

### Mapping the Ground We Stand On

Program visualizes the Indigenous heritage of our land.

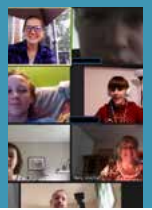
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### Junior Youth Connections Celebrates Three Years

A program for children 10–13 to grow connections is thriving.

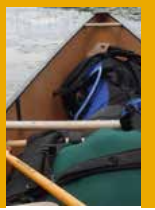
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### The Minesing Swamp

Martha Tatarnic reflects on coming through the wilderness as part of our faith journey.

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A section of the Anglican Journal



# NIAGARA ANGLICAN



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

MAY 2022

## Walking in Right Relations



Detail of the quilt created by St. John's parishioner Jane Rajantie.

**BY THE REVEREND JUDY STEERS**

Last summer, moved by the discoveries of unmarked graves at Residential Schools, and the upcoming National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, parishioners at St John's, Elora began an initiative called Walking in Right Relations. The aim of this group was for us to learn more about the history and legacy of residential schools, to discern ways to take public, communal, and personal action in response to our learning.

Since the group first met, we have undertaken a number of projects; some are in the planning stage, some have been initiated and borne fruit. One particular project that has grown and inspired us over the year began with our public



Orange ribbons used to make the quilt were originally tied to trees around the church property for the 2021 National Day of Truth and Reconciliation

Photos: Contributed by Judy Steers

observance of the first National Day of Truth and Reconciliation in September 2021. St. John's parishioners and the local community were invited to tie ribbons made of strips of orange cotton cloth onto the trees around the church and parish centre as a public witness to our grief and solidarity over the discovery of thousands of unmarked graves of Indigenous

children on the sites of former Residential Schools. Over the course of three weeks, a couple of hundred ribbons were tied onto the trees, bushes, and branches around our parish. Passers-by could stop on our front porch and find educational materials about the Truth and Reconciliation

See WALKING Page 2

## Mission in Action



**BY KERRY LUBRICK**

Christ's Church Cathedral was urgently compelled to love and jump to action during this pandemic, winter season, and time of housing crisis. On January 27, we opened our Warming and Resting Centre as a place where people who are precariously housed and food-insecure can come for resting, warmth, light snacks, hand washing, referrals, friendship, and pastoral care. We now have made a decision to make this an ongoing ministry every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon.

"Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality." (Romans 12: 10-13)

As of March 26, 2022, over the 9 weeks/27 days we have seen an average of 7 people per day. Through our amazing volunteers and clergy, we are starting to build trust and community. The following is information on the demographics and observations:

- There have been 202 visits by



Patrick enjoying his visit with the Reverend Rob Jones, Kathy and Oakley.

Photos contributed by Kerry Lubrick

61 individuals; 20 individuals attend regularly.

- 87% are male, 13% are female.
- 40% of visitors live in a shelter, with the rest evenly

split between those who are housed and those who are homeless.

See MISSION IN ACTION Page 4

# Walking in Right Relations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Commission and the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery. (Pamphlets are available for print on the Anglican Church of Canada website.)

Jane Rajantie, member of the Walking in Right Relations team, and also part of our knitters and quilters group, was inspired by the words of an Indigenous

elder she heard interviewed on the radio who called on Canadians to remember the Indigenous story and presence on the land by keeping an empty chair present at meetings or gatherings.

Inspired to take this call one step further, Jane gathered up all of the ribbons from the trees.

She wondered how the pieces of our public witness could be transformed into a permanent reminder of our commitments. They were faded from their month out in the wind and rain—nevertheless, she washed and trimmed them. They sat in neat rows on her quilting table as she waited through the autumn for inspiration to come; it was hard to imagine how to make a quilt out of one-inch strips of frayed fabric!

Late in the winter, Jane finished the quilt. She described the process as both a spiritual exercise and a labour of love as she painstakingly stitched together a beautiful two-sided quilt—one with striking orange strips against a dark background like the night sky, and the other side a flame-coloured sunset. She included red ribbons on the sunset design to also remember missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people (MMIWG2S).

This small quilt was gifted back to the church, to be present at worship and other gatherings and remind us of our commitment to continue to remember, learn, and respond. Later,



The quilt on display in the sanctuary.

Gordon Bristowe—a talented woodworker in the parish—created a wooden stand for it to be displayed either folded or full-length. This quilt is now displayed at weekly worship, and “attends” meetings as parish council and vestry (in its own Zoom window instead of a chair, for the time being). It reminds us of our continued commitment to walk in right relations with our Indigenous siblings.

Judy Steers is Assistant Curate, St John’s, Elora

Editor’s Note: “May 5th has been officially established as Red Dress Day to remember miss-

ing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people. Red Dress Day was established with the unveiling of Métis artist Jaime Black’s REDress project, an aesthetic response to the findings of the 2014 report by the RCMP, titled *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview*. This report revealed that more than 1,000 Indigenous women and gender-diverse people went missing or were murdered in Canada over the previous 30 years. For more information, and to register for virtual events organized this year by Brock University, visit <https://bit.ly/BrockRedressDay>.



Above: Judy Steers with the quilt’s maker, Jane Rajantie.

Below: Gordon Bristowe shows the reverse of the quilt with the stand he made to hold the quilt.





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# HATS Open House

On Friday, April 1, the tiny shelter that has been auspiciously placed in Bishopsgate, just outside Christ's Church Cathedral in downtown Hamilton, was buzzing with activity. Hamilton community members gathered for a literal open house to learn more about the initiative supported by the diocese. The group that will be building and placing these shelters, Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters (HATS), was on-site as well to take questions from curious citizens.

Outside, HATS coordinator Tony D'Amato Stortz spoke with interested community members and shared survey data accumulated over the past month regarding the need for a housing stopgap like the tiny shelters. A formal presentation was led inside Christ's Church Cathedral by Archdeacon David Anderson, rector of St. John the Evangelist, Hamilton, and Deirdre Pike, diocesan Social Justice Coordinator and Senior Social Planner for the Social Planning and Research Council

of Hamilton.

Anderson opened with land acknowledgement and welcome to the cathedral. He emphasized in his opening remarks that shelter is a basic human right: "God calls us to a future where everyone has a home, where they can flourish and be who their Creator intended them to be." He praised the wide breadth of non-profit partners working to address sustainable solutions to homelessness, and noted that we cannot wait for long-term solutions without entertaining short-term strategies for addressing the immediate needs of our fellow citizens.

"Jesus told a story about a fool who built his house on the sand; wise people build on a foundation," Anderson reminded attendees. "Let us build on the shared commitment of common good in the city so everyone can have a home and flourish."

Photos: Charles Meeks



Clockwise from top left: Visitors check out the shelter; Tony D'Amato Stortz, HATS coordinator; D'Amato Stortz and his friend Miller spoke of issues facing the homeless; touring the shelter; checking out the interior; Dierdre Pike, diocesan social justice coordinator, and Archdeacon David Anderson, rector, St. John the Evangelist.



# Mapping the Ground We Stand On

BY KERRY LUBRICK

On Thursday, March 17, 2022, as an action in learning truth for reconciliation, some of the Primate's World Relief and Develop Fund (PWRDF) parish representatives, among many others in the Diocese of Niagara, participated in the "Mapping the Ground we Stand On" workshop. The workshop was arranged by the diocesan PWRDF representative, Kerry Lubrick, facilitated by Greg Smith (PWRDF Huron) and Cheryl Marek (Diocese of Toronto), and supported by Bruce Weaver (Diocese of Niagara, Mohawk Elder).

This workshop, through the content, exercises, and discus-

sion, definitely opened our eyes to the true history of Canada and how explorers, immigrant settlers, colonization, industrialization, and land occupation has negatively impacted relations with Indigenous peoples in Canada and abroad. Indigenous peoples entered into agreements with settlers to respect the land and to share in its abundance of resources to allow for sustainability of the land. These agreements were soon broken by settlers. The first step in our reconciliation is for us to understand the true history.

In 2015, as part of its commitment to support the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, PWRDF devel-

oped the interactive "education for reconciliation" resource Mapping the Ground We Stand On. This workshop is available in-person and also has been adapted for Zoom utilizing animations, videos, and breakout room talking opportunities. This workshop, also known as the Mapping Exercise, invites participants to explore Indigenous presence on the map of Turtle Island/Canada, the history of settler arrival, and their relationship to one another. It also offers an opportunity for learning and reflection on the concepts of terra nullius (empty land), the Doctrine of Discovery and Indigenous knowledge, enabling individuals and groups



PWRDF developed the interactive "education for reconciliation" resource Mapping the Ground We Stand On.

Photo: pwrdf.org

to imagine how both personal and collective journeys toward a just, respectful, and healing relationship might look.

We encourage parishes to host a Mapping workshop. To book your workshop (virtual or in-person) please visit <https://pwrdf.org/mapping-exercise/>



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CALLED TO LIFE  
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# Mission in Action at Christ's Church Cathedral

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

- All have experienced homelessness.
- Many experience loneliness and seek community.
- Poor mental health has been observed.
- Some seek pastoral care.

The Christ's Church Cathedral's Community Engagement Discernment Team was convened in May 2021 to identify potential outreach opportunities. During the process, interviews were completed with service organizations, faith groups, neighbours, etc. The most frequently referenced need identified was drop-in space or "safe space" for various

populations. It became apparent that our missional calling was to implement a program to safely support our vulnerable neighbours and offer community, compassion, and hope—which is the mission of Christ's Church Cathedral.

In preparation for opening the Warming and Resting Centre, it was important to ensure the availability of volunteers. Within days, we had interest from 27 people to volunteer in-person. These volunteers are from our cathedral family, St. Paul's (Westdale), St. John the Evangelist, individuals who previously volunteered at the Resting and Hygiene Centre,

and many other individuals in our community. We all met on Zoom for training, which was provided by Dr. Dale Guenter and Kerry Lubrick. Very few "fears" with volunteering were identified; the main fear was of contracting COVID-19. What was overwhelming was the passion and interest to participate in this ministry.

Our strength and asset in this mission is definitely our people; the volunteers, clergy and staff. They are truly examples of "servant leadership": loving others, listening, humility, compassion, trust, commitment, and caring. I truly see discipleship and see Jesus washing the feet of his disciples in every interaction.

In addition to the team of in-person volunteers, we have a significant number of volunteers who contribute in other ways. Coordinated by David Savage, there is a team of people who bring supplies regularly to the centre. Deliveries include cream,



Dean Tim Dobbin offers support and listens to Steve's stories

Photos: Contributed by Kerry Lubrick

milk, cheese strings, bananas, baked goods, etc. There are also volunteers who gathered gently used winter clothing to distribute at the centre. In addition, there are many individuals who have provided financial donations that assist in purchasing supplies including gloves, hats, and socks. Grace Anglican—Food with Grace (Rev. Sue-Anne Ward) has also been generous

with supply donations.

As we continue with this ministry, we will look to develop further programming, as COVID-19 protocols allow. If you are interested in assisting:

- To volunteer in-person, contact Kerry Lubrick (Kerryllubrick@gmail.com)
- To assist with supplies or donation of gently used clothing/shoes, connect with David Savage (dsavage3@cogeco.ca)
- Make a financial donation by sending a cheque made out to Christ's Church Cathedral and note for the Warming and Resting Centre in the memo line, or send an e-transfer to [cathedral@niagaraanglican.ca](mailto:cathedral@niagaraanglican.ca) indicating in the message block provided as part of your bank's e-transfer process that the donation is for the warming centre.



Volunteers at the cathedral's warming and resting centre

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## HR Director Announces Plans to Retire

Canon Terry DeForest has advised the bishop of his intention to retire from his role as director of human resources, effective May 15. He will continue to serve on a part-time basis as rector of St. Paul's, Westdale.

Terry has faithfully and conscientiously served the diocese through his work at the synod office for more than a decade. In addition to his ardent care for clergy, licensed lay workers, and diocesan employees, Terry's outstanding leadership in ministry has furthered God's mission throughout the diocese and beyond, particularly through his support of candidates for



ordination and his leadership with the Ontario Provincial Commission on Theological Education and on the Executive

Committee of the Canadian Council of Churches.

"Terry possesses a tremendous pastoral heart; the gift of elegance in writing; diplomacy in negotiation; and kindness in adversity," reflected Bishop Susan Bell. "And he is a diligent seeker after justice."

Terry is currently one of the longest actively serving priests in the diocese. Remarkable on his continued presence in a pastoral capacity, Bishop Bell notes that she "will miss his counsel and presence in [the diocesan office], but I am consoled by the knowledge that he is going to ease into retirement."



# Pathways to Partnership Conference Announced

Archbishop Anne Germond, metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario, has announced a conference centred around ordained vocational discernment to be held June 21–23, 2022.

The "Pathways to Partnership" conference will gather together a variety of leaders from across the province who participate in the processes of discernment, formation, and education for ministerial candidates, including bishops, heads of colleges or their designates, and members of judicatories responsible for candidates' processes.

Participants will be focused primarily on rethinking how theological schools recruit students, rethinking development of curricula to address the changing needs of the people of the province and the world, and rethinking how theological colleges and dioceses handle recruitment, formation, and deployment.

"It is imperative that our province takes the time and expends the energy to do the work that will encourage and excite those whom God is calling to ordained ministry in these new

times," Archbishop Germond emphasized. This will involve discussions about the current ways ordination candidates are prepared and supported both in spiritual formation, educational tracks, and life-long learning.

The co-chairs of the hard-working organizing committee are Bishop Susan Bell and Bishop John Chapman. The conference will be facilitated by Archbishop Colin Johnson and Susan Graham-Walker.

Three years in the making, this opportunity for extended dialogue about the future of ordination training was post-

poned due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Bishop Susan Bell expressed positivity about the delay due to the shifts in the church over the past two years: "The landscape of ministry has changed significantly due to the pandemic."

This is a momentous opportunity to come "nose to nose with reality" and for the church and the academy to come to terms with their respective realities, to forge partnerships, and go forward together to better support the needs of parishes across the province. Bishop Todd Townshend of Huron diocese will be composing a background paper in order to orient participants to the history of vocational discernment and formation in the ecclesiastical province.

"One of the complexities of this conversation is trying to discern what the church of tomorrow will need in terms of spiritual formation," observed Bishop Bell. "We're aware of that and yet it's important to try."

Archdeacon Bill Mous and Canon Christyn Perkons will represent the Diocese of Niagara at the conference.



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## BY THE REVEREND DEACON THOMAS TRIPP

I was asked to write a brief synopsis of Collins Christian Ministries (CCM), our ecumenical prison ministry in Western New York. CCM functions as a volunteer program for Collins Correctional, a medium security facility of men operated by New York State, about 50 miles south of Buffalo.

CCM is our own version of Kairos, which has been around for quite a while. CCM includes women, which I will expound on later. Members consist of several different Christian denominations, which create varying perspectives, yet are all focused on spreading God's love.

We conduct two "weekends" per year, in the fall and spring. They run from a Thursday evening kickoff session to a "graduation ceremony" on Sunday afternoon. The males-only "Inside Team" goes in at 7:00 a.m. (except Thursday), and leaves at 9:00 p.m., except on Sunday. Most of the group sleeps at a nearby church.

The "Outside Team" consists of a male and female support group—making breakfast, cooking and transporting dinner to the inside, and praying for the prisoners and Inside Team alike. Females may briefly attend the dinner session each night, and the whole of the Sunday graduation. After a weekend is completed, the women members may attend with their male counterparts in "grouping sessions", which are weekly sustaining and support sessions. We often stay in touch with our new brothers after their release.

How does all this work, you ask? The prison chaplain who works closely with our group selects about 40 applicants to attend each four-day weekend. We supply about 25 members who are molded into "family units", with about eight inmates per table. There are Spanish-speaking members who work with Latino inmates. There is much planning that goes into

each session, and much reward coming out.

We sing (we have musicians among us), we pray, we educate inmates about the triune God. We talk, we counsel through osmosis, we don't pry, we offer forgiveness. I would say that forgiveness is the most important part of the weekend—encouraging the inmates to forgive those who have harmed them, and asking God's forgiveness for the harm they have done to others. We share meals with them, both those prepared by the prison staff and our homecooked efforts.

The highlight of the weekend occurs on Saturday night with a forgiveness ceremony, followed by the Outside Team's presence (and friends) at the prison fence, saying prayers and singing to those inside. It moves hardened men to tears, including yours truly.

The basic thread that runs through the sessions is: Love, Love, Listen, Listen. We turn it all over to Jesus, working through the Holy Spirit. We win some and we lose some, but it does not deter us. The prison has welcomed us through the years because we help to lower the rate of recidivism.

Sadly, the pandemic has cancelled our work for the past two years. We have all suffered that loss. We did manage to have the chaplain relay email messages (without addresses) for inmates to read at Christmas and Easter.

We have been hearing encouraging news lately about the possibility of starting up again this spring. It may not look and taste the same, but we hope to be able to continue God's work. After all, isn't that what Jesus told his followers in Matthew 25 to do? "Where were you when I asked you to visit those in prison? What you do to the least of these, you do to me."

*Thomas Tripp is a deacon in the Episcopal Diocese of Western New York.*

# The Little Boy In the Striped Jacket

BY THE REVEREND CANON  
DR. SHARYN HALL

*If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children. —Mahatma Gandhi*

Of the many horrific scenes of terror and destruction in Ukraine, the one I carry in my heart is the television video of a little boy in a striped jacket crying and walking alone as people flee down a road. Where is his family? Will someone help him? What is his future?

We all are horrified to witness the invasion of Ukraine by Russian military forces. The war is happening because of the determination of one man who has decided that his nation will become an empire again. Russia is a large and powerful nation and for many years it controlled the land and people of other nations in eastern Europe. That repressive Soviet empire gradually fell apart as nations regained control of their freedom. Now the president of Russia is laying waste to the country of Ukraine as the first part of an epic plan to rebuild the Soviet empire through war in Europe again.

Several years ago, I read a series of novels set in the time of World War I. The novels describe the conditions in which people, both soldiers and civilians, endure the reality of wartime. A young man named Joseph is an army chaplain attached to medical stations behind the trenches. He comforts the dying and listens to the fears of the soldiers, some as young as age sixteen. As a priest and chaplain, he lives the sorrows of war, which seem so far away from the peace of God.

Now, over one hundred years later, we are seeing those same realities vividly reported to us through television: fear and courage, terror and compassion, the power to kill and the struggles to save. Many people are praying, hoping that God's mercy will somehow end their suffering. When we pray to God for peace, we pray for an end to all wars—but peace is much more than the absence of war.

We are praying for an end to aggression, brutality, and destruction. We are praying for



the human right to dignity, self-determination, and security. We want peaceful lives for children in their homes and schools, where they will learn that love and kindness are blessings which can overcome hatred and cruelty.

Children in Ukraine try to play in bomb shelters until they hear the loud explosions and shout, "Bombs, bombs!" They know the sounds and dangers above them. The children are traumatized. They try to behave normally, but they feel everything. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that millions of children have fled Ukraine, some with mothers but some alone. Their families are split apart because their fathers are required to remain in the country to fight.

The compassion of neighbours and strangers has been courageous. The children have few clothes and one or two precious toys. Some shelters have seen the trauma in the children and asked local doctors and counselors to help them. One psychiatrist has already noted signs of post-traumatic stress disorder in refugee children. Many of these children will not forget the terrifying memories for the rest of their lives.

I lost track of the little boy in the striped jacket. I do not know if his family found him or kind strangers helped him to safety away from the terror. In faraway Canada, I hope and pray that he is comforted now and that he will grow up to be a man of peace for children in Ukraine and around the world.

*There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want, and that they grow up in peace. —Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations*

# Junior Youth Connections Celebrates Three Years!

BY SARAH BIRD

Junior Youth Connections (JYC) is celebrating its three-year anniversary! JYC started as an in-person gathering for youth aged 10–13. The program offers opportunities for youth to meet new friends, have fun, play games, enjoy snacks, and explore spirituality. Different parishes across the diocese would host JYC events typically on a Friday evening. The event would also invite children, youth, and family ministry leaders to gather at the same time in a different room to network, connect, and share resources. JYC shifted shortly after pandemic closures to be offered online through Zoom. This shift has forever changed Junior Youth Connections and the way we continue to provide the program.

Adapting JYC to online gatherings created unexpected new benefits for the youth and volunteers. The numbers of participants increased immediately as travel barriers were removed, and youth felt more comfortable meeting new people for the first time through a screen rather than in-person.

The virtual program runs very similarly to in-person except we are unable to serve gourmet snacks and beverages through the internet. However, food is incredibly important for youth gatherings, so we invite participants to prepare snacks and have, on occasion, planned epic chef challenges!

Another unexpected delight was how often the youth wanted to gather. Typically, JYC took place four to five times a year. Once we shifted to online, we began offering the program weekly due to the response we received. Youth were missing community connections and faith formation opportunities. It was a no-brainer that JYC would become a fun space for youth to join weekly to escape the daily challenges of pandemic living.

Donna Ellis from St. John's, Ancaster, and Mary Gordon from the Church of the Resurrection, Hamilton, have been two integral youth ministry volunteers for JYC. The youth absolutely adore their outgoing and warm personalities that have nurtured the budding community. They truly have a gift for working with children and youth, and their

passion is felt by each participant. Both leaders have led the youth through faith discussions and practices, and always come prepared with an outrageous game. You would be surprised how much laughter and fun we can have through computer screens!

As we move towards a post-pandemic season, JYC will include both virtual gatherings and in-person events! We are excited to continue to grow the JYC community diocesan-wide for many years to come!

Dates for Junior Youth Connection:

JYC virtual Zoom gatherings (4:30 p.m.–5:30 p.m.):

May 17, June 21, September 20, October 18, November 15, December 13. There are no gatherings in July or August

JYC in-person gatherings (7:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m.): Friday, May 13 and Friday, September 30.

To join, please contact Sarah Bird by email ([sarah.bird@niagaraanglican.ca](mailto:sarah.bird@niagaraanglican.ca)) and provide your name, parish, and email address to be sent a link the day of the event to connect with the group.



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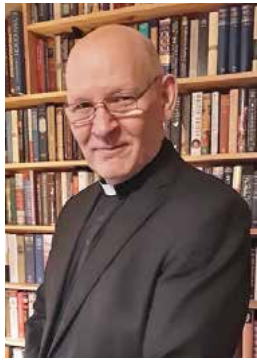
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# Russia, Ukraine and the Church



**BY THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN**

The obscene war in Ukraine provided the opportunity for some people to write a lot of nonsense about the religiosity of modern Russia, and about the place of the Orthodox Church in Vladimir Putin's plans and plots. While we can't be sure of the precise motives of the Russian despot, the idea that he was and is motivated by theological imperialism is absurdly far-fetched.

That, however, is what was being suggested by some newly minted experts on the region. Putin, they claimed, is

devout, sees Kiev as the Slavic Jerusalem because it's where Christianity began in the region, and he is angry that in 2019 the Ukrainian Orthodox Church declared independence from its Russian Orthodox sibling. That decision, by the way, was supported by Bartholomew I of Constantinople, nominal head of the international Orthodox Church. In response, the Russian church separated from the greater Orthodox world.

Forgive the pun, but it's all invincibly byzantine. I first discovered that back in 1988 while co-writing a CBC documentary to commemorate the 1,000th anniversary of Christianity in Ukraine. There are divisions within divisions, not made any easier by "Kievan Rus" being the name of the land from which Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus all originated. But the region is far from what it was, and that's the entire point.

Putin has certainly increased the influence and profile of the Orthodox Church, but Russia itself isn't a particularly observant nation. More than 80 per cent of Russians may claim to believe in God, but very few

ever attend church. A mere 10 per cent of them spend their Sundays in worship, which is low even by European standards, and a fraction of the rates in the U.S. Spend any time in Moscow or St. Petersburg and you'll see what I mean.

As for Putin's personal piety, accounts vary. His mother was a devoted believer, and his own sense of Russian identity is likely deeply woven into a sense of Orthodoxy, which is true for many of his compatriots. It's tempting to say that Christians don't command armies that kill innocent people, but that would be callow in the extreme. Whatever the case, it's very unlikely that the Ukraine war was purely a holy crusade for Kiev. It was more about NATO than the New Testament.

It's worth remembering that even Joseph Stalin, a former seminarian but a convinced atheist, curtailed his venomous persecution of the church in 1943 in an effort to increase patriotic fervour against Nazism.

The Russian Orthodox Church itself appeared divided on what happened. In an almost unprecedented display of defi-

ance, more than 250 Orthodox clerics issued a statement in which they said that the people of Ukraine "must make their own choices by themselves, not at the point of assault rifles and without pressure from either West or East." The letter continued: "We call on all opposing sides for a dialogue because there is no other alternative to violence. Only an ability to hear the other side can give us hope to get out of the abyss our countries were thrown into several days ago. Let yourself and us all enter the Easter Lent in the spirit of faith and love. Stop the war."

Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian church, remains a firm supporter of Putin, whose rule he once described as a "miracle of God", and in those words he speaks for a number of his fellow clerics. For the priestly class, the wounds left by the Soviet Union's suppression of religion will never fully heal, and any leader who subsidizes their new cathedrals and prays in their churches will always be revered.

Christian nationalists in the West have long applauded Putin

for his socially conservative policies and support for what they regard as traditional family values. Franklin Graham, son of Billy and one of the world's leading right-wing evangelicals, praised him for "protecting Russian young people against homosexual propaganda". As Fox News commentators and their crass comrades like to say, Putin is the antithesis of woke and that, they conclude, is a direct product of his faith.

That does a disservice to the Orthodox Church, with its many centuries of beauty, sophistication, and also suffering. It's flawed, often overly politicized, and sometimes chauvinistic, but also profound and diverse, and to reduce it to slogans is numbingly banal.

It's always easy to blame and bash religion, and sometimes it's justified. But not always. And surely not by people who really should know better.

*Michael is leading a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in September. Call 416-444-6666 for details, and visit <https://www.ihotours.com/tour/reverend-michael-coren-2/> for more information.*

Irene Pang of Climate Justice Niagara offers these graphics as a starting point for discussing climate issues during the upcoming provincial election.

**TALK ABOUT CLIMATE JUSTICE WITH YOUR CANDIDATES**

Introduce yourself (e.g., I'm a Christian, parent, student, health-care worker, new Canadian, etc.).

Why do you want Ontario to do its part to fight climate change? What is important to you?

**Climate Resilience**

I am very concerned about the impact of climate change. What initiatives would you implement to build climate resilient communities across Ontario?

**Save the Greenbelt**

I hold dearly the gifts of food, water, beauty, and ecological integrity that our Greenbelt provides to Ontarians. I request to abandon the construction of Highway 413, which will destroy farmland and increase pollution and urban sprawl.

**Clean Commute**

How will your government accelerate infrastructure to support increasing adoption of electric vehicles?

Instead, this money should be invested in expanding and electrifying urban and regional public transit.

**Protect Food + Water**

What will your government do to ensure that farmland is protected from developers so that Ontario can be better able to feed itself?

**Phase Out Natural Gas**

I believe it's critical to add more low-carbon power. Please explain to me your plan to get off natural gas and increase renewable energy across Ontario.

**Greener Homes**

If elected, what policies will you push to make sure new housing in the province is consistent with reducing the environmental impact of new construction?

**Real Hope for the Future**

We are parents of two kids. We need your help to secure a safe planet for our children. Investing tax payers' money in clean energy gives us real hope. Use the power entrusted to you to make Ontario a life-giving place. We urge you to choose life for my kids, your kids, and all future generations.

What is needed is a limit on the size of new homes, and ensuring that home heating is electric or geothermal.

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.

- Deuteronomy 30:19



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## Learning How to Pray

BY THE REVEREND DEACON SANDRA THOMPSON

If you were standing with a group of people before a meeting and were asked to say a prayer out loud, could you do it?

I am a cradle Anglican and I could not. But that was before Revive.

When I heard about this program, I was curious, cautious, and hopeful. Curious to see what it was all about, for sure; cautious because I don't always have confidence in who I

am and I didn't want to embarrass myself when others might find out what I didn't know; and hopeful that it would be a course that would be worth my time and effort.

Revive fulfilled my curiosity, eased my worries (because it isn't always about me, anyway!), and it was well worth my time and effort. I completed the course and felt that it made me a better lay leader than when I began.

For prayer, we were given a formula/word to remember the structure of saying a prayer. I

wrote that out on a small piece of paper that I could reach whenever I was asked. Yes, I would panic if I didn't have it, but it is a small enough word to put to memory, and before long I had it memorized. It took practice and a few of my friends to push me out of my comfort zone and begin meetings with a prayer, and I can honestly say I can do it. I may not be as eloquent as some when I pray, but that is okay. I just take a breath and quick moment to focus my thoughts and then I begin, not

concerning myself about short hesitations that happen while I find the correct word or phrase.

Prayer is only one part of the program. Another "module", which is how the course is organized, is meditation. I looked at the person leading the meditation and said, "You want me to sit quietly and empty my mind for how long?" Um ... nope, can't do it! My mind isn't set up that way. Of course, she asked for me to try. So I closed my eyes, and tried. But before long, I was thinking about what I needed

to pick up on my way home, and things I wanted to accomplish before bed. With some practice, I was able to lengthen the meditation sessions before my mind went elsewhere.

I am now a deacon, but without Revive I would be a deacon who didn't really know how to pray, meditate, or look at Scripture in a few newer ways. It strengthened my faith, brought me closer to God, and with both of those, has sent me on a clearer pathway to be the best Christian I can be.

### In other words . . .

## Science and Faith #3: Creation and Evolution: Do We Have to Choose?

BY JOHN BOWEN

A few years ago, I got an email from an old college friend, Denis Alexander, at that time director of the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion at Cambridge University. In a "p.s.", he said, "I have been busy celebrating Darwin's birthday this past week. Do you remember Nick Sagovsky? I can remember when he became a Christian [in the 1960s]. I watched him lay a wreath on Darwin's tomb in Westminster Abbey on Thursday (Darwin's birthday)." I confess I had to Google Nick Sagovsky (not having seen him for fifty years) to see why he would be laying a wreath on Darwin's tomb—and discovered that he had become the Canon Theologian of Westminster Abbey.

I couldn't help thinking how counterintuitive that scene would have been for many Christians and for many secular people: a leading scientist who is also a Christian, plus a leading Church of England clergyman, marking the birthday of Charles Darwin, father of modern evolutionary theory—and in Westminster Abbey of all places! Inside and outside the church,

Darwin and his theory of evolution have long been perceived as being enemies of Christian faith. You will often hear things like, "Well, of course, evolution disproves the Bible. The Bible says the world was made in six days, but scientists have proved that it took millions of years."

But that scene at Westminster Abbey suggests it might not be quite so simple. For example, you will often hear the defence, "Ah, but we don't take the creation stories literally anymore." Unfortunately, that can sound as though we are just moving the goalposts to prevent a goal that has already been scored!

Yet hundreds of years before Darwin, St. Augustine, writing around 400 AD, suggested that the six days of Genesis 1 were to be interpreted symbolically. And in the mid-1500s, John Calvin, a leading theologian of the Reformation, wrote, "Moses [supposedly the author of Genesis] spoke in a popular way ... One should not look there for astronomy and other ... sciences; it is a book for laymen [sic]." In other words, the Bible is not trying to teach us science, so don't look there for scientific information.

Far from moving the goalposts, those who stress that Genesis is not literal are merely reminding us where they always believed the goalposts to be.

So, if Genesis is not teaching us science, what is it?

In the first place, it is a work of literature. It's not strictly poetry in the way that the psalms are, but it is like poetry. Here's just one example. The symbolic numbers ten, three, and seven are used throughout the story: it says "And God said" ten times; the word "earth" occurs seven times; the word "to create" is used three times, and on the third occasion is used three times. You get the idea. This is not a journalist scribbling down what she was seeing, nor a scientist writing a technical report on an experiment. This is someone carefully crafting a story for the glory of God—and doing a lot of counting!

The creation stories are also a political document. Many scholars believe that Genesis was written for the Israelites when they were in exile in Babylon 500 years before Jesus. In the religion of the Babylonian empire, there were already stories of creation—but they were very bloodthirsty

stories which involved gods fighting and killing each other. Not surprisingly, the Babylonian empire was also pretty violent. (What we believe about the gods shapes our behaviour—for better and for worse.)

In contrast to that, the Genesis story spoke of a peaceful and orderly creation brought into being by a single loving and rational Creator. Quite a different picture—suggesting a radically different kind of society.

But these stories are also spiritual. They offer answers to some of the deepest questions human beings can ask: Who am I? What is my value? Why am I here in this world?—questions science isn't equipped to answer.

Genesis answers: You are in a world created by a loving Creator. You are of infinite value because you are in the image of God, and you are here to use your gifts to look after this amazing world. Babylonian religion taught that only the king was in the image of God, and that human beings existed simply to do the bidding of the king. Not much room for human dignity there!

Genesis challenged that ancient view and said, in effect,

no: every individual is in the image of God, and therefore not a single one should be mistreated or exploited. That was radical. Today we take things like the equality of all people, and human rights, and democracy, for granted. But those things did not come out of nowhere, and they are certainly not self-evident. Genesis's view of the world was certainly one of those sources. You certainly couldn't get them from a secular view of evolution.

So Christians who believe in evolution—theistic evolutionists or (if you prefer) evolutionary theists—would say: A scientific view of evolution tells us how God did it (and it's a fascinating story), but the Bible tells us what it means (which evolution can't tell us). Both versions of the reality are important. The two stories exist side by side.

Much more can be said—though not by me. If you want to pursue the subject further, try Denis Alexander's book, *Creation and Evolution: Do We Have to Choose?* (Monarch Books, 2008). His answer, as you might expect, is "No!" It's mine too.



# ANTI-RACISM: A Journey Towards Healing and Wholeness

A Special Series



**BY CANON CHRISTYN PERKONS**

The Anti-Racism Working Group is hard at work developing a “made in Niagara” anti-racism education program rooted in our baptismal covenant aimed at our leaders, lay and ordained. We expect to present the finished program at diocesan synod in November 2022 and begin offering the training early in 2023. A parish-based program is planned for 2023, but in the meantime, many of you are asking how you can start working on anti-racism education and create change now.

Let me offer you some resources for your parish and individual journeys.

*The Church Cracked Open: Disruption, Decline, and New Hope for Beloved Community* by Stephanie Spellers. Spellers is the Canon for Evangelism, Reconciliation, and Creation for The Episcopal Church, and situates the institutional church in a time of disruption and displacement like we have never before experienced. Says Spellers, “What if we are indeed at that point where the most faithful act is to accept the cracked reality of the things we loved most? ... Perhaps you and your church are the thing being broken, and your life, identity, and understanding of reality are being poured out, all so that God’s love might become the true center of your life. ... I trust that nothing separates us from God’s amazing grace, even when we’ve been utterly, irrevocably cracked open.” While the American flavour of Stephanie’s foundation will require some translation into a Canadian context, the similarity of our churches, children of British Empire and new world exceptionalism inexorably moves us through “our story of choosing idols, ego and sin over God” into hope-filled glimmers of God at work in our midst. The book invites us to explore what it means to

“allow our hearts and structures to crack open in deep love for God and one another” in a way that reflects Jesus’s own vulnerable turning of his privilege to restore wholeness to a broken world. The book concludes with an invitation to the reader and to the church to “release our grip on privilege, recenter on God, and live as beloved community” with practical steps that allow us as people, churches and an institution to embrace the path of Jesus and turn away from empire and power.

Equally potent and transformational is *Wait – Is this Racist? A Guide to Becoming an Anti-Racist Church*, whose authors, Kerry Connelly, Bryana Clover, and Josh Riddick, invite readers to engage interactively in nothing less than deconstructing the ways in which the church may be “propping up White pseudosupremacy” through our culture, our policies, our governance, and our liturgies. This challenging work helps us explore how to make systemic changes that impact our churches, our lives, and our very world. “The goal is for the world to no longer be White, with everyone else just doing their best to assimilate, but rather a beautiful coalition of cultures where everyone is valued and thriving in the authenticity of their God-given identities.” Connelly, Clover, and Riddick invite us to not just do anti-racism but to be anti-racist, which means imagining “new ways to be White in the world

that not only do no harm, but also participate in collective liberation.” Walking the path laid out here invites us to co-create the kingdom of God, to walk the path of the cross, rejecting and condemning the abuse of power—and instead using the privilege that systemic racism has given White people to “lay down our false dominance, and endeavor with the collective”, to imagine and create a world where everyone flourishes.

And highlighting our commitment to truth and reconciliation, I recommend *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act: Helping Canadians Make Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples a Reality*, in which Bob Joseph unpacks how the lives, culture, and opportunities of Indigenous peoples in Canada are controlled by the Indian Act, “an explicitly race-based piece of legislation”.

While we may know something about residential schools and their ongoing legacy of trauma, most of us are ignorant about the Indian Act and the ways in which it shape and continues to shape (despite significant updates) the lives of Indigenous peoples, and perpetuates the stereotypes and orientation towards forced assimilation that motivated its passage in 1876. Joseph’s book invites us to explore the history of the Indian Act and then to use our collective understanding of this history of our relationships to come alongside First

Nations peoples (Métis and Inuit were excluded) to dismantle the Act as a critical first step in honouring and respecting the dignity of every human being. A Canadian society that embodies trust in and respect for indigenous self-governance points to a society that achieves reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, suggests Joseph, who is a former associate professor at Royal Roads University, a facilitator and trainer focusing on establishing better relationships with Indigenous people, and a member of Gwawaenuk tribe.

The process of becoming and then being anti-racist as individuals and as institutions is not easy. In fact, this part of our discipleship journey is challenging and messy, just like so much of what Jesus invites us into on the Way of Love. There is pain and grief and an unsettledness as we lean into an understanding that the Canadian cultural and Canadian historical perspective from which we as settlers (and as White people for those readers who are White) operate is not the lived experience of the Indigenous and non-White people around us. We have

so much to learn about the perspectives and experiences of others, so much to acknowledge in terms of the ways in which settler history and culture has landed us with power and privilege to which we are often blind, and so much to give as we, like Jesus, turn away from the allure of power and privilege to embrace justice and wholeness for all of God’s people.

I invite you to read any or all of the books I’ve mentioned, explore anti-racist websites, workshops, and educational opportunities, visit sites of Indigenous and non-White historic and cultural significance, and take part in experiences that reflect cultures other than your own. Then share what you’ve learned and how that learning is changing your heart with your family, friends, fellow parishioners, work colleagues, and elected representatives. Telling our stories of transformation and coming alongside God’s anti-racism work in our midst is how we are called to help bring about God’s kingdom!

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# The Minesing Swamp

BY THE REVEREND MARTHA TATARNIC

Our awesome friend Jeff used to help my husband Dan and me lead youth group canoe trips when we were serving at churches in the Orillia area. Jeff might be part-superhero. He's the kind of guy who can blast through marathons, or any number of other physical challenges, without breaking a sweat. This had ramifications for those canoe trips.

I had to learn this the hard way. Jeff suggested a "nice and easy" Saturday paddle for the group through the Minesing Swamp. There was an island about an hour into the swamp where we could pull in and have our lunch, and then we could have parents prepped to pick us up a little way down river.

Things didn't go as planned. The water levels were lower than expected, which meant that there was no straight line available for paddling to the island. Instead, we had to wind our way in and through a maze of swamp weeds. As we went, the wind picked up. None of us was an experienced paddler, and a two-hour paddle turned into an all-day affair. We barely made it to the other side in time for supper. I had bruises on both



legs from having braced myself so hard against the sides of the canoe for the hours of paddling into the headwind just to keep moving forward. I thought I was never getting out of that swamp.

Sometimes it feels like I'm still there, stuck in the maze of weeds, paddling with all my might into a headwind.

Over the course of the last few months, our Wednesday night service featured a sermon series called "Wilderness & Hope". Thirteen different preachers—some ordained, mostly laypeople—reflected on various wilderness Bible passages. We began the series while in the middle of yet another COVID wave and lockdown, so it was easy terrain with which to identify: we've collectively been wandering in a pandemic wilderness for over two years now.

What was helpful about these sermons was the opportunity for people to draw on their own

experiences, as well as the witness of Scripture, in order to pull together some touch points for our wilderness times that keep us attentive to the condition of our souls and to God's presence with us along the way. We heard of journeys through illness, vocational despair, relationship challenges, not to mention a variety of ways that people had navigated our shared COVID reality.

This is at the heart of the spiritual tradition of the wilderness, and it runs as a constant theme from the earliest pages of Scripture through to the end. What looks like the wild and wandering circumstances that would have never been our choosing is actually ripe for finding out who we really are. Jesus threw himself into the rigorous discipline of a forty-day wilderness period post-baptism and prior to beginning his public ministry. I wonder if he knew that this wilderness was leading

somewhere. I wonder if he felt like he chose the wilderness or if it found him.

More than that, I wonder what sort of wilderness he experienced prior to that 40-day fast. He was 30 years old, we understand, when he began his public ministry. This man who had so much ballyhoo about him when he was born was, by first-century standards, practically an old man by the time anything began to happen for him. Did he feel stuck? Did he wonder what he was doing or where he was going? Did he wish that something would happen? Did he fear that this something might not be what he wanted? In those 30 years leading up to when it all got started, did he know that being stuck was also part of it? That he had to have those quiet, unremarkable years in order to be clear enough about who he was that he could offer himself for the world?

Our youth group came out of

that swamp a bit battered, and certainly exhausted, in body. We had chosen to go into the swamp, but we had no idea how grueling it would be to get out. Nonetheless, we all walked a little taller for having ultimately navigated the challenge. The group coalesced around that shared experience. I sometimes feel like I am still stuck in that swamp, which is helpful to remember when I feel like I am metaphorically flailing around in other swamps.

Not everyone's wilderness experience—biblically or personally—leaves them as unscathed. The losses and wounds we experience in the wild and dangerous terrains we get thrown into are real, and the Bible makes no promises that it will be otherwise. What the Bible does promise, and what our different voices bore witness to, was God's nearness, Jesus's companionship, through it all. This means that even the most treacherous pathways can still be leading us closer to God, which means they are also leading us closer to knowing our own selves and the ultimate destiny of our lives more fully. This means that there is no darkness where God can't shine light; there are no dead places out of which God can't raise new life.

# Black History Month—and Beyond!

BY THE REVEREND RANDY WILLIAMS

This February, for the second consecutive year, Church of the Incarnation celebrated Black History Month and Beyond. The "beyond" means that the celebration does not conclude at the end of February, but that the historical and present accounts of Blacks over the centuries is intricately interwoven into the fabric of Canadian society. One question remains at the fore: Why is this history not included in our national stories of valour and pride?

Before we answer that question, it may be helpful to ask another question: Why do many whites feel so uncomfortable about February as Black History Month? There is an apparent unease. Why? Is it not possible that in learning about others

we re-discover ourselves? Then, there comes the question, "Why do they have to celebrate for an entire month?" That's almost the same as asking why "they" have to celebrate at all.

While the emphasis here is on Black History Month, this question also relates to any Black, Indigenous, or person of colour (BIPOC), and certainly also members of other communities historically persecuted—women, Asians, members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. There are specifically identified months for Indigenous peoples, Asians, and other ethnicities.

Back to Black History Month. If Blacks don't use this opportunity to highlight who they are and their ongoing accomplishments, who will? In the past, our fate has been left to others to decide and the results have been nothing short of disastrous.

So, we raise this uncomfortable question for some in our diocese: Why do we need to celebrate Black History Month (and now beyond)? The month is a great start, but recognition needs to continue the remaining 11 months, as we do not disappear and are still contributing to our churches and communities. We celebrate because we know that despite our presence from the landing of Champlain, our history has been camouflaged—or in most cases omitted. Lack of inclusive storybooks for youngsters, appropriate textbooks in our schools and academic institutions, and the lack of public recognition of movers and shakers have mostly made us seem like we have just arrived and made no contributions to this great country built by enslaved and free Blacks.

You may have questions such

as: Why would we celebrate when we have no Black people in our parish? We only have a couple of Blacks, so why bother? I've asked—and Black members feel uncomfortable with me asking. Do I really want to highlight and possibly embarrass a specific ethnicity in my parish? I therefore ask this question: Have you ever been in a situation where you felt that you had contributed so much, but never got the recognition in the past—or present—and the future looks just as blank? This is a deflating, demoralizing, and demeaning life experience.

I remember reading an American classic, *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison. It was one of the most confusing, unsettling, but memorable books I have read. It's a story of a young, university-educated Black man who struggled to survive and succeed



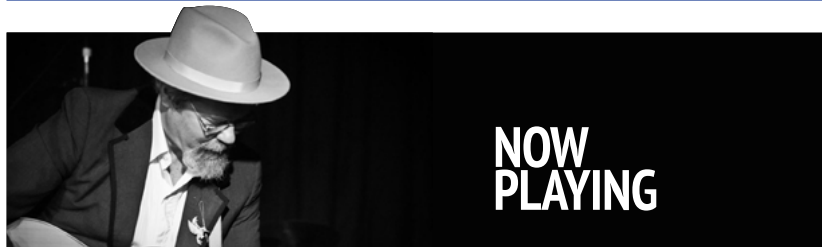
Christopher Columbus Lee, an early resident of Oakville. Oakville Museum

in the swirl of twentieth-century racism. He struggled because he was deemed invisible. That's what it feels like to many Blacks who have struggled to be successful, and made contributions only to not be "seen" in society, in education, in business, and in our churches.

Recognition of Black History Month helps to undo some of that systemic structural anti-Black damage. Recently we have seen large corporations and

Continued Page 11





## The Church of the Outsider

BY THE VENERABLE MAX WOOLLAVER

Her wooden yardstick measured things precisely. She moved methodically around each corner with practised ease—touching here, tugging there. Even though she was far away, it was easy to see her thoughtfulness, her care, the quality of her attention. She was thorough, attentive, present to her place and task. Thus, my first experience of an altar guild.

At the time I did not know what she was doing or why, but I have not forgotten her—from 48 years ago! Why on earth have I remembered for so long the seemingly innocuous movements of an elderly woman going about her church duties?

Here is another “church moment” much closer to the present day: a dozen folks in a circle sharing our journeys. To our surprise, the majority of us did not grow up in the Anglican Church. In fact, a good number of us had freely chosen to be baptized as adults—including myself. Over the years I have met scores of Anglicans who did not begin as Anglicans, and many of those Anglicans did not begin as church folk in any church at all.

At the same time, I have met many Anglicans who have left the church and whose children do not attend. Those children, now grown up, have no intention of bringing their children to church. In fact, I would say, anecdotally speaking, the offspring of “born Anglican” folk are numerically insignificant.

In our circle, while sharing

our journeys we all spoke of an initial curiosity in the Anglican world. No one mentioned royalty. No one mentioned empire. No one mentioned bishops. No one mentioned priests. No one mentioned hierarchy. We discussed, instead, liturgy, spiritual loneliness’s silence, music, poetry, social justice, intellectual freedom, spiritual growth, the church year, pre-Reformation church history, the Gospels. Questions, monks, saints, cathedrals, mystery, Narnia, T. S. Eliot, the conscience, confession, prayer, colour, raising children, environmental issues.

I have come to something like a conclusion that the Anglican Church is a lot more interesting to folks outside the church than we are generally led to believe. I would almost say the Anglican Church as it presently exists was made for outsiders!

I was led to some of these thoughts, oddly enough, by the magnificent preface to Robert Alter’s translation of the Hebrew Bible. He writes: “The unacknowledged heresy underlying most modern English versions of the Bible is the use of translation as a vehicle for explaining the Bible. ... In the most egregious instances this amounts to explaining away the Bible ... in their zeal to uncover the meanings of the biblical text for the instruction of a modern readership, [these versions] frequently lose sight of how the text intimates its meanings—the distinctive, artfully deployed features of ancient Hebrew prose and poetry that are the instruments for the articulation of all meaning, message, insight,

and vision.”

Perhaps the appeal to “outsiders” and converts to the Anglican Church is that we do not attempt to “explain away” the power and mystery of God and our existence. We instead embrace the mystery. We are consecrated by the mystery, beauty, and power of the revelation of God in the risen Christ. I believe the Anglican Church speaks directly and articulately to the meaning, message, insight, and vision that our present day longs for. Like Richard Hooker, our foundational Anglican theologian, I believe that meaning, message, insight, and vision are inherent in all human beings. In discussing, in his day, whether non-Christians should be prayed for, he wrote (more or less): “Of course, for we do not know what that man or woman might become!”

There is in the Anglican Church an all-embracing, Spirit-led love for all humanity. We are all be-coming. We are all made in the *imago Dei*—the image of God. Jesus died for us all. God’s love for all humanity is eternal. We worship with all our heart, mind, soul, and body. We strive as Anglicans to embody St. Paul’s self-understanding that we too have been given a “commission”: “to make God’s Word fully known!” When I remember now that altar guild member in Canterbury Cathedral, I am grateful for her incarnation of the revelation of God’s Word in the beauty and dignity and mystery of her purposeful movement.

Sometimes it takes an “outsider” to see that.

## Black History Month

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

other businesses re-examining their exclusive hiring practices and policies, and recognizing that anti-Black racism has existed and continues. They aim even in the smallest step to change. Regrettably, sometimes the church is left behind in matters of social injustice.

But what a way to take a lead in your communities of whatever ethnicity! Whatever affects one of us affects us all. We have been pondering this at our church. Last year, for the first time, we celebrated Black contributions in Oakville. There are few Blacks. It was the White members who introduced me to the town’s rich Black history. Buildings were identified, names called. Then we had the person who piloted the bill through the House of Parliament, Canada’s first Black female MP, Dr. Jean Augustine, join us virtually and tell her story during our Sunday service. It was then that we started to extend our community connections, which continues today.

Of course, our music director, Dr. Charlene Pauls, was intensely involved. She relayed to me the impact of this event: “Each of the musical selections chosen impacted me as I created, searched, and curated so many inspiring, passionate, and challenging [pieces] to include each week. The impact of the music during Black History Month provided a moment not only to pause and remember the past, but also

to serve as an active call to seek a more just future in our own neighbourhoods and beyond.”

The parish became actively involved in readings and recommending materials. Last year’s events made this year easier as we again celebrated the month in a variety of ways: music, readings, inviting community connections to speak, and more. We ended the month’s focused celebrations—but not our recognition of Black history and involvement!—by hearing from our local MP, Anita Anand, who spoke about Black History and shared some of her own story as a brown woman whose family immigrated to Canada. None of this would have been possible if it were not for the support of Michael Patterson, our rector. He led simply by giving consent.

We share this not to brag, but to encourage you that you can never start too small. Every bit helps in being inclusive. Is that not what the gospel is about? God’s unconditional love and recognition for all. The tagline for my previous parish means so much to me: “Bringing the community together for good.” Oh, that we would! But in many ways, our communities need our churches to lead. Godspeed as you do.

Randy Williams is Associate Priest at Church of the Incarnation, Oakville

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### Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

**Deadlines:**

- June – April 29
- September – July 29
- October – August 26

**Submissions:**

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

**Original cartoons or art** –

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

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

**Questions or information:**

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

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# Parish Mission Action Plan FAQs

BY CANON CHRISTYN PERKONS

Having hosted two Zoom Parish MAP orientation sessions, responded to calls from rectors and potential parish facilitators, and facilitated a Niagara School for Missional Leadership course ("So You Want to Facilitate the Parish MAP Process..."), I want to share the most frequently asked questions and my responses.

## Why are we being asked to create a mission action plan?

I don't know about you, but when I don't plan how I use my time and resources, I end up expending time, money, and other resources on the squeaky wheels—the things that are most pressing in the moment. And the reality is that when I am constantly distracted by squeaky wheels, I'm not moving towards my goals. Without a plan, I tend not to maximize my time and energy, I don't prioritize what's important to me, and I finish a day or a week, a month, or sometimes longer, feeling like I've been running on a hamster wheel with little to show for my efforts.

Discerning and then prioritizing our missional goals enables us to stay focused, say no to things that distract us from our mission, and use our people

and financial resources most effectively. Having a mission action plan also allows us to course-correct, to adjust how we are investing ourselves when we find ourselves moving away from true north. Investing time in a mission action plan up front is worth its weight in gold when we need to tell our stories of impact and transformation—whether that's at vestry, from the chancel steps, in conversations with people or in prayer with God.

## Why the focus on missional?

People often tell me they've done strategic plans before, and they observe that it seems as though the diocese is just playing with words. Here's how I describe the difference: A strategic plan focuses on us deciding what goals are important for us to accomplish to meet the parish's needs and priorities. A mission action plan focuses on listening for what God is inviting us into, and how we can come alongside the mission of God within our faith communities and outside those buildings. Discerning versus deciding! Here's another question I hear a lot: What is God's mission? God's mission is restoring wholeness to a broken world, reconciling us as God's beloved community. So, the task of mission action

planning is listening and looking for God's direction, and choosing to use our gifts and talents in the service of that mission as we become co-reconcilers with God.

## We're being asked to do too much ... this feels like busy work.

I know it's a statement, not a question, but it begs a response. The Parish Mission Action Plan process asks parishes to commit to four one-hour meetings, at the conclusion of which the parish will have two to four initiatives in each of Adult Faith Formation, Reshaping Parish Culture to Enable Ministry, and Fullness of Life in the Neighbourhood. Neither the rector nor the corporation is expected to carry the process, nor are they expected to be responsible for the initiatives happening. That's the role of all the baptized, those who had the ideas, those who got excited about the ideas, and anyone else who wants to participate in the rollout of a particular initiative.

## I'm overwhelmed when I look at the Parish Mission Action Plan Facilitators Guide.

Yes, another statement, but one I've heard several times. I have successfully allayed that anxiety for others; let me do it for you. Essentially the back 40

pages of the 80-page guide are resources for a number of initiatives your parish might choose to undertake—or they might not. Either way, you don't need to worry about those 40 pages unless your MAP includes one or more of the activities. Of the remaining 40 pages, there are roughly ten pages of introductory material—essentially, how to get started. That leaves 30 pages that cover the four one-hour meetings. The first three meetings have the same prep instructions, same agenda, and much of the same script with changes made to accommodate the specific topic; master one agenda and script, and you've got the other two down cold!

That leaves roughly eight pages for the fourth meeting in which the group will follow the facilitator's instructions, and prayerfully choose the top two to three initiatives for each of the three topics. And you're done with the MAP! Sure, you'll need to start working on the initiatives, but you've ended the process with an enthused and passionate group of people who are excited about the initiatives that are uniquely suited to your God call and your capacity! Your MAP is a go!

## Is there a minimum number needed to successfully complete this?

No, there is no magic number below which you shouldn't start the process—but for the process to work as intended, you need more than your corporation and parish council to show up. If only the designated leaders are engaged, this is likely to deteriorate into a make-work project that ends up on a shelf! People need to feel invited, engaged, and significant to the process. The guide gives you reflections to use for preaching, distributing through newsletters, or in bulletins, and emphasizes that you cannot over-communicate about the value of the process and the MAP to the growth and well-being of the parish. Use your recruited leadership team to raise awareness and excitement about this process. When people express dismay or anxiety about the return from COVID-19, talk about this process as a way to discern how God is calling your parish to re-emerge with vitality and wholeness.

*Still have questions? Email Christyn at [christyn.perkons@niagaraanglican.ca](mailto:christyn.perkons@niagaraanglican.ca) to find out more.*

# What to Expect When You Join "The Table"



BY BECKY HALLIWELL

If you asked me two years ago if I knew what the table was, I would tell you it's an object with a flat surface and four legs to hold it up.

Like everyone else, in March of 2020 my life changed. I was limited to my work and home life and was not able to see any of my family members or friends. One evening I was scrolling on social media and

saw a few old friends from my youth ministry days post about this event on Zoom called "The Table" that was happening that evening at 7:00 p.m., welcoming anyone to join who was 19 or older.

A little back story: I have not been involved with any church in a long time. Just my usual holiday showings. School, work, and some medical issues I faced stopped me from attending church on a regular basis.

That night I thought to myself: I have nothing better to do and it would be nice to see some familiar faces that I have not seen in over 10 years. When I logged onto The Table's Zoom meeting, I did not know what to expect. I sat on the couch quietly listening to people share stories of how their week was going, whether they had

struggles that they were facing, or moments of celebration and happiness. Right away I could tell that it was a safe space that made everyone comfortable to share.

During the first few months of the pandemic, we met every Thursday at 7:00 p.m. We would start off with a check-in, and then have discussions based on major events that were unfolding currently in the world, or ask random questions that were pulled from a cute little pottery bowl, called "the bowl of questions". These questions helped change the subject matter or shift us into a new direction if we found ourselves going down a rabbit-hole of thought. The conversations that came out of the topics were so intriguing. Being able to hear from different ways of thinking was refreshing!

The Table community quickly became a second family for me. It allowed me to reconnect with God and put more faith back into my life—especially after experiencing a traumatic event in 2019 that put major strain on my faith and relationship with God.

Once summer 2020 hit, it was decided that we would return in the fall with the regular schedule of meeting every third Thursday of the month. We kept the meetings on Zoom to follow all COVID-19 protocols and help to eliminate transportation barriers. The Table community also established an ongoing group chat where members could ask for prayer requests and stay further connected. Some members messaged the group everyday saying, "Have a good day everyone!" That is how

close this group of people have become.

So, what is "The Table"? The best way to describe it to you is exactly how I described it at the beginning, with just a few more additions. The flat surface is the open conversation that can be had every time this amazing group of people gathers. Anything can go on the table to be shared without fear of being judged. As for the legs, I would like to think of them as the support all members give one another, not just four, but an endless amount, as The Table is always willing to expand.

If you are a young adult who is looking for deep conversation about life, spirituality, and complexity of our world, join us on the third Thursday of each month. We will always make room for one more!