



Refugee: A Sonnet for Epiphany

We think of him as safe beneath the steeple
Or cosy in a crib beside the font,
But he is with a million displaced people
On the long road of weariness and want.
For even as we sing our final carol
His family is up and on that road,
Fleeing the wrath of someone else's quarrel,
Glancing behind and shouldering their load.
Whilst Herod rages still from his dark tower
Christ clings to Mary, fingers tightly curled.
The lambs are slaughtered by the men of power,
And death squads spread their curse across the world.
But every Herod dies, and comes alone
To stand before the Lamb upon the throne.

—Malcolm Guite (b.1957)

Guite, Malcom. "Refugee" *Sounding the Seasons: Seventy Sonnets for the Christian Year*, Canterbury Press, 2012, p. 16



An Epiphany Message from the Bishop

Dear Friends,

I came across this poem on which to meditate for this feast of Epiphany. It's by someone we might call a contemporary Anglican poet—his name is Malcolm Guite.

What this poet captures so beautifully I think, is the good news of the birth of God's Son who comes to make things right in this world – to undo all the wrong that we do; to restore justice; to remake us into the image of God's love.

The poem speaks of the power of God threatening the powers and principalities of this world. It speaks of the power of love over fear, and of right over might.

And it does this, not by mentioning the picturesque bits of the Christmas story: kings and three gifts, but by centering on the difficult bits—the parts we often pass over: refugees on the run from a murderous and manipulative ruler.

And it shows where God is in this story: with the vulnerable, with the threatened, with the hungry, the poor, and the innocent. And this revealing of God's presence—this Epiphany—shows us very clearly where we as followers of Jesus should also be. As, over the course of our lives, we learn to become more and more like Christ, it is clear that the mission of God is all about loving and protecting these little ones.

May you embrace God's mission too—this Epiphany and always.

Faithfully,

The Right Reverend Dr. Susan J.A. Bell
Bishop of Niagara



Dinner Inaugurates Anniversary Year

After an uplifting day of Synod business, Bishop Susan Bell hosted an anniversary dinner at the Burlington Convention Centre to mark the beginning of the diocese's sesquicentennial. Archbishop Linda Nicholls, 14th primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, was the featured speaker at the event.

The diocese was founded in 1875, and formally incorporated by an act of the provincial legislature which received royal assent in 1876.

The celebratory anniversary dinner drew some 200 guests

from across the diocese, with all proceeds being directed to the newly established 150th Anniversary Curacy Fund, which will support the training and formation of priests throughout the diocese.

A pre-dinner reception, sponsored by KPMG, kicked off the event as clergy and parishioners mingled with members of synod.

Church dignitaries attending the dinner also included Archbishop Colin Johnson, assistant bishop of the Diocese of Niagara, Bishop Michael Bird, 11th Bishop of the Diocese



Bishop Bell announces the creation of the 150th Anniversary Curacy Fund.

Photos: Dani Leitis

of Niagara, Bishop Douglas Crosby, Bishop of the Roman

Catholic Diocese of Hamilton, Pastor Dave Witt of TrueCity, a network of churches in Hamilton. In addition, representing Ecclesiastical Insurance, the dinner's lead sponsor, were David Huebel, president, and Colin Robertson, chief risk management and customer officer, along with our diocesan insurance broker, Linda Papadopoulos, senior vice-president, AJ Gallagher.

Dean Tim Dobbins served as the emcee for the evening's program. As part of the celebration, Sarah Bird, missional formation

coordinator, introduced the plans for a time capsule in celebration of the 150th Anniversary. She encouraged guests to share their prayers for the Church and hopes of for the future of the Diocese of Niagara. Guests perused 'then' and 'now' display takes, featured highlights of the diocese's ministry. Some attendees fully embraced the spirit of celebration by taking pictures in the 'selfie corner'.

Following dinner, Bishop Bell sat down with Archbishop

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Anniversary Dinner

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Nicholls for a conversation that explored the Synod's theme, 'Faith in the Future.' The two shared stories of their journeys through life and ministry, which the former primate reflecting on her pioneering ministry. The former primate reflected on her pioneering ministry as a priest, bishop, and archbishop. As primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, she was only the second woman to serve as primate in the worldwide Anglican Communion. Bishop Bell observed that the archbishop was an icon for many women in ministry, including her.

During their hour-long conversation, Bishop Bell invited Archbishop Nicholls to engage with a wide variety of questions,



Archbishop Linda Nicholls shares stories from her years in ministry with Bishop Susan.

including "If you knew 30 years ago what you know now," how would your early days of ministry be different. The primate reflected that she might hold some liturgical practices more gently.

Archbishop Nicholls rounded off the conversation with

what the future looks like for her as a now-retired primate, passionately discussing her work moving forward with the Anglican Communion's Science Commission and the importance of engaging the knowledge found in science with our faith.



Items from the diocesan archives on display including the first ever Niagara Anglican newspaper.

If you would like to make a gift to the diocese's 150th Anniversary Curacy Fund, please visit the diocesan website, or if you are interested in making a legacy gift, please be in touch with Canon Drew MacDonald at drew.macdonald@niagaraanglican.ca.



Scan this QR code to donate online to the Curacy Fund today.

The Power of Music to Stir the Soul

DR. CHARLENE PAULS

In our rushed lives so often bombarded by disheartening news, a perfect antidote is the offer of a peaceful and uplifting choral Evensong on a late winter afternoon.

On Sunday, February 9, 2025, at 4:00 pm, the Church of the Incarnation in Oakville is welcoming Canada's pre-eminent professional Anglican choir from the Church of St. John's Evangelist, Elora to join choirs in a candlelit, late afternoon Evensong service.

The traditional Evensong service has its roots in the monastic offices of the medieval church. The Anglican Evensong form was established by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer in 1549 in the first version of the Book of Common Prayer when he consolidated the monastic offices into two services conducted in English: Morning Prayer and Evensong. Much of the music associated with the Anglican Evensong service stems from the reign of Queen Elizabeth I later in the 16th century when composers such as William Byrd and Thomas Tallis created brilliant polyphonic choral repertoire specifically imagined for this service. For many, the Evensong service is considered the pinnacle of the English choral tradition, and its popularity continues to this day.

Dr. Patrick Murray, the Director of Music at St. John's

the Evangelist feels that an important part of the St. John's mandate is to reach out to other churches to help nurture the strong musical traditions that are part of the history of the Anglican church. In each of the past two years the choir of St. John's the Evangelist has visited a different parish within the Diocese of Niagara to lead or join forces with the home choir in creating an Evensong service for their local community. As they do so, Dr. Murray is finding new ways in which these historic Anglican Evensong services respond to the needs of our 21st century world.

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome my long-time friend and colleague Patrick to Incarnation, where we have a thriving community church choir of about twenty-five to thirty singers. It is an exciting opportunity for this dedicated group to work with and sing alongside the sixteen professional choristers from Elora, and we are also extending an invitation to our community to join us for an afternoon to stir the soul through the power of music.

As one might expect, the Evensong service will be comprised of such elements as the Introit, sung Responses and Psalm, the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis Canticles, a choral Anthem, and congregational hymns, as well as readings and scripture. Choral music will alternate between pieces sung

by the choir of St. John's the Evangelist and those sung by the combined choirs.

We are exploring new ways of experiencing the music of Evensong by combining traditional chants with more newly composed elements such as Canadian composer Sarah MacDonald's settings of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis taken from her "Isolation Fauxbourdons (Evening Service)" written for the University of Cambridge choir during the pandemic. We are also exploring the elements as a choral anthem by Norwegian American composer Ola Gjeilo, "The Ground", with lyrics excerpted from the Latin Sanctus and Agnus Dei settings.

All are invited to attend this special Evensong service on Sunday, February 9 at 4:00 pm, as the Church of the Incarnation in Oakville welcomes Canada's own professional Anglican choir from Elora to join forces in what will be a service that will warm the soul both musically and spiritually.

Dr. Charlene Pauls is Music Director, Church of the Incarnation, Oakville; Artistic Director and Conductor, Guelph Chamber Choir; and Associate Artistic Director and Conductor, Oakville Choir for Children and Youth.



Photo: Contributed by St. John the Evangelist, Elora, Parish Choir

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“WELL DONE YOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT” ...

SUE CARSON

These words from Matthew 25 were spoken by the master in the parable of the talents. The servant who had been trusted with five talents used them wisely and was able to return another five to his master.

A talent in the New Testament amounted to a substantial sum of money. As the servants were entrusted with significant amounts, they knew the master expected them to use his wealth carefully and put it to good use.

The third servant was given less but obviously lacked the strength of character of his fellow servants and was too frightened to risk losing any of the money. On the master's return this servant was admonished and was told “You should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned, I would have received

it back with interest.” (Matthew 25:27)

I have always felt sympathy for the third servant who just buried what he had been given, as he didn't want to make a mistake and anger his master. I have worries about managing my finances but my concern for the environment has led me to a greater interest in who is doing what with my money.

Tim Nash of Good Investing, a sustainable investment manager, says there are two choices for investors, “doing less evil” and “doing more good.” The “doing less evil” (or negative screen) would be not investing in fossil fuels, tobacco, palm oil, alcohol, weapons. “Doing more good” (or positive screen) would be investing in companies that produce renewable energy or companies run by Indigenous groups.

For a few years, the Climate



Justice Niagara committee has been discussing ethical investment practices. We have shared where we are getting good returns while choosing investments that are responsible and are not harming the planet.

Below are just some of the ideas that members have discussed.

1. Divesting some of your money from one of the big five banks. Banks lend money to oil companies and if this bothers you then open an account

with a local Credit Union. It is an ethical way to bank and supports local sustainable options. They provide most of the same services as banks.

2. For those who are searching for a new financial advisor ask questions to be sure their values on the environment match your own. Can they assure you that they are not investing in the fossil fuel industry?
3. Buy promissory notes with local organisations such as Indwell in Hamilton. Indwell is a Christian organisation that builds low-income housing.
4. Bonds can be bought in companies that offer green alternatives such as SolarShare. They have a minimum amount that needs to be invested but have good, fixed interest returns.
5. Ask your financial advisor to invest in ESGs but be sure that they exclude fossil fuels.

Environmental is how a company's practices affect the natural environment.

Social is about relationships with employees, customers and suppliers.

Governance is to do with the company's leadership and shareholder rights.

6. Tim Nash gives advice via webinars and emails through his company www.goodinvesting.com – some of his webinars are free.

Whatever step you take in investing there are risks but our beautiful world is something that we need to take care of now and for future generations; it is possible to use our monetary resources for the good of the earth. Doing nothing to slow climate change is the greatest threat today.

No one can do everything, but everyone can do something and maybe the master will say “well done you good environmental servant”.

Displays of Remembrance Across the Diocese of Niagara

THE REVEREND ROB TOWLER

“It was the realization of a vision—two years in the making,” says the Reverend Rob Towler, rector of St. John's in Port Dalhousie.

The parish is located directly across from the village cenotaph. Every year, on the Sunday before Remembrance Day, residents gather with Royal Canadian Legion Branch 350 to remember those who gave their lives in the service of their country.

Having already adjusted the service to include the tolling of the church bell as the names of recently deceased veterans were read, Towler proposed a new visual memorial by the church: A Poppy Cascade. A floral tribute of poppies flowing in remembrance from the church



St. John's Port Dalhousie

Photo: Robert Towler

bell tower down into the street.

It was an immense task, and he was blessed with the leadership of Frances and Bill Couldridge who carried the weight of making this vision a reality.

Knitters and crocheters from the parish and wider community were enlisted to make the woolen poppies.

A second group of people was gathered to attach the poppies (over 4,000) to a massive deer net and wireframe for hanging.

A third team was commissioned to help with the actual installation (featuring a SkyJack vehicle donated by Pete's Siding). Frances Couldridge met with a local school to discuss the Cascade project and how they might get involved. She then spoke with representatives of the Legion regarding their support and traveled to Niagara on the Lake where she learned the “inside story” of their Poppy Cascade, as well as valuable tips on installation.

On November 1, 2024, the



St. John's Ancaster Photo: Sara Garcia

Cascade was placed. Local residents stopped their cars and posed for pictures even as the installation was taking place.

Dani Leitis, communications coordinator for the diocese adds, “Moving west across the diocese, the Ancaster parish of the same name had embarked on their own poppy display for the second year in a row.

“St. John's in Ancaster had displayed their 5,000 hand-made poppies across their fences, up the railings and light posts. These poppies were created by volunteers from the parish and from volunteers from the UK. Babs Dawson led a team of 12 to 15 people who met on a weekly basis to bring together this year's display which consisted of 2,000 more poppies than they had last year!”

In the days following many people have remarked on these beautiful tributes. The internet was flooded with photos. Leitis adds, “St. John's Ancaster was featured in an article for the Hamilton Spectator and both parishes were featured on CHCH TV.”

A beautiful tribute — Lest We Forget.

NIAGARA ANGLICAN

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ANGLICAN
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NIAGARA

CALLED TO LIFE
COMPELLED TO LOVE

In other words

The Unfriendly “Friendly Church”

**JOHN BOWEN**

A friend wrote to me recently from another part of Canada, and her message made me both sad and angry. Here's what she said:

I attended an Anglican Church on Sunday in the small town where I live. I was with two friends who were new to Anglican services. I thought to myself, no wonder this church is in trouble. They have absolutely no sensitivity to the fact there might be visitors here. No explanations of what they're doing, how to engage. Strange things like singing, “Don't sweep me away with the sinners” repeatedly during a Psalm. No explanation of what to do during communion. Frazzled juggling of books and bulletin, with the occasional mistake in printing so you were completely lost. Sometimes giving page or hymn numbers from the front, sometimes not. I would never have gone back, and I'm a life-

long Christian.

“Ah,” you say. “That's terrible. I'm so glad our church isn't like that. We are a very friendly congregation.” But wait a minute.

Not long ago, I attended an Anglican church with a reputation for being very friendly. Were they friendly? Absolutely. During the passing of the peace, there were many hugs, handshakes, and even conversations. Not with me, mind you, but they were certainly happening. Over coffee afterward, there was animated conversation around the tables. You could tell what a warm, friendly community it was. It was lovely to watch. I just stood with my coffee, not quite sure what to do, and certainly not wanting to interrupt anything. I read every one of the notices on the noticeboard. Some more than once. There were obviously a lot of interesting things going on in this congregation. Fascinating. After about fifteen minutes, I gave up. I felt I had gotten a good impression of why that church had a reputation for being friendly. Have I been back since? Well, what do you think? They were friendly. But only to one another. And that's the problem.

It's not terribly reassuring to know that this is not only an Anglican problem, but it does seem to afflict other traditions. I have a friend who is a

congregational consultant in his denomination and is often called in to help churches that are in trouble. At a conference where he was a speaker, he announced, “I have been to four congregations of this denomination in recent weeks, and in none of them was I welcomed.” Over coffee afterward, one pastor came up to him and said, “I hope you will visit our church soon. I think you will find it very different.” “And which is your church?” asked my friend. The pastor told him. “Ah yes,” replied my friend, “yours was the third of those I was talking about.”

Why this matters

If these were not churches, this might not be a big deal. If you were checking out a bridge club, and everybody ignored you because they were chatting with their friends, well, that would be sad. You probably wouldn't go back, and it would be no big deal. But welcoming and bridge don't have any intrinsic connection. As far as I know, there's nothing about bridge that means you are an inauthentic bridge player if you don't welcome new people. I suspect you could be a real jerk and still be a brilliant bridge player, though I would be happy to be corrected.

But church is not like a bridge club. (You heard it here first.) So often our problems in church



come back to the basic question: What is a church? And then a second question: What exactly is your church for? I believe at its heart church is a gathering of people who have responded to the call of God, to be apprentices of Jesus, learning to live as God's people, in God's world, in God's way.

To put it another way, we learn God's way from Jesus. Thus, we see in Jesus the forgiveness of God, so we look to practice forgiveness. We see Jesus' compassion for the marginalized, the needy, and the sick, so we seek to practice those things. And so on. Hence, St Paul can call us “the Body of Christ,” a community deliberately dedicated to showing the character of Jesus in the world. This is one of the ways people encounter the reality of God's love in their lives.

If you are following my argument, you can see where it's going next. Here it comes: In Jesus, we see the welcome of God. God welcomes us into the family with open arms, regard-

less of who we are or what we have done, just like the father welcoming the prodigal home. One of the ways we respond to that welcome of God is to turn around and, in our turn, offer that welcome to others. St. Paul spells it out: “Welcome one another, as God in Christ has welcomed you!” (Romans 15:7)

This means that being a welcoming community is not just a nice thing; nor is it just an effective way to encourage new people to stick around. No, if we do a good job of welcoming people, what they will experience is actually a real-life touch of the welcome of God. They will feel the welcome of God in our welcome. In that sense, welcoming is sacramental, and those who welcome are sacramental ministers. And if we fail to welcome them—well, I am sure God is quite capable of finding another way to welcome them. But we are failing to do the very thing the church exists for. As my friend said, “No wonder this church is in trouble.”

A New Initiative for the Migrant Farmworkers Project

On November 7, the Migrant Farmworkers Project welcomed Ambassador Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, staff members of the Consulate General for Mexico, and INEA to St. Albans Hub for the inauguration of Plaza Comunitaria. The Plaza Comunitaria is only the second of its kind to be launched in Canada. This partnership supports temporary farmworkers who come from Mexico and wish to complete their elementary and secondary school requirements while working in the Niagara region. The program will also offer opportunities for further lessons in English. Classes will rotate between running at the Fleming Branch

of the Lincoln Pelham Public Library and the Migrant Farmworkers St. Alban's Hub.

Photos: Contributed by Migrant Farmworkers Project



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Learning Packages for Children

**THE REVEREND DEACON
NANCY MCBRIDE**

During the COVID years, St. Paul's Caledonia started giving out educational packages to the children in the weeks leading up to Christmas and Easter. We were all lonely and also wanted to keep the children connected. We chose a simple craft or gift to accompany the traditional story. I remember an enthusiastic Zoom session where the children showed off their completed craft.

In the fall of 2023, I wanted to do something special for the children, and the concept of an Advent calendar popped into my head. Instead of counting down 24 days to Christmas, each

child received four envelopes, one to be opened each Sunday of Advent. During week one, the child learned about the Advent wreath, by reading the story and building their own wreath from a salt-and-flour disc, which they painted green. The package contained appropriately coloured birthday candles, which fitted into the holes pre-drilled into the base. There was a prayer and a song. We often use 'A Candle is Burning,' sung to the tune of 'Away in a Manger.' Each week, they lit the appropriate candles as they read the story. For weeks two and four, the craft was a salt-and-flour Christmas tree ornament to paint, with a new prayer and another verse to the

song. For week three, I used the story of the candy cane and gave directions to share the box of candy canes they received with family and friends! They were also asked to tell the story when they gifted the candy cane. I made and gave out ten kits, all to children whose parents or grandparents brought them to church.

During Holy Week 2024, I prepared a package called "A Lot Can Happen in Eight Days." Twelve little boxes fit inside a box I crafted for the purpose. Each box contained a token to help tell the story. For example, a donkey and a palm branch illustrated Palm Sunday, with strips of cloth to represent the cloaks thrown on the roadway as Jesus

rode by. A rooster helped to tell the story of Peter's denials. I made a crown of thorns from a length of fine wire. I confess, that I 'borrowed' the concept from the Resurrection Eggs package marketed by the FamilyLife store. Using their concept, I changed tokens to fit the stories as I would tell them to the children.

This year, I prepared 20 Advent packages. Continuing with the theme of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, I wrote a story, and a prayer, and added the same song as the previous year. The packages were simpler this time. A flat wooden ornament was

placed inside the folded story page for each week and then inserted into a numbered blue envelope. The four envelopes were tied together with purple ribbon. The activity for each week was to paint the ornament - an angel, a dove, a heart, or a star. Each week, I asked them a question, with the answer promised in the next envelope! The first question was 'Why were the envelopes blue and the ribbon purple?'

I realize that my ideas are not unique, and I would welcome conversations with others who might like to share ideas.



Providence in the Universe?

COLIN C M CAMPBELL

When I was a science student at university, I was gripped by a conflict that has intrigued me ever since: How can God be active in the world, if it is wholly governed by scientific law? The implications of what I was taught proclaimed that we are mechanical systems, governed by impersonal laws that operate at the molecular level of our minds and bodies. The work of Galileo, Leibnitz and Newton had developed a magnificent body of knowledge, known as classical physics. Its central idea was that the universe is composed of tiny regions where all events are determined by involuntary processes. The problem for a person of faith, like me, was that, if this was true, then what is the relevance of such a basic religious practice as petitionary prayer? This seemed to me so apparent that, at the time, I found it profoundly ... discouraging?

My teachers were generally agnostic and those who were churchgoers lived with a mentally divided worldview. Material matters, which included their health, were the purview of science. Faith was relegated to pronouncing values and healing wounded emotions.

Classical physics regarded these microscopic processes to be interconnected in chains of cause-and-effect. For example, the protein in an animal was an effect caused by the animal

eating a plant. The nourishment in the plant was an effect caused by the Sun's action on the plant's chlorophyll. This, in turn, was the effect of nuclear fission in the Sun, and so on.

This idea of events being connected in a causal chain originated with Aristotle, who saw all the events in the universe to be traceable to a Prime Mover or First Cause. The idea passed on to Thomas Aquinas, who identified the Prime Mover with the God of Christianity and from there the idea was taken up by the Enlightenment scientists, who brought to it all the rigour of mathematics, giving us the culture of deterministic materialism that so troubled me.

It turns out this idea is profoundly wrong! The idea was first queried by the skeptic, David Hume. Hume reasoned as follows: "You say that, if I drop

a ball, gravity causes it to fall. You have made a causal event out of a contemporaneous event by inventing a concept called gravity." Quantum theory agreed with him!

According to quantum theory, each microscopic event is separated from every other microscopic event; they are not connected in a causal chain. They do, however, have a cause and that cause is the same for all microscopic events! It is assigned a single value, known as Planck's constant. Science has no explanation for what that single cause is. However, I know of no better explanation than to make the hypothesis that it is due to the providential action of God.

One conclusion that can be drawn from this is a reevaluation of the meaning of miracle. Normally, it is defined as an

event that breaks natural law. However, natural law is based on a fixed pattern of cause-and-effect. Without that pattern, the distinction between miracle and natural event disappears. Miracles and natural events

then have the same common cause - isolated micro events caused by God. The ontology of science not only seems to agree with that of the New Testament, but it also seems to require it!



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An Epiphany Opera

THE REVEREND CANON DR. SHARYN HALL

Music from a shepherd's pipe filled the cold winter air. Wrapped in a heavy cloak, a boy sat in the evening shadow, piping steadily. As he played, stars appeared in the darkening sky. The boy could see that one star burned more brightly than the others, and he could not take his eyes from it.

And so, begins the story of a lame boy with a crutch sitting beside his small desert home near Bethlehem in the early years of the first century. This story is the text of a one-act opera for children entitled, 'Amahl and the Night Visitors.' Amahl is the only child of a young widow who has sold their flock of sheep to have money for food. On this chilly night, they will be visited by three unusual figures and their lives will change forever. The Night Visitors are strange kings from a faraway land, who are following the bright star.

This children's opera was created by Gian Carlo Menotti in 1951 for the National Broadcasting Corporation in New York City. It was the first

opera created specifically for television. Menotti created the story and composed the music for this short opera. He links together the shepherds of St. Luke's Gospel with the wise men of St. Matthew's Gospel.

Amahl and his mother and their shepherd neighbours are near the bottom of the social ladder. Their poor lives are precarious, dependent on the weather and the health of their flock. The Night Visitors are the opposite. They have wealth and a high status in their country. They are kings, but they also are wise men who believe that a greater power than theirs resides in the heavens above. They believe in this unknown power so strongly that they begin a long and arduous journey in search of a divine Child.

By bringing the two gospel stories together, Menotti underlines the message that the Christ Child was born into the reality of earthly life with all its diversity of race, religion and social status. He also makes the gospel stories more personal by creating individual people with names and identifiable characteristics. The anonymous shepherds of St. Luke's gospel

become a lame boy, his mother and their many neighbours.

The wise men of St. Matthew's gospel become elderly King Kasper, who is a little deaf, King Melchior, who wears a jeweled crown, and King Balthazar, the youngest king. The kings are carrying rich treasures for the special Child, but they receive invaluable gifts from the poor shepherds. Amahl's mother welcomes them into her humble home even though she has no food and only a meagre fire for warmth. The kings are grateful for her hospitality. Neighbouring shepherds bring fruit, olives and cheese, saying, 'this is all we shepherds can offer,' but the kings thank them for their kindness.

The climax of the opera comes in the middle of the night when everyone appears to be asleep. Amahl's mother is troubled by temptation. She wonders if the wealthy kings would miss a little of the gold, which would mean so much for the care of her child. As she moves toward the gold, the servant of the kings awakes and captures her. He drags her before the kings and accuses her of theft, but King Melchior tells her to keep the



Photo: NBC Television [Public Domain] via Wikimedia Commons

gold. He says, 'the Child we seek doesn't need our gold. He will build a kingdom on love alone.' Amahl's mother rushes to kneel before the kings, exclaiming, 'Take your gold! I've waited all my life for such a king. And if I weren't so poor, I would send a gift of my own to such a Child.' Then Amahl speaks up, 'let me send him my crutch that I made myself.' As Amahl steps forward with the crutch, he begins to walk on his own. There is great joy and excitement as Amahl starts to run and dance. The kings declare, 'It is a sign from the Holy Child.' Amahl begs his mother to allow him to go with the kings to present his crutch to the Holy Child himself, and she reluctantly agrees.

In his opera, Menotti imagines an encounter between an ordinary child and three extraordi-

nary men from a foreign land. The men carry amazing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh for a very special Child foretold by a brilliant star, but these mysterious kings also bring a great gift for Amahl, his mother and their shepherd friends. That great gift is hope, hope for a brighter future of love and compassion for all people in the kingdom of the Holy Child.

For over 2,000 years, the search for the Holy Child has transformed the lives of millions of people around the world. It is a search which will and must continue in the hearts and minds of people who can see hope for humanity in the Child born in Bethlehem and are willing to bring that gift of hope into the lives of others. With God's help, so may it be.

Diocese Blessed by Support of Foundation

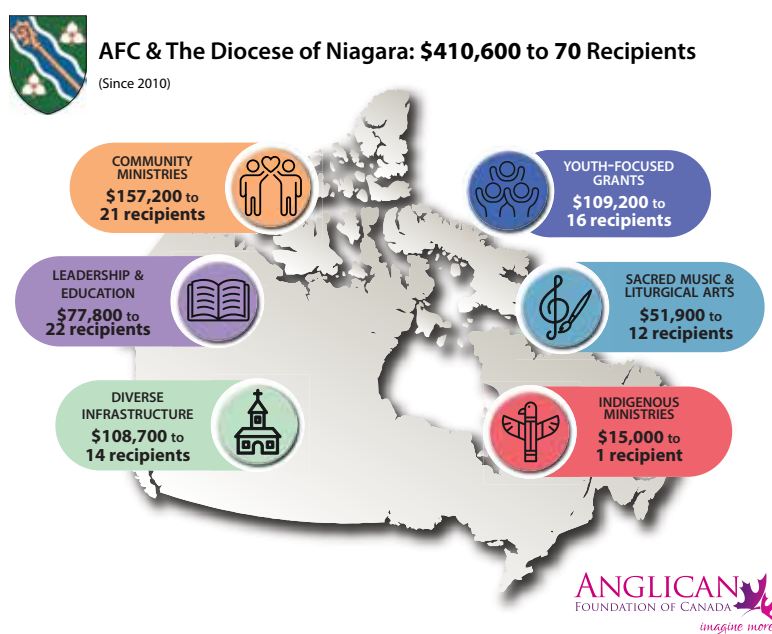
In late October, the Anglican Foundation of Canada began sharing their annual reports of grants to each Diocese across Canada. As always, the diocese is grateful for the support of the Anglican Foundation of Canada over this past year.

This year alone the diocese has received \$30,000 in grants. St. Luke's in Smithville was one of the grant recipients to support their accessibility project, while the University of Guelph's Ecumenical Campus Ministry received a grant to support the work of their student leadership program. A theological education bursary was provided within the diocese and Canterbury Hills camp received a grant through the foundation's Say Yes! to Kids campaign which allowed the camp to support the intake of campers who required financial support.

The foundation provides grants to projects that fall into several different categories, Community Ministries,

Leadership and Education, Diverse Infrastructure, Youth-Focused Grants, Sacred Music and Liturgical Arts, and Indigenous Ministries. Since 2010, the foundation has provided \$157,200 in grants focused on community ministry projects in the diocese such as the diocesan Community Justice Camp, the Migrant Farmworkers Project, The Church of the Nativity's Nativity Gardens, Holy Trinity Welland's Breakfast program, and more. These grants represent approximately 38% of all grants received in the diocese, which is one of the highest in Canada.

The foundation is finding an increase in community ministries across Canada. Michelle Hauser, development and communications officer for the Anglican Foundation of Canada references our theme for this year's synod, "This is where we so often see that 'Faith in the Future' being lived into as Canadian Anglicans seek to be



the hands and feet of Christ in the world, inspiring that future of hope." Building on that hopeful outlook, \$38,000 in theological education bursaries have been awarded to candidates in Niagara since 2010. "We certainly have a fruitful partnership in supporting the next generation of leaders in the Church" says

Hauser.

With the growth of these inspiring projects, comes an increase in requests to the foundation, and the need for parish members is critical to being able to meet the demands of dioceses across Canada. At the end of 2023, only 3 parishes within the Diocese of Niagara were active members.

The combined donations of parishes within the diocese can have a big impact overall.

To become a parish member visit anglicanfoundation.org/ membership to choose the membership level that is most appropriate for your parish. "Many smaller churches choose the Companion level (\$100 - \$499) with an annual donation that is appropriate to their means." Hauser says she is also available for virtual visits to any church or parish council who might want to invite her to make a presentation about the history of AFC and the benefits membership. She can be reached at mhauser@anglicanfoundation.org.

At the time of writing this article, we were amidst the CUPW strike. In response to this AFC began to explore alternate ways to donate starting with a new 1-800 number. For those who do not wish to donate online please call 1-877-354-6387.

'Just Wars' and the Relevance of Christian Pacifism



THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN

Has there ever been a less appropriate time to write about the relevance of Christian pacifism? The horrors of Israel and Gaza, the Russian onslaught in Ukraine, more than a dozen other significant military conflicts, and numerous smaller clashes. War has always been with us of course, but we've never had the ability to inflict such slaughter so rapidly and easily. The reality is obscene, the potential even worse.

Therein lies the paradox of the issue. Wars keep occurring not because they are successful but the very opposite. Perhaps the most misplaced statement in the annals of armed conflict is that coined by HG Wells to describe the First World War. "The war that will end war." Of course, even if wars succeeded in bringing peace and prosper-

ity there would still be a moral argument against them. But they simply don't.

Very few people regard war as desirable, but the majority likely hold, whether they know it or not, something along the lines of the just war theory. The United Nations charter, for example, states, "Only in the inherent right of self-defence against armed attack can a Nation be justified in resorting to military force, without the approval of the Security Council."

Saint Augustine wrote that war was only morally acceptable if waged to defend the innocent, and today a just war would be based on the principles of right cause, last resort, declared by proper authority, having an appropriate intention, possessing a chance of success, and the use of proportionate means.

The pacifist argument, on the other hand, doesn't have much support these days, and the political left largely abandoned the idea long ago. When they chant "stop the war" they usually mean stop the war against the people they support. One of the few areas where it does still have some support is within Christianity and even there it's generally a fringe commitment. The anabaptist tradition is often pacifist, and Quakers too. But for the most part, various churches see peace as a vital end rather than a valid means.

Jesus told us to turn the other cheek, love our enemies, put down our swords, and that peacemakers will be blessed. He also told his followers to buy a sword, although this may have been metaphorical, and he certainly demonstrated righteous anger when he cleared the Jerusalem temple of merchants and money changers. But taken as a whole, and certainly compared to his contemporaries, Jesus was indeed "the prince of peace." The early church was largely, though not unanimously, pacifist and Christian pacifists won praise and converts during the Second World War by serving as medics on the front line. Although there were others—often political rather than religious—who refused even to work on farms because they regarded it as aiding the war effort.

Immutable pacifism is, whatever the motivation, difficult to live. Refusal to resist violence directed at oneself isn't the same as refusing to intervene when another, innocent and perhaps vulnerable, is attacked. Then again, defending someone against a street thug isn't the same as launching a missile.

I honour the memory of those who battled Nazism but much of devastated Europe was left in the hands of Soviet tyranny, hundreds of thousands of innocent people died, and the Holocaust certainly wasn't stopped. Some would even argue that it was made more possible by war conditions and the cloud of secrecy. And that particular war is usually cited as the case against pacifism.

Korea was five years later, then Vietnam, several wars between India and Pakistan, Israel and its Arab neighbours, wars in Latin America, Indochina, Africa, the Middle East, and even between Britain and Argentina over the Falkland Islands. That conflict, said Jorge Luis Borges, "was a fight between two bald men over

a comb."

The number of people who have been killed or horribly injured is in the millions, often civilians and even soldiers frequently conscripted or in the military because of no alternative jobs—which could be provided if investment went into infrastructure rather than armaments.

Beyond the human tragedy is the financial cost. It's beyond reliable calculation but runs to trillions of pounds, and more than enough to build housing and factories, fund medical systems and schools, and feed and clothe people. This would go a long way to remove the very reasons why wars often start in the first place.

Self-defence? Take Israel's reaction to the horrific massacre of October 7th. Specifics aside, nobody seriously believes that

what's happening in Gaza will lead to long-term peace. Compare this to Northern Ireland, a conflict I reported on and never thought would be resolved. Visceral hatred hasn't completely disappeared but acting on that disorder is now considered unacceptable on both sides. It was less ideological pacifism than violence fatigue that led to the agreement, but the beneficiaries couldn't give a damn.

No formal agenda but a Christ-centred commitment to an alternative to the status quo that aids only those who deal in arms and power and is always self-perpetuating. So, if you're more comfortable let's call it hatred of war rather than love of peace, war phobia instead of pacifism. Either way, it's, ironically perhaps, more relevant than ever.



Photo: Unsplash/Patric Fore

Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

Upcoming Deadlines:

- March – January 24
- April – February 21
- May – March 28

Submissions:

- News, Letters, Reviews** (books, films, music, theatre) – 400 words or less
- Articles** – 600 words or less

Original cartoons or art –

Contact the Editor.

Photos – very large, high resolution (300 ppi), action pictures (people doing something).

Include name of photographer. Written permission of parent/guardian must be obtained if photo includes a child.

All submissions must include writer's full name and contact information. We reserve the right to edit or refuse submissions.

Questions or information:

Contact the Editor at editor@niagaraanglican.ca

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St. George's Holds Space for the Hungry—Both Living and Passed

JOHN BACHER

On November 10, 2024, before the Community Breakfast, which has been held every day at St. George's Anglican Church in St. Catharines for the past 30 years, a moving ceremony took place. This was a reading of the list of those who had died in the past year, of people who were regular participants in the free breakfast. "Once a month the clergy and some lay volunteers hold a sunrise worship service in the breakfast program dining room at 7:10 am, before the normal opening time." Says the Reverend Mike Degan, the assistant curate at St. George's. "Since it is a custom to observe All Souls on Remembrance Sunday, the planners decided the November service should be a Commemoration of the Departed, the focus being on those who were known to the breakfast program community who had died to this world in the previous year."

It is a tribute to the around 150 volunteers who make the miracle of the Community Breakfast possible, which takes place from 7:30 to 8:30 am, that the names of many who take part in its blessings are known. In being able to somehow keep such records (there is no sign-in sheet), the volunteers assisted by dedicated clergy are able to not only provide food but also care for the varied needs of those they serve with nourishment.

Although they were simply following the example of Jesus in Mathew 25: 35-36, they are carrying out the example of an Anglican Holy person who lived nearby on Queen Street at the dawn of the Progressive era, Lucius Oille. A medical doctor, Oille, was not merely concerned with physical well-being but tried to care for his patients' souls. The goal for this program is to provide a meal for those who need it, no questions asked. The environment is meant to be a safe welcoming space with volunteers interacting and getting to know the visitors and the clergy taking turns to provide a pastoral presence.

Jesus' invocation as recorded in scripture and conducted at St. George's Church is simple and direct. The words are, "For I was hungry, and you gave me some-



Volunteers busy preparing breakfast for the daily breakfast program at St. George's, St. Catharines.

Photos: Contributed by John Bacher

thing to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger, and you invited me in, I needed clothes, and you clothed me, I was sick, and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

The Remembrance Sunday Roll Call of the Dead was read by Degan with flute music in the background. After the ceremony, he informed me that the people were not necessarily victims of homelessness.

In conversation with Degan, the significance of the names slowly became apparent to me. Looking around the room, I realized that based on age, (I am 69), I was the oldest person in the room. Based on this observation, I concluded that those who were listed on the roll call had not reached this age, far below the Canadian average of 81.30. (77.43 for men) The roll call was the name of persons who were from various situations tied to poverty and were not able to reach the Canadian norm for life expectancy.

In a sermon, I heard the Co-Rector of St. George's the Reverend Tom Vaughan give a good sense of the positive spirit of community and caring the Community Breakfasts provide. This was based on a parable of aid from a beneficiary of the food aid to another who just missed, as often happens, the 8:30 cut-off time. In the spirit of Jesus, Vaughan explained someone who had food outside shared it with a slow arrival who was locked out.

Sadly, many of the more affluent in St. Catharines look down

on the downtown core, oblivious to the Christian compassion that makes it such a blessed place, despite its inequalities and cruelties to live in. This summer I witnessed this, after seeing the spectacular fireworks of fireflies in Richard Pierpont Park, with my friend the dedicated environmentalist, Daniel Nardone. I came home to view a brave man recovering from addiction crying out in great pain in my driveway.

The man in agony was known to me. A kind tenant in my home had paid him to remove trash from around my home, which mysteriously appeared daily over a couple of weeks. For several days he would remove the trash in the morning before it could be widely viewed. I learned the gentleman I heard writhing in agony was suffering from the effects of what is called 'Cold Turkey,' when terrible pain hits those who have withdrawn from deadly chemicals. I witnessed a friend of his share a prescription medication to be helpful in this situation, which helped him survive for an ambulance to take him to hospital.

My witness to the compassion that saves helps me to understand what works behind the daily miracle of the Breakfast Club. This is a common explanation offered by some theologians to explain Jesus's miracle of the feeding of the Five Thousand. This was that Jesus shamed people into sharing the food they were hiding beneath their cloaks.

Degan adds: "The Community



Breakfast Program at St. George's, St. Catharines has been serving breakfast with kindness and generosity every morning of the year since 1997 to all comers, no questions asked.

"In 2023 we served breakfast to 31,340 guests (an average of 86 per day). The program relies on the daily support of volunteers and donors from several local community members, churches, and organizations.

"In addition to St. George's, some Anglican churches in the region continue to play an important part in sustaining the program: the Church of the Transfiguration participates in

the leadership and regularly donates cereals; St. John's in Port Dalhousie provides financial support; St. John the Evangelist in Niagara Falls makes a regular donation of jam; and clergy and parishioners for many other churches are included in the roster of 180 volunteers.

"Special attention is being given to creating a welcoming environment in our dining room. Many volunteers converse with guests. The Church holds a worship service once a month and the parish clergy take turns being a pastoral presence at Breakfast every Sunday."

Supporting the Bishop's Company



Six parishioners of Christ Church, Flamborough were the special guests of a dinner hosted by Bishop Susan Bell and Archdeacon Bill Mous. The evening was one of the silent auction items at the annual Bishop's Company Dinner, which raises funds to support clergy and lay leaders in times of need. To become a member of the Bishop's Company, please visit: <https://niagaraanglican.ca/bishops-company>

Photo: Contributed by Bill Mous