

Gratefulness as a Spiritual Practice

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being.”

But, there’s a powerful antidote to the barrage of negativity and moral injury to which we are all subject today: the spiritual practice called “Gratefulness.” When we are feeling lost at sea, it is because we have been distracted, usually by negativity, out of being fully present to all of reality. Often our fear response has kicked in, and we’re not seeing all there really is around us.

It was many years ago that I came across the ideas and writings of Brother David Steindl Rast, an Austrian/American Benedictine brother, through his website www.grateful.org, which I encourage you to check out. There are many different ways to make gratefulness a spiritual practice, such as keeping a Gratitude Journal – perhaps at the end of the day, review your day and write down three things for which you are grateful. This will start to change your attitude as you start to NOTICE all of what you are encountering during the day. Another very powerful practice Steindl Rast calls: Stop-Look-Go, which is very useful when you’re carried away by the currents of negativity. Stopping and looking at the full reality grounds you back to the present again and allows you to reset and go on into positive action.

Thanksgiving is a time, once a year, when we can all stop, be present and give thanks for all of God’s abundance. But gratefulness can become our general attitude in all of our lives, which makes us more joyful and effective in serving and helping to usher in God’s kingdom. And there’s a lot of that which needs to happen in our world right now!

There are so many things for which I am grateful, but one current one is my family’s trip this summer to England and then my wife, Katherine’s and my journey onward in France. We did a road trip all the way to the French Alps and back. Our last days were spent in Vernon, in Normandy, on the other side of the Seine from Giverny, which was where Claude Monet made his home for the last four decades of his life. He devoted himself to a large landscaping project which created his famous Water-lily Garden and other gardens, and he continued to paint scenes from around his home and further afield.

This site of the Banks of the Seine at Jeufosse was very close to where we would cross the Seine to drive the fifteen



minutes to Giverny. There, we visited the beautifully preserved village, the Impressionist Art Museum and the home and gardens of Monet. It will remain a lasting memory and a source of gratefulness for me forever. I love the works of many Impressionists and Monet in particular because he sees deep into the heart of reality and presents it to you in a way that a photograph simply cannot convey. Far better than a photo or even a video, the movement of water and the sway of the field grasses is known in you, the beholder. The dance of colour in a moving meadow is displayed in a kind of visual mythic power and expresses a truth which is far greater than a snapshot can show.

Over these last few years I have been so grateful for sight, which, when I stop and really look, can lead to insight. The beauty of art transports me away from concern and distraction into a fuller reality and into presence again. And it is from the spiritual riches of presence that I can return to action. At this Thanksgiving-tide, I invite you to bring a spiritual practice of gratefulness into your day-to-day life and make Thanksgiving more than just a season. Do go to www.grateful.org and look up Brother David Steindl Rast, who this July turned 100 years old. All those decades of grateful living and transforming lives!

Shaping the Future: An Invitation to the Women of Niagara

HANNAH KELLER

What might God be calling you to in this season of your life? What gifts, wisdom, experiences, and stories have God entrusted to you for the life and mission of the Church?

As we approach the 50th anniversary of women’s ordination in the Anglican Church of Canada, Bishop Susan Bell will be going on retreat in October with the women of the diocese—both lay and ordained—in Niagara-on-the-Lake for a weekend of renewal, reflection and inspiration.

This retreat is an opportunity to step away from the pace of everyday life, rest in God’s presence, and spend time with other women from across our diocese. Together, we will celebrate the faith, courage, wisdom, and ministry of the women who have helped shape our Church, while also looking toward the future and asking where God may be calling us next.

Led by Bishop Susan in partnership with the Niagara School for Missional Leadership, the retreat will include a special lecture by Bishop Susan, a moderated panel conversation with women ministry leaders, and opportunities for personal and small-group reflection. Through shared stories, prayer, conversation, and worship, we will explore the gifts women bring to the Church and how women’s leadership can help us engage our changing world and participate more fully in God’s mission.

The weekend will begin on the evening of Friday, October 16 with a wine and cheese reception, followed by Compline. The main retreat programming will take place during the day on Saturday, October 17.

Whether you are an experienced leader, someone discerning a new calling, or simply looking for space to be still with God, there is a place for you at this retreat.

Come and be refreshed. Come to be inspired by the stories and wisdom of other women. Come to celebrate how far we have come, and to imagine together the future God is inviting us to shape.

Niagara Women’s Retreat: Shaping the Future

- St. Mark’s Anglican Church, Niagara-on-the-Lake
 - October 16-17, 2027
 - Cost: \$75 | Accommodations not included
- Scan the QR code to register today.
- Registration is open now. We look forward to welcoming you!



YOU'RE INVITED

WOMEN'S RETREAT

October 16, 2026 | 6:00pm-8:30pm
October 17, 2026 | 9:00am-4:30pm
St. Mark's Anglican Church,
Niagara-on-the-Lake



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Led by Bishop Susan Bell



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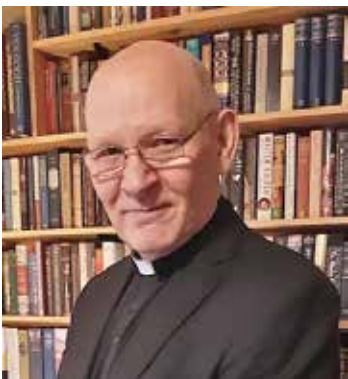


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No Additives Necessary



THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN

Recently there was a headline in one of the world’s most prestigious newspapers announcing, “Full-fat faith: the young Christian converts filling our churches.” It was far from the first time such words have been used to describe what is a growing phenomenon: the movement in these morally ambiguous, unstable, worrying times to a religious certainty and often a rejection of what is denounced as progressive or woke. It’s different from and more sophisticated than the oxymoron of Christian nationalism, that distortion of the Bible so as to incorporate spiteful, anti-Christian xenophobia. At its best, this is about orthodoxy and faithfulness, but it can also be committed to shallow traditionalism and arch conservatism

I understand the impulse, but what’s concerning is the political positioning that often accompanies it all. A rejection of full LGBTQ equality in the church, opposition to same-sex marriage, to the ordination of women as priests and ministers, to economic and social justice, feminism, and to listening to long-marginalized voices. All causes which I accept not in spite of my faith but precisely because of it.

The problem with full-fat anything is that while it may provide temporary pleasure and satisfaction, in the long term it can be terribly bad for the heart. And the Christianity I know and love, the Christ I know and love, demands the heart set free, even

if at times that can be difficult and painful. But then no serious person ever said that being a Christian should be easy.

The history of theology isn’t some linear process with an inevitable conclusion in strict Roman Catholicism or severe evangelicalism. It’s complex and challenging, involves dialogue and being able to admit when we’ve got it wrong. The fundamentals contained within the Christian creeds are to me ironclad, but their ongoing interpretation entirely justifiable and desirable. This isn’t ambiguity or doubt but an understanding of the reality of the human condition.

There was a time when I was one of the more prominent lay defenders of conservative Christianity in Canada. I was a regular guest on television and radio, had my own daily shows, was a columnist in numerous newspapers, a speaker all over North America, and the author of two books on Catholicism, one on the best-seller list for 11 weeks. I was even given a papal knighthood. No horse, alas, but there was a cape!

I miss the book royalties and the speaking fees, but I’ve no regrets at all about leaving all of that behind, the full-fat version of Christianity if you like, for what I believe to be something more authentic, a relationship with God whose nature we see

in Jesus and his teachings. Seek justice and truth, love others as yourself, struggle for peace and a new and better world, empathize and include, and call for the great reset of how we live, what we say, and what we do.

The church isn’t a place to hide or retreat from what is around us, even if the contemporary environment may be intimidating and shocking. To wish for another age is to miss the point of the beatitudes, the cross, and the resurrection. Jesus was and is more about revolution, a true revolution of the self, than a reassuring nostalgia.

Accepting the supernatural, miracles, the truth of scripture, of course, means Christians are out of rhythm with the mainstream. But that acceptance should reform believers into positions they never thought possible. Not as liberal Christians, denying Christians, embarrassed Christians, or full-fat Christians. Just Christians. Pilgrims walking a path that doesn’t fit into any comfortable political definition and is never complacent. Not left nor right. Far more radical than that.

In 1952, the great C.S. Lewis published his still essential book *Mere Christianity*, the title taken from 17th-century cleric Richard Baxter. Mere Christian. That will do very nicely. No additives necessary.



Photo: Unsplash/Tony Chen

Giving Thanks

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Gratitude declares that God does indeed provide, and as we feel more satisfied, connected, and loved, we can begin to see others and the world around us more clearly. The result is usually more purposeful energy, generosity, creativity, and joy.

Spiritual Practices in Gratitude

If you would like to build up more gratitude in your life, here are some intentional spiritual practices you can try:

- **Write a thank-you note.** Think of someone who fills you with gratitude. Then, write them a note, thanking them for who they are and what they give you and the world.
- **Create a gratitude journal or scrapbook.** Intentionally write down at least 5 things for which you are grateful each day. You can use photos or images as well. Add any words of thanksgiving to God for these gifts you are noticing in your life.
- **Spend intentional time with the people, places, or activities for which you are grateful.** As you interact with whom and what you are most grateful for, pay attention to what makes you so thankful for them and express that gratitude to both them and God.
- **Say a grace of thanksgiving before each meal.** Pausing to express our thanks to God before eating is a wonderful opportunity to regularly remember other

things in our lives we might be thankful for, too. If you would like some beautiful words to help you pray, the Book of Alternative Services has several lovely short prayers for grace on pages 694-695.

- **Go for a gratitude walk in nature or your neighbourhood.** As you walk through God’s creation, pause every few minutes and notice anything beautiful or fascinating that catches your eye. Thank God for each thing that you notice.
- **Memorize a prayer of thanksgiving.**

The act of memorizing can help our hearts to live out the words in our lives. There are several delightful prayers in the Book of Alternative Services (p. 128-129, 694-696). This one on page 697 is especially lovely and easy to adapt and put to memory:

Our Lord God, we thank you for all your blessings, for life and health, for laughter and fun, for all our powers of mind and body, for our homes and the love of dear ones, for everything that is beautiful, good and true. But above all we thank you for giving your Son to be our Saviour and Friend. May we always find our true happiness in pleasing you and helping others to know and love you, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.



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**CALLED TO LIFE
COMPELLED TO LOVE**

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Women’s Ordinations

THE REVEREND CANON DR. MARGARET MURRAY

As we prepare for our celebrations of the 50th anniversary of women’s ordinations, we have been reflecting on the stories of women in ordained ministry in the Diocese of Niagara. The Rev. Nicola Zhang shares her story.

A Short Story – of a Chinese Canadian Woman Priest



By The Reverend Nicola Zhang

I am sitting in the rector’s office at St. Michael’s Anglican Church on Hamilton Mountain, planning its 70th anniversary celebrations. As I remember my first day here two years ago, I find myself looking back on the unexpected journey through which God led me to the priesthood.

As an atheist for the first half of my life and a Chinese-born woman, I never imagined that I, an immigrant and minority in Canada, would become a Christian, a priest, and a disciple of Christ in the second half of my life.

My faith journey began when I joined a two-year catechumen program to learn more about Western culture. I enjoyed reading Bible stories, asking deep questions, and debating matters of faith. At the time, I thought my happiness came from gaining knowledge. I did not yet realize that God was beginning to reveal His plan for me. At Easter in 2012, I was baptized as a Roman Catholic.

Soon after my baptism, however, I became bored with Sunday worship because I felt I was no longer learning very much. I did not understand then that worship is not simply about gaining knowledge. It is about experiencing God’s wisdom and presence—celebrating, giving thanks, and recognizing that God is among us and within us.

Eventually, I stopped attending church for several years. Nevertheless, God continued working in my life.

In 2019, after I was laid off

from work, I began volunteering at an Anglican church where my children’s piano teacher served as a volunteer music director. I helped establish the first Chinese choir for the Chinese Mission of the Anglican Diocese of Niagara.

Things moved quickly. Within two months, I served as a reader, server, and Sunday School teacher. I accepted these roles joyfully, not because I had suddenly become more faithful, but because the church helped me rediscover gifts that I had almost forgotten.

Before immigrating to Canada in 2000, I had been a successful teacher whose abilities were recognized and fully used. As an immigrant, I had lost some of that sense of identity and purpose. Through serving in the church, God helped me rediscover who I was. I began to understand that returning to God also meant rediscovering the gifts He had given me and using them to serve His people.

In the fall of 2019, I began a three-year Master of Divinity program, discerning whether priesthood was God’s call for me. My academic studies and spiritual life flourished. I graduated with honours in 2022, was ordained a deacon that year, and began my life in ordained ministry.

At first, everything seemed perfect. I was loved by parishioners and helped build the Chinese community through youth programs, volunteer ministries, and community events. I was proud to serve as a Chinese woman in ordained ministry.

Then God surprised me. I was sent to another parish in a community with very few Chinese people. I could not understand why God had taken me away from a place where I felt comfortable and successful. I cried, questioned God, and struggled with the change, but I continued believing that God had a larger plan.

He did. In that new parish, I received some of the most important formation of my ministry. By watching the priest-in-charge live out the Gospel, I learned more deeply what it means to love and serve God’s people. As I devoted myself to parish ministry, God strengthened my abilities, deepened my faith, and taught me through both challenge and love.

I now understand that when God wants to give us greater wisdom, He may first lead us beyond what is familiar. He

CALLED TO LIFE COMPELLED TO LOVE

challenges us, shapes us, and empowers us along the journey.

I was ordained a priest in September 2023 and became rector of St. Michael’s in August 2024. Now, two years later, I continue to discover that my journey is not finished.

God is still shaping me, still teaching me, and still leading me into the person and priest He calls me to become.

...

Nicola’s path to ordination has been surprise-filled, courageous, and shaped by barriers so different than those encountered by many of us. Yet every priest’s journey—women’s and men’s alike—is rich with stories of God’s persistent call and the unique gifts each person brings. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of women’s ordination to the priesthood, we honour a centuries-old tradition rooted in apostolic times and renewed for a truly missional future. This anniversary renews our joy and commitment as women continue to be welcomed into this sacramental and incarnational order, called to make Christ present in sign and symbol, in care and compassion, and in life and action.

You are invited to participate in this celebration in three ways.

Photo Display:

Many parishes, individuals, and priests have photos of women at their ordination, as well as images of women priests in ministry moments. PLEASE scan and send your photos SOON to 50thordinationanniversary@gmail.com.

Panel Discussion:

Women Called to the Table: 50 Years of Priestly Ministry

Tuesday, October 27 at 7:00 p.m. at The Church of the Resurrection, 435 Mohawk Road W., Hamilton. Join Bishop Susan Bell for an inspiring evening of conversation, reflection, and hope as we gather to celebrate 50 years of women’s priestly ministry. Together, we will:

- listen to powerful stories from women priests and the ministries they have shaped;
- reflect on the grace, resilience, and growth woven through our shared journey; and
- look ahead with honesty and hope as we name both the challenges and possibilities of

priestly ministry today and in the future.

Diocesan Anniversary Service: Celebrating 50 Years of Women’s Priestly Ministry

Sunday, November 29 at 4:00 p.m. at Christ’s Church Cathedral, 253 James St. N., Hamilton

Come early to enjoy the slideshow and explore the displays honouring women’s journeys into priestly ministry.

Come take part in a service of thanksgiving and celebration for the first 50 years of women ordained as priests in the Diocese of Niagara and the

Anglican Church of Canada. Come share in our hope and renewed commitment as we move beyond this milestone into a future of faithfulness and inclusivity in our missional priesthood.

ALL priests are warmly invited to vest as we celebrate priestly ministry in a missional church.

Deacons and laity are invited to celebrate the ministry of priests in our midst – both men and women.

Let us gather in thanksgiving for all that has been, in joy for all that is, and in hope for all that God is still calling us to become.



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The 50th anniversary of the ordination of women

Gratitude and Joy

THE REVEREND CANON
KATHY MORGAN

One of the gifts of preparing for the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood has been the opportunity to reflect on my experiences in ministry. To remember the people and the moments that formed me and continue to shape who I am as a priest.

It was a Sunday afternoon in late November, on a day the City of Hamilton hosted the Gray Cup, when Ann Macdonald, David Ponting and I were ordained to the priesthood at St John's, Ancaster, as the first snowstorm of the season was blowing in. Not everyone who had hoped to come could make it, and people wandered into the church throughout the service having fought both the weather and the traffic to attend.

There are two memories I

hold close in my heart, even after all these years from that day. As the bishop offers the prayer of consecration, the bishop and all the gathered priests lay their hands on your head and pray. Time stands still under the amazing weight of those hands and prayers.

In that moment you are woven into a much larger story, and you are connected to those who have gone before you, and those who are walking with you. The women who were ordained priests in those early years had to carve out a path for the rest of us to walk on. Walking into ministries and parishes that were used to male clergy and a style of leadership. They shared God's love, preaching with their unique voices as they faithfully answered the call God had placed in their lives with great courage, strength and determination,

widening our understanding of how all the gifts given are needed for God's purposes to be accomplished.

The second memory was from the end of the service. After we processed to the back of the church, I remember Ann and I linked arms, hoisted our vestments over the other arm as we dashed down the sidewalk to the parish hall, through fat snowflakes, laughing, slipping and sliding while trying not to fall or get our chasubles wet. It was a moment of deep joy.

That real joy has continued to be found and reflected in ministry. It does not mean priesthood has always been easy or painless. There have been struggles, divisions, times of uncertainty and grief. I still don't have all the answers, and some days I am not even sure of the questions. Each congregation and ministry has taught



The Reverend Kathy Morgan at her ordination, flanked by her parents, Sharon and Allan Jones.

Photo: contributed by Kathy Morgan

me something about faithfulness, dedication and God's love. I carry what I have learned into the next congregation and continue to learn and grow as a priest.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood, I am grateful. Grateful to be in the

Anglican Church where I could follow the call God placed in my heart. Grateful for the mentors and faithful ones who heard the Spirit calling for change and for all gifts and callings to be honoured. Grateful for the ones who created the path, the ones I journey with today, and the ones who are still to join.

The Call and the Persistence

50 Years of the Ordination of Women



THE REVEREND CANON
MARTHA TATARNIC

We were parishioners of the Anglican church when I was growing up, but the United Church was important to me in a key way. Margaret Bain was the minister there. I saw her regularly around town: at school functions, Girl Guides, Remembrance Day services, and other public places where religious leaders in those days were invited to take part.

I spent the year that I turned 15 bargaining with God about not wanting to be an Anglican priest. I had, as a thoroughly Type A teenager, thought I had my path ahead already mapped out, and it didn't include anything about going to seminary or preaching in pulpits. I think back to how hard it was for me to be willing to hear God's call in my life, and how much patience God had to deploy with me

(sometimes the persistent widow in Jesus' parable must be God), and yet what wasn't part of my resistance was the worry that ministry wasn't something that women do. The Anglican Church has been ordaining women longer than I have been alive. That fact, combined with Bain's witness, meant that I grew up seeing women in ministry as thoroughly normalized.

As we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women this November, I have been listening to stories and considering my own. For women who blazed the trail in those first decades of women's ordination, and for those who grew up in parts of the church where women aren't in leadership, considering a vocation looked a lot different than it did for me. Women not only had to contend with the inconvenience of having their lives called onto a path that they themselves didn't imagine, but then they had to push back against the systemic gaslighting that told them that ordaining women isn't something that is done. They had to figure out how to trust God was speaking to them when at every turn they were told that God doesn't speak that way.

In her piece in the September *Niagara Anglican* about this upcoming anniversary, Canon



The Reverend Martha Tatarnic talking with children. Photo: contributed by Martha Tatarnic

Margaret Murray posed these two questions to us: Are we making a different priesthood together? Is priesthood evolving?

In answering the first question, I would want to state plainly that I don't believe women are naturally more collaborative, compassionate, or nurturing than men just by virtue of our being women. Women are people, and we're all different. It's also easy to imagine the ordination of women made the priesthood more just. I believe with all my heart that God is deeply invested in making this world more just for all. But I see our celebration of this milestone as being about something more basic. It's about faith. The women who led the way listened to how God was speaking into their lives and trusted what they heard God saying. They centered their rela-

tionship with God in defiance of what religious leaders and institutions said and saw. They invited not just women, but the whole church, to pay attention in a new and different way to how God might be at work in us. We are making a braver, and arguably more dangerous, priesthood together because we are bearing witness to the world in a powerful way that God speaks into our lives—sometimes in ways that override human-made institutions—and that together we can learn to listen and to trust.

The second question leads me to a note of sadness and caution. I have been ordained for twenty-two years, now seeing the children that I raised while in full-time ministry heading off to post-secondary school. I am still one of the younger female priests in our diocese, and we have seen a steady dropping-

off of women's ordinations in Niagara. I know how hard it was for me to accept that this was the direction I was meant to go. I know how important Bain's and others' witness was to me, and how much God had to niggle at me nonetheless. I trust that God continues to speak and to call into a whole variety of different kinds of lives, but we might need to learn to be a lot more intentional in how the church, together, listens. More importantly, the church must be willing to ask hard questions about systemic realities that might be preventing people, and particularly preventing women, from being able to trust that the niggling of God is real and that this vocation is for them too.

The priesthood is always evolving. It is evolving because God is living, and each one of us who has lifted up and embodied that priesthood has reflected in a unique way how God is alive in us and the people we serve. We want to make sure, together—we must do this together—that we are intentional about evolving in ways that bring us closer to the living God and attentive to how we make it possible for many different kinds of people—including women, and including young women—to hear and trust God's call.

100 Years On

St. James, Dundas, Celebrates Its Past and Its Future

ANNE WASHINGTON

On November 20th, 2026, Saint James, Dundas will celebrate 100 years in its present building, though the church has seen significant changes over this time. During World War I, it was located on Hatt Street. A munitions factory next door operated twenty-four hours a day, its noise impeding the worship of the congregation. So, the decision was made to move to the present site on Melville Street, and the present building opened in 1926.

The parish prospered under

a succession of distinguished clergy and lay leaders, becoming known for its Christian education programs; the quality of its worship (including liturgical music and art); a pioneering co-operative preschool; its dedication to social justice; welcome to waves of refugees from Vietnam, the Middle East, and Africa; its early acceptance of women's ordination; its commitment to the inclusion of 2SLGBTQI+ people; and its long-term support of ecumenical collaboration.

In 1978, a disastrous January fire gutted the church, leaving

only the outer walls standing. After a short sojourn in the Dundas Armouries, worship resumed in the parish hall while reconstruction took place over two years. The rebuilding of Coventry Cathedral after World War II inspired architect Trevor Garwood-Jones. The new Saint James featured Coventry's crown-of-thorns theme, chose plain glass rather than stained glass to remind worshippers of the world around them, and invite outsiders to look at what was going on inside the building. A more open space encouraged worship-in-the-round, as

well as the traditional linear arrangement of pews. The dedication of the new building coincided with widespread questioning of a faith which had largely been taken for granted. The last forty years have seen a general decline in religious observance, but a willingness to embrace new forms of discipleship, and new ways of being the church. There is a renewed sense of God within us and among us, and ready to be discovered at work in the community around us. Our response to a turbulent century may be likened to a

popular nineteen-sixties poster, "For what has been, thanks: for what is to come, YES!" On November 20th, a festive meal celebrating our thanksgiving for the past and our hope for the future will take place at the church; and on Sunday, November 22nd (The Reign of Christ), the liturgy will honour this dual theme. Tickets for the meal are available on a first-come, first-served basis, and of course you are all welcome for the centennial service at 10.00 a.m. on the Sunday—peace and blessings to you all from all of us at Saint James.

Thanksgiving is a Time of Thanks and Giving

THE REVEREND CANON DR. SHARYN HALL

Several years ago, I was at our diocesan synod when one of the issues receiving considerable debate was raffles in the church. A few churches were raffling very large prizes such as a new car or a vacation trip. There was serious discussion about where to draw the line between raffles and gambling. Several good arguments against gambling and expensive raffles for charities were put forward, but one argument was questionable to me. One delegate condemned raffles with the emphatic statement that no one should get something for nothing. This statement seems to me to argue against Christian teaching.

I understand that in our

society the work ethic is very important. Many people believe that you only deserve what you earn, but at the same time, there is admiration for generosity. Sometimes the two ideas seem at odds. This is nothing new; we see the same clash of opinions in the Bible. In the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20), workers who were hired toward the end of the day are paid the same wage as workers who worked all day. To people who believe in equal pay for equal work, this is simply wrong. The workers who laboured all day in the fields believe that they should get more pay than those who worked only one hour. The workers who worked all day are not being cheated. They receive the wage agreed for a day's



Photo: Unsplash/Kelly Sikkema

labour, but they resent that the latecomers are treated equally to them. We wonder what happened the next day. Did all the workers refuse to work until the afternoon and still expect a full day's pay? This parable reverses what would seem fair and just to us, but of course, this parable is not about business practice or labour relations or pay equity. This parable is about generosity to those in need. This parable is about God's call to us to be generous. God's generosity is freely given, not earned. We see this also in the familiar story in the Book of Exodus. The Hebrew people on their

long journey out of Egypt are in the desert, and they are afraid they will die of starvation, but their prayers to God are not cries for help and guidance; they are complaints. God is well aware of the complaints and tells Moses, 'I have heard the complaints of the people.' This is not the first or only time that the people blame God for their troubles. How does God answer?—with generosity. The people have not earned God's generosity. Nevertheless, God sends them wonderful food: the unusual bread-like manna which appears as morning dew, and surprising flocks of plump, tender quails.

These two stories from the Bible remind us that we cannot earn or demand God's favour or generosity. If we acknowledge that good fortune or happiness or success or any number of blessings have been given to us freely, we have reason to be thankful to a generous, loving God. So how do we thank God? Jesus reminded us that the greatest commandments are to love God and love your neighbour. Opportunities to be thankful and generous are many, both near and far, because the needs are great. We can put our thankfulness to practical use in our neighbourhoods, community organizations, local charities and churches, neighbourhood food banks, etc. Another possibility is larger organizations like the Canadian Wildlife Federation, Alzheimer Society, Canadian Cancer Society, and many other worthy charities. Thanksgiving is a good time to look at the many ways you can give thanks to God for God's help and generosity by giving generously of your time or means to help others.



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In other words

Discipleship in Everyday Life: How Does it Work?



JOHN BOWEN

The word “disciple” sounds kind of old-fashioned and religious, and it can be difficult to imagine using the label about ourselves. “Oh yes, I’m a disciple of Jesus” doesn’t exactly come easily to modern lips.

But if we think of Jesus as announcing “the kingdom”—a way of doing life that brings renewal to a tired and hurting world—and a “disciple” as someone committed to learning from Jesus how to live this new life, then maybe, just maybe, it’s imaginable.

Still, what does this look like in everyday life? What does discipleship look like in that place where many of us spend some forty hours a week—the workplace?

I asked several Anglican lay people in various jobs how this works for them. Let me share

some of the answers with you.

1. Their workplace is where Jesus teaches them the ways of the kingdom

One person told me how she was struck by a specific story about Jesus and tried to incorporate his example into her work. I love that she says she is “slowly learning.” That’s the way it normally is in a mentor/apprentice relationship—being shaped little by little:

One recent insight which cracked my hard heart is how Jesus responded to the rich young ruler asking about how to live: “Jesus looked at him and loved him.” I think he is helping me to look at people and remember how he loved people, and that is what he wants us to do. M, Physiotherapist

When we “look at people,” one thing we learn is to recognize and honour the image of God in them. Did you know that was important for accountants? Well, if the accountant happens to be a disciple of Jesus, yes, it is. And really, for anyone in any job at all.

The key effect [of my discipleship] on my work is the knowledge that all human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. K, Accountant

2. They use their unique gifts to play their part in God’s work

An apprentice learns first of all by imitating the Master, until they get to the point where they can express that work in their own unique way. Each then adds to the richness and variety of the work.

My goal is to seek justice and beauty through my work as an architect. I believe that good design affects us as people. I hope that the spaces I help create speak to people’s souls, much like nature can do, to point towards God’s hand in my work. E, Architect

I sought after work in which my God-given interests met a hunger in the world. I knew working with women and children would be part of it. J, midwife

Eventually recognizing my own God-given skills and abilities is what led me to become a psychotherapist. S, Counsellor

3. It all comes down to love

Of course, the motivation for what we do is key. When St Paul is teaching about spiritual gifts, he warns us, if I “do not have love, I am nothing.” (1 Cor 13:2) The folk I spoke to understand that this is at the heart of what they do:

The challenges that have

been placed in my life as a wife and mother have enabled me to use my skills to bring hope, justice, comfort, and compassion to families challenged by severe mental health concerns. C, Community Development Worker

I have been given an opportunity to convey Christ and His mission here on earth not only through WHAT I teach (i.e., the content), but also through HOW I teach (e.g., with compassion, concern for the whole person, spiritual discernment, etc.). R, Educator

4. The love and creativity of God are expressed through them

In one sense, these folk are not doing anything original. They are simply passing on the love and creativity that they see and experience in God:

The ways in which I have experienced God’s love have led me to want to share God’s love and bring hope to others. C, Community Development Worker

I’m drawn to the creativity of our creator, the dizzying complexity and amazing abilities of his creations... I just try to make sure that my faith and abilities as a reflection of the creator shine through. B, Creative Writer

I have always understood

my job to be the way that I reflect Jesus in the world. B, Educational Consultant

5. Their work is a calling—a vocation—from God

The primary calling of a Christian in the New Testament is always to follow Christ: that is the “vocation” which comes with our baptism. But there is also a secondary “vocation within a vocation”—work that we discover and express through using our gifts:

I’m definitely not in it for the money, or because it is easy. It is all about calling. E, Architect

It is definitely a vocation. S, Civil Servant

So, discipleship in the workplace is perfectly possible. It is real, and it is down-to-earth. It affects the worker’s head and heart and hands. It makes no difference what our work is: after all, every aspect of life is the work of the Creator, and so every aspect of life needs the renewal of God’s Spirit—and, amazingly enough, God does this through the work of committed disciples like us! This is the most amazing privilege any human being could ever have.

This article is an edited version of a chapter from John’s 2021 book, God is Always Bigger.

Time to Stop Praying to God; Time to Start Talking to God

DAVE HUFFMAN

I’ve often wondered: when I pray to God, does he listen? In Matthew 18:20, Jesus says ... “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” When you think about it, as Christians we do an awful lot of praying. Growing up, we are taught how to pray. We memorize the standard prayers until we know them by heart and can rhyme them off at the drop of a hat. But is that praying? When we sit in church or when we

are attending a special function such as a dinner or a wedding and we, as a group, say the words that we have been taught to use, is that praying? We say the words, but do we know what they mean? Do the words, many written hundreds of years ago, convey to God what we want him to know about us on a personal level? I wonder.

Imagine for a moment that you and your partner attend a very large wedding. When you enter the reception hall, you find that it’s packed full of hun-

dreds of people. And each one of those people is happily chatting away. The drone of noise would be deafening. If you were to turn to your partner to say something, you would end up having to shout just to be heard.

Now imagine God, in heaven, sitting on his throne of love. Every minute, every second, He is surrounded by such a deafening drone of prayers. And many of those prayers are being said by people who are just reciting what they have been told to say. Prayers that carry no meaning,

have no purpose.

I’ve given this a lot of thought. When I pray to God, I want Him to know it’s me and I want Him to hear what I’m saying. I want my prayer to carry a message direct from me to my Creator. To do this, I’ve stopped ‘Praying to God.’ Instead, I’ve started ‘Talking to God.’ At night, in my bed, I take some time and talk to my God, my Father, my Friend. I have found this practice to be very comforting.

I encourage you to give this

a try. At night, in the dark, just before you close your eyes, take a moment to talk to God. You might be surprised that he does listen to you.

Dave Huffman is a parishioner at St. Luke’s Church, Smithville, Ont.

Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

Upcoming Deadlines:

December – October 15

January/February – November 19

March – January 18

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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The Church in Which We Serve

REVEREND DEACON SHEILA PLANT

The face of today’s church is changing in ways that we could never have imagined. In ancient times, the temples were wide open, and both man and beast were welcomed there. That reality is so far removed from modern times, and yet it is mentioned in the Bible so many times. The tax collectors even took up tables in the temple.

I had the privilege of attending the Church of England Guild of Vergers annual training conference and retreat in August. This was my fourth year attending this conference and every year I come away with new learnings and new ideas.

This year it was easy to draw similarities between the Church of England and the Anglican Church in Canada. One of the sessions was all about safeguarding within the church, and in this regard we are all singing from the same hymn book!

Our keynote speaker was Hilary Higton, who is the Safeguarding Officer for the Diocese of Worcester.



Listeing to people we encounter in the church, and how we respond, are part of a safe church environment.

Photo: Unsplash/Kelly Sikkema

She said that we have a commitment to creating a safe and welcoming environment for worshippers and visitors. As vergers, we have a role in the welcome, care and protection of all who come into a place of worship.

Some churches are only open on Sundays, but other churches have a specific time when the church is open for visitors. At St.

Luke’s, we are open on Thursday mornings. Some churches, like the Cathedral, are open all the time. If this is the case, then who do we encounter first? Is it first-time visitors? Is it regular parishioners? Is it a victim or survivor of some crisis who is looking for solace? It might even be an ex-offender looking for someone to talk to. We don’t know the back story of these



individuals. During these visits, it is important to keep an eye out for who we notice. It might be a lost child, or a confused person, or it might even be someone acting inappropriately. But, no matter what, it is our job to create that warm, safe environment and welcome for all who come through the doors.

During Safeguarding Training, the four “Rs” are emphasized. They are Recognize, Respond, Record, Refer.

We learn to **Recognize**: we see that something is not quite right and may seem a little off. We may have to go into pastoral mode. We **Respond** by being non-judgemental and impartial. We find the right way to say something or to pass information on, perhaps to a member of clergy. We have to take them seriously, and by talking to them we can then suggest that we talk to someone together.

We need to **Record** everything they say as soon as possible. It must be factual and accurate. We look at who, when, and

where. We then time and date the information and then pass it along to the appropriate person. When we **Refer**, it might become necessary to call the police or EMS if there is immediate harm. At this point, the rector would also be advised if there is no safeguarding officer in place.

The Safe Church training conducted by the Diocese of Niagara continues to play an important role in keeping our churches and all who walk through their doors safe, but welcoming. Even if your parish does not have a verger, the sidespeople, greeter or others still play a vital role in welcoming everyone safely and without bias. Our churches are spiritual homes, so let us help those who come with open hearts to lay their hearts before God.

ReBoot Shoe Drive Gives Shoes a Second Life

ANDREEA BURLACU

The ReBoot Shoe Drive has wrapped up after a successful six-week collection campaign that brought together the Church of the Apostles Helper Bees Program and the Guelph Tool Library. Running from June 1 to July 15, the community drive collected more than 1,500 pairs of shoes and boots, surpassing its original goal of 1,000 pairs.

Every donated pair has now been processed, with footwear sorted for reuse, cleaning, and distribution. More than 1000 pairs have already been distributed to local community organizations, including Waterloo Wellington Canadian Mental Health Association, Guelph Food Bank Clothing Store, Rachel’s Saturday Table, Hope House, and Royal City Mission. The program was made possible through a grant from the Guelph Community Foundation.

ReBoot was created to reduce textile waste while giving quality footwear a second life. Rather than allowing unwanted shoes to end up in the landfill, the program connects usable footwear with people who



Rob Anderson and David DaSilva, volunteers from Community of Hearts clean the donated shoes.

need it. Shoes that cannot be reused are diverted for recycling through TerraCycle.

Throughout the six-week campaign, donations were collected at three collection locations, including the Shoeper Store, the Guelph Tool Library, and the Church of the Apostles. Community members contributed everything from summer sandals and running shoes to winter boots. At the Guelph Tool Library, the donated footwear was assessed, sorted, tracked, and prepared for distribution.

The project was also sup-

ported by a dedicated team of volunteers from Community of Hearts, who came to the Guelph Tool Library each Wednesday to clean the donated footwear. Their enthusiasm, kindness, and teamwork played an important role in preparing hundreds of pairs for their new owners. “ReBoot shows the impact that’s possible when organizations come together to create meaningful opportunities,” said Drew Kolohon, Program Manager at Community of Hearts. “We’re proud to have partnered with a program that helps people feel included and valued.”



John Dennis, coordinator of the Helper Bees program, holds shoe donations ready to distribute. Photos: contributed by Andreea Burlacu

Shoes that could not be reused were also given a second life through recycling. TerraCycle processes donated footwear by separating shoes into their component materials and recovering those materials for use in manufacturing. “No shoe donated will go to waste,” said Burlacu. “Whether a pair is passed on to someone in need or recycled into new materials, every donation has the opportunity for a new life.”

John Dennis, Coordinator of the Helper Bees, said that “the success of ReBoot demonstrates what can happen when

community organizations, volunteers, and residents work together around a simple idea: a pair of shoes that is no longer needed by one person can make a meaningful difference to someone else.”

Thanks to the generosity of our community, more people will have access to a variety of footwear, from summer sandals to warm winter boots. Fulfilling requests from community organizations and finding the right pair for each person has been incredibly rewarding.