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*Celebrating 150 Years*

# Faith Meets Fun at the Diocesan Picnic!



Left: Archdeacon Bill Mous and volunteer Ivars Leitis prepare hotdogs for guests.  
 Right: 150 guests for 150 years.

Photos: contributed by Sarah Bird

On Saturday, June 14, 2025, at the beautiful Canterbury Hills Camp, the Diocese of Niagara hosted a joyful and memorable celebration, the 150th Anniversary Diocesan Picnic. This milestone event was part of a year-long series of celebrations marking the 150th anniversary of our beloved diocese. The event brought together families,

friends, clergy, camp alumni, camp staff, and volunteers from all corners of the region for a day of faith, fun, and fellowship. It was more than just a picnic; it was a heartfelt reminder of the deep community that has flourished in this diocese over the past century and a half. The day began with spiritual grounding and reflection.

Attendees were invited to join Bishop Susan for prayers in the Outdoor Chapel, setting a serene and uplifting tone for the day. Also, during this time of prayer, Alison Steele (children, youth, and family coordinator, from St. David's Welland) led a Godly Play session focused on the story of Creation. The session offered a meaningful and engaging experi-

ence for families that blended faith with imagination and wonder. To conclude this time of worship, Bishop Susan gathered the community for a Ceremonial Tree Planting, a touching moment and lasting tribute to the diocese's deep roots, both physically and spiritually. More than a symbolic gesture, the

planting reflected our growing commitment to Creation care, in alignment with the Communion Forest initiative championed by Climate Justice Niagara. This initiative has already inspired several parishes to engage in tree-planting projects, ecological assessments, and long-term envi-

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## General Synod Sets New Direction with Faith and Hope

In June, Anglicans from coast to coast to coast gathered in London, Ontario, for the 44th General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada. Its theme, "They will soar on wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:31), served as a touchstone for its worship, events, and actions. Members entered into a week of deep discernment about the Church's future in the face of the present economic, political, and climate crises that call on Christians to act

for justice for God's Creation. Reflecting on her experience, diocesan lay delegate Susan Little highlighted the potent, hope-filled sermons delivered throughout the week. "For me, the highlight of General Synod is the powerful messages that the Spirit inspires throughout our time together in worship or moments of its proceedings." This included a stirring sermon by Bishop Michael Curry,

the retired presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States, which set the tone for the week. Little shares, "With animated delivery and enthusiasm, he recalled our faithful ancestors who couldn't see the 'big picture' of what God was doing but trusted that the outcomes were part of God's plan." The bishop reminded those assembled of the story of Queen Esther and how, despite

humble beginnings, she was able to make a difference in people's lives. "Implicating us in the exciting business soon to unfold throughout the coming seven days together, he told us that 'You are not here by accident. Who knows—you may have come to the kingdom for such a time as this.' Now, that is some pressure to pay attention!" In her primatial address, Archbishop Anne Germond

offered words of hope and encouragement to the Church. "As we continue to be shaped by the Risen Christ, let us hold tenaciously onto the promises of God, trusting in God's never-ending faithfulness to be with us in all our doings," urged the acting primate. For Little, this was another stirring message of hope, "urging

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# General Synod Meets

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

us to let go of old patterns and to soar in faith, rising to the new challenges.”

The main business of the Synod was the consideration of the Creating Pathways for the Transformational Change report, as recommended by the *Primate’s Commission on Reimagining the Church: Proclaiming the Gospel in the 21st Century*. The six pathways articulated in the report seek to streamline the structures and organization of the Church, reducing its costs while empowering and supporting parishes to proclaim and live out the Gospel message.

“Each of the pathways have the potential to transform the Church in ways that are prophetic, bold, and faithful,” reflected Archdeacon Bill Mous, one of Niagara’s clergy members. “Taken together, and with the Spirit’s leading, the possibilities to reshape our Church for its 21st century witness are all rather breath-taking to behold.”

Members overwhelmingly embraced the report and urged the primate and officers of General Synod to begin actively pursuing the pathways, authorizing up to \$2 million to be allocated for this work over the next three years.

When describing the significant challenges ahead, Archbishop Germond compared the Canadian Church to that of the people of ancient Israel, returning to Jerusalem after decades of exile. She stressed that it needs to give up its internal divisions to see its way forward through cooperation. The acting primate warned that, “if we are to succeed at all, we can only be a unified church, walking together into the future with bold, prophetic hope, extending the hand of grace to one another at every opportunity.” She added, it will be “a time of sacred and holy risk-taking.”

During the synod, Bishop Susan Bell brought forward two successful resolutions which drew from Niagara’s ministry experience. The first called for a national strategy for local ministries of hospitality and advocacy with migrant workers in Canada. This strategy would strengthen the commitment of the Church toward the elimination of human trafficking and modern slavery with faith-based ministries that support migrant workers, addressing systemic injustices that migrant workers



Newly elected Primate Shane Parker. Photo: General Synod/Charlotte Poolton



Adam McNeill speaks to a motion at General Synod. Photo: General Synod/Brian Bukowski



Members of Niagara’s delegation pose for a photo with Jodey Porter and Dana Lutton. Photo: contributed by Bill Mous

experience. The second resolution, seconded by Archdeacon Bill Mous, called for the Council of General Synod to share and study the principles of ability and inclusion. Jodey Porter of St. Mark’s Niagara-on-the-Lake delivered a powerful presentation on this relatively new field of enquiry in theology, reflecting on her lived experience and work as the Anglican representative for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada’s Taskforce on Ability and Inclusion. The resolution seeks to build on ten Tenets of Disability Theology outlined in *The Disabled God*, a book by Nancy Eiesland. These tenets state that all people are reflected in God’s image, including those with disabilities and maintain that disability is not a sin or a divine punishment. Youth and young adult members, including Niagara’s Paige Keller of St. George’s, Guelph and Adam MacNeil of Church of the Resurrection, Hamilton, actively participated with passion and purpose in all aspects of the synod.



Bishop Susan Bell (centre) and other bishops celebrate the new primate. Photo: General Synod/Charlotte Poolton

McNeill brought forward a resolution that would allow for greater youth involvement in the Council of General Synod, and he seconded a resolution calling for the creation of a national youth council. Both resolutions were carried.

On Thursday, June 26, the election for the new primate took place at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. After the second ballot, the order of laity requested additional names be added to the original slate of four candidates. The order of bishops nominated Archbishop Shane Parker, and he was ultimately elected by the members of the laity and clergy on the fifth ballot.

“Archbishop Shane has long been a faithful and wise shepherd within our province, as Bishop of Ottawa,” said Bishop Susan Bell. “His deep pastoral sensitivity, theological insight, and unwavering commitment to justice and reconciliation, as well as his laser focus on priority issues, have been a deep blessing to our province and will continue to be so for the wider Church.”

Reflecting on the electoral process, Little was impressed with “its utter reliance upon the Spirit!” She added that “through the offering of prayer, singing and reflection all day long, we became part of a greater universe.”

Little was also inspired by the newly elected primate’s address to members upon entering the cathedral after his election. “He described the mitre that he was expected to wear and discovered

all sorts of padding, duct tape and staples, holding it together. As it was, it wouldn’t fit, so he took it apart so it could be useful again. Just like the Church, the primate said we must get rid of what’s not necessary anymore. He concluded that there’s a need for “deep change in our culture” to do what the Church should be doing, and he encouraged us “to courageously live into that change.”

Towards the end of the week, elections were held for the Council of the General Synod, the executive governance body that meets between general synods. Bishop Susan Bell and Paige Keller were elected to serve on the council for the next three years.

Throughout the synod, Niagara’s witness to the discernment, discussion, and decisions of the synod was well served and well represented by its delegation. From serving on sessional committees to speaking to resolutions; engaging in presentations to supporting members in crafting resolutions, those from Niagara made significant contributions to all aspects of the leadership, organization, worship, and debate of the synod.

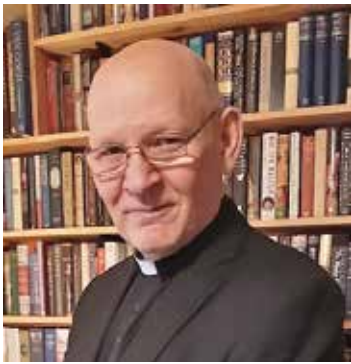
Buoyed by the generous hospitality of the Diocese of Huron, inspired by the prayerful witness of the Synod, and guided by new leadership and directions for ministry, members of the General Synod charted a Spirit-led course for the Church for the years ahead with faith and hope.



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# A Promise and Ministry to Love



## THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN

A few weeks ago, the world just became a bigger, more gorgeous, and much more exciting place. Because our granddaughter was born. At a time so cruelly volatile and dangerous, in a culture increasingly unforgiving and judgmental, a small example of purity and hope has joined humanity. Why, people ask, would your daughter have had a child at a time like this? Those people, if only they knew it, are part of the problem. The antidote to despair is optimism, and nothing gives us more optimism than new, pristine life. The mother of the child is

our daughter Lucy, and back in 2018, I wrote her a letter for her wedding. Among other things, I recalled how, when she was four years old, I took her to see *The Nutcracker* at Christmas in Toronto. There she was, in her party dress, all smiles and anticipation, sitting on her booster seat and leaning in as if magnetized to the ballet, its music, and its glory. Then the music ended, the audience applauded, and we left. At which point she began to cry. The tears bisected her miniature cheeks, and she was nothing but weeping and sorrow, and it

was as if my life was collapsing before me. Why Lucy, why? She had seemed so exquisitely happy. “Because,” she said, in between gulps for air, “because it’s stopped and it’s finished”—more agonizing gulps—“and I don’t want the magic to be over. I don’t want the magic to end.” Now it was my turn to feel tearful. But I managed to hide my tears and reply: “Darling, I promise you, I promise you with all that I have, the magic will never end.” What a promise that was, what a grand and great

commitment that surely couldn’t be fulfilled. How dare I say such a thing? But as I’ve aged, seen our four children mature, and seen them become adults themselves and take their places as good, kind, and productive members of society, I’m convinced that the magic, while perhaps not of music and dancing and fantasy, is as strong as ever. Because that magic is love. An authentic, all-consuming love that binds us together, enabling us to put others first, and to turn dreams into reality, and aspirations into achievements. Love may be a term that is overused, misunderstood, and even exploited, but that doesn’t change its true, sparkling nature. For me, as a priest, it informs, it has to inform, all that I do and all that I am. When I was ordained, I took an oath “to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely.” That calling is a joy and a privilege, but I can’t pretend that it’s always easy, and at times it’s frustrating and even dangerous. It’s love that sustains me—the

love of Jesus Christ, who taught that his followers should be known to the world by this very quality. God in heaven, if only that were always the case! But love as a father and grandfather, too. A love that delights in every word, every step, every smile. A love that makes me a better, brighter person. The immaculate symbiosis of love. Because of that, I will hold my granddaughter in my arms and whisper in her ear some of the things I said to her mum so many years ago. “My darling granddaughter. I’m 66 years old now, and I will only be here for a part of your life, but my love will be with you forever. I know that your life will be extraordinary because your parents will be your guides and guards. Please know that this foolish, flawed, inadequate man can promise you that you are loved by so many people, so deeply, and that because of that love, the magic will never end. I give you my word, my darling, the magic will never end.”



Photo: Unsplash/Almos Bechtold

# A Banner Year at Canterbury Hills Camp

With nearly 200 campers a week, a record-breaking Leader-in-Training class of 29 participants, and an additional Teen Camp program running for nine days and eight nights, it is turning out to be yet another fun-filled summer at Canterbury Hills Camp!

Photo: contributed by Canterbury Hills Camp



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**CALLED to LIFE**  
**COMPELLED to LOVE**



*In other words*

# Why Read the Bible?



JOHN BOWEN

Anglicans have a love-hate relationship with the Bible. Some bits we love—Psalm 23 (the Lord is my shepherd), 1 Corinthians 13 (love is patient, love is kind), the parable of the lost sheep and the kind shepherd; and so on.

But a lot of it we could do without—the embarrassing bits about six-day creation and Adam and Eve, the battles and the genocides, the endless genealogies, and the picture of a mean and judgmental God. We might feel like following the example of American President Thomas Jefferson, who carefully cut out from the New Testament the parts he liked and stuck them together to make his own personal New Testament.

But there is a reason the Bible is as it is, and there is a reason that our weekly readings include bits from all over the Bible. Here’s the reason: all human beings need a story to live by, to help them make sense of their world and their lives, and the Bible is the Christian story.

**A six-act play**

What does that mean? Tom Wright is an Anglican Bishop and a world-renowned New Testament scholar, and he has a great analogy for this, which I’m going to adapt slightly. He says, suppose a previously unknown play of Shakespeare’s was discovered tomorrow, but there is one act, Act 5, missing—let’s say it was eaten by mice.

What could you do? He says the most daring solution would be to get together the world’s most experienced Shakespearian actors, get them to memorize Acts 1 through 4, and I’m going to add in an Act Six (even though Shakespeare wrote no six-act plays!), and then set those actors loose to act out the play, following Shakespeare’s script.

Which is okay until they come to the missing Act 5, of course. So, what are they going to do then? Well, says Tom Wright, they would improvise, they would make it up. Of course, the trick is, if they are going to do that well, they would have to be true to Acts 1 through 4, the characters and the plot would have to be credible, and their improvisation would have to connect with the start of Act 6. So, on the one hand, they can’t simply quote lines at random from earlier acts, as though nothing has changed, but on the other hand, they can’t simply ignore the play as Shakespeare wrote it, and say that’s out of

date. Tom Wright says what they are called to is not just improvisation but faithful improvisation.

Now, says Wright, that is how the Christian story of the Bible works. There are six acts:

Act 1 is creation. The story begins with a good God making a good world. For the Christian, the world is not random and it’s not meaningless. It is made by a Creator, with beauty and purpose. That’s where our story begins.

In Act 2, things go wrong. We decide we can manage the world without the Creator’s help, and the results are all around us. G.K. Chesterton says, “sin... is the only part of Christian theology which can really be proved—[it is] a fact as practical as potatoes.”

Then Act 3: this begins in Genesis 12, when God calls Abraham to be the father of a nation that will bring blessing and renewal to the whole world. God begins his world restoration project and recruits human beings to work with him. The Old Testament is the story of God shaping one nation to demonstrate to the world what it means to live as God’s people in God’s world in God’s way.

Then in Act 4, something different and wonderful happens: the writer of the story enters the story—as if Shakespeare should see a rehearsal of Hamlet, and steps onto the stage saying, “Here, let



me show you how it’s done.” The coming of Jesus is the author of the story, entering into that story. Jesus trains his twelve apprentices in the ways of God’s new world, he dies for our sins and is raised to new life, then sends out his followers to start new communities of apprentices.

Let’s skip Act 5 for a moment and go on to Act 6. This is the end of the story—indeed, the end of the world. This is the ultimate happy ending: God will intervene once again to put everything to right and usher in a new creation where “death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more.”

**Faithful improvisation**

So where does that leave us? We are in Act 5. We are called to faithfully improvise our role in God’s story of the world—on the one hand improvising, since we can’t simply quote earlier parts

of the play; but on the other hand faithful to the story: this is not a story we make up out of thin air: we’re living in a God-shaped, God-initiated story.

I have an atheist friend in his 80s who told me he wakes up every morning and thinks, “What’s it all about?” He has no story like this to live by, no reason for hope. I said, I hope humbly, “I wake up every morning and read the Bible and pray—and it reminds me what I believe it’s all about.” We are living in a story, and it is a good story—indeed, the Bible calls it Good News, Gospel.

*This article is based on a sermon preached at the Church of the Ascension, Hamilton, in October 2024, to mark the 50th anniversary of the church’s Bible study group.*

# Community Kindness Matters

THE REVEREND DEACON  
NANCY MCBRIDE

Food insecurity is a significant concern for many communities around our diocese. The town of Caledonia is no different.

We are fortunate that Caledonia has an excellent food bank. The community supports it with regular collections and food drives, yet we are all concerned that the needs last year were up 30% from the previous year. As costs increase, income always seems to shrink. Community meals—free or ‘pay as you can’—are available during the week. Several unhoused individuals have presented at the

local food bank, at community meals, and on the doorsteps of local churches.

Over the winter, the Caledonia Presbyterian Church collected sleeping bags and blankets, food and hygiene supplies for several unhoused individuals. Most popular item? Socks and hand warmers. Think about it: when your hands and feet are cold, the rest of the body can’t be warm.

A year ago, a discussion about a Community Pantry began. The unhoused have few resources available to them. Not everyone can access the food bank. Many families need a little support now and then. And the food bank isn’t open every day.

Eventually, the conversations

led to a public meeting, with an invitation going out to the community at large via social media and word of mouth. A group of concerned citizens responded. Some represented churches or other community groups, while many were there simply because they cared and wanted to help as they could.

Using a model learned from a similar group in Paris, Ontario, the folks around the table planned a community pantry, which was magnificently constructed by the Special Projects Committee from the Chamber of Commerce. The pantry itself is in the parking lot behind the Caledonia Presbyterian Church, which is centrally located on the

main street of town. The location is quiet and private.

The formal launch took place on Monday evening, June 1, 2025. A team of volunteers in rotation check and restock the pantry daily, with non-perishable, unopened food staples. These include canned foods and pasta sauces, dry goods such as pasta or cereal, sealed snacks, nut butters, boxed milk, juice boxes and bottled water, baby food, and baking mixes. Dry or canned pet food is also welcome. Restrictions include no glass containers, no homemade food,

nothing containing alcohol, no medications and no sharp objects or tools. A separate list of supplies will pertain to winter. The list makes provisions for pets, too.

An ancient Latin chant. ‘*Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est*’ translates as ‘Where love and charity are found, there is God.’ I can think of no better example of God’s Love than this selfless mission of kindness.

*The Reverend Nancy McBride is a deacon at St Paul’s Anglican Church, Caledonia.*





# Picnic Celebrates 150 Years as a Diocese

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ronmental stewardship. In this context, the ceremonial planting stood as a living sign of the diocese's dedication to climate justice and faithful action.

With hearts filled from meaningful prayer, the day blossomed into a vibrant celebration of food, games, and joyful connection. For those looking to kick back and enjoy classic picnic fun, the event did not disappoint. The Lions Hall hot dog stand drew a steady crowd, while the cotton candy station was a favourite among the young and young-at-heart. Face painting, arts and crafts, and lawn games kept guests engaged, and carnival games added an extra layer of excitement. Whether it was a fierce match in the Gaga Ball tournament or high-energy relay races, including picnic favourites like the three-legged race and potato sack race, there was truly something for everyone to enjoy.

In addition to the fun activities, the picnic was also a time for giving. Throughout the day, guests were encouraged to support the Anniversary Curacy Fund, an initiative launched by Bishop Susan Bell. The fund provides newly ordained clergy with opportunities to serve alongside experienced priests in parishes and missions, building confidence, skills, and leadership for the future of our diocese. Donations to this important effort are still welcome and greatly appreciated.

The spirit of the day was

captured in the words of the attendees.

"Being able to see people from different ages, parishes and communities come together to celebrate our diocese was something special," shared Hannah Keller (St. George's Guelph). "The sense of community, faith, and joy in the air was incredible."

Picnic volunteer and much-loved Synod staff member Jane Wyse reflected: "It was wonderful to speak with camp alumni who attended the picnic. They were so excited to be back on site and to see how things have changed." She added, "The event was a fantastic way to meet new and familiar faces, and to reconnect. Everyone did a great job; it truly was a wonderful day for all."

Behind the scenes, a dedicated team of volunteers and staff made the day possible. From early planning meetings to setup, parking lot management, hot dog grilling, tech support, and activity coordination, the event team worked incredibly hard to ensure every detail was thoughtfully executed. Their care and collaboration made the day not just successful, but truly meaningful.

One especially beautiful aspect of the planning process was the way it brought together children, youth, and family ministry coordinators from across the diocese. Their collaboration sparked new friendships, shared inspiration for parish ministry, and highlighted

the many gifts and talents alive in our diocesan family.

As the day wrapped up, the most common question was: "When is the next one?" The overwhelming enthusiasm spoke to the joy and connection felt by all.

Reflecting on the day, Sarah Bird (picnic lead and diocesan missional formation coordinator) shared: "This picnic celebrates not only our past 150 years, but the ongoing vibrancy of our diocesan community. I look forward to many more moments like this together."

From heartfelt prayers to playful games, the picnic was a joyful celebration of faith, fellowship, and the strong roots of our diocesan family. Here's to many more years of shared ministry and community!



Top: Bishop Susan Bell plants a tree on the grounds of Canterbury Hills to mark the Diocese's 150th anniversary.

Middle: The Family Picnic volunteers gather for a group shot.

Above left: Cotton candy was on offer to guests.

Above right: Face painting and crafts were part of the fun for children.

Left: Gathering for worship at the outdoor chapel.

Photos: contributed by Susan Bird



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# Fall Brings New Opportunities for Learning with NSML

“With fall now upon us, we’re excited to launch another season of learning and formation through NSML,” says Sarah Bird, missional formation coordinator for the diocese and registrar for the Niagara School for Missional Leadership. “We’re continuing to offer some of our most loved courses while also introducing exciting new opportunities for growth within our community.”

Returning this fall are three perennial favourites:

- **Anglican Polity: How We Do Things Around Here** — Hosted by Bishop Susan Bell, along with invited subject experts, this course provides valuable insight into the structures and rhythms of Anglican life.
- **Pastoral Care Foundation:**

**Presence, Paying Attention and Prayer** — Led by the Venerable Terry DeForest, this grounding course is designed for anyone engaged in care ministries. It explores the essential elements of caring presence, attentive listening, and prayerful support, helping students develop and practice a range of pastoral care skills.

- **Christian Foundations** — A cornerstone course central to NSML’s offerings, returning this fall with a new instructor, the Reverend Dr. Rob Jones. Currently assistant director of Jewish Studies and assistant research professor at Penn State, Rob brings a unique blend of academic expertise and pastoral experience that will enrich students’ under-



standing of the Christian tradition and its historical contexts. Also returning is:

- **Following Jesus in a Time of Climate Crisis** — Led by Reverend Jon Swales, this course is a timely and challenging exploration of faithful living amid environmental

change. With clear scientific evidence of a warming world caused by fossil fuel emissions, this course examines what it means to follow Jesus and live justly in the face of climate breakdown, focusing on care for the most vulnerable and future generations.

New this year is a significant opportunity for deep formation:

- **Two-Year Certificated Course in Mission Practice**, led by the Reverend Canon Dr. Ian Mobsby. This orthopraxis-focused training equips both lay and ordained people to develop their mission practice. Participants will develop the skills, knowledge, and leadership needed to initiate and sustain contextual mission projects in their communities.

“This course offers a blend of theological grounding and practical application, aimed at developing leadership for mission in today’s ever-changing world,” says Mobsby.

## Course Dates, Times, and Registration

Courses begin in mid-September and run through to November. Specific dates, times, and registration details can be found on the NSML website at [nsml.ca](http://nsml.ca) or by contacting the registrar directly.

**Special Offer:** Students from the Diocese of Niagara are eligible for a promotional rate. To learn more and register, please contact the registrar at: [registrar@nsml.ca](mailto:registrar@nsml.ca)

# An Altar to an Unknown God

**THE REVEREND STEWART CAROLAN-EVANS**

A question to begin with: when did you last encounter God? Statistics show that a growing number of Canadians identify as having no religious belief or, more strikingly, as ‘spiritual but not religious’, the most rapidly growing group. So, many may reasonably answer, “I’ve never encountered God, because there is no God to encounter.” Or others may say, “Yes, I’ve experienced something, but not the God you talk about at that church of yours.” Whether you place yourself in one of those groups, somewhere in between, or firmly in ‘church’, my guess is this: like most people I’ve met, you carry somewhere within you a sense of ‘other’, something good beyond yourself, a presence that is often hard to name, dare I say, unknown. This sense of the divine can arise in many places. Nature: the grandeur of a sunrise, a bird in flight, the panoply of stars. The everyday: the trust of a small child, an act of kindness from a stranger, human love shared for a lifetime. Art: an abstract modern sculpture, a Renaissance painting, a single line of poetry.

I remember as a younger man hearing a line from a song by The Clash: “The gutter prince of ghetto poets was bounced out of the room by the bodyguards of

greed for disturbing the tomb, his voice like flame throwers burned the ghettos in their chests...”. Was this about the degradation of a society preyed upon by a rich elite? Possibly. Or was the “gutter prince” the one foretold by prophets? A prince who was indeed rejected and cast out by those in power, only to rise again on the third day? A prince and king whose voice still burns within those who dare to

follow him today? Perhaps both. Was that moment for me an encounter with God, or simply a product of my imagination? In truth, I’ve come to believe this: left to myself, I tend to fashion a god who conveniently agrees with me. That god always affirms my preferences and never asks much. Which is why I need others, a community, to keep me honest. I need voices outside my own head. I need a story that

comforts and challenges. I need a book that dares to speak the truth. Many call that community the Church, and that book the Bible.

We live in a time when many question the need for church. And I get it. The Church has, at times, caused harm, protected the wrong things, and forgotten the Gospel it was meant to live out. Yet, when the Church is faithful, it becomes not a place of easy answers, but shared searching. A place where we name what is unknown, and find that God has already been at work. In earlier times, missionaries often assumed they were bringing God to faraway places. The story they told was one of “introducing” the divine to people they saw as uncivilized. But Indigenous voices have rightly reminded us: God was already here. Present in ceremony, story, land, and spirit. The missionaries, at best, gave a new name to the One already known. At worst, they obscured the divine behind cruelty and cultural destruction. Some of the hardest truths of our past lie in that tension.

Still, I believe the longing for God, the hunger for something more, remains in every human heart. You may have your own list of “encounters.” They may not have seemed dramatic at the time. But I invite you to reflect: what moments have stirred that sense of ‘other’ in you? Could it

be that those were sacred? When in Athens, St. Paul found hidden among the many sites, a little altar with a strange inscription. Intrigued, he dashed to the market square to listen and talk about it to the leaders of the city. He said, “For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of devotion, I found among them an altar with this inscription: ‘To an Unknown God,’ now what you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.” (Acts 17:23). It’s a brilliant moment. Paul doesn’t condemn the Athenians for their searching; he affirms it. He names the unknown God not as a threat, but as the One they were already reaching for without knowing it.

So it is for our church today. Our task is not to scold the world for being ‘secular’ but to pay attention, to listen for where the Spirit is already stirring, even among those who don’t know what to call it. We name the God who is already present. And we point gently toward the altar. Not with triumph, but with humility. Not with certainty, but with hope. Not with judgment, but with love. The altar is still there. The invitation still stands.

*Stewart Carolan-Evans is the rector at St. John’s, Burlington.*



An altar to an unknown god, perhaps the one referenced in Acts 17:23

Photo: Wikipedia



# Young Adult Ministry in Guelph Responds to Local Need with Community Closet

**HANNAH KELLER AND PAIGE KELLER**

On Sunday, April 6, parishioners of St. George's Anglican Church (Guelph) took part in a ribbon-cutting ceremony between services for the parish's new 'Community Closet.' An outreach initiative of the church's Young Adult Ministry (YAM), the project was developed over a two-month period. The closet aims to provide acute care for those in need in downtown Guelph, particularly those who are unhoused.

The idea for the project began in January, when an individual in need came to the church with wet winter boots. No local community clothing providers were open, as it was early on a Sunday morning. With temperatures as low as -20°C, he was in critical need of dry footwear, which the parish was unable to provide. This incident brought awareness to St. George's that there were significant gaps in Guelph's social services, particularly on Sundays. Members of the YAM felt called to develop an outreach ministry to address these shortcomings.



The Reverend Victor Kischak (left) and YAM leader Hannah Keller (right) during the ribbon cutting ceremony.

A donation list of items was shared with the parish, with an emphasis on quick and minimal preparation; basic outdoor clothing items, like coats & socks, along with instant meal items and bottled beverages. A cabinet was also purchased with support

from the Justice & Outreach Committee. During the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the Reverend Victor Kischak, rector of the parish, led gathered parishioners in a prayer before blessing the closet's new ministry. Afterwards, parishio-



The interior of the Community Closet. Photos: contributed by Sue Hawthorne-Bate

ners were invited to explore the closet and learn the different ways the ministry plans to support those in need. As the Community Closet becomes an ongoing ministry, YAM members are excited to see parishioners of all ages

embrace the project. At the time of writing this, in the two to three months that the closet has been operational, it has allowed St. George's to prioritize social justice in a meaningful and hope-filled way.



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 information below:

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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](mailto:drew.macdonald@niagaraanglican.ca).*

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# Red Maple Leaves



**THE REVEREND CANON DR. SHARYN HALL**

For many of us, the month of September signifies the end of summer and the beginning of the beautiful season of red maple leaves. We are seeing many red maple leaves these days as symbols of our love for our country, in response to the threats from the President of the United States to take over Canada as the 51st state of America. Canadians are deter-

mined to assert our independence as a sovereign nation in our territory, our economy, our culture and our politics. The friendship which Canadians and Americans share has a long history. As happens in many friendships, there have been disagreements and rifts over the years, but on the whole, strong ties among the people survive. Today, Canadians often find American family and friends apologizing for the political upheavals caused by the

American government. The month of September also brings to mind a tragedy which affected not only people in the United States but also people in Canada, who immediately offered help. September brings back the memory of September 11, 2001. We remember watching over and over again on television two passenger airplanes flying into the two towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. We could not believe what we were seeing on television. Was

this the beginning of WWII? Was this the signal that wars are no longer in another part of the world but on our doorstep? There is now a beautiful memorial where the two towers of the Trade Center once stood. It is a place of peace, sorrow, and hope. After that day of tragedy on September 11, offers of help and sympathy poured into the city of New York so overwhelmingly that an organization was formed called 'New York Says Thank You Foundation.' The statement of the Foundation reads, "the kindness and compassion of people from all across the world prove LOVE is stronger than HATE...actions big and small that bring people together to transform tragedy into hope are living proof that LOVE is stronger than HATE."

Each one of us can contribute to the strengthening of love by actions big and small, which promote understanding, respect and dignity. Each one of us can counteract the power of hate by our compassion and support for others in our neighbourhoods and in countries near and far. Do we speak out against injustice suffered by those who have no voice? Do we speak up to support the dignity of others regardless of their differences from us? We can remember that the terrible act of hatred on September 11, 2001, gave rise to actions which brought people together from many walks of life across the world to transform tragedy into hope as living proof that LOVE is stronger than HATE.

# Church of the Ascension Celebrates 175 Years

**EMILY ANDRUS**

The Church of the Ascension in Hamilton celebrated the 175th Anniversary of its founding by hosting a Festal Evensong service and catered dinner on Thursday, May 29th, 2025, in Hamilton. One of the earliest Anglican

churches in the province, with a church incorporation date of 1850, the land for the Church of the Ascension was donated by one of the first wardens of the church, R. Juson. The building opened for service on June 22, 1851. As an example of a mid-19th-century Gothic Revival church, the designated Heritage

Building is a significant property of historic and architectural value. Bishop Susan Bell presided over the beautiful carol service of Thanksgiving with over 125 parishioners, former clergy and distinguished guests in attendance, including the Reverend Dr. Peter Widdicombe, Reverend Canon Bahman Kalantari and Venerable Terry DeForest. We were honoured to have special guest Richard McLaren from London, Ontario, whose family was instrumental in establishing the church. Long-time dedicated parishioner Ruth Roberts gave a speech about the history and special memories of the church over the years. Esteemed choirmaster John Laing led local Hamilton musicians and choir members in song. Chair of the 175th Anniversary Committee, Emily Andrus and team— Celeste VanderBent, Alex van Nostrand and Shelley Waring— worked with other parishioners to make the special evening a success. In her moving and hopeful remarks, Bishop Bell expressed a strong appreciation for the good works accomplished by Church of the Ascension members over the past 175 years, including significant outreach to homeless persons in Hamilton. She highlighted the Ascension's dedication to the Christian call to support and sustain Christ's



Bishop Susan Bell cutting the celebration cake.

Photo: contributed by Emily Andrus

presence in the parish and local community. The congregation, currently led by the Reverend Leonel Aboroa-Bolona, priest-in-charge, continues the tradition of reaching out and helping those in need. We give thanks to God for sustaining us over these 175 years, providing us with the means to serve God through the good works of the clergy and parishioners who have come before us. In the Doxology, we recognize "God's glory from generation to

generation," and we remember all those parishioners who have served and made the church what it is today. As we move forward, we will remember one of our church mottos, "new days, new ways, love stays." May God continue to bless us as we move forward and help us to discern our calling for His glory. Thank you to all who attended for their generous donations and assistance.



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# New Model of Indigenous Learning at St. Jude’s:

## Shared Values Celebrated at Storytime Event

NANCY J. COOMBS

On June 22nd, the weekend of Indigenous Peoples’ Day, Oakville marked the day with a celebration of story and allyship at a special Indigenous Storytime event, co-sponsored by St. Jude’s and the Oakville Museum. Fine artist and book illustrator Jennifer Faria—a member of Chippewas of Rama First Nation and creator of picture books—gave readings from her acclaimed works, *Raven*, *Rabbit*, *Deer* and sequel *Finding Moose*, to a full room of children and caregivers from Oakville and the greater region.

A thrilling moment came with a surprise announcement, previously unknown to the event organizers. The artist’s new Canada Post stamp had just been released. Faria gave the audience a “sneak peek” of her portrait of Métis Elder Sophie McDougall (1928-2023), a knowledge and Michif language keeper from Saskatchewan. This portrait is a part of the 2025 Indigenous Leaders Series’ stamps. Portraits of Julia Haogak Ogina (Inuit) and Bruce Starlight (First Nation) are also featured in this year’s series, which highlights those pivotal “in preserving culture and improving the quality of life of Indigenous Peoples in Canada”.

Participants then enjoyed making a craft, based on the Sacred Grandfather Teachings.

These were familiar to those from the St. Jude’s community in attendance, as the guiding principles have been taught monthly in Children’s Church throughout 2024 and 2025. Carmen Almeida (St. Jude’s Children’s, Youth, and Family Ministries Coordinator), in sharing her perspectives on the event’s significance, said, “It was wonderful to see our Indigenous Storytime event... bring the 7 Grandfather Teachings to life, reinforcing the values we’ve explored throughout the year in a meaningful and engaging way. The stories, activities, food and drinks shared helped deepen our collective understanding and appreciation of these teachings through cultural connection and community.”

Also key to the event’s success was Sarah Bird, The Diocese of Niagara’s missional formation coordinator, who shared the invitation broadly to the Diocese’s Anglican Family Hub network. She has been an integral supporter of St. Jude’s new model of learning completed throughout the school year. In reacting to the Storytime event, she expressed generous words for “the thoughtful and intentional work...especially in building on the Sacred Grandfather Teachings through the Children’s Church program. It’s inspiring to see this kind of commitment and collaboration.” Trying new approaches can be daunting, but

her validation, along with the Rev. Canon Dr. David Anderson’s empowering leadership at St. Jude’s, has been pivotal in allowing this enhanced learning to be brought to fruition. Exploring traditional wisdom has offered new perspectives, such as on sacred land, interconnectedness, humanity and communal identity, proving compatible with foundational elements of Jesus Christ’s teachings.

St. Jude’s partnered with Good Minds, an Indigenous book supplier, in sourcing material for the new curriculum. Used was *The Seven Teachings Stories Series*. “The heartfelt stories serve as cultural bridges to non-Indigenous people wishing to familiarize themselves and their children with contemporary Indigenous culture,” written by Métis author Katherena Vermette and illustrated by Irene Kuziwi. The Seven Sacred Grandfather Teachings include:

- 1. Humility – Dbaadendiziwin – the wolf,
- 2. Bravery – Aakwa’ode’ewin – the bear,
- 3. Honesty – Gwekwaadziwin – the raven,
- 4. Wisdom – Nbwaakaawin – the beaver,
- 5. Truth – Debwewin – the turtle,
- 6. Respect – Mnaadendimowin – the buffalo, and
- 7. Love – Zaagidwin – the eagle.

The event’s snacks were provided by Tiffany Henry of Time to Earth Catering, an Indigenous women-led land-based collective. It is sometimes stated, in understanding covenant and allyship, that “we eat from the same bowl.” Sharing food and drink on that occasion further enhanced the sense of community. Families and guests also visited the Museum’s *Debwewin: The Truth Project* Exhibition, to explore Indigenous history and contemporary experiences. Oakville Museum, two steps from St. Jude’s, by the lake in Old Oakville, was the host. Its beautiful space was a perfect backdrop for thinking about our shared histories on the land and water.

The Storytime event was one of many Indigenous-themed initiatives and ceremonies St. Jude’s has launched or taken part in over the last few years. St. Jude’s runs these events as an ally with Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) treaty and local community partners, including being represented on the *Debwewin Oakville Ally Leadership Council* convened by the Oakville Community Foundation. St. Jude’s Indigenous Students Scholarship

Program, founded in 2008, has also awarded dozens of scholarships with funds raised by the congregation and is currently in partnership with Oakville-based Sheridan College.

Gathering in fellowship on Indigenous Peoples Day weekend was a poignant time to honour our shared covenant rooted in the love of Christ, Creator and Creation, as well as keeping these commitments in our everyday lives. As we like to say, in recognizing the traditional Treaty 22 MFCN lands where we worship, “We are all grateful Treaty People.” Perhaps this relatively simple, attainable, but transformative enhancement to St. Jude’s Children’s Church curriculum might inspire others to try new ways of learning and fellowship with our Indigenous partners.


As we prepare for The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation later this month, may we continue to find small, meaningful ways to walk together on the long and sometimes challenging but always promising road ahead.



(L to R) indigenous storytime team: Carmen Almeida (St. Jude’s Children’s, Youth, and Family Ministries Coordinator), Preeya Nayee (Oakville Museum Programmer), Carolyn Cross (Oakville Museum Supervisor and *Debwewin* Ally Leadership Council Representative), Jennifer Faria (Featured Artist), Nancy J. Coombs (St. Jude’s *Debwewin* Ally Leadership Council Representative and Rector’s Warden), Tiffany Henry (Director of Time to Earth--Event Caterer)


Photo: contributed by Nancy Coombs

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# From Seeding to Strengthening:

## Five Bold Missions Developing in the Diocese

**THE REVEREND CANON IAN MOBSBY**

Across the Anglican Diocese of Niagara, a quiet development has been taking place—one that speaks of deep faith, radical hospitality, and the emergence of missional, Spirit-led communities rooted in love and service. In neighbourhoods, rural fields, community centres, and church spaces, five distinct mission initiatives have grown out of listening, accompaniment, and a desire to be where God is already at work. Today, these projects are no longer in their infancy. They are maturing, flourishing, and seeking to sustain their unique callings. Their stories reveal what can happen when the Anglican Church dares to go beyond its walls and embrace new forms of Christian presence.

Each of these missions—the Migrant Farmworkers Project, St. Luke’s Mission in the North End of Hamilton, the Mission in Acts for Mandarin-speaking newcomers to Canada, the Hamilton Well, and the All Saints Mission—were born in response to a specific context of need. Though diverse in approach, all share a deep commitment to welcome, care, and belonging for those often outside the traditional expressions of the Church. They are places where the Gospel is lived through meals shared, friendships formed, justice pursued,

and the presence of Christ embodied in community.

The **Migrant Farmworkers Project** reaches out to agricultural workers who come to Canada under temporary work programmes, often separated from their families and faith communities for months at a time. Through pastoral support, worship in their own language, and advocacy, this mission brings spiritual care and solidarity to those vital to our food system yet often overlooked. What began as a seasonal ministry is now developing consistent, year-round patterns of connection and discipleship.

In the north end of Hamilton, **St. Luke’s Mission** engages dechurched and unchurched younger adults in a rapidly evolving urban neighbourhood. It offers a unique Christian community shaped by contemplative practice, sacramental worship, and deep relationships. Rather than replicating inherited models, St. Luke’s is forming a distinct ecclesial identity—one that resonates with spiritual seekers longing for meaning and authenticity. Rooted in a rhythm of prayer, silence, and sacrament, it is becoming a place of genuine encounter with God.

The **Mission in Acts**, based in the Oakville area, serves Chinese newcomers to Canada. Grounded in Acts chapter 2, this community creates space

where Mandarin-speaking individuals and families can explore Christianity, build relationships, and navigate life in a new country. It offers English-language support, primary health care and food security, and spiritual formation in a context that bridges cultures while remaining distinctly Christian. This is a space of gentle witness, shaped by hospitality, curiosity, and shared journey.

The **Hamilton Well** promotes Christian spirituality through contemplative activities such as meditation groups, spiritual book clubs, and reflective gatherings. It reaches out especially to the spiritual-but-not-religious and those who have left the church but still seek spiritual depth. Rooted in the Christian contemplative tradition, the mission offers a quiet, non-judgmental setting where people can find stillness, healing, and transformation. Whether through events at the Cathedral or small group conversations in local cafés, The Hamilton Well gently witnesses to Christ’s love in a fragmented world.

The **All Saints Mission** in downtown Hamilton is a creative renewal initiative based on the ground floor of a condo building at King and Queen Streets. It offers a mixed ecology space for building community, prayer, and spiritual experimentation. Through shared meals, baking,

partnerships with local service agencies, and inclusive liturgies that connect with post-secular seekers, All Saints is reclaiming sacred space for a new generation of spiritual explorers and the marginalized alike.

The All Saints Mission has already been formally recognized as a Diocesan Mission. In the next six months, three of the remaining four are entering a formal process under Canon 4.9 of the Diocese of Niagara to be similarly recognized. This is more than an administrative milestone—it is a profound sign of affirmation. It signals that these initiatives have discerned a unique charism and demonstrated the kind of rootedness, purpose, and spiritual vitality that merit long-term support. These missions have not just been experiments—they are emerging expressions of the Church.

Recognition under Canon 4.9 provides a clearer structure within the diocese and a measure of autonomy and responsibility. More importantly, it marks the Church’s acknowledgement of the Spirit’s work in these places. It is a vote of confidence in what these missions have done and in what they are becoming.

Part of that becoming is a growing sense of sustainability and entrepreneurial spirit. While still supported by diocesan

resources, each initiative is also exploring ways to generate income, form partnerships, and raise up leaders from within. The goal is not self-sufficiency for its own sake, but resilience—so that these communities can thrive for the long term and continue their ministries of mission, hospitality, and spiritual formation.

What unites these five missions is a shared commitment to being the Church in new and sometimes uncomfortable ways. They are not planted in places of privilege, but in communities where the need for God’s presence is most acute. And yet in each one, there is joy, depth, and hope. These are not merely outreach projects—they are communities of faith, shaped by prayer, relationship, and a Christ-centred vision for the world.

The Diocese of Niagara has long spoken of becoming a more missional Church. These five mission initiatives offer a glimpse of what that future looks like. Rooted in love, shaped by context, and driven by a deep desire to follow Jesus, they are now moving from starting to flourishing. In doing so, they remind us that the Gospel is always on the move—meeting people where they are and making all things new.



The Reverend Canon Garfield Adams, the ordained missionary for the Mission in Acts Mission, speaks with children at a Sunday Service.

Photo: contributed by Diocese of Niagara





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# Reflections from the Glass:

## Life at All Saints Mission, Hamilton

**THE REVEREND CANON  
MIKE DEED**

If you're driving west on King Street through Hamilton, you might miss All Saints Church entirely. At the base of one of the newly constructed condo towers, our building blends into the streetscape. On a bright day, the front windows—stretching floor to ceiling—reflect the surrounding businesses and homes so clearly that it can be hard to see inside. But that reflection is a fitting image for what All Saints Mission is all about: being deeply connected to the neighbourhood around us.

All Saints Mission opened its doors at 301 King Street just over two years ago. Before that, a small but committed group gathered in a borrowed chapel, generously offered by the Church of the Good Shepherd. Yet opening a building is not the beginning of a mission—it's prayer and listening that come first.

In the early days, as we prepared our new space, we paid close attention to the neighbourhood. As a priest-missioner, I walked the streets, striking up conversations with anyone curious enough to chat with a wandering priest. Together we visited local shops, attended neighbourhood association meetings, read community news, picked up litter in the park, prayer-walked, and lingered over coffee in nearby cafés and pubs. We hosted open houses to welcome neighbours into the new space in their neighbourhood. Through all of this, we listened. We prayed. And slowly, a shared life began to take shape.

Here's what that life looks like today:

On Sunday mornings, a community comes together. We set out chairs, prepare crafts for children, and brew coffee for



The Reverend Canon Mike Deed celebrating the Eucharist..

Photo: contributed by Mike Deed

conversation and connection. We learn new music—including simple chants we can carry into our personal prayer lives. We celebrate the Eucharist, enjoy refreshments, and often continue into Bible study. Several of those who come to worship join All Saints from Options for Independent Living and Development (OFILD), a local organization that supports adults with special needs; another way God's Mission is ongoing in this neighbourhood.

On Sunday afternoons, a quieter community gathers in the chapel for Enter in Silence—a time of intentional meditation and prayer. This space is especially welcoming to spiritual seekers who may not connect with traditional expressions of church. We begin with contemplative chants from Iona or Taizé, followed by scripture and reflection, then settle into an extended period of silence. Occasionally, we share

insights—what we've heard, or how the Spirit has stirred us in the stillness.

Early Monday morning, another group arrives: The Baking Community. After morning prayer at 8:30 am—now enriched by the gift of *Pray Without Ceasing*, our new daily prayer book. We also celebrate the Eucharist together monthly. Then, from 9 a.m. to noon, we make the connection between the broken bread of the Altar and feeding God's world as we bake together: cookies, cakes, loaves. These baked goods feed our Sunday congregation, our Tuesday Seniors Connection, and our friends at the Indigenous Drop-In Centre just a block away. This summer, we were also able to send encouraging cookies each week to young leaders at Canterbury Hills Camp.

Seniors Connection began on Tuesdays as an outreach effort, a response to the visible isolation among older adults in

our neighbourhood. It has since become a vibrant community in its own right. We've celebrated Christmas and Easter together, and this fall we will honour the Season of Creation.

People find their way to All Saints from many different paths. Some are returning to church after time away; others are exploring faith for the first time. Still others have walked faithfully within the Anglican tradition and now feel called by God to this new season as a Mission. Together, we are a community of communities—a "Mixed Ecology" of Church, where each gathering, with its own distinct shape and practice, fully embodies the life of God's Church as we respond to our calling in this time and place.

These small communities continue to listen to God's call in the world and to respond with love and generosity: A small group of knitters have created prayer shawls for those who are suffering. In the past year, we've supported 'A Greener Future,' a charity dedicated to environmental education and cleaning up around the Great Lakes, and before that, 'Tree Canada,' which has been trying to replant some

of the millions of acres of trees lost to wildfires.

We've collected food support for Crossfire food bank at a neighbouring Church and art supplies for a local mental health project. Every May, we collect supplies for Martha House, a ministry of Good Shepherd. Every Summer, we collect backpacks and school supplies so that children at a Hamilton Elementary School can go back to school well, and every winter we collect coats, hats, gloves, scarves and towels for those who are unsheltered in our city or facing housing insecurity. All Saints gets to host a Summer Bingo Party and a Christmas party for OFILD in our new space.

We take to heart the words of Archbishop Rowan Williams:

"It is not the Church of God that has a Mission. It is the God of Mission that has a Church."

At All Saints, we are learning what it means to be that Church—reflecting the world around us, listening closely to our neighbours, and walking gently but boldly into the work God has placed before us.

### Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

**Upcoming Deadlines:**

- October – August 18
- November – September 15
- December – October 20
- January – November 17

**Submissions:**

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**Photos** – very large, high resolution (300 ppi), action pictures (people doing something).  
Include name of photographer.  
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photo includes a child.

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

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Climate Justice Niagara

# Peace With Creation: Season of Creation 2025

BRUCE MACKENZIE

Each year, September 1st to October 4th marks the Season of Creation, which is observed by Christians across the world. This year, the Season of Creation also marks the relaunch of Climate Justice Niagara's Parish Accreditation program. Care for Creation is an important part of who we are as a faith community. As part of the diocesan vision for excellence in ministry, the Parish Accreditation Program seeks to enable and encourage parishes to live out our call to be better stewards of creation while we strive to sustain and renew the earth (the Fifth Mark of Mission).

The program is designed to help parishes reduce energy and water use, support recycling and waste reduction, promote carpooling and active transportation and contribute to local food production. The program has been fully updated to reflect changes that have occurred since it was first developed, as well as new opportunities. Originally launched in 2010, the accreditation program provides parishes with the opportunity to achieve bronze, silver, or gold certification. To date, twenty-eight

parishes have received bronze certification, 13 have received silver, and six have received gold certification.

To qualify for the certifications, the parish has to achieve certain environmental standards outlined in each of the three levels. Some of the things parishes can do would be to change all lighting in the parish to LED lighting or install low-flush toilets. An accreditation through this program symbolizes the parish's dedication to care for Creation and its commitment to climate justice.

### What is the Season of Creation?

*"For the palace will be forsaken, the populous city deserted; the hill and the watchtower will become dens forever, the joy of wild asses, a pasture for flocks. Until a spirit from on high is poured out on us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness, and trust forever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure*

*dwelling, and in quiet resting places."* Isaiah 32:14-18 (NRVUE)

The following is adapted from the *Season of Creation Celebration Guide (2025)*, published by the Season of Creation Ecumenical Steering Committee. Used with permission. Learn more at [seasonofcreation.org](https://seasonofcreation.org).

Christians around the world are invited to give particular attention to praying and caring for God's creation as part of the global Season of Creation, observed from September 1 to October 4 every year. It is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together. In 2019, our General Synod passed a resolution adopting the Season of Creation in the Anglican Church of Canada as a time of prayer, education, and action, encouraging dioceses and parishes to participate.

There are many ways your community can participate in the Season of Creation. Hold an ecumenical or interfaith prayer service; worship outdoors; go for a hike with members of your parish; work to reduce your plastic or energy consumption; or advocate for stronger environmental policy.

The theme for this year's Season of Creation is "Peace with Creation." The Biblical text for this year is Isaiah 32:14-18. The prophet Isaiah pictured the desolated Creation without peace because of the lack of justice and the broken relationship between God and humankind. This description of devastated cities and wastelands eloquently stresses the fact that human destructive behaviours have a negative impact on the Earth.

The reading from Isaiah also tells us that Creation will find peace when justice is restored. There is still hope and the expectation for a peaceful Earth. To hope, in a biblical context, does not mean to stand still and quiet, but to act, pray, change, and reconcile with Creation and the Creator in unity, metanoia (repentance), and solidarity.

Peace, or shalom, is understood as the full restoration of broken relationships. Peace with creation, therefore, requires proactive steps. Christians are called to protect and nurture Creation in peace, working in partnership with others and passing this responsibility on to future generations. Only through reconciliation with and genuine justice for all living things will

Creation find peace, fulfilling Isaiah's vision (16-18).

### Mark Your Calendars

Climate Justice Niagara is hosting an event on Saturday, September 20th. We look forward to meeting the Diocese of Niagara Climate Justice Facilitators from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at St. James, Dundas. This event is designed specifically for Climate Justice Facilitators to help them mark the Season of Creation this year. The program will include opportunities to speak with other facilitators, to share ideas and resources and to hear about the challenges and successes experienced by other parishes. Please plan on joining us.

During this Season of Creation, and beyond—let us practice hope together, as we seek to safeguard this beautiful Creation. Let us give thanks to God!

For more information about the accreditation program and how your parish can participate, visit <https://niagaraanglican.ca/climatejustice/accreditation>.

# One Year of Being Welcomed at All Saints, Guelph

THE REVEREND CANON LUCY REID

All churches seek to be welcoming and inclusive. Sometimes we learn just how much they are! At All Saints Lutheran Anglican Church in Guelph, one Sunday in April, a new parishioner, Kathryn Ssedoga, brought a special cake to coffee hour. During the announcements at the end of the service, Kathryn read us this explanation:

*"To be welcomed is a special thing. More special, and possibly rare, for anyone that differs from some mold of 'normal' in some way.*

*After COVID, many were displaced from communities we had made home. Connections and communities strained and broke as bubbles were sought out and new alliances grasped. A year ago, I was one of those shipwrecked souls that had been*



Photo: David Howells

*bubbleless. My church of over thirty years had disintegrated, and I was adrift when I first glimpsed red in the trees on Silvercreek. The next day I investigated further. I wrote down the name of the church (where red dresses were hanging up outside),*

*and I googled you when I got home.*

*The idea of acknowledging Red Dress Sunday really appealed to me, but I was still cautious and decided to go the Sunday before, which was in a few days, to 'check it out.' Surprise, surprise, when*

*I walked in and was greeted by the familiar face of Lucy Reid, whom I had known as my university chaplain. I had regularly attended her women's spirituality programming. It was like coming home, seeing that familiar face. Then, I was welcomed to lunch and an afternoon of programming for Red Dress Sunday that included an art walk. That afternoon, I made my first friend at All Saints (Ann Sanders), though I didn't get brave enough to call her for some weeks.*

*Though I have been a follower of Christ since 1985, I had never attended a liturgical style worship service. I was intrigued and curious. It was all very odd and new from what I was used to. I still sometimes sit in awe at the robes and the processions of choir and communion, etc.*

*I have gotten to know more faces, and you have welcomed my questions and been helpful*

*with my journey of rich discovery in the liturgical year. Having Autism, missing social cues, and having a quirky demeanour, I don't always connect easily, so it is really something to see the progress and connections I am making at All Saints. You are all AWESOME!!!!*

*I realized that it is exactly a year since I wandered through your doors, and as I prayed about it, I was moved to do something to celebrate you all. There is a cake for coffee time that celebrates you. It says: ONE YEAR OF BEING WELCOMED AT ALL SAINTS CHURCH."*

We at All Saints are grateful for Kathryn acknowledging us this way and are even more determined to be welcoming in real ways to those who walk through our doors for the first time.