


*Blessings for
your celebration of
Christmas & Epiphany*

It's going to be all right
Read the Bishop's charge to the
146th Synod of the Diocese of
Niagara.

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God In the Darkness
The Reverend Canon Sharyn Hall
reflects on finding faith in a dark
time.

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NIAGARA ANGLICAN

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

A section of the Anglican Journal



JANUARY 2021

Primate Joins Bishop for Virtual Event



Bishop Susan Bell recently hosted Archbishop Linda Nicholls, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, for a special evening of online fellowship in support of the ministry of the Bishop's Company.

Describing Archbishop Nicholls as a "strong, smart, and warm" leader by whom the Canadian church is blessed, Bishop Bell drew on questions submitted by members of the Bishop Company. The bishop jovially interviewed the primate as part of the one hour online event that was broadcast via Zoom.

Their conversation ranged from a series of rapid-fire questions and more light-hearted questions such as the primate's favourite hymn (*My Life Flows on in Endless Song*, #401) to more deeper ones related the Church post-pandemic and being a woman in ministry.

While it was not possible to gather for an annual dinner this year, some traditions continued, including a toast to the Queen and to the Church. Members of the Bishop's Company were also treated to pre-recorded jazz music provided by an ensemble from St. Christopher's in Burlington. The Bishop's Company is a discretionary fund that allows the bishop to compassionately and strategically respond to the emergent needs of our diocesan leaders, lay and ordained, in addition to responding to the needs of Christians within our diocese and beyond.

In Other Words

The Story of the Magi and the Story of the Bible

JOHN BOWEN

One of the joys for me in recent years has been telling Bible stories to children and families at our church's Messy Church. Maybe it was because I never felt I was entirely comfortable in the rarified world of theological education, and Messy Church was an opportunity to let my hair down and be a fool for Jesus. (OK, the bit about letting my hair down is a metaphor.)

One Thursday evening, I forget

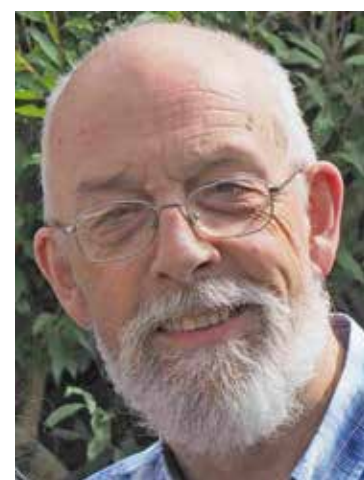
what the story was to be—and it hardly matters—but I began by asking, "How many stories are there in the Bible?" After a moment's thought, the answers began: Ten! A hundred! A thousand! Twenty-seven! The adults sat in amused silence. They were experienced enough to know a trick question when they heard it. Then I sprang the trap: "The answer . . . is one! There is only one story in the Bible."

Then of course I had to explain. The big story of scripture is the drama of a world

gone wrong, and of a loving Creator who works to put things back together—and recruits human beings as "co-workers" along the way. And the hundreds of little stories we are familiar with (and tell at Messy Church) are the subplots to that biggest of stories, as the characters contribute their lines to the unfolding plot, for good and (all too often) for evil.

Is this story a comedy or a tragedy? Lots of tragedy certainly—and the tragedies continue to this day. But in clas-

sical terms, a tragedy consists of the central character's rise to success, fame, and (possibly) fortune, and their eventual fall and destruction. Think *Macbeth*. Comedy, on the other hand, is a story of one thing after another going wrong—but then everything working out right in the end. Think *Midsummer Night's Dream*. An upward parabola and a downward parabola, if you like. Or, as my 11-year old daughter explained it (well, her mother is an English professor, so what do you expect?) many years ago,



"Like a smiley face and a frowny face." Exactly. So, which is the story of the Bible? Clearly a smi-

See *STORY* Page 3

Climate Justice Niagara's 2021 Resolutions



BY SUE CARSON

The beginning of 2020 was probably the worst time for us to make environmental resolutions. Climate Justice Niagara's hope of encouraging people to use less plastics was dashed when COVID-19 appeared. Plastic consumption increased as we heeded health concerns during a pandemic. Motivating people to combat climate change needs us to take the same drastic actions.

A member of Environment Hamilton once told me that there are three ways individuals can make a difference: Buy Less, Fly Less and Eat Less Meat. Looking at these three in the context of COVID might be the way to shape and change our behaviours. Shopping, travel, and food have all had to be re-examined during COVID.

Shopping:

While local shops are in shutdown, Amazon has had increased profits; but each purchase involves transporting goods by air, excess packaging, and truck delivery to your door. This doesn't even address the way that Amazon employees are treated. Nor the fact that the company, as investigated by the CBC's Marketplace, often treats returned items as trash; it is cheaper for them to dump unwanted goods rather than trying to restock and resell them.

The first two shopping questions to ask, "Is this an essential item?"; and "can I purchase it locally?" Shopping close to home keeps money in the local economy. Thirdly, "Could I repair something?" just as James and John were seen "overhauling their nets". (Matthew 4: 22).

Flying:

There is no doubt that we have all been forced to fly less in 2020. This has resulted in clearer skies and less pollution. While taking a holiday in the sun is something many have come to expect, it was possible to have staycations instead. We did survive!

Could you fly and drive less? Maybe take one longer holiday rather than numerous short trips. This might be the hardest resolution to make but could you consider taking virtual tours instead. Or take time to just walk close to home and reflect like the prodigal son, "so he set out for his father's house". (Luke 15:20).

Food:

When we were scared to visit grocery stores, food shopping became of utmost importance. Many people turned to baking their own bread and growing their own vegetables. There were concerns whether there would be enough food to go around. We became so appreciative of those that grow, sell or in

any way ensure that grocery stores are stocked.

This year think about keeping your food purchases as local as possible. Visit farmers' markets in your area during the summer. Pick your own fruit then freeze or bottle for winter consumption. This will be healthier for you and reduce all those plastic clam shells that get trucked here from the States. Could Meatless Mondays become a habit in your house? Be creative in the kitchen. God will ensure there will be food enough "when the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna fell with it." (Numbers 11:9).

Climate Justice Niagara challenges everyone to look at these three areas and consider implementing some 2021 resolutions for a cleaner world. If COVID-19 taught us anything it is that scientists are the ones to listen to and not the politicians. We have been advised by the International Panel for Climate Change that the years are ticking by. Strong actions need to be taken to ensure that increasing numbers of drastic climatic events are not the beginning of the end of the world we know.

May your 2021 resolutions create a better planet.

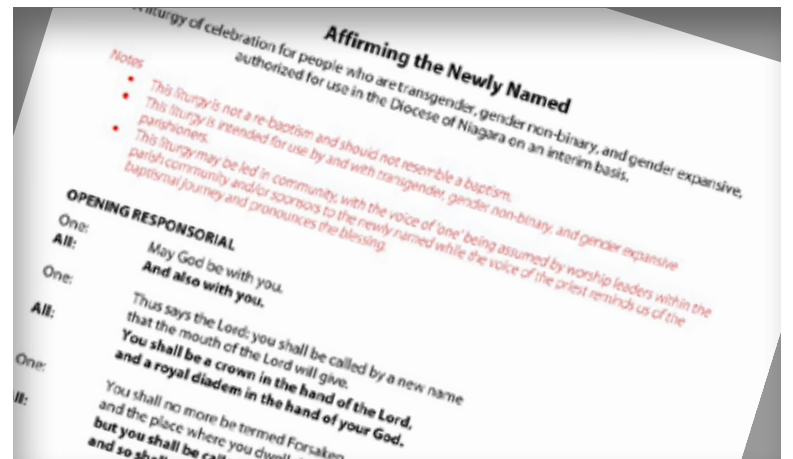
Sue Carson is chair of Climate Justice Niagara.

Bishop Authorizes New Naming Liturgy

Bishop Susan Bell has authorized for use in the Diocese of Niagara an interim rite to enable clergy to better respond to the pastoral needs of transgender, non-binary, and gender expansive parishioners. The rite is called 'Affirming the Newly Named' and celebrates and affirms those who are claiming a new name and set of pro-

affirm these people and surround them with love. Coming out can be terrifying for many trans and non-binary people. Now our gender expansive siblings will know that our church welcomes them fully and celebrates the completeness of the person God has created them to be."

The liturgy may be used

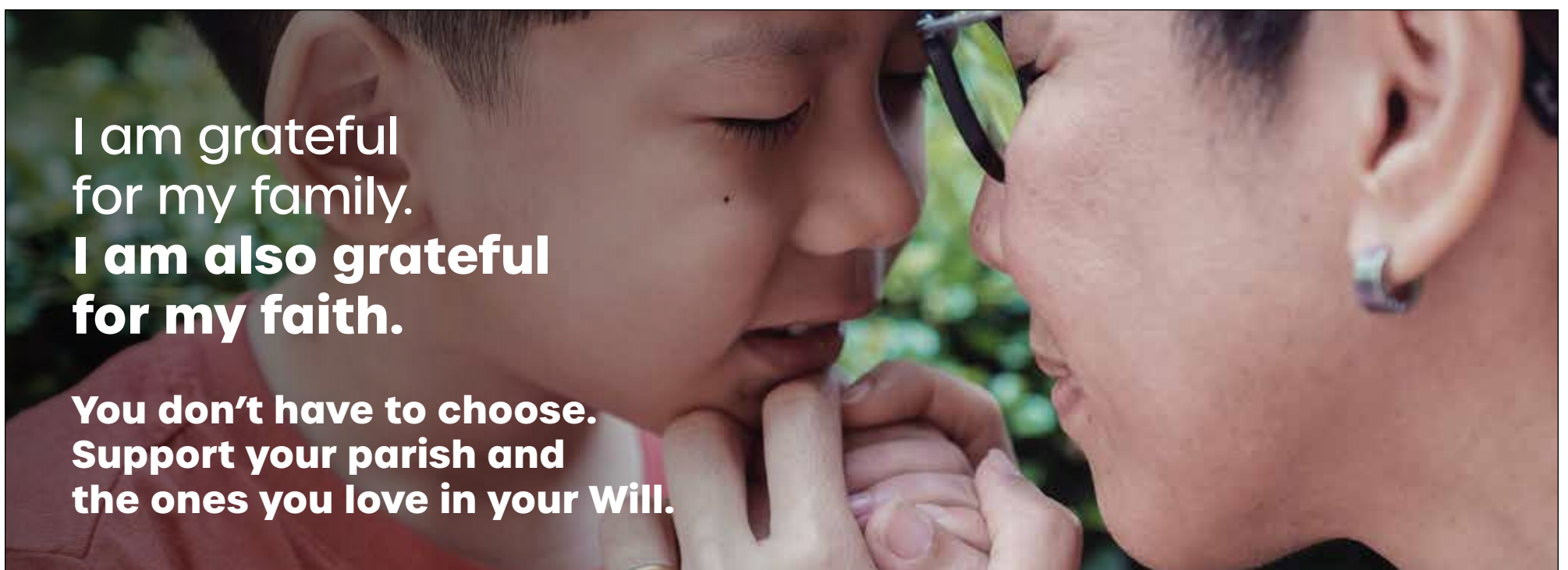


nouns as part of their journey to fullness of life in regard to their gender identity.

"I am so grateful to have this pastoral rite available for use in parishes as it names and sacralizes the experience of trans and non-binary people who are beloved of God," says Bishop Bell about the new liturgy.

Canon Penny Anderson, who helped to craft this liturgy, says that "feeling free to live their authentic gender identity is central to the faith journey of a growing number of people in our diocese. This new liturgy allows our congregations to

within a main act of worship and is written to be led by those who have supported the candidate, with the congregation celebrating the image of God being revealed and the priest affirming the candidate's baptismal journey and pronouncing the blessing. This liturgy is not a re-baptism and should not resemble a baptism. The rite is considered an interim one because it bridges a liturgical gap until such time as the Anglican Church of Canada as a whole is in a position to offer resources for this purpose.



I am grateful for my family. I am also grateful for my faith.

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Story of the Magi

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ley face, since it is a story with a happy ending to outshine every other conceivable happy ending. The *Divine Comedy* indeed.

This is why one can even say that the main theme of the Bible is the Gospel—the Good News. Yes, I know, it was Jesus who made that term central to his message. But in a sense, he is simply summing up the story of the Bible so far, and sowing the seeds for the rest of it to be written. And in his teaching, his life, his death, his resurrection, that work of God to put things right in a broken world finds unique focus. Truly Good News.

So, what has this to do with Epiphany and the visit of the magi? Well, one early stage in God's Gospel work in the world was the call of Abraham. In Genesis 12. God calls Abraham and promises to make of him a great nation. But why? The reason God gives is crucial: "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Somehow, this new nation is to be the source of



blessing to a hurting world. New Testament scholar Tom Wright quotes a Jewish commentary on Genesis which, tongue in cheek, has God saying: "I will make Adam first, and if he goes astray, I will send Abraham to sort it all out!"

Some of the prophets also

foresee the international reach of the Good News: Isaiah, Micah and Zechariah all foretell that "Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD ... that he may teach us his ways, and that we may walk in his paths.'" In other words, all nations will

recognise the goodness of the Creator's ways for the world, and come to share in the shalom.

Isaiah adds some interesting details: "Nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn . . . They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the

praise of the LORD." Anything familiar there?

One more piece before we actually get to Epiphany. The final vision in the book of Revelation includes this in its description of the new Jerusalem: "The kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. . . . People will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations." Once again, there is a picture of the Creator's renewing love drawing all "the nations"—and contributing to the beauty of the new creation everything from their cultures which (knowingly or unknowingly) has contributed to that work of renewal and to the flourishing of all creation.

And so to Epiphany. "There came wise men from the east." Indeed there did. Hardly surprising, is it? They are the first-fruits of that multi-cultural, healing revolution announced and embodied in Jesus Christ. They are a foretaste of God's ultimate happy ending.



A Big Dig starts at St. Matthew's House

The first phase of the first #GreenMyCity project got underway in November at St. Matthew's House – with big machinery doing some very big digging.

St. Matthew's House has been chosen by the Green Cities Foundation to be their first project in Hamilton. Initial work was focused on the children's playground and included planting trees, removing the current raised AstroTurf area and an old tree stump, as well as creating a temporary play area with mulch and wooden logs. Sod was also laid, and a new berm area was mulched to start the work on the parking lot transformation.

When completed by spring 2021, the transformative #GreenMyCity project will create healthy, sustainable green space complete with a new green playground, log structures, creative and active spaces, community gathering spaces and greenery.

The Big Dig is the first step towards realizing this vision, consistent with the mission of St. Matthew's House to be a place of hope for people in Hamilton and beyond.

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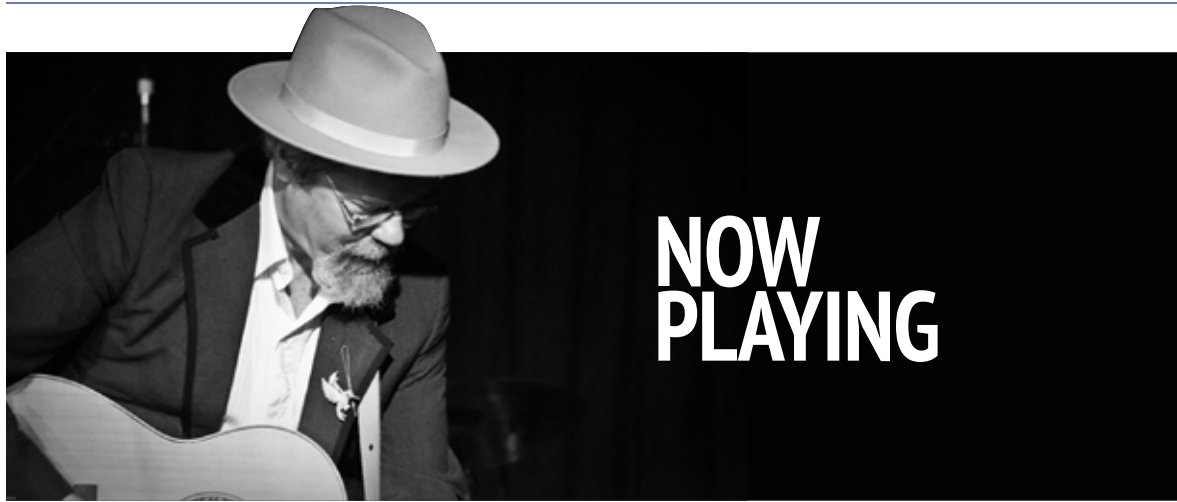
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CALLED TO LIFE
COMPELLED TO LOVE



An Ancient Present Again

BY THE VENERABLE MAX WOOLLAVER

“Old men ought to be explorers...” wrote T.S. Eliot in the East Coker section of the *Four Quartets*. I have been feeling very much like that of late. I have been feeling both “old” and “exploring.” Let’s call it a state of mind.

As it often happens, it is a book that has drawn me into this state of mind.

The title page of the book reads like the Angel of Judgement’s trumpet-blast: “THE ANGLICAN BREVIARY Containing THE DIVINE OFFICE According to the General Usages of THE WESTERN CHURCH. There is definitely a “Raiders of the Lost Arc” feel about all this.

As I read the title of the Breviary I was reminded of the solemn warning which opens *The Cloud of Unknowing*, the indispensable medieval classic on contemplative prayer: (I paraphrase) “if you are not serious about reading this book, please close it immediately and never come back.” I also thought of two remarkable works of ancient architecture.

The first is the Ishtar Gate in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. The enormous blue glazed Gate and Wall from c. 500BC, decorated with bulls and winged deities towers above the visitor. The Gate,

dedicated to Ishtar, the Goddess of Sexual Attraction and War, is overpowering in its effect. The Gate is from the uncharted depths of human time, a culture which couldn’t possibly feel more “alien”. The Ishtar Gate even in its current setting achieves its original purpose—to make you cower before the power of Babylon.

The second, and infinitely more tender in its impact—is the architecture of the Edicule within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The Edicule covers a traditional burial and hence the place of Resurrection of Jesus. Ellen, Hannah and I stood together in the candled darkness of its close interior. If the Ishtar Gate is overpowering, the Edicule is Silence made real in ancient grey wood. The pilgrim’s heart is drawn across the night ocean of prayer to the further shore of unknowing before the mystery of this place.

What then is a breviary? The Oxford Dictionary: “... a book containing the service for each day ...”

However! The Anglican Breviary is 1981 pages of finely printed liturgies and directions. The Roman Breviary, which was the womb of our Prayer Book, was 1,000 years in the making before our *Book of Common Prayer* was born in 1549. The *Book of Common Prayer* itself is a breviary. As Anglicans we

are familiar with the concept. However! THE ANGLICAN BREVIARY is another matter altogether. It is, in short, a work of incomparable genius applied to liturgical architecture. This book has the capacity to guide and transform the solitary human life and the life of communities. It has been doing so for 1,000 years of gestation from 500AD to 1549 to the moment you read these words. It is doing so today with great social and political effect in the New Monastic communities inspired by the Benedictine Rule.

We could say our Prayer Book was born in the cave of St. Benedict, his hermitage in Nursia, Italy. We can also say that the true birth of our Prayer Book had its more private birth in the soul of St. Benedict. From there, the Benedictine Rule came to profoundly influence all of European civilization.

To open our Breviary is to be transported back to the root of liturgies “indigenous to Western Christianity.” The Breviary can also likewise stir a contemporary “new birth” of soul in new cultures geographical and ethnically far from its point of origin in time and space.

As T.S. Eliot went on to write: “...we must be still and still moving into another intensity for a further union.” This is the strange and alluring call of the Breviary.



Relief from the Ishtar Gate

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

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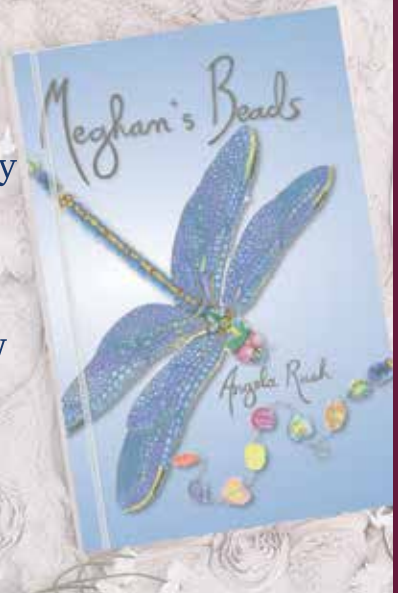
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Unique and Uplifting Synod Charts Course for 2021

“ENLIGHTEN THE EYES OF OUR HEARTS,” WAS THE RESPONSE TO THE OPENING PRAYERS OF THE 146TH SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF NIAGARA WHICH, IN A HISTORIC FIRST, CONVENED VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCING ON NOVEMBER 7.

Inspired by the synod theme and drawn from a passage in the Letter to the Ephesians, this prayer was enacted throughout the synod's agenda. Through worship and stories, actions, elections and appointments, the synod offered members plenty of uplifting, inspiring and hope-filled moments of the Spirit's work in and through the people and parishes of the diocese throughout the pandemic.

Synod convened with a territorial acknowledgement given by Cheryl Barker from the banks of the Grand River, the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, the Mississauga's of the Credit, and the Neutrals. This was followed by a teaching on reconciliation offered by Archdeacon Valerie Kerr. “It starts with developing understanding and building relationships,” she observed and said reconciliation” continues with learning more about each other and respecting our differences.”

Mission Action Plan

Canon Christyn Perkons provided synod with an update about the diocesan Mission Action Plan (MAP), which identifies our active seeking of God and God's mission and lays out diocesan priorities for the next three to five years. The presentation began by highlighting the ways last year's synod impacted the final version of the MAP, noting the mission statement now includes trinitarian language.

While the pandemic has forced a pivot, Canon Perkons reported that much work in underway on the MAP's three primary objectives.

The first objective is to discern and implement opportunities to ignite and strengthen faith and we partnered with God in many ways around faith strengthening and igniting. The launch of a new diocesan online service, the hiring of a Revive coordinator and diocesan missionary, a renewed relationship with Cursillo, and the development of the Anglican Family Hub, with all its many initiatives, were offered as a few of the examples of this objective being put into action.

Reimagining our diocesan culture and adapting our structures to enable ministry is the second objective of the MAP. “The reality is that for the last 10 months, we have all been constantly reimagining who we are and how we are called to live faithfully into the reality of the present,” said Canon Perkons. She also noted that a diocesan anti-racism working group has been formed, work is underway on the development of a school for missional leadership, and the ordination discernment process has been revamped.

With regards to prioritizing social justice action with an emphasis on environmental action, the third objective, Canon Perkons pointed towards the new mandate of the Climate Justice Niagara committee as well as plans for the formation of a human trafficking working group.

Canon Perkons also noted that a new easy to use, three-session, online-friendly resource will soon be available for parishes to develop their own mission action plan. Members of synod were also invited to provide feedback about the MAP to help in the work of continuing



to contextualize this living plan.

Canon Changes

Three changes to our diocesan canons were considered and approved by members of synod. The most substantial change was the addition of a new canon about the cathedral of the diocese which regularizes the de facto situation which currently exists with respect to the administration of Cathedral Place by defining the special nature of the cathedral congregation's status and ministry context. Drafted with the support of the cathedral corporation, the new canon enhances transparency and accountability, improves governance, and puts in place structures to better manage Cathedral Place.

Two other amendments to existing canons were approved. The first grants the Bishop the authority to call a meeting of synod council, in extraordinary circumstances, sooner than the usual 14-day notice period, enhancing the nimbleness of our governance structures to respond in a timely manner. The second creates the jurisdiction for the bishop and synod council to enact regulations related to the manner by which vestry meetings are conducted for situations which are not currently contemplated by the existing canons, such as virtual vestry meetings.

Budget

Acknowledging that “this is a difficult and extraordinary time” given the pandemic's effects, Budget Chair Gerry Anthony presented a 3.6 million dollar diocesan budget. He noted that in recent years, the diocese has stewarded its resources wisely and as a result “we are heading into the next year is a relatively good position, all things considered.”

While the budget forecasts a deficit of \$473,000, funds are in place to cover the deficit through the standard draw on investments and the sale of property in 2020.

The budget seeks to “balance fiscal responsibility with the need to carry on the essential work of the Church; to trim discretionary expenses and support parishes; and to live into our new vision for ministry while recognizing the evolving missional landscape,” Anthony told members of synod.

Archdeacon Bill Mous outlined several initiatives included in the budget to support parishes, included the provision of \$250,000 to support parishes who may not be able to meet their usual DM&M contributions, in spite of their best efforts to do so; \$30,000 for a parish technology grant program; and the elimination of interest on receivables to support parish cash flow needs.

Treasurer Jody Beck walked members of synod through the more significant changes to the 2021 budget. She noted that employment expense will decline and that there will not be a cost of living increase included in the budget. Expenses have been reduced in many areas, given travel and in-person programs are expected to be significantly limited in 2021. A targeted stewardship campaign is also planned, recognizing that there are generous donors

who want to help the diocese through this extraordinary time.

After a time for questions, the budget was overwhelmingly approved by synod.

Election Results

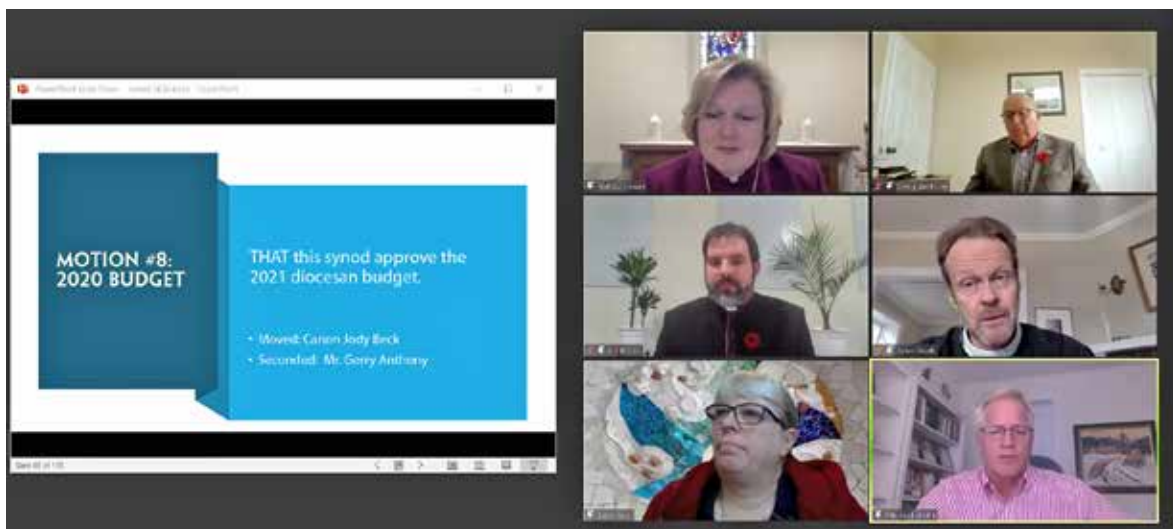
Using an electronic voting platform, members of synod elected representatives to the provincial synod planned for the fall of 2021. In the order of clergy, David Anderson, Valerie Kerr, Ann Turner, and Rod McDowell were elected. In the order of clergy, Andrew Clinkard, Janice Whiteley, Jodey Porter and Donna Ellis were elected. Rob Towler and Dan Bennett will serve as alternates for the clergy while Neil Bell and Rob Pawson will serve as alternates for the laity.

Synod also elected the following members to fill vacancies in the roles of regional representatives to synod council: Gary Pollard (Brock), Byran Elliston (Greater Wellington), David Eccles (Hamilton-Haldimand), and Byron Nicholson (Lincoln).

Fran Wallace and Sue-Ann Ward (clergy) as well as Sister Heather Broadwell (lay) we also elected as diocesan representatives to the Corporation of Trinity College for a term of two years.

Safe Church Policy Revision

Archdeacon Bill Mous gave an update work that is underway to overhaul of our existing policies with a more modern and robust Safe Church Policy. The revision will broaden our policies to include conflict, harassment, and discrimination, with a view towards incorporating our beliefs and values as Anglicans as expressed in the Anglican Communion Charter for the Safety of People, as well as current best practices and legislative requirements. The revised policy is expected to be brought forward for approval by synod council sometime in 2021.





The Bishop's Charge

to the 146th Synod of the Diocese of Niagara

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND
SUSAN J.A. BELL

+ IN THE NAME OF GOD: FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Well, let's begin with a prayer.

*Loving God, because you've loved us,
We are not people of fear:
we are people of courage.
We are not people who protect our own safety:
we are people who protect our neighbours' safety.
We are not people of greed:
we are people of generosity.
We are your people God,
giving and loving,
wherever we are,
whatever it costs
For as long as it takes
wherever you call us.
This we pray in Jesus' name.
Amen.*

Well, it's been quite a year. There we were sailing along from last synod minding the Lord's business, working at the Mission Action Plan, our MAP, just generally being the Church and then along comes a pandemic and the next thing you know, our churches are closed, our society is in lockdown, we're worried for everyone's safety and missing each other beyond all measure. And the months stretched on and on with all their attendant worry.

So. The first thing I want to say to you today—or rather the first thing I think Jesus wants me to say to you today is: "it's going to be alright." It really is.

We are going to be okay. The Church is going to be okay. The diocese is going to be okay. We have been and will continue to do our very best to support our parishes to come through this time in as healthy a way as possible.

The second thing I want to say is that things will be inevitably different—I think we all know that. I don't yet know exactly how because none of us does. But I know that this time will change us as a Church in good ways and less good ways. Crisis is an accelerator—and this time will speed up many processes that were already in play.

I know that these months have been deeply stressful—the increase in workload, the financial strains, the creativity—which although wonderful, necessitates extra time and effort, the need for pastoral ministry and yet the impossibility of providing it the way we are used to for funerals, weddings, baptisms, let alone through regular worship—all changed by this virus; the isolation, the endlessness and boundarylessness of this time—all of this has been SO hard. It has demanded that we dig ever-so-deep into the faith of our baptism to find the inner resources to meet this time.

I wish that I was able to tell you when it will all end—because that would help, wouldn't it? But I can't; no one can, really.

But this is God's Church and I know that God is leading us through COVID-19 to be something new and something shrunken and something beautifully different and yet at its core, the same.

Those are the first and most important things I have to say today as your Bishop. I say them with full confidence because of your tremendous commitment to the work of the Gospel, your incredible gifts and emerging skills, and the diligent work of all our efforts to steward our resources.

I suppose this is why I chose some words from St. Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus for us to think about as our theme for synod.

St. Paul speaks into a time that feels a little reminiscent of our own: into a multi-cultural and multi-faith context. He speaks urgently and intensely about church unity—trying to draw the new and fragile communities that he and others have established together. He's calling people together from many different backgrounds and cultures and traditions and he keeps holding the vision of

this new family, this new community, bound by a new belief so strong and so dynamic that it would transform the world and almost more importantly—it would transform their world.

So Paul says he prays for the people of the church that because of their new faith they would begin to see life differently—with the eyes of faith—with the eyes of their hearts enlightened—so that they could begin to see the riches that a life with God offers them.

Maybe you can see where I'm going with this—because these words are about hope—specifically, seeing hope and possibility and seeing those not someday in the future, but now.

This letter is about the now of the Church—not the someday. He's praying that right here and right now God will give them special sight to see hope.

And not only that, but Paul makes it clear that God is putting God's power to work in us, also not for someday, but now: that this hope is active in our lives right now. That Jesus has come to unite heaven and earth and that—in our hands, if we choose—lies the potential for us to be the means to transform lives with God's love.

That's the hope he's writing about.

Now let's talk about this thing called hope, because hope is not always comforting or comfortable. Hope asks us to open ourselves to what we don't know, to imagine what is beyond our imagining, to bear what seems unbearable. It calls us to turn toward one another when we might prefer to turn away. So, this thing we call hope is as much a discipline as it is a gift. Hope does draw our eyes and hearts toward a more whole future but it also anchors us in the present, where Jesus waits

That Jesus has come to unite heaven and earth and that—in our hands, if we choose—lies the potential for us to be the means to transform lives with God's love.

for us right now to work with him toward a more whole world.

So I guess we might ask: what are we hoping for right now? Right now, in the midst of a pandemic?

Well, let me be honest and tell you of my own struggle during these past months. I have wrestled with waiting. You see, I love our diocese and I have loved the exciting conversations that we've been having over the past couple of years. I have loved the urgency of them and the expectation that they've created. By nature, I am generally optimistic and future focused. I am always looking forward to something.

Then the pandemic hit.

Our future was suddenly foreshortened for the simple reason that we can't predict what will happen next week, never mind next year, or five years from now. I suppose that was manageable for a month or two—or even six. But the reality of not knowing when this crisis will end has forced me, like everyone else, to my knees in prayer—knowing that I needed another way forward because everything has changed, at least for the medium term.

So, in addition to prayer and soul friends, I went looking for spiritual resources and met with a gem of a book that might well have been written for this time. In fact, it was not. It was written in 2005. It's called *Seven Spiritual Gifts of Waiting* by Holly Whitcomb.

Whitcomb says that the seven gifts of waiting are: patience, loss of control, living in the present, compassion, gratitude, humility, and trust in God. It's quite a list and I found it a helpful reflection on where we—and I—have been.

The book helped me make sense of a feeling I'd been having that despite the fact that many parts of our common life have been put on hold indefinitely and we are in a prolonged season of waiting. But instead of this being a flat or empty space, I think that God is at work in it sorting our priorities, making us think again who we are and what is important, while stoking our expectation, and honing our focus.

Which is all to say, after the initial shock of these last months, I am finding a tremendous

amount of hope in this time of waiting that we find ourselves in.

And this waiting has revealed a faithfulness beyond our honest expectations. You, for instance, have all been so faithful.

What I think is that it's amazing that we have really seen what and who the Church is during this time. You know all that stuff we've been saying for a decade or more about the Church not being the building, but rather, it is the people?

That has been a certain hope—we have hoped that without buildings, our community would still thrive—the love of God would still stir us to take care of the widow and the orphan—that we would still give generously of ourselves—of our commitment, of our time and our individual talents to the whole. And do you know what? By God, it's true. By the grace of God, it's true. We have done all that and more. Well done. I mean it, well done.

Through the diocesan Pandemic Response Fund, we have been able to collectively support food programs, meals-to-go, and grocery deliveries in every corner of our diocese, from Niagara Falls to Waterdown to Acton; we've supported the rest and hygiene centre here at our Cathedral; the migrant farm workers project throughout the Niagara peninsula; the merry mask makers at Church of the Apostles in Guelph, and the global pandemic relief efforts of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund.

A good friend of mine said something at the beginning of this crisis and it stuck with me. He said, "wouldn't it be great if people said at the end of this time, we couldn't have got through it without the Church?"

Well, the folks who have been part of these and all your many ministries are surely saying that. And of course, Jesus is the one who says, "by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."—and that we have; creatively, compassionately, and profoundly.

One of the ways we have shown this love is by continuing to contribute to the mission and ministries of the Church beyond

Bishop's Charge

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6



our parishes.

I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the Diocesan Mission and Ministry contributions you have shared with the Church so generously, to the best of your ability. This has allowed us to carry on with our ministries that take care of the whole diocese. It's also allowed us to meet our diocesan commitments to support the important provincial, national and international ministry that these funds represent as we share them from structure to structure to build up the one holy catholic and apostolic church through this Anglican Communion of ours. In a time when these ministries are more important than ever, your generosity and faithfulness is so appreciated.

This time of waiting and sorting our priorities is calling some additional things forth from us. This time has given us time to consider everything from our sacramental theology and praxis to how we resource, support, and oversee ministry.

Our polity—or the way we organize ourselves—has proven to be a huge strength in this crisis. That's no surprise because it's time tested. But what it has proven is that we are actually in this together. For instance, the application for and the reception of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy would not have been possible without this polity on several fronts—Canon Jody Beck our deeply capable, hardworking and tremendously conscientious treasurer, to whom we all owe a deep debt of thanks for her management of the diocesan finances through this uncertain period, is a member of our diocesan staff and servant of us all. Through her good works, and by organizing things like payroll and employment centrally, we have been

eligible for the support that has ensured our financial security through these difficult months. It is because of the way we are organized, with the smallest unit of our Anglican polity a diocese—and not the parish as many assume—that we have consistently benefitted from the subsidy, thanks be to God. We really live into our polity in Niagara.

The way we organize ourselves isn't a secular way of doing things. But that's good and right. We are the body of Christ and our governance structures look different from the world because they are based on Scripture, tradition and reason. We're pretty unapologetic about that because it's core to our identity and I believe in these challenging times that we have had cause to embrace who we are even more; to give thanks for our dynamic structures. I also believe that we are well served by living into those tried and true processes even more. So, if you are unsure about process, lean on and live into our diocesan structures. Ask questions, and above all trust the processes. We have been blessed with many generations of wisdom in creating our canons and policies and they are a deep well of certainty to draw from in uncertain times.

Here is something else that is being called forth from us, and it relates to three of those spiritual gifts within the waiting: loss of control, humility, and compassion. This time has been exhausting. Change is exhausting—that's a fact.

We have been given an almost constant diet of change for the past eight months. Not only have we been coping with constant change, we've been expending huge amounts of energy doing it. We have been running a race—sprinting, really,



In addition to that we have all been carrying around a lot of grief. There's been so much loss for us all: relational loss—the loss of community, of rhythms, of worship, and fellowship. Because we've been running this long race, we haven't had time to grieve all this loss. An ungrieved loss is a burden which we carry that weighs a million pounds.

Because of these things that we are carrying around with us, we must remember very intentionally—and honestly—who we are. We are not those who can give in to the unresolved anxiety of this time and visit that upon each other. We are people of peace—siblings—made in the image of God. Therefore, we self-consciously care for the image

fact is, yet more still will be asked of us this year.

So, I ask you—and pray that God will give you the resources—to care for our leaders and be patient and gracious while they cope with change and stress—because it's all really quite exhausting. I ask that we would all be gentle in our expectations. Our goal now is to adjust to a sustainable pace for the remainder of this pandemic so that we can come through it ready to meet the future with genuine excitement and with the energy and resolve to action all of the plans we've made while we've been in this season of waiting.

We are all experiencing a loss of control in this time. That's a reality. But maybe that just

what other gifts do we discern are there?

Well, I am so very grateful that the Mission Action Plan Leadership team was so diligent in their work last year and that synod council approved the diocesan Mission Action Plan back in January, because it's kept us focused and moving in a defined and focused direction of travel even in the midst of difficulty.

One of the planks of the MAP was the creation of a school for missional leadership in the diocese. Through our consultations, you told us that you wanted a school that teaches the broad range of missional skills that leaders both lay and ordained need in order to connect with our present culture. Well, as other things have moved off the agenda because they simply could not be done in covidtime, the school came into view as something that could continue to be planned in this time.

So, I invited a group of subject matter specialists to provide the framework for the school and to operationalize it. Mr. Michael Smith who has been a parishioner at St. Jude's and is now at the Church of the Incarnation is our skilled and diligent facilitator for the process which is well underway. The school is an investment in the formation of the skills and gifts for leadership in our time and I am very excited to be able to share with you that there will be three inaugural courses offered in February. I will be inviting

This is a challenging time to lead; I know that. But you, along with our wardens and treasurers, have done it with heart and soul and with real conviction.

of God in each other—loving each other—and especially at this time of strain and stress, loving our leaders, both lay and ordained.

It's times like this that the fruits of the spirit are truly meaningful: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

This is a challenging time to lead; I know that. But you, along with our wardens and treasurers, have done it with heart and soul and with real conviction.

We're doing so well. But the

means we have to trust, to lean on and lean into God's love for us and our love for our neighbour a little more fully that we've been accustomed.

Remember that we are called to life—and compelled to love. That Mission Action Plan vision was providential and so very consciously determinative of our diocesan culture in this time. Who could have known except the Almighty that those words would become so important to us?

If those are the things that are being asked of us in the waiting,

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Bishop's Charge

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

a select group of students to partake in these first courses, as part of a soft launch of the school. Stay tuned for more details as they are available.

In order to garner the experience of the best practitioners in mission, we've adopted a unique approach to procuring faculty for our school. We will take full advantage of the possibilities of technology and invite people from across the world to join our team. Some courses will begin and remain online. Others will happen in person, as we're able. But this mixture will be a dynamic and exciting way learn from a wide range of people. To this end, I am appointing the Reverend Ian Mobsby as our canon theologian for mission. Ian is the Woolwich Area Mission Enabler with the Diocese of Southwark in the United Kingdom. And I intend to name more partners in mission as we grow in ministry.

We are making other crucial investments in leadership for ministry too. I have appointed Archdeacon Michael Patterson to fulfill the role of Archdeacon of Leadership. This is a half-time role and Michael will concentrate on creating a coaching network for clergy to support and mentor those in orders. He will also be working to help recruit new, missionally oriented leaders for our diocese and he will lend his own experience in teaching in our school. We're very glad to welcome Michael in this new role and look forward to working with him to support all our leaders to become mission-shaped at every stage of their vocation.

We are also looking forward to fully engaging the many gifts of our diocesan missionary, the Reverend Jeff Potter, in the New Year as we seek to resource and support new missional communities and church plants.

We continue to right-skill our diocesan staff to meet the demands of communicating the Gospel in our cultural moment.

As another plank of our MAP, Climate Justice Niagara, formerly Greening Niagara, has a new name, underscoring the urgent need for collective action to address the global climate crisis. Renewed for ministry, Climate Justice Niagara will seek to equip us to live more deeply into our abiding commitment to

care for God's creation, and to be strong advocates for local and global change through prayer, education, action, and advocacy.

That kind of connection and response to our global circumstances has also led us to another commitment. In the wake of the tragic death of Mr. George Floyd and in response to the acknowledgement that racial inequity is endemic in our society, we have established an Anti-Racism Working Group. I've tasked this group with raising awareness about and working toward ending the systemic racism that is present in our diocesan and church culture. At the end of November our clergy and licensed lay workers will

... One thing will never shift in these uncertain times, and that is our unwavering support for our parishes so that we come through this crisis together as much as possible.

partake in anti-racism training, as an initial demonstration of our renewed commitment to eradicating anti-black racism and to the calls to action of the truth and reconciliation commission.

All of this planning and thinking and recasting of vision have been the gifts contained within the waiting.

We have been working hard to respond to the time we're in and this has also meant we have had to change our focus and defer plans—particularly plans that have needed substantial resources in order to achieve them, such as the MAP's plan for differentiated curacies.

However, providing wraparound financial support for our parishes and technology grants and forgoing interest payments on receivables is so much more important at this time than the equivalent amount of money for a curacy fund. The curacy fund will happen another year. This year we need to take care of each other—demonstrably, fairly, and generously.

We'll continue to adapt the MAP as we go—that's a just a reality that we all are living

with, as Canon Christyn Perkons will say more about in a bit.

But one thing will never shift in these uncertain times, and that is our unwavering support for our parishes so that we come through this crisis together as much as possible. You'll have seen that the character of our whole budget is designed to be responsive to the needs we have heard expressed. It is an extraordinary budget for an extraordinary time. Although it is a deficit budget, we have stewarded our resources well and have the funds available to support it.

As I have said, this is a challenging time to lead, but by the grace of God, it is a time that is also full of opportunities.

I—and we—are here to support you as you continue to be the face and hands of Christ in your communities, up and down this beautiful diocese. We are truly in this together. We're going to be okay. Reignited by the love of Jesus, we are indeed called to life and compelled to love. That is the hope to which we have been called.

And now, I would be remiss if I did not offer thanks.

I hope you'll bear with me as there are many to give. I want to thank our clergy—our priests and deacons—as well as our licensed lay workers and parish staff, for their dedication to their people, their diocese, their parishes and their God. You are quite honestly extraordinary. I could not have asked for more this past year. I pray for you every day and give thanks for you always.

I want to thank our archdeacons. As I tell them—I hope often enough—they are wonderful. They are a group of trusted leaders who care deeply for all the parishes and leaders within their areas. They are wise and experienced. I am grateful for their support and counsel. So thank you David, Max, Michael, Peter, John, and Val.

Thank you also to our Regional Deans. They have done yeoman duty this year in particular with our COVID-19 policies and procedures. But they are just generally capable and dependable. Thank you to Ann, Jeff, Cheryl, Pam and Dan.

Thank you to the diocesan staff who make our diocese go round. I am more grateful than I can say for the ways in which

you support me and are at the service of all of our parishes. It is a complicated system that we steward, and you do it with grace and devotion. A profound thank you to our directors: Christyn, Gillian, Jody, and Terry whose specialized ministries are undertaken with both skill and wisdom. We have an extraordinarily gifted senior leadership team.

I am also so deeply grateful to Mike Deed, our Diocesan Liturgical Officer. Mike has brought his considerable gifts as a liturgist to bear for our diocese and we have been blessed by the skill he's demonstrated, and for the countless hours he has expended in support of our diocesan Sunday services in particular.

Thank you to Canon Alison DAtri without whom I simply could not function. Her price is above rubies and I am grateful for the ways that she keeps this too busy Bishop organized and on track. That kind of support just cannot be underestimated and I'm truly indebted to her for it.

My thanks to Archdeacon Bill Mous. The Lord was surely looking after us through his appointment. We collated Bill in February last year and a couple of short weeks later we were in lockdown. Bill has been my rock and our diocese is blessed by his omni-competence but even more than that by his Godly leadership. I look forward to many more years of like-minded work with him for the good of our beloved diocese.

But my greatest thanks is to all of you. For your faithfulness to God. For your commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For your devotion to your parish families. For your love of our diocesan family and the good work we do together as the Body of Christ. For your dedication in being the face and hands of Jesus in your communities.

Because of all that – because you see with the eyes of your hearts enlightened by the love of God – we're going to be alright, for all shall be well, all manner of things shall be well.

+IN THE NAME OF GOD: FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Synod Delegates Reflect



Sue Thibodeau, St. John's, Port Dalhousie

A Zoom version of Synod—not what I was looking forward to on the morning of November 7th. But that's not how I felt at adjournment! I felt invigorated, optimistic, full of hope and proud. And this is why: the warm assistance given to those needing help to sign in, the fascinating video-clips of the territorial acknowledgment and ministry moments, and the wide variety of contributors who presented our finances and lead us in wor-

ship gave me confidence and assurance that, despite the Pandemic, the diocese was there humbly doing its work.

What remains with me even now is the Bishop's Charge. "It's going to be all right" began and ended her calming but powerful message. The idea that "crisis can be an accelerator" leading to many aspects of our mission being "beautifully different" reflects what's happening in our parish. Diocesan support through managing Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy applications, offering technology grants, and providing a Pandemic Response Fund positively impact St John's. And in light of our diocesan collective mission, St. John's outreach ministry will now include donations to the Migrant Farmworkers' Ministry to help three neighbouring parishes in the Niagara Peninsula in their important work.

At the end of synod, I truly felt that the diocesan budget and our Mission Action Plan revealed "proof we're in this together."



Carey dePass, Grace Church, Milton

I felt very proud to be a member of the Anglican Church after attending the 2020 virtual synod meeting. Who said that Anglicanism is dead in Canada? There were over 200 attendees for a church business meeting on a Saturday!! Where there is interest and participation, this is the sign of a living, growing organization!!

Bishop Bell's charge was inspiring and gave us faith in the future but also clearly spelled out the leadership challenges fac-

ing the Diocese of Niagara caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

The technology and video techniques were equal to any other private sector or governmental organization. The meeting was run according to accepted rules of order in an orderly, smooth fashion. Elections were conducted beforehand, and votes were conducted with voter ID security in mind. The attendees were patient when glitches occurred and participated when opinions were sought.

Well done and well-organized Diocese of Niagara staff!

For all the reports and resolutions of synod, visit:
niagaraanglican.ca/synod/2020

Hope: the Great Conqueror

**BY THE REVEREND
MICHAEL COREN**

A new year, a new start, a new hope. It's a time to look to what is to come but also, sometimes painfully, to look back on what was. And in this era of plague we of course ask questions that cut to the heart of faith and hope. When, for example, my mum was in the final stages of her dementia I would sit by her bed and silently ask how this could be allowed to happen. This good, kind woman was now a shell of what she was, unable to speak her pain and fear, oblivious to the love and care that was around her. Where was God, why was such horror happening to one so undeserving? Such questions have been asked for all time, and are now being uttered in agonized choruses as the innocent succumb and their families mourn.

In theology this problem of God and the existence of human suffering is known as "theodicy" and there are entire books written about it. But in all honesty it's just a way to intellectualize what is an entirely justifiable scream of sorrow and anger. And in the case of coronavirus we can't even blame human failings as we can with murderers

and warlords; this is a natural horror.

The letter of James in the Bible tells us to be patient and confident in our suffering, and the great C.S. Lewis wrote of pain being God's "megaphone to rouse a deaf world." Yet while the current challenge is certainly bringing out the best in us and will, we hope, lead to a better society, it can't and doesn't explain the death of a child or the horror of a parent.

As for those ghouls who insist that it's all a punishment for our sins, that's twisting God into a personal vigilante and is, ironically, profoundly anti-God and even blasphemous. It's also directly contrary to what Jesus said about the sick. He spent an extraordinary amount of time with the ill and the disabled, and totally rejected any idea that their plight was a result of their or their family's actions.

But it still doesn't answer the question of why all this happens, and it's in no way inappropriate to wonder at a God who is supposed to be all-powerful, all good, and all knowing. A mature faith allows for questions as well as answers, even encourages them, and if anybody wants a complete and satisfying answer I simply cannot give one. I'd also recom-

mend being extremely dubious about any person of faith who claimed otherwise. This isn't some philosophical game.

My response, for what it's worth, is that our world is merely the land of shadows and that real life hasn't begun yet. As a Christian I'm promised not a good life but a perfect eternity. I have hope because I know that Jesus suffered too, and that the Resurrection was the template for all of humanity. I realize this might be inadequate for the non-Christian, even for some Christians, but let me also emphasize that I'm convinced that the gentle rabbi, the prince of peace, came not only for his followers but for everybody.

There's more. He was us. Was us, and is us. The Christian belief is that Jesus was fully God but also fully human, and knew our pain and terror not as a divine onlooker but as part of the human community. This was the unique, the unprecedented miracle of divine empathy. The heavenly leap of God into our lives and our deaths. He wept and he loved, for us and with us.

The world in which Jesus lived was soaked in bloody injustice, oppression, and often gruesome death, and surely it's

no accident that this was the time chosen for God to break into humanity. That gives me enormous solace, even when all around me is brokenness and chaos. I worry about my family and friends, I try to comfort those close to me who have lost loved ones, but sometimes I too feel the clawing darkness.

My mum eventually fell into a coma-like sleep, and the dementia took her while she was alone in a distant hospital ward. I wouldn't insult you by claiming that it was all somehow tolerable because of my faith. Mum wasn't a Christian, mum suffered, and I was angry and I was crushed. What I will say is that hope is the great conqueror, and that I know that love wins in the end. Thank God. Literally, thank God. Have a blessed 2021.



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THE REVEREND DEACON PAUL BATES

I HAVE BEEN WORKING ON A BOOK TITLED, *FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW: AN ETHOS OF LEADERSHIP GROUNDED IN FAITH*. WHAT FOLLOWS IS AN EXCERPT FROM THE INTRODUCTION.

Not so long ago, a young man began a career as an auxiliary officer with the British police. It was the first morning of the first day of training for his new assignment. He arrived early for his first class. The first to arrive, he chose a desk in the classroom—two rows back at the left-most end of the row. He positioned his officer's peaked cap at the front right hand side of his desk, centred his note paper and pen, and waited. Eventually, precisely at the top of the hour, the assigned senior instruction officer arrived. Before the assembled students, the instructor walked directly, in a very straight line, to the young man, to whom he barked, "I'm getting old, and I'm getting cranky! Put your cap on the

hook outside, then come back and sit down!" I expect that we can all recount workplace experiences that were as disappointing. Good, well-intentioned, people sometimes lose their compass. It can happen to us all. Work can be a struggle. While people take pride in their chosen endeavours, they also experience work-related dissonance, to a lesser or greater extent. Jesus said, "I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly." Abundance implies plentiful-ness: more than sufficiency. Our expectation of work—our daily contribution to our chosen field of endeavour—should hold the hope that as we contribute to the abundance of the enter-

prises that we are part of, we too will experience life abundantly—a sense of flourishing. Mary Shideler offers: To be a person is to act, to work. In working we become our true selves and know ourselves and each other truly. Therefore work which is essentially trivial or shoddy, or consists of making things that are not worth making at all, diminishes the persons who engage in it at every level of production, exchange and use. In contrast, those who love their work, and love to do it well, grow into the full measure of personhood. We are called to be people who bring our faith to God's workplace as God's revelation unfolds, broken as we are. Work is a human response to a divine call. Thus, leadership becomes practical theology—theology in practice. I propose that Spirit-led leadership is a critical, learned, practice if people are to achieve a workplace environment that is conducive to human flourishing. Men and women are defined to a large extent by their profession. Their work shapes, to a considerable degree, their sense of worth and identity as well as their economic circumstances. A characteristic of leadership may be described as showing the way, both in the sense of

organizing work processes, and in terms of safeguarding the ethos of the workplace. Practising a life of faith, for many, means finding deep spiritual meaning in the great number of hours to which we devote our working lives—seeing the product of our work, and our contribution to the lives of others—as a commitment to God's Kingdom. As Christians, we must make a deep commitment to the aspiration that every human being might flourish—to grow vigorously, succeed, thrive, and prosper. True human flourishing can only be achieved when, as Elizabeth Liebert writes, it is through discernment that we, "come to know ourselves in the light of God, thereby coming to know God." Given its centrality to our existence and fulfillment as persons, work should lead to this deeper knowledge of God. As a Deacon I strive to fold together the experiences of my years in corporate, government and academic environments, into a role of listening and encouraging, as the Spirit guides. Paul is serves as a deacon at Grace Anglican Church in Waterdown.



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God In The Darkness



BY THE REVEREND CANON SHARYN HALL

In these winter days, we are well aware of the physical contrast between light and darkness. We are at a time of the earth's rotation when there is more darkness than light in our days. Gradually, we are gaining a little more light each day, but if the skies are overcast with snow or sleet, our days can feel dreary and oppressive.

Some people suffer a serious reaction, physically or psychologically, to the long, dark days of winter, and this winter there is more reason to feel downhearted. The worldwide pandemic of the coronavirus is placing everyone in danger. For almost a year, the virus has surged in waves from nation to nation and from community to community. Millions of people have become ill and died.

It is difficult to comprehend the enormous impact of the pandemic on the global population, but it is not difficult to realize the devastating effects

on communities as neighbours, friends and families seek isolation. Many people have lost loved ones to a lonely death because they were prevented from comforting them. The physical danger and mental strain of this historic pandemic are made more worrisome by the cold darkness of winter.

The contrasts of darkness and light were a constant reality for the ancient people of the Bible. They accepted that days and nights, light and darkness, were not in their control. We, however, live in a society which is mostly light, even during the night. By artificial means, we have light on our streets, in our homes and where we work. We have office towers of light piercing the night sky often preventing us from seeing God's starry heavens. In a power failure, we are people walking in darkness and we search for a candle to lead our way.

When the prophet Isaiah writes about darkness, he talks of the physical and spiritual aspects of life. He speaks to the Hebrew

people who are suffering both the physical darkness of oppression and the spiritual darkness of estrangement from God.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of darkness—on them light has shined. (9:2)

The people lost faith in God's care for them and they were surrounded by people who did not believe in God's existence. That description is similar to our society today. For people seeking faith, light became the symbol of hope in God's divine presence. However, if light is the symbolic image of God with us, then is darkness, as the absence of light, the image of God's absence in our lives? Is God ever absent?

In psalm 139, the psalmist says to God,

Darkness is not dark to you: the night is as bright as the day; darkness and light to you are both alike.

The mystical people of the Middle Ages who felt close to God understood that darkness holds divine mystery, and that

God is in the darkness as well as in the light.

The world in which we are living now challenges our faith in God because we are living in the darkness of fear and suffering, but if we believe that God is with us in this darkness to strengthen and sustain us, we can have courage to keep hope in our hearts. We also can comfort and encourage others to have hope. Kindness and community support can alleviate loneliness, anxiety and despair as we endure the cold darkness of these winter days.

Someone once said that an excellent prayer is simply, 'O God', because we turn to God in that moment searching for God beside us. In whatever form of darkness we encounter in our lives, God is with us to comfort and encourage us to see our way forward into brighter days of warmth and renewed hope.



St Mark's Orangeville held their annual Toonie Loonie fundraiser in October 2020. The \$1000 raised will go towards the PWRDF Water First project helping to provide clean water to our Northern Indigenous Communities and to train and support Indigenous youth to gain skills and hands on experience in the operation of water maintenance in their communities.

Pictured (L to R) : Archdeacon Peter Scott, Rector of St. Mark's Anglican Church Marg Coupland, St. Mark's PWRDF Parish Representative, and Canon Lynne Thackway.

Deadlines and Submissions for Niagara Anglican

Deadlines:

- March – February 1
- April – March 1
- May – March 29

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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Late Have I Loved You: On Beauty

THE REV'D DR. DANIEL TATARNIC

Two years ago, I visited the Italian city of Ravenna, the world's most significant region for mosaic icons of the Byzantine era. Ravenna is also known for having been a battleground between Arianism and Chalcedonian orthodoxy. Today, you can still visit the infamous Arian Baptistery with its breathtaking mosaics; but you can't be baptized in the Arian font.

There is an echo of holiness in Ravenna; want to visit Dante's tomb? Go to Ravenna. Want to explore early Christian doctrine? Go to Ravenna. Want to immerse yourself in the other-worldly glow of Byzantine architecture and mosaics? Go to Ravenna. Want to partake in exceptional regional meats, cheeses, and wines? Definitely go to Ravenna! Beauty beckons!

Yes, beauty beckons. Touring the Basilica of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo (504 A.D.), a church rich in artistic history and heretical controversy, the mystery deepened, and I suddenly found 'me' in the story. Surrounded by glowing icons of 'the white-robed army' in east-ward procession, the pulp in my teeth throbbled, and my soul stretched out: "Please, take me with you; let me see what you see!" Some things drop you to your knees, and it was one of those things.

We are taught that goodness, truth, and beauty (transcendentals) pilot the waters between God and humanity. Reading the book of Psalms, or even the Song of Solomon, could a praying person come to a different conclusion? Beauty beckons.

The God of beauty-full things beckons in different forms: a beautiful argument, a beautiful painting, a beautiful piece

of music, a beautiful gesture, a beautiful mess (if you have young teens at home you know)! Truth, goodness, and beauty constellate, and their appearing, like the constellations of the night sky, attract the soul's vision above the imminent horizon, away from the dead-affect of the malaise of modernity; grace perfecting nature. Surely, goodness, truth, and beauty are features of authentic Christian formation, right? Well, that depends.

Inspired by the writings of 20th century theologians like Hans Urs von Balthasar, Edith Stein, and Eric Przywara, theologians like John Milbank, and even popular authors like Margaret Visser (*Geometry of Love: Space, Time, Mystery and Meaning in an Ordinary Church*, 2008), draw attention to the dynamic of beauty in evangelization, catechesis, and Christian

formation; let's call these things 'on-going conversion'.

Conversion, by way of beauty-full things, is a theme scrutinized in *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Eerdmans, 2003) by David Bentley Hart. God's freedom to appear, to disclose aspects of the Trinitarian life (any time, any place) is an essential component of Christian mission. Why? Because God is free to self-communicate at any moment, or not. God has the freedom to do so and has been known to do so, or not. So, the church needs both a language and a response sufficient to that wild, unrestricted freedom: there are no limitations imposed on God.

But, according to Hart, an authentic encounter with transcendent beauty does not, in fact, leave one silent or mute before the mystery. It inspires doxology and leaves one



grasping for words, concepts and images. It's the experience of rapture: overflowing, overabundance, overwhelming, or in Hart's words, "to establish thereby a grammar of adoring response." In this day and age, fewer and fewer have the psychic language (the grammar) with which to participate in such encounter; to make the beauty-full meaning-full, to enter into and sustain lives of adoration. Yet this conundrum is exactly where the Church's mandate to care for souls in the 21st century, and in a post pandemic world meets the burning question of the age.

Human trafficking and a cup of tea

BY DIERDRE PIKE

"Human trafficking and slavery are evil, violent crimes against God, creation and humanity. They take root and grow where the commodification of people and the Earth is encouraged and rewarded, where 'getting something for free is admired', and where systems of oppression — colonization, imperialism, racism, patriarchy — create and perpetuate false realities, truths, orders, and values."

With those powerful words spoken by the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, we had begun the first of three meetings of a national reference group on human trafficking and modern slavery in Canada. When I received the Primate's invitation through Dr. Ryan Weston, the lead animator, public witness for social and ecological justice, to join this group of people from coast to coast to coast, (over Zoom, of course!) I knew I better do some homework.

After a year a half in my role in justice and outreach, I had been digging deep into a few different issues, but had taken no action to follow up on the last official diocesan engagement on human trafficking in 2018. Back



then, Canon Michael Mondloch and three others from Niagara, had joined representatives from across the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario, for three days of prayer and planning called, "Engage Freedom! Anglicans Against Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery Workshops."

Geographically, Niagara is impacted by this horrid reality in a few ways. The presence of the, "highways to hell," or the 400 highways corridor, runs through or near many communities in the diocese and is the primary route for moving human beings from town to town against their will in Ontario. It has been reported that 66 percent of people trafficked in Canada

are brought to Ontario going through the Golden Horseshoe.

The Welland Canal has made Port Colborne an area of concern for increased trafficking of women and girls, particularly Indigenous females. The YWCA in the Niagara Region has assisted hundreds of victims of human trafficking in the area. They have proposed a shelter of just 6 beds to help women and their children escape.

For these reasons and more, I knew it was time to make this issue a bigger priority on my docket and that of this diocese. Archbishop Anne Germond, metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario, was also in the reference group. We connected over

this one simple statement by the representative from Newfoundland.

"My work in this area has all started with a cup of tea."

After a virtual tea with the Archbishop over the old-fashioned phone one evening, I knew it was time to invite the people of this diocese to have a cup of tea so we could talk about this scourge on humanity.

General Synod laid the groundwork for this effort with a 2019 resolution condemning the ongoing practices of human trafficking and modern slavery and committing to work for their elimination in Canada and globally.

The resolution also urges the Anglican Church of Canada to:

- constructively engage all levels of government on relevant policy areas to combat human trafficking, slavery and enforced migration;
- develop, promote and disseminate liturgical, theological and educational materials related to combatting human trafficking, slavery and enforced migration;
- continue building relationships with local and regional networks combatting human trafficking, slavery and exploitation; and
- maintain and support a

national network of Canadian Anglicans engaged in this work and to liaise with relevant ecumenical, interfaith and Communion bodies.

We are deepening our dialogue on this issue in the Diocese of Niagara starting with tea in 2021. If you want to join us, please drop me a line at deirdre.pike@niagaraanglican.ca or call me at 905-526-1317, ext. 470. Let's have a tea and talk!

