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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



JUNE 2023

## New Church Space Consecrated for All Saints Mission



Bishop Susan Bell raps on the door of the new church space as part of the consecration ceremony.

Photo: Contributed

# “This is the beginning of something wonderful”

—Bishop Susan Bell

On Palm Sunday, Bishop Susan Bell did something that hasn't happened in the Diocese of Niagara in nearly a quarter century. She consecrated a new church space, setting it apart for worship and ministry, in the name of All Saints.

More than 70 people gathered at the new church space, located at the corner of King and Queen Streets in Hamilton in a newly constructed, 24-storey condominium building.

“You are the best news we've had in years,” said Bishop Susan Bell during the

special service.

As the first 'mission' established by the bishop under the new Mission Canon approved by Synod in 2022, All Saints is an innovative missional experiment gathered around a small, diverse, and evolving community.

Centred in the heart of downtown Hamilton, Canon Mike Deed, All Saints missionary, is working to build partnerships in the local community and

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## Congregations Join Together, Furthering God's Mission in Burlington

**“THE SPIRIT IS DOING A NEW THING IN BURLINGTON,” SAID BISHOP SUSAN BELL ABOUT THE MERGER OF ST. ELIZABETH'S ANGLICAN CHURCH AND HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH.**

With the support of their bishops and councils, the two congregations voted to enter into a merger agreement, and to begin their shared ministry together as of May 1. The site of the Holy Cross church has been chosen as the location for the merged church, called the Burlington Anglican Lutheran

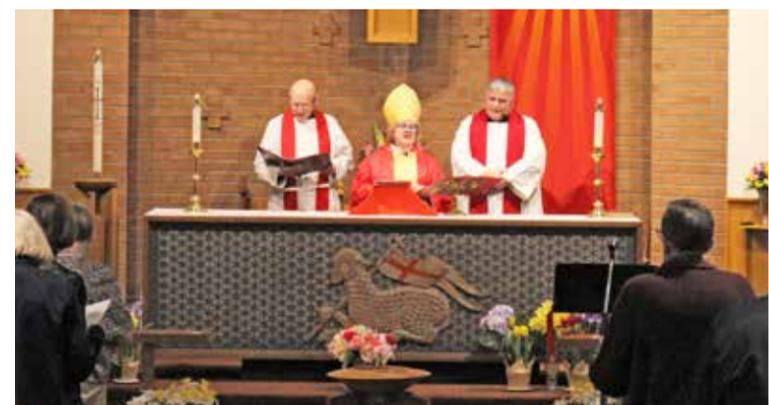
Church until they discern their new name.

“As a former pastor of Holy Cross in Burlington, it has been my great joy to see this merger process take place,” observed Bishop Michael Pryse, who served the parish in the late eighties. “I thank and applaud the Holy Cross and St.

Elizabeth's leadership teams who have so carefully advanced and shepherded this journey of discovery and have accomplished that which we might have barely imagined 35 years ago; thanks be to God!”

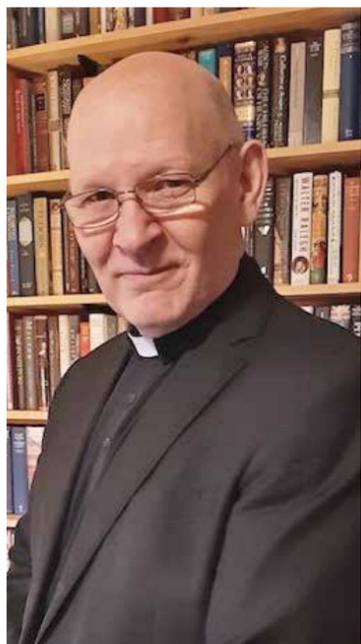
The idea for a shared ministry was rooted in 2019, when Colin Cameron, the pastor of Holy Cross, initiated a conversation with Canon Susan Wells,

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Left-right, the Rev. Michael Coren, Bishop Susan Bell, and the Rev. Colin Cameron at the Eucharist during the final service at St. Elizabeth's Burlington.

# You Are Never Alone



**THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN**

I wasn't raised in the church, and knew little about Christ or Christianity outside of what were then school assemblies with traditional hymns, and films about Jesus over Christmas and Easter.

It was 1973, I was 14-years-old, and had my first encounter with death. Teenagers are immortal,

and rightly so, which meant than when a schoolfriend was hit by a car and killed, I had no idea how to react and what to feel. The funeral seemed so foreign to me, like a sickening interruption in my emotional diary. Sorrow, fear, or just profound confusion? I didn't know what to think, feel, or do.

As I was leaving the cemetery, looking at the ground and trying not to cry, I found myself walking alongside the local Anglican priest who'd taken the ceremony. He saw my obvious discomfort, and asked if I was okay. I replied with a teenage mumble. "Don't worry", he said, "I won't try to convert you. Here to chat if you need to. But never think you're on your own in this. If my faith tells me anything, it's that. We're in this together."

Not profound, perhaps even banal in a caring way, and I certainly didn't consciously reflect on what he said. Yet I don't think I ever quite forgot it either. I later found out that the young cleric was a noted classicist and scholar. He could, therefore, have given me all

sorts of theology and philosophy, little of which I would have understood. He said what he did because it had a pristine and fierce wisdom.

Mine is a late vocation and I've been ordained for less than four years. But in that time, I have taken 24 funerals, some involving the most biting tragedy. I've also seen pain and suffering more times than I can count, and behind most of it is invariably the same sting—loneliness.

Just like that priest, I don't usually give people arguments for the historical reality of the 1st-century Jewish teacher Yeshua, or for the veracity of the Christian narrative. In my experience, witness is preferable to apologetics. What I do and will say is that the need for community, for the centrality of human solidarity, has seldom been more important or as scarce as it is now.

The cult of the individual holds unelected office. It infects our politics, media, and even psyche. Racial inequality still punches away, new generations can't depend on long-term

employment or their own homes, or even afford rent, and we feel monitored as potential purchasers or even criminals rather than respected as unique and precious individuals.

Most religions present some sort of antidote, as do some secular alternatives, but I'm here as a Christian, and as a priest. So, if I believe anything it's in a seamless garment, a sacred thread of continuity, from a man who preached love, justice, and peace down to a cynical, fractured, angry world centuries later. The Gospels are as proudly revolutionary as any political text, and they're as much about a lived life as an afterlife, where we're told to follow a code that roars at its epicentre a form of holy selflessness—love God, love your neighbour. What at first glance sounds so simple is, in fact, bulging and bursting with complexity.

Fast forward almost fifty years from that clumsy, awkward teenager. Now I'm a 64-year-old man, a husband, father, and grandfather. I'm back in Britain and at a high school reunion.

Lots of old—and, sadly, I mean "old" faces—and the girls with whom I was in love at school are now grandmas themselves. Over there in a corner is a man likely in his mid or even late 70s wearing a clerical collar. I look harder and realize I recognise him. Different but not dramatically so, it's that priest from the funeral. He'd apparently helped and stayed in contact with some of the classmates of the boy who'd been killed, and was here to say hello.

I approached him. "You probably don't remember me," I said. He smiled. "Yes, I do. You're Michael. I met you back in 1973 at the funeral. I told you we're not alone in this, and have prayed for you ever since." A pause, as I stand there amazed and speechless. Then he says, "I know you're a writer, and I've read some of your work. But I also heard that you were ordained." I say I was, I am. "That's good", he says. "That's really very good." Yes, it is. Not alone, never alone.

# Celebrating 55 Years of Campus Ministry in Guelph

**ANDREW HYDE**

On Saturday June 24, the Ecumenical Campus Ministry at the University of Guelph (UofG) is hosting a 55th Anniversary Breakfast and Celebration at Harcourt United Church (87 Dean Ave., Guelph).

It was 1968 when the Anglican and United Churches went in together to hire Ritchie McMurray to be the university's first full-time chaplain. A lot has changed over the past 55 years. For instance, UofG's enrolment in 1968 was around 6,000 students. Today, the university community is some 30,000 strong.

The chaplaincy has changed a lot as well. The Presbyterian Church now contributes to this ecumenical endeavour, as do individuals from a wide array of Christian backgrounds. The religious landscape of campus is more diverse than ever before, and the chaplaincy's work with the Multi-Faith Resource Team has never been more important. The challenges facing today's

young people, and their relationship with the institutional Church, are much different from what they were 55 years ago.

But God's faithfulness has remained the same. And that's worth celebrating.

Alumni, church partners, students, parents, fans, and

advocates of campus ministry are invited to ECM's 55th Anniversary Breakfast and Celebration on Saturday June 24. The free breakfast begins at 9:00 a.m., and the celebration program begins at 10:00 a.m. You'll hear reflections from students, alumni, past chaplains, and

more. This celebration coincides with Alumni Week events at UofG, and finishes in time for attendees to make it to campus for the President's Milestone Lunch.

To RSVP visit: [www.ECMguelph.org/55years](http://www.ECMguelph.org/55years)



# Congregations Join Together

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

then the priest-in-charge of St. Elizabeth. The two churches had a working relationship for several years, through the East Burlington Seniors' Luncheon project which was spearheaded by the late Canon Jean Archbell. At this point, the Holy Cross community was wanting to explore what future God might be imagining for them, one that would offer sustainability within a missional and discipleship framework. As it turns out, St. Elizabeth's was having similar conversations.

"The St. Elizabeth's community realized many years ago that sustainability for ministry was going to be an issue. So the Possibilities Committee was convened by the vestry in 2015 to research options and adaptations that would allow us to continue to support our members, our community, and our mission," said Ross Noble, a warden at St. Elizabeth's. "Finding a partner in our community like the people at Holy Cross, with common goals, aspirations, and

compassion was exciting."

The possibility for Anglican and Lutheran churches to do so arises from The Waterloo Declaration which established a full communion relationship between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

After a year of intentional conversations and relationship building, facilitated by Canon Christyn Perkons, director of congregational support and development, focused on shared beliefs and values as well as differences in culture, practices, and polity, the two churches sought to test out the waters by worshipping together. A combined worship team brought together liturgy and music, sharing the best of both traditions with worship alternating between locations weekly in Advent 2021. What started as a 4-week pilot was so successful that they eagerly continued worshipping together on Zoom and in-person.

The leadership teams looked



Members of the joint congregation pose for a group shot after the final service at St. Elizabeth Burlington. Photo: Contributed

for areas of commonality. "It became very clear that there was so much in common, such as our love towards the people in Burlington (and beyond), enjoyment we get from worship and music, and a vision of growth in our community," observed Noble.

"Trying to go through this process when we were physically closed was a challenge," said Cameron. "Canon Christyn did an amazing job of gathering us together and helping us build relationships that were at first entirely online. It was tough, it

was slow, and in the end, it was quite rewarding."

"By early 2022, momentum for a shared future was building, and the leadership teams set out a timeline that would allow for the development of merger guidelines and community consultation," said Canon Perkons.

"The members of Holy Cross are quite excited about the merger," observed Cameron. "We've come to genuinely love our siblings in Christ whom we've met from St. Elizabeth's, and we've been blessed so many times through

our coming together."

As the two congregations lean into their shared life on Lakeshore Road, Colin Cameron will serve as the first incumbent of the newly merged church with support from Michael Coren during the month of May.

"Drawing on the strengths of two traditions, we have a bright future in front of us – one where the Light of Christ shines brightly to lead us into and through the unknown as followers of God's will," said Cameron.

# Budget Committee Begins Its Work

Spring, the season when many will get back into their gardens, plant flowers and vegetables and enjoy God's creation, is also the season when work begins to plan and create the diocesan budget. "This season is both a challenging time and an opportunity to continue God's mission of building the kingdom of justice, love and peace in new and creative ways in the Diocese of Niagara," said Archdeacon Peter Scott, chair of the Missional Budget Planning Committee, alluding to Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, which reminds us that for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.

The committee's mandate is to create an annual mission-

shaped diocesan budget, directing resources to renew the work and ministry of the diocese, to respond to episcopal priorities and to align with the strategic vision and objectives outlined in diocesan Mission Action Plan (MAP).

One of the ways this was accomplished for this year was by setting aside \$50,000 to continue to offer rebates to parishes which completed a Mission Action Plan, allowing parishes to resource the ministry goals they had discerned for their community.

Four members of Synod, one of whom is a member of the Financial Advisory Committee, comprise the committee, along with the bishop, executive

officer, and treasurer.

From May through October, the committee meets monthly to undertake its work, consulting with the Financial Advisory Committee, the Cathedral Place Property Management Committee, and Synod Council throughout the process. The bishop and diocesan leadership team also consult with staff and ministry leaders to develop priorities and discern how best to resource emerging MAP initiatives.

Funding to support the work of the Anti-Racism Working Group is an example of how the budget committee has directed resources to support the objectives of the diocesan MAP. "The budget for this year is helping

to create a 'made in Niagara' anti-racism curriculum that will be far more life changing than anyone involved could have imagined," says Archdeacon Scott.

"The current diocesan budget makes a 3.6 million dollar investment in ministry, equipping us for the mission to which God has called us through this extraordinary time and continuing to make significant investments in ministry through our parishes and the wider Church beyond our diocese," says diocesan treasurer Kemi Okwelum. "We heard the concerns voiced at last year's Synod, and will strive to carefully steward the diocesan financial resources, ensuring essential supports

for our parishes and the wider Church remain."

Once a draft budget has been firmed up, with cost-of-living and inflationary adjustments and Diocesan Mission and Ministry assessments finalized, it is presented to Synod Council in September for review, before being shared at pre-Synod meetings with members for additional feedback. After taking what is heard in the consultations into consideration, a penultimate draft of the budget is presented to Synod Council in October to commend a final version for Synod's consideration. Once approved by Synod in November, the next season of the diocese's vital ministry begins.



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ANGLICAN  
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NIAGARA

**CALLED TO LIFE  
COMPELLED TO LOVE**



# The Divine Intention

BY THE VENERABLE MAX WOOLAVER

If you are out on lake ice in the silence of night you will sometimes hear the ice sheering against itself. This is the sound of the ever-expanding icefield meeting the barrier which is the shore. And if we are imagining glacial ice, the sound we are hearing is a voice of power which does not recognize the shore's constraint. Glacial ice shifts entire landscapes.

There are likewise powerful voices and forces within the silences of our interior life. Our hunger for enlightenment, like lake ice or the glacier, is not constrained by the shoreline of our mortality. We yearn limitlessly against the press of time.

In her astonishing book, *The Murmuring Deep*, Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg contemplates these interior voices and forces. From Psalm 48:2 she quotes: "Deep calls unto deep." She adds, "The Hebrew word that is rendered by the English "deep" is *tehom*—incomparably richer in association. This *tehom* [is] unfathomable, void, dense with watery voices ..."

If you are a praying person,

you have learned that your interior life is "dense with watery voices". Thoughts which will not reveal their origin, memories which come unbidden, 'to do' lists assuming a disproportionate authority, unnamed hungers, and fears threaten to drown out our prayer. At particular times, these contingent realities will defeat our best intentions and will, in fact, overcome the elemental urgency of our desire. The elemental intention, however, will always return.

The intention I am speaking of is your desire for God. This desire will always return because your desire for God is an echo of God's desire. Nothing can or ever will defeat God's desire for you.

If you are brave enough, and it does take some courage, to open the Anglican Breviary you will easily find The Prayer of St. Gertrude, page 1, (Yes, Page 1! I told you it was easy to find!):

"O Lord, in union with that divine intention wherewith thou thyself didst render thy praises to God, I desire to offer this my Office of prayer unto

thee."

Don't be put off by the 'wherewith' or the 'didst render' or the 'unto thee', or the word 'Office'! 'Office' simply means "this act"—sort of. Read her prayer slowly.

St. Gertrude's prayer gives voice to a startling desire and possibility: that our intention in prayer is birthed within the prayerful intention of Christ. With a mature, deeply vulnerable, child-like candour she seeks the marriage of mortal and Divine Intention.

Maybe we are overly concerned too often with the content and "quality" of our prayer. St. Gertrude shifts our gaze to our intention. Would the Risen Christ, who now lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:4), ever disparage your intention to pray? Would we ever disparage a child's intention to pray?

Despite our culture's general distrust of "intention", Gertrude's prayer, surprisingly and precisely, names the bedrock of our spiritual life. The bedrock of your spiritual life is your intention to pray in union

with the intention of Jesus. St. Gertrude's longed for marriage of her intention to the intention of Jesus takes us by surprise: the deep, soul-shaping voices that groan and whisper and sheer

within us are giving voice to our own intention to live in union with the Risen Christ. Like the lake ice or the glacier, we will never bow to the limits of the shore.

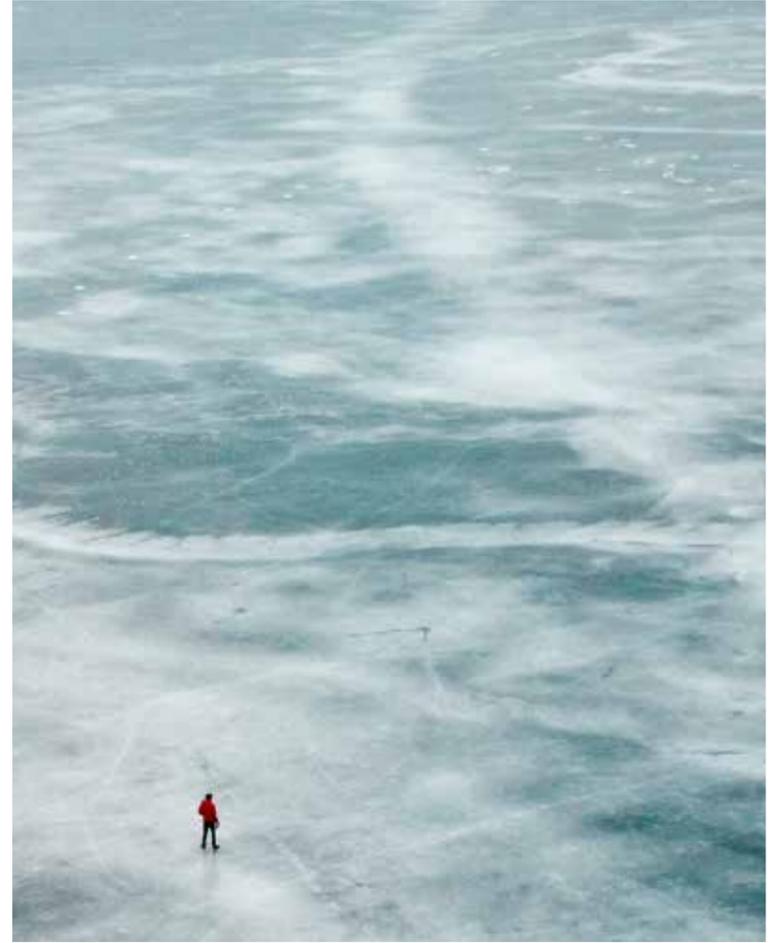


Photo: Unsplash/Intricate Explorer

## Circle of Friends Brings Community Together

BEV GROOMBRIDGE

On the first Wednesday of each month at 11:00 a.m. The Church of Our Saviour The Redeemer holds a very special outreach called "Circle of Friends". This event is just resuming after an almost three-year break due to COVID restriction. We are now up and running again and it is open to everyone in the community. Although the majority of those attending right now are parishioners, we were thrilled to be joined by a few ladies from the wider community, and we hope that more and more will join us for this morning of fun and fellowship.

At our meeting on April 5th, twenty-four ladies and two wee ones met to enjoy each others' company and to create beautiful

"Thinking of You" cards for our sick and shut-ins. There was a lot of laughter and creative energy flowing throughout the event. Luncheon consisted of quiche, salad and dessert. A good time was had by all. Together we are the church!



Working together to craft a greeting card.

Photos: Contributed by Bev Groombridge



## Children, Youth and Family Ministry Coordinator

St. John's Anglican Church in Ancaster ([www.ancasteranglican.org](http://www.ancasteranglican.org)) seeks a part-time (10-15 hours weekly) coordinator of our ministry amongst children, youth and families.

This ministry includes supporting our Sunday morning programming with children (Sunday School), mid-week gatherings with teenagers (Youth Group) and outreach to new families and unchurched families in our surrounding communities. Other programming opportunities include seasonal family events such as a Christmas Pageant, a Good Friday Liturgy, a Vacation Bible School, community service projects, Baptism and Confirmation preparation.

A full job description is available upon request.

For additional information, and/or to apply with a CV and cover letter, please contact the Reverend Canon Joseph Asselin at [rector@ancasteranglican.org](mailto:rector@ancasteranglican.org)

## Climate Justice Niagara

# Twenty-seven Parishes and Counting...

**SUE CARSON**

Twenty-seven, that's the number of parishes in the Diocese of Niagara which have committed to completing the self-guided energy audit—so far. The original 14 parishes are now collecting their utility bills for 2023 and starting to create a five-year plan to help them lower their Greenhouse Gas emissions by ten per cent.

The 13 new parishes that started working on the audit this past winter have been helped by a member of the Climate Justice Niagara committee with a laser room measuring gadget that makes assessing the square footage much easier. Christ's Church Cathedral is one of these new participating parishes and, surely, no other building can be more challenging!

Some parishes had presentations at vestry meetings and congregations were able to understand the value of establishing a benchmark to be able to measure future reductions in gas and electricity. If reducing the parish carbon footprint isn't sufficient to inspire participation, then the rising cost of

gas this past year might be the deciding factor! After checking some of the parish 2022 utility bills I discovered that costs had risen by hundreds, even thousands of dollars. The war in Ukraine is certainly one cause, but with the carbon tax increasing over the next few years, this trend will continue.

Measuring and starting on the energy audit can be done at any time of year. The only thing that is easier in winter is feeling for draughts around doors and windows. If things are quieter around your parish, this summer would be a good time to get started on a parish energy audit. Our two measurers have quieter calendars and driving is less hazardous without snow.

I am excited to think that every step in improving our carbon footprint demonstrates that the people of the Diocese of Niagara, and of every parish that completes an energy audit, are committed to sustaining and renewing the life of the earth.

So how does an energy audit work, you might wonder?

The most important thing that a parish needs for an energy audit is to have one or

two people who are willing to be the parish contact. It does help if they are comfortable with completing fillable forms online, but assistance is available so don't let this be the stumbling block.

The parish contact will be sent a self-guided questionnaire to complete. Some of the questions, such as, "How many windows are in each room? What type of stove do you have?" can be easily answered. Other questions, such as "what is the age of the furnace? What is the percentage of LED lights?" may require a little background searching. Nothing should be too difficult to complete and, if in doubt, leave it out, as new information can always be added later. Typically, the building walk-through should take about two hours, but it can be done in stages.

The second part of the audit involves keeping a record of the gas and electrical energy used each month. Most parishes find that the person who sees the monthly bills is the best one to record this data—so perhaps the treasurer, office administrator, or warden.

It takes time to analyze the data collected, but over the coming years, churches will be given graphs to show their usage, and suggestions will be made on creating plans for a better carbon footprint.

Climate Justice Niagara hopes

that more parishes will consider registering for an energy audit this year. If you have questions, please contact me at [d.carson@sympatico.ca](mailto:d.carson@sympatico.ca) and arrange for a visit to get your parish started. I am eagerly anticipating parish number 28.



St. John's, Jordan was pleased to welcome the former chair of the Climate Justice Niagara Committee, Sue Carson, as guest speaker at both 9:00 and 10:30 services on April 23, the diocese's inaugural Climate Justice Sunday. She also presented a Green Parish Accreditation certificate—at the bronze level—to The Reverend Pam Guyatt and Brenda Lane.

Photo: Contributed by Brenda Lane

## National Indigenous Day of Prayer June 21

Creator God,  
from you every family in heaven and earth takes its name.  
You have rooted and grounded us  
in your covenant love,  
and empowered us by your Spirit  
to speak the truth in love,  
and to walk in your way towards justice and wholeness.  
Mercifully grant that your people,  
journeying together in partnership,  
may be strengthened and guided  
to help one another to grow into the full stature of Christ,  
who is our light and our life. Amen

On June 21, the Anglican Church of Canada marks National Indigenous Day of Prayer in its calendar, the same day as National Indigenous Peoples Day. This is a day to give thanks for the gifts of Indigenous peoples, to pray for the ongoing work of truth and reconciliation, and to celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures, and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

*Fiercely* **I'VE GOT YOU**  
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A worship experience celebrating pride in the **2SLGBTQIA+** community

**4PM, SUNDAY JUNE 11, 2023**

**Christ's Church Cathedral**  
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Hamilton

JOIN US AFTERWARDS FOR REFRESHMENTS AND CONVERSATION

**ALL ARE WELCOME**

**In Memoriam****The Right Reverend Walter Asbil (1932-2023)**

Photo: Diocese of Niagara files

Bishop Walter Asbil, retired diocesan bishop of Niagara, died on April 8, 2023 on the eve of Easter, at the age of 90.

“Bishop Walter was a faithful and dedicated servant who led the diocese with the heart of a pastor,” said Bishop Susan Bell. “Each of us have great reason to remember him with gratitude and with love. I thank God for his wise and compassionate service to our diocese.”

Born in 1932 in Rawdon, Quebec, Bishop Asbil studied at Concordia University where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts in 1954, followed by a Bachelor of Divinity from McGill University and a Licentiate in Theology from Montreal Diocesan Theological College in 1957. He was ordained a deacon in May of 1957 and a priest in December of that same year. He served in several parishes in the Diocese of Montreal before moving to the Diocese of Niagara to take up the position of rector of St.

George’s, St. Catharines in 1970.

In 1973 he was appointed an honorary canon of Christ’s Church Cathedral in Hamilton, and in 1982 he was appointed to serve as a Bishop’s Archdeacon. In 1986, he was appointed to serve as rector of Christ Church Cathedral and dean of the Diocese of Ottawa.

In 1990, Bishop Asbil was elected to serve as coadjutor bishop by the synod of the Diocese of Niagara. He was ordained to the episcopate on November 1, 1991 and became the ninth Bishop of Niagara on December 1, 1991. He served as diocesan bishop until his retirement on December 31, 1997. During his long ministry he also contributed to the councils of the church, including service as deputy prolocutor of the General Synod and as a member of the global Anglican Consultative Council.

Bishop Asbil was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity

degree from his alma mater, Montreal Diocesan Theological College.

In retirement, Bishop Asbil served as incumbent of St. Saviour’s Church, Queenston, and then served as Bishop-in-residence at St. George’s Church, St. Catharines.

A service celebrating Bishop Asbil’s life and ministry took place on Monday, April 24 at St. George’s, St. Catharines. Bishop Asbil’s family, friends, and colleagues gathered to mourn his death and celebrate his life and incredible witness to the Gospel. Bishop Susan Bell officiated at the service, with Bishop Michael Bird celebrating the Eucharist, and Canon Martha Tatarnic preaching.

“Thank you, Walter, for walking with us, shaping us, blessing us, and, in the mystery of God’s own life, being with us now,” said Canon Martha Tatarnic in her homily.

**Remembering Walter Asbil, Ninth Bishop of Niagara****Archdeacon Bruce McPetrie**

There was a certain aura when meeting Bishop Walter Asbil. His welcoming smile and gentle ways spoke of a spiritual man of the highest calibre. Bishop Walter was a pastoral man who loved his people and was loved back by those for whom he was caring. If you ever had the chance to work with him, you know you were blessed. I know of no other cleric who rightfully earned as much respect as he. Even those outside church circles, in conversation, would volunteer that when Walter spoke, they listened attentively. When he wrote about the impact a decision makes on a particular subject, the letter was often kept, shared—and I know of one that was read aloud in the Provincial Legislature.

**Bishop Michael Bird**

Bishop Walter was quite simply one of the finest church leaders I have ever had the privilege of serving with in ministry. At St. George’s Church in St. Catharines, I witnessed the profound and abiding impact his ministry had upon the con-

gregation there and how deeply loved and respected he was by everyone. Prior to Walter’s becoming bishop, Bishop John Bothwell once told me that, in his opinion, Walter was the finest parish priest in the Canadian Church.

In his episcopal ministry, Bishop Walter inspired his clergy, myself included, to think outside the box and to vigorously explore new models for ministry. He fostered wonderful relationships with the clergy and people of the diocese, and my family and I have many fond memories of Walter and Mavis’ visits to the churches I served. In many ways, I tried to follow his examples in my own episcopal ministry.

Above all, however, and on a personal note, I am most grateful for the beautiful letters of encouragement and support he sent to me, on a regular basis, as one of his successors in the Bishop’s Office. They were always very timely, and they meant the world to me. I still have many of them to this day.

**Carol Overing**

You could have knocked me over with a feather when Bishop Walter called me and asked if I could act as bishop’s chaplain for him. I had no idea what a bishop’s chaplain was, or what one did. I asked, he explained, and there I was in the role. It involves accompanying the bishop to various “bishopy” functions—of which there are many—and holding the bishop’s mitre and crozier when his function made it difficult for him to do this for himself. So, I spent many a time happily standing beside the bishop and looking very “bishopy” myself (except I never put the mitre on my head).

What I remember most fondly about Bishop Asbil is his sense of humour and his graciousness. He always asked how I was feeling, and about the welfare of my family. My impression of him was that he was deeply faithful, very loving, and that he strived to not take himself too seriously. At the same time he was mindful and serious about his calling as a bishop. In old-fashioned terminology, Bishop Asbil was a true gentleman.



Photo taken in September 2015, marking the 25th Anniversary of his consecration as bishop.

Photo: Courtesy of St. George’s St. Catharines

# Remembering Walter Asbil, Ninth Bishop of Niagara

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

## Canon Rob Welch

When I reflect on Bishop Walter Asbil, I think of someone who was gentle, nurturing and pastoral, but who could be firm and direct when necessary. One of Walter's key words was "gratitude" (he used it as the theme of one of his charges to Synod), and I think of his life and ministry with a same expression of gratitude.

Walter appointed me as vice-chancellor to my Dad (officially) in 1991 when he was coadjutor bishop and then as chancellor November 1st, 1992, after he became diocesan bishop.

It can't be overstated that without Walter, Cathedral Place wouldn't have been a reality. As bishop, Walter was determined to move the Synod Office to the Cathedral as a symbol of the diocese's support of the neighbourhood surrounding the Cathedral. Some others in diocesan administration, at the time, had a vision that the Synod office was best located in a commercial strip plaza in Burlington. Walter had other, better, ideas. When Cathedral Place opened, the Primate at the time, Archbishop Michael Peers, praised Walter's vision to those



Bishop Walter, Asbil, left, at the episcopal election of Susan Bell.

Photo: Niagara Anglican files

present at the ceremony.

Walter was also prepared to stick his neck out for those less fortunate. When the Mike Harris government, upon taking office in 1995, cut social benefits and transformed other programmes, Walter wrote an open and critical letter to the Premier. He decried the changes, saying they were "slamming the poor." Later Walter showed me a letter he received in response from a parishioner of a St. Catharines church, telling him he should stick to religion and not venture into politics. He put the letter

aside with a smile.

## Archdeacon Marion Vincett

I just read the obituary posted on the website of the funeral home in St. Catharines where Bishop Walter had made his funeral arrangements. It captures him exceptionally well in every regard, but the phrase that caught my attention was: "He was a wise, fiercely inclusive leader," because my experience of him captures this reality.

I had been ordained deacon in 1989 and served my curacy at St Mark's in Orangeville before

being appointed to All Saints, Erin, in the spring of 1991. In 1994, at the clergy conference in Orillia, Bishop Walter came and sat beside me with his glass of wine in hand. We chatted briefly and then he said, casually, "Marion, I should like to appoint you as Archdeacon of Greater Wellington."

This was a tremendous shock to me, and my immediate reaction was to say, "Oh no! You can't do that!"

Walter smiled sweetly, and said, "Actually, Marion, I think I can!"

I became an archdeacon, but not before he had patiently explained that he saw the duties as being primarily pastoral to his clergy. My image of an archdeacon had been very much influenced by Trollope, I think! As far as I know, I was the first female archdeacon appointed in Canada, and Bishop Walter was always very supportive of bringing women into the leadership of the Church.

## Bishop Ralph Spence

Bishop Walter Asbil was one of the great bishops of our church—wise, kind, a gentleman in every sense of the word. He had a vision of where the Church would be in the future and knew our ministry must adapt to the age we serve in today. He was a mentor to many, but most of all a real, true friend who supported and encouraged the clergy and lay people. He served God and his Church with every day of his life. Bishop Walter and Mavis were the best of Christian examples for all of us and Niagara is an example of the best of what we can be because of the two of them.



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# Consecration of New Church Space

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



exploring ways to open the mission's doors to new ways of being God's Church. The mission's mandate is shaped by three priorities: to deepen relationship with God, to walk with its neighbours, and to work for justice. "The new building with its huge windows looking out onto the busyness of King Street," said Canon Deed, "is another constant reminder to seek and meet God in the world and to be invitational."

"All Saints has a long history of commitment to social justice, advocacy, and supporting those who are marginalized by society," noted Canon Deed. The mission action plan for All Saints envisions the new ministry space to be a visible presence in downtown Hamilton, partnering with community-based programs and participating in local initiatives for the good of the neighbourhood.

While the new space has people excited for the future, over the years the people of All

Saints have learned to travel light and have been careful to preserve only what is life-giving from the past life as a parish. Two stained glass windows and the century-old baptismal font, which is prominently displayed and viewable from the street, have been incorporated into the new worship space.

"Well done for conserving what is best and most important," said Bishop Bell. "And for letting go, so that the future is not fettered by the past." The past, the bishop urged, provides the mission with the security to build the future with confidence, buoyed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

It's been a long journey to this point. The people of All Saints have been waiting for a permanent worship space to call their own since 2009 after their former church, which dated back to the 1870s, was deemed structurally unsound, as a result of a rare earthquake in 1998. The building's foundation

was cracked as a result and this led to the removal of the stone spire; restoration costs were estimated at more than \$6 million. Consequently, the parish voted to leave the building and build a new church to continue ministry in the neighbourhood they have served for more than a century. The church and other buildings on the property were eventually demolished in 2016.

Since that time, the people of All Saints have worshipped in a nursing home, a local Presbyterian church, and with their Anglican siblings at St. Paul's, Westdale. During the final leg of their pilgrimage, the Good Shepherd community in Hamilton exhibited generous hospitality time and again, as timelines shifted.

"I hope that you, All Saints, have inaugurated a moment, a movement, and a season," said Bishop Bell. "And that there will be plenty more new churches to come."



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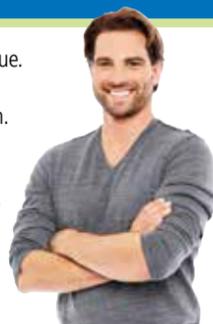
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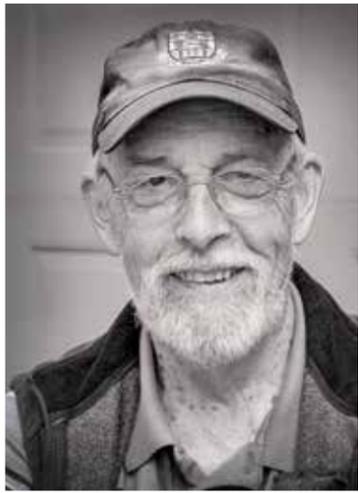
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*In Other Words*

# Pathways of Evangelism



**JOHN BOWEN**

Over the years, I have discovered a great strategy for teaching evangelism. In any group I was teaching, I would start by asking, "Did anyone here come to faith as an adult?" In a group of twenty or thirty, there are always a few. So, I ask, "Can you describe for us how that happened?" They would then tell their story. I would ask the group to listen carefully, and report what struck them. The seminar would then teach itself! How come?

Coming to faith is a very personal thing—like falling in love—and yet there are some things that all such experiences have in common. The first thing that people often notice is that coming to faith is a slow process. There are no quick conversions—at least, of the kind that last, generally. For the majority,

it takes between six months and three years to figure out that they want to follow Jesus.

This shouldn't surprise us. After all, many of Jesus' parables are about farming and the process of ploughing, sowing, watering, weeding, waiting, and, finally, if all goes well, reaping. It is a natural phenomenon—but it is also a truth of the Kingdom. God's ways of working are consistent across physical and spiritual realities.

During that process, different people play different parts. It may have been a kind neighbour who just happened to be a churchgoer. Or someone who invited them to a Christmas carol service, which touched deeply. From time to time, I hear people say, with some embarrassment, that something a street preacher said as they hurried past on the other side stayed with them and made them think. God is apparently very unscrupulous. Or a friend told the story of why their faith is important in their life.

In most stories, there comes a time when those moving towards faith begin to hang around the fringes of the Christian community. It might not have been a Eucharist, which is very alien if you've never encountered it before, but it might have been Messy Church, which was invented for that very purpose, or an

informal Bible discussion group in a home. This is often called "belonging before believing."

It's not unusual for people to describe how they began to be involved in the things that Christians do. I remember doing a weekly Bible study in a coffee shop with a young man who was exploring faith. When the server asked what we were doing, I kept quiet and let him do the explaining—witnessing to the faith he didn't yet have. He was good with computers, so I encouraged him to give technical support at a church-run home for new refugee claimants. In other words, I began to get him involved in the things that Christians do, even though he was not yet a Christian. That's called "behaving before believing," and it's not an uncommon stage in the journey to faith.

At some point, those moving towards faith heard a verbal explanation of what it is all about. They may have asked a direct question: "So what exactly is this Good News you keep referring to?" and got a helpful answer. Or they heard a sermon about beginning the Christian life. Or they enquired about baptism, and were helped

to understand the words of the baptismal service. We tend to downplay the importance of words—"I witness by my life"—but in my experience, discussion and verbal explanation are almost always an important part of people's stories.

Often, people will have attended an introductory course to faith, like Alpha or something similar. Such courses are helpful in that they give newcomers time to think about what they are learning, ask questions, and come to their own decisions. But they also build community, usually over food—another opportunity to belong before believing.

Other factors come up regularly—a personal crisis, wondering about the meaning of life, guilt over wrongdoing, and so on. The order in which these things occur may vary, as may the rate of progress—of course. God works with us individually. But there is always a gradual process involving these different factors.

In her book *Travelling Mercies*, the writer Ann Lamott describes her conversion like this:

"My coming to faith did not always start with a leap but

rather a series of staggers from what seemed like one safe place to another. Like lily pads, round and green, these places summoned and then held me up while I grew," says Lamott. "Each prepared me for the next leaf on which I would land, and in this way I moved across the swamp of doubt and fear."

The people I have invited to tell their stories all described a sequence of safe places. Lily pads, if you will, to borrow from Lamott. Can we provide lily pads for those who are seeking faith? That might require some thinking outside our usual boxes.

One Advent, our church advertised a series of three sermons on Christmas movies—*A Christmas Carol*, *Miracle on 34th Street*, and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. A young woman walking past one Sunday morning saw the poster on the sidewalk, walked in to listen, and ended up being baptised the following Easter. The unconventional sermon topics were one of the final lily pads on her way to baptism. Does all this sound interesting? Exciting, even? If so, maybe we need to think again about evangelism.



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# A Journey of Pilgrimage and Discovery for Young Adults

Young adults aged 20-26 have been invited from across the Anglican Church of Canada to journey on a 12-day pilgrimage to the Holy Land from May 1 – 12, including three from our diocese. Anna Tavakoli (St. Cuthbert's, Oakville), Mackenzie Colbourne-Tennant (University of Guelph Chaplaincy), and Adam MacNeil (Church of the Resurrection, Hamilton) will attend, along with 20 other young adult participants. We asked each to share a brief reflection as they prepare for their pilgrimage.

## Anna Tavakoli

Growing up, I was not very familiar with Christianity and what it meant to be a Christian.

As I got older, I became interested in learning more about the Bible and who Jesus was. I began reading the Bible for kids when I was twelve years old. Prior to immigrating to Canada, I had the opportunity to visit different churches when I travelled to Europe. The first time I went inside a church, it felt strangely familiar, and I was more drawn to Christianity. Since moving to Canada, I have been attending St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church in Oakville regularly, and have taken many roles in my parish as well as our diocese. Currently, I am the youth leader and Sunday School teacher at St. Cuthbert's. I am confident that joining this pilgrimage will help me build a stronger relationship with God, and seeing the places where Jesus walked and performed miracles in person will be an invaluable experience. Lastly, as a child and youth minister, gaining this experience will be very beneficial to my teachings and my knowledge of Christianity.

Besides tasting the amazing Middle Eastern food, I am most looking forward to visiting other Christian Palestinian young adults and learning about their faith journey and experience living in Israel as a Christian. I am hoping that I could amplify their voice once I return to Canada and advocate for their rights.

I am most excited to see the Jordan River, where Jesus was baptized, and I am hoping to renew my baptismal vows with my fellow pilgrims. My baptism at St. Cuthbert's was a major milestone in my faith journey



Anna Tavakoli and Adam MacNeil (R) attended the weekly Cathedral Place staff worship and were commissioned by Bishop Susan Bell ahead of their pilgrimage. Mackenzie Colbourne-Tennant was unable to attend. They were joined by Sarah Bird, Program Consultant, Children, Youth and Family Ministry, who is on the left.

Photo: Contributed by Sarah Bird

and what better way to relive the biblical experience!

## Mackenzie Colbourne-Tennant

Over the past few years, I have been working through prayer and action to grow my faith in such a way that I can better understand God in not only my life but as He works in others as well. This includes how our understanding of God and His wonders shapes and is shaped by the cultural teachings around us. It is this understanding that encouraged me to pursue my study of Anthropology at university in the first place. Having learned in school all about how the places where we grow up and choose to make our lives can have a profound impact on how we navigate the world, the ability to explore the Christian faith in the landscape where Christ Himself and the apostles would have known and grown is an immeasurable privilege to partake in. So often our faith and understanding of Christ is shaped by the cultural and physical landscapes around us; it is in glimpsing the cultures that may have encouraged many tenets of our faith to blossom that we will be able to better return to our own communities with fuller, more open hearts. I look forward to joining this pilgrimage as a way to bring first-hand experience of this understanding back to my community.

With such an amazing itinerary planned it is difficult to choose any one thing that I

am most looking forward to, but I can say that I am especially excited to visit Magdala and Jerusalem. Not only do both of these places have such beautiful Biblical attachment and were places of faith, loyalty and miracles, but also have a deep and rich on-going story that I long to learn more about.

I think one of the things that brings me great comfort in my faith is the knowledge that Christ's love calls to such a diverse and dynamic flock of believers. One of part of Jesus' story that I am most excited to see and walk amidst in this pilgrimage is how this love, and His open-armed acceptance of any who wished to know His grace is still reflected in so many different ways across so many different cultures today. I look forward to seeing how culture and proximity to such sacred places shapes the lives of Christians in the Holy Land, and what about their lives I might learn from.

## Adam MacNeil

Last year I was told by a few friends in our diocese that I should consider applying for the young adult pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I was amazed that the Anglican Church of Canada had drafted this incredible itinerary and assembled a significant amount of funds to support such an excursion for more than a handful of young Anglicans. When this opportunity was brought to my atten-

tion, travel was the last activity on my mind. Uncertainty around emerging health measures and pandemic waves was still hovering. And yet, I found myself imagining what this pilgrimage could do and could mean, not just for myself and my spiritual journey, but also for the places and contexts in which I serve. After more than two years of ministry in likely one of the darkest times of the past several decades, it seemed like the opportune time to draw closer to the biblical lands in order to re-engage with the story of our faith and the story of the Church. I found myself reflecting: how might this pilgrimage cultivate a renewed commitment to the Gospel and provide new focus, energy, and vision in my ministry going forward? And so, I applied. I was so thrilled to accept the invitation to join a fabulous group of young Anglicans from across Canada on this incredible pilgrimage to the Holy Land!

There are so many things about this trip to look forward to; however, I am most excited about building relationships. I am excited to meet other young Anglicans from various parts of our Church and getting to know them, their journey of faith, and their roles in the Church. I am looking forward to sharing this experience with them, as we walk in the footsteps of Jesus and talk about life, theology, and the challenges our world and our demographic faces.

Furthermore, I am looking forward to establishing relationships with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem: getting to know Christians in the area, and seeking ways to partner with them in God's mission in the world. Lastly, I am excited to learn more from our Jewish and Muslim siblings, and hope to discuss the possibility of more interfaith work and ministry going forward.

I love the story of the road to Emmaus. It encapsulates so much of what I think we are called to as Christians: to walk together, share in a meal, to reflect with one another, and to have our hearts burning with love for the God who meets us right where we are. On our last day of the pilgrimage, we will fittingly be on the road to Emmaus. I am excited to recall this story in that sacred place, and pray that we would have the eyes to see and ears to hear the presence of Christ around and within us.

*Upon their return, each participant will write a reflection piece that will provide a glimpse into their experiences. Please keep an eye out for those in an upcoming issue! If you would like to financially support future faith formation opportunities such as this, please be in touch with Sarah Bird ([sarah.bird@niagaraanglican.ca](mailto:sarah.bird@niagaraanglican.ca)) to learn how.*

# The Vulnerability of the Word

## The Editing of Mary Magdalene and the God Who Isn't Done with Us

**THE REVEREND CANON  
MARTHA TATARNIC**

We expect that the Bible will continue to have new things to teach us. It might be surprising, however, for many of the faithful to learn that what we think is in the Bible isn't always right. Biblical scholars are constantly studying the earliest available manuscripts we have of the various parts of Scripture, looking for clues about what was originally written, and what—over the course of hundreds of years of copying those Biblical texts by hand—got distorted or changed in that copying process.

It would be hard to identify anyone's scholarship challenging our Biblical perceptions more than Elizabeth Schrader. Through a compelling journey of prayer and curiosity, Schrader has recently discovered a visible editing of the earliest manuscripts of John's Gospel, particularly in the story of the raising of Lazarus, John 11.

As we are familiar with it, the Bible tells us that Lazarus had two sisters—Mary and Martha—and that it was Martha who, at the grave of her brother, proclaimed the truth of Jesus' identity: 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.' Schrader's discovery, however, suggests the strong possibility that Martha was an addition to the Lazarus story. Early patristic writings support the view that Mary was the sole sister to Lazarus, as well as identifying Mary of Bethany as Mary Magdalene. The odd editorial activity around Martha in several important early copies contributes to a picture of Mary Magdalene as the one to make the Christological confession at her brother's grave regarding the identity of Jesus, the one to anoint Jesus prior to his burial,

and the first to see him rise from the dead. Martha was added into the story, Schrader hypothesizes based on her study of these earliest manuscripts as well as the tradition and non-canonical writings, in order to distract the reader from seeing clearly that Lazarus' sister was actually Mary Magdalene. It was not just Peter and a few other favoured male disciples at the centre of Jesus' group of disciples. It was also the one called Magdalene, which means "the Tower."

Schrader's research is exciting, reminding us that our faith is alive and mysterious. But what I find most compelling about Schrader's work is how she frames it theologically. In the podcast "In Search of Truth," Schrader observes that John's Gospel reveals to us the "vulnerability of the Word." The narratives of Matthew and Luke draw our attention to the small, fragile nature of God's Incarnation in the birth of a peasant baby to a mother who, but for the mercy of a man who didn't impregnate her, would have been stoned to death for adultery. John's Gospel complements these birth narratives by speaking of the Incarnation as a simple utterance. That utterance is unheard by many and a threat to some. And while John reassures us of the eventual triumph of God's Word—that this is a light that can't and won't be extinguished—it is also clear that this triumph must take a circuitous path, revealing as it goes all of the many ways that human beings will put on our blinders and refuse, or be unable, to see. It is also clear that the Word of God ultimately seeks partnership with a whole raft of different, often disreputable, and sometimes downright disappointing, sorts of people to amplify and spread that utterance.



This theological insight is remarkably descriptive of life in the church. I don't always like the implications of what she is saying, but it might just be true enough to provide a moral framework for staying in an institution that can get it so very wrong.

On the downside, we should not be surprised in our faith communities that, we are governed and companioned by people who frustrate and confound us. The heartbreaking and sometimes horrifying ways that the church has subscribed to every version of racism, misogyny and abusive behaviour is part and parcel of this vulnerability for which God willingly signed up. The editing of John 11 arguably reveals a misogynistic impulse by the men of the church threatened and disturbed by the power of a woman leader. The church has been entrusted to the worse sorts of insecure, broken and blind sinners ever since. There is an immorality that runs as a raw, gaping wound throughout our history, and it is understandable that there would be those who would choose to jump ship and navigate their relationship with God in a different way.

And at the same time, God isn't finished with us yet. This means that while we might understand the reasons for the church's more rancid witness, we don't have to embrace or condone them. We can look,

hope and act for better. Even Scripture is no golden calf, frozen in time and cast into its final and permanent shape. It is a living document, and the both gentle and fierce breath of God keeps blowing through it to speak to us in ways that we haven't yet been able to hear. Schrader speaks not just of vulnerability, but also of healing. We are living in a moment where God is actively "healing" the church's witness.

Mary Magdalene was a woman who was at the centre of Jesus' circle and who was ultimately considered too dangerous to be fully seen. The Church has been quick to misrepresent her as a prostitute, and popular Christian culture has, for centuries, diminished her as a romantic temptress to Jesus or a woman hopelessly besotted with a Saviour not available for that kind of love. Her witness as a central leader in the group of disciples would be preserved by God in these earliest manuscripts eventually to shine in

the darkness. And although the faithful have been eager to reduce her to the female tropes with which the patriarchy is most comfortable, in the end perhaps what these impulses most reveal is the feeble vision of the church, and the truth about the Magdalene is only just at the beginning of its power to bless us.

Mary's story, both in Scripture and in the millennia beyond, stands as an encouragement to keep seeking and choosing a faith that boldly and courageously challenges cultural and institutional norms, assured that in God's faithfulness, those little glimmers of light will ultimately not be extinguished.

I don't like being part of a church that has been so unable to support the witness of women. But I am grateful that God has stuck it out with us, to invite us now to see and be changed. I am also grateful that God sticks it out with me through my various missteps and wilful blind spots. I may rail against a church that can be so disappointing. But I am both liberated and empowered by God's vulnerability and persistence. God's vulnerability commissions me to hope that I, too, could add my own feeble voice in witnessing to the light as I see it shining in all of our lives. God's persistence promises that when I, or we, don't yet see, then the story isn't yet done.

### Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

#### Upcoming Deadlines:

September – July 28  
October – August 25  
November – September 22

#### Submissions:

**News, Letters, Reviews**  
(books, films, music, theatre)  
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**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.

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# Deacons Called to Serve Across Niagara

**THE REVEREND DEACON  
RICHARD MIDDLETON**

When I was approached as a young teen by my parish priest to be the crucifer of our church, I think this was the first step on my journey to become a deacon. Marriage, parenting, and a job loss brought me to Ontario, where I took a job at John Deere Welland, where I worked for 30 years, having started in my early twenties. This job introduced me to The Reverend Deacon Ben Martin at St. David's, in Welland. He helped me find my calling. The Reverend Canon Jim Powell was at St. David's at that time, and he asked me if I would be interested in being a licensed lay reader. I said yes, and a was a

licensed lay reader for 18 years. A number of things led to me becoming a Deacon, but that calling was affirmed by many in the community. First, a neighbour, having learned that I was a licensed lay reader, asked if I would do her husband's funeral, as they did not have a church they belonged to. I did my best to offer a service honouring her husband, but with our Lord and Saviour as the focus. The family said I did a great job and they thought that I should look into becoming a deacon.

A few years passed and a very close friend's wife died. My wife and I were asked to do the eulogy for the funeral, and after the funeral the minister said that I had missed my calling.

He thought that I had done a great eulogy with help from my wife. One of our sons had begun going out with a girl who was tragically killed in a car crash. I was approached by the family and asked to lead them in prayer at the funeral. I was also asked to read a poem at the funeral service, which had to do with losing a child at such an early age. I did as asked, and after the funeral service the minister came to me and told me that I had missed my calling. I told him I was seriously considering becoming a deacon.

A few years later, the Anglican Church of Canada implemented the position of perpetual deacon, and I applied. In March of 2004, I was ordained by Bishop

Ralph Spence in the Diocese of Niagara, and I continue to hold this position today. I have been very thankful to do this work for our Lord and Saviour. In my parish, at St. David's Welland, I help with both Sunday services, and once a month I lead a morning prayer service at the Dunn Parish in Dunnville. I also volunteer at local homes for the elderly. I regularly visit two private care homes for seniors, and I do communion regularly in places that I visit. I serve as the Padre and Chaplain for our local Royal Canadian Legion Branch #4 in Welland, and I'm also the Chaplain for the District Deputy Grandmaster of the Masons for the District of Niagara B. I also drive patients to and from their

treatments at the Juravinski Hospital in Hamilton, as well as the Walker Cancer Clinic at the St. Catharines Hospital. I continue to help out with funeral services at St. David's Welland, as well as offering funeral services for families in the community when asked.

I enjoy this work and feel that it is what my Saviour and Redeemer wants me to do.

# First Retreat for CYFM Network of Leaders

**SARAH BIRD**

The children, youth, and family ministry (CYFM) network of leaders celebrated three years by gathering at St. John's Elora for a retreat in April. Eleven ministry leaders from across the diocese journeyed to the beautiful town of Elora on a Friday evening. As people arrived there were hugs, bursting hellos, and an excited energy. For many, it was the first time they had met one another in person. The CYFM Network of Leaders have been meeting over the last three years online through Zoom. This retreat was an opportunity for celebration, learning, and rest for the dedicated and passionate CYFM leaders who have worked incredibly hard throughout the pandemic.

As per the request of the leaders, the learning resource selected for the retreat was



Photo: Contributed by Sarah Bird

an introduction to Godly Play. Godly Play is a well-known children and family ministry resource that has been taught, shared, and offered across the world for many years. Judy Steers, chaplain at St. John's Kilmarnock and Godly Play instructor, led the group through a full session, invited

leaders to practise stories, and facilitated a "make it yourself" Godly Play build. Alison Steele, CYFM coordinator from St. David's Welland, also offered her expertise and helped lead the sessions, as she has been offering Godly Play at her parish on Sundays over the past year. She was trained through the

pandemic and has loved watching the children of her parish absorb biblical stories in a new way that encourages play and wondering.

The leaders were able to connect with one another and catch up over delicious meals. The group also honoured one of the members, Donna Ellis,

CYFM coordinator, St. John's Ancaster, who is retiring in September after twenty-seven years of ministry. The Network of Leaders has been a true blessing for ministry leaders as it has become a community that prays for each other, shares resources and ministry initiatives, celebrates one another through life's milestones, and is a place for people to share challenges and hard realities. This group continues to grow and welcomes new people.

We give thanks for the support of the diocese, which encourages this network to grow and flourish!

*If you are interested in joining the Children, Youth, and Family Network of Leaders please contact: [sarah.bird@niagaraanglican.ca](mailto:sarah.bird@niagaraanglican.ca)*

# Ordinations to the Diaconate

On June 4, Bishop Susan Bell will ordain six new deacons for service in God's Church. Every blessing to Mike Degan, Monica Green, Sarah Grondin, Charles Meeks, David Montgomery and Joyce Richardson Tufford! If you believe you might be called to served in holy orders, speak with your parish priest or visit: <https://niagaraanglican.ca/ministry/vocations>



Mike Degan



Monica Green



Sarah Grondin



Charles Meeks



David Montgomery



Joyce Richardson Tufford