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A section of the Anglican Journal



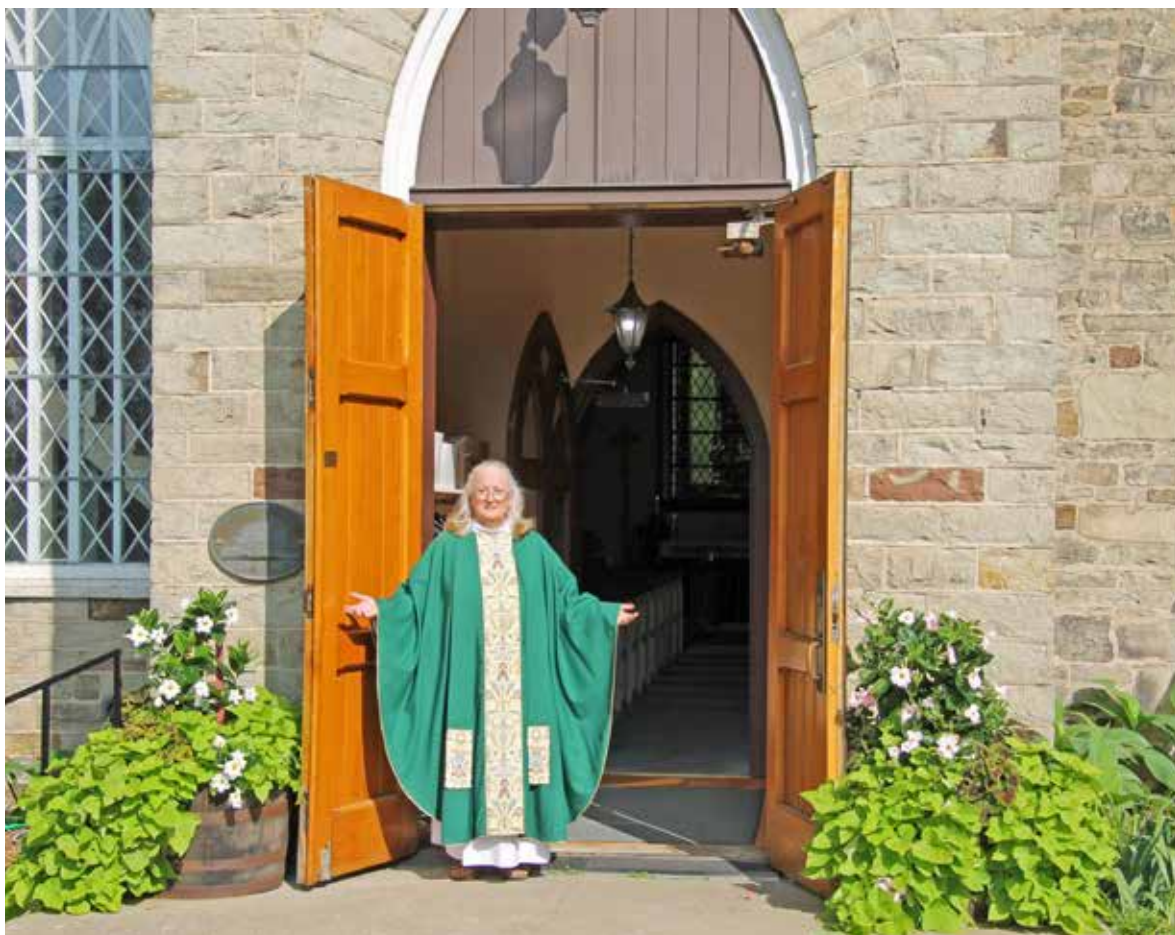
NIAGARA ANGLICAN



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SEPTEMBER 2021

In-Person Worship Services Resume Across Diocese



The Reverend Pamela Guyatt, rector of St. John's, Jordan welcomes parishioners to in-person worship. Photo: Brenda Lane

ON SUNDAY, JULY 25, PARISHES IN NIAGARA BEGAN A CAUTIOUS RE-OPENING OF CHURCH BUILDINGS FOR IN-PERSON PUBLIC WORSHIP SERVICES, WITH ALL PARISHES EXPECTED TO RE-OPEN NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 12.

"I am so very glad to be able to write—at long last—that we are beginning the process for re-opening our churches for public worship," said Bishop Susan Bell in a pastoral letter to the people of the diocese. "Thanks be to God!"

The decision to re-open was made possible by the collective sacrifices of Ontarians in adhering to pandemic protocols in recent months, as well as high levels of COVID-19 vaccine uptake which have driven case rates down and held variants of concern at bay for the time being.

"For those of us for whom returning is a difficult idea whether through anxiety at the

thought of gathering again, or because the habit of faith has become faint through lack of contact with the gathered body of Christ, I pray that the Holy Spirit will strengthen you, uphold you and stir in you both the memory of the joy of Christian fellowship and the present need for the Church to be the Church," wrote Bishop Bell.

Capacity limits for services will vary by church, based on the number of people that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2m from every other person in the worship space. Masking and physical distancing will continue to be required for all ministry activities.

Training Leaders for God's Mission

The Niagara School for Missional Leadership officially launches this fall with a slate of eight courses.

"The Niagara School for Missional Leadership is the matrix of sharing and learning the best practices and the best theological thinking for building—with God's leading—the future of the Church," says Bishop Susan Bell.

The school's mission is to

be a Gospel-focused learning community that trains effective missional leaders to respond to the needs of God's world.

"This school is borne of a listening posture: listening for where the Spirit has been trying to lead us," says Bishop Bell. "She blows where she will and we have been trying to keep up with her!"

The formal launch of the school comes after more than a



year of discernment, planning, and testing, including the piloting of four missionally oriented courses in the winter and spring of this year.

"We've built this school together: through broad consultation in the diocese, through our MAP process, through the deeply able representation on the planning team, through the hard work of our diocesan volunteers and staff," says

Bishop Bell. "It has been a joint effort and a labour that, we pray, reflects God's love."

Expressing gratitude to the people of the diocese for their ideas and partnership in building the school, the bishop also gives thanks for those whose gifts were offered early on to help turn the dream of a missional school for leadership into

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Training Missional Leaders

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a reality: "I am deeply grateful to those who have offered their resources to support this idea. Their generosity has helped to underwrite creativity and innovation into the future."

The goal of the school is to connect experienced, effective missional practitioners with participants to inspire and equip them to missionally lead vibrant communities of faith. Ten esteemed missional leaders, including Bishop Bell, will lead this fall's courses, which cover a variety of interests and topics relevant to building up the missional church today.

"I'm excited by the breadth and depth of our instructors' expertise, and by their excitement in offering the results of their experience with us all," notes Bishop Bell.

All courses will be offered

online, in the hope that people from all parts of the diocese will register for a course without the barrier of having to travel to a central location.

Registration for courses is now open through the school's website. Spaces will be reserved for Niagara participants through September 10, after which registration will be opened up to participants from beyond the diocese. Each course will cost \$250 and bursaries are available to support participation where cost might be a barrier to registering.

"We hope that every person who takes one of these courses is as inspired as we have been to see how it will transform them and the culture of our parishes and diocese," says Bishop Bell.

Learn more about the school or sign up for a course at nsm.ca

New Coordinator Hired

Bishop Susan Bell is pleased to announce the hiring of Charles Meeks to serve as coordinator of the Niagara School for Missional Leadership and diocesan communications, on a full-time basis.

Charles will support our diocesan communications, including the Niagara Anglican newspaper, by coordinating, curating, and creating missionally-oriented content for publication across our many media platforms. This important work will help animate our diocesan Mission Action Plan, support episcopal priorities, and share stories of personal discipleship and transformation, innovative leadership, ministry renewal, and new missional enterprises.

In addition, Charles will also coordinate and animate all aspects of the Niagara School for Missional Leadership, working in close collaboration with the school's leadership team, teacher-practitioners and learning-practitioners, furthering the school's vision of forming effective missional leaders who can inspire and equip others for their participation in God's mission in the world.

With a passion for discipleship and the renewal of the



Church in mission-shaped ways, Charles is a postulant of our diocese and holds a PhD from the University of St. Michael's College and Wycliffe College in the University of Toronto. In addition to his freelance and

consultant work, Charles has served as interim communications and marketing coordinator at Regis College and as adjunct professor at Northeastern Seminary in Rochester, New York.

Fall Instructors & Courses

1. **Ian Mobsby:**
Introduction to the Missional Church
2. **Bishop Susan Bell:**
Missional Preaching
3. **Archbishop Colin Johnson:**
Adaptive Leadership
4. **John Bowen:**
Mission 101
5. **Val Kerr and Janice Whiteley:**
Practicing Reconciliation
6. **Gillian Doucet Campbell:**
Stewardship for Mission
7. **Pat Paulsen and Judy Paulsen:**
Christian Foundations
8. **David Anderson:**
Discipleship for the Missional Church



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A Virtual Disturbance — Canadian Deacons Gather



**BY THE REVEREND
DEACONS ROD
MCDOWELL, JEAN
RUTTAN YATES, AND
SHEILA PLANT**

Niagara's host team for the conference: Deacon Jean Ruttan-Yates, Chaplain Tom Vaughn, Deacon Rod McDowell, and Deacon Sheila Plant.

Photo: Contributed

The deacons of the Anglican Church of Canada have been in the habit of gathering every three years to worship, share, and educate in different locations across the country. In 2017 at our last gathering it was decided that the best way to describe a group of deacons was a "disturbance." This article is the story of a wonderful gathering of the disturbance that happened this summer in Niagara.

In 2018, we accepted the challenge of hosting the triennial conference of deacons and formed its organizing committee for the diocese. By March of 2020 everything was in place. We had liaised with the executive of Association of Anglican Deacons in Canada (AADC), found and confirmed space at Mohawk College for the conference, planned all the worship and

events, lined up guest speakers which included our primate, Archbishop Linda Nicholls. We were ready to go but then the pandemic began, and our residential conference was necessarily postponed.

By the fall of 2020, it became apparent that holding a residential conference in June of 2021 was a no-go and planning began for a virtual conference scheduled for July. After months of Zoom and emails with the AADC committee and our Lutheran sibling deacons, we were utterly exhausted but finally July 9 arrived. The conference opened, with the critical and wonderful assistance of Archdeacon Bill Mous and Mary Anne Grant by Zoom at noon that day.

The theme of the conference was "Deacons in a Pandemic

and its Aftermath: A Virtual Community Coming Together" with over 100 participants. Deacons from across Canada and a few from the United States joined us along with a few priests, and our own Bishop Susan Bell, Bishop Susan Johnson, national bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and Archbishop Linda Nicholls. Tom Vaughan, chaplain to the Niagara deacons, served as chaplain for the conference. Following the usual opening housekeeping, Bishop Bell welcomed the participants. Worship, lead by the Niagara deacons, featured a re-affirmation of our ordination vows lead by our bishop.

What then followed was an incredible address by our primate with some question-and-answer time followed by Zoom

sharing with our very humble spiritual leader.

We think it is important to dwell on some of the points that Archbishop Linda spoke to us about, such as the importance of us listening. One of her first slides warned us to "keep our foot in the door." She warned us that this was our time, and we must look for the gifts of others and bring the voices of these people to the Church. She reminded us that Jesus looked to those on the edges as we are called to do. About residential schools, Archbishop Linda said it was not enough to be sorry but to understand what happened, and to learn, and listen. She also urged us to keep our ear to the ground, to observe and advise our parishes and bishops. We must, she said, observe, notice, and name. It is our task to connect the Church to the world.

We followed her address and comments by being sent to breakout rooms for the remainder of the afternoon, and Friday closed with wonderful moments of contemplative prayer lead by Canon Stuart Pike.

The next day began with worship lead by Lutheran deacons and featuring an address by Bishop Susan Johnson. We then broke into three different webinars: Antonio Illas lead a group on Migrant Workers; Deirdre Pike facilitated a discussion on prejudice and inequality; Janice Whiteley offered a session on truth and reconciliation. We are deeply grateful to Antonio, Deirdre, and Janice as they shared their experience and journeys with us.

Saturday also included a business meeting for the association, which decided to change its name to Anglican Deacons Canada. Of note, Rod McDowell was elected to the board of directors.

The conference ended with worship conducted by the board and many goodbyes. It was a wonderful experience in which we felt the real presence of the Holy Spirit. It was indeed a virtual disturbance. Thanks be to God!



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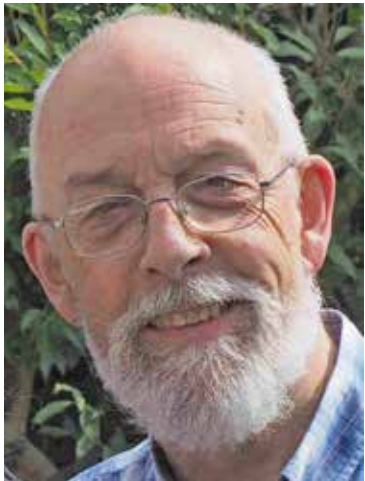


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In other words

Faith, part 1: Why I am not “a person of faith”



BY JOHN BOWEN

I do not consider myself “a person of faith.” There, I said it. Are you shocked? Yes, I attend my parish church regularly. I say the creed without crossing my fingers. I renew my baptismal vows at least once a year. So what could it possibly mean to say I am not “a person of faith”?

Well, consider the fact that these days we call people what they want to be called. Thus, we no longer talk about Eskimos, but about the Inuit. You can think of other examples. (So far, this principle has not been applied to my own nationality—Welsh, which is an ancient English word meaning “foreigner.” Hmm.)

Flattening reality

In the same way, “person of faith” is not a term made up by

Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, or adherents of any religion, as far as I know. But, in a secular society, it is a convenient term for lumping together all religious people, regardless of what they believe. Again, it’s rather like saying “Indigenous people” while forgetting that they comprise 634 First Nations in Canada alone and speak more than fifty distinct languages.

The term flattens and devalues the differences between religions, differences it is important to honour for the sake of respect and integrity. Even the word “faith” means different things in different religions. Sometimes people will push back, “But you all believe in God, surely?” Well, actually, no. A Buddhist’s understanding of Ultimate Reality is so far from traditional Western understandings of what we call God, that many would prefer to be called atheists.

That’s my first objection. The second is perhaps more significant. The phrase divides “people of faith” from everyone else. And who is that “everyone else”? I’ve never heard anyone say this, but the underlying assumption seems to be that other people (normal people?) do not have faith, are not people of faith. Some might put this mildly: “I really admire the way you have faith.” Others might be more aggressive: “I prefer to base my

life on reason and evidence.” The latter would identify with Mark Twain’s definition: “Faith is believing what you know ain’t so.”

So what is wrong with dividing the world into people of faith and everyone else? Because the world just ain’t so. Everyone has faith. It depends, of course, what you mean by faith. How about this for a working definition: “Faith is believing things for which you see what you consider good evidence, but which cannot be proved.” That’s not a bad starting point for understanding Christianity, and perhaps other religions too.

Who has faith?

The fact is that everyone lives by this kind of faith. Everybody lives on the basis of what they consider to be good evidence, but which they cannot prove. What do I mean? Well, I am writing this in a coffee shop, and just got a refill. Have I checked that the barista didn’t poison it? No, of course not. In theory, I could—but why would I bother? She’s my friend and I’ve been coming here for many years. I consider that the evidence that this is a perfectly fine cup of coffee is totally adequate.

Coffee is one thing, however, but what about bigger issues? Take God, for example. Sure, many (perhaps most) religious

people believe in God—a God of some sort—on the basis of faith. Why? Because we believe the evidence is adequate, and we choose to trust. Is that irrational? Not at all—any more than my choice to drink this coffee (which is still good) is irrational.

In the same way, an atheist is equally a person of faith—though they may claim the opposite. In other words, they too consider the evidence. They simply come to the opposite conclusion. Of course, the atheist and the Christian may differ as to what they see as evidence, or good evidence, or what that evidence means. And, of course, neither of our conclusions can be proved.

Not long ago, a previously unknown fish was discovered in the depths of the ocean. An atheist friend said, “To me, that’s just more evidence that the universe is random.” You can probably guess my answer: “To me, that’s just more evidence of the infinite creativity of God.” Who was right? Well, they are both responses of faith, and neither can be proved “right” in that sense.

We should all have doubts

We can think of Christianity and atheism as working hypotheses by which we live our lives. Both are—or should be—open to doubt and correction. As C.S.

Lewis wrote, “Now that I am a Christian I do have moods in which the whole thing looks very improbable.” We appreciate his honesty. But then comes the sting in the tail: “but when I was an atheist I had moods in which Christianity looked terribly probable.” That’s the nature of faith, whether religious or secular: doubt helps us sift what is true from what ain’t, that which is worth basing a life on from what is just wishful thinking.

So that’s my second objection to being called a person of faith. It gives the impression that some have faith, and some don’t. It masks the reality that everybody is in one way or another a person of faith. The playing field is more level than the phrase implies—and Christians (and others) don’t need to be defensive about what they believe.

So am I “a person of faith”? Not actually. Please call me whatever I prefer to call myself, whether it’s Christian, Muslim, Jew, or anything else. In my case, “Christian” is fine—though even that was originally a term given by outsiders to the faith!

“Person of faith” sounds innocuous enough, but underlying it are assumptions which are disrespectful and even patronising. And that doesn’t help conversation or mutual understanding one little bit.

Writing to Learn, Writing to Pray

BY THE REVEREND
DEACON NANCY MCBRIDE

As a child in school, I became a proficient reader—a skill I credit with much of my success in life. I also learned about learning styles and how to exploit my strengths over my weaknesses. For example, I do not learn well if I just listen and hear or if I speed-read something. I need to do something else to focus the learning into my mind permanently. In high school and university, that meant taking copious notes in every lecture, and spending time every evening transcribing my scribbles into an organized study guide. Over the years, I refined my

methods of crafting summaries to meet my needs at the time. I called my practise “writing to learn.”

But I also write to pray. When I read or hear something that catches my thoughts—words of scripture or a hymn, a point from a sermon or a zoom talk, or a conversation or news item—I make a note. Often this is just a scribble on a random piece of paper that happens to be at hand. These notes find their way to a pile on my desk. The ritual of cleaning my desk every day calls me back to the ritual of writing to learn and writing to pray. I can pray without a script with confidence, but my method means that I am better prepared

for it. I am always afraid I will ramble on.

When writing prayers, I take a lectio divina approach: reading what I have scribbled, several times, silently and aloud, slowly turning the words over in my mind. Sometimes I am prompted to look up what a word really means. I search for background and context. When my snippet is a Bible verse, I read the entire chapter of Scripture out loud a time or two. The words are a gift, and I feel the presence of God as I entertain them in my mind. Before long, my thoughts gather, and I start to write. I am rarely satisfied with my first draft, or even my second. Sometimes

I set something aside to mull over for a while before I revisit and revise it. I write a lot! I hang onto everything, filing it away for future use. Periodically, I read through my journal to bring prayers back to mind. I often tell myself I need a better filing system, but where’s the fun in that? The process of rediscovery is useful to show how my prayer life is improving, and what I have learned since

I last spoke those words with God.

I write these words not because I think this is the best or only way to construct prayers, but to share an insight to a process that works for me. I hope that, for someone, it may bring meaning and clarity to their own prayer life.

Deacon Nancy serves at St Paul’s Anglican Church in Caledonia.



New University Chaplain Appointed for Brock

BY THE REVEREND KRISTA HILTON

"We have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God." Colossians 1: 9b-10

Chaplaincy at university provides spiritual and pastoral care to students and staff via a ministry of presence, outreach, and faith exploration. I am happy to introduce myself as the new ecumenical chaplain at Brock University in St. Catharines, and I'm looking forward to welcoming the students to campus in the fall.

I came to campus ministry via a circuitous route... I first experienced a call to chaplaincy when I did my undergraduate degree at the University of Guelph in 1995. However, once I began my Master of Divinity degree at the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax, my focus shifted to parish ministry. I served in parishes in the Diocese of Nova Scotia & PEI for ten years, after which I resigned from parish ministry and focussed instead on training in spiritual direction, vocational discernment, and pastoral counselling.

My husband and I subsequently moved to the Diocese of Niagara and we began our family; looking after our two girls occupied my time in the following years. After three years of living in St. Catharines, I saw a job advertisement in the Niagara Anglican for a part time chaplain (sponsored by Anglican, Presbyterian, and United Church of Canada) at Brock University. Suddenly, the vocation from all those years ago was reborn! After prayerful discernment, I submitted my application and was then excited to be offered the position.

I now have the privilege of walking with university students as they discern the pathways for their future and learn to listen to how God is guiding them. Entering university is both an exciting and scary time for many of them. It is often a time of budding independence, exploring new ideas and ways of being in the world. This can be challenging, confusing, and mind-broadening all at the same time. A university chaplain provides a ministry of presence: a person who will walk alongside and provide a safe space for wrestling with new concepts, light bulb moments, and even discovering new identities.

As students across the diocese attend a campus for the first time, or return to campus, I



Photo: Contributed

encourage students to reach out to the campus chaplain as a resource for support, encouragement, and spiritual guidance. And I welcome the prayers of the diocese for all campus ministries, that they may be a place of welcome and acceptance for everyone.


Brock Ecumenical Chaplaincy is one of three university chaplaincies supported by the diocese, the others being situated at McMaster University and the University of Guelph. Krista can be reached at nb_khilton@brocku.ca.

Canterbury Hills Offers Summer Day Camp

With the easing of provincial pandemic restrictions, Canterbury Hills Camp was able to welcome day campers this summer. After months of lockdown, the camp provided a much-needed breath of fresh air. Here, Oak cabin campers work on their balance at the Whale Watch initiative, a group balancing task which teaches communication, team work, and patience.



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Reflecting on Sacred Circle

THE TENTH GATHERING OF SACRED CIRCLE, THE NATIONAL DECISION-MAKING BODY FOR INDIGENOUS ANGLICANS IN CANADA, HAPPENED OVER THREE DAYS FROM JULY 15 TO 17. THE OPENING OF SACRED CIRCLE TOOK PLACE ON AT SIX NATIONS OF THE GRAND RIVER, WITH THE LIGHTING OF THE SACRED FIRE. THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S SACRED CIRCLE WAS "RETURNING HOME: REMEMBERING THE LOST."

Since 1988, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit members of local Anglican churches have gathered every three years to talk about spirituality, past and present experiences, hopes for the future, and relationships with the Anglican Church of Canada.

We asked two participants from Niagara for their reflections about the tenth Sacred Circle.

Canon Donna Bomberry

Returning Home: Remembering the Lost began the evening of Wednesday, July 14th with Archbishop Mark MacDonald joining the Elders on Six Nations of the Grand River for the lighting of a ceremonial Sacred Fire that burned until the closing Saturday night of the 17th.

Following the 2019 General Synod held in Vancouver, British Columbia, the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples called for a focus group (nine people) to begin drafting a document that would serve as a constitution and by-laws for the emerging, self-governing, national Indigenous Ministries affirmed by General Synod.

Version 1, a draft for discussion, was presented to the registrants of the Sacred Circle one week prior to the start of the gathering. Ninety-nine First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Anglicans gathered from across Canada via Zoom and dispersed into 12 talking circles to discuss the document. Through five breakout sessions and plenary report-back on each section: The Vision, Our Foundation - The Covenant of 1994, Our Rule of Life, Our Guiding Principles, and the seven sections of Other Elements of Our Foundation were reviewed.

Over the next two days we reviewed and scrutinized the twelve sections of Our Way of Life. The sections covered the following: Of the Sacred Circle; Of our ways of Prayer; Of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples; Of the Elders; Of the Bishops; Of Boundaries; Of the Joining of People and Communities in the Sacred Circle; Of Congregations, Communities, and Regions; Of Indigenous Spiritual Ministries; Of Conflict or Hurt; Of Changes



to Our Way of Life; and Of Our Relations with the Anglican Church and its Jurisdictions. The final afternoon we reviewed section XIII Equipping the People for God's Future and Way of Life for Ministry.

The five breakout sessions produced feedback and recommended changes to the document that the Focus Group will receive and incorporate to produce a Version 2 draft for discussion in November 2021 when the next gathering of the Sacred Circle is convened.

Archdeacon Val Kerr

It certainly was a different Anglican Sacred Circle this year. There was much work to undertake, and we dug in with gusto yet are not quite finished. With virtual meetings it can make

sharing a little more difficult, however, this circle, like some, has a way of coming together that even virtually we can connect. Be that while we were taking part in our daily Bible studies or discussing other important matters the people engaged in this circle are faithful Anglicans who, like others, are willing to work hard at becoming disciples of Christ and listening not only to each other in the circle but to where Creator is calling them to go on this journey.

There was much listening, hearing, learning, discussion, reporting and perhaps some laughter...that happened both in our break-out circles and when we met in the larger circle. It was so nice 'seeing' old friends and making new ones. It was great to hear others sharing greetings and love as they reconnected and it was, as always,

a privilege to be part of this Sacred Circle.

As you may note from Donna's reflection, there really has been much work undertaken not only in our time together at Sacred Circle but also much hard work behind the scenes. From the staff who kept us organized and in the right rooms, by the note takers for each small group, as well as the focus group leaders who has worked so hard collaborating and producing all the documents under the heading of Our way of Life and more. Simply put these documents are the ways in which we covenant to live out our faith as a fully self-determining Indigenous Church within the Anglican Church of Canada.

One of the issues raised in group was the fact that there are some people who believe Indigenous Anglicans taking part in this planning want to leave the Anglican Church of Canada. This could not be farther from the truth for we see this as a way of becoming even more of a benefit to our beloved Church as we feel we have much to teach and learn from each other.

Archbishop Mark MacDonald, as always, fulfilled his role with humility, love, and grace throughout or time together.

Learn more about Sacred Circle at: <https://www.anglican.ca/im/sacredcircles/sc10/>

Masks Make Almost \$5,000 for St. Matthew's House

BY SUSAN LITTLE

What happens when: 1. You've got lots of time on your hands; 2. piles of sewing fabric are waiting for a project; and 3. COVID-19 restrictions are keeping you inside? Ask Susanne Adams.

She has made a huge difference in the lives of hundreds of people in our community and beyond because she responded to COVID-19 in her own unique way. Susanne is well known at St. John's in Hamilton for a wide variety of sewing skills and crafting leadership. As a retired nurse living by herself, she had plenty of time available and had a ready supply of materials to be used when the COVID-19 numbers increased in late March 2020 and people needed



personal protective equipment (PPE). Personality wise, she is the kind of person who is always ready to help. No wonder that she was one of the first people making masks!

She uses three layers of material and washes them before cutting and sewing. "It was quite the process," she says. "I streamlined it so that I prewashed the cotton, pressed and cut out the masks all at once. Then I started to sew according to thread colour. It was an assembly-line kind of production".

Over time, she figured out which nose-piece material gave a better fit. "It also took a bit of experimenting, developing my own patterns especially for adults with large or small faces. One size does not fit all," she

laughs. She also customized her work: she made masks for children, often using prints of their favourite cartoon characters or superheroes and she produced loyalty masks for adults cheering on different sports teams.

To date, Susanne has sewn over 1600 masks, with probably 200 child-sized ones included. She has donated almost \$5000 last year and this year so far. "At St. John's we're always collecting food and donations for the needy. I couldn't imagine a better place than St. Matthew's House," she says.

Susanne was happy to be able to fill a desperate need for safe personal wear. "I love making people happy. It really wasn't that hard," she says modestly.

You'll Never Walk Alone

BY THE REVEREND CANON DR. SHARYN HALL

*When you walk through a storm,
Hold your head up high and don't be afraid of the dark.
At the end of the storm, there's a golden sky,
And the sweet silver song of a lark.
Walk on through the wind,
Walk on through the rain,
Though your dreams be tossed and blown.
Walk on, walk on, with hope in your heart,
And you'll never walk alone.
You'll never walk alone.*

You may know this song which has been performed and recorded by many singers and choirs over the past 75 years. It was first sung in a Broadway musical, *Carousel*, in April, 1945, just months before World War II ended. The drama and lyrics of all the songs in *Carousel* were written by Oscar Hammerstein II and the music was composed by Richard Rodgers.

The song was written at a time when people were weary of years of brutal war. Many

soldiers and civilians experienced terror, suffering and death. People away from the fighting lived with daily anxiety for their loved ones serving on the front lines. There were years of hardship through the war and after the war because of economic and social upheaval. The thought that you'll never walk alone was a strong message to encourage people to work together, to look out for each other and to have hope that life would be better.

Over the years, this song has been sung by famous entertainers and opera stars and also spontaneously by crowds at football matches in England. During this pandemic, in some areas of the UK and Europe, it is sung in support of medical staff, first responders and those in quarantine. In April 2020, this song was sung to World War II veteran, Captain Tom Moore, during his fundraising walk back and forth in his yard. He completed 100 laps before his 100th birthday and raised over 32 million pounds for the National Health Service in Britain.

Today, millions of people in their suffering and sorrow turn to God for courage and consolation, but as the coronavirus multiplies, other people may feel abandoned by God and ask, "Where are you God?" If you see God as an almighty judge, you might see this pandemic as proof of God's power to pun-

ish as well as build up people. If you see God as a loving God who suffers with the broken and broken-hearted, you might see God giving us courage and strength to persevere through these difficult days.

The response of many people to this pandemic has shown us that God walks with us, works with us and through us for the benefit of God's world: the tireless scientists who have developed vaccines months faster than expected, those who minister to the sick and dying, offering compassion to their families, those who minister to people struggling with mental illness, despair and isolation. We have an abundance of abilities, and God is supporting us as we all have roles to play in Christ's mission of compassion for all God's people.

As we hear in the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Comfort, O Comfort my people, says

your God," God was telling the troubled and distraught Hebrew people, "Take heart, I am with you! The Hebrew people needed to hear that message as they struggled to survive famine, disease, and wars. We need to hear that message today as our world seems overwhelmed by a relentless virus, devastating natural disasters, and economic upheaval. We need to hear God telling us that God is walking with us in our wilderness of uncertainty and anxiety.

We have learned again that we are all one body of humanity because every race, religion, and nation is threatened by the virus which causes COVID-19, but we can be sure that our loving God has not abandoned us in this pandemic. Millions of people are walking and working together with God's help to bring comfort and healing and hope to all people. Walk on with hope in your heart. You are not alone.

No Shipping, No Shopping

BY THE REVEREND DEACON DIANE ELLIOT

The world paid a great deal of attention to a gigantic container ship that somehow swiveled in the middle of the Suez Canal and blocked all vessel traffic for a week. Suddenly everyone knew about shipping, about containers, and our attention was riveted to the photos of tiny-looking tractors trying to remove enough sand from the side of the canal to pry this behemoth loose. One week later, they were successful, and the ship was moved to the side of the canal while the various governments and insurance companies, flag states, charterers, etc. fought about who was to blame and who was going to pay.

Well, we're paying. The prices of everything have gone up a lot since then, no matter what the origin of the goods we're buying. Interesting point: only 10% of the world's trade travels through the Suez Canal; the rest sails around the world from various places and get where it's going without going through any canal. So, what's up with the price increases on almost everything? I'm not sure I can explain that.

I can confirm, however, that

seafarers aren't getting more pay. And there are still way too many of them stuck on their vessels (approximately 200,000) for way too many months over the end of their contracts. We are still meeting seafarers in our ports (Oshawa, Toronto, Hamilton, and Port Colborne) who haven't been off their ships for months.

Recently our chaplain in Port Colborne took the captain of a ship docked there on a shopping trip for vegetables—but at 7:00 a.m. to avoid the crowds. They were heading to Thunder Bay for their first "jab" and he didn't want to jeopardize his crew. "I haven't been off this vessel at all for four months," he told me; "Please can you help me?" And because that's who we are and what we do, they were at the front door of the grocery store in Welland when their doors opened.

Since 1961, the original Mission to Seamen has served the crews of ships arriving in the ports of Toronto, Hamilton, Windsor, Sarnia/Lake St. Clair, and Thunder Bay. Over the past 60 years our service has evolved: the name was changed in 2000 (Mission to Seafarers reflects the arrival of women seafarers); Toronto amalgamated with

Hamilton; Oshawa and Port Colborne stations have been created. But the Mission has remained the same: "to provide compassion, care and support to Seafarers around the world" no matter their race, gender, culture or religious background.

Over the past twenty months, this Mission has taken on even more meaning as we daily meet seafarers whose need for our services is even greater. We have assisted with repatriating seafarers to their home countries, both the living and the dead; we have shopped for over C\$1 million in a wide variety of goods for seafarers who are unable to leave their vessels. And we have provided a listening ear for seafarers who are struggling with mental health issues that come with being away from home for many more months than their regular contracts.

For nine years I have had the privilege of working with some of the finest clergy and lay chaplains, ship visitors, and mission hosts with the Mission to Seafarers Southern Ontario, along with those we have met from around the world. Together we have had the further privilege and honour of serving some of the finest people in the world, the seafarers,



Seafarers and friends outside the Mission's office.

Photo: Contributed

who serve each of us unselfishly, with dignity and honour, dedication and loyalty. Those who work at seafarer missions are the hands and feet of Jesus, supporting those who support us, no matter their faith or cultural background, doing what Jesus has called us to do. We are part of the largest, multi-faith, non-denominational ministry in the world and are very proud of that.

Please remember the role seafarers play in all our lives: "no shipping, no shopping." Think of that over your next cup of tea

or coffee, or while you are out shopping in a big box store.

To learn more about the Mission to Seafarers Southern Ontario, or to donate, check out their website (mtsso.org) and Facebook page (Mts Southern Ontario/Facebook). To volunteer, please contact Deacon Diane Elliot at deacondianeelliott@gmail.com.



ANTI-RACISM: *A Journey Towards Healing and Wholeness*

A Special Series



Celebrating Black History

This is the fourth installment of this series.

BY MARY GORDON AND
RANDY WILLIAMS

Every February, people in Canada are invited to participate in Black History Month festivities and events that honour the legacy of Black Canadians and their communities. This is often a busy month in the church calendar, coming on the heels of Christmas and as preparations for vestry meetings are underway. So, as members of the diocesan Anti-Racism Working Group, we wanted to share our experiences now, to help spark ideas for how your parish might plan to observe this important month in February.

First, though, let us say a bit about ourselves.

I, Mary Gordon, am a parishioner of Church of the Resurrection (COTR), Hamilton; a diverse community that includes people from Barbados, Jamaica, St. Vincent, Trinidad, Nigeria, Rwanda and as well as second generation Black Canadians. The visible minority population in Hamilton is 19% according to the 2016 census, and COTR's congregation reflects that percentage! I am married to a Black man and, having a bi-racial daughter, it was and is important to me that they feel like they belong in the parish we attend. Thankfully that is the case. COTR's standing Living Black History Ministry Committee works to build bridges by giving permission to tell stories (in a safe environment) and a framework in which to hear them as well as curating specific events and activities to engage, move and teach people in the church and in the neighbourhood.

And I, Randy Williams, am the Lay Associate at Church of the Incarnation, Oakville. As a Black male, Black History

and culture have always been important to me. I arrived in Niagara from a predominantly white Toronto parish where just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, we had celebrated six weeks of rich Black History. Yes, from the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Day in January to the end of February. Incarnation is a majority white parish where people are committed to learning, sharing, taking risks, doing things differently...where there's

For Incarnation, a planning team created a collaborative experience for our first Martin Luther King celebration. The combination of technology, YouTube, fantastic risk-taking readers, our Director of Music, our priest, and God made for an amazing worship and educational experience.

Said one of the readers of King's "I Have a Dream" speech, "As I read his words, I was moved, not only by the memory

A young adult in our parish says that he feels privileged to have grown up in a parish that has a Living Black History Ministry.

an active interest in social justice. In December, while preparation was in full swing for Christmas, the worship planning team was also preparing for our first January Martin Luther King celebration.

At COTR, the Living Black History Ministry Committee has offered numerous events including movie and discussion nights, day trips to sites and museums important to the Black story including Griffin House in Ancaster, Black History Museum in Collingwood, and the Oakville Museum at Erchless Estate in Oakville which is the permanent home of *The Underground Railroad: Next Stop, Freedom* multimedia presentation, Guest speakers have included sports personalities, authors, and journalists, workshops on racism and sensitivity training, and musical events like the Toronto Children's Concert Choir and Luckystickz concert. The church also maintains a Black History resource library including books, DVDs and directions to local opportunities for learning.

of his passion and ability to lead but by the realization that his words are as poignant and necessary today as they were when they were first spoken. With our recent collective societal shock at the discovery of graves of so many Indigenous children and, before this, the overflowing of anger and frustration of people of all colours and nations at the unequal treatment still endured by our Black community members, it's difficult for me to imagine anyone missing an opportunity to address our failings, ask for forgiveness and strive for a better world."

A 20s-something Black parishioner and participant in the Martin Luther King celebration, explained her joy that her church was actively organizing this; she was thrilled that she was able to see and hear Black Canadian history shared in her church. She noted the importance of such programming not just for Blacks but for everyone. Incarnation's Director of Music, Charlene Pauls, who was involved in the planning and

execution of our celebrations, said the following, "the impact of the music included during Black History Month 2021 provided not only a moment to pause and remember the past, but also served as an active call to seek a more just future in our own neighborhoods and beyond."

These events have impacted parishioners in a variety of ways. One said, "I wasn't aware there was actually a month dedicated to Black History before becoming a member of Church of the Resurrection". She comments that she is learning and unlearning through these events and the ministry of the Living Black History group with opportunities for growth, acceptance and understanding is a huge step forward. A young adult in our parish says that he feels privileged to have grown up in a parish that has a Living Black History Ministry. The ministry moved him from mere dates and names to hearing raw and powerful stories of discrimination, courage, oppression, liberation, pain and strength.

These events have been an opportunity to grow, unlearn and learn, and we feel that by offering these events we are helping give a voice and a space for others to do the same. Can it be uncomfortable? Heck yes, but through that discomfort comes

knowledge, understanding, growth and compassion.

And what about you? The bottom line in all of this is that each parish just needs to make a start. Begin with what you have. Each parish may be surprised that there is someone, regardless of ethnicity, who may be willing to simply take the first step. Simply ask. An idea is all it takes. Start small. Talk to the diocesan Anti-Racism Working Group for support and resources.

If you and your parish aren't doing anything related to Black History then we encourage you to do something in the next year. Now is the time to bring together a planning team and start brainstorming. Don't be afraid to invite neighbours with lived experience to be part of your work. And if your parish hosts an event around Black history or anti-racism, we want to know about it.

There is something to be said when we combine the social justice teachings and love of Jesus with a little risk taking and some discomfort. Miracles occur.

Contact Naomi Kabugi for information and resources as you plan your Black History Month celebration at naomikabugi@gmail.com

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Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce —Proverbs 3:9



Baptising God

BY THE VENERABLE MAX WOOLLAVER

Humans are curious creatures. And by 'curious' I mean odd. Endowed with remarkable powers of observation and rational power, humans often refuse to be either observant or rational.

Perhaps one of the more remarkable powers a human being possesses is the power to 'change one's mind.' We can take on board new facts, new experiences both profound or run of the mill and by virtue of that new fact or experience, freely choose to alter our views or behaviour. Equally impressive in humans is the opposite power: the power to not change one's mind in spite of profound experience or new knowledge. Not all but many anti-vaccination folk would be an example of this.

However, the staggering power which in a manner of speaking, trumps them all (sorry for the reference) is the capacity to hold both of the above powers at the same time. The endearing and truly frightening power to which I refer is the power to be both changed and not changed at the same time. The simultaneous belief in and practice of contraries just might be the defining characteristic of humanity. As C.S. Lewis might say, this characteristic has the devils laughing out loud.

Nowhere is this practice more evident than in the Church.

Let me share with you where I see this practice of contraries most tellingly at work in our faith communities.

A fundamental tenet of the Christian church is that the nature of God is revealed in Jesus of Nazareth. Two quick quotes: "For in Christ the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily..." (Col. 2:9 NRSV) and Jesus speaks in the Gospel of John: "The Father and I are one..." (John 10:30).

The interesting and perplexing fact is that many followers of Jesus do not then actually apply what they have seen in Jesus to what they believe of God.

Jesus walked through the heat of the day, and yet we leave a white-bearded old white man on a throne. Jesus wept at the grave of a friend, yet we leave God high above the world. Jesus said: If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I have come not to judge the world, but to save the world; yet many of us live in fear of a judging God. Jesus fell to the ground sweating blood in Gethsemane, yet we can barely imagine a God who suffers. Many folks believe that God is meant to control history, but Jesus refused to be 'the controller.'

Even as we can profess that Jesus reveals the nature of God, we do not then allow that profession to actually overhaul our 'unbaptized' image of God. We leave the old working formula in place and sadly enough, very influential on us.

This is truly sad. And dangerous. And as a matter of doctrine — heresy.

If we refuse to 'baptize' our image of God by virtue of the revelation of God in Christ, we leave ourselves open to all manner of prejudice and false solemnities. If we refuse to welcome the God who comes to us in Christ, we effectively leave Jesus of Nazareth in the tomb.

The supreme gift of the New Testament is the revelation of the Nature of God in the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. If we leave our old pre-Christian image of God unbaptized, we lose the second supreme gift of the New Testament: the revelation of a baptized human nature in the revealed nature of God in Christ. Through our vision of God in Christ we are given new vision of ourselves in Christ. Without the baptism of our vision of God, we lose the vision of a transformed humanity. Christ is our vision of God and through Christ, our vision of ourselves.

Kitchen Bees Mark Delivery of 8000th Meal

BY ALEXIS MIMACHO

Since starting the program back in April 2020, the Kitchen Bees have made over 8000 meals and worked with 75 volunteers from the community. The Kitchen Bees program is an outreach project of the Church of the Apostles in Guelph. The program works hard to help keep the community fed with high quality ingredients, and delicious new recipes 4 times a week.

Steering Committee Member Laurie Douglas says, "What started out as a small commitment about a year ago, has grown to a network of food sourcing, volunteer engagement, and uniting like-minded organizations desiring to address food insecurity magnified during the COVID pandemic."

Almost all the volunteers have come from the community. They arrive to a sanitized kitchen with the ingredients to make the meals. For many it is a rare opportunity to volunteer during the pandemic and to help the community. Steering Committee Member and frequent volunteer Carolyn Beir tells us that "serving with Kitchen Bees is a fun and practical way to invest in our local community — to help feed those that find themselves



Julia Young with her daughters Blaire and Peri Campbell making meals for the Kitchen Bees.

Photo: Contributed

in a place of need just now. It allows my family, as three generations volunteering together, to provide healthy meals for others made with a ton of love. "

The Kitchen Bees works closely with The Bench, which provides a space for those who are food insecure or homeless to come by for a meal, or pick up toiletries and self care items they may need for the days or weeks to come. Kitchen Bees provides 3 meals a week to them, feeding around 50 people per day.

In addition to The Bench, Kitchen Bees offers frozen meals to different distribution services in Guelph including Hope House and the Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition. Some of

these services are providing food to those quarantining in hotels with COVID-19. Since most of these people don't have access to a stove or oven, they appreciate meals that can be warmed in a microwave.

The program will continue until the end of the year as we have received funding through Second Harvest/Food Rescue and the Federal Government Canada Summer Jobs Program. We are particularly excited about the increase of attention and interest directed towards the program, and are very happy to see more members of our community wanting to offer a helping hand during these difficult times.




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The Church — Called to be a Living Wage Employer

BY DEIRDRE PIKE

How much does it cost to participate fully in community life? That question is at the heart of determining a living wage for workers in our midst - perhaps even you, your kids or your grandchildren — who are struggling to make ends meet on two or three minimum wage jobs.

Since 2012, the Hamilton Living Wage Coalition has been asking and answering that question in an effort to improve income security for workers. The Diocese of Niagara joined the movement early on, committing to pay clergy and diocesan staff a living wage, and encouraging parishes to do the same.

A living wage is not the same as minimum wage. For example, in Ontario, the current minimum wage is \$14.35 an hour. However, even if a person could find a full-time job, that hourly wage would leave a worker in poverty, unable to pay for both rent and food.

Participating in community life is surely about more than

paying your rent and eating food. A living wage makes it possible for workers to:

- feed, clothe and provide shelter and transportation for their family
- promote healthy child development
- participate in activities that are an ordinary part of life in the community like taking a college course to advance your employment or taking a vacation
- avoid the chronic stress of living in poverty

A living wage is different from a minimum wage because it is not mandated by the government but chosen as an act of social responsibility. While some people use economics to argue against a living wage, the research shows benefits to businesses who step up. These include:

- reduced absenteeism
- decreased turnover which lowers training costs
- increased morale, loyalty and productivity
- decreased in-house shoplifting



Since the cost of living varies from community to community, so does the living wage amount. Here are the relevant amounts for some of the communities in this diocese, as of 2019:

- Hamilton: \$16.45
- Guelph: \$17.00
- Niagara: \$18.12
- Halton: \$21.00

As a Church, are we ensuring our workers are able to participate fully in community life by paying workers these just wages?

Each year there is a communication to parishes updating the local living wages in each part of the diocese, declaring the Diocese of Niagara as a living wage employer, and reminding parish administrators to consider taking the same action. However, there has been no obligation to report wages at the parish level, so it is not clear how many really do. I think it is time to check in on this even, or especially, as we consider a “just recovery” from the ongoing

COVID-19 pandemic.

The Christian Church has long been an advocate for living wages, following on the great parables of Jesus which started the ball rolling.

“You, too, go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just,” says the employer in Matthew 20:4, as he continues to hire unemployed workers, offering them generous wages.

Bishop Susan Bell is encouraging us to recommit our diocese to this movement. During the pandemic, we have witnessed the elevation of many minimum wage jobs deemed “essential.” Surely, it is essential that all work is compensated in a just way, allowing for people to participate fully in their communities, not languishing in poverty. Knowing we are “called to life and compelled to love,” may our parishes be living proof of our diocesan commitment to justice and just wages.

For more information and resources, contact Deirdre Pike at deirdre.pike@niagaraanglican.ca



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JOE DITMAR,
COMMUNITY MEMBER*

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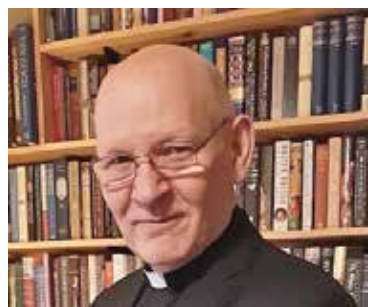
In an era when many people look down at their waists to assess nutritional health, Dr. Kaplan is looking up instead. She calls it “nutrition above the neck” and stresses the importance of food selection in her recently published book “The Better Brain – Overcome Anxiety, Combat Depression, and Reduce ADHD and Stress with Nutrition”. RSVP to meadowlands@vivalife.ca or oakville@vivalife.ca.

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Empathy: The Great Virtue



THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN

In recent months, churches in Canada have been attacked, some of them destroyed. Most have been Roman Catholic, but some were Anglican. This has all happened, of course, since mass unmarked graves of Indigenous children were found on the grounds of former residential schools, which were often run by churches. While we don't know who's responsible for the attacks, it's not unreasonable to assume they are directly linked to the gruesome discoveries.

Several of these churches are located on Indigenous land. Many attendees have been devastated by the loss, and Indigenous leaders are generally highly critical of the destruction. But there's sometimes a note of ambivalence in their responses

because they obviously realize the grim role the churches played in running residential schools and in the expunging of Indigenous culture.

Those on the political right, of course, have used all this to roar their horror, often conveniently forgetting the context of the situation. Some, especially in Canada, have qualified their arguments—but not in the U.S. In a breathtakingly bizarre and crass column in *The American Conservative*, associate editor Declan Leary writes: "Whatever natural good was present in the piety and community of the pagan past is an infinitesimal fraction of the grace rendered unto those pagans' descendants who have been received into the Church of Christ. Whatever sacrifices were exacted in pursuit of that grace—the suffocation of a noble pagan culture; an increase in disease and bodily death due to government negligence; even the sundering of natural families—is worth it."

Truth, and Christianity, cry out to be heard! Let me say this with absolute confidence: As an ordained cleric, I condemn all attacks on churches. But it's

also my duty to try to understand the anger and agony behind these actions. To scream at violence without realizing its causes isn't an authentic Christian response.

Most churches have made full and heartfelt apologies for their role in running residential schools, taking ownership for their crimes, trying to repair damage done, educating themselves and their congregations, and paying reparations. The partial exception is the Roman Catholic Church. Apologies have usually been inadequate and legally filtered, and senior clergy have even tried to obfuscate, claiming persecution of their church. The Catholic Church was supposed to pay \$25 million in compensation, cried poverty, and was then exposed for spending far more than this amount on church improvements and grand buildings. Is it any surprise that some people are outraged?

Violence isn't the solution, but passivity isn't either. For generations, Indigenous peoples have asked politely for justice and fairness, and little, if anything, has been done. They were

ignored when they whispered, now they're scolded when they shout. It's not they, but we, who are the problem; not those with power, but those without it, who deserve to be heard.

The Jesus who inspired me in my mid-50s to return to university for three years, attend seminary, and seek ordination didn't spend his time obsessing about buildings and comfort. Rather, he spent his time speaking about a permanent revolution of love and justice. He stood with the poor, the marginalized, and the despised, and reserved his harshest words for those who stood—and stand—behind the walls of legalism, judgment, and traditional structures of rule and control.

He had a few things to say about the churches, the temples, of his day: "As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!' Then Jesus asked him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down'" (Mark 13:1-2).

We also read in John 2:13-15: "The Passover of the Jews

was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the moneychangers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables."

Once again, I can't, and won't, support the destruction of churches, but I'm more concerned about the destruction of people. The attacks aren't the products of a moral vacuum, and those who dismiss them as hate crimes need to spend some time with people who are disenfranchised and desperate.

I realize that the left, as well as the right, have tried to exploit the situation, and absolutes are never helpful. But if Christianity is to inform and influence the body politic, in Canada and elsewhere, it must remind itself that empathy is the great virtue. Feel for others, think as others, be others, and then ask the important questions. Then, God willing, come to the appropriate—if deeply challenging—conclusions.

Bishop Condemns Hamilton Hate Attack

In July, Bishop Susan Bell expressed shock and deep disappointment at the news that Hamilton Police were investigating a hate crime, after a mother and daughter were nearly struck by a vehicle at an Ancaster plaza while death threats and racism slurs targeting the Muslim community were uttered.

"My heart and my prayers go out to the family at the centre of this attack, and to our Muslim siblings in Hamilton and beyond," said Bishop Susan Bell. "What we have witnessed in our community is abhorrent; violence, hatred, and Islamophobia

are never acceptable and have no place in our communities."

In condemning this violent and disgraceful attack, the bishop invited prayers and solidarity with the local Muslim community, and that the people of the diocese bear witness to God's great commandment to love our neighbours.

"We are a people of faith in Niagara called to life and compelled to love, a people who are called to challenge violence of every kind."

This attack comes after another violent attack in London, Ontario in which four

people were intentionally killed with a vehicle, targeted because of their faith.

The Diocese of Niagara, alongside the wider Anglican Church of Canada, is committed to dismantling racism, acts of hatred, and culturally and religiously motivated hate, in all their forms, including Islamophobia.

"We are committed to challenging Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and all forms of hate in our community," said Bishop Susan Bell. "Please join me in offering prayers for a world where the fullness of God's love reigns in all our relationships."

Nominations Sought for General Synod & Synod Council

Members of synod are being invited to let their name stand to serve as one of Niagara's General Synod delegates or as a Synod Council regional representative.

General Synod is the chief governing and legislative body of the Anglican Church of Canada. It will convene next year from July 13-17 in Calgary. Delegates must be members of synod.

As the executive committee of the Synod of the Diocese of Niagara, Synod Council carries out financial, administrative, and legal duties as defined by

law and existing canons, sets directions, establishes policies, and allocates resources for the work of the synod. Two representatives are to be elected by members of synod for a two-year term from each of our five regions. Alternates are also elected for each region for a one-year term.

If you are interested in letting your name stand for election, please contact Mary Anne Grant at maryanne.grant@niagaraanglican.ca. Nominations must be received no later than September 30, 2021.

Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

Deadlines:

October – August 27
November – September 27
December – October 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.

Questions or information:

Contact the Editor at editor@niagaraanglican.ca

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Our House Is on Fire

BY SUE CARSON

This September we celebrate the fifth Season of Creation, a five-week segment of the church year when we focus on our planet. I wonder if five weeks is long enough to acknowledge our beautiful world.

For me, the Season of Creation starts with the arrival of the first snowdrop and ends with the fall of the last red maple leaf. The mystery of winter also belongs to creation; it is the time of rejuvenation and healing so the yearly miracle of life can begin again.

The Gospel reading for September 5 tells of Jesus healing ordinary people—the daughter of a gentile woman and a deaf man. The first was someone of a different race and Jesus questioned why he should heal the daughter, but mother had the courage to tell Him that she deserved at least the crumbs under the table.

If ever there were a time when healing was needed, it must be now; healing for a world heading



towards climate disaster.

Sir David Attenborough believes that the world could heal itself if we would only put on the brakes and let her take care of things herself. The time for gentle words is over and the new generation, like Greta Thunberg, are going to have to speak louder and answer back to those in authority as the Syrophenician woman did.

Greta's words to the world leaders at Davos, "our house is on fire," have become poignantly true to the residents of Lytton, British Columbia, with the

images of a charred town so fresh in our minds from this summer. One survivor spoke on TV about his town being the canary in the coal mine; "we need to open our eyes to climate change," he said.

We have been aware that climate change has been happening in hotter, less-developed countries. But even in our diocese there have been floods and unusual weather patterns; our predictable world is now off-kilter.

The International Panel on Climate Change announced in

2018 that we had twelve years to completely change our lifestyles to delay the dangers of weather-related incidences. Two lost years because of COVID have increased the urgency, so there are only ten years left.

Yet for the advertising media, post-pandemic means more cruises, plane rides, and shopping—all things that will exacerbate climate change. There is a feeling that COVID-19 cheated us out of our holidays and the life we deserve, but the world and the creatures who share this planet have been cheated by our desire to consume and travel.

The gentile woman fought back when Jesus refused her request to heal her child. Mothers around the world are crying out for help for their offspring. How many times do the mothers in Grassy Narrows have to tell us that their children have mercury poisoning? The cries from mothers in Africa remind us that their land is parched, and their children are starving.

In Canada there are people,

like the deaf man, who are unable to speak for themselves: the elderly living without air conditioning; the poor finding that food prices are rising because of droughts in California; many hundreds dying from the heat in the western provinces.

David Attenborough said that "what we do in the next ten years will profoundly impact the next few thousand." Will the toppled statues in one-hundred-years' time be Albertan oil wells? Will future young people ask: "why was climate change allowed to happen in the twenty-first century?"

This Season of Creation, please give the Earth time to heal by treading more gently in every aspect of your life. Advocate for those abroad who are crying out for help and be the voice to those in our society who can't speak for themselves.



Church of the Ever Greater God: Life Beyond the Pandemic?



BY THE REVEREND DAN TATARNIC

I was sitting on the patio of Conversations Café in downtown Beamsville, on a bright, cloudless morning, with a steaming cup of fresh brewed java in hand. It was the first time since the beginning of the pandemic that I was meeting people for morning coffee and conversation. It was an odd feeling, a mix between excitement and hesitation. A part of me was thinking, "am I allowed to do this?"

I'm a realist, and the reality is

that the past few months (18 or 19 of them) haven't been resplendent ones for institutional Christianity. Even without mentioning the global pandemic, public opinion about the role of institutional Christianity in Canadian society has cooled. The scandal of residential school gravesites unearthed deep feelings and set a nation reeling.

So, hear me out. Things like global pandemics and public scandals aren't the things institutions recover from as an act of the human will, or as the result of the power of positive thinking. There were times this summer, when I watched the news and thought, "we will never recover from this, it just goes from bad to worse."

As the news kept feeding my anxiety, I was wrestling my way through a compelling—albeit controversial—read, *Church of the Ever Greater God: The Ecclesiology of Eric Przywara*, by the Jesuit author Aaron Pidel (University of Notre Dame Press, 2020).

I won't say much about Przywara here, other than he was a mild-mannered, Polish Jesuit priest. He was also an academic of the highest calibre, who had a wicked sense of humour that he employed in intellectual sparring matches with the protestant theologian Karl Barth. Barth took the sparring very seriously, and would eventually declare Przywara's theology to be the work of the anti-Christ!

But having survived World War I, and the Spanish Flu, and Karl Barth, only to witness his country dissolve into World War II, Przywara succumbed to a deep depression that seemed to influence his theology, deeply. Witnessing the scandal of the first half of the last century, he felt "that God is permitting the collapse of the ... Western Church" in order to inaugurate a "cosmic" and "global" one; the pilgrim church on earth inhabits a realm of "unmasterable tensions", an oscillating rhythm, a parallax.

This is a brilliant, but controversial, hypothesis: "God doffs the vesture of Western Christendom to free not only himself, moreover, but the Church for renewed mission." So far, so good, because our working definition of mission these days goes like this: mission is seeing what God is doing, and joining in. Don't get too comfortable, because there is a parallax effect; it wasn't long ago that Christians believed that colonization, and slavery, and national socialism were exciting things that God was doing. So, when it comes to joining in, we don't have a clean record of discerning spirits.

Is Przywara right? Is God fed up, and "ungirding himself from Western Christendom" in order to set the record straight? If so, how do we 'join in' and cooperate with this divine work?

And this brings me back to my steaming cup of java, on the patio of Conversations Café, one bright morning in July, to the "unmasterable tension", the

parallax-effect of being there. It was a familiar place, I had been there many times before, but something had changed. Was it me? Was it society? I couldn't reconcile how it felt being there.

Church of the Ever Greater God introduces us to a post-pandemic theologian of the 20th century, whose struggle with mental illness offers insight into the parallax-effect of our present context. If nothing else, his theology encourages us to dwell in the oscillating rhythms of "unmasterable tensions", while not succumbing to the temptation to force resolution. The Church, "beset by human weakness" but "bolstered by divine strength", inhabits a time-and-place that it cannot master by virtue of its own will; and that is the grace of it! With such an assurance of living in proximity to the ever-greater, we lean into our anxieties, and stretch outward to becoming the Church of the Ever Greater God.