

A New Season at NSML

Dani Leitis talks to Hannah Keller, new Niagara School for Missional Leadership coordinator.

Page **4**



Sent Beyond The Walls

Canon Ian Mobsby describes the emerging vocation of commissioned lay missionary.

Page **8**



Supper at Emmaus

Canon Stuart Pike offers another *visio divina* exercise, this time for the Easter season.

Page **11**



A section of the Anglican Journal



NIAGARA ANGLICAN



A Gathering Place and a Sounding Board for the People of the Diocese of Niagara — Since 1955

APRIL 2026

TRIUMPH Over Fear and Uncertainty



Photo: iStock/Mike_Pellini

Dear friends in Christ,

Many of us come to the feast of Easter this year with hearts and minds that are unsettled. The daily news reminds us of conflict and instability across the world. Closer to home, our own communities face real challenges—economic pressures, housing insecurity, strained social services, and the weariness that settles in when anxiety becomes part of everyday life. It is no small thing to hold all of this, and I want to begin by acknowledging how real and personal these concerns are for many of us.

It is into this anxious world that the Church proclaims, with humility—and courage—that Christ is risen!

Easter doesn't ask us to pretend that fear and uncertainty are not present. The first Easter morning itself unfolds in confusion and distress. Mary comes to the tomb expecting only loss. The disciples are frightened, uncertain as to what the future holds, unsure whom they can trust. The Resurrection doesn't

begin with calm confidence, but with God meeting people exactly where they are in the complexity of their emotions.

The risen Christ comes not as a distant triumph, but as a wounded presence. He speaks peace to anxious hearts and breathes new life into fearful disciples. And in doing so, he shows us that God's answer to anxiety isn't abandonment, but accompaniment. We aren't promised immunity from the world's troubles; we are promised that God will not leave us alone within them.

This is the hope of Easter: that even when events beyond our control shake our sense of stability, God's faithfulness remains sure. Resurrection tells us that despair does not have the final word, that violence and injustice do not define the future, and that God's work of renewal continues—even when it unfolds slowly, quietly, and in ways we may not immediately recognise.

In the life of our beloved diocese, Easter hope calls us to

remain rooted in prayer, worship, and community. It invites us to practice trust, generosity, and compassion. When anxiety tempts us to withdraw or harden our hearts, the risen Christ calls us back into relationship—with God and with one another.

I am grateful for the many ways I see resurrection life already at work across the Diocese of Niagara: in congregations offering hospitality and care; in ministries of service and justice; in faithful leaders who continue to discern God's call amid uncertainty. These are not small signs. They are expressions of Easter hope lived out day by day.

As we celebrate this season of resurrection, may we allow ourselves to hope—not because circumstances are easy, but because God is faithful. May we trust that the risen Christ walks with us through anxious times, opening before us a future shaped by love.

With my prayers and every Easter blessing,

+ Susan Niagara

Tyranny, Saints, Martyrs, and the Courage to Love

THE REVEREND CANON DR. IAN J. MOBSBY

When we hear the words saint or martyr, it is easy to imagine people who are somehow different from us—braver, purer, more heroic, set apart by extraordinary holiness. Yet the Christian tradition insists on something both more demanding and more hopeful: saints are ordinary people who loved God

and others deeply, often at great personal cost.

The word martyr simply means witness. A martyr is not someone who seeks suffering or death, but someone who refuses to abandon love, truth, or compassion, even when doing so would be safer or easier. Martyrdom is not about glorifying suffering; it is about refusing to let fear have the final word.

This understanding reshapes



Image: Unsplash/Marcus Spiske

how we read the lives of the saints. Take Agnes of Rome, whose witness continues to speak across the centuries. Agnes bore witness not through sermons or arguments, but through her life. Her faithfulness became a quiet but profound form of resistance against misogyny and patriarchy—not resistance rooted in anger, but resistance rooted in trust. She refused to surrender her

dependency on God, even when the world sought to control and dominate her.

Agnes reminds us that holiness is not about power or control, but about where we place our trust. She resisted oppression not by grasping for power, but by entrusting her life to God. In doing so, she revealed a deeper truth: that God's strength is made

See *TYRANNY* Page 2

Tyranny, Saints, Martyrs, and the Courage to Love

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

known not through domination, but through faithful love.

It is tempting to keep saints safely confined to history—beautiful icons, distant stories, names marked on calendars. Yet saints are not only people we remember; they are people who shape us. They teach us how to live when the world becomes harsh, unjust, or unkind. Just as the world is now in all its unleashed hate and power.

And if the saints lived in difficult times, so do we. In recent months, many Christians have found themselves asking what faithfulness looks like in a world marked by deep division, political anxiety, and social unrest. In some contexts, clergy and lay leaders alike are being reminded that discipleship is not an abstract idea, but a lived commitment that can carry real cost. In some dioceses in the USA, clergy and licensed workers are being asked to check that they have wills in place to ensure that if the worst should happen, their dependents are being considered.

In such times, holiness often looks remarkably ordinary. It looks like presence rather than withdrawal, compassion rather than indifference, love rather than self-protection. Saints are not always those who make headlines; more often, they are those who quietly refuse to stop loving—even in the most provocative of situations.

For me, one such saint was my dear friend and fellow Anglican priest, Charlie. Charlie was not perfect—saints never are—but he lived with a remarkable generosity of spirit. He had a deep compassion for those on the margins and a faithfulness to love that was neither sentimental nor safe. He chose relationship over comfort, presence over self-interest, and mercy over fear.

Charlie's ministry among people experiencing homelessness was marked by genuine mutuality and deep respect. He was profoundly loved, not because he sought recognition, but because he showed up again and again with humility and grace. His faith was rooted in

prayer, shaped by struggle, and expressed through a costly attentiveness to others. He lost his life as a consequence of a brutal assault by someone he had tried to help.

Saints are not always those who make headlines; more often, they are those who quietly refuse to stop loving—even in the most provocative of situations.

Many people continue to be inspired by Charlie's life and witness. His example has encouraged others to live more deeply, more honestly, and more courageously as Christians. For me personally, he was a reminder that holiness is not about hiding who we are, but about allowing God's love to be fully embodied in our lives, even when that embodiment carries risk.

In this sense, Charlie stands in the long tradition of Christian witness. He did not seek suffering, but his way of loving aligned him with those the world often overlooks or discards. Through his life, he bore witness to a different way of being human - a way shaped by Christ.

Saints and martyrs are often those who stand with the vulnerable, not because it is dramatic or heroic, but because they cannot do otherwise and remain faithful to who they are in God.

Saints do not stand above us; they stand ahead of us, lighting the path. They show us what becomes possible when love is taken seriously.

Agnes shows us that even those who feel powerless can resist systems of harm through faithfulness. Charlie shows us that holiness often looks like quiet generosity, patient compassion, and the courage to remain open-hearted. Charlie has inspired me to be far more generous and to seek to be a loving presence, particularly with those

who are seriously hurting.

Together, they remind us that God's power is not found in domination, but in vulnerability, not in coercion, but in love. They remind us that faith is not merely what we believe, but how we live - and who we choose to stand with.

Most of us will never be called to martyrdom in any dramatic sense. But all of us are called daily to witness: to kindness in a world of cruelty, to truth in a world of distortion, to compassion in a world that often hardens itself to survive.

Every act of love that costs us something is a small martyrdom. Every refusal to turn away from suffering is a form of witness.

Every choice to remain human in an inhumane world is a holy act.

The saints remind us that God is found not in safety, but in faithfulness. And they leave us with a simple but demanding question: not "Could I ever be a saint?" but "Where am I being invited to love more deeply, more faithfully, more courageously?"

"All the King's Men" Part of Growing Outreach

BEV GOOMBRIDGE

Laughter filled the parish hall at The Church of Our Saviour the Redeemer on February 25 as men gathered for the first meeting of a new fellowship group, "All the King's Men." We were thrilled to have two of our relatively new parishioners among those attending.

Around the breakfast table, the men shared stories of life's challenges, career paths, and moments of joy. Conversation flowed easily, with laughter and honest reflection helping deepen connections beyond Sunday worship. One gentleman said that it was exactly what they had been looking for. Before they left, they were each encouraged to bring their friends with them in March.

"All The King's Men" is the newest outreach initiative at Our Saviour the Redeemer. We already have in place an outreach group called "Circle of Friends," which meets on the first Wednesday of each month. Participants at Circle of Friends enjoy a time of gathering and sharing over coffee, followed by a complimentary lunch and crafts. We have also begun another



Around the breakfast table, the men shared stories of life's challenges, career paths, and moments of joy.

Photos: Contributed by Bev Groombridge

new group called "The Chosen". Participants of "The Chosen" gather in the Whitcomb Room and, in comfort, view an episode of "The Chosen" which depicts in a powerful and moving way the life of Jesus. Following the viewing of an episode, participants gather in the parish hall to enjoy a complimentary lunch, discussion and trivia.

Every Thursday at 1:30, we enjoy a session of "Biblical Conversations". Have you ever been puzzled about what Jesus was really saying to you through His parables and sayings? Are

you looking for the answers to so many of the questions that you have been afraid to ask about Scripture? Are you searching for a community of people who will love and support you? Where there is no pressure to speak and just listening is welcomed and respected? Where asking questions is encouraged and is received in a warm and accepting environment? All questions are valid and welcome. Our rector is an amazing Christ-centred teacher. Participants are encouraged to share their understanding of scripture with



The Biblical Conversations group poses for the camera.

one another. We are growing in numbers and have people from various denominations who have joined our group.

We are thrilled to be reaching beyond the confines of our church walls to bring Jesus' love to the community in which we are situated.

As these ministries continue to grow, Our Saviour the Redeemer hopes to create spaces where faith can be explored openly, friendships can flourish, and newcomers can find belonging. All are warmly welcome.



The Circle of Friends group with their Easter bonnets.

Rethinking Healing: What Scripture Really Says About Disability

THE REVEREND CANON DR. DAVID ANDERSON

When many Christians hear the word healing, they imagine Jesus restoring sight, mobility, or speech. These stories are powerful, but they have often been interpreted in ways that unintentionally harm persons with disability—suggesting that disability is something to be fixed, erased, or prayed away. Disability theology invites us to look again, to read scripture with fresh eyes, and to discover that the Bible’s vision of healing is far richer than the simple removal of impairment.

A recent Wednesday morning celebration of Holy Eucharist and the Weekday Eucharist Lectionary gave me the gift of preparing a sermon on Mark 3:1-6. As you read this passage, you can cut the tension with a knife. The Pharisees are watching to see if Jesus will heal on the Sabbath. They suspect he will, and they are there to catch him. When Jesus enters the synagogue and encounters a man with a withered hand, the stage is set.

Before any conflict unfolds, the insights of disability theology help us notice something essential for our understanding of the passage: the man is already there. He is not brought in as an object lesson. He is not a prop in a theological debate. He is a worshipper, a member of the community, someone who belongs in the synagogue before Jesus ever arrives. His presence is not a problem to be solved; it is a reality to be honoured.

This is one of the gifts of disability theology—it teaches us to pay attention to who is already in the room, whose presence has been overlooked, and whose story has been flattened into a symbol. The man in Mark 3 is not introduced as a sinner or as someone in need of fixing. He is simply present, whole in his humanity. Yet in the eyes of the religious leaders, he becomes a test case. In the eyes of Jesus, he becomes a neighbour.

When Jesus asks, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save life or to kill?” he is not merely debating Sabbath law. He is exposing the posture of the community toward those who live with embodied difference. Is it lawful to restore, include, and honour? Or is it lawful to ignore, exclude, and treat someone’s life as secondary to our systems?

This question echoes through-

This is the heart of disability theology: God does not erase disability to make people acceptable.

out the Gospels. Jesus’ healings are not about erasing disability but about restoring community. In the ancient world—as in our own—disability often meant exclusion: social, economic, and religious. Jesus confronts those systems, not the bodies of people with disability. Healing, in scripture, is never merely physical.

It is social. It is relational. It is communal. It is about belonging.

In Mark 3, Jesus does something profoundly important. He calls the man to the centre—not to expose him, but to reveal God’s heart. And then he says, “Stretch out your hand.” Notice what Jesus does not say. He does not say, “Stretch out your good hand.” He does not say, “Hide what is withered.” He invites the man to bring the very part of himself others have learned to avoid, pity, or judge. Jesus invites him to bring his whole embodied reality into the centre of God’s healing presence.

This is the heart of disability theology: God does not erase disability to make people acceptable. God confronts the systems that marginalize disabled bodies in the first place. The healing is not the point. The restoration of community is the point. The exposure of hardened hearts is the point. The revelation of God’s compassion is the point.

For the Diocese of Niagara, this matters deeply. Sadly, I have heard the stories of many Christians with disabilities who have experienced churches as places of pity or invisibility rather than belonging. Rethinking healing helps us shift from narratives of cure to practices of solidarity, accessibility, and welcome. It invites us to ask not, “How do we fix people?” but “How do we remove the barriers that prevent people from flourishing?”

The invitation of Jesus—“Stretch out your hand”—is not only for the man in the story. It is an invitation to each of us and to our diocese. Jesus invites us: stretch out your hand. Stretch out your compassion. Stretch out your imagination. Stretch out your welcome. Healing, in the way of Jesus, is not about returning to “normal”. It is about revealing God’s justice—a justice that centres the marginalized, restores belonging, and refuses to let anyone remain unseen.



Photo: Unsplash/Nathan Anderson

Diocese of Niagara JUSTICE DATES

www.niagaraanglican.ca

Speak to your parish about how to mark these dates or contact Deirdre Pike at deirdre.pike@niagaraanglican.ca for ideas.

**April
17**

Anti- Racism Training

9:00 - 4:30 pm
Christ’s Church Cathedral
Register online

**Climate Justice Sunday April
19**
Parishes across the diocese.

**April
22**

Earth Day with Webinar

6:30-8:30pm
Zoom
Register online

**Pride Month and
National Indigenous
History Month June**

**June
4**

Fiercely Loved Pride Service

4:00 pm
Christ’s Church Cathedral



NIAGARA ANGLICAN

The official publication of the Diocese of Niagara, published 10 times a year from September to June as a supplement to the *Anglican Journal*.

The Diocese of Niagara lies at the western end of Lake Ontario, encompassing the Niagara Peninsula, Hamilton, Halton Region, Guelph and portions of Wellington and Dufferin Counties.

Publisher: Bishop Susan Bell
905-527-1316
bishop@niagaraanglican.ca
Editor: Dani Leitis
editor@niagaraanglican.ca
Advertising: Angela Rush
905-630-0390
niagara.anglican.ads@gmail.com
Proofreader: Wendy Leigh Bell

Art Director/Layout: Craig Fairley
Imagine Creative Communications
Printed by: KT Web Printing Ltd.,
Toronto, ON M6A 1Z6
Mailed by: Elite Bindery and Mailing
Services, Scarborough, ON M1P 5A1
Available online at:
niagaraanglican.news (blog)
niagaraanglican.ca/newspaper (PDF)
Subscriptions: \$15/year.

Submissions:
Submission information and
deadlines are printed elsewhere in
the paper.
Mailing address:
Cathedral Place
252 James Street North
Hamilton Ontario L8R 2L3

For a complete staff directory and
more information, visit the diocesan
website: niagaraanglican.ca



ANGLICAN
DIOCESE OF
NIAGARA

**CALLED TO LIFE
COMPELLED TO LOVE**

In Conversation

Hannah Keller Joins NSML for Spring Launch

The Niagara School for Mission Leadership is welcoming the spring semester, and with it, fresh energy from Hannah Keller, our new NSML coordinator. Registration is now open for two transformative courses designed to equip parish leaders for God's mission in today's world: *Engaging the Community* with Emily Hill and Canon Ian Mobsby, and *Missional Spirituality* with Mark Dunwoody.

Joining NSML this spring is Hannah Keller, the new NSML coordinator. We asked her a few questions about her role and what participants can expect.



Hannah Keller, NSML Coordinator

Dani Leitis: Hannah, for those who haven't met you before, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your previous role?

Hannah Keller: Sure! I joined the diocesan staff team in April 2023 as the Administrative Assistant, right after finishing my undergraduate degree at Huron University College. As a lifelong Anglican, I was really excited to begin my professional career serving the Church in this way. I grew up in a military family, so I moved around quite a bit, but I've been attending St. George's Anglican Church in Guelph since 2012.

In my assistant role, I supported a wide range of diocesan ministries, programs, and events. That meant helping to organize Synods and Synod Council meetings, assisting with diocesan property matters, supporting YLTP, coordinating communi-

cations for WOW grants, and serving as the registrar for the Bishop's Company. It was a broad support role, which gave me a great overview of how everything fits together.

That's also how I first became involved with NSML. I was asked to work with the previous coordinator, Sarah Bird, to develop a student database, and that collaboration really sparked my deeper involvement in that ministry.

DL: What excites you most about joining NSML?

HK: I've always been someone

who genuinely loves learning. Ever since I was a kid, school was something I really looked forward to. So, the idea of joining a ministry like NSML, where life-long learning and spiritual growth are at the heart of what you do, is really exciting to me!

DL: How will you support students at NSML?

HK: I think that, at the heart of it, my role is about making sure students feel supported, connected, and set up for success throughout their time at NSML. On a practical level, that means ensuring the administrative side runs smoothly. If I do my job well, students can focus on their learning rather than worrying about logistics.

Beyond administration, I see my role as being a connector and advocate for students. I'll work closely with teacher-practitioners to ensure course

expectations are clear and the learning platform runs smoothly, while also being someone students can turn to with questions or for guidance. At the same time, I hope to help them connect their learning to real ministry contexts, linking them with missional and vocational opportunities across the diocese and fostering a sense that they're part of a wider, supportive learning community.

DL: What do you hope participants will take away from this upcoming term?

HK: I hope participants leave the Spring 2026 term feeling both grounded and equipped. Grounded in a deeper sense of where God is at work, in their own lives and in their communities, and equipped with practical tools to respond faithfully.

For those taking *Engaging the Community*, I hope they gain confidence in listening to and building meaningful connections in their neighbourhoods. My hope is that they won't just walk away with ideas, but with tangible skills and the courage to try something new in their parish's context. In *Missional Spirituality*, I hope participants experience real renewal. That they grow in their inner life with God, develop resilience in leadership, and gain spiritual rhythms that sustain both themselves and the communities they serve.

Ultimately, I hope this term helps them lead with empathy, clarity, and a renewed sense of purpose in God's mission.

DL: Do you have any suggestions on how students can prepare for the upcoming term?

HK: I'd suggest that students take some time to reflect on their current parish context and personal spiritual practices before the term begins. Thinking about specific questions or challenges they're facing, and coming ready to share and learn from others, will help them get the most out of both the practical tools in *Engaging the Community* and the spiritual formation in *Missional Spirituality*.

DL: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

HK: I'm excited to support students as they grow in faith and ministry, helping them feel connected and confident along

INSTRUCTORS FOR THE SPRING NSML COURSES:



Emily Hill



Canon Ian Mobsby



Mark Dunwoody

the way. I'm also looking forward to learning alongside them and seeing how this term (and future terms) shapes both of our journeys!

Whether you want to deepen your spiritual rhythms, grow in leadership confidence, or engage more intentionally with your community, NSML's spring semester offers a season of learning, reflection, and transformation.

To register for courses, visit nsmll.ca. For questions about NSML, any of the courses, or registration questions, you can contact Hannah by emailing registrar@nsmll.ca.

Engaging the Community

Dates: Mondays, April 13 – June 8 (no class May 18) | Time: 2–4 pm

Led by Dr. Emily Hill and The Rev. Canon Dr. Ian Mobsby, this course helps lay leaders and deacons confidently connect

with their local neighbourhoods. Participants will gain practical tools and hands-on practice to listen deeply and discern how God is already at work. Parish groups are encouraged to attend together.

Missional Spirituality

Dates: Wednesdays, April 15 – June 3 | Time: 10 am–12 pm

Led by Dr. Mark Dunwoody, this course draws on centuries of spiritual formation and soul care to help leaders thrive in a changing world. Divided into three sections—Personal, Leadership, and Corporate Rhythms—participants will grow in inner life, leadership resilience, and the skills to guide communities with empathy and vision.

Join us for a fiddling fun time

**Where: Church of the Nativity
1831 King Street East
Hamilton (at Barons Ave.)**

When: Saturday April 25, 2026

Entertainment: 2 - 3 pm

Refreshments: 3 - 4 pm

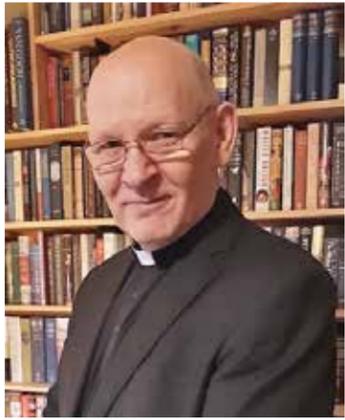
Tickets: \$30.00 (at church office)

Phone: 905-549-4335

Email: admin@worshipwithnativity.org

Accessible Building

Facing Antisemitism: A Christian Call to Listen



THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN

This Easter, I will once again read and pray about the death and resurrection of Jesus. I will likely weep at the trials and the triumph, and will certainly thank God for salvation. But truth be told, I'll also cringe a little as I listen to those texts that speak of "Jews" so negatively. There's context, of course, and this is in many ways a Jewish story, but that's seldom prevented antisemitic hatred.

The first time I remember giving any thought to my Jewishness was when I was a child, playing football in the local park in an east London suburb. A boy I'd not met before asked if I wanted to go back to his house for some cake. Of course! We played entirely innocently until his father came home.

He seemed angry. Then, "Is he a Jew?" My new acquaintance didn't know, and I'm not sure I did, really. "He is, get him out of here!" I should have told the old nasty that I had three Jewish grandparents, but that mum's mum had been raised Anglican, and could I perhaps stay until tea.

I had no bar mitzvah, wasn't part of the wider Jewish community, had little interest in or knowledge of Israel and Zionism, but was acutely aware of antisemitism because I had no choice. It never quite left the room. There was some at high school, media stereotypes on television, and the local fascist party and their rancid comrades were active.

As a young adult, one of my first journalistic assignments was to interview Roald Dahl after the famous author had written an attack on Israel that bled over into pure anti-Semitism. During the interview, he unleashed a spew of Jew-hatred, which now features in an award-winning play starring John Lithgow that has just transferred from the West End to Broadway.

So, I've never been able to escape what can be a painful ambivalence. In other words, I'm acutely aware that, Christian priest or not, there are still people who detest me simply for my heritage. If you doubt what

I say, spend a day reading my emails.

The haters always did their thing, but October 7 and the Israeli response smashed whatever reservations there had been. Endless anti-Jewish venom on social media, physical attacks

Here in Canada, Jewish schools have been repeatedly shot at, synagogues arson-attacked, and Jewish people targeted for violence and even planned abduction. That pattern is repeated internationally.

and murders, and security required at all Jewish institutions. Here in Canada, Jewish schools have been repeatedly shot at, synagogues arson-attacked, and Jewish people targeted for violence and even planned abduction. That pattern is repeated internationally.

And I guarantee that by now some of you have reacted with comments about genocide and demanded, "What about Gaza?" Which goes to the heart of the problem. The racist victimization of innocent people is repugnant,

and condemnation doesn't require qualification.

This isn't about withholding criticism of Israeli policy, and I've been immensely proud of those Anglican bishops who've spoken their minds after visiting the West Bank. Without compromising on calls for Palestinian justice, they've emphasized the difference between the Jewish diaspora and the Israeli government and spoken of the sin of antisemitism. But not all Christians behave thus, and there are, for example, podcasts hosted by "proud" Christians with millions of followers who thrash around in ignorance and loathing.

Some of the new anti-Semites are undisguised; others argue that they're not anti-Jewish but anti-Zionist. Perhaps. When Stalin purged patriotic Soviet Jews, he condemned them as Zionists. Mussolini, before Israel was even established, spoke of "Zionists" when he introduced his racial laws. The list goes on.

As Christians, we have to accept that for centuries Jews were treated appallingly by the church. Frankly, if that hadn't been the case, it's unlikely that European Jews would have left their homes for a desert 2000 miles away. Theodore Herzl, founder of modern Zionism, reported on the infamous

Dreyfus Trial and said that if a loyal French soldier could be persecuted and incarcerated, what hope was there for assimilation and acceptance? The industrial slaughter of the Holocaust seemed to prove the point. As such, Christian empathy and sensitivity are the least we should now expect.

There's no doubt that antisemitism has at times been exploited to silence criticism of Israel, but surely, we can hold two clashing thoughts in our heads simultaneously. When Jewish people tell of feeling intimidated, frightened, and unsure if the countries in which they've lived for generations are still safe places for them, don't dismiss but listen.

We have four children, all raised Christian, all products of Catholic schools. Recently, one of them drove into the parking lot of his Toronto home to see "F*** the Jews" scrawled on the wall. It's becoming far from unusual and cuts to the bone. In tribute to my father, I gave all of our children Hebrew middle names. Let me admit something I've never mentioned before in public. I now genuinely ask myself if that was a wise idea, and my heart breaks. It just shouldn't be that way.

The Evolving Spirit at Holy Trinity Fonthill

LYN ADDARIO AND DIANNE WILLIAMS

A Spiritual Renewal committee at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Fonthill, began meeting in the summer, with some guidance for the first few meetings from Monica Romig Green, the faith formation coordinator for the diocese. We have gathered regularly since July to pray for the parish and consider the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

Although we have a format for each gathering that leads us through prayer and discussion, it is Spirit-led and a time to connect with ourselves and God. Together, we make suggestions for how our life at Holy Trinity could be more engaging with a heightened awareness of God among us. For example: coffee hours each week; slowing down as we pray for individuals during the service; and developing the music used to offer a more meaningful spiritual experience each week.

The exact role or function of

the group within our church is open to different ideas from those who attend. Everyone is welcome to come to our gatherings. Be it far from any one of us to define the role of the Spirit at Holy Trinity. We pray that it will evolve.

We also organized a Lenten Practices program to promote meditation and reflection each week as part of our services throughout Lent. Romig Green and Emily Hill, parish development missionary from the diocese, offered feedback that they are overjoyed to witness our contagious enthusiasm to involve the

congregation in a more meaningful Lenten Journey for each towards Easter.

Lent provides an opportunity to engage our Christian faith by looking at the reality of our lives: examining our ways, confessing, and repenting from sin, meditating on the plan of God in the suffering and vicarious death of Jesus, celebrating the great gift of salvation, and marvelling in the resurrection.

At this time, we pay attention because these weeks are rich with the greatest themes of our faith: forgiveness, suffering, atonement, redemption, sin, obe-

dience, offering, prayer, mercy, divinity, salvation, and love. Focusing on seven disciplines to practice and exercises to assist

us to be with God, allowing the Holy Spirit to speak and having the opportunity to respond to Him on our spiritual journey.



Photo: holyltrinityfonthill.org



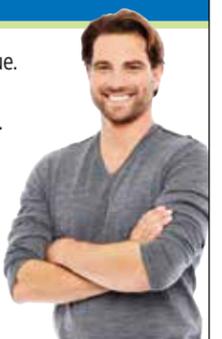
Make a Smart Investment, choose Pollard

Pollard offers great windows and doors of exceptional value. With over 75 years of Canadian manufacturing, you can trust Pollard for expert advice and professional installation.



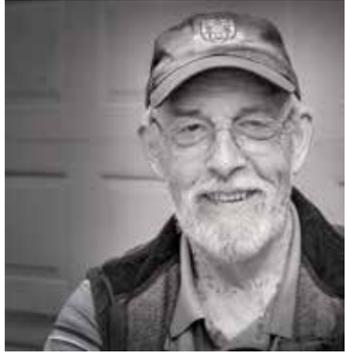
Call **1.800.585.5561**
POLLARDWINDOWS.COM

I chose Pollard for my home.
SCOTT MCGILLIVRAY
HGTV HOST & REAL ESTATE EXPERT
RECEIVE ADDITIONAL 5% OFF WITH AD



In other words

Bypassing the Watchful Dragons

**JOHN BOWEN**

To read a story is to take a risk. As if your life is not complicated enough, you enter a different world, encountering people and situations wildly different from your own. You may encounter murder, dysfunctional families, travel to another planet, isolation among wolves, sexual abuse, and a million other situations. And you will come out the other end changed. The way you see the world will never be quite the same. So is that really what you want?

When King David committed adultery with Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite, David undoubtedly told himself a story about what he had done: “She

was deliberately trying to get my attention”; “She wasn’t happy with Uriah”; “I’m the king: I can have any woman I want.”

Then Nathan the prophet was given the unenviable job of confronting the king. He could have taken the direct approach: “Your Majesty, you have sinned against God, against a husband and wife, and against the welfare of your kingdom. You need to repent.” God only knows how that would have been received—but probably not with rapturous enthusiasm.

Instead, Nathan tells a simple story: A poor man has a single lamb, whom he cares for as his own child. A rich neighbour receives guests and steals the poor man’s lamb in order to serve it up to his guests. The volatile David reacts passionately, not realizing the trap: “As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die!” Then, in one of the most dramatic confrontations in all of literature, Nathan points at David: “You are the man!” And David immediately crumbles: “I have sinned against the Lord.” Nathan must have heaved a sigh of relief: it worked!

And it was a story that did it—by appealing to David’s conscience indirectly, by way of his imagination.

C.S. Lewis understood the power of stories. When he wrote his first fiction book, *Out of the Silent Planet*, he was amazed that so few critics picked up on the underlying Christian content. That helped him realize the power of story to circumvent what he called “the watchful dragons—the reaction that many people have to talk about God or faith or religion. The watchful dragons breathe out fire that says, “Back off! I have no interest in discussing such things.”

This conviction led ultimately to the creation of the *Narnia* stories. As every Christian reader recognizes, there is deep spiritual significance to almost everything that happens in these stories. Lewis is trying to work around the watchful dragons, teaching us what it means to encounter Aslan, the lion who is the Christ figure, without sounding religious or churchy.

There is one occasion, at the end of *The Voyage Of The Dawn*

Treader, where Lewis comes close to tipping his hand about the Christian content of *Narnia*. The children are about to return from *Narnia* to our world, and Lucy cries because they will not see Aslan again. Aslan replies that he is present in our world too. “But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name.” Lewis (rightly) doesn’t spell out what he means, and it is left to the reader to figure it out.

But there is another way that story can connect to the real world. You may remember the movie, *The Never-Ending Story*. In it, the boy Bastian is reading a book called *The Never-Ending Story*. In the story, the Kingdom of Fantastica is in danger, and only a child from our world can save it. As Bastian reads, he slowly pieces together various hints that he himself is that child! But what can he do? He has to choose to step into the story and play the part that only he can play. Bastian is scared, but when he finally finds the courage to do so, Fantastica is saved.

Christian faith is similarly a story which invites us to step

into it. It is a story of a good world made by a loving Creator, a world messed up by the human creatures God has put there to steward it, and a world into which the Creator himself have stepped in order to initiate the redemption of this world that he still loves.

But as we read the story, we discovered that the hero of the story says disturbing things like, “Come to me! Follow me!” which mysteriously resonate across the centuries and invite us to step into the story and play our part. This year, the Oscars are finally giving an award to the best Casting Director, an award I think is overdue because, when you think about it, the Casting Director can make or break a movie. So what if we thought of Jesus as the Casting Director for the story that God is writing about the human race? To become part of the story, we need to come to Jesus, the Casting Director, and say, “Lord, here I am. Cast me in whatever role you know suits me best, and help me play my part in your story.” What adventures might follow!

Chapter Reborn: A Resurrection Story in Niagara and Huron

THE REVEREND ANDREW RAMPTON

Our God is a god of resurrection. Whether it is the promise spoken through Isaiah of a new thing unfolding before us (Isaiah 43:19), the dramatic scene of Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones restored to new vitality (Ezekiel 37), or the empty tomb on the morning of the Resurrection (John 20), God is always breathing new life into what was thought to be dead and gone.

This happens in ways great and small. We hear the stories of the Bible and we live with sure and certain hope in the promise of the Resurrection. But we also see signs of renewal and God’s work making new things, restoring old treasures in our lives and individuals and in our communities. Anglicanism, with its commitment to holding together a breadth of practices, is a beautiful example of God’s good, restoring work taking many shapes and forms but joined in a common point of origin.

The breadth of liturgical, spiritual, and aesthetic diver-



sity is one of the treasures of Anglicanism. Wrought through conflict, mutual discernment, and God’s grace to unite us across difference, Anglicanism thrives when this balance is respected and celebrated. A small group of priests from the Dioceses of Huron and Niagara feel called to explore and enrich this diversity in our dioceses through the resurrection of a chapter of the Society of Catholic Priests (SCP). The SCP is an Anglo-Catholic confraternity that prioritizes inclusive priestly formation and catholic evangelism, with chapters in Australian, European, and North American provinces. In the North American province, membership is available to professed religious, deacons, priests, and bishops serving in the Episcopal Church, Anglican Church of Canada,

Anglican Church in Mexico, Anglican Church of Central America, and the Church of the Provinces of the West Indies.

There was a chapter in the region which operated in years past, providing opportunities for formation, spiritual growth, prayerful support, and witness. The chapter even hosted a North American conference in Toronto some years ago. Over time, as happens in such organizations, participation in the chapter declined and it rested, dormant for several years.

The resurrected chapter, named for the Feast of the Annunciation, was created following the attendance of Huron and Niagara clerics at the 2024 North American conference. Our purpose is to promote catholic evangelism and spirituality, offer collegial support to clergy serving in our dioceses, to pray for the Church and its work in the world, and to serve the needs of all of the people of God through faith formation and developing resources to support prayer, sacramental participation, and loving service to our neighbours.

The Annunciation Chapter will

host our first chapter conference on May 14th and 15th 2026 to honour this mandate. Teach Us to Pray: Exploring Prayer in the Catholic Tradition of Anglicanism will be held at Christ’s Church Cathedral in Hamilton and feature Brother James Koester of the Society of St John the Evangelist as the keynote speaker.

Everyone interested in the life of prayer, laity and clergy alike, are welcome to join us for two days of prayer, conversations with Br. Koester, and fellowship. Solemn high mass for the Feast of the Ascension—Bishop Susan preaching and presiding—and mass for the Feast of

St. Matthias (transferred) will be celebrated alongside the Daily Office. Registration details and further information about the chapter and its activities may be found at annunciationscp.org.

This is only one example of God’s activity in our midst, making new what was once old. The diversity of life and ways of good and holy living are all around us, especially evident in these Eastertide days. I hope and pray that we can see and share signs of new life, renewal, and resurrection in all of our communities, ministries, and families in this holy season of celebration.

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU, STEP BY STEP!

We pride ourselves on being flexible in our offerings, providing options as diverse as the families we serve.

- Simple Cremation Packages
- Celebration of Life Packages
- Ample Parking
- Full Service Packages
- Pre-Arrangement Services
- Tribute Hall

Circle of Life

CREMATION AND BURIAL CENTRE INC.

100 KING STREET EAST, DUNDAS, ON L9H 1C4

905-628-8558

CIRCLEOFLIFECBC.COM | KARIN@CIRCLEOFLIFECBC.COM

Passing from Darkness to Light: Keeping the Easter Vigil

THE REVEREND CANON DR. SHARYN HALL

The service on the evening before Easter morning has an ancient history. In the early years of the Christian church, a ritual of scripture readings and prayers developed as an overnight preparation for the first Eucharist of the resurrection at dawn. It was called 'vigil' from the Latin word 'vigilia', meaning wakefulness or watchfulness. All night, people gathered to read stories from the Hebrew scriptures recounting God's covenant with the people, God's love for creation, and God's mercy when the people rebelled against God.

The vigil liturgy in our BAS prayer book offers ten passages from the Old Testament, each with an accompanying prayer and psalm. All ten are not required, and parishes may choose three or four from the list if they are not planning to stay most of the night. It was the custom in the very early church to light fires and candles for the all-night vigil before the light of dawn, and that custom gradually became the ritual of welcoming the new fire and lighting the Paschal candle. Some Christian



Photo: Unsplash/Nick Fewings

churches choose to hold their vigil service as the sun rises on Easter morning, symbolizing the arrival of the disciples at the tomb at dawn of the third day.

The symbolism of passing from darkness to light mirrored Christ's passage from death to resurrection. This symbolism of a rite of passage was carried into the preparation for baptism, and the Easter vigil became the most important baptismal service of the year. Baptism was and is a ritual of change into a new life with Christ. In our baptismal service, we say, "Receive the light of Christ to show that you have passed from darkness to light."

The image of passing from darkness to light is found in numerous writings of both the Old and the New Testaments. For example, in the Creation Story, the darkness of the unformed earth is transformed by the gift of light from God. In the Exodus story, when the Israelites travel in the desert, which was a very dangerous place in the darkness, they are led by God in a pillar of fire. The prophet Isaiah speaks of the people who walk in darkness, the darkness representing their rebellion against God, but they have seen a great light which guides them back to the covenant with God.

In the season of Advent, we read those words of Isaiah as a prophetic vision of the coming of the Messiah, who will be the light of the world. At Christmas, we celebrate light in the birth of the Messiah and give thanks for light in the darkness of our winter days. Christmas candles remind us that new life will come from the frozen earth and from the gift of God's Son to the world.

On the night before the dawn of Easter, we celebrate the light of Christ that conquered death and can overcome the shadows of fear and sorrow which may darken any human life. As Christians, our faith in the resurrection of Jesus robs the power of darkness to create hopelessness in our earthly lives. We know that darkness exists in our world; the darkness of cruelty and injustice can blot out the light Jesus offers, but it is our response to the light of Christ which can overcome such darkness to sustain God's light in the world.

Twice a year, we celebrate the light of Christ in the darkness of a nighttime worship service. On Christmas Eve, we begin our celebrations of the birth of

Jesus, the incarnation of God's light into human life. On Easter eve, we begin our celebrations of the resurrection of Jesus, the promise of God's light after human life has ended and God's way of dispelling the darkness of death by revealing the new life of resurrection.

We acknowledge that there is darkness in our world. We recognize the need to renew God's light in our lives and in God's creation. We rejoice again that in the hope of Christ's resurrection, death is not oblivion into darkness. Death is the passage to new light in the everlasting presence of God. However, Christ's resurrection is not only about victory over death. His resurrection also infuses light into our earthly life. The risen Christ is a beacon of hope.

As Christians, we are called to bring light to the struggles and sorrows of human life. "Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." We are called to be Easter people, carrying the light of Christ into the darkness of this world.

Holding Things and Letting Go



THE REVEREND CANON MARTHA TATARNIC

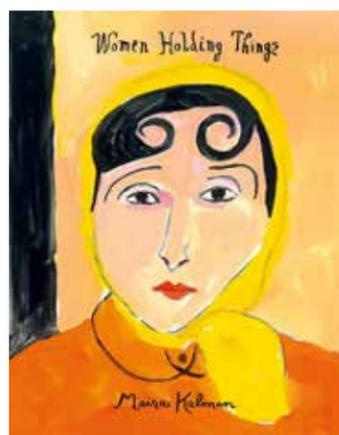
Inside the jacket cover of Maira Kalman's book, *Women Holding Things*, she says, "you hold in your hands a thing I hold most dear. A Book. If there was ever a time to hold onto something, this is it. Hold on, dear friends. Hold on." It's a beautiful and unusual book, illustrated by the author, offering both laugh-out-loud moments and devastating articulations of humanity's capacity for horror and grace. It was written in 2022, but it feels like it was written for this moment. Every day, we wake up to jaw-dropping news and to ground that we thought was solid splitting apart under our feet. Knowing where to turn and

what to hold onto is an ongoing question.

In response to our global unsettledness, I find myself holding on, not just to this book, but more broadly to the power of words. I crave the poems of Mary Oliver. I listen on repeat to the turns of phrase my favourite songwriters sing, and how they can capture the smallest insight about our human condition, and the truth of what they offer makes me want to laugh and cry all at once. I wait with anticipation for my preferred podcasters to wrestle through the week's political and cultural events from a variety of deliberately partisan perspectives. When so many of our greatest collective challenges right now are dictated by the made-up late-night rambles of a man with both far too much power and way too many insecurities, I crave the offering of words that feel honest, real, candid and complex. I want to listen to voices that eschew easy answers and are grounded in the humility of knowing that this one piece of perspective is exactly that, one piece.

I have a number of very wise

and inspiring friends who don't believe in God and aren't part of a church. I watch the way that they build meaningful community around them and talk about discerning their direction and a calling to service that sounds like they are speaking about the same Spirit I know and seek to follow. Whatever language they do or don't use, I am blessed to



have them in my life. And also, I only know how to have a whisper of a chance of figuring out how to hold on because of the community of the church, called to be the life of Jesus.

Our prayers, our songs, our stories, all of those treasured words passed along down the

generations, provide a landing place, a centre. It's these words, and it's what holds them together and what holds us together. I want our voices raised in praise and honesty, the thunder of the organ, and also the quietest moments—the pinprick sounds of a candle being lit, of knees bowing in prayer, of intentional spacious breathing. It all works together to form our observance, shaping us to be people who observe—able to notice and see and pay attention, not just to hold on, but to live. I want, challenging as it is, the baked in premise of what it is to be a church (even if we aren't always perfect in living it out). We're not self-made designer communities, but rather a patchwork quilt of the walking wounded who have been stitched together only by the commonality of having been touched in some consequential way by God's love. And if that is true, then we should be able to talk about hard things and to choose to listen more than we draw conclusions. Compassion, rather than condemnation, should be our default.

The back cover of Kalman's book offers a final teasing thought: "Along with holding on, you could also LET GO. But that is another book." There is a lot that we're all holding onto right now, holding on for dear life. We're holding on to hope, to one another, to the promise of God's nearness, to sanity, to peace, to the ability to choose goodness and beauty in the face of the world's chaos. And at the same time that we need to figure out how to keep holding on, surely we also need to figure out how to let go, how to shake off the heaviness, how not to feel so trapped by the machinations of powers beyond our control, how to be able still to see the glimmers of light on the horizon.

I am convinced more than ever that God gives us the gift of community exactly so that we can stand in defiance of the darkness and division, and it is in just this, just showing up for one another, that God most powerfully draws close. It will be together, dear friends, that we will hold on and let go and know goodness and be blessed and blessing.

Sent Beyond the Walls:

The Emerging Vocation of the Commissioned Lay Missioner

THE REVEREND CANON DR. IAN J. MOBSBY

Across our Diocese, something both ancient and new is quietly emerging. It is not a programme, not a strategy, and not an attempt to open up Christianity in a new way in the parishes and missions of the Diocese of Niagara. It is a rediscovery of a vocation - the calling of some lay people to be formed, commissioned, and sent as commissioned lay missioners into the everyday spaces of life where the Church is rarely seen and seldom expected, where this type of mission takes a long time to build, and is never quick!

We are calling this vocation the Commissioned Lay Missioner.

Our first cohort, which began in 2025, is already in training, and the signs are deeply encouraging. These committed followers of Jesus are not being prepared to replicate existing church activities, nor to support parish outreach projects that already happen within parish life as a bridge into the parish or mission neighbourhood. They are being called to deliberately be with those where church is unbridgeable, which, as we know in our post-Christendom post-secular context, are the growing constituency of those who live and work in local communities. So Commissioned Lay Missioners are being equipped to cultivate relationships, communities, and expressions of Christian presence among those who are de-churched or who have never been churched at all—people who will not walk through our doors, not because they are hostile, but because church as we know it has little connection or relevance to the texture of their lives.

This is not a failure of faith. It is a change in culture.

We now live in a society where many are spiritually curious yet institutionally distant, open to meaning but wary of organized religion, searching for belonging while unsure where to look. The question before us is no longer, “How do we bring them back?” but rather, “How do we go to where God is already present and at work in their lives?”

The Commissioned Lay Missioner exists to inhabit that question.

This vocation grows directly from the vision of a mixed ecology Church—a Church that holds inherited forms of parish

church life mostly on Sundays, alongside new, contextual, and relational expressions of mission. Mixed ecology is not about abandoning tradition, nor about innovation for its own sake. It is about diversification for the sake of the Gospel: recognizing that no single expression of church can reach the fullness of our communities, and that the Spirit calls us to cultivate many forms of presence, witness, and belonging.

Lay Missioners are formed to listen deeply to their neighbourhoods, to discern spiritual hunger, to gather people in unexpected places, and to nurture communities of loving action, prayer, conversation, service, and exploration that may never look like a conventional expression of church (particularly at the beginning) yet are authentically rooted in Christ. They are builders of new bridges between church and world, translators of faith into lived context, and companions to those who might never otherwise encounter Christian community.

Importantly, this is not a solo endeavour. Commissioned Lay Missioners remain grounded in, supported by, and accountable to their sending parish and Diocese. Their ministry flows from the worshipping life of the Church even as it reaches beyond it. They are not replacements for clergy, nor are they volunteers filling gaps. They represent a distinct, recognized calling—one that reflects the baptismal vocation shared by all Christians, now given particular shape through training, discernment, and commissioning.

What we are witnessing is less about creating something new and more about recovering something deeply traditional. The early Church grew not primarily through gathered worship but through networks of households, relationships, and daily encounters. Faith spread along the ordinary pathways of work, friendship, and hospitality.



The Reverend Canon Garfield Adams (centre) with Commissioned Lay Missioners Ellick Wong and Frank Gu of the Mission in Acts Mission.

Photo: Niagara Anglican files/contributed by Garfield Adams

In many ways, Commissioned Lay Missioners are reclaiming this apostolic instinct for our own time.

For parishes, this moment invites prayerful imagination. Who among you already carries this missionary heart? Who is trusted in the community, attentive to others, spiritually grounded, and drawn to engage beyond the familiar patterns of church life? Often these individuals are already present — sometimes quietly at the margins — waiting to be recognized, encouraged, and formed.

Supporting someone to explore this vocation is itself an act of mission. It signals that the parish understands itself not only as a place of gathering, but as a community sent. It widens our understanding of ministry and allows gifts already given by the Spirit to be named and nurtured.

There will be an opportunity this summer for those sensing such a call to enter a process of discernment through a panel conversation, with training for the next cohort beginning in the autumn. This time of testing vocation is as important as the training itself, ensuring that those who step forward do so with prayerful clarity and communal affirmation.

We are not looking for experts or activists. We are looking for faithful, attentive disciples — people willing to listen, to learn, to accompany others, and to trust that God is already present in the places we are sent outside of church worship services.

If your parish knows someone who might explore this path, or if you yourself feel a quiet stirring of curiosity, we encourage you to begin a conversation. Leaflets and application materials are available from Jane Wyse in the Synod office by emailing jane.wyse@niagaraanglican.ca. For further discussion about the role, formation process, and how this ministry is supported, please contact me, Canon Ian Mobsby,

diocesan community missioner, at ian.mobsby@niagaraanglican.ca.

The future of the Church will not be shaped only by what happens inside our buildings, but by how faithfully we are willing

to be present beyond them. The Commissioned Lay Missioner is one way we are learning, together, to follow Christ into the life of the world he loves.



INDEPENDENT SENIOR LIVING
Life Lease & Monthly Rentals with Enhanced Services



Martindale Place is a community of choice for Seniors where Christian values and excellence are celebrated

Contact us @ (905) 988-9414
or accommodations@martindaleplace.com
1128 Vansickle Road North, St. Catharines
MartindalePlace.com | facebook.com/MartindalePlace



It's a new year, a new life...
AT HERITAGE PLACE
and we're feeling good




Visit our Sunshine and Garden Studios

Enjoy Life, Your Way
HERITAGE PLACE RETIREMENT RESIDENCE
A Community of Independent Seniors
4151 Kilmer Drive, Burlington L7M 5A9
Call Astra: 905-315-2580 • www.heritage-place.ca

Filling the Little Church with Joyful Song

DAVE HUFFMAN

Songs of praise, hope and joy can be heard throughout the town of Smithville, located in the heart of the Ontario Niagara Region. St. Luke's Church, 'The Little Church With A Heart,' now has a choir, and they love to sing.

For years, at every Sunday Service, the parishioners of St. Luke's sang their hymns accompanied by long-time organist Ken Durham. Led by Canon Dr. Eleanor Clitheroe, affectionately called Reverend Ellie, the congregation heard the ancient stories, learned the lessons and listened to meaningful and thoughtful sermons by Clitheroe. But for Clitheroe, something was missing. The services were filled with faith in the Lord, love and praise for Jesus, and hope for humankind, but the joy of song was lacking. The kind of joy that brings with it a sense of uplifting spirituality that makes you feel



Ray Lafleur (front) and Wayne Young, practising, accompany and lead the choir.

Photos: Contributed by Dave Huffman

good. The joy that is found in the gift of music. For St. Luke's, that hole was filled when Ray Lafleur and Wayne Young became members of our parish family.

When Lafleur, a seasoned Christian musician and accomplished guitar player, along with Young, a long time Bass player, were first approached by Clitheroe about the possibility of forming and developing a Sunday Service Choir, they

agreed to give it a try. From the congregation, ten members willingly volunteered their time and their talents, resulting in a rich mixture of voices. At first, it wasn't easy, and Lafleur, the choir master, had his hands full. It took time, patience and plenty of practice to bring the ten voices into organized harmony. When they came together, the result was wonderful. The sopranos hit the high notes, the tenors carried



Eric Hoskiss, a trained soloist, serves as a lead for the choir.

the body, and the church was filled with joyful songs praising the love of Jesus.

The choir has been blessed with one special addition to its group. Trained soloist, Eric Hopkiss, with his full, rich voice, often acts as a cantor for the church service and a lead for the choir.

Now, Sunday services are filled with a full range of music. Organist Ken Durham contin-

ues to lead the congregation in our traditional Anglican 'Blue Book' of hymns while our choir expands that range of music to include uplifting songs that complement the service.

With the ongoing work of our Deacon Stephen LaSalle to bring spirituality beyond the walls of our church and out into our community, the St. Luke's Choir has been busy. They have been well-received at various events and gatherings throughout our township. They have sung and continue to sing at senior gatherings, at services held at the local Legion Villa Complex, and at our church's monthly Seniors Café.

When asked, choir member Sue Langdon said that belonging to the St. Luke's Choir has been a joy and has rounded out her religious experience. Bruce McFarlane, church warden, has commented that the joy the choir brings to the church is truly amazing.

Group Discernment: Discovering God's Direction Together

THE REVEREND MONICA ROMIG GREEN

And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what really matters, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1.9-11 (NRSVUE)



Photo: AdobeStock

Last October, I wrote an article for the *Niagara Anglican* that mentioned group discernment as an aspect of spiritual renewal. A few people reached out to me to discuss how group discernment for spiritual renewal could be utilized in their particular church contexts. Taking note of their interest, I thought it might be helpful to examine this topic more closely and offer some clarity on what can be, for some, a new, elusive, or confusing concept.

What is Group Discernment?

We often use the term discernment primarily in relation to those seeking affirmation as to whether they have a vocation for ordained or commissioned church ministry. Discernment is an apt word for this, as it describes a process through

which someone is seeking input from God and God's people to discover what God desires for the Church.

However, God's Church is not just called to be discerning simply for matters of ministerial vocation. As the Body of Christ, all of us are called to follow God's leading and to participate in God's Kingdom work together. Therefore, all decisions we make, especially those related to spiritual matters such as faith formation, should not be decided via reason, discussion, and prudence alone. We should also be constantly seeking God's leading and God's input during our decision-making processes, "to help us determine what really matters," to quote Paul's words to the Philippians.

Since we are called to act as

one Body, it is also important that discernment is done within the community. Just as the Christian life is not meant to be lived in isolation, so too our discernment should always include other members of Christ's church. We discern together for each other by listening and watching attentively for the Holy Spirit's communication. Group discernment is not about trying to determine the wisest choice or the most expedient action. It is instead a desire to look for where God is already at work and then to ask if we are being invited to participate in that work. It is a process that always includes listening and watching for how God might be communicating to us directly and also through those we are discerning with.

How does Group Discernment Work?

Group discernment begins when a group of Christians choose as their goal to seek first what God desires for their community. Being clear and intentional about this shared goal is foundational for a group to discern together well. Another fundamental aspect of group discernment is to openly acknowledge and remember God's active presence with and within the group as it meets. Since God is Spirit and therefore unseen, it can be easy for a group to forget that God is both present with the group and within each member. Sometimes a simple visual aid, like a lit candle, a cross, or a Bible placed in the centre of the group, can be a helpful reminder that God is with us.

Because group discernment involves seeking God's input, it can be helpful to have times when everyone is listening for God at the same time. This is usually done through periods of focused silent prayer, guided by a helpful piece of Scripture or a reflection question. A planned structure guided by a facilitator and timekeeper—like those used in Ignatian group discernment, Quaker clearness committees, or the Episcopal discernment ministry Listening Hearts—can be helpful for guiding a group

into prayerful silence and out again to bounded, fruitful discussion.

Listening is key throughout group discernment. Along with listening for God in prayer, discerners also listen to each other's sense of what God might be communicating. Discerners welcome each other's offerings as essential pieces that eventually make a whole become clear over time. Ultimately, a group in discernment is not looking for full consensus but rather seeking to discover a shared sense of God's potential direction for the group, coupled with a humble openness to being course corrected along the way.

Because it can take time for us to become attuned to God's activity, group discernment tends to be a process that takes place over several meetings. This is not a one-and-done experience, and for that reason, it also requires patience and perseverance from the discerners.

I have found group discernment to be a faith-building and life-giving way for a community to move forward in their spiritual journey with God. If you have questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact me at monica.green@niagaraanglican.ca.

The Defeat of Inevitability

THE REVEREND STEWART CAROLAN-EVANS

Easter can suffer from a strange problem: we already know how it ends. The Church gathers each year to proclaim resurrection, but unlike the women at the tomb or Peter hiding in fear, we do not arrive in confusion or doubt. We come knowing the outcome. Christ will rise. The stone will be rolled away. The alleluias will return. Such familiarity can dull astonishment.

We see it in other parts of life. Since arriving in Canada two years ago, I've grown fond of hockey. On one occasion I recorded a game to watch later, only to have a kindly parishioner 'share' the result before I'd seen it. The speed and skill were still there, but the tension had gone. What would have held me in suspense became something I simply observed. Knowing the ending had removed the shock. I sometimes wonder whether Easter can feel like that for seasoned Christians. We know the cross. We know the third day. We know the words before they are spoken.

But the first witnesses did not know.

Peter did not run to the tomb in triumph. He was "amazed," Luke tells us, and that word carries confusion as much as wonder. Only days earlier he



Photo: Unsplash/Bruno van der Kraan

had denied even knowing Jesus. He had seen hope collapse into execution. Rome remained powerful. The Temple authorities remained entrenched. Death remained undefeated. Everything had unfolded exactly as experience had taught him it would.

It was all so tragically predictable.

The crucifixion did not surprise anyone. History had trained them well: another failed prophet, another crushed movement, another reminder that power wins and idealism dies.

Inevitability is a heavy thing.

We know it too. We know how institutions decline. We know how conflicts escalate. We know how illness progresses. We know the news cycle will bring another headline of grief before the previous one has settled. We know how easily cynicism becomes

self-protection.

The world teaches us what to expect.

That is why Easter is not simply the happy ending to Good Friday. It is something far more disruptive. The resurrection is God's refusal to accept inevitability as final. The women arrive at the tomb expecting to anoint a body. Peter runs expecting confirmation of loss. Instead, they find absence. Linen cloths. Emptiness. A gap where death should have been. The resurrection is not optimism. It is not positive thinking. It is not even reassurance that life will be easier. It is the interruption of what seemed certain.

In raising Jesus, God overturns the verdict that death always has the last word. The cross reveals the depth of human violence and rejection; the empty tomb reveals that those forces do not

ultimately determine reality.

Isaiah's vision of a new heaven and a new earth is not poetic exaggeration. It is theological promise: "The former things shall not be remembered." The wolf and the lamb shall feed together. Weeping will cease. It is a picture of creation re-ordered because God has acted. But Easter does not transport us out of this world. Peter still lived under Roman occupation. The early Church still faced persecution. The world did not instantly transform into Isaiah's holy mountain.

What changed was deeper than circumstance.

Peter, who had expected the story to end in shame, becomes the one who stands and declares, "God raised him on the third day." The man formed by fear becomes a witness shaped by hope. The resurrection defeats not only death, but the assumption that nothing truly new can happen.

Perhaps that is where Easter presses most gently—and most firmly—upon us.

In parishes across our Diocese, faithful clergy and lay leaders labour week by week. There is joy, yes, but also fatigue. We know the statistics about church attendance. We know the financial spreadsheets. We know the familiar patterns of resistance and discouragement.

It can feel as though we understand exactly how the story will unfold. Easter does not promise that every challenge disappears. It does something more unsettling. It asks whether we have quietly accepted inevitability as truth.

The empty tomb stands as God's contradiction of that assumption.

It invites us to live not as people resigned to what history predicts, but as people open to what God may yet do. To answer distrust with trust. To answer division with forgiveness. To answer weariness with patient faithfulness. Not because we are naïve, but because we belong to a kingdom in which resurrection has already occurred.

The defeat of inevitability does not mean the absence of suffering. It means suffering is no longer ultimate, that decline is not destiny, that despair does not have authority. Peter ran to the tomb expecting confirmation of loss. He left carrying astonishment. The Church continues to live from that astonishment.

Each Easter, we do not merely rehearse a conclusion we already know. We stand again before the place where inevitability was overturned and hear the quiet announcement: "He is not here. He has risen." And in that announcement, the future reopens.

Where is God?

COLIN C.M. CAMPBELL

The author of this article shares a reflection which grew out of a Bible study at the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Hamilton, where participants explored the prophet Habakkuk and the Apostle Paul's understanding of faith. It invites readers into a long-standing Anglican conversation about grace, holiness, and the ways God meets us in prayer, community, and daily life.

You have a problem and decide to take it to God. But where do you find him? This issue showed up at a recent Bible study at the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Hamilton. We read that the prophet Habakkuk had the same problem. He says, "How long shall I cry for help and you will not listen?" A few verses later, he supplies a rather enigmatic answer: "The just shall live by faith."

Our group pondered the fact that the Apostle Paul had quoted

this in his Epistle to the Romans (1: 17) and that it was this quotation of Paul's that had led Martin Luther to formulate the version of the Gospel that was in our Articles of Religion.

When Luther read this, he wrote, "The Gates of Paradise were flung open, and I entered." Now, this is an extraordinary claim. This one event was able to do what years of prayer and meditation had been unable to do. The Apostle Paul had the same experience. According to his understanding as a Pharisee, the way to find God was to follow God's rules, as expressed in God's Law. The problem was that he found that he was unable to do it. He cries: "Unhappy man that I am! The things that I do, I do not want to do, and the things that I do not want to do are the things that I do! Who is to rescue me from this body of death?" His answer is unequivocal: "Jesus Christ".

This leads him to teach that an

individual finds God not by God's Law alone or by doing good deeds themselves, but by faith in Jesus.

Expressed this way gives us a problem, just as it gave one to some of Paul's listeners. At the time, some thought that if you were not saved from sin by doing good deeds, God's Law and good deeds did not matter.

Jesus had to point out that he had not come to abolish any part of the Law. Deeds still matter. However, it was left to Paul to point out that holiness and good deeds are the outcome of faith, not the way to find holiness and to be able to do good deeds. One does not become holy in the way that one learns to play golf: simply by making a start and then by practising. To try to find holiness by faith in God's Law is slow and burdensome. Trying to be holy by faith in Jesus, in Jesus' words, is "a yoke that is easy and a burden that is light."

Some of us found this puz-

zling. If Paul's conversion was simply an infusion of Jesus' new and improved ideas, then surely the search for holiness must be just as grim as before. What made being "born again" so liberating?

Paul writes, "It is not I who live but Christ, who lives in me, both to will and to do." Living by faith in Christ means trusting in this new, inner, mystical

reality, lived for Christ, in us, by the Holy Spirit. It reaches back in time to supply Habakkuk with an answer to his quest for how to find God. When we have a problem, we find a solution by first turning inwards in prayer.



We're Here For You

24 / 7 / 365

Call Now

(519) 745-8445

Email

info@erbgood.com

ERB GOOD
FAMILY FUNERAL HOME

Exceeding Expectations Since 1946

Kitchener & Waterloo's longest serving,
independently owned family funeral home.

Life Celebration - Burial - Cremation -
Aftercare - Bereavement Support - Green
Funerals and Burials - Personalized Options

The Supper at Emmaus

Visio Divina for the Easter Season

**THE REVEREND CANON
STUART PIKE**

I have become a Caravaggio hunter of sorts. That is, a hunter of the paintings of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610), widely known simply as Caravaggio. This new quest of mine is almost entirely the fault of a Caravaggio-devoted parishioner of my last parish who shall remain anonymous, but whose initials are Terry Raybould! He has a passion for Caravaggios and has a document that lists every painting and its location. He has seen dozens of them in his travels.

Caravaggio's influence inspired much of Baroque painting following the Renaissance period. He was known for his dramatic use of chiaroscuro (light and dark) to an extent that was later to be called tenebrism. He painted very dramatic scenes, and he painted with extreme realism, not beautifying the subjects or the scenes. His art influenced many Dutch and Flemish painters, including Peter Paul Rubens and Rembrandt.

Most people in all of my past parishes will know that my favourite Gospel passage is the story of the Road to Emmaus. It's an Easter story, taking place on Easter Day, though our lectionary has us read it later in the Easter season on the third Sunday. Here in the "Supper at Emmaus" painting, we have the crux of this story as the flash of recognition happens in Cleopas with his arms spread wide in surprise, and his companion sitting upright in his seat! Their server doesn't know what to make of it all.

There are a lot of details to notice in the painting. Cleopas wears a shell on his tunic – the symbol of a pilgrim. The facial features, clothes and setting are simple, even rustic, imperfect and mundane. There is a basket of imperfect fruit with spots on the apples and withered grape leaves. Cleopas' companion has holes in his clothes. It is not



The Supper at Emmaus, by Caravaggio, at the National Gallery, London

Image: Wikipedia

a perfect scene of the renaissance which seems to be set in a higher plane of existence and less accessible to mere mortals. Caravaggio's audience would have felt that this scene could have happened in their own ordinary lives.

On the table with a simple traveller's meal, there is a chalice, some wine, some water and a portion of bread for each of them. Jesus' portion of bread has just been broken, and his hands are raised over the meal with a symbol of blessing. Cleopas and his companion, as disciples of Jesus, could well have seen him do these actions of the breaking and blessing of bread at the feeding of the multitude or might have heard of it happening at the last supper. We cannot see it from our perspective, but perhaps Cleopas can even see a wound on Jesus' hand. The scales fall from their eyes, and they understand that Jesus had been

their companion all the way.

Perhaps the most notable element of the painting is the face of Jesus. You will never have seen Jesus painted this way. He is unrecognizable. But then that's a main point of the story: these two disciples have spent part of the day walking with a stranger who had somehow set their hearts on fire as they shared what had been their hopes and dreams – shattered by the execution of their Lord. They were grieving and were afraid, and decided that it was time to "get out of Dodge." Jesus comes to them in the guise of a stranger. Post Easter, Jesus is still known to people this way: in their ordinary imperfect lives, if they will open their hearts to fully see their own reality. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says that the King is known among the poor, the sick, the needy and the prisoner. "What you did to them, you did to me."

I invite you to a Visio Divina on this painting by following the steps that I wrote in my Advent article:

Visio – what grabs your attention? Mentally name what you are seeing and feeling. Is there something you find comforting? Disturbing? Puzzling? Sit with these thoughts for five or ten minutes. Perhaps write some notes down.

Meditatio – silently gaze upon the painting again. Remembering what you saw in the first step: does this image spark some memories for you? Does it convey another image, sound or scent from your memories? Is there a hymn or a piece of music that arises in you? What is coming from your past or recent experience that is speaking to you through this?

Oratio – Gaze on the painting again. Given what has arisen in the first two steps, form a prayer that you want to offer to God at

this moment. Think of people, situations, your family, friends and yourself.

Contemplatio – Leave everything from the first three steps behind and simply enter stillness and silence and rest in the presence of God. When thoughts assail you, re-enter stillness by focusing simply on your breathing or silently saying a simple sacred one or two-syllable word of your choosing to symbolize your letting go of all thought and returning to the presence of God. Set a timer for 5 to 15 minutes for this last step of entering into silence. At the end of the silence, say a simple prayer of gratefulness.

This summer, I look forward to actually gazing upon "The Supper at Emmaus" when my family and I visit the National Gallery in London. How will the scene intersect the "chiaroscuro" of my own life? How does it yours?

Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

Upcoming Deadlines:

June – April 20
September – July 27
October – August 24

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

M.A. Clark & Sons Funeral Home Ltd. Burial & Cremation Centre

Leslie Clark Dan Hierlihy Brad Mellor
John Martin Renee Mastromatteo

Ph: 905-383-3323
Fax: 905-383-2168

567 Upper Wellington Street,
Hamilton, ON L9A 3P8

Email: clarkandsonsfuneralhome@outlook.com

Climate Justice Matters

Water Matters

ROSEMARY ANSTEY

Clean water is a gift we often take for granted. Our bodies are mostly water, and we can survive only a few days without it. Although 70% of the planet is covered in water, just 1% is freshwater available for human use.

In Canada, we are blessed with abundant freshwater. Most of us turn on a tap without a second thought. Yet this blessing is not shared equally. In nearby Six Nations, as many as 70% of households do not have running water, relying instead on wells or costly deliveries. Access to safe water remains an urgent justice issue, even here at home.

The average Ontarian uses about 187 litres of water each day — more than twice the amount used by the average European. We rarely connect our water use with energy consumption, yet water treatment (for wastewater and drinking water) and pumping account for roughly 38% of municipal energy use. Clean, unlimited water comes at an infrastructure cost, to energy systems, and to the climate.

Globally, we face a growing crisis. Nearly four billion people live with severe water scarcity for at least one month of each year. Dry reservoirs, crop failure, wildfires, dust storms and even sinking cities are signs of a planet under strain.

Wetlands

Wetlands are lands seasonally or permanently covered by shallow water and are among God's most remarkable creations. They sustain a vast diversity of wildlife, prevent floods, purify water and strengthen resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Around the world, wetlands

are at the forefront of an ecological crisis and face growing pressures from land conversion and climate change. One quarter of all freshwater animals are now at risk of extinction.

Ontario holds approximately 24% of Canada's wetlands and about 6% of the world's total wetlands. Yet southern Ontario has already lost an estimated 70% of its original wetlands. In the Greater Toronto Area, roughly 90% are gone, which is one of the highest rates of wetland loss recorded globally.

Many factors cause wetland loss, including land conversion for development, pollution from industrial agriculture and climate change. This loss matters.

Wetlands store an astonishing 29 billion tonnes of carbon in Ontario alone. They act like giant sponges during heavy rainfall, significantly reducing floods that damage homes and livelihoods. Southern Ontario's wetlands provide habitat for 20% of Ontario's species at risk, including eight native species of turtles. For Indigenous Peoples, wetlands are deeply woven into culture, language, spirituality, and ways of life, reminders that water connects all living things.

Within our diocese, in the Royal Botanical Gardens in Hamilton and Burlington, wetlands are at the core of their conservation mission. Their nature sanctuaries protect extensive wetland habitats which support more than 150 native plant species, over 200 migratory bird species, and 68 species of Lake Ontario fish. As part of one of North America's largest freshwater restoration initiatives, their teams work daily to restore and steward the habitats of Cootes Paradise and



Grindstone Creek Marsh and boardwalk at Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton.

Photos: AdobeStock

Grindstone Creek Marsh areas on the shore of Lake Ontario, as well as recreating wetlands lost to past agriculture in their newer meadow restoration areas.

Modern Pressure on Our Most Precious Resource

Growing in our technological world are Artificial Intelligence data centers with a large water footprint. Large artificial intelligence data centres can consume up to 19 million litres of water per day, as much as a small town, while also drawing significant energy and generating carbon emissions. Even in unseen places, water is being used at enormous scale.

And then there is bottled water. Globally, one million plastic water bottles are purchased per minute. Canadians alone generate three million tonnes of plastic waste per year,

and only about 10% is recycled. In 2006, it was estimated that it takes nearly three litres of water to produce one litre of bottled water once manufacturing, filtering, transportation and refrigeration are considered.

And the manufacturing of these bottles does greater damage, with approximately 29 million barrels of oil used to produce the 50 billion water bottles that Canadians use per year. It also takes 50 million barrels of oil to pump, process, transport and refrigerate the bottled water.

A Faith Response

Scripture begins with water, "the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God[b] swept over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2). Water is life-giving, sustaining, and touched by the Spirit of God from the very start. It is a sacred sign of life, renewal, and baptismal promise.

To care for water is to care for our neighbours. As Anglicans, we

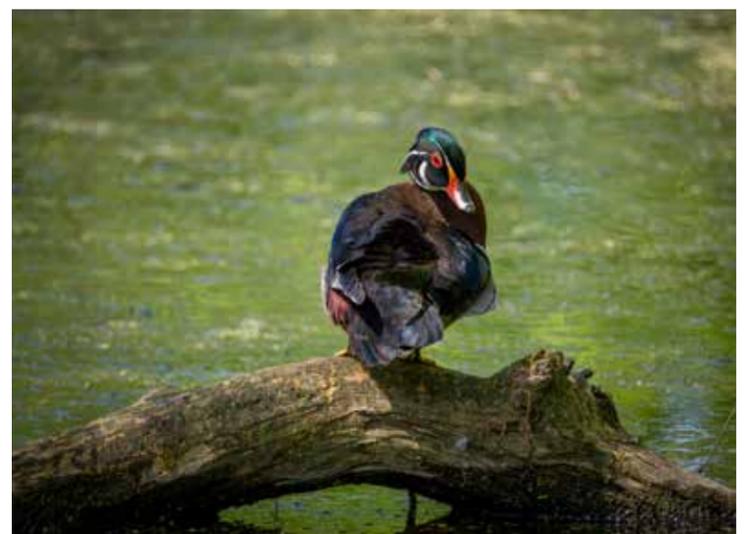
are called to seek justice for communities without safe access. It is to protect wetlands that shield the vulnerable from floods. It is to reduce waste, reconsider consumption, and advocate for policies that honour creation.

Here in the Diocese of Niagara, our waters surround and shape us. From the roar of Niagara Falls to the countless streams, rivers, and wetlands flowing into Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, from the wetlands of the Royal Botanical Gardens to the many creeks, ponds, and waterfalls of Hamilton and surrounding communities, God's gift of water is everywhere. Protecting it is not only an environmental responsibility, but also a spiritual calling to care for all creation in our own backyard.

Water matters because life matters. As people of faith, we are invited not only to be grateful for the gift of water, but to be faithful stewards of it — for today and for generations yet to come.



Niagara Falls, a powerful symbol of the water that is a part of our ecosystem.



Wood duck, a species that inhabits this region.