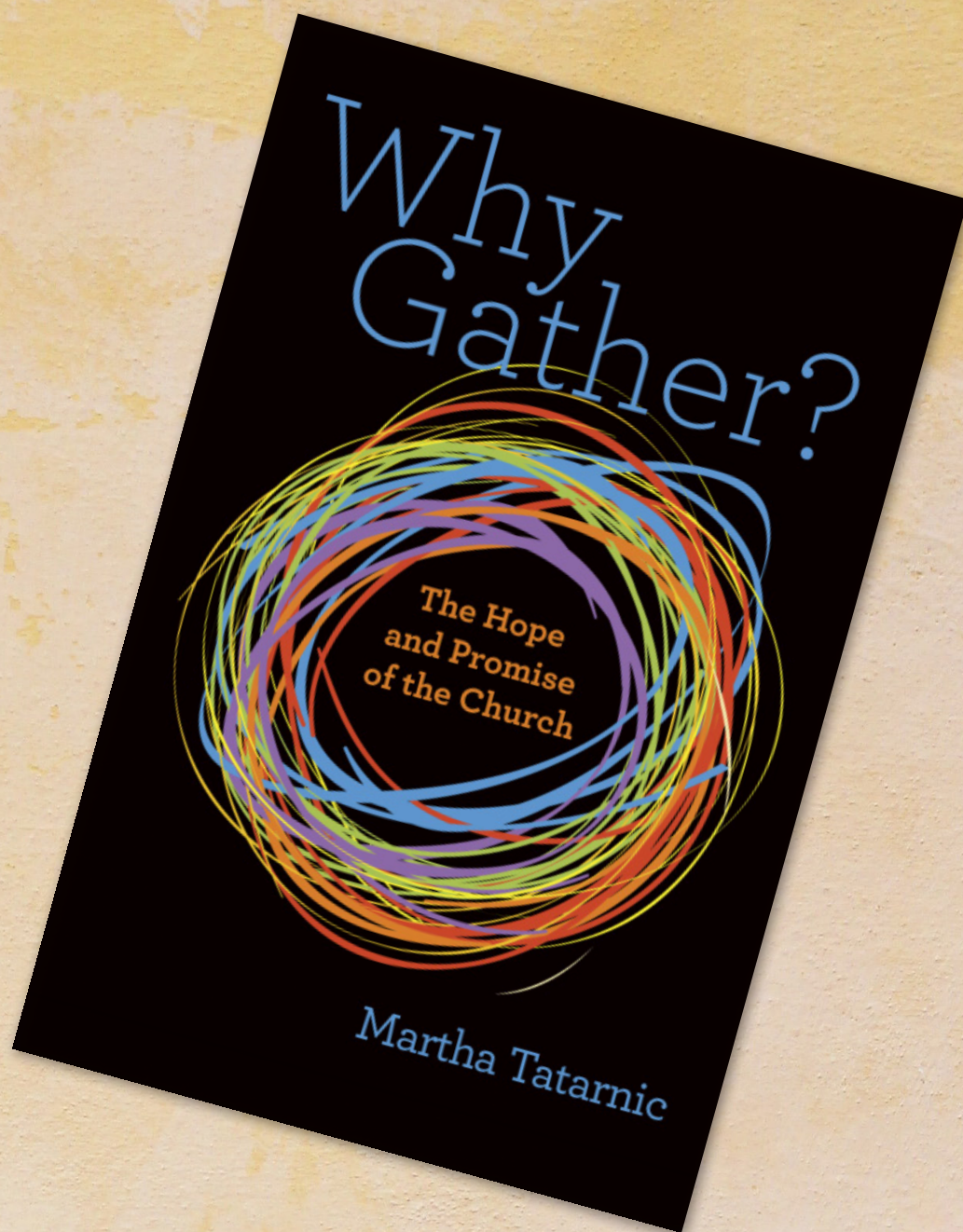
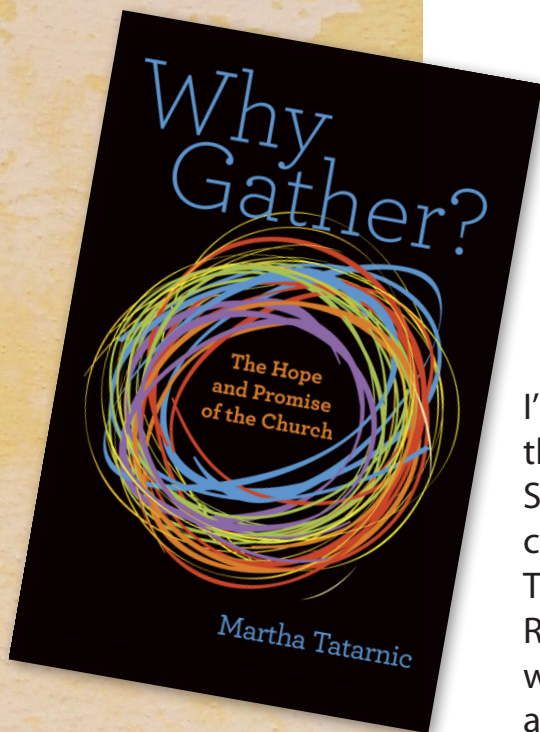


A LENTEN STUDY GUIDE

for use with *Why Gather?*



ANGLICAN
DIOCESE OF NIAGARA



**A Lenten
Study Guide**
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Why Gather?



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I'm delighted to commend three books from three homegrown authors for our Lenten Book Series in 2023. The wisdom and witness contained in the writings of Dr. John Bowen, The Reverend Canon Martha Tatarnic, and The Reverend Michael Coren will be a blessing to all who turn their pages and will help us be the face and hands of Christ more authentically and more faithfully.

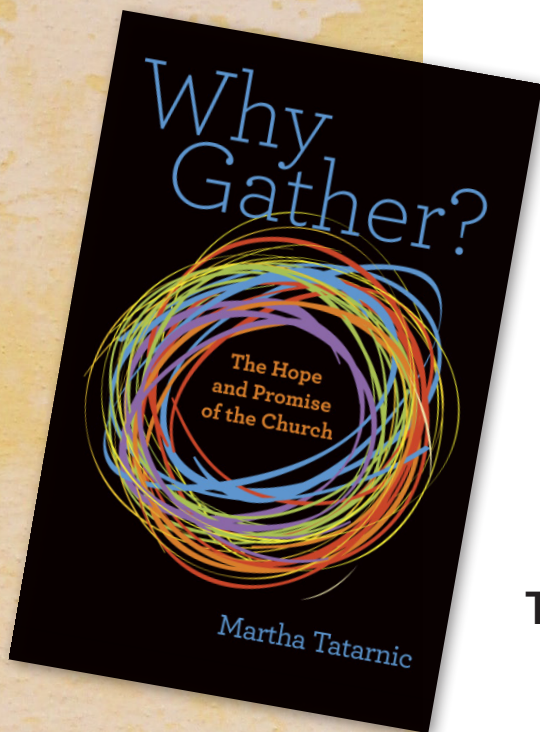
The Reverend Canon Martha Tatarnic's *Why Gather?* (Church Publishing, 2022), written during the height of the pandemic, recounts real stories about God at work in the lives of flawed and faithful people and the imperfect and messy communities in which we gather.

With honesty and wisdom, Martha invites readers to seek out the Kingdom of God that is already at hand and provides both the tools and inspiration we need to recognize, embrace, and celebrate how God is at work in our churches and our lives even in times of struggle.

Blessings on this Lenten journey.
Sincerely,

+ Susan Niagara

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



**A Lenten
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Why Gather?

A Lenten Study Guide
written by the author
The Reverend Canon Martha Tatarnic

READING OUTLINE

Week 1 – Part I, Chapters 1-5

Week 2 – Part 2, Chapters 6-12

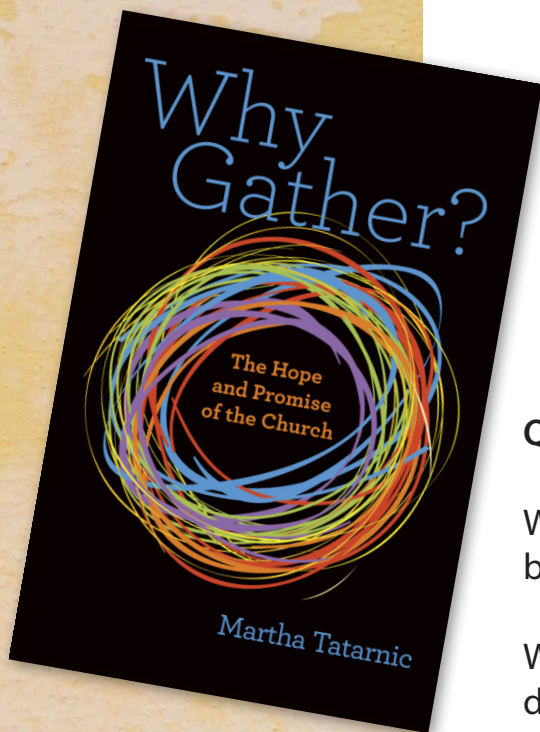
Week 3 – Part 3, Chapters 13-19

Week 4 – Part 4, Chapters 20-25



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WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Read Chapters 1-5

Questions

Where were you when the COVID pandemic became real?

What has been your experience of the well documented decline of the Anglican Church in Canada? Institutional religion in general? Has that caused stress or concern? How do you think that has impacted how we are as church?

What was your experience of church in the pandemic? What questions got raised for you about church and why it matters?

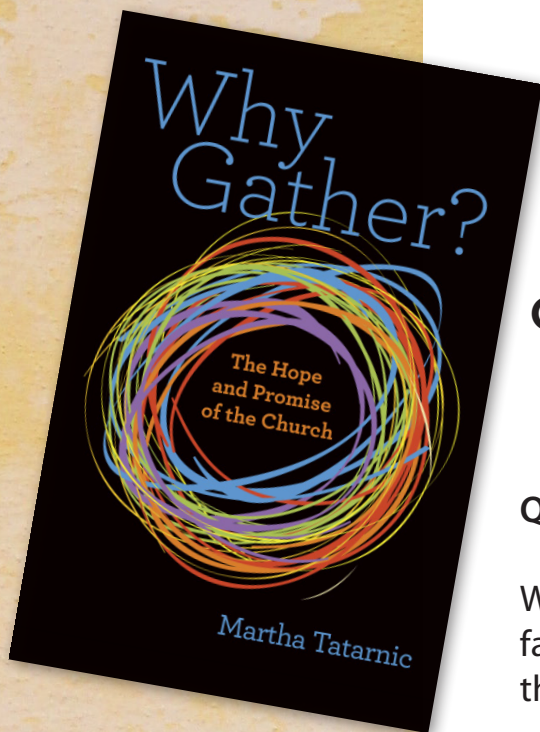
“Ultrarealism” asks us to shift our focus from what we wish were different, or what we’re worried might happen, and instead to “see, accept and embrace,” the circumstances in which you actually find yourself.

Another way of looking at ultrarealism is: What is outside of my control here? (accept) And what choices do I have? (embrace) How do you see this applying to other aspects of life? How does this connect with the life of the church?



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WEEK 2: NOT ANOTHER HYPOTHETICAL VERSION OF WHAT THE CHURCH COULD BE

Read Chapters 6-12

Questions

Where has the church most challenged your faith? Where has the church, and the people of the church specifically, supported your faith?

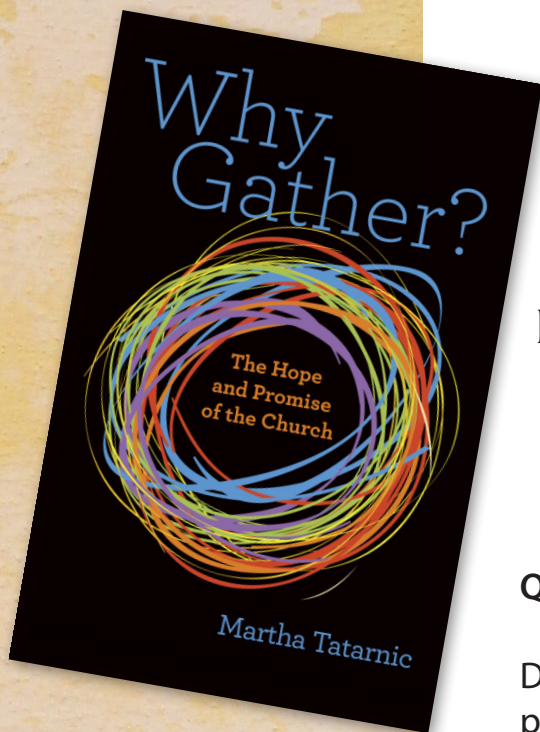
Think of a “saint” in your life. Can you name their good qualities and bad qualities? Do you have an image of Jesus with which you particularly connect?

The church is an answer to our spiritual disconnection, a witness to how our lives are actually bound to one another and to God. How does the church serve the world out of this truth?

The Designer Community constructs our relationships with one another around editing out difference. Where do you see the reality of Designer Communities at work? In communities, other people, in yourself?

The ultrareal church is not a Designer Community. God sees and loves and welcomes us in our diversity and difference. Where have you been challenged or blessed by the diversity and difference of God’s community?





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**WEEK 3: ACCEPTANCE:
HOW THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH
REVEALS THE POWER OF GOD**

Read Chapters 13-19

Questions

Do you experience “the calling cards” of God’s presence? Where? How?

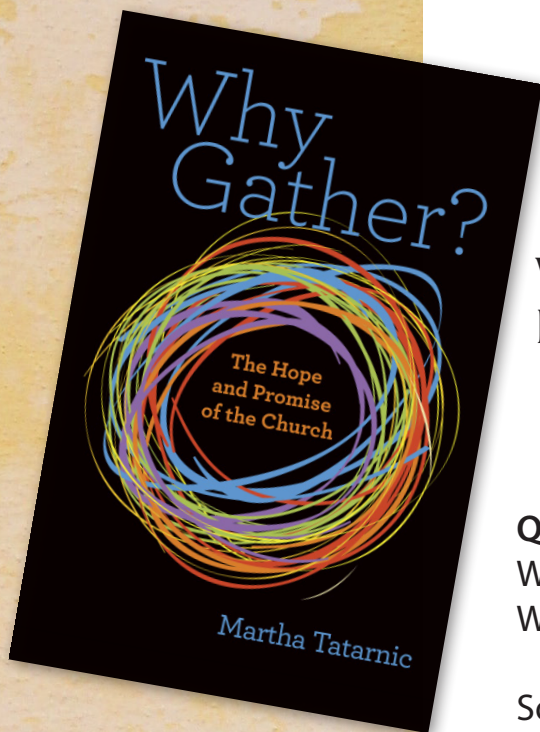
Why might our mortality be a source of blessing? What resources does our Christian faith offer us in coming to terms with death, ours and others?

Who are the ‘martyrs’ in your life (the people whose witness reminds you of that hope amid life’s greatest difficulties)?

Why is it important to believe that “God is not indifferent to our sin?” What does that mean?

Have you experienced instances where you thought you were following God’s will only to have things not turn out as expected? “Things have a habit of working out.” But what about when they don’t work out? Does it challenge your faith?

Where have you experienced people showing love in the midst of senseless tragedy?



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**WEEK 4: THE GATHERED CHURCH:
EMBRACING WHO WE REALLY ARE**

Read chapters 20–25

Questions

Where have you feared change in the church?
Where has it been a good thing?

Sometimes embracing the reality of a situation means leaving or letting go. When has this been true for you?

What's good about inclusivity?
Where does it miss the mark?

Praise is a distinguishing activity of the life of the church. What does it mean to praise God? Why is this important?

How do you experience the sharing of faith stories? Spiritual experiences? Is it uncomfortable? Easy? "You may think I'm crazy, but..."

"Growing Churches Expect God to Act."
What does this mean?
Why do you think this is the case?



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