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A section of the Anglican Journal



NIAGARA ANGLICAN

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MARCH 2026

Turning Again to God, Neighbour, and the Earth



Photo: Unsplash/Archee Lal

THE REVEREND DR. PRAKASH JUSTSTELLA WILFRED

Lent is a season of turning again toward God. Year after year, the Church invites us to repentance, prayer, fasting and self-examination not as ends in themselves, but as means of returning to God. At the present moment, marked by environmental degradation and climate uncertainty, Lent also calls us to reflect on another broken relationship, our relationship with God's creation.

The Holy Bible reminds us that repentance (*metanoia*) is not merely private or inward. The prophet Isaiah consistently links faithfulness to God with care for the land and justice for the vulnerable. "The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants,"

Isaiah declares, "for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes". In biblical imagination, sin has communal and ecological consequences.

Every Ash Wednesday confronts us with a stark truth: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." These words are not only about mortality; they recall our origin. In the book of Genesis, humanity is formed from the *Adamah*, the soil and animated by God's breath. To remember that we are dust is to remember that we belong to the earth, not as masters, but as creatures within God's good creation.

The Lenten journey through the wilderness deepens this insight. Jesus' forty days in the

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Bishop Invited to Enthronement for Archbishop of Canterbury

Bishop Susan Bell has received and accepted an invitation to attend the installation of the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury, Sarah Mullally, at Canterbury Cathedral on March 25, 2026, the Feast of the Annunciation.

Historically known as an enthronement, the installation service marks the symbolic start of the Archbishop of Canterbury's public ministry in the Church of England and across the Anglican Communion.

Bishop Bell is attending as co-chair of the Anglican-Methodist International Coordinating

Committee, and one of only a handful of Canadians who will be attending, including the primate of the Anglican Church of Canada.

"I am deeply moved to be invited to attend this historic event, not only for the life of our Communion but for the spiritual leadership of women in the Church," said Bishop Susan Bell. "It's a great honour and privilege."

The bishop has asked that the people and parishes of Niagara be steadfast in their prayers for the incoming Archbishop of

Canterbury, and for the communion which she will lead. "We must pray for her and for our beloved church, especially in the days leading up to the installation."

Rooted in centuries of tradition, the service will look forward with the hope of Jesus Christ—and celebrate the diversity of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion today.

Archbishop Sarah Mullally will be installed on the cathedra of the Diocese of Canterbury, the oldest diocese in the English

church. Following this, she will be installed on the Chair of St. Augustine as Primate of All England, which also symbolizes her ministry in the Anglican Communion.

"It's a great honour and privilege to have the opportunity to represent Niagara and, of course, our wider Anglican Church in Canada, and bear witness firsthand the bonds of affection we share across the Communion with the see of Canterbury," said Bishop Bell.

Back at home, the bishop invites parishes to organize

watch parties for this historic event and to offer special intercessions on the Sundays bookending the installation.

The role of the Archbishop of Canterbury is not only that of the most senior bishop in the Church of England, but also the diocesan bishop of the Diocese of Canterbury. The role includes the position of one of 26 Bishops in the House of the Lords and the *primus inter pares*—the first among equals of the Primates of the global Anglican Communion.

St. James Dundas Hosts Worship Residency

ALLISON LYNN FLEMMING

St. James Anglican Church, Dundas, will host award-winning music ministry, *Infinately More*, for a Lent and Easter Worship Residency.

Husband and wife duo, Allison and Gerald Fleming, are well known in the Anglican Diocese of Niagara. Since moving into the region a decade ago, *Infinately More* has led worship services, concerts, and music team workshops in many parishes. Their Lenten Musical Calendar video series (supported by Diocesan grants) ran for three years. Each weekly video featured original music by the duo and a brief reflection by members of the clergy, including Bishop Susan Bell.

St. James has a rich music tradition and deep roots in the local arts community. Spearheaded by Canon Leslie Gerlofs, rector of the parish, St. James is enjoying a diverse musical season, exploring various styles and expressions in their Sunday morning

services.

“St. James is excited for the opportunity to partner with *Infinately More* in the ongoing development of our music ministry program.” Shares Canon Leslie, “We are grateful for the gifts Allison and Gerald bring for the enrichment of our worship experience.”

The idea of a “worship residency” may be new to some parishioners, but not to *Infinately More*. Over their 20 years of ministry, the Flemings have led residencies in churches across the country, including a three-month stint with All Saints Anglican Church in St. Andrews-by-the-Sea, New Brunswick. *Infinately More* has ministered in churches of over 30 denominations, including Anglican Churches in every province. This vast range of experiences has given them a unique view into the variety and beauty of worship across Canada.

Each residency is uniquely tailored to the individual community. Together, *Infinately*



Allison and Gerald Fleming are *Infinately More*, the award-winning music ministry. Photo: *Infinately More*

More and St. James will explore “blended worship”—singing classic Anglican hymns in new ways, introducing contemporary worship songs, and creating space for original music. Sunday morning will be rooted in tradition, while also incorporating fresh expressions of the Lent and Easter season.

As Gerald Fleming explains, “In our ministry, we often teach about ‘formational music’ and ‘transformational music.’ Formational are the great songs of our faith, tested by

centuries of use, the scriptural building blocks for where we are today as a faith community. Transformational are the songs that reach deep into our hearts. Like the psalms, these songs give us the opportunity to pour out our praise, pain, worship, and love for our great God. They are intimate and personal, like diary entries to our Lord. By singing both formational and transformational songs, we give ourselves a complete and holy approach to worship.”

This particular worship residency also reflects the Diocesan call for Christ-centred, hope-filled, missionally-focused communities. In this season, St. James and *Infinately More* will sing the story of Jesus, from desert temptation to new life in the garden, with an inclusive and dynamic musical voice. Members of the congregation and wider community are not just welcome to attend the services—they are invited to be part of the music!

All are welcome at weekly rehearsals. There’s space for sing-

ers in the choir and instrumentalists of all kinds. Songwriters are encouraged to share their gifts. Some people may want to join for the whole season, but even folks interested in playing or singing for a single service are welcome to participate.

The Lent and Easter Worship Residency will begin at St. James (137 Melville St, Dundas) with the first rehearsal on Thursday, February 26, 7:30 p.m. and will conclude with Easter worship on Sunday, April 5, 10:00 a.m. In addition, *Infinately More* will lead the music for an intimate Maundy Thursday service on April 2, 7:00 p.m.

If you’re interested in participating in St. James and Infinately More’s Lent and Easter Worship Residency, or if you’re curious about hosting a similar residency at your parish, please visit www.InfinatelyMore.ca or email allison@InfinatelyMore.ca

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INVESTING in the church of tomorrow TODAY

Disability Theology and Its Promise for Our Church

THE REVEREND CANON DR. DAVID ANDERSON

Disability theology begins with a simple but transformative conviction: every body bears the image of God. Not just the bodies that move easily, communicate typically, or fit our inherited assumptions about ability. All bodies—fragile, complex, disabled, chronically ill, neurodivergent, aging—are places where God's presence dwells. When the church takes this seriously, it reshapes not only how we welcome people with disabilities but how we understand God, community, and the gospel.

This past summer, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada passed a resolution encouraging the study of inclusion and ability across our church, drawing from the tenets of disability theology inspired by Nancy Eiesland's seminal book, *The Disabled God*. These tenets affirm the inherent value of all people, reject the harmful linking of disability with sin, highlight Jesus' ministry of radical inclusion, and call the church to offer genuine

hospitality and inclusion.

If you followed the Synod discussion, you may have noticed how strongly the Diocese of Niagara was represented. Jodey Porter, a lay delegate from St. Mark's, Niagara on the Lake, offered a compelling presentation. The resolution itself was moved by Bishop Susan Bell and seconded by Archdeacon Bill Mous. None of this was accidental. At Jodey Porter's prompting, and after consulting with trusted theological advisors, Bishop Susan gathered a small group of leaders in our diocese to study disability theology and begin the work of discerning what it has to teach us across our diocese.

For our church, disability theology is not an optional niche topic. It is central to our identity as a community committed to justice, compassion, and radical belonging. Our diocese has long affirmed that the church is strongest when every member can participate fully in its life. Disability theology gives us the language, imagination, and courage to make that vision real.

At its heart, disability theology challenges the assumption

that disability is a problem to be solved. Instead, it invites us to see disability as part of the diversity of creation—something that can reveal God's character in ways that able-bodied experience alone cannot. Scripture is full of stories where God works through bodies that do not conform to cultural expectations: Moses with his speech difficulty, Jacob who limps after wrestling with God, Paul who speaks of a "thorn in the flesh," and Jesus himself, whose resurrected body still bears wounds. These stories remind us that limitation is not a barrier to God's work but often the very place where grace becomes visible.

This theological lens matters for us because it reframes our mission. If every body belongs, then accessibility is not merely a legal requirement or a gesture of hospitality—it is a spiritual practice. It becomes part of how we proclaim the gospel. Ramps, large print bulletins, sensory-friendly services, flexible liturgies, and inclusive leadership are not "accommodations" for a few; they are signs of the kingdom for all. They testify that the church is a place where people are valued not for what they can do but for who they are.

Disability theology also helps us confront the subtle ways exclusion persists in church life. Many people with disabilities have experienced churches as places of pity, charity, or invisibility rather than belonging. By engaging disability theology, our diocese commits to listening to the voices of people with disabilities, learning from their wisdom, and reshaping our practices accordingly. This is not about "helping" people with disabilities; it is about recognizing them as teachers, leaders, and co-creators of our common life.

In a time when loneliness and social isolation are rising across Canada, disability theology offers our diocese a path toward

deeper community. People with disabilities often understand interdependence more clearly than the rest of us. Their experiences challenge the myth of self-sufficiency and remind the church that we are called to be a body where each member needs the others. This is not weakness—it is discipleship.

Finally, disability theology aligns with our diocese's longstanding commitment to justice. Ableism—like racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression—diminishes human dignity. By naming and resisting ableism, we participate in God's work of liberation. We help create communities where people are not defined by deficits but celebrated as bearers of gifts.

Bishop Susan also reminds us that disability touches us all. "Disability and vulnerability are not exceptions to the human experience; they are part of it. Some of us live with disability from birth, others encounter it through illness, aging, or changing circumstances. In all

cases, the church is called to be a community of open arms, where inclusion is not conditional but foundational." God's love is made known in every body, including our own.

In embracing disability theology, we are not simply adding another program. We are reclaiming a truth at the heart of the gospel: that God's love is made known in every body, and that the church becomes more fully itself when all people can belong, contribute, and flourish.

I am privileged to serve as the chair of the Bishop's Study Group on Disability Theology as we embark on a project of listening to the stories of parishes, disabled and non-disabled persons, and their experiences of disability, inclusion, and belonging. We will begin these conversations in several parishes in the coming months. In the meantime, if you have a story to share, I would be honoured to hear from you.



Jodey Porter speaking at General Synod

Photo: Brian Bukowski



Bishop Susan Bell with Jodey Porter at General Synod



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Being With

A New Opportunity for Relational Connection and Faith Formation



THE REVEREND MONICA ROMIG GREEN

Being With is a new small-group resource available in the Diocese of Niagara for those looking for a welcoming, unique introduction to Christianity or for anyone who would like to connect relationally with others as they reconsider the essentials of our faith.

Being With comes from St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London, created by their vicar, Samuel Wells, who is also a public theologian. He designed *Being With* to offer a warm, inclusive environment where every voice matters and invites participants to explore for themselves what faith could look like when it is expressed in generosity, openness, and grace.

Wells' course is based on three main theological principles: that God created the universe to be

with us in Christ; that the Holy Spirit has been at work in each of our lives since we began; and that God's means and ends are identical. *Being With* expresses these theological principles together through an experience that is relational, incarnational, and anticipatory of the Holy Spirit's work in the midst.

Being With ultimately becomes not just the name of the course, but also the very nature of the Gospel itself: God being with us, us being with God, and us being with each other.

To Wells, the act of "being with" is more than just showing up. It involves presence, attention, mystery, delight, participation, partnership, enjoyment, and glory. *Being With* hosts learn to embody these characteristics through short training courses.

The structure of *Being With* is deceptively simple. Each meeting has four parts. The first is the Welcome, in which everyone shares what the heart of their week has been. This simple prompt provides an opportunity for each participant to reflect on their lives and share something either joyful or difficult, as the case may be. Next are the Wonderings, which introduce the theme of the session experientially by inviting participants to respond out of their own

thoughts and lives to statements such as "I wonder if you know what it feels like to be set free," or "Tell about a story you've loved for a long time." For both of the first two parts, participants who share are met with a simple



response: a personal "thank you" from one of the hosts. No one in the group counter responds or makes comments on what anyone else says. The group simply lets the sharing linger in the air and in our hearts and minds. This creates both a safe and hopefully brave space for people to speak honestly.

The last two parts of a *Being With* session are the Story/Talk and the Discussion. The Story/Talk is an eight-minute reflection on the theme of the session, written by Samuel Wells and read aloud by one of the two hosts. Topics creatively addressed in the Story/Talks include Meaning, Essence, Jesus, Church, Bible,

Mission, The Cross, Prayer, Suffering, and Resurrection. The host who reads these also tries to incorporate into the Story/Talk aspects of what group members shared during the Wonderings. This improvisational addition is a beautiful and personal way to bring people's lives directly in contact with the message of the Gospel.

After a minute of quiet for the group to ponder what they just heard in the Story/Talk, the hosts open up the rest of the time for a Discussion, in which participants can talk about and question anything they have heard. The prompt for this is: "I wonder what is going on in your heart and head." The session ends after 90 minutes.

The result is an opportunity for all present to see and be seen, to share and be heard, to listen and to receive, both the theological points being offered and the relational experience with one another. Wells' desire is for people participating in *Being With* to not just leave with a mental understanding of Christianity, but with having had an experience of the heart of the Gospel—being with one another and God.

Being With groups consist of up to twelve members and require two hosts to lead each

session. Hosts can be clergy or laity. Groups can be offered in person or online. Both formats have proven very effective. There are ten sessions for the *Being With* core course, and additional *Being With* courses that keep the same structure but focus on other specific topics, such as Creation, the Church, Baptism, and the Bible.

Since *Being With* offers a different experience than a typical inquiry course, there is a short online training required for those who would be the hosts. Four churches in the diocese already have trained hosts and are finding firsthand that *Being With* is an excellent resource for people new to Christianity and those who simply want to grow deeper. I believe so much in this course that I am now a *Being With* trainer and am ready to arrange host trainings specifically for any interested churches and missions within the diocese.

If you think *Being With* might be a good fit for your congregation or if you have any questions, I welcome you to reach out and connect with me at monica.green@niagaraanglican.ca.

The Reverend Monica Romig Green is the Diocesan Faith Formation Coordinator

A Call for Sponsors for the Annual Bishop's Company Dinner

The Bishop's Company plays a quiet but vital role in the life of the Diocese of Niagara. Through the generosity of its members and supporters, the Bishop's Company enables the bishop to respond compassionately and promptly to the pastoral needs of clergy, lay leaders, and divinity students across the diocese. In many cases, this support becomes a true lifeline at a critical moment.

Save the Date

This year's Bishop's Company Annual Dinner will take place on Thursday, May 28, at Carmens Event Centre in Hamilton, bringing together approximately 250 guests from across the diocese for an evening of fellowship, celebration, and shared commitment. The guest speaker for the evening will be Archbishop



Shane Parker, 15th Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada.

How Does Your Sponsorship Help?

The annual dinner is the primary fundraising event for the Bishop's Company and provides essential support for its work throughout the year. Sponsors play a key role in making the evening possible while directly strengthening the fund, which allows the bishop to respond to emerging pastoral needs with care and flexibility.

Individuals and organizations are invited to consider sponsoring the 2026 Bishop's Company Dinner and becoming part of this meaningful

work. Sponsorship is both a tangible way to support diocesan leadership and a visible sign of commitment to the well-being of those who serve the Church.

Details about sponsorship packages can be obtained through the Bishop's Company registrar or the diocesan communications coordinator, Dani Leitis, by emailing dani.leitis@niagaraanglican.ca.

How Else Can I Help?

Parishes, organizations, and individuals can also support the Bishop's Company through memberships and joining us at the annual dinner on May 28th. More details about membership registration and tickets can be found by visiting <https://niagaraanglican.ca/bishops-company/register>.



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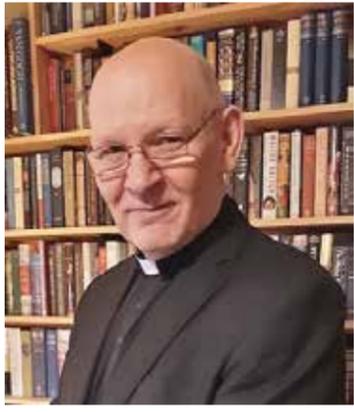


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Faith That Refuses Silence



THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN

Engelmar Unzeitig was ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood in Germany in 1939, a month before the outbreak of the Second World War. Unlike far too many of his fellow Christians, he refused to remain silent about the obscenities he saw around him and was soon arrested by the Gestapo. Imprisoned in a concentration camp, he became known as the "Angel of Dachau," working tirelessly for other prisoners and volunteering to help those with typhoid. In March 1945, he contracted the fever himself and died. It was the middle of Lent.

"God's almighty grace helps us overcome obstacles," he said. "Love doubles our strength,

makes us inventive, makes us feel content and inwardly free. If people would only realize what God has in store for those who love Him!" This fine heroic priest lived and died as a shining example of a Christ follower, a devotee of the one who transformed the world by initiating a permanent revolution of love, offering us salvation with a new, pristine covenant, and turning complacent assumptions upside-down.

Engelmar Unzeitig told friends, both Christian and non-Christian alike, that he knew that many people prefer to wash their hands of the pain and suffering around them, doing nothing while noble victims die in their place. He said others may genuinely lament what was happening in the world, but don't intervene because they think it would be too dangerous for them. Then there are those, he said, who rejoice in it all. History has certainly taught us that he was correct.

Such Lenten lands, such Paschal paths, have seldom been as obvious as they are now, and yet for the most part the response is selective and limited. So let us in the church begin the restoration here and

now, let us present a new image of organized Christianity to an understandably cynical world.

Because we need to acknowledge that the Christian faith is in danger of appearing irrelevant or the plaything of various political extremists. Irrelevant? Because outside of the church, we Christians are often seen as odd but harmless eccentrics. A tool of extremism? So-called Christian nationalism, an acidic oxymoron, is growing not only in the U.S. but in Canada, too. Ostensibly Christian commentators with



Engelmar Unzeitig Photo: Wikipedia

audiences of millions spew racism, antisemitism, and hatred, perverting the creed preached by a first-century Jewish man born to a poor family in an occupied

land, and they do this to somehow justify closed borders and closed minds.

Not that the Christian left is free of blame, many of whom subscribe to a faith summed up by "I protest therefore I am." Christianity is more complex than that, and I've seen inspiring, selfless devotion to the poor from people who vote for all sorts of parties. C.S. Lewis's famous book *Mere Christianity* took its title from 17th-century church leader and theologian Richard Baxter, who wanted to emphasize what united rather than divided Christians. Lewis had a similar idea, but was also responding to those who insisted on qualifying the faith politically.

What will boost Christianity, what will save Christianity, is Christianity itself. A belief that we have to be constantly aware of those who suffer, must be humble and gentle, desire justice, show mercy, forgive and embrace, do all we can to bring about peace, resist sin, love God with all our heart, mind, and strength, and love others as ourselves. As Victor Hugo wrote in *Les Misérables*: "To love another person is to see the face of God." Hugo, of course, had an ambig-

uous, often critical relationship with the church, and good for him.

Last November, I stood by a grave in rural England with my arm around an old friend who was mourning his wife. "Why," he asked me, as angry as he was distraught, "do bad things happen to good people?" In such situations, we should listen rather than speak, try to be there rather than be clever. I said that I didn't know. Long pause, long hug. "But I do know," I eventually continued, "that next month I'll celebrate the birthday of God who took the form of a vulnerable and innocent baby, in part so as to suffer not only for us but with us, so that in our suffering we are never alone."

Did it help? I don't know. I do know that as I travel through Lent, I must try to grow, evolve, and mature in my faith and humanity. Catherine Doherty wrote that, "Lent is a time of going very deeply into ourselves: What is it that stands between us and God? Between us and our brothers and sisters? Between us and life, the life of the Spirit? Whatever it is, let us relentlessly tear it out, without a moment's hesitation."

I think that Engelmar Unzeitig would agree.

The Year I Forgot About God

THE REVEREND DEACON SANDRA THOMSON

Sometimes, as you get older, you find your role changes when it comes to your parents. I have heard people call it 'switching' roles, but for me, I can't say that. My mom and dad were still able to give me advice. I could tell my dad what was happening in my house, and he would tell me what to do. With my mom, I could talk to her about my life, and she would confirm that I was going in the right direction or not. They were getting to a certain age and ability that I needed to step in a lot more this past year. It was a daily visit to help them with certain things they were no longer able to do and to take them to appointments. It was not a burden, not an obligation, maybe a responsibility, but why name it? It was something I just did. Maybe I can just call it love for two people who have taken care of me all of my life.



Photo: Unsplash/ Feodor Chistyakov

My parents taught me to be independent. Neither of them talked to others about their troubles, and in some ways, I am like them. I can be an open book about certain things, and then pretty closed with others. This past year, I was a bit of a closed book, somewhat quiet about what was truly happening with my folks. Many people knew my parents when they were younger, and I guess I didn't want anyone to hear about how they were failing. When I think

back to those many months, I know God was there, but I wasn't letting him in. I didn't give God a second thought. I am pretty sure he was knocking, but I wasn't answering; I was focusing on what I needed to do. God didn't stop there. He did something only God can do; he sent my friends.

Those friends were what got me through a very difficult year. I was surrounded by love from them, but none of them pushed me to talk. We met; we went for

walks. I had dinner with some, poolside visits with others and even some unconditional 'dog' love. They are church-goers and non-church folks.

It is now fall, and although I cannot remember how it happened, I realized that I had forgotten God in all of this. It hit me pretty hard. I thought back to the prayers I would say before the breakfast program where I volunteer. I asked that those who walked the streets would be aware that they never walked alone and that God was always with them. Here I am asking this for them and not paying attention to God in my life.

The rest of the year wasn't any easier, but I started to tear down the wall around me and let God in some more. Now I hear God when he says, "Are you there?"

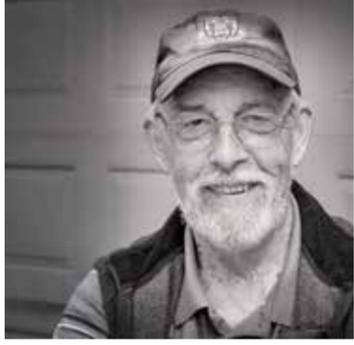
It's God." I have to remember not to get too wrapped up in my life and forget about God. I need to take time daily to reach out to God, and although it won't relieve me of those difficult things that life throws at us, it does make it easier.

The new year gave me an opportunity to go on a week's vacation to Iceland. The rawness of this place and all of the beauty surrounding me. Waterfalls, glaciers, mountains, volcanoes and just nature at its best. In this peacefulness and quiet, just the sounds of nature allowed me to leave reality behind for a few days and show me God in a new light. With all of my memories and many, many pictures, I am home. Yes, back to reality, but I remembered to bring God back home with me.



In other words

Ministry Outside the Box



JOHN BOWEN

I recently preached at a service to launch an unusual form of ministry: a young woman was being commissioned as a Licensed Lay Missioner, attached to a local parish. Her responsibility? To cultivate relationships in the neighbourhood and to run Messy Church out of the church on a regular basis. The woman is not ordained, but this is an official ministry of the diocese. So, what is this about?

An American scholar, Ralph Winter, has suggested that all through Bible and church history, there have been two streams of ministry: ministry inside the religious community, and ministry outside it. Here are a few of his examples, plus one of my own:

Old Testament precedents

The Old Testament always assumes the ministry of both priests and prophets. The priests are responsible for regular worship and sacrifice, the maintenance of family life, and the well-being of the community. The prophets, on the other hand, are usually single men, living ascetic lives off in the wilderness, and descending occasionally on the cities to denounce them for the superficiality of their faith!

Both are necessary. The priestly stream is necessary for the everyday life of the community to flourish. But if that's all there is, there is the danger of the religion becoming no more than a lifeless ritual. On the other hand, if there were only the prophetic, there would be no continuity, no stability, and—for obvious reasons!—no children or family life. The two work together in a symbiotic—though not always comfortable—relationship.

New Testament precedents

As St. Paul and the other apostles travelled around and planted

churches, these apostolic bands form a kind of mobile ministry team—iterant, evangelistic, and entrepreneurial, never becoming part of any one church for long. Their goal was simple—to establish local communities where the life and love of Christ could be experienced and shared. Very different ministries, but nevertheless complementary, each doing things the other could not do.

The Wesleyan movement

In the 1700s, there was a renewal movement within the Church of England, led by the brothers John and Charles Wesley, both Anglican priests. (Charles, in particular, wrote hymns that we still sing: anyone familiar with “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing”?)

John's calling was to preach to the masses who had no connection to church. Since they

established church was not flexible enough to accommodate it.

Overseas missions

The 19th century saw the flowering of the overseas missionary movement. I am well aware that the movement has many problematic aspects, particularly for its collaboration with imperialism and colonialism, with all their evils. Nevertheless, it is less well-known that there were also “good missionaries.”

One of these was Gladys Aylward, a young English housemaid who strongly felt that God wanted her to serve the people of China. She was turned down by missionary organizations because she had no education, so she found a way to get herself to China alone.

There she learned to speak Mandarin, eventually becoming a Chinese citizen. She became involved in ministries of hospitality and prison reform, and was a pioneer in the liberation of women in that culture. (There is a lovely old movie about her, called *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, much of it filmed in North Wales, where I grew up.) Gladys Aylward was someone who had an amazing ministry—

outside of the traditional church or missionary box.

An Order of Evangelists

In the early 2000s, I visited the Anglican Church of Kenya, where I discovered that they have an Order of Evangelists. In fact, in the Prayer Book of the Anglican Church of Kenya, which I have on my bookshelf, there is a liturgical Form of Service for the Commissioning of Evangelists.

I asked the bishop what exactly these evangelists do. He replied, “They plant churches.” Evangelism and church planting are not exactly mainstream ministry options in the West, but in Kenya, the Anglican church has embraced, recognized, and even authorized these ministries as being necessary to the health and growth of the church.

It's into this rich historical context that the new ministries in the Diocese of Niagara are best understood. There are ways of engaging people outside the church on their own turf. And, after all, isn't that where Jesus did most of his work?

... all through Bible and church history, there have been two streams of ministry: ministry inside the religious community, and ministry outside it.

The monastic orders

Monasteries and convents offer ministries different from those of a parish church. Traditionally, they offered education, hospitality, and medical care, especially for the poor—things far beyond the capacity of a parish church. Monastic life was not (and is not) for everyone, naturally, but for some it offered an outlet for ministry different from that of the parish.

would seldom feel at home in traditional parishes, he went to where people were to preach the Gospel—for instance, to coalminers on their way to work early in the morning. He then started hundreds of home fellowships, led by trained lay people, which were meant to complement, not replace, the work of the parish church. In time, this movement turned into the Methodist denomination—largely because the



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Meeting Christ in the Mess:

A New Missional Practice Launches in the Diocese

DR. REBECCA VENDETTI

In the spring of 2024, St. James, Dundas, began the work of listening and discernment that would eventually result in the launch of a new Messy Church. They did this through MAP 2.0, weekly prayer group meetings, neighbourhood walks, community events, and ongoing informal listening among families and caregivers. These practices directly shaped the emergence of Messy Church as a missionally appropriate response.

What is Messy Church?

Messy Church is a family-friendly, intergenerational, creative exploration of faith. Importantly, this is not just another activity for church kids. Rather, it is an opportunity for unchurched and dechurched families, and those on the fringes of traditional Sunday morning worship, to encounter the Gospel and participate in Christ-centered community.

Typically, a Messy Church event lasts around two hours, with roughly one hour of that time being devoted to “exploration”. When you come to Messy Church, you will find around six to ten tables set up with different ways to interact with a specific Bible story or a Biblical theme, including craft tables, tables with colouring pages, and at St. James, we have added a Lego table, creative prayer practices, and other interactive games and activities. This offers an opportunity for kids and parents (or grandparents) to explore faith together. These activities are largely aimed at children and youth, and at St. James, we are excited by the challenge of figuring out how to nurture adult faith formation alongside our younger community members.

Following this, we come together to share a Bible story, have a short time of sharing and discussion, and pray together before sharing a meal. At our December gathering, our worship time involved telling the story of Jesus’ birth in an interactive way that involved passing a small, wrapped gift around a circle. We ended with a creative prayer practice, writing words that represented where we needed God’s light in the coming year on construction paper stars,



praying over them, and hanging them up in the nursery nook in the sanctuary.

Creativity as a Medium for Mission

My own family first encountered Messy Church when my twins were toddlers, and we could barely make it to Sunday morning church before the Eucharist (even though we lived only three blocks away). During this period in our lives, Messy Church was a lifeline, offering us love, community, and spiritual depth in a time when the rest of our lives looked like chaos.

Messy Church showed us the best of hospitality, in a meal provided on a weeknight

- that I didn’t have to prepare myself! - and all the clean-up is done. It showed us the best of community, as we met other families, and the children could run and shout and build and wreck together. We are still close friends with some of those families, even long after that first Messy Church stopped running. It showed us how creativity can be a medium for mission, through the crafts that reinforced Biblical lessons, to building and playing with a (nearly) life-size paper mache empty tomb at Easter, to escaping from a table-turned-whale in our Jonah and the whale story, to enacting the story of Noah’s Ark and then gleefully



Above left: Messy Church participants enjoy a meal together. Above right: Children try their hand at hitting the piñata. Left: Rebecca Vendetti poses with Bishop Bell after her commissioning.

Photos: Submitted by Rebecca Vendetti

destroying the giant-cardboard-box-turned-ark when the story was over. And it showed us the best of love, as we felt loved and accepted and like we belonged, even when we were late, or loud, or messy, or didn’t fit into the expectations that we encountered elsewhere.

In this period of our lives, Messy Church is like an opportunity: an opportunity to encounter Christ in an unconventional fashion, when some of us (or at times all of us) feel like we just can’t sit still through a traditional worship service, or when we feel an itch to encounter and live out the Gospel in ways that are loud and messy and unusual, in ways that are sensory and involve our entire bodies, in ways that involve scavenger hunts and exploring nature and parties and prayer and spiritual disciplines. It is an opportunity to embrace the fact that Jesus can be found in the mess, in the outdoors, in games and shared meals.

Unchurched and Dechurched

During our pilot session in November, we had 32 participants, with over half of those being children and youth. We had multiple unchurched

families join us, and some church families brought friends. Through creativity, story sharing, and exploring where we find God in stories and in our everyday lives, we hope to provide a space for those who do not fit into traditional church to encounter Jesus and experience the best of hospitality, community, creativity, and love.

If you are interested in this type of work and would like to be a part of the Messy Church team, we are looking to strengthen our core team. Contact sjd.messychurch@gmail.com for more details.

Dr. Rebecca Vendetti is the first diocesan licensed lay missionary, instituted at St. James in Dundas in November 2025. Her ministry leading Messy Church offers creative prayer practices for kids, tweens, teens, and adults looking for unique and meaningful ways to explore their spirituality, discern their unique gifts to the world, and find a sense of community.

Prioritizing Justice in Your Calendars:

Social Justice Calendar Dates for Winter and Spring of 2026

DEIRDRE PIKE

There is a national day marking pretty much everything we love in Canada. You likely celebrated Pie Day on January 23, not to be confused with Pi Day coming up on March 14, (3.14, naturally). February 10 seems like a strange day to honour the umbrella weather-wise, but in my opinion, any day of the year could be No Housework Day, not just commemorated officially on April 7. While I'm partial to National Cat Day on August 8, it is not reserved in my calendar.

While the silly days named above provide us with fun diversions, I think the days that belong in our calendars are the numerous social justice days, reminding us of strides made and work to be continued on justice and dignity for all. One

great resource I've found to mark the social justice days or days marking equity deserving groups is from the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion.

Early in March is the 115th **International Women's Day** on the 8th. While recognizing these days on your social media accounts is something, it's also important to find out how your community is taking action. Google IWD and your town/city and join in the fight for gender equity.

The **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** takes place on March 21. One of the ways you can commit to taking action that day is by registering for the Diocese of Niagara's Anti-Racism training on Saturday, April 17, 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. All the clergy of the diocese have taken the



Photo: Unsplash/JessBailey

training, and now it is open to parish staff, volunteers and interested parishioners. Please send me an email to register: deirdre.pike@niagaranglican.ca or call 905-527-1316, ext. 470.

April brings our attention to climate justice with **Earth Day**

on April 22, and **Climate Justice Sunday** observed on the 19th. This is a time for Climate Justice Facilitators in each parish to ensure the liturgy reflects our intentions for climate justice. Use our diocesan resource found here.

Climate Justice Niagara will host a webinar on April 22 using prayer, education, and advocacy for a 90-minute way of taking action on Earth Day. Once again, contact me for more information and to register.

Your 2SLGBTQI+ diocesan working group has begun planning for the **Pride Service**, *Fiercely Loved*, on Sunday, June 7, 4:00 p.m., at the Cathedral. As well, **Trans Day of Remembrance** will take place on November 20, 7:00 p.m., Church of the Apostles, Guelph. It's never too early to mark these important dates down.

Finally, June is both **Pride**

Month and the **National Indigenous History Month**.

Working with the Urban Indigenous Project Manager in Hamilton, the diocese will be hosting a blanket exercise early in the month and encouraging everyone to attend the **National Indigenous Peoples Day** on June 21 at the Hamilton waterfront or check your own communities to build local relationships.

Before your calendar gets filled up with the likes of National Onion Rings Day (June 22) and National Teddy Bear Day (September 9), please be sure to put these and other social justice events on your calendar so we can create the kind of equitable world where we all have time and resources to celebrate kitties, pie and ice cream everyday if we want to.

Alive and Well:

The Music of St. George's, St. Catharines

BRAD BARNHAM

In the quiet aftermath of the pandemic, as doors reopened and hope cautiously returned, something stirred at St. George's Anglican Church in St. Catharines. People came back—not only to worship, but to one another. And with them came the humanity of choral music. The Choir of St. George's has re-grown out of this renewal shaped by the deeply human need to sing together, and what was once taken for granted has become precious again: singing together in community.

Today, the choir stands as a living expression of that renewal. Drawing singers and listeners from across the Niagara region, the ensemble is led by Director of Music Brad Barnham and includes thirty committed choristers and counting, supported by dedicated section leads and a widening circle of voices from the community. The music offered at St. George's is chosen with care—repertoire that speaks to this congregation, in this time. Ancient and modern, familiar and new, the choir moves freely among classical, gospel, Renaissance, Victorian, folk, and contemporary tradi-



Director of Music Brad Barnham, leading a packed church through "O Come All Ye Faithful" at Lessons and Carols 2025. Photos: Max Schafrick

tions, singing with conviction and purpose, always in service of worship and to the glory of God.

At the heart of the choir's life is collaboration. On feast days and special services, additional singers join, known as "Friends of the Choir," enriching the sound and strengthening the bonds between church and community. These shared musical moments reflect a wider truth: that art flourishes where people are welcomed, invited, and heard, and this truth can be witnessed all across our region.

One of the most meaningful expressions of this spirit is the

annual Remembrance Sunday Requiem. Each year, the choir undertakes one of the great works of the choral canon, offering music as a space for remembrance, grief, and reflection. Recent performances have included Requiems by Fauré, Bruckner, and Rutter. This past November, the choir presented *Requiem for the Living* by Dan Forrest—a work that speaks tenderly to those who carry sorrow, even as it gestures toward hope. Joined by chamber orchestra, soloists, and Associate Organist

Continued Page 11

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Video Killed the Radio Star



THE REVEREND DR. DANIEL TATARINIC

In the mid-90's, I attended an academic forum on technology. I was a first-year undergraduate student. A panel of scholars was debating Neil Postman's book *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (Penguin Books, 1986). The book was required coursework reading. Classroom discussions preceding the forum had been very spirited affairs. I had high expectations of the professional panel and debate.

Postman suggests that a culture which elected a film star as a president (he was talking about Regan) was dangerously close to uncoupling itself from rational discourse. His analysis of North American pop culture was that of a people amusing themselves toward cultural decline; as Nero fiddles, Rome burns.

It was 1996. The internet as a household phenomenon was relatively new. If Postman was correct, if television had been manipulated to turn every-

thing—from war, to famine, to political unrest—into a form of entertainment, might the emerging technology suffer a similar fate? That debate was thirty years ago.

In spite of my expectations, the forum ended up being dreadfully disappointing. Every academic panelist agreed that they disagreed with Postman. Not a single panelist challenged another. Postman had been declared a buzz-kill.

All panelists felt that the internet held great potential for building up a golden age of civilization. It would make us more civil, more human. Well and good. I agree that technology has the potential to (1) draw the world together into a more global communion of humanity; (2) it has the capacity to bring great literature and vast libraries of knowledge into the homes of everyday people at the click of a cursor. It might even equalize access to information and knowledge across classes; (3) it has the potential to animate well-educated, socially engaged citizens who are more like philosopher-kings than ever before in history. Public education, democratic government, and general human civility will flourish like never before. And given this lofty rationale for the internet, human beings will refrain from reducing these technologies into forms of brain-rotting-entertainment.

Even at the time, I felt that the panelists had been rather



Image: Unsplash/Mohamed Nohassi

naïve in their assumptions. As a student, I had a pretty good idea of what the internet was being used for, and there was a disjunct between reality and lofty assumptions. They say that hindsight is 20/20, and looking at the state of the world today, the predictions my professors made in 1996 have not aged well. Back then, we were talking about universal access to the internet.

So, what of Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

I can't help but feel like I'm experiencing some of what I experienced in 1996. I've attended several forums on AI lately. I've heard the sales pitch over and over. From the Carney government's glowing prospectus on AI and national economic security, to perfectly well-articulated reasons why I need to sample every conceivable AI chatbot, I've been sold a pitch about how AI is going to improve my sermons, increase my productivity, make me a better listener, and even how it will improve my natural good looks and charm! It's always the same message—I promise you—AI is going to change everything in your life

for the better; you'd be a fool not to embrace it now. And why, exactly, should I be resorting to AI? Because the more I use it, the better it becomes at mimicking me. Makes sense, right?

I've heard that one of the great benefits of AI is that, unlike human intellects, it is 'neutral.' But neutral it is not. Marshal McLuhan's warning that "the medium is the message" applies to AI just as much as it applies to television, radio or books. Remember, video killed the radio star.

The ethical irony behind this strident push for AI is that no self-respecting university ethics committee would ever approve of this as a research project with human subjects. Imagine I make this pitch to a medical research board for approval. How likely would I be to be given ethical clearance? I'd like to conduct a research project; it may hurt the human subject, it may not, I won't know until I've conducted the research. I'll need access to listen in on every human subject's phone. I need access to every subject's data history. I want access to all of the

subject's social media data, the names and contact information of every person in their personal contact list. I want the ability to listen, remotely, to every conversation the subject has, with friends, doctors, therapists, and even lovers—without their consent. I don't want any supervision, no accountability, and I will not be available for peer-review. This is AI.

AI listens to us through cellphones, computers, and smart watches. It recommends products, vacations, therapy models, and sexual partners. All based on unrestricted access to eavesdrop on our lives; it learns, self-corrects, and tries again. Then it tries again. But to what end? Is this really the prelude to what my professors, thirty years ago, thought of as the prelude to a golden age of flourishing and civility? Or, is AI something different?

I suspect that our current debates on AI will age like my professors' pronouncements about the internet. I, like them, probably won't be here in thirty years. But I suspect that if you follow the money, you'll see where the narrative is leading. Is this really the dawn of a golden age of humanity, or is it the masterfully disguised logic of the Empire? As long as you fill bellies with bread and entertainment, people won't question motives. As long as it is written by "machine and new technology", they'll let you do it.

Nero fiddles, Rome burns.

Honouring Service: New Canons and Archdeacon Installed

On Sunday, January 18, Christ's Church Cathedral hosted a Thanksgiving for Ministry service, including the collation of Archdeacon Paul Walker as Archdeacon for Greater Wellington. The service also celebrated Canon Cheryl Barker, rector of St. George's, Georgetown, and Canon Will Alakas, rector of St. Columba's, St. Catharines, as honorary canons. They were recognized for their long and faithful service to the diocese, their leadership in the councils of the church, and their love for their parishes and support of the diocese as a whole.



The Reverend Canon Cheryl Barker and The Reverend Canon Will Alakas pose with Bishop Susan Bell.

Photos: Dani Leitis



Archdeacon Paul Walker poses with the bishop.

Anglican Parishes Unite for Advent: Building Bridges Through Shared Worship and Reconciliation

THE REVEREND JANN BROOKS

In a meaningful step toward relationship building and reconciliation, Anglicans from Six Nations Parish (Huron Diocese) and St. Paul's, Caledonia (Niagara Diocese) came together this Advent season for a series of shared worship services and mission activities. The initiative, led by Archdeacon Ros Elm, rector of Six Nations Parish and Huron's archdeacon for Indigenous Ministries Elaine Burnside, pastoral associate for Six Nations Parish and Jann Brooks, rector of St. Paul's Caledonia, fostered collaboration and understanding between neighbouring communities whose relationships have long been shaped by colonial policies and by the Anglican Church's historic role in systems that harmed Indigenous peoples and disrupted relationships. Don Lynch of St. John's Church of Six Nations Parish remarked that, "the joint services brought together two neighbouring congregations – one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous – in a meaningful and uplifting way. The singing was especially inspiring, filling the space with energy and a shared sense of worship that bridged backgrounds and traditions."

The program, which explored the role of Mary, saw parishioners travelling between churches and experiencing



four distinct types of services: Morning Prayer hosted by Huron Diocese's Indigenous Missioner Hana Scorrar; Eucharist with Biblical Storytelling; Gospel-Based Discipleship; and a traditional Festival of Lessons and Carols featuring readers from all participating churches, including special guest Archbishop Linda Nicholls. Sandra Tobicoe, St. Luke's Church of Six Nations Parish, voiced that she espe-

cially enjoyed the music. "I had attended a church for over 30 years with a magnificent pipe organ and an excellent organist. In my present church, this is what I miss the most! It was grand to attend St. Paul's (Caledonia, ed.), to listen to the organ, and hear so many people singing the beloved hymns of Advent – and to learn some new ones as well."

For participants of St. Paul's,

the experience prompted reflection on the relationship that has long been neglected. Neil Bell of St. Paul's described feeling "At home within minutes" and expressed hope that the tradition would continue. "Our parish has bee hives, and the one church we visited had wild bees: immediately, we were sharing ideas. When together, one wonders why we had not done it years before and certainly hope that we make it a continuing tradition," Bell said.

The program also addressed the importance of reconciliation, echoing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call for Canadians to move beyond dialogue and actively practice reconciliation in daily life. "To do so constructively, Canadians must remain connected to the ongoing work of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships," the Commission's final report states. As Anglicans, the call carries particular weight, given the documented role of the church in systems that caused harm to Indigenous peoples.

For Richard Pardoe, also of St. Paul's, the shared services encouraged deep reflection on the long-standing assumptions and unfamiliar histories. "Despite living next door to our neighbours on the Six Nations' Reserve for almost fifty years, I found myself knowing very little about the culture and life of the

people living just a few minutes' drive away. I thought I knew about Canadian history, but discovering the hidden events in our shared history and reading about it as seen through the eyes of the Indigenous people is an eye-opener for me," Pardoe said. He hopes the churches will build a deeper relationship in the future. Lynch added, "Overall, the experience was deeply positive and marked by openness and mutual respect. After the service, members of both congregations spent time socializing, engaging in friendly conversations, and learning more about one another, strengthening connections and fostering a spirit of community." Elaine Burnside remarked, "What is significant in my mind is that roughly 30 years ago, we had a very strained relationship because of land disputes in Caledonia. What we recognized during this Advent time together was a desire to learn, understand, and respect, producing hope! It is a step. Now there is a relationship, a friendship, that can be nurtured and furthered."

As Advent unfolded, the partnership between the two communities offered a glimpse of the season's deeper promise: that light is often born in unexpected relationships, and as Archdeacon Ros Elm so succinctly put it, "Reconciliation and new life can begin when people choose to walk toward one another."

Turning to God

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

wilderness unfold in a place of vulnerability and dependence. The wilderness is not empty space; it is a living environment where Jesus learns obedience, restraint, and trust in God. In a climate-challenged world, Lent becomes a kind of wilderness training which teaches us how to live faithfully within limits and resist the temptation to turn stones into bread at the cost of creation.

The Anglican tradition has long emphasized right relationship held together through Scripture, tradition and reason; this includes restoring the right relationship with the Earth. Our baptismal covenant commits us

to strive for justice and peace and to respect the dignity of every human being. Increasingly, we recognize that human dignity cannot be separated from the health of land, water and ecosystems upon which life depends.

The Lenten disciplines invite us into this wider repentance. Fasting challenges habits of excess. Simplicity questions patterns of consumption. Almsgiving reconnects us with neighbours, human and more than human, who bear the cost of environmental neglect. These routines are not acts of self-denial for their own sake, but spiritual disciplines that create space for God's restoring work.

The parishes in the Diocese of Niagara, situated in an area surrounded by fertile land, waterways, and diverse communities, have a particular opportunity during Lent to pay closer attention to their place. How we use energy, reduce waste, support local food systems, and protect water sources are not far-off concerns; they are expressions of Christian discipleship lived locally.

Lent then leads us to Easter, to the promise of resurrection and new creation. The resurrection of Christ affirms that God has not abandoned the world God loves. As we turn again to God this Lenten season, may we also turn

toward the Earth with humility, gratitude, and care, trusting that in Christ, all things are being made new.



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From Page to Practice: Living the Mission Action Plan Through Faith Formation



DR. EMILY HILL

When I first became the Parish Development Missioner for the Diocese of Niagara three and a half years ago, I must admit I was a little nervous about being responsible for monitoring our progress on the diocesan Mission Action Plan (MAP). We all know how easy it is for organizations to set ambitious goals, only to have them remain on the page, sitting on a shelf and quietly collecting dust.

What I soon discovered, however, was something quite different. Because our goals are rooted in becoming a more missional church, and because there

is a genuine eagerness across the diocese to join in what God is doing in the world, there has been a real sense of energy and joy that continues to carry this work forward.

The first goal of the diocesan Mission Action Plan, and the focus of this article, is to create and implement opportunities to ignite and strengthen faith. Progress toward this goal can certainly be measured in quantitative ways. Yet over these past few years, I have come to see that the most meaningful signs of change do not always appear immediately or neatly in a spreadsheet. They appear in people.

The Niagara School for Missional Leadership exists to equip lay and ordained leaders for missional ministry. Now in its fourth year, NSML continues to be a place where learning and discipleship meet lived experience. One student in the New and Ancient Evangelism course captured this shift succinctly: "I am more open to look for the conversations and ways to communicate Jesus to others—not

only on a large scale, but also one-on-one." Another student, reflecting on the Reimagining Church course, described how learning moved quickly into action, realizing a call "to be out [in the world] as a disciple" and to

... there has been a real sense of energy and joy that continues to carry this work forward.

begin the journey toward becoming a commissioned missioner.

The newly launched Commissioned Lay Missioner program is another way faith is being formed and expressed across our diocese. Led by the Reverend Canon Dr. Ian Mobsby, the first cohort of nine participants brings together gifted leaders from parishes and missions who feel called to build community among those who are de-churched or unchurched, embodying the Gospel in their neighbourhoods and everyday lives.

Another commitment named

in the Mission Action Plan was the appointment of a diocesan Faith Formation Coordinator. Since stepping into this role, the Reverend Monica Green has been supporting parishes across the diocese in nurturing local spiritual renewal. In one parish, this support helped spark a prayerful renewal group that is already bearing fruit. As a recent report from their group stated: "Comments from around our prayer circle were full of joy, peace, belonging, comfort, love, and thankfulness. Our group is beginning to experience the sprouting of spiritual renewal. How wonderful is that?"

The call to be formed in faith by God continues throughout our lives, and the vision of the Mission Action Plan is for faith formation at every age and stage. This commitment is expressed through the work of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries, including the diocese's primary residential youth program. The Youth Leadership Training Program, a long-standing diocesan offering, has recently been redesigned to focus on leader-

ship as an expression of deep and lived faith.

In reflecting on what they learned about themselves during the 2025 program, many of the young people spoke directly about God and faith:

"More about believing in God means to me, and brought me closer to God and religion."

"I learned how to take my faith seriously and to never not be myself."

"That I enjoy learning more stories about Jesus."

There are many more stories that could be told, but I want to conclude with something I have learned along the way. Any strategic plan only bears fruit when it is truly owned by the people who live it. Thank you for the many ways you continue to show up with courage and humility, open to being formed by God. It is in this shared openness that the Mission Action Plan truly comes alive, and where confidence in Christ's mission is being renewed.

Alive and Well: The Music of St. George's St. Catharines

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Adam MacNeil, the choir offered a performance that many experienced as both a musical and spiritual touchstone. The full performance can be viewed by scanning the QR code:



Throughout the year, the choir's presence continues to shape the rhythm of parish life.

From the candlelit beauty of Lessons and Carols in December, to the solemn pilgrimage of Holy Week to the radiant joy of Easter morning—complete with brass and timpani—music carries the story forward. Each June, that same spirit finds joyful expression in *Shine All Your Light*, a colourful benefit concert celebrating the talents of local musicians and supporting the music ministries of St. George's.

Music at St. George's is more than sound—it is a gathering,

a prayer, a gift freely given. As the choir continues to grow and its roots deepen, new voices are always welcome. We invite you to follow St. George's on social media, at the links below. Those interested in joining the choir, either as a regular member or as an occasional "Friend of the Choir", are encouraged to contact Director of Music Brad Barnham at bbarnham1@gmail.com.

All are welcome. Music, after all, is for everyone.



The Choir of St. George's, performing Dan Forrest's "Requiem for the Living" with chamber orchestra for Remembrance Sunday 2025.

Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

Upcoming Deadlines:

- May – March 16
- June – April 20
- September – July 27

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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Meet Your Climate Justice Facilitators

BRUCE MACKENZIE

The work of Climate Justice Niagara (CJN) is supported by over 80 Climate Justice facilitators in parishes across the Diocese. In the coming months, we will introduce you to a few of these wonderful volunteers who do so much for the planet and for their churches.

Diane Kelley, St. David's, Welland

Diane Kelly says that she took on the role of parish facilitator for St. David's because of her strong interest in environmental issues. "I have a degree in Environmental Studies and have always had an interest in doing whatever I can to sustain our environment," Kelly says. "This role gives me the opportunity to share my interest with the parish."

Kelly was one of the earliest facilitators to be appointed in the Diocese. In reflecting on how the role has changed over the last 15 years, she says, "I think the increasing focus on the world's climate over the years has made the role easier. Everyone is now well aware of the need to lessen our impact on the earth and its limits to ensure we leave behind a better environment for future generations. I find more and more people aware and interested in doing their part."

Kelly speaks of the benefits of being part of Climate Justice Niagara. "My involvement keeps me informed on the latest issues and new initiatives. We are kept up to date through emails, Niagara Anglican articles, face-to-face meetings and programs such as the parish accreditation program and Communion Forest. The resources shared amongst the group are all valuable tools to assist facilitators in making improvements in their own parish."

Kelly notes that the parish of St. David's remains committed to environmental issues. "We achieved the Bronze level accreditation early on in the program, and received a certificate acknowledging our butterfly (pollinator) garden. We are now working towards completing our energy audit. This has involved tracking annual energy consumption data over the last five years and doing an inventory of

the building's energy use."

Kelly reflects that "our most impactful contribution to the environment came through our participation in the Communion Forest inventory of our trees. We learned about the health of our trees and were able to plant a new Black Gum tree, native to our area, and to commemorate the 75th anniversary of our parish."

Kelly says that while St. David's does not have a formal "Green Team" in place, "there are several parishioners who are more than willing to help when I need assistance."

Michael Skafel, St. Luke's, Burlington

Michael Skafel took the position of Climate Justice Facilitator at St. Luke's, Burlington, initially, because he was interested in the opportunity to make the parish more sustainable. As one of the earliest facilitators to be appointed in the diocese, he says that his role has also changed over the last 15 years. "Initially," he reports, "the main focus was on reducing the carbon footprint of the church. This is the area in which I was most interested, and where the parish could make substantial progress. Having been successful in major ways, other areas of greening and climate justice are now coming to the fore."

Skafel served as co-chair of CJN's predecessor, Greening Niagara (GN). "During the time I spent on the diocesan committee," he notes, "I found the regular meetings were very rewarding. I think, also, that the GN committee had many successes and was able to motivate many parishes to take action. Further, we were able to advise the BACCB (Bishop's Advisory Committee on Church Buildings) on environmental issues, and provided a guide to aid in installing solar energy systems in parishes." Supporting the parish in implementing best practices and seeking Parish Accreditation were also important contributions.

When asked what the greatest impact has been that Skafel and St. Luke's have made on the environment over the years, he noted that St. Luke's has made a significant reduction in electricity usage. In the old church

building (some parts date from about 1834), they went, in three stages, from incandescent to compact fluorescent (CFL) to all LED lighting. In terms of heating, the church went from oil to high efficiency (HE) oil to HE gas with programming, and the parish hall went from very old hot water heating with poor control to high efficiency gas heating with programmable zone control. A qualitative energy

audit allowed them to locate and address leaks in the building envelope. The church also had almost no insulation, and when it was re-roofed in 2018, four inches of rigid insulation were installed along with ventilation between the insulation and the shingles. The renovation of the parish hall allowed the church to include enough items so they would receive an award from the federal government and

contributed to their Silver parish accreditation.

Skafel notes that there has been some support from the rest of the parish. However, he says, "if a specific suggestion is presented that involves a significant expenditure, the financial case has to be made as well. The rector was always a strong supporter."



Above: Planting of the Black Gum tree provided through the Communion Forest project. Left to right in the photo: The Venerable Terry Holub, Diane Kelley, Pauline Robertson, Gord Rendell, and Gary Bowron.

Below: Mike Skafel (second from left) on the day parishioners were preparing the Pollinator Garden and the other gardens at St. Luke's Burlington in April, 2025.

Photos: contributed by Bruce Mackenzie

