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A section of the Anglican Journal



NIAGARA ANGLICAN

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MARCH 2024

Capital Campaign Will Not Go Ahead At This Time

Having received the results of a four-month feasibility study for a major financial campaign led by the Steier Group, Bishop Susan Bell, with the affirmation of Synod Council, has made the decision not to proceed with a campaign at this time.

"I have heard a lot of anxiety from folks in the town halls," observed Bishop Bell in a video message, while noting that the diocese was still recovering from a once-in-a-lifetime event with the pandemic. "This tells me that we are in a complex place in terms of our confidence...and ultimately that we are not yet ready to dream."

The study also pointed to several other challenges that

would be faced if a campaign was launched at this time. These included economic worries, competing initiatives, and uneven support for the campaign across the diocese. "Certain areas of the diocese are experiencing greater degrees of unemployment and economic hardship," said Canon Drew MacDonald, stewardship and campaign advisor.

The study indicated excellent support for the proposed campaign's focus on resourcing parishes and missions to support God's mission and for developing leaders for the next season of the Church's ministry. Bishop Bell indicated that these areas would continue to be a priority, though it may

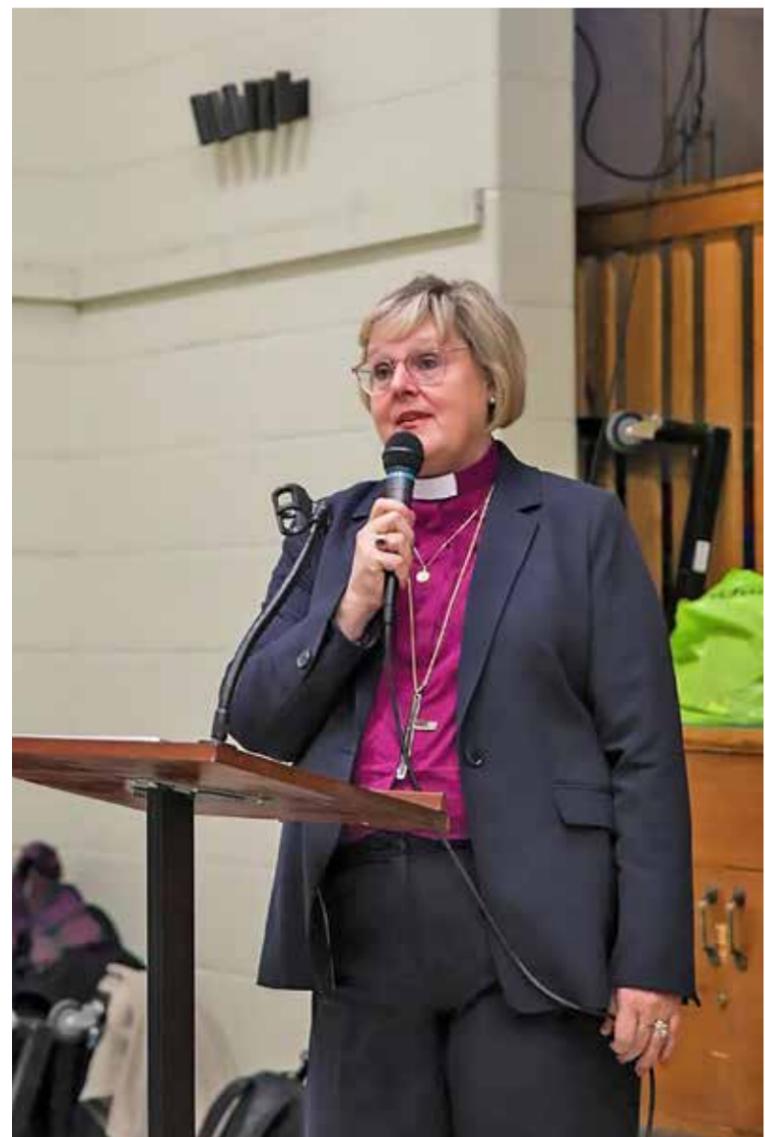
look somewhat different from what was contemplated in the proposed campaign.

"There was also good support for the other two components of the proposed campaign that were being tested: fostering reconciliation and equipping shared ministries," observed Canon MacDonald.

While a \$20 million goal was being tested, the study indicated that a goal on the order of \$10 million, over several years, and with the participation from every family across the diocese was more realistic.

The study engaged over four hundred people through

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Bishop Susan Bell speaking at a diocesan town hall about the capital campaign feasibility study.

Photo: Contributed by Diocese of Niagara

An Invitation to the World Day of Prayer

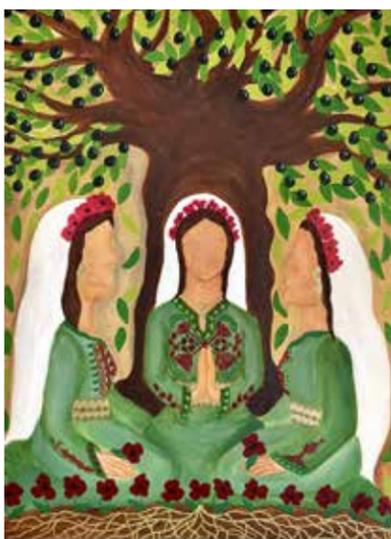


Image: World Day of Prayer website

THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL WORLD DAY OF PRAYER IS "I BEG YOU ... BEAR WITH ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE," BASED ON EPHESIANS 4: 1-3.

A committee of Christian women of Palestine have prepared the service this year. Organizers are encouraging participants to reflect on the history and challenges faced by this area as citizens struggle for security, peace, and independence as well as the efforts that women have made during

changes in ruling influences over the last century. It's also an opportunity to examine a geographical area that is home to the birth of Christianity.

"It's a day that draws Christians from all corners of the globe together in prayer," says Bishop Susan Bell. "For over 100 years, the World Day of Prayer has bridged barriers; inviting followers of Jesus to stand together in prayer and action, fostering God's mission of love in our world through justice, peace, and reconciliation."

The World Day of Prayer is an international, inter-church event that began around 100 years ago and now takes place in more than 146 countries. In Canada, the World Day of Prayer is coordinated by the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC), one of the original founders of this prayer movement.

Offerings received through the World Day of Prayer transform the prayers of participants into action in the form of project grants empowering women and

children in Canada and throughout the world. All regions share in the grants, with consideration given to greatest need. Through offerings, WICC has distributed around 3 million dollars for small projects in the past 40 years. The vision is to restore hope to women and children touched by injustice.

To learn more visit: wicc.org/world-day-of-prayer

Investing in a Sustainable Manner

SUE CARSON

As Anglicans we have a responsibility in the preservation of our world, as we are stewards of creation. The fifth mark of mission states: "We will strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth."

As an early adopter of Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) funds our diocese has been fully engaged in investing in companies whose values mirror our own.

Last year a subgroup of the Climate Justice Niagara (CJN) committee started a conversation to see if there were further steps that the diocese could take in being a more sustainable investor.

The recent Lambeth Call on Environment and Sustainable Development included this encouragement to Anglicans worldwide: "we must ensure we use and invest our assets

ethically to be good news for our planet and people, and as a matter of urgency, remove our funds from any new fossil fuel exploration, and seek to invest in renewable energy sources."

In the fall of 2016, the Council of General Synod established a Responsible Investing Task Force, in response to Resolution A171-R2, with a mandate to review and, if deemed appropriate, recommend changes to the current investment portfolio and the investment policies of the General Synod and the General Synod Pension Plan in relation to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) concerns. The Task Force's Final Report presented in 2018 recognised climate change as an urgent ethical issue requiring an immediate response from all sectors of society.

We believe that climate change is an urgent ethical issue requiring an immediate response from all sectors of

society. We acknowledge our responsibility to ensure that our investments are managed in a manner that is consistent with the Church's stance on climate change. At the same time our task force is mindful of the social impacts of a transition to a low carbon economy and supports the vision of a "just transition." A just transition is a transition "towards an environmentally sustainable economy [that is] well managed and contribute[s] to the goals of decent work for all, social inclusion, and the eradication of poverty.

Decisions we make about the transition—including our own investment decisions—may have impacts on individuals, families, and communities. We need to be inclusive in our thinking and our discussions and make those decisions in ways that minimize or mitigate negative impacts even as we try to address our common con-

cerns about climate change.

The Task Force, which included Dean Tim Dobbin, recommended an inclusive approach to responsible investing that mitigates 'negative impacts even as we try to address our common concerns about climate change.'

The investing approach by the diocesan investment manager seeks to live into this recommendation by investing in companies that are leading the way on environmental sustainability and renewable energy, and by actively engaging companies that could be doing better.

This year CJN will be continuing to have a conversation about investing sustainably and ethically. Although we may have been doing "no wrong" with our ESG investments, have we been doing everything right by the future of planet and its people?

As individuals there are steps that we can also take, and CJN hopes that many of you will

consider a more sustainable investing policy. Would you consider divesting from oil and gas companies? Is investing in ESGs an option for you? Could you use a Credit Union rather than a bank? Are you aware of how your pension fund is invested? Could you invest in more green energy or Indigenous projects? All issues that CJN will continue to investigate as we move forward on learning more about sustainable investing.

With the increasing number of climate disasters happening around the world and here in Canada, as Christians we have a moral imperative to continue to ask questions about our investments. Do they support our call to care for God's creation and the renewal of the life of the Earth?

To learn more about Climate Justice Niagara visit: niagaraanglican.ca/climatejustice



Photo: Unsplash/Markus Spiske

Treasurer & Director of Finance Resigns



Kemi Okwelum

Kemi Okwelum, treasurer and director of finance, has submitted her resignation to Bishop Susan Bell, effective January 28, 2024.

Bishop Susan expressed her deep gratitude for Kemi's leadership with our diocese over the last two years, particularly for her guiding work with our finance team and as a member of the diocesan senior leadership team, the missional orientation of her financial analysis, and her excellent stewardship of the diocesan financial, investment, and insurance portfolios. We wish Kemi all the best in her future endeavours.

Synod Council has appointed Canon Jody Beck to serve as

interim treasurer while a search is conducted for Kemi's replacement. Jody has diligently and faithfully served our diocese in



Canon Jody Beck, appointed interim treasurer

this role for over 11 years before retiring in 2021.

In addition to her demonstrated ability with accounting processes and procedures, Jody's leadership has opened new opportunities for God's

mission and helped revitalize policies and practices in several areas, especially insurance, investments, payroll administration, statistics, and property development.

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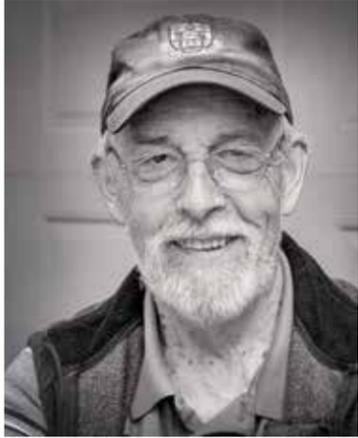
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In other words

The Woman Who Made C.S. Lewis Cry

**JOHN BOWEN**

Dorothy L. Sayers is mainly remembered today as a writer of detective stories. Some readers suspect that she was secretly in love with her creation, Lord Peter Wimsey—aristocrat, man of the world, and detective—and maybe she was. Titles like *Gaudy Night*, *The Nine Tailors*, and *Strong Poison* (in which she introduced Lord Peter's love interest, Harriet Vane), were all best-sellers in their time. One reviewer said of *The Nine Tailors*, "This is unquestionably Miss Sayers's best—until the next one."

Sayers was also a Christian and a lifelong Anglican, and some of her best writing was of a spiritual and theological nature. The book I think is her best religious work—and certainly my favourite—is a series of twelve plays on the life of Jesus, written at the request of the BBC in 1940 and published under the title *The Man Born to be King*. (You can buy a new paperback version for \$30, but I like the old hardback copies which you can often buy second-hand for under \$10!)

Two things are very striking about the plays. One is the freshness of the language. Sayers is very intolerant of the kind of Christianity which dulls the sharp edge of the Christian story. In particular, she is very

critical of those who "pare the claws of the Lion of Judah, certified Him meek and mild and recommended Him as a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious old ladies." She does not mince her words. "It is curious," she observes, "that people who are filled with horrified indignation whenever a cat kills a sparrow can hear that story of the killing of God told Sunday after Sunday and not experience any shock at all." The Man Born to be King manages to shock us afresh, and that's a good thing.

Mixed reactions

The other thing that always astounds me about the plays is the response of the public at the time. Some listeners are wildly enthusiastic—while others are horrified at how "irreverent," "blasphemous," and "vulgar" the plays are.

In the latter category is a listener who was shocked that Herod (in the play) told his court to "keep your mouths shut." Apparently, the critic did not believe that anybody "so closely connected to our Lord" could possibly speak so vulgarly! Fortunately, the BBC had received approval from leaders of no fewer than eight church denominations before going ahead with the plays, so the critics could hardly appeal to their church leaders for support.

Sayers's reward, however, was the positive responses, and those were overwhelming. One man wrote, "I learnt more about my religion in half an hour today than I ever did in the years of Sunday School." Another said, "I have known this story my whole life, but you have made it come alive in a totally new way." Sometimes the effects were immediately and profoundly practical: "Your play *The Man Born to be King* is quite changing the atmosphere in



Statue of Dorothy L. Sayers opposite her former home in Witham, Essex.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

our house, and where there has been resentment and criticism, we can feel it all dying away in the presence of Christ. I'm sure this must be the case in all homes where they have heard it broadcast."

Lewis and Sayers

Dorothy L. Sayers was a friend of C.S. Lewis and he wrote to her in 1943 to say: "I've finished *The Man Born to be King* and think it a complete success. ... I shed real tears (hot ones) in places." But that was not the only time he praised the work. Thirteen years later, in 1958, he spoke at Sayers's memorial service, and confessed, "I have re-read [*The Man Born to be King*] in every Holy Week since it first

appeared, and never re-read it without being deeply moved."

I too find it very moving. Here is one of my favourite passages, one that never fails to bring tears to my eyes. It is a speech Sayers puts into the mouth of Mary Magdalene as she tells Jesus about the first time they met. See what you think:

Did you know? My friends and I came there that day to mock you. We thought you would be sour and grim, hating all beauty and treating life as an enemy. But when I saw you, I was amazed. You were the only person there who was really alive. The rest of us were going about half-dead—making the gestures

of life, pretending to be real people. The life was not with us but with you—intense and shining, like the strong sun when it rises and turns the flames of our candles to pale smoke. And I wept and was ashamed, seeing myself such a thing of trash and tawdry. But when you spoke to me, I felt the flame of the sun in my heart. I came alive for the first time. And I love life all the more since I have learnt its meaning.

You don't have to read *The Man Born to be King* every Holy Week. But you should read it at least once. Just make sure you have your Kleenex handy.



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ANGLICAN
DIOCESE OF
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**CALLED TO LIFE
COMPELLED TO LOVE**

St. James Can Pivot

SUE CHESTER

St. James, Fergus has a history of meal programs. We hosted "Ladies who Lunch" as a program for women of all ages and included those who could bring their young children. Many of these women were isolated, so a meal out served more than just filling the belly. The purpose was to provide a meal for those who needed it but also an opportunity for the participants to have a social space in the community. At one point childcare was provided and sometime speakers were brought in to talk on subjects of interest and/or to help participants in a tangible way. It was a joint effort with a local chef, a coordinator, and a group of volunteers who helped prep and clear up afterwards. As participants became comfortable some joined the volunteers who helped prepare the food.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, we were one of a few food programs in Centre Wellington that ended up joining together to provide meals-to-go most days for those in isolation and/or need. At one point some meals were produced by local restaurants or businesses. This was a win-win enabling them to keep staff employed. Our certified health safe kitchen enabled us to be the main center and our large hall was great for packaging meals into containers and stacking ready for a dedicated group of volunteers to deliver to those who had requested them.



Photo: Contributed by Sue Chester

The volunteers came from local churches and the surrounding community with funds being provided by grants and donations from individuals and local businesses.

Fast forward to today. As life has slowly returned to something like it was before, many groups started up their own food programs again. We assessed the meals-to-go program and with the input of the Community Resource Centre established there was still food insecurity but also a lingering sense of isolation post COVID. We now provide biweekly meals in-house, that draws a group of anywhere between 32-50 people with approximately 10 deliveries for those unable to attend in

person. The program is open to all and is greatly enjoyed. The social aspect seems to be an important part of what we do. Currently the program is run entirely by volunteers from the church. We have a volunteer coordinator and 4 teams that work on a rotating schedule. The local Optimist Club is in our rotation and does the meal from start to finish as a community service project every 4 weeks.

We have designated funds from the meals-to-go to support this program. A donation jar is put out at each meal for those who can and wish to make a donation for their meal. The program is self-sustaining with gifts and donations in the form of cash and food donations.



Photo: Contributed by Bishop Susan Bell

Congratulations to Bishop Susan Bell who successfully defended her ThD thesis, "The Form and Character of a True Pastour": Recoding the Priest in George Herbert's The Country Parson, at the Toronto School of Theology on January 25, 2024! Pictured here is the thesis defence committee.

Bells for Chuck Havill

HAMISH GUTHRIE

When we stopped this morning
in the garden where you worked,
a moss-green hummingbird
hovered at a blue flower
the needle tip of its beak
keen as an accountant's pencil.
The balance sheet is finished
where you lie filed in holy ground
where shadows print figures on the grass,
your ashes within hearing of the sound
business, Bible and the rector's cares
through an open window give the garden air.
You calculated ways that prayer could rest.
You knew the cost of bells.
Your ruddy mirth was deep, warm, numberless.
You knew all would be well.

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AND STRENGTHEN THEM TO GLORIFY GOD IN THIS LIFE AND IN THE LIFE TO COME."

Four priests were instituted to their new roles in the diocese by Bishop Susan Bell on January 10, 2024 at Christ's Church Cathedral in Hamilton. Jann

Brooks serves as the rector of St. Paul's, Caledonia; Martha Tatarnic and Tom Vaughan as co-rectors of St. George's, St. Catharines; and Ian Momsby as diocesan Community Missioner.



The Reverend Jan Brooks, The Reverend Canon Martha Tatarnic, Bishop Susan Bell, The Reverend Tom Vaughan, The Reverend Canon Dr. Ian Mobsby.

Photo: Contributed by Diocese of Niagara

Attend a Cursillo Weekend in April

TIM STANDISH AND THE REVEREND DR. SHIRL CHRISTIAN

Cursillo is a worldwide movement designed with a multi-faceted approach, supporting the participant as they learn, grow, and are strengthened in their Christian faith-walk. The more local expression of Cursillo is based in the Dioceses of Niagara and Huron, and has been approved by both Bishop Susan Bell (Niagara) and Bishop Todd Townshend (Huron).

The experience begins with the live-in 2 and a half day weekend including talks on the Christian life, table discussions, prayer, lots of singing, fellowship, and good food, enabling participants to enhance their faith path in the company of other participants and supportive leaders. Prior to the actual weekend, potential participants may be identified, and must be sponsored to the weekend by a person (priest or

also be attended online via Zoom.

The word "Cursillo" (Cur-see-o) means "course" and gives a nod to the Spanish roots of the now-worldwide movement. However, it is much more than a "one-off" weekend course; in the broader sense of the word "course," it refers to a "run" or a trajectory, from the initial weekend experience through the rest of one's life.

The next weekend hosted by Niagara Huron Anglican Cursillo is planned for April 12-14, 2024 at Mount Mary Retreat Centre in Ancaster. Since attendance at a Cursillo weekend depends on sponsorship, those who have already been on a weekend should consider approaching someone they feel may benefit from attending one. If you have not attended a weekend and are interested, you may seek out a sponsor in your own parish; ask your parish priest or contact the Cursillo Secretariat through niagaracursillo.org. Ongoing dialogue including the parish priest as well as the potential sponsor



Photo: Emily Hill

lay) who has participated in a Cursillo weekend, and who will commit to ongoing support. The weekend is a wonderful opportunity to begin to build a wider faith-community—one which continues well beyond the Cursillo weekend itself.

Subsequent to the weekend, a variety of group events offer the participant, now called a "Cursillista," a variety of events that continue and strengthen the Christian journey. These include day-long gatherings with speakers and discussion time, group reunions—called "Ultreyas," a word used by Spanish pilgrims to encourage one another on their pilgrimage—and small, more local informal group reunions giving everyone an opportunity to share joys and sorrows, prayers, and mutual support. Most of these post-weekend events can

and candidate/participant goes a long way to ensuring a positive experience.

The Niagara-Huron Anglican Cursillo is led by Lay Director Tim Standish and Spiritual Director Shirl Christian, who both were commissioned into their positions by Bishop Susan Bell (Niagara) and Bishop Todd Townshend (Huron). Additional leadership is provided by a Secretariat elected by members from both dioceses. Cursillo has the strong support of our Bishops and Primate—Archbishop Linda has attended a weekend!

The Cursillo method strengthens and equips Christians to, as the Mission Statement suggests, Make a friend, be a friend, and bring a friend to Christ. For further information about Niagara Huron Anglican Cursillo, check our website at niagaracursillo.org



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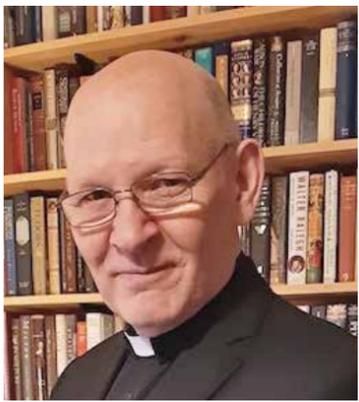
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Antisemitism and the Christian Left



THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN

I was first aware of my Jewish heritage when I was seven-years-old. I was at the home of a new friend I'd met in the local park. We were playing innocently when his father came home and began shouting. I only realised later what he'd been saying. "Is he a Jew? Get him out of here." Only half-Jewish, so I should have asked if I could at least stay until lunchtime.

In fact, I experienced very little antisemitism growing up in Britain and now living in Canada. I've three Jewish grandparents, but my maternal grandmother was Anglican and I was raised with a limited Jewish identity. But Coren is a Hebrew name, people knew, and generally didn't care.

I'd long considered hatred of Jewish people a pathology that while never dead, was confined to the largely irrelevant fringe. The reaction to Israel's campaign in Gaza changed that however.

Of course there's a vital difference between criticism of Israel and antisemitism, and of course the term is sometimes wrongly and politically applied, but if you don't think that antisemitism has become magnified recently the one thing I can guarantee is that you're not Jewish.

The basics first. I've lived in Israel, worked with Palestinian Christians in the peace movement, wrote my university thesis on pre-state Zionist terrorism, know the history and politics of the region rather well, and believe in a ceasefire, a two-state solution, justice for Palestinians, and peace for Israel.

I'd always assumed that most of my fellow Christians agreed with me on all this and I continue to believe that the vast majority still do. I've written at length on the problem of Christian Zionism, how it's militaristic, ignores the Palestinian Christian narrative, and at its most raw looks to an eschatological bloodbath.

But what of the Christian left? I'm never comfortable with qualifying Christianity and much prefer C.S. Lewis's use of the word "mere," but while left and right may be clumsy, they're useful shorthand.

I'm a man of the left. Liberal, social democratic, and old-style radical. So, I was a little surprised earlier this year to be blocked on X (formerly Twitter) by a co-founder of the Red-

Letter Christians in the US and a prominent left-wing Christian. I'd objected to his reference to the "Holocaust hermeneutic". I found it to be reductive and smug, especially as I'd grown up being aware of my great-aunt's death camp tattoo.

I'm sure I'll survive that social media excommunication but it's indicative of a genuine problem. Gaza and the Palestinians became a cause for the left, and that includes left-wing Christians. That's entirely understandable and usually laudable, but for Christians there has to be a wider, deeper, more nuanced analysis.

One of, perhaps the main, motivation for Israel's foundation in 1948 was the unparalleled agonies suffered by Jews in Christian Europe. Jews left the Arab, Muslim world later and weren't the main protagonists in the early years. Centuries of pogroms, blood libels, expulsions, massacres, and finally the Holocaust took place in a

continent that was overwhelmingly Christian. Good God, many of these atrocities were church-initiated, and it's only fairly recently that the wound of Christian antisemitism has begun to heal.

None of this should present a Christian from demanding justice and peace in Palestine but it should inform our approach, understanding, and sympathies. I've also seen a shameful lack of empathy in the depiction and description of Jesus as a Palestinian. I appreciate what's being attempted, but we should never forget the horrors that have been caused by the expunging of the Jewishness of Jesus. He was a Jew, a Galilean Jew, with a Jewish mother. To suggest otherwise is not only bad theology and a denial of God's plan but also racially and politically crass and dangerous.

I sometimes hear and read things from Christians that border on the racist, and make it appear that the entire Israel/

Palestine conflict exists in a bubble without any historical and human context. Colonial settlers? Where were the survivors of the Shoah and later the Mizrahi Jews from the Arab world supposed to go, and why does my paternal DNA go back not to Europe but the Middle East?

Israel and its supporters have sometimes used antisemitism as a justification for the actions of a nation-state, false accusations are profoundly damaging, and no authentic follower of Jesus can turn away from the slaughter of the innocents. But our commitment is not to a political ideology but to a relationship with God, and such a relationship rests on love for all people, understanding of our own brokenness and failings, and to a great, grand revolution of compassion and understanding. The Jewish Jesus teaches me that, and should teach us all.



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Capital Campaign

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

personal interviews, town halls, and surveys. Bishop Susan Bell expressed deep gratitude to everyone who participated in this important "time of listening and prayerfully discerning."

There is still an expectation that a financial campaign will happen in the future but the bishop says that there is work to do before this happens. "I want us to lift our heads from

the deep insecurity we have felt during the pandemic and begin to live into the future with confidence trusting in God's provision for God's Church."

The bishop pointed to a renewed emphasis on parish-focused stewardship development initiatives and the Mission Action Plan process as important components of this work.

One of the key themes

highlighted through the study was the deep respect and affection parishioners have for their clergy who are faithfully leading through this time. The study also affirmed the leadership of the bishop and the diocesan vision.

"This is very positive and very encouraging—and reveals a solid foundation for the future," said Canon MacDonald.

The Stranger At Our Gate

SUE CARSON

FOR ... I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU WELCOMED ME, I WAS NAKED, AND YOU CLOTHED ME ... WHEN DID WE SEE YOU A STRANGER AND WELCOME YOU, OR NAKED AND CLOTHE YOU?

These words from Matthew 25 have taken on clearer meaning to the parishioners of St. James, Dundas this winter. Hidden among the newspaper stories of rising rents and the increase numbers of newcomers to Canada there is an ongoing drama playing out in our parish and parishes like ours.

In the summer and fall of 2023 East African refugee claimants started arriving in Hamilton having fled social or political strife. Social service agencies were stretched to the max and religious organizations were asked to assist with settlement in any way they were able. The Hamilton-Haldimand Region of the Diocese of Niagara, under the leadership of Archdeacon Terry DeForest and other clergy, invited the newcomers to a meal at All Saint's Mission in downtown Hamilton in September, and as so often happens when people eat together relationships were forged.

Since then so many of us have rallied round doing what we

can to welcome these newcomers who are now experiencing a Canadian winter for the first time. With the help of other churches, and our usual winter clothing drive at St. James, we were able to collect vast numbers of coats. All Saints Mission have kindly loaned their facilities and we kitted out over 100 Kenyans and Ugandans. A couple of weeks later we welcomed 120 and were able to provide them with bed linens and towels.

We have heard stories of depressing scenarios happening in the shelters in Hamilton. These shelters are struggling to keep the homeless warm, fed, and off the streets at night. Some of the men told us they first arrived in Toronto and were told to come to Hamilton because there was no space in Toronto.

The newcomers are so happy when they manage to find housing. Usually four or more rent a house or apartment together and move in without much for

furniture. Some of them, we discovered, were sleeping on the floor, often for weeks until our furniture collection and moving business was initiated. At the time of writing at least 60 beds have now been delivered around Hamilton.

A local service club and some individuals have donated money so we can rent small trucks and every Tuesday a team goes around picking up donated furniture and taking it where things are needed. Social media and word of mouth mean that the collection of furniture is just keeping up with the list of needs. One kind parishioner

has given up her garage for storage. Her neighbours must be wondering about the numerous people coming and going at irregular times of day.

The most amazing thing is that these newcomers have become our friends and love coming to help move the furniture, helping other newcomers get settled. So, our more aging congregation just needs to drive cars and vans and not lift the heavy beds and sofas. Every week we welcome a dozen or more of them to our Sunday service and find sharing our cultures has livened our coffee hour.

We are also helping with finding jobs and giving support to the refugee claimant's application process; both very stressful experiences that all newcomers face. We get excited when another one finds a job or gets their paperwork completed. Two of our favourite young men have found employment at ship building company; one young lady is busy taking courses for her PSW certificate.

One thing is certain they are all so grateful that Canada has welcomed them. Remember a stranger is just someone you haven't met yet.



Photo: Unsplash/Akshay Paatil

St. Paul's Shelburne Disestablished

On Sunday, January 21, the people of St. Paul's, Shelburne held a final service, celebrating more than 150 years of faithful ministry in their community, while also coming together to acknowledge their grief and sorrow at the conclusion of the parish's ministry. Their vestry had earlier requested the voluntary disestablishment of the parish.

In giving thanks for the parish's long ministry in the community, the bishop reminded the congregation that they—the people—are the Church, not

the building. "Your work is to remember that God is with us here today, but God goes with us too, to the next Christian community that you will join and be part of—grafting in like a new branch giving life on an established tree," said Bishop Susan Bell during her homily.

Please hold the people of St. Paul's in your prayers in this poignant time, and as they discern where God is calling them to worship and share their gifts.



L to R: Scott Thompson (deputy warden), Margaret Finlayson (warden), Bishop Susan Bell, Anne Gould (treasurer), The Reverend William Willis (priest-in-charge), James Gould (warden).

Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

Upcoming Deadlines:

- May – March 29
- June – April 26
- September – July 26

Submissions:

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

Original cartoons or art –

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

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

Questions or information:

Contact the Editor at editor@niagaraanglican.ca

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Become a Bishop's Company Member

Bishop Susan Bell is inviting Anglicans from across Niagara to become members of the Bishop's Company, a group dedicated to providing resources to allow the bishop to respond compassionately and strategically to the emergent needs of diocesan leaders, lay and ordained.

"Gifts to the Bishop's Company help me to pastorally respond to the needs of our clergy, lay leaders, and divinity students," said Bishop Susan Bell. "So often this assistance from the Bishop's Company is a lifeline for the people we are able to help together." This support takes many forms, including relief from extraordinary financial hardship, assisting with unexpected medical and dental costs, or compassionate care in the wake of an unexpected death.

Members make an annual

contribution of \$250/individual or \$450/couple in support of the bishop's important pastoral ministry.

Membership also comes with an invitation to an annual gathering with the bishop. This year's dinner event will take place on Monday, May 7 at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington. During the event, Bishop Susan will be hosting a conversation with the Reverend Michael Coren, priest, author, and columnist.

To become a member, or renew a membership, visit niagaraanglican.ca/bishops-company. If you need help, please email Hannah Keller, registrar for the Bishop's Company, with any questions you may have at hannah.keller@niagaraanglican.ca or call 905-527-1316, ext. 380.



Bishop Susan speaking to Bishop's Company members at a fall Bishop's Company event.

Photo: Niagara Anglican files



THE REVEREND CANON DR. SHARYN HALL

The oldest surviving piece of text from any Gospel in the New Testament is a tiny fragment from the Gospel of John. It dates from about the year 130 CE and is preserved in the Rylands Library in Manchester, England. It contains the words of Jesus to Pilate: 'For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world, to testify to the truth.' We know from the gospel text that Pilate replied to Jesus: 'What is truth?' We do not know in what way Pilate asked this question. Was he being cynical or sarcastic, for who can know what truth is? Or was Pilate beginning to wonder if this calm prisoner before him was a holy man who might have the answer.

Pilate's question, 'What is truth?' has become a catchphrase for the belief that truth is only a matter of opinion. Truth in our current time also has been questioned in many ways by politicians, jurists, and theologians. Determining what is truth has become more complicated by the development of internet communication and the proliferation of social media. In

recent years the issues of disinformation and misinformation have raised serious concerns for the safety and well-being of people. That danger of harm to others has led to violence, civil unrest, and political upheaval. The question has changed from what is truth to whose truth do you believe and trust?

The statement of Jesus which prompts Pilate's question is not always given as much attention. 'For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world to testify to the truth.' Jesus sums up the purpose of his life in this sentence. Unfortunately for us, he does not go on to explain what he means by truth; however, in his Hebrew language, truth was a combination of what is real and faithful. Jesus is affirming that God is real and faithful in God's relationship with humanity.

God was with the people in their anguish and hardship. This message was welcomed by the crowds of people who followed Jesus into Jerusalem and shouted, 'Hosanna'. They believed that Jesus was sent by God to lead them out of the oppression of Roman occupation, like Moses had led their ancestors out of Egypt, but the

people were mistaken. Jesus had not come to be a second Moses. He brought a more powerful and lasting truth about their relationship with God. This was not what the people wanted to hear, so in disappointment and despair, they deserted him.

The death of Jesus seemed to be the defeat of the truth he proclaimed, even to his disciples, but in the days and weeks following his death, the disciples learned that his truth would prevail. The truth Jesus proclaimed was not an intellectual answer to what is right or wrong. It was not and is not a simple answer to the competing claims to truth in human society. The truth Jesus proclaimed posed moral questions: What is Justice? What is Compassion? How do you love your neighbour? How do you love God?

Jesus lived the truth he testified in his ministry. He developed relationships with people from all walks of life: male and female, rich and poor, powerful and weak, Jew and Samaritan. He had harsh words for those who used the Hebrew scriptures to browbeat the people into fear of God's wrath instead of assuring the people of God's mercy and love.

In our world today, the truth about God loving humanity is opposed by similar forces that led to the death of Jesus. God is used as justification for prejudice and aggression against anyone different in their understanding and worship of God. Justice and compassion are inconvenient obstacles in the pursuit of power and self-righteous importance.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to keep alive the truth that Jesus lived and testified to Pilate, the truth that God is real and that God is faithful with love for all God's creation and all God's people.



Rylands Greek P 457, also known as The St John Fragment, on display in the Rylands Gallery at John Rylands Library in Manchester, England

Photo: Wikimedia Commons/John Rylands Library



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