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A section of the Anglican Journal



NIAGARA ANGLICAN



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FEBRUARY 2024

Appeal Supports Food Security Across Diocese



In 2023 Silvercreek Community Market volunteers distributed food to 7,187 people, 2,843 of whom were children, up from 4,878 people in 2022.

Photo: Contributed by All Saints Lutheran Anglican Church

22 food security ministries across the diocese are starting 2024 off on a strong note thanks to more than \$20,000 raised through a special appeal in late 2023.

"It's a gift to our parishes that is made possible by one generous donor who was moved to respond to the conflict happening in our world at this time by matching all the gifts that have come in for this appeal from all corners of our diocese," said Bishop Susan Bell in a letter to recipients. In addition, several memorial donations were also made to support the appeal in loving memory of Dr. Geoffrey Purdell-Lewis, a parishioner

from St. John the Evangelist in Hamilton.

Year-over-year increases to grocery prices of 10 per cent or more have forced individuals and families to turn to help for the first time, while also stretching the budgets of food security ministries even thinner. Churches throughout our diocese have been responding to this growing need through hosting and stocking community fridges, running food banks and community meal programs, cultivating community gardens, and delivering prepared meal

See Food Security Page 3

Niagara Communion Forest Initiative Receives Funding

DEIRDRE PIKE

Climate Justice Niagara (CJN) is poised for planting as part of the Communion Forest in 2024, after receiving a \$7,500 grant from the Anglican Foundation of Canada. The grant is matched by the Diocese of Niagara for a combined \$15,000.

The funding will support the Niagara Communion Forest—Inventory, Planting, and Stewardship initiative, assisting parishes of the diocese with tree inventories to determine the state of current trees as well as the potential for future planting.

Green Venture in Hamilton will be an active partner in

the training process and will provide guidance throughout the project. CJN will also be working with Neighbourhoods in Toronto, a community-based tree inventory, monitoring, and stewardship planning program. Parish volunteers will learn from these experts in the field how to identify, monitor and measure native trees. Together with CJN, they will be guided to plan and participate in mini forest planting or select native shade trees to plant, increasing church property tree cover and urban forest health.

To ensure long-term sustainability of the trees planted, parish volunteers will also be

engaged in learning to care for, maintaining and protecting trees on church properties and in their neighbourhoods.

To further support this work, the diocese will be taking on an Environmental Management student from Niagara College. Raul Guerrero started his 13-week placement with Deirdre Pike, justice and outreach program consultant, on January 10, 2024. One of the first orders of business is to create and distribute a brief parish survey to help choose the first 10–15 parishes participating in the Communion Forest. The training will be completed in the spring, with planting to take place in the fall.

The Communion Forest is a global initiative comprising local activities of forest protection, tree growing and eco-system restoration undertaken by provinces, dioceses and individual churches across the Anglican Communion to safeguard creation.

For more information, please connect with one of the CJN Communion Forest members. Bruce Mackenzie, brucemackenzie2@gmail.com (St. George's, Guelph); Fran Wallace, rector@sain-aidans.ca; (St. Aidan's Oakville); or Deirdre Pike, deirdre.pike@niagaraanglican.ca



The Niagara Communion Forest—Inventory, Planting and Stewardship initiative is intended to spur more forest planting, similar to the planting which happened at St. George's, Georgetown in 2024. Photos: Connor Jay

Living Black History at Church of the Resurrection

THE VENERABLE JIM SANDILANDS AND LOUISE JOHNSON

Since 2015 The Church of the Resurrection in Hamilton has worked to produce programs and events to honour Black History Month. A committee has worked year to year to create opportunities for learning and initiative to help deal with systemic and unconscious overt or covert racism. Over the years through events, activities, and resources the team has tried to meet the goal of exposing and combatting racism in ways which promote understanding and action. In those years there have been learnings and so we have modified our work to meet the changes with the times. For example our recent focus has shifted to Emancipation Day in August because more and more events are occurring in the month of February which follow or duplicate some of our own activities. We are adapting as awareness is changing and hopefully growing in the larger community. We are learning too how our individual stories can impact our experience of racism and how important it is to take the time to listen to each other as we share our day to day experiences.

Our plan is to continue to grow and adapt ourselves to meet the challenge of racism in our world. By Grace we are given the chance to open our minds and hearts and so influence the attitudes of others. We

are thankful for the work which has begun and continues to grow in our journey to love our neighbour as ourselves and to promote and end to racism in our world.

What follows is a brief history of our story to date.

Church of the Resurrection is situated on the West Mountain in Hamilton at the corner of the Rolston neighbourhood. The neighbourhood is highly diverse and includes a significant Black Community. This diversity is reflected in the members of the parish, who are from several Caribbean Islands, Africa, Guyana and second-generation Canadians. Our aim in celebrating Black History is to engage our diverse congregation and local community in meaningful ways, to increase their awareness of Black Canadians, their experiences and contributions and make our Vision statement that we intend to be: "A joyful, growing, and loving community of faith where you have a place" a reality for all.

In the fall 2015 a small group of parishioners was recruited to work with the clergy to plan and lead our celebration of Black History in February 2016. Our celebratory plans should include opportunities for members of the parish and the local community to hear about the experiences of Black people and events that are often not taught in school. Each of the following events was expected to have educational and or entertainment components.



- Movie Nights,
- Brief (two page) weekly summaries of the work, (also referred to as Blue Pages), of Black Canadians and other individuals who made significant contributions to arts, sciences, sports and advocacy for human rights.
- "Living Black History" A celebration with special display, music, keynote speaker, and
- Church service with guest speaker

Thanks to the availability of vast library of Canada's National Film Board productions we were able to view and select Black History related productions and made "Movie Night" a feature of our celebration. The opportunity to view the movie on a large screen followed by small group discussions, was well received by attendees from the neighbourhood and parishioners who enjoyed popcorn, pizza and the social interactions. Movie Night became a feature on our annual Black History celebration up

to 2020. We continue to receive inquiries about the resumption of Movie Nights and hopefully we will be able to do so in 2024.

The Blue Pages biographical summaries were popular take away item for parishioners and visitors.

With the guidance and support from The Ontario Black History Society staff, we were able to attract a well know journalist, broadcaster and human rights advocate JoJo Chintoh to be the keynote speaker at our Main Celebratory Event on February 27, 2016. We also benefited from their generosity in sharing contact information for other prominent Black History advocates, and the affordable prices for their Black History promotional material.

The successful celebration of Black History month in February 2016 and the feedback we received from the wider community motivated and influenced the decision to incorporate Black History education

and celebration as an ongoing part of our communal life in a meaningful and inclusive way. A committee with broader representation from our congregation was recruited and given the responsibility to plan and implement a sustainable program of education and events annually.

Since its inception, The Committee:

- Organized Day Trips to Oakville Black History Museum and Sheffield Park Black History Cultural Centre
- Designed Afrocentric Themed Displays for Main Events during Black History Month
- Hosted The Toronto Children's Concert and Performing Arts Company Concert Choir, DeJhan Hamilton, local Solo Steel Pan Musician and local All Star Jazz Band concerts
- Offered Diversity and Equity Training Workshop
- Organized Movie Nights
- Received Grant Funding and donations to establish Black History Library
- Incorporated Emancipation Day Celebration in its Living Black History Endeavours.

We are hopeful that Church of the Resurrection's Living Black History Programs and their results will motivate others to deal with racial biases and discrimination with joyful coexistence endeavours.



Church of the Resurrection, Hamilton celebrating Black History in 2022.

Image: Niagara Anglican files

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Food Security Ministries Get A Boost

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

boxes to those most in need in our communities.

All Saints Lutheran Anglican Church in Guelph offers a free, choice based, fresh food market called the Silvercreek Community Market since May of 2017, operating on the first and third Thursday of each month.

"All Saints Lutheran Anglican Church in Guelph was very grateful to receive a \$1,000 grant from the diocese in support of the Silvercreek Community Market," said Michele Altermann of All Saints Lutheran Anglican Church. "This outreach ministry has been distributing free fresh produce including fruits, vegetables, and eggs, to the community since 2017. In 2023 we distributed food to 7,187 people, 2,843 of whom were children. That number is up from 4,878 people in 2022. As you can see the need continues to grow as more families than ever are

experiencing food insecurity. Please know that every dollar helps put nutritious food on the table for our families."

Each visitor receives close to five pounds of fresh produce, along with eggs and baked goods donated by COBS bakery. Since many of their clients are newcomers, they intentionally stock culturally appropriate food items.

St. Mark's in Orangeville is one of the Food Security Grant recipients, serving an average of 55 visits each month. Through a food cupboard offering basic food staples, and cleaning and hygiene products, the parish supplements other community programs, mainly serving visitors who reside in the downtown area close to the parish.

In Smithville, St. Luke's operates an emergency food pantry in conjunction with West Lincoln Community Care, the only food bank in West Lincoln, serving

the largest geographic area in the Niagara region. "This grant will allow our parish community to build our "No Questions Asked" Emergency Food Pantry Program," said Stephen LaSalle of St. Luke's Smithville. "In doing so, together with our partners in the community, we will be able to work together to ensure that those in need within our community do not go without."

West Lincoln Community Care is serving 40 per cent more households than previous years, and 105 per cent more than before 2019. St. Luke's operates a "no questions asked" food pantry for those not yet ready to access food bank services, due to the perceived stigma of accessing food banks. When possible, St. Luke's works with visitors to connect them with West Lincoln Community Care.

St. Jude's Justice and Servant Ministry operates five separate programs in Oakville in col-

laboration with 12 community non-for-profit partners. The Pantry Program cooks 400 frozen meals per month and distributed to St. Matthew's House in Hamilton and Links2Care in the Halton region, supporting home-bound seniors. St. Jude's delivers weekly meals to 35 low-income families supported by Link2Care. A weekly barbeque in the summer months supports 80-100 families living in subsidized housing complexes in Oakville. Food for Life Outreach Program supports 35-40 families living in subsidized housing. In 2022, these families received close to 40,000 pounds of fresh food. Lyon's Lane Gardening Program supports Kerr Street Mission food bank visitors with fresh vegetables. In 2020, 800 pounds of vegetables were harvested!

Throughout the diocese, parishes are responding to the growing need for food security



programming, and donations will help the people served by these 22 ministries access healthy and nutritious meals with dignity and care.



Silvercreek Community Market recently received two donations from local business leaders in Guelph. Pictured here are volunteers, community members, business leaders, and Mayor Cam Guthrie and Member of Provincial Parliament Mike Schreiner.

Photos: Contributed by All Saints Lutheran Anglican Church

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**CALLED TO LIFE
COMPELLED TO LOVE**

In other words

How old is God? And Other Conundrums



JOHN BOWEN

Some books have such thought-provoking titles that you hardly feel you need to read the book. I still think from time to time about, *Do What you Love: the Money will Follow*, though I confess I never got round to reading it. Another such was J.B. Phillips, *Your God is Too Small*, written some sixty years ago, but still worth reading. And yes, I have read it.

I for one know that my God is too small, and sadly always will be. One reason for this is the images we developed in childhood, and which never completely leave us—even though we know they are wrong. In my life, my first image of God was that of the rector of the church where I grew up. He was, it seemed to me, very tall and definitely old. He was bald, wore glasses, and was very kind. Oh, and he was always wearing a cassock and surplice when I saw him. If he was God's representative, then presumably that's what God was like. It made perfect sense.

The old man God

As an adult, I can laugh at this now. But the fact I know the image is wrong doesn't mean it has completely gone away. And I'm pretty sure I'm not the only one. Think of all those cartoons mocking the idea of God. (The Far Side comes to mind.) They invariably portray God as a very old man—always a man—with a white face, long white hair, bushy eyebrows, and a long white robe. The reason those cartoons work is that everybody recognises the caricature. They tap into our childhood memories. If our subconscious image of God was a shiny pink pyramid, to take a silly example, we wouldn't get the joke.

Of course, as we grow, we try to replace those childhood

images with something more adult. But it's difficult. C.S. Lewis tells of a young woman he knew whose parents taught her "to regard God as a perfect 'substance'; in later life she realised that this had actually led her to think of [God] as something like a vast tapioca pudding. To make matters worse, she disliked tapioca." So thinking of God as impersonal is not exactly an improvement on the old man in the sky. At least you can imagine talking to the old man. Tapioca, not so much.

One of the problems of the "old man" image of God is the "old" part. Of course, it makes sense. God has always been there. A million years is nothing to God. Therefore, obviously, God must be very, very old—and, like the rest of us, must look his age. The trouble is, what seems obvious about God is often wrong. In particular, there are some wildly unhelpful ideas which get smuggled in under cover of "very, very old." Old, for instance, can imply a certain degree of infirmity, and perhaps a loss of memory. Old people tend to be rather slow and cautious. I am not casting aspersions. I speak from first-hand experience. If God is like that, then God is probably going to be something of a drag on my life. God is likely to be very conservative, and unlikely to embrace the future with a great amount of enthusiasm. And is that kind of God someone I want to entrust my life to? Hardly.

The youthful God

Sometimes people question the usefulness of theology. But actually theology can be deeply useful, even practical. Come to think of it, if theology is talk about God, we're already doing it. Here's a prime example. Christian theology believes that God the Creator was incarnate in a unique way in Jesus of Nazareth. In Christ, the author wrote themselves into the drama of the human race, to become a character in the story alongside all the others. Thus, if you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus.

But think what this implies. When God became a human being, God could presumably have become incarnate as an



Cima da Conegliano, God the Father

Image: Wikimedia Commons

old man—long beard and bushy eyebrows included—if that was going to give us an accurate image of the Creator. But in fact God chose something different—a young man at the height of his powers. A young man who was radical in his approach to life, love, and religion. A young man who led the way with such determination that it was difficult for people to keep up with him. A young man who delighted the marginalised and horrified the establishment. How old is God? Christian tradition would say God is about thirty years old.

Why does this matter? Because what we think about God will shape our lives, for better or for worse.

I remember, as a child in Sunday School, hearing what bad things idols were, but never having a very clear idea of what they were, or why they were so bad. Now those rules about idolatry make more sense. For example, the Psalmist mocks idolatry, but then explains the problem: "Those who make them and all who trust them shall become like them." (Psalm 135:18) We become like the things we worship. So if the object of our worship is less than God, then our growth will also be less than our Creator has in mind for us.

I love a prayer of Bishop George Appleton's, as he reflects on this question in the light of the resurrection:

O Christ my Lord, again and again I have said with Mary Magdalene, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him." I have been desolate and alone. And thou hast found me again, and I know that what has died is not thou, my Lord, but only my idea

of thee, the image which I have made to preserve what I have found, and to be my security. I shall make another image, O Lord, better than the last. That too must go, and all successive images, until I come to the blessed vision of thyself, O Christ, my Lord.



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New Use for St. Matthew's House Property Inaugurated

A Sunrise Ceremony was held to formally launch the construction phase of the 412 Barton project, honouring the site as it becomes home for Black and Indigenous seniors facing homelessness in Hamilton.

"St. Matthew's House has been a place of hope for this community, and we are delighted to support this important work as this project is all about offering hope, as an outworking of our call to love our neighbour and a concrete demonstration of our commitment to the ongoing work of healing and reconciliation," said Bishop Susan Bell referencing the diocese's \$100,000 contribution to support the project.

The ceremony sought to recognize the land as originally belonging to First Nations people, and that St. Matthew's House, founded by local Anglicans, is working on this project as an act of truth and reconciliation. The project is also intended to be an act of reconciliation and inclusion of the Black community by fostering equity and justice together.

The ceremony included expressions of gratitude to the land for hosting a food bank for many years and serving thousands in the city who have

faced hunger and poverty. "We give thanks for this rich legacy of compassion and care," said Bishop Bell.

The land and people were honoured through words and rituals celebrating the future residents who will call 412 Barton home, with a smudging ceremony and African drumming. The event was held outside, in solidarity with future residents who are currently or close to being homeless.

In addition to the bishop, speakers from the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, the Afro-Canadian Caribbean Association, the City of Hamilton, and building partners Assembly, New Commons and Jackman Construction shared excitement for the 412 Barton project and its unique vision. Performer, artist, and community champion Tom Wilson spoke of building community with love, understanding and awareness of each other's humanity, and of thinking and working ahead for seven generations ahead.

Through this project and its partnerships, the 15 deeply affordable apartments that will be built will create the space for people at risk of homelessness to thrive.



Bishop Susan Bell took part in a smudging ceremony and spoke at the outdoor ceremony to mark the start of construction.

Photos: Tim McKenna

Learn more at www.stmatthewshouse.ca/412-barton



Architect's rendering of the 412 Barton building Image: St. Matthew's House website



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Skate to the Puck: Podcasting & Dwelling in the Now



**THE REVEREND CANON
MARTHA TATARNIC**

There's a famous quote by hockey great Wayne Gretzky that gets floated out in leadership circles, including the church, on a semi-regular basis: "Skate to where the puck is going, not to where it has been." It's undeniably good advice for hockey players, especially coming from someone known as the sport's "Great One." It also sounds amazingly appealing for people leading an institution or organization where the future feels uncertain. If you can intuit where things are inevitably going, and have a plan for getting yourself and your organization there, then you and your organization have a chance of being seen as having something relevant, attractive and compelling to offer.

I will confess that I am not someone who is good at knowing where the puck is going. I'm grateful to the prophets among us who can read the tea leaves and the spreadsheets and offer us fact-based trajectories about things like climate change, pandemics, asteroids, and the economy. I'm grateful for honest, fact-based assessments about things like church budgets and faith community membership.



Photo: Unsplash/Matthew Fournier

I'm not much of a skater, and I'm also not the kind of leader who is particularly good at mapping strategic plans that will chart our course for the next five years. I have my gifts, but getting out in front of the puck isn't what I would define as one of them.

For those of us who aren't skaters or the best strategists, there's an alternative to Gretzky's advice. This alternative is where I find hope and something to offer. It's also an alternative that ultimately serves us well for the future too. It might be essential, in fact, for being prepared and faithful for what lies ahead.

The alternative to skating to where the puck is going is in becoming really attentive to where the puck actually is right now.

I would go as far as to say that "being attentive to where the puck is now" is a good metaphor for the priestly ministry to which I am called. The priest-

hood in which we share, the priesthood of all believers, isn't about planning for what's around the corner, it's about lifting up what is. It's about being clear about what is here before our eyes; it's about praying for God's blessing to be revealed right here and right now.

Most people who know me know that I love to run. Perhaps what I love even more than running though is listening to podcasts. My love of podcasts is usually what gets me out the door for a run, even when I don't feel like putting shoe to pavement. I love listening in and feeling part of obsessively detailed discussions about reality television or music; I am grateful for long form interviews that delve into the real meat of getting to know what makes a public figure, politician, celebrity or artist tick. Being a podcast guest on *Vicar's Crossing* and *Pew & Beyond*—two amazing Canadian Anglican podcast offerings—was one of my favourite experiences of being able to talk about recent writing projects and publications.

It was in that same rota of book promotion that I first connected with *Future Christian* podcast, hosted by Loren Richmond Jr. out of Denver, Colorado. *Future Christian* is intentionally ecumenical and features guests specifically speaking on ecclesiology: the life, structures and leadership of the church. Because that is the focus, it leaves a great deal of room for Christians from a vari-

ety of contexts to offer insight from mainline, charismatic, small, large, rural, urban, church plants, and legacy churches, to name a few categories.

What has intrigued me most about the podcast, and what eventually resulted in my taking on some hosting duties along with Loren, was the threads that I kept hearing across these remarkably different experiences and dialects of the Christian faith. One guest might reflect on what it looks like to be a Christian missionary overseas in an age of decolonization. Another might be reflecting on urban church planting. And both are calling Christians wherever they find themselves ministering to invest deeply in listening and learning from the people and places we have been called to serve. Guests have offered reflections on clergy burn-out, the future of theological colleges, the grief of closing a church, and what the research shows about why people are leaving the church, and across all of these seemingly different topics comes a clearer picture of what it means to proclaim the Gospel within the context of secularism. Research is offered, statistics are unpacked, guests talk from personal experience about what has worked, where and why it worked, as well as what hasn't worked and how there is grace and learning there too.

If we go back to the Gretzky analogy, although the podcast is called "Future" Christian, what it offers first and foremost is

a slowed down, multi-vantage point perspective on where the puck is right now. What's great about that is the honesty and freedom that results from allowing the church to consider who we really are, in this moment, and where we are experiencing life and stress and hope and failing. What's great about that is removing the guess work, the wishing we were something different, the worrying about what's to come and getting real about what actually is—this is the Ultrareal Church, as I like to call it. What's great is that God is there. Shining through the most raw and honest accounts from across the church landscape, as well as the accounts of flourishing, is the God who makes good on the promise to show up. What's great is that becoming clearer about what is right here now also offers much needed clarity for what lies around the corner.

Future Christian is one forum for listening, learning, drawing connections, hearing field reports and piecing together how it all connects. Where and how is this happening in your ministry? What discussions are you having that feel most honest and liberating? And how can we shape cultures of attentiveness to the real, lived, varied, multi-dimensional experience of voices from across the church landscape lifting up for us the raw and holy experience of who we actually are?

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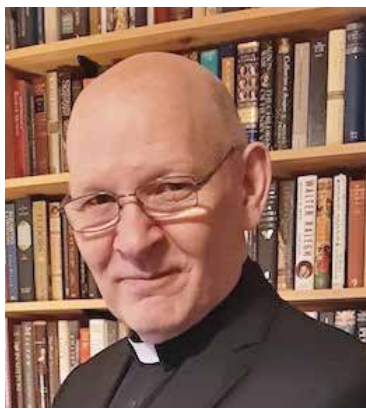
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Do We See the Unhoused in Our Neighbourhood?



THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN

I serve a community in Burlington that is considered a comfortable and attractive place to live, and for the most part that's certainly true. St. Luke's was founded in 1834, has an exquisite interior and is set in green and picturesque land. There are a number of fairly well-off people in the community and many of them are extremely socially conscious and generous. They need to be because, contrary to what some might believe, this city—just like any other in the diocese or the country for that matter—contains the poor, the unemployed, the hungry, and the homeless. Our church's regular community lunches are always full—when we open the doors each week to distribute food, the line is long. Then there are those who cannot find a place to live.

One woman came to see us recently. She is in her mid-40s, intelligent and alert, with some minor mental-health challenges. Covered in a plastic sheet to keep her dry, she was wheeling a large suitcase containing all she owned. She'd slept several nights in local bus shelters, sat in libraries or coffee bars in the day, and spent her time phoning or visiting places to find work or a roof over her head. She spoke highly of the local police, who were supposed to move her along when they saw her sleeping outside—but knew she had nowhere else to go.

When I drive to church early on a Sunday morning, I always see people asleep in shelters. This, in one of the more affluent cities in Canada.

She asked whether we could help her. She explained that she'd contacted shelter after shelter in Burlington but they were all full. I said I'd try and started to call them again. She was right. I then extended the search to Oakville and Mississauga. Nothing. Surely Hamilton had something. Rejection after rejection. "I'm really sorry," said one worker who answered the phone. "You can call others, but I'm telling you that there are just no vacancies."

Another shelter manager: "We recommend that you look further afield. Perhaps try Owen Sound." I said that it was 200 kilometres away, that this person had no money and no transport, and that if she got there and found nowhere to stay, she'd be in an even worse state. There was a pause. "Yes, I see what you mean."

We ended up giving her some cash, which we seldom do, and some cards to use at local stores, which we often do. I felt like such a failure. It's difficult to keep tabs on people, and I'm ashamed to say I've lost contact with her. Her story, alas, is far from unusual.

Many people sleeping wherever they can—sometimes in shelters, when they're lucky—have physical or mental-health issues or rely on long-term



Photo: Unsplash/Ev

government support. But not all. I know people who are working, even full-time, who simply can't afford an apartment. And because shelters are so often full, they use tents to find a minimal degree of privacy. Some have had breakdowns or experienced family tragedies, others have just been smashed by circumstances that I guarantee are not so far from me or you.

I asked one of the people we help whether Toronto was any easier. "Yes and no," he said. "I have a job here, even though the money isn't great. I can't risk losing that. There are more shelters and places in Toronto, but more people, too. There's another thing." He takes a deep breath. "There are angry people in some of those places, and, to be honest, they frighten me. I'd rather be cold than scared."

Being cold is, of course, a genuine danger in Ontario as we approach another winter. Cities issue weather warnings and open public venues for those living outside—but that's temporary and inadequate. A few hours in January temperatures can be fatal. But more than this, everyone deserves a place they can call home. While it doesn't have to be grand, it must be secure and stable.

I can't pretend to have all the answers, but I know from experience that many good and kind people aren't aware of how common the unhoused problem is. They don't realize how many of those we might assume go home each night to sanctuaries of love actually spend the night on the streets in the company of indifference or even danger. Shelters help, but we need more, and the demand will only increase. They're also a temporary response when what is needed is a long-term solution. Affordable housing is vital, and that means a fundamental shift in government policy at all levels. I'm just not sure if

the political (and public) will is there.

We're a prosperous province in prosperous country, and we even sometimes boast of being "the greatest country in the world." I'm not sure what the unhoused people I know would say to that, but I do think that any nation should be mea-

sured on how it treats its most vulnerable, and I know that such a view is hardly exclusively Christian. But if Jesus teaches us anything it's that God's image is in everyone and often particularly so in those who suffer and struggle.

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 - 400 words or less
- Articles** - 600 words or less

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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.

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Dr. Lucius Oille's Greenbelt Legacy

JOHN BACHER

The sudden resurrection of the Ontario Greenbelt from the dead points to the significance of the life of an Anglican Holy Person, Dr. Lucius Oille. (October 3, 1830 – August 13, 1903). Keeping urban sprawl away from its landscape protects Oille's legacy of a waterworks, which now supplies clean drinking water for several communities in Niagara.

In developing the St. Catharines waterworks, Oille acted about a decade following Louis Pasteur's discovery of bacteria in 1861. Instead of using wells contaminated by fecal matter, which spread diseases, clean water originating in Lake Erie passing above St. Catharines through the Welland Canal was employed.

A gravity powered drinking water reservoir sheltered by forests in a park-like setting was created. Downstream from the treatment plant a spectacular recreational system evolved. It includes De Cew Falls and much of what it now is, Short Hills Provincial Park.

As Chair of the Waterworks Commission (which controlled the city's water until the formation of regional government in 1970), Oille commissioned an artist to sketch the beauty of this landscape. Featuring rapids flowing through the rugged giants of an old growth forest, the sketch was published in an annual report.

Lands upstream of the reservoir were recently threatened by urban development in Thorold which would have unleashed polluted storm water into it. Such proposals have ended since site alteration here was prohibited through Greenbelt designation.

Originally established for St. Catharines, Oille's system now provides drinking water also for the communities of Thorold, Lincoln, and Niagara-on-the-Lake. Niagara-on-the-Lake's incorporation was a vivid lesson of the dangers of pollution, coming after the revelations of contamination by leaks in the infamous American Love Canal.

A lifelong abstainer and non-smoker, Oille was motivated in part by the situation where contamination was so common, beer was the safest drinking beverage. It had long been pro-



St. Catharines reservoir

Photo: John Bacher

moted by concerned Christians as an alternative to Gin. Such concerns to curb alcoholism were important in the Anglican laity group, which was involved in the founding of Oille's parish, the Guild of the Iron Cross.

The Guild of the Iron Cross functioned as a devout Christian version of Oille's secular, secretive Masonic Lodge. Members were pledged to, "resist Intemperance, Impurity and Profanity." Youth were encouraged on this path through a church camp near Fort Mississauga, where the Niagara River flows into Lake Ontario.

Oille lived through all the dramatic developments which led to the building of St. Barnabas which continues its holy mission today on Queenston Street. In 1870 the first Vesper services were held in what was originally a mission for St. George's Church. It was located on the second floor of a building that was a Grocery Store. The Boys Choir nurtured by the camp fostered high standards for Church music, a goal of the High Church movement of the era.

At the same time as Oille campaigned for pure water, the St. Barnabas mission developed into a simple wooden Church

on John Street, (now Tasker), in 1875. In 1893, the wooden church was moved about a mile to the new stone Church on Queenston Street, to become the parish hall.

Obituaries to Oille make it clear how his dramatic works were based on deep profound love for people. He was seen as being concerned with not only the mere health but "the problems of the patient." They viewed him as a "confessor and advisor." His love for animals was shown in the design for his downtown drinking fountain which has lower bowls so dogs can get water.

Oille also established Niagara's streetcar-based transit system. Lacking any significant personal wealth, he was able to build it through his good credit rating. While it was able to pay its own way while he lived before automobiles were common, it eventually became a publicly owned enterprise. This evolved first through the Canadian National Railway, which was transferred to municipalities in 1961.

The contemporary controversies over the Greenbelt point to the most heartfelt aspects of the tribute to Oille in his obituaries. One noted how, "Dr. Oille was

always the constant and zealous and incorruptible guardian of the interests of the people, and it is he, who we owe the unsparing and ceaseless vigilance during his term on the waterworks commission through which we possess such a magnificent waterworks system." One distinctive feature of the system is the Faucet Falls, which provides a flow of water for fish habitat whenever the main flow at De Cew Falls is turned off.

A lifelong bachelor who lived frugally, Oille died in conditions described in an obituary tribute as "penniless." All accumulated fortune that was left from a life of compassionate charity went to pay for the memorial window to the right of the altar at St. Barnabas Church. Its donation came as a pleasant surprise to the parish.

There have been no additions to the Canadian Calendar of Holy Persons since 1994. Oille's addition could make the day of his death, August 13th, a time of celebration of his works motivated by a profound Christian love of humanity and creation. This includes De Cew Falls and its gorge, whose waters are protected through the Greenbelt.



Memorial window to Dr. Oille in St. Barnabas Church, St. Catharines.

Photo: contributed by John Bacher