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A section of the Anglican Journal



NIAGARA ANGLICAN

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MARCH 2025

The Invitation of Ash Wednesday

Embracing Lent in Our Daily Lives



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THE REVEREND NICOLA ZHANG

As the Lenten season begins with the solemnity of Ash Wednesday, Christians are drawn into a sacred rhythm of reflection, repentance, and renewal. The ashes imposed on our foreheads, accompanied by the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return," serve as a poignant reminder of our mortality and dependence on God. But beyond the ashes and the liturgical traditions, Ash Wednesday extends an invitation—one that calls us to deeper transformation in our daily lives.

A Call to Return to God

The primary invitation of Ash Wednesday is found in the Scriptures often read on this day, such as Joel 2:12-13: "Return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your garments." This call to "rend your hearts" highlights that Lent is not merely about external

observances but about an inward turning toward God. It is an opportunity to pause, examine our lives, and realign our hearts with the divine will.

This invitation resonates deeply with me as the new rector of St. Michael's on Hamilton Mountain. Since beginning this role on August 1, 2024, I have felt both the weight of responsibility and the joy of leading this parish. After completing three years of M.Div. study at Trinity College and two years of curacy at St. Cuthbert's in Oakville and Grace in Waterdown, I recognize the sacred privilege of shepherding a community of faith. This Lent, as we prepare for our Mission Action Plan 2.0 (MAP 2.0) in 2025, I invite our parish—and you—to embrace this season as a time for communal and personal renewal.

Practices of Lent: Fasting, Prayer, and Almsgiving

As part of our Christian tradition, I would encourage three primary practices during Lent: fasting, prayer, and almsgiving.

These disciplines are not ends in themselves but tools for spiritual growth and renewal. On Ash Wednesday, we are invited to embrace these practices intentionally, allowing them to shape how we live each day.

Fasting, for instance, while traditionally associated with giving up food or certain pleasures, is ultimately about making room for God. By abstaining from excess and indulgence, we are reminded of our dependence on God's provision and are encouraged to cultivate simplicity in our daily choices. Similarly, prayer invites us to deepen our connection with God, whether through structured prayers, silent meditation, or reading Scripture. This practice reorients our hearts and strengthens our faith. Finally, almsgiving shifts our focus outward, calling us to respond to the needs of others with generosity and compassion. It is a tangible way to express gratitude for God's blessings by sharing them with those in need.

Living the Lenten Invitation Daily

The invitation of Lent is not limited to Ash Wednesday or Sunday services; it is a daily call to transformation. For our parish, this season is also a time to engage in intentional preparation for MAP 2.0. Seven of our parishioners are participating in the course *Reimagining Church* through the Niagara School for Missional Leadership (NSML). This course invites participants to rethink church in light of our changing world, equipping us to envision new ways of living out our faith and mission.

The themes of the course, such as introducing fresh expressions of church, nurturing change in traditional congregations, and exploring the Bible as a book of mission, align beautifully with Lent's call to renewal. These learnings will help us as a community discern our role in God's unfolding mission. Practically, we can embrace this season by starting each day with intention, whether through prayer, reflection, or simple acts of kindness. By embracing small sacrifices, such as

limiting distractions or choosing simpler meals, and seeking opportunities to serve others in our community, we reflect the heart of Lent's transformative power.

Lent as a Journey Toward Resurrection

Ultimately, Lent is not merely a season of self-denial but a journey toward the hope and joy of Easter. Ash Wednesday's invitation to "return to God" is an invitation to participate in the death and resurrection of Christ. As we let go of sin, selfishness, and distraction, we make room for the new life God offers us through Jesus.

This Lent, may we accept the invitation extended on Ash Wednesday with open hearts. Let us embrace the season's disciplines not as burdens but as pathways to deeper faith, hope, and love. As we prepare for the fulfillment of MAP 2.0, may our parish and our daily lives be transformed, reflecting the glory of Easter morning and the ongoing work of God's mission in the world.

Climate Justice Niagara

Certificate Program Recognizes Ecological Gardens

BRUCE MACKENZIE

A number of parishes across the Diocese of Niagara have created gardens that provide beauty as well as a number of environmental benefits. Climate Justice Niagara is pleased to recognize the important work that parishes have done to support the Anglican Church's Fifth Mark of Mission—"to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew life on earth"—through the awarding of framed certificates of appreciation. Certificates are awarded in four categories:

Food Gardens

Food gardens are gardens devoted primarily to growing food crops—herbs, vegetables, and fruits. Local food gardens provide fresh food and cut down greenhouse gas emissions caused by transporting food long distances. A food garden increases local food production and encourages community involvement in food sustainability. Food gardens can

also support important outreach ministries by providing fresh produce to food banks or homeless shelters.

Pollinator Gardens

A pollinator garden is a garden that is planted predominately with flowers that provide nectar or pollen for a wide range of pollinating insects such as bees, butterflies, moths, and ants, which are known as pollinators. Pollinators are essential to our food system and pollinator gardens are a way to offer support for these species. For a garden to be considered a pollinator garden, it should provide various nectar-producing flowers, shelter or shelter-providing plants for pollinators, and avoid the use of pesticides.

Water Gardens

A water, or rain garden, is a bowl-shaped perennial garden that captures surface water runoff from hard surfaces (roofs, roads, and driveways), and allows that water to absorb into the ground.

Rain gardens provide important environmental benefits by improving water quality. Surface water is filtered as it absorbs into the ground and the nutrients are taken up by native plant species in the garden. Rain gardens also create a habitat for birds, bees, butterflies, and other wildlife, reduce downstream flooding, and beautify your church and neighbourhood.

Children's Gardens

A children's garden is a dedicated space designed to spark a child's sense of wonder and discovery, where they can interact with plants, learn about the environment, and develop a deeper appreciation for the natural world around them. These gardens can include interactive exhibits, hands-on activities, and educational programs that encourage children to explore and experiment with different aspects of gardening, ecology, and sustainability (herbspeak.com).

If you would like to arrange



Above: The pollinator garden at St. Alban's Acton.

for a certificate presentation at your parish, please contact Bruce Mackenzie, CJN Chair at office@saintgeorge.ca or Deirdre Pike, Program Consultant, Justice & Outreach at deirdre.pike@niagara-anglican.ca.

We would also love to hear from you. Let us know about any climate justice-related initiatives at your parish—tell us what you have learned, a success story, plan, project, or recommendation. We'd love to hear about what is happening in your parish.



Sue Carson presents a certificate to the Rev. Canon Susan Wilson, and John and Mary Rutherford at St. Matthew-on-the-Plain, Burlington for their pollinator garden.

Photos: Contributed by Climate Justice Niagara

New Roots Take Place in the Diocese of Niagara

Growing the Communion Forest

DEIRDRE PIKE

The 419 trees planted last fall for the Communion Forest lie dormant as they await their first spring in the Diocese of Niagara. The sleeping mix of deciduous and coniferous beings are located in four parishes that were selected for planting after completing a tree inventory.

With financial support to the tune of \$7,500 from the Anglican Foundation and matched by the diocese, Climate Justice Niagara was able to contract Green Venture from Hamilton and Neighbourhoods out of the University of Toronto, to assist with the implementation of the initiative over the course of 2023 and 2024.

Initially, 23 parishes completed the survey used for the selection process. Based on elements like water access and number of volunteers, 13 parishes ended up moving to the next step of training to complete a tree inventory on parish property. After two webinars during the

winter, parish representatives were eager to gather in person at St. Paul's, Hamilton, to learn about tree inventories from Dr. Danjiela Puric-Mladenovic from the University of Toronto, and Liz Enriquez and the Green Venture team.

After seven parishes conducted tree inventories over the summer, it became clear that more parishes needed to tend to existing trees rather than adding new ones to the mix. In the end, four parishes were chosen to move ahead to plant a variety of trees before the end of November.

The first to plant was St. Paul's, an urban parish that determined a gap on the west side of the building. Jane Walker, the Climate Justice Facilitator for the parish, was thrilled with the outcome.

"There are now four beautiful trees, an Alternating Leaf Dogwood and three Hop trees, lovingly planted, mulched, and watered today (it's in my schedule to keep watering them) which will grow, create oxygen, and

eventually provide a habitat for birds and insects plus shade. We're so lucky."

St. David's, Welland, recognized they had a number of trees they needed to restore or cut down, but they also knew they had the perfect spot to plant a special tree for their 75th anniversary



George Pere and (deirdre to confirm) from the Rainbow Kings and Queens with The Reverend Stuart Carolan-Evans from St. John's Nelson.

Photo: Contributed by Deirdre Pike

this year. Although their first request was turned down because it wasn't a native tree, they were very happy to receive a Firestarter Black Gum, a large root ball, planted in a wire basket.

St. John's, Nelson found they had room to plant 14 trees. With advice from Green Venture, they chose a mix of seedlings: Red Maples, Sugar Maples, Balsam Firs, and White Pines. The parish volunteers were backed up with extra help from The Rainbow Kings and Queens, a diocesan group supporting LGBTQ refugees from African countries with homophobic policies.

Even more of the RKQs headed out to St. Paul's in Caledonia on November 12 to help plant the mini-forest, a mix of 400 trees planted in a 10-meter square. The forest is comprised of Black Maple, Red Maple, Sugar Maple, Smooth Serviceberry, Yellow Birch, Blue Beech, Bitternut Hickory, Shagbark Hickory, Alternate-leaf Dogwood, American Hazelnut, Honeysuckle Bush, American Beech, Bitternut,

Ironwood, White Pine, Black Cherry, Chokecherry, Northern Red Oak, Red Elderberry, Basswood, and Canadian Hemlock.

This winter, the diocese is pleased to have another placement student from Niagara College and the Environmental Management Assessment program. Bhavika Vhagjiani will be working with Deirdre Pike to put plans together for each parish regarding watering and other tree management activities to ensure the healthiest growing process.

Climate Justice Niagara is currently looking for other grant opportunities for tree planting in the communities within our diocese. If your parish is interested in planting for the Communion Forest initiative and would like to conduct a tree inventory this summer, please contact Deirdre Pike, Justice and Outreach Program Consultant, deirdre.pike@niagaraanglican.ca, or call 905-536-0171.

Lent Beyond Sacrifice: Discovering the Prejudice of Love



THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN

Not very long ago I was riding the subway in Toronto and, as is usually the case, was wearing my clerical collar. I'm a big fan of "representing". A young mum and her daughter were sitting next to me and suddenly the little girl touched my arm. "Could I ask you a question?" she said very politely. Yes, of course. "You know in Lent when you give something up," she said. "If you tell someone what you're giving up, will it not come true?"

"You mean like those wishes you make when you blow out the

candles on a birthday cake," I said. "Yes," she replied, "just like that." They didn't teach me that one in seminary but having raised four children I think I managed to rescue the situation relatively well.

Yet her version of Lent wasn't especially unusual. Those people who still observe the season sometimes have a strange view of a time when we should be sacrificing so as to feel solidarity with Christ or to refine and define ourselves to become better Christians. So, using the Lenten period to lose weight or give up smoking isn't necessarily a bad thing, but I do wonder if the focus might not have become just a little blurred.

I'm hardly one to criticize, because I'm still trying to work it all out. Having said that, God save us from those who do think that they fully understand and know exactly what they're doing. But as we enter these Lenten lands, these Paschal paths, we need to remember some fundamentals of the faith and remind ourselves why Jesus spent 40 days fasting in

the desert. To put it bluntly, let's grasp the fact that ours is the God of losers. As Freud said, if we all got what we deserved we'd get a good beating, and when I consider how I've sometimes behaved over the years I cringe in embarrassment and shame. Lent reminds us of sacrifice and suffering, and that God loves us not because we're perfect but because we're the opposite. The divine quintessence of the Jesus narrative is a paradox. In death there is life, in giving there is receiving, in sacrifice there is completion. What Christianity shouldn't be is a moral thermometer. It's too profound, too pristine, too radical for that.

In fact, perhaps in Lent, we can work on building a great new prejudice. Pause as readers wonder "What on earth is going on?" I mean the prejudice of love. Prejudge people as souls, made in the image of God, full of goodness and beauty. Of course, we'll sometimes be let down, but if we haven't realized that reality as followers of Jesus, we haven't been paying attention!

The determination to love runs so dramatically counter to the morbid fashion of judging others and then taking comfort in the fact that we're not like them. When the truth is that we're usually not very different at all. It is at its most vile on social media and the front pages of the tabloids, and due to the influence and size of the constantly multiplying social media platforms, we've seen graphic judgmentalism turned into an art form. First, force the chosen victim to close their account, then have them fired, then ruin their lives, and even in some gruesome cases have them self-harm or even kill themselves. This mob hatred once involved vilages and pitchforks, but now it's performed on a keyboard. That's so contrary to the Jesus of Lent, who was fully God but also fully human and who went hungry and thirsty to fulfill a divine mission of salvation for all of us—yes, all of us—who have fallen. Observe Lent in whatever way you want but never forget that the purpose is to learn to love.

By the way, 20 years ago, I decided to fast for Lent, something that might not be healthy, could be dangerous, and I'm certainly not recommending it. For 44 days I drank a glass of V8 every morning, and swallowed a vitamin pill, but ate absolutely nothing. It all seems a distant memory now and there's no way I would ever do it again. The result was that I had extraordinarily clear and vivid dreams, a certain spiritual awakening, a loss of weight that didn't last very long, and incredibly bad breath. My wife is a very tolerant woman. I've been asked in the past if this was my most memorable Lent. The answer is no. My most memorable Lent was 11 years ago when I became an Anglican, and decided to devote 40 days trying to jettison all that I thought was keeping me from pursuing the true love of Christ Jesus.

As for the details, I can't tell you because they might not come true...

Niagara Completes the First Year with New Anti-Racism Training

DEIRDRE PIKE

By the time the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination rolls around on March 21 this year, every priest and deacon in the Diocese of Niagara will have received a full day of anti-racism training.

The training is a direct result of the work undertaken in response to the murder of George Floyd in 2020. Bishop Susan Bell tasked an Anti-Racism Working Group with determining the best way forward in making a commitment toward equity, diversity, and inclusion, particularly as it pertains to anti-Black racism.

The result is a team of committed volunteers from the diocese,

backing up a professional anti-racism trainer, Adam Benn, from Queer Positive Power. The team includes Winston Tinglin, St. Christopher's, Burlington; Nikola Zhang, rector, St. Michael's, Hamilton; Deirdre Pike, Diocese of Niagara; and the group's chaplain, Katherin Morgan, rector, Church of the Resurrection, Hamilton.

Initially, the training was pilot tested last April by 25 senior clergy and staff in the diocese. The changes made as a result of the pilot training have led to a solid curriculum of training which has been received very well.

Some of the topics include: How Colonialism has Shaped our Understanding of Race/Racism;

Group Scenarios on Stereotypes, Prejudice, Discrimination and Oppression; The Racial Iceberg: Overt and Covert Forms of Racism; Anti-Black Racism in Canada and in the Anglican Church; Intersectionality, Power and Privilege—Power Flower; Microaggressions; and The Three As—Being an Ally, Advocate, and Accomplice.

Using the clericus meetings as a way of accessing clergy all in one place, the first session was held in the Greater Wellington region back in October. Brock and Lincoln combined for a session in November.

February will see the clergy from Trafalgar have the training, and then Hamilton Haldimand

will wrap up the year-long process in March. Each year going ahead, there will be an annual session for new clergy and deacons.

For more information, contact Deirdre Pike, Justice and Outreach Program Consultant. Deirdre.pike@niagaraanglican.ca or 905-536-0171.



The Reverend Nicola Zhang presenting at the anti-racism training.

Photo: Contributed by Deirdre Pike



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In other words

Why Inclusiveness is Not Enough



JOHN BOWEN

You've heard it as often as I have: "The wonderful, good news of Jesus Christ is that all are welcome in the family of God." There are so many examples of God welcoming the outsider in the Gospels: the Syro-Phoenician woman who receives healing for her daughter though she is not Jewish; the Samaritan woman at the well who drinks the living water; the lepers only Jesus would touch; and all the "publicans and sinners" with whom Jesus ate and drank. The Gospel demolishes the barriers that normally divide human beings and announces that all are welcome in the new humankind, regardless of race, ancestry, culture, age, or sexual orientation.

Let there be no mistake: this is a radical message, challenging as it does all forms of racism and exclusivity. It is a foretaste of that amazing scene in Revelation, where "all tribes and tongues and

nations" gather before the throne of the Lamb.

Half a Gospel

So, the message of inclusivity is good news, no question about it. Yet it's dangerous to think this is the whole Gospel, not least because it embodies such a precious truth. But this Gospel is only half a Gospel. What then is the other half? All are welcome—of course—but the welcome is to a life where we learn to give up control of our own lives to follow Jesus, a life where we allow God to work in us and through us to renew the world. And, to put it bluntly, not everybody wants that.

Imagine some kind of club—let's say it's an athletic club—and it advertises itself as "We are an inclusive club and all are welcome!" You think, "Well, I'm not athletic, but if they're inclusive and everybody is welcome, maybe I can go there with my chess board and find someone who wants to play chess." When you arrive at the door, they are indeed welcoming and obviously pleased to see you. But they are a bit puzzled by the chessboard. And when you look around, everyone seems to be involved in physical fitness activities. Not a chessboard to be seen! And, in spite of the warmth of the welcome, you go home disappointed.

There are several people in the



Gospels who are like this: they are fully welcomed, but end up going away disappointed:

- Nine out of ten lepers take the gift of healing that Jesus gives them but continue to live their own lives. Apparently, only one becomes a disciple. (Luke 17: 11-19)
- There is a scene in John's Gospel where Jesus talks about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Many of his disciples find that a hard saying, "turned back, and no longer went about with him." (John 6:35-69)
- The rich young man wanted to follow Jesus—and Mark notes that Jesus loved him—but refused to be included because the cost of following was too high. And (astonishingly) Jesus let him go. (Mark 10:17-22)

So the welcome is certainly for all. But not all will choose to pursue what the welcoming community is about.

Welcome to what?

Rowan Williams has said: "I don't believe inclusion is a value in itself. Welcome is." It's a helpful distinction. People are totally welcomed into the community. But it is a community of a particular character: radically committed to the way of Jesus, with its decisions and direction governed by the teaching of Jesus and the leading of his Spirit. And visitors, however warmly they are welcomed, will at some point be faced with the challenge of the Gospel, of being "converted" and baptised. Rowan Williams again: "conversion means conversion of habits, behaviours, ideas, emotions."

Think of Zaccheus: Jesus welcomes him when no one else will—but the result is that Zaccheus gives up being a tax collector and gives away his ill-gotten gains. He becomes a disciple who quickly learns that giving is

more blessed than receiving. The woman taken in adultery is told, "Go and sin no more." The first four disciples leave their familiar life as fishermen to follow the strange rabbi from Nazareth. They are "converted" to discipleship.

Can we do anything to help people stay beyond the welcome? Absolutely. Let's go back to the analogy of the athletic club. What if the people who welcomed you at the door said, "Why don't you leave your chessboard with us for now? Just wander around and watch what people are doing. Talk to them and ask them why they do it, and what they like about it. Then come back and ask us any questions." And what if they said, "You seem to be new to this, so you may be interested in a beginner's class we have starting this Wednesday. It goes for three weeks, and it's free, and that'll help you decide if this kind of thing is for you."

"Surely Jesus welcomed everybody? Surely he included everyone?" Yes but. As someone has said, "God loves us enough to accept us exactly as we are—but God also loves us too much to leave us that way." Everybody is included in the invitation to life with God—a life of change, growth, adventure, and love as an apprentice of Jesus. Leave your chessboard at the door.

Working "Alongside Hope" with Mark Hauck

DANI LEITIS

Keeping our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus means including care for the world beyond our borders. That's where the work of Mark Hauck and Alongside Hope (formerly The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund) comes in.

The Diocese of Niagara's very own Mark Hauck, a parishioner of St. Mark's Anglican Church in Orangeville and now the Board President of Alongside Hope, has always truly been working "alongside hope."

Mark has both a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Toronto and a Master of Arts from McMaster University, in Political Science. He also has his Bachelors in Education from the University of Toronto and teaches for the Peel School Board. In addition to



Alongside Hope board president Mark Hauck Photo: alongsidehope.org

his teaching, however, Mark has over 30 years of experience in fundraising, marketing, and international development bringing a wealth of knowledge to Alongside Hope.

Mark has worked in a variety of settings as a former fundraising consultant on capital campaigns, including for McMaster University. His interest turned to international development working which eventually led him to

Alongside Hope.

Mark describes international development as the most challenging field to fundraise for but notes that's why he does it. "I have experience raising funds and working in the development field," he says, "in international development spaces through my work with Oxfam and Habitat for Humanity in Canada." He then reflects on a particular experience with Oxfam during the Rwanda genocide of 1994. The terrible acts of violence, destruction, and horrors were shocking for the world to witness in the news. Oxfam and other NGOs were fervently advocating for UN support and troops to put an end to it all. Rwanda was left in ruins. "In three months, we raised a million dollars, which was a tremendous success for an international development agency

like Oxfam Canada." He attributes that success to the urgency of the appeal, the devastation of the country, the work of Canadian peacekeepers, and leadership of General Roméo Dallaire which was broadcast across Canada at a scale that had not been seen before. "When I was there for this particular appeal," he says, "we used strategic and creative mar-

keting techniques that displayed the urgency of the appeal and how those funds were needed desperately to help the situation."

Mark has now taken his previous experience and become involved with Alongside Hope for the past 4 years as chair of the fundraising committee, vice presi-

See Alongside Page 8

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All the Small Things

And the God Who Doesn't Suffer from Main Character Energy



THE REVEREND CANON MARTHA TATARNIC

Jeff was introduced to me as a bassoon player. Apart from my own instrument, the French horn, the bassoon is my favourite orchestral instrument. I was interested in talking with Jeff and learning more about where and with whom he has played.

Jeff told me that he has mostly been a Toronto musician, and he named some of the gigs he has had over the years. "But my favourite thing," he said to me, "is busking." Of all the musical performances that he does, it is playing on the street corners of Toronto that brings him the most joy. "You just never know how that is going to be meaningful for exactly the right person."

Jeff then proceeded to tell me a story. He was on the subway one night after a gig, the bassoon in his case beside him, when a man across the aisle said, "I know you!" He remembered Jeff playing on a street corner twenty years prior. "Your music was so beautiful, and it meant so much to me." He wasn't able just to remember on what street corner he had heard Jeff playing, he was able to list six of the songs that

he had heard all of those years ago.

What a series of extraordinary happenings: that someone could offer into the world exactly the thing that another person needs to hear; that the memory of that music could imprint itself onto a person's brain so indelibly that they would remember it all of those years later; that in a city of millions, Jeff and this passerby would meet again and there would be this moment of gratitude and recognition; that Jeff would receive a window into the gift that his music might be.

That I would get to hear this story. I count myself as part of the extraordinary ripple effect of Jeff's music. It was such a quiet and small thing Jeff was describing. Nothing about the world was changed by any of this, and it is hard to argue that even Jeff or the passerby's lives were changed in any quantifiable way, and yet what I was hearing described was a pocket of excess grace, a gift given and received and multiplied.

I am becoming more and more convinced that this story is exactly representative of how God most likes to work and what God's desire for us is. I do believe in big miracles, and the longer that I'm in parish ministry, the more that I believe in the great big things that God does. But it seems to me, across the pages of Scripture and in our lived experience, that God's specialty is in flying under the radar. Jesus is already there in the crowd even as the people are wondering about when God's Messiah is going to show up. Water is turned into wine, and most of the guests

don't even know something has happened, they just enjoy the delicious wine. Someone says the thing that someone else needs to hear, and people meet Jesus, receive forgiveness and share meals, and eyes are opened. Ten people receive healing, but only one of them turns back with recognition of what has happened and where it came from.

God, surprisingly, doesn't suffer from main character energy. God acts to bring delight and joy and flavour and wonder and beauty to our lives without it then having to be about God. God of the small, under-the-radar, things bears witness to what this is actually about, which is love. God really does love us, fiercely and unconditionally, and what better sign of that than inviting us to have a share in God's own delight for the wild, untamed colour and flavour and surprise of life, just for the sake of making our hearts glad.

Also, there is an added blessing in being able to recognize the presence of God and to give thanks. Love received is one thing, but being able to love in return is what our hearts are made for.

My mantra these days goes like this: pray for the big things, look for the small stuff. I have so many big prayers consuming me these days: for peace in war-torn places, ceasefires to hold, protection from Trump and his threats against Canada, and health for the people and church I love. I know that these prayers matter because I know that God wants peace, wholeness, and health for this whole complicated world.

But then I try to notice the small stuff. I look for happenings that are extraordinary and quiet, where noticing that something has happened is a bonus. I seek to pay attention to those minute soul stirrings, for the catch in the back of my throat moments, for gratuitous 'just because' beauty, for connections that might be momentary, but they validate something core about how our lives really do matter.

It's in those big prayers that I remember what God wants, and to which end God is always working. But it's in the small things that I remember this is first and finally about love.



Get Ready for Spring with NSML

The Niagara School for Missional Leadership invites you to enroll in one of our highly anticipated upcoming Spring courses.

This season, we are thrilled to introduce a brand-new course, inspired by one of the most beloved and influential franchises in pop culture. Stay tuned for the official announcement—you won't want to miss it!

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Jesus intentionally connected with outsiders, making relational ministry central to his mission. In 2025, how can we, as his followers, embody that same courage and intentionality in reaching our communities?

Teacher-practitioners: Canon Dr. Ian Mobsby and Dr. Emily Hill



Missional Spirituality

The course is designed to help leaders reflect on the past, engage with the present, and prepare for the future. By exploring timeless spiritual truths that have guided Christians for centuries and integrating leadership science to address today's challenges, this course provides practical strategies to enhance your personal, leadership, and communal rhythms.

Teacher-practitioner: Mark Dunwoody (Leader of Fresh Expressions Canada, international writer trainer and coach)

For more information, go to nsmll.ca



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Embodying Mercy and Justice:

A Lenten Call to Serve the Marginalized

THE VERY REVEREND DR. TIM DOBBIN

Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde's courageous and powerful words at the prayer service for President Trump's inauguration at Washington National Cathedral on January 21, 2025, are still ringing in my ears as I write. In short, she implored President Trump to 'have mercy upon' immigrants and the 2SLGBTQI+ community. She added, 'Our God teaches us that we are to be merciful to the stranger, for we were once strangers in this land.'

The Church sets aside the season of Lent as a time of preparation during which we are invited to be more intentional about allowing God to draw us

closer to Godself. Ideally, it is also a time during which God makes us more aware of God's inbreaking reign of mercy and justice for all people, unleashed on an unsuspecting world through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. In God's wisdom, God works through our parishes and through us, as fragile, as vulnerable, and as broken as so many of our communities are, to expand this reign—that's God's plan for the healing and reconciliation of this world God loves so much. Together by God's grace, we embody the mercy and justice Bishop Budde calls for, especially with and for those on the margins, including immigrants and the 2SLGBTQI+ community.

It is one of the reasons, we

are so deeply grateful at the Cathedral for what we regard as a clear sign of God's inbreaking reign of mercy and justice for all people, especially the 'least, last and lost' through the Cathedral Café. It's not only the number of folks we see—around 200 visits per day, six days a week; it's not only the amount of meals we serve—nearly 70,000 in our first full year of operation to December 2024; it's not only in the range of services being offered—medical, paralegal, housing support (five folk were rehoused earlier in January), reissue of ID cards, haircuts, pet care, peer support groups... All these are great, of course. What moves me more than anything, is to witness first-hand, God turning people's lives around.



Photo: Niagara Anglican files

We hear stories of what God is doing in the lives of some of our guests at Discovery Bible Study on Thursday mornings, which Rev. Monica Romig Green facilitates; we see the transformation in the faces of those who now attend our Wednesday morning Eucharist; we participate in it around the font at Sunday worship as Jim for example responded to God's call on his life through the waters of baptism.

The lives that are changing are not limited to our guests. Our volunteers tell us that they are becoming different people through the relationships they develop at the Café. Our parish-

ioners are learning the meaning of true hospitality as some guests join us for coffee hour on Sunday. As a faith community, we are investing more in connections with our neighbours on James Street North so that together we can discern ways of responding to the scandal of folk being without homes and other supports in a country as wealthy as ours.

May Lent be a time during which God opens each of our hearts to those ways in which our parishes and we ourselves can lean more into the new order of mercy and justice for all people, against which no amount of chaos and contempt can stand.

Breath of Fresh Air Thanks to Local Builders

THE REVEREND STUART CAROLAN-EVANS

Burlington, a historic landmark dating back 185 years, has recently undergone a much-needed transformation thanks to the generosity of a local building company.

The story began in the summer with Linda, the church warden of St. John's. While overseeing renovations at her own home by Renuitt Builders, she learned of the company's unique commitment to community service. Ryan and Dylan, co-owners of Renuitt Builders, shared that their company undertakes one charitable renovation project each year, free of charge, for a worthy cause.

Recognizing the potential to make a difference, Linda asked if they might consider helping her beloved church. The historic building, a pillar of the community, had been grappling with several maintenance challenges. Chief among them were the original windows, which no longer opened. Without air conditioning, the church became unbearably hot during the summer months, creating a stifling environment for worshippers. During one particularly sweltering service, the heat even caused a congregant to faint.

Moved by Linda's passion and the church's plight, Ryan and Dylan visited St. John's to assess the situation. The church corporation highlighted the urgent need



An employee of Renuitt Builders peers out the window that now opens.

Photo: Contributed by St. John's Burlington

for repairs, especially to the windows. After careful consideration, Renuitt Builders decided to take on the project.

"It was an easy decision," said Ryan. "The church is a cornerstone of the community, and the idea that we could make a tangible difference for the congregation was inspiring."

True to their word, Renuitt sent their best tradespeople to St. John's. In a matter of hours, the team lovingly freed up the jammed windows, ensuring they could open once more. The results were transformative. For the first time in decades, fresh air flowed through the sanctuary, creating a cool and comfortable environment for worshippers.

"It's such a simple thing, but it has made an enormous differ-

ence," said Linda. "The congregation is thrilled. The church feels more alive, and services are so much more enjoyable now."

But Renuitt Builders didn't stop there. As a final gesture of goodwill, the company also made a generous donation to the church, further cementing their commitment to the community. The partnership has been a win-win for everyone involved. St. John's received critical repairs at no cost, Renuitt Builders gained well-deserved recognition for their charitable efforts, and the congregation now has a cooler, more inviting space to worship.

Dylan reflected on the experience, saying, "This project reminded us of why we started this initiative in the first place. It's about using our skills to give back and make a meaningful impact."

The congregation of St. John's couldn't agree more. Parishioners have expressed their heartfelt gratitude, noting that the repairs have not only improved comfort but also renewed their sense of community pride. The hope is St. John's story will inspire other local businesses to consider how they might contribute to similar causes.

As for Linda, she's simply overjoyed. "This church has stood for nearly two centuries, and it's heartening to see it cared for so lovingly. We're so grateful to Renuitt Builders for their generosity and hard work. They've truly

given us a breath of fresh air—in every sense."

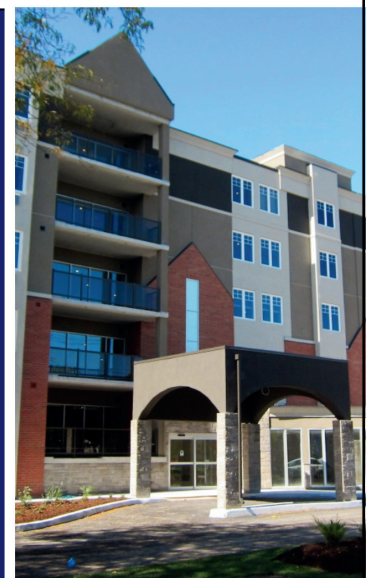
With its newly functional windows and the goodwill of a local business behind it, St. John's Anglican Church is ready to continue its mission as a place of worship, fellowship, and commu-

nity for generations to come. And for Renuitt Builders, the project serves as a shining example of the power of kindness and the difference it can make in the lives of others.



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The Lion and the Lamb

THE REVEREND CANON DR. SHARYN HALL

Here we are in the month of March and the weather is behaving in the usual unpredictable way. In this month people often comment, 'Will March come in like a lion and go out like a lamb? Or will the opposite happen?' The saying is familiar to me because I heard my grandmother say it often and usually there was some truth in how the weather behaved that month. It was only later that I realized the saying had Biblical roots.

In the scriptures, the lion represents power, strength, and aggression. In some passages, lions indicate royalty or kings as bold warriors. In contrast, the lamb in the scriptures is associated with gentleness, innocence, and vulnerability. Lambs were easy prey for lions.

There are many examples in Christian art from medieval to modern times where Jesus is portrayed as the Lamb of God. The prophet Isaiah says that when the kingdom of the Messiah comes, the lion and the lamb will lie down together in peace.

As we prepare ourselves for the events of Holy Week and the festival of Easter, we read again the scriptures which lead to the inevitable conflict between Jesus and Pilate. Jesus had become famous as a teacher and healer, and many people were convinced that he was the Messiah sent by God to liberate them from the harsh control of the Romans. Jesus knew Pilate by reputation. Pilate was the governor of Judea for three years before he and Jesus met face to face.

As a historical figure, we have some information about Pilate from ancient sources. He had military and diplomatic training and was in other minor posts in the Roman empire before he was sent to be governor of Judea and Samaria. This was not a promotion because the Hebrew people



Image: Pixabay/Jeff Jacobs

were known to be rebellious under Roman rule.

Pilate was about the same age as Jesus, in his early thirties. When he arrived in Judea, he discovered that there was no statue of the Roman emperor in Jerusalem. Pilate marched into Jerusalem with images of the emperor on the standards of his soldiers. He ordered the images to be placed up on the walls facing down on the Temple.

To the Romans, the emperor was one of their gods. For the Hebrews, who worshipped only one God and whose image was forbidden, this was an outrage. Thousands of Jews protested at Pilate's palace and knelt in prayer waiting to be slaughtered, but Pilate backed down fearing that word of the slaughter would be reported to Rome. It was a humiliation that Pilate would not let happen again. An ancient historian describes Pilate as 'inflexible, merciless, and obstinate.'

And yet, in his confrontation with Jesus, Pilate seems hesitant to order the death of Jesus. Was he being merciful or politically shrewd in hoping to avoid more trouble with the people? Was Pilate the lion and Jesus the lamb?

Jesus was born into a brutal world. His people were a conquered people with little political, economic, or religious freedom. Into that world, Jesus came to preach love—love for God, love

for your neighbour, and love for your enemy. His preaching about love was misunderstood and rejected by many. His message was a disappointment to the people who wanted the Messiah to be a valiant warrior. The power Jesus offered the people had nothing to do with military might or territorial domination.

One of the great Christian writers of the twentieth century, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, wisely recognized the power of love. "Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides, and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire."

Some people would say we live in a brutal world today, a world of terrorism and war, religious hatred, and economic desperation. We see leaders, governments, and terrorist organizations grasping for power. We see barbaric actions of rape and cruelty which are reminiscent of warfare centuries ago.

In today's world, there are lions who are attacking and slaughtering innocent lambs. As Christians who follow the Way of Jesus, we are called to carry his search for justice, his compassion for those who suffer, and his love for all God's people into the turmoil of our world.



Our name has changed. Our work stays the same.

PWRDF is now Alongside Hope

After two years of discernment and consultation, PWRDF's members* have approved a new name. Alongside Hope emphasizes themes of partnership, accompaniment, community and teamwork that have always exemplified the way we work.

With its tagline — Anglicans and partners working for change in Canada and around the world — Alongside Hope honours the legacy of PWRDF as an agency of the Anglican Church of Canada, and it will carry us forward into the future.

As we walk alongside our partners and many supporters, listening and sharing with one another, we embrace and embody the hope of a truly just, healthy and peaceful world.

Scan the QR code to view a video about our new name and read our list of Frequently Asked Questions, or visit pwrdf.org/our-new-name.

* The PWRDF Board of Directors, Diocesan Representatives and Youth Council comprise the voting membership.



Alongside Hope

Anglicans and partners working for change in Canada and around the world



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Upcoming Deadlines:

May – March 28
June – April 25
September – July 21

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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500 Years of Anabaptism

“Alan the Anglican” talks with “Mary the Mennonite”

I'm 'Alan the Anglican', formerly an Ecumenical Chaplain at a seniors' community founded by Mennonites in Waterloo. I called my friend, 'Mary the Mennonite', a resident there, to talk about the 500th anniversary of the Anabaptist movement, which is being celebrated this year. As the *Anglican Journal* has occasionally reported, we have been in a formal dialogue with the Mennonites since 2018—not with any intention of structural unification, but with a mandate to listen and learn from one another. E.g. <https://anglican-journal.com/canadian-anglicans-mennonites-meet-first-ever-formal-dialogue/>

Mary is a lifelong Mennonite, a wife and mother, a teacher, and one of the first women ordained to leadership of a Mennonite congregation, back in 1988. No, she doesn't wear a bonnet or a dark dress, nor does she speak Low German or drive a horse and buggy. Mary is from a more 'liberal' strand of Mennonites, open to the gifts of life beyond the borders of Mennonite faith and culture. She was, like most of the residents, quite receptive to what I brought as an Anglican to the community of Christians at the home. I, in my turn, came to appreciate Mennonite perspectives, practices, and stories. While the 'Mennonite Church Canada' grouping has only 225 congregations and 31,000 members (Anglicans have 1,500 and 295,000 respectively), I commend this tiny but powerful section of the Protestant Church to your attention during their year of celebration.

What are the Mennonites com-

memorating in 2025?

In 1525, just 8 years after Martin Luther 'began' the Protestant Reformation, three 'Radicals' from Zurich, Switzerland, were re-baptized. Although they had been baptized as infants, Conrad Grebel, George Blaurock, and Felix Manz baptized each other on January 21. They were the first 'Anabaptists' (Greek for 'Again-Baptists'). These men, diving into the Scriptures for themselves, concluded that baptism could only be for those who confessed their faith in word and deed, something impossible for an infant. Anabaptism cut at the heart of Christendom, Catholic and Protestant, where baptism was required of all citizens. All three were soon killed for their 'anti-social' heresy, but the movement grew. In 1536, a young Roman Catholic priest in the Netherlands, Menno Simons, left the priesthood and joined the Anabaptists. His followers became 'Mennonites'. Today, there are over 2 million baptized believers in 86 countries, 30% of them in North America. In Niagara, there are congregations in the St. Catharines and Hamilton areas. They are all celebrating their faith story this year, and Mary was delighted for this opportunity to share the gift of the Mennonites with the wider Church.

"The most important gift, I think, is that we base our position on Jesus' teaching of non-violence – or what we used to call 'non-resistance'. Indeed, the most striking thing in my experience of Mennonites was their radical commitment to peacemaking.

I was blessed to know several conscientious objectors who had served in work-camps in Northern Ontario during World War II, as well as former members of Christian Peacemaker Teams who put themselves in harm's way to disrupt armed conflict. Many could tell stories of family members who had been killed for their non-violent commitment in Soviet Russia. This "teaching of Jesus" was 'rediscovered' by the Radical Reformers; when invited to study the Scriptures without the constraints of the Roman Catholic magisterium in the early days of the Protestant Reformation, they not only leapt upon the spiritual freedoms offered by the Gospel ('salvation by grace through faith alone', 'the priesthood of all believers', etc.) they also grasped the responsibilities of 'carrying your cross', 'loving your enemy' and 'putting down your sword'. Sadly, the Reformers like Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and, later, Cranmer, opposed the Anabaptists, and many were executed as heretics – often by being drowned. A cynically ironic form of capital punishment. Today, however, in an age of monstrous violence and unutterably powerful weapons that can be deployed in a heartbeat, the Mennonites' gift of non-violent peacemaking could not be more valuable.

The second gift: "an emphasis on raising children in the faith", said Mary. So much of a Mennonite's identity rests on their faith-commitment and handing down the faith is essential to their continued existence; the whole



Alan Cook in St. Jacob's, ON, at what used to be 'The Mennonite Story' interpretive Centre

community therefore makes it a priority, not just leaving it to chance. (This is one of the many similarities between the experience of European Jews and the Mennonites.) Mary grew up in 'Mennonite country' in the 1940s outside Waterloo, where family life was centred around the church. She, like all the Mennonite children, learned the faith from Scripture, Sunday School, and her parents, praying and singing hymns (in harmony) at home. She was baptized when she could make her own decision, aged around 12. "We learned to follow Jesus in daily life and in the community."

Mary's faith, and the faith of many of the Mennonites I have met, has held fast, has often been passed on to their children, and is making a difference into their old age. As Chaplain, I could always count on the Mennonites to show up for Bible studies and (four-part harmony!) hymn-sings as well as to support those in need.

Willard Metzger, Mennonite Church Canada executive director, commented in 2016, "With Canada both more religiously diverse and increasingly 'religiously neutral', Canadian Anglicans are realizing they are going to need to learn how to continue to be influential



Mary Scheidel

Photos: Contributed by Alan Cook

and speak the gospel, but more as a voice from the sidelines... and how to form our communities and live out our convictions as distinct communities, rather than assuming that the culture is just going to go along with us because we're 'The Church'."

Mary then offered, "The gift of Anglicanism to me has been the liturgy." The Radical Reformers eschewed the ritualism of Roman Catholicism, demanding simple worship that drew heavily on Scripture. Mary shared a particular gift she'd received from our Book of Common Prayer: "As a child, the school day ended with a 'devotion'. I learned one Anglican collect that I would recite if I was frightened of the dark when I was walking back to our farm." As she spoke, I joined in the nearly-500-year-old prayer:

'Lighten our darkness; we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy, defend us from all perils and dangers of this night, for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.'

Thank you, Mary; thank you, Mennonites! May the continued conversations between our denominations continue to 'lighten the darkness' of our times.

Alongside Hope

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

dent of the board, and now board president since October of 2024. Being heavily involved in the work behind the name change from PWRDF to Alongside Hope, Mark is positive, and confident about the change. "The process to change was transparent. It involved a wide variety of stakeholders, board members, volunteers, staff, youth council, and diocesan representatives." Mark notes that the change has been well received so far but adds "while the name has changed the work is exactly the same, and what is really important is the people who are helping behind the name."



Alongside Hope has around 50 partnerships with civil society organizations across the world for their development work. In emergency, humanitarian crises they will find additional partners who are working on the ground "In Gaza, we work with the Diocese of Jerusalem, and the Anglican Alliance to provide support to them." Sometimes, the Government of Canada, through Global Affairs Canada, identifies a need and looks for an

international development agency in Canada that they can fund to collaborate with their partners to deliver the programs. Programs like the Solar Suitcase Campaign "It was providing a mobile child delivery apparatus," Mark shares, "that provided light and all sorts of equipment that would allow rural clinics in Africa to be able to help deliver babies in the poorest regions of Southern Africa." Mark laughs, "It literally looked like a suitcase." Mark goes on to explain how this mobile setup is meant to be compact and packed like a suitcase for ease of transport.

When asked if this career path

has always been his dream he shares "It's the one thread in my life that has continued from my early working days with Oxfam, all the way through either volunteer, or working through volunteer opportunities, and working with Alongside Hope is like the culmination of everything I've done over the last number of years." Mark will be heading to Africa in June for his next project, "Seeing the work, and the impact we make firsthand has made all the difference in my commitment to continue working in this difficult field."

Mark noted that the Canada Post

strike at the end of 2024 certainly impacted the donations they received recently but is appreciative of the support coming in so far in this early part of the year. Alongside Hope will continue to accept donations addressed to PWRDF for well over a year so not to worry if you accidentally make your donations out to the wrong name!

Mark reflects on his faith and the role it has in his work, "I've always felt that following the faith, and following Jesus' example, working with the most marginalized people in Canada and the rest of the world, helps to provide a spark to my own faith."