How thankful are we anyway?

John Bothwell
Retired Bishop of Niagara

In this Thanksgiving season, does God see Canadians as being really thankful?

In our harvest liturgies we Christians certainly ‘talk the talk’ of gratitude, but in our every day living do we really ‘walk the walk’? In chapter 17 of St. Luke’s gospel, there is a story about the healing of ten lepers who cried out for mercy, and when Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priests, they obeyed and were healed. But when only one returned to say thanks, Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? Where are the other nine?”

Another best-selling author, Jared Diamond makes exactly the same point in his book Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed. And Diamond asks, “What will happen when it finally dawns on all those Third World people that the current living standards in the First World are probably unreachable for them?” Some scholars estimate that it would take at least one and probably several more planets the size of our earth to produce enough for Third World people to live as we do. Yet most middle-class Canadians would find it extremely difficult to share our personal and national wealth, especially if that meant higher taxes or a reduction in our own standard of living! Human nature seems to favour short-term gain over long-term stability as long as the destructive consequences seem distant examples from different times and places to prove his point.

Typical of failed societies

In his best-selling paper-back, A Short History of Progress, Canadian author Ronald Wright points out that “the idea of material progress” is a modern invention barely three centuries old, but it has become almost a secular religion in prosperous, nations like Canada. He also warns that our expectations of an ever increasing standard of living is typical of failed societies in the past, and gives specific examples from different times and places to prove his point.

The deep well of gratitude

Linda Moore
Centre for Leadership and Human Values

Two friends sit on the side of a hill silently watching a gold and rose sun set over an Alber-tan sky and smile. A thoughtful stranger hands a half loaf of bread to a small and hungry child on the streets of Mumbai and watches in wonder as she then distributes pieces of it to several others that surround her. A beggar in Bangkok puts his withered and worn hand on the shoulder of a distraught woman comforting her. A young business man in Prague walking to work with a whistle on his breath takes time to wish others a good day. A farmer in Botswana holds a sheaf of grain in his arms and weeps for joy. A Tibetan monk in New York stops and offers a prayer in a park. All across our globe in every minute of every day individual human beings are expressing their gratitude for their own prosperity and good fortune and passing it on to others. It is an eternal cycle of joy that is open to all.

An immense imbalance

This way of being in the world does raise a number of questions. How does this welling up of gratitude begin? Where is its source? Since it does not seem to have anything to do with observable economic prosperity, how little do we need to be fulfilled and appreciative? Why do some give so freely while others do not? What do we fear that stops us?

At first glance we see in our world an immense imbalance between those that have and those that have not, based solely in the material and economic sense. Arousing out of this perspective of disparity many emotions emerge; anger, fear, envy, outrage and deep
A new bell for the Plant Quiet Garden

It’s an Absolute Blast at St. Matthew’s-on-the-Plains, Burlington! This is what two parishioners of St. Luke's Hamilton do when they’re not at worship! They’re bellblasters, or in this case, bell blasters! Wayne Nusko (left) and Walter Raybould (right) have refurbished the 1892 historic bell for St. Matthew’s-on-the-Plains. It hung in the bell tower until 2004 when the front of the church was re-designed. Its new home is in The Plant Quiet Garden, which was dedicated by the Bishop on the patronal Feast of St. Matthew. The garden is open to the community for everyone’s enjoyment. Please drop by and take a look.

The genesis of the Jamesville Community Centre

SUZ-ANN WARD
ASSISTANT CURATE, CHRIST’S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

In an effort to meet some of the needs of the Jamesville neighbourhood, Christ's Church Cathedral, and the Jamesville Children’s Centre established a partnership that worked to create a breakfast program for neighbourhood children. After a number of months of preparation, members of the Jamesville Breakfast Club sat down to their first morning meal together on March 20, 2006. Each day, an average of 70 children and 10 volunteers gather to fuel up for the day. Together, as neighbours, we are growing in health and in relationship. The program and the partnership have proven to be very successful.

In recent months, the lack of recreational activities and community space available to people living in the Jamesville neighbourhood of Hamilton has been identified as a concern. In order to address this situation, a group of folks from this neighbourhood undertook a project, spear-headed by Christ's Church Cathedral, that created a community centre with and for Jamesville and Beasly neighbours.

The positive relationship developed through the creation and implementation of the Jamesville Breakfast Club made it possible for Christ's Church Cathedral to approach the Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board about transforming a portion of one of their school sites into the Jamesville Community Centre. We have created a hub for the community in the physical plant of St. Mary's Catholic Elementary School. It is now a place where neighbours can gather to engage in a variety of social, cultural, educational, and recreational activities.

Creating opportunities

We have entered into partnerships with individuals and organizations in order to provide programs, activities, and opportunities to people of all ages free of charge. We are building relationships among members of the community and breaking down barriers that prevent some Hamiltonians from participating in sport, recreational, artistic, and community opportunities. Our goal is to create growth opportunities for people of all ages, ensuring that there is a particular focus on children and youth.

None of the organizations involved in the partnership possessed all of the resources necessary to undertake the project on its own. Each entity was able to provide some of the required resources to launch and sustain the partnership. Christ’s Church Cathedral provides the rent, a portion of the insurance, wonderful volunteers, and coordination of the partnership. The Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board provides the space, and insures and maintains the physical plant. The City of Hamilton, the YMCA, SISO, Hamilton Artists Inc., and other community groups provide the programming and program leaders. Now, our neighbours in Hamilton have a community centre where they can learn, socialize, and recreate. We could not do this alone, but as partners we were able to put existing space, skill sets, and resources to use for the benefit of the community.

A safe place

At a meeting in June, parents from the neighbourhood identified a need for summer time activities for children. A free drop-in program offering games, crafts, sports, and special events seemed like a good starting activity for the Jamesville Community Centre. The City of Hamilton hired, trained, and supervised the staff. Christ's Church Cathedral paid the staff. The Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board provided the site.

Many neighbourhood children made the new friends and engaged in fun activities in a safe place.

During the school year, the YMCA of Hamilton / Burlington is running a Virtual YMCA in one of the classrooms. The program provides a nutritious snack, access to a variety of books, activities suitable for the children’s level of development and interest, curriculum that focuses on building children’s literacy skills through fun and interactive activities that motivate children to read, write, and communicate, and integration of literacy into programs that centre on the arts, health and recreation, values, and academic enhancement. The program runs from the close of the school day until 6:00 pm.

SISO is now running their client service programs from the Jamesville Community Centre. SISO provides trained staff, volunteers, equipment, and materials. Volunteers from Christ's Church Cathedral and McMaster University have partnered with SISO to provide child minding on site during the SISO educational sessions. This service is provided to ensure that all parents are able to take part in the opportunities that SISO provides.

Parish hall open for business

KEITH BRAITHWAITE
ST. LUKE’S, BURLINGTON

It seemed fitting that the first events in the newly renovated hall at St. Luke’s, Burlington were the Annual Summer Club and the Annual Friends of St. Luke’s Day. Last year both events had to be held at other Anglican Churches in Burlington. The summer club with a theme of Treasure Island attracted an attendance of 73 children who came from four Anglican churches in Burlington: St. Elizabeth’s, St. Matthew’s on the Plains, St. John’s and St. Luke’s. As well there were several kids with no church affiliation at all, which is very exciting. Families have already started to ask what dates next year’s Summer Club will be so that they can plan their summer vacations around them!

The first Friends of St. Luke’s Day was held in May of 1972 with attendance of about thirty seniors and has been held every year since then. This year’s Friends of St. Luke’s Day was held on August 30 and close to 130 nursing home residents and shut-ins attended a service in the newly painted church followed by a reception in the new parish hall. As in years past there were several ladies in their 90s. There was much rejoicing and pride as church members and visitors enjoyed the ambience of the new auditorium.
What a trend we have in Jesus

Michael Thompson
Rector - St. Jude’s, Oakville

It’s pretty easy to be caught up in the more and more of it, and invitations to acquire it are more and more invasive. On the phone, at the front door, by email, on the buses, in the elevators, on the TVs, boards, through the mail, on television, radio, and even at the cines. It’s as if someone is afraid of all the pregnant potential of con-acquisitiveness might atrophy if it weren’t regularly stimulated. Evangelists of “salvation through stuff” means a tireless campaign for things long and many, not most, of us have signed up. So if, at Thanksgiving, we simply sprinkle a garnish of gratitude over our stuff, there’s a very real risk that we are simply dragging the Holy One in like a kindly, if not terribly bright, uncle to bless our stuff and leave our souls alone. We credit our kindly uncle God for the wonderful appearance of all this stuff in our lives, and set out tomorrow to acquire even more of it. Only mildly put off by what this or that relative did or didn’t say at the family party, we put Thanksgiving on hold and get on with the real business of our lives.

How stuff matters

Stuff is not only the foundation not sought for whose appearance in our lives we occasionally give thanks to a vague and distant God, but in the covenant that a living and present God makes with us, then our celebration of Thanksgiving can take on a vitality and power that will at once astonish and worry us. It can have the sternness and stamina to stand in contradiction to the deepest and world’s self-defeating trust that more stuff means more life.

It isn’t that stuff doesn’t matter. Only someone who never runs out can be cavalier about stuff—about clothing that keeps a body warm and dry, or shelter that keeps that body safe, about food that keeps a body fed or water to answer that body’s thirst. But to understand how stuff matters and think matters to that relation is to understand the covenant by which its Creator forgets it with meaning.

As I reflect on that covenant, I see a high bench near the foot of a hill bench was given in 2001 by the family of a citizen of this town, St. Jude’s will always be grateful to God. At God is given “in memory” and “with love.” Its presence here is admitted- tensely useful, but it is more than useful. It speaks to a memory, and to the primal covenant of a family, a household woven together by and for the purpose of love.

A covenant of belief

Our Hebrew ancestors received a covenant at Sinai—ten command- ments by which the living present God might be heard and served by those he calls “my people”. One of those ancestors, Jesus, brought that covenant of belief into new expression by defining the range and depth of both human and divine life in a single moment of costly love on the Cross. In that baptism we enter that covenant by be- lief in (holding dear) this trune Father, Son, and Spirit) and by the intentions that shape belief towards selfishness. Will you... Continue in the apostles’ teach- ing and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers? Persevere in resisting evil? Proclaim good news by word and example? Seek and serve Christ in all per- sons, loving your neighbour as yourself? Strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being? These are more than obligations to a distant and demanding God. They are more like marriage, a life together shaped for the shaping of us and service. Not an obligatory thank- you note to a great-aunt in the old country (“Bible-land”), but a searching conversation about what we and God will get up to together in caring for the earth and its creatures.

Our true and holy selves

If in our thanksgiving we make only passing reference to some God in the misty distance, and do not understand that our endow- ments, including the stuff in our cars, are for a purpose we share with God, then our thanksgiving risks mere sentimentality. But if our thanksgiving is grounded in a cov- enant—a common cause we share with the One who gives—then the world is a new place, and we are a new people. If we go still deeper, and give thanks that in gathering for worship and growth, in resist- ing evil, in telling the world good news, in serving and in honouring each human person, we are discov- ering our true and holy selves, and then we have come home. I think, to the heart of this festival.

And if we could dare to believe that, by living into that covenant, we might bring the universe to praise and thanksgiving to God for inventing humankind as partners in finishing the work of creation, we might hear the first haunting notes of the eternal song of praise God sings for us and for all creation.

This wisdom is hard. It asks us to steer for our best, not to settle for something less than less. It calls us into question all our strategies to- wards an easy life. It flies in for the beauty, the beauty, the beauty, the beauty. This challenge we mean by “the economy”, especially the questions of “What counts?” and “Who counts?” It challenges the spiritual lassitude that leads us either to the self-indulgent content- ment of the winner or the self-de- feating despair of the loser. Nei- ther contentment nor despair will strengthen arm and heart and brain for the work on which our covenant with a living God calls us.

A covenant of hope

A covenant is memory; our ancestors—by saga and sacrament— have drawn us into this covenant. Their response to God’s faithful- ness invites us to respond in the circumstances of here and now. The covenant of our baptism is meant to function in our local community, a hard life-giving embodiment from our ancestors and the God who moved among them. And a covenant is hope; hope that our lives can mean something, add up to something, and write a new chapter of fidelity towards God’s dream for the earth and all its creatures. When our thanksgiving acknowledges our gracious entan- glements with all living creatures, and with the living earth itself, thanksgiving becomes a relation- ship not only with a living God, but with all that the living God has called into existence and blessed. Hope invites us to believe that we can bring gifts of healing, justice, and stewardship to that relation- ship. Hope contradicts every “just do as you’re told.” “Curing evil can be done” that tempts us away from the full, demanding depth of our humanity in God’s image and our life together in covenant with God and with creation.

In our baptism we joined the world in love, and in thanksgiving we encounter the rich generous bounty of God’s earth, and wonder if it might be that we are not only to eat our fill, but to fill the hungry with good things.
I suspect that many people on both sides are coming to the conclusion that time will not change anything in this instance.

John Bowen

Important for us to be relevant to the other members of the family who might live far away or is it more important to be relevant to the people in our neighbourhood? I think that is a question that needs to be addressed. Is it a matter of recognizing that different parts of the family think very differently about their relationship with God and saying that my primary goal is to keep family together? Or is my primary goal to live in relationship with the community in which I find myself and to speak the truth about our relationship with God as that community understands it? And I think we are irrelevant to the people in our society if we ignore this reality in order to maintain a unity with people who live in a very different reality. And if we keep the family together at all costs, I fear that the cost to our community within and right outside our doors is much too high.

Susan: My thought is that we are in communion with the Anglican Church around the world and that is a richness that I would never ever want to see go away. But this issue seems to be asking at what cost unity. Is it for me a God thing so at what cost do I sacrifice what I believe in and where the Gospel is calling me for the sake of unity. That is the question that I struggle with.

Christyn: Before we move on to the topic of the day, does anyone need to say more about this?

John P: I will give you what I sense at the parish level. I think most people see themselves as part of the Anglican community. And as Anglicans, I think we see ourselves as part of a world-wide community. They may be different in Kenya and in New Zealand and in Chile but they are still Anglicans and we share that sense of identity. If there was a schism or a break, I think people would sense they have lost part of their identity. I think it is at that level. I don’t think it is one of these great momentous events in people’s lives; I just think it is part of who they see themselves being.

Judy: I think that difficulty lies in where we then have allegiance? Is it to the relationship that extends outward from us to other places in the world or is it to the relationship that we have to the milieu in which we find ourselves? In other words, is it more

better leave? Why can’t it be a matter of “we disagree, so we need more time”? We need to be patient with each other until we come to some kind of consensus. I might have to take some time and I might have to do some compromising and you might too. Why is it about leaving? Why isn’t it about time?

John B: I suspect that many people on both sides are coming to the conclusion that time will not change anything in this instance. One time-limited factor is the question of who the Archbishop of Canterbury asks to the next Lambeth conference. Because if Group A is invited then Group B probably won’t go, and if Group B is invited then Group A will be unhappy.

Christyn: Let’s move on to the authority in the scripture.

John B: My hunch is that our differences are not so much to do with what the Bible says. We could argue about the interpretation of specific verses of scripture until the cows come home. It is more a question of what we mean when we say that something, in this case, scripture, has authority over us. For instance, if Jesus had said “this shall not have same-sex relationships, in any culture, in any century,” what would we do with that? I suspect we would still be looking for a way around it!

Kevin: For me though, it is important that Jesus didn’t talk about homosexuality. I mean he just didn’t, and that means that it’s not this hugely important issue. It’s probably not nearly as important an issue as affluence and greed, for example. That is why for me as a conservative, there is room for compromise on this issue—because Jesus did not spend time on this subject.

Sandy: I would challenge that from the perspective of the Jewish background of Jesus. He said clearly that he came to fulfill the law and the prophets and not abolish them. He did not say “porenas,” which is a catch-all word for sexual immorality. I am sorry, but I am challenging your idea that Jesus would have not thought that homosexuality wasn’t important. He thinks adultery, for example, is so important that he says don’t even think about it. He tightens up the standards from committing adultery, for example, to even thinking about it. So for me, it’s back to the trajectory thing. In some areas Jesus tightens the standards, in others he challenges them. That is why we need to look at the whole scope of scripture.

Judy: How do you get a trajectory from adultery to the blessing of same gender unions? From an activity that fractures relationships to an activity that enhances relationships?

Susan: Sandy just said she saw the trajectory coming from the Jewish background of Jesus and I have trouble with that because I see Jesus as the one who was telling the Pharisees not to be hypocrites. He did not always follow the rules as is evident by the way he lived and the way he spoke to the Pharisees. I don’t think that Jesus supported all the rules; only those which bring us closer to God. He put aside the importance of the laws, choosing to concentrate on how God transforms your heart and how you act towards other people. For me, that is the Gospel. I have difficulty with imposing beliefs on Jesus that Jesus didn’t specifically address. The nature of Jesus is to be and do the unexpected.

John B: But he quotes almost every book of the Old Testament, and treats them as having divine authority, and this is odd because he is a person who is not afraid to confront religious traditions when he thought they were out of order, so we can’t just say he set the rules aside. For instance, if Jesus said “this shall not have same-sex relationships, in any culture, in any century,” what would we do with that? I suspect we would still be looking for a way around it!

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Wendy: I ask myself, what does all this mean? What does the ministry of Jesus say and mean? It seems to me that he was clearly a man in faith and well instructed. But in his ministry, his example was clear. Whenever he was dramatically confronted with a choice between the rules and a compassion-ate response that was deeply understanding, “uber-understanding” of the nature of people and their longing for relationship with God, Jesus chose the revolutionary compassion-ate response. And to me the essence of Jesus trumps every verse that tends to be repeated and heralded about this issue. For me, the life and ministry of Jesus is far more authori-tative than any particular culturally centered book of the Bible.

John B: I think that both ‘sides’, if I can use that language, tend to take things from the Bible out of context and just throw them at one another. In Bible Interpretation 101, you learn that it’s important to interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, and the New Testament in the light of Jesus. So I think you are sending us in the right direction Wendy. But one reason that people like myself want to say the Bible is authori-tative is because Jesus clearly understood himself as living in the light of his scriptures, the Old Testament. He quotes the Old Testa-ment and speaks of it as conveying the voice of God in a way that challenges our cultural assumptions about the Bible. So, for example, he understands his mission in terms of what the Old Testament requires of him: “... the Son of Man must go as it is written.” As though he is saying, “I don’t have any choice about where I am heading because it is there in the Old Testament.” That is where the conservative concern about being obedient to scripture comes from: we’re trying to follow Jesus’ leadership. And his example is the “uber-scripture.”

Judy: Who gives scripture its authority?

John B: I would say God. And that the church, in talking about authority of scripture, hasn’t invented it, but rather has simply recognized that. “Wow, we think this is something that God is speaking through.” I think this has been the consistent testimony of the church.

Judy: So if we say “wow, this set of writings is something that God is speaking through,” don’t we give it the authority to speak?

Kevin: The church gives it the authority.

See DISCUSSION on page 5
October 2006

Dialogue Task Force discussion

Continued from page 4

John B: If I go home and say “Judy Steers said this,” does that mean I am giving authority to your words? No, your words have their own authority. I’m just the vehicle.

Judy: I’m not sure that’s true. I believe in the sovereignty of the life of your own words but you indicate that you have given them authority when you say to someone else, “Judy Steers said this.” I think that you give God the authority and accept scripture as the word of God. Or is this the book that I have heard that we will turn to as a Christian community and use as authoritative for us?

Kevin: I think Christ gave authority to the church which then recognized the canon of the scriptures as the word of God. But it was through the church that we received the Bible. It is through the church that the Bible has authority. In part, the authority comes through the church’s interpretation of the scriptures as a catholic view of things. The traditional answer is that the Holy Spirit is guiding the church in its recognition of the canon of the scripture.

Sandy: I guess the other part of it that would be important for me is this whole sense of who is in charge? And that is an authority question. How do we determine that? Does anyone else have a story? What authority do we give it? Or do we see it as intrinsically having authority? You see it as having an intrinsic authority. I see it as having an extrinsic authority.

Judy: It is far more helpful for me to see scripture as being written by humans. It doesn’t make us do things. So I think this comes down to the basics; theology of creation. How does creativity work? This is something we work out with each other. How do we do that work of creation in humility, responsiveness, and interpersonality? How do we understand ourselves as servants as you mentioned and hold that accountability to scripture, to the community, the church, to our history, to our future?

Kevin: I agree with what you are saying about creation and freedom. God used evolution to create the world, but that is not the place to start from the beginning. However, when it comes to how we make decisions - in a church, it is not just us deciding. I think it is the Holy Spirit guiding the church and that is why it needs to happen within a larger context than just our own individual opinions. That is why the Archbishop of Canterbury has asked us to be in dialogue so that we can be supporting a church-wide decision on this; a church-wide compromise rather than an individual response. I believe and hope and pray that the Holy Spirit will guide the church.

Judy: And so this comes back to the authority of scripture; who gave it its authority? What authority do we give it? Or do we see it as intrinsically having authority? You see it as having an intrinsic authority. I see it as having an extrinsic authority.

John B: I’m still not clear then what it means to say that the Bible has authority in our lives. I would put it this way: we all live by our stories. To be a Christian, is to be invited to play our part in the story that God is writing about the human race, and to be faithful to the story as we know it from the Bible. Certainly this includes a strong doctrine of creation, but it also includes a strong doctrine of sin. So for me, to live with the authority of scripture means to live in a way that is faithful to the story. But at the same time, I agree that I can exercise my free will and my creativity, but in a way that honours the story that God is telling. Sometimes that means doing things that I don’t want to do and sometimes it means not doing things that I do want to do. Sounds like the General Confession, doesn’t it? Funny, eh? Sometimes, as I try to follow, I have a sense that my true self, whatever that is, is being fulfilled, but at other times I have a feeling that what I thought was my ‘true self’ is being crucified, so that something truer can emerge.

Sandy: I would have to agree with you on absolutely every point that you made except that I don’t know how it applies to what we are discussing. I believe in the authority of Scripture. I believe in God’s transformative power. I believe in all of those things but our interpretation of all of those things takes us into the place of grace. The challenge is that we each need to honour that people on both sides of the one bible believe in the same Scripture, the same transformative power of grace and so on. Neither side has an exclusive on these beliefs.

Judy: Who is in charge is a key question. My response is that we are because we have complete

I AM CHALLENGING YOUR IDEA that Jesus would have not thought that homosexuality wasn’t important. He thinks adul-

SANDY: I think Christ gave authority to the church which then recognized the canon of the scriptures as the word of God. But it was through the church that we received the Bible. It is through the church that the Bible has authority. In part, the authority comes through the church’s interpretation of the scriptures as a catholic view of things. The traditional answer is that the Holy Spirit is guiding the church in its recognition of the canon of the scripture.

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John B: I don’t see any discrepancy between everything you said about being a human document on the one hand and the other hand saying that this is a document which God has somehow supernaturally brought into being, and used totally through history to guide us as we live in it. The church has traditionally affirmed both human and divine authorship.

Sandy: There’s a sense when you are reading a passage from the Bible that you have read it 101 times before. Then suddenly, it rearranges itself in your heart and in your mind. That is the Holy Spirit at work, giving the sense that there is something very special about it, something powerful about it. And the more you study and understand the story and the authors and the language and the context and the authors are there but there is something more, and that is where God is in it; that is where the authority is in it; it comes from God.

Sandy: I think that asking whether the whole Bible is the word of God is more important, is the wrong question. And if you ask the wrong question, you got the wrong answer. The living word comes out of the written word. The Holy Spirit who is the living word today confirms it and helps us learn about Jesus through the written word. God is not in conflict with God’s self. The written word tells us about God, it does not replace God, Jesus and is confirmed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Sandy: Susan, how can we engage this conversation about the Incarnate Word, Jesus, God’s self? The written word tells us about Jesus through the written word. And it becomes an issue when parishes amalgamate or disestablish. We have seen it become an issue in other parts of the Canadian Church as parishes amalgamate or mortgage land. Given the legislation of Ontario and the Canons of the Diocese of Niagara, it is important to note the important roles and responsibilities of the Bishop and Synod in these conveying matters. They, as well as the Vestry of the Parish, must be involved in these issues.

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Bible Study

Come learn the historical and literary skills that will help you to understand the scriptures

Facilitated by
Audrey Conard, Honorary Assistant
Joe Asselin, Rector

Begins on Tuesday October 3 and meets for 12 weeks
7:30 to 9:15 pm
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See DISCUSSION on page 6
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In 1992 it was mandated that resources be produced to help congregations engage in study around the blessing of same sex unions and to provide blessing resources.
Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are they which do mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

In many parts of the world, Christians have been and are being persecuted with the Lord Jesus, many losing their life. It has been said that Christians are the most persecuted group of people in the world today, but true or not, we may at any time be called upon to be accountable for the fulfillment on reaching that place which has been prepared for us will be our reward.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

One more we return to the second of the two great commandments, in which we are told to ‘Love our neighbors as ourselves.’ Mercy comes in many forms of acts of kindness, not only of the flesh, but also in the spirit. From giving wa-

H ow glad I was to read “Walk-

ing with each other” in the September Niagara Anglican—although it turned out to be an im-

portant and timely lesson on the Anglican Communion. It is high time that we were instructed in the fundamentals of Anglicanism; we’ve had too little of fundamen-
tals from the pulpits.

But what a mess we can make when we attempt to discuss human sexuality! I was amazed at Andy Steer’s closing comment that we couldn’t find an openly gay or le-

bian person who is involved and deeply connected to the church, and who wants to be in a discus-

sion like this? You can’t find them in this diocese. It makes me sus-

pect that not one of them was ap-

proached personally. In fact, since I first read the panel deliberations on the diocesan website I have become aware of an active lesbi-

an in my own parish who would have gladly accepted an invitation to participate.

People do not want to ap-

proach the subject.

The trouble is that Anglicans, in-

deed churchgoers as a whole, are indoctrinated with the idea that dis-

cussing sex and sexuality. Plenty of people in this diocese know that I am transsexual (see “To Whom do I belong” in the September Nicina-

gan Anglican) and that I have been very active in the diocese over many decades, yet nobody has ap-

proached me concerning human sexuality, although I am listed as a sexologist in international Who’s Who in Sexology, 1986. I have the impression that people do not like to approach the subject with me in case it hurts my feelings!

I believe that most people think that, because I am transsexual, I must be gay. Well, I never was.

In the male role I was completely heterosexuel. Gender identity and sexual orientation are different conditions. Unless a person has bisexuel inclinations, sexual orien-
tation does not change with sur-

gical sex reassignment. If I were sexually active at present I would be considered a lesbian. As it is, I have a low libido and am not sex-

ually active. Some would say that is not surprising considering my age! In spite of all this, it is a fact that genetic males who consider themselves to be “transsexual” find a home under the “pink tri-

angle.” This can hardly be surpris-
ing when 60-65 percent of gender dysphonic males, who consider themselves to be transsexual, are also homosexuel oriented.

God is still revealing him-

self to humanity.

...walking in the world that I would wish of anybody is that they should be transsexual, especially if one has also been brought up in a traditional religious faith. One has to become a Wrestling Jacob. I have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed” (Gen 32:28) and I was “put out of joint” until such time as I had had surgical cor-

rection. Now I know that we are all part of God’s creating. I am a transse-

xual, transvesties, transgendered, true transsexuals and, of course, ‘normal’ people—whatever it is to be ‘normal’.

We have only to look at the amazing progress made in human knowledge during the past century to realise that God is still reveal-

ing Himself and His universe to humanity. We have also learned so much about what it is to be hu-

man from the scientific viewpoint.

Why do we still kick against the pricks?” (Acts 9:5, KJV). Why do we still reject people on grounds of colour, race, gender, religion, language, sexual orienta-
tion, gender identity, mental state, personality, etc.

Is it still because we do not know the “God in whom we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28)? In reading “Walk-

ing with each other” I have failed to find an explanation of Him what-
soever, unless John Bowen’s ref-

See LIMPING TOGETHER on page 13

Limbing with each other

SUSAN C. HUXFORD-WESTALL ON ALL SAINTS, HAMILTON

H ow glad I was to read “Walk-


Courage to Risk

NIAGARA AWARE 2006

Discovering passionate and sincere worship, biblical teaching, prayer, and fellowship

JUDE GARRIERE

I found it interesting that the word ‘retreat’, as a noun, is defined as a place. The first definition, from the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary says retreat is “an act or process of withdrawing especially from what is difficult, dangerous, or disagreeable.” It is further defined as “a place of privacy or safety: refuge.” The final definition is most apt for our purpose: “A period of time or opportunity in our daily routines to explore our creative talents and find new ways to offer our praise to the Lord.” This was my third Awareness weekend, and I have gone from being a new Christian discovering passionate and sincere worship, biblical teaching, prayer, and fellowship, to being on the planning committee and having the honour of offering retreat to others.

Finding Peace

When I first became involved with the committee, I thought I was giving up my personal experience of rest and being ‘filled’ in order to serve. I was surprised and humbled to discover that I found my peace and restoration in service. I felt filled with the Holy Spirit and was aware of Him working through me during the retreat. It was another enlightening weekend where I learned more about my faith, God, fellow Christians, and self. I came away from the Guelph Bible Conference feeling renewed and knowing that I had grown as a woman of faith with a deeper, more passionate relationship with God and confidence that I have a place and a purpose in the body of Christ.

Passion

The first thing a person needs to evangelize effectively is a passion about Jesus the Christ. The Great Commission calls us to make disciples. It is both a responsibility and a privilege to invite others to know Christ. When we increase our knowledge of the good news of the gospel and deepen the relationship our hearts has with Jesus Christ, we cannot help but be inflamed with a passion. Anyone who has ever fallen in love has experienced the exalting emotion that accompanies the relationship with our significant other. Evangelizing for Jesus Christ and telling others about his love for us takes that same type of passionate enthusiasm.

Prayer

Prayer is an essential discipline for the effective evangelist. Just as Jesus ‘refuelled’ on the mountain with intimate conversation with His Father; it is imperative that we, as the ministers of evangelism take that time to commune with our Father and reconnect with His plan. The parables in the diocese that have embraced the ministry of evangelism and have made it a part of the fabric of their communities are the ones that have been intentional and systematic in their personal and private prayer lives. Evangelism does not happen in isolation but must be approached with the clear understanding that God is in charge and without God in the mix, our efforts are in vain.

Perspective

This is particularly important at this juncture in our history. It goes without saying that the place of the Church in today’s culture has radically changed in a relatively short period of time. What we have always known, cherished and have taken for granted in our society as members of the Church, are sometimes treated with disdain, cynicism or at worst, indifference. As we attempt to make the gospel relevant to ways we must put into perspective the nature of the hearer, the prevailing conditions and influences and the environment in which we reside. Jesus always adapt- ed what He said and how He said it depending upon His audience and the circumstances surrounding them. Likewise, we must be clear about what it is we are trying to say to people and why. Why would someone want to join your church? What is it you offer? How will involvement in your faith community make a difference in people’s lives? What are the needs of your neighbourhood? How will you respond?

Persistency

The results of the efforts of evange- lism usually are not instantaneous. We can become discouraged and think our energy is for naught. God does not have a day planner system with a list of deadlines. The pace at which God works in people’s lives can be bewildering to us. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell the parable of a sower who went out to sow seeds. Some fell among thorns, others among rocks and still others on fertile ground. In the parable, Jesus challenged the hearers to sow the seeds. He did not tell them they were responsible for the condition of the ground. It is God who prepares the ground. The sower was persistent in sowing the seeds.

As Christians, we can have no greater purpose than spreading the gospel of grace and the love of Jesus Christ.

So in this month, as we celebrate Thanksgiving, we must remember that we are called to share the gifts that God has given each of us. God has provided us all with a gift of faith, the gift of the Church and the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ.

No better gifts to share with others than these.

Four P's of evangelism

MICHAEL PATTERSON

When we suggest that as Chris- tians, each of us is called to evangelize, we often are stopped short. This is a pretty formidable task that intimidates many people. We may protest that we are delib- erate about spiritual disciplines, active in our churches, and inten- tional about living responsible lives, but the designation evangelist still frightens us. Why? Often we are unsure what it means to be an evangelist. Doing evangelism requires neither a minimum of forty years on a faith journey nor a seminary education. Anyone, with God’s help, can be an effective evangelist. I have found that there are four cornerstones that have enabled my ministry: Passion, Prayer, Perspective and Persistence.

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How will decisions made at General Synod affect the Diocese?

PETER WALL

DEAN - CHRIST’S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

A s events unfold around us—we the general convention of ECUSA this last summer, com- ments by the Archbishop of Can- terbury, a planned meeting of Primates for early in 2007, and various statements by some Pri- mates and some Bishops—there is great speculation about what the Anglican Church of Canada might or might not do at our General Synod in June of next year when we meet together in Winnipeg. Not unlike our American cousins, we will be under a close microscope and, also, like their convention, we will have the added political dimension of the election of a new Primate. Thus it is not unreasonable to wonder what the implica- tions of certain actions could be. I write this as a close observer, and sometime participant, in the pro- cess. If I am elected as a delegate to General Synod, it will be my fourth consecutive Synod—third from this Diocese—and I have the privilege of serving both on the na- tional Faith Worship and Ministry Committee, which has dealt with many of the issues around human sexuality at the committee level, and I have also been the Niagara member of the Council of General Synod, a kind of national execu- tive body, during this triennium. However, I am neither a canon, lawyer, nor a particularly political person, so I can only offer these personal observations and opin- ions from my somewhat distinctive vantage point.

What if General Synod accepts the findings of the St. Michael Re- port, which says that the blessing of same-sex unions is a matter of doctrine, but not of core doctrine? The General Synod will then have to decide, with advice from its Chancellor, whether or not this is a matter of doctrine sufficient to change church Canons. This would take at least two successive meet- ings of the Synod. Thus no action could be taken until at least 2010. As a matter of doctrine, it is quite clear in our church that no local op- position need be held to the blessing of same-sex unions at the national decision would be made. Presumably some ‘escape’ clause would be needed for the Diocese See SYNOD DECISIONS on page 15
Let's do the time warp again

NIAGARA YOUTH CONFERENCE bonds young Anglicans

CHRISTYN PERKONS
DIOCESAN RESOURCE CENTRE

The Niagara Youth Conference is the pinnacle of Niagara youth events. It totally rocks! Twenty three volunteer staff members spend eight months planning the conference around a theme—Let's Do the Time Warp Again for 2006—and then give up one week of their vacation to staff the event along with the Diocesan Program Consultants.

Bonding with friends

Eighty seven youth from all across the Diocese descend on Canterbury Hills in the last week of August ready to rock with the tunes of the NYC Band, explore issues and questions of faith in small group sessions, experience activities like The Crusades, look at issues affecting the church in large group plenaries, and bond with old friends and new.

Guests this year included Bishop John Bothwell who spoke to the delegates about change agents in the church. Archbishop Andrew Hutchison led the delegates on a Spiritual Time Trek around Canterbury Hills, and then joined them for dinner, during which our beloved Bishop Ralph instigated his traditional NYC foil fight. (Foil balls from the potatoes are flung with abandon at delegates and bishops alike!) Pictures from this awesome week can be found at www.zipsqueal.com.

What delegates say

Says Kristi Boulton (St. Matthias, Gauleph), "NYC is unlike anything else you'll ever do. If you have questions or doubts about your faith or spirituality, this is the place to be. NYC gives you the opportunity to be who you really are; you're free to be the person God meant you to be!"

Nick Head-Petersen (St. David and St. Patrick, Guelph) adds, "the experience is incredible; freedom of expression, thought-provoking discussions, and an unbelievable sense of peace, love and understanding."

"This is my first time and I loved it. First of all, you get to explore and learn more about yourself and your faith through many great activities and discussions. Secondly, you make so many great friends that you can see at NYC in the future and at other youth ministry events like Youth Synod, YLTP and SpiritQuest. Most of all, it's just a blast," comments Katie McCann (Holy Trinity, Fonthill).

The challenge is to take that faith and sets that a group of strangers and comes back each year because it "has a big impact on my faith, and shows that a group of strangers can come together as one in faith."

After NYC Nick feels "rejuvenated spiritually and ready to tackle the challenges of the world; challenges within our parishes, our country and our world as well as in your own community. At NYC, you are able to live each day with your faith interwoven in the day's activities among people who love and care deeply about you. The challenge is to take that faith and that sense of being loved out into my everyday life."

Katie adds, "back at my home church, there aren't a lot of teenagers so coming to NYC shows you that there are lots of people your own age who believe in God. The whole NYC experience is life-changing."

Kristi sums it up; "there's a magic at NYC that sets off a spark inside you. That spark is the flame of your faith. That flame is fanned and grows with the rich spiritual and emotional experiences you participate in. Every year, the staff makes the experience fresh and new. You can always count on your faith being rekindled and that's why I keep coming back."
Thanks-living

Mark Nancekivell
Director of Transitional Ministry

"We thank thee, Lord, for all things, for our food, for life and health, and every good. Accept our thanks, for Jesus' sake, Amen." So runs what is known by our friends and extended family members as the "Nancekivell Grace." Introduced to my father's family over seventy years ago by my late great aunt, Mona Johnson, it has stood the test of time for our family. In our household, we say it at every meal.

Twice blessed

As a priest, much like Margaret Visser, I am curious about what 'depends on dinner' when it comes to asking a blessing at either end of a meal. In my family, we hold hands at the beginning of the meal, and if one of our cats presents themselves at the dinner table, they too are included, by touch in our family circle. Our eldest cat, DC comes running when we say what our table is for as "the food chant," hoping for a scrap to be slipped to him under the table. When our nephew, Mitchell began to learn a grade in larger family gatherings, he led us in his grace, then our daughter, Amanda would lead us in our family blessing of the food. We were indeed, "twice blessed!" And even though the kids in our family are now teenagers, we still use both blessings when my husband's family gathers, to honour the different traditions in our extended family. I rather like that.

What does your family do by way of thanksgiving at daily meal times?

One of the benefits of being a pastor in the Arctic, but there is something here which can be applied more generally even in unglamorous situations. The way we speak is a critical factor in the work of interim pastors. There should be an effort to communicate clearly the vision the Diocese has for the parish and vice versa what the parishioners are saying to the Diocese in order to be clearly understood by the interim pastor.

The way we speak

A vital part of interim work is communication. I arrived in Kangirsuk in late January and started the community by speaking their own language. Inuktitut (Esquimo). It was made very clear to me that hardly anybody from the English or French culture bothers to read this language. Everyone asked "who taught you?" I would reply, "Joanasie Qinnuajuaq, Joanasie Agualagruk and Joe Talulimuq when I was in Povungnituk in 1962." It was then that I began to really feel like an interim—an "in-between" person straddling two distinct time periods.

In early days as a missionary, the expectation always was to speak the language of the people. The lay reader would come to the Mission house and lessons would begin. Joanasie spoke no English and I could hardly understand a word in Inuktitut. There was then, another teacher, of a kind, the late Rev. E. J. Peck, in the shape of his Eskimo-English Dictionary, published by the Church of the Ascension Thank-Offering Mission Fund, Hamilton. It was these resources which helped me to conduct services, preach, and later, teach in the local school.

Forty or more years later, the children of Kangirsuk School consider me a novelty—the latest entertainment in town. There was, however, a more serious side to the way I was speaking. I could not hide my English accent, nor the fact that I was quite rusty, not having spoken the language for years. However, the way I spoke connected them with the past. Speaking a language introduces one to the thoughts and dreams of a people, and brings with it, the names and the memories of the past. I know that mine was an extreme experience in communication in the Arctic, but there is something here which can be applied more generally even in unglamorous situations.

The way we believe

I was privileged to be taught by people who heard the Gospel message for the first time from missionaries. In a deep sense, I felt I was again an "in-between" or spiritual interim, bridging the gap between the first believers and the present. They told me how the Reverend E. J. Peck would shout words of encouragement to the families returning home after hearing the message and he wanted them to keep on in the faith.

In the same way as I preached and taught the children choruses and actions in their own language, the leaders felt encouraged in the great task of spreading the faith. Interim pastors should not just keep things as they are, they should encourage others to reach out in faith. I was able to introduce and facilitate training for the leaders so that over twenty children could enrol in the Boys' and Girls' Brigade. The elders had been apprehensive about direction, but realized that the faith has to be proclaimed afresh to each generation in an exciting way. Reaching out to children and young people in the name of Christ is new and old at the same time!

It was made clear to me by the Parish vestry that many people had given up going to church. We talked about putting notices in the local stores, using the local radio station to inform the community of what the church was doing. Above all we talked about the encouragement noticed by those who had been visited in their homes.

An "in-between" pastor's calling is a challenge. In one sense, interim pastors are the 'in-between' people who minister Christ to the people at the time of a vacancy. As Christ, taught, performed miracles, died, rose again, ascended and will come again, so intermediaries work to encourage. In-between people witness to this great truth. Parishes may be without rectors but they are never without Christ. Those of us who are used as intermediaries should take seriously God's call to min- ter in the 'in-between' times, praying that Christ will come again and that His life and message continue to be faithfully proclaimed everywhere.
This is my story

YVONNE SKREPNech
ST. JOHN THE DIVINE, CAYUGA

I was born in Meadows Bay of Island, Newfoundland, the seventh child in a family of fourteen children. I was raised in an Anglican family, able to trace five generations of membership in the Anglican Church, through my father's line and so I was immersed in the Anglican doctrine from infant baptism to confirmation, to teaching Sunday school. God was talked about a lot in my life. At school Morning Prayer and Evening prayer part of the curriculum. My first Bible carried the written words on the inside cover "Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest." The inwardly digest part did not take place until many years later. I realize now that I was born about God but I really did not know Him.

After graduating from a Church of England school I became a teacher at one of these schools located at Isle aux Morts. I needed to spread my wings and so I moved to Cartwright, on the island's southern shore, there was a house for a year and it was here that even before I was born, I had learned that I was a child. The love of my parents told me they were uncomfortable with me being in such an island place and felt I should try Toronto in I had family there. At church services and communications would be much easier. So I off to find a school for the blind in Toronto. When I arrived at the Beverley Street School for the Blind it was to find that it was being taken over by the Metropolitan Toronto Association for the Mentally Handicapped. As I was being given a tour of the school I knew this was where I was meant to be. So I started work there the next day.

Good times and bad times

During my time in Toronto I not only found my vocation but my future husband. Peter, who was at college training to become a radio-telecommunications officer. He went to work for the ministry of transportation and sent him to British Columbia, so I followed him out there. We married and began our life together in Terrace.

I became involved in setting up a school for special needs children but before it opened we were sent to Prince George. I loved living there, as it was a beautiful, vibrant city. By now we had our first baby, Nyle. However my health was not good and I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. I was dumbfounded and I couldn't really take it in. I was a young mother who was told that my "life is on a question mark." I spent quite a while in hospital in Vancouver, having all kinds of tests and eventually was sent home to Prince George to try to cope with MS and my baby. There were good times and bad times. I think I was in a kind of denials, refusing to let my life be controlled by the disease. I believed that if I didn't dwell on my difficulties I removed the threat of depression from my life. It worked well enough for me as we were moved from Vancouver Island, to Comox and I was able to go back to work and again establish a small school for special needs children.

Our next posting was to Cranbrook and we lived there for about twenty years. These were very fruitful times for me. I went to work establishing a highly successful programme of individual education plans at a school for special needs children.

I really got to know God

When Peter retired, due to ill health, our family moved to Terrace. We eventually moved to Cranbrook where we opened our life together in Terrace.

We eventually moved to Ca-

The Religion of Material Progress?

Religion of material progress, and demonstrates indifference and inertia!

What I would do differently

If I could live my life over again I would start as soon as verbalization skills were in place to openly and exuberantly confess my love for Christ. I would shout it from the rooftops and the valleys and the rooftops. I would deal with my loved ones with more Christ-like attitudes. I would serve Him better much sooner.

Advice to new Christians

To new Christians starting out in life I say never to be afraid to confess the caring, crucified Christ. Read, read, read the Bible. Pray for His help in understanding and digesting what you read. Find a loving church, sensitive to the needs of others. Praise your Saviour by letting the world see that your face tells the story that you carry His love within. Never cease to pray and thank Him. Adore Him, confess to Him, thank Him and ask for His help and blessings for others.

How thankful are we anyway?

Continued from page 1

tant and a few sceptics still dispute them. Thus the ideal “to whom much is given, of them shall much be required” is entirely forgotten!

Religion of material progress

But the idol of unending material progress has serious implications for materiality of life and neighbours right here in Canada as well as for the Third World. Seventeen years ago, all the political parties in our federal parliament voted unanimously to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. Yet to-day, Canadian poverty rates are still substantially above those in the developed world. For example, Hamilton's Social Planning Council reported early this year that even in prosperous Canada, child poverty is still at least 10 percent, and in Hamilton itself one in five children live in poverty. Meanwhile, in poorer countries like the United Kingdom, poverty is still at least 20 percent. This is an urgent issue that needs immediate attention.

Sacrifices over time

But let's face it, although the consequences of doing nothing about this challenge are certainly drastic, it will not be an easy one to tackle. It will require personal inconvenience and real sacrifices over a prolonged period of time, and with no clear Five Year Plan, or even a Five Hundred Year Plan to guide us, results will come very slowly. Still, in this Thanksgiving season, I believe there is hope. I believe that every act of genuine gratitude and compassion has a ripple effect, like a pebble being thrown into a calm pool. Or in Jesus' metaphor, like the mustard-seed which is very small, but grows into something really big, or the kind of yeast that could leaven the lump of our prosperous indifference and inertia!
Well of gratitude

Continued from page 1

unhappiness. In fact, the uneasi- ness goes much deeper. Spiritually and emotionally the disparity lives within us as well.

We may believe we are not loved, have no friends, or can find no joy. We can feel we are some- how denied the gifts life has to offer. As a collective human race it is this disparity and belief in "lack" that makes us poor of pocket, poor of heart and poor of soul. Even for those of immense financial wealth a belief in lack of a different kind creates a series of thoughts that keeps an attitude of poverty alive. Somewhere in our hearts we hold fearful of lack. Without this belief in abundance, the sense of gra ti- tude eludes us. This is not a natu- ral state of being. It is simply the outcome of not being awake to the unlimited prosperity within us and within our world.

Sharing all we have

At some point each of us makes a decision to see lack or to see abun- dance when we look at our world. This view can be greatly influ- enced by our environment and those around us and yet it is we who make the decision in the end. My friend, Marianne Knuth is a living example of this choice. In an African land- scape of a crippling aids pandemic, immense poverty, violence and a devastated economy, she has started, in Zimbabwe, a new community called the Kufunda Learning Village, dedicated to assist- ing others redefine their understand- ing of success. She is helping oth- ers to reclaim their sense of wealth and possibility.

In the midst of this wasteland she expects only to be a pinpoint of light and for her that is enough to begin a transformation. She has chosen a world view of prosperity and possibility. She has chosen a perspective of appreciation for the immense "source-fullness" of the human spirit. She sees only glori- ous human beings all around her. She shares all she has, effortlessly and joyfully, and so can we!

Deep within our souls we are simply loved. Our deepest desire is to express that love through our thoughts and actions. The only bar- rier to living this way is our own selves, not anything outside us. It is our own set of fear-based beliefs and sense of lack that holds us back. The process of transformation from this state of being is simple.

Discipline

We need only awaken and see that all that we have already. We need only pay attention. This state of appreciation and gratitude simply requires that we do not need only the discipline of daily aware- ness and action.

1. Each morning before rising from our bed, we can take a few minutes to list all of what we are grateful for and give thanks.

2. During the course of the day, in any moment of frustration or anxi- ety, we can stop in that moment and consider something to appreci- ate and give thanks.

3. Throughout the day, we can stop occasionally and pay attention to at least one, a scene in na- ture, a thought of a loved one and give thanks.

4. Before drifting off to sleep at night we can review the joys of the day, the people we love, who love us, the talents and skills we have to share with the world and give thanks.

This deep attention to our pros- perity at every level and in every nuance leaves no room for great envy, selfishness or despair. It leaves no room for fear. It leaves room only for generosity of spirit and the expression of love. Once we live from this expression we are open to more possibility, more abundance and thus the circle of prosperity and joy grows.

Place of gratitude

In a world fraught with the articule of complexity, the simplicity of gratitude and appreciation can open our heart to the transformation of thankfulness. And so I invite you to live in this place of gratitude, mo- ment to moment, day to day with me. Together in this community of appreciation, we can join Marianne in being that point of light that brings a global transformation.

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Well of gratitude}

October 2006

12

Getting to know you

COLLEEN SYM Social Justice Coordinator for the Diocese of Niagara

H uman beings are products of our heritage and experiences. The new Diocesan Social Justice Outreach Committee in Oakville, Kerr Street Ministries now involves over forty churches, including St. Aidan’s, St. Jude’s and St. Simon’s Anglican Churches. Colleen comments, “Out of Kerr Street, I could see it was possible to have a partnership between a secular organisation and religious establishments... You could see the relevance of people’s faith in the work they were doing.” Considering her current commitment, Colleen asks, “What makes it relevant for the kids? That’s the real question.” Hence, Colleen’s mission is “to bring change to the world, even perhaps courage to overcome long- standing habits which are detrimental to others.”

Faith in action

She continues: “To be a resource to the parishes is a piece I’m really interested in... The other piece is to bring different issues to the atten- tion of the Diocese, where it would be appropriate for the Diocese to take a position or to get the word out. This article is a piece of how we get the word out to parishes.”

Ruefully, Colleen acknowledges, “there’s a lot of commitment and dedication out here, but not resource- es.” Realistically, she comments, “grass-roots work in the parishes will be to help them develop what they want to do at the local level. Needs assessments, outcomes mea- sures, and funding or grant applica- tions are what secular non-profit or- ganisations have done, but they are new concepts for parishes; an area of support parishes need.”

“Managing a financial budget is im- portant,” Colleen explains. “So often I’ve heard, ‘Can you do it for me?’ Yes, I can do that, but I’m more than happy to review what you’ve got; review applications, and help to make connections with other groups that are doing the same thing you want to do.”

She states, “most conversations begin with ‘Marion (Marion Vincenty of the venerable Archbishop- con of the Diocese of Niagara) told me I should talk to you.’ Colleen’s commitment reaches beyond the Diocesan connection: “Seeing funding applications for en- dowments goes through the Commit- tee helps make connections. That capacity building piece is where I can help... (and) tie (a parish’s appli- cation) in with a national campaign of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Canadian Council of Churches, or the World Council of Churches. I’ve spoken with Maylanna Maybee (Coordinator of Justice Education and Networking at the National Of- fice, but we will discern what kind of relationship would develop.”

Family ties

Born in Winnipeg, Colleen is the middle of three sisters. After earning a BA in Psychology and Sociology at Carleton University in Ottawa, and two years in law at the University of Ottawa, she took third year of law studies at the Uni- versity of Manitoba in Winnipeg, then attended for one year in the Atto- rney General’s Office there.

Moving back to Ontario, she re- articulated with the Crown Attorney’s Office in the City of Toronto, where she became involved in matters relating to contrary sexual assault prosecution, de- manding work which requires “vi- cariousness and a great deal of field.” Joining the legal clinic in George- town in 1994, Colleen has been Executive Director for the past four years.

With her partner, Mark, who is in sales, and their two daughters aged seven and nine, are involved: “The girls are getting an education on what’s important. Kids are obser- vant; they see what’s going on.”

Remembering growing up at St. George’s Church, Crescentwood, in Winnipeg, Colleen reflects “back to that period when it wasn’t relevant,” and confesses to identi- fying with “that typical Anglican demographic (of being) raised in the Church, confirmed, having been brought up close to the church with the children. I’m guilty!” She smiles. “For me, (I ask) what’s the relevance of it, and then how do I make it relevant for the kids?” That got me to St. George’s (George- town) in 2002.” After attending St. George’s for a year to see if it was a fit, we had the girls baptised, and now they’re doing their First Com- munion. We all met and are proud of the girls baptised; that was a one-off. If they were baptised, we had to make a commitment to follow through. As a small unit of the Georgetown parish, inviting ap- plications to share the Diocesan Outreach Committee’s work in social justice, seemed to answer Colleen’s concerns about finding her place in the Church’s efforts to live as Christians are called to do. “I didn’t want to do the Sunday school thing, in part because we have two small children. Bake sales stress the point that you don’t actually do roofs and so on. Gardening was great. I’ve realised there’s a tension between mission and maintenance; I’m more of a mission person.”

What makes faith relevant?

As a lawyer and as Executive Director of the Halton Commu- nity Legal Services, Colleen has a strong connection with Kerr Street Ministries in Oakville, providing support for low income people. “(Our) mandate is for public legal education, a piece I’m really interested in... The other piece is to bring different issues to the atten- tion of the Diocese, where it would be appropriate for the Diocese to take a position or to get the word out. This article is a piece of how we get the word out to parishes.”

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O
On September the 18, Charles McVety, President of the Defend Marriage coalition—an alliance of 13 traditional marriage, family and religious advocacy groups—kicked his campaign into gear on Parliament Hill. His goal is to sway members of parliament to re-open the debate on same-sex marriage and to once again make certain that the legal definition includes "one man and one woman." All of this is justified in these groups by the Sacred Scriptures and the Tradition of the Church.

It is one way of looking at things. It seems to me that there are far bigger fish to fry when it comes to Christian marriage, but starting up that fish-fry might open some unpleasant doors and odours, even for the Defend Marriage coalition. It's much easier to point fingers at a small group of people who want to be recognized in their committed journey, rather than to look at the inherent problems in the church's relationship to the structural itself.

Of course this fishing expedition would take much more space than this paper would allow, but perhaps scratching the surface would have been noticed how many marriages are now occurring outside the Christian church? There are now ministers and officiants across the province who do larges numbers of weddings in homes, halls, restaurants and gardens. At one time this was unheard of; save the very quiet wedding that might occur at city hall or the odd wedding that ran off to Vegas, or the many marriages now occurring outside in homes, halls, restaurants and gardens. Perhaps it does if all we think about is legal-

ity, rules and regulations. Oh yes, perhaps when we equate marriage to genital expression we might also reason to believe that the only right way to live out marriage is in the interaction of male and female; after all this produces children. But when we see it as a rite of passage into a new way of living—out love on this earth—the love that was intended by the creator—it seems that limiting the symbol to any particular group is ludicrous. After all there are now thousands of gay couples in this country and in other countries who have entered into the journey of marriage and are living it out with a deep and living spirituality.

Perhaps this is happening, but perhaps those zealous people in Defend Marriage, might want to consider the possibility that they are driving more people away from the Christian celebration than they are saving!

The expediency and legalistic approach of the civil marriage verses, the in-depth understanding and principles offered by a more 'sacramental' approach must not be overlooked. It would seem that in our society we as a church need to help people understand the difference. Of course we need to understand the difference our-selves in the first place if we are to show anyone else that we have something to offer. We are unfortunately, the beneficiaries of ancient and antique arguments about the nature of marriage. These range from the Roman insistence that marriage is one of the "seven sacraments instituted by Christ to give grace" to Luther's assertion via his two kingdom's doctrine, that marriage is relegated to "an estate of the earthly kingdom... subject to the prince and not to the Pope!"

Most of us who are involved in either opposing at marriages, or who live in one believe that there is a truly spiritual dimen-
sion to marriage. We believe that the day we entered into marriage our lives were changed. I preach this all the time: "You will know that something is dif-

ferent when you pass through the ceremony they come out the other side, changed or altered. How this happens and what it is that happens is difficult to put into a few words, but we all know it is true.

Perhaps Dietrich Bonhoeffer knew it best when he said that it was not love that sustained marriage—and we know that this is true—but rather marriage that sustains our love. What can sustain love in this world? What symbol has that power? Most of us in our heart of hearts believe that marriage has that ability.

Within marriage the symbols of love have an incredible affect on our lives, Martin Bu-

cher, the great Jewish philosopher in the last century said, "I kiss my wife, not only be-
cause I love her, but in order to love her." A kiss is not only an expression of what is, but it has the power to create what is not yet complete!

This discussion of the power of symbol and the 'sacramentality' of marriage could go on forever, and suffice it to say that most of us are believers in Christian marriage and believe that it has the power to sustain our love and bring it to places that we have never known before.

Frankly, it doesn't appear that Charles McVety and his troop have any concerns about dealing with the real issues of Chris-
tian Marriage. Our society is walking away from a gift that it cannot see because of the ecclesial blocks that we put up in the in-

terest of preserving tradition and in a true spirit of pettiness.

Does the rite of commitment that we call marriage belong only to one particular group in the world—male and female couples? Perhaps it does if all we think about is legal-

ity, rules and regulations. Oh yes, perhaps when we equate marriage to genital expres-
sion we might also reason to believe that the only right way to live out marriage is in the interaction of male and female; after all this produces children. But when we see it as a rite of passage into a new way of living—out love on this earth—the love that was intended by the creator—it seems that limiting the symbol to any particular group is ludicrous. After all there are now thousands of gay couples in this country and in other countries who have entered into the journey of marriage and are living it out with a deep and living spirituality.

Sadly, there will always be those bent on "the rules" and "the way it's always been" in their minds. Unfortunately, in their zealous guardianship, they will only push people far-

ther away from the very gift that marriage is intended to be.
Northern lights

Jim Newman
Director of Stewardship and Financial Development

There’s a natural sense of stewardship in the far north. My daughter and her family live in Old Town in the City of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. It’s an eclectic mix of hunter’s cabins and modern houses. There’s little wasted space and it’s a land where the adventurous souls who arrived years longer than they expected. The local economy is on the upswing again as new diamond mines come into production.

Good stewardship is evident

I’ve watched good stewardship in the progressive modernization of Yellowknife’s facilities over the last decade. I see it in their sensible disposal of waste products and the local production of electricity. I see it in the clear streams and lakes, the regulated fishing and hunting sectors, and in the clear nights that are devoid of excessive light pollution. The heavens come alive there in ways that most of us have forgotten.

Yellowknife is a friendly and helpful. Sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks abound for good reasons. It’s a place of elegant soapstone carvings, winter roads, moderately expensive groceries and fuel, and unlocked doors.

Meanwhile here in the south

Our four lane highways are clogged, our rivers are polluted, our televisions are getting larger, and our children are at risk. Parishes struggle to stay afloat amidst a cycle of rampant conspicuous consumption. What a paradox!

Struggling parishes in this land of abundance!

We must create a strong culture of stewardship in Niagara. That means taking excellent care of our parishes, our environment, our communities, ourselves, and each other. We know that strong spiritually healthy parishes are beacons of Christ’s light in the world. So let’s give thanks and resistively from our God—given store of time, talents, and treasure. It’s the right and just thing to do.

An interesting conversation

Graham Stap
Rectors - St. Alban the Martyr, Glen Williams

I had an interesting conversation the other day with an old friend, a person who is having a very difficult time with the institutional church and particularly the Anglican Church. When I say conversation I use the term loosely as the person refused to discuss any aspect of the church and muttered something about religion being the cause of all the wars and problems of the world.

Problems of our own making

I must admit that I was saddened by this as I know the person had, in the past, been very active as a layman, a choir member and leader of the church as well as being a generous steward.

I started to try and figure out any reason for the change. At best I had only the history between us to go on and quickly realized that I would be largely guessing. It could be the tension surrounding same-sex relationships and the conflicting attitudes within the church. It could be the financial woes of the church in general. It could be that I stopped and realized all of the problems I was thinking of were of our own making. We are responsible.

Then I started to think of priorities and wondering if we placed too much emphasis on maintaining what we consider to be the right things of the church, how we should or should not do something, and to whom we were to ‘New Niagara’ and all the wonderful ideas, deep thoughts, and dedication that came into being through the process of New Niagara.

What happened to New Niagara?

Along with the obvious desire of all those that attended to see our churches not only alive and well but also full of the Spirit living and serving God; accepting people where they are and not where we expect them to be, I wonder what happened to this ‘new beginning’ and all the work so many people put into it. This brought me back, full circle, to the person I had been talking to. As a church we have lost this person because, obviously in many cases, we have not accepted people where they are but try to mold them to our own image.

In this summer my wife and I visited many churches. We saw quite clearly that churches used to do new things, or were doing old things in a new way were the churches that were at least three-quarters full. These churches were not filled with just new attitudes but with new attitudes into the hearts and minds of the people. The service was lively and people were invited to share in both worship and hospitality.

Filling pews

Others that were still in the same old rut were nearly empty and we were not invited to share because there was nothing new. My old friend’s church was one of the latter. Congregations across this great land are growing. However, it seems to me that new churches where all the people of the church know that the love of God is the greatest power in the whole world and are doing things that we as a people are taking advantage of this turn around and filling their pews.

Interpretation of the word

Audrey Conard
Annie & Jocelyn Oakesville

Over the years I’ve heard many questions about the Bible, and I’ve had many questions about the Bible. I suppose I don’t have to. It’s enough for me to answer for ourselves:

Was every word written by God?

Is every part of the Bible equally important?

Is it true that some parts of the Bible contradict other parts?

How was the Bible written? Is it historically and factually true? Is it literally true? How shall I use the Bible?

God stirs up the questions

Here’s what is primary for me as I approach those questions. The Bible is for us a means of grace. Through Scripture God comes to us and speaks to us, the way Christ comes to us in the bread and wine. God is always and continues to engage us with us through the Biblical texts.

My experience is that God is the one who stirs up our questions about our lives, about who we are, and about our lives of faith. I believe God does that to intrigue us, draw us nearer, and to stretch us.

I have a very precious letter sent by my grandfather to my grandmother in 1914. It’s a love letter in scratchy, sepia script on drying yellow paper. Very clearly the purpose of the letter is to persuade my grandmother to marry him. Facts and descriptions of his past and current situations were true as he saw them, as he was writing. They mean little to me now. Many of his expressions, even his grammar, are quaint. I don’t know the people that he mentions, but I’ve always wanted to do a little research, not just about my grand-parents, but about the years before World War One in mid-America as well. I want to know why his engraving trade was not popular. I wonder why with his German-sounding name, he might have had to move to Canada for a while. The intent of his letter is clear: “Love me, here’s who I am, throw in your lot with me.” However, I will know my grandfather more fully when I can round out his set ting and background. My grand mother shared the world, so her understanding would be natural and immediate. All these years later, I have to make an effort to gain a background setting.

The larger story

I suppose I don’t have to. It’s enough for me to answer for ourselves:

Why do some parts of the Bible seem strange to me, and mine baffles me?

I think my grandfather’s letter is an interesting conversation? Would his assumption about the Bible as a human library, the ancient authors, viewpoints, and genres—letters, chronicles, poetry and prayers, folk tales, a novel, stories and sermons, etc.—and as we see the Bible as a human library, the larger story of how God works with humankind emerges with clarity.

We can then spend less time arguing about the surface as if everything is text and spend more time cooperating with God’s overall intent.

Biblical study groups in our parishes can be helpful. We can learn the literary and historical skills that can help us to better understand the context in which the scripture was written. These skills are not, as we might say ‘fancy-schmancy’; they are sensible and help us as we en able us to answer for ourselves:

What was the material of this book were the biblical teachings and history? Why and for whom was it written? I’d feel differently about my grandfather if the letter I have written to a woman other than my grandmother.

Was the material of this book originally passed down orally? Why does it the form it takes? Why did our faith ancestors think this material had to be preserved? What were our ancestors like? Engaging our texts enables us to speak across time.

The larger story of Christ’s reality and God’s loving mystery can grow and deepen through engaging with our sacred texts. We will not find our answers in the book, but by engaging our texts we enable us to speak across time.
Advocacy Justice Camp

EXPERIENCES

that will last a lifetime

SARAH KOLESIC
Incarnation Parish, Oakville

On the morning of Sunday, May 7, I gathered up all my bags and headed out to the Via Rail station where I would await my train to Ottawa. Not really knowing what to expect, I promised myself that I would try my best to keep an open mind whether happiness, sadness, or anger would happen. My destination? The Anglican Advocacy Justice Camp for young people being hosted by the Diocese of Ottawa.

I arrived early the morning and headed down to the lobby where I met up with all the other anxious Advocacy Justice Campers who were ready to begin day one. When I first stepped foot in Church of the Ascension, I looked around frantically for a familiar face. Thankfully, I spotted Evan Rudderham whom I had known from other Niagara youth ministry events. Needless to say, Evan and I pretty much clung together for most of the day still unsure of what to make of the whole situation. One thing we did know: we had both been placed in the Development and Aid committee, which was about considering development and aid had always been something I wanted to learn more about.

Focusing on poverty

Throughout the course of the week, our group attended many scheduled events and meetings all around the city. The most memorable of which was a visit with a man named Mr. Joseph Kahigwa. Joseph is the Deputy Ambassador of Uganda who was visiting the Canadian High Commission office during the time of Justice Camp. We walked into his office where we were all seated and our name was called out one by one. We were thrilled because this time by all we had earned a little snack! Joseph was a kind man, truly cared about his people and was overjoyed that we had come to speak to him on behalf of anyone who wishes to help.

The next day while Evan was meeting with Liberal MP, John McCallum, I had the opportunity to go down with Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs). Although we were supposed to be talking about development and aid issues, Ablonczy seemed more focused on the issue of poverty. She told us how poverty within the family is the key to defeating the cycle of poverty. Whether or not the government had the opportunity to help, we were very grateful that she had taken out of her schedule to meet with us.

Encountering homelessness

As the week went on, we met with many more important individuals such as the Vice President of CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency). She was calling out for a special season of love and gratitude to our diocese of Niagara. It’s a dispute focused on a parcel of land in Caledonia, a town that will last a lifetime.

ALAN L. HAYES
The Anglican Church

Most Anglican worship services are scheduled according to the calendar, with various daily services, weekly services, and annual services. This scheme is sometimes called “the sanctification of time.” But sometimes we gather for worship according to provisions revealed in history. In centuries past, if a king died or a prince was born, people went to church. In case of plague or famine, famine or bountiful harvest, threat of war or victory over the enemy, people went to church.

Recently we’ve had an historical moment in our own area that called out for a special season of confession and prayer. It’s had a lot of attention from the media.

Caledonia conflict

It’s a dispute focused on a parcel of land in Caledonia which had to fall in our diocese of Niagara. The property was claimed by two different groups: white developers, and the Mi’kmaq in the Six Nations reserve located directly adjacent, which for Anglican purposes is in the diocese of Huron. The legalities of land ownership along the Grand River have been controversial for at least two centuries. A good brief introduction, written by a lawyer who hasn’t taken sides, is available at www.law.org—click on the free September-October issue, and look for “aboriginal law.” A lawsuit about one of the issues has been in process for years.

Last February native protestors began occupying the disputed site. Counter-protestors gathered and maybe made racist remarks. Things escalated. The protestors began blocking traffic on the road into Caledonia, in effect holding the town hostage. Some local white officials got buffy and made inflammatory comments. Violence occasionally erupted. The law courts got involved. A local judge warned the occupation against native lawlessness had to be told by the Court of Appeals that he might be playing a little loose with the law.

In June, the conflict was abruptly defused when the provincial government agreed to allow the developers for the disputed land title and for their expenses. Construction stopped, and the protests de-escalated, but ill-will and mistrust remain.

Seeking healing

In June, the conflict was abruptly defused when the provincial government agreed to allow the developers for the disputed land title and for their expenses. Construction stopped, and the protests de-escalated, but ill-will and mistrust remain.

Some lessons from history

Sometimes in history, when local government has given up moral leadership, responsibility has fallen on the church. For example, in occupied France in World War II, the parish priest often assumed civil roles, such as settling disputes, distributing welfare, even making sure the aqeducks were repaired. And in Selma, Alabama, in 1965, when a group of white racists used dogs, water-cannons, and prejudiced judges to keep racial minorities from voting, the black church stepped in. Christians from across the country marched peacefully to remind them, in the language of the Prayer Book, “to do justice, and to LOVE THE STRANGER.”

No, things haven’t gone that far in Caledonia. But I left the healing service reflecting that this is a crucial time for our world, when some of our worldly principalities and powers have failed to offer much healing, help, or hope. The Church has some work to do.

Worshippers pray for healing in Caledonia controversy

Continued from page 8

of New Westminster, which has already approved a local option. What happens if General Synod does not accept the findings of the St. Michael Report? One would assume that the Synod would reject the St. Michael Report, then Synod is saying that the blessing of same-sex unions is quite clearly not a matter of doctrine in any form, and local order could prevail, in other words, a local option would be virtually assured. In this case, the experience of AOC with others, they always get the impression that it was all work and no play, which is definitely not true! There was always plenty of time for the regular tourist attractions and opportunity to socialize with people from other groups. One evening I managed to sneak away and join the Homelessness and Poverty group for their night walk. This night walk turned out to be a real eye-opener. The amount of homelessness I encountered was unbelievable and really showed that homelessness is a national disaster and must be dealt with immediately.

Experience of a lifetime

Overall I believe that my experience of Advocacy Justice Camp will remain with me forever. I wish all the delegates the best in their day to day lives carrying out the lessons we all shared together. As for now, I look forward to the Environmental Justice Camp held in BC next year. See you there!

General Synod Decisions

Continued from page 8
Giving thanks is more than just words
TYING ACTION TO YOUR WORDS of gratitude this harvest season

Bill Moss
DIVINITY STUDENT

What does it mean to give thanks? Most of us give thanks for something at some point during our days, whether for the opportunity to go to school or work in a safe country, to have enough on our plates in the evening or simply to wake up and greet another day; we give thanks for many things and for many different reasons. In this harvest season, we are particularly mindful about the gifts of the earth. Fresh sweet corn, golden delicious apples and Italian blue plums are some of my favourite harvest time foods. Each year the earth provides us with a wealth of resources which we use in our everyday lives and so we set aside a day each year, both in the Church calendar (Harvest Sunday) and in our society (Thanksgiving Day), to be grateful for all we have received from creation.

Using Creation Wisely

The BAS Collect for Harvest Thanksgivings reminds us of God’s action as creator of the fruitful Earth but also our own role as stewards of all things. The collect implores us to utilize God’s creation responsibly, so as to be stewards of all things. The collect implores us to be grateful for all we have received from creation.

I wonder how many families will celebrate Thanksgiving this year by giving thanks for the harvest of farmers in California or South America—sure sometimes our crops cost slightly more and are not available year-round—but what is the cost both economically and ecologically of sustaining such practices? Is it not worth the prices to support local farmers? If we don’t how can such practices? Is it not worth the prices to sustain creation increase? of creation? Are we too busy to care about the gifts of the earth?

Stewards of creation

Moreover, are we being stewards in such a manner as to permit future generations to inherit an earth which can still provide such bountiful harvests? Our current ecological crisis seems to suggest that we are not being, nor have we been for a while, stewards of creation in a way that will allow our descendants to celebrate the Harvest Sunday for generations to come. The destruction of agriculturally productive land, the move towards industrializing agriculture and climate change all are significant obstacles to humanity’s fulfillment of God’s charge in Genesis to be good stewards of creation.

With this seemingly enormous task lying ahead of me, I often ask myself how I might be a better steward of God’s creation. After a reflection during an ecological retreat this summer, one change I have made in my own life was to scrap the gel I used to put in my hair. Sure it’s not a big change—as I doubt that the water treatment plants hardly noticed the resultant decrease in hair gel chemicals flowing into them—but it was symbolic and a reminder about my need to be a better steward of creation.

Fair trade

While I’ve been writing this article I’ve been pondering what would it look like for our parishes to celebrate Harvest Thanksgiving outdoors, in green spaces, the edge of a cornfield, a park or a natural area, and amidst creation and the community instead of isolating ourselves from creation in wooden or stone structures. Might our understanding of the relationship of God and creation change and thus appreciation for the gifts of creation increase?

There are many other ways of course: to begin using organic waste bins, carpooling, or buying local fruit in season. One common approach parishes take is to switch from regular to fair trade coffee. How many parishes use the excuse that fair trade coffee is too expensive? Sure it’s $8.25 for a pound of coffee beans. Yet we have no qualms about paying $1.25 for a large double-double cup of coffee that costs pennies at Church? Ever since that day the words of St. Paul, repeating words to be found in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 32:35), have been ringing in my ears. The dropping of the atomic bomb was a crime against humanity, not just against the Japanese. It caused death and agony to countless non-combatants. It is politically correct to remember and respect the holocaust of the Jews during World War II, but it is politically inconvenient to remember the holocaust of Japanese civilians that ended it. What goes round must come back. It took 56 years.

When will we learn to listen to the command to forgive our enemies? When will we learn the true meaning of “Thou shalt not covet”? How can we pray “forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us”? Only when we can show understanding and love for those who do us wrong can true peace be established in the world. Neither militarism nor pacifism is the answer.

Forget the fuss and worry about all you need to do to get ready for the Holiday Season!

Leadership

TLC or The Leadership Conference is coming to Niagara on Saturday, October 28.

Your Diocesan Resource Centre team has been busily seeking out talented individuals to lead workshops on a variety of leadership topics and we are thrilled with the response. We think you will be too.

The Leadership Conference will be launched by lively worship and by a short plenary session with our Bishops, Ralph and Ann. These two popular and entertaining characters will share their thoughts on leadership in today’s Church from their perspectives on the front lines in two dioceses. They are excited to have been given this opportunity to reflect publicly on this crucially important topic for the Church.

And the NEWS gets even better; this conference is being largely funded by the Survive & Thrive Education and Training Endowment Fund and will have something for everyone. There will only be a small charge ($10 per person) to participants for lunch and refreshments.

TLC is capturing much interest from our neighbouring dioceses and we have been turning back requests for visiting registrations since we have determined that a conference primarily financed by Survive and Thrive Funds should be first and foremost a conference for Niagara delegates. However, if the registration targets have not been met by October 2, we shall open these floodgates. So, Niagara parishes, please get your registrations in as soon as possible and, no later than October 2nd, in order to be sure of spaces for October 28.

To register online go to www.niagara.anglican.ca/leadership/ and click on the right hand side of the page.

For more information, please contact: Karen Nowicki Administrative Assistant 905-527-1316 (ext. 380) karen.nowicki@niagara.anglican.ca

Poetic justice

SUSAN C. HUXFORD-WESTALL ON ALG. SANTS, HAMILTON

The radio is full of September 11, 2001 and has been harping on it for the last few days, but nobody recalls August 6, 1945. I was in London having just completed my repatriation leave after four years in India and Burma. I knew that the Japanese were in full retreat. I was with my father when we heard the news that the atomic bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima. Nagasaki followed three days later. I said to my father “It shouldn’t have happened. It was not necessary.” Truman’s excuse—the American excuse—was that it would save allied lives by ending the war more quickly. Of course, it did, but at what a cost?

Ever since that day the words of St. Paul, repeating words to be found in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 32:35), have been ringing in my ears. The dropping of the atomic bomb was a crime against humanity, not just against the Japanese. It caused death and agony to countless non-combatants. It is politically correct to remember and respect the holocaust of the Jews during World War II, but it is politically inconvenient to remember the holocaust of Japanese civilians that ended it. What goes round must come back. It took 56 years.

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For the three-hundredth time
Peter Wall, Dean of Christ’s Church Cathedral, donates blood for the 300th time.

In thanksgiving for good books

PETER WALL
DEAN - CHRIST’S CHURCH CATHEDRAL

I have the enormously satisfying privilege of being able to get away during at least a portion of my summer vacation. For good or ill, I am one of those people for whom actually having a vacation necessitates being out of touch with the office, with the ‘day-to-day’ and even with home. Our family has a cottage in a beautifully idyllic place called McGregor Bay, with only water access, and a good hour by boat and car to the nearest store; there is no hydro, no telephone, no cell service, no cars, no traffic, and no laptops—at least until they invent a propane driven one; just loons and stars, the sounds of wolves howling at night, woodpeckers doing what they do to the trees, the odd bear by night, woodpeckers doing what they do to the trees, the odd bear by night, woodpeckers doing what they do to the trees, the odd bear by night, woodpeckers doing what they do to the trees, the odd bear by night, woodpeckers doing what they do to the trees, the odd bear by night, woodpeckers doing what they do to the trees, the odd bear by night, woodpeckers doing what they do to the trees, the odd bear by night, woodpeckers doing what they do to the trees, the odd bear by night.

The cottage is a marvelous place with lots of books; by the time I get around to them, many are long past the best seller list. But this year, as I give thanks for the abundant harvest which is my life, I am thankful for two particularly engaging books I read this summer, both published within the last ten years. One was an important book which I have been trying to read for awhile, and which I deliberately took to the cottage to get through! The other was a completely serendipitous find, brought by a relative’s friend. I want to say a little about each of them and commend them both to all. They would both even make a good parish study book!

Relaxing with good books

The first is Thomas Cahill’s The Gifts of the Jews. Published in 1998, this is not a new book, and is part of a series by the author, which he calls The Hinges of History. Many will be familiar with the first book of the series, How the Irish Saved Civilization; others will already have read Desire of the Everlasting Hills, which deals with Jesus and the beginnings of Christianity. Cahill is an engaging, witty, and delightful writer. He is an accomplished scholar, but is neither a theologian nor a biblical scholar. The Gifts of the Jews is sub-titled “how a tribe of desert nomads changed the way everyone thinks and feels.” It is a very good read, with some very profound moments. Starting more than five millennia ago, Cahill traces the development of what we now know as the Bible and with the peoples we call “the Jews.” His open sentence, ‘The Jews started it all—and by it I mean so many of the things we care about, the underlying values that make all of us—Jew and gentile, believer and atheist, tick,” draws the reader into an erudite and involving examination of ancient history, religious development, biblical politics, and human nature. Cahill is at times wickedly funny, deeply moving, significantly insightful, and gently convincing. I highly recommend it as a good read!

Looking forward to next year

Then I picked up Keeping Faith, a novel by Jodi Picoult, a New England novelist. A complex and engrossing book, it centers on a little girl named Faith with no religious background at all, having never been ‘churched’ in any way. With a non-practising Jewish mother and an equally non-practising Episcopalian father, Faith is living through the painful disintegration of her parents’ marriage, and suddenly begins to hear the voice of God, to recite biblical passages, to develop stigma, and to miraculously heal. Sounds awful, right? Wrong. Picoult writes very well, and the book has just enough interesting twists and turns, and a cast of just eccentric and charming enough characters to make it a good and satisfying read. Almost a ‘can’t put down’ book, it is a treat and a thought provoking read; not so much in terms of whether or not people can have these mystifying experiences, but much more in terms of how we in the world both react internally and externally to those around us who possess such gifts.

I was not prepared to enjoy this book as much as I did, so it was a nice little bit of serendipity to go from Cahill to Picoult!

So, as fall nips the air, relax with a good book. I’m already looking forward to the cottage next year!

Matt Arguin
St. Christopher’s, Burlington

Well, another summer has come and gone. It seems surreal that I’m back in the classroom again so soon. I’m definitely excited to be back. Not only do I get to attend some interesting lectures, I also get to see my friends again.

One thing that has always fascinated me about university is the sheer diversity in the student population. Altogether, McMaster enrols approximately 22,000 students per year, and you are bound to meet someone who has an interesting story to tell!

People come from around the country and all over the globe with the common goal of higher education.

In many ways, I think the university/college atmosphere serves as an excellent microcosm for Canadian society. I mean, think about it: At university, each student brings with him/her a different cultural, economic, and ‘religious’ identity; and yet we are all united as part of the whole student body. So, as a country, we too strive for this kind of ‘cultural mosaic.’

It is a system in which people of various backgrounds try to co-exist amicably with each other in mutual respect.

By and large, the idea of multiculturalism has become synonymous with the Canadian identity. So much so that it is an integral part of our legal system via The Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The charter and the definition of marriage

While it is true that, legally, the rights of one group cannot supersede those of another, the Charter ensures that the Canadian government cannot withhold certain privileges and benefits from its citizens based on gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, culture etc. The legal definition of marriage was amended in 2005 to include same-sex couples. This change was not a mere ‘wink’ taken by the government, as much as it was a Constitutional issue that had to be resolved.

The main purpose of the amendment was to extend the same benefits to heterosexual married couples to same-sex couples. Primarily, this meant equal access to income-tax deductions, inheritances, and the fair division of spousal property.

Beyond the legal stuff

Now, I know what you’re thinking: the idea of a same-sex couple in Canada has been around since the early 1980s. So has The Charter. Why does it warrant any discussion in a local diocesan newspaper?

Since 2002, the Anglican Communion has been struggling with the blessing of same-sex unions. While many churches accept gays, lesbians, and transsexuals as full members of the Christian community, they are not comfortable extending the institution of marriage that far.

I think a crucial point is being overlooked on both the local and international levels. Part of the reason this debate is so pain-staking for us is because we’re not just Anglicans, but we’re Canadians too!

As children—particularly those educated in the eras following The Charter—we are taught that, as Canadians, we have to respect the diverse cultures of everyone. We are constantly encouraged to look above and beyond issues of race, color, gender, and sexual orientation. It is all part of the process in giving birth to the cultural ‘mosaic.’

For many in the Church, the issue of same-sex unions is not simply a moral one. It is also inextricably linked with our heritage. If we can overlook the stigma of sexual orientation as Canadians, why can’t we do the same as people of faith?

Looking towards the future

The General Synod of 2007 is the proposed council-date to reach a decision regarding same-sex blessings in Canada. Just like the return to school after the summer break it will be here before we know it! My hope is that this article will shed some light on one of the many factors which may contribute to the decision. Regardless of your position, remember that we are all part of a fantastic and unique country; but perhaps more importantly, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ!

Caralei Peters
MSc, ND
DOCTOR OF NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

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They are coming home in body bags

CHRISTOPHER M. GRABIEC
Editor

When I was a young and idealistic Ro- man seminarian in the early seven- ties, I studied the scriptures voraciously, and took in every bit of church history that I could. In my own heart, I was de- termined that if ever I were in a church that would be different; different, in the sense that it would be something like the group of people who gathered weekly at my historical church that was still influencing my life. I loved the fact that Jesus turned over tables in the temple, and that he chal- lenged so many of the religious practices and traditions in his day. I loved that he was so against the established govern- ment church, because he believed that they severely oppressed the people. It was change that I was looking for in my life, in my church and in my society.

I even joined a social justice group of religious across Canada. I remember so clearly the time that we bought shares, and then went to an annual meeting of the Noranda Corporation. We were there to protest the injustices in which Noranda was involved in South America. I remem- ber an elderly and wealthy man standing up at the podium. He had a very angry voice. He told us all that he was a faithful Angli- can and that the clergy that were present should get out of the room and back into their churches, worrying about empty pews rather than a business world about which we knew nothing.

I was a Roman then and now an Anglican. The question that nags me consistently, de- rived from what this old man said, is what do we believe as a church? Do we really think that we should continue to shut our mouths and not speak loudly and clearly against the injustices that exist in our society and in our church? Well, let us take a risk, just like our teacher and founder Jesus of Nazareth did, and speak to a few issues.

Our young men are coming home from Afghanistan. How long will it be before anyone re- ally stops to think about what is happening? This current government has gotten us into a war that we did not want since the Second World War. We are more peaceful than almost anyone else in the world. Now we’re fighting wars. Has anyone said anything about this? In our si- lence, does our church even appear to care that we’re being led down this horrific and regressive path? Of course we know that the Middle East is unstable, but they abso- lutely hate our interference—particularly American. How much longer until we be- come the targets of hatred as well? Enough is enough and the church should cry out in a loud voice that God does not want war and killing! Maybe the church should try to broker a peaceful settlement, no mat- ter who we need to talk to. It’s time to turn over the tables of our government and act more like Christ in the world today.

On Labour Day we were driving through Toronto and saw a portion of the Interna- tional Air Show. Above us flew monstrous Boeing C-17 cargo plane—one of the largest planes on the planet. Canada is planning to buy four of these war machines at $250 mil- lion each. Isn’t it time for Christians to stand up and say we don’t need military toys? We need help for the poor in this coun- try. We need better education and medical care for our children. We need to fund AIDS research to help folks throughout the world overcome this horrendous disease. We need to fund a real cleanup of our environment so that our children and grand-children have a chance to live!

How about the same gender blessing de- bate? Are you sick of it? I am. How long will it be before any church is willing to speak up and have an equal say in their parish church? The great- est resistance to same sex mar- riage comes from the Christian community. Whatever is going through our heads? Does anyone really believe that Jesus would be fighting against the fullest inclusion of faithful- and caring gay or lesbian people in the church? Wouldn’t Jesus be turning over the tables in our churches?

Thanksgiving it is... or is it? Body bags, hurting people at our own hands, fear of speaking against the horrific injustices in our society and in our churches. How can we be thankful without acting in justice? Thank- giving isn’t about turkeys, it’s about living out our call to be ambassadors of God in ways that seek and needs our help.

My early dreams of a church that would really make a difference in society have not been fulfilled, but on this thanksgiving I will continue to hope!

From thanksgiving to justice

KELLY WALKER
Author and Book/Gift Writer

Thanksgiving is the ultimate Christian at- titude and gesture. I always thought that with Jesus of Nazareth's insistence on wash- ing one another's feet, that action would have won out. But even that was proclaimed within the context of Passover, which is ul- timately a gesture of remembrance within a context of thanksgiving.

The gathering of Christians, since the beginning, has been associated with an ac- tion that we have called Eucharistia. The assembly or ekklesia gathered regularly to proclaim the marvels of God and God's ac- tions in a prayer—pre-eminent in Jewish worship—called berakah. Its form is simple and, as I explain it, you might realize that it is a prayer-form which you recognize from your own Christian assemblies.

God's wonders are great

It begins: “Father, are you...” followed by some attribution of God... Lord God of all Creation, gracious giver of life... whatever. Then it continues with some gestures of God that we know well. There are many seasons, you saved us from peril, you did this or that. These are called mirabilia dei, or, in the midst of the heagadath or the wonders of God that we remember in this prayer. Then the prayer ends in a simple, “Blessed be your name, forever.” In some forms of this prayer there was a word add- ed, like in the Our Father which is one such

prayer, “Give us today the bread for today.” The physical gesture that generally ac- companyes this prayer is that of raised hands. It signifies that God’s wonders are great and we stand in awe and admiration before them.

The Christian Eucharist is traditionally acclimated standing. It begins with the invi- tation, “Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.” And the response is, “It is right to give our thanks and praise!” Then the presider continues proclaiming the great and some- times long berakah, recounting the marvels of God which include the marvel of Jesus of Nazareth and all that God has bestowed on us through this sacred rite. At the end of this prayer, which we proclaim every Sunday, we all shout “amen!”

This is the under girding of all Christian life. We are forfed by it and define our gath- erings by it. It is accompanied by the tradi- tional food which fills us with the energy of that meal. Unity and action are the accom- panying gifts. But they are rooted in the at- titude of thanksgiving

A sacrifice of praise

So this season which is full of harvest and autumn colour and smells, is one we asso- ciate with the Eucharist in the context of gratitude. Offer this sacrifice, not of the kill- ing of animals as in the temple, but a sacri- fice of praise, the way of the new covenant. Walk within the mystery of this season which magnifies our God. Smell the scents of the season, taste and see how good our God is, eat and drink abundantly for our God is a gracious one whose dream for humanity is abundance for all.

It is a special time to be conscious of this attitude of thanks and praise. Go for long walks and breathe in the beauty of the sea- son. Take in the new air and breathe out the old. Re-introduce your being to the rhythm of the seasons and realize that you too, earth creature that you are, live within the same rhythm of life, death and constant new be- ginnings and endings.

Giving God thanks and praise

On your meandering through streets, woods, cemeteries, or wherever you walk, remem- ber the mirabilia dei for which you could have a grateful heart. Think of the gifts you have received, the people who have graced your days and nights, the four-legged friends who have accompanied you on many a walk throughout your life. Rejoice in them and be glad.

It is indeed right that we should give God thanks and praise. It is our heritage. It is how we are formed not as a small and scrupulous people but a large and generous population on the face of the earth. If we build up our people in the Eucharist and praise, then we will readily wash feet, comfort the needy and assure peace and abundance for all in a weary world.

To learn more about Kelly, visit his web- site at www.kwalker.com.

Mailbox

JOY ROBERTSON
HAMILTON, ONTARIO

The parish church is the basic unit of Christianty. If it isn’t present, then Christianity is losing its presence in to- day’s life. The parish church needs to be about people, not finances. Finances are a given to be handled by some skilled parishioners in that field.

The parish church must exude open- ness, welcoming, friendliness, freedom of speech by all and with its clergy, wardens, parish council as the facilita- tors for the people.

The feeling of belonging, being re- spected as individuals and each of hav- ing an equal say in our parish church is being lost and people are staying away; leaving or just giving up. We need to have a purpose in attending and sup- porting our church; this needs to come from the people, not from above.

There is no room or place for intimi- dation, sarcasm, cleques, or “if you don’t like it go elsewhere” attitudes. Our par- ish churches are where we are and where we want to be, to be with our Lord Jesus Christ in worship and activity.
Reflections on Hospice Ministry

RONALD PINCOE
Refl ections on Hospice Ministry
and comfort the affl  icted. That’s a grand scheme of things and to stop life’s work has been important and the assurance that their life has given them emotional support is sharing their journey with them. It’s sitting beside a terminally ill person and holding their hand. It’s the ‘outside the church’ part of the equation where the deacon fits in most comfortably, out in the larger community where the parish priest and curate, if the parish is lucky enough to have one, quite simply do not have the time to go. I had already begun some volunteer work with Hospice Dufferin when I heard that gentle whisper in my ear. “Get back to school” the voice said. “Theology is good.” One thing led to another and the next thing I knew Bishop Ralph was handing me a Bible and telling me to go. “Try in palliative care,” he said. “This is the simplifi ed job description for the dying friend.”

Feeding the hungry, heal the sick, comfort the affl  icted. Raise the gospel to the people.

One thing that every palliative care support worker learns very early in their training is the difference between empathy and sympathy. Experience has proven that when a support worker begins to sympathize with a client and family they share their concerns they will become a basket-case themselves and be of no use to anyone. During support group sessions this problem, if it is there, will usually surface and the person may end up on the receiving end of grief counseling rather than giving it.

As the dying persons’ journey progresses, the role of the support worker may gradually begin to shift towards the needs of the family. It has been my experience that whether people have a strong religious faith or not we all seek assurance that life in one form or another continues after death.

About a year or so ago I received a call that a young man in hospital was dying and the only family he had, apart from an estranged father, were a few friends who were with him. These friends all appeared to be the types you would say as being on the fringe of society, somewhere on the bottom rung of the ladder.

While I spent some time talking with his lady friend who told me that she was his prime caregiver, the others would alternate between hanging around in the room and going out to the garden for a few puffs of something. I was sure didn’t come from the corner store.

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The Order of Niagara was created by Bishop Ralph Spence for the laity of the Diocese of Niagara. The first group of recipients were installed into the Order at the Service of Jubilation, at Hamilton Place, on Sunday, May 28, 2000. All licensed clergy are invited to nominate one person from each parish who has given of themselves to the parish, diocese and the Church. It is a way of honouring the laity of the diocese and is the responsibility of the clergy to put forth nominations.

This year the order of Niagara was celebrated on September 17 for the Greater Wellington, Lincoln and Mohawk Regions and on September 24 for the Brock Trafalgar and Undermount Regions. The celebrations took place at Christ’s Church Cathedral in Hamilton Ontario.

Order of Niagara recipients

Frank Ernest, St. John’s, Ancaster
David Davies, St. Alban’s, Beamsville
Elizabeth Coombs, St. Christopher’s, Burlington
Evelyn Harris, St. Elizabeth’s, Burlington
Mabel Smith, St. Luke’s, Burlington
Ian McLean, St. Matthew on the Plains, Burlington
Rhonda Patterson, St. Philip’s, Burlington
Joan Lawrence, St. Paul’s, Caledonia
Yvonne Skrepnechuk, St. John the Divine, Cayuga
Walter Court, St. James, Dundalk
Audrey Nicol, St. James, Dundas
Alexandra Urquhart, St. Paul’s, Dunnville
Ronald Stevens, St. John’s, Elora
Tim Powell, All Saints, Erin
Ruth Sproul, St. James,ergus
Betty White, Christ Church, Flamborough
Doris Vinybush, Holy Trinity, Fonthill
Marilyn DeBeau, St. Paul’s, Fort Erie
Betty Parry, St. George’s, Georgetown
Evelyn Bolton, St. Paul’s, Glensford
Cathy Boxshall, St. Alban’s, Gla
Marion Menary, St. Alban’s, Grand Valley
Alfreda Jeffries, St. Andrew’s, Grimsby
Arlene Bock, St. Philip’s, Grimsby
Peggy Johnson, St. George’s, Guelph
Francine Campbell-Rich, Christ’s Church
Cathedral, Hamilton
Myra Wheeler, All Saints, Hamilton
Margaret Gordon, St. Alban’s, Hamilton
John Kelly, Grace Church, Hamilton
Joy Sharp, Holy Trinity, Hamilton
Roy Turvey, Resurrection, Hamilton
Margaret Firth, St. John’s, Hamilton
William Tindale, St. Paul’s, Hamilton
Marlene Minken, St. Peter’s, Hamilton
John Romanini, St. Stephen on the Mount, Hamilton
Ann Whaley, St. Stephen’s, Hornby
Rosemarie Hilton, St. Paul’s, Jarvis
Bessie Robinson, St. Mark’s, Louth
Elva Middlebrook, St. George’s, Lowville
Solveig Austen, Grace Church, Milton
Nova Evans, Christ Church, Nanticoke
Doug Reece, Christ Church, Niagara Falls
Douglas Hicks, Holy Trinity, Niagara Falls
Kim Martignago, St. John’s, Niagara Falls
Ethel Winzer, St. Aidan’s, Oakville
Paula Valentine, St. Hilda’s, Oakville
Margaret Brockett, St. Jude’s, Oakville
Rosemary Anstey, St. Simon’s, Oakville
Margaret Marie Milson, St. Mark’s, Orangeville
Evelyn Oates, St. Luke’s, Palermo
Florence Galgaller, St. James and St.
Brendan’s, Port Colborne
Charles Campbell, St. Saviour’s, Queenston
Patricia Jenkins, St. John’s, Ridgemount
Trinette Tomassello, All Saints, Ridgeway
William Martin, St. John’s, Rockwood
Robert Atkinson, St. Paul’s, Shelburne
Joyce Pearce, Grace Church, St. Catharines
Sharon Grimstead, St. Catharines
Janet Veale, St. George’s, St. Catharines
Denise Chuchman, St. James, St. Catharines
Betty Storosko, St. John’s, St. Catharines
Monica Stevenson, St. Thomas, St.
Catharines
Lillian Packham, Redeemer, Stoney Creek
Wayne Thorsteinson, St. John the Evangelist, Thorold
Thomas Weatherall, Grace Church, Waterdown
Josephine Davies, All Saints, Welland
Diane Katch, Holy Trinity, Welland
Cecil Mitchell, St. David’s, Welland
Gordon Gwynne-Timothy, Christ Church, Whitfield
Mildred Bartczak, St. John’s, Winona
Cecily Hey, Christ Church, Woodburn
Susan Kolne, St. John’s, York

Bishop’s appointees

Andrew Brockett
Beverley Davies
David Davis (deceased)
Ann Grose
Norman Haas
Clebert Halliday
Ethel Harris
Anne Hay
Bob Haynes
Elizabeth Kay
Ross Kelly
Wilma Lazenby
Peggy Lewis
Paul Mansfield
Norma Marsh
Florence Meares
Lewis Menery
Fred Neale
Audrey Page
Geoffrey Purcell Lewis
Allan Rathbone
William Robertson
Ed Storosko
Dan Tregumo
Margaret Vance
Judy Watson
Bruce Wilson
Shirley Woodburn (deceased)
George Wyatt

The multitude of your sacrifices, what are they to me? says the Lord. I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.

When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts?

Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New moons, Sabbaths and convocations, I cannot bear your evil assemblies.

Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.

When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen.

Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, make yourselves clean. Take your evil assemblies.

Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Amos 5:21-24

I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them.

Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Rowan Williams
Archbishop of Canterbury
February 2006

...this is how