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A section of the Anglican Journal



NIAGARA ANGLICAN



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JANUARY 2022

Presence and Prayer



Christ's Church Cathedral Opens its Doors to New Ministries

Dean Tim Dobbin and Assistant Curate Rob Jones have started to realize a dream for transforming the way Christ's Church Cathedral serves as both the geographical and spiritual heart of the Diocese of Niagara. Christ's Church Cathedral is supporting two new opportunities for mission and missional support: Open Cathedral and the Community of Prayer.

Launched in November, Open Church gives community members the chance "to come, sit, rest, and just 'be' without having

"a quiet place to pray," "a place to escape the cold," a place to rest," or simply a place to enjoy some coffee to go. As churches and other spaces closed due to the pandemic begin to reopen, it is hoped that Christ's Church can once again be viewed by neighbours in the Jamesville area of downtown Hamilton, as well as those across the city, as a safe and welcoming space.

The second ministry initiative of the Cathedral congregation stems out of a gathering of individuals that have been

to pay money, without having to buy something," a rarity in many places. On Sundays from 12:00 pm–4:00 pm, all are offered

meeting together to pray for the Church, the city, and the diocese since March. As Jones reflects, the formation of this praying community is "in some ways a gift that Bishop Susan brought to Dean Tim and me: [the idea of] a community that would be the praying heartbeat of the diocese." The group was led in its earliest discernment process partly by taking Canon Ian Mobsby's course offered as a pilot for the Niagara School for Missional Leadership on developing missional New Monastic communities.

The core prayer group has remained intentionally small in order to create space for younger leaders within the diocese, especially—lay or ordained—to pray and support each other in addition to the diocese as a whole. Gathering over Zoom since before Lent, the group

engaged in an extended period of discernment, thinking of ways to live out this new "vocation of prayer." One result of their partnership with Christ's Church Cathedral is the Open Cathedral initiative.

Beyond Open Cathedral, however, the group also envisioned opening their gatherings to the wider diocese, and thus have begun welcoming all interested in joining in their vocation of prayer once per month. Jones explained that this is "really a simple vocation: sticking with prayer, not trying to outrun the Holy Spirit, and modelling what it would look like for the church to be a praying church at its core."

"One of the things that's always been important to me," Jones reflected, "is balancing the active with the prayerful." There is always a "temptation towards action—which is important

for the church—but I think this group as a whole and the diocesan prayer service that we're offering is rooted in this core conviction that the active church needs to be a praying church, sustained by a rich and regular practice of prayer, and vice-versa."

Whether you desire to join in active prayer for the friends and neighbours of Christ's Church Cathedral, or simply enter into a space for calm and contemplation, the doors of Christ's Church Cathedral—both physical and virtual—are open.

To learn more about these new initiatives, visit the Christ's Church Cathedral Facebook page, or contact The Reverend Rob Jones at rob.jones@niagara-anglican.ca.

Niagara School for Missional Leadership Looks to Winter Term



Eight courses are being planned for the winter 2022 term of the Niagara School for Missional Leadership (NSML), which will run from February through March.

Three courses will be offered for the first time, including Gillian Doucet Campbell's

course on thinking missionally about stewardship. Canon Christyn Perkins will be leading a course on developing a parish Mission Action Plan (MAP) utilizing the newly released facilitator's resource guide. For those involved in diaconal ministries or interested in diaconal

ministry, Patrick Paulsen will be spearheading the first of a three-course series situates participants in the narrative of Scripture and history to which the modern church belongs. The course material stretches all the way back to Abraham's call in order to help orient the church

to questions of how we arrived at this pivotal moment for mission in the twenty-first century.

NSML courses are designed to "make you stop and consider: what is the message we have? Who is this message for? That's

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Anglican Foundation Grants Over \$25,000 to Niagara

BY CHARLES MEEKS AND MICHELLE HAUSER

In late November, more than 100 grant and bursary applicants received some welcome news that they will receive funding from the Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC).

"I am delighted to say that the Board of Directors of AFC has approved close to \$650,000 in grants and bursaries to 110 applicants as part of its fall 2021 grant cycle," says Dr. Scott Brubacher, Executive Director. "This brings the 2021 grant awards total to more than \$835,000, one of the most generous years in AFC's 64-year history." Brubacher says an additional \$125,000 or more in disbursements from some of AFC's trusts may yet see the 2021 grants total hit the \$1 million milestone.

Pushing the grant program to new heights was an astonishing \$468,000 in funding for the Say Yes! to Kids Request for Proposals (RFP): the largest one-time investment in youth-focused ministry the Canadian church has seen.

"AFC supporters embraced Say Yes! to Kids with a spirit of generosity last spring," says Brubacher, "and applicants responded to that generosity with a spirit of innovation and creativity this fall. "For that initiative alone," says Brubacher, "a total of 84 applicants applied for nearly \$520,000. It was the largest, and most diverse funding request—in terms of regional spread and social impacts—we have ever seen."

In the Diocese of Niagara, four applicants for Say Yes! to Kids grants and two applicants for leadership and education bursaries received a total of \$25,400. The Say Yes! to Kids grants span three major categories, including supporting the mental health of young people during the pandemic, building youth ministries, and supporting faith formation efforts. Grant recipients include St. Luke's Smithville, St. George's Guelph, Grace Church Milton, and the diocese's Children, Youth, and Family Ministry program (CYFM). Educational bursaries were awarded to Monica Romig Green and Nicola Li Fen Zhang, both candidates for ordination in Niagara.

Bishop Susan Bell expressed deep thanks to the AFC for their

longstanding partnership with the diocese, reflecting particularly on its spiritual support of ministries in Niagara in addition to financial support. The Bishop affirmed that the AFC's backing of these "innovative, compassionate, and forward-thinking" projects is "a wise vote for the future of the Church." In these days of transition from being a "Christendom church to a missional church," the diocese can now continue answering the call to lead and to love by extending its online reach.

Peter Wall, interim pastor of St. James Dundas and gift consultant for the AFC, echoed Bishop Bell's sentiments, affirming that there is "no shortage of generosity, passion, and creativity in the diocese of Niagara." Wall revealed that a portion of the overall funding for Say Yes! to Kids grants initially came from a matched gift from within the diocese, reflecting that our members are "more ready than ever to say that young people matter to the Canadian church."

Sarah Bird, program consultant for children, youth and family ministry, expressed gratitude on behalf of ministry leaders throughout the diocese. "This grant has come at a time when we are exhausted; it's hard to dream when life continues to be unpredictable," she reflected. However, this financial boon "allows leaders to dream and channel their excitement into future opportunities." While the pandemic "has turned everything upside-down," Bird stated, "Niagara chose to jump into action to offer many supports for connecting faith formation to families in one of the most challenging times we'll ever face."

One such leap into action is by St. Luke's Smithville, who have worked with leaders among their young people to develop a youth drop-in program. As parishioner Jim Higginson expressed, the gap between Sunday School and other services in many parishes continues to grow, and financial assistance from the AFC will help bridge that gap in order to demonstrate Christ's love in the community.

"We are closing in on two years since the onset of the pandemic," says Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada and AFC chair, "and we know our



Sarah Bird, program consultant for children, youth and family ministry, expressed gratitude on behalf of ministry leaders throughout the diocese.

churches continue to face challenges. But the entire board feels so energized by our capacity to fund these innovative, missional projects and to support Canadian Anglicans in their vision for an engaged, compassionate church. There are creative, visionary projects from across the country here and we are praying for all of them."

Grants awarded in the fall 2021 cycle range between \$1,000 to \$15,000 and fall within AFC's key impact zones: community ministries, diverse infrastructure, Indigenous ministries, leadership and education, and music and sacred arts.

You can view the fall 2021 grant awards slide presentation, which provides a full list of all Say Yes! to Kids as well as regular grant award recipients, at <https://vimeo.com/649514331>.



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The Vocation of a Citizen



BY THE REVEREND DEACON ROD MCDOWELL

In her recent charge to Synod, Bishop Susan Bell quoted from an interview with the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams.

In the interview Archbishop Williams said, “To be a Christian is to be in politics—which is the art of humans living together—and people of faith have perspective on how we ought to be living and working together. We have an interest in seeing deep and authentic humanity being nourished. And we have a duty to challenge whenever that deep and authentic way of living is sidelined or diminished whether it’s by inhumane policies or

inadequate educational provision or whatever. The political is inevitable.”

Thank you, Bishop Susan, for inserting this wisdom in your charge because it is really relevant in 2022. In 2022 the people of Ontario will have the chance to vote in a provincial election on June 2 and in municipal elections on Oct. 24. Only citizens of Canada will be eligible to vote, but that does not prevent permanent residents or anyone else in Canada from voicing their opinion.

Please look at the vows we take at a baptism. Now the reality is they were probably taken for us by our parents and godparents when we were baptised, but we repeat them in

church every time there is a baptism. The last of the covenants we repeat is: “Will you strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being?”

I am going to suggest that everyone of us who is a citizen and entitled to vote has a vocation, or a calling, to become involved in the political process and vote on election day.

In her charge, the Bishop mentioned climate change and anti-racism as particular subjects that call for our involvement. Human trafficking is another issue involving diocesan resources. There are many other issues including poverty, treatment of our elders, justice and reconciliation for First Nations peoples, and a host of others.

This year is a wonderful opportunity for all of us to be involved. Would you consider joining a political party and get it to focus on some of these issues? Perhaps you may even consider running yourself! There will be numerous opportunities to meet and question

candidates and, of course, the opportunity to vote.

In the last federal election, my riding of Niagara Falls had the lowest percentage turnout in the Niagara Peninsula. This is a tragedy because every vote matters. In a municipal election a few years ago, I attended the incumbent mayor’s campaign office about a half hour before the polls closed. A call came in that four people needed a ride to the polls. A car was sent. Early election results showed the incumbent winning by two votes! A recount raised to six. Your vote matters.

So, I encourage all of us to listen to what the Archbishop said and what our baptismal covenants call us to do: “To be a Christian is to be involved in politics.”

How you do this is entirely up to you. As a former refugee lawyer, I represented far too many people who had not been free to be involved in politics and risked torture, imprisonment, or death if they did. Our politicians will make major decisions on many

of the issues I have discussed. Please make your opinions known and your voice heard. Please vote! As citizens, it is part of our vocation.



The Reverend Deacon Rod McDowell, a long-time advocate of refugee rights, is a member of the ministry team at St. Paul’s Ft. Erie.

Ordained for Sacred Ministry

On the Feast of the Reign of Christ, November 21, Bishop Susan Bell ordained Sandra Thomson and Mark McGill as deacons at Christ’s Church Cathedral in Hamilton. They are pictured here along with the rectors of the parishes where they are serving, the Reverend Sheila VanZandwyk of Church of the Transfiguration in St. Catharines, and the Reverend Tom Vaughn of Holy Trinity in Welland.

Photo credit: William Pleydon



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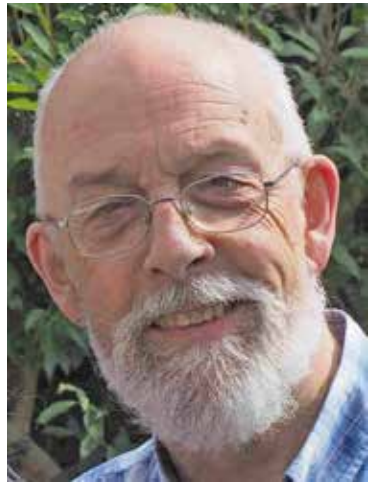


ANGLICAN
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**CALLED TO LIFE
COMPELLED TO LOVE**

In other words:

The Unfolding Gospel—An Exercise in Self-Advertisement

**JOHN BOWEN**

Last time I checked, self-advertisement was not among the nine-fold fruit of the Holy Spirit. Love, joy, peace—all that good stuff—yes. Self-advertisement, not so much. But maybe I can share something within the Niagara Anglican family that I feel pretty good about: a new book.

The Unfolding Gospel: How the Good News Makes Sense of Discipleship, Church, Mission, and Everything Else was published by Fortress Press in July last year. It had actually been incubating for some years, taking shape little by little, like an unborn chick, but COVID-19 finally allowed it to hatch and

spread its wings.

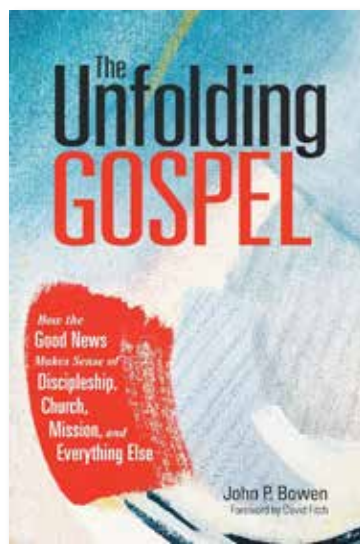
The back-story is that way back in 2002 I published my first book, *Evangelism for 'Normal' People*. It really summarised what I had learned and taught about evangelism over the years to that point. Yet, in the time that followed, teaching at Wycliffe College and in churches and conferences, I began to feel I had started in the wrong place.

In spite of my best efforts, the word evangelism offended and scared people. Indeed, it still does! I remember one respected church leader in Ottawa saying vehemently, "I have no intention of ever sharing the Gospel with anyone!" And I found myself thinking (though not until it was too late to say it!), "So tell me about this Gospel that you're not willing to share. What exactly is it?"

As a result, time after time, I found myself being driven back to ask: What is the Gospel? After all, the Greek word for Gospel, is evangel—literally good news—and so to evangelise is simply "to good news," to tell the Good News. Unless we know what the evangel is, there is no point in even discussing the hows and whys of evangelism.

Time after time, I found that

Anglicans in particular had no idea in what way the Christian Gospel was good news, for them or for anyone else. One lifelong church member told me: "What is the Gospel? That's easy. Love your neighbour as yourself." I had to say, as gently as I could, "That's really not good news for anyone—not for me and (sadly) not for my neighbour either." It sets a standard impossible for me to live up to. Frankly, if that's all Jesus has to say to me, then it's actually pretty bad news.



But no. To summarise what I think is the key first chapter of the book, the Good News is that God has done something—and continues to do something—to

put right all that we have put wrong in the world—to do away with sin and suffering. And, as Christians understand it, somehow the focus of that Good News is Jesus Christ, his life, death and resurrection, his ascension, and the sending of the Spirit.

Then I had a second revelation. It was difficult to talk about Jesus' announcement of the Gospel without talking about his call to repentance and faith. So what was that about? Of course: repentance and faith were simply the doorway to discipleship—to becoming apprentices of Jesus, learning to live his life in his world.

From there, it was a small step to rethink what church is: the church is at its heart the community of disciples of Jesus. And why are they disciples? Because they believe he has brought the very Good News the world needs to hear—that God is on our side, and working in love to renew, redeem, and restore everything that is broken. As Tolkien has Sam Gamgee ask Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings*, "Is everything sad going to come untrue?" And the answer, gloriously, is "Absolutely yes."

I have come to the conviction

that, once we have grasped this, a lot of things fall into place. If we grasp the heart of Jesus' Good News, then we will understand what discipleship is, and what the church is. We will also understand that slippery word mission. It is simply shorthand for this work of God to restore all things—the mission of God which we are invited to join in.

But there is more: the Good News which is Jesus is the key to understanding all sorts of other things: Why are the sacraments so central to the church's life? What does leadership look like? How may traditional churches be revived? How and why should we start new churches? How do we relate to the culture around us? Understanding the Gospel even sheds a new light on the thorny topic we began with—evangelism.

The blurbs on the back cover include some generous words from our Primate, Linda Nicholls. But I should stop. That's quite enough self-advertisement for one day.

The Unfolding Gospel can be ordered from the Canadian distributor, Parasource of Paris, Ontario, for \$26.22 plus postage at www.parasource.com.

Seeing Beyond Ourselves

BY SHARYN HALL

On January 6, we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany. From the Gospel of Matthew, we read the story of the Magi, who see a brilliant star in the heavens and recognize that a child has been born who will influence human history. They make an arduous and dangerous journey into the land of the Hebrew tribes and Roman overlords to find this child.

In our churches at the feast of Epiphany, we add the three Magi to our Nativity scenes and then we believe that the pictures are complete; but are they?

For centuries there has been a tradition in the city of Naples, in Italy, to enlarge the Nativity scene to reflect the importance of the birth of Jesus for all people. The Holy Infant and the Madonna have a central position in the scene, but there are many other figures as well;

for example, it is acceptable to place a farmer's wife cooking spaghetti next to the three Magi. The figures usually reflect the contemporary culture of Naples, but historic and international people also may be represented. In the local museum, you can see one of the largest Nativity creations which includes over 160 people and many animals, angels and miniature objects. You may recognize politicians, celebrities and at least one pickpocket.

Some people may find this inclusion of everyday figures in a religious tableau as inappropriate, but there is an important message in these overcrowded scenes. Let us not confine the birth of Jesus in a time and place two thousand years ago. If we confine his nativity to a small vision, we may not see the universal relevance of the Christmas story.

Jesus was born into the chaos of humanity. People were pouring into Bethlehem: Roman soldiers, merchants, farmers, slaves and probably pickpockets. Into this crowded town came poor shepherds on a quest to find a holy infant foretold by angels. People would hardly notice them, but people might notice three men in rich, exotic robes, travellers from a distant land, followers of an unfamiliar religion.

In our gospel narratives, we have the message that God sent Jesus into the world as it was, a world as fragmented and violent as our world today. Who might we place in our Nativity scenes now? Like the crowds in Bethlehem, we might include people hurrying to offices, merchants opening stores and restaurants, and weary hospital workers. Like the lonely shepherds, we might represent homeless people, migrants or



Detail from a Neapolitan nativity. iStock

refugees. Like the Magi, we might include strangers from exotic lands. Who would you place in your Nativity scene? Perhaps a loved one, an astronaut, an Olympic athlete?

As Christians we believe that Jesus was God in the world with a message of hope and love which transcends the diversity of human society. Because we are loved by God, we are called to care for God's world and for God's people. When the Magi arrive at the stable, the Nativity scene is not complete and never

will be, because the message of Jesus Emmanuel is made new again in every generation which strives for justice, compassion and peace in this complex world of the twenty-first century.

The story of the star and the Magi ends with the Wise Men safely returning to their own country. We do not know, and it seems unlikely, that they abandoned their own religion to adopt the Hebrew faith. We might hope that they told others of their journey and encouraged respect among non-Jews for the Hebrew God. On January 6, we begin the season of Epiphany in our church year. It is the time when we explore the events in the life of Jesus as he begins his mission from God. Let us all begin this new year with hope. The more we search for God, the more we realize that God is sending us unusual signs to guide us.

Niagara School for Missional Leadership Announces Winter Plans

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

been the encouraging thing for me...the mission field is every human being," expressed Randy Srochenski, former CFL long snapper who co-pastors PORT Church, St. Catharines, with his wife Racheal—both of whom are NSML participants.

Two courses that were integral to the piloting of the NSML are now being offered to all. Canon Ian Mobsby's Introduction to Missional New Monasticism offers an online learning experience for those interested in exploring new expressions of Church (such as the Fresh Expressions initiative). Leanne Friesen's course, The Persistent Parish: Pursuing Missional Movement in Cozy Congregations, aims to guide participants through rethinking missionality in their congregation's current context. The course will introduce Anglicans to a body of literature on the missional movement that might be unfamiliar.

Reflecting the sustained interest in certain subject areas, several courses, such as Archdeacon Val Kerr and Janice Whiteley's course on Connecting with Indigenous Knowledge, will be offered again.

"Our hope is that our [learners] will take away a lot of tools for their toolbox," expressed Archdeacon Kerr. These tools focus on breaking down barriers between leaders, whether ordained or lay, and the world outside the walls of the Church.

The winter terms builds on the successful launch of the NSML, with its first full term concluding in December. The formal launch came after more than a year of discernment, planning, and testing, including the piloting of four missionally oriented



The Reverend Canon Ian Mobsby, one of the NSML teacher-practitioners.

courses in the winter and spring of 2021. Nearly 50 participants engaged in six courses last fall.

Susie Kim, a newly appointed missionary in the diocese, affirmed that the NSML "gives leaders and future leaders the space to practice skills and try things out"—something that might bring discomfort to those unused to thinking missionally.

Bishop Susan Bell prayed that all who participate in the NSML will see the energizing spiritual benefits of thinking and praying about our response to God's mission. "When you join God's mission," she reflected, "it's a bit like putting a plug into a socket—you're tapping into the source of love in this world, which is Jesus Christ. And sharing that love, sharing the gospel, is an energizing thing."

Applications for enrollment are currently being accepted for the Winter 2022 term.

To learn more about the Niagara School for Missional Leadership's current course offerings and teacher-practitioners, and to apply for enrollment in a course for Winter 2022, visit nsm.ca or email hello@nsm.ca.

New Treasurer Appointed for the Diocese

Bishop Susan Bell is pleased to announce the appointment by Synod Council of Kemi Okwelum to serve as the diocese's next treasurer and director of finance, effective December 15.

Okwelum will oversee diocesan finance and accounting functions, stewarding the resources entrusted to the care of the Synod and its parishes for the purposes of furthering God's mission in our communities. As a member of the senior leadership team of the diocese, Kemi will support the diocesan



vision and Mission Action Plan priorities through the provision of resources for ministry.



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Faith Formation Boxes Spread Joy Across Niagara

BY SARAH BIRD

The children, youth, and family ministry (CYFM) leader network is celebrating the completion of our largest faith formation box build for Advent! Through the pandemic the network of leaders gathered bi-weekly through Zoom to pray, share creative and innovative ideas, discuss challenges, and brainstorm new initiatives. The largest challenge frequently discussed was finding ways to stay connected to children, youth, and families in parishes as they were not comfortable returning to in person worship.

At the start of the pandemic, two family ministry coordinators, Katherine Kerley and Alison Steele from Lincoln and Brock regions, respectively, joined together to develop Lent faith formation packages for their parish families. The success and positive feedback from this project inspired other members of the CYFM leader network to join the next build for Vacation Bible School. What

started off as two parishes working together quickly turned into five parishes that reached further across the diocese into Hamilton-Haldimand and Trafalgar regions.

The development of a faith formation box takes an unbelievable amount of time, planning, research, and creative flowing juices. The Advent box that was just delivered across Niagara in December was the largest build to date as the network began planning in May 2021. Once the written materials were completed, a four-day build took place starting in Hamilton at Christ's Church Cathedral and then in St. Catharines at the Church of the Transfiguration with a spirited volunteer team. The box included 28 daily colourful envelopes (starting with Advent 1 Sunday to Christmas Day) that were filled with prayers, Scripture, story cards, crafts, and special treats to help families journey through Advent as they anticipate the birth of Jesus. Once the box was completed, they were then gift



wrapped in beautiful Christmas paper so that each family could unwrap their special box.

The Advent box was delivered to over 200 children some of whom are not affiliated with a

parish. This project grew larger than we had anticipated, as 12 parishes were involved in the making and or distribution—a beautiful reminder from God that team ministry is indeed a blessing, and that anything is possible when two or more are gathered. Moving forward the Spirit continues to guide children, youth, and family ministry throughout the diocese. The network of leaders asks for your continued prayers as we continue finding new ways to form faith of the younger generation of our beloved church.

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Archbishop Stephen Cottrell Calls for Attention to Climate Change

BY JAMES NEWMAN

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Stephen Cottrell, The Archbishop of York and Primate of England, was the guest speaker for the fall Bishop's Company event. Archbishop Cottrell is an engaging and sophisticated leader, theologian, speaker, and writer.

The format was an informal series of questions and discussion between our Bishop Susan Bell and Archbishop Cottrell. I submitted the following question in advance:

The Fifth Mark of Mission of the Anglican Church of Canada is "to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth." What's your advice about how to motivate people in our pews to take positive action about climate change? (and what might that action as a church be?)

The following is a transcript of the Archbishop's response:

"What a good question. Is there a more important ques-

tion facing the world?

"I think I would start by...two things...on the big picture level I think we need to teach much more about this. This needs to be not a kind of add-on to the Gospel; this is the Gospel... how we inhabit the world in the way of Christ...this is the Gospel. So, I'd want to preach and teach about it much more... good to hear that Canada is ahead as usual...it's even in your Baptismal liturgy. It's those things that start to impress it into our consciousness. This is what it means to follow Christ.

"For me the Lord's Prayer is the pattern for our praying and our living, and the other thing that interested me about the Lord's Prayer in this regard, if you go back to the 1662 Prayer Book, which is obviously the liturgical foundation document for both our churches even if we may not use it that much anymore—if you find the Lord's Prayer, it says it says, 'Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, they will be done in earth as it is



Archbishop Stephen Cottrell

in Heaven.'

"We don't say 'in' earth any more, we say 'on' earth. I'm not aware of any liturgical commission changing the language. It just kind of happened. So now all our modern liturgies say 'on' earth, so it's a really interesting difference. We used to say we live in the earth, recognizing quite naturally that we are part of the created world, interdependent with it. And then we suddenly decided that we didn't live in it anymore, we lived on it, and it was ours and we could do with it what we liked.

"That is the change, I think, in a single word, that we need to make. We need to return to understanding that we live

in the earth and we're part of it. And indeed, from my small understanding of Indigenous cultures and people in Canada, many of them still retain a much richer and deeper understanding of our relationship and interdependence with the whole created order, and that's a blessing that you need to take hold of as part of your heritage. So that's the first thing—it's a teaching [opportunity] about what it means to live the Christian life.

"So then of course there's all sorts of practical things that we can and must do, and I'm sure you have them in Canada. We have all kinds of eco-church schemes in this country [such] that churches can actually do things to reduce their carbon footprint, and in the Church of England we have a very bold ambition to be carbon neutral in the church by 2030, which is twenty years ahead of most government and other organizations.

"Now, I don't think we're going to reach it, but we're going to

be close. And I think it's our boldness of vision turned into very direct action that we need. We need to be more uncomfortable about this. And the good thing about having a target like 2030, which is the target we've given ourselves in the Church of England, is, that's my watch. So, you can't not engage with it. So, I think that the trouble with all our current targets is, and the reason our politicians and nations are not engaging with it is, it's not my watch...so if I fail, I will not be accountable for this. Well, I will be, but I won't be around to face the accountability—literally not be around. By 2050, let's face it, most of the current generation of leaders will be long gone.

"So, I think we must be much bolder, much tougher on ourselves, much less comfortable, and it's got to be action against climate change (not talk), but at the same time it must flow for us Christians from a deep renewal of our own traditions to see that this is what it means to be a follower of Christ."

The Ripple Effect

BY SUE CARSON

On October 30, when Synod passed Climate Justice Niagara's motion, a journey began to reduce our diocesan carbon footprint. We thank Synod delegates for acknowledging that the time is right to act. You will be hearing more from your clergy and corporation on what steps will be taken in each of your parishes. Our committee is here to help everyone achieve the best outcome.

You may be asking questions such as: What is an energy audit? Why do we need to do this? What difference will our actions make?

First, a walk-through energy audit means checking every room for ways to reduce carbon emissions. This will involve looking at things such as the HVAC system, insulation, kitchen appliances, office equipment and lighting. Also needed will be someone to monitor the unit amounts of hydro, gas and water used each month to establish a baseline of energy use. Each parish will then create their own



unique 5-year plan of action.

Second, why do we need to do this? As stewards of creation, the actions that we take will be noticed in the communities we serve, and our leadership is likely to inspire others to act. I am a great believer in the ripple effect. One stone, however lightly dropped in water, creates ripples. So even a small nudge can make a difference. How we act and what we say may be the gentle push that causes others to make changes in their lives. The outside community members who use our parish buildings will see how as Christians we try to conserve energy so we will act as good witnesses.

Third, will it make a difference? Buildings are responsible for nearly 20 percent of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Canada. One parish's action

may seem a small pebble, but the combined efforts of 85 parishes will be considerable in making waves. If we all learn new energy saving tactics and follow these ideas at home this will help cut overall GHG emissions that our government has recently agreed to do at the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference. Education is going to be key, so everyone understands the important role they play.

We appreciate that as parishes re-open there will be many issues you have to deal with; but the three terrible weather experiences in BC last year—a heat dome that killed hundreds of people; fires that destroyed so many homes; and the devastating flooding that affected so many lives—show that acting for the good of our planet is even more urgent.

St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians and said: "As for you, my friends, do not grow weary in doing good (2 Thess 3:13). I hope that acting for the environment does not make you weary, but any positive action

that causes a ripple effect to save our planet will a good move.

For more information, contact Sue Carson, chair of Climate Justice Niagara, at d.carson@sympatico.ca.

Motion 7 - Parish Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plans:

- 'that Synod mandate Climate Justice Niagara to assist and resource parishes to complete a walk-through Energy Audit of their church buildings by the end of 2022;
- and that wardens and clergy use the audit to create a five-year parish plan to reach a greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of at least ten percent (10%) by 2024;
- and that all parishes be encouraged to publicize their efforts as a Christian witness to the community at large and means of demonstrating our deep and abiding commitment addressing the climate crisis.'



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

A Special Series



Creating a Culture of Respect, Justice, and Peace for All

This is the eighth installment of this series.

BY CANON CHRISTYN PERKONS

Diocesan Synod marked a turning point for the Anti-Racism Working Group. Did we report that our work was finished? Quite the contrary!

A shared sense that we were ready to move from contemplation and discernment to action coalesced with coming to the end of our group reading of *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*. We came to Synod ready to share where we had been on the journey and where we anticipated going next.

We tell and listen to stories of racism, and the pain of those experiences sits heavily with us. We notice the trauma those experiences create in our bodies, and we awkwardly use newly

learned body and breathing practices to settle and safeguard our bodies. Our commitment to one another, to this vital work, and to our call to be catalysts in this transformation bring us together every three weeks despite busy schedules, fatigue, and the needs of our personal lives.

The past few months find many of us participating in various anti-racism training experiences to increase the group's awareness of best practices and available resources. These training experiences require more time but we are driven by the call to make broken relationships whole.

Each time we think we have learned a lesson, something happens that reminds us that this is a journey that asks us to relearn behaviours and patterns of thinking again and again. So

we recommit to continue telling, listening, feeling, and healing.

Now we find ourselves on a threshold. We are ready to move from a desire for change to creating a framework for a cultural transformation in the Diocese of Niagara. We're excited about a renewed community that includes: a compelling narrative of hope and wholeness; an embracing of role models; leaders and elders from a wide breadth of ethnic diversity; liturgies and rituals of healing and reconciliation; practices of self-care and well-being that enhance everyone's lives; study groups and education that raise awareness and change behaviour; and clear, equitable practices of belonging, rewarding, and restoring peace and harmony.

We will be starting with the development of an experien-

tially-based education process rooted in our baptismal covenant, followed by the creation of a program to train facilitators to guide this process in parishes, regions and online. Hand-in-hand with this work will be a focus on human resources practices that focus on equity, diversity and inclusion. It promises to be another life-affirming and life-changing year!

Such a culture change requires a collaborative and concerted effort from all of us to acknowledge our past failures and mistakes, and our present reality—an effort rooted in an understanding that this transformation is about rights, privileges and opportunities being extended to all of God's people equitably. This transformation means we are striving for justice and peace among all people and respecting the dignity of

every human being. We are called to boldly create God's new kingdom where people flourish, grounded in right relationships and abundance for all—to walk the way of Jesus!

I have something to ask of all of us; please pray for this work, the people undertaking it, and for the unfolding of God's kingdom in our midst. Your prayers are critical to our mission which is nothing less than working with God to dismantle the systemic racism that cripples and breaks us all.

If you have skills and resources to offer this work or a passion for this transformation, contact Canon Christyn Perkons at christyn.perkons@niagaraanglican.ca. The Anti-Racism Working Group welcomes new members, partners and resource sharing!

New Facilitator's Guide Available to Create Parish Mission Action Plans

Inspired by the process to develop a diocesan Mission Action Plan (MAP), the diocese has now made available a guide to help congregational leaders discern and develop their own parish MAPs. The facilitator's guide helps shepherd individual parishes in support, vision, and mission, and was developed by Canon Christyn Perkons.

"It is my hope that just as the diocesan MAP helped us identify our ministry priorities particularly with regard to reaching those outside our churches, so this process will do the same for parish ministry," Bishop Susan Bell shared in her charge to this year's diocesan Synod. "It will help us each find our mission in our parish context and will sharpen our sense of identity in

our wider communities. It's my prayer that it will be widely used across the diocese in the coming year."

The guide primarily provides resources to move parishes through four sequential gatherings to a mission action plan that will serve the parish and God's mission for the next one to two years. The first three meetings allow people to participate in holy brainstorming that flows out of the parish's strengths, gifts, and passions framed by



the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. The final meeting leads participants through a prioritizing process that culminates in a plan with goals for three focus areas: Adult Faith Formation,

Reshaping Parish Culture to Enable Ministry, and Fullness of Life in Your Neighbourhood. The resulting plan is intended to be simple, flexible, shaped to a parish's particular community context, and reflective of God's unique call to mission.

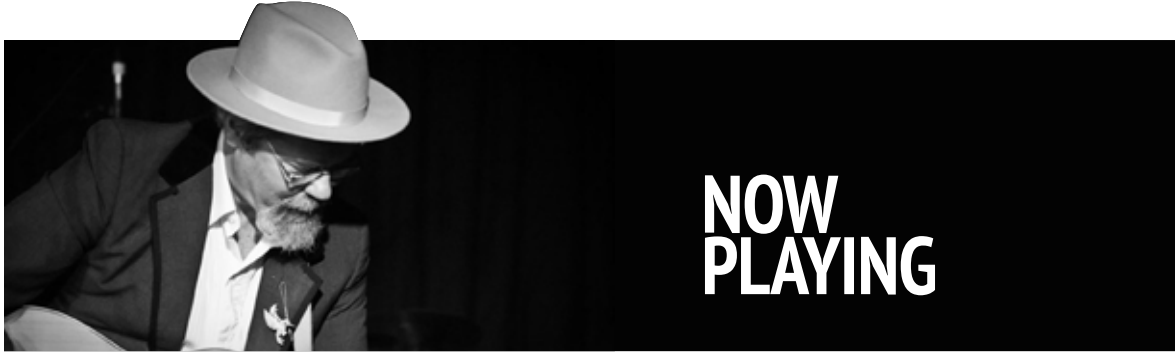
Available for free as a fillable PDF, the guide includes detailed steps and tools for parishes to meet together, reflect, brainstorm, and set goals for both the smaller core steering group that meets together and for how the group communicates with the broader parish.

"I am deeply grateful to the many teachers and writers whose work, over the past few years, has become part of my DNA and underpins so much of this initiative," said Canon

Christyn Perkons. "This process is offered to the people of the Diocese of Niagara as we walk together led by our shared vision, 'Called to Life, Compelled to Love' and our mission, 'Ignited by the irresistible love of Jesus and renewed by the Holy Spirit, we partner with God to deepen faith, share stories, and care for creation.'"

Download the MAP Process for Parishes Facilitator's Guide at <https://bit.ly/mapforparishes>.

For more information, or for assistance as you plan to create your parish's MAP, contact Canon Christyn Perkons at christyn.perkons@niagaraanglican.ca.



Transforming Prayer

BY THE VENERABLE MAX WOOLLAVER

When Jesus speaks of himself as “the Way, the Truth and the Life” we would not be far wrong to be hearing him say “I am the Way of Prayer, the Truth of Prayer, and the Life of Prayer.”

We are often led to prayer through a concern for another. This is the way it should be. We need and ought to pray for others. We call this intercessory prayer. We intercede for others. This is a kind of ‘standing before God’ on behalf of someone. This is a beautiful and sacred impulse. This longing in us to pray for others is an echo of the Divine Pity which lives in the Heart of God for all those who suffer. We read that the Risen Christ intercedes for us before God.

While intercessory prayer is never far from our heart, our soul, our mind and our body there is another moment of prayer to which we are called. In 2 Peter 1:3-4 we read: “[God’s] divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness...[that we] may become participants of the divine nature.” Yes! You read that correctly: “participants in the divine nature!” The King James Version reads: “partakers of the divine nature.” This is a staggering claim!

At the very least, this notion of “partaking” or “participating” in the “divine nature” intimates an entirely new order, kind, and hope of prayer. It is a way of prayer which does not arise naturally within us as, say, the

prayer of concern for another. It is not perhaps a “natural” inclination for us to pray: “O God, make me a partaker of your Divine Nature.” Or perhaps we could say, we have not, as a matter of course, been taught to pray in this manner.

Yet, it is the prayer of Jesus. Jesus prays: “As you, Holy God, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17). The transformation of human nature in union with God is the most fundamental understanding of the meaning and purpose of human life. Jesus calls all humanity into a lifelong journey of the transformation of human nature through the sharing of God’s Holy Nature.

This is, in faith, the essence of Christianity. This is the call of the church. This is the call of God to you. The ceaseless flow of Transforming Grace is being poured into our hearts whether we know it or not. The call to seek awareness of this ceaseless flow of Grace calls for the birth of a new consciousness. Jesus and Nicodemus had a good conversation about this!

We must not be discouraged by the fact that Transforming Grace is perhaps known primarily in retrospect! The Emmaus disciples recognized Jesus only after he left their presence: “Were not our hearts burning within us as he spoke with us by the way...?”

There are rare moments when the proximity of the Holy One births a felt experience. These are memorable moments. It

comes as a shock when we realize that these moments were fleeting. St Teresa of Avila spoke of moments of conscious union lasting 30 or 40 seconds. The memory of even these brief moments can remain for a life time! Indeed, these experiences change entire lives!

Yet, for most of us the ongoing transformation of our human nature is a quiet, ongoing affair. We often read that God’s first language is silence. God’s love for us is a lifetime’s journey of quiet, ever-deepening, renewal of heart, soul, mind and body.

This is the prayer we long for. This is the prayer the Holy Spirit seeks to birth in all of us. This is the life we long to live. This is the prayer St. Paul beckons us to seek when he beseeches us to ‘be renewed in the mind of Christ.’ This is the prayer of Paul in Ephesians 3: “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Paul in Colossians 1 proclaims: “Christ in you! The hope of Glory!”

The courage to pray for union with God’s Holy Spirit is but the love of God stirring in your heart, soul, mind and body. We were born to live in God. The lifetime’s transformation of our human nature in Christ is the birth of this never-ending life. This is the eternal partaking of the Nature of God – union with the Risen Christ who is The Way of Prayer, The Truth of Prayer and The Life of Prayer.



The Wafer and the Virus

BY HAMISH GUTHRIE

This threatens the candles
and the gleaming stillness
in the glass portraits of the saints.
Proceedings quietly disturb the sunlit dust.
The altar is a more difficult approach
as we begin in silence
and the golden music of the flute.

We conduct a double liturgy,
the service and the virus' antiseptic steps.
The germs are real and present elements.
The chalice is forbidden to be touched.
We near the laden altar and stand back.

So strange to fear a poison
may hover at the chancel steps.
The wafer and the virus
double as we step close in awe.

Drawing us, the voice
may speak invisibly the little death
in droplets in the air.
So strange to feel a dread
in this most intimate approach.
We move between the dangers to the bread.



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

The Refugee Journeys of the Masri Family

BY HOLLIS HISCOCK

In 2016, Basel, Sabah, Aboudy, and Amira Masri were warmly welcomed by St. Christopher's Church, Burlington. Their multi-year odyssey started in Syria, through Turkey and eventually Canada. Today, the Syrian Family Reunification Committee (SFR) is working to bring 10 more Masri family members from Turkey to Canada.

The three brothers and their families met with Canadian embassy officials in Ankara and were told their application for permanent residency was approved. The next step is arranging travel visas.

In the two following conversations, first Basel relates his stories and hopes, and secondly SFR Coordinator Bob Loree tells us what is happening and what we can do.

Hollis: What were your thoughts when you stepped off the plane in Toronto to begin a new life in Canada?

Basel: The moment we stepped out of the plane, we did not feel that we were strangers when we saw a big sign that said "welcome to Canada," raised by a wonderful Canadian group. I also felt that we are now in safe hands, and we are going to have our first night without any bombs or aircraft strikes.

Hollis: How do you feel now?

Basel: I feel that we are a very successful family and we have accomplished many goals. We are an active part of the com-



Above: Basil's children at the restaurant he manages.

Below: The children run in the yard.

Photos: Contributed



munity, plus we can see how our lives exist here in Canada.

Hollis: What are the biggest changes?

Basel: I can see our beautiful kids growing in a safe environment and that their future is here. I can see myself as a successful student, full-time manager, multitasker, and the most important growth is that I will be a very successful law student in the near future ... all because of the support from the families that sponsored us five years ago.

Hollis: What do you do for fun and relaxation?

Basel: Go to the theatre, go out to the local parks, explore new places, and do other activities

such as swimming and biking.

Hollis: What work experiences have you had?

Basel: After we arrived in Canada, within three months, I found a part-time job at a restaurant after my school hours. Then I had full-time in the same field, got different positions and then became a restaurant manager.

Hollis: What have you done to further your education?

Basel: Both our kids are currently studying, grades 2 and 3. They are doing very well and speak two languages. Sabah got a hairdresser certificate. I went to an English as a Second Language (ESL) school. Then my teacher suggested I go to

college so that's what I'm doing now at Sheridan College. I will be finishing my highest English level just before Christmas.

Because I went to law school back home in Syria, I have that desire to complete my education here in the same field. I'm applying for paralegal and finally I'm definitely going to law school.

Hollis: Why do you want other family members to come to our country?

Basel: For so many reasons. First of all, I really missed them, I have not seen their kids. Secondly, their kids can go to school and the adults can start building their future. I can assure you that—with your support—they can build a bright future for themselves and for their kids. They are very hard-working, and they are well educated.

Hollis: Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Basel: I do believe that every single penny is counted, and I am faithful that God will help your kids and your grandkids because good deeds will never be forgotten.

Hollis: You coordinated the group that brought Basel's family to Canada; now you are doing the same for his extended family. Why?

Bob: Canada is a great place to live. The entire Masri family has experienced the horror of living in a country that has become a warzone with indiscriminate bombs ripping through neighbourhoods, killing loved ones,

demolishing lives, and separating families. They have experienced terror and pray for safety, security, education, health, and life with family and friends. Sponsoring Basel's extended family to come to Canada is about offering survival, providing opportunities, changing lives forever and reunifying a family separated by violence. God is calling us to action, to be thankful and help others. We are answering that call.

Hollis: What groups are involved with SFR?

Bob: We are a team of Anglicans, Muslims, and community members who are sharing our good fortunes with human beings who have had their lives destroyed. We have learned how innocent people with horrific experiences beg for the chance to have their family reunited in Canada. For them to have the opportunity to be healthy, educated, contributors in a safe future with loved ones, is our mission. We need your help!

Hollis: How can people help?

Bob: Our financial goal is \$90,000 to be donated or pledged before December 31, 2022. Cheques can be made out to The Synod of the Diocese of Niagara, with St. Christopher's Refugee Sponsorship in the memo line, and sent to Cathedral Place, Attn: Refugee Sponsorship, 252 James Street North, Hamilton, ON, L8R 2L3.

To learn more, donate, and contact SFR, visit syrianfamily.ca.



Refugee Turned Citizen

BY CATHERINE LECKEY

Raed Al Salkhadi has shared with the parishes of St Simon's and St Jude's of Oakville the happy news that on November 2, 2021 he became a Canadian citizen. Raed is the eldest of the three children of the Al Salkhadi family, which in April 2017 arrived in Oakville as refugees from Syria, by way of Jordan, and were sponsored by the two parishes as part of the Diocesan Refugee Initiative.

War overturned the comfortable life that Raed enjoyed as a young child in Syria. On his arrival in Canada, speaking no

English, he was thrown into grade 9. He persevered, graduating from St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School in June 2020 in the midst of the pandemic. He is in his second year of the Police Foundations program at Humber College and hopes for a career in law enforcement. He learned to drive and works part-time at Fortinos.

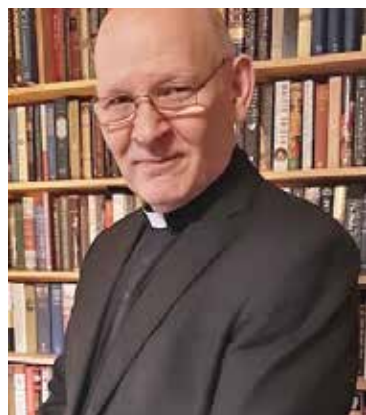
As we congratulate Raed and rejoice in his success, we recognize what a privilege it has been to share his journey and how much we have learned from witnessing the courage and tenacity he showed in beginning a new life in Canada, despite the

trauma of war and loss. For his part, Raed hopes his story will encourage others to support displaced families in need of a new home.

We have learned recently that Raed's mother, Rabea, has passed her citizenship exams and will soon join her son as a Canadian citizen.



I Gave In



BY THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN

In late October 2021, in our very own Christ's Church Cathedral in Hamilton, I was ordained a priest. I'd been made a deacon two years earlier, and that followed three years of academic theological studies at Trinity College, University of Toronto, accompanied by several placements in churches and a gritty but glorious curve of learning like no other in hospitals, street support, food banks, and generally with those too often forgotten if not completely ignored. I'm sometimes asked why I gave

up various lucrative positions in media in my mid-50s to return to university and seek ordination. The answer, I suppose, is that I'd either lost my senses and had some sort of mid-life crisis, or that I believed the Christian story to be true. I may well have lost my senses—many would argue so—but I also believed it all to be true.

Apparently I'm what is known as bi-vocational, which has always sounded to me much more sexy than it actually is! I'm a priest, but I still write columns, publish books, sometimes appear on radio and TV. Because of my media work I'm allowed an entry into public life that very few other clerics are permitted, and that matters a great deal to me. Because the church, the faith, the image of Christianity, has seldom been as grim as it is now. I wish I could say otherwise but that would be a pointless and damaging illusion.

Anti-vaccination zealots holding crosses as they scream igno-

rance and conspiracy theories, supporters of Donald Trump justifying their extremism with scripture, anti-choice obsessives praying ostentatiously. The list goes on. Of course, this is only a right-wing fringe of the international church, but the loudest noise is often in the shallowest end of the swimming pool, and my goodness these guys really know how to splash.

So, when I promised on that special day to "love and serve the people among who you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor" and to "declare God's forgiveness" I was taking on quite a bit.

Every week on social media I'm accused of being a child abuser or screamed at for worshipping a "sky fairy." It's standard stuff from angry God-haters but has as little connection with thoughtful atheism as Jesus does with Trump-adoring fundamentalism. Stephen Fry, one of the most brilliant atheists in the world, wrote to me before my priesting with the most

beautiful words of encouragement. Our humanity should define rather than divide us, and if we can't disagree within a community of organized goodness, we have no hope.

I fully understand apathy and often anger towards churches. I myself have written numerous times about the failings of Christian institutions, and while Anglicans may not be the greatest sinners, we all have bloody stains on our hands. My father's family were east-European Jews, and they saw precious little compassion from a body ostensibly based around a Jewish messiah who preached peace, equality, and justice.

But that makes what I do, what we do, more significant than ever. Christianity and churches matter. Some people might doubt that but if they could shadow me on an average week they'd understand. The state, and God bless public medicine and social support, simply can't cope with every demand. A lot of what I do is helping people

with rent, food, and health challenges, and they come to us because they know they'll be received. Interesting how people who are struggling often have much more affection for the church and Christianity than do those who are comfortable.

But at the philosophical foundation of this is my faith in a man who 2000 years ago in a largely unnoticed part of the world occupied by an imperial power sang an exquisite but challenging melody of love, change, hope, and grace. I'm not a fool, I'm not unworldly, and I've kicked away at faith for years. The fighting stopped, the resistance ended, I gave in. I think I'm a different person from who I was eight years ago, and I suspect the growth will continue. Jesus called for the revolution of the self as well as of the world. Is that political? If it is, so be it. I'm his for life, and the day I stop trying to make the world a better place is the day I've failed him.

Remembrance Day Remembered

The Sanctuary at The Church of Our Saviour The Redeemer, Stoney Creek was beautifully decorated for Remembrance Day by Connie Hamilton and Janet Lampman. The Baptismal Font was showered with red poppies as well as a few purple poppies to remember the animals killed during the war. On top was an actual helmet from the war owned by Bill Vance. Also decorated were altar, portable altar, lectern and organ.

We will never forget those who fought so bravely and those who gave their lives so that we might live in peace.



Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

Deadlines:

- March – January 28
- April – February 25
- May – March 25

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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Socktober Super Successful Sock Drive

BY ALEXIS MIMACHO

The Kitchen Bees, an outreach project of The Church of the Apostles in Guelph, has been keeping busy in October gathering socks for their month-long sock drive 'Socktober'. The focus of this project is to help keep Guelph's most vulnerable warm throughout the cold wintery months ahead. The Kitchen Bees were thrilled with the overall success of Socktober, collecting a grand total of 5000 pairs of socks.

The Kitchen Bees had a stretch goal of collecting 1000 pairs of socks in October. At the beginning of the month they were unsure if it would be possible to collect so many socks on their own. Kitchen Bees Coordinator John Dennis said "We extended an invitation to a number of churches in Guelph. Kortright Presbyterian Church, Dublin Street United Church, Harcourt Memorial United Church, and River of Life Church all joined us for Socktober."

As the weeks went by, more and more donations came in -

quickly surpassing the initial goal of 1000 pairs of socks. Alexis Mimacho, the Kitchen Bees Project Facilitator, said "We weren't expecting the word to spread as fast as it did. There were 150-200 pairs of socks being dropped off each day at one point". The program cincreased the goal to 2000 pairs of socks, shortly after hitting the 1000 milestone.

A local school, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School, collected 700 pairs of socks during a pajama Tuesday event and a local company, MF Property Management Ltd., collected funds from staff to purchase 200 pairs of socks. All different types of socks were collected including children's socks, clean gently used socks, and a surprising number of Christmas themed socks.

The socks collected will be distributed through local emergency relief organizations, The Bench and Your Downtown Guelph Friends. Ed Pickersgill from The Bench said "we distribute more than 5,000 pairs of socks each year. Having the socks donated means that we



can allocate our limited funds to purchasing more food and hygiene products."

The reason that so many socks are needed is that the most vulnerable in Guelph often lack access to laundry facilities or the funds to wash clothes. Socks often get worn until they become unwearable, therefore a clean pair of socks can have a significant impact on someone's well being. Foot conditions are a highly prevalent issue among the homeless, with up to two

thirds reporting a foot health concern and one quarter of individuals visiting a health professional, according to a recent study.

Kitchen Bees Coordinator John Dennis noted that "we were thrilled with all the socks that we collected. Our sense was that everyone can relate to having cold feet. The success of the program is the result of the community coming together to support this worthy cause."

Alexis Mimacho is the Kitchen Bees Facilitator. The Kitchen Bees is a volunteer emergency food program started in response to the pandemic in May 2020. Volunteers prepare meals in the church's commercial kitchen for local emergency food providers and street missions. In 2021, they will provide 7,000 meals, much needed supplies, and opportunities for over 100 volunteers to prepare meals. Questions can be directed to kitchenbeesguelph@gmail.com.

A Stewardship Journey

BY GILLIAN DOUCET CAMPBELL

The Magi in the Gospel of Matthew asked: "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?" It is the start of a new year. This is a time given over to reflection and resolutions. This question asked by the Magi is a good one to reflect on; we might in turn ask: where is Jesus seen in my life? How am I being the hands and feet of Jesus?

Through the lens of stew-

ardship, this question is very important. It leads us to examine how we are expressing our faith in Christ Jesus through the resources God has given us; our time, skills, and finances. That is what Biblical stewardship is about: utilizing and managing all the resources God has provided for the glory of God and the betterment of God's creation. And this is what the Magi did. Compelled to follow the star that signaled the birth of the newborn King of the Jews, they

set out to worship him in the best ways they knew how.

We cannot know for certain how far they traveled on their journey. Some scholars suggest "the East" meant they traveled anywhere from 600-1,200 kilometers over diverse terrain. So you can imagine that their expedition required many resources, including time, finances, and skills. I am sure it also meant the giving up of things, such as opportunities, events, and time with friends

and family. But together they prioritized what they saw as important and made it happen. They willingly embarked on a difficult journey—likely with doubts, questions, and sacrifices.

But it is an important journey to Jesus Christ. As Matthew 2:10-11a says, "When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage." In Greek, where it says, "they were overwhelmed with joy," it means "overwhelmed with mega joy!" Their "mega joy" was heartfelt awe that led to worship. It was not a fleeting moment of happiness. Instead, it was worship deep from a heart filled with wonderment.

Truly, worship is a time where your head and heart connect in awe and reverence of God. Like the Magi, we are to humble ourselves to worship the Lord. This is what the Magi did when they saw Mary and Jesus—they "knelt down and paid homage," humbling themselves in the presence

of the One worthy of worship.

Finally, we reach the most famous part of this passage: the giving of gifts. St. Matthew says, "opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh." Stewarding the resources God has given each of us and giving back to God through our time, skills, and finances is a part of discipleship. It is truly an integral part of worship, of showing and accepting love from God with joy. God does not necessarily call us to give extravagantly. But we are called to steward the resources God has provided thoughtfully and generously. When you delight in someone you want to give in a way that is meaningful and thoughtful.

As we enter this new year, let's resolve to be more like the Magi and step out on a journey of faith—one that requires our heads, hearts, and resources and that will include both sacrifice and mega joy. Most of all, this is a journey that leads us along the path of the Magi to worship Jesus Christ.

