

For the Love of Creation

Anglicans join ecumenical climate advocacy campaign.

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Anti-Racism

New series explores racism on a journey towards healing and wholeness.

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Micro-volunteerism

offers new ways to serve.

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A section of the Anglican Journal



NIAGARA ANGLICAN

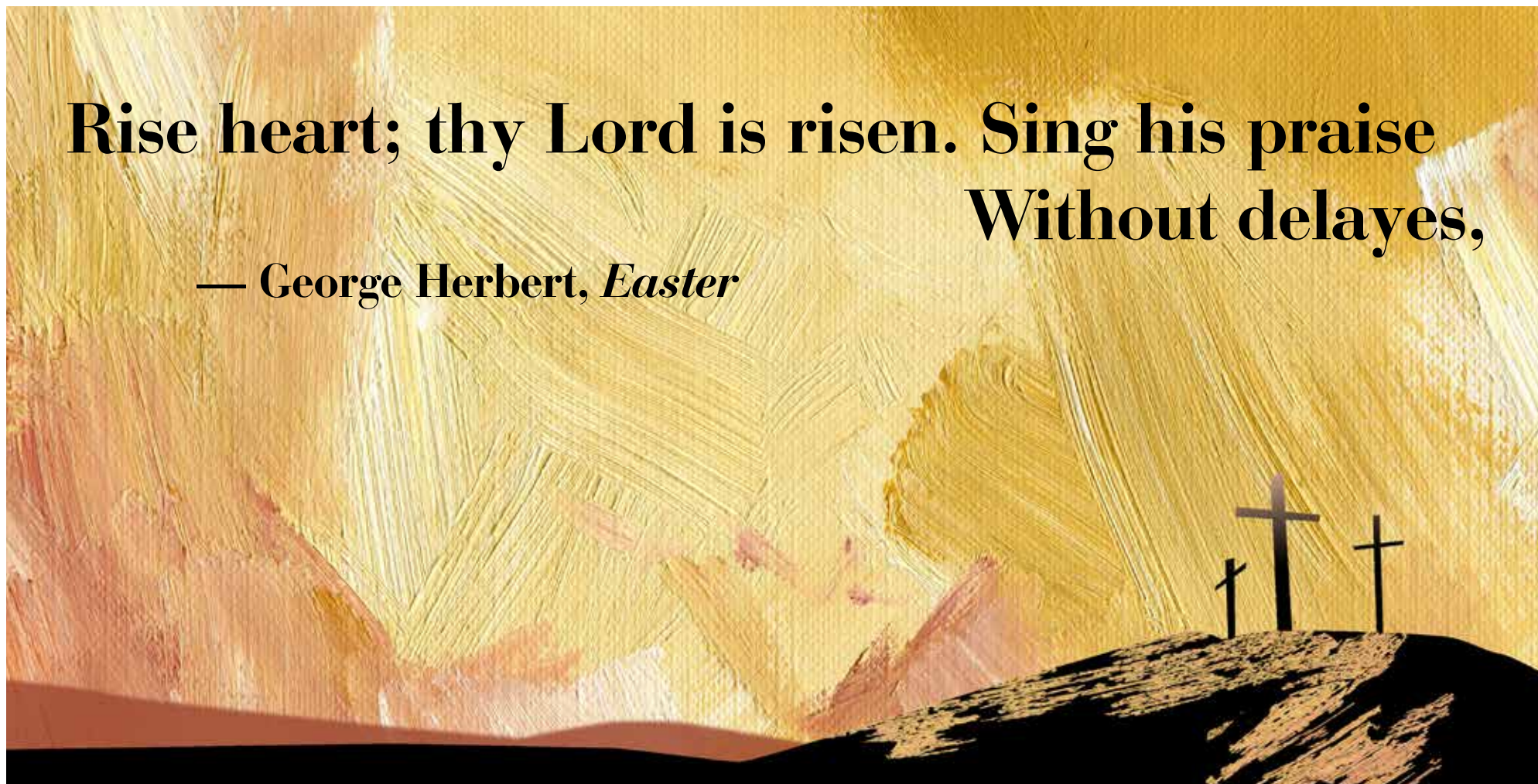
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APRIL 2021

Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise Without delays,

— George Herbert, *Easter*



A HAPPY AND BLESSED EASTER TO YOU!



BY BISHOP SUSAN BELL

Perhaps no other time in recent memory has the church had such need of the celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord.

In N.T. Wright's book written for our times, *God and the Pandemic*, he writes that the Resurrection was met by the disciples with "tears; with

locked doors; and with doubt." Mary was in tears in the garden; the disciples were fearful and behind locked doors and Thomas doubted.

Well, those seem to me like entirely reasonable ways to greet the news that someone presumed — and even confirmed — dead has risen!

Entirely reasonable.

Mary's tears flowed because a real death had happened. The Easter story does not merely say that things, after looking rather unpromising on Good Friday, turned out alright after all — no need to be upset.

On the contrary, it says this is about as serious and painful as it can get. So Holy Week brings home to us once again the fact

that at the very centre of the Christian story is the story of a death: a brutal, unjust, and terrible death. And that there is real grief — and very real tears because of it.

But there are also tears of recognition — of knowing and being known — as Mary recognizes the risen Jesus in the garden. These are tears of joy and renewed hope as a future which had been tragically snatched away by this real death now takes shape again — but in a different way — promising real life instead.

Then there is the fear that the unknown brings. When the dead do not stay dead, that is a fearful thing. When the powers and principalities of this world want to squash hope and destroy difference and change,

that is also something to fear. The fears of the disciples hidden away behind closed doors were paralyzing. They were faced with an inexplicable reality, but a reality no less, that they had to come to terms with.

And there's doubt. Thomas is the spokesperson for that very understandable doubt; doubt that God could do this incredible thing and Jesus could truly have risen. Thomas had to come to terms with the fact that for God nothing is impossible.

Tears, fears and doubts greeted the Resurrection.

The fact is the Resurrection has never been easy to accept. It can only be explained in human terms up to a point and after that, well, it's a matter of faith — a matter of belief in God's power and loving intent; a matter of

knowing and trusting that God keeps God's promises. I cannot tell you how Resurrection happened in the tomb on that first Easter day; it is indeed a holy mystery. God's ways cannot be justified or explained at times — so great are God's powers that we can't understand them. But I know Jesus rose from the dead. That's a matter of faith. And it's legitimate to say that. Truly it is.

I may not be able to tell you how it happened, but I can tell you why it matters.

I can tell you that Peter and James and John and Mary Magdalene and all the rest of the disciples so very close to Jesus experienced a shift in their reality so profound that it

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Easter

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

changed the trajectory of their entire lives. Ever after they were “Eastered” people—as are we because of their witness.

You see, it was personal for them. They knew that Jesus had walked among them, healed them, taught them, loved them, and saw them. And they knew with a slow dawning of comprehension that he was exactly who he said he was: God’s Son. And so when he died and said it was for them, to make them right with God. That he would give his life for theirs—they knew that to be the truth too. And when he had risen from true death with the good news that his work was accomplished, that they were right with God, they were forgiven, redeemed, and set free, and that Jesus had done that not just for them but for all humankind, well, they spent the rest of their lives compelled to tell anyone and everyone about that.

As one biblical scholar said, the disciples knew what to do next because they knew the story they were in. They knew that the Messiah—the promised Messiah—had come and that Jesus was the answer to God’s promise. So, they went around preaching the good news of the proof of God’s love for the rest of their lives.

Well, we have our own tears, fears and doubts to contend with: tears for the tragedy of the real deaths during the pandemic, the fears of danger, illness and death that have been our companions this past year, and the doubt that there will be an end to the suffering induced by COVID-19. These are very real things for us.

Here’s the thing: just like the disciples, Jesus meets us in our tears, fears and doubts, and just as he breathed his peace on the disciples in the upper room and emboldened his followers to preach the gospel and live lives of selfless service, he continues to breathe his strengthening peace on us too for the same work. And we take this strength, borne of faith and we live out of it and we share it.

What I know for sure is that people like you and me—people with the knowledge of Easter and the certain hope of life with God in their hearts, reveal God’s love and action among us here and now in acts of love and mercy as Eastered people.

So, the blessings: the peace, the strength and the hope of the Risen Christ be with you now—and always.

+ Susan

Coldest Night Warms Hearts In Pandemic



Emerging safely from lockdown for a good cause, close to 25,000 walkers raised nearly 10 million dollars across Canada in support of charities serving people experiencing homelessness, hurt, and hunger.

The Coldest Night of the Year is a family-friendly walk held annually in mid-February.

Over 70 people took part in the Coldest Night of the Year walk in Burlington in support of Open Doors at St. Christopher’s Anglican Church.

The campaign’s goal of helping to raise funds to support people in need of care and compassion aligns well with the outreach ministry practiced at St. Christopher’s and the money raised directly benefits the

Carrie Ford-Jones and Jeff Butt and their 8 children on the first CNOY all together

people they serve.

“Last year, during the pandemic, staff and volunteers worked to build strong alliances with local agencies and quickly implemented procedures to continue serving the community safely and efficiently,” said Christina Mulder, director of programs and partnerships for Open Doors. “In 2020, we prepared and distributed 12,000 meals, 4400 litres of milk, 2200 dozen fresh eggs, 7000 lbs of produce, and 300 backpacks stuffed with essentials like masks, lunch bags and water bottles.”

Despite having to be virtual, Open Doors and their local teams of walkers, raised aware-

ness about the experience of people they serve through their social media campaign “Moving for Mental Health” and over \$48,000 in funding to ensure this essential programming and support continues into 2021.

In St. Catharines, Anglicans in Action, a group organized by the Greater St. Catharines Social Justice Network took to the sidewalks in support of Start Me Up Niagara, a local agency which offers services to support people facing significant challenges such as poverty, homelessness, unemployment, disabilities, addictions and mental illness.

See Coldest Night Page 3



I am grateful for my family.

I am also grateful for my faith.

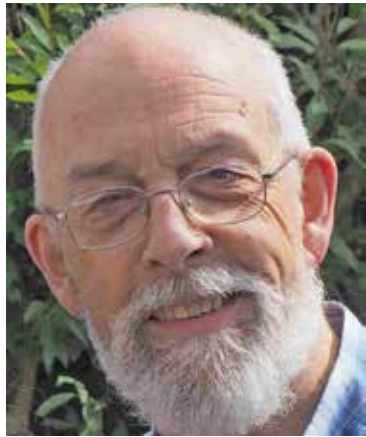
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In Other Words

Six Ways to Believe in the Resurrection

**BY DR. JOHN BOWEN**

I remember once doing a debate on the rationality of faith with a philosophy professor in Montreal. In the course of the debate, I said something about Jesus coming back from death, and he immediately shot back, "Sure Jesus is alive. You mean like Elvis?" For many thoughtful people in our world—and some in our churches—that is what the resurrection means. A combination of wishful thinking, sentimentality, and superstition—on a level with thinking that Elvis is alive.

Let me offer you six ways I find helpful in thinking about the resurrection:

1. The historical approach

Some people begin to believe by considering the historical evidence for the resurrection. My wife became a Christian while a student at Oxford, under

the influence of some friends who had themselves recently come to faith in Jesus, and they gave her books on this subject. Her conclusion, like that of many others who have followed that route, was that Jesus must indeed have risen from the dead, and that therefore she should follow him.

What is the evidence? It's a big subject, but here's just one clue. There were dozens of so-called Messiahs around at the time of Jesus, and most of them ended up getting crucified. However, in most cases, when that happened, that was the end of the matter. In the case of Jesus, the opposite happened: the movement he started, instead of dying with him, grew until it reached the whole world. Something must have happened: but what was it? That's the question. The resurrection, impossible though it may seem, makes the best sense of the data.

2. The Butterfly Approach

Then there are some people say, "Spring is coming: trees and flowers which seemed to be dead are coming to life, butterflies will soon burst out of apparently lifeless chrysalises. There's resurrection for you. It's all around us. What's your problem?"

Now, there is a world of difference between a seed that

appears to be dead and a person who is actually dead. And seeds "come to life" millions of times every day, yet there is only one recorded instance of a human resurrection. So it's hardly a fair comparison.

At the same time, it is the same Creator who is behind the spring and the resurrection; and Jesus did say his death would be like a seed falling into the ground to die and then bearing fruit. So there is a kind of (what can we call it?) stylistic similarity that makes a connection between spring and resurrection very attractive.

3. The Consistency Approach

Some people are helped by not centering out the question of the resurrection and looking at it as an isolated event in the Gospel story. After all, whether you believe in the resurrection depends on what you believe about God. If there is no God, of course, it's highly unlikely that there could be a resurrection. But, on the other hand, if there is a Creator like the God Jesus spoke about, then resurrection makes perfect sense. In fact, what would have been strange would have been if there had been no resurrection.

4. The Experience Approach

Others are helped by listening to people's stories. I think of

three friends who have spoken publicly about the influence on their lives of the Jesus-who-is-risen. None of them is (what shall we say?) given to mindless religious fanaticism. One is a librarian, one a military chaplain who has served in Afghanistan, and one a criminal lawyer.

Newton's second law of motion says that a body moving in a particular direction will change direction only if a force from outside, moving in a different direction, impacts it. That's what these people are saying: my life was going in one direction, then it changed direction, and I believe that the "outside force" was that of Jesus. So many have stories like this. The question is: do these stories ring true? Are the witnesses credible?

5. The Imaginative Approach

Some people find it helpful to do a thought experiment: not so much looking into the tomb to see if we can figure out what's there (or not); but rather standing at the door of the tomb and looking out at the world. How does the world look different if Jesus did rise? How would my life look different today? This week? How would death look different if Jesus did rise? Would the world make more sense or less? Try it and see what happens.

6. The Choice Approach

A friend in Ottawa is a senior civil servant. For years he went to church with his wife because she believed, and he wanted be supportive. But he didn't have what he considered the necessary feelings to call himself a Christian. Then a mutual friend said, "Dave, faith isn't a matter of feelings. It's a matter of choice. You choose to believe." Dave isn't particularly into "getting in touch with his feelings" anyway, but the idea of choice is something that made sense to him. So he chose to believe, and his life changed. Maybe that is the approach that will work for you.

It may be that you say, "Well, I still can't believe." Personally, I am encouraged that the first disciples also had a hard time believing. Even after forty days of resurrection appearances, as Jesus was about to return to heaven, Luke tells us "and some doubted." And yet they are still called disciples.

The thing to do with our doubts and questions is to bring them to Jesus, and to say, "Lord, I find it very difficult to believe this stuff, but I do want to follow you, and I'm open to learning if you're open to teaching." And you know what? He is. And as John's Gospel promises, as we learn and follow, we will figure out what to believe and find "life in his name."



Erick, Karene, and Raquel Nettel on their 5km journey.

Coldest Night

"Anglicans in Action seize in their ministry every opportunity to share God's love with those who are often forgotten," said Jan Kaye of St. Thomas' Church in St. Catharines. "We entered the walk challenged to raise a few thousand dollars for Start Me Up Niagara but were able to generate over \$11,000 through the work of our group."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

She noted that through the efforts of 15 walkers from local Anglican parishes, they "have witnessed the love of God multiplying exponentially allowing us to see Him at work." In total, more than \$168,000 was raised for Start Me Up Niagara.

"The need is really higher than ever, COVID really does impact people who are homeless, said Emily DeGaust, the

agency's fundraising coordinator in a video message for the event. "They have a lack of public facilities... they don't have anywhere to go." Start Me Up Niagara provides a warm place to rest, while providing food, care, and other supports.

Since 2011, the Coldest Night of the Year has raised over \$33,500,000 in 149 communities across Canada.



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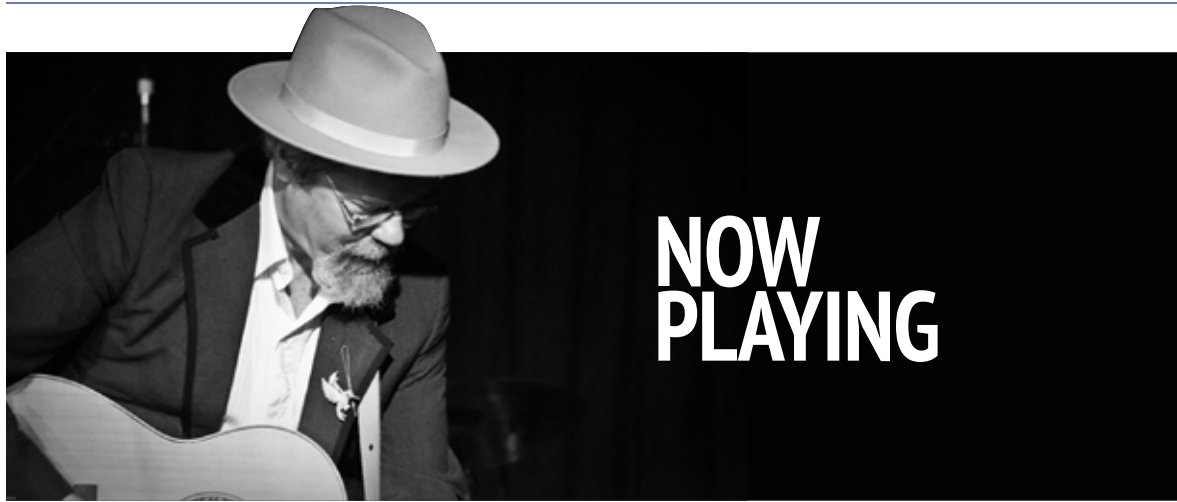
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**CALLED TO LIFE
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Jerusalem

BY THE VEN. MAX WOOLLAVER

Candles the colour of honey flickered silently on either side of the low passage to the burial chamber. Bowing to enter, we three then stood before the slab of rough stone. This could very well be the burial place of Jesus of Nazareth. If it is the tomb of Jesus it also the place of 'anastasis'—resurrection. Close by is a credible site for Golgotha—the site of the Crucifixion.

The tomb is within the Edicule, a free-standing structure within a free-standing structure—the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The astonishing Church of the Holy Sepulchre is a complex and bewildering unity of three separate, living Christian traditions—a living testimony to the complexity of the nation itself. The 'nested' realities experienced within the Edicule within the church, is an apt metaphor for present day Jerusalem itself.

Ellen and I had come to Israel on our own in 2011 for a three-week stay. We looked forward to our daughter joining us soon. The trip was to hold real drama for us.

On our first night in Jerusalem, we met Father Bob Holmes, a Basilian priest who was leading a peace and justice tour for members of the Roman Catholic Church. Bob quickly and generously invited us to join his expedition: "We have two empty seats in our van! Come along whenever you like..." Father Bob had many years of experience in Israel associated as he was with Christian Peacemaker Teams.

And so it was, that the next morning, we found ourselves with Father Bob heading off to meet members of The Women in Black, a group which in 2011 held a weekly public display of protest of the continued occupation of the West Bank. At great

personal risk they carried their protest to a central square in 'new' Jerusalem. Within minutes of arrival at the square, the women were at the centre of a circling and threatening opposition. It was, to us, an immediate revelation of the tensions which are so very near the surface of day to day life.

One evening we heard grieving parents share their stories of loss—one child shot by the Israeli military, the other killed by a Palestinian bomb planted in Jerusalem. The parents belonged to a group seeking an end to hostilities.

In our journeys north we travelled alone and stayed with an elderly farming couple in Galilee. They farmed the same ground since the foundation of the Israeli state in 1948. In those days, their weapons were always close at hand. They had an old photo on their wall of David Ben-Gurion mopping his furrowed brow at the moment of the formal establishment of the state of Israel. The farm overlooked the Sea of Galilee. We spent thoughtful afternoons there.

Once again with Father Bob's group, we visited a Palestinian farm not far from Bethlehem and surrounded by settlements.

The farm is presently denied the basic necessities for farming yet has managed to persist through international aid. The farm, known as The Tent of Nations, has become a school of peace for Israeli and Palestinian children. The Christian farmer claims a faith lineage to apostolic times.

While it may be impossible to convey the complexity of Israel there is no denying the impact of Jerusalem on the mind, heart and soul of the pilgrim.

As I took one slow step after another toward the Western Wall, I felt my composure crumbling. I was there to pray. I had a note in my hand to place in the wall. With each step my heart seemed to edge ever closer to a kind of crisis ... like a bird sensing the upward draft from a cliff overlooking the sea.

The tears began to flow.

And then came a crushing release of emotion as I pressed my forehead and palms to the wall and wept uncontrollably. I wept for my family's losses, for all families, for an end to divisions, for all those praying beside me, for the Blue Mosque on the Temple Mount, for Israeli children, for Palestinian children ... I wept for all the world ... from Jerusalem.



The Edicule within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem.

Photo by Larry Koester (CC BY 2.0)

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Anglicans Join Ecumenical Climate Advocacy Campaign

Canadian Anglicans have joined a coalition of 35 Canadian churches and faith-based organizations have come together for an unprecedented, months-long campaign of personal environmental action coupled with federal climate advocacy.

Prioritizing social justice action with an emphasis on environmental justice is one of three primary objectives our diocesan Mission Action Plan (MAP) and Climate Justice Niagara encourages Anglicans in Niagara to come alongside this initiative.

For the Love of Creation's faith-in-action campaign mobilizes people of faith from across Canada to reduce household greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and demonstrate their support for increased federal climate action.



FOR THE LOVE OF CREATION

"During the pandemic lockdowns we have seen the resiliency of creation begin to recover from damage human activity can cause. There is time for us to change the trajectory of that damage—if we will pay attention. For the Love of Creation lets us pay attention now," says Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada.

The campaign runs through October 4, 2021 (the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi and the end of the Season of Creation).

Anglicans are being invited

to take action to reduce their own GHG emissions and engage in acts of solidarity with justice-seeking communities. Participants will also be encouraged to write to federal Cabinet Ministers to call on the Government of Canada to:

- increase Canada's national GHG emissions reduction target;
- invest in a just transition to a fair, inclusive, green economy;
- implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including, but not limited to,

the right of free, prior and informed consent; and

- commit equal support for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures in the Global South.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic there have been reductions in greenhouse gases because of less flying, cruising and driving," observed Sue Carson. "We need to accept that our individual actions collectively have caused catastrophic impacts on our air, seas and land, and the creatures that inhabit all three ecosystems."

Complementing this campaign, and following up on a successful March Zoom event on water, Climate Justice Niagara is planning for an Earth Day event on April 22. Katerina Gonzalez, an Al Gore-trained presenter for the Climate Reality Project,

will be the featured speaker. She will focus on the dangers that greenhouse gas emissions have caused in our world and the things that we need to do to mitigate these.

"As we quickly adapted during pandemic restrictions, we need to use these skills to lessen the impact that we are making on the earth's resources," says Sue Carson, chair of the diocesan Climate Justice Niagara committee. "While dealing with one crisis we must never forget the importance of the greater one, climate change, that is affecting our planet."

Learn more at: fortheloveof-creation.ca/advocacy/campaign/ and visit the diocesan website to register for the upcoming Earth Day Zoom event.

Lenten Experience Deepened by Welsh Connection

BY THE REV. ANN TURNER

International travel is out of reach this spring, but the parishes of St. James, Fergus and Bro Celynnin (Anglican Diocese of Bangor in North Wales) are sharing the armchair journey of a lifetime! Together, we are deepening our Lenten experience by sparking some new friendships, hearing some stories from across the seas, and sharing in prayer and study together! Parishioners of Bro Celynnin and St. James are gathering weekly for a guided Lenten journey through the Bishop's recommended book, *The Seven Spiritual Gifts of Waiting* by Holly Whitcombe.

There is no question that pandemic has placed obstacles throughout our lives, but it has also inspired opportunities. While participating in a New



Left: The Reverend Eryl Parry and the limited cast for her ordination, including Bishop Andrew John, hike the mountain to the remote, ancient hilltop holy site of Llangelynnin, 900 feet above the nearest village.

Below: Parishioners from Fergus and Conwy gather on Zoom.

Monastics course with our diocesan canon theologian for mission, Canon Ian Mobsby, this past fall, I struck up a friendship with Eryl Parry. Newly ordained, Eryl is what is known locally as a pioneer priest; her primary ministry is seeking new ways to connect with people who are not part of gathered church life. Eryl's partner, David Parry, is vicar of their parish.

The parish of Bro Celynnin stretches from the medieval walled town of Conwy down through the rural communities of the picturesque Conwy Valley. Its five medieval church buildings range from St Mary's Conwy (the site of the 12th century Cistercian Aberconwy Abbey) to the remote, ancient hilltop holy site of Llangelynnin, 900 feet above the nearest village. Conwy town has a population of just over 4,000 but it is set within a wider conurbation of nearer 15,000. The town, and the valley as a gateway to the Snowdonia Massif, is a major draw for tourists so the pandemic has brought a somewhat calmer atmosphere.

While St. James, Fergus is a single-point parish, we share much in common with Bro Celynnin. In our first Zoom meeting, we discovered similarities that include our proximity



to rural living, our love of small-town life, our passion for new and creative ways to worship and study, and a great delight in shared laughter. We have also been wowed by hearing the complexity of our familiar doxology in Welsh! Bishop Susan Bell joined us for our first session as well, bringing greetings from Niagara and setting the tone for a time of discovery and shared faith. Our last session will be in Holy Week and we all look forward to Bishop Andrew

John joining us for our closing session.

As Bishop Bell reminded us, we are blessed as Anglicans to be part of a family—worldwide—of about eight million siblings! We at St. James feel this blessing, having connected with this small branch of our family and are looking forward to an ongoing relationship with our newfound friends.

Thanks be to God for this opportunity to share the gift of a truly, holy Lent!

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ANTI-RACISM: A Journey Towards Healing and Wholeness

A Special Series



A Continuum of Healing and Wholeness

This is the first installment of a special series

BY CANON CHRISTYN
PERKONS

Members of the Anti-racism Working Group will be sharing reflections about their perspectives on the group's work over the next several months. The sixteen participants, invited by the bishop to join a team charged with making recommendations that would help the diocese of Niagara become more just, diverse, inclusive and equitable, are a mix of ethnic backgrounds, geography, gender and age. The Rev. Naomi Kabugi chairs our gatherings with the Venerable Val Kerr serving as chaplain while I provide staff support for this work.

Of course, we all come with unique stories about our experience with racism. Some of us are immigrants moving in and out of language and cultural differences with greater and lesser ease. Those of us who are first generation Canadians have one foot in the culture created by our parents' stories and expectations, and the other in

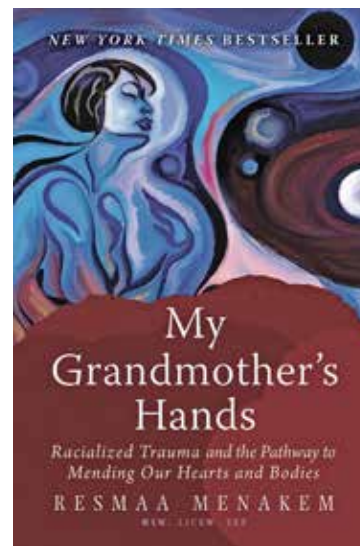
the Canadian culture in which we were raised. And some of us don't know our ethnic background and feel like we have the option to pick and choose a cultural identity. Some of us come from countries where no one is referred to by their colour, and some of us live in contexts where we are always described by our colour. Each of us, we hear, carries some confidence in our identity and place coupled with an insecurity about where we and others belong.

There are some among us who had hoped to move quickly to action ... to change ... to transformation, but it was clear from the first tentative sharing of our stories that we needed to take a step back from tasks to embrace being present to each other. We saw how difficult it was for our group to find language in which to tell our stories ... language that didn't step on toes, that didn't trigger hurt or anger, and language upon which we all agreed to describe our experiences. For some, anger about the naïveté of others about our

racist culture was a barrier. For others, the defensiveness coming from guilt and shame kept us from being vulnerable.

So we've begun to develop expectations for our group interactions. We're committing to working from the belief that we're all speaking from good intentions, and we've agreed to respond with grace when one of us unintentionally hurts or triggers another. We're promising to take risks and be honest about our thoughts, feelings and opinions recognizing that the dialogue will be limited if we don't share our authentic selves with one another. We have agreed to dwell in discomfort at times knowing that talking about racism and inequity shifts the ground beneath our feet. We live in trust that out of dis-ease will come growth.

The other way we've chosen to help us find common language and healing is through reading together *My Grandmother's Hands; Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* by Resmaa Menakem. Menakem's book uniquely examines the



social construct of white body supremacy as it is stored in our collective bodies and souls and offers practical exercises that invite the reader into intimate racial healing. The reading and exercises are both disturbing and provocative...and sharing our respective experiences feels risky but again we affirm the value of one another's discomfort.

It sounds difficult, doesn't it? I am certainly finding this work much more personally challenging than I had anticipated. I didn't realize that fear of saying the wrong thing, of being

unintentionally racist would be paralyzing. My picture of myself did not include racism; in fact, I felt good about saying that I was colour-blind—not having any awareness of how that denied the experiences of others. My walk with these courageous risktakers has allowed me to start trusting that I will be graciously coached when (not if) I make an error, that risk and discomfort are the seeds of transformation. I am privileged to have my worldview opened and broadened by the stories of others while at the same time, pained by my own naïveté. I am experiencing grace in new ways, and I am deeply moved by the resilience of many in the group.

While this is hard work, I am filled with hope that this journey we are walking together will bring healing and wholeness to each one of us; hope that the respect, grace, vulnerability, and resilience that marks the working group will be a gift to the diocese as we slowly and patiently move towards a more just, diverse, inclusive and equitable community.

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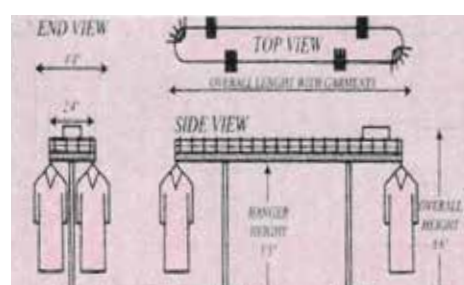


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Refugee Rights Case Supported by Canadian Churches

The Federal Court of Appeal recently heard the Canadian government's appeal of a decision finding that the Canada-US Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) is unconstitutional. Amnesty International (AI), the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), and The Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) joined individual refugee claimants as their lawyers reiterated to the court that the STCA violates the right to life, liberty, and security of the person, as well as equality rights guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Safe Third Country Agreement is a treaty between Canada and the United States which forbids anyone from claiming refugee status in one country if they originally came to the other country. "A refugee coming from their country arrives first in the United States and then wants to claim asylum in Canada," explains Deacon Rod McDowell. "This person cannot make the claim in Canada (or vice versa) at a land border crossing unless they meet one of the exceptions listed in the agreement."

This appeal was brought to the court just weeks prior to Refugee Rights Day which is observed each year in Canada on April 4. While Easter will take



Deacon Rod McDowell has been a long-time advocate for refugee rights.

precedence this year, the day is an opportunity to bring attention to the advances made in the protection of refugee rights in Canada as a result of the Singh Decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, which found that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects the fundamental rights of refugees. Refugee Rights Day is also a time to learn about the threats to those rights, such as those arising from the Safe Third Country Agreement.

"Many refugee claimants are not safe in the US, and do not benefit from the same protec-

tion that they would receive in Canada," said Ketty Nivyabandi, Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada. "In July 2020, the Federal Court ruled that sending refugee claimants back to the US, where they face detention and mistreatment, shocks the conscience of Canadians, and that being detained in the US exposes these refugee claimants to increased risks of return to persecution. We look forward to the Federal Court of Appeal reaffirming the strong legal conclusion drawn from the clear and extensive evidence that was before the Federal Court."

The Niagara frontier, and especially Fort Erie, is the major border crossing point for refugees coming from the United States to Canada. "Prior to the implementation of the STCA, some 6,000 plus refugees would cross at Fort Erie in a given year," says McDowell. "With the implementation and tightening of the STCA, and the effects of the pandemic, that number has now dwindled to about 900 in the last 12 months."

Refugee protection in the US drastically deteriorated under the Trump administration, but many laws and policies that violate refugee rights pre-existed his administration, and will not be easily reversed by the

new Biden administration. The Canadian Council of Churches and its partners, have been challenging the STCA since before it was signed and won a previous Federal Court ruling finding the US unsafe for refugees in 2007 (though this decision was subsequently overturned on appeal, based on a technicality).

Under the Biden administration, continuing concerns include:

- Arbitrary detention of thousands of migrants and asylum seekers continues in the US's more than 200 immigration detention facilities.
- Arbitrary detention is routinely used by US authorities to undermine access to legal counsel and pressure asylum seekers into giving up their claim, thereby forcing them back to serious human rights violations in their country of origin.
- White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki recently declared: "Now is not the time to come ... the vast majority of people will be turned away. Asylum processes at the border will not occur immediately; it will take time to implement."

At the Federal Court, the organizations submitted extensive evidence that the US system fails in many ways to protect

refugees, and that people turned back from Canada under the STCA are at risk of being sent in turn by the US to face persecution, torture and even death in their home countries.

"Hospitality is a core value of Canadians and they expect people who are seeking protection in Canada to be received, welcomed, heard and treated with respect, not returned to face detention," said Pastor Peter Noteboom, General Secretary of The Canadian Council of Churches.

Under the Safe Third Country Agreement, most refugee claimants who arrive at an official border post seeking protection in Canada are denied entry and turned back to the US. Because the agreement only applies at official border crossings, many refugees have been forced to cross the border in between ports of entry, sometimes in perilous conditions. Withdrawing from the Agreement would not only ensure that Canada meets its legal obligations, but would also allow people to present themselves in an orderly way at ports of entry, ending the need for irregular crossings.

With files from the Canadian Council of Churches

Systemic Change Needed

BY IRENE PANG

Ever since I understood the climate crisis emergency, it has fundamentally changed the entire thought process of the myriads decisions my family and I have to make every day: the way we drive and go about, the food we eat, stuffs to buy (or not to buy), where to invest our money and many more. We are committed to do as much as we can to reduce our carbon footprints.

I wish I can tell you that this journey has been fun and pleasant. But instead, I found it difficult and inconvenient.

We tried to ditch single-use plastics, only realised that over 95% of items on the shelf comes with plastic packaging that are sadly non-recyclable in the municipal system. We tried to take public transit and drive



Making good environmental choices can be difficult and inconvenient, but need to be undertaken for the wellbeing of God's creation.

less, only found that a 10-minute drive would turn into 3 bus trips that takes over an hour. Not to mention that it costs considerably more to buy local produce than items that have travelled from thousands of miles away.

We stumbled, compromised, and then tried again, just like many others. And such experience has opened my eyes to the reality that many of our so-called personal choices are

indeed readily made by the economic system which thrives on extractivism and killing the planet. Within the existing system, our actions, big or small, of not hurting the planet is a battle by default.

It is not a battle against one's will power, it is a battle against the system.

Yet our personal inconvenience has become trivial, when comparing to the enormous

sacrifice that many have made. And plenty of them are close to home. The numerous days and nights that Indigenous land defenders have spent behind make-shift school bus blockades, fending off bulldozers coming in the name of economic development. The pledge that 200 youths from across Canada had made to go on a hunger strike to stop the Teck Resources' Frontier oilsands project in early 2020.

No matter how challenging and inconvenient it might be, or how little our influence might seem to be, there is no reason for not joining the fight. For real changes to happen, we need enough people to recognize the importance of acting sooner rather than waiting. We need enough people willingly incur a relatively small cost now to avoid an enormous future cost

to our youth and children. We need enough people to use their votes to elect climate sincere leaders. We need enough people to working at the systematic level to fight climate change. We need enough people to co-create a just economic and social system that thrives on caring of the Earth and all people.

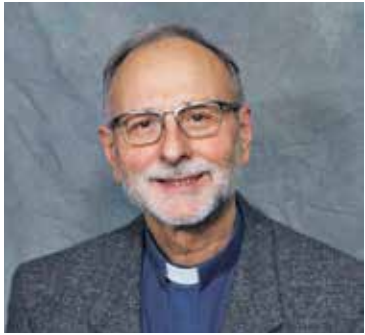
It is difficult and inconvenient. Yet it is holy. It is an act of love. It is doing justice to the sacred Earth that God creates and the sacred people that God dearly loves.

Irene is a member of the Climate Justice Niagara Committee and a parishioner at Grace Church Waterdown



Guest Column

Jonah the Petulant Prophet



BY THE VEN. DR. JOHN COURSE

Beyond his peevishness, Jonah also has a death wish. He would rather die than fulfill his calling to save the hated Assyrians from imminent destruction.

The Assyrians were fearsome warriors who invaded the northern kingdom of Israel in the early eighth century BCE, destroying its key cities and deporting the survivors. Long after the fall of the Assyrian empire, an inspired writer drew on this distant memory to tackle the sensitive topic of God's merciful love for one's enemies. Although feelings of hostility toward the Assyrians had subsided over time, aware it remained a challenge to have this theme taken seriously, the author develops a novel approach to make it more palat-

able for the intended audience: knit it to an amusing tale.

This short story begins with Jonah receiving an unsolicited directive from God. He is to go immediately to the great city of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and announce its demise. Jonah, however, disobeys his orders and immediately sets out in the opposite direction to flee from "the presence of the Lord." This antic is intended to elicit a smile of amusement, for, as everyone knows, Jonah sets for himself the impossible task of escaping from the all-seeing eye of God.

Jonah's choice of flight is a ship. Soon after it attempts to sail away, God sends a mighty storm to cause havoc aboard this vessel. Once it is determined Jonah is the cause of the gale, the polytheistic sailors seek guidance from Jonah as to how to placate his offended deity. His extreme, over-the-top solution, that he be thrown overboard should in the spirit of this comedic work be taken as a further humorous development.

Following their unsuccessful attempt to circumvent Jonah's request, the sailors ask for forgiveness from Jonah's God before they throw Jonah into the sea. The author then pokes

fun at Jonah by having these polytheists appear more devout than he by having them offer a sacrifice and make vows to this God.

God spares Jonah from drowning by having a large fish swallow him up (there is no biblical Hebrew word for whale). For those who enjoy physical comedy, an amusing scene follows, which calls on the imagination. After swimming northward for three days, this big fish spews a stinking, disheveled Jonah onto shore as close to Assyria as it could swim. Saturated with remnants of partially digested fish, Jonah is now clearly in a state of ritual impurity. Yet, given the urgency of his mission, it appears God does not allow poor Jonah a chance to wash up before issuing him a second call to get a move on to Nineveh. This time Jonah follows orders—to a degree.

Jonah arrives at the exceedingly large city but, ever the reluctant prophet, he stops well short of its centre to proclaim, apparently once, his message of doom: "Forty days more and Nineveh will be overthrown!"

Shortly thereafter, Jonah's worst fears are realized. The



Assyrians heed his message! From the king all the way down to their livestock, mass repentance follows and to a ludicrous, unprecedented degree. Can cows repent? They do here. Moreover, not only does the king don sackcloth, he also vacates his throne to sit in ashes! Further humorous embellishment can be seen in the unheard-of practice of having the Assyrians and livestock alike forgo even the consumption of water as part of their fast.

Utterly disillusioned, Jonah's death wish surfaces again, this time in a prayer in which he asks God to take his life. The essence of his prayer consists of an ancient credal statement (4:2b) cast as a complaint that God stayed true to his gracious, merciful nature and spared those Assyrians. In the context of the humour utilized in this story, the author hopes we will be amused by the audacity Jonah shows when castigating God for God's praiseworthy

attributes.

In the closing verse of this tale, God says to Jonah and by extension to the reader, "And should I not be concerned about Nineveh ... in which there are more than 120 thousand persons ... and also many animals?"

Given the sensitivity of this subject matter, the reader is gently invited into the story by means of this rhetorical question and indirectly asked to follow God's example and forgive, even love their enemies, whom-ever they might be, although it may be difficult as can be seen in the uneasy, tug-of-war relationship that exists between God and Jonah.

Aware this message would be a hard sell, the author utilizes elements of comedy to win and keep the audience's attention long enough to raise the climatic question that closes this teaching story. That this work made it into the Hebrew Bible testifies to the success of the writer's approach.

I've Been There Too



BY THE REV. CANON MARTHA TATARNIC

As some of our readers know, I began receiving ministry coaching in the fall of 2020 from the Very Reverend Peter Elliott, retired dean of the cathedral in Vancouver. Ministry can be challenging, and it can be utterly impossible without drawing on the wisdom and experience of others. In our biweekly Zoom

coaching sessions, we have talked through any number of dilemmas, hopes and dreams, identifying concrete next steps and longer-term strategies.

I would say, though, that what has made the biggest difference to me has been those moments when Peter has been able to respond to one of my struggles with a story from his own experience. "I've been there too," has been the solid ground in our coaching relationship, his offering to me that allows me to breathe, to trust, to trust myself and my experience, because someone that I respect so much has been there too. In all of the other work that we look at together, that starting point of companionship and understanding is an immeasurable treasure.

Now that we're in the season of Easter, we get a flooding of images, hymns and prayers that speak of the triumphant,

radiant, death-defying Jesus. But it can sometimes be difficult to remember why our Alleluias matter so much. When we ourselves are in a broken, lonely, grieving or lost time of our lives, the joyful proclamation of Easter can even feel alienating—and as the pandemic rages on, more of us than not might be experiencing this disconnect.

In the triumphant, risen Jesus, what we need to keep track of is the very different kind of power Jesus accessed throughout his ministry. Time and time again—in the wilderness, in the quiet moments of prayer, in the garden of Gethsemane and on the cross—we see that the offering of Jesus' ministry is grounded in his own weakness and vulnerability. He leads by going into every dark and fragile corner of what it means to be human, what it means to be haunted

by demons, to need the tender care of another, to have his heart broken, to experience his own body failing and to expel his final breath. He teaches his followers, not how to be strong, but how to be totally and completely human. He teaches them to hunger, to need healing, to ask forgiveness, to give thanks, to not know everything, to be surprised, and to take up the cross as the walking wounded and follow Jesus on the pathway of love.

In so doing, Jesus saves us. He doesn't save us from the pain and suffering of our own mortality. He saves us for this loving relationship with God. He reveals this God who never stops drawing near to us, wherever we are on the wild pathways of life, and who offers us this life-giving gift: "I've been there too." It is that joining of God's experience to ours, whatever lost and lonely

places we may get ourselves into, that then allows God's life to be bound to ours, and for us to have a share in how God's power—not ours, but God's—raises us from death to new life and invites us to participate in the new creation.

Maybe you know something of how a friend, teacher, mentor or even a public figure has blessed you by speaking from their own experience into yours, allowing you to feel seen and connected and not alone. Maybe you have experienced how God has joined you on the winding road of life, how Jesus has befriended you with the light, healing, love, guidance, strength, peace and forgiveness you couldn't generate on your own. Maybe this is your Easter prayer—to meet again the God who draws close, offering us this powerful gift: "I've been there too."

Micro-Volunteerism Offers New Opportunities to Serve

BY GILLIAN DOUCET CAMPBELL

The volunteering landscape in Canada is evolving. In your parish, you may have noticed this. For instance, the way people volunteer is changing. A trend in volunteerism is micro-volunteerism which centers around a short-time commitment, quick projects, and primarily done on one's own. These volunteers contribute defined pieces to a larger project. What makes micro-volunteering innovative is the time commitment. Organizations know people are busy; these opportunities capitalize on the limited free time someone has.

Some roles are undefined. Like Migrant Farmworker Project volunteers who sort bulk grocery deliveries to fill grocery bags, or organize clothing, or deliver items for Migrant Farmworkers. As Antonio Illas, missionary of the Migrant Farmworkers Project shares, "Without the forty plus volunteers this ministry would not be possible. I could not do on my own what we accomplish. It is their commitment and dedication that makes this project a success."

Volunteering can be formal or informal. Informal volunteers are like my neighbours Jeffrey and Richard who clear snowy sidewalks of much of our street and several driveways. Formal volunteers fill a specific ongoing role, like that of a warden. In reflecting on wardens, Dan Bennett, rector of three Anglican parishes in greater Fort Erie

and regional dean of Brock, says, "Wardens are invaluable. I would be lost without the teams of wardens I've been blessed to work with. It's a special ministry that wardens undertake. Apart from the practical matters they oversee, I've watched them become cheerleaders, confidants, managers, and disciples."

Volunteer engagement in Canada has been affected by the continuing pandemic. While financial support is the number one need of organizations, they also require in-kind support of specialized skills. Skilled roles such as finance, strategic planning, and grant writing continue to be the most sought-after volunteer skills with technology skills – specifically website and communication and an understanding of technology tools and hardware is increasing.

At St. Aidan's, Oakville, the new technology role was filled by grade nine student Cherry Wang. When Wang heard through a friend a volunteer was needed, she jumped at the chance saying, "I knew how to fill the role. I'm proud that I can use my skills to help." Fran Wallace, the incumbent at St. Aidan's reflects, "This young volunteer wasn't a parishioner, but what a wonderful way to bring a community member in by providing a meaningful role. We're grateful Cherry could lead us in this way."

Alex Urquhart of St. John the Evangelist, Hamilton, has become their technical coordinator. Urquhart shares, "People need to connect with

God during the pandemic. I'm handy and available on Sunday. I'm a gamer and Archdeacon Anderson knew that I used a fair amount of this equipment at home, so he asked me to consult, which turned into a regular volunteer role." Urquhart noted too that, "Archdeacon Anderson understands the equipment and its good quality. I'm well supported."

The support Urquhart references is key. According to a Canadian report released by Volunteer Canada entitled The Volunteering Lens of COVID-19: Fall Survey, "Volunteering, both informal and formal, flourishes when supports are in place to keep people safe and benefit most from people's time and talents. Those supports not only include volunteer management practices, but also the skills and knowledge of an experienced leader of volunteers."

Attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion has also grown during the pandemic. This focus led to the creation of the diocesan Anti-Racism Working Group. Mary Gordon, a youth volunteer with Church of the Resurrection, Hamilton, as well as with diocesan children, youth, and family initiatives is a volunteer with this group. Gordon shares, "Working with youth who have been willing to address issues of diversity, particularly around the inclusion of LGBTQ2 and my passion to create a safe community that is accepting of all, I was glad to join." Gordon, who also works full-time and has a family

reflected that "Volunteering fulfills my passions, so it's important to me to find the time. It helps others, but it also feeds my soul."

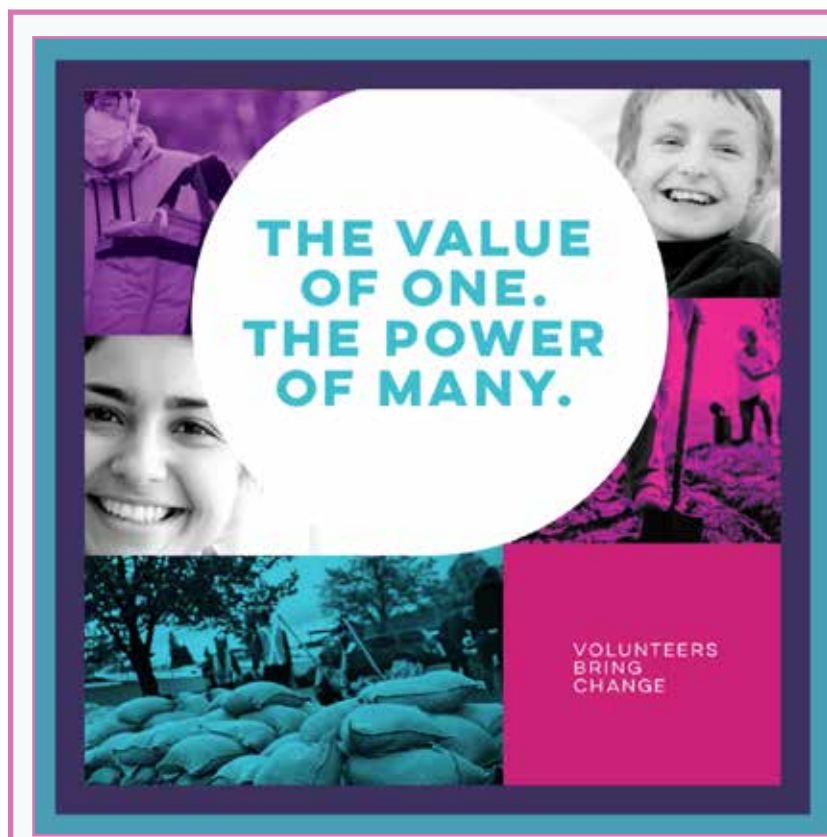
Whatever the reason people give of their time and talent or whatever the role they take on, volunteers are immensely important for parishes to thrive. As Bishop Susan Bell says, "volunteers are worth more than rubies."




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National Volunteer Week is April 18 to 21. This year's theme reflects on the awe-inspiring acts of kindness by millions of people and the magic that happens when we work together towards a common purpose. Each year, hundreds of thousands of hours are offered by the people of the Diocese of Niagara in support of our many ministries. Thank-you each and every one of our thousands of volunteers who support the work of their parish and beyond and giving so generously of your time and skills to further God's mission.

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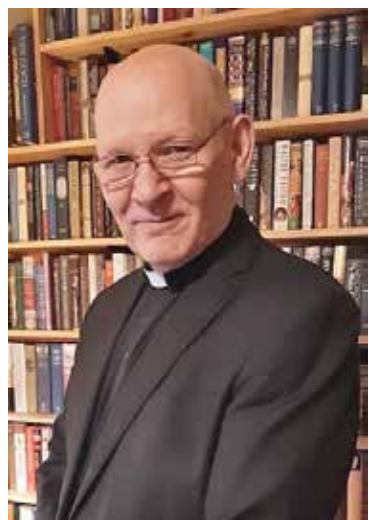
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**BY THE REVEREND
MICHAEL COREN**

We've just commemorated Black History Month, which in itself is an admission of failure. It should be unnecessary, redundant, should be part of the daily history of an equality-based society. But it's not. At our church in Burlington we discussed the iconography of the white Jesus, what it meant, and the damage it caused. Yeshua and his people were, of course, first-century Middle Eastern Jews, and while there was a certain variety of looks because of the mixed composition of the Mosaic exodus, most would have been dark-skinned and certainly not the Scandinavian messiah so frequently and inaccurately

depicted. Is it relevant? Surely, Jesus's appearance matters far less than what he did and taught. Problem is, the obsession with the iconography of a white Jesus has so infected the faith historically, and continues to do so even today, that Christians have felt enabled to treat people of colour appallingly.

This has been most keenly seen in Christianity's relationship with slavery. Few churches have clean records regarding the obscenity; as early as the 15th century, the Roman Catholic Church gave it official endorsement in a set of papal bulls. In the years before the U.S. Civil War, the church was one of the largest slave-owning entities in four states, and in South America, various religious orders enslaved countless men and women, working them to enormous profit. The Church of England was an integral part of the emerging empire and did much to develop and institutionalize the transatlantic slave trade. When the British 1833 Slavery Abolition Act was passed, paying out £20-million — around \$1 billion today — to slave owners across the British Empire, many of those who received this "compensation" were Anglican clergy.

The Methodists were nobler, with founder John Wesley denouncing slavery as "the sum of all villainies." Various non-conformist Christians outside of the mainstream were similarly convinced. As a church, the Quakers were probably the most vehement in standing against the evil of human ownership. And the Christian abolitionist movement, which produced heroic figures such as William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, was extraordinary in its courage and determination.

But this is the point, really. The abolitionists were extraordinary when they should have been ordinary. Their spirit should have been commonplace within organized Christianity, and it wasn't. They should have been some of countless, but they weren't. Wilberforce and his followers were often opposed by other Christians, and those who weren't actively against them were often indifferent, or disguised their apathy with excuses. In this case the cry was, "If Britain abolishes slavery, the French will take over. Or the Spanish, the Dutch, or Portuguese. We'll deal with it later." It's chilling how eerily

similar this sounds to those contemporary complainers who reject policies to counter climate change.

Christians also struggled to end U.S. slavery in the 19th century, but other committed believers led the Confederacy, and continued to regret the loss of slavery, and to embrace racism. It's a painfully disarming story, and the fact that so many Africans and people of African heritage remain faithful Christians is a tribute to their ability to see the authentic Jesus, the Rebel Christ, through all of the racist distortion, and to their invincible grace to forgive.

The Bible itself is at best ambiguous. The Old Testament writes of slavery, often without

censure and even with approval. As such, it describes a society that differs little from many of the other slave-based cultures of the ancient world. The New Testament may not be as absolute, but the few specific references to slavery are far from encouraging. Over the centuries, churches have evolved and matured, with Christian institutions often confessing the darker sides of their histories. But it would be disingenuous to argue that the present is not somehow a product of the past.

Former archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams put it well: "The Body of Christ is not just a body that exists at any one time; it exists across history and we therefore share the shame and the sinfulness of our predecessors." Ultimately, this shouldn't be some morbid attempt at historical justification, but rather an opportunity to move forward with full disclosure and crisp transparency. Christians should be in a condition of permanent revolution and embrace the constant admission that we can be better and do more. It's the correct thing to do, it's the Christian thing to do.



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Serving Breakfast to the People of St. Catharines for 25 Years

BY DUNCAN MOFFET

February marked the quarter century anniversary of the Community Breakfast Program at St. George's Anglican Church in downtown St. Catharines. Over half-a-million breakfasts served in the last 25 years without missing a single morning—a perfect record.

As we have for more than two decades, we serve breakfast to all comers every morning, no questions asked. Thank you to the many tireless volunteers who have made this ministry possible, as well as the church and wider community who have supported it financially. While we pray for an end to the hunger and poverty that necessitates the program in the first place, we also give thanks for God's provision in being able to serve our community in this way.

Every good cook has a well thought-out and tested recipe for their favourite dish. The program has persisted throughout the past 25 years by stick-



Left: Two regular guests chat as they enjoy breakfast.

Below: One of the program's mentors serves breakfast and coffee to a guest.



ing to the same basic recipe. We offer a simple breakfast, prepared by volunteers, funded largely by individual donors, and overseen by a team of hands-on leaders. We have a small roster of "mentors" who hand out the bagged breakfasts, maintaining a friendly and loving interaction with our guests and greeting many by name.

I took over leadership of the program in 2020 filling the shoes of the very capable and

energetic Janet Veale who had served in that role for more than 20 years. While I'm sure every new leader feels that they face unique challenges, the need to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic is truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Although our method of serving has changed because of the pandemic, we offer the same breakfast of oatmeal, cereal, toast with peanut butter and jam or Cheez Whiz, orange juice,

milk and tea or coffee. Over the past year we served an average of 60 bagged breakfasts daily and provided a further 30 each morning to a nearby overnight shelter. We modified our service several times, beginning with our regular dine-in service, moving to a larger room to allow for greater distancing, changing to carry-out service with no indoor access, and finally, by providing bagged breakfast handed out at the door. We will be ready for the next turn in the long and winding road of the pandemic.

At the outset of the pandemic a number of volunteers and some entire teams decided to step back from service because of concern for their personal safety. Many of these volunteers have subsequently returned, demonstrating their confidence in the safety and hygiene procedures we've put in place. Currently, there are more than 150 volunteers who serve once per month on one of our 31 five-person teams. Each team works on the same assigned day of the

month throughout the year.

Reflecting on the past year, we are pleased and proud that we have continued our record of unbroken service. Throughout this pandemic we have been guided by two foundational principles. First, we will serve breakfast every morning as we have for 25 years. We seek to meet a need. Second, we can succeed only as God provides and equips. While many things change around us, we testify to God's unchanging and abundant provision.

Looking forward, we would like to expand our ministry by getting to know our guests better and having more opportunities to talk with those longing to be sure of God's love for them. Serving breakfast is our ministry; our goal is to welcome our guests into God's kingdom where each one of us is a guest.

Duncan is a parishioner of St. George's, St. Catharines, and chair of the Breakfast Program.

The Lenten Musical Calendar

BY ALLISON LYNN

"What if we could help churches sing their way to Easter?"

This was the question on our minds when we imagined a brand-new ministry project: the Lenten Musical Calendar.

We envisioned a weekly video series, inspired by the lectionary. Each week would feature a different guest preacher and an original song performance by our duo, Infinitely More.

As a freelance music ministry, Infinitely More has been blessed to serve Anglican churches across the country, including those in our home diocese of Niagara. We reached out to several parishes to see if they would partner with us in this

new venture. We were thrilled to receive a "yes" from everyone we asked.

The Lenten Musical Calendar is a fresh, creative expression of the Lenten journey, perfectly formatted for lockdown. By taking on the production ourselves, we have been able to take one more job off the plate of over-worked clergy.

We were honoured that, after consulting with Canon Christyn Perks, our proposal received a diocesan congregational support and development grant.

Our primary audience is practicing Christians, but the videos also appeal to the "lightly churchd" - people with some church background or spiritual curiosity. Our words

and music are deeply spiritual, but the delivery is relaxed and invitational.

Videos debut each Saturday at 11 AM, on Infinitely More's Facebook and YouTube channels.

The response has been incredibly encouraging. Many churches share the videos in their newsletters and on social media. St. George's (Georgetown) embeds each week's video into its online worship. St. Thomas' (St. Catharines) is using the music portion for its worship broadcast on Cogeco TV. At least two parishes play the videos for their long-term care and retirement home residents.

The enthusiastic response to the Lenten Musical Calendar



speaks to the great desire for artistic, innovative ministry. People are hungry for the truth of the Gospel, especially in this pandemic season. Through music, inspiring words, and technology, we have a tremendous opportunity to bring that truth directly into people's homes and hearts.

The Lenten Musical Calendar ends with a bang on Easter weekend! We're honoured to have Bishop Susan join us for

our Easter Gospel reflection. We'll also debut a brand-new original Easter anthem, which is fitting to be shared and played all throughout the Easter season.

Allison Lynn and Gerald Flemming form the award-winning music duo, Infinitely More. They are based in St. Catharines. Find them at: InfinitelyMore.ca, Facebook.com/InfinitelyMoreBand and www.youtube.com/InfinitelyMoreBand.

Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

Deadlines:

- May - March 29
- June - May 3
- September - July 30

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.

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Words About Words

BY THE REV. DEACON
NANCY MCBRIDE

One afternoon, I loaned my label maker to my young friend Samuel, so that he could complete a project. That done, he proceeded, with youthful enthusiasm, to label everything in sight! He was having so much fun that he didn't notice me turning it into a spelling lesson. At one point, he looked up and asked me what my favourite word was. I hesitated — too many choices to pick just one! He persisted.

"Mom's favourite word is LOVE," he said. "You must have one too." Thus prompted, I came up with "SHARE." "Why share?" he wondered. I explained that it described how my calling as a deacon led me to share the Gospel's 'good news' with people, to find out the needs of people in our community, and to get people involved in trying to fill those needs. I said that we should all share our time and talents in God's service as best we can. The label he made me is still sitting on my desk, where I will see it.

While I struggled with a topic for this piece, my eyes landed on Samuel's label lying there where I had left it. With the exception of phone calls and offering prayers at our online services, my usual diaconal activities have sat on the shelf with the label. What could I write about that had not already been said? I thought about words and about how very critical they are in relationships. The one thing we miss most in pandemic season is people! Connections with our families and friends are crucial to staying healthy in mind and spirit until the end of this isolation.

Words are important in keeping up our connections, our relationships. They can support, uplift and educate. Their power is made clear in the words of Scripture. As deacons, we share those sacred words to the scattered people we meet in our several ministries.

As COVID-19 fatigue deepens, we are learning that words can often hurt more easily than they help. Social media has kept us together in some respects, but it is also a bad influence. Think

of tweets that offer racist or bigoted opinions. How quickly do 'vultures' chime in to demean someone's opinion? How quickly does the civil level of language deteriorate? Words that berate and attack break down relationships. Left unchecked, these words decrease our willingness to care about our neighbours. Many readers become discouraged and depressed. It seems to be so much easier to disagree and get angry than it is to say something nice.

Social media has a place, and there have been many examples of "Love your Neighbour" — people in the community helping others because they can.

In our community, a young woman asked a simple question on a popular Facebook group — "since seniors cannot see their family this Christmas, or might not even have family, is there a

resident in the local retirement home who might appreciate a gift? How do I find out?" That was Monday.

Within a few days, she created a "Play Santa for a Senior" group. People stepped up with links and suggestions. Connections were made. Word spread. A gift list was arrived at and volunteers came out of the woodwork. One local store offered space as a drop off centre. Another offered storage and sorting space. In two weeks, some 275 donors contributed about 500 gifts for residents of retirement homes, long term care facilities, community living centres and people in the town who were nominated by a neighbour or friend.

On the night before the drop-off deadline, it appeared that there was a shortage of presents. Within two hours, there were pledges and e-transfers of about

\$2,000 to make up the difference. The smiles on the faces of the people — moms, their kids, neighbours — who sorted the gifts and delivered them were bright and glowing with hope and love. Residents of half a dozen or more institutions had equally bright smiles on Christmas Day. It was a great display of 'Love your neighbour'.

Words have power. The wisdom of the Bible gives us the words to make a difference every day. When we walk in the footsteps of Jesus, we show his love for others and we bring them hope.

May our words always be gentle and sweet, for we may never know how much they will mean to someone who needs to hear them.

Nancy has served as a deacon at St Paul's Anglican Church in Caledonia since 2015.



Using Our 'Holy Imagination' in the Fight Against Human Trafficking

BY DEIRDRE PIKE

The dignity of the human person was a grounding principle for the recent diocesan forum, "Human Trafficking? Not in My Community!" From Bishop Susan Bell's opening prayer to Archbishop Anne Germond's concluding remarks, the 70 people in attendance were surely filled to overflowing with information on the issue, and compassion for the victims, when the session ended.

Paula Whitlow, executive director of Hamilton's Native Women's Centre, began the discussion with the fact, 50-51% of trafficked persons in Canada are Indigenous women and girls. Paula described the myriad services offered to women at the centre, including Healing Our Sisters, specific support to human trafficking victims. She explained how important it is to let the women seeking refuge, "to just 'be' for the first few days after experiencing so much trauma."

Just letting things 'be' over a



cup of tea, is how Archdeacon Charlene Taylor began a relationship with the women's services in her area offered by the Safe Harbour Outreach Project (SHOP).

"You cannot become partners without having a relationship first," she wisely warned, explaining how important it is to, "just sit and listen to what's going on if you want to learn how you might be able to help."

That approach led to a partnership which now includes free space from the diocese to house SHOP, the only sex worker advocacy program in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Testing the knowledge of the participants with true or false polls was one of the ways Dr. Andrea Mann, director of global relations for the Anglican Church of Canada, helped pass on her storehouse of knowledge



Archdeacon Charlene Taylor holds up her cup, a symbol of the importance of building relationships.

on the big picture of human trafficking and modern-day slavery. Andrea recommended the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking for its many resources to support the diocesan efforts to educate and advocate in this area.

Archbishop Anne Germond urged Christian leaders to use "holy imagination to see where the reign of God is already breaking into the world," and connect to the "voices of courage" doing this work in local communities. She also had practical steps individuals can take to ensure they are living in ways congruent with a desire to end human trafficking.

"A human being is worth extravagant and lasting com-

mitment," stated the archbishop, quoting the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams.

The team of volunteers who put the forum together will be building on the momentum and messages from the evening and sharing next steps, including further educational opportunities and local resources, as they are developed.

Deirdre Pike is the diocesan program consultant for justice and outreach. If you are interested in joining this work or obtaining a link to the recording of the forum, please email her at deirdre.pike@niagaraanglican.ca.