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A section of the Anglican Journal

NIAGARA ANGLICAN

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

NOVEMBER 2026

The Autumn Triduum:



Photo: Unsplaash/Veit Hammer

Three Days for the Dead

THE REVEREND ANDREW RAMPTON

On November 1 every year, the Church celebrates All Saints' Day. This important holy day is an opportunity to focus on God revealed in the communion of saints and the holy examples of our ancestors in faith. To quote the letter to the Hebrews, "since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us." All Saints Day is an important reminder to us that true holiness is possible—with God's help—for ordinary people like you and me.

But All Saints Day does not stand alone in the church calendar. It is, in fact, the middle of three ancient, holy days. These are sometimes called the Autumn Triduum or, less formally, the Three Days for the Dead. "Triduum" usually only comes up, if it does at all, in reference to three holy days at the end of Holy Week: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter, especially the Great Vigil of Easter. The term "triduum" is just Latin for "three days," but there are similarities between the Paschal Triduum in spring and the Autumn Triduum at this time of year.

There are three main points of connection between these three-day observances: Both involve celebrations with lots of candy; both include important vigil liturgies; both inspire us to greater prayer, charity, and almsgiving.

All Saints Day is an important holy day, full of celebration, feasting, and light. But, as the saying goes, it's always darkest before the dawn. So just like the Paschal Triduum starts with the ominous and lonely prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane on Maundy Thursday and the painful isolation of the Cross on Good Friday, so the Triduum of the dead starts with the Vigil of All Saints Day. All Hallows Eve. Hallowe'en.

For the Early Church—and for many Christians today—venerating saints meant spend-

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Neurodiversity and the Body of Christ

THE REVEREND CANON DR. DAVID ANDERSON

In recent months, I have been reflecting on the presence of neurodiversity in our parishes—not as an abstract idea, but as a lived reality. Autism is not rare in the church. It is present in our pews, our parish halls, our Sunday schools, and in many of our families, including my own. As a parent supporting a daughter on the spectrum, I have seen how autistic ways of experiencing the world can be both profoundly challenging and profoundly beautiful. And I have seen how the church, often without meaning to, can either make room for those differences or make life harder.

One of the most striking moments in my own parish life came when my daughter served at the altar. She found participating in the liturgy deeply fulfilling. I am not entirely sure why. Perhaps it was the chance to work closely with me. Perhaps it was the comfort of having purposeful tasks to do during the service. But I suspect it was something more: the clarity, structure, and embodied rhythm of serving offered her a way of worshipping that felt safe, meaningful, and spiritually alive. What some might call "distraction" or "restlessness" in the pews became, at the altar, a form of grounded participation.

There is a quiet gift in Anglican liturgy's structure and rhythm—a gift that can meet neurodivergent worshippers



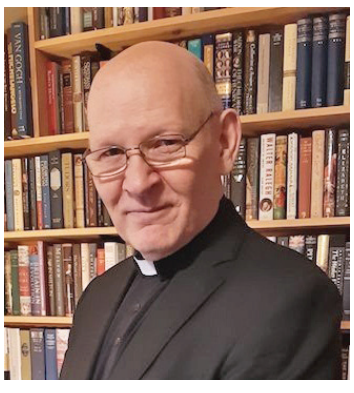
Photo: Unsplash/Gianna B

with steadiness, clarity, and grace. In its ordered flow, many find a place where their whole selves can rest and belong.

This past spring at St. Jude's, we conducted a parish survey as part of a pilot project for our diocesan work on disability, inclusion, and belonging. The survey was meant to help us listen more deeply to the lived experiences of our parishioners, especially those whose challenges are not immediately visible. Several responses pointed to sensory overwhelm, social fatigue, and difficulty navigating unspoken expectations during worship — realities that are common among neurodivergent people. Reading these reflections alongside my own family's experience made something unmistakably clear: neurodiversity is already present in our parish life, even when it is not named. And listening to these stories is not simply an administrative exercise; it is an

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The Discipline of Forgiveness



THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN

We've all been hurt by people, sometimes in a relatively small, passing way but occasionally not, and that can lead to deeply significant suffering and even trauma. A common part of the human condition, alas. Not very long ago, an influential man who was widely considered to be deeply ethical and spiritual was revealed to have behaved extremely badly. His fall was dramatic, nasty, and I'm sure agonizing.

My initial reaction was a morbid satisfaction and glee, a form of schadenfreude, because I'd seen the other side of him and been personally stung by the man. I tried to convince myself that in this case my feelings were justified and that my response was righteous and fair. But that sort of twisted logic just won't do, especially if we follow Christ. Apart from anything else, my attitude didn't change him, but it did change me. It diminished me, narrowed me, made me seem callous. So, I reached out to him as an old acquaintance, asking if there was anything I could do. It was through a third party, so I'm not sure he ever knew about it. I certainly didn't receive a reply.

Forgiving someone who is broken and can no longer do you any harm is different from forgiving someone who is still active and successful, but I can think of several people who come into that category. I've tried with all of them to build bridges but to no avail. So, when St. Paul wrote, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads," he should have added that it doesn't work with everybody! Your decency might expose their wrongdoing and lead to enemies becoming friends, but not always. I've an idea they despise you all the more.

Because forgiveness, and accepting forgiveness, requires self-reflection, and we're living in an era where self-reflection is regarded as weakness. It's so much easier to continue to lash out and appear tough, and if we're being honest, it does provide a temporary satisfaction. Thing is, the hit doesn't last very long.

Consider the mass attacks initiated by tabloid-type media, which extend far beyond actual tabloids, that are so prevalent in our culture and discourse. Name, shame, and condemn, whether the target is a mass murderer or merely someone who has broken a contrived taboo. It's a problem with all ideological perspectives, all political sides. The left finds someone who is insufficiently critical of Israel or ambivalent about trans issues; the right discovers an activist who made a violently anti-conservative remark five years ago or a politician who accidentally shared a platform with a criminal. I boycott therefore I am.

What lies beneath all this performative nonsense is the implicit belief that we're not like them, we're better, we're the good guys. There are, of course, genuinely bad people out there, but much of the time all this says more about the screamer than the screamed at. It's all been further empowered by a social media that can be innocuous and fun, even helpful, but is now so dominated by AI and organized malice that it distorts the public conversation. It doesn't reflect life but perverts it, and it's getting worse rather than better.

Which brings me back to forgiveness and refusing to be pleased at someone's demise. It's harder to do than you might think, but I strongly urge people in public life—politicians, performers, priests, pundits—to consider enlightened self-interest if nothing else, because the dragon does have this habit of eating its own. The person I mentioned at the start of this column was once revered and was a hero and darling to some important people. I wonder if he now reflects on it all, questions his behaviour, regrets his actions, and most of all tries to repair the damage. Good God, I hope so.

The Autumn Triduum

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ing time with their earthly remains. Travelling to the church or shrine of a local saint and celebrating the sacraments, to say nothing of the afterparty, in their presence was an important part of All Saints Day. But earthly remains mean spending the vigil with bones and dusty tombs where there are cobwebs and bats. You can see where some of our modern Halloween horror traditions have their roots. Even when the dead are good holy people, it makes the easily frightened living a little uneasy to spend too much time around them.

The modern-day associations in some places between Hallowe'en and Hell, the occult, or plain old jump-scare horror are just that: modern associations. For Christians, Hallowe'en has long been an evening where one might be frightened or made uneasy by the association with dead saints, but it was not a time of badness or evil. After all, it was the first celebration of a festival all about the glory of God shining through the lives of our friends, family, and neighbours.

The second day of the Autumn Triduum is All Saints' Day proper. We've come through the dark of the vigil and are here to witness the "yet more glorious day" described in the hymn "For All the Saints". Here, our thoughts turn to heaven and to those we believe already inhabit its many rooms. Those whom Jesus led to their eternal reward during his descent to the dead and those who have joined them since. We hold in mind the never-ending Easter celebrated in heaven as we pause for a moment to celebrate here on earth.

We do our best to share in the perpetual rejoicing of heaven, celebrating the sacraments, spending time with family and friends, sharing food, drink, music, and every other celebration at our disposal. This is also one of the ideal days of the year for baptisms. Showing the new Christians what it means to become saints-in-progress, joining the great extended family of Jesus that is the communion of saints.

Finally, on 2 November, we keep All Souls Day. This is the day when we settle ourselves into the sure and certain hope that is central to our faith. Traditionally, on All Souls Day, Christian communities remember those who have died. There may be a special memorial liturgy, a reading of names, a memorial feast, or many other ways of remembering those we love but see no longer.

Whatever the method of



observance, All Souls Day reminds us that though we may sometimes be frightened and unsettled—as on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, or Hallowe'en—we have also seen the glory of Christ's victory over death and sin at Easter and reflected in the holy lives of saints remembered on All Saints Day.

With this held close to our hearts, even though we grieve and miss those who have died, we remember that though they are separated from us for a while, they are not lost. We will be reunited one day in a place where there is no more pain, neither any weeping nor sorrow. All Souls Day is our solemn celebration of hope and a source of comfort in our grief.

May your Triduum of the Dead be good and holy. May you find inspirations for prayer, charity, and almsgiving born of thankfulness. May you be moved to celebrate all through the night with the saints of God, bones and all. And, of course, may you find enough candy to disappoint your dentist.

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National Strategy for Local Ministries with Migrant Workers

THE REVEREND PETER CIALLELLA

At its historic 44th General Synod in London, Ontario (June 23 to June 30, 2025), the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) brought together delegates from across Canada to pray, discern, deliberate, foster spiritual renewal, and enact important policies to continue the important work of Christian evangelization and witness for the 21st century. Part of the continuing mission of the Church is to advance and promote the prophetic work of justice on behalf of the marginalized. One of the important communities identified by the General Synod was the migrant workers in Canada. There are approximately 900,000 migrant workers in Canada who comprise 5% of Canada's overall labour force. They are employed in key sectors of the Canadian economy that face chronic labour shortages, such as agriculture, forestry, fishing, hospitality and food services.

To address the concerns of the migrant workers, a motion was moved by Bishop Susan Bell, bishop of the Diocese of Niagara and seconded by Blessing Shambaré, rector of St. John the Evangelist, Edmonton, AB. The motion was carried.

The commitment of the ACC is to formulate a national strategy for local ministries of hospitality and advocacy with migrant workers in Canada in order to support the needs of migrant workers and address the systemic injustices that migrant workers experience, such as trafficking, unsafe working and living conditions, improper compensation practices, access to medical and mental health care, and serious consideration when it comes to legitimate grievances and concerns.

The Office of General Synod endeavours to share and promote resources that will support and connect the participation of local Canadian Anglican parishes and groups in ministries of hospitality and advocacy in partnership with migrant workers and migrant serving organizations, including resources that:

- Raise awareness and promote learning about the contributions of migrant workers to local and national food security, economy and community;
- Raise awareness about migrant worker experiences in Canada, including learning about and responding to:
  - The root causes of enforced migration;
  - Migrant exploitation and labour abuses in Canada;
  - Misinformation, discrimination, and xenophobia; and
- Enable faith-based initiatives including ministries of:
  - Pastoral care and worship;
  - Study and prayer that ground service and advocacy in scriptural and theological teachings about welcoming the stranger and protecting the vulnerable;
  - Enabling relationships between migrant workers and local parishes and congregations that build mutual understanding, friendship and support;
  - Direct services that meet basic needs, such as clothing, language skills, shelter, transportation, access to health care, and more; and
  - Empowerment programs in support of migrant organizing and advocacy for their own rights.
  - Strengthen Anglican participation and partnerships of collaboration with local, regional, and national migrant justice networks, ecumenical groups, civil society organizations, and government agencies to address issues and solutions holistically; and
  - Enable effective ministry monitoring, evaluation, and long-term sustainability and vision.



Above: Community BBQ organized by the Migrant Farmworkers Project in the summer of 2026. Photo: Contributed by Peter Ciiallella

Below: Bicycles are refurbished for farmworkers in Niagara region.



In terms of systemic injustice, the General Synod recognized that Canadian foreign and immigration policies can be seen as complicit in enforced migration globally and are associated with ongoing experiences of precarious living and working conditions for migrant workers in Canada. Without a legitimate pathway to permanent residency status, migrant workers, of whom the vast majority are taxpayers, have restricted access to social services and few guarantees of their labour rights. Immigration policies, rather than addressing real labour needs, restrict opportunities for residency, which encourages unstable and potentially exploitative migrant work contexts. Moreover, migrant workers have no legal right to organize or form a union to advocate on their behalf.

Unfortunately, few Canadians are aware of migrant workers who are all but invisible in our rural and urban workplaces. Many of us know little about migrant workers' experiences and their direct contributions to local, regional, national, and international economies and food security.

This resolution serves to support existing and future Anglican ministries with migrant workers from coast to coast to coast through providing resources and connections for the church's leaders and members with other faith-based communities also engaged in similar ministries of hospitality and advocacy. It also serves to build bridges between diverse communities in Canada, such as migrant and Indigenous peoples, and supports education toward racial justice.

This resolution serves to strengthen the Church's commitment to recognize, uphold and defend the dignity of every human being, and work toward the dismantling of racism and colonialism within the church and beyond. This resolution seeks justice and aspires to nurture and sustain right relationships among people of faith in local, national, and global communities and networks.

Diocese of Niagara

In the Diocese of Niagara, the Migrant Farmworkers Project has been responding to the needs of the migrant farmworkers in the Niagara region for nearly 15 years. And under the avid leadership of Bishop Bell and with the approval of Synod Council, the Diocese of Niagara has designated the Migrant Farmworkers Project to be a diocesan mission, effective October 1, 2025.

"This designation takes our diocesan ministry with migrant farmworkers to the next level," said Bishop Bell. "Niagara is truly becoming a mission-shaped Church, responding to God's call in ways that meet spiritual and pastoral needs."

This Spirit-led ministry reaches out primarily to Spanish-speaking farmworkers from Latin America and workers from the Caribbean who come to Canada. Of the estimated 5000 migrant farmworkers, about 25% work in Southern Ontario, supporting local farmers with their harvests. The mission supports workers throughout the Niagara Peninsula by offering opportunities for worship, a place to gather in community, access to medical care, translation services, bicycles for transportation, education workshops on rights and safety, seasonal clothing, and more.

The mission operates out of two hubs where workers can gather: St. Alban's in Beamsville and the public library in Fenwick. The hubs host a café with access to wi-fi and fresh, home-cooked meals made to go. Many of the workers stay and enjoy the company. The Beamsville hub also hosts a community closet for seasonal clothing and personal care items, private medical rooms for access to Quest Community Health services, a food bank,

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NIAGARA ANGLICAN

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ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF NIAGARA
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Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Women'sOrdination

The Niagara Anglican continues its series highlighting the ministry of women priests as we mark the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women in the Anglican Church of Canada.

A Road Paved with Grace

THE REVEREND CANON LUCY REID

A wash of gratitude colours the picture as I reflect on my ministry in the Anglican Church of Canada. My husband David and I emigrated to Canada from England in 1984, so that I could be ordained a priest. We had studied and trained together in England and had been working in a parish together for three years, David as a curate and myself as a deaconess.

The Church of England's General Synod had debated the ordination of women several times and determined that there were no fundamental theological objections to the ordination of women, but that the time was not yet right. Frustrated at the roadblock, we had considered a move overseas to one of the places where women were already being ordained: Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, the US, and Canada. After an unexpected meeting with some Canadian clergy on a sabbatical in England, a priest from the Diocese of Montreal, Ken Genge, had taken a chance on us and offered us a position in his parish in St. Lambert.

Looking back, I am amazed and grateful that Ken risked sponsoring us, the parish paid for our move, and the Bishop of Montreal ordained me. These



Lucy Reid at her ordination to the priesthood, with the Right Reverend Reginald Hollis, Bishop of Montreal in 1985.

Photo: Submitted by Lucy Reid

strike me now as remarkable acts of faith and generosity. David and I worked as assistant curates in St Lambert for two years, finding our feet as new Canadians and working at last as equals in the Church. We then offered ourselves for ministry in the Diocese of Moosonee, which was chronically short of clergy. We were placed in Kapuskasing as co-rectors and arrived with our first child, who was a few months old.

Almost five years of ministry in the north opened our eyes to a very different Canada, and we met Indigenous clergy and people for the first time. I remember the Rev. Redfern Loutitt, who taught me enough Cree to give a blessing to Cree patients in the hospital. Redfern was a survivor of the residential "school" system and had had to relearn his own language as an adult after having it beaten out of him. Yet he was gracious and open to his settler colleagues and set me on the road to learning and practising reconciliation. I give thanks for his life and faith.

From 1991 to 2008 we lived and worked in Guelph and raised our three children there. I was working as the Ecumenical Campus Minister at the University of Guelph. It was a rich period for me of going deeper into my spirituality as a woman and a priest. I was discovering how powerful language is in the formation of people's concept of God, and how limiting - even stunting and distorting - the traditional male language for God can be. I read the works of feminist theologians and spiritual writers and met with other women in small groups to share our struggles and journeys.

During that period, I pulled together my thoughts and experiences and wrote a book, *She Changes Everything*. Seeing the divine as Mother, Sophia, Breath of Life*, and finding the Holy One in ourselves as women had been life-changing for me, and my hope was that the book might touch other women who had felt disenfranchised from a patriarchal faith. Back in parish ministry in Victoria, BC, and Toronto for fourteen years before retirement, I tried to bring my learnings and faith to the churches I served.

An all-male priesthood can only limit the Church's ability to be the Body of Christ in the world. I am immeasurably grateful that the Anglican Church of Canada recognized that and gave me the opportunity to be ordained. Fifty years on, I am still changing, but remain rooted in Christ, God-with-us, my way, my truth, my life.

** A second edition entitled She Changes Everything: A Woman Priest's Journey with the Feminine Divine is due to be published by Bloomsbury, London, in April 2027.*

Prophets and Midwives

THE REVEREND CANON TRUDY LEBANS

This year we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women in the Anglican Church of Canada. Let us lift up four of the many who bring unique, challenging, prophetic work that breathes life into the bones of this old body, the church. From the time a woman said, "I have seen the Lord," and through all the centuries since, women have been proclaiming the radical hope expressed and lived out by Jesus. Women have always been leaders of the faith, and with the many religious and lay ministers, ordination brings their particular perspective to shine on leadership in our time.

The person I have known the longest is Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan, former president of the Canadian Council of Churches. In 2025, she was awarded the King Charles III Coronation medal for her service as director of Unity, Faith and Order with the Anglican Communion, from 2009 to 2015, and as ecumenical officer of the Anglican Church of Canada from 1991 to 2009. She successfully convinced the Canadian government of the time that peace and justice were not only acceptable, but essential aspects of religious activity. With genuine warmth and humour —and steely resolve—Barnett-Cowan has negotiated Christian ecumenical work and unity. A prophet in the midst of hierarchical and historical anxiety, she has modelled new ways of being in communion.



The Reverend Alyson Barnett-Cowan

Photo: stmartininthefields.ca

Canon Martha Tatarnic will be well known in the Diocese of Niagara. Tatarnic has shown creativity liturgically and in community-building as co-rector of St. George's, St. Catharines. While she prepares for her cycling marathons, we can be certain she is also thinking about ways to bring women's stories into the history and significance of the faith. Aside

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Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Women's Ordination

A Tower of Strength

Remembering the Rev. Canon Wendy Roy

THE REVEREND CANON DR. MARGARET MURRAY

In 1983, it was still early days for women serving as priests in Niagara when the newly ordained Wendy Roy began to sweep away the cobwebs of complacency in the Church. She was in her early 30s, yet her resumé already pointed toward the ministry that would follow. Drawn to the cutting edge, she studied the student experience in McMaster's new avant-garde Medical School, then worked with a McMaster surgeon researching breast cancer outcomes across North America. The work proved formative: Roy was named an author on the resulting publication, gained grounding in research methods, and developed the precision and integrity that would mark her future. Seeking broader outreach, she later became Coordinator of Ontario's "Consumer Education Program for Disadvantaged People," hiring, training and deploying summer students across the province while travelling by DC-3 and bush plane. By then, she was realizing her desire for outreach at a more personal level.

Roy approached Bishop John Bothwell about ordination to the priesthood, then enrolled in the MDiv program at Trinity College. Her developing self-awareness is evident in her own listing of her ministry interests: "mission, outreach, social justice, spiritual direction and women's issues." She was ordained deacon in 1982 and priest in 1983, serving first at St. James, Dundas, then St. Thomas's, Hamilton, and finally as Executive Director of St. Matthew's House.

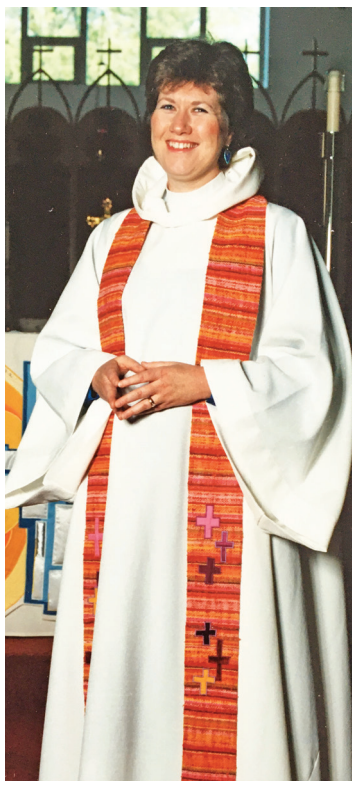
Roy spent 19 years as executive director of St. Matthew's House, creating programs, writing grant proposals, building partnerships with agencies and outreach groups, and receiving many awards that affirmed her commitment. Shortly after concluding that ministry, she suffered a massive stroke that removed her from active ministry and the floor of Diocesan Synods.

Roy died peacefully at her favourite place, the Haliburton cottage, on June 27, 2026.

I am indebted to her spouse, Dr. Dean Jeffries, PhD, for providing these details. They reveal her formative early adult years and the backstory of a life and ministry whose full force became clearer to me through my own encounters with her within the life of the Church.

What follows is more personal: a tribute shaped by my own experience of being ordained priest just five years after Roy. During seminary studies and early diocesan involvement, I became aware of her strength and presence. In those days, there were few women ahead of me in ordained ministry; Roy became one of the people who showed what was possible.

In parish ministry and at St. Matthew's House, her compassion was unmistakable; at Diocesan Synods, so was her passion for justice. At the microphone, she was articulate, challenging the Church to examine its assumptions and widen its boundaries. She pressed for the just inclusion of women, including fair maternity leave and childcare supports. In those years, people diagnosed with AIDS were often shunned, and different expressions of sexuality were judged before they were understood. Roy challenged those assumptions and called the Church toward justice and compassion. On behalf of St. Matthew's House, she reminded Synod of the needs of the hungry, unhoused and persecuted, advocating for those without a voice.



Canon Wendy Roy at St. James Dundas in 1983. Photo: Submitted by Margaret Murray

I sometimes feared her surgical analysis of our assumptions but came to see that such a reaction revealed our collective reluctance to remove our blinders. I respected her integrity, was captivated by her courage, and identified with her passion. In those moments, she was calling me to become more fully myself.

Bishop Asbil once told me that she repeatedly declined his appointment of her as a Canon of Christ's Church Cathedral. She finally accepted when she understood the honour not as personal distinction, but as recognition of the importance of the work to which she had given herself.

In ministry, Wendy Roy was a tower of strength, embodying both the prophetic and priestly dimensions of the vocation we believe reflects the pattern of Jesus.

Well done, good and faithful servant!

Prophets and Midwives

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

from her podcasts and ongoing parish ministry, Tatarnic has also written: *The Living Diet: A Christian Journey to Joyful Eating, Why Gather? The Hope and Promise of the Christian Church*, and most recently, *Anne Boleyn: Reputation, Revolution, Religion and the Queen who changed History*.



Canon Martha Tatarnic

Photo: Niagara Anglican files

From the west coast, Diocese of New Westminster, Laurel Dykstra has been a creative and courageous voice for climate concerns, for the wisdom of indigenous people, and for



The Reverend Laurel Dykstra

Photo: saint-catherines.org

relational spirituality that connects rather than divides. Dykstra started the ministry of Salal + Cedar Watershed Discipleship Community as a place for sacramental practice in nature and concrete action for ecological justice but found community along the way. Dykstra is responsible for both the big picture and coordinating moving parts.

And finally, Gerlyn Henry. Henry leads the parish of Broadview in Scarborough, Diocese of Toronto. She has thousands of followers on TikTok and Instagram. Her goal is to make the life of spirit and faith accessible to both seekers and the disenchanted. She communicates with humour and insightful interpretations of scripture. For many folks, her videos are their pathway to faith.

For those who wonder about the future, we need to remember the women who stand at the foot of every cross, who risk their lives to give birth to new vision, who will not accept death as the last word. Women are midwives of the faith, releasing what no longer brings sustenance, delivering fragile new ideas, shouting out with joy at life in creation, in community with all that lives, and reaching out into the starry night to show us the way of the Divine, in this holy earth, in the stars, in the complexity of quantum thinking, and in each other's faces.



The Reverend Gerlyn Henry

Photo: Gerlyn Henry via broadview.org



Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Women's Ordination

Called to the Table, Indeed!

THE VENERABLE SUZANNE CRAVEN

Over the last 25 years, I have been asked many times Why did you want to become a priest?" All clergy can relate.

We all got the question. We learned to recite the short and the long answer over and over, yet despite the repetition, it remains humbling to publicly share even part of that very personal story.

In my case, the call compelled me to drop everything and follow my deep instincts. Never once did it occur to me that being a female priest would be a statement for equality. Rather, it was something I had to do in this life.

I had worked in growing positions of management in public library systems since graduation. I thought that being a priest of a church would be similar to being head of a branch library. Indeed, there are many similarities. You manage staff and numerous volunteers. You keep the physical plant ship-shape and up to date. You manage the budget. You get to know your patrons/parishioners, and in general life moves on with a rhythm.

All of the above was correct, yet the church was so much more. Reflecting back, my library work, in part, moved me closer to the call. Whenever I had a library patron who also fessed up to having faith and/or a church community for support, I was off to the races. The search for information was not only to meet their current issue, but also to support them with information on prayer, healing, and love.

At our family church of St. Matthew-on-the-Plains, our rector was the Canon Carol Skidmore. What a blessing she was! God spoke right through her—directly to me! You know how that happens in sermons, when you feel that the words spoken are a direct hit. I became more active in my church—Sunday school teacher, parish council, warden, programmer—you know the route.

Part of my call included a recurring dream of Jesus, rowing a boat across Lake Gennesaret while I was swimming behind. Sometimes I wondered if I could keep up, but his eyes were on me constantly, and even when I was tired, somehow, he gave me the energy to keep going. It was always a long way, and I never reached the shore in my dream, but merely persevered on the journey with a constant focus on Jesus. He would not let me falter.



Suzanne Craven, left, with The Reverend Carol Skidmore, during her curacy at St. Matthew-on-the-Plains

Photo: Contributed by Suzanne Craven

I couldn't wait—I had to find out more about my faith. My ravenous hunger would not be satisfied until I explored what could be my next step. I made an appointment to meet a professor at Wycliffe College where my rector and bishop had studied. The appointment was exhilarating! I found my way to the dear Wycliffe chapel with the beautiful stained-glass windows, and sat down to pray. While I was praying, I had a vision and feeling of a light gossamer sheath falling over my head, surrounding me to the floor. It was warm, encompassing, encouraging, and I felt so safe, as though I had come home.

It was a surprise to many that at this time of my life, I would return to university, but my family was so supportive!

I was fortunate to have super work experiences under the supervision of Keith Morrison at St. Paul's in Caledonia (I'm still not convinced, Keith; did you really have a headache 15 minutes before a service so I would preach without prep?) and also, with the then Canon Michael Bird at St. Luke's Burlington. From St. Luke's I left for the first of my two ventures to Kenya—with $800.00 donated from the congregation for new Bibles at my destination. Both positions were such affirming experiences in the world of ministry. I listened and learned, worked hard, and loved every minute.

Was it always easy? Well, I was the first female to serve in one parish, and was approached by a gentleman right after the service. He made it clear that he did not believe that women were meant to be priests in the church. We met for coffee that week. He was also first in the door on my last Sunday with a parting gift, saying he wished I could stay. It was simply his first experience of a female priest!

A quarter century later, I still look back so fondly at the many experiences shared with faithful congregations. The rich relationships formed, the happy times of births, baptisms and marriages, the sad times of illnesses, deaths and funerals are all full of such holy ground. What a tremendous privilege to do God's work alongside God's people. I was enriched by so many colleagues in our Diocese and grateful for inspired leadership from our Bishops.

I'm still swimming, my focus is still on Jesus, and God willing, there is still more for me to do happily in the background of retirement. Thanks be to God for this life!

Suzanne Craven is the retired Archdeacon of Trafalgar

National Strategy for Local Ministries with Migrant Workers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

and a bike repair shop, which supplies bikes to workers at a small cost for easy transportation. Both hubs offer meeting areas where they can host educational workshops, celebrations, and more.

The Migrant Farmworkers Project meets with workers at the hubs and directly at the farms. This is particularly helpful for workers who work late hours or live too far from the hubs to easily travel to the weekly gatherings. Through these connections, the mission works to ensure that workers have access to the resources and support they need for their physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

Spiritual care is an important part of this ministry, with opportunities for conversation, pastoral support and Eucharist. Eucharistic celebrations are held at St. Alban's Church in Beamsville and St. John's in Jordan.

With its new mission designation, several goals have been identified to expand the mission's impact. The first is to establish a community for newcomers to Canada from Latin America and connect that community with migrant farmworkers. With the support of Sandra Ciallella, another goal is to ensure that these communities are accessible to people of all genders.

Once these foundations are established, the mission can continue to build its spiritual dimension through worship, retreats, and formation.

The mission relies on volunteers and donations to provide its successful services. In the past, the mission largely depended on the vision and direction of the missioner. With the designation, an advisory board has been established and uses a collaborative, team approach that includes input from diocesan leaders. This new board helps give the missioner the support they need to implement the vision of the mission in line with the diocesan Mission Action Plan.

One of the important goals of the Mission Action Plan is to implement a new support system for migrant women who encounter unique challenges they face both in Canada and in their own home country. A growing number of migrant women have come to the hub to seek support and renewal.

In the future, the Migrant Farmworkers Project Mission hopes to connect and build on the network of ministries across Canada with other Anglican churches, missions and faith communities in order to strengthen and support the churches and organizations committed to the cause of serving our migrant workers in Canada. As a mission project, we continue to employ a hermeneutical lens informed by the Gospel, our ecclesial tradition, the evolving dynamics of mission, and the lived experience and culture of our migrant sisters and brothers. When we walk with our migrant sisters and brothers and learn to become "migrants with the migrants", we not only fulfill and invigorate our own vocation as missioners, but indeed the Church's mission on behalf of all migrants.



The Migrant Farmworkers Project serves hot meils through St. Alban's Beamsville.

Photos: Contributed by Peter Ciallella

Jesus Said That?

A series exploring some surprising things he said, and how they relate to sharing faith.

Do Not Judge

A Major Hindrance to Sharing Faith

THE REVEREND DR. JUDITH PAULSEN

DO NOT JUDGE, SO THAT YOU MAY NOT BE JUDGED. FOR WITH THE JUDGMENT YOU MAKE YOU WILL BE JUDGED, AND THE MEASURE YOU GIVE WILL BE THE MEASURE YOU GET. WHY DO YOU SEE THE SPECK IN YOUR NEIGHBOUR'S EYE, BUT DO NOT NOTICE THE LOG IN YOUR OWN EYE? (MATTHEW 7:1-3)

One of Jesus' most straightforward, and yet most difficult, instructions is, "Do not judge". The breadth of this directive is astonishing.

To judge someone means to form an opinion on their moral standing. Such judgements happen in the privacy of our minds, which makes this directive of Jesus easy to ignore. But here's the thing about judging people. While it occurs in the privacy of our minds, it affects both the way we view the person we are judging and the way we treat them. It can show up in everything from a sudden coolness toward someone to a determined zeal to fix them. When we judge a person, it affects the way we think and act, often shutting down the type of relationship, and even conversations, that allow faith to be shared and cultivated.

Of course, it would be much easier not to judge people if they didn't give us such good reasons for doing so. Why shouldn't we judge the politician who accepts a bribe, or the teenager who destroys property, or the perfectly healthy-looking panhandler, or the racist in a white hood? How could Jesus mean that we're not to judge anyone? We judge people because they often deserve it!

But if we're honest, we judge people for a less worthy reason. We often judge people because we think of ourselves as worthy and morally obligated to pass judgment. In John's gospel account, a crowd preparing to stone a woman thought they were both worthy and compelled to judge her. While Jesus recognized the woman's guilt, he shut the stoning down with one statement, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone."

It is important to note that the Bible distinguishes clearly between our judgment of good and evil itself, and our judgment of people. We are never supposed to turn a blind eye to evil. We are supposed to rightly discern right from wrong. But that doesn't make us the rightful judge of those whom we think do wrong. Discerning good from evil, and judging people, are two different things.

The Scriptures teach that the reason we are not to judge people is that as wrongdoers ourselves, we often don't make good judges. It points out that we tend to see others' sins while ignoring our own. We are easily swayed by appearances. We are prone to our own self-interest. We favour those who are most like us, or who are rich or influential. As individuals, we simply aren't very good at judging people accurately.

This is why our judicial system involves so many people in the process of determining legal judgements: those who collect evidence, witnesses, experts, and those trained in the law. We do our best to ensure sound legal judgements, but this always involves many people. Yet we recognize that miscarriages of justice still occur from time to time.

The Bible teaches that God is the one truly able to perfectly judge human beings. God alone has all the facts. God alone knows the motivations of the heart, and the factors that gave rise to them. God alone sees deeply enough to discern intent from mistake.

A time will come when everything each of us has done will be revealed. Clearly, how we live matters. Whether we follow our Saviour's instructions matters. Our faith, as Christians, is meant to be linked to how we live. This includes us trying our best to follow Jesus' most challenging directives, such as "Do not judge".

Although worthy to judge people, Jesus tempered judgement with mercy. To the woman caught in adultery, He said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more." Later, in chapter 12, John records Jesus saying these words, "As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it."



Photo: Unsplash/Andre Hunter

Jesus commanded us to simply refrain from judging people, even when we think we have good reason for doing so. That's because there are good reasons to let go of judging. When we let go of judging others, it frees us from pride and hypocrisy. But letting go of judging people not only frees us from things. It frees us for things. It frees us to see the best in people. To see the potential that each person has, no matter how much they've messed up in the past.

When we let go of judging people, we are free to participate in God's new creation begun in the resurrection of Jesus. In 2 Corinthians we read, "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Everything old has passed away. Look, new things have come into being." Are you able to look at the world and see the new things God is doing, despite the frailty and brokenness of human beings? A refusal to judge people provides fertile ground for building authentic relationships with them and for sharing our faith with them. Simply put, judgement is a hindrance to both of those things.

As Christians, we are called to live out the forgiveness that God has shown to us. God is perfectly able to take care of the judgement bit. Simply decide, and ask God to help you, to be gracious to each person your life intersects with. Take a moment to think of someone that you have had a judgmental attitude towards. Call them up, invite them for a coffee or a beer, and start building the sort of relationship that will allow you to share your faith and to hear what they believe. Let go of judging and see what new thing God grows in its place.



A Slice of Fun at St. Stephen-on-the-Mount

LYNNE TIMMINS

Our first-ever pie contest at St. Stephen-on-the-Mount was a delicious success! Four judges had the delightful—and challenging—task of sampling seven homemade pies, each lovingly made from scratch by various parishioners. After much tasting and deliberation, Faith Misener took first place with her delicious strawberry rhubarb pie, while Linda Clugston earned second place for her creamy and refreshing Lemon Cream pie. And, in a spirit of good-natured fun, Rob Hand claimed the honour of last place and received a magazine filled with recipes to help him practice for next year!

Congratulations to all of our talented bakers, and thank you to everyone who participated and helped make this inaugural pie contest such a sweet success!



The 2026 pie contest winners.

Photo: Melody Hand

Through the Wilderness to Welcome

THOMAS LITTLEWOOD

"It sounds almost biblical," was how Paul Walker, rector at St. John's and archdeacon of Greater Wellington, described the process behind the St. John's Commons at St. John's, Elora. It has been a project forty years in the making, and the result of countless hours of work by so many people. As part of the Mission Action Plan process, one of the priorities the parish identified was an accessible gathering space, with a commercial kitchen and a universal washroom.

Designed by parishioner Edward Thomas of SRM Architects, the space certainly fulfills those goals. It is accessible, preserves our two heritage buildings, and provides a much-needed space for the community to gather. From the outset, SRM Architects and Zehr Group have been at the helm of this project, guiding it with exceptional professionalism, meticulous attention to detail, and genuine care. Parish leadership has been continually impressed by their commitment to excellence throughout every stage of the work.

This has not been a straightforward undertaking. The new St. John's Commons connects two heritage buildings that are neither square to one another nor on the same elevation, presenting a series of complex design and construction challenges. In the words of Colleen Murray and Peter Barr, wardens and co-chairs of the project, "SRM Architects and Zehr Group have consistently met every challenge with ingenuity, patience, and exceptional craftsmanship. Their ability to solve complex problems while maintaining the highest standards of quality and care has been nothing short of remarkable. We couldn't have asked for better partners to bring this vision to life."

At its core, the St John's Commons has been about accessibility. But there is so much more to accessibility than washrooms, automatic doors, and ramps. It is how we live into our baptismal covenant: "to respect the dignity of every human being." It is also a critical way in which we can love our neighbours as ourselves. Now at St John's we can welcome the whole community, not just the able-bodied, into the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.





St. John's Commons at the opening dedication.

Photos: Bill Mous

In Centre Wellington, a growing number of people are experiencing food insecurity. This is only amplified by the increasing cost of food and the lack of public transportation in the area. One recent study noted that over 4,000 people in Centre Wellington are food insecure. It is a growing issue in Elora, and one that flies beneath the radar. St John's Elora included a commercial kitchen in the plans to be able to partner with local food security groups. This is part of the parish's mission to Proclaim the Love of Christ.

Of course, St John's Elora is well known for its choral music and tradition, and that has not been forgotten in the new St John's Commons. The architect and construction teams have created a space that is acoustically tuned to choral music, it will provide a new space to host intimate concerts.

Indeed, no celebration at St. John's Elora is complete without the Parish Choir. And the Parish Choir placed the first layer of musical patina on the new space with Anton Bruckner's Locus Iste: "This place was made by God, a priceless mystery; it is without reproof." Given the forty-year-long 'journey through the wilderness,' it certainly feels like the St. John's Commons was made by God.

Bishop Susan Bell noted in her remarks after Evensong on Sunday, September 27, that discernment is how Christians make decisions. And sometimes that discernment takes a long time. But through the Commons, St. John's Elora has discerned that it wants to prepare for the future. A future that includes everyone in our community, and one that cares for the community, honours the past, and is accessible to all.

Thanks be to God.

Thomas Littlewood is parish administrator at St. John's Elora

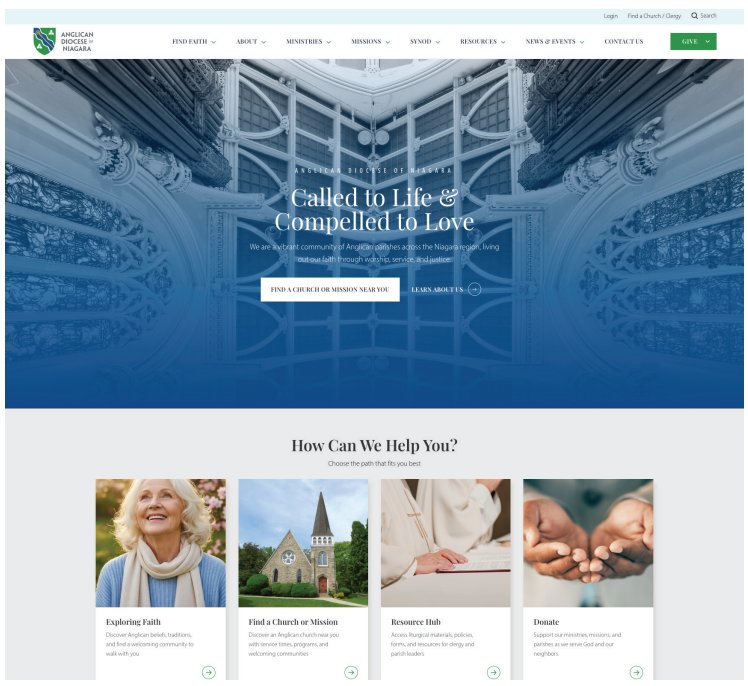
Making the Diocese Easier to Find

After more than a year of planning, reviewing, testing and perhaps more conversations about websites than anyone expected, the Diocese of Niagara launched a new diocesan website in September.

The new niagaraanglican.ca is more than a visual refresh. It is intended to make it easier for people to find information, connect with the diocese and its churches, and access the resources they need.

"Our old website had a lot of good information, but we knew that finding that information wasn't always easy," says Dani Leitis, communications coordinator for the diocese. "We wanted to take everything we had learned from our users and build something that was easier to navigate, more accessible and more welcoming."

The previous website had been in its current design for about five years, but its underlying technology was considerably older. Over time, the site had grown to include 600 pages, more than 1,000 news posts and a substantial collection of documents and resources.



That growth reflected the breadth of ministry happening across the diocese, but it also created a challenge: how do you make a large amount of information easier to navigate without simply removing information people need?

That question was at the heart of the redesign.

A website that looks beyond our walls

One of the most important goals of the redesign was to take a more missional approach to the diocesan website.

The website is often the first place someone encounters the diocese. That person may be an active Anglican looking for a diocesan resource, but they may just as easily be someone who has recently moved to the area, someone looking for a church, someone wondering what Anglicans believe, or someone who is simply curious about faith.

That means the website cannot be designed only around the needs of people who already understand the diocese and how it works. It also needs to create a clear and welcoming entry point for people who are outside our existing communities.

"We wanted to think about the website as more than a place where we put information for people who are already part of the Church," says Leitis. "If we're serious about being a missional Church, then our digital presence needs to help us reach beyond our walls. Someone should be able to come to our website without knowing anything about the Anglican Church and still find a way into the story we're telling and the communities we're part of."

That shift influenced both the structure and the content of the new site. Information is organized with the questions a visitor might actually have in mind, rather than simply reflecting the internal structure of the Synod Office.

The goal is not to hide the complexity of diocesan ministry. It is to make the way into that ministry clearer.

"Our website is one of the places where we have an opportunity to tell people who we are, what we care about and what God is doing in this diocese," says Leitis. "We wanted to create more opportunities for people to encounter those stories, whether or not they walked into one of our churches or missions first."

This also means giving greater attention to pictures, stories, news and resources that demonstrate the life of the diocese in the world: the work happening in our communities, the ways Anglicans are responding to the needs around us, and the many ways people are living out their faith.

In that sense, the new website is not simply a new home for existing information. It is part of the diocese's wider work of connecting with people, sharing the gospel and inviting people into community.

Finding a church, wherever you are

One of the most significant changes is the new **Find a Church & Clergy** search.

Rather than limiting users to

See WEBSITE Page 10

Finding Hope in Unexpected Places

A Deacon's Advent Reflection on Home Alone

THE REVEREND DEACON STEPHEN LA SALLE

Over the years, serving as a deacon has changed the way I move through Advent. It has taught me to look past the season's busyness and pay closer attention to what people are carrying quietly in their hearts. While the world rushes toward Christmas with lights, music, shopping, and the excitement of Christmas morning, Advent now invites me to pause, listen more carefully, and notice the small signs of God's presence in the people and stories I meet along the way.

So much of diaconal ministry happens in those ordinary, tender places. As deacons, we stand where church and community meet. We listen to people's stories, notice what they need, and try, in small but faithful ways, to build bridges of compassion, connection, and hope. Advent always brings me back to that calling.

One Christmas movie that brings this home for me is the 1990 John Hughes film *Home Alone*. Most of us remember the comedy: Kevin's traps, the burglars, and the lines that still make us smile. But underneath the humour is a surprisingly tender story about loneliness, reconciliation, and hope.

That becomes clear near the end of the film as Kevin sits alone in a church while a children's choir rehearses O Holy Night. The sanctuary is still. Candles flicker. For a moment, everything quiets down.

By then, Kevin has spent several days on his own after being accidentally left behind while his family flies to Paris for Christmas. At first, an empty house feels like an adventure. But the excitement fades, and loneliness begins to settle in. Sitting in that church, Kevin is no longer simply afraid of the burglars. He is afraid his family may not come back.

A few pews away sits his neighbour, Old Man Marley.

For most of the movie, Marley has been wrapped in neighbourhood gossip and wild rumours. The children fear him because they have imagined a story about him without really knowing him. But in the church, we see the truth. Marley is not frightening. He is a lonely man carrying the hurt of a broken relationship.

Years earlier, an argument separated him from his son. Hurt turned into silence, and silence stretched on for years. Now Marley comes quietly to choir rehearsals just to see his granddaughter sing, still hoping there might be a way back.



In the movie *Home Alone*, an eight-year-old boy and an older neighbour sit together and speak honestly about fear.

Photo: ©Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation

What follows is what I suggest is one of the most touching conversations in the film. An eight-year-old boy and an older neighbour sit together and speak honestly about fear. Kevin is afraid of losing his family. Marley is afraid his son no longer wants him in his life.

They are separated by age and circumstance, but they are longing for the same thing: connection, belonging, and a way back to the people they love. In that quiet church, they become a kind of bridge for one another.

Whenever I watch that scene, I think about people I have met through ministry. The details change, but the longings often sound familiar: loneliness, grief, regret, family tension, broken relationships, uncertainty, and the quiet hope of reconnecting with someone who has drifted away.

As deacons, we are often welcomed into those sacred, ordinary moments. Sometimes the conversation happens over coffee at Tim Hortons. Sometimes it happens after church on a Sunday morning. Sometimes it happens in a hospital room, a retirement home, or someone's living room.

What I have learned is that people are not always looking for easy answers. More often, they are looking for someone who will listen with care, receive their story, and not rush to judgment.

That is what Kevin and Marley offer one another. They do not fix everything. They do not offer quick solutions. They simply make room for the truth to be spoken, and they listen.

Often, that is where God's work begins. Healing may begin when someone finally feels heard. Reconciliation may begin with one honest conversation. Hope may begin when we realize we do not have to carry our burdens alone.



For me, the heart of Home Alone is not Kevin defending the house from burglars. It is Marley finding the courage to reach out to his family. On Christmas morning, we see him reunited with his son, daughter-in-law, and granddaughter. There are no dramatic speeches or long explanations. There is simply an embrace, and somehow that is enough.

That moment reminds me that reconciliation often begins with one small, brave step: a phone call, a conversation, or simply the willingness to try again.

Advent holds that same hope. As we prepare for Christ's coming, we remember that God does not remain distant from our struggles, loneliness, or brokenness. In Jesus, God draws near and enters fully into human life.

The Incarnation is God's loving reach toward us.

As deacons, we are called to reflect that movement. We seek Christ not only within the Church, but also in homes, workplaces, hospitals, shelters, and neighbourhoods. We help bridge distances, nurture connection, and point to God's presence in everyday life.

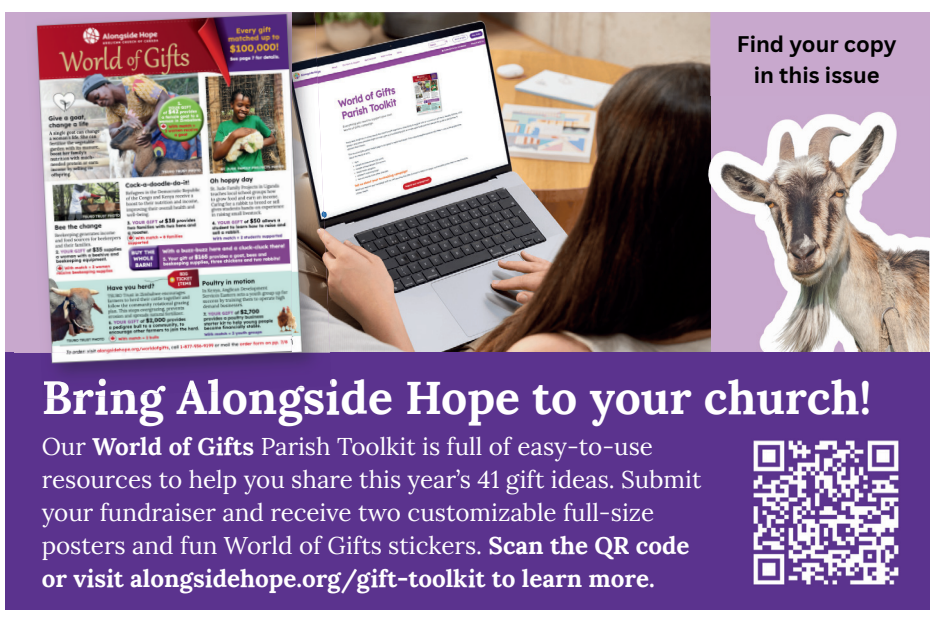
That is why Advent matters so deeply to me. It teaches me to pay attention, listen with care, notice where God is already at work, and trust that healing and hope remain possible even before we can see what is changing.

As Advent draws near, perhaps this is the invitation for all of us: to notice the people around us, listen carefully to the stories they carry, reach out where distance has grown, become instruments of reconciliation where relationships are strained, and trust that God's grace still appears in unexpected places.

After all, grace may appear in the glow of Advent candles, in children singing O Holy Night, in a quiet conversation between a lonely boy and an older neighbour, or in the simple, faithful acts of listening, accompanying, and connecting that lie at the heart of diaconal ministry.

Advent reminds me that God is always moving toward us. In Jesus, God crosses every distance, steps into our brokenness, and meets us with love, grace, and hope. As deacons, we are invited to live that same movement in the world: to listen deeply, walk with others, and help mend the places where loneliness and separation have taken hold. Sometimes that happens through a conversation, a small act of kindness, or simply being present with someone who feels forgotten. In those moments, we share in God's work of drawing people closer to one another and to Him. As we make our way through Advent, may we be willing to cross the distances between us, trusting that God is already at work bringing us closer in love.





The Serious Business of Play

THE REVEREND STEWART CAROLAN-EVANS

There are sentences I never expected to write as an Anglican rector. "We need to decide where the dungeon masters will sit" is probably one of them. Yet that is the sort of question now appearing in conversations at St John's, Burlington, as we prepare for JohnCON, three days of tabletop gaming from November 13–15. There will be dice, maps, miniatures, board games, fantasy worlds, special guests, and, on the Friday evening, a medieval-style Tavern Feast complete with hearty food and a member of our choir taking on minstrel duties with his dulcimer. It is all rather wonderfully improbable. And perhaps that is part of the point.

When I recently spoke with Monica Romig Green, our diocesan faith formation coordinator, she spoke quite seriously about the importance of adults learning to play. The phrase stayed with me because "serious play" sounds almost contradictory. Children play naturally. Adults tend to feel that whatever we do ought to have a purpose. We exercise for our health. We join groups for networking. We read for self-improvement. We volunteer to make a difference. Even hobbies are increasingly explained in terms of the benefits they provide: stress reduction, cognitive health, social connection, resilience. All of these things may be true. But they also reveal something about us. We have become suspicious of doing something simply because it is enjoyable. Children rarely ask what playing is "for." They simply play. Adults, on the other hand, often seem to need a business case. Churches are not immune from this. We rightly ask what our ministries are accomplishing. We count attendance. We plan programmes. We track finances. We worry about declining membership, ageing congregations, volunteer fatigue, and how we might connect with people beyond our walls. These are necessary questions. But perhaps they are not the only questions.

Sometimes Christianity itself reminds us that not everything worthwhile can be measured by its usefulness. Sabbath, for example, refuses the idea that human worth depends upon productivity. God commands people to stop. To rest. To cease producing. To remember that the world continues without their constant effort. And then there are the feasts. Scripture is full of meals, celebration, music, dancing, storytelling, weddings, shared tables, and unexpected hospitality. Jesus seems remarkably comfortable around food. He eats with friends, strangers, sinners, disciples, critics, and people who probably had no idea quite what to make of him. None of this means that Christian life lacks purpose. Quite the opposite. The Bible also seems deeply comfortable with delight.



Image: Craig Bragg

Perhaps not everything the Church does needs to be useful before it is good. That thought has shaped how I have come to think about JohnCON. Of course, we hope people will come who have never walked through the doors of St John's before. We hope friendships will form. We hope people will discover that a church community can be welcoming, generous, curious, and fun. We would be foolish to pretend those hopes are absent. But if JohnCON is judged only by whether it increases Sunday attendance, produces new members, or becomes an effective piece of church growth strategy, then I think we will already have missed something important. People playing together is good. People laughing together is good. People sitting around tables, sharing food, telling stories, solving problems, taking imaginative risks, and enjoying one another's company is good. These things do not need to become something else before they matter. That may be especially worth remembering in church life today.

We have become very good at asking what things are for. What is this event for? What measurable outcome will it produce? Will it strengthen stewardship? Attract younger people? Increase participation? Build community? Again, these are not foolish questions. But if every meal becomes outreach, every friendship becomes evangelism, and every gathering becomes strategy, people can begin to feel less like neighbours and more like projects. Christian hospitality ought to be more generous than that. Grace, after all, is a gift. A gift is not valuable because it produces a measurable return. Joy is not merely a tool. Friendship is not an instrument. Rest is not laziness. Delight is not wasted time. Perhaps play belongs somewhere in that same theological landscape.

At St John's, JohnCON will fill our building with people rolling dice, moving pieces, inhabiting stories, eating together, and, I hope, laughing rather loudly. Our poster invites people to "Live the Fables! Share the Fun! Join the Fellowship!" I rather like that. The Church will continue to plan, budget, measure, and worry. We probably need to. There will still be spreadsheets on Monday morning. But perhaps we also need occasions when we simply set the tables, open the doors, tell stories, share food, roll the dice, and enjoy being together. Not because play is secretly work in disguise. Not because every game must lead somewhere else. But because delight is part of the life God has given us. Sometimes the serious business of being human is remembering how to play.

Website Renewed by Diocese

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

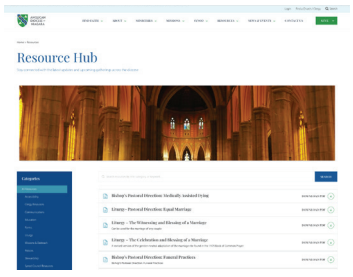
searching by municipality, the new directory allows people to search by distance and find the parishes closest to a particular location.

Parish listings provide key information including the parish website, clergy and service times.

The new system also reflects a change in how parish information is managed. The diocesan website no longer hosts individual parish pages, and parishes no longer have access to edit the diocesan website.

Instead, the Find a Church & Clergy directory provides a consistent way of presenting key parish information while linking people directly to each parish's own website for more information about its community.

Parishes can contact Dani Leitis at dani.leitis@niagaraanglican.ca to request updates to service times and other information in the directory.



A new home for resources

For clergy, lay leaders and others who regularly need diocesan forms and documents, one of the most visible changes is the new **Resource Hub.**

The searchable hub brings together forms, documents and other resources in one place, making it easier to find information without knowing which section of the website it might be stored under.

The goal is not simply to provide a larger library, but to make that library easier to use.

"There's a huge amount of knowledge and resources within the diocese," says Leitis. "Part of my job with this project was asking, 'How do we make that knowledge easier for people to access?' The Resource Hub is one of the biggest steps we've taken in that direction."

Accessibility from the beginning

Accessibility was also an important consideration throughout the redesign.

A diocesan website serves people with a wide range of abilities, experiences and ways of accessing information. That includes people who use assistive technologies, people with visual or hearing impairments, people who have difficulty navigating complex websites, and people who simply benefit from clear, straightforward information.

The diocese also serves communities in rural areas where reliable high-speed internet is not always available, making performance and ease of use important considerations.

"Accessibility isn't just about checking a technical box," says Leitis. "It's about asking whether people can actually access the information we're providing and participate in the life of the diocese."

Still growing

Although the new website has launched, the work does not end with launch day.

Additional content updates and improvements will continue over the coming weeks and months as the diocese continues to review the site and respond to feedback.

"We knew going into this that we weren't going to launch a website and never touch it again," says Leitis. "We took a 600-page website and brought it down to 73. A website like this needs to keep changing as the diocese changes. We're going to keep listening, keep improving and keep looking for ways to make it more useful."

The project has involved staff from across the Synod Office, who contributed content, reviewed information, tested features and provided feedback throughout the process. The diocese also received feedback from users across the diocese early in the process through a website survey and developed an in-depth RFP with a third-party consultant to ensure all aspects of the project had been considered.

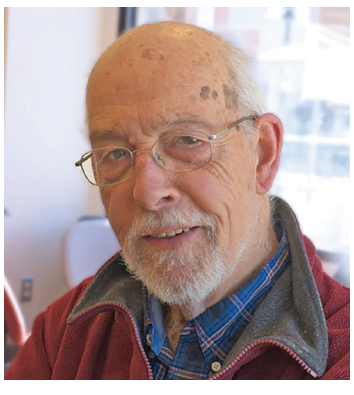
Leitis says that collaboration was essential to the project.

"A website this large touches almost every area of our work, so this couldn't have been a communications project alone," she says. "I'm really grateful to everyone who took the time to help us think through what their ministry areas need and what our users need from us."

The new website is now live at **niagaraanglican.ca**. While there is still work to do, its purpose is straightforward: to make the diocese easier to find, easier to navigate and easier to connect with, whether you're visiting for the first time or have been part of the Anglican Church for years.

In other words

Is evangelism ethical?



JOHN BOWEN

Evangelism is a word that Anglicans love to hate. Although I was professor of evangelism at Wycliffe College for twenty years, I still find that word an embarrassment.

There are good reasons to dislike the word. David Novak, a professor of Jewish studies at the University of Toronto, said that evangelists "inevitably come across as men and women who are so self-righteous that they feel no moral compunction about denigrating other faiths and their cultures for the sake of cajoling their adherents to cease being what they have been and change their identity by becoming what the missionaries are." Ouch. That's pretty damning. Doesn't sound much like Jesus, does it? After all, it was said of him, the model for all evangelists, that "the common people heard him gladly."

Secular evangelism

I am at an age where people ask me to write blurbs for their books. One such was a book called *The Ethics of Evangelism*, by my friend Elmer Thiessen.

He begins the book with a surprising argument: he believes we are all evangelists, whether we know it or not, whether we are Christians or not. Evangelism is a natural and universal thing that enables friendships and social life in general. What on earth does he mean? Well, he says, we all share good news: "Have you seen this movie? It's amazing!" "You have to come with me and try this new restaurant!" "My favourite novelist has a new novel out, and it's her best. Can I lend it to you?" In all of those cases, we are sharing an enthusiasm, a conviction, hoping that the other person will respond and share our enjoyment.

Thiessen then talks about how businesses unashamedly co-opt the word evangelist. Apparently, the head of the Kellogg's company in England calls himself "a cereal evangelist" (pun doubtless intended). Until this summer, Vint Cerf was Chief Internet Evangelist for Google. The former head of Starbucks told his staff that their goal should be to create evangelists out of every customer—meaning, visitors to Starbucks would become so enthusiastic about their experience that they would recommend it to everybody else. There is even a book on business strategy, called *Creating Customer Evangelists*, which recommends the same approach.

Evangelism with a conscience

So how exactly does ethical evangelism work? There are many examples I could give, mainly of what I have seen in others, but let me offer a personal story. A few years back, I got to know a man—let's call him Fred—who was hanging out on the fringes of a church.

Over coffee one day, I asked him casually whether he would consider himself a Christian, and he said no. I asked if he knew much about Jesus or the Bible, and again he said no. I then said, "If you would be interested, I'd be very happy to meet with you over coffee to talk about the stories of Jesus." To my surprise, he agreed.

Over the course of a year, Fred and I worked our way through the Gospel of Luke, one story at a time. Each time, I asked him some questions, and he asked me some questions. I was able to explain some puzzling things, and he had some good insights which had never occurred to me. Towards the end of the year, as we were approaching the end of Luke, he said, "I guess I need to make a decision soon?" I said, "Well, that would seem appropriate." After some time of reflection, Fred came back and said, "I don't think this is for me." He was hard-pressed to explain quite why, but one reason he was able to give was divisions between the churches, which to him undermined the credibility of the message. (That's a topic for another day.)

The next time I was asked to speak about evangelism, I asked Fred if he would like to come and talk about his experience of being evangelized, but he was (understandably) a bit shy. Instead, he wrote some reflections for me to read out. Here are some of the things he said:

"I have had Christian friends my entire life but have never been invited to a one-on-one detailed discussion of the Bible. I have no idea why. If I had to guess, I would say that they didn't want to offend me.

"For me, it was helpful to hear about the idea of "joy" while reading. I also found it interesting that you were able to apply meaning to passages that were of little significance to me.

"Some of the most helpful discussions have been about self-doubt and shortcomings. As a non-Christian, I have many doubts, and to hear some of those same doubts echoed by a Christian is comforting.

"For what it's worth, our continued friendship has meant more to me than the Bible study."

Will Fred ever become a Christian? I don't know; that is between him and God. My job is to be a good friend, to pray, and to be patient. And that too is a part of ethical evangelism.

Neurodiversity

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

act of pastoral care. When the church pays attention to the needs people carry quietly, we begin to see the Body of Christ more truthfully.

Neurodiversity invites the church to reconsider what "normal" participation looks like. Too often, we assume that worship should be experienced in a particular way: sitting quietly, making eye contact, processing language quickly, socializing easily, and following subtle cues without difficulty. These expectations are cultural, not theological. They reflect a narrow understanding of human experience. And they can unintentionally exclude those whose minds work differently.

The Body of Christ is not built on sameness. St. Paul's vision of the church is one of interdependence, where each member brings gifts shaped by their own embodiment. Neurodivergent ways of thinking, perceiving, and relating are part of that diversity. Autistic Christians often bring extraordinary gifts: deep honesty, pattern driven insight, sensory attunement, intense focus, and a capacity for wonder that can enrich the church's understanding of prayer and worship. These are not deficits. They are gifts the church needs.

Yet neurodivergent people often carry invisible wounds. Many have been misunderstood, judged, or excluded because their behaviour did not fit expectations. I have heard stories of autistic children being labelled disruptive, autistic adults being treated as problems to manage, and families quietly withdrawing because church became a place of stress rather than welcome. These experiences are not rare. They reveal how fragile our assumptions about "normalcy" can be, and how easily the church can wound without intending harm.

If the church is to honour neurodiversity, our hospitality must become more spacious. This means creating worship environments where movement is allowed, sensory needs are respected, and participation has many forms. It means resisting the urge to interpret behaviour and instead cultivating curiosity, gentleness, and flexibility. It means recognizing that someone who steps out during the service may be overwhelmed, someone who avoids conversation may be managing sensory overload, and someone who fidgets or stims may be regulating their nervous system. These are not disruptions. They are simply different ways of being present.

Supporting a neurodivergent family member has changed the way I see the Body of Christ. It has taught me that the Holy Spirit does not work only through minds that are calm, linear, or predictable. The Spirit works through minds that are quick, associative, sensory rich, and wonderfully different. Neurodiversity is not a challenge to be solved. It is a gift to be received — and a call to deeper hospitality, where every person is welcomed as they are, and where the church learns to see Christ in ways it never expected.

Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

Upcoming Deadlines:

January/February – November 19
March – January 18
April – February 15

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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Creator, Creation, Community:

Indigenous Lodge Opens in Oakville

NANCY J. COOMBS

WHO WILL FIND PEACE WITH THE LANDS?... [AS THEY] RECLAIM THEIR ANCIENT HERITAGE, THEY WILL DISCOVER THE MEANING OF THE LANDS OF THEIR ANCESTORS. — VINE DELORIA, JR., *GOD IS RED*

"Our Gathering Lodge" opened in Oakville just before National Indigenous Peoples Day with a special ceremony in June. Indigenous people and allies of all ages gathered at the opening. St. Jude's Anglican Church sponsored the sacred plants for the Lodge's outdoor area. The gardens reaffirm connections to Creator and creation along with restoration of the land and community. St. Jude's has served on local truth and reconciliation initiative Debwewin Oakville's Ally Leadership Council, convened by the Oakville Community Foundation (OCF)—with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN) and Oakville community partners—from the start.

Elder Peter Schuler, an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper and advisor to the Lodge, describes it as a place for "healing and supporting reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples." The Lodge is a pan-Indigenous space in the Queen Elizabeth Park Community and Cultural Centre (QEPCCC). The opening ceremony brought together elders, knowledge keepers, and Indigenous community members, with members of St. Jude's and local, provincial and federal officials, donors and Oakville partners on traditional Treaty 22 land. One of Debwewin Oakville's initial aims, the Lodge reflects a "supportive environment for traditions, culture, art and community to be shared and celebrated," as the OCF states, which has spearheaded the Lodge initiative. The indoor-outdoor space will be used by Indigenous peoples from throughout the region.

Local Indigenous artist and OCAD student, Will Snyder, unveiled the Lodge's wooden "Our Gathering Lodge" sign he created: its name will be added in numerous Indigenous languages, highlighting that the inclusive space welcomes Indigenous peoples of all backgrounds and identities. Youth hope to use it as a safe spot to hang out and to learn from elders. MCFN O'Gimma Kwe (Chief) Margaret Sault has voiced her support for the Lodge and hopes to host an MCFN Council meeting and off-reserve member meetings there. Beading and drum-making, language lessons, ceremonies, and neighbourhood events are also envisioned.

MCFN advising Elder Peter Schuler—who has guided Indigenous-led consultations on the Lodge's design, governance and use—opened the day, after smudging rituals, with a message of hope and healing. Lodge council member Kate Dickson (Coast Ts'msyen First Nation, Elder, Pacific Northwest British Columbia) sang and drummed. Local Knowledge Keeper Stephen Paquette acknowledged the sun warming attendees, and spoke of the strong gusts of wind recalling ancestors' spiritual presence for the renewal of ties on MCFN's traditional territory of Treaty 22, an agreement dating to 1820. Then there were words of gratitude to donors and allies, and Lodge advisors, who had contributed to the initiative.

The ceremony's second part was a blessing and communal planting of the gardens, led by Elder Peter. Garden sponsors St. Jude's and Oakvillegreen's attendees planted together a wild strawberry plant with others planting the remaining ones. Indigenous plants represented include wild bergamot, milkweed, black-eyed Susan, pearly everlasting, smooth blue aster, Eastern white cedar, pale purple coneflower, sweet grass, tobacco, wild geranium, in addition to wild strawberry. St. Jude's had joined OCF in picking up the plants at Kayanase, an Indigenous-owned greenhouse on Six Nations of the Grand River, committed to restoring Mother Earth through native seeds, plant propagation, and ecosystem revitalization. Oakvillegreen Conservation Association also contributed plants. The outdoor area features a fire pit, a focal point for future gatherings.

Refreshments and locally sourced food by Chef Tawnya Brant were then enjoyed inside the Lodge. Its rough-pine design contrasted fittingly with the colourful mural featuring traditional imagery by local Indigenous design firm Jensen Group.

Corporate in-kind donations and other gifts by allies have been essential to bringing the space to fruition. St. Jude's parishioners and friends have sought for many years to build on the parish's living land acknowledgement, including its longstanding Indigenous Students' Scholarship Program and other Indigenous educational initiatives, while expanding outreach and community learning opportunities and resources, including an Indigenous knowledge library collection. Building Indigenous partnerships and friendships remains a priority. For St. Jude's, encouraging contributions to the Lodge has been a tangible way to support these relationships, as followers of Jesus and grateful treaty people. The parish's Rector, the Rev. Canon Dr. David Anderson, made a direct appeal to the parish and beyond to support the Lodge. The Indigenous gathering space is in need of support for ongoing operations and activities.. To contribute to Our Gathering Lodge: https://ocf.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/create/fund?funit_id=1303

To learn about Debwewin Oakville https://debwewino-akville.ca/.

As the event was winding down, OCF organizers dimmed the lights and turned on the night sky projector, providing a celestial display on the black ceiling inside. Elder Stephen shared his observations about creation while noting the universal wonder of watching the sky. Elder Kate added, "We are star nations."

Then stillness.

In silence, surrounded by the panelling's fresh pine scent, we understood that we'd just experienced the Lodge's first teaching. That spontaneous communal sharing made the unofficial part of the day one of the most meaningful for those of us who'd lingered. Transformation—history itself—happens in small moments together when we take the time to listen and to let it.

Nancy Coombs is a senior warden at St. Jude's Oakville.



Artist Will Snyder explains his Lodge sign to Elders and other attendees at the opening ceremony.

Photo: Contributed by Nancy Coombs

The Tree that is Still Growing: An Update

In the September edition of the Niagara Anglican, Stewart Carolan-Evans, rector of St. John's Burlington, shared an article about The St. John's Tree of Life, a bare tree that has been painted on the west wall of the church. "This tree is a visible sign of who we at St John's Anglican Church are: a living and growing community of people whom God has gathered in this place." says Carolan-Evans in a letter to parishioners. To be that visible sign, the tree will now be adorned with wooden maple leaves.

"Each wooden maple leaf, lovingly made by a member of St John's, bears a single name. No dates, no titles, no descriptions, simply a name" explains Carolan-Evans. "Each leaf represents a person whose prayers, presence, service, humour, questions, generosity, grief and faith have become part of the shared life of St John's. Both living members and those who have died find a place among the branches. No single leaf makes a tree, yet every leaf changes it."

Beneath the tree are the words that inspired the painting from Revelation 22:2: "The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

The painting was completed by Carolan-Evans wife Karen over the course of a weekend in September. Since then, the tree has begun to grow as leaves are added but it remains intentionally unfinished so new leaves will be added as the life of St John's continues to grow.

