

## WOWED AGAIN by WOW Grant Applications

BY GILLIAN DOUCET CAMPBELL

THIS YEAR, THE WALKING ON WATER (WOW) GRANTS PROGRAM SUPPORTED FOUR PROJECTS PROVIDING \$58,233 IN FINANCIAL SUPPORT. WOW GRANTS PROVIDE SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR NEW MINISTRY INITIATIVES WITHIN THE DIOCESE.

The WOW Grant discernment journey is a process, which involves a call for applications in the fall, initial discernment by a volunteer team of people from throughout our diocese, and a discernment day in early January where applicants present their case for support and answer questions posed by the volunteer team. Decisions are then made and shared that same day with applicants.

"It's lovely seeing out-of-the-box thinking," said Canon Christyn Perkons, director of congregational support and development. She has been leading the WOW Grants

process since its inception in 2014. Grants are available to parishes, chaplaincies, missions, and other related affiliates of the Diocese of Niagara. One-time grants of up to \$20,000 can be applied for a new ministry, program, project, or for an existing ministry to take it to the next level. The overall goal of the WOW Grants program is to support initiatives that launch transformational, creative, innovative, and inspiring ministries.

WOW Grants exists today due to the foresight of Bishop Michael Bird and the synod

See WOWED Page 3



## Bishop Attends Webinar with Dr. Theresa Tam



In January, the Canadian Council of Churches, on behalf of the Government of Canada, organized an information webinar for faith leaders about vaccination and public health measures against COVID-19 with Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's chief public health officer.

"It's good to love our neighbours by doing our part to be credible sources of information and to support pandemic protocols in our communities,"

said Bishop Susan Bell, who joined with hundreds of faith leaders from across the country to participate in the event.

The faith leaders heard firsthand from Dr. Tam that the COVID-19 vaccines approved for use by Health Canada are both safe and effective. Free vaccines will be available to everyone who lives in Canada over the course of 2021.

In some communities, during the mass vaccination phase of

the vaccine rollout, churches may also have a role to play by being vaccination centres.

Faith leaders were also reminded that until extensive immunization is achieved, public health measures will continue to be essential to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in Canada and save lives.

# Be a TOM For Earth's Sake

**BY SUE CARSON, CLIMATE JUSTICE NIAGARA**

When Archdeacon Bill Mous was an assistant curate at St. James, Dundas, (a while ago) he gave an inspiring sermon at the beginning of Lent about GUS and TOM. Traditionally as Christians we have used this time of year to Give up Something to show penitence. Bill's message was that TOM was perhaps more important. Take On More. This could be joining a bible session group or extending daily prayer time.

A few years ago, an annual Lenten calendar: Give it up for the Earth for Lent was created. Each day there was a suggestion on how to lessen one's environmental footprint. Ideas included taking reusable bags to the store; cutting back on plastic containers; and turning down the thermostat.

Those concerned about climate change have become quite good at suggesting GUS endeavours, but TOM actions take more courage. To convince people to go beyond their comfort level by asking them TO DO MORE is not so easy. Unless we are prepared to do more, much more, then climate change will get worse.

Last year when Dr. Dianne Saxe spoke during our Climate Justice Niagara Zoom evening, she made it abundantly clear that churches, even our Anglican Church, were not doing enough. We are trusted



I don't expect everyone to rush out to buy an electric car – although that would be amazing!

voices that should be speaking out at every opportunity – all of us in the virtual pews not just our leaders.

Dr. Saxe impressed on us the need to talk about climate change – not just to those people we know to be sympathetic. We need to start the conversation with those in our book club, at the gym, or in Rotary. The mantra she uses is: "simple messages, repeated often, by people that we trust" will spread the word.

Three years ago, my husband bought an electric car. Since then, four of his friends have also purchased one. Would they have bought one anyway? Probably. Did Dave's enthusiasm and endless encouragement spur them to act sooner? Almost certainly.

I don't expect everyone to rush out to buy an electric car – although that would be

amazing! My example is to show that all of us can be influencers. Another of Dr. Saxe's messages is that no one do everything, but

everyone can do something.

Have confidence to spread the word. Tell others which shops allow customer to use their own containers; or which dry cleaners use safe chemicals.

Dr. Saxe emphasised the importance of contacting our elected representatives at all levels of government. If we write letters or call them, they will know our concerns. Changing lightbulbs was an important step ten years ago but changing the minds and actions of politicians is much more important today. This TOM action doesn't involve leaving home, so the pandemic is no excuse.

There are many environmental organisations like the David Suzuki Foundation, or local ones

such as Burlington Green or Wellington Water Watchers that have excellent websites to learn more.

The four areas in Climate Justice Niagara's mandate are prayer, education, action, and advocacy. Following them may help you decide on a plan that you feel comfortable following. Pray about one topic that you are concerned about. Read and educate yourself. Act by writing to someone or changing your behaviour. Then tell others what you are doing, be an advocate for something that you feel passionate about.

We still need to remember GUS actions, but we desperately need more TOMs.

## New Archdeacon for Trafalgar



Bishop Susan Bell has appointed Jeff Ward, rector of St. Cuthbert's in Oakville, to serve as the Archdeacon of Trafalgar.

"I am delighted that Jeff has accepted this responsibility to share in the exercise of my episcopal ministry," said Bishop Bell. "He has always been an immense support to me, personally, and to my ministry, and I look forward to having him as part of our diocesan leadership team."

In addition to providing support and wise counsel to the bishop, regional archdeacons have a particular responsibility for church buildings, the well-being of clergy and their families, and the implementation of diocesan policy. They also serve as members of synod council.

Due to pandemic restrictions, plans for a service of collation have not yet been finalized.



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# Lent, Lockdown and Landscapes: A Living Opportunity



## BY THE REVEREND CANON LESLIE GERLOFS

Living through the latest lockdown has many of us carrying a weight much heavier than last year's stay-at-home orders. I mean this quite literally and figuratively!

For me, Lent 2021 presents itself as a living opportunity to

be more intentional about nurturing my faith and well-being and to delve deeper into some of the ancient spiritual practices of our forebearers because of how they imbue self-examination and introspection. Most can be practiced in the comfort of a quiet space at home. I realize that some of our homes may not be as quiet as others so perhaps

including family members in a new prayer practice or Bible study could enable connection with each other and God.

There are a myriad of tools and resources (for all ages) online to help guide you through the cold winter days of Lent. The key is to find a discipline that works for you, then stick with it until it

becomes part of the rhythm of your days. Or perhaps switch it up each week and experiment with a practice you've never tried. You may be surprised at a powerful experience of God, or a particular grace, or change in your perception over the course of Lent.

Whatever spiritual disciplines you put into place, remember

to be gentle with yourself. We're all navigating a storm that still clings to the horizon and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Let's try to ride the waves as best we can, supporting and encouraging one another through the rough waters. May you be led in love and mercy by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## Lent Resources to Give a Go!

An extensive list of Anglican resources from across the country: [anglican.ca/resources/lent2021](http://anglican.ca/resources/lent2021)

Explore the world of Ignatian prayer and spirituality: [ignatianspirituality.com/lent](http://ignatianspirituality.com/lent)

Artwork and scripture come together in a form of *visio divina*: [thevcs.org](http://thevcs.org)

Join the brothers of SSJE each week of Lent: [www.ssje.org/comepray](http://www.ssje.org/comepray)

For the Love of Creation: [fortheloveofcreation.ca](http://fortheloveofcreation.ca)

For something lighthearted, Lent Madness: [lentmadness.org](http://lentmadness.org)

# Wowed by WOW Grant Applications

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council of the day which set aside funds from the sale of property to provide an annual income stream for the grants.

Since 2014 over 66 missional initiatives have been supported by the Walking on Water (WOW) Grants program for a total of \$525,085.

"The WOW application process is so inspiring. I just find the whole process very uplifting," shared Rob Howard of St. Paul's, Westdale, a committee member since 2019. Normally a two-year commitment, it was due to the pandemic that Howard was asked to stay on for another term. He was grateful to do so saying, "If you need me again, I'm always available for

this process."

WOW Grant applications must connect to the diocesan Mission Action Plan. An example of this is seen with the 2020 application of Grace Anglican Church, Waterdown. They applied to receive support for solar panel generation and storage that would enable the parish to power the whole building with a green energy source. While solar panels may not appear to renew or deepen faith, solar panels are, as one Grace Church parishioner reflected, "The new stained glass of our church buildings."

The solar panels also tie into our diocesan objective to, "prioritize social justice action with

an emphasis on environmental justice." As Sue Ann Ward, rector of Grace Church, Waterdown so aptly shared, "recognizing that we are experiencing a climate crisis . . . it is essential to the mission of Grace Anglican Church to move quickly towards net zero and to work with others to undertake the change necessary to preserve and protect God's creation."

Another inspiring example is the recent Greater St. Catharines Justice Committee's (GSCJC aka Anglicans in Action) application. Near the start of the pandemic, the group began to respond to the growth of food insecurity in their area. They are partnering with the organiza-

tion Community Care providing family meal kits that can be distributed easily through their food bank. The kits consist of a recipe and the required non-perishable ingredients needed for a nutritious meal for a family of four. The kits are delivered to two Community Care locations and, as Betty Lou Souter, CEO of Community Care shared, "we are so very appreciative of the fact that you [GSCJC] have been able to provide approximately 100 "Meals in a Bag" weekly between our St. Catharines and Thorold offices".

Meal kits may not themselves be an innovative ministry. Instead, it is GSCJC's focus on partnerships and learning about

systemic issues surrounding food insecurity leading to advocacy that is innovative. For instance, plans are underway to make signs available for volunteers to show support for a living wage. With these signs comes learning so volunteers can engage in meaningful conversations with friends and neighbours curious about their sign.

As committee member, Nancy Neuman, from Church of the Epiphany, Oakville said, "WOW grants are a sign of vitality. Even the name makes me smile". The WOW Grant program truly is a gift to the diocese from the diocese where together we can, "turn dreams into vibrant mission-centered ministries."



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# Broken Authority

**BY THE VENERABLE MAX WOOLAVER**

Lent is a time for tracking thoughts to their origin. This 'tracking' can take us across surprising ground. Sometimes the hunt begins with an interruption.

As I sat enshrouded in layers of indecision, slowly surrendering to the creeping dullness, the silent, stealthy vulture of sleep circling ever closer, ... a text buzzed in ... and I was saved: "Have you heard Kaitlin Rose sing Dylan's 'Dark Eyes'? "NO! I have not" — a YouTube investigation! Just what the doctor ordered! Suddenly—I was energized!

No sooner had I checked in with Kaitlin Rose—another YouTube offering popped up—don't they always? Dylan himself singing 'Dark Eyes', live in Australia ... I must check that out. What's this? Dylan can't start the song? He can't find the melody ... he can't find the words... he tries ... the crowd hollers ... he tries again ... and then the unimaginable ... he gives up!

And wai t... what's that? Patti Smith singing Dylan's 'A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall'? At the Nobel Prize gathering in Sweden? I must check that out!

Look at that crowd!! Royalty, formality, full orchestra, it's a Big Deal ... she sings ... its great ... and then ... she misses a line ... and then another ... she looks up ... like a wounded child ... she says: "I'm sorry ... I'm so nervous ..."

She begins again ... sings more powerfully ... and then ... a halting line repeated twice ... she stumbles with the lyric ... she says again ... "I'm sorry ..." a vast silence fills the hall ... she stands broken ... humble to the point of vanishing ...

She breathes ... the music begins tenderly ... like a breeze ... she enters again ... the audience bathes her in support ... the artist enters the Song ... the Song

enters the artist ... the words and rhythm and tune and pictures and power transform her: "Oh, what did you hear, my blue-eyed son? And what did you hear, my darling young one? I heard the sound of a thunder that roared out a warnin', I heard the roar of a wave that could drown the whole world, Heard one hundred drummers whose hands were a blazin', Heard ten thousand whisperin' and nobody listenin', Heard one person starve, I heard many people laughin', Heard the song of a poet who died in the gutter, Heard the sound of a clown who cried in the alley ... and it's a hard rain that's gonna fall ..."

These last words were punctuated with a fist as she stood rock solid, becoming her courage ...

Time and time again people in every walk of life meet moments that call them beyond themselves ... times of brokenness ... hesitation ... fear ... and time and time again we are stunned by their courage, humility and vision ... their authority is rooted in their willingness to be broken, to risk ridicule ... in service of a song, of a love, of a people, of a planet ... in service of the Christ ...

When people heard Jesus, saw Jesus, witnessed his power, his willingness to heal, to forgive, to lash the powers that be—they were astonished.

"The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law."

The authority of Jesus lay in his willingness to be broken ... to be broken out of his love for his people, the world ... and for you. He prayed: "Abba, take this cup from my lips ... but not my will, your will be done ..." And on the cross, he prayed, in his final words ... not for himself ... but for you: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

The authority of Jesus did not rest in power ... but in brokenness ... in the moment of truth ... "Not my will, but your will be done."

As you track your own thoughts to their origin this Lent, where do they lead you? Who do you find within yourself at the origin of your introspection?

Is there fear there? Who did Jesus find on the other side of his fear? How was Patti Smith able to pull herself together in that pressure packed moment?

Lent is a call to track your own thoughts to their origin ... and then by the grace of God to push past that origin to discover the life which birthed the ecstatic cry of Paul: "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me!"

And God bless interruptions.



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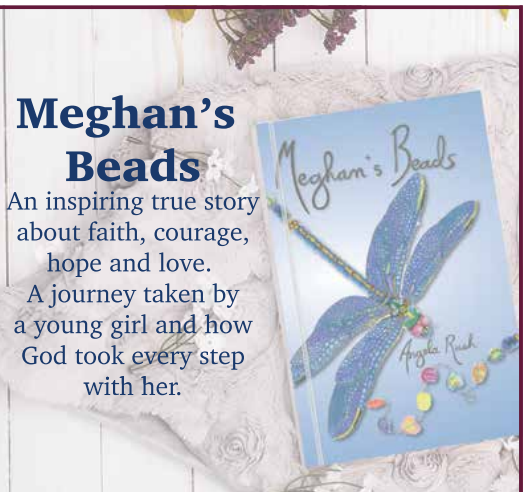


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# Reflecting on a Year of Ministry in a Pandemic

*A Special Feature*

On March 13, 2020 the Bishop issued a pastoral letter suspending all Sunday worship services, in concert with all dioceses within the ecclesiastical province of Ontario. Two days later, the Bishop livestreamed the first diocesan service via Facebook from Christ's Church Cathedral.



## BY BISHOP SUSAN BELL

What is a Christian response to COVID-19? Well, I think that these reflections from our fine Niagara leaders are a good start. Each has refracted their own experience of this pandemic

through their various ministries and given us an idea of how they have managed to continue to minister in Jesus' name in extremis.

These reflections also bring us to the throne of grace in prayer as we contemplate the toll that this pandemic has taken on those who have contracted it – and the pernicious long form of COVID-19 disease that some have had to endure. They lead us to pray for the communities

that have suffered outbreaks: for frontline workers, long-term care home staff, and those who care for the workers as well. They lead us to pray for those who have lived alone, in isolation; and those who have lived in fear of contracting the virus.

But they also lead us to pray, like Jesus, in faith and trust: the prayer above all prayers: the Lord's Prayer: a prayer for protection, for our daily needs to be met, and for our lives to

be shaped by God's leading. One of the most affecting liturgical lead-ins to the Lord's Prayer I've heard is this: "We know that things are not as they should be and so we pray, ... our Father, ..." and in so doing we pray for God's kingdom to come—where sorrow and sighing shall be no more. Let it be so and in the meantime may we pray a blessing on all who minister and all who receive the care of servants like these.

## A Year Unlike Any Other!

### BY THE VENERABLE MICHAEL PATTERSON

In my more than 30 years of ministry, nothing prepared me for what I was about to encounter one year ago both personally and professionally- none of us were. Words like pivot, unprecedented, Zoom and 'you're muted' were not a regular part of my lexicon. Within a few short days, we, as Church, were forced to re-imagine what it meant to be the Body of Christ in the world.

Immediately, we were fumbling to find new ways to be the 'gathered community' in worship. The technical learning curve was very steep, and the sense of inadequacy and uncertainty about just about

everything became an ever-present condition for me. It felt as though no matter what I did, it just was not good enough; this was not what I signed up for all those years ago.

But as time wore on, it occurred to me that this was perhaps God's wake up call to us as the Church. It has shaken us out of our complacency, it has driven us to really get down to determining what is most important and has breathed new life into an institution that is struggling to reclaim and re-define its identity in the world.

God, the disrupter, has laid bare before us the reality that God's presence, God's love and grace is most realized in the faces, in the embraces, in the

hearts of those around us- our families, friends, colleagues. Relationships matter and we are incomplete without one another. For too long we have taken that for granted and not paid enough attention to the lonely, dispossessed, and isolated. Loneliness kills! God for me has been found most profoundly in the smallest gestures.

I have deeply appreciated the unexpected effect of our online gatherings. Our small parish community now stretches across the country re-uniting us with former friends and extended family members. And what we lose in physical connection and touch, we gain through the ease of face-to-face screen encounters. I have personally



Archdeacon Michael Patterson preaches during one of the parish's Zoom worship services.

reconnected with an old family friend, a priest from Kelowna B.C. who I had not spoken to in thirty years and is now an occasional "attendee" at our on-line worship.

The blessing of this time will continue to emerge but what

has really been made clear in all of this is who really is at the helm of our lives. *Michael is the rector of Church of the Incarnation, Oakville and serves as the Archdeacon of Leadership for the diocese.*

## God is in the socks

### BY DONNA ELLIS

2020 began as most do with lots to be done for the upcoming year. Plans were underway and gaining momentum. Then ... everything came to a screeching halt.

The virus became a reality and we stayed home.

Always the optimist, I was reluctant to cancel anything. I wanted to think that staying home was just temporary and I needed to continue to get events organized. Everything was on schedule. I wasn't ready to say the events were cancelled. To me, it meant not following through.

Somewhere between March break and Easter, the magnitude of this virus began to sink in and I realized that indeed, these events would not be taking

place and I needed to connect with youth, children and families in new ways.

I regrouped and I hit the ground running. I figured out the Zoom platform and began holding junior and senior youth group meetings for an hour each week. I sent out emails to families to check in and I set up Bible study for teens. I read stories to children on Sunday nights. I emailed Sunday school lessons to parents and I created my first video for Holy Week (way outside my comfort zone). I had an incredible need to send out copious amounts of resources to families so they could create a similar atmosphere and opportunity for spiritual growth at home as we had in the church.

I hit a wall. I was so focused on figuring out how to answer



God's call in this unusual time, that I had forgotten that God's call was also to be intentional about self-care, my own spiritual needs and taking time off. Well, I was home, wasn't I? I had a need to prove I wasn't just "sitting around". I had to look like I had it all together.

While most socks knit by Donna Ellis during the pandemic have been given away, this pair was kept.

It took a good week to recover and reorganize my days to have time built in for prayer, exercise and self-care. Self-care turned out to be knitting socks. Not sure why socks. But there you have it. The feeling of doing something creative with my hands was very therapeutic. Making socks takes focus and a skill of manipulating four needles. The computer and cell phone got ignored as they dinged and buzzed away with some new information that I must know. The warmth of the wool passing through my fingers was comforting and the discovery of how the patterned wool played out in the completed rows was exciting. I found the process meditative, as if working on the sole of the sock was kindred to working on my own

soul. I began to feel more whole and well.

As a result of that intentional time and prayer, I found the ministry begging to reshape itself. No longer was it shaped by the "I have to do this or that" list. I did more listening. I asked questions. I did more praying. I was able to take a step back and assess where the needs were, what was working and where my energies were best placed. I still don't have all the answers and often fall back into old ways, but God is always there, waiting to heal me in my next pair of socks.

*Donna is a licensed lay worker and serves as the Youth, Children, and Family Ministry Coordinator at St. John's, Ancaster.*



## Reflecting on a Year of Ministry in a Pandemic

# Grace and Transformation Abide

BY ANDREW HYDE

As followers of Jesus, we affirm that so much transformation happens when we gather at the table together.

For our students at the Ecumenical Campus Ministry (University of Guelph), that transformation has often occurred when we gather for Community Dinner each Wednesday. Students come in as lonely strangers, and are transformed into a community as they chat and laugh over bowls of chili. Church partners, who bring us warm crock-pots each week, become surrogate aunts and uncles for UoFG students who are far from home. In a usual season, a cramped little living room in the heart of campus becomes a location of grace and grounding, as students are



A winter morning at the University of Guelph campus during the pandemic.

fed both physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

But of course, this is not a normal season at the University of Guelph. Campus is almost empty this year. Students are going to classes online, primarily from

home. Extracurriculars are happening over Zoom. Our community is trying to remain vibrant over social media and livestreams and via care packages.

Yet there are still moments of grace.

I was reflecting on this as I joined a small team of staff volunteers this week, delivering meals to students who are isolating in residence, due to a COVID-19 outbreak on campus. A lapse of judgment by a handful of young students, has now led to 60+ Gryphons—mostly first years—contracting COVID-19. Approximately 200 are taking the precaution to self-isolate.

As is often the case when university students make poor decisions in our community, there are many feelings of frustration, anger, guilt, and shame. There are many in town who are calling for severe consequences for the students involved—hefty fines, penalties, and expulsions topping the list.

Yet what I've experienced as part of that team of volunteers, is that there are people in our

midst who need to be fed, so we feed them. There are students who languish in isolation, so we reach out. The preheated portions of lasagna and fruit cups that we leave on their doorknobs are like the loaves and fishes that we have to offer, and I trust that somehow in the offering, God can transform someone's shame into a new opportunity.

How we share a meal together looks very different on campus these days. But the same grace, the same transformation takes place. Thanks be to God.

*Andrew ministers as a chaplain at the University of Guelph through Ecumenical Campus Ministry (ECM), a partnership between the Anglican, United and Presbyterian churches.*

## Prayer Beads

BY THE REVEREND DEACON ANN VANDER BERG

The wardrobe of the pandemic: masked to protect our eyes, nose, and mouth, covering ourselves with protective gowns and latex free medical grade gloves. Our personal and professional style, the clothing we chose to wear, intentional, thoughtful choices; our hair style, facial bone structure and smiles, all neutralized and dulled by necessity.

In healthcare, while spiritual care is a valued professional specialization, most disciplines regularly and significantly contribute to the spiritual well-being of patients. They use their own seasoned language, mediating sacred encounters that heal even when they do not always cure. Dr. Bev Hattersley, palliative care physician at St. Peter's Hospital (and a St. James, Dundas parishioner) and I sat down and shared some of our common thoughts and experiences while working in the context of the pandemic.

We focused our conversation on the following two questions: What grace is present while wearing the wardrobe of the pandemic? How do we forge relationships through these barriers when people just see our eyes?

One of the biggest losses in our respective professional prac-



Ann (left) and colleague and fellow parishioner Dr. Bev Hattersley pose in their pandemic wardrobe.

tices is the loss of touch. Holding a patient's hand in prayer, or to comfort, or while having a difficult conversation. Rubbing a person's back who is grieving. Hugging to comfort or offer our strength to borrow. If it is the sparseness of the pandemic providing us with the eyes to see or if it is a new and precious gift from God, we both have a heightened awareness of trust.

This grace stands out in several ways. It enables us along with all the staff to show up for work and do our best no matter how depleted we feel. We realize care taking of ourselves happens in each other. Before we meet with a patient we offer a quiet prayer aware that we enter another's sacred story. Grace filled, exquisite

moments of beauty multiply like precious pearls on a strand as prayer beads. They spark and give energy to a cloud covered pandemic. We participate in the presence of the holy in the lives of patients, some of whom on the outside may otherwise appear broken. We receive a confidence from staff. Above all, the boundaries of the pandemic has not been able to take away a huge amount of kindness.

With loving trust we hold close our prayer beads as we pray and work, pray and work, pray and work.

*Ann is a deacon at St. James Dundas and psycho-spiritual practitioner/chaplain, at St. Peter's Hospital, Hamilton Health Sciences.*

## For I Am About To Do A New Thing

BY THE REVEREND TOM VAUGHAN



This pandemic which we are all experiencing has served as the impetus for many of us to attempt new and creative ventures in our parishes. The idea of doing something new is illustrated in Isaiah 43, verses 14–19, when the prophet recounts the mighty act of the Exodus and the drowning of the Egyptian army but then immediately instructs his listeners with the words "Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a

new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

The topic of "a new thing" also appears in Revelation 21. Just before we read about the new heaven and the new earth, God

## Reflecting on a Year of Ministry in a Pandemic

# Trust God, Trust Jesus, and Trust the Holy Spirit

**BY THE REVEREND GARFIELD WU**

At the beginning of the pandemic, I thought it was only a temporary measure of coping with the change, like what had happened during SARS many years ago. I never thought this storm would last so long.

There were challenges from moving the ministry centre from the church to a virtual church, our home, online tools. Spiritually, I could feel the fear and anxiety around the congregation, including myself and my family. There was a sense of being driven out of the garden of Eden, where we were comfortable with our old church life model.

Switching most of our minis-



try (worship, Bible study, Sunday school, fellowship, etc) to an online model was like an Exodus journey, although changing is a must with spiritual guidance and support. From the COVID-19 Resource Hub to every email, phone call I asked for support,

I am so grateful for the strong leadership from Bishop Susan and the diocesan office. I am also so grateful for my colleagues, friends, congregational members, and family members. We encouraged each other, walking together out of the slavery

The Nourishing Neighbours team at St. Luke's, Palermo gives thanks for the generosity of their community.

of old habits and adopting the new normal in our lives.

With the new lockdown and stay-at-home order, the pandemic is going on, and we are still wandering in the wildness of the spiritual journey. Still, I am becoming more faithful than before. For instance, I had such a different Christmas and New Year in my life for the first time. God is presenting more opportunities to people, more than any time. We can feel the strong drive of looking for spiritual support among the people

who were so used to busy and mundane lives. There is a new horizon of growing ministries like many people saw the star when Jesus came to this world over two thousand years ago.

Driven out of the Garden of Eden, Exodus from a "slaved" place, and wandering in the wilderness with faith and hope: this has been my experience of pandemic ministry. The scripture has the words made to the flesh, and it never changes like the promises God made to his people - trust God, trust Jesus, and trust the Holy Spirit.

*Garfield serves as the rector of St. Luke's, Palermo and as the diocesan Chinese Anglican Missioner.*

## Forget your Perfect Offering

**BY THE REVEREND ANN TURNER**

There is no doubt that Canadian poet Leonard Cohen taps easily into the heart and soul of our people. Although a much-used text these days, his words capture our experience in ministry here at St. James in Fergus over the last, strange year.

"Ring the bells that still can ring/ Forget your perfect offering/ There is a crack, a crack in everything/ That's how the light gets in" speaks into being the realities we encountered as we pared away the unnecessary, risked the unknown, and opened our hearts and building to those experiencing food insecurity throughout our region.

We were not prepared for the compassion and generosity

that poured into our parish as we took on the work of hosting free meals for all in our community who identified by need or desire. There was no "perfect offering" and we learned as we traveled together. We found grants. Volunteers—including three professional chefs—from across the community simply appeared!

"The light [got] in" as we fed hundreds, daily, throughout the most difficult pandemic times. The community of St. James has in turn been blessed by holy surprise; by new, shared-ministry relationships, and by a conviction that hope and possibility reside in our commitment to direct our resources to community outreach.

Our ministry continues as we adhere to our own measure of



being good neighbours: we are committed to engaging our community, to discovering just how God is already at work in Fergus and surrounds, and discerning where and how we might come alongside in our own small way

to help lift up God's kingdom here in Centre Wellington.

*Ann is the rector of St. James, Fergus and regional dean of Greater Wellington.*

St. James Fergus parishioners prepare to make a delivery as part of the parish's food security ministry.

## A NEW THING

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6**

says, "Behold I make all things new." (Revelation 21:5)

How has everyone managed all the changes that have become part of our ministries during this pandemic? As we consider how our lives have been impacted, I see these passages as being relevant to our situation. Most noticeably, I felt

called to appear at the church in front of a camera in order to speak to people in Welland, not only parishioners. So many were feeling fearful, uncertain, and anxious. We had not previously recorded our services but were blessed by a person who was adept in doing so. We have since upgraded our equipment to respond to the needs of a growing audience who tunes in on Sunday.

I am blessed to serve in a parish such as Holy Trinity where its members choose to live by the good news of the Gospel. Our church community engages in ministry by serving the neighbourhood, and reaching out with the love of Jesus. This ministry was clearly illustrated with our pizza project for which money was collected in order to buy pizza for the frontline workers. They were then delivered to

long-term care homes, hospitals, and similar places of employment. Notes of support written by our parishioners were also included with the boxes. This support was further extended at Christmas time when a concert was presented to frontline workers in order to bring a message of hope and peace.

In talking to many colleagues over the course of this chapter of our lives my sense is God has

been a guiding hand in instigating new practices. I would love to hear about your Isaiah moments as a family of faith in the Diocese. Blessings to you as God continues to work through all of us.

*Tom is the rector of Holy Trinity, Welland.*



## Let Justice Roll Like a River



BY DEIRDRE PIKE

When I started in parish ministry back in the mid-80s, I always loved being the first to bring in the mail so I could peruse the new and exciting resource catalogues and put my name on any freebies up for grabs. Those were the days!

One of my favourite cookbooks to this day arrived 35 years ago, as a sampler for our Catholic Women's League, to consider replicating. It is filled with recipes from CWLs in parishes across Canada. I still make the delicious zucchini-coconut bread submitted by St. Casmir's, Thunder Bay, and a broccoli-cauliflower casserole from St. Maurice's, Morris, Manitoba.

Another piece of mail I enjoyed receiving was the large package of Lenten calendars which arrived each year from one of our justice partners. The Sundays were always set aside for praying for people around the world facing various kinds of injustice. Monday to Saturday was taken up with actions around the house that raised awareness on so many things we take for granted.

I remember there was always a day set aside when you had to count up all your CDs, putting

five cents for each one into the Lenten money jar to be handed over at the end. I had well over 300 and this seemed like a hefty fine for being a music lover! Fridays involved various fasting suggestions and an option to pay your way out to a burger. Another day we were instructed to put 25 cents in for each tap in the apartment. It was a good way to get me to appreciate what I had, pray for others who had not, fast a little here and there and send a little money their way in the end.

This year I have found multiple Lenten calendars and other resources online to guide us through these 40 days of 2021, particularly connected to climate crisis and creation care,



and moving us deeper than offering a quarter for each tap.

For example, I just registered for the PWRDF's Lenten resource, *Creation care: climate action*. Bishop Jane Alexander (Edmonton) and PWRDF Diocesan Representative Patrick Stephens (Ottawa), will lead us through the 40 days with stories about PWRDF and prayers for the earth.

One of our Climate Justice Niagara steering committee members is Lowell Bliss, from St. James and St. Brendan, Port Colborne. He is also part of a group called, *Climate Caretakers*, committed to mobilizing Christians to learn about, pray about, and act on climate change. Their Lenten materials for a Carbon Fast are so rich and

"[We] were instructed to put 25 cents in for each tap in the apartment [as a Lenten offering]. It was a good way to get me to appreciate what I had ..."



## Building a Mystery: The New Normal



BY THE REVEREND DR. DANIEL TATARNIC

It seems like it was only yesterday that Sarah McLachlan's song, *Building a Mystery*, topped the summer charts. In fact, it was 1997. I was in the middle of undergraduate school, studying philosophy, drinking way too much coffee, and smoking too many cigars! McLachlan's song peaked when I was struggling to understand what I would do with my life. In my personal repertoire of iconic soundtracks, I'd include it in the top ten.

Would I follow a still small voice and venture into unknown waters? Or would I stay on a familiar track that was more certain and lucrative? Both options came with their own set of challenges and sacrifices. A friend of mine says that "God has a million plan As; choose plan A". With no clear sense of the outcome, I chose plan A: "cause you're working, building a mystery. Holding on and holding it in. Yeah, you're working, building a mystery, and choosing so carefully."

Now, if you had told me last year at the end of the annual vestry meeting, that my priestly ministry in 2020 and 2021 would be mostly digital, I would have laughed. It wasn't long before I stopped laughing, falling head-long into uncharted waters. As 2020 went on, and as digital expressions of church became 'the thing', as six weeks of pandemic became six months, and six months became a year, real-

ity set in: we crossed a threshold and entered a new age. Now, there's no turning back.

I think back to life at the

"... the digital platform has brought the global Church to the local, and the local to the global."

Cathedral on March 14th, 2020. Finding ways to address a pastoral challenge for a six-week lockdown sounded inconvenient but manageable. I remember how we rationalized it all, "remember, we're not starting anything new". Then we hit the six-month mark, and it became obvious that we had started something new. No need to deny it, we had developed new gifts and new insights, we saw new horizons open up. And now we're crossing the one-year mark, and I think it's fair to say

that digital ministry in a digital age is normalizing.

Now, I'm not suggesting that the value of in-person events is in any way diminished by this. I am not proposing that the deep, incarnational value of being together is any less important. What I am suggesting, however, is that the way we engage with faith has opened in new ways: "did you listen to the podcast from Washington National Cathedral yesterday?"; "You should check out Pope Francis's speech last week"; "Did you see that cat interrupt the poor Vicar of Canterbury's tea?"

It might be argued that this all verges on the edge of digital voyeurism. And there might be some credence to that argument. But, in another sense, the digital platform has brought the global Church to the local, and the local to the global. I think the Creed refers to it as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

could lead you well into Easter. Find them at: [climatecaretakers.org/lenten-carbon-fast](http://climatecaretakers.org/lenten-carbon-fast)

Finally, the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Water Network has launched a monthly newsletter, *Together for Water*, for anyone who sees access to water as a human right. You can learn more: [water.oikoumene.org](http://water.oikoumene.org)

Let justice roll like a river, and may our Lenten prayer, fasting, and almsgiving bring about tangible results like drinkable water running from every tap in First Nations communities in Ontario, Canada, and beyond. And so be it.

In the midst of the isolation of the pandemic, there have been many, many times that I have 'felt' more connected to a wider community than I ever have before. And there is some precedence for this. In the ancient church, the practice of sending relics of saints and martyrs, of the practice of including relics in the sealing of altars was the way the church affirmed its catholicity. Relics were sent to local communities far and wide as a visible sign that the Church was One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.

In other words, no community was too small, and no altar was too insignificant to be united in prayer and devotion to the universal Church. The Ever-Greater-God bestows grace whenever grace needs to be bestowed: God will sort it out! In the meantime, continue to err on the side of building a mystery and remember, we're not starting anything new.





## THE REVEREND DEACON IRENE WALBACK

"The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet," writes award winning author and theologian Frederick Buechner.

This "place" he writes of is the very place where we find deacons at work, living and loving their calling to serve God's people. As the College of Deacons, we gather monthly on Zoom to learn and to share in conversations led by our chaplain, Tom Vaughan. What is often apparent is our hunger for conversations about the changing face of our ministries. Those involved in food security programs have had to be creative in ways in which to gather and distribute food to those who have long been clients of this program along with creative ways in which to invite others whose

needs are great to partake of the help that is offered. Many deacons are involved in offering worship at long-term care facilities as well as being attentive to folks in these homes who are at the end of life. For now, those ministries are curtailed awaiting the demise of the pandemic.

For me, one of my focuses is to serve as spiritual care worker at Guelph General Hospital. God's call to me, inviting me to hospital chaplaincy, was clear from the moment I boldly walked into the spiritual care office shortly after my ordination 13 years ago and asked that I be taken on as a day chaplain. Sometimes the Spirit moves our feet and our hearts in ways we never imagined. Living as we do, 30 minutes from the hospital, I knew that it was not wise or fair to patients and staff to be expected to wait for me to arrive to attend to end of life or emergency events. A day's commitment of pastoral

care allowed many opportunities to build relationships with both staff and patients.

As of March 2020, my weekly walks of the hospital wards came to a halt. The loss of the opportunity to connect with patients and staff, to visit the birthing unit and ask for God's blessing on newborns and their families grieves me greatly. This past year has been somewhat puzzling in just how do we continue to building community with those living with challenges, and how do we refine relationships to build trust among patients in long term care facilities.

We are brought into this world to build just those things, community and relationships, to nurture and nourish as best as we can with the gifts we are given. Emailing prayers of concern and encouragement, with expressions of gratitude to the staff of care facilities has taken the place of bedside prayers with patients and hallway conversations with staff. If only one individual reads our caring correspondence that's okay, we have reached out as we are brought into being to do.

The Rector of All Saints in Erin, Joan Dunn, serves on a half-time basis. Joan's one Sunday away a month allows me to offer Morning Prayer worship and to preach. It is an awe-filled challenge for me to

read through the liturgy for the day, and to study the scriptures in an effort to discern what is being said through those words and to recognize how each reading supports and complements all those chosen for the day. Aha moments are in fact God moments, gifts of discernment to enlighten us during our studying time, gifts to guide and direct us a homily unfolds before us.

Reading through the writings of scholars and theologians is more than confusing at times, yet is entirely a welcomed confusion eventually leading to clarity of heart and mind when the time comes to compose a homily. As a sometimes preacher I find it rewarding when a parishioner inquires of how I determined what I expressed during a homily. It means that yes, an individual was listening intently and a question opens a time for mutual discussion. That's a step in building community! Sharing the theme of a homily with the scheduled lay reader, well before worship date, allows that individual to incorporate the general theme of the homily into the prayers they compose and will offer during worship. That's continuing in a relationship.

Erin has a Royal Canadian Legion in the village. I am honoured to be their chaplain and have been so for 13 years.

This year our Remembrance Day continued in an honourable manner though with few in attendance as spectators were discouraged from being present. Following our remembrance at the cenotaph we then proceeded to the Erin Union Cemetery where we offered thanksgiving for our military interned in that sacred place, for their families and for all who continue to serve. I pray that November 11, 2021 allows us to gather as we have in previous years, to take time at the cenotaph and to gather at the Legion where all local clergy participate in a service of thanksgiving. For now I continue to support our veterans and members of the Legion through various communication devices. Whether by phone or text or email we continue to build a caring community.

I begin my writing of this column with a minor indication of the variety of ministries the members of the College of Deacons of Niagara offer. I close with another quote, the source is unknown to me, and it is this "We come into life to give certain gifts. If we don't give them who else will? We are so unique, individual, it would be a precious gift lost to the world if we didn't share."

Let us all continue to offer our gifts as best we are able. It is why we were gifted the precious breath of life. Amen.

## 2021 Opens News Doors for Ministry

BY SARAH BIRD

2021 has brought forth a new, exciting, and spirit filled energy as we introduced faith formation programs for all ages within the diocesan children, youth, and family ministry umbrella.

Leading up to the new year a few virtual gatherings were offered to determine what individuals were looking for in terms of faith spaces for children, youth, and young adults.

With virtual fatigue on the rise as families balance working from home, navigation of online learning, and lock down restrictions, we carefully connected with families to find out how we could best support them and their children. Quickly it became evident across all age groups that people were hungry for new connections, freedom and safety to explore some difficult questions, and a space to be

themselves.

When the first lockdown took place in 2020 two virtual youth groups as well as the young adult program (The Table) were quickly formed. God was so profound throughout those gatherings as new communities were built, new friendships forged, and a deeper understanding of faith grew as we explored the life of Jesus.

Understanding how important these virtual gatherings were for both the participants and the volunteer leaders helped shape the new faith formation virtual programs for 2021.

The three new programs launched early January were Junior Youth Connections (JYC) for youth ages 10-13, Youth Alpha for youth ages 13-17, and Sparking Children's Faith (weekly bible lessons) for school aged children. The number of participants for these programs continues to grow, and the posi-



tive outpouring from parents, guardians, and volunteers has been unbelievably encouraging. There are participants who have joined from every corner of the diocese which has beautifully banded us together as a diocesan family.

Fruitful dialogues have included questions such as: if you could ask God one thing what would you say? What is prayer? What did Jonah smell, see, and hear inside the whale's belly? Why is the pandemic hap-

pening? Does the Easter Bunny know Jesus?

In each program we ask participants to help determine what they would like to see, learn, and offer during our time together. This provides a sense of ownership and encourages personal growth and leadership amongst the virtual communities. Each program is tailored slightly differently depending on the age group, but all have a common thread that weaves together questions, sharing of

life experiences, and creating time for fun.

God has led us through new doors of innovation and creativity that has forever changed the landscape of how we gather children, youth, and young adults. Virtual gatherings continue to break down barriers, provides a sense of safety and comfort, and builds trusting relationships amongst the members. These foundational elements will create a very special moment in time once we can all gather again in person. Relationships with Jesus and each other will continue to grow as we continue to uplift and support each other in the months ahead.

To learn more about the programs and initiatives of children, youth, and family ministry please visit: [niagaraanglican.ca/cyfm](http://niagaraanglican.ca/cyfm) or e-mail [sarah.bird@niagaraanglican.ca](mailto:sarah.bird@niagaraanglican.ca)

# A New Model of Engagement for Cursillo in Niagara Approved by Bishop

**BY THE NIAGARA HURON ANGLICAN CURSILLO SECRETARIAT**

A new model of engagement has emerged for Cursillo in Niagara and the Diocese of Niagara. This model retains the method of our Cursillo founders, and will involve ten pilot churches in the diocese, both clergy and active Cursillo members, who will identify those in parishes who are seeking faith formation and enrichment. To get to this point involved much prayer, the assistance of the diocesan office, especially Bishop Susan Bell, actively and positively creating a path for the Good News that comes out of a Cursillo Weekend.

"Over the past year, we have been prayerfully discerning the future role of Cursillo in Niagara as part of an intentional dialogue with the members of the Niagara-Huron Anglican Cursillo Secretariat," said Bishop Susan Bell. "Cursillo has a long and vibrant history in our diocese and has helped many people grow in their faith and in their relationship with Jesus."

Bishop Bell approved this new parish-level collaborative Cursillo model in December



"Cursillos de Cristiandad" means "Short Courses of Christianity" in Spanish. Designed to motivate and support Christians to live out their baptismal covenant and to faithfully share the Gospel, the first Cursillo weekend was held in Niagara diocese forty years ago.

2020. We would like to describe the background leading up to her decision and give an appraisal of its significance for the diocese.

The new model provides a blueprint for how Cursillo will operate at the parish level. It sets out the roles of various people, and enumerates the steps in a process to engage people in the parish. The foundation of the model is close collaboration between the parish priest and Cursillo volunteers in the parish.

In March of last year, Bishop Bell endorsed a report which had been prepared by the Niagara Huron Anglican Cursillo Secretariat (NHACS) on proposed

changes to improve the Cursillo Movement in the diocese, following feedback from clergy in 2019. NHACS is a committee of elected people who are responsible for the growth of the Cursillo movement in the diocese; two people on this committee are appointed by the bishop.

This feedback came from response to a survey and from a clergy focus group discussion. The feedback clearly indicated that a number of changes were needed. NHACS analyzed the feedback and then developed recommended changes. Following approval of the report by the Bishop, implementation of these recommendations

began, in collaboration with the Diocese of Niagara. One of the recommendations was to develop the new parish-level collaborative model.

The next step is to implement the new model in the diocese. With some suggestions from the Bishop, work is proceeding to identify ten parishes to be the first to implement the new model. The goal is to select those parishes most likely to succeed with implementation. Brian Galligan, priest-in-charge at St. Simon's Church in Oakville, is also the Cursillo spiritual director in Niagara. Brian has interviewed a number of priests, asking about their support of Cursillo and their willingness to devote time and effort to implement activities. NHACS is also identifying volunteers who have attended a Cursillo Weekend and who are willing to help in the implementation too. When implementation is underway in ten parishes, later in 2021, the goal is to have at least 20 candidates from these parishes attend the next Cursillo Weekend, scheduled for November, 2021.

The first objective in the diocesan Mission Action Plan for the next 3-5 years is "to discern and implement opportunities to

ignite and strengthen faith."

That is exactly what the Cursillo Movement has been accomplishing. Over a 40-year period, an estimated 1,000 people have gone on Cursillo Weekends in the Niagara Diocese. In 2018, a phone survey was conducted with 30 persons drawn from this group. Eighty-five percent said the experience was significant and years later, when the survey was conducted, the impact was still discernable in the specific changes that they had made in their lives. More specifically, respondents were asked to rate their Cursillo experience on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means a negligible impact and 10 means the Weekend experience transformed your life completely. In answer to this question, 28 persons gave a rating and of these, 24 (85%) gave a rating of 7 or higher.

"With a renewed model, passionate leadership, and God's help, the future of the Cursillo Movement in Niagara looks bright, said Bishop Bell. "Lives will be transformed as Cursillo comes alongside the objectives of our diocesan MAP."

*Details of the new model can be found at [niagaracursillo.org](http://niagaracursillo.org).*

## NEW NATIONAL eSTORE

Order Anglican Church of Canada resources for in-church or at-home worship, for yourself or loved ones. Many publications are now available, including:

- 2021 Canadian Church Calendar (includes liturgical colours, Proper numbers, and three Diocese of Niagara photos)
- 2021 desk and pocket diaries
- Book of Alternative Services
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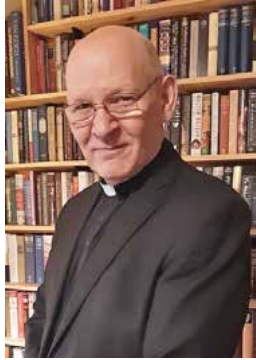
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# Living the Great Commandments Through Lockdown



**BY THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN**

It's not the first time it's happened, and I fear it won't be the last. But the punishment of six members of Trinity Bible Chapel in Waterloo for breaching Ontario's lockdown restrictions is causing quite the reaction. Regional police monitored a church gathering on December 27, and brought charges under the Reopening Ontario Act.

"For years, we have taught our children to respect police, and now our children and grandchild-

ren are witness to their fathers and grandfathers receiving charges from police for worshipping Christ with our church," responded the church in a press release. "It is a dark day for Waterloo Region and Ontario." It added that the lockdown was "an unconstitutional and unlawful restriction of religious freedom."

Predictably, this church has been championed by certain websites and blogs and held up as an example of courage in the face of tyranny. Which would be amusing if it were not so dangerous. Because as flawed and difficult as the lockdown is, it's a central tool in the fight against the COVID-19 plague and will remain essential until vaccinations become readily available. I like to think that we in the Anglican Church, and so many other denominations, know this well and have walked the walk.

Also, this in no way constitutes an attack on religious freedom: it's a science-based defence of the general population, especially the most

vulnerable. Freedom of worship has not been limited: restrictions have been placed on the right to assemble in churches and thereby increase the likelihood of the spread of infection. Such a spread doesn't endanger only the person who decides to attend church, but also the innocent other parties whom the worshipper then meets. As we know, the central teaching of Jesus: "This is the first and the great commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself."

It's safe to say that the more fundamentalist the church, whatever its denomination, the more likely it is to embrace conspiracy theories about the virus, to see the evil hand of secular government behind the lockdown, and to regard resistance as some form of Christian duty. It's worse south of the border, where a number of churches have exposed their members to potentially fatal infection. Difficult to forget the CNN coverage of a woman leaving such a church in Ohio and explaining that she

wasn't worried because, she said, "I'm covered in Jesus's blood."

At St. Christopher's in Burlington, and I'm sure this is replicated throughout the diocese, we hold Zoom services each Sunday morning and regular weekly morning prayer. We have church men's group, mental-health groups, prayer shawl groups, and groups that don't even have a name. I give my phone number to congregants, they call me whenever they need to, and we chat, laugh, cry, pray. We help one another and share our faith. We spend time with people who have lost parents and loved ones, with those who grieve and weep. We listen because people need to be listened to. It's what we signed up for, and it's a privilege and an honour.

Of course we would all sometimes like to be physically present with people, but, in truth, there are times when the imposed distance is liberating and helpful for the situation. But the point is that we are living in a plague year, and business is simply not as usual.

We are about saving souls but also about saving lives—and certainly not putting them in greater danger.

It's difficult not to conclude that there is an element of soft martyrdom at play in the "resisting" churches, a certain self-righteousness and paranoia. Those who organize and lead prohibited services are given a relatively small fine or penalty and then parade themselves as if they were part of a genuinely persecuted church. As someone who has seen the persecuted church, stood with people in regions of the Middle East whose loved ones have been slaughtered because of their faith, the comparison is downright insulting.

Like all people of conscience and a sense of communal solidarity, Christians have a duty right now to listen to informed wisdom, keep people safe, and not be selfish. It's ethical and vital, and—most important of all—it's surely what Jesus would have done.

# Canterbury Hills Plans for Summer of Virtual Camp

**BY EMILY LLOYD**

Hello friends of Canterbury Hills Camp! We are excited to announce that registration for the second year of our virtual camp program is now open! This year we are excited to share that we are offering two different virtual programs to fit the needs of families during the pandemic.

## Camp in A Box

*Our Original Virtual Camp Program*

Bring the magic of Canterbury Hills right to the comfort of your own home. Each week will offer lots of activities that encourage independent play, creativity, and faith formation.

Each week camper(s) will receive a box of pre-packaged program supplies, along with an activity book, and access to our YouTube channel with staff prepared instructional videos, songs, prayers and more! Each week will have a different theme. The registration fee for one week of Camp In A Box is \$50.

## Camp from Home

*Camp In A Box+*

The second, and newest program to register for is the Camp from Home Virtual Camp program. This program will include all of the same components of the Camp In A Box program, but will also include scheduled live programming with Canterbury

Hills Camp staff, and other campers of similar age! Join the Canterbury community for group games, reflections, campfires, chapels, and so much more! The registration fee for one week of Camp from Home is \$80.

Participants of either program will also have the opportunity to register in our Pen Pals program! Through the Pen Pal program campers will be matched with another participant of similar age and interests. Campers will then receive five pre-addressed and stamped envelopes, as well as prompt cards to help spark initial conversation ideas. What a fun opportunity to meet a new friend



who could even become a cabin mate in future summers! This will be an add-on program that is accessible to campers registered in any of our 2021 summer ses-

sions, for a one-time \$10 fee.

For more info please see [canterburyhillscamp.ca/virtual-camp](http://canterburyhillscamp.ca/virtual-camp)

## Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

### Deadlines:

- April – March 1
- May – March 29
- June – May 3

### Submissions:

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

### Original cartoons or art –

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

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

### Questions or information:

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



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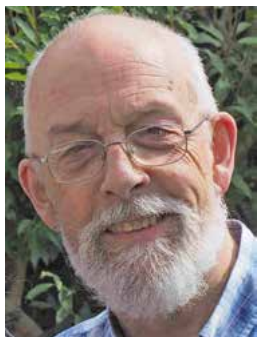


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**In Other Words**

# Redeeming Atonement: Good Friday and the Prodigal Son

**BY DR. JOHN BOWEN**

The camera always lies. Yes, yes, I know it's not what we were taught, but think about it.

Here is a photo of a child bawling his eyes out. How insensitive—to photograph a child in the midst of such pain or grief! But what we don't know is that just outside the frame is his big sister, who is pulling hilarious faces at him. Those are not tears of pain, but those of helpless laughter. A photograph always frames the scene—and leaves important facts outside on the margins.

Why does this matter? We're only talking about photographs, after all. But the principle has a wider application. Soon it will be Holy Week, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter. Easter is

great—Good Friday, not so much.

It's partly that the scene of the crucifixion itself is so uncomfortable, to put it mildly. One lifelong Anglican friend said to me recently, "Why can't we just get rid of the cross altogether? The Christmas scene is so much more positive and life-affirming." And yes, of course, he's right.

But the problem is more than the horrible imagery of crucifixion. There is also that doctrine that goes along with it, one that many Anglicans love to hate: the atonement. The idea that "Jesus died for our sins" smacks of what one friend recently called a "monster god." Here is a God (probably elderly, male, and white) who is furious at the failings of humankind and determined to inflict violent vengeance on us. Fortunately, however, there is the loving Jesus who is willing to interpose his body between us and the supposed justice of this god. No wonder some people call this divine child abuse. Indeed, it is. Or it would be if it were the whole story.

But (so often there is a but), what if the camera isn't telling the whole truth? What if we are seeing only a part of the whole scene, a part it is easy to

misinterpret if we don't see the realities outside the frame? Sure, but where are we going to find that bigger picture?

I suggest we begin in what may seem like an unlikely place—the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. Let's note first of all that there is no cross in the story. Yet Jesus seems to tell the story as if it summarises his understanding of God and his understanding of his own mission. Human beings go astray, they realise the folly of their ways, they return to a loving and forgiving Creator, and all is well. No cross there, and certainly no atonement. What a relief.

But wait. Not so fast. Consider the psychology of the story. The younger son's actions pain the father very deeply. When the son comes home, what should the father do? One New Testament scholar, Kenneth Bailey, spent time in the Middle East, in villages where the culture has not changed much in 2,000 years. There he told the story of the son who leaves home and then comes back, and he asked that exact question. The answer was unanimous: the father should beat the son.

On one level, one can understand the response. It's a perfectly human one. You

have hurt me: I will hurt you back. An eye for an eye. Make the punishment fit the crime. Justice would suggest that the father should visit on the son a punishment that would make him feel the same degree of pain the father had been feeling. That would teach him a lesson. And the father would feel better—perhaps.

I don't need to tell you that's not what happens. Instead, the father runs to meet the boy, hugs him to his heart, isn't interested in his speech of apology, and throws a feast for him. And what of the father's pain? The father keeps it inside. He chooses not to turn it outward and inflict it on the one who actually deserves it. He abandons justice, and shows mercy and grace instead.

You see where this is going? I know this is a human way of talking about God, but it's the best we can do: we have hurt our Creator—by our treatment of God's world and its inhabitants. Where to begin? The poor, the disadvantaged, our indigent brothers and sisters. And what about those in our own families? Have we never said anything unkind, done anything unkind, at home? Sometimes, we have even treated ourselves

badly! And I haven't even mentioned the natural environment ...

What is the Creator to do? It would have been understandable if God had said, "I'm done with that planet. I'm going to dump it in the cosmic garbage and make me a nice new world instead." That would have been just. If we saw the situation from God's point of view, we might well agree with the verdict.

But what we learn from Jesus is that that is not the Creator's way. "There was once man who had two sons ..." Where is the cross in that story? It's not absent, it's just invisible. The cross is in the heart of Father. And what we see on Good Friday is the pain we have caused to our Creator—no longer an abstract idea, but visible in the suffering body of God incarnate. This is why Paul says, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself."

*John's new book, God is Always Bigger: Reflections of a Hopeful Critic, with a Foreword by Bishop Susan, is now available on Amazon.*

# Blossom By Blossom The Spring Begins

**BY THE REVEREND CANON DR. SHARYN HALL**

FOR WINTER'S RAINS AND RUINS ARE OVER,  
AND FROSTS ARE SLAIN AND FLOWERS BEGOTTEN,  
AND IN GREEN UNDERWOOD AND COVER  
BLOSSOM BY BLOSSOM THE SPRING BEGINS.

Swinburne (1865)

As the month of March begins in our part of God's world, many people look forward to the coming of spring. The winter has been cold and damp with snow and freezing rain.

March is an unpredictable month. As the old saying warns, March may come in like a lamb and roar out like a lion, or do the very opposite. Through all the ups and downs of March weather, we still believe that Spring will come with warm sunshine and buds on trees. We still have hope.

Last March, we suddenly realized that dark clouds were

on the horizon. A new virus was making people seriously ill and spreading around the globe with alarming speed. In our communities, our social lives were shut down. Places to gather, such as restaurants, shopping malls, houses of worship, were closed. It all seemed strange and unsettling, but we believed it would last only a few weeks.

This March, we look back on a year of anxiety, hardship and sorrow. This pandemic has changed the lives of people across Canada. Thousands of people mourn the deaths of loved ones. Thousands of people

have lost their livelihoods. And yet, we still have hope as we care for each other. Exhausted doctors and nurses continue to care for the sick and the dying. Scientists tirelessly pursue new treatments and vaccines to combat the disease.

Some people have refused to follow health guidelines, but the majority wear masks and refrain from close contact with others. Face masks in the general population have become symbols of community care and sometimes fashion statements. Neighbours continue to reach out to neighbours. Family and friends find ways to send love through virtual means or old-fashioned ways of phone calls, cards or an apple pie left on the front porch.

In our church calendar, March is in the season of Lent, a time of introspection to search for

God in our lives. Lent also is a time of anticipation of the most Holy Week in our Christian year, the week in which we walk with Jesus from adulation as he entered Jerusalem to a brutal death days later and finally to his miraculous resurrection from an empty tomb. Lent is when we prepare to be amazed again at the promise of God's love for all humanity.

The word 'Lent' originated in old German, Dutch and English cultures meaning 'Spring', the season to celebrate and give thanks for the renewal of life in our earthly world. We naturally long for spring to lift our hearts from the heaviness of a cold, dark winter. Every spring we smile at green shoots in the soil, robins building nests and blossoms on trees.

Through the past year, we have struggled with loneliness



and anxiety as the pandemic prevailed with no end in sight. We need more reasons to smile, to give thanks for blessings and to see God with us in the promise of spring.

The poetic excerpt which opens this article is similar to a wonderful passage in the Biblical Song of Solomon. The words remind us that God's renewal of the earth will renew our strength and hope in the days and months to come.

For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

*The flowers appear on the earth; The time of the singing of birds is come, And the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. (2:10,11)*