an environmental scan across the country. What is working? Is religion on the sidelines in our lives? Are priorities different in other denominations? Maybe all of this is telling us not to look inward but outward and recognize where and who we are today?

Jesus tells us that he was sent by God to bring



eternal life to the whole world. As disciples, our job is to proclaim that love in and to the world.

So, where we are in our work? We are discussing how we can take all of this to our own parishes to show our communities that our faith is relevant. There are no obstacles we cannot overcome. We need to be involved in tackling climate change and other political issues at every level. We must recognize that following the life of Jesus will make a difference, if we absorb and shout out loud, we can and will make a difference in the world.

Mother Teresa said, "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." Our mission is to be Called to Life and Compelled to Love, thus casting our stones and creating many ripples.

Our MAP work is getting closer to our final document. It is a work in progress and, for me, it continues to be challenging, stimulating and rewarding as I rediscover my belief that God's hand is in all I do and say.

This is exciting! Thank God.

# Circle Of Friends

**BY BEV GROOMBRIDGE**

The Church of Our Saviour The Redeemer (Stoney Creek) has launched its third monthly outreach luncheon called, Circle of Friends. Our vision is to meet the needs of our parish family and those in the wider community by offering a safe and friendly place where people can gather, have a complimentary lunch and enjoy the company of others.

Many seniors, as well as those who have lost loved ones, find themselves experiencing loneliness and miss having meaningful dialogue with others. We believe that love, companionship and laughter in a safe and friendly environment eases loneliness and boredom and the crippling fear of loneliness.

The other two outreach luncheons offered each month are:

Faith, Food and Fun which provides a full nutritious hot meal, a sing-a-long and a friendly game of bingo.

Still Kickin' was named by Mrs. Margaret Salter, one of the first participants at it's formation, who proclaimed to the gathering that "We're still kickin'." It also provides a full complimentary hot meal with Trivia led by The Rev. Bahman Kalantari.

Any food that is left over from these three events are made into meals frozen in microwavable containers and made available to those who are in need of a hot nutritious meal.

We are grateful for the Walking on Water grant that we received that enabled us to upgrade our kitchen in order to make these and other events possible.



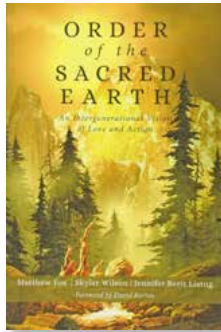
*Still Kickin' gathering in 2018*

**Book Review**

# Not a new religion, but a new order

**ORDER OF THE SACRED EARTH**

Matthew Fox, Skylar Wilson, Jennifer Berit Listug (Monkfish Book Publishing Company 2018)



We live in a time of the greatest environmental devastation that our world has ever seen. Unprecedented wildfires, floods, earthquakes, and storms are occurring across the globe. Polar icecaps are melting. Sea levels are rising and temperatures are climbing. An increased number of species are facing extinction. Economies and governments are teetering. Many countries envi-

ronmental protection system has been under assault by an administration whose mission is to roll back efforts to fight climate change and ensure the

dismantling of existing environmental health policy.

This escalating daily siege on the environment is so overwhelming it leaves many people feeling helpless, wondering, "How can I possibly make a difference?"

Matthew Fox, a 76-year-old elder, activist and spiritual theologian, along with Skylar Wilson, a 33-year-old wilderness guide, leader of inter-cultural ceremonies, and an event producer, and Jennifer Berit Listug, a 28-year-old writer, spiritual leader, and publicist, are presenting a challenge and an opportunity in the vision launched in this mod-

est book. That vision is about creating an Order of the Sacred Earth.

Essay contributors to the book and its vision include Mirabai Starr, Brian Thomas Swimme, Adam Bucko, and David Kortzen. Citing how many religions, governments, and social theories have become more divisive than unifying, *Order of the Sacred Earth* proposes a return to the collective consciousness that we are of one human race and part of a magnificent world. Turning our backs on the earth and its natural cycles will only harm humanity, it says, and conservation should not just be regarded

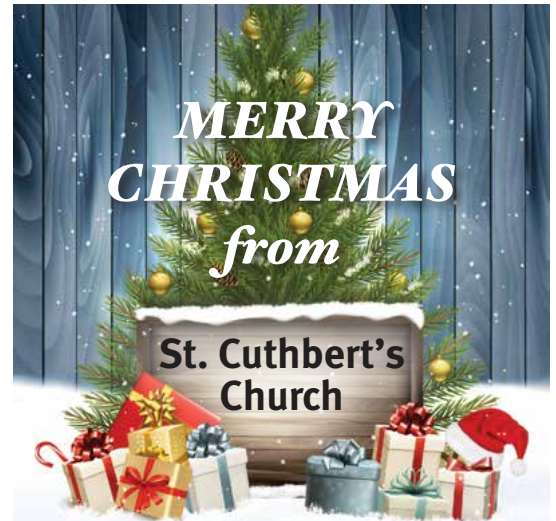
as a prudent ecological movement but as a holy privilege.

Fox writes that the world does not need another religion or even a reshuffling of our old religions. He says, "What it needs is a new Order." He describes this Order as a community and movement of people [no matter what their background] to share a sacred vow to preserve Mother Earth and become the best lovers and defenders they can be on behalf of Mother Earth. A post-denominational Order and a post-religious Order - therefore a Spiritual order!

by *The Rev. Deacon Rob Roi*



Bishop Susan Bell with newly ordained deacons: Fran Wallace, Judy Steers, Michael Coren, Jody Balint, and Ann Vander Berg following a Spirit-filled service at Christ's Church Cathedral in Hamilton. At the right is the Reverend Kevin Cull who was received into the Anglican Church of Canada. Calling spiritual leaders for the next season of the church is a focus of Bishop Bell's episcopacy.



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**10:00 a.m.** Contemporary Eucharist with choir and Sunday School

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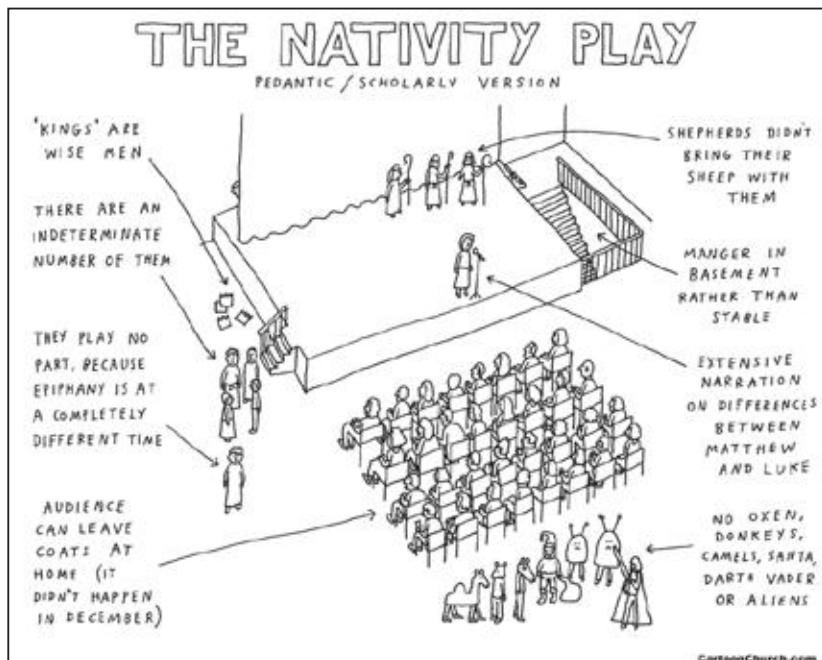
**4:30 p.m.** Family-Friendly Communion Service

**9:00 p.m.** Candlelight Choral Eucharist

**Christmas Day Worship**

**10:00 a.m.** Traditional Eucharist

For more information about St Cuthbert's please visit:  
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# Jesus At The Annual Meeting

BY DAWN DAVIS

*"Question? All in favour? Motion carried!"*

Our procedure may be in order, but are we forgetting anything?

We are told that when two or three come together there will be more than us there. Jesus promises to be in our midst, but often, it feels like we have left Jesus at the door and are carrying so many heavy burdens on our own:

Insurance costs, budget limits, government regulations, personal matters and fewer people filling ministry positions all contribute to feelings of anxiety, worry and being overburdened.

So why do we forget to include the one who said his yoke would be easy and his burden light?

Well-meaning church folk will sometimes say: "We don't have time for spirituality. We need to get down to the church business." But what is our business if not to be faithful to our calling and stay connected to God's Spirit, energy and direction? Paul warned the church in Philippi that to do otherwise is to labour in vain. (Phil. 2:16)

When we meet, we are enveloped in God's love, empowered



by the Holy Spirit and strengthened for more than we can ask for or imagine.

So how do we get Jesus through the door and into our meetings?

1. Surprise! Jesus is already there to meet us. We don't initiate a spiritual relationship with God. We simply respond to an ongoing invitation to full life. Assume that God is already ahead of us and in the room. Our ministries may be challenging, difficult and tiring, but be open to the one who said: "I come that they may have life, and have it abundantly."
2. Always begin and end a meeting with prayer and/or scripture. It is spiritually

vital to spend a few minutes connecting with God and reflecting on our faith. This helps remind us that God is indeed present. Besides this, engaging with scripture connects us with the countless faithful over the ages that have drawn inspiration and guidance from God's holy Word. It shifts us from our narrow focus and opens us up to the many possibilities that we have not yet considered possible.

3. When faced with a challenging decision, stop all the talking and allow for some silence. This may seem uncomfortable at first because we are used to seeking direction by sharing

ideas. Christians, however, recognize there is more to us and life than our own good ideas. Stop and listen for God to speak into the situation. Remember, this is God's church and we are simply the stewards of this amazing and wonderful community of faith. Perhaps a good question to reflect on sometime might be: "How do we 'hear' God?"

4. Lighting a candle, making a small altar and placing an open Bible on the table are all ways that can provide a visual reminder that we are engaged in God's holy work and that there is more to us and our church than business.

If you want to start incorporating scripture in your meetings you might be interested in the Love Letter blog. It provides a 15-minute group discussion to open church meetings. This short process of scripture meditation is based on one of the upcoming lectionary readings and provides an opportunity for individual reflection, small-group discussion and engagement in a spiritual practice. This gives busy clergy and lay leaders a ready-made resource that can change how you do ministry.

[canondawndavis.wordpress.com](http://canondawndavis.wordpress.com)

Another helpful resource is from St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Virginia, that provides a weekly Bible study that can be adapted to a shorter, meeting openers.

[ststephensrva.org/reflect-learn/weekly-bible-study-guide/](http://ststephensrva.org/reflect-learn/weekly-bible-study-guide/)

At the very least, a short lectio divina can be used. Instead of four readings, use two at the beginning and a third reading at the end of the meeting. Ask: "What word or phrase stood out for you?" and then: "What is being said in this passage?" At the end of the meeting ask: "What is God asking us to do based on this passage?"

This February, parishes will be holding their annual vestry meetings. Love Letters will provide a number of different vestry meeting meditations you can choose from. This is a great time to remind ourselves that we are not alone and that we do not have to carry so many responsibilities and burdens on our own. For we can do everything through Christ, who gives us strength. 2 Phillipians 4:13

*Canon Dawn Davis is the Faith Formation Coordinator for the Diocese of Niagara*

## On the Road

**In 1969** I hitchhiked to Toronto from Digby, NS. I had heard the call of the global youth movement. The siren call was irresistible to me. I smashed my piggy bank and, taking all my silver dollars, bought a ticket to St. John, NB, to cross the Bay of Fundy on the Princess of Acadia.

Upon arrival in St. John, I phoned my Mom to tell her what I was doing. God bless her!

I was 16 years year old. My trip had its genesis in a tripartite desire: 1) to hit the road—My cousin Allan and I had earlier snuck into the U.S. at night on a railway bridge over the St. Croix River at Calais, Maine and St. Stephen, NB. We slept in a field that night. The next day we were apprehended by W. A. Fogg of the Maine border patrol when he pulled the bus over. He sent us home. It was a different

world back then. 2) to join with others for whom Jimi Hendrix, The Beatles, Herman Hesse, Aldous Huxley were voices beyond our ken; 3) to respond to an Invitation.

My destination in Toronto was the Rectory of St. Thomas', Huron St. Toronto. Not because it was an Anglican site, it just turned out that Mary and the Rev. Edgar Bull were the only people in Toronto I knew. Edgar and Mary were in Sandy Cove, NS at the time but their boys, Hank and Arthur, were home. That was good enough for me. It remains for another day to tell that particular aspect of this story. Suffice it say—for me, their house, with Rochdale College in full flight next door, with Woodstock happening soon, was the hippie capital of the world.

The Invitation: a year earlier I had been playing with friends

on the grounds of Trinity Anglican Church in Digby. I had in fact never been baptized and had never been in a church. I think my being there had something to do with the rector's daughter. While sitting on the lawn I was approached by a man who, after a few minutes of polite conversation, invited me, if ever in Ontario, to visit his 'community.' It seemed intriguing—'community'? Who lives in 'community'? Hippies?

After a few days on Huron St. I hit the road for Bracebridge, ON. The OPP very politely took me off the 401 where I was hitchhiking and put me on a picturesque back road. I eventually made it to the 'community.' I remember it only as very pleasant, with wooden buildings and an outdoor statue of Christ which cried in the rain. There were no particularly memorable conversations. All was quiet.



Thirteen years later, as I stood on the doorstep as the summer Anglican student for The Church of the Nativity in Sandy Cove, NS, Fr. Ritchie McMurray asked me: "Did you visit the Cowley Fathers (SSJE) in Bracebridge in 1969?" Quite surprised I replied: "Yes, I did... and how did you know that!?" Fr. Ritchie said that he had happened to visit Bracebridge a day or two after my weekend stay. The Prior, David Hemming was a friend. Knowing that Ritchie knew the Digby area,

David asked him if he knew the Woolaver family in Digby and the young son, Max. After hearing 'yes' from Ritchie, Fr. Hemming said: "That young lad is going to be a priest."

Given all that has to come pass, I wonder just how far can we trace the roots of our desire?

*Max Woolaver is Rector of St. Andrew's Grimsby, and Archdeacon of Lincoln. He is gifted at making us see beyond the immediate, often by helping us laugh at ourselves.*





## One Year In ...

BY SARAH BIRD

It is amazing how fast this year has flown by in my new role as the diocesan Program Consultant for Children, Youth, and Family Ministry (CYFM). Taking the time to write this article is a blessing as it allows me to reflect and celebrate the many spiritual refreshing moments, growth of new relationships, and the journey of visiting parishes across the diocese over the last twelve months.

Niagara is a diocese that leads the way for children, youth and family ministry, and we have much to be proud of. This year's success for programs and events can be measured not only in the increase of participants but also by the feedback received from

parents, youth, volunteers and clergy. I've had several e-mails and phone calls expressing gratitude for transformative stories that children and youth have shared at home and with their parishes.

A program I would like to highlight is The Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP). YLTP is offering a new curriculum that focusses on 5 fundamental exemplary leadership practices: Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart (taken from - The student leadership challenge). We were excited to offer this fresh, exciting curriculum to stay current with best educational practices. During YLTP 2019 I was inspired by how the youth openly shared their faith, and the level of support and encouragement they offered to the community. Many of these youth are leaders within their churches and volunteer their time with other CYFM

programs.

Another highlight from this year is the shift from youth programs to intergenerational programs. This allows a diverse mix of age groups to gather, and parents no longer need to worry about childcare. The Gathering and Niagara in Action are two intergenerational programs that have received raving reviews. Young parents have expressed how nice it is to include their "little ones" in an evening out or during a day program. A prevalent reality across the diocese is that grandparents bring their grandchildren with them to church on Sundays. This is one of the reasons why it is so important to make the shift to intergenerational programs so that we are inclusive to all family dynamics.

Early in my role as the CYFM program consultant it became evident how we did not offer programming for young adults (specifically ages 20-40). As a result, we launched a pilot project called The Table. The Table

has been a successful group that meets regularly once a month at a local coffees shop. This casual evening invites young adults to join a conversation that explores spirituality, trending topics, and life's biggest questions. We've seen consistent numbers of participants, and happily encourage new people to pop by any time. What's even more exciting is that Guelph and St. Catharines/Thorold will be launching their own Table within the new year.

Finally, I would like to celebrate how we are connecting volunteers and leaders of CYFM from churches across the diocese. It has been a priority of mine to visit churches so that I can meet the clergy, parishioners, volunteers and staff to better understand the DNA of each church. After making those connections, I created a platform for CYFM volunteers and leaders to further network, build resources and help remove barriers that leave people feeling isolated within their roles.

There are 30 people connected

through a closed social media page, who share stories and resources, ask questions, and post about upcoming events and programs. We also plan regional meetings for CYFM leaders so that programs, youth groups and events can be merged between churches. I also host several diocesan wide CYFM Zoom chats (an online video conference call) that allows people to connect from anywhere and everywhere. This allows meetings to be more accessible and has been incredibly helpful for those with busy schedules. I am inspired and give thanks to God everyday by how dedicated, passionate, and gifted our volunteers and leaders are within the Niagara Anglican community.

It is an absolute honour and privilege working for the Anglican Diocese of Niagara and I am incredibly grateful that God has called me into this ministry. Yes, it has been an incredibly busy fast pace year, but I continue to feel that we are just getting started. Bring on 2020!

## Winterize Your Church



BY IAN CHADWICK

Maybe it will be different this winter... And maybe it won't. So, in the very little time you have before the temperatures drop below freezing and ice and snow turn parking lots and access ramps into skid-pads and ski-jumps; best be doing something.

Think snow-plow and salting contracts; and review them to make sure you're not paying for extra, mid-week salt applications on days when it doesn't snow. Keep a good supply of small-grain rock salt for emergency use, right before an ice storm or snowfall. (imagine a sandwich: snow/salt/pavement).

And just as the diocese has requested, keep a record of every snow removal and ice treat-

ment event. If people know you always do a good job of clearing the parking lot and steps on a Sunday morning, they are more likely to "risk" being there. Likewise, it is worth using and regularly changing those temporary door mats to collect the salt-slush in the narthex, before it stains the church carpet. Have some trays for boots as well.

Love those heating bills? You may not believe me but I can show you stained-glass windows with holes you can put your fingers through, and single pane basement windows with gaps that would make you gasp; and it's there that you can make the easiest savings on your heating bill (simply using sticky-tape and plastic sheets from the dollar store).

Are there any churches not using programmable thermostats? Are there any churches still burning fuel oil? Talk to Mr. Propane. Are there any churches which forget to change the furnace filters? Are there any churches where the furnace service company telephone number is not carved into the rector's desk top?

Think — what could possibly go wrong? Think ice-induced flips, twisted ankles, bruised backsides, broken wrists, insurance claims, loss of face and loss of revenue.

Enjoy the season!

Canon Ian Chadwick is Chair of the Bishop's Advisory Committee on Church Buildings.

A  
B  
C  
D  
E

A grandfather was walking through his yard when he heard his granddaughter repeating the alphabet in a tone of voice that sounded like prayer. He asked her what she was doing. The little girl explained: "I'm praying, but can't think of exactly the right words, so I'm just saying all the letters, and God will put them together for me because He knows what I'm thinking."

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# CANADA BRIEFS



A roundup of news from other diocesan papers in the Anglican Church of Canada Compiled by the *Anglican Journal* staff.

## B.C. church to replace old parish hall with 30-storey building

A Vancouver-area parish is planning a property redevelopment project that will see its existing parish hall replaced by a 30-storey skyscraper for affordable housing, market rental and ownership housing and the new parish hall and offices.

Richard Geoffrey Leggett, archdeacon of Westminster and vicar of Holy Trinity Cathedral in New Westminster, B.C., says the parish has been working with Conwest Group of Companies, a local development corporation, on a plan to replace the cathedral's 120-year-old parish hall with the multi-use residential tower. The project, Leggett says, will also involve the construction of a community plaza, 4.5 levels of parking for parishioners, visitors and residents of the building and a new pedestrian path running across the church's property, connecting a nearby Skytrain station to the street.

Income made by the project will go toward renovating the cathedral, building the new parish hall and buying a share



of the market-rate rental apartments in the building, Leggett says.

A key principle of the project will be that it focuses "on 'growing communities of faith' rather than institutional survival and preservation of the status quo," he says. While much work needs to be done on Holy Trinity Cathedral, "the renewal of the physical fabric of this architectural icon will point beyond itself to God's world in the world in and through the parish in the past, in the present and into the future."

The parish—which served as the diocese's cathedral until 1929 and retains the name "cathedral"—had already been involved in planning to redevelop its property for a decade when he arrived there in July 2018, Leggett says.

—Topic

## Four rural N.S. congregations become one

Four congregations on Nova Scotia's South Shore have merged after an 18-month discernment process.

"Our people realized it was impossible to continue to operate as four congregations with five councils, four buildings, four worship teams, five treasurers and so on," says the parish's rector, the Rev. Michelle Cockell. "The realities of aging congregations left a smaller group to do the work of the church. People were tired just trying to keep up with the physical stuff, with not much left for being, and making, disciples."

The four congregations will now meet as Grace Anglican Church, in Chester Basin. The three remaining churches have been deconsecrated, Cockell says, and two have accepted offers of sale.

"Our people are dreaming dreams again, imagining what God is calling us to do and to be now that we're together," she says. Among other ideas for mission, she says, the new congregation is considering reaching out to isolated seniors and the

working poor.

"Despite declining congregations, I do not believe that God is done with the rural church," Cockell says. "Statistics from the UK report per capita church attendance in rural areas is twice that of urban churches... Our villages can thrive when there is hope, and hope is what God's people have to share."

—*The Diocesan Times*

## Diocese of Edmonton helps provide medical coverage in Burundi

Parishes in the diocese of Edmonton are raising funds to support an initiative in their companion diocese of Buyé in Burundi.

Through the \$5-5 Ways Challenge, parishes are raising money in support of an initiative by the Buyé Mothers' Union, which helps seniors and low-income families purchase a \$5 medical card that grants them 80% medical coverage for a full year.

This is the second year donating to the project. In 2018, the diocese raised \$5,460, enough to provide medical cards to 1,092 seniors in 20 parishes. The total for the 2019 giving is still being tallied.

Several messages of thanks were shared with the diocese, including one from Uwimana Charlotte, 59, from Mwumba Parish, who was able to pay for her husband's 41-day hospital stay because of the 80% cost reduction, and 52-year-old Barengayabo Daphrose from Gashikanwa parish, a widow who often has to sell food in order to afford medical care when her children get sick. "As I get this card, I am hopeful that my family will not have any struggle in paying the medical bill. I do not have anything to pay back this noble assistance, but I will serve my Lord up to the end of my life because it is showing me how far God loves us," Daphrose said.

—*The Messenger*

## Diocese of Ottawa leader presented with key to the city

Canon Sue Garvey, who recently retired from her role as executive director of Cornerstone Housing for Women—a community ministry of the diocese of Ottawa—was presented with the key to the city of Ottawa Sept. 12.



Ottawa mayor Jim Watson called Garvey a true leader and exceptional role model for ending homelessness and expanding affordable housing in the city.

Councillor Catherine McKenney said the key to the city was particularly appropriate, because Garvey herself had handed keys to home for hundreds of women through her 22 years as executive director of Cornerstone.

The ministry also threw its inaugural Purple Tie Gala fundraiser at the Ottawa Art Gallery on Sept. 14, raising close to \$50,000.

Cornerstone's newest residence was opened in November 2018, with 42 units of supportive housing for women. Through a \$10,000 grant with the Anglican Foundation of Canada and a partnership with Minwaashin Lodge, the ministry is supplying residents with culturally sensitive counselling and support from Indigenous elders, traditional crafting and teaching circles, and more. Though 10% of the units are earmarked for Indigenous women, currently 35% of the residents identify as Indigenous.

Cornerstone Housing for Women runs four residences as well as an emergency women's shelter.

—*CrossTalk*




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# Bikes Make a Difference

**BY GILLIAN DOUCET  
CAMPBELL AND ANTONIO  
ILLAS**

A Mexican farmworker riding a bike was the spark that ignited Rev. Javier Arias' heart, and St. Albans (Beamsville), to start the Migrant Farm Workers Project. One hot afternoon in the summer of 2013 Rev. Javier, saw a migrant worker riding his bike. He followed him to his residence, where 24 migrant workers. A pastoral relationship developed, and the Migrant Farmworkers Project had begun.

Since then, the Migrant Farmworker Project has been collecting donated bicycles through the Bikes for Farmworkers program. Bikes are refurbished and provided to the migrant farmworkers for a nominal price of \$20.00.

This is one of the many programs of the Migrant Farmworker Project. Bikes are the primary mode of transportation for the farmworkers. "It's the reason you see dozens of seasonal workers riding their bikes in the rural areas and shopping centers of the Niagara Region," shares Rev. Antonio Illas, Migrant Farmworker Missioner with the Anglican

Diocese of Niagara. He explains that the, "migrant workers depend on and need the bikes. Not having a bike would mean walking several kilometers on mostly unlit rural roads to get to the bank or to shop. This would mean extra hours of their precious down time, as they work an average of 10 to 12 hours daily in the farmlands, vineyards and greenhouses in the peninsula. The bikes are not a luxury but a needed vehicle".

The Bikes for Farmworkers program at St. Alban's, is attended by José Luis, a migrant farmworker who volunteers as the bike mechanic. José Luis was trained in bike repair here in Canada. He now gives back to the program by donating his time. José Luis is grateful for the skill he learned in Canada and uses it when he returns to his village in Mexico, running a bike program for children in his neighborhood. He has been empowered with a new skill.

This ministry has also been an inspiration to other local community members in initiating a bike service program for migrant workers in their area. One of the most successful programs is in nearby Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Mark Gaudet and Terry



Jose Luis hard at work in the Bike Repair workshop at St. Alban's (Beamsville).

Weiner began by selling 40 bicycles in 2016. This year they sold 550 bikes and repaired 345 others – that's 895 bikes! In three years they have sold and repaired approximately 2,135 bikes – and more are always needed.

Bikes for Migrant Farmworkers is a success

because of the commitment of volunteers. Community members continue to donate bikes for the program year after year, and many make a financial donation.

For more information or to donate to the Anglican

Diocese of Niagara's Migrant Farmworker Project, and specifically the Bikes for Farmworkers, please contact Rev. Antonio Illas, Migrant Farmworker Missioner at [migrantfarmworkers@niagaraanglican.ca](mailto:migrantfarmworkers@niagaraanglican.ca) or visit [www.migrantfarmworkers.ca](http://www.migrantfarmworkers.ca).



## Celebrating Longevity

A special gathering with coffee and cake reception was recently enjoyed between services at St. George's Church Guelph. A large number of members of our congregation are in their 9th decade of longevity and we decided to celebrate this milestone. A wonderful reason to get together.

### Deadlines and Submissions for Niagara Anglican

**Deadlines:**

- February – December 27
- March – January 24
- April – February 11

**Submissions:**

- News, Letters, Reviews** (books, films, music, theatre) – 400 words or less
- Articles** – 600 words or less

**Original cartoons or art** – Contact the Editor.

**Photos** – very large, high resolution(300 ppi), action pictures (people doing something). Include name of photographer. Written permission of parent/guardian must be obtained if photo

includes a child. All submissions must include writer's full name and contact information. We reserve the right to edit or refuse submissions.

**Questions or information:**

Contact the Editor at [editor@niagaraanglican.ca](mailto:editor@niagaraanglican.ca)



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# New Nativity Figures

Six new life-sized carved figures will be added to an expanded Nativity display this year at St. George's (Georgetown). Last year Robbin Wenzoski and his wife Laura, created wonderful life-sized sculptures of Mary, Joseph, and infant Jesus to be displayed out front of the church.

The display was so well received by the congregation and community that when the church asked for support to add a few

new figures, the pledges were enough to commission all six of the remaining figures. This year, St. George's will be adding an angel, a shepherd and lamb, and the three wisemen.

Canon Rob Park, rector of St. George's, said, "The enlarged display on the front lawn of the church will communicate the message of the birth of Christ and provide an impressive reminder to all who

see it of the true meaning of Christmas."

A free community event will be held on Sunday, December 1, at 4pm to celebrate the installation, with hot chocolate and cookies, carol singing, and a reading of the Christmas story. The celebration will conclude out front on the lawn for a blessing of the nativity and carols played on the church bells.

The display is an official part of Halton

Hill's "Light Up The Hills" winter celebrations and is a stop on the Kinsmen Club of Georgetown's "Seniors Tour of Lights."

Canon Rob Park said, "St. George's is grateful for the support of the community and for the wonderful work of chainsaw artist, Robbin Wenzoski."



Rob expresses his gratitude to Robbin Wenzoski for the work he and Laura did to create this wonderful work.

Photo: Sue Graham



Last year's nativity display at St. George's.



Above: Robbin and Laura Wenzoski have been hard at work on the wisemen and other new figures for St. George's Nativity display.

Photo: Robbin Wenzoski

# It's Our Nativity Too



**BRIAN E PEARSON**

Consider this. The Christmas story is not just about Jesus. Yes, it's a theological construct designed to bolster the Christian claim that Jesus is the Son of God. But it's also a mythic tale that has something to say about all of us. Or why would we still be telling it, lo, these many years later? It's not supposed to be just about him!

The hardest sermons I had to preach in my 38 years of ministry as a parish priest were at Christmas and Easter. People wanted to hear the old, old stories, and they didn't want you messing around with them.

It was hard because, as literal stories, they not only beggar our ability to believe, they have almost nothing to say to us. Jesus was born of a virgin. Okay, interesting! Jesus rose from the grave. Well, how nice for him!

These stories only speak to us if we see them as the myths that they truly are, that is, as stories that may not be literally true, but that tell a certain kind of universal truth. Or, as a First Nations saying goes, "It may not have happened just like that, but every word of it is true."

As to Christmas, what could a virgin birth, an angelic visitation, and a guiding star possibly have to do with us? Unless, that birth is viewed mythically—as hope in a dark world, as each new birth is; as attended to by the angels, as all births are; as changing the world, as every birth does.

Then the story shifts to become a lens through which we see our own miraculous arrival, both literally, as babies, and spiritually, as we become the people God made us to be. I

was a sign of hope, when I was born; the angels watched over me, and celebrated; my presence has changed the world, forever. Now that's something to chew on over Christmas dinner.

The Jungian writer James Hillman says literal thinking is the enemy of mythical thinking. You make a story literal—like, insisting that the virgin birth was historical fact—and you squeeze all the life out of it. But mythical thinking—well, there we are, right in the middle of that story, right down to our soul.

*Brian Pearson is a retired Anglican priest (formerly from Niagara). He continues to fill his days as a writer, musician, and public speaker. His reflections have emerged from his upcoming memoir. You can access his daily blog, and experience more of his offerings at [brianpearson.ca](http://brianpearson.ca)*

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