

What Makes A Church

John Bowen reflects on what it is that truly makes us church.

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Still Being Church

A pictorial glimpse of how we continue to be church.

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With a Grateful Heart

Parishes around the diocese are responding to needs in the community during the pandemic.

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A section of the Anglican Journal



NIAGARA ANGLICAN



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MAY 2020

STILL BEING CHURCH



Jesus Isn't Deterred by Locked Doors or Fearful Hearts



BY THE REVEREND CANON MARTHA TARTANIC

Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you." (John 20:20-21)

As we often say, we need to know the bad news before we can really hear the Good News. I don't have to spend a lot of time regaling you with a recap of all of the bad news. We know, day by day, hour by hour, that the corona virus has been changing our physical, emotional, spiritual, relational and financial landscapes. Given all of the bad news, our ears should be particularly pricked, ready to be attentive to that Good News in a renewed and intentional way. Here are some of the holy and life-giving things I see unfolding across this tumultuous landscape:

- Although stress and anxiety

can bring out the worst in people, it can also bring out the best. Every day, I witness countless examples of how our community is willing to show up for one another, how those who are able are stepping up to get groceries for those stuck at home, how friendship and concern is being extended, and how we are finding ways of strengthening the bonds of community, even as person-to-person contact is being limited.

- I hear people expressing new levels of gratitude. All of us have to worry about the economy, and too many of our households are worried about very significant impacts to financial well-being because of this crisis. We worry about getting sick. We worry about our loved ones getting sick. We worry about people living in shelters and on the streets.

And yet, we are also able to see our blessings with newly opened eyes. One person told me that she uses her times of frequent handwashing to say prayers of thanksgiving for her family and friends, for access to clean water and social supports, and for the many people working on the front lines of our health care system to respond to this crisis.

We do have so many people in our community who are continuing to work because

the well-being of all of us depends on them. We have nurses and doctors, truck drivers and plumbers, PSWs, and so many others in our midst who continue to show up for the sake of others. We have volunteers across our programs who are here to make sure the hungry are fed and those in peril are helped. We have those who are figuring out how to work from home. And we have people who must obey, to the strictest level possible, the call to isolation, and whose willingness to follow these protocols is protecting lives.

At the heart of our faith is Jesus' model of sacrificial love. What we need to remember is that the willingness of all of us to make sure that we are following the public health measures put in place is also part of our loving response. We all share in the responsibility of trying to keep our whole community safe.

- The church is most definitely not closed! The church isn't our building, and it's not dependent on our ability to gather in our building. Our church is us. Wherever we are, and no matter what measures are put in place, our identity as church continues. We may just need to find other ways of showing up for each other and connecting as a community to God's love. As important as all of these

signs of goodness are, they aren't what we mean when we're talking about Good News. Good News is God's initiative and God's gift. We can certainly participate in how God's goodness and love is made known, but our hope is founded first and foremost in God's activity, not our own. I am reminded of the Easter evening account in the Gospel according to John. The disciples are locked away in the Upper Room because they are terrified of what could happen to them as followers of a recently executed criminal of the State. Jesus shows up in the middle of their fearful gathering and says "Peace be with you." He breathes on them. He gifts them with the Holy Spirit. They will need that gift because Jesus also commissions them to "be sent" out into the world, to share in the same work which God had anointed Jesus to do. He indicates that this work will centre around forgiveness. Forgiveness, most broadly, is about mending broken relationships, it is about allowing our lives to be brought back to God.

This is the Good News. Jesus isn't deterred by our locked rooms and fearful hearts. Jesus seeks us out in our locked rooms and speaks right into our fearful hearts with God's gift of peace. Jesus commissions us, knowing that wherever we go, whatever we do—OR especially right

now, wherever we can't go, and whatever we are not able to do—the thing that we offer to the world is God's love. Sometimes that means that we can offer God's love in our actions of service. Sometimes that means that we offer God's love simply by being willing to be held in God's love and to receive God's love through the loving service of others.

With that Good News promised to us again, we can face this anxious landscape. We can find that there are blessings enough to make sure that all are cared for in these days ahead. We can be guided by wisdom and love, not fear. We can figure out how to raise our Easter Alleluia and to share in the risen life of Jesus once again, even if the forms our church takes need to adapt. We can pray: for God to heal us, for God to end the suffering this pandemic is causing, for God to redeem us. We can trust that God's healing and redeeming are guaranteed, whatever the days ahead may hold.



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WHERE THE CHURCH IS

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From The Editor

For years I have preached to many a congregation that “the church” is about more than buildings. That no matter how beautiful the building, or grand the music, or even how large the annual budget ... our calling is to be so much more.

And (I must admit) there have been times when I wondered if our members really understood that. This usually followed a conversation with a member or a council/vestry meeting, when someone agreed by saying “yes – but what about ...” I shall leave my reflection on the “yes-but” folks for another time.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced upon us the opportunity to actually live out that truth.

With federal and provincial governments closing all but essential services, with our diocese closing all church buildings and offices, and our members all engaged in self-isolation and proper social distancing ... we are facing a ministry challenge unlike anything we have ever experienced in our lifetime. Sure there have been health scares and closures before—but nothing like the scope and scale in which we currently live.

I am blessed to be rector of two parishes St. Alban's (Beamsville) and St. John's (Winona). And when pandemic protocols were implemented, neither place “stopped” being

church. As I contacted our members (through phone calls, texts, and emails) I was thrilled to hear that they had already been connecting with other members of the church family through these same methods. Some offering prayer, some just checking in, some asking if they were okay and had all the supplies and groceries needed. We are still the church (with or without the building).

As I talk with colleagues and friends across our diocese and across the country, I am hearing similar stories: connecting with one another, worshipping together (usually as part of Bishop Susan's Sunday prayer service), and helping those in

need (including grocery drops to those who are unable, or afraid, to venture out). We are still the church (with or without the building).

These stories, and much much more, tell me that yes—we get it! That we know we are more than our property and our possessions. We have taken the opportunity presented to us by the COVID-19 pandemic and shown that we know our true purpose. My prayer for us all is that when this crisis is behind us (which it will be), that we remember how we lived and loved—and use that as a compass for moving forward.

God bless you ... continue to care for each other ... and stay safe.



Rob+

The Reverend Rob Towler
Interim Editor

Progress & The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire



BY THE REVEREND
DANIEL TATARNIC

I was sitting in the Cathedral. Rays of light from the rising sun were moving across the rose window above the high altar. I was sitting all alone, but waiting for another. Like every Tuesday, we will keep the tradition of opening the Cathedral doors; but no café, no conversation, no loitering—just care packages for the needy, and a blessing.

There was eerie silence. And it made the slow movement of the sun feel sorrowful, evocative. In many ways I felt like the psychological observer from one

of my favorite paintings by Joseph Turner, *Decline of the Carthaginian Empire*: there was warmth, there was light, but the sun was arching across the sky, marking the passage of time: “and God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons and for days and nights’ (Gen 1:14).”

I was praying through the psalms, but admittedly distracted by a rumor state of emergency. “This is bad”, I said to myself, “this is bad”. I don't know if it was real, or just the result of getting lost in the moment, but I swear if you look at that rose window long enough, it'll merge into the image of a Latin cross. At least that's what it did on Tuesday, March 17, as I sat alone and prayed, and thought, and waited for another.

What did I think about? Well, recently I had heard a retired priest speak about their feelings of betrayal. “Niagara used to be



a progressive Diocese”. Now, the younger generation of leaders was far too conservative for my retired colleague's tastes, “they wear cassocks.” But seriously, in the eerie silence of COVID-19, his comments stuck with me.

Progress is an elusive term. What one generation sees as progressive isn't always a defining feature of the next. If your idea of progress looks something like a straight line pointing in one direction—away from what came before it—then you and I are probably not working from the same definition.

Progress is movement, but not necessarily linear, and not something we do. I've always

appreciated Hans Urs von Balthasar's way of putting it in the introduction to his theological trilogy, “Beginning is a problem.” Progress is out-movement, drawing forward and backward, and up and down, stretching outward—always outward—toward the

Good. The goal of progress is beatitude (there's an old word), the vision of God. Progress isn't something achieved, it is something given. In the end, our only hope is that God will give us a share in abundant truth, goodness, and beauty.

What progress has become in modern lingo hardly reflects a theo-logical goal: the will to power, the means to an end. In this modern world we measure progress—we know where we've begun, and we know where we want to end. And like all instruments of rationality, progress has been weaponized, it needs to produce efficient results, or else; or else what?

Why so much attention on

being progressive? Well, that's a dumb question, right? We know that a progressive church attracts millennials. It appeals to the unchurched, simple mathematics. Be progressive and youth will flood into our pews, like they did during the halcyon days, the golden years, before ... decline.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not trying to be unduly harsh or unsympathetic to those who struggle to understand what happened. A definition of progress faltered! Now what? Decline isn't supposed to happen in a *progressive* church. Or is it? I for one never knew the golden age of Christianity, so my anxiety is of a different sort, maybe I'll write about that someday.

Suddenly, there was a sound at the west door, a familiar sound! It jostled me out of my headspace. So, I got out of my seat, looked up at the light, brushed off my cassock, and headed to the door; time had passed, another had arrived.

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In other words:

What makes a church, and why does it matter?

BY JOHN BOWEN

Change and tradition sometimes seem like opposites. “We Anglicans have our traditions. We love them and are proud of them,” we hear. But we also hear, “The church needs to change with the times. We need to find ways to be relevant.”

I’ve thought about this a lot, and finally stumbled upon one insight which I find very freeing: change is actually part of our tradition. There is a famous scholar of mission—a missiologist—at the University of Aberdeen called Andrew Walls, who has quietly influenced many Christian leaders without drawing attention to himself. He gives a lovely illustration of how this works.

Walls asks us to imagine an Interplanetary Professor of Comparative Religions from another planet, who visits earth at intervals of several centuries, to try and understand this thing called “church.”

- First, he visits a group of Jewish believers in Jerusalem, a few years after the time of Jesus. They look largely like other Jewish folk of that time—worshipping in the

temple, circumcising their babies (unfortunately, they are not yet familiar with the Letter to the Galatians), and emphasizing family life. What makes them distinctive is their belief that Jesus is the Messiah foretold in their scriptures.

- The professor’s next stop is in the year 325 CE, when he visits the Council where the Nicene Creed is being hammered out. Far from being Jewish, these people are somewhat hostile to Jews. Clergy are not married. Their concern right now is to find the precisely correct Greek terminology to describe the relationship between God the Father and God the Son.
- The third visit takes our professor to Scotland in the 6th century, where he observes Celtic monks. Some are standing in ice-cold water with their arms outstretched, praying the Psalms. Some are sailing off in a little boat, bearing beautiful manuscripts, to evangelize some of the pagan Scottish tribes.
- On his next visit, the scholar visits England in the 19th century, where a group of

well-dressed evangelical gentlemen in London are discussing the evangelization of the heathen in Africa, some 6,000 miles away. They are also passing motions to try and abolish slavery. Many of them carry Bibles containing the same documents that each of the other previous groups had valued.

- Finally, the professor, now thoroughly confused, visits an indigenous church in Lagos, Nigeria, in the 21st century. There, the people are processing through the streets on their way to worship, claiming to be Cherubim and Seraphim, and proclaiming the power of God to speak and to heal.

For these different forms of church, worship looks very different. The marks of their life together are very different. Their attitude to the outside world, to marriage, and to the activity of God, all vary wildly.

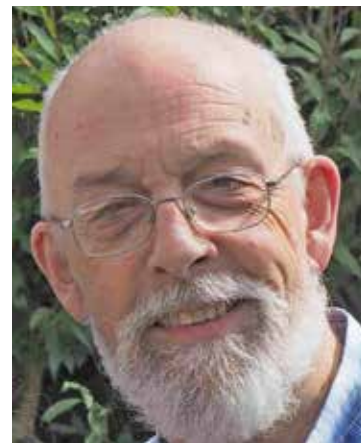
So what makes them church? Walls suggests: (1) They all focus on Jesus Christ. (2) They all take the Bible as their authority (though the first group have no New Testament). And, although there are some differences, (3) each group practices baptism

and communion. I would add: (4) each group feels compelled to share the love of God with the world in deed and word, though (again) in different ways. In other words, they are engaged in mission.

As we think about the future of the church, why should it not look different, as radically as the Nicene church was different from the Celtic church or the Nigerian church? We might not like such a church or feel comfortable with it. But that is hardly the priority. The priority is finding a container that makes the water of life accessible to those who have not yet tasted it.

I suggested last month that the Gospel is like water—the living water of the Good News—and that different kinds of container can be used to hold water. But in spite of that, there are certain characteristics that any container must have:

- It must be rigid: it’s tricky drinking from a water balloon.
- It cannot contain contaminants, or the water will no longer be safe.
- It needs an opening, usually at the top (though a tap at the bottom would work too). The



water may be pure, but if it’s not accessible, what’s the use? (Hmm, there’s a sermon there, I’m sure.)

Andrew Walls helps us see what are the requirements for a Gospel container: a focus on Jesus, through whom we experience God’s determination to mend everything broken; a reliance on the Bible as the story of God’s renewing work, which helps orient and direct our lives; baptism and communion, which seal our participation in the work of God; and a desire to express that love in the world.

All this opens the door to what are often called “fresh expressions of church.” After all, change is part of our tradition. The possibilities are endless—if we are open to them.

John Bowen is Professor Emeritus of Evangelism at Wycliffe College in Toronto. He is a parishioner at St John the Evangelist in Hamilton.

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BY THE REVEREND DEACON HEINO CLAESSENS

In our Diaconal vows, we are called to be a ministry of servanthood, interpreting to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. To look for Christ in all others, being ready to help and serve those in need, seeking the glory of the Lord Christ. As a Deacon, I feel called to meet the challenge.

Deacons are called to be in this world, and I do so as CEO of a national company with 24 members on our team. Yet we are also committed to interpreting to the church the needs of the world which I accomplish through Community Unity Halton Hills, a registered charity under the guidance of the Georgetown Ministerial Association, founded in 2008 of which I am the Executive Director. We are the

community of faith working together making a difference in our community accomplished through missionalministries; a single word to describe our preaching the Gospel while living the Gospel in community. In 2019 these missionalministries included:

Yard Clean-ups

In the spring and again in the fall, we gather volunteers from many of the churches to assist families in need, due to age, health or circumstance, with their yard clean-up. With approximately 80 volunteers of all ages, we raked, we visited, we prayed with those in need. We touched and in turn were touched. Not only did we leave signs behind —“This yard was taken care of by Community Unity”, but we also showed and left the love of Christ. The spring clean-up is youth centric getting them more involved in

community.

Food From the Heart and the Easter Brigade

Food From the Heart (FFTH) serves a twice monthly high hot protein meal to the clients of the Georgetown Breadbasket. This too is an important touchpoint for His love to be active in community as members of FFTH come alongside those in need by listening to their stories and engaging with them to find help.

On Holy Saturday, over 150 volunteers from most churches in our community gathered to bag enough food for a family of 4 for a week and then deliver the bags to 160 families as vetted by the Georgetown Breadbasket. What an incredible display of agape! Yet, it wasn't so much the ministry we engaged in; it was the mission—the WHY.

To touch people in need, to see them, to acknowledge them, to dignify them and to bring awareness to others of their plight. This missionalministry takes place during a time of year when food is at its scarcest in our community.

Jubilee

People coming to a church in need are referred to Jubilee where caring and compassionate trained volunteers advocate for anyone needing support

by developing a holistic plan through accessing community resources. This year nine families/people came to us for assistance. The needs were diverse, very real, and yet it wasn't just the need that caused us to act, but because we are called to follow Him in giving ourselves to the other—making a very real difference to those in our community.

Last year, 2019, saw the release of our Community Unity Opportunity Scan giving birth to the Jubilee Seniors' Missionalministry.

Working together with four regional agencies, the Seniors Missionalministry strives to intentionally develop connections with lonely/isolated seniors living in Halton Hills, and to find opportunities for their inclusion

in our community. We are super fortunate to be partnered with Plan to Protect® and Diaconal Ministries Canada to provide ongoing training and support.

Through our connections with Habitat for Humanity and the Town of Halton Hills we've started the Tiny House Missionalministry in association with the youth of Christ the King Secondary School and regional support agencies to aid those finding themselves situationally homeless. This is also our foray to getting the youth involved in our community through social justice projects.

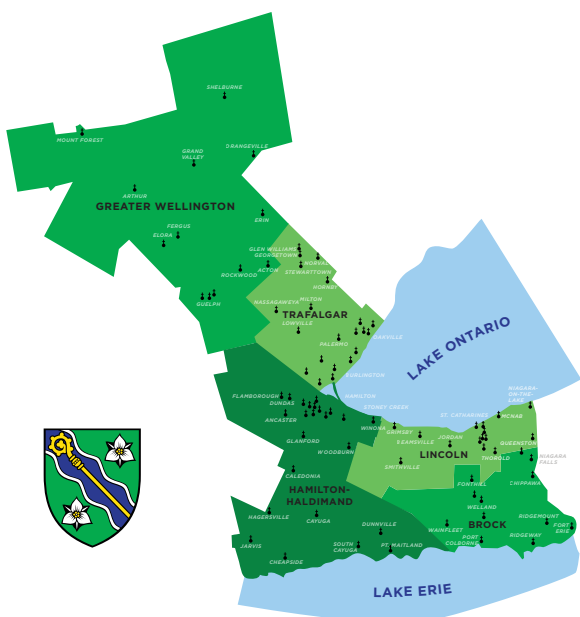
Its missionalministries like the above that bring the Good News into community using our hands, our feet, our eyes, our voices, in His name.

The Deacon's Bench is a regular 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 Heino Claessens, of St. Alban the Martyr (Glen Williams)



Regional Profiles

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have suspended the Regional Profiles, until such time when churches are once again open and able to report on the “regular” ministries in their parish and region.



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Serving the **NEIGHBOURS WE DO NOT SEE**

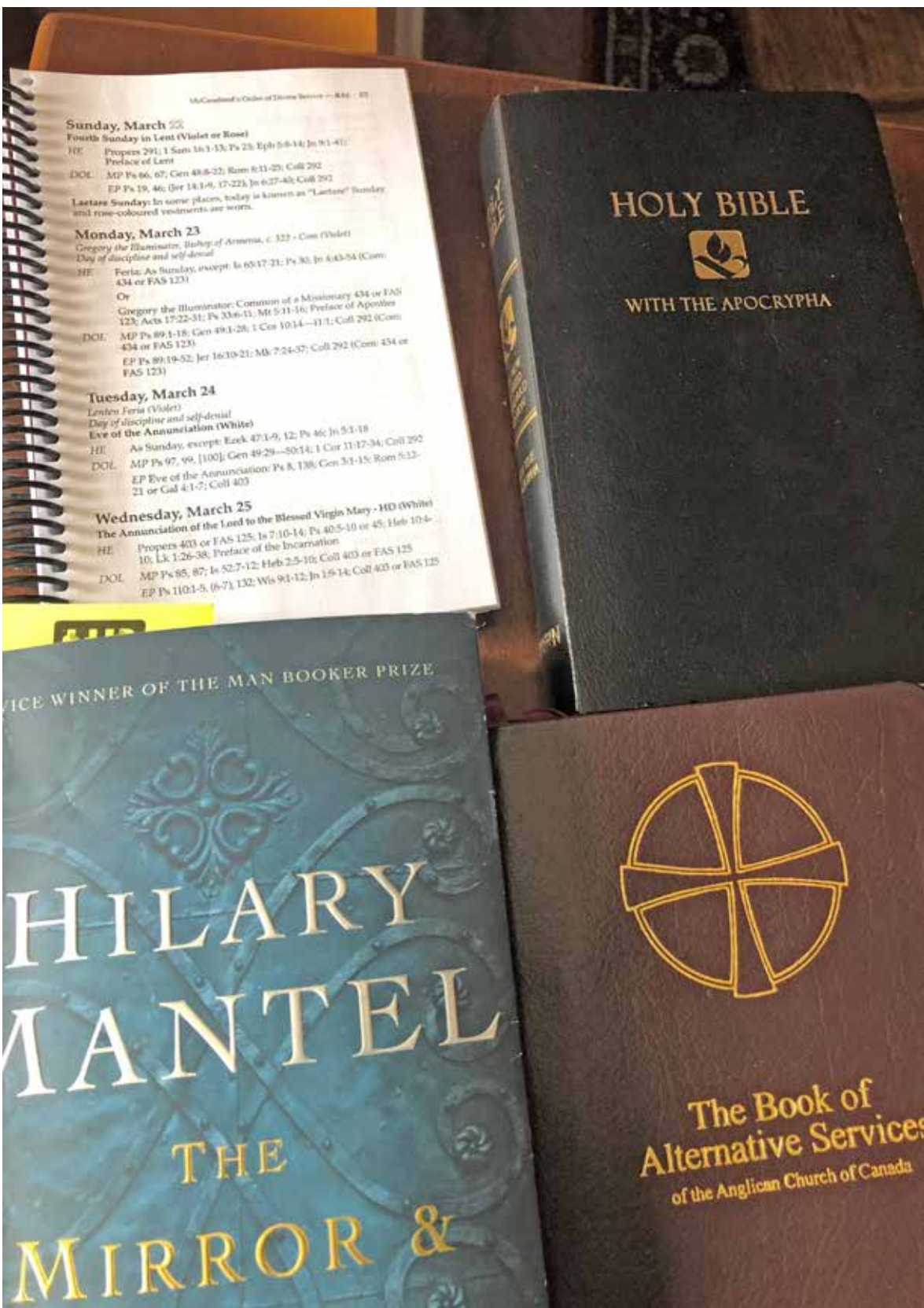


The Migrant Farmworkers Project provides services that address the physical, mental and spiritual needs of Spanish speaking seasonal workers in the Niagara Region.

When you eat your next meal be mindful of where your food comes from. Think of the labour of the migrant workers' in the fields that make it possible for you to enjoy Ontario fruits, vegetables and wines.

Show your gratitude for their hard work by supporting the Migrant Farmworkers Project by volunteering, giving gently used winter clothing, or donating online at migrantfarmworkers.ca.

STILL BEING CHURCH



Left: The Reverend Michael Coren of St. Cuthbert's (Oakville) is leading Bible Study on Thursday evenings and Prayer on Friday mornings by Zoom – everybody is welcome. He is also reading Hilary Mante – as a reminder that the church has long faced challenging times!

Right: The people of the Church of our Saviour The Redeemer (Stoney Creek) joined with the rest of Anglican churches in Ontario on March 22 and placed a candle in our windows as requested by Bishop Susan. We then took this act one step further, by asking parishioners to continue the practice of lighting a candle each night at 7 p.m. and add their own prayers for those affected in any way by COVID-19.

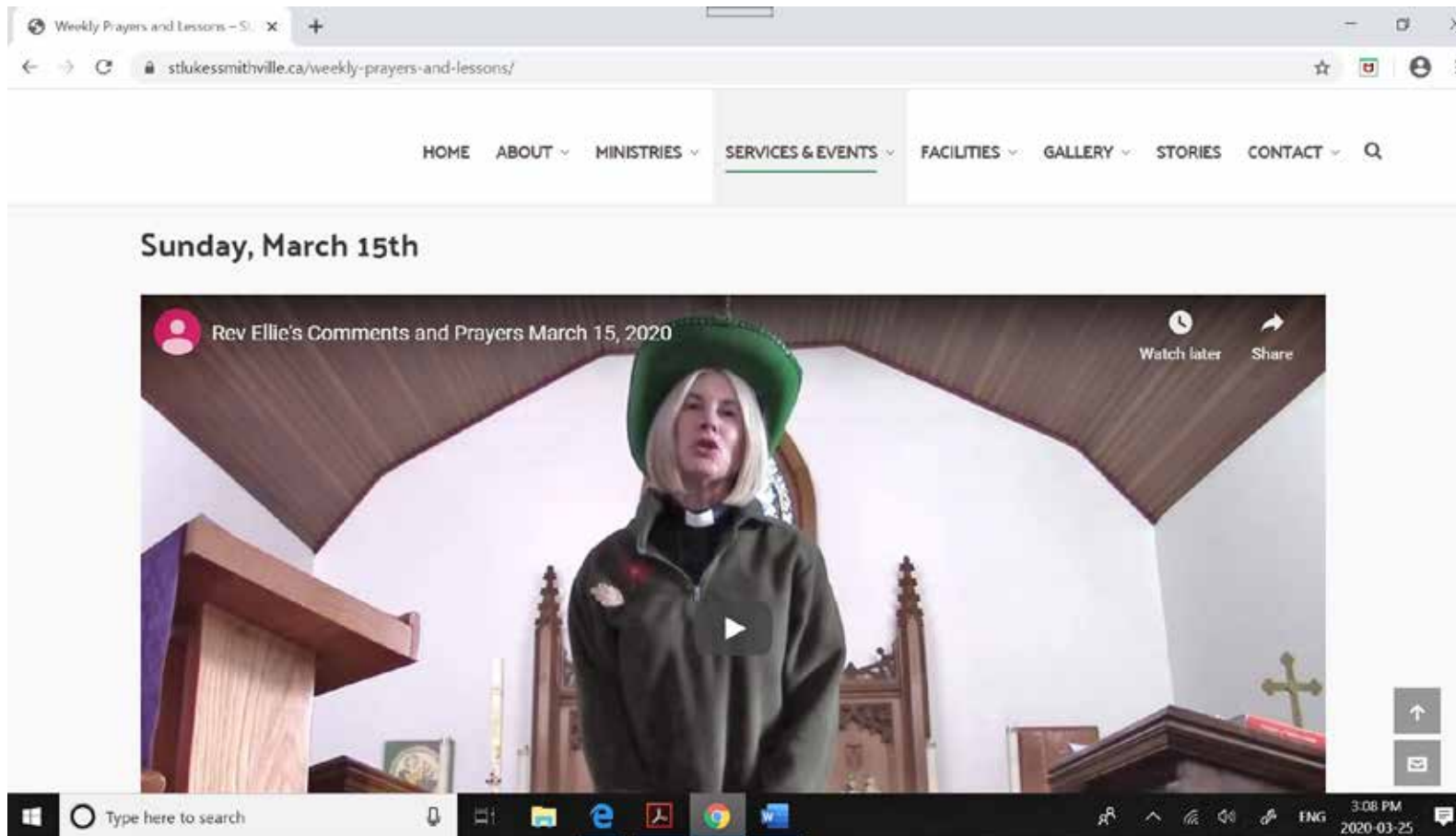


Above: St. Luke's (Burlington) continues its Food for Life program in a new, safe way. Free groceries every Tuesday at 11:30 am at 1382 Ontario Street.

Right: Every Sunday the diocese is invited to gather online and pray with Bishop Susan. The bishop leads a service of morning devotions, and offers a reflection on the daily lections – connecting us and our calling during this time of pandemic and isolation.

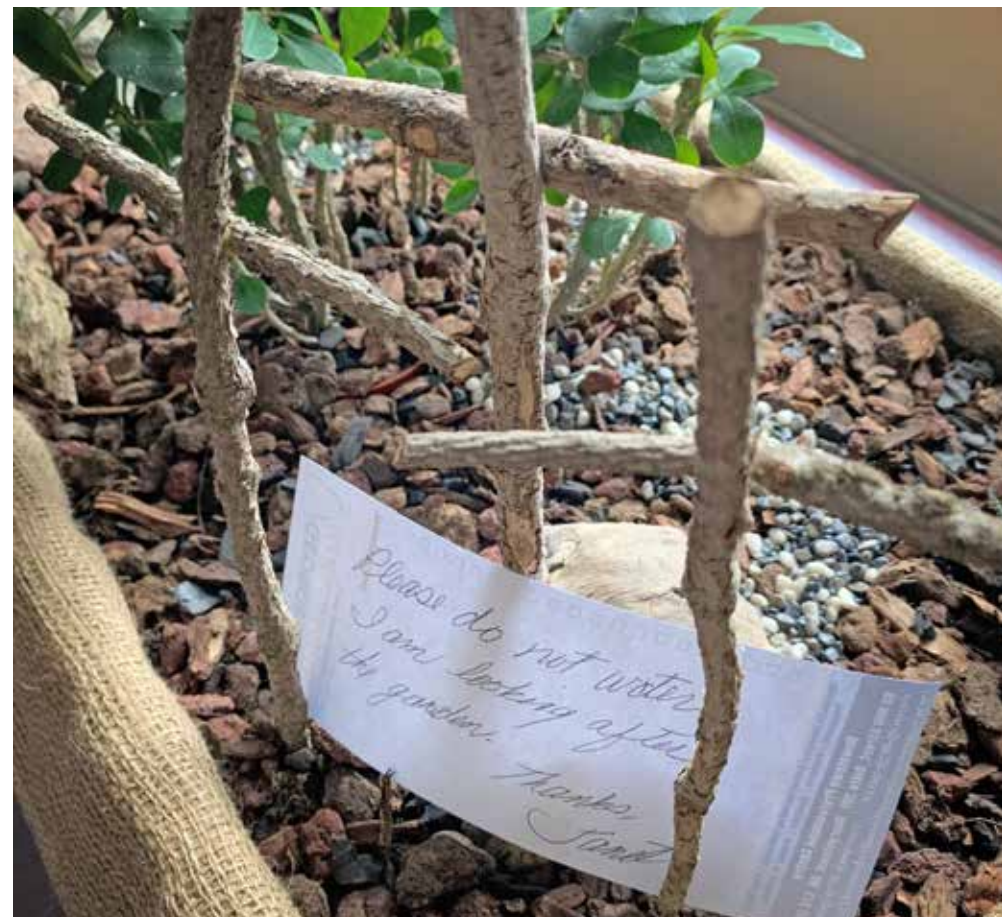
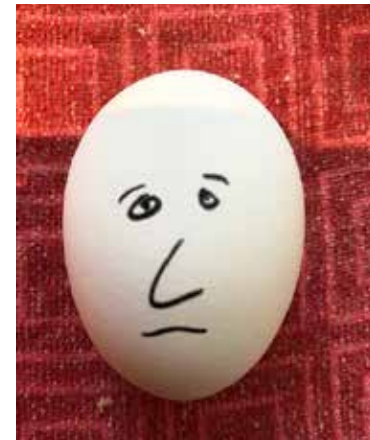


— A PHOTO ESSAY



(Left: The Reverend Eleanor Clitheroe of St. Luke's (Smithville), posts a short video each week. Her prayers and comments are designed to keep the parish community engaged during this unprecedented time.

Below: The Archdeacon of Lincoln has been closing every email with this amusing picture—a hard-boiled archdeacon.



Above: While doing my regular walk through of the building I checked on the Lenten Garden. I saw the sign left by Janet Armstrong our Altar Guild president who helped put the garden together. It says, "Please do not water. I am looking after the garden. Thanks, Janet." I was comforted by the knowledge that Janet was doing her part to care for it. God provided the sun, and Janet helped by watering it. It reminded me that God is caring for us and we are doing our part, calling, connecting with, and supporting each other during this extraordinary time.



Above: St. John's (Jordan) supports the community practice of residents putting stuffies in their windows for children to spot and the practice of chalk drawings to brighten the days of isolation.

Left: St. Luke's (Palermo) has regular prayer time, staff meetings, and coffee time via online platforms.



Left: Illness cannot stop pastoral care or family visits. Here Anne Hamilton has a visit with her daughter (Jane Garcia). Anne is recovering from a cold and was able to "shake hands" with her daughter, through the window of her apartment.

Submitted by Sara Garcia of St. John's (Ancaster).

Chinese Anglican Mission in Oakville

BY GARFIELD WU

The Chinese Anglican Mission in Oakville has its own unfolding picture with God's blessings. Under Bishop Susan's guidance, this ministry is supported by the Synod office and local parishes.

There are four Oakville Anglican parishes involved in this mission development: St. Aidan's, St. Simon's, St. Cuthbert's, St. Luke's. The first bilingual service in Oakville has been established, and there are some outstanding ministries with great potential for growth and development:

1. English Coffee (New comers, immigrants, building up culture bridge)

English Coffee is a social evangelism program which is designed to welcome newcomers and immigrants, especially those who are not confident in their English communication skills. The church community provides a welcoming and safe place for their new life in



A community concert held as part of the Music Ministry of the Chinese Anglican Mission.

Canada. This forum offers a variety of events including culture workshops, English conversation groups, English Choir group, and all-English volunteer group. This ministry encourages people

to practice their English, learn Canadian multi-culture, and integrate with local community people, as they explore a successful new life in Canada.

2. Music Ministry (Choir, community concert, fundraising events) We provide community concerts, music programs for children and adults, and worship music/choir practices. This ministry connects people through music—one of the best gifts God has given us. People can find spiritual nourishment from the common language of music regardless of race, language, or background.

3. Youth Ministry (Sunday School – under 8 years old) We have set up connections to Chinese communities/ neighbours which include many young families. We have the opportunity to reach these families by providing creative Sunday School programs. We have a Sunday school led by a volunteer leader, which connects with approximately 30 families who are eager to join our events/church Sunday school.

4. Youth Ministry (International students/College students) We have a volunteer/church connection group which includes many young people from 9 years old to college students. They are led by a volunteer youth leader, regularly gather for community events and

church worship volunteers.

5. Pastoral Care (Oakville Hospital Spiritual Care, Oakville Community Pastoral Care) There are many pastoral care needs within the growing numbers of our groups. We set up the spiritual care Mandarin support in Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital (OTMH), the biggest general hospital in Oakville.

6. Seniors' Group We have a senior's group gathering at St. Cuthbert's, with 30-40 people attending regularly.

7. Bilingual Worship Services We have established our first bilingual service (1:30pm every Sunday) at St. Simon's. We are planning to set up second worship service at St. Cuthbert's in 2020;

8. Christian Education and Faith Formation We have had many baptisms and provide sessions on Christian Education for all, but especially to the new Christians. We plan to provide more Christian education programs, especially since we have four Theology students in our community.

Chinese Anglican Mission is alive with faith and hope. We hope our churches are that kind of places where it's easy for people to feel welcome and "at home". As the next couple of years unfold there will be many opportunities to welcome others to "come and see". Change, even when it is good, can be

stressful. We can find ourselves feeling uncertain and hesitant about all the unknowns. With the Chinese Anglican Mission work there will be a new relationship with Diocese and other parishes in Oakville area and beyond—an opportunity to engage developing relationships through a brand new Anglican Chinese outreach.

That is a lot to take in but I am reminded of the words of the prophet:

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Jeremiah 29:11

These words of comfort are a powerful balm for Christians living with anxiety about the future. Let us pause to remember how our lives have been shaped and transformed over time both personally and as a community as we sought to follow Christ.

The Reverend Garfield Wu is the Chinese Anglican Missioner for the Diocese of Niagara.

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A World to Live in

It's the bottom of the 10th in the nail biting 2011 Texas Rangers/ St. Louis Cardinals World Series. Game 6. The Rangers lead the series 3-2 and need just one more strike in the bottom of the 9th to clinch. They are leading by 3 runs and now the Cardinals come up to bat. Our son, who is house bound with us during this pandemic, is watching a rerun on MLB.com. I hear the roar of the crowd... I can't see the screen... I can't remember how the game ends...! Who wins?

While this was going on, I glanced at the op-ed in the *NY Times*: "God Doesn't Want Us to Sacrifice the Old". There is a debate in the U. S. over the notion that suggests offering, in this hour of pandemic, less medical aid to the most vulnerable of our society.

These two realities juxtaposed make for a jarring and enervating atmosphere. And so it goes in this "hard Lent".

On the one hand, we look

out the window and people are walking by, the birds are singing lustily and the days are mellowing into longer light. On the other, COVID-19 numbers are going up, the stock market is sea-sick and no one knows for sure how far away an effective vaccine might be. Churches are closed, services are suspended.

During a season of pandemic what is at play within us? Competing forces of faith and fear? Silent calculations of risk? An actuarial analysis of infection rate percentages? Who is old? Who is young? What does 'compromised' health mean? Did she need to take all the hand sanitizer?

I once spent an afternoon in the mid-1970s with William Golding, the author of *Lord of the Flies*. He had spoken to our M.A. class in the morning and then invited us to a pub lunch. He told us that he had just recently returned from a conference on various dystopian

views of western culture. The *Lord of the Flies*, a seminal book of the 20th century, concerns the break-down of civil order within a boy's church choir as the boys find themselves marooned on a desert island. Golding, in his tale of terror, reminds us that heartless thought leads to heartless action; anxiety at the perimeter of our conscience can lead to its overthrow; an overriding instinct for self-survival can cultivate, to say the least, a disregard for the common good.

How absolutely essential it is then to recognize the Person at the centre of our Christian religion. How absolutely vital it is to ponder, during this hard Lent, the nature of the Revelation of Divine Love in Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy One we call the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One. The nature of our Community of Faith draws its nature from the Community of The Holy Trinity. Our parish community



is held in the embrace of the Divine Community. The source of our mortal life is Divine Life—given freely, abundantly, compassionately.

These are not doctrines in the abstract. These are not, "tidy conclusions to an argument" but rather, "they offer us a world to live in." (Rowan Williams, *Christ, The Heart of Creation*). The world of our own soul and the world in which we live, is 'in-breathed' by God the Creator, God the Living Word, God the Holy Spirit. We are thus graced to stand in this anxious hour.

The Venerable Max Woolaver is the Rector of St. Andrew's (Grimsby) and Archdeacon of Lincoln.

You Can Do It



BY SUE CARSON

As a society we have become totally dependent on plastics in every aspect of our lives.

The time has come to wean ourselves off this material wreaking havoc in our environment.

Recently I saw a report stating the people of the United States throw away 600 million plastic straws a day. That's two per person! Human beings around the world continue to purchase a million water bottles every minute. This amount of debris is unsustainable. The impact on our environment and wildlife is too much already and certainly will be devastating for future generations unless we turn it around.

Thankfully, the Diocese of Niagara has taken up the cause of reducing single-use plastics. The motion passed at Synod in November 2019, to ban single use plastics by 2022, has set the tone for the Vestry Motions currently being passed in parishes across the Diocese to do the same.

Deirdre Pike, the Justice and Outreach Program Consultant, is collecting the names of parishes in which the motion passes so please be sure to let her know about yours at deirdre.pike@niagaraanglican.ca. This information will be passed on to Greening Niagara and communicated to Bishop Susan and the Synod council. So far there are about 10 parishes who that have passed the motion, including one who had done it already before Synod!

Perhaps this year there was not time for your parish to prepare for passing such a motion. Could you consider this an option for vestry 2021? Our Greening Niagara committee is compiling ideas and web sites that might be useful in helping parishes find alternatives to single-use or disposable plastics.

This is a useful web site to help you get started at

home and in the parish: myplasticfreelife.com/plasticfreeguide/

A few early ideas to get you started:

- Buy frozen juice cans rather than juice in plastic bottles. The cardboard and metal lids can be both be recycled in the blue bin.
- Serve milk in jugs and butter on plates, rather than using single serving containers.
- If you buy fruit in green plastic baskets, return these to farmers' markets
- Buy eggs in cardboard cartons, not plastic.
- Buy cleaning materials in bulk and decant into re-used spray bottles.

Thank you for working on this important environmental disaster. As you start to make these important changes in your parish and home life, remember that every plastic bottle you throw out that isn't properly recycled will still be around in 450 years. One final bit of food for thought - those single use Styrofoam cups that aren't recyclable won't be degraded for another 50 years.

I am willing to share your

good ideas, web sites and local vendors who sell cardboard alternatives so please contact me with these. Remember - not every piece of plastic will be gone overnight we have two years to seriously work on this issue and get it right, so don't give up!

Sue Carson is Chair of Greening Niagara and can be reached at d.carson@sympatico.ca.



**Greening
Niagara**



Dignity Kits

The St. John's (Port Dalhousie) Dignity Kit initiative has a new local partner. In the winter months, thanks to Socks For Change, our Dignity Kits now offer warm, durable, wool socks and neck warmers for men and women in need along with the regular underwear, hygiene, and grooming items that go into our kits.

The Dignity Kit program began in 2017 as a collaboration among the parishes of St. Barnabas, St. Columba, and St. John's, Port Dalhousie. After St. Columba formed their own group in 2018, in May of 2019 the sorting sessions were transferred to St. John's. Our parishioners, along with some volunteers from St. Barnabas, enthusiastically support this ministry with generous donations and we have a dedicated team of volunteers who gather, sort, and knit items monthly.

Last year, chair Carol Lahey delivered over 250 individual kits along with bags of hand knit toques and gloves as well as larger shower and grooming supplies for the Start Me Up Niagara (SMUN) drop-in centre. SMUN clients line up eagerly each month to receive these kits. In both January and February alone this year, over 60 women's and men's kits were created. Our kits are packaged in practical hand sewn cloth bags that recipients enjoy. The bags are made by Connie Elkin, sister-in-law of Dignity Kit team member Marilyn Kanak and wife of Anglican priest Bob Elkin who are based in Thessalon, Ontario.

At the end of last November, St. John's Mission Strategy Committee recommended that the parish focus its Outreach initiatives and resources on local agencies that serve the homeless and those at risk of homelessness in our city.

These include Out of the Cold, Start Me Up Niagara, and the Resource Association for Teens (RAFT).

A parish council member, Colin Johnston, suggested we speak with Port Dalhousie entrepreneur, Sam Baio, who began "Socks for Change" a couple of years ago. Sam's connections with clothing manufacturers allow him to source out quality, military grade socks, costing a mere \$2 per pair. These would be perfect for our kits. And a new partnership was formed! St. John's donated \$500 to Socks for Change and we received 250 pairs of toasty, durable socks for our kits on January 23rd and 100 neck warmers in February.

Socks for Change is sponsored by Pen Financial Credit Union and Wise Guys Charities. 50,000 pairs of socks and accessories have been distributed across the entire Niagara Peninsula



Dignity Kit chair Carol Lahey hands Sam Baio of Socks for Change a cheque for \$500 from St. John's Port Dalhousie

in every community among sixty charities, Niagara Regional Police cars, all EMS vehicles, women's centres, refugee and migrant worker centres, and in the schools of all four Niagara school boards!

The people of St. John's hope that this is just the beginning of a long partnership with

Socks for Change where we can maximize the usefulness of our Dignity Kits for those who use them, especially in the cold or damp months of our Canadian winters.

Visit the Socks For Change website where their slogan "End Poverty Feet First" can be found!

What we did for Lent

**BY DONNA ELLIS,
LICENSED LAY WORKER**

As I sit here working on the article of what we did at St. John's Ancaster to help children of young families entre into lent, "Journey into Lent" I am feeling like it was so long ago. In just 4 weeks our world has been turned up side down. What I did confidently then, seems like a lifetime ago. In the space of isolation and trying to find ways of reaching out and connecting with families, I find myself on unfamiliar ground.

After 24 years of ministry to youth families and children I am faced with suddenly and quickly trying to find ways to connect with youth and families that are unfamiliar. Just two weeks ago, I sat back feeling accomplished as I had our Journey through Holy Week all mapped out for families on Good Friday. Life certainly has a way of pulling out the rug.....and then there is God. I am struck by the feeling of how timely this virus has us. Lent. A time when we need to give up to make more time for God...and there I was teaching our youngest generation how they might possibly do that not thinking for one minute how the magnitude of what that

means would hit me.

I began this time by jumping in with both feet depending solely upon my ability and experience to find ways families could connect with one another and to us. As you know, when you leave God out of the equation (despite I felt I was doing for God) one hits a wall. Yes, and my wall came roaring at me. Then feelings of inadequacy. In a moment of taking a break I decided to reorganize all the resources I brought home from the church I found a Homily that one of our parishioners gave on Lent 1. Right there in black and white it jumped off the page at me. The temptation is always "You can be like God, you can do it, you can overcome". But that's not what Genesis is trying to teach us and not what Jesus models for us, but to return to the source of life by dying to self (Gary Wiebe)

So, the goal for this Licensed Lay Worker is to lovingly submit and give God the space to direct and guide me through this strange valley and to be attentive to that ways God provides. One of the ways was right in front of me. The Diocesan Family Hub. It is organized by Sarah Bird. I was invited along with several

awesome people in Youth, Child and Family Ministry to work at providing a space for families to access lots of ideas and resources. Collaborating on this

project is a gift.

Below is a quick synopsis of the old world and how we began Lent together with children of young families.

This year we created a series of 5 stations.

We started off with a cup of

Continued Page 11

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Michael Coren

God's Wrath?

Generally speaking, organized Christianity has reacted intelligently and responsibly to the Coronavirus crisis. Most denominations in Canada cancelled all of their services, live-streamed the Eucharist or prayer, and issued regular advice to congregants. There was something deeply moving about watching viewing numbers increase as people of faith joined in an internet community to worship together and demonstrate a worried but heartfelt solidarity in the face of threat.

Historically, alas, there have always been Christians who looked for scapegoats (Jews, foreigners, witches, whomever) when plague or disasters occurred, and others who were convinced that it was all a punishment from God for our sins. Those sins tend to vary according to the political climate of the day. In 2014 televangelist John Hagee said that the Ebola outbreak was God's punishment for President Obama's policies about Israel; and after 9/11,

Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson claimed that God had allowed the terror attack because the Lord Almighty was angry because America encouraged abortion and homosexuality. Then there was AIDS. Because in the western world the virus was particularly common among gay men and intravenous drug users, the Christian right saw God's hand at work.

My personal theory is that God's punishment for our sins is that we have to listen to hysterical fanatics screaming that God is punishing us for our sins!

This time round, Robert Jeffress — pastor of Dallas First Baptist Church, and a regular Fox News contributor — preached a sermon entitled, "Is the Coronavirus a Judgment From God?" At first it looked like we were going to be okay: "The coronavirus is not one of the plagues in Revelation" he explained. But hold on just one fundamentalist moment. Jeffress continued, "All natural disasters can ultimately be

"My personal theory is that God's punishment for our sins is that we have to listen to hysterical fanatics screaming that God is punishing us for our sins!"

traced to sin."

Lifesite News, a highly popular media platform founded by the influential Canadian anti-abortion organization Campaign Life, ran a column with the headline, "Coronavirus is 'the killer of globalization' and a 'scourge' from God: Roberto de Mattei." It described de Mattei as a "celebrated intellectual" and quoted the man without any attempt at criticism. "God is righteous and rewarding and gives to each what is his due ... He not only chastises individual persons but he also sends tribulations to families, cities, and nations for the sins which they commit."

Lifesite also listed as one of

its featured blogs an article headlined, "Why coronavirus is a punishment from God that should lead to repentance." The author wrote, "It is true that those who suffer most are not necessarily the greatest sinners, but the explanation of this is the familiar idea that the punishment God sends us is a sign of love." Personally, I prefer a nice card and some roses.

At a more serious level, this is a reductive and banal spirituality that may satisfy the zealot but is dangerously crass and in fact profoundly ungodly. It depicts a genocidal God, sufficiently cruel to hurt indiscriminately, and too indifferent or impotent to be able to punish only those who have genuinely caused harm. It's all the product of an ancient, fearful belief system that has nothing to do with the gentle Jewish rabbi of the first century who called for love and forgiveness, and so distant and different from the Gospel calls of Jesus to turn the other cheek, embrace our enemies,



reach out to the most rejected and marginalized, and work for justice and peace.

That's the lyrical message emphasized every ten years in Oberammergau. In 1633, the plague was devastating Europe, and the people of this Bavarian village swore that if spared they would perform a Passion play every decade. They were, and have kept their promise ever since. 2020 was supposed to be the latest production but, with supreme irony, it has been postponed to 2022 due to Coronavirus; truth be told, the locals were probably saved originally because they had sealed all of their borders. Faith and reason. Far more effective than ranting about God's wrath.

The Rev. Michael Coren's website is michaelcoren.com

Lent

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

jelly beans. The cup was our life. Nice and full. Now to add more intentional time for God during lent. I added more jelly beans but they overflowed. Hmm now what? A child offered that we should take some out first. "Great idea" I said. And we went on to discuss what we could take out of our lives to make room. Even for 5 to 10 minutes. The kids came up with some very creative ideas. Ie: go to bed 5 to 10 min. earlier. 5 to 10 minutes after supper. Wake up 5 to 10 minutes earlier.

We then began our journey.

1. First, we made footprints

with sand. I told the story of Jesus in the desert for 40 days and how He was tempted. I illustrated the story using the box of sand we planned to use in the craft.

After the story we discussed how this story shows us "what Jesus would do". This prompted a discussion on what we can do when we are tempted? We went on to discuss scenarios we might face and thinking about "what would Jesus do".

2. The next station was making W.W.J.D. bracelets.

We talked about thinking about what Jesus would do, allows God to mold us into the person God wants us to be. Something God does our



Sydney and Mackenzie with their plants in progress.

whole lives.

3. The next station was air dry clay and kids had fun rolling, pinching, pushing, creating with their hands.
4. We then moved to create a prayer cross with coloured beads to help us with our new time for God. Each colour was a reminder of whom we should be praying for.
5. The last station was planting seeds that should bloom in 40 days. (Easter)

We had a wonderful time together and taking home tangible items helps them remember this time what each item represents.

Youth

Over the course of Lent, 14

youth participated in "Give it up for the earth" with the expectation that by reducing our carbon footprint by just more one for thing for 40 days, it will become a habit for the benefit of creation. Ways in which they are doing it: shorter showers, giving up the use of plastic straws, cups etc., unplugging electronics when not in use, purchasing gently used clothing, taking the time to make cookies instead of buying them.

As well, we get together over Zoom chat to encourage and check in with one another.

Donna Ellis is the Director of Children & Youth Ministry at St. John's (Ancaster)

Deadlines and Submissions for Niagara Anglican

Deadlines:

- May - March 25
- Summer - April 24
- September - July 24

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

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With a Grateful Heart

A Word from Bishop Susan Bell



It has been moving to witness the people of our diocese creatively and faithfully finding ways to be the hands and feet of Christ in response to the COVID-19 pandemic—while still heeding the advice of the government officials and public health experts.

In these extraordinary times, we have been living a singular truth: that the Church has never been a building. Our buildings are beautiful, it's true. They have community importance for us. Our buildings are containers for ministry—and for the collective memories of our parishes. But if ever a time proved an important truth, it's now. And it is this: the Church is a people bound by belief in God and by care and love for each other. Truly, we are proving Jesus' words in St. John's Gospel: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Each of you have found ways to reach out to one another that are rooted in that identity as disciples: in communicating through Facebook; in worshipping together online, and by upholding each other at set times of prayer; by caring for body as well as soul; by grocery shopping and filling prescriptions for each other; and by keeping loving company in our homes and by phone calls to friends and family afar.

I must also tell you that I have been truly inspired by the selfless and innovative efforts of our clergy and lay leaders, who along with essential service workers, healthcare workers, first responders, grocery clerks and delivery agents, have worked so hard to help us through the pandemic crisis.

Thank-you, all of you, for building up the Body of Christ, each in your own way and according to the gifts that God has given you.

Grace Church (Waterdown)

Food with Grace Waterdown Food Bank, a ministry of Grace Anglican Church, continues to provide nutritious, adequate, and appropriate food to people in our community who are experiencing financial crises or struggling on low incomes. The people who use this food security ministry are our neighbours; they are our families; they are us. To protect everyone involved from the spread of Covid 19, Food with Grace has instituted some new protocols. Volunteers are now putting together bags of food which are being distributed to our neighbours by a single volunteer under a tent outside the church doors. We are making every effort to ensure physical distancing guidelines are being followed while maintaining social and spiritual connectedness. Some of our regular

volunteers are not able to participate at this time but other parishioners and community members have joined the team. Food with Grace is grateful for the love and generosity of the volunteers and donors, and for the gratitude and kindness shown by the wonderful neighbours we serve.

The Rev. Sue-Ann Ward

St. John the Evangelist (Thorold)

As soon as our Sunday services were suspended, there was concern for community members who usually joined us for lunch following the service. Reimagining how to continue to offer this hospitality was our immediate response. Instead of offering a hot lunch, we moved to a take home lunch bag. These bags are packed with fresh sandwiches made at the church by two people carefully following social distancing guidelines. Fresh fruit, small bags of raw veggies, and baked goods are added. We have posted times for people to drop by and pick up their bags from the open church door. We are then able to greet people from a safe distance and check in on their wellbeing. We have seen a gradual increase as the weeks have passed as people are feel the economic crunch, as other programs are being suspended, and as people learn of our ministry. This ministry is important, and we are glad to find a way to safely reach out to support our community; to make a difference in this particularly challenging time.

The Rev. Katherine Morgan

St. Paul's (Caledonia)

One of the first programs cancelled in our area Meals on Wheels. This program serves some of our most vulnerable, so we quickly offered to help. With the Haldimand Norfolk Health Department, we have established a system of grocery shopping, preparing freezer meals, and dropping meals off; a ministry serving the needs of not only Caledonia but the whole Haldimand region. The church has been nimble in engaging the world in new ways. It is with such thankfulness that we have witnessed ministries both continuing and starting in our region, and people working as the disciples of Christ during these times.

The Reverend Cheryl Barker

St. George's (St. Catharines)

The Community Breakfast Program at St. George's has transitioned from congregate dining to carry out service. The Operations Team, responsible for ensuring breakfast is served every morning as it has been for over 24 years, made the necessary changes to allow food preparation and service while maintaining 2-m of separation between volunteers and guests. We meet or exceed all the requirements of Niagara Region Public Health keeping paramount the safety of guests and volunteers.

Parishes around the diocese are responding to community needs during the pandemic

Some of our more vulnerable volunteers have stepped back from serving temporarily but with smaller teams and more efficient service, we are still well equipped to provide breakfast to about 50 guests every morning. What a joy and privilege to be the hands of Jesus in these difficult times. It is our prayer that we continue to show His love every morning to all comers, no questions asked.

Operations Team, Breakfast Program

St. James (Fergus)

Partnerships! That is how St. James has responded to the pandemic. Together we have transformed our community meals to "delivery only" to continue to meet the needs of those who are most vulnerable. In partnership with Central Pentecostal and

The Reverend Corey Parish, Assistant Pastor, along with the many Centre Wellington community volunteers, we continue to provide Monday and Wednesday lunches and Friday suppers. We also work with corporate and ecumenical partners to create a double blessing: hiring local restaurants to prepare meals on Tuesday and Thursday and have these meals delivered as well. Those who are food insecure and those who operate small businesses in our community benefit. Three different chefs have stepped forward to help us keep our food ministry alive. In between meals, St. James maintains soup and emergency supplies to deliver to those in need. At this point, it has also become clear that many of our vulnerable neighbours need assistance to stay home, so we are working with our Community Resource Centre and their Director, Ron McKinnon, to aid with seniors' errands and shopping. We are finding ways to pay attention to and love our neighbours. As Simone Weil tells us, "Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity."

The Rev. Ann Turner

St. Paul's (Glanford)

As a Lenten project, St. Paul's Glanford chose to support St. Matthew's House



outreach to seniors through the HOPES (Housing Outreach Preventing Eviction for Seniors) program. We began putting together baskets of basic start-up supplies for seniors who had just obtained housing such as pots and pans, dishes, cutlery, towels, bedding, cleaning supplies. Children from our Messy Church program

painted shoe boxes and filled them with toiletries. Several women made afghans and others made financial donations to purchase items. When we heard that St. Matthew's House was feeling tremendous pressure because of the pandemic to help older adults who found themselves isolated at this time, we arranged immediate delivery. We are so grateful to be able to help this important work; as an elderly congregation, helping seniors in need is a wonderful fit for St. Paul's.

Mary Burnett

Holy Trinity (Chippawa)

Our food bank offers a large variety of non-perishable items and some fresher quality foods weekly to our regular patrons. When the pandemic began, we knew that to close the door on our friends would be to close the door on family. Through text messaging with our regulars, Holy Trinity has worked out a method of providing the service without any physical contact thereby eliminating risk to us all. Donations are provided by our generous parishioners and some community members. We at Holy Trinity continue to pray for the health and welfare of all during these unprecedented times and anticipate supporting our vulnerable neighbours for years to come.

Pam Fickes

St. Simon's (Oakville)

St. Simon's local outreach focus is food security, but the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a change in our programming. As God's helpers, many of us want to get out and help but we recognized that limiting our physical help and encouraging parishioners to make financial contributions is how we can best support our neighbours and keep our community safe for everyone. We encourage parishioners then, to provide financial donations to a choice of three different food banks for food purchases or to Food4Kids Halton who provide access to food to identified families in need.

We also work with local partners to deliver packed groceries to the doors of those in need or to senior residences; and dropping off leftover soap from our outreach toiletry cupboard to our most vulnerable. One program partner, Oak Park Neighbourhood Centre, started a porch food bank where one of our program leaders assists with sorting food. Anyone in the community can donate groceries by depositing donated food in the bins on the porch. Those in need pick up food items on an honour system.

Bronwen Bruch, Outreach Coordinator

Is your parish supporting the community in new or re-imagined ways? We would love to continue sharing stories of parishes being the face of Jesus during the pandemic. Send your stories to christyn.perkons@niagaraanglican.ca