

New
Year's
edition
2005

Niagara Anglican

News Perspective Reflection

for a growing church

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Epiphany
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2005



Fire draws 'huge' support for St. John's

Thorold parish overwhelmed by community generosity

In the face of adversity, they've seen the face of God and it is carrying them through difficult days.

A visibly moved rector of St. John's, Thorold, said the overwhelming support she and parishioners have received from across

the diocese and beyond has been their strength after a fire damaged the church on Nov. 20.

"To arrive and see smoke billowing out of the church was devastating," said The Reverend Canon Dr. Cathie Crawford Browning, rector.

The cause of the fire, which started in the kitchen, and left heavy smoke and water

damage in the kitchen and in the church, has not been determined, nor has there been an estimated cost of damage. There was also damage to the offices, both upper and lower.

"It's taking a long time ... there needs to be inventory taken ... there is so much that goes into a claim of this magnitude."

Executive Archdeacon Marion Vincett

said St. John's, Thorold, insurance coverage had recently been updated.

"They've got good coverage," she said. "But it's a very traumatic event."

St. John's parishioners could see "the face of God" in the "huge support" from parishes across the diocese and from another denomination as well.

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Niagara's newspaper odyssey

A commentary by members of the Publisher's Advisory Board and Editor
Diana Hutton

The Niagara Anglican tells the Niagara story of people and places, good news and painful news, says the Reverend Canon Charles Stirling. It has tried to do this in an open and honest way. It has tried to do this within a reasonable cost structure, that at times, sees some stories and pictures printed and others not.

As chair of the Bishop's Publisher's Advisory Board (PAB), Canon Stirling said when the budget synod adjourns on Jan. 8, the Niagara Anglican must be granted a budget in order to proceed into the new year. Without a diocesan subsidy of as much as \$36,000, the newspaper may fold.

Undaunted by the grim reality of losing its subsidy, volunteer members of the PAB – Canon Charles Stirling, former general manager of Brabant Newspapers, a chain of weeklies in Hamilton; The Rev. Canon Kristine Swire, Carol Summers, ON, John Janisse of The Dunham Group and Pam Claridge, a newspaper publisher in Orangeville – are forging ahead with strategic plans that would see the newspaper become self-sufficient.

The board has welcomed to team Niagara Anglican Ted Manning as director of marketing. With a proven background in advertising and promotion, Ted has taken on the challenge – on a commissioned basis – of saving the newspaper by bringing in more revenue through advertising.

Ted operates his own company in Thorold-St Catharines, and is a member of St. John, Thorold. (Ted is featured in this month's Getting to Know You column on page 8.)

Ted is confident that with combinations in the development of area advertising pages, calling on suppliers or services which need more than the local market, and aggressively going after national advertising, there will be a marked turn-around and increase in revenue.

PAB member John Janisse said the group is being proactive in attempting to save the newspaper. But, referring to the possible loss of the \$36,000 diocesan subsidy, he added, "we can't do it with our legs cut out from under us."

In reality, the newspaper can likely be produced on a subsidy smaller than \$36,000.

"I think the truth is that we need parishes to keep proper track of their subscribers, we need all subscribers to donate, we

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'We can't do it with our legs cut out from under us.'
- John Janisse



CRACOW ARTIST IMITATOR of Hans Pleydenwur's "The Adoration of the Magi", tempera on wood, c. 1480, National Museum in Poznan

Parish viability task force created

By JIM NEWMAN

A task force has been created by Bishop Ralph Spence to develop and make available tools for determining parish health and viability.

Only a few years ago, most of us could not have imagined the dramatic new urban development taking shape in many communities or the major demographic

shifts occurring in downtown areas of our cities. Nor could we have accurately forecast the significant increases in energy and operating costs that can quickly outstrip increases in parishioner giving.

In the October issue of the Niagara Anglican, Executive Archdeacon Marion Vincett reported during the past nine months six parishes within the diocese of

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Conflict is behind the notion of clergy unions

By ARCHDEACON IAN DINGWALL

In the news recently, we have heard of some United Church ministers enrolling as members of the CAW Union.

This has caused some lively conversations, and not a few laughs and giggles. Someone, for example, asked me if I had ever thought of a clergy union, to which I replied the only union that would accept me as a member was the Mothers' Union – and then only on an honorary level!

We ought not brush off this topic so easily and pretend, with humour, that it is not a serious matter.

I noticed in a press report, for example, one or two Anglican spokespersons who had indeed summarily brushed the matter quickly under the carpet.

Their words suggested the United Church, being congregational in polity, their clergy did not have the benefit or the protection of bishops.

That may be a valid point of view but surely it does not do justice to the subject.

Congregational conflict is very much a fact of church life and it is found in all churches.

Conflict is, more often than we like to think or admit, a present reality that confronts the Anglican Church of Canada.



ARCHDEACON IAN DINGWALL

According to sociological surveys, a root cause of conflict is found in the clergy versus the laity debates, wrangles and hostilities. Often at hysterical and high decibel levels.

Most of us could cite occasions when conflict in congregations has bared a seamier side of things that we prefer to ignore or deny.

The dispute might be focussed on what Christianity is about, but personality clashes are part of the problem.

Very often no solution is apparent and the easiest remedy is to remove the priest to another environment. What does that solve?

So perhaps there is a need for a clergy union or, at least, a need to discover a better method of dealing with personnel problems and conflict.

The entire church community needs to appreciate more clearly that when problems arise, they should be dealt with in real, open and helpful ways – knowing that “the problem” is seldom the fault of just one of the parties involved.

In church land, we find it uncomfortable and awkward to be open, frank and honest with each other. There are different reasons for this state of affairs but one is that often both parties begin from a premise of certainty – always “my certainty” without concern for other points of view.

Struggle for power

And, of course, the struggle for power is always present and, unfortunately, people on both sides deny or ignore same.

For me, it raises the question of individual integrity and our lack of a personal sense of security which causes us to be defensive and hostile rather than open and caring.

Obviously all congregations need to assume a major role of responsibility in problem solving. Just as obviously, clergy must too.

If, for example, we clergy wish to be

taken more seriously and with added appreciation, we need to be more open to evaluation. And, if evaluation is done in a responsible and sensitive way, positive things will happen.

Unfortunately when conflict and criticism is spewed out in a manner that no one is able to understand or accept, it becomes a “we / they” battle.

Dialogue

Dialogue is what is always needed and the parties involved most often need the advice, support and perspective of an outside person – be that the bishop or someone else. (Notice the deliberate exclusion of the word “debate” which suggests each side’s purpose is to batter down the opposition.)

In dialogue we meet as partners willing and eager to work together for the common good.

I, for one, would never oppose the establishment of clergy unions.

But I would rather see the Church (laity and clergy) working together in openness and with mutual appreciation, speaking the truth to each other in love.

Niagara diocese's newspaper odyssey

Continued from page 1

need increased advertising revenue, and until these make up the total bill, we need help from the diocese to make up any shortfall,” said Mr. Janisse. “Next year, this might be \$30,000 – but it might also be \$5,000.”

In November, the diocesan budget committee presented to members of diocesan synod five budget scenarios – using the New Niagara process – but only one (Scenario 5) will guarantee the survival of the Niagara Anglican.

At least two scenarios allocated \$22,000 for the newspaper. That amount is roughly the diocese's portion of postal/distribution costs to the national newspaper, The Anglican Journal. A three-year contract was signed in December 2002 sealing Niagara's participation in the postal program. That amounts to approximately \$21,000 a year.

Essentially, the proposed \$22,000 subsidy would mean Anglicans in Niagara would continue to receive the national paper but there would be no diocesan counterpart.

Needs a chance

The newspaper needs a chance to show how it can do ministry as a self-sufficient entity.

“We want people to see a Niagara Anglican that is evolving to mirror the modern face of the Church in Niagara,” Mr. Janisse said.

The future of the Niagara Anglican was questioned when it was ranked among the lowest of 18 priorities at four regional budget meetings last fall. Priorities were compiled through the exhaustive New Niagara process. Other priorities that ranked low included a new half-time position in youth ministry and continued support of Canterbury Hills Camp maintenance.

Canon Stirling said the Niagara

Anglican was set against other ministries for a share of funding that would guarantee its survival.

A ministry

“The Niagara Anglican is and remains a ministry in our diocese, ranking with all of the other ministry programs,” he said. “Some voices indicated the paper should be self-sufficient ... that would make the Niagara Anglican the only ministry put to the task of raising money.”

For the past two years, the paper has been exploring aspects of what Niagara people want to read about. It has, at times, pushed the envelope to engage in the debates of our time, Canon Stirling said.

“It provides thoughtful reflection on those issues, and has been a forum for people to engage in dialogue, even in a time of serious disagreement,” he said.

Volunteers

The newspaper is already produced at a fraction of market cost, thanks to the tireless efforts of the volunteer members of PAB. Its members are a mix of clergy and lay people. Each brings enormous talents and industry-related experience on behalf of the bishop to the PAB table.

They sit on the Publisher's Advisory Board because each has a fundamental belief that the Niagara Anglican – and its sister, the diocesan web site – is a ministry like any other.

“Our goal is to have a paper that people want to read,” Mr. Janisse said. “And not only Anglicans in Niagara, but also Anglicans in other dioceses, and non-Anglicans who are on the spiritual journey.”

“We believe the paper can be a powerful tool for evangelism. Parishes should be able to give copies of the paper to visitors, who will see the spirit of God alive and active in our churches.”



Photo courtesy of the VOICE of Pelham

CHILDREN OF THE Sunday School at Holy Trinity, Fonthill, wanted to do something different for their outreach project this year for Christmas. They are buying a farm animal for a village in need. The children hosted a couple of bake sales and through the generosity of parishioners and leadership of the teachers, they raised about \$200. The money will be forwarded to the Mother's Union who sponsor an orphanage in Madagascar.

Parish viability task force created

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Niagara have elected to disestablish and, by year end 2004, all but one was fully closed.

The reality of these parish closings raises some critical questions. How healthy is your parish? Is your parish reaching its potential? Why are some parishes thriving while others struggle? Why are so many parishes depleting their endowments to support current operations or defaulting on payroll and diocesan mission and maintenance remittances?

The Bishop's Task Force will create assessment tools for evaluating parish viability in the Diocese of Niagara. It will develop a framework for collecting benchmark data. Benchmarks are highly useful comparators, such as identifiable givers as a percentage of Sunday attendance, or freewill offerings as a percentage of parish income.

The task force's work will be consistent with the diocese's strategic primary goal to expand and develop healthy parishes and ministries. It will engage in a consultation and discernment process that builds on a basis of shared intentions, using an agreed-upon process and commonly accepted assumptions, categories and definitions.

At the outset, the task force will review the work of the Diocese of Toronto Strategic and Sustainable Ministry Working Group and the Diocese of Niagara Mission Strategy and Planning Committee. Both have done extensive work on parish viability.

Criteria and methodology

The task force will develop criteria and methodology for evaluating parish viability, and design a process to gather the necessary information. It will test and refine the evaluation process and tools, and create supporting documentation. The tools and materials will be presented to the bishop and the Diocesan Mission Strategy and Planning Committee for their use.

The task force reports regularly to the bishop and the Diocesan Mission Strategy and Planning Committee. The work will be completed by March 2005.

Task force members are Archdeacon Lynne Corfield, The Reverend Amy Cousineau, Catherine Cumming, Pat Leece, Archdeacon Dr. Fred Gosse, The Rev. David Howells, diocesan treasurer Bob McKinnell, Jim Newman (chair), and The Rev. Canon Michael Patterson.

SUPPORT THE PWRDF

Bill 31: Can we find a balance?

By THE REV. DOUGLAS GRAYDON and THE VEN. HARRY HUSKINS

Religious and spiritual care has always been understood as an integral part of health care. Chaplains and visiting clergy form part of a holistic comprehensive care team that addresses aspects of spiritual wellness.

However, recent developments around access to patient health-care information have raised significant concerns about whether chaplains and visiting clergy will be able to continue their important ministries.

Privacy

A person's right to privacy for the health-care information found in medical charts and records is very important.

On the other hand, health-care organizations could not function if their client's medical information was not shared with those who have a need to know.

To deal with this balance the Personal Health Information Protection Act, Bill 31, which addresses rights to privacy and the due process of disclosure based on a person's 'express consent' was passed into law in May, 2004.

Recent developments in patient health-care information have raised concerns about whether chaplains and clergy may continue their ministries.

As originally written, however, the Bill would have required provincially run and funded institutions such as hospitals, senior's residences, and correctional facilities to deny chaplains and clergy and pastoral visitors from our congregations any information about patients and residents.

To avoid such a situation, representatives of the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Anglican Provincial Synod and Bishops submitted a brief to the Ontario Legislature early last year recommending changes to the act that would identify chaplains as a health-care practitioner within a health-care facility. Recommended changes also included allowing health information custodians to be able to disclose information to appropriately identified clergy.

Spiritual care

The churches' brief urged the government to recognize within the legislation that

"spiritual care constitutes a legitimate and important dimension of health care."

These recommendations were warmly received by the Standing Committee and Bill 31 was amended in the committee stage to add an 'implied consent' provision.

Now, if a person identifies him/herself as a member of a faith group, the institution must provide spiritual care providers from the group with information indicating that they are in the institution, where, and how best to contact them, unless the individual expressly asks that this not be done.

Problems remain

Problems still remain, however. The act restricts access to health-care information only to health information custodians, and the definition excludes spiritual and religious practitioners such as chaplains and visiting clergy.

This means that while hospitals and other health-care facilities can let chaplains and clergy know that certain people are res-

ident in their facility, they cannot disclose more detailed information such as diagnosis or current medical status.

The implication, for example, becomes one where chaplains and visiting clergy can "walk into situations and circumstances cold," not being able to obtain information relating to the condition of the patient or parishioner.

Limitations

Therefore, depending upon how a health-care facility interprets Bill 31, the place of chaplains and visiting clergy, as members of a health-care team, could become severely limited.

The churches are working together with the Ministry of Health, the Ontario Hospital Association, and the Information and Privacy Commissioner's Office to deal with these difficulties and to ensure that local institutions correctly interpret the act - particularly the "implied consent" provision that provides necessary information to spiritual care providers.

The Rev. Douglas Graydon is the Provincial Chaplaincy Representative, and the Ven. Harry Huskins is Provincial Executive Officer.

Fire draws huge support for St. John's, Thorold

Continued from page 1

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thorold, was quick to offer space for worship and other services, going as far as to change its own worship times to accommodate worship by St. John's parishioners.

"St. Andrew's Presbyterian has been beyond amazing," Canon Dr. Crawford Browning said. "They opened their own facility so we could continue to gather and to do ministry."

Canon Dr. Crawford Browning said although she has no firm estimates, she "hopes and prays" the congregation can move back into its home in a few months.

"Everyone is helping out," she said. "We're coming along."

Particularly bitter was that the newly-refurbished organ, which was to be dedicated the day after the fire broke out, will again need to be inspected and repaired.

"It's been an unbelievably stressful time," Canon Dr. Crawford Browning said. "The lovely show of support, from the diocese, from the bishop who was beyond amazing, from the community really have been peace sustaining. We really feel not alone in this."



Photos by Ted Manning

FIRE TORE THROUGH St. John's Anglican Church in Thorold on Nov. 20. The cause of the blaze remains unknown, although it is thought to have begun in the kitchen. The church suffered smoke and water damage in the kitchen and throughout the church. Stained-glass windows were damaged or destroyed. The fire occurred one day before the church's refurbished organ was to have been rededicated.



Editorial

2005 is a year of opportunities

2004 was a year of challenges

Happy New Year! The Diocese of Niagara weathered an intense 2004, filled with challenges and opportunities.

From the complexities and emotions of same-gender blessings discussions, to hosting General Synod 2004 which installed a new primate in our very own Christ's Church Cathedral, to an exhaustive consultative process known as New Niagara which dared us to dream, to the disestablishment of six parishes, to the very real financial crisis in which many parishes – and the diocese – find themselves, from baptisms to ordinations and the Order of Niagara, to the mundane and marvellous realities of every day life, this diocese saw it all 2004.

And today, standing at the gates of 2005, we can look ahead knowing despite having a way to go, we have come far already.

Pundits may argue we haven't come far at all, that the chance to recognize fully our gay/lesbian brothers and sisters was twice withheld last year within our diocese. But they'd be wrong.

While delegates to General Synod paused for more discernment in the worldwide Anglican community, delegates

at Niagara's synod voted to move forward. With a heavy heart, as a bishop of the Church, Bishop Ralph Spence could not give his assent. He stated the issue will be revisited at the next diocesan synod in the fall of 2005.

Democratic process

The democratic process which allows the free expression and vote of the people was alive and well in our Anglican Church in Niagara. Not all communions allow their people this freedom.

The failure of the budget for 2005 at diocesan synod based on several concerns illustrate the Church's own parliamentary system works and gives truth to the statement that we are Episcopally led and synodically governed.

What was quite remarkable about 2004 was that despite the intensity of the issues at hand, Anglicans across this great diocese soldered on, at times under great stress, and at times in great celebration.

Battered, perhaps, maybe a little beaten but gathering our hopes, our dreams, our faith, we greet the year ahead.

We have faith that the spirit of God has guided our prayers, meditations and discussions on these issues. It is our hope that the Spirit will guide our actions in this new year.

A blessed and Happy New Year!

Letters to the Editor

The Church must lead

This was not the synod where the majority denied equality to a minority. But it is the synod where one minority was permitted to deny equality to another. What does this say about our commitment to protect the right of minorities?

We are a church born out of a persecuted minority, and yet we are often slow to defend the rights of others. Must we be such hypocrites? No! We must recognize the rights of others as we wish to have our rights recognized.

Today we are asked to recognize the love of gays and lesbians to be equal to the love of everyone else. Next time we stand up to demand the rights of an minority be protected, will those who oppose them say, "How dare you speak of protecting such things? First

remove the log from your own eye!"

We often hear about the Church providing moral leadership, but who says that moral leadership must be by holding back social progress? It need not be.

It is time for the Church to lead. It is time for us to move forward faster than others and to pull them along. It's time to move towards Christ's vision of a society where all are accepted and loved and each of us is permitted to love others in the way that we choose.

People have spoken of those who might leave the Church if the blessing of same-sex unions is permitted.

I say it may become time for people to leave a church that is slowing the spread of equality to all.

I am not gay, and I used to have trouble

sympathizing with those who were, but I once asked myself "How would I feel if someone told me I should not date/love/marry a girl, whom I loved and who loved me, for any reason?" This thought made me realize what it must be like for someone who loves someone of the same-sex but is told that relationship is of lesser value than other relationships. Love for others is one of the basic values taught by Christ. Who are we then to set limits on love?

This is a sad day for minority rights in Niagara, as they have been denied. It is a sad day for democracy in Niagara as it was a minority that denied them.

Tom Robinson
- Churchless in Waterloo -
tarobinson@uwaterloo.ca

Canadian Church has many evangelism initiatives

Re: A Reflection on Process, Letter to the Editor, November 2004, Niagara Anglican.

Iwas surprised by Susan Huxford-Westall's comments on evangelism in her letter. In particular, her image of evangelism as "standing on a street corner proclaiming, 'Are you saved?'" seemed anachronistic.

It is sad that there are still Anglicans who think this way, particularly one as thoughtful and discerning as Ms. Huxford-Westall appears to be from the rest of her letter.

Let me list some of the initiatives that have taken place in the Anglican Church of Canada in recent years to raise awareness and understanding of evangelism:

- After the Lambeth Conference of 1988 declared the 1990s to be a Decade of Evangelism, (then) Canadian Primate Michael Peers set up an Evangelism Commission, which, among other things, ran three well-attended national conferences on evangelism

- Two years ago, this Commission sponsored the making of a video entitled *Paying it Forward*, which has been used by many parish

councils and other groups as a primer in Anglican evangelism

- In 1992, Wycliffe College set up its Institute of Evangelism, and sent Harold Percy all over the country to teach clergy and laity about evangelism

- In our own diocese, Bishop Ralph made and circulated to all parishes a video about evangelism, entitled *Draw the Circle Wide*.

- Many books have been published in recent years to help mainline Christians think about evangelism

- Alpha, though not to everybody's taste, has modeled a kind of Anglican-inspired evangelism that is a hundred miles from street corner ranting

- Since his appointment, Michael Patterson has visited numerous parishes in the diocese – not to mention synods – to teach about evangelism

- Most recently, in September, Andrew Weeks conducted a diocesan workshop on Welcoming Newcomers, which is an integral part of evangelism.

This is why it surprised me that a commit-

tee member of the diocese can make the statements Ms. Huxford-Westall does.

Her comments are particularly ironic since she seems to be passionate about adult education (she complains that other people "fail to attend"), yet for some reason she has either not heard about or attended these excellent adult education opportunities in the past dozen years.

A contemporary understanding of evangelism would suggest that it is perfectly appropriate for Michael Patterson to be "Director of Evangelism" and not "Director of Service."

Evangelism and service are different though complementary aspects of the Church's ministry, as they were in the ministry of Jesus.

I would argue that in recent decades we have not done badly in terms of service (though we could do better, certainly), but we have been weak in evangelism. A director of evangelism can help us get the balance right.

John Bowen
St. John the Evangelist
Hamilton



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Viewpoints

The Windsor Report

My sisters and brothers in Christ,

The six-month anniversary of my installation as primate is upon us and I want to begin my pastoral letter to you with a word of thanks. Since June, I have had many opportunities to be with Anglicans across our country. We have a Church that is full of faith, life and energy.

From coast to coast I have spoken with children and young people, clergy, lay people, government officials, aboriginal leaders and our ecumenical partners.



– The Most Reverend Andrew S. Hutchison Archbishop and Primate

What I have discovered are communities of faith and love that give hope through the gospel of our Lord. I thank you for your ministry and for the prayerful support that I have received.

I write to you at this time at the request of the House of Bishops. We recently met in Saskatoon, with a spirit of reconciliation and fellowship marking our time together. The House passed a unanimous resolution receiving the Windsor Report with gratitude, recognizing its importance and commending it to the Church for study. A second resolution asked me to write a pastoral letter inviting the people of our Church to make submissions about the report.

The Commission that produced this report was created by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, at the request of the primates and was chaired by Archbishop Robin Eames of Armagh, Ireland. The Commission comprised 19 people from 14 of the 38 provinces of the Anglican Communion and who covered a broad spectrum of geography, culture and theology. The Reverend Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan, the director of Faith, Worship and Ministry for the Anglican Church of Canada, was a member.

It is extremely important to realize that this was not a committee to settle the difficult questions that we face about blessings of same sex relationships. Its mandate was to maximize unity within the worldwide Anglican family despite the differences that we may have. The recommendations were unanimous.

The report begins by describing the relationship called communion, into which Christians are called by God, and how this relates to the mission of the Church. It then describes the current difficulties and tensions that the Anglican Communion is experiencing.

The next section deals with principles of biblical authority and interpretation. How we hold these principles and make decisions, as close as possible to the local level, is one of the difficult questions that is raised. A clear challenge is the discernment of those issues that we can disagree about without dividing the Church.

The report then moves to its recommendations on the future life of the worldwide Anglican Church. It describes Instruments of Unity, especially the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and recommends the creation of an Anglican Covenant that would define the relationships among the member Churches of the Anglican Communion.

Further recommendations are directed to the Episcopal Church of the U.S.A., and our own Canadian Diocese of New Westminster, asking them to express regret that their actions were undertaken without sufficient consultation with the rest of the Communion.

It also called for a moratorium on the ordination of any further bishops who live in same gender unions and urged bishops not to approve Public Rites of Blessing for same sex relationships until "some new consensus" emerges internationally among Anglicans.

Another recommendation calls on bishops who have intervened in other dioceses and provinces to express regret for "the consequences of their actions" and "to effect a moratorium on any further interventions."

On my most recent webcast, available through our national Church web site (www.anglican.ca <<http://www.anglican.ca>>), I invited all members of our Church to share their thoughts on the Windsor Report with me. I continue to seek responses. I have also invited each diocese to make an official response.

These initial responses will become part of the message I take to Belfast, Northern Ireland, when primates of the Anglican Communion meet in February 2005 and again to the Anglican Consultative Council in Nottingham, England, in June 2005.

Our General Synod has recognized the integrity and sanctity of committed, faithful same-sex relationships. When we meet next in June 2007 we will need to address the outcome of these international consultations and our own Canadian processes to discern what decisions are appropriate for the life of this Church.

When the primates gathered in 2000 they stated that, "We are conscious that we all stand together at the foot of the Cross of Jesus Christ, so we know that to turn away from each other would be to turn away from the Cross."

My love for Our Lord and our Church compels me to address these issues with determination, not for the purposes of winning or losing, but to honour the gospel values that we all share. I pray that you will accompany me.

I close with the concluding words of Archbishop Robin Eames' foreword to the Windsor Report:

"The Lambeth Commission...offers this Report in the prayerful hope that it will encourage the enhanced levels of understanding which are essential for the future of the Anglican Communion. Above all I pray it will be viewed as a genuine contribution to what communion really means to Anglicans."

Yours faithfully,

The Most Reverend Andrew S. Hutchison
Archbishop and Primate

Life interwoven

"What is man....?"
Psalm 8:4



Signs & Wonders

– The Rev. Canon William C. Thomas
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I love driving in Hamilton before 8 a.m. on a Sunday morning – you could fire a canon down most streets and not hit a thing. On

this particular Sunday morning in December, the sky was a deep clear blue – and the only clouds were the wind-shifted contrails from more than 30 jet aircraft, with the most recent five fanning out from the rising sun like particle beams in a cloud chamber.

But just as I was approaching the junction of Hwy. 2 and Main Street, a car pulled out in front of me. As I caught up to him at the Burger King on Main Street West, I suddenly witnessed three pigeons fly up as though escaping from his roof hatch – and an explosion of feathers that engulfed the car. It was immediately obvious the fourth bird didn't make it out of the way.

What disturbed me most was the car ahead didn't slow or turn aside, before, during, or after the hit. It just kept rolling ahead with the same inexorable progress as the jets overhead.

The driver must have seen the birds scavenging the bag of fries lying on the road. I was far enough behind that sudden braking would have created no difficulty – nor was there any other traffic on the road that would have precluded a sudden lane change. The car just kept rolling on as though nothing of consequence had taken place.

There are those who might want to argue that pigeons are nuisance birds with a penchant for carrying disease and creating messes all over the place, and that one less is no great loss.

Others might suggest that in a Darwinian world, any bird too slow or stupid to get out of the way of a moving car, doesn't deserve to live long enough to beget future generations, and that the species is better off without it.

But that would ignore the impact and influence of the human population on the world.

If someone hadn't thrown the chips out of a car window, the birds would not have landed on the roadway. And if we hadn't paved over so

much land with our roads and buildings, there'd have been more natural food around. It really is hard to blame the pigeon for its own demise. After all, for millions of years, since the first proto-humans lived in caves on rocky cliffs, other animals that shared our habitat (like rock doves and cockroaches) have followed us as we moved out of one form of cave and built others (high-rise buildings, with their window crevasses, cornices, and ledges are remarkably cliff-like).

We humans are part of the created order, not something apart from it. Everywhere we go, we reshape the natural world around us and reset the delicate balance and interaction of living and inanimate things in ways we are only beginning to glimpse dimly.

The dead pigeon was an obvious and immediate example – but those 30 contrails were a sign of something with much greater impact and complexity.

On an otherwise bright clear, cloudless day, our presence was heating and distributing tons of carbon dioxide in the upper atmosphere, and the resultant clouds were now covering nearly 40 per cent of the sky – reflecting tremendous quantities of solar energy back into space, absorbing others, and cooling the ground proportionately. Who knows – under a clear sky, the pigeons might have been warned of the approaching vehicle by a flash of reflected sunlight. Indeed, tropospheric physicists can mathematically demonstrate that the movement of a butterfly wing in the Amazon basin can affect the formation and path of a hurricane.

All life is woven into a unified whole with the inanimate stuff of this planet. And there are consequences to everything we do. God does not expect us to plan out every action's consequences before we move a finger or draw a breath. But I would hope that when we see that our present course might seriously affect others, we might hesitate, or change direction. Or whenever a life ends, we might at least acknowledge its passing.

"I saw and I took note, I considered and learnt the lesson..." Proverbs 24:32

Doctrine...and all that

Much has been said lately about doctrine; issues pressing on the Church from all sides want to say something about 'doctrine' and say it definitively!

Perhaps as we strain to hear all the competing voices, it might be helpful to think about what doctrine is and how we can respond to the different demands of doctrinal discussions whirling about us. Doctrine tends to be somewhat dense and turgid stuff – here goes!

The Oxford English Dictionary defines doctrine as: "the act of teaching or instructing; a piece of instruction, a lesson, a precept"; and as "a body or system of principles or tenets". The Church's doctrine is found in the ancient creeds, in the decisions of ecumenical councils of the Church, and in various other historic documents.

Doctrine

Anglican doctrine usually is seen as that which is included in the historic creeds, those statements in Scripture which define that "body of principles"; the doctrinal elements of the 39 Articles and, to a certain extent, some actions taken by various Synods and, in particular, The Lambeth Conference.

Our ordinals, in both the Book of Common Prayer and The Book of Alternative Services,

refer variously to "holy Scriptures containing sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ" (BCP) and "the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the word of God and to contain all things necessary to salvation" (BAS).

Both sources also require the candidate to be loyal to the doctrine and discipline, and worship of Christ "as this Church has received them".

Hence, doctrine becomes for us that which we have received initially from Scripture and also that which we, through the ancient and honourable Anglican notion of Scripture married with tradition and reason, call our faith as Anglicans.

Interpretations

As in so many things in our faith and in our Church, it is not so much the black and white nature of doctrine which informs us as much as it is the nuances, the shades of interpretation, and the distillation of history combined with local episcopal authority and jurisdiction.

We sometimes distinguish between that which we would call faith and doctrine and that which we would call discipline and order. The former, doctrine, is that which we believe. The latter, order, is the way in which we live out that which we believe.

See DOCTRINE / page 6

Some good ideas from Niagara churches

Visiting churches in the diocese, I come across a lot of good ideas for worship and ministry. Sometimes I can develop a whole column out of just one idea, but this month I'll bunch a few together.

Helpful signage

Most of our churches have outdoor signs telling people what time our Sunday services begin. But St. John, Burlington, goes further. It has a sign telling people what time they end.

Of course for you and me that's not necessary; we know roughly how long a Sunday morning Anglican service lasts. But lots of people don't. Maybe someone without a church background will see the sign from the Dundas highway and say to themselves, "Well, if it just takes an hour, it might be interesting to check it out sometime."

Collection plates

Most of our churches pass a collection plate in the middle of the Sunday morning service, looking for money contributions.

The Church of the Incarnation, Oakville, is one that doesn't. Members know where to find a collection basket if they want; visitors are the guests of the congregation.

I'm disposed to this alternative approach partly because the bishop who ordained me, Lewis Garnsworthy, used to fulminate against collection plates.

I think they looked unbusinesslike to him, as if they were designed for casual giving, especially small change. Bishop Lewis wanted members to honour the principles of Christian stewardship by pledging, and then pay on their pledge the way they paid any other bill.

I have another concern. When money goes up at the offertory, it begins to look like a commercial transaction: we pay God, God gives us the Eucharist. And that's the wrong symbolism. Christ's gift of himself to us is really an act of free, unconditional, and unmerited grace.

Besides that, a money offering distorts the catholic liturgical action of the Eucharist, which is partly a re-enactment of the Last Supper. The offertory reminds us that on the night on which he was betrayed, our Lord took bread, and after supper the



The Itinerant Churchgoer

— The Rev.
Dr. Alan L. Hayes

cup. We don't read that he took any offering envelopes.

I gather that collection plates came into our worship in the mid-Victorian period, when pew rentals went out. I think they've had their day.

But if we must have collection plates, I like what happens at the Episcopal church in Nenana, Alaska, which is a very socio-economically mixed congregation. The priest says: "If you have, give. If you need, take."

Instrumental bands

Many of our churches have organists and choirs, but a few churches have instrumental bands, at least on some Sundays. They give extra life and energy to the music we offer God in our worship.

They also allow participation by those (like me) whose voices would ruin the choir but who do play an instrument.

I was privileged to experience a fine band at St. Peter, Hamilton. It had two violinists (one of them strolled), two guitarists, and a keyboard player, along with three

singers. The band was amplified, which gave it an extra boost of richness in a slightly cavernous church, and the words of the hymns were projected onto a screen so that those of us in the congregation didn't have to keep looking down at our hymn books.

During the song "King of kings," the kids in the congregation came out and danced, which was a lovely touch. I found the whole service wonderfully uplifting.

Coffee hours

Finally, many of our churches have coffee hours, but sometimes, in order to find them, you have to go down some steep stairs or through a few sets of doors or even to another building. Not all visitors will persevere, and even regular attendees may find it simpler to head home.

St. Philip, Burlington, has coffee in a room right at the back of the church, and since it's so handy, the proportion of people who stay is quite high.

Not long ago I was at a church in London, England, called St. Mary, Islington, which has the coffee in an area right at the back of the worship space itself. It really makes the fellowship a part of the liturgy.

Doctrine and all that...

Continued from page 5

We further understand that matters of doctrine and faith are usually matters which are deliberated by Synods or by Houses of Bishops whereas matters of discipline and order more often lie within the jurisdiction of the ordinary (from "order") or local bishop. (I caution the reader to remember that even these distinctions could be interpreted in many different ways even by those reading this column!). An example: the matter of the remarriage of divorced persons, widely and loudly debated in the late 1960s, was clearly seen as a matter of doctrine or faith.

There are clear Scriptural warrants about divorce, adultery, and standards within marriage in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' teaching.

Compromise

The significant arguments which this discussion elicited meant much prayerful consideration and negotiating, to say nothing of compromise, which allowed our Church (and many others both before and since) to re-interpret, as a matter of faith, this important issue.

My point is that this was quite clearly seen as doctrinal and not as a matter of order or discipline. Some did not agree; some others

maintain to this day that we erred in making provision for the remarriage of divorced persons.

However, the Church, acting through its Synods and its bishops, did decide. Canons were changed. A new doctrine emerged.

Such is the Anglican way; we are episcopally led and synodically governed.

Unlike some churches with a very exact and clearly laid out hierarchy of absolute decision making, ours is a much more collaborative and shared process.

Our Church also functions, certainly internationally and, to a certain extent, nationally, as a com-

munion. The word comes from the Greek *koinonia*, which means fellowship or participation. It helps to explain the nature of the dynamic relationship between the three persons within the Holy Trinity; it values qualities of interdependence, giving and receiving, with sharing life.

Truth

David Hamid, bishop suffragan of Europe, and a former member of this diocese, has written about communion that it "underlies the truth that the fundamental nature of the Church is relational: she is related to God, her members are related to each other, and our

churches are related in a community of interdependent, participatory relationship...including generous forgiveness of one another's faults and, as a result, being open and generous in our relationships."

The whole notion of doctrine – what it is and what it is not, how we decide and who does the deciding, what its implications are, and how we live as a Church within the tensions it possibly creates or supports – is with us in a big way at this moment in God's time.

We would all do well to learn, to think, and to pray about it.

ACW needs recycled items for Cuba mission

The Anglican Church Women of St. Luke, Burlington, is in need of gently used or new items for its Cuba project.

ACW Missions firmly believe in reusing and recycling. Are you able to help out when cleaning cupboards, moving, etc?

Needed for the Cuban Project

are old suitcases for packing supplies, men's dress shirts which will be made into hospital gowns; sheets, pillowcases, and towels which will be made into bed pads, sanitary pads, receiving blankets, bandages, small towels, and face cloths.

Baby supplies

Also in great need are baby supplies including receiving blankets, sweaters, booties, and hats.

Medical supplies such as

bandages, dressings, bed pads are urgently needed.

Also collected are used postage stamps, fabric for quilts, blankets and sheets for quilt backings, wool for knitting, thread of any colour, and used eyeglasses.

If you can help the Anglican Church Women of St. Luke's, Burlington, please contact Betty Hambrook at (905) 332-3174 or Muriel Swanson at (905) 634-0059.



Mark your Calendars!!!

A Family Ministry Initiative sponsored by Niagara's Children's Ministry

God's Paint Brush...

A Retreat for Families

Feb. 4-6, 2005

Canterbury Hills Camp

* This retreat is a gathering that aspires to create opportunities to enrich faithful, nurturing relationships and homes. The program will be based on four key factors developed by the Augsburg Youth and Family Ministry Institute: 1) caring conversation; 2) family devotional life; 3) family service; and 4) family rituals and traditions. This year's theme is based on the book, "God's Paintbrush" by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso and its accompanying family curriculum. Brighten up your winter with...new friends, spending time with your family in the Carolinian Forest, workshops for children, youth and adults, hearty meals, tobogganing, outdoor activities, lively music, creative worship times, family crafts, family cabaret and much more. *

Fee: \$100/person

5 and under free

\$375 Family Rate

Start time: Feb. 4, 7 p.m. – End time Feb. 6, 3 p.m.

For Registration & Information

Contact Dawn Alexander-Wiggins

Consultant in Children's Ministry at

(905) 527-1316 ext. 440 or

dawn.wiggins@niagara.anglican.ca

Registration Deadline is January 28, 2005

*

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ATTENTION, READERS

The Publisher's
Advisory Board of the

Niagara Anglican is conducting a survey about the Niagara Anglican newspaper.

PAB is asking you to tell us how we can better serve you. What would you like to see?

What do you eagerly read? What could you do without? To complete the survey, visit www.niagara.anglican.ca.

Those without Internet access are encouraged to visit their parish churches to have a copy of the survey printed out.



Parish secretaries rejuvenate at SNAP retreat

By NANCY F. REVIE

Spirituality on the front lines. Sounds like a battle, doesn't it?

The Secretaries of Niagara Anglican Parishes (SNAP) came together for their annual retreat and workshop to tackle this and other important topics. The two-day retreat was held at Canterbury Hills Nov. 18-19, 2004.

The program was packed with workshops, meditative sessions, guest speakers, journaling, labyrinth walking, personal reflection time, the popular Wednesday morning "Breakfast with the Bishop", and ended with a special service of Holy Eucharist.

Interspersed with the sessions was time for the group to network, swap stories and make valuable contacts to enhance their work experience.

Spirituality

The overall theme was Spirituality.

While all the programs were interesting, informative and enjoyable, the group learned that people don't grow through programs, they grow through spiritual journeys.

Everyone came away with a renewed sense of self and the challenge to identify and reflect

on their personal life experiences. The beautiful surroundings, the program and the fellowship all

seemed to speak permission to nurture and deepen Christian spirituality in each of the participants.

For the past 17 years, this annual event has been an opportunity for secretaries and administrators of Niagara Diocese to get together in a relaxing atmosphere.

The focus of the retreat is professional development and personal growth through information sharing and learning new skills.

It is a program that is supported and encouraged by the diocese through the division of Ministry and Outreach, and in particular, Bishop Ralph Spence. The program is planned and run by SNAP participants.

Spring Fling

The next SNAP event is a Spring Fling which Margret Sweetlove has volunteered to organize.

Details will be sent to each parish in Niagara. All secretaries and administrators are invited and encouraged to attend this event.

This year's Fall Workshop and Spiritual Retreat is over, but the memories will last a lifetime.

Hats off to the planning committee: Sonya Bolek, St. John's, St. Catharines; Jennifer Cawood-Fleury, St. George's, St. Catharines and Nancy Revie, St. Matthias, Guelph.



BACK ROW FROM left: Jennifer Cawood Fleury, Nancy Revie, Blanche Robertson, Caren Ritchie, Grace Berridge, Louise Tuffner. Middle Row from right: Sarah Clarke, Margret Sweetlove, Jayne Pratt, Diane Tepper, Arlene Book, Christine Priestman, Patti Harris, Linda Watson. Front Row from left: Joan Perry, Sonya Bolek and Jane Stewart.

Nine grads celebrate completion of Bishop's Diploma Course

BY JOHN MOORE
St. Luke's, Palermo

Bishop's Diploma Course certificates were awarded to nine graduates on St. Andrew's Day, Nov. 30, at the Christ's Church Cathedral, Hamilton.

Following the special Eucharist which Bishop Ralph Spence celebrated, the graduates and their guests enjoyed a dinner in Myler Hall.

Bishop Ralph congratulated the graduates - Doreen Bryant (St. Peter's, Hamilton), Michael Dufour (St. Peter's, Hamilton), Lesley Edwards (St. Andrew's, Grimsby), Robert Kirk (St. Thomas, St. Catharines), Marlene Minken (St. Peter's, Hamilton), John Moore (St. Luke's, Palermo), Joy Rawlings (Grace Church, Milton), Susan Sanders (St. Peter's, Hamilton) and Paul White (St. Andrew's, Grimsby) - for their perseverance in completing the course, and stressed the importance of an educated laity in the parishes.

The diploma requires completion of six courses of eight offered and attendance at a retreat at least once during the period of the courses.

Courses are hosted by various parishes in the diocese and can be completed in a minimum of three years. One course held in the fall and one in the winter.

The bishop also thanked the instructors - The Reverend Canon Dr. Mark McDermott, Rev. Canon Barry Randle, Rev. John Ripley and Rev. Paul Whitehouse - who have conducted the courses which are currently offered at Christ Church, Flamborough; St. Andrew's, Grimsby; St. Peter's, Hamilton; and Grace Church, Milton. He also thanked Jane Stewart of the Diocesan Resource Centre who is the registrar for the courses. She also arranged the presentation ceremony and dinner.

The first course of 2005 begins this month. It will focus on liturgy using word, water, wine and bread by William Willimon as the text.

The registration fee per course is \$35. For a couple sharing one textbook, the fee is \$45. For more information, start dates and times, contact Jane Stewart at (905)527-1316 ext. 420 or by email jane.stewart@niagara.anglican.ca.



BISHOP RALPH SPENCE poses with graduates of the Bishop's Diploma Course. A special eucharist was held Nov. 30 at Christ's Church Cathedral, Hamilton.

**Please support
Your Niagara Anglican
The Diocesan Newspaper**

Please use the envelope included in last month's paper, and bring your 2004 contribution to your local parish (cheques can be made out to The Diocese of Niagara)

or
Donate Online - at www.niagara.anglican.ca/Newspaper

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We Need Your Help!
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Father Mark Curtis

"Canada's Singing Priest"

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Friday, February 11, 2005 @ 7:00 P.M.
Redeemer University College
777 Garner Rd. E., Ancaster

Tickets are \$15

Contact Valerie at 905-777-3837 ext. 12431



TED MANNING

Director of marketing for the Niagara Anglican

Ted Manning, marketing director, Niagara Anglican

Life can unfold in unexpected directions, and Ted Manning readily describes such an experience.

"Charles (the Reverend Canon Charles Stirling, chair of the Publisher's Advisory Board) put an advertisement in the Niagara Anglican for a marketing director.

"The first time I saw it, I thought, 'Hmmm, interesting...' The second time, I thought, 'Hmmm, there it is again.' It was like a gentle knocking you hear."

After opening his own sales and marketing business a year ago, Ted was ready to explore a little further.

"A huge number of small to medium-sized businesses in the Niagara Peninsula couldn't afford a full-time marketing manager," Ted explains. "Typically, such a business can focus on the business itself or on marketing the business. Usually one or the other does very well, but the one not focused on tends to need attention."

His business, TT&T Consulting Services provides needed attention to such companies, so they can get on with what they do well.

Ted answered those ads in our diocesan paper, and is beginning what is hoped to be a rewarding relationship between them.

Ted's basic task is to develop a marketing plan, with the long-term goal of making the paper self-sufficient.

Told by the Publisher's Advisory Board (PAB) to "pick what you want" for his title/job description, Ted chose the simple but clear "Director of Marketing."

Ted has found PAB members very helpful, as they work to discern where they are now, and where they want to be.

Ted will play an important role in reaching those goals, and cheerfully admits that he has a number of "attack strategies."

"Contacting people and making relationships" means educating people about the newspaper business: "A lot of parishes and businesses don't realize how inexpensive advertising is in the Niagara Anglican (and they) under-use it."

To overcome this, Ted will visit

Taking the Anglican in new directions

our churches, not to talk money or solicit, but to talk about the paper.

He firmly believes that the paper can "contribute to raising funds the diocese needs. I'm enthusiastic about this," he grins, "and it will be interesting to see if I'm still as enthusiastic after six months!"

A student of human nature, Ted explains, "Some businesses may not necessarily benefit, but people are generous. I'm asking businesses to sponsor those who need support."

A bargain

Advertising costs in our paper are, Ted says, "a bargain in the Niagara area. Businesses may take out ads because of the exposure the paper gets."

For example, "Charles suggested an events page, with items at low cost for our parishes. I would ask other churches, such as a Mennonite Church advertising their bazaar."

Ted has ideas for fundraising, and wants to put his accumulated experience and talents of 20 years in the technology industry to work for the Niagara Anglican.

"If you don't have a plan," he says, "you're part of somebody else's plan, and I want to use (these gifts) to help other people."

Born in Niagara Falls, Ted lived most of his life in Thorold, but went to Toronto's Ryerson Polytechnical College.

In first year studies, "I spent all the money I had made! So I decided to continue my education in Niagara at a rate I could afford."

Always available

Working at a fine paper mill in Thorold "as soon as they let me in," Ted earned a reputation as always available to fill in for employees who developed "Friday night 'flu," and "made more on weekends than my friends who worked full-time at McDonalds."

In his three years at Niagara College, Ted began studying Electronic Communications, a natural sequence to his experience running audio and video programs at Thorold High School, but "ended up in computers."

Getting to Know You

— The Rev. Fran Darlington

"I was a kid who would take everybody's old TVs and radios — they'd come back as something else! I was never an A student — except science when I was interested."

After graduation, Ted "started out in a tech role, testing and troubleshooting microprocessor computers."

He moved to customer service: "I thoroughly enjoyed that, working with both people and technological skills."

Gradually, Ted moved into management roles, and was part of the group that developed the first international computer network for airlines.

Sales

Ted then moved into sales, fitting in "like a dream come true. I liked it because of the people contact... I love to talk! When I started college, I never would have thought I'd end up in sales. I was totally wrapped up in computers and electronics."

With his warm smile, Ted admits "I still like the toys!"

Acknowledging the benefits of experience working for large companies, Ted explains (they) "did some major training, especially in managing priorities, persuasion techniques and so on. It's given me quite a tool box to draw from, and I'll continue with courses at Niagara to keep my mind active."

Ted's wife, Terry, was a nurse, but now is the secretary for a lawyer who has been on a respirator for 17 years. Ted's fascination with human nature is evident as he describes his wife's employer: "An amazing man, with three children, and a compelling story."

Ted and Terry's daughter, Tricia, is an 11-year-old "gadget-inclined" student in Grade 5. Ted proudly describes his daughter: "She's got a good memory, and takes voice and piano lessons. She sang at her grandfather's funeral — she's got a great voice! We have no idea where she's going, but she's got great potential!"

Named for his family, Ted's

business is called TT & T Consulting Services. "I always wanted to do it, and I don't think that was an accident. My issue was being quiet enough to listen!"

Ted's faith is an integral part of his day-to-day life: "God has a terrific sense of humour. What you ask for doesn't come in a package — it's always a surprise!"

A parishioner of St. John's, Thorold, since childhood, Ted has been a warden, and served on parish council "for a long time, a rector and a half or so."

Fire

These days, Ted is putting energy towards overcoming the recent disastrous fire that destroyed the hall and office areas of the church, and severely damaged the worship space.

His sorrow is evident: "I can reconstruct the whole building in my mind. One fireman said he remembered playing with me in the basement. Another one, a friend, carrying out a heavy stand, asked me 'Wasn't your dad a machinist, always making things?' My father's name was engraved on the bottom of the stand."

Ted then cheerfully describes the hospitality offered to St. John's parishioners by the people of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. "They couldn't be more wonderful! They've given us office, meeting and worship spaces, and even moved their worship time for us."

Strength

St. John's new organ was to have been dedicated the day after the fire, and the planned concert happened at St. Andrew's.

Ted marvels at the strength and resilience of St. John's current rector, the Reverend Dr. Cathie Crawford-Browning.

Commenting on his pleasure in human contact, Ted says, "God gave us two ears and one mouth. What does that tell you?" Though he loves to talk, Ted is ready to listen to your ideas and questions, so please call him at 905-680-0615 to talk about the future of the Niagara Anglican.

With his commitment to God, to his Church, and to the Diocese and its newspaper, Ted's gifts will enable us to move forward with new hope and confidence into the future God has in mind.



We Need Ambassadors

You know people. You know business.
You know a lot of Anglican dollars go to businesses
in your area who want to attract more customers.
Will you introduce us to your local market
so advertising can find us.

To advertise in The Niagara Anglican or for more information,
contact Ted Manning, director of marketing, at (905) 680-0615.

ORGANIST/DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Ryerson United Church, Hamilton, seeks a competent organist/pianist/choir director to lead its musical program in a church with a rich musical heritage. See ad at rcco.ca or ryerson-unitedhamilton.com websites for further details. Reply to Sheila Guest at kilcoo@mountaincable.net or by mail to 19 Thunderbird Court, Hamilton, ON L8K 5Z9

—OUTREACH—



Welcoming newcomers at St. James, Dundas

Parish creates two-step approach to welcome, invite newcomers

In his charge to synod in November, Bishop Ralph Spence indicated the need to focus on evangelism.

He related several vivid images regarding welcoming newcomers to our churches. References ranged from not even approaching visitors to swooping down on newcomers and asking them to be wardens within their first five weeks!

At St. James', Dundas, the corporation has approved the following two-phase plan which was implemented late last year.

First Phase

The first phase involves three steps.

When a newcomer arrives at the church, the greeter of the day (who changes on a weekly basis) welcomes the newcomer, provides the person with a temporary name tag, and, if possible obtains basic information about home address, telephone number and e-mail address.

In the following three weeks, the newcomer is contacted three times. The first is a friendly telephone call, merely asking if the newcomer had any questions about the church, the liturgy or the programs offered in the church.

In the second week, the contact is by mail, but the process varies depending upon whether or not the newcomer did return.

If the person did attend, a simple card is mailed, following up on



NEWCOMERS TO ST. JAMES, Dundas, include (seated front row left), Arlene Long, Carleon Hardie, Joyce Kelly, Louie Maddock, and Bea Marskell. (Back row) Robert Morrow, Bob White, Irene Taylor, Mark Mainprize, Ross Kelly, Helen Denton, Jane Beckett, Barb Reeves, Lesley Ann Nicholson and Art Marskell form the welcoming committee.

the earlier phone call and again, offering assistance. If the person did not attend, the card is accompanied by the bulletin for the Sunday with a note indicating that the person had been missed.

The third week involves a home visit which is accompanied by a symbolic welcoming gift – a loaf of bread.

The second phase of the plan involves a five-week series for newcomers.

This has been done successful-

ly in the past, and the series has been revamped and invigorated for a large group of newcomers this fall.

Weekly meetings

The five-week series were broken into one weekly evening, for a two-hour period. Each of the sessions involved a short Bible study, some reflection and, after the first session, some time spent on topics of interest which were elicited in the first session.

The usual ice-breakers helped

to bring the group together at the beginning of each session.

Organizers had a template from which to work, but tailored the actual content to the needs and wishes of the newcomers.

The current session involved an examination of the history of the Church, a tour of all facilities and an explanation, and visits from specific groups within the church to explain their programs (e.g., Holiday House Tour, Women's Groups, music in the

church). The session ended with a pot-luck supper, which was very successful and allowed the group some informal time to socialize. An evaluation form was distributed to provide the planning team with advice on future sessions.

Anyone interested in more detail about the two phases of the "Welcoming" to St. James can contact either Robert Morrow (robertmorrow@sympatico.ca) or Helen Denton (hevans@interlynx.net).

Sharing a tradition

St. George's hosts Thanksgiving Dinner for international students

One-hundred-ten international adults and 12 children got a taste of a real Canadian Thanksgiving Day meal Oct. 19 when St. George's Church, Guelph, held its Sixth Annual Thanksgiving Dinner for the International Students.

Guests hailed from countries including Argentina, Austria, Brazil, China, Egypt, England, France, Guatemala, Germany, Honduras, Hong Kong, Iceland, India, Iran, Jamaica, Korea, Mexico and Sri Lanka.

Each year, it's a treat to introduce fellow students from the same country to each other. This year, it was two women from Iceland.

And, of course, there were many 'Canadian' volunteers from St. George's Church!

St. George's Annual Thanksgiving Dinner started six years ago when the Ecumenical Ministry of the University of Guelph approached the church to host a traditional Canadian turkey dinner for students who were left on the empty campus over Thanksgiving weekend.

One of the young women who attended the dinner again this year commented, "I really enjoyed myself! My friends and I will be back next year if you do it again!"

These students departed happy and full of turkey, and most of all, appreciative of the fellowship of the Outreach Committee and the generous parishioners of St. George's.

Linda Kapasky of St. George's Anglican Church, Guelph, is co-ordinator of the Thanksgiving Dinner for International Students

SUPPORT THE ANGLICAN APPEAL

Love bridges many differences

Most of you, if not all of you, know that I am a convert to Christianity. The family in which I grew up was Jewish. It was a good upbringing. That's not to say it was perfect because it wasn't. My family was as dysfunctional as any other in some way or another.

But, at least until my dad's death, I had the love of a mother and father and the relatively comforting presence of two brothers and a sister.

I did not convert to get away from my family. Yes, I was something of a rebel, which won't come as a surprise to most of you who know me. Nonetheless, it was not my rebel nature that effected this change. Rather, my conversion experience represented a profound spiritual awakening for me that had never before played a role in my day-to-day living. For whatever reason – and I have never questioned why – this spiritual awakening happened not in the context of the Jewish community in which I grew up but in a totally foreign context called the Church.

Telling my mother that I had converted to Christianity and had been baptized in the Anglican Church was the hardest thing I have ever done – hard for two reasons.

On the one hand, while I had discovered something amazing and life-giving, I could only participate in this by letting go of something that had shaped and molded me, and kept me safe until that point in time – that is, my family. On the other hand, I was acutely aware of the pain I would inflict on my mother. She would never understand

Preacher's Corner

— Nissa Bausbaum
Church of the Transfiguration,
St. Catharines

my situation and she would be terribly hurt by my decision.

My story has a relatively happy ending. Admittedly, it took my going far away to England for two years and one hugely cathartic telephone conversation with my mother upon my return – when she told me that even in my faith, it says to honour your mother and your father. Nonetheless, we reconciled, not because we ever came to understand or agree with each other but because we came to accept one another. Undoubtedly, we accepted each other because we loved each other.

This year's Diocesan Synod was not an easy one; neither was it a boring one, as so many of them can be. It wasn't easy because we spent pretty much the entire synod talking about sex and money and, just as I have learned in my pastoral care relationships with couples, sex and money have a nasty habit of ripping apart the Church in the same way they have a habit of ripping apart our personal relationships.

With respect to the subject of money, synod members were not able to come to an agreement about the 2005 budget. In some cases, this reflected people's concerns about not incorporating the results of the New Niagara process; in other cases this reflected people's concerns about the mounting diocesan debt and the inability of parishes to make either their payroll payments or the Diocesan Mission and Ministry share in order to deal with this debt and to prevent it from getting any higher.

See LOVE / page 12

Take Your Pastor to Work day

A twist on a not-so-old concept

By THE REVEREND MICHAEL CALDERWOOD



THE REVEREND MICHAEL CALDERWOOD

I do not remember exactly when it started, but I remember how and I remember why.

It was at coffee hour after church several years ago. I was doing the usual meet and greet and asked a parishioner how things were at work.

Things apparently were not going well – that much I could surmise. But the more he shared his experience, the more I realized that I had no idea what he was talking about.

Maybe it was all those big words, but it became clear to me that he was from an entirely different world than I was.

It suddenly struck me that there, in the middle of the parish hall, over a white chocolate chip cookie, two very different worlds met, rubbed shoulders, and maybe even collided. It was time I did something about it. I had to see his workplace.

Ever since then, I have made "Bring your Pastor to Work" an important part of my ministry.

About once a month or so, I

make it a point of spending a day with folks in their workplace.

The results have been interesting. I have been welcomed into a variety of environments and warmly introduced to co-workers and supervisors.

When they find out who I am,

they seem a wee bit curious and some intriguing conversations arise. One of the more interesting moments comes when I ask people how what we do on Sunday morning helps them at work?

The answers are as varied as the people I ask.

I hope the question helps draw some connections between wor-

ship and daily life, a chance to bring what we do on Sundays into the world, a chance to bring the deepest needs of the world into our worshipping communities.

I have visited teachers at school, done a 12-hour shift with an ambulance driver, spent time with the manager of the victims assistance program of the Ministry of Justice, seen the intricate work of a dentist, and sat in a cubicle of a computer programmer for an international courier service.

It truly is a ministry of coming alongside. I see an entirely different side of people's lives: the care and compassion of a police officer or the difficult decisions made in a car dealership.

I knew these things, but seeing them before my eyes has been both humbling and life-giving.

The effect this has had on my preaching has been significant.

So, now when I ask people how things are at work, sometimes I have a better idea of what they are talking about.

This experience has reminded me how easy it is for us as clergy to become detached from the daily life and work of our parishioners.

It has also brought a sense of joy and gratitude that what happens on Sundays sometimes really does make a difference.

As someone told me the other day as we ended an eight-hour shift together, "What happens in church keeps me grounded".

And after spending the day with her at work, I understand more fully what she means.

The Reverend Michael Calderwood is priest associate at Holy Trinity, Fonthill.



GOING TO SCHOOL with a teacher and working alongside a dentist has given Rev. Calderwood insight into the lives of his parishioners.

Church cemeteries must be properly licenced under bill

Churches in the diocese which have or provide cemetery services need to prepare for stringent new provincial legislation.

Bill 209, The Funeral Burial and Cremations Services Act (2002), will mean more stringent enforcement of regulations, licensing cemetery sales persons as well as other service providers, changes to property taxation, and increased consumer protection.

In addition, Bill 209 will introduce an industry-wide compensation fund, increased penalties for non-compliance and fines of up to

\$250,000.

The Reverend Steve Witcher, chair of the cemetery advisory committee, told diocesan synod in November that parishes with cemeteries need to work quickly to ensure compliance.

Cemetery board

He recommended parishes establish a cemetery board consisting of one or more trustees, the rector's wardens and others, to oversee cemetery administration.

In Niagara, 41 parishes currently provide some form of disposition or care of human remains. The majority, 30, offer conventional ground burial, seven offer scattering areas, eight columbariums or niche walls, four offer multiple means of disposition.

But, Rev. Witcher said, "not all parishes are operating under provincial regulations.

"Ensure that you are licenced," he said.

Under the Cemeteries Act (1990), cemeteries in Ontario must be licenced and a licence is required to establish a scattering area or memorial garden. There are no exceptions.

Scattering areas


"A scattering area is deemed a cemetery in Ontario."

The cost of a cemetery licence is \$10, however a \$100,000 trust must be established prior to obtaining a licence. Approval must be granted by provincial and municipal authorities to establish and operate a cemetery scattering area or columbarium. Owners must provide ministry approved bylaws to purchasers as well as an approved price list for all services and a ministry approved contract of sale.

"Cemeteries require adequate funding to operate efficiently so compare your selling prices with other cemeteries in your area," Rev. Witcher recommended. "Review costs for services at least every two years."

For more information about the changes, contact The Rev. Witcher switcher@sympatico.ca or by calling (519) 843-2141.





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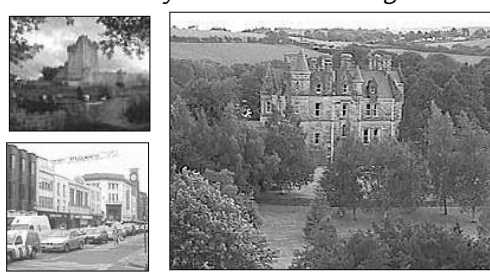
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'The Quick and the Dead'

The Undermount Saints exploration of All Saints Day

All Saints Day is a special occasion in the Christian tradition and according to the Education Act, students are entitled to be absent from school without penalty.

Section 21 (2) (g) of the Education Act states: "A child is excused from attendance at school if he/she is absent on a day regarded as a holy day by the church or religious denomination to which he/she belongs."

With this in mind, the Undermount Saints and a few saints from St. James, Dundas, set out on a road trip dedicated to fun, learning, and exploration. We had an awesome day! Forty saints participated – a blend of God's children ages eight to 71.

The first stop was at The Hamilton Cemetery. Tour leaders Donna Reid and Robin McKee fascinated us by bringing to life Hamilton founding fathers, George Hamilton, Richard Beasley, James Gage, and The Land Family.

They also talked about the mass graves created because of flu epidemics, such as the Spanish Influenza 1918-1919. Soldiers who survived the trenches from WW1 came home only to die from the flu.

Donna and Robin explained the symbolism behind the beautiful art found on many of the gravestones.

After lunch, we went on a tour and celebrated the Holy Eucharist at Christ's Church Cathedral. The tour there was led by the Dean of the Cathedral Peter Wall and the Archivist Canon Katharine Greenfield, ON.

We learned why the Cathedral is a cathedral and we were told we could look, touch and feel anything, just be careful. It was a privilege to be able to look closely at the beautiful carvings of the Reredos and to sit in the bishop's chair.

Dean Wall led us in the Great Feast with much enthusiastic participation from our group.

Our final stop was St. Matthew's House, with which we all are familiar. It is totally amazing to actually see the support St. Matthew's House offers to people in need.

The Rev. Canon Wendy Roy led us on the tour.

Last year St. Matthew's House touched the lives of over 67,000 individuals through a variety of programs, services and supports. Their motto is "Hope and Help for People to Help Themselves."

We had a great adventure learning that there are many saints who lived long ago, but that saints are also ordinary people living today.

They are people who make a difference in the world. So, on All Saints Day, we not only celebrate the saints of long ago but we celebrate all of us today. A saint is someone who lets the Light shine through

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PARTICIPANTS IN THE UNDERMOUNT Saints gather in Hamilton Cemetery on Nov. 1, All Saints' Day, to take part in an educational and spiritual journey.

Time is on our side if we pray

Kings 8 v 54-61. The final prayer of Solomon. (Good News Bible)

"After Solomon had finished praying to the Lord, he stood up in front of the altar where he had been kneeling with lifted hands. In a loud voice he asked God's blessings on all the people assembled there. He said 'Praise the Lord who has given His people peace, and He promised He would. He has kept all the generous promises he made through his servant Moses. May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our ancestors, may He never abandon us; may He make us obedient to Him, so that we will always live as He wants us to live, keeping all the laws and commands He gave our ancestors. May the Lord our God remember at all times this prayer, and the petitions I have made to Him. May He always be merciful to the people of Israel and to their King, according to their daily needs. And so to all the nations of the world will know that the Lord alone is God, there is no other. May you, His people, be always faithful to the Lord our God, obeying all His laws as you do today'".

In the New Testament, Jesus bids us, 'to go through the Narrow

Anglican Fellowship of Prayer – Annette Harris

Gate (Math 7 v 13-14), because the gate to hell is wide, and the road that leads that way is easy, and there are many who travel it.

But, the gate to life is narrow and the way that leads to it is hard, and there are few people who find it'. A clear warning perhaps, that straying from the 'way of our Lord' is dangerous, a message as clear as Solomon's.

We, in the West, have grown careless in the first, and second Great Commandments, that we love God above all else – above self, above wants, above distractions in any form. He is a jealous God, He demands allegiance, none other can be put before Him.

He gave His best, His son, that we might be put right with Him that cannot in any way be defiled by the world with all its wrong.

The second directive, that we love our neighbour as ourselves, to care, to regard.

He, our Lord, is not asking us to dote on anyone, He is asking us to listen, respect. We are too busy,

too much to do with our time, our money, and yet it is all given.

We are but stewards of all that is given, we have grown cold in our love for our neighbours in the south, in the north, and to the east.

No agency, no religion or state can seem to address with sufficient strength or purpose, the needs of so many in this world.

Jesus came with the prime directive from our Holy Father in heaven for all to love, to care.

Take time each day to bring to mind the Lord's Prayer, to meditate upon it, to listen to the words spoken to us across time.

The giver is God from whose mighty store houses, all is given, let us try to remember and pray for the needs of others.

Time is finite and the time given to each of us is momentary. We cannot add as much as a day to our time on earth, listen today, pray today, give thanks for all the wonderful gifts we have been given and for that which we have been forgiven.

Remember Solomon's words 'be faithful' to our Lord God..., and also our Saviour's words.

You love God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength. If we do this, time is on our side. Amen.

St. Paul's, Stratford, celebrating 100th anniversary

Members and former members of St. Paul's Anglican Church, Stratford, are invited to celebrate the parish's 100th anniversary in 2005-2006.

Members of the St. Paul's Centennial Committee are hoping to welcome back as many former parish members as possible to join in the celebrations, meet

old friends, and make new ones.

Former parishioners are also asked to contact others who may be unaware of this important milestone.

For more information, or to be placed on a contact list, please call Charles Ryde, chair of the centennial committee.

Volunteers needed for Breakfast Club at St. Luke's

The parish hall of St Luke's Hamilton is the scene where about 100 children get a nourishing meal every morning before school through the efforts of the Breakfast Club.

Because of its location, the Parish of St Luke's Hamilton is in a unique position to help sponsor this ministry to the local lake district neighbourhood and

the three North End schools - Centennial, Bennetto, and St. Lawrence.

Anyone who wishes to help out with this program is asked to speak to the volunteers at the hall any school day morning or to go to www.northhamiltonchc.org/program.asp?program=1

Bishops installs 7 new canons

Bishop Ralph Spence announced the following priests to be installed as Canons of Christ's Church Cathedral on Jan. 2 at a Service of Evensong: **Frances Darlington, Robin Graves, David Howells, Robert Hudson, Kristine Swire, Mark Tiller and Stephen Witcher.**

This installation of canons will be held at 3 p.m., along with institutions of new ministries, followed by the Bishop's Levee. All are encouraged to attend.

Happy Anniversary

Happy 60th wedding anniversary wishes are sent to Martha and Joe Smyth, faithful members of St. Luke's, Burlington, who celebrated this significant event on Dec. 5.

Wedding bells

The Reverend Cheryl and Stephen Fricker are pleased to announce the happy event of their marriage Oct. 22, at a small candlelight service in St. Paul's Anglican Church, Hamilton.

The couple wishes to thank all who participated to make the evening so very memorable, especially Bishop Ralph Spence, who officiated at the ceremony and the Rev. Dr. Brian Rutan who presided at the Jazz Eucharist.

"Much love and many thanks to our children, Timothy, Christina, Michael, Scott, Matthew, Mallory, and Mark who also shared in the ceremony and to our parents, The Right Rev. Joachim and Shirley Fricker and Ken and Ruth Smith. To our families, friends and colleagues for all your prayers and good wishes. May the love that

People In The News

— Alison D'Atri

Andrew's and the parish of St. Paul's in Westdale for their love and support and to Bill and Nancy Harris for their generous gift of a honeymoon in the Bahamas.

"For the gift of love and new life we have found in each other and received from you, we give God thanks and praise!"



THE REVEREND CHERYL and STEPHEN FRICKER

Engagement

The Reverend Darcey Lazerte, rector of St. Simon's, Oakville, and Dawn Wiggins, consultant in Children's Ministry, are

we share be a blessing to God and to all whom we touch."

Cheryl and Stephen also want to give special thanks to the Rev. Stuart Pike and the parish of St.

pleased to announce their engagement. They will exchange vows on May 5 at Trinity Chapel, University of Toronto. A family reception will follow.

Swire on the move

The Reverend Kristine Swire has resigned as rector of St. Paul's, Glanford, and will begin her new ministry as rector of Ascension, Hamilton, on Jan. 4.

Gladding comes to Niagara

The Reverend Mark Gladding, former priest of Huron Diocese, has accepted the appointment to begin his ministry in Niagara as rector of St. Paul's, Mount Forest, and Grace Church, Arthur. This was effective Dec. 1. A warm welcome to the Reverend Mark Gladding!

Clowater issued as honorary assistant

The Reverend Harley Clowater was issued a bishop's permission as honorary assistant at Church of the Resurrection, Hamilton, under the supervision of the rector, effective Oct. 24.

Condolences to Jones family

Our deepest sympathy is extended to Enid Jones, parish secretary at Christ Church, Niagara Falls, and family, on the death of Enid's mother on Nov. 10.

Newly-licensed lay readers

Lay reader licenses were issued to the following: Ross Gillett at St. John's, Niagara Falls, under the direction of Archdeacon Lynne Corfield, effective Nov. 15; Violet Naylor at St. Barnabas, St. Catharines, under the direction of Canon Keith Whittingham, effective Nov. 1; and Gary Gallagher at All Saints, Hagersville, under the direction of the Reverend Lynne Thackway, effective Nov. 1.

Bishop's Itinerary

January 2005

January 2, 3 p.m., Christ's Church Cathedral, Evensong. Installation of Canons, Institutions of New Ministries and Bishop's Levee

January 5, 8:30/10:30 a.m., St. Mildred's Lightbourn School

January 6, 7 p.m., St. James, Fergus, Ordination of Priests

January 7, 5 p.m., Cathedral Place, Synod Council

January 8, Session Two, Diocesan Synod

January 9, 10 a.m., St. Philip's, Burlington, Parish Visit

January 9, 4 p.m., St. Jude's, Oakville, Ordination of Priests

January 14, Student Conference

January 16, 8:30/10:30 a.m., St. Paul's, Hamilton, Parish Visit

January 16, 3 p.m., Christ's Church Cathedral, Undermount Regional Confirmation

January 26, 1:30 p.m., Cathedral Place, Meeting of the Candidates Committee

January 26, 5 p.m., Meeting of the Board of St. Matthew's House

February 1, Dundas Golf and Country Club, Guest Speaker

Love can bridge many differences

Continued from page 9

As a result ... there is no budget for 2005, the figures from 2004 will be used in the meantime and a special synod has been called for January to consider alternative options. As much as I am grateful that people have finally begun to question the theory behind the creation of the diocesan budget, I am also painfully aware of the financially tenuous situation in which we find ourselves as a diocesan family and the individual livelihoods that will be on the line as a result of our decision-making. ... It really feels as if the day has arrived in Niagara when 'not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down'; and it's not a comfortable feeling. Only once before - when I converted - have I felt that my actions would ultimately inflict pain on someone else. It wasn't a good feeling then and it's not a good feeling now.

With respect to the subject of sex, members of synod had three motions on which to vote.

Firstly, a motion to put off any action around this issue was defeated. Secondly, a motion to accept and carry out the recommendations of the Eames Commission was tabled until next year's synod; this because it was felt that most synod members had not read the report and, therefore, could not reasonably vote on its contents. Finally, a motion to allow the blessing of same gender unions in parishes that choose this was passed with a 66 per cent majority. While the bishop acknowledged this majority and said he would have voted in favour of the motion had he not been chairing the meeting, he ultimately exercised his Episcopal authority and did not give his assent to the motion. Hence,

although the motion did pass, the technical status in the diocese on this issue has not changed and will not do so for at least another year when Niagara's synod will likely vote on the issue once again.

If I feel the discussion of the budget puts us that much closer to no stone being left unturned, then I must also say that I feel the discussion of same sex blessings puts us in the realm of Jesus' other words, that 'you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death'. Many people in the Church, on both sides of this issue, are feeling betrayed and persecuted.

I have spent a goodly portion of the last year talking about sex, specifically as this relates to same-gender relationships. I have cried over the issue, I have gotten angry about it, I have hurt people over it and I have been hurt by others. We have done studies in the parish, I have pussy-footed around it in several sermons, we tackled it head-on in our Holy Week and Easter celebrations and I have spent endless hours in pastoral care visits both with people who are against blessing same-sex unions and people who are in favour of it. Neither side is happy. Both sides are hurting. Because of the rigidity of some on each side of the issue, I have felt stretched like an elastic band, many times wondering how much stretch is really left and how close I am to snapping.

I stand before you this morning, obviously still in one piece. And here's why. This community of Transfiguration, has always accepted and encouraged the gifts we have to give one another and to give those in need outside our walls. To suggest that the reason for this is because we understand each other so completely that

there is no disagreement would be an absolute untruth. Instead, it is because, for each one of us, the whole seems to be more valuable than the sum of its parts. This may sound trite but in many churches this is simply not the case. Rather, many worshipping communities are torn apart by the individual needs of their members.

The blessing of same-sex unions obviously pushes the envelope for many of us. For some, it can't come soon enough; for others, any time that it might come will always be too soon. I'm not sure we will ever reach an agreement about this, anymore so than my mother and I would ever have reached an agreement about my conversion. But, like my mother and I, I do think it's possible to come to an acceptance of each other, an acceptance not fostered by understanding but rather by love. And I think in trying to do this, we need to look directly into the eyes of our community to discover just how possible this is.

Almost 10 per cent of our households in this parish are gay or have someone among family or friends who is homosexual. When the first gay couple showed up at worship about two years ago, certain people's fears were quickly expressed: "There will be more and more of them and parishioners will leave."

Would we ever have said that if it was a black couple that had come to worship? Not likely. Nonetheless, the fear was real and to have simply sloughed it off as prejudice, would have been to sweep some very strong feelings under the carpet - an action that never produces a positive result. Instead, we began to talk about it with one another. Admittedly, this hasn't always been easy.

More recently, in light of the General

Synod decision not to vote on the issue, I have heard the suggestion from the other side that "gays and lesbians are obviously not full members of the club." Just as I would suggest that the first comment from two years ago was an expression of prejudice, my response to this latest comment is that the Church is not a club. People join clubs because they agree with whatever the club stands for. They leave clubs when that agreement is no longer there. I have been a priest for long enough to know that this kind of agreement simply doesn't exist in the Church, at least not in the Anglican Church. As such, to paraphrase Archdeacon Bruce McPetrie who stood up on the floor of synod: "Our membership in the church should not be a commodity to be bought, sold or traded as a response to a particular issue."

We have not swept the issue under the carpet at Transfiguration and I think we have benefited from these actions. Gays and lesbians have been welcomed into this community and they, in turn, have offered their time, talent and treasure in hugely life-giving ways. Like everyone else here, their presence has been a blessing. And this is really where I think our focus should be - not on whether or not we think the blessing of same sex unions is right or wrong but rather on the blessing that every member of this family is to one another.

Several years after I converted, I heard from someone in my family that the reason my mother had accepted my change of faith was because she could see how happy I was - happier than I had ever been since my father had died. I guess she could accept the presence of God's blessing in my conversion even if she couldn't bless it herself.