

Children's Festival Reunion

Susan Little reflects on the history of this vibrant children's ministry initiative.

Page **3**



Farewell to the Palm Project

Reflections on this Church of Nativity ministry as it concludes.

Page **4**



Save the Date

Bishop's Company speaker and special 150th anniversary events announced.

Page **9**



A section of the Anglican Journal



NIAGARA ANGLICAN

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



APRIL 2025

Living in the Light of the Resurrection:

Embracing Hope and Resistance

THE RIGHT REVEREND DR. SUSAN BELL

ALLELUIA! CHRIST IS RISEN!

Easter dawns and we know that we have been changed by the Resurrection of Jesus. How, then, are Christians to live in the light of this momentous event? How does it change our lives?

Perhaps that has not always been clear in our relatively comfortable times and places.

But, as people around the world and across all time, who have lived under difficult times and authorities could tell us, the importance of the Resurrection of Jesus becomes very clear indeed.

As we are experiencing right now, it is exhausting to live by the newspaper page. No sooner is one account written than it is overtaken by the next. If you are on social media, you'll have noticed the generalized anxiety that pervades our 'feeds.' Our safety and sovereignty are being threatened; our relative economic

comfort is being eroded. And we are experiencing—right now—some political instability ourselves; even as I write, electing new leaders in the midst of unactualized and unpredictable threat.

The Gospel; and especially the Resurrection, is not separate from all that. In fact, it is a crucial response to all that.

I have been reading The Reverend Dr. Jesse Zink's new book: *Faithful, Creative, Hopeful: 15 Theses for Christians in a Crisis-shaped World*. Jesse was kind enough to send a few of us an advance copy, and I appreciated it so much that I've given it to many in return! He very helpfully draws many things together in a way that is both sobering and hopeful. I recommend it to you.

He suggests that as Christians, we are called to see with apoca-

lyptic clarity—that is, with a view formed by faith and by millennia of Christian wisdom. It will help us to live wisely and fully in these times.

That worldview says something like this: the powers and principalities of this world wield considerable control over our lived realities—but of course, our faith tells us that this is not the whole story. Systems such as neoliberal capitalism try to turn us from communities into economic units. Paradigms such as rampant individualism further break down our sense of interconnectedness. Not surprisingly, we are wearied by the struggle over time, and this has weakened our bonds as a church.

Enter the Resurrection and behold the world with Kingdom eyes—and see what oppressed peoples have always seen: that Christ's apparent defeat on Good Friday, was itself defeated on Easter Sunday; that the powers and principalities of this world have lost their ability to control

us now that Christ has risen from the dead; that there is hope; that there is a reason to resist; that loving your neighbour; caring for each other, coming together in our churches to feed the hungry; tend the sick and to advocate passionately for the widow and the orphan and the refugee are what we do as communities of resistance against the powers and principalities of this world to show that there is a different way to live—a kingdom way to live.

But our parishes are also places of rest. They are places where we can renew and retool to perform those works of mercy. In this way, we are also communities of peace. This is just as important as our work embodying the Gospel, for each makes sense of the other. Rest and enjoyment in each other's company is such a blessing—just being together, gathering strength together, telling the Gospel story that privileges love over fear, and saying words of love to each other

and to our world.

I said back in November in my Charge to Synod that we should keep our eyes focused on Christ in all that we do. Well, sometimes the Lord gives you a word that you don't fully understand at the time. I knew it was important to speak it because I'd been given it—but God has been filling up that word with more and more meaning in the months since.

So I say it again: I believe we are being called to keep our eyes firmly focused on Christ and him crucified and risen—for in this is our salvation: here and now and in eternity.

May we embody this call to be Christian communities of resistance and peace in the light of the blessed Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A happy and blessed Easter to you all.

+ Susan

Bishop of Niagara

Celebrating the Children's Festival:

Join Us for a Reunion April 26th!

SUSAN LITTLE

As the Diocese of Niagara celebrates its 150th Anniversary of Anglican witness in the Anglican Church of Canada, we thank God for its inspiration, dedication, and accomplishments in the lives of thousands in this part of Southern Ontario. Moreover, as Niagara reviews its past, one significant achievement comes to the fore: Children's Festivals in this diocese. Thirty Festivals (1983-2012) used the joy of the Lord to interpret bible stories in ways that inspired games, crafts, songs, and drama. Once acclaimed as the single event to gather the greatest number of Anglicans together at the same time, on the same day, celebrating God, the Children's Festival certainly is a noteworthy chapter!

When the Children's Festival began in June 1983, it arose from a vision of Sunday School teachers to gather children from dif-



Buttons created for past Children's Festivals

Photo: Susan Little

ferent parishes to come together and celebrate as Anglicans having fun together. This great chapter in the history of Children's Ministry in Niagara began, initially in Hamilton, and in the late 1980's spread to five locations – Hamilton, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Burlington/Oakville, and Guelph/Elora. Focusing on one scriptural theme but developed individually in each location, hundreds of children had fun together: they played games,

made crafts, participated in drama and storytelling, and sang lively songs, all exploring the common theme in their own way.

Every year, volunteers from each area of the diocese gathered together in the late fall to select a 'rich' theme, one which could spawn crafts, songs, and games on a scriptural theme. These volunteers, usually Sunday School teachers, returned to their own area churches and collected others to develop, as well as run, the activities for the day itself. Then they enlisted even more volunteers to take the children to this day-long event. Children's Festival attracted lots of people! Bus loads of kids converged on places like Elora for many years, collecting children from smaller parishes along the way. Similarly, a Waterdown church used a school bus to take their kids and adults to the day's activities. Some places even created their own t-shirts and mugs!

Wherever they gathered, children learned about God in a lively, child-centred environment. And kids were amazed that so many other kids their age went to church! While some locations of Children's Festivals didn't last as long as others, we give thanks for this period of Children's Ministry in our diocese. Some who attended the festival as children later returned to attend with their own children! Some who planned the first Festivals, later saw their own grown-up children leading activities. Amazingly, some of the original planners experienced the joy of seeing their own grandchildren participate! Several planners have developed life-long friendships that continue to this day. Thanks be to God!

To celebrate the festival's contributions to Christian formation in this diocese, we are gathering on the last Saturday in April—after all that's always when they

happened—to share food and conversations and give thanks!

If you are one of those people who helped make these events happen or someone who simply attended these events, you're invited to meet on Saturday, April 26th, at the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Hamilton (where so many of the festivals took place) for a potluck supper, gathering at 4 p.m. and concluding by 7 p.m.

Please bring along any souvenirs and especially your memories. Better still, contact someone you know from the Children's Festival and invite them to join you.

Let us know you're coming! Contact the original co-ordinators: Susanne Adams susanneadams@rogers.com (905-531-3733 or Susan Little salittle208@gmail.com (905-912-4686).

The Success of the Missional Imagination Conference:

A Milestone for Missional Dioceses in the Anglican Church of Canada

THE REVEREND CANON DR. IAN MOBSBY

Two years ago, a vision was born. Emily Hill and I recognized the urgent need to cultivate a missional imagination within the parishes and missions of our diocese. Soon a conversation was struck up to explore this potential with other diocesan missionaries in the Anglican Church of Canada. We wanted to create a space where Anglicans could explore, reflect, and engage with mission initiatives—innovating ways to renew and transform church communities through intentional engagement with those who had no experience of Christianity and those who had left churches. What started as a dream became a reality on January 30 and February 1, 2025, with the launch of one of the first specifically mission-focused conferences for the Anglican Church of Canada.

The Missional Imagination Conference was made possible as a collective effort. A common vision through the support and collaboration of the diocesan missionaries and directors of con-



gregational development from the Anglican dioceses of Niagara, Toronto, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, and Kootenay.

This collaboration provided a robust foundation for the event, ensuring a wide-reaching impact across the country. The participation and enthusiasm of diocesan leaders and missionaries highlighted a shared commitment to reimagining mission and revitalizing the church.

The conference proved to be an inspiring and engaging event that brought together 97 attendees with 15 speakers, all dedicated to fostering a missional mindset within the Anglican Church of

Canada. It was designed as a fusion of TED-style talks from overseers, diocesan missionaries, and practitioners leading specific mission initiatives. The dynamic format allowed for a rich exchange of ideas and experiences, offering both theological insights and practical applications for local mission efforts.

Some key themes explored during the conference included:

- The role of missional communities in revitalizing Anglican parishes.
- Mixed ecology models—blending traditional and emerging church expressions.
- Theological reflections on

mission in a rapidly changing cultural landscape.

- The Missional Journey as a theoretical basis for the practice of mission.
- Practical case studies of mission initiatives in Canada.

The differing speakers and topics ensured that attendees gained not only inspiration but also tangible strategies for their own ministry contexts.

One of the most exciting outcomes of the conference was the emergence of a growing new Anglican missional network within the Anglican Church of Canada. Participants engaged in meaningful discussions about the future of mission, forming connections that will extend well beyond the event itself. This network has the potential to become a collaborative and supportive community, empowering Anglican missionaries—whether they are leading specific mission projects or working within traditional parish structures—to share wisdom, resources, experiences, and encouragement.

Our hope is that this conference will serve as a catalyst for further development of mis-

sional initiatives across Canada. We hope that the event will envision future conferences becoming increasingly diverse and inclusive, drawing participation from missionaries of specific projects, mixed ecology parishes, and those pioneering new ways of being church.

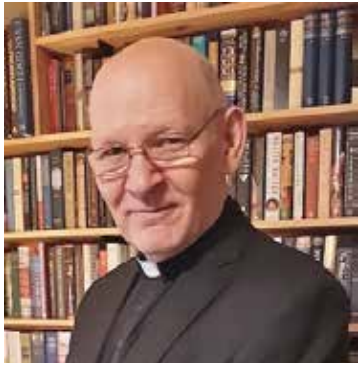
The success of this inaugural event demonstrates that there is a deep hunger for missional imagination within the Anglican Church of Canada. As we continue to build on this momentum, we look forward to seeing new mission expressions emerge, parishes transformed, and church communities revitalized through the power of imaginative and Spirit-led missions.

This is just the beginning of an exciting journey. May the Missional Imagination Conference continue to inspire and equip Anglicans across Canada for the vital work of mission in the 21st century.

To keep up with what seems to be developing see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/accmissonalnetwork/>

The Complexity of Easter:

The Intersection of Faith and History



THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN

There's one film that I recommend to anybody who wants to learn something about Easter. I refer to *Monty Python's Life of Brian*. Confusion, extremism, religious pedantry, failure to grasp the message, and laughter. Humour is big in the Gospels, if only people would understand it. Don't, whatever you do, opt for Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. It's more medieval caricature than ancient reality.

Movies aside, as with all religions there can be no conclusive proof for or against Christianity. It's something the so-called "new" atheists have never understood in their arrogant assumption that all the clever people are on their side. There's plenty of evidence for all sorts of Christian claims, often from sources that

were far from sympathetic. Josephus, who was Jewish; the historian Tacitus, who was Roman, and his friend Pliny who governed a province. None support Christianity but all testify to the life and activities of Jesus. Yet, in the final analysis, faith is about faith.

The geopolitics of Easter are complex. Herod—there were several—had ruled Israel for many years but died in 4 B.C. His kingdom was divided into three, but the Romans soon took one part, Judea, as a province under their direct rule. Galilee was given to Herod Antipas, Herod's son, meaning that Jesus wasn't raised under Roman governance.

There were lots of Greeks in Galilee and lots of bandits too. The majority of Jews lived not only outside of Galilee but outside of the entire region. The diaspora has existed for a very long time.

The Easter story is the pinnacle. There's no sacrifice, no resurrection, no salvation without the crucifixion. The Last Supper was the meal Jesus ate with his disciples before his execution, and in which he shared the bread and the wine "in remembrance of me."

What Jesus' words precisely

mean is still debated among Christians, but it was certainly a commandment. As was his plea that we love one another. The Latin for commandment is "Mandatum," from where we get Maundy Thursday. The synoptic gospels present the Last Supper as a Passover Seder although it differs in some respects from the 1st century norm. In that Mark and Matthew were Jewish, and Luke either a Hellenized Jew or a Greek, who knew the Jewish world intimately, this must have been intentional.

Shortly afterwards, Jesus is arrested and then comes the trial. Where it took place is uncertain. The traditional view holds to Jerusalem's Antonia Fortress, built by Herod to honour his patron Mark Antony, and by the time of Jesus, a large part of the Roman garrison was stationed there. Luke says that when Pontius Pilate discovered that Jesus was a Galilean, he sent him to Herod, but Herod returned him to an unwilling Pilate.

The Gospels aren't clear on the geography, and it was later pilgrims who established the route of the stations of the cross. It's considered largely accurate but the starting point, the trial, will never be precisely known. In

terms of the date, we know from non-biblical sources that Jesus was crucified by Pilate during the reign of Tiberius, which provides a window of less than a decade.

The trial was conducted early in the morning before most people were awake. Pilate was a man promoted above his abilities, and he clearly didn't want to be involved in what he considered an esoteric Jewish squabble. Philo, a Jewish scholar and contemporary, condemns him as corrupt and cruel. He was certainly out of his depth and largely unconcerned about what Jews, and Jesus, meant by messiahs and Christs. These were religious terms unusual to the Romans and considered absurdly rustic.

When the Jewish leadership claimed that Jesus held himself as a rival king to Caesar, however, there was resonance. Treason. That'll do nicely, and the Etruscan-invented crucifixion, a judicial murder for slaves but never Roman citizens, could be applied.

When the verdict was announced the crowd cheered. But does it show the faithlessness of the mob? We're speaking of relatively few numbers and Jesus's opponents had sufficient influence to sway a few hundred. Then there were the actual fol-

lowers of Barabbas, the alternative candidate offered by Pilate for freedom. Contrary to what we're told, he was more likely a rebel leader than a criminal, and his advocates would have been organized and violent.

Whatever the crowd's composition, the verdict was crucifixion. It could take a long time, was public and exposed, the dying victim would struggle to breathe and was often bitten by wild animals aroused by the smell of blood. Seneca wrote, "You must never mention crucifixion in polite company."

Then the resurrection. If you can believe this, the rest is easy. The first Gospel, Mark, was likely written between AD 64 and 72, a mere 30 years after it all happened. Numerous people would have been alive who had witnessed the events firsthand and the author would have been dismissed as a lunatic or liar if they'd doubted him.

People who saw Jesus killed would then devote their lives to his cause, knowing what their fate would be. People die for the wrong reasons, but never knowingly so. They believe, and in this case, they believed because they saw. Have faith and see. And have a blessed Easter

Embracing Evangelism:

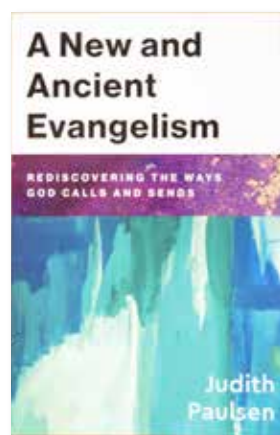
A Reflection on Bishop Susan's Book for Lent

KATHY THOMAS

Evangelism: a single word that strikes fear into many Anglicans. This word creates a picture in our minds, of us boldly going out into the community and reciting scripture in order to bring people to Christ. I have to admit that this has been my reaction to evangelism as well. Recently, I had the opportunity to read

a book, *A New and Ancient Evangelism*, by Judith Paulsen, which looks at evangelism through conversion stories in scripture to rediscover the ways God calls and sends. What can we learn from 2,000 year-old stories that will help us be effective evangelists in the 21st century?

After reading this book, I have come to understand an evangelist needs to know scripture, but



this doesn't have to mean memorizing chapter and verse from the Gospels. Jesus and the disciples went out into the world and told stories. I, as an evangelist, need to be able to share stories about the life of Christ in order to bring people to God. Each chapter in the book focuses on a conversion story from scripture which allows the reader to look at the ways people are called to

God. There is the conversion of a God-fearing outsider, a desperate general, a prison warden, and a child prophet. In chapter 3, The Conversion of Friends, Family, and Students, John 1: 35-51, is shared followed by a discussion on relationships, community, and how people come to faith following different paths. In this

See *EVANGELISM* Page 10



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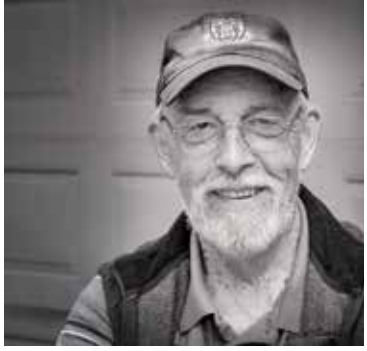


ANGLICAN
DIOCESE OF
NIAGARA

**CALLED TO LIFE
COMPELLED TO LOVE**

In Other Words

Formation or Discipleship: Do We Have to Choose?



JOHN BOWEN

Fashions come and go in the church world almost as quickly as in the world of clothing. When I was a student and involved in a large Christian group, certain words were fashionable. The important question was whether you were “a committed Christian” or merely “a nominal Christian.” One could also ask whether someone was “keen” or “sound” in their faith. To be committed, keen, and sound was a noble ideal. Now I recall those things, they sound quaint and (to be honest) pretty embarrassing.

More recently, a whole new range of words has become fashionable. You know the ones I mean: discipleship, missional, ecclesial, attractional, formation, and fresh expressions. My observation is that they are often

a new name for an ancient reality. As such, they can draw our attention to important realities when older language has lost its bite, and that’s helpful.

I have been puzzling over two of these words that I find particularly confusing: discipleship and formation. Are they the same thing? And why do they matter? I think I’ve finally got an answer. See what you think.

My basic conclusion is this: formation is what God can do for us and in us. Discipleship is what we do in response to God and God’s formation. Let me explain.

“Formation” stresses what God does

God is in the business of shaping human beings—if they are willing—into all they are capable of becoming. The evangelist Leighton Ford says, “God loves us exactly as we are—but God also loves us too much to leave us that way.” What parent doesn’t want their child to grow to maturity?

And what is it that God wants for us? What is that maturity? The answer is simple but pretty intimidating: God wants us to be like Jesus. St. Paul speaks of “till Christ be formed in” us (Galatians 4:19): there’s that idea

of “formation,” and the goal of formation, to be formed into the likeness of Christ. Jeremiah has a vivid image for this, that God is a potter—and we are the clay (Jeremiah 18).

Do we give up our independence by putting our lives in the hands of God in the way this suggests? No. It is no more foolhardy than putting ourselves in the hands of a teacher or trainer—and people do that every day, whether it’s to learn a sport, how to paint, or drive a car. But entrusting yourself to God as a teacher is better: human teachers are fallible, but God is the one who made us and knows who and what we are capable of becoming.

How does God the Potter form us? There are many ways: through scripture, other people, and circumstances, to name but a few. Not long ago, I was complaining to my friend, Hal, about some foolish thing that had happened at church. “Is this really what Jesus had in mind for the church?” I asked. Hal responded without hesitation, “No, but I think he does care about how we respond to it!” And of course, he was right. Indeed, I suspect God the Potter was applying his

strong yet gentle hands through Hal’s words to reshape my sense of what’s really important. In this instance, God was more concerned about my sarcastic response to what had happened than about the situation itself!

Speaking of our response, that leads to the second word:

“Discipleship” stresses what we do

At the beginning of Mark’s Gospel, Jesus does two things: he announces that “the Kingdom” is at hand, and he invites four fishermen to follow him. How are these two things connected? The Kingdom is the state of affairs where the Creator’s ways are followed, ways that lead to human flourishing. But the bringing of the Kingdom is not the work of a one-man band—even if his name is Jesus. As C.S. Lewis says, “God seems to do nothing of Himself which He can possibly delegate to His creatures!”—not because God can’t manage the job, but because it is what human beings are made for—to work as junior partners alongside the Creator—and therefore it brings us joy.

So, what are the disciples to do? The word “disciple” simply means learner or student—but

not student in an academic sense. Maybe a better translation than “disciple” is the word “apprentice”: a disciple of Jesus is someone who is apprenticed to Jesus in the work of the kingdom, learning “on the job” day by day how to live in a way that enables human beings to flourish.

Jesus says, “Come to me . . . learn from me” (Matthew 11:28-30). In the Gospels, we see the twelve learning—often with difficulty and just occasionally with success. And the learning continues into the Book of Acts—and beyond, right into our own day. God is seeking to form us to be more like Jesus. Our job is to be good learners, willing apprentices—pliable clay!

These two spiritual realities—formation and discipleship—are thus two sides of the same coin. They raise two important questions: On the one hand, what might God be trying to teach me about Kingdom life here and now? And on the other hand: how am I responding as an apprentice of Jesus? Not bad questions to reflect on as we move from Easter to Pentecost.

Farewell to the Palm Project: A Reflection on the History

BLANCHE ROBERTSON

For thirty-three years, parishioners and friends of the Church of the Nativity have helped Christians enter Holy Week on Palm Sunday.

After several years of providing palm branches and crosses to parishes, St. Margaret’s Anglican Church in Hamilton retired their palm project in 1991. After this retirement, what was then St. Mary’s decided to explore the possibility of filling their shoes. Starting slowly that first year, St. Mary’s supplied 500 crosses to five ecumenical neighbours, raising a staggering profit of \$32.85. Of course, what was important was the fellowship that began! It’s hard to believe, but as the Palm Project got underway, no one involved knew how to fold a cross—and this was before YouTube!

The project expanded. Harold Brooker and John McBride



developed a prototype device to cut the individual palm strips... simplifying and speeding up what had been done by hand, with scissors! The Palm Project grew to supply churches from Fort Erie to Toronto with crosses, strips, and branches. For several years, the project supplied a wholesale business, and crosses were being shipped from coast to coast to coast! During the month-long project each year, more than 10,000 crosses were made.

Countless people were needed

to make this endeavour possible! From cross-folders to cleaners, from cutters to “strippers,” from sweeping the floors to doing load after load of laundry, from the dreaded quality control inspector to the packagers and couriers—there was a job for everyone, and folk found their way into tasks they enjoyed.

In 2006, St. Mary’s and Grace Church merged at St. Mary’s location on King St. The new Church of Nativity continued the Palm Project.



Photos: Contributed by Blanche Robertson

The Palm Project has been much more than a successful fundraiser: it was a time of fellowship. While working away, people would go from just smiling at fellow parishioners across the aisle on Sundays to getting to know one another. We learned to try to limit John R’s access to the water spray bottles to help ourselves stay dry, and we looked forward to seeing Cocoa and the other dogs who would come for moral support.

The Palm Project has been joy

and stress, and has nourished body and soul. But for everything, there is a season, and the Church of the Nativity has discerned that this Lent will be the final time that people gather in Addison Hall to work with palms. We will be putting away our scissors, hanging up our towels, and giving thanks for a ministry that has helped us and others celebrate Jesus’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem, following the glory of the palms to the glory of the Resurrection.

Climate Justice Niagara

Environmental Stewardship: My Time at the Diocese of Niagara

BHAVIKA VAGHJANI

Forests have always held a sense of wonder—towering trees, rustling leaves, and the intricate web of life within them. This deep connection with nature has guided my path in environmental conservation. That same connection to nature has shaped my journey in environmental conservation.

With a Master's in Zoology from India and a strong background in wildlife monitoring, ecosystem restoration, and environmental education, I've worked on vulture conservation, wetland surveys, and reptile rescue. Moving to Canada allowed me to expand my expertise through a postgraduate certificate in Ecosystem Restoration and now, studies in Environmental Management and Assessment at Niagara College. My work has ranged from conducting environmental site assessments and GIS mapping to analyzing energy data for sustainable development.

My internship at the Diocese of Niagara with Climate Justice Niagara has been a great extension of my studies and work experience. Over the past six weeks, I contributed to two major initiatives: Communion Forest and Zero Emission Churches. I've seen how dedicated the Diocese is to environmental protection through projects like Communion Forest and Zero Emission Churches. These initiatives focus on restoring green



Bhavika deploying camera traps to photograph and monitor coyotes in the area.



Bhavika at the Norfolk Peninsula Conservation Authority working on invasive species.

Photos: Contributed by Bhavika Vaghjani

spaces, improving energy efficiency, and promoting sustainability within faith communities.

What stands out is how these initiatives also raise awareness, foster collaboration, and encourage long-term stewardship. Faith leaders play a key role in guiding their communities toward environmental responsibility, inspiring real action. It's been eye-opening to see how faith and environmental care can come together for change.

The Communion Forest initiative really resonated with me because of my background in ecological restoration. Deirdre Pike, the diocesan justice and outreach program consultant, was instrumental in guiding me throughout the project, providing

helpful resources and direction that allowed me to contribute more effectively. I reviewed the tree inventory survey responses from parishes and will be preparing the data for digitization to assess tree health. This experience really highlighted the importance of post-plantation care and the role of community engagement in ensuring the long-term success of such projects. One of the things I contributed was identifying gaps in the spatial tree mapping, which led me to reach out to parish representatives for additional details.

My work in the Zero Emission Churches initiative introduced me to energy efficiency improvements in religious institutions. A major highlight was collaborating with Sue Carson, who is

leading this effort. With her knowledge and understanding, Sue helped me navigate energy data and efficiency measures. I will be analyzing energy data for some churches, gaining valuable knowledge in carbon footprints and emission reduction strategies. I will also assist in identifying parishes to promote energy-efficient heating solutions, such as Air Source Heat Pumps, to further reduce emissions.

Beyond the technical work, the people I met at the Diocese made my experience truly special. The welcoming nature of the staff group fostered an environment of learning and collaboration.

Climate change in India and Canada presents unique challenges. India faces heat

waves, erratic monsoons, and air pollution, while Canada deals with fluctuating winters, severe storms, and energy issues. Canada struggles with road salt pollution and erosion harming ecosystems, while India grapples with deforestation, industrial pollution, and groundwater depletion impacting biodiversity and agriculture.

This internship has shown me that climate action transcends geographical boundaries—whether it's restoring green spaces in Canada or advocating for conservation in India, the principles remain the same: community engagement, sustainable planning, and a commitment to preserving our planet.

Missional Stewardship: Our Primary Business

THE REVEREND CANON DR. DREW MACDONALD

We live in troubling times. No need to write a commentary on the recent developments in the United States and the potential negative impact on all of us north of the 49th. For those living on the margins, for those already struggling with food insecurity, there is an underlying fear and anxiety. Yet there seems to be more unity within our country as never before. People who have been divided mysteriously seem to be coming together. So, for all that seems to be going sideways, there appears to be a real oppor-

tunity for the Church to be a source of love and support for an increasingly broken and fragmented world. I would go so far as to say our communities need the Church now more than ever.

I have heard myself proclaim as I preach across the diocese that we need to realize [and deeply believe] that the Church is arguably one of the most relevant institutions in our modern society. We exist in virtually every local community and have the missional mandate to bring the Good News of love, kindness, and reconciliation to people who are feeling isolated and more alone than ever before.

As the stewardship advisor for the diocese, we need to realize that our stewardship is in fact primarily 'missional.' In my experience, I rarely hear these two words put together, but they are profoundly intertwined. In fact, effective stewardship must follow vision and mission. For example, each parish [and parishioner – certainly, the leadership team] needs to be able to answer some simple but significant questions. Who are we? What has God called us to do? Do we have a strong sense of our purpose or mission? Can we communicate our purpose or mission effectively? Once again this is why

Bishop Susan Bell and staff like Emily Hill have spent so much energy, time, and resources in helping every local congregation develop a clear Mission Action Plan (MAP). I can't emphasize

enough how foundational this work is.

So, for clarity, stewardship is not merely about financial

Continued Page 8



Canterbury Hills Welcomes Teens to Their Summer Programming

ZOE OLIVEIRA

While mid-July sun truly shows camp at its finest, I have come to enjoy the beauty of camp in winter. From the thick blanket of snow across the rolling hills, interrupted only by the press of paw prints, to the gleaming sheet of ice across the creek, Canterbury Hills Camp is a true Winter Wonderland, straight out of a children's fairytale. It is no doubt then that even now, buried under snow and huddled by space heaters to keep warm, the camp office is hard at work, preparing for the return of campers, staff, and their wide imaginations.

Our camp registration opened on Monday, February 3rd, and quickly revealed that despite their time away, camp has been on everyone's mind. Within the first three hours of the online portal opening, we had 957 registrations! If that number isn't staggering enough, our first session to fill was maxed out of camper spots within two minutes! While Day Camp, Overnight Camp, and Bridge Camp continued to be family favourites, we introduced a brand new program this



year that certainly caused a buzz. Canterbury Hills Camp will be running an overnight Teen Camp, for campers ages 13 to 15, between August 6th and August 14th.

In this new nine-day eight-night program, our eldest campers get to experience the fun and creativity of Canterbury Hills programming with the independence and freedom young people need. In cabins of 12 with 2 dedicated cabin leaders, Teen Camp groups will enjoy Canterbury classics (like archery, arts and crafts, and creek walks) combined with specialty crafted programs: Double camp-out anyone? Ever tried rappelling off the climbing tower? How about

Teen Camp exclusive after curfew activities?

Unique to Teen Camp, among our program offerings is the inclusion of scheduled "choice chunk" activities, offerings selected and led by senior camp staff that include the mixing and mingling of groups. While specialty activities will allow for personal growth in a variety of skills and hobbies, the community of Teen Camp, and the like-minded peers it brings together, will inspire independence and discovery, as campers live, learn, and bond throughout this extended overnight program.

For those of our campers looking for an adventure beyond



Photos: Contributed by Zoe Oliveira

the scenery of Canterbury Hills, this year's registration also included the addition of another Adventure Camp Session! In this travelling, off-site program (now available in three one-week sessions) campers develop outdoor awareness, camping skills, and leadership in the context of a small, supportive unit. It's a time to explore, take risks, learn, and grow under the guidance of our experienced and passionate Adventure team, all the while camping, canoeing, and hiking along the Grand River. For the ultimate adventure, campers can challenge themselves to complete all three sessions, resulting in their completion of canoeing the

entirety of the waterway.

With registration now well underway and available camper spots filling daily, the office is looking ahead once more, towards the interviewing and hiring of our dedicated staff team for summer 2025. Should you know anyone interested in working with children, immersing themselves in nature, sharing their faith, and contributing to a community living environment, you can direct them towards our newly updated website, at canterburyhillscamp.ca for more details about applications and hiring.

As is written in Psalms 74:17, it is God who set all the boundaries of the Earth; God who made both summer and winter. This balance is present across all of God's creations, another wonder of our maker, without doubt. I don't know that God specifically intended for summer and winter to balance a perfect blend of running summer camps and preparing for them—I am simply glad that it does.

To learn more about Canterbury Hills camps, visit canterburyhillscamp.ca.

Climate Justice Niagara

Preparing for Climate Justice Sunday

A Call to Action for a Sustainable Future

BRUCE MACKENZIE

TO STRIVE TO SAFEGUARD THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION AND SUSTAIN AND RENEW THE LIFE OF THE EARTH
— ANGLICAN CHURCH, FIFTH MARK OF MISSION

Parishes across the diocese are encouraged to celebrate our Mother Earth and commit to climate justice on April 27 this year, our annual diocesan Climate Justice Sunday. This date corresponds with the global marking of Earth Day on April 22.

Earth Day is an annual event to demonstrate support for environmental protection. First held on April 22, 1970, it now includes a wide range of events coordinated globally by earthday.org. Over one billion people are involved in more than 193 countries.

Climate Justice Sunday is an opportunity to reflect prayerfully on the state of the planet and our responsibility for safeguarding

all of life. It is a time to educate ourselves on what is happening and how we should respond. It is an excellent time for individuals and congregations to get engaged and to advocate for change.

It is critical that governments, businesses and all sectors in society contribute to addressing this global climate emergency. This includes people of faith. It is important for Anglicans to express our solidarity with movements and campaigns working for climate justice. As more and more marginalized people across the planet bear the consequences of a warming climate, it is incumbent upon us to accept our responsibility and to work for change.

What are some ideas for Climate Justice Sunday?

Individual churches can incorporate ecological and climate justice themes into their worship services. There are some great resources available on the Climate Justice Niagara webpage to assist with this. They can be found on the diocesan website by visiting www.niagaraanglican.ca/climatejustice/partners-and-resources/. Parishes can organize a special event with a guest speaker on a particular topic or issue. They can produce and distribute educational materials and resources on environmental themes.

How about organizing a car pool to church on Climate Justice Sunday? It's not too late to participate in the Communion Forest. Contact Deirdre Pike to learn how to conduct a tree inventory on your property this summer.

It is also important that each parish appoint a Climate Justice Facilitator, to act as a point person on climate justice initiatives. This is part of your annual reporting to the diocese, but more importantly, the person will be the parish connection to Climate Justice Niagara.

Finally, join Climate Justice Niagara on Earth Day, Tuesday, April 22, 6:30- 8:00 pm, for a Climate Justice Webinar. We'll



have some climate justice experts, and we will build on our pillars of prayer, education, action, and advocacy, to protect the integrity of creation.

For more information, please contact Deirdre Pike, deirdre.pike@niagaraanglican.ca or 905-527-1316, ext. 470.

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Risky Business: Entering Into Holy Week

THE REVEREND ANDREW RAMPTON

FOR THE MESSAGE ABOUT THE CROSS IS FOOLISHNESS TO THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING, BUT TO US WHO ARE BEING SAVED, IT IS THE POWER OF GOD.
(1 CORINTHIANS 1:18)

When I was a young man and began attending church, I was interested in making music. I was intent on having as little as possible to do with the church beyond music-making, scarred as I was from an adolescence of negative encounters with church-going classmates and neighbours. I had learned that church was a risky business. But to be a good church musician means developing some familiarity with the traditions of our faith. So began my encounters with Holy Week and its power.

A few years into this journey, I remember a mentor commenting one day about a love of the Cross. This struck me as odd. I found it much more sensible to love Easter and the resurrection. These were joyous celebrations where we saw proof that the



Photo: Unsplash/Christian Liebel

power of death and sin had been defeated; the wrongs of the past were put to right. The Cross was a place of grief, pain, and loss. A necessary evil to accomplish the good that came next, but not something to be dwelt upon. And certainly not something I could imagine loving.

Holy Week is a risky business. It holds some of the most ancient traditions of our faith. If there were ever a presentation of our faith that seemed foolishness

to the world, the emotional and theological roller coaster of the Triduum was it. The traditions of Holy Week are powerful, drawing us close to God in intimate and unsettling ways. They appear once a year and remind us of our distant-yet-present ancestors in the faith, whose inheritance we guard and treasure. Whenever we sincerely approach God with open hearts, we run the risk of being changed in ways we cannot anticipate.

As the years went by and I sang, played, and prayed through the liturgies of Holy Week again and again, I began to understand what one might love about the Cross. It is a difficult place, full of hurt, grief, and loss. It is a place of sacrifice of the innocent. But it is also a place where the depth of God's grace, mercy, and power to transform are most evident. Called, as ever, to contribute to God's work, we see humanity at the Cross offering our very worst.

We gather all of the hatred, fear, selfishness, anger, and murder that we can muster and give them to God, as if in a challenge. "See what you can make of that!"

God's response is not wrath or condemnation or abandonment. Our unworthy offering is received and transformed into forgiveness, reconciliation, and the promise that this murder will yield eternal life. Our continued violence is met with water and blood, Baptism and Eucharist, love pouring forth from the Body of Christ. Even the Cross, a human instrument of agony and death, is made lovely by God's love.

This relationship God desires with us is risky business. It is easy to think of how we might be loved when we are at our best. But Holy Week reminds us that God's love is poured out for us in both wine at the wedding feast and in water and blood upon the Cross. That we are loved much at our best and even more at our worst. That Jesus loves us even when we are loveless and, by this, we are made lovely.

The Ministry of the Button

THE REVEREND DEACON NANCY MCBRIDE

A reality in many parishes is that children are not always in regular attendance for Sunday morning worship. In our parish, it is not practical to offer a Sunday School program. We have a variety of kid-friendly activities available at a small table at the back of the church. While this helps the children cope with a mostly adult-friendly liturgy, it is not very inclusive. I remember teaching my sister to print by copying the pew bulletin onto a blank sheet of paper. After ten words, she had earned the privilege of wearing my wristwatch! My mother fed my fidgety brothers pieces of sugary cereal during the sermon.

I always have a 'show and tell' children's talk up my sleeve, as it were, for those wonderful Sunday mornings when we have children in church. The ideas are often sparked by something I read, but I pride myself on the 'improvements' I make.

Take this idea, for example.

Every household had a button jar, so the props were easy to come by. Each child chose a button from the basket, which held enough buttons that each person in the congregation could have one.

I began by observing that buttons have different sizes, shapes, and colours. Then I asked them why we need buttons. They responded that buttons fasten our clothes together. If you don't use them properly, your clothes might fall apart, or your pants might fall down!

Then we explored how many holes their button had. I asked them to name that many things they could thank God for and encouraged them to say a thank you prayer to God.

I told them that people sometimes fall apart because they fight

or don't know each other. The prayers we say hold us together because we are all God's children.

Next, they felt how hard a button is. We thought about people who are sad or who are sick or have hard things in their lives. The prayers we say to God will help them.

Then we thanked God for something that was the same colour as the button they held in their hand. Different colours and shapes do the same thing, but they are all still buttons. We are all different, but we are all God's children.

At the social time after the service, the children offered the adults a button. The different colours, shapes, and sizes reminded them to thank God for their families and friends, for people who live together and love



Photo: Unsplash/Xavi Cabrera



each other, for people who are different from them, and for the various gifts we have all received. This was a reminder that God made us all to live together in His Love, and His Light, and His Peace, and that He loves us all.

My latest thing is prayer balls, (small-sized soccer balls). One ball has the theme "What I am thankful for?" while the other is "Things that I know". The white spaces are lettered with thoughts that will lead them to say a quick

prayer for family, friends, school, etc. The other ball has motivational prompts, such as God loves me, I can do it, and I belong. The ball is tossed or rolled from child to child, and wherever their right thumb touches the ball, that's what they pray about.

A parishioner once remarked that he thought I must really enjoy my faith, which I do. My motivation is to be welcoming our children to do likewise.

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The Amazing Benefits of Collaboration in Community Outreach

BLAIR RICHARDSON

In 2010, St. Jude's Church approved a three-part mandate for Justice and Servant Ministries. One part was "to mobilize our resources and alleviate the problems of hunger, malnutrition, and food insecurity". Our chosen strategy was to partner with established community agencies, rather than working alone. Our budget and our volunteer complement have since grown, along with welcoming new partners. Relying on our partners' knowledge of where and how to focus efforts, we have developed and implemented new community outreach programs.

Our Pantry Program is one of five outreach programs that focus on food insecurity. We collaborate with community partners, whose volunteers are assigned to teams that prepare, package, label, and freeze nutritious meals. Meals are delivered to Links2Care in Halton Region, St. Matthew's House in Hamilton, and the Wesley Emergency Shelter in Burlington. They provide these frozen meals to specific clients; low-income individuals without family support, and those who lack kitchen facilities or who are unable to cook.

A key partner is White Oaks Secondary School (WOSS) in Oakville. Under the direction of Jon Hogan, Head of the Culinary Program, WOSS has structured part of its curriculum around its involvement with St. Jude's. Students have been preparing

and freezing about 200 meals per week during the school term.

CHCH TV highlighted this partnership with an evening news segment in January.

In 2024, the Pantry Program expanded greatly with the addition of more community partners and the recruitment of more volunteers. Partners now include Food for Life, Links2Care in Halton Region, St. Matthew's House in Hamilton, Wesley Emergency Shelter in Burlington, Adults in Motion, both Hamilton and Oakville, WOSS, and St. Dominic's Catholic Women's League in Oakville.

To increase meal production without exceeding the budget, the volunteers of the program decided to switch from purchased food to donated food. While this greatly complicated both food storage and meal production, it allowed the program to significantly increase meal production within the existing budget. Each week, the Pantry Program receives large quantities of mostly fresh food donated by Food For Life and St. Matthew's House, some of which is stored at St. Jude's and some are stored at WOSS. Each week, the program devises recipes for the cook teams, based on what food is available. Volunteer time is often required to prepare vegetables, e.g. peel, slice, and dice, in advance of cooking sessions. Over 5,000 pounds of food were donated in 2024, reducing the cost per meal to largely the cost of packaging.



This collaboration benefits the target population of people in need by increasing the level of service. In 2024, the Pantry Program distributed over 7,000 meals and 1,000 desserts, doubling the number of meals prepared in 2023. We depend on the knowledge, relationships, and client bases of Links2Care, St. Matthew's House, and the Emergency Shelter because they know where the needs are, for food support in our community; knowledge that the Pantry Program does not possess. There are many other benefits, too.

Sometimes, the Pantry Program receives food items that cannot be used in a timely manner. When this occurs, these food items are delivered to Frontline Outreach and the Salvation Army Lighthouse Shelter in Oakville. St. Matthew's House receives large quantities of bulk-packaged food, designed for restaurants, which are too large for individual usage. This food is given to the Pantry Program, which can better use bulk food in their meal production.

The collaboration with the Halton School Board creates a



Volunteers, in conjunction with community partners, prepared and distributed over 7,000 meals last year.

Photos: Contributed by St. Jude's Church

wonderful opportunity to raise awareness among students on the critical need for food support in Halton and surrounding regions. WOSS students say they appreciate the opportunity to give back to the community, as well as the volunteer hours they accumulate to meet graduation requirements. Moreover, this collaboration has enabled the Pantry Program to maximize its meal production through the use of its facility and the assistance of students and staff at WOSS.

As a group of helping agencies, we can share and leverage our resources more effectively, and capitalize on the strengths of each, in meeting community needs.

You can view the news segment via this link: www.chch.com/chch-news/high-school-students-serve-meals-to-the-community/

Missional Stewardship

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

giving or the responsible care of resources; it is a holistic, biblical principle that encompasses our entire lives. In my travels from parish to parish, I am struck by how few really realize how radical this biblical perspective is.

Briefly, we must understand from the beginning of creation God called humankind to 'work it [creation] and take care of it' [Genesis 2:15]. We must recognize that as stewards we actually don't own anything, God does. A steward by definition is someone who looks after someone else's property. Given the nature of our capitalist culture and our notions of private property, we mistakenly think we actually own

things. Yet, the Christian and biblical mandate turns all of this radically on its head. We give to God, as a response to all that God has provided us. For those who may still remember when using the *Book of Common Prayer*, we would make our offering to God with these profound and significant words:

"Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, for ever and ever. All that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine. All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. 1 Chronicles 29: 10,11,14. [BCP page 74]

Jesus compounds the concept when we read from Matthew 25:14 the Parable of the Talents.

One of the many lessons that can be taken from this passage is that each servant was entrusted with property. Some were given a lot and others less. Nonetheless, none of them owned the property but were meant to be stewards of it and missional in their management of it. Two of the three stewards responsibly doubled their portion to the great pleasure of the Master. I wonder if God is actually entrepreneurial. Regardless, it is clear that God expects us to be Missional with our resources.

If taken seriously these biblical concepts are not just radical but transformational. When I realized that God was the source of

all my blessings, I found stewardship to become a joy. My home, my property, my car, my education—everything is God's regardless of what the tax man thinks. Suddenly, I started to see what it meant in part: 'For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God'—even my very life is God's. Now *there* is a discussion topic for your next bible study or parish council meeting!

So given the perilous state of the nation and yes, economic insecurity, the Kingdom of God and the Missional work of the Church really should be our Primary Business. Good stewardship, worthwhile stewardship, and responsible stewardship

always follows mission and vision. The stronger and more vital the congregation the clearer the mission [or MAP] and the increased likelihood that our stewardship dollars, stewardship time, and talent will be generously directed to the Kingdom Work of the Church.

Maybe a radical idea for some, but possibly, we need to recognize that the only type of stewardship is missional stewardship. These two words need to be put together. I'd go so far as to say, 'Missional Stewardship' is the only kind of stewardship. Once we understand this biblical perspective—it changes everything—our very lives.

The Annual Bishop's Company Dinner Returns in May!

The annual Bishop's Company Dinner will be hosted on Tuesday, May 13th at Carmen's Banquet Centre. This exclusive event will begin with a cocktail hour followed by dinner. Bishop Susan Bell will be welcoming Cynthia Mulligan from CityNews for what is sure to be an inspiring conversation.

"I am so excited by this year's event and inspired, as ever, by our faithful membership and all the financial gifts to the Bishop's Company Fund which are so incredibly helpful," said Bishop Bell. "Together we are able to support members of our diocese in dire need; from the most vulnerable and isolated members of our community to those who are experiencing mental health concerns.

Members of the Bishop's Company help support the bishop's pastoral initiatives within the diocese, including the provision of emergency care for clergy, deacons, and licensed lay leaders, and bursaries for religious and leadership education. Funds



Cynthia Mulligan, award-winning reporter, to speak at the Bishop's Company dinner.

Photo: citynews.ca

raised through the Bishop's Company also strengthen the wider Anglican community as resources are occasionally shared beyond our diocese to respond to emergent pastoral needs faced by our siblings in Christ.

The exclusive annual dinner – complete with fun and fel-

lowship - is open to members of the Bishop's Company and their guests as a thank-you for their generous support.

Cynthia Mulligan, this year's featured guest, has over 25 years of journalism experience and specializes in Politics. Mulligan has traveled across the world as an investigative journalist and has been recognized for her series *Kicking Cancer*, in which she documents her journey fighting stage 4 cancer.

"I hope to welcome people from all our parishes and missions in May for a wonderful evening that will help me provide much-needed care, compassion, and support," said Bishop Bell.



Group Photo from the Bishop's Company Annual Dinner in 2024

Photo: Contributed by Diocese of Niagara

To become a member, or if you'd like to learn more, please visit www.niagaraanglican.ca/bishops-company. If you have any questions or need support with your Bishop's Company Membership

please contact Hannah Keller, Bishop's Company Registrar by phone at 905-527-1316, ext. 380, or by email at hannah.keller@niagaraanglican.ca.

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Save the Date: Diocese Presents 150th Anniversary Celebrations

At Synod this past November, Bishop Susan Bell launched the 150th anniversary year of the Diocese of Niagara. The Anniversary Dinner that night was just the beginning of a year full of celebrations and we have some special dates to note for your calendars!

For the Easter season, you can expect a **Stations of the Resurrection** series offering prayer and reflections for parishes and missions to use during the Easter season.

June 8th this year is Pentecost Sunday. Embracing **Pentecost** as the birthday of the Church, parishes, and missions are invited to celebrate the anniversary of the



diocese locally with engaging, joyful, and festive ideas to enhance your missional initiatives in your community.

Mark your calendars for **Saturday, June 14th for a diocesan-wide Family Picnic.** This wonderful opportunity for celebratory camaraderie will run from 11:00 am – 2:00 pm at

Canterbury Hills, complete with fun activities and outdoor worship to mark our anniversary!

Taking a sneak peek into the fall, be on the lookout for a special **spiritual retreat led by Bishop Susan Bell.**

We are looking forward to celebrating with you! Don't hesitate to share how your parishes and missions are celebrating 150 years. Send your stories and pictures to Dani Leitis, editor of the Niagara Anglican by emailing editor@niagaraanglican.ca. Stories should be no more than 600 words in length and high-resolution photos are best for clarity in printing.

Farmer Mariluz Suarez of ELOF, Colombia

**Our name has changed.
Our work stays the same.**

PWRDF is now Alongside Hope

After two years of discernment and consultation, PWRDF's members* have approved a new name. Alongside Hope emphasizes themes of partnership, accompaniment, community and teamwork that have always exemplified the way we work.

With its tagline – Anglicans and partners working for change in Canada and around the world – Alongside Hope honours the legacy of PWRDF as an agency of the Anglican Church of Canada, and it will carry us forward into the future.

As we walk alongside our partners and many supporters, listening and sharing with one another, we embrace and embody the hope of a truly just, healthy and peaceful world.

Scan the QR code to view a video about our new name and read our list of Frequently Asked Questions, or visit pwrdf.org/our-new-name.

* The PWRDF Board of Directors, Diocesan Representatives and Youth Council comprise the voting membership.

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Conspiracy Afoot



THE REVEREND DR. DANIEL TARNIC

I am a conspiracy theorist. And being a conspiracy theorist is not popular these days. So let me qualify why I am a conspiracy theorist and let me appeal to Augustine of Hippo to justify it. I am proposing that conspiracy be defined positively as people acting/working (i.e. conspiring) harmoniously toward a common goal. Co-resonance might be a better word, in which case I am a co-resonance theorist. You get the point.

When St. Augustine wrote his magisterial work, *The City of God*, he was formulating an answer (apology) to a pressing question. In the aftermath of the fall of the Roman Empire (i.e. the Earthly City), many people accused Christianity of culpability in the decline of the old order. Had the people remained pious pagans, had they not neglected the gods of their ancestors, the Empire would not have succumbed to Visigothic incursions.

Enchanted by a vague remembrance of their halcyon days, the people of the Earthly City pined away for simpler times and simpler gods. The Roman gods protected the city for generations and the Christian God did not; why does an all-powerful god allow things like this to happen? Augustine sets out to address these issues by framing the questions in a different way: How does God relate to history, and why do civilizations rise and fall? Where is grace operative during times of political, cultural, and social chaos?

Accessing Augustine's *City of God* is not an easy task. First, it is nearly one thousand two hundred pages of dense text. So, if you're planning on buying the book, invest in some high-octane coffee to go along with it. Second, depending on whether the reader happens to be a theologian, a philosopher, or a political theorist,



A conspiracy from another age. A page from the manuscript of *The City of God*, 1470.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

there are many interpretations regarding the nature of the two cities: the earthly and the heavenly. But the book endures across ages, so it must have something compelling to say, some wisdom to impart.

I had studied *City of God* as a philosophy undergraduate student. I wouldn't say that it impressed me much. But last summer I attended a seminar facilitated by a scholar for whom Augustine is his life's work. When the student is ready the teacher appears. His presentations on *The City of God* began with an invitation to consider it a form of Christian conspiracy. This tweaked my interest! That was last summer, and the religious-political scene was quite different. We were living in different times and in a very different Earthly City.

As I watched the near-atomic reaction to Bishop Budde's sermon during the inauguration service at Washington National Cathedral last November, my interest in *The City of God* as a conspiracy theory, moved from simmer to boil. I watched, on social media, my most agnostic, religiously apathetic friends positively excited by Bishop Budde's message. And for a moment, I caught a glimpse of what Augustine may have had in mind with his conspiracy. This is the moment of Christian witness, let's not let it pass.

The City of God is not a time or place, it has neither geographic nor cultural boundaries. The City of God is a conspiracy of souls, united by a common goal or purpose: there are two cities but one kingdom, and "God shall be all in all". Forget this and the

rest won't make sense. There is no need to destroy or deny the Earthly City, for even this fleeting and passing human attempt to organize ourselves politically has both a beauty and chaos unique unto itself. The Earthly City can become very ugly. It can also manifest serene beauty and order. Toronto is fabulous in the springtime, but it is filthy and smelly in the summer. The Whitehouse is impressive from the outside, but it's rotten on the inside. One leader builds up, another hacks to pieces. So, the Romans' question to Augustine isn't hard to justify: where is the all-powerful god in all of this chaos and upheaval? Augustine's answer will leave those looking for definitive resolution to the question of God's action / in-action in history disappointed; where is God? There is God. And God loves conspiracy theorists.

While those conspiring to practice theological virtues may do so, and in the process save their souls, there is no guarantee that the Earthly City will ever become much more than a stammering attempt to give voice to that which is beyond-our-reach. Notwithstanding, we reach out. Our souls reach out for that which haunts us. We desire to co-resonate with the goodness, truth, and beauty we see transcribed in creation. The echo of perfect justice, the hope of lasting peace, the aroma of all-embracing love. Sometimes we even try to live these virtues virtuously. But we trip, we fall, we stumble, we regret, and we start all over. The striving matters. The failing matters. The conspiracy matters. Where is God? There is the God who fills all in all.

Evangelism Continued from Page 3

conversion story, Andrew invites his brother Simon, and Philip invites his friend Nathaniel, and Jesus in turn invites them all to come, see, and follow. A relationship is already established with friends and family which gives me the opportunity to not only share stories from scripture but also my own story of coming to faith.

Along with knowing scripture, I have learned the importance of knowing my own story as a person of faith. At the end of each chapter, ideas from the chapter are brought directly to the reader to consider their own story as a Christian through the discussion questions. Consider the question, "How has your understanding of Jesus grown through the years?" I have been an Anglican my whole life, but this question brought to my attention that my understanding of Jesus has been a journey throughout my life. This helped me to realize that everyone's faith journey, is exactly that, their journey, and that conversion may be sudden, or it may take a lifetime. Consider this question, "How did that community of faith disciple you? Did it begin with teaching or with a relationship?" This question led to the understanding of the importance of relationship building in order to bring someone to faith. The most poignant realization for me came from this question: "In what ways do you think God was at work in you before you became a Christian?" This question reminded us that those we hope to reach have pre-existing spiritual lives.

In *The Conversion of a God-fearing Outsider*, Cornelius led a spiritual life, but he did not know Christ. If we trust that God is already working in people's lives, then we can start a conversation that respects these experiences. Recently, I was asked by someone I know why I was pursuing becoming a deacon. His question about my faith journey was made possible by our pre-existing relationship. He was born into a family of atheists and agnostics, but from our conversation, I could see God working in him as the questions he asked demonstrated a genuine interest and openness to understanding my desire to share the love of Jesus with others. In this personal example, I was able to apply two things I learned from the conversion stories and apply them in the 21st century: build relationships and share a story from my faith journey. If we trust that God is already working in people's lives, then we can start a conversation that respects their experiences. Reaching people requires a commitment to spending time listening to their stories, building relationships, and inviting them into the community.

After reading the book, *A New and Ancient Evangelism*, by Judith Paulsen, I feel I am better prepared to go out into the world and become a disciple of Jesus, spreading the Good News that God is with us. Remembering it all begins with prayer and trust in God.



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Honouring Our Past, Embracing the Future

St. Matthew's House Becomes St. Matt's

RENÉE WETSELAAR

For more than five decades, St. Matthew's House has been a pillar of compassion and support in the Hamilton community. Founded with a mission to serve those in need, the organization has grown and evolved, responding to the changing needs of seniors, families, and individuals facing housing and food insecurity. Now, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of our incorporation, we embark on an exciting new chapter—one that honours our history while positioning us for an even stronger future.

This year is being marked with a significant milestone: a rebranding that reflects both our legacy and our forward momentum. St. Matthew's House is now St. Matt's. Alongside our new name comes a refreshed visual identity, including a bold new logo, updated tagline, and modernized brand colours. While this transformation is outwardly visible, the heart of our work remains unchanged—providing life-changing support to those who need it most.

Why the Change?

Rebranding is not about erasing the past; it is about evolving to meet the present and future with clarity, energy, and inclusivity. Over the years, St. Matthew's House has expanded far beyond its origins, becoming a lifeline for seniors at risk of homelessness, a champion for food and income security, a provider of quality childcare, and an innovator in community-based support programs. Our work has grown, and our brand must reflect that evolution.

The transition to St. Matt's allows us to be more accessible, recognizable, and adaptable. The shortened name is friendly and familiar, removing barriers for those we serve while reinforcing



that we are a dynamic, modern organization. At the same time, it maintains our deep-rooted connection to our faith-inspired values of service, dignity, and justice.

A Legacy of Service, A Future of Impact

As we move forward as St. Matt's, we remain committed to the vital work that defines us. Our programs continue to provide stability, dignity, and hope for seniors who are homeless or at risk of eviction. Our innovative initiatives, such as our paralegal program and eviction-avoidance services, help seniors navigate legal and financial challenges, preventing homelessness before it happens. Our street outreach and food programs ensure that no senior in our community is left behind.

We are also growing in bold new ways. The construction of 412 Barton, our 15-unit deeply affordable housing project for Black and Indigenous seniors, is a testament to our commitment to lasting solutions. This initiative will provide not only safe housing but also a supportive community, allowing residents to thrive with dignity and security. Meanwhile, our childcare programs continue to nurture the youngest members of our community, ensuring they have the foundation they need to grow and succeed.

A New Look, A Steadfast Mission

With our rebranding, we are introducing a fresh visual iden-

tity that captures the essence of St. Matt's: warmth, resilience, and inclusivity. Our new logo symbolizes the interconnectedness of our work, while our updated colour palette reflects both the strength and compassion that define our mission. These changes are not simply aesthetic—they reinforce our identity as an organization that is both deeply rooted in tradition and boldly stepping into the future.

Looking Ahead

As we celebrate 50 years of incorporation, we invite our community to join us in this exciting transformation. Whether you have been with us since the beginning or are just learning about our work, now is the time to engage. Together, we can build a future where every senior has a place to call home, every child has the care they deserve, and every person in need finds a compassionate ally in St. Matt's.

Rebranding is more than a name change—it's a renewed commitment to our mission, a reflection of the community we serve, and a promise to continue evolving in service of those who need us most. Thank you for being part of this journey. Here's to the next 50 years of impact, innovation, and unwavering care.

Renée Wetselaar is the Executive Director of St. Matthew's House, soon to be St. Matt's.

Souper Bowl Sunday

A Challenge to the Diocese

For seven years St. John's Anglican Church in Ancaster has conducted a soup can collection.

We start collecting in early January and end on what we call Souper Bowl Sunday which was February 9th this year. Every year the amount collected has increased with this year's total

being 1676 pounds.

Thanks to all for the donations from St. John's parishioners. All donations went to the seniors program at St. Matthew's House.

I would like to challenge other parishes to the same as this amount will only last four to six weeks.



With the results of the soup can drive are, from left: Renée Wetselaar, Executive Director of St. Matthew's House, Robert Patterson, ON, and The Reverend Canon Joseph Asselin, Rector, St. John's Ancaster. Photo: Submitted by Robert Patterson

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Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

Upcoming Deadlines:

- June – April 25
- September – July 21
- October – August 25

Submissions:

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

Original cartoons or art –

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

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

Questions or information:

- Contact the Editor at editor@niagaraanglican.ca

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New Honourary Canons of Christ's Church Cathedral

At the 150th Synod of the Diocese of Niagara, Bishop Susan Bell announced that we would soon be celebrating 5 new honorary canons at Christ's Church Cathedral. On Sunday, January 19th Bishop Susan and Dean Tim Dobbin, during a special service in thanksgiving for ministry, installed the new canons Garfield Adams, Eleanor Clitheroe, Malcolm French, Naomi Kabugi, and Tom Vaughan. Also in

attendance, showing their support, was Archbishop Colin Johnson, the assistant bishop for the diocese, and Bishop Michael Bird, the 11th bishop of Niagara. We share great gratitude for the wonderful ministries of the new canons and pray that God continues to strengthen them with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and keep them steadfast in their work.



The Diocese of Niagara is celebrating 150 years! At our 150th Diocesan Synod, Bishop Susan Bell initiated a special anniversary fund to support local curacies throughout the diocese. Equipping right skilled and well-formed spiritual leaders is crucial for the flourishing of ministry like that which has been demonstrated by our new canons.

The vision for this anniversary fund is to better equip newly ordained clergy who would benefit by working alongside seasoned priests allowing for a focused time of apprenticeship.

We invite you to visit our diocesan website to learn more about this special anniversary fund and if moved to do so, make a donation by using the QR Code below or visiting niagaraanglican.ca.

Your support of this diocesan initiative will be a blessing to the Church for generations to come.

Giving Thanks for 150 years of Ministry in the Diocese of Niagara

If you desire more information about the 150th Anniversary Curacy Fund, please be in touch with Canon Drew MacDonald at drew.macdonald@niagaraanglican.ca.



Scan this QR code to donate online to the Curacy Fund today.

The love of the sport

TANYA SCHLEICH

It all started with the passion for basketball within our youth group: laughter, exercise, friendship, and skill building. Watching my group grow and learn together, become closer as friends and even schedule their own time together to play this fun game, made me realize it was an integral part of St. George's youth group. It was a true enjoyment and provided energy and excitement to get together more often. The bonds that were built surrounding this sport were truly beautiful. One day we received a generous donation from a member of our church that was designated for our youth group. We decided it would be great to purchase two high-quality nets with stands to be able to play as a group in our own church home.

One day I was talking with the youth, and I asked them if they would be interested in playing a game where staff/adults were against the youth group. They immediately loved the idea, and the energy and excitement began that day. We scheduled our first game, announced the date, and welcomed our members

to attend and watch the game. The support our youth received was absolutely amazing. We had barbecued hot dogs, chips, ice cream, and even referees. The referees we had for the first game decided it was intense, and they were tired, so for the next two games one of the original referees generously paid to have professional referees come out to our games. This moved our second game to the next level. I also felt it we needed to have a mascot, so we now have a dragon that announces the dates and appears at each game to make announcements. A dragon is so fitting for St. George's.

The success of these games has far exceeded what I ever thought it would be. The fact that our very own Reverend Tom Vaughan loves the sport, plays on the staff team, and has a very personal love for basketball, is so essential to the success so far. Reverend Martha Tatarnic is always there supporting our youth and watching intently to keep score. We are very lucky to have such encouragement from our church family and our ministry leaders. Each team had two captains, Gordon and Cecilia Tatarnic and

Reverend Tom Vaughan with retired Bishop George Elliott. They all provide great leadership to our teams, and we are also very lucky to have a talented group to help with cooking food and snacks. We even have a real popcorn trolley machine.

So, in all this success it is so amazing to see that we have youth and adults come out to play that have never been to St. George's before. The friendships are growing and strengthening each and every game. Also, the fact that the youth are interacting with the adults of our church and our community in a fun way is so inspiring and exciting. I am looking forward to many more games, and I am excited for new opportunities to come. This passion for basketball is so much more than a little "b-ball" for St. George's. It is about fellowship, intergenerational fun, community involvement, and support for our youth. As their youth group leader, I am very thankful and extremely blessed.

St. George's next game will be Saturday, May 24th at 2:00 p.m.



Photos: Contributed by Tanya Schleich