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A section of the Anglican Journal



NIAGARA ANGLICAN



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JANUARY 2023

Bishop Announces Lenten Books for 2023

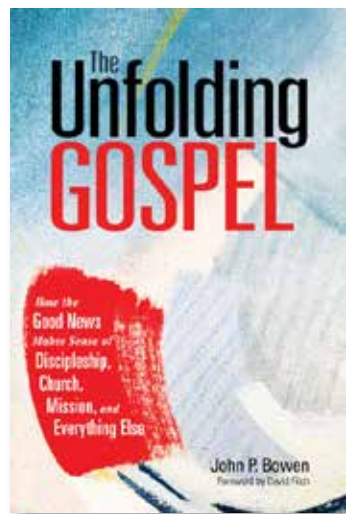
THREE AUTHORS FROM WITHIN DIOCESE OF NIAGARA CHOSEN

DR. EMILY HILL

You are invited to join Bishop Susan Bell and three local authors from the Diocese of Niagara on a Lenten reading journey.

As our diocese continues to live into our call to be missional in all we do, Bishop Susan has chosen three books that encourage readers to examine our lives, churches, and the world to see how God is at work making all things new through Jesus Christ.

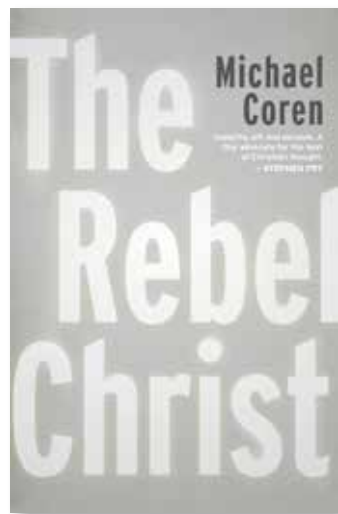
Dr. John Bowen's *The Unfolding Gospel* (Fortress Press, 2021) explores what "the gospel" is and how it informs—or should inform—our understanding of mission, church, culture, and leadership. With the warmth and clarity of a seasoned teacher of evangelism, Bowen provides the knowledge and inspiration



about how to live and share the gospel that individuals and congregations seeking to be more missional need.

The Reverend Michael Coren's *The Rebel Christ* (Dundurn Press, 2021) asks the question, "What did Jesus say about the pressing issues of his and our day?" To explore

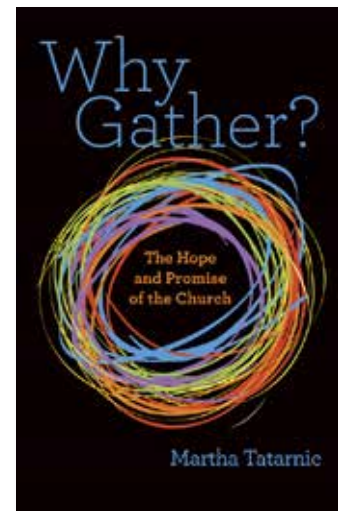
this question, Coren engages in historical and literary analysis of controversial Biblical passages and invites readers to embrace Jesus as a rebel Christ.



Through multiple examples, Coren demonstrates that Christ did not remain silent in the face of pain and injustice, and reminds us that, to truly follow Him, we

need to commit to exposing, condemning, and transforming injustice through love.

The Reverend Canon Martha Tatarnc's *Why Gather?* (Church Publishing, 2022), written during the height of the pandemic, recounts real stories about God at work in the lives of flawed and faithful people and the imperfect and messy commun-



ities in which we gather. With honesty and wisdom, Tatarnc invites readers to seek out the Kingdom of God that is already at hand and provides both the tools and inspiration we need to recognize, embrace, and celebrate how God is at work in our churches and our lives even in times of struggle.

Bishop Susan is grateful for the depth of talent in the Diocese of Niagara and is thrilled that parishes can choose between these three books for their 2023 Lent study. Discussion questions to accompany each book will be available on the diocesan website well in advance of Lent. There will also be opportunities to hear from the authors and ask questions during Lent. More details will be available about these opportunities in early 2023.



Climate Justice Niagara Joins Advocates to Stop Bill 23

DEIRDRE PIKE

The "More Homes Built Faster Act," otherwise known as Bill 23, passed in late November despite province-wide protests. One could argue it could also be called the "More Greenbelt Destroyed Faster Act."

Bill 23, intended to quicken

the rate of housing development in Ontario, damages precious environmental land, weakens conservation authorities, and hurts municipalities. The bill is part of the Progressive Conservative government's plan to build 1.5 million homes in the next decade.

Climate Justice Niagara was

one of hundreds of groups who signed petitions and encouraged members to advocate for an end to this bill, a bill known to be more favourable to developers than municipalities or the environment.

Bill 23 opens up 7,400 acres of

See BILL 23 Page 2

Bill 23 Puts Greenbelt at Risk

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



formerly protected Greenbelt land, which surrounds much of the land in this diocese. Since the Progressive Conservatives

formed government in 2018, eight large parcels of that land have already been bought. Some opponents to Bill 23 are already

asking the auditor general to probe these purchases.

While many municipalities made local decisions to stop this kind of sprawl by freezing urban boundaries, Ford's Progressive Conservative government has overridden those moves. Hamilton, Guelph, and Niagara, are all municipalities within the Diocese of Niagara that have voted to freeze urban boundaries.

The bill not only takes away environmental protections, according to municipal leaders, but will also put the cost of development on the backs of taxpayers, remove heritage conservation, and erode public accountability. Mayors across the province have joined forces to consider next steps.

Diane-Laure Arjaliès, an associate professor at Ivey Business School in London, ON, told Global News in an interview that Bill 23 carries dire consequences for the environment, such as "major impacts in terms

of flooding, in terms of extreme weather events." These environmental concerns stem from the destruction of crucial wetlands, farmlands, and forests.

Bill 23 would limit the power of conservation authorities to make good decisions in the face of climate crisis. For example, it would require conservation authorities to identify conservation lands that could be used for residential subdivisions, with the province now deciding whether or not to sell such lands for development or protect them from development. It would also forbid conservation authorities from considering "pollution" or "conservation of land" in decision-making.

Climate Justice Niagara and Bishop

Susan Bell have both emphasized the need for advocacy with local MPPs, Steven Clark, the Minister of Housing responsible for the bill (Steve.Clark@pc.ola.org), and Premier Doug Ford (416-325-1941).

As we advocate for change, we are reminded of our baptismal covenant: "Will you strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation and respect, sustain, and renew the life of the earth?" Let our powerful reply lead us to action: "I will, with God's help."



The Carpenter

Nestled in His heavenly manger,
Carved from the finest lumber.
Lay our Saviour our newborn King,
To awaken all from slumber.

From the East and from the West,
So many travelled to see,
This tiny babe, the Prince of Peace,
Destined to set us free.

A Carpenter by trade,
His hands did more than create.
A Carpenter for our souls,
Nailed to timber was his fate.

In wood His life began,
Heaven's Carpenter He would be,
On wood His life would end,
The Carpenter's covenant for you and me.

Angela Rush



Ordination to the Diaconate

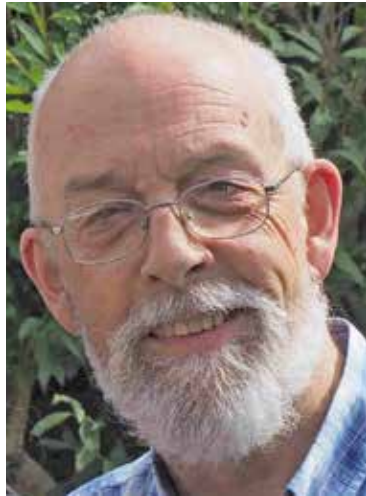


Nicola Zhang, Larry Collinson, and Rob Miller were ordained deacons at a special service on Sunday, November 20th at Christ's Church Cathedral in Hamilton.

In Other Words

Why go to Church?

What makes the weekly discipline worthwhile

**JOHN BOWEN**

I am currently rereading C.S. Lewis' autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, and one thing that has struck me afresh is his story of being taken to church as a child. He grew up in Belfast in Northern Ireland, and he was taken to the local Anglican church, St. Mark's, Dundela, where his grandfather was the priest.

Even as a child, he was disillusioned with the church. For one thing, his grandfather used to weep in the pulpit, particularly over what he perceived to be the evils of the Roman Catholic church. As Lewis grew older, he realised that one of the main reasons people attended the Anglican church was to demonstrate to the wider society that they were not Roman Catholics. You can see why a child might be disillusioned. Wouldn't you be?

There are other less-than-ideal reasons for going to church.

Going to church for aesthetic reasons

These are people who just say, "Well, of course, I don't believe a word of it. But I do love the musty smell of these old buildings, and the feeling of peace I get when I walk through the

door. And I've always had a liking for organ music."

I suppose this is spiritual in the broadest possible sense. I suppose this person might one day become curious whether that feeling of peace is more than just a psychological oddity. Or maybe a sermon, or an organ prelude, or a prayer will be "a means of grace." These things do happen, thank God.

Going to church to get brownie points from God

This is the person who says, "Well, I do believe in God, so I go to church to make sure I stay on the right side of God. Because God likes people who go to church—right?"

I guess this answer is an improvement because at least it involves God. But the attitude that going to church gets you brownie points with God, which will somehow work to your credit on the Day of Judgment? Well, that's just sad. Whatever happened to the unconditional love of God, to which God invites a free response?

Going to church because of the community

Ask churchgoers why they go to church, and four out of five will say, "I love the strong community." Someone at my own church once mused, "In this church, you will never have to carry a burden alone." That's a wonderful testimony.

Yet community can be found in many places. I know a group who regularly cycle together, and they take care of one another in a way quite similar to that of a church. Caring community is a beautiful thing, and essential to human flourishing, wherever it happens. Community is always a gift

of God, but it's not unique to churches.

Going to church for spiritual sustenance

This is the person who says, "I am a spiritual person, but there's very little in my daily life or in the culture around me that feeds my spirituality. I need church to restore that spiritual dimension of my life."

I have much sympathy for this point of view. It's a good reminder that much of the world operates on a horizontal level and doesn't pay much attention to the vertical dimension. As with community, though, church is not the only place I can find a space for spiritual reflection. Many would respond that it is much easier to worship God, or at least feel spiritual, out in nature, without all the hassle that comes from involvement in a church.

Better metaphors

Someone has said what the church needs is not better arguments but better metaphors. It's a shrewd observation, and Lewis knew this too. In his BBC broadcasts in the 1940s, which later became *Mere Christianity*, he explains church to secular listeners in pubs across Britain by

using a wartime metaphor that must have resonated deeply at that time:

"Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage. When you go to church you are really listening-in to the secret wireless from our friends: that is why the enemy is so anxious to prevent us from going."

The image probably wouldn't connect as well today. For a start, what's a "wireless"? A metaphor that I have found connects better with people both inside and outside the church is that church is a school—but that too needs explaining.

It begins with the Gospel, Jesus' announcement of the coming upside-down kingdom of God, where the values of the world are turned on their heads, and the world is turned right-way up. Then Jesus calls disciples to work with him in creating the kingdom, apprentices who slowly learn from him how to think, speak, and live in a kingdom way. One writer has suggested that baptism is—among other things—the way we register in the school of

Jesus, the way we announce our intention to live as apprentices of Jesus.

Where does that leave church? Try thinking of it this way. At its heart, church is the gathering of the apprentices of Jesus. Like all apprenticeships, the majority of learning takes place on the job, as we watch the master artisan at work, and try to imitate them. But equally, there are times when the apprentices benefit from coming together. That's church—the coming together of apprentices, to encourage one another, to discuss how they've got on with the lessons of the week before, to confess where they messed up, to learn more from Jesus, to take part in the family meal, and to be sent out for another week of apprenticeship.

I'm glad if people come to church for any reason—for the beauty, to please God, for the blessing of community, or for rediscovering the spiritual. But there is more, far more. Church helps us connect us with God's purposes for the world in Christ. And that's a source of deep satisfaction, for the simple reason that it is what human beings were made for.



Photo: Unsplash/Karl Fredrickson



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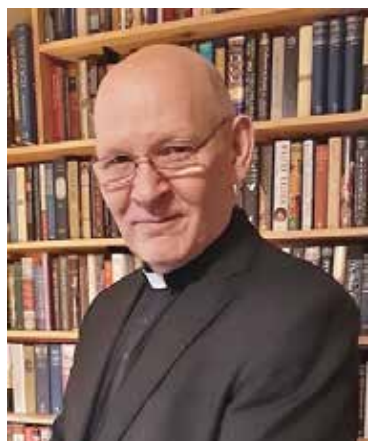
For a complete staff directory and more information, visit the diocesan website: niagaraanglican.ca



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COMPELLED TO LOVE**

Returning Home



THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN

I haven't been back to Britain for more than three years. The pandemic and a minor surgical procedure were the impassable and impossible barriers, and it means it's the longest I've ever been away from my homeland. I was born there and didn't leave for Canada until I was a 28-year-old.

It also means that this is the first time since their funerals that I've visited the graves of my parents, Phil and Sheila Coren. Because they died some time ago this might sound strange, even perverse, but certain family issues and complications made it the case. I am, I assure you, not proud of it. It's eaten away at me for a very long time.

As a priest I've taken numer-

ous funerals, and see loss and death on a fairly regular basis. But this encounter on a rainy day in a rural setting was something profoundly different. I speak not of grief, that entirely natural grab and grip of pain, but something even sharper and darker. A spinning combination of guilt, self-realization, and sobering nostalgia. I wasn't prepared for it, and was taken by emotional and even physical surprise.

Guilt because I took my mother and father for granted. Yes, yes, that's supposed to be the way to a certain extent but my children treat their parents with far greater awareness than I did mine. I loved them, I told them I loved them, but did I show them that I loved them? No, at least not to the extent that they deserved. When I blithely left for Canada to marry a woman I'd met in Toronto, I didn't give my parents a second thought. Of course they wanted me to be happy, encouraged me, but everything that I did was defined by my needs and my wants. That just wasn't good enough.

Self-realization because as I grow older as a father and now as a grandfather, I've come to understand what family and sacrifice are about, and to relish the star-soaked symbiosis of rela-



Photo: Unsplash/John McArthur

tionships. I failed at that with my parents, whose graves I now look on with so much remorse. No, I'm not being too hard on myself. I'm being honest!

The self-realization that floods me isn't comfortable, and it opens wounds that were never healed but ignored and forgotten. The pain is suddenly reignited, and the tears I have are as much self-pity as sorrow for mum and dad. So, once again it's about me.

Sobering nostalgia is tied in with a sense of mortality. There was once a time when I never discussed health with friends—now it's often the first subject we speak about. Death

doesn't frighten me, my faith is strong I hope, but not being able to see my children and their children grow to maturity certainly does. As it must have for my parents, whose concerns I failed to grasp—didn't even try to—because of my lack of empathy. If I were writing from an experience of familial abuse or neglect it would be more linear—horrible but clearer. But no, my parents cared for me, protected me, and gave what they could seldom afford to make my life easier. I should have acknowledged that so much more energetically and enthusiastically.

They gave me crimsons, purples, and royal blues, and I replied with the colours of complacency. Now they rest in dull, colourless places and I want so much to put it all right, and to repair the damage. But that can't be done, at least in this land

of shadows. I sincerely believe in an eternal life, and perhaps other words and other gestures can be made in times to come. I certainly hope so, with all of my heart and soul.

There are Hebrew as well as English texts on Phil and Sheila Coren's graves, but neither language can do justice to them, or in any way expunge my deep melancholy. In the years I have left I will try my best, will likely often fail, but will, I pray, carve this visit into my psyche. It is, in every sense, the very least I can do.

I should have done and been better, could have done and been better, and now look for forgiveness rather than sympathy. I'm in the forgiving business, of course, and I'm confident in the embrace of Christ Jesus, but this is something beyond my control. I'm so sorry, mum, and I'm so sorry, dad. I loved and love you, and always shall.



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

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To learn more contact your church office or go to WillPower.ca.



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Song of the Grand is a moving experience, wonderful story, beautiful music & singing. It is a great new way to raise funds for your church. - Gillian Wood, St. Andrew's Grimsby.

Your Ministry at McMaster



THE REVEREND ALLISON BARRETT

Stepping into ministry at McMaster as your Interim Ecumenical Chaplain has been an exhilarating experience! While McMaster University started as a Baptist institution, before long the Anglican, Presbyterian and United Churches joined in supporting a ministry to students, staff, and faculty that has grown exponentially. No one could have imagined back in the early 1970s, when the Ecumenical Chaplaincy position was created, that we would now be ministering to a community of over 40,000 people.

What exactly does ecumenical chaplaincy entail? We serve soup and bread to hungry students every week and host a Thanksgiving dinner for international students when everyone else is home with their families. We offer cookies—lovingly home-baked!—during the extended period of ‘exam hospi-

tality’ and even have a therapy dog to help with exam stress; students are now pouring into our office to see the ‘therapist.’ ‘Wonder Walks’ (on McMaster’s many beautiful trails) get people out in nature as every member of the community feels their way in the new world created by the pandemic.

We provide a listening ear for issues of grief, isolation, identity, faith, and a myriad of other conversations that happen quite naturally within and beyond the Chaplaincy’s open door. Of course, we organize worship, like McMaster’s first-ever memorial service for those who have passed away over the last year—Blue Holiday—and Advent services. We pray for and with all those within our circle of care.

As ecumenical chaplain, I believe we draw an incredibly wide circle around what this ministry means and who it encompasses. I see students who are studying addiction because of friends they’ve lost, those trying to please far-off parents, students worrying about their friends back home in war-torn countries or homelands facing incredible social upheaval. I see people struggling with self-acceptance, problems that range from crises of faith, deep grief, and mental health challenges to roommate problems! Faculty and staff are ‘hotelling,’ having lost offices during the pandemic, and come to campus a few days



Students enjoy time with Biscuit, the therapy dog.

Photos: Contributed



The university chaplaincy offers soup and bread as a way of reaching out to students.

a week not knowing where they’ll be working. And everyone—absolutely everyone—is still recovering from the last almost three years, trying to figure out how to go forward with some hope, faith, and belief in this old world.

Your contributions of every and any kind—spiritual, volunteer, financial—are the heart of what makes McMaster’s

chaplaincy possible and are always welcome! If you would like to come and see what we’re doing or contribute in any way—we need lots of cookies for two weeks of Exam Hospitality!—please contact me, Allison Barrett, at barrettam@mcmaster.ca or our office administrator, Nathan, at chaplain@mcmaster.ca if you would like to support this ministry with a much-

needed donation. It’s your ministry and always has been.

If you’d like to find out more about what we’re doing together at McMaster’s Ecumenical Chaplaincy, see our website mcmasterchaplaincy.org or follow us on Instagram @spiritualcareatmac.

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Human Trafficking Justice Niagara is Urging Parishes to Mark Freedom Sunday on February 19

DEIRDRE PIKE

Freedom Sunday, a global church movement, provides an opportunity for people to deepen their understanding of modern slavery and human trafficking in today's world and in their own communities. The timing of Freedom Sunday corresponds with National Human Trafficking Awareness Day each year on February 22.

The Reverend Jody Balint, rector of St. James & St. Brendan Anglican Church in Port

Colborne, is the chair of Human Trafficking Justice Niagara. Jody worked at Covenant House in Toronto for six years, a non-profit serving at-risk, homeless, and trafficked youth between the ages of 16 and 24. She is well aware of the real and potential impact of human trafficking on young people today, especially those experiencing homelessness.

Her homily from Freedom Sunday 2022 is just one of many liturgical resources assembled for parish use last year. In fact, further resources have been

assembled for Freedom Sunday 2023 and will be available on the diocesan website niagaraanglican.ca.

The following key components of Human Trafficking Justice Niagara's mandate were identified and received at diocesan synod in November 2022.

Prayer: Ensure that prayers and concern for human trafficking become an integral part of parish life, particularly on National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, February 22.

Education: Equip and inspire

social justice facilitators and teams by developing and sharing current local resources and evidence-based knowledge about modern-day slavery, human trafficking, and forced labour.

Action: Provide facilitators, clergy, and lay leaders with the tools to ensure their parishes are able to assist local outreach supporting victims of human trafficking.

Advocacy: Model strong leadership and resolute political action to address human traf-

ficking and modern-day slavery. Support parish and diocesan leaders in recognizing the presence of trafficking in our communities and ways to speak out against it.

If you are looking for ways to impact this justice issue in your area, please join Human Trafficking Justice Niagara.

For more information, contact the Reverend Jody Balint at rectorstjamesandstbrendan@gmail.com.

“Poppies for Peace” Remembrance Art Display

LESLIE HICKEY

Inspired by installations in Canada and the UK, The Church of the Incarnation, Oakville has embarked on a Poppies for Peace project to honour the sacrifices of so many. We collected 5000+ poppies engaging parishioners as well as those from our community and beyond to participate in the project. Many people contributed their time and talents to crochet or knit poppies. We had groups of people helping to sew them onto a backing so that they could be displayed from our church roof and cascade into the wooded lot next to our church building. It was a beautiful art installation to see, but it was also an emotional and visceral reminder of those who fought for peace.

Our project grew from the original plan to create one large banner for outside the building to many displays both inside and outside the church. The outside banners were installed in the third week of October and stayed up until the end of November. We held an open house on November 6 which celebrated this project. There was music performed by our fabulous choir, refreshments, and information about our parish and some of the other initiatives we have on-the-go from community gardens to eco-justice.

In addition to the breathtaking banner running from the roof outside the church into the wooded lot beside it, over the signs at Dorval Drive and Old Abbey Lane, and at the

Milton Road entrance, there were over one hundred poppies affixed to sticks and displayed on the walkways and within the wooded area for people to enjoy. There were numerous art installations on the inside of the church, including another long banner, along with wreaths,

knew who fought for peace.

Co-coordinators Pearl Moffat and Leslie Hickey plan to expand the project for next year adding additional banners to the outside and other projects for the inside. The outside banner was lit up at night, creating beautiful shadows from the



and crosses decorated with felt poppies also created by parishioners. An interactive candle table and meditative space was a nice finishing touch for those visiting the inside of the church at the open house. They could light a candle in honour of peace or in remembrance of someone they

spotlights against the banner and were a visual reminder of those fallen but never forgotten.



Bishop institutes three rectors



At a small service of institution, Bishop Susan Bell welcomed and affirmed The Reverends Cheryl Barker, Victor Kishak, and Canon Leslie Gerlofs, who were instituted as rectors of St. George's, Georgetown, St. George's, Guelph, and St. James, Dundas, respectively.

Community Partnerships Result In Socktober Success

SAMY MASAAL

The Helper Bees at the Church of the Apostles in Guelph set a lofty goal of collecting 4,000 pairs of socks for the community through our 2022 Socktober Campaign. Thanks to many different churches, organizations, and individuals across the city, the Helper Bees achieved their goal!

The socks will be distributed by the Helper Bees community partner, Your Downtown Guelph Friends, throughout the winter.

"This is our second year of running the Socktober program in Guelph," said John Dennis, Helper Bees coordinator. "As an individual parish, we could never collect this many socks, but by partnering with many groups and working together to get the word out to the community, we reached our goal."

Socks were collected at the Church of the Apostles, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Kortright Presbyterian Church, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School, Dublin Street United Church, the Guelph Tool Library, Jobs Opportunities Enterprise Program, Rivermill Condos, the 23rd Guelph Spark Unit, and the River of Life Church. There were also many donations from community members who read about the campaign on social media, in our local papers, or through the weekly emails from



Above: Students at St. Francis Catholic School in Guelph show off the food and socks they collected during the campaign. Right: The Reverend John Borthwick of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Guelph is buried in socks his congregation collected.



Photos: Contributed by Samy Masaal

Guelph Member of Provincial Parliament Mike Schreiner.

The Reverend John Borthwick noted that, "St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Guelph was delighted to participate in Socktober this year. We know that the need is great in our community and to ensure that the guests of Your Downtown Guelph Friends would keep their feet warm and dry over the winter was something that we wanted to do without hesitation. It is always good to partner with community organizers and other faith communities, like Church of the Apostles, to make

a difference in our City. We are better together."

Tanya Murphy, a special education resource teacher from St. Francis Catholic School, added "We ran our Sock Drive for Grades 4-8 with some of the teachers in Grade 6-8 making it a class competition to see who could bring in the most socks for the Sock Drive. I feel that teaching kids to help others in the City of Guelph shows them that little things like a clean pair of warm socks can make a difference in someone's life."

According to a study from Dalhousie University, socks and

warm dry feet make a huge difference for those who are homeless. Foot-related complications are highly prevalent, with up to two thirds of people reporting health concerns relating to their feet. Approximately one quarter of individuals visit a health professional, and one fifth of individuals require further follow up due to the severity of their condition.

Your Downtown Guelph Friends Director Kat Nixon said, "For those who are in our downtown community, their lives can be filled with a lot of fear, worry and discomfort ... While

we know that socks won't heal all wounds and fix our community crises, we do know that the symbolism of many different communities of faith, walks of life, educational groups, programs, and community members coming together to address this need in our community shows that Guelph cares about our people. Socktober provides not only warmth to the feet but hopefully warmth to people's hearts for them to know that people are thinking of them this winter in some of their greatest adversity."

Samy Masaal is the community outreach worker for the Helper Bees at the Church of the Apostles, Guelph.

The Age of Rising Seas

THE REVEREND CANON
SHARYN HALL

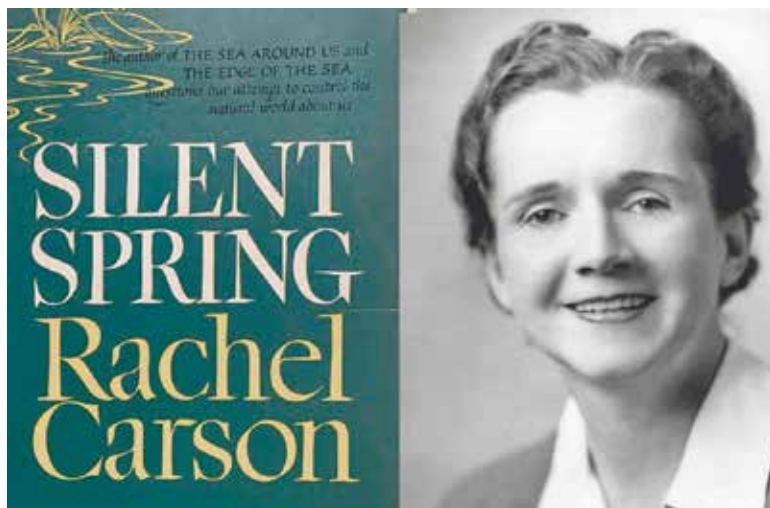
Recently, scientists have discovered underwater creatures which no one knew existed. Explorers have discovered caves with majestic creations of gypsum crystals at least two storeys high—these are not man-made phenomena. For those of us who believe in the God of all creation, these are discoveries which remind us that the more we learn about the earth, the more there is to discover.

We also now know that the planet is suffering because humanity has seen the planet—its land, water, vegetation, and creature kingdom—as an inexhaustible source of usable resources. We have the potential to conserve God's creation as the earth adapts to the increasing human population, but we do not always have the breadth of vision to see how one action can generate unexpected reactions. In 1962, an American zoologist, Rachel Carson, published a book *Silent Spring*. This past year, two articles by John Gibb in the *Hamilton Spectator* com-

memorated the publication of that book and the groundbreaking work of Rachel Carson. She presented case after case illustrating how chemicals were causing chain reactions of damage to vegetation and wildlife. Her book caused an uproar.

She was vilified by the chemical companies who painted a disastrous picture of crops overrun by insects and disease, resulting in food shortages. Further studies revealed that Rachel Carson was right. Al Gore and David Suzuki, crusaders for environmental action, credit Carson's book as beginning the modern environmental movement.

Sixty years later, we are dealing with serious global environmental issues, and yet some people resist the need for changes. As usual the issues are portrayed as the environment versus the economy, but somewhere underneath all the data and rhetoric is the question of justice. For generations, humanity has plundered the earth for its wealth of resources and for the insatiable desire for human comfort. No thought was given



Zoologist Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*, turns 60. We still face serious global environmental issues today.

to moderation or conservation. Perhaps even worse was the notion that the earth could absorb all our human garbage without choking on the refuse.

We are learning that the earth is a living organism and is fighting back. Rivers overflow into disastrous floods. Fires consume forests that allow the earth to breathe. Polar ice caps melt into the sea as the seas rise.

In biblical times, people lived with the rhythm of the natural world in God's control—a good crop was God's blessing, a natu-

ral disaster was God's wrath. Some people still talk in those terms today, but as humanity began to influence the rhythm of earthly existence, God's role was ignored or dismissed. When there was an unexplainable disaster, the people wondered again if dominion over the earth was really humanity's prerogative.

Before she wrote *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson wrote three inspiring books about the sea. She loved the mystery of the sea and all its interesting creatures,

but she also warned about the changes taking place in the waters around us. In 1963 she wrote about a changing climate in an age of rising seas. She intended to write more about what she could foresee, but died in 1964.

Recently the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, an island nation in the Pacific Ocean, made an urgent plea to all nations at the climate conference. "Climate change is drowning the Pacific Islands. The world's addiction to oil, gas, and coal threatens to swallow our lands under the warming seas inch by inch... The time has come to make peace with the planet."

We can no longer ignore that we are part of the created order of life. Recent natural disasters remind us that we are not masters of Planet Earth. The earth is a living organism, God's living creation, a gift to be treasured and protected. To renew our relationship with God's creation is to renew our relationship with all God's people so that we can live in harmony with the earth we call home.

Two Long-Time Diocesan Staff Retiring

With more than a half of century of service to the diocese combined, Canon Christyn Perkons and Debbie Young are retiring from their roles at the Synod office.

Earlier in the fall, Canon Christyn Perkons, director of congregational support and development, announced her retirement, effective January 31. Christyn has ministered as a member of the diocesan staff team for 20 years, expanding

her responsibilities over the years from her initial position as a program consultant for youth ministry to a coordinator position, and culminating in her present senior leadership role as a director.

"Christyn has compassionately and conscientiously served our diocese through her ministry that spans the decades," says Bishop Susan Bell. "Her work in creating the diocesan Mission Action Plan will be a legacy gift

for this diocese for many years to come; she has truly left her mark on us and we will miss not only her skills but her wisdom."

Throughout her ministry, Christyn has helped guide the unfolding of God's kingdom in parishes across the diocese and beyond, and through the lives of countless people who have been transformed by her faithful witness. "Her godly leadership is sustained and constantly made new by her steadfast faith," said the bishop.

Christyn joins Debbie Young, who retired at the end of the

year after 35 years of service to the diocese. Her roles with the finance team varied over the years but her steadfast and supportive presence has been a constant at Cathedral Place.

"As a staff team and as a diocese we have been blessed by Debbie's dedication and friendship," said Archdeacon Bill Mous, executive officer and secretary of synod. "Keeping track of payroll details, spreadsheet data, and financial transactions, isn't everyone's cup of tea; Debbie's finance and administrative work over three decades has

better equipped our diocese and its parishes for the missional ministry God calls us to come alongside."

Bishop Bell invites your prayers for Christyn and Debbie, along with their families as they embark on their well-deserved retirements and begin their next chapters.



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Left: Debbie Young



Right: Canon Christyn Perkons

Deacons Across the Border

THE REVEREND DEACON RODERICK MCDOWELL

This is a story of permanent or vocational deacons coming together. Our former Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, once described a gathering of deacons as a “disturbance.” This is how a “disturbance” began and continues to this day.

You will recall when our churches had to close down in March, 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we discovered virtual worship and Zoom video-conferencing. In Buffalo, New York, Archdeacon Diana Leaker, director of deacons for the Episcopal Diocese of Western New York, had a fabulous and inspired idea as summer approached. She wondered: “Why don’t the deacons of Western New York and Northwest Pennsylvania meet regularly by Zoom. Bishop Sean Rowe, bishop of both the dioceses of Western New York and Northwest Pennsylvania, approved the con-joint meet-

ings. In June of 2020, the deacons of Niagara joined those of Western New York, and Northwest Pennsylvania and have met together over Zoom every Monday ever since.

You may wonder how the deacons of Niagara got connected with those in Western New York and Northwest Pennsylvania. When I began my formation for the diaconate, Canon David Long, then director of ministry support for the Diocese of Niagara, asked me to join with the deacons of Western New York in their formation process. I did so for the next year and as a result made many life-long friends. They came to my ordination and I to theirs. I attended events for deacons in both Buffalo and Erie, Pennsylvania. A bishop even once declared that I was one of theirs! Diana and I had met at many of these occasions. I reached out to our deacons and so it began. I can’t remember if I asked permission from Bishop Susan Bell but when she heard about it she was

delighted.

Niagara currently has 15 active deacons, Western New York has 13 and Northwest Pennsylvania has five. Every Sunday evening Diana sends out a Zoom request to the active deacons in all three dioceses. We meet every Monday morning at 9 a.m.—holidays do not stop us!

While we are all Anglican deacons, there are some differences. The American deacons, for instance, during their formation spend six months in a very different parish than their home parish, and after ordination the bishop can transfer them to different parishes. Nevertheless, we have more similarities than differences. One of our great frustrations has been our inability to meet in person and hopefully, by next spring, we will be able to gather in person.

We talk about many things—we share stories of our ministries as well as discuss the goings-on in our dioceses and churches. We have become a disturbance community.



Let me give you some examples. Deacon Penny from Western New York shared about her trip to an orphanage for children in Honduras that she and her parish sponsor. Many of the Western New York deacons talk about the shortages of priests and how they are forced to cope. Mark McGill and Sandra Thomson, of the Diocese of Niagara, have told of the programs to feed those who need nutrition. I have told of my problems as a Small Claims

Court judge dealing with mentally ill litigants. We have joked and cried together.

Monday morning is something we all look forward to each week. Christ told us to gather and worship in community. This is a different and yet wonderful way in a time in which we could not gather in person. Zoom has helped bring us together!

It is my hope that this marvelous exercise will continue. Please pray for us as deacons reach across the border.

St. Matthew’s House invites people to join the 412 Barton Street Campaign

St. Matthew’s House, a charitable, non-profit multi-service agency in Hamilton, is seeking donations supporting their ambitious capital campaign for the 412 Barton street project (also referred to as 4Twelve). Through the project, 412 Barton street will be transformed into 15 affordable rental units intended for seniors facing homelessness, with a special focus on Indigenous and Black older adults. 50 per cent of the units will be designated for women.

“We hope that The 4Twelve will serve not only as a safe housing solution for our clients but will be a model of what is possible—the start of many more projects like this for St. Matthew’s House,” said Renée Wetselaar, executive director of St. Matthew’s House, in a press release.

Through the capital campaign, St. Matthew’s House is seeking to raise one million dollars, which will fund the completion of each unit, including furnishings as well as laundry and storage facilities. The capital

campaign will also fund a community food security centre and 24-hour wraparound support.

“This initiative is the culmination of all of St. Matthew’s House’s efforts in community building since it began in the 1960s,” said Brent Bentham, chair of the capital committee overseeing this project, in a press release. “This is a project where our compassion has merged with the foresight of our Federal government to address a pressing need.”

St. Matthew’s House welcomes you to become a champion of this capital campaign through



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Good Bones

THE VENERABLE MAX WOOLAVER

“Here, then, is the crucial question which we have been leading up to. Have we ever opened our door to Christ? Have we ever invited him in? This was exactly the question which I needed to have put to me. For, intellectually speaking, I had believed in Jesus all my life, on the other side of the door. I had regularly struggled to say my prayers through the key-hole. I had even pushed pennies under the door in a vain attempt to pacify him. I had been baptized, yes and confirmed as well. I went to church, read my Bible, had high ideals, and tried to be good and do good. But all the time, often without realising it, I was holding Christ at arm's length, and keeping him outside. I knew that to open the door might have momentous consequences. I am profoundly grateful to [Eric Nash] for enabling me to open the door. Looking back now over more than fifty years, I realise that that simple step has changed the entire direction, course and quality of my life.”
—John Stott

has proclaimed throughout the ages, embraces and coordinates a wider range of human experience, opens up more possibilities of human living and offers in the end a deeper and richer ecstasy of fulfillment than any alternative way of life and thought.” —Eric Mascall

When we see an old house we sometimes say “That house has good bones.” We mean that the house is structurally solid and strong. If you bought it, you could renovate with confidence and flair. The strength of the old house inspires confidence in the vision of the new house.

John Stott, quoted above, shared his lived experience of Christ—both his experience of “holding Christ at arm's length” and the experience of ‘opening’ the door of the heart, mind, soul and strength. As the venerable pastor sensed in his being, that movement of faith would have “momentous consequences” for him. Indeed, the life of John Stott had ‘momentous consequences’ for the Anglican Church of the 20th century and well into the 21st.

Eric Mascall also quoted

above, shared his lived experience of the Anglican Church. His lived experience of the Church opened for him “more possibilities of human living and offered in the end a deeper and richer ecstasy of fulfillment than any alternative way of life and thought.”

John Stott, as many of you will know, was profoundly evangelical in his spirit, while Eric Mascall, remembered and much admired by fewer folk, was profoundly Anglo-Catholic. In a sense, you could say, they represent something of the ‘Good Bones’ of the Anglican Church.

Yet, how many of us, ‘hold Christ at arm's length’? How many of us would claim that the Anglican Church has been experienced as “a deeper and richer ecstasy of fulfillment than any alternative way of life and thought”?

By the modest means of this column, I want to proclaim my earnest belief—not ‘offer’, as in quietly and discretely—that the Anglican Church is opening the door, in our current day and circumstance, to Christ and to a ‘deeper and richer ecstasy of

fulfillment.’

It has never been easier to see Christ ‘at work’ in our Communion and it has never been easier to contrast what we see in the world with what we see in ‘our Church.’ Of course, it is not ‘our’ Church... it is God's Church!

In a strange way, the COVID-19 pandemic has been part of this unfolding revelation. I have a colleague who spent a continuous three hours on the car phone calling shut-in parishioners. I know for a fact the continual offering of prayer that our concern one for another has inspired—24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

But is not just the COVID-19 pandemic. As one priest-to-be told me recently, “Our folks are famished for God.” He was speaking of the 25-35 age bracket who are coming to a 6:30am service of a quiet Morning Prayer—twice a week—and a liturgical offering of Evening Prayer—three times a week. Another priest-to-be told me of her secular business group quietly asking for Bible study.

I also see this uprising of graced longing in our bold entry into controversy as we proclaim that all people are made in the divine image. As community in Christ, we are making it clear that we prefer to stand alongside, not over and against, the de-colonization of our hearts,

souls, minds and bodies as we proclaim the love of Christ for all peoples. We are not the embodiment of imperial power. We are the body of Christ.

I see the stirrings of the Holy Spirit in the awakening of the mystical dimension of our sojourn in Christ. This awakening of the inspired longing for a meaningful spiritual practice is the stirring of the awareness that we cannot command God to be this or that. We are not called to be prophets of national or personal self-interest. We are called to be disciples and apprentices of Christ. Like Martha's sister Mary, we are called to choose “the better part,” to listen to Christ. How do we do that? This is what we are yearning—even pleading—to know!

The Anglican Church has never been better ‘positioned’ to offer the wisdom, which over the ages, it has received. We have never been in a better position to offer Christ, in practice, in sacrament, in lives of living testimony to the transformative blessing of life in the Risen Christ.

The ‘stripping down’ of the last few years has in fact been good for us. It is ongoing. And it is deepening.

Our Church has good bones. Our ‘old house’ is strong. We can, with God's help, build the ‘new house’.

“The faith which the Church

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Waking Up to Christian Unity

THE REVEREND AARON O'REAR

There is a sound that parents of multiple children know, a sound that filters through the woodwork of a house and echoes through rooms and hallways. It's a distinct sound that touches a specific nerve in parents—the sound of siblings shifting from happy play to angry fighting—discordant note! Domestic bliss shattered! “He took my book! She hit me! I was sitting there!” We roll our eyes, we sigh, and we put down the coffee and the paper and trudge upstairs to separate the combatants.

I suspect God hears our denominational divisions as that sort of discord, though perhaps without the newspaper since God is all-knowing. I refuse, however, to accept a vision of the Kingdom of God that does not include coffee. Our wrangling over points of doctrine or the means and shape of ministry, these are equal to the bickering of siblings.

I say this not to dismiss the importance of our differences over theology and praxis. I have officiated enough funerals for families riven, entrenched behind old grievances and certain of the self-evident righteousness of their own positions, to know that family division can be a deep and real thing. In fact it's a truism that we never fight so fiercely as we do with family.

Still, at the heart there is

something resonant in the comparison. My wife and I have three children and, like any children, they do their share of fighting. Not physical, at least not yet, thank heavens, but the everyday sort of squabbling that lacks sufficient ratiocination or reason to be called argument. Typical stuff, really, and generally blown over as quickly as it started, but in the moment very real and very painful. Yet, when it is over, no, even as it is storming, they are brothers. Inescapably linked, bound by blood and shared history, united at the cellular level, they are brothers. Maybe they're brothers who bicker.

Maybe they will grow up as brothers who rarely speak to one another, even, heaven forbid, hold grudges and long feuds with one another. Perhaps their future is one of awkward, stilted Thanksgiving dinners and conversations brokered by spouses. They might even, some day, be the divided family gathering in uneasy truce to arrange their parent's funeral. I hope not and I pray not, but it might happen. Even if it does, they'll still be brothers.

This is the heart of Christian ecumenism. Deep and entrenched differences exist, yes. Much pain and anguish is felt over these differences, yes. But beneath them we are brothers and sisters in Christ, bound by blood—His, not ours—and a shared history. If we are following Jesus, if we remain committed to Him, then nothing we do can break that

bond. It is indissoluble, not due to our strength or faithfulness—human history should be evidence enough that those are sorely limited—but because Jesus prayed that it might be so: “May they be one, as you and I are one.” When God prays, the prayer becomes reality. Let there be light,” or “This is my body.” We are profoundly One with our sisters and brothers in other denominations. More so that we could ever imagine.

Our ecumenical gestures cannot unify the Church. The Church is already unified. All we can do is uncover and try to live that unity. We do that with special celebrations, such as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, praying not to be united but that we might wake up to the fact that we already are. We do it through shared projects in outreach or formation, in dialogue and fellowship, in joint statements of faith, and even in mutual acknowledgements of how we fail to realize our unity.

Personally, I would learn from the wisdom of parents everywhere who, having put down the coffee and the paper, having trudged upstairs to part the combatants, now sit them down and—calmly as possible—ask what happened. Not to judge or solve or punish, but to let the squabble be seen as it really is. They remind their children to treat one another with kindness, to consider how their own actions affect the other, and then send them back to their game.

Because parents know that once the hurt is addressed, once the tempers calm, the siblings will still be siblings and the sound of squabbling will give way to the sound that every parent loves—the sound of brothers and sisters happily playing, delighting in one another and in the game, in joyful peace born of their inherent unity. This is the sound we hope God hears when we gather in Christian unity.



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Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

Deadlines:

- March – January 27
- April – February 24

Submissions:

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

Contact the Editor.

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

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

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It's Me. I'm the Problem

Taylor Swift, female leadership and Biblical role models

**THE REVEREND CANON
MARTHA TATARNIC**

My daughter Cecilia and I feverishly await new Taylor Swift albums, and our excitement for *Midnights*, which dropped a few weeks ago, was highest of all. We were comparing notes about the album over text a few days later and shared simultaneously that the song that both of us had on repeat was “Anti-Hero”. The deceptively simple words to the chorus frame the song’s sentiment: “It’s me. Hi. I’m the problem, it’s me.” It’s one of Swift’s catchiest, but certainly not her only, ode to wrestling with her own enormous ego and dramatic tendencies. She admits to narcissism, to driving away the people she loves most, to pettiness and calculation, to being trapped and isolated by her own giant success. It is funny. It is self-deprecating. It is relatable. Cecilia and I were both hooked.

This is interesting to me in a number of ways. Taylor Swift is the epitome of a trend that I have been observing for a number of years now, and this latest pop anthem sums it up: as a culture, we’ve become obsessed with the female anti-hero. I started to notice it in the beach-read thrillers I would tear through on vacation, giving me a mostly unbroken stream of unreliable female narrators. Women who were too drunk, brokenhearted or just generally confused to know what was really going on came to dominate the whodunnit and what’s-next page-turners of the bestseller lists. Whether it was *Woman on a Train*, *Woman in Cabin 10*, or *The Woman in the Window*, we found a collective and voracious appetite for reading about women falling apart in consequential ways.

I noticed a similar trend in hit television shows, movies, and our biggest pop stars. When Lady Gaga was at the height of her popularity and powers, she leaned in to her brand of being an outsider and weirdo, taking us behind the scenes in revealing documentaries about the chronic pain she lives with and the other difficulties she navigates. Taylor Swift comes by it

honestly in adopting a brand of insecurity and self-curated ugliness—despite arguably being the most famous, lauded, and materially-successful singer-songwriter of our time.

I wonder not only why this archetype is so popular, but also why successful women feel such

insecurity that I caused in others. I reeled with spiritual vertigo. Never have I received advice that feels so at odds with my own experience of myself. I had spent the previous fifteen years trying to prove that I deserved, as a young woman in ministry, to be at whatever tables I found

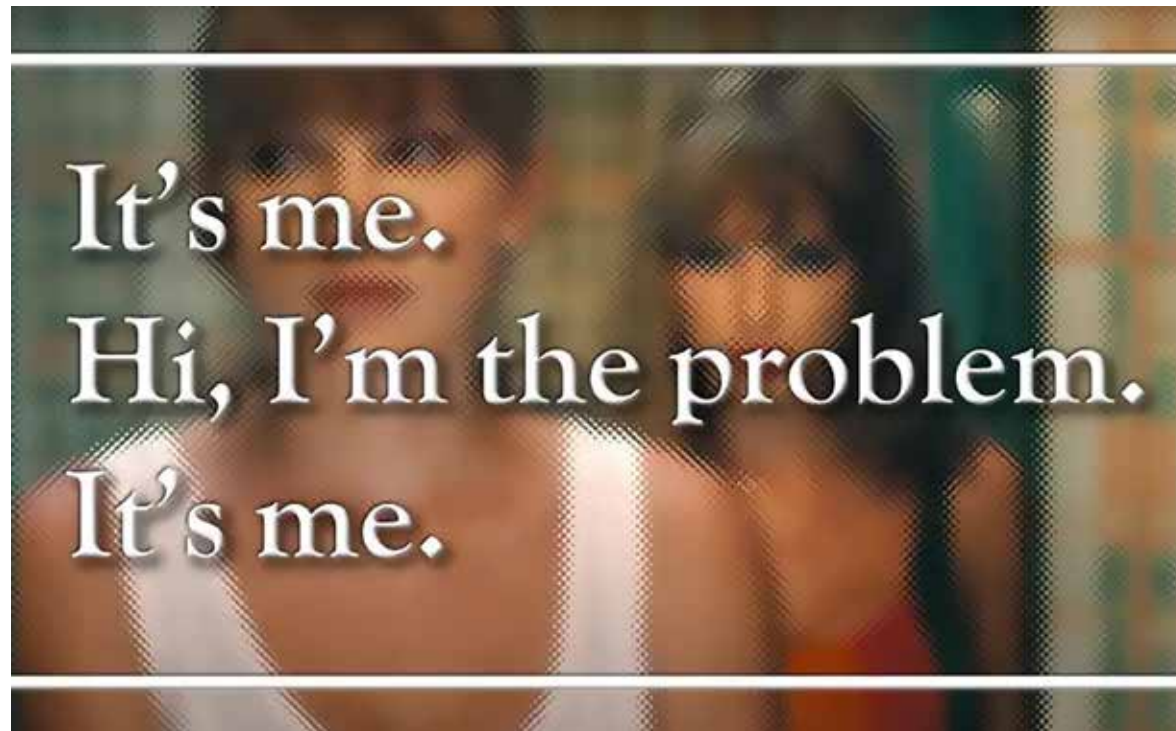
the roles that have traditionally been assigned to us. Christianity has been widely criticized for slotting women into one of three categories, two accepted, one not: Virgin, Mother, Whore. Feminists have railed for generations against a religion that claims Mary as the ultimate

that women be listened to—not as the world may wish we would speak, but with the voices we actually have, giving expression to our refusal to be interpreted through the nice, neat categories that have so long been assigned to us.

Ironically, this brand of anti-hero leadership provides a lens for seeing our Biblical witness more clearly too—despite how Scripture has been used to support patriarchal categories assigned to women, men, and the non-binary for millennia. Mary herself leaps off the pages of Scripture, not merely as a Virgin Mother, but as a woman who is, by turns, rebellious, demanding, visionary, heartbroken, courageous, scared, obedient, loving, grumpy, ignorant, and prayerful. She is representative of the characters of all genders who dot the pages of Scripture, not with their unblemished heroics of faithfulness, but with their flaws and foibles, their limited perspectives, squabbles, immaturities and second thoughts. Even Jesus, in whose feet we are meant to follow, the model of how we are to live and be, gets to have the occasional bad mood and limited understanding. I love him even more for those moments.

These less-than-perfect characters make it easier for me to love and know God too. The Bible’s collection of anti-heroes frees God from the realm of saccharine sentimentality and allows me to see how holiness really works: not in some perfected other world, but in this world, in these people, and maybe in me too.

Ultimately, I blast Taylor Swift’s brilliant new song in my car or kitchen on an almost daily basis, and I tune in to the stories of Scripture most days too. I consider my own battles with my ego, the ways in which I am obviously much too much; I intentionally opt for a front-row seat on seeing and analyzing all of my own shortcomings. And I see a way through my many flaws, not to guilt, shame or inadequacy, but to freedom, grace, and truth.



a gravitational pull toward it. I wonder why Cecilia and I, both women with goals and intelligence, who value achievement and want to contribute meaningfully to the world around us, are so taken with a song that names all of the cracks in the façade of our most prominent example of female empowerment and success.

There’s a way of reading this as a victory for the patriarchy. It is easy to argue that female heroes are only palatable to us when ridden with flaws. Taylor Swift is an exceptionally powerful and accomplished woman. But maybe we can only accept that power when taken with a spoonful of the sugar she herself doles out in reminding us that she’s really a mess on the inside.

A few years ago, when I was settling into the various mantles of leadership that I had come to wear, a female colleague took me aside one evening at a gathering of clergy and told me that my so-called success was intimidating and that I would need to work very hard in the coming years to present myself as vulnerable in order to allay the inse-

curity that I caused in others. I reeled with spiritual vertigo. Never have I received advice that feels so at odds with my own experience of myself. I had spent the previous fifteen years trying to prove that I deserved, as a young woman in ministry, to be at whatever tables I found myself populating—often with the sneaking suspicion that maybe I had been invited in order to fill some gender-based quota. Furthermore, I’ve rarely left an insecurity unexpressed. I wrote a book about struggling with an eating disorder and another about skating on the thin ice of professional burnout. Whether in sermons, blogs or books, I have consistently mined my own flaws in a very public way for whatever wisdom and learning they might hold.

It is quite possible that, whether we’re talking about Taylor Swift or about my daughter and I, we are easier for our audience to swallow when we do the labour of reassuring others that we’re not so great after all.

While this may be true, it’s not the whole truth. There is another way of reading Taylor Swift’s “I’m the problem” prowess—as well as the connection that Cecilia, myself, and millions of fans the world over feel about this song and this model of female empowerment. In a very real way, we embrace our female anti-heroes as a means of carving out space for ourselves, and carving that space apart from

female icon—setting a standard to which we can literally never measure up since she’s the only woman who has managed to be both a virgin and a mother simultaneously.

Of course, Christianity is by no means an outlier in adopting cultural norms which keep women under control by relegating them to such two-dimensional roles, roles which are directly related to how female sexuality is managed or shamed.

I have become a Taylor Swift fan, despite her dominant popularity and my general apathy toward music that is too “pop,” because I can’t help but feel grateful for, and connected to, her relentless insistence that her power is three-dimensional, her leadership is nuanced, and her feelings include heartbreak, egomania, strategy, ambition, self-love, fragility, and regret. She’s not a virgin, she’s not a whore. She is silent on the matter of whether she one day hopes to have children. She (and many others like her) carve out a different model of leadership, an alternate brand of success, and the in-your-face demand