



Niagara Anglican

NEWS • PERSPECTIVE • REFLECTION • FOR A GROWING CHURCH • DECEMBER 2005

Advent: Opening Our Doors



CHRISTOPHER M. GRABIEC

Recently, I have become more and more aware of the true lack of spirituality in our workplaces in the secular world around us. There are probably a number of reasons for this. First of all, church attendance is down, so folks who are in the workplace simply are not being "fed" with the gifts that the church has to offer. Secondly, the perception is that the church refuses to look at and move on secular issues of jus-

tice so people think only in terms of irrelevance. Thirdly, folks have allowed themselves to become so busy in a fast paced society that there simply is no time for the church. There are many more reasons, but the fact is that if we have something to offer, we simply do not have the people to hear it these days.

Consequently, we hear about secular organizations and consultants who are rising in the workforce helping people with such things as "leadership and

human values" and philanthropic endeavours in the corporate culture. Spirituality, in the broad sense (i.e. beyond Christian) is often the topic of seminars and discussions in the secular world. Here we are as a church with such a treasury of wisdom and gifts and we seemingly sit back and watch the world go by.

By the time you read this article, we will be in the middle of a very busy season. The world calls it the Christmas Season and we call it Advent. It's the contention

of this author that in spite of our protests, they are virtually one and the same thing. Let me talk a bit about the history of this time, and then I would like to draw some practical conclusions.

History

The earliest reference to the celebration of Christmas was at Antioch in the middle of the second century. The official determination of Christmas was made somewhere around 336 when it seems to have appeared in the Roman calendar. In many ways Christmas was set to compete with many pagan feasts which came at year end and which involved the elaborate decorating of homes. The council of Tours in 567 established the period of Advent as a time of fasting before Christmas and they also proclaimed the 12 days from Christmas to the Epiphany as a sacred and festive season.

By the 14th century, the practice of fasting during Advent had all but disappeared. Urban V, Bishop of Rome and Charles Borromeo, Bishop of Milan tried to bring clerics and people back to this penitential practice of preparing for Christmas. The truth seems to be that people have always fought this notion. Lent was always seen as a penitential time, but somehow the people of the church (including the monastics) seem to always fall away from the Advent practice.

In the 17th century Bishop Crammer wrote in his collect for the first Sunday of Advent, calling the church to cast away works of darkness during these days and put on the light of Christ:

"Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen."

Today

Obviously, a penitential attitude during the Advent days is the furthest thing from our minds. People are too busy being joyful and happy. They are too busy doing "worldly" things such as being hospitable to friends and relatives. The business of endless dinners and socials, along with the requisite giving of gifts is so "non-Christian" that people have no time for the church or for spiritual growth during these four weeks. Or is that true?

I've heard all the arguments about the commercialism of Christmas. I have heard Christians of great means declare

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A Fulfilling Gift for Our Church Family

SHARRON HILDEBRANDT
ST. JOHN'S, THOROLD

This spring, the two year sponsorship of our Afghan family came to an end. However, their problems did not cease at that time, and we continue to visit and help them, where and when needed.

During these two years, our family became very committed to helping Parigul and her four children. There were many difficult situations and obstacles to overcome as her life story unfolded to us. She had known the ultimate pain of losing her husband and first-born son at the hands of the vicious Taliban army, and had suffered through the disappear-



Sharron Hildebrandt

ance of her then nine year old second son. She was a very strong-willed person, a loving mother, but a person who harbored oh so many secrets.

We were to find out that Parigul had been married at the age of eleven to a fifty year old man; presumably her family had sold her (as is the custom in her country), for food or money. In later years, after her husband and son were killed, she fled Afghanistan during the night, with her children, crossing the mountains that separate Afghanistan and Pakistan. She would stay there in a refugee

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Living by the Compass

LUCY REID
PRIEST AND CHAPLAIN, UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

There are some conversations that shape our way of looking at life and work. I remember more than a dozen years ago, when I was a recently arrived university chaplain, Tom, a professor of Computer Science and an active member of the United Church, talked to me about his commitment to treating all people with equal respect. He told me that whether he was speaking to a first year student or to the president of the university, he wanted to value each one as a child of God like himself. His commitment became my goal, as I gradually connected with the university population. I tried to look through that lens at the people I was getting to know, from the frighteningly intellectual academics to the radical student activists, from the housekeeping staff to the elderly alumni, each one a child of God, deserving of my respect, time and attention.

The Friday Group was Born!

Tom later told me about a book he was reading that he felt might resonate with faculty and staff on campus. Written by Stephen Covey, *First Things First* challenged readers to live by the compass rather than the clock - to be clear about their direction in life,

their deepest priorities, the legacy they wanted to leave behind. It raised spiritual questions without being specifically religious. Tom suggested we offer a study group for any staff or faculty who wanted to discuss these issues. And so "The Friday Group" was born. We have been meeting now for over ten years, from 8:00 to 9:00 every Friday morning. Participants come and go; Tom himself left Guelph to take up a position at another university. But the group has become well-established on campus, chewing away at the principles and practice of integrating spirituality and work.

We began with Covey's book, but have, over the years, read and discussed many others. Several stand out: *Orbiting the Giant Hairball*, by Gordon MacKenzie, on how to survive and be creative even in a large and hairy corporation; *Living Buddha, Living Christ*, by Thich Nhat Hanh, on practicing in daily life the teachings of Buddha and Jesus; *Becoming Human*, by Jean Vanier, on building community through compassion and openness to others. We often disagree with one another as we discuss the ideas we read, and we come from a variety of religious backgrounds, from fundamentalist-Christian-

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PARISH NEWS

Community Outreach - Canned Casseroles for St. Matthew's House

SUE CRAWFORD

It is not easy today for churches to think beyond their walls. Costs of running a church climb every year with energy costs etc. Despite this, we at St. Mike's seem to reach deeper and deeper into our pockets for we know there are people in our community more in need than ourselves. The recent Asian disaster, New Orleans Flood and now the Earthquake are certainly examples of reaching deeper. All year long St. Michael's parishioners find extra boxes and cans of food for either St. Matthew's House or Neighbour to Neighbour; they find an extra toonie for the jar. (for Camp Canterbury Hills and other outreach)

As a relatively new parish-

ioner to St. Mike's (formerly St. Augustine's) I am impressed with the outreach that happens at our church. A few weeks before the March break, a can with strips of paper with an ingredient for a casserole was passed around. As always if I see that the ingredient I have picked out is something I know I have plenty of or is cheap to purchase, I take one or two more ingredient slips of paper. I have always donated but never taken part in the actual assembly of the casseroles. This past March break I was available. We had gathered enough ingredients to assemble 80 casseroles!

The 'event' is organized by Denise MacDonald and a cast of 'thousands.' It took less than an hour to line up all the ingredients,

measure the dry ones and label. There were four or five recipes each with different ingredients. The assembly lines included three or four parishioners - both men and women! The ingredients are checked and double checked then placed in a tinfoil tray which will be used to cook the casserole. The recipe is included then everything is bagged and sealed. All St. Matthew's House has to do is open the cans or boxes, place the ingredients in the tray, mix and then pop in the oven! Everything is measured right down to the salt and pepper!

I couldn't think of a better way to spend a few hours of my break than being a part of our community outreach. Each year it seems we put together more and more casseroles.



Parishioners preparing the ingredients

Children's Garden Alive and Blooming at St. Mike's



Children from St. Michael's, Hamilton, have been planting seeds and plants in their own garden on the parish grounds for the past two years. Last year they grew Sunflowers almost 10 metres high! The stones that surround the area have the name of each child who has helped.

Over \$500,000 Gift to Church

The late Joan Lee was an active and generous member of St. Cuthbert's Church in Oakville for many years. She and her mother are associated with many special vestments and altar hangings which add great beauty to the sanctuary of their beloved parish Church. They were well known for their kindness and generosity.

In 1999 Joan, whose health was failing, asked her Rector Rev. Joe Asselin if there was a way to give her home to the Church, and Canon Dick Rokeby helped her formulate a generous gift to the life of St. Cuthbert's, the outreach of St. Matthew's House and the Diocesan Survive and Thrive campaign. Of St. Cuthbert's portion of her gift, 75% was dedicated to the building expansion/renovation and 25% was dedicated as a permanent, youth ministry endowment with only the interest/investment income to be utilized.

Joan Lee, an octogenarian, died in 2005 and is sadly missed by all who knew her. The decision she had made in 1999 has come to



fruition, and her home becomes the property of the Church. But Joan had benefited from this generosity during the past five years as well.

She could have left her home to the Church in her will and that would have been a very fine way of giving the gift, but she had chosen to give her home as a Charitable Trust. This meant that she placed ownership of her

home in a Charitable Trust in 1999 which would belong to the Church after her death, but she 'retained lifetime use' of the property.

And because she gave it through a Charitable Trust, she received a Charitable Gift Receipt for a significant part of the value of her home in 1999, and was able to reduce her income tax each year.

In setting up the Charitable Trust, she designated that her home parish of St. Cuthbert's would receive half the value of the property, St. Matthew's House would receive 25 percent, and Survive and Thrive would receive the same amount.

Because of her faith, commitment, generosity and careful planning Joan Lee greatly reduced her income tax for six years, and gave a thoughtful gift to St. Cuthbert's, St. Matthews House and Survive and Thrive campaign who will share the gift of over \$500,000 from this thoughtful member who took time to plan ahead to make the best use of her gift.

Holiday House Tour

Sponsored by St. James' Anglican Church, Dundas

Where did the years go? Tickets are now on sale for the 30th annual Holiday House Tour, sponsored by St. James' Anglican Church in Dundas. The committee works throughout the year to develop an interesting, enjoyable and enlightening tour of historical and contemporary homes in the Dundas area. This year's tour takes place on Saturday, December 3th, from 12.00 - 5.00 p.m. As well as homes, the tour features a formal tea in the parlour at the church on 137 Melville

Street, in Dundas. At the church, the holiday festivities will be accompanied by local artisans including members of the Artisans' Guild of Hamilton offering unique hand-crafted items for purchase. In the church sanctuary, which has art displays changed on a monthly basis, the display will be works of local artist Alison Sawatzky.

"The town of Dundas is most fortunate to have homeowners who respond in such a positive manner for the tour", says Audrey Nicol, co-chair of the tour. "For

our thirtieth anniversary, these wonderful people are decorating their homes with a warm and welcoming atmosphere that everyone will enjoy. We appreciate their efforts and the assistance of local merchants, florists and decorators who share their talents to make the day memorable for both the hosts and our guests."

The downtown area of Dundas will continue this trend; people come to the Holiday House Tour from throughout southern Ontario and spend the day in 'Olde Dundas' visiting the fine shops and restaurants.

This year, the 6 homes come from all areas of Dundas and

range from two renovated historic homes - one with a new addition - to a small but enchanting cottage to stunning contemporary homes. "The homes have been chosen to provide a variety of settings and ages," noted co-chair Lynne Morrow. "We always stress the importance of presenting these delightful houses as 'homes' that people can relate to and enjoy at the beginning of the holiday season."

The tour benefits the outreach program of the church. Money raised supports a variety of local and international programs including Dundas Community Services, St. Matthew's House, Interval

House, and other local needs.

The \$15.00 ticket provides access to the six homes, the art display, tea and a visit to the artisans on Dickens' Lane at the church. Tickets are available in a variety of locations throughout the Dundas, Hamilton, Ancaster, Waterdown, and Burlington area as well as the church office. 'Out-of-towners' can call the church office and have tickets placed on hold until 1.00 p.m. on the day of the tour (December 3, 2005).

For further information contact Marg Taylor (905-628-8669), Lynne Morrow (905-627-3685), or St. James' Anglican Church (905-627-1424).

St. Simon's 50th Anniversary - An Evening to Remember



Dorothy Embleton and Alan Marsh show off the grand prize Emerald and Diamond Bracelet to winner, Dorothy Embleton

St. Simon's Anglican Church in Oakville celebrated its 50th Anniversary with a gala Dinner and Dance on Saturday, October 29 at the Holiday Inn in Oakville. One hundred and fifty parishioners and their friends enjoyed a delicious roast beef dinner, followed by dancing until midnight to a live orchestra, The Royal Oaks Big Band, under the direction of Al Hirsch. The event was entitled "An Evening to Remember."

The entrance to the ballroom was festooned with white tulle and potted white mums; the walls of the ballroom were decorated

with black musical staffs and notes, and gold stars.

During the evening, the guests enjoyed a dance couple from the Fred Astaire Dance Studio performing tango, foxtrot and cha cha routines, and the awarding of door prizes donated by local Oakville merchants. A highlight of the evening was the raffle of a beautiful \$1,200 emerald and diamond bracelet.

The dinner-dance was one of many activities and events during the year 2005 in which past rectors of St. Simon's were invited to return for a visit and to preach the sermon.

York Churches Welcome Advent

CAROL SUMMERS

On the first Sunday in Advent the church people of York take to the streets. There is an active ecumenical committee in York which has resulted in several ecumenical church services during the church year. It seems appropriate that we begin the year in unity by worshipping together so we gather for this evening service full of worship, singing, candlelight, movement, food and conviviality.

We always begin the service in St. John's Anglican Church where we welcome everyone. We sing a hymn, listen to the first reading and a short reflection, pray together and then we all light our candles and troop out singing and making our way to the next church. To be frank there are some fairly steep hills in York so the singing fades a bit at times! After a few minutes we arrive at the next stop which is either the United or the Maranatha Christian Reformed Church (we alternate each year) where we sing the next hymn, hear the second reading and homily, more prayers and off we go, singing, for the final part of the service, with the same format as before except that at the end of the service we all descend to the church basement for refreshments, and a great deal of talk and much laughter.

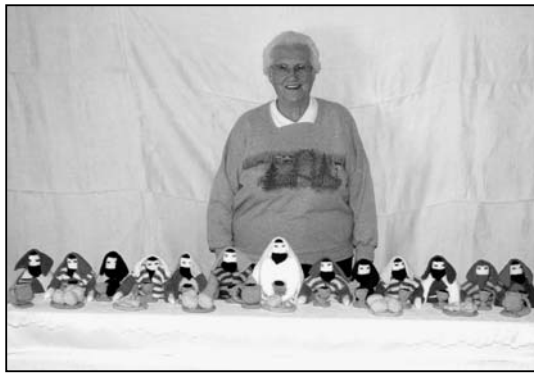
This has been going on for years now and each year the congregation grows. We have had a mixture of weather, as you would expect of this time of year. One year we had a snow storm and I was sure that almost no one else would come but the church was full. The storm died down and with that fresh blanket of snow and the stillness that was around us when we came out of St. John's it was a wondrous walk. Singing carols by candlelight and with a great sense of the wonder of God, it turned out to be one of the best Advent services.

It takes a conscious effort to maintain a spiritual focus during this hectic time of year I find this service gives me an opportunity to stop and adjust my thinking before I take a deep breath and plunge into the whirlwind of preparation for Christmas.

During this "moveable service" we notice the differences between our denominations. St. John's is decorated for advent and the United Church is in its full Christmas glory. The Christian Reformed pastor gives the reading and the homily, without lay involvement. We hold it in three churches, walking from one building to another, but it is amazing how the service flows. The essential message is the same in all three churches. It's only the delivery that's different.

A Little Last Supper

Two years ago at Synod, Rev. Lynne Thackwray the rector of All Saints' Hagersville was intrigued with a pattern from England with directions to knit all the disciples and plates and cups and bread etc. depicting the last supper. She was eventually able to persuade one of her experienced knitters to take up the challenge and try the pattern. Ethel McNeilly was certainly up to the challenge and along the way provided the ladies of the church with many laughs as they got to look along the way at 13 pairs of hands and 13 little beards and tiny pieces of knit slices of bread. Eventually the whole scenario was completed and on Palm Sunday it was dedicated at All Saints' and placed in a plexiglas display cabinet on the wall in the church. Since then it has had many admiring wide eyed children and impressed knitters view her accomplishment. It can be quite fascinating what can come out of our yearly Synod.



Teenage to Old Age... With a Side of Psalms

BETTY COOMBS

Looking for something interesting to beguile those early days of March when it seems as though winter will never end? Aha! Have we got the place for you! Come to St. Christopher's, Burlington to enjoy our Fourth Annual Leadership Conference with John Bell. While John is primarily known for his creative approach to music and the liturgy, his interests and expertise are far-ranging. The two-day conference at St. Christopher's emphasizes this diversity. The conference takes place on Friday, March 3 and Saturday, March 4, 2006. Participants may register for any part of the conference, full or half days.

Friday morning the topic is *Faith and Frailty* when John will work with participants

to develop an understanding of how God views those in their senior years and will also provide helpful devotional materials. Friday afternoon's topic is *The Last Journey* in which John looks at how music and liturgy can help us both lament and celebrate the lives of those who have moved into God's nearer presence.

Moving to the other end of the age spectrum, John embarks on an exploration of contemporary Youth Ministry, entitled *God in Touch With Teenagers* on Saturday morning. Here, he draws on his own experience with Youth Ministry as well as a recent Canadian event with youth ministry leaders at the United Church of Canada, Five Oaks Centre. Finally, on Saturday afternoon, John will open up our appreciation of the Psalms with the

topic *Rediscovering the Psalms*, finding new ways to read them and sing them. While there will be some singing, this session is not intended primarily for musicians, but rather is for everyone who wonders why we do some of the Psalms on Sunday morning.

There will be a bookstore where relevant materials, including John's own books can be purchased so bring your cheque book or Visa. Cost for a full day is \$40, half day \$25 which includes lunch. Deadline for registration is February 24, 2006. For more information, contact Helen Hicks at 905-634-1977 or don.helen.hicks@sympatico.ca. Come and join us for two unforgettable days! (Oh yes! Why not encourage a friend to register for the event too?)

CHRISTMAS TREE SALE



Buy an "Anglican" tree this year
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The Reverend Tim Novis, chaplain, receiving a \$1500 cheque from two prefects at Ridley College - Matthew Whitty and Tyler Burton - the prefects sold Ridley tigers wrist bands (orange and black marble - really cool) and the money has gone to PWRDF Hurricane Katrina relief.

A Tribute to the Ministry and Mission of the Church

DIANNE DISTLER

As we attend worship each week we see the many faces of our parish family around us, some of whom we are more familiar with than others. This makes me reflect upon not only how well we know each other but whether or not we take the time to consider their individual roles within the parish. Over the years I have observed that within the church the true leaders and dedicated workers are most often the silent type, going about their business, and that of the church, quietly doing their work without expectation of acknowledgement or praise. It is from this perspective that I decided to write an article of appreciation to some of the members of my congregation, St. Alban the Martyr, Hamilton, who like many others dedicate themselves to the work, maintenance and fundraising of the church, both within the parish and by reaching out to others.

For many years Doreen Malashevsky has been the driving force behind our parish fundraising through Rummage and Penny sales, Crazy Bingo, Monday Night Euchre and weekly sales. This does not mean that she is working alone, just ask her husband Walter. It takes many hands to successfully prepare for and accomplish fundraising, regardless of the size of the event. St. Alban's has no major fundraisers geared at raising thousands of dollars through one event but over the years Doreen and her team, assisted by the parish volunteers have successfully raised around \$100,000.00

through their efforts. I cannot possibly name all those whose efforts went into the projects, past and present, but I do know that they worked together as a family, and for this I would like to say "Thank You" to all who have striven to raise funds to support our parish.

The members of St. Alban's, as do many others, support the mission of the church on a larger scale, reaching out to regions where the cost of schooling exceeds the family income, areas that are devastated by natural disasters and here at home to the less fortunate within our community.

Thanks to efforts of Leslye Hagarty and the help of material supplied by PWRDF our parish increased their contributions to PWRDF in order to benefit from the offer of our Federal Government to match donations slated for East Asia and have forwarded \$1,000.00 to aid in their relief. On October 30th we celebrated the work of PWRDF by incorporating the material from "Enough for All" into our worship and reflecting on the necessity of clean water in sustaining life. It is Leslye's hope that we can further raise another \$500.00 for PWRDF before the end of the year, a high target for a parish whose regular attendance averages 57.

Recently Ethel Pell submitted an article to the Niagara Anglican regarding the mission in Bequia, a small fishing island off the coast of St. Vincent. Those members of St. Alban's have supported the mission school of Bequia for many years, initially sponsoring a student, and

more recently through funds to use at the school's discretion. Ethel frequently reminds us that the Loonie needs to be fed, a bank in the shape of a Loon, where all loose change is collected and forwarded to Bequia. Whenever we receive Newsletters from the mission they are posted beside our own Bequia Mission poster for all to read or get a copy of to take home. Through letters we have received I know that the students we have sponsored and the school greatly appreciate Ethel's efforts. On their behalf "Thank You."

While I know that most, if not all, parishes support St. Matthew's House, or a regional food bank, through food donations and/or support of families at Christmas, the location of St. Alban the Martyr enables us to have direct contact with St. Matthew's House. All food donations made are taken each week by John Lewis. As he drops them off, he asks what else is needed, then goes shopping with financial contributions to meet their requests. Some of those who need the support of St. Matthew's may recognize John's face but far more benefit from John's dedication. John would not be able to do this work without the support and contributions of the members of the parish. To them and John, "Thank you."

It takes the hands of many to do mission and ministry within a parish and every parish has them, to all who work to live the Gospel and fulfill the Great Commission "Thank you all for your dedication, work and faith."

Advent at Christ's Church Cathedral

CATHEDRAL STAFF

During Advent, Christ's Church Cathedral is presenting an educational series entitled, "What Child is this on Mary's Breast?"

Often these days we are reminded that we live in a time when many in society know little if any details about scripture events or teachings. This includes many folks attempting to return to church, or who are with us for the first time. As well, quite a few of the most regular of our parishioners express their need for opportunities to learn more or have a place to ask questions.

At this time of year as we approach Christmas, we declare in the carols and hymns we sing and in the words of the liturgy, that this Baby born to someone called Mary is a child who, like others, cries, needs to be nursed, sheltered, clothed, and grows up in a family home.

On the other hand, he is referred to as the Son of God, is sung about by choirs of angels, visited by strange mystic, royal visitors from other cultures who claim to have been sent by signs from heaven to worship him, and other unusual, supernatural occurrences which certainly are not associated with our kids - or anybody else's.

This series of sessions will address some of these questions and others expressed by the participants. The sessions are arranged around themes from familiar carols.

- 1. Nov. 27** - "Come Thou long-expected Jesus." Why was Jesus born when and where he was?
- 2. Dec. 4** - "Of the Father's Love begotten." What is the relationship of Jesus to God? If Jesus is divine, who was looking after the universe while he was on earth?
- 3. Dec. 11** - "Unto us a boy is born." What does it mean to say that Jesus was perfectly human?
- 4. Dec. 18** - "My Song is Love unknown." Why did Jesus come to live here? What did he accomplish?

The sessions will be held in the Niagara room from 9:15 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. between the two Eucharists at the Cathedral. They will be conducted by Archdeacon Richard Berryman, one of the Cathedral's Honorary Assistants.

It would be helpful, though certainly not necessary, to read Archdeacon Berryman's recently published book, "A Totally Human Hope" before or during this series. It is for sale in the Cathedral Shoppe.

St. Simon's Reaches Out to the Community

MICHELLE STANFORD
KIDZLIFE COORDINATOR

On Saturday November 19, for the second year in a row, St. Simon's in Oakville is "taking it to the streets" by putting a float in the town's Christmas Parade. This year there will be over 25 children and 20 adults participating. This is a parish-wide initiative, with many people helping to design and build the float. This year's parade theme is "Christmas Traditions" and St. Simons will create a fun and unique Bethlehem scene.

This is also an initiative that reaches out to the community and partners with the local Christian bookstore Goodbooks who make a significant financial donation to enable the parade walkers to hand out bookmarks. The bookmarks list "Top 10 Ways to Keep Christ in Christmas" along with details on the holiday church services, Christmas bazaar date and a coupon to use at Goodbooks.

Last year, St. Simons raised over \$1,300 to buy dozens of child and adult costumes--angels, shepherds and wisemen, along with a few animals. These costumes are available to other parishes in the diocese to use in Christmas pageants or other special events on a first-come, first-serve basis by contacting KidzL.I.F.E., St. Simon's Children and Family ministry program at kidzlife.stsimons@bellnet.ca. Perhaps you would like to come and take some pictures of the prep (happening Nov 18 in Oakville) and the "day of" event?

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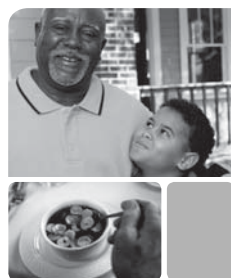
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Rabbi Baskin Preaches at St. Paul's Westdale

On Sunday October 23rd Rabbi Bernard Baskin, Emeritus, Temple Anshe Shalom, Hamilton, spoke on the occasion of the 74th Anniversary of St. Paul's Church, Westdale. We are pleased to include the text of Rabbi Baskin's sermon.

Gratitude at the Holiday Season

Some years ago, a husband and wife attended a church service for the dedication of a stained-glass window in memory of their neighbor's son, killed in Vietnam. It was profoundly moving. Afterwards this couple approached the minister, "That was a magnificent service, and that's a beautiful window. We would like to purchase a similar window to bear the name of our son." "But your son has safely returned from Vietnam!" exclaimed the astounded Cleric. "That's just the point" they quietly replied. "That's just the point."

The words that Frances Gunther wrote after the untimely death of her teenage son are filled with poignant beauty and melancholy wisdom. "All the wonderful things in life are so simple that one is not aware of their wonder until they are beyond touch. Never have I felt the beauty and joy of life so keenly as now that Johnny is not here to enjoy them. Today, when I see parents impatient or tired or bored with their children, I wish I could say to them, 'But they are alive! You can touch them-what a miracle!' All parents who have lost a child will feel what I mean. Others, luckily, cannot. But, I hope they will embrace them with little added rapture and a keener awareness of joy."

Unfortunately, our years bring us sorrow as well as gladness. There is no light without some shadow, and no victory without some measure of sadness and defeat. And it would be foolish to suggest that life treats us all as equals. Fortune seems to have her favorites. There is no way to put on rose-colored glasses to make the world seem more attractive, or to shut our eyes to the harsh realities of existence. Yet, the capacity to experience gratitude and the ability to express thanks are signs of maturity as well as necessary for our health and well being.

If gratitude is so vital to our happiness, stability and self-fulfillment, why are we so prone to follow the opposite course? Why are we such pathological complainers? Let's face it, some of us seem to be constantly disgruntled.

I congratulated a man recently who had won \$1000 in the Ontario Lottery. "You're lucky!" I told him. "You call this luck?" He responded. "One more miserable number and I would have won \$10 000!"

How are we to cultivate the fine, but difficult attitude? How are we to find the emotional resources for expressing thanksgiving? What is needed more than anything else is a sense of humility. One of the built-in hazards of being human is the overwhelming temptation to accept success in a mood of self-congratulation. The weeds of pride flourish most conspicuously in the soil of prosperity. When life becomes comfortable and upholstered, when our undertakings proper and our possessions multiply, we are so prone to proclaim ourselves self-made men or women. What further demonstration do we need of our resourcefulness, our wisdom, our ingenuity, our cleverness?

Legend of Two Evils

A well-known legend tells of two angels, each given a basket and sent to earth to



Rabbi Bernard Baskin and Bishop John Bothwell

gather up the prayers that were offered there. One was to collect only petitions. The other was to gather up prayers of gratitude. When they returned, the angel bearing the requests was carrying a basket filled to overflowing. The other angel was deeply depressed for his basket was all but empty.

How rich are those who know how to receive graciously, for we all receive in a lifetime more than we are able to return to others. For instance, we live in houses we did not build and sleep in beds we did not construct. We sleep beneath sheets or blankets we did not weave and wear clothes we did not fashion. We eat food we did not grow and read books and papers we did not write. We ride in cars we did not manufacture on roads we did not create, and we come to worship in buildings we did not erect.

God showers upon us more wonderful gifts than we can ever fully receive, gifts of beauty - the sky, sun, moon, stars, flowers, grass, lakes, streams and the mighty oceans. God's gifts are everywhere present and remain only to be received.

Magnify Blessings

In one of his letters, Robert Southey tells of a friend who always put on his spectacles when he was about to eat strawberries so that they might look bigger and more tempting. "In just the same way," adds Southey, "I make the most of my enjoyments."

We would do well to ponder these words. If only we could learn to magnify our blessings instead of exaggerating our troubles!

Grandma's eyesight wasn't as good as it used to be, but there was nothing wrong with her perspective. When asked about her health, she answered softly: "I have two teeth left, and thank God they are directly opposite one another." Her spectacles were properly focused.

The Jewish observance of Sukkot begins tomorrow evening. The ancient biblical festival of thanksgiving which served as a model for the pilgrims, was born not in mighty prosperous Rome, nor in secure, amply endowed Greece. Thanksgiving had its origin in weak, insecure and tiny Judea. The poet was undoubtedly correct in speaking of "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome." But while Greece enjoyed glory and Rome was resplendent in grandeur, it was lowly Judea that had gratitude.

Gratitude in Hard Times

Nor should we forge the bleak background against which the pilgrims marked their first Thanksgiving in 1620. Of the 102 pas-

sengers who landed at Plymouth Rock, 51 died within the first six months. Their graves had to be kept level with the ground in order to save them from desecration and to keep from the Indians the knowledge of the frightful toll of casualties. Not a single family had been spared by death. The survivors lived on the fringe of starvation in a hostile, uncharted world. They never knew what it was to have enough or to be secure. They stood alone against the forces of nature and man. These were the people who gathered to give thanks to Almighty God for His blessings and to express their humble dependence upon His mercies for their continuing life.

Two Lists

A good Thanksgiving Day exercise might consist of sitting down with two sheets of paper. On one we ought to list all the things we crave and are yearning to acquire. On the other sheet we ought to enumerate all those things we own and could lose. To our surprise we would find the first list quickly exhausted while the second would appear endless. We would probably soon tear up the first list, feeling a little ashamed and largely thankful.

In order to emphasize the importance of giving thanks, our Jewish tradition developed a unique system of brief blessings. Some of these blessings are recited for the unending wonders of nature - when we see a rainbow stretching from horizon to horizon across the brightening sky, when we see the vast ocean with its constant ferment and upheaval, when we see huge towering mountains ascending heavenward from the flat landscape. And there are also blessings when we break a piece of bread to eat, for first seeing trees in bloom, even for viewing a great scholar or an outstanding personality. In this way the Jewish tradition cultivates a necessary sense of gratefulness.

Every blessing we enjoy has been sacrificially paid for by others. It is no accident that the world "bless" and the world "bleed" come from the same root. Every important blessing we enjoy - our freedom, our health, our heritage, our security - is dipped in the blood of generations of benefactors. There is nothing we can give which we did not first receive. Such obligations can never be fully repaid, but neither are we exempt from making some sustained effort at repayment. May our blessing be ample and our thanksgiving and gratitude unbounded.

Cathedral to Establish Arts Council

The Very Reverend Peter Wall, Dean of Niagara and Rector of the Cathedral has announced an exciting and welcomed new dimension in the life of Christ's Church Cathedral and the community at large. Dean Wall said; "For several months a working group has been engaged in laying the groundwork for a non-profit Arts Council to promote, commission and present works in music, drama and dance at Christ's Church Cathedral. The works will be variously sacred, based in aspects of religion and faith, as well as faith in the world issues."

The Council is the hope and vision of cathedral parishioner, Francene Campbell-Rich and will, eventually be endowed by her estate. In the meantime, with the bulk of their task accomplished, the working group has announced the institution of the foundation to come to come into being on January 1st, 2006, and will be in the position of receiving donations through the balance of 2005 and beyond to begin its operation. One of the first commissions will be a work to celebrate a double anniversary for the cathedral, which will mark 175 years as a parish and 135 years as a cathedral in 2010.

The Council will proceed to establish itself as a registered not for profit charity. The working group will also move to establish a Board of Directors drawn from the Arts Community in Hamilton and Cathedral appointees.

For further information please contact the Reverend Canon Charles Stirling at 905-527-1316 ext 253, or charles.stirling@niagara.anglican.ca.

Baltic CRUISE

Leaving May 20th, 2006

- With Collette Vacations Inc. and Archdeacon Ian Dingwall from Copenhagen (3 days)
- Through the Baltic Sea to S. Petersburg and the Hermitage Museum (2 Days)
- Visiting on Route: Tallin (Estonia), Helsinki, Stockholm, Berlin with S.S. Amsterdam of the Holland America Fleet.

Interested?

Please contact Ian Dingwall as soon as possible because of deadline dates for reservations:

email:
dorothy.dingwall@sympatico.ca

phone:
905 637-3449



Niagara Investment Fund

ROBERT MCKINNELL
DIOCESAN TREASURER & CFO

For many years the Diocese has assisted parishes with the investment of their various funds. These funds include rectory sale proceeds, cemetery monies, endowments, designated monies for capital projects and a multitude of other parish investments.

In the immediate period prior to 1996, the Synod office paid a specific interest amount on those funds under its administration. During this period, the funds were invested in a number of financial vehicles such as the stock market

and more liquid areas that included bonds and GIC's. However, as the result of losses in the stock market, which the Diocese absorbed, the decision was made to set up a System of Participation Units in 1996.



Robert McKinnell

The units were initially valued at \$10.00 each. The parish funds on deposit with the Diocese, at that time, were converted over at that rate. All monies were then invested and the individual unit value would fluctuate based on the performance of the overall fund.

Parishes could invest or withdraw monies based on the unit value at month end.

During the five year period from 1996 to 2001, parishes received a monthly payout based on an annual rate of 5% and in one year that was raised to 7%. This monthly payout was subtracted from the total fund prior to calculating the unit value. The unit value was then obtained by dividing the remaining fund balance by the number of units. Parishes that did not want to receive a payout simply reinvested that amount by purchasing additional units at the going unit value. An outside firm was hired to perform these various calculations. Unfortunately, there were delays in sending the monthly payments to parishes. In addition, it was difficult for parishes to determine their actual annual rate of return.

In 2001, we simplified the system and restructured it so it operated similar to a mutual fund with which many people are

familiar. By the 15th of the following month we have received our reports from the bank and our investment company. We calculate the unit value, after allowing for withdrawals and deposits, by dividing the total fund value by the number of units. If a parish receives a monthly amount, then units are sold to cover that.

The investment fund is now much easier to administer. We no longer require the services of an outside company to perform unit value calculations. The computerized data base is exported to an Excel file which is integrated into a Word document that generates the monthly reports for each fund balance. These in turn are mailed to the respective parish. Our system is streamlined and our reports are timely.

Next month I will report on our investment firm, The Russell Group.

A Fulfilling Gift for Our Church Family

Continued from Page 1

camp for almost three years. In order to survive, two of her boys worked in a factory weaving carpets for several hours each day, earning very little money, but out of necessity for the family to survive. Because of her physical impairment, Parigul sat for most of the day, and as she did so, she created many beautiful pieces of embroidery work.

Parigul felt pulled in several directions when she was chosen to be sent to Canada. Would she ever see her son again? If he were alive, how would he ever find her? Should she take her family to safety in a free country? Her husband's son (by a wife prior to Parigul) had the best answer. He coerced her into taking his son, who was the same age as her missing son, to Canada. She was to tell everyone that this was her son, and if she did so he would, in return, look after several members of her extended family who would be left behind. However, if he ever heard that she did not look after his boy, her family in Pakistan would be killed. Out of fear and desperation, she did as she was told and eventually Parigul was set to leave Pakistan with four children.

When this family arrived in Canada, they possessed only the clothes they wore. Parigul had one small bag which contained several pieces of her beautiful embroidery work. One week after their arrival, they were given permanent housing in Hamilton. What a disappointment this decision was to the Outreach Committee at St. John's Church. However, after much soul-searching it was decided that the Settlement Organization was probably correct in suggesting that they settle in Hamilton, as there are over one thousand Afghans there, as opposed to two or three families in the Thorold/St. Catharines area.

Language

Because of Parigul's inability to converse in English, a young woman whom she had befriended, called Faridah, also became a very important and necessary person to us at any of our visits to Parigul's home. Farida lived with her parents and seven siblings just a few doors

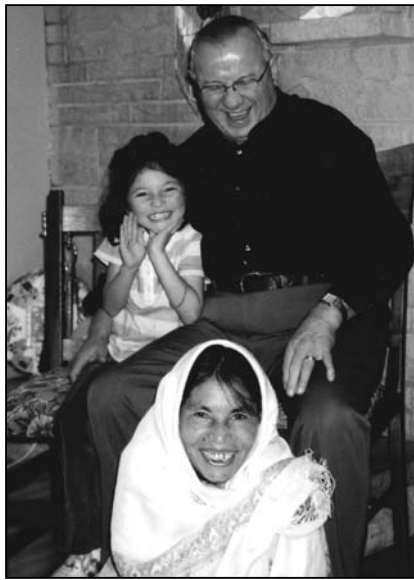
from Parigul's apartment. This young woman has also become a very dear friend.

Parigul was found to have many medical problems when she arrived. She badly needed eye glasses, which she received; a cataract operation, which was set for the following May; and as well, orthotic boots were ordered for her in order to adjust her leg length. An appointment was also made with a bone specialist to see if anything could be done for her hunched back, the result of a wall falling on her, breaking her arm, leg and back, several years prior. Sadly she was told that any surgery would be impossible. Seema Gul, her daughter, arrived in Canada with a nasty bite on her wrist, from a certain insect found only in Asian countries. There was no treatment available in Canada to heal this sore so doctors at McMaster Medical Centre placed an order to Pakistan for the correct medication. Upon its arrival the healing began and the sore cleared after several weeks, leaving only a slight pink scar. Aliullah, the youngest boy, had a hearing problem which would require surgery to have tubes inserted in his ears.

At one of our visits, Parigul broke down and admitted to us that Ali Madat was not her son, and she tearfully explained the circumstances surrounding the reasons why this child had come with her to Canada.

First Christmas

My entire family grew very fond of Parigul and her family, especially Seema Gul, who referred to my husband as "daddy". So when their first Christmas in Canada was approaching we had to include their family in our celebrations. Of course Faridah, our translator, was also a part of these plans. My husband set off for Hamilton on



Jake Hildebrandt with Seema Gul and her mother Parigul.

Christmas Day to pick up our company for 3:00 o'clock. He was slightly taken aback when he arrived to find 14 eager people lined up for a ride to St. Catharines, in our seven-passenger van. Parigul had met a new friend and her daughter and they had been invited as well. Faridah had brought along six of her siblings to experience a real Canadian Christmas. How could we say no! After a quick call home, two trips to Hamilton, more potatoes and vegetables prepared, more salad made, together with a huge turkey, we knew we could be ready! Luckily we found a gift for everyone...mittens for some, slippers for others and socks for still others. Everyone had a wonderful first Christmas in Canada and eventually a very tired family headed home (this time in two vans) with bags of toys, clothes and other gifts. This was truly a Christmas our family including the grandchildren will always remember, and for our Muslim friends they too will never forget this day.

Missing Son

The very best Christmas gift came to Parigul, however, in the form of a telephone call from her missing son, who was now fourteen years

old. Somehow, through calls he made to his grandmother in Afghanistan, he was able to track down his mother in Canada. Immigration Canada was quickly informed that the real Ali Madat had been found and arrangements began for his journey to Canada to join his family. Luckily Immigration Canada provided an open window of opportunity for one year, to enable lost children who are found, to be able to join their families in Canada, and this process was begun. As for the original Ali Madat, he has received permission from Immigration Canada to remain with Parigul. However, he is no longer the man of the house and this has caused him some grief, but in time we're sure he will accept this situation.

As summer began, Parigul and her children were invited to Cathie Crawford-Browning's home for a luncheon and barbecue as well as a swim. The children were in awe of the pool, especially when four suitable bathing suits were produced, along with water wings, noodles and towels. They were changed and in the water in no time, and proved to be true water babies, enjoying every minute of their swim. It was a wonderful experience for each one of them.

Well-Adjusted

It hardly seems possible that our two-year sponsorship of Parigul and her children has ended. We have seen such a change in Parigul and the children in these two years. She has become a happy, social young woman in the Afghan community in which she lives. The children are all doing well in school and seem to be well-adjusted, happy young people. If we could only convince Parigul that she needs to learn more English words, she would be even happier, and everyone would find it so much easier to converse with her without the

need of a translator. However, she does know the important words, such as 'thank you', 'I love you', 'mother', 'father', and of course 'money'.

Parigul has now moved into a four-bedroom, two-story town home, just a few blocks from their former apartment, which is specially built to accommodate disabled people. The children are all extremely happy with the move as the three boys no longer have to share one bedroom, and Seema Gul now has her own room. Ali Mohammad's dream of having a garden has been fulfilled; a small flower garden now borders their lawn.

Homecoming

As for the "real" Ali Madat, he too is now safely on Canadian soil. Parigul's dream of once more seeing her missing son came true one rainy cool evening in early September this year. We stopped in Hamilton to pick up Parigul, and in true Afghani fashion, she had once again asked every friend she knew to go to the airport. However, this time they had their own vehicles. At the airport, Parigul sat as close to the arrivals door as she was allowed, her face beaming in anticipation of her son's arrival. No one could imagine the joy she was feeling at this time. Suddenly she let out a shriek and dropped everything where she sat, to embrace her boy, now a young man. At that very moment we knew that what we had done for this family was so worthwhile.

We are overjoyed that we have been able to take part in this wonderful outreach program at our Church. Their problems will probably never end, and we will hopefully always be there to help when they do call. This amazing family brought great joy to our Church family at St. John's, and a heart-warming contentment and pride to our personal family. They will always hold a special place in our hearts.

If your Church or group is considering a sponsorship, by all means don't think twice. You will be forever grateful with your decision.

Sow Your Seeds in Spring, Reap the Harvest in Fall

AN OLD ABORIGINAL TEACHING

An elder was teaching his grandson about life. He said to him, "Grandson a fight is going on inside of me. It is a terrible fight between two wolves." "How come there are two wolves grandfather?" the boy asked. His grandfather answered "One wolf is evil - he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, conceit, self-pity, guilt, resentment, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego; the other wolf is good - he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith. This same fight is going on inside you - and inside every other person too." His grandson thought about this for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win, grandfather?" The elder simply replied "The one you feed."

LYNNE CORFIELD
RECTOR OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST AND
ARCHDEACON OF BROCK

It was in January 2003 that we held a Special Synod in the Diocese of Niagara to discuss the Residential School Fund (RSF) and what our Diocesan response would be. We accepted responsibility for our part in the errors of the past, and this meant that we would need to step up to the plate and find the money to fulfil our commitment to the National Church, and the aboriginal people of our land who had suffered in the schools.

Each parish was given a target based on a percentage of their annual Diocesan Maintenance and Mission assessment. At St. John's in Niagara Falls that meant finding close to \$4,500 per year, for five years. We were asked to consider a stretch target, and at the time when our annual vestry gathered they felt that as we were barely keeping our head above water, we had better not be too ambitious! We accepted our target of \$22,149 and if we should be fortunate enough to feel flush at some point, then we would certainly send in some extra money.

Where Would it Come From?

Like many parishes we were in the midst of 'Survive and Thrive' and lots of people were still paying regular sums over and above their parish commitment for a five year pledge. At St. John's we were also struggling with a \$20,000 deficit, and now we were looking to find another \$4,430 per year... where indeed would it come from?

We were fortunate to have in our midst, the Rev'd Val Kerr who was at that time a student of Divinity at Huron College. Val is an aboriginal woman of the Mohawk nation who was teaching us lots about the native culture. We participated in a day of learning

that Rev'd Val provided for the Regions of Brock and Lincoln with the 'blanket exercise' and drumming and dancing. We found that there was indeed much that we could learn from this culture, if only we would take the time. We learned about the Medicine Wheel, the Sweat Lodge and the Grandfather and Grandmother stones of the fire. The seven teachings are respect, courage, wisdom, humility, love, truth, and generosity. With this in mind people were generous with their donations, and for the first little while we managed to make our quarterly payments. At our annual vestry each year the parish chooses a 'cause' that will receive 10% of all our fund raising efforts for the year, and for 2003 it was decided that RSF was indeed a worthy cause. I was delighted when at Vestry in 2004 the parish decided that this sum would be an extra donation, over and above our commitment. We also decided that the \$4,430 would be a line item in our budget so that the money would be paid, regardless of the amount of specific donations.

People were Encouraged to be Creative

We found that now we are into the third of five years, it is more difficult to keep the cause in front of people...and that donations were dwindling.



Lynne Corfield

In all fairness, we have had a lot of parish expenses that have meant that we have been asking for other donations over and above the regular identifiable giving. Then our Stewardship Team came to the rescue! They came up with the brainwave of using a tried and tested 'Talent Money Campaign' to hopefully raise one year's contribution to the RSF. On the May holiday weekend we kicked off a "Sow Your Seed" campaign that would run throughout the summer and would end at Thanksgiving when we would "Reap in the Fall" and gather in the harvest. The Stewardship team provided seed money of \$5 with the hope that at least 50 people would sign up and produce \$4,500. People were encouraged to be as creative as possible with the ideas to make their money grow. When they signed up we gave each person a flower to write their name on and some tape so that they could add it to our garden. A large frieze was created and put up on the wall in the church to serve as a visual reminder of our goal. With lots of encouragement and follow up from the Stewardship team, 62 people signed up and planted flowers in our garden...and they were very creative.

A Five Year Old had a Lemonade Stand

What is delightful is that a large variety of people of all ages were

involved in raising \$7,500 and we are still counting! Holly Chatelain, a five year old, held a lemonade stand on the dock of her cottage. There were other children who participated too. Brothers Jacob (6) and Joshua Allegro (4), held a lemonade stand outside church one Sunday; Jamie (10) and Jonnie Pratt (8) helped their parents with several BBQs held after church; Kaitlin Gibson (13) did face painting and helped her Mom make jewellery. We had an artist who raffled one of her paintings and raised \$300; card parties, pool parties, pie making, strawberry picking, jam making, 'Newfie' flashlights and jewellery were for sale, to name a few. When the harvest was in I was handed a letter that had been enclosed with one of the donations. "Many sleepless nights I spent trying to decide on how to put the church's money to work for me. Selling cups... already done, having a garage sale... already done. I needed my idea to be unique, one of a kind. On my last sleepless night I decided to go for a drive around town...I finally saw the light! Casino Niagara! My saviour. Not knowing anything about cards and no time to learn, I went straight to the slots. I



Chair Roland Pratt presenting Lynne with a cheque for \$7,500

quickly cashed in my precious \$5 and quickly went to work. Within minutes, \$5 turned into \$10, then \$15! But then things took a turn for the worst. \$15 became \$10, then \$5. Do I stop? No one had an answer for me. The staff were watching making sure that everyone of us was doing our job of spending money! One minute later, \$5 became \$10, \$15, and then \$20! Relieved and a nervous wreck I decided to cash it in. I left the Casino with my new found money. I hope it was all worth it." You can tell that this was written tongue in cheek, but it seems to

convey the amount of fun and fellowship, and creativity that was unleashed over the summer, a time that is usually rather lazy and quiet in church land! Besides all the money that was raised (and that will be on hand to pay our RSF commitment), awareness was raised and lots of fun and fellowship was had by all. Our 2005 and most of 2006 payment is in the bank, ready to go, and at the end of the day, we can say that our commitment to the RSF was truly a team effort and the whole parish participated in making sure that it was paid in full.

Is The Message Getting Through?

JIM NEWMAN
DIRECTOR OF STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Recently I was asked what might be the most important stewardship question of the past twenty years. It was at one of the Pre-Synod meetings that are held in every region of the Diocese of Niagara in October and early November. These meetings are excellent opportunities to review the Diocesan budget, and they also offer occasions to provide information about services available from the Diocesan Resource Centre. Such was the case recently when, as the new Director of Stewardship and Financial Development, I presented an overview of goals, objectives and priorities for the coming year. Here's the question:

"You mentioned that Anglicans in Niagara give, on average, about 1.5% of their household income each year to their parishes. You also say that we need to do better. But that percentage has not changed over the last many, many years. Do you think that the message about being substantially more generous givers is not getting through to parishioners, or that it is getting through but they are not responding?"

I don't know the definitive answer. I do know that many Anglicans give above the 1.5% average - they give 3%, 5%, 10% or more of their incomes to parishes and other worthy causes, plus their time and talents. Some are tithing or working their way up to a goal of giving at the biblical tithe level. Are they the ones that "get it"? If so, what is "it" anyway?

Here's what I think 'it' is. Kennon Callahan, noted Presbyterian pastor, researcher, professor, church consultant and speaker says: "The churches that do the best in church finances have a rich, full, abiding passion for mission. They are motivated by a theology of service, not a theology of survival. Their compelling, driving spirit is one of giving, serving,

loving mission."

Anglicans who give generously understand the importance of support for the work of our churches in the community, the diocese, across Canada and around the world. They also understand their role as ministers of the Gospel by virtue of their Christian baptism. They talk about their faith often and comfortably while being respectful of others. They understand the importance of hospitality in the process of evangelism, and they demonstrate it.

They talk about their faith often and comfortably while being respectful of others. They understand the importance of hospitality in the process of evangelism, and they demonstrate it.

Making the Right Connections

All of this says to me that stewardship programs that ask people to "fund the budget" don't work very well. Instead we must help parishioners connect their motivation for giving to their parish's mission and ministries. We help them make that connection when we ask them to

give to help teach children and to fund mission work locally and world wide. We help them make that connection when we ask people to give generously to support clergy as they visit the sick, provide pastoral counseling, offer Holy Communion to shut-ins, and give spiritual guidance to others.

It's up to parish Corporations and all of us who "get it" to make those strong connections by talking about leadership, evangelism, and stewardship - the three-legged stool that Bishop Spence states is so critical to our mission. One of the best vehicles to model this in your parish is a narrative budget, but there are other ways too. For example, if our parish needs funds for Christian Education facilities, we could talk about a family that joined another parish because ours lacked adequate space.

We can be the kind of church we need to be if we give generously to our mission and ministries from a theology of abundance. I think that's our responsibility as Christians.



Kennon Callahan

Niagara Churches Sing Psalms in Many Ways

ALAN L. HAYES
THE ITINERANT CHURCHGOER

Our oldest worship texts are the psalms. They're also among our best. In my Sunday travels around the diocese of Niagara, I've discovered quite a variety of ways of using the psalms.

Psalms were part of Christian worship from the very beginning. They were simply carried over from the synagogues where the earliest Christians worshipped.

What a treasure the psalms are! In addition to praise and thanksgiving to God, they also include lament, uncertainty, and, frankly, annoyance with God, which reflect how we frequently feel but which we otherwise politely exclude from our worship. And they connect us with the Church through the ages, and with Israel too.

One particular reason why the psalms proved very suitable as Christian texts was that they had some special associations with Jesus. God's words at Jesus' baptism, "This is my son," came from Psalm 2. The vinegar given Jesus on the Cross recalled Psalm 69. His words, "O God, why have you forsaken me?" quoted Psalm 22.

Except among Anglicans, the psalms largely disappeared from congregational worship in the 1800s. Protestants replaced them with hymns and praise songs,

though a few of these were based on psalms. Among Roman Catholics, psalms remained in the liturgical texts, but they were in Latin and congregations didn't join in them. In the 1960s, the



Alan L. Hayes

psalms enjoyed a revival among both Roman Catholics and Protestants, mainly as a result of the renewal of congregational worship called the Liturgical Movement. But Anglicans, under the very beneficial discipline of the Prayer Book, had honoured the psalms all along. (Forgive me the boasting.)

Today, perhaps the most popular style of psalmody in the diocese of Niagara at the main Sunday service is the Gelineau chant, developed by a Jesuit musician in the 1950s. A phrase is chosen as a focus; for Psalm 136, for example, this might be, "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good." This is sung to a simple tune by the entire congregation as an introduction and refrain (or antiphon). A cantor sings the other verses according to a more complicated chant.

Gelineau himself used ancient psalm tones, but later composers have typically created their own musical phrases. In the Anglican Church of Canada, the late George Black of Huron College was a particularly gifted composer of Gelineau psalm music.

I've visited several churches where the bulletin included the musical notation for the refrain. A few of them are St. John the Evangelist, Hamilton; St. Luke, Hamilton; Grace Church, Milton; St. Jude, Oakville; St. Elizabeth, Burlington; St. Alban the Martyr, Grand Valley; St. John, Ancaster; and All Saints, Ridgeway. One that printed the cantor's part, too, was Christ Church, Woodburn.

An advantage of the Gelineau chant is that the refrains are short and simple, and therefore congregational participation is very easy, requiring no rehearsal. This can also be the disadvantage. Some of the refrains sound a little like commercial jingles for insurance companies or lingerie. The Church has frequently borrowed its music from the wider culture; unfortunately, our own culture is highly linked to Madison Avenue.

So sometimes something pre-modern is preferable. The most traditional music for the psalms is Gregorian chant, named for Gregory the Great, who was pope around the year 600. (He didn't originate it; he reformed it.) This is a flowing plainchant composed in one of the ancient church modes (or musical scales), typically with several notes to a single syllable. It can lift you to another spiritual realm. You'll find it at St. Barnabas, St. Catharines.

Many composers have set the psalms to tunes with a fixed metre, which requires turning the psalms into metrical poetry. One

familiar example is Psalm 23 in the version "The king of love my shepherd is," #520 in Common Praise. (Its clear metre scans as "the king of love my shepherd IS.") Another is Psalm 46 rendered by Martin Luther as "A mighty fortress is our God."

From the 1560s well into the 1700s, the only hymn-singing in Anglican worship came from books of metrical psalms.

It's possible for the congregation to sing a metrical refrain (instead of a Gelineau refrain) to punctuate the cantor's singing of the other verses. St. Matthias, Guelph, did this the day I visited; they used a metrical refrain from Voices United for Psalm 126.

There are some upbeat, contemporary musical renderings of the psalms, too. Once when I visited St. Christopher's, Burlington, they used a rousing version of Psalm 100 by Linnea Good, a liberal Protestant songwriter who is now based in the Okanagan Valley.

To my taste, Anglican chant is still the very best way to sing a psalm. It combines an intensity of attention with a peacefulness of spirit. Unlike Gregorian or Gelineau, it can be sung in harmony. But it's a little hard for congregations to learn, and it's rare in our diocese. I've found it sung at evensong at Christ's Church Cathedral in Hamilton by their very fine choir. And recently at St. John the Evangelist, Elora, I heard a stunningly exquisite and haunting Anglican chant setting for the searing Psalm 137. The

composer's name wasn't printed in the bulletin, but I found out later that it was Noel Edison, the church's music director.

In smaller churches, and in larger churches at early services, the psalms are more frequently said than sung. There are many ways of doing this. At Christ Church, Flamborough, when I visited, it was done responsively by verse (that is, the minister and the congregation alternated verses). At St. Simon's, Oakville, it's done at the early service responsively by half-verse. At St. John's, Elora, at the 9 a.m. service, it's done antiphonally by verse (that is, those on the south side of the centre aisle alternate with those on the north side).

In convents such as St. Michael's House, Oakville, the psalm is said antiphonally by verse, but there's a two-second pause at the half-verse. When I first heard this style many years ago I found it a bit mannered, but I soon came to find it very helpful and focusing.

Some follow the psalm with a psalm prayer from the Book of Alternative Services, some with a doxology (the "gloria patri"), some with nothing at all. Each approach has its pro's and con's, and some folks have strong views on the matter.

Our use of the psalter provides a great example of how the diocese of Niagara worships. We share a common worship founded in the witness of Scripture, but we support a creative and fascinating variety of local styles.

Journeys

ROGER HARRIS
ANGELICAN FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER

It was at a recent A.F.P. Prayer Day, that through an opportunity of choice of workshop, I was enlightened to a part of Advent that we read about each year, but is perhaps eclipsed by the real reason for our celebration - the birth of Jesus.

The subject of this particular workshop was the Labyrinth, and I have to confess that apart from a fleeting connection in the past, I had not followed up on this to broaden my approach to prayer, perhaps partly due to opportunity, and partly due to accessibility.

The Labyrinth is a Journey

The Labyrinth is itself a journey, where upon entering, one walks a circular path, which eventually arrives at the center. Here there are several prayer stations for rest and contemplative prayer, before continuing on the return journey.

After a presentation on the history of the Labyrinth, we were invited to experience for ourselves what the Labyrinth could do to help us in our communion with God. In this, we each began a journey.

Although we were a group, we were all invited to start when we were ready. On entering, each individual proceeded at their own pace, overtaking some, and being overtaken by others. The focus is not to reach the center in the quickest time, but to reach it at the right time, with everything of heart and mind gathered together. Then, on

reaching the center and the presence of God, all can be laid before him in prayer.

The return journey is no less meaningful, and gives an opportunity for reflection and focus. It is by no means a moving away from God, it is again a time of contemplation and sowing of seeds for the future, so that on reaching the exit one can feel refreshed and uplifted.

God Knows What We Need

As with all journeys, the content is not the same for any two of us, and God knows what each of us needs. It was my journey through the Labyrinth, which brought to mind three other journeys that took place at this time of year, two millennia ago. Each had its own uniqueness but they all had one thing in common - to glorify God, and to see His benevolence, born in a stable.

The first and most significant journey was that of Mary and Joseph, and may well have been the most arduous and hazardous. It would probably have taken them nine or ten days considering Mary's condition, but each knew what waited at the end, if not the elements surrounding it. Theirs was a journey of fulfillment, knowing that their relationship with God was assured in the events that were to unfold in the birth of a baby boy.

The shepherds probably had the shortest journey, but more than likely the most enlightening. They traveled in anticipation, not knowing what to expect. They have witnessed the wonder of an angel appearing before them, giving them the news of the birth of a Messiah, and not to pass this by, they decide to go and see this miracle for themselves. On arrival at their destina-

tion, one can only try to imagine what thoughts were going through their minds as they see laid out before them a scene that the world in its 'weariness' had been waiting for. A babe, in a cradle, in a manger, in Bethlehem.

Perhaps having the greatest distance to travel, the three Magi had the most time to reflect on the necessity of their journey. Knowing the reason, these three Kings journeyed in homage. Humility was also to be a part of this experience, because they knew that as great as they were, with all their learning and wisdom, they would be entering into the presence of a king destined to become greater than all the Rulers of the earth, past, present and future.

Better to Travel Hopefully

Three journeys, all leading to a place

where God resided and all leading away again when fulfillment was given. A mother to the pain of a crucified son, a babe who was eventually to find no place to lay His head, shepherds to return to their flocks and magi to their life of privilege. Three journeys all part of a chosen path that each of us take in seeking our own fulfillment and the presence of God.

It is said that it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive. To travel hopefully is most certainly what we do, for although we do not know what the future holds, we know that we do not travel alone, and, thanks be to God, we do have a destination. If we keep this in focus, our journey will be less arduous and our arrival will give us rewards that will make the trodden path a thing of challenge, accomplishment, and a new beginning.

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FOCUS ON YOUTH



Youth Ministry Leaders Conference

JOYCE WILTON

It was an absolutely glorious weekend at Canterbury Hills. The sun was shining, the trees were a palate of fall beauty, the program was full of information, the music and worship were full

had to say. Kim Martignago from St. John's in Niagara Falls said "I was amazed how jammed packed the weekend was with awesome information, there was almost too much to take in over two days. It was great to meet other

James, Guelph said "I found it very interesting to hear from Dave Overholt how things are changing in Youth Ministry and how we as leaders need to adapt. The weekend challenged me to question my parish about our mandate for youth ministry - is it just for the kids in our parish or is it to reach out to community kids as well? I left with many new ideas, I enjoyed meeting other leaders and feel I am on the right track. This was my first overnight at Canterbury and I really enjoyed it. I would most certainly attend this event again, it was renewing and enlightening."

Donna Ellis from Christ Church, Woodburn said "the conference was everything I expected. I got just what I needed, lots of usable information, and fabulous workshops. The music from the Niagara Youth Ministry Band was incredible and inspiring, and now I have my own CD of their music and I don't have to borrow my daughter's. The greatest change of thinking that I take away is the concept of mentoring. We have a huge role to play in young peoples' lives and it is as simple as just a few at a time. That was a gift!"

youth leaders from all over and to share ideas with them. Dave Overholt was so full of wisdom and energy. I can't wait to get back to my church so that I can use all the stuff I learned."

Diane Hilborn from St.



From Left: Peter DeGroot (Diocese of Niagara), Rev. Archie Hunter (Diocese of Ottawa), Rev. Darlene Cunliffe (Diocese of Huron), Mary Gordon (Diocese of Niagara)

of Spirit-filled energy and the guest speaker Dr. Dave Overholt was challenging, supportive and enlightening. But the most important element was that 30 youth leaders, 10 from Niagara, came with energy, enthusiasm and a passion for young people in their church. We called it "Looking Forward: Trends and Directions in Youth Ministry." It was billed as a weekend conference for youth leaders, volunteer and professional, to learn, network and gain support for the very important ministry they offer to their parishes. It was a cooperative effort between the dioceses of Niagara, Toronto and Ottawa, but the invitation was sent out broadly.

The feedback from Niagara participants was glowing and here is just a sample of what they

JYC, An Awesome Parish Experience

ERIN BIGGS
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES,
ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST (HAMILTON)

When Joyce Wilton (a Diocesan Consultant in Youth Ministry) asked me in the spring if St. John's was interested in hosting the regional youth event called Junior Youth Connections (JYC), I was excited - but also a little apprehensive. I'd never attended the event before and so wasn't sure what to expect.

I soon found out that it was an event for kids ages 9 - 13 and that other parishes in the area would be invited to attend. October is a busy time of year for us at St. John's (and everybody else!) and I was wary about adding more to my plate then I could handle. I didn't need to have worried! Working with Joyce was an easy and enjoyable experience. I did little more than show up! The event ran beautifully, the students had a blast and the adults came away better equipped for their ministries. This was a positive experience through and through.

First there was the main event - the experience of the middle school students. After a few mixers and ice breakers, they built and played through a mini golf course in our gym. I'm not sure which part they found more fun: making the course, playing it, or running around and knocking it all over when they were done! This section of the evening, though planned and prepared by the Diocesan team, was run by high school students from our youth group. It was amazing to see them fit into that leadership role, taking up that responsibility and succeeding. It's entirely possible they had more fun running the games than the younger students did playing them! After assembling (and dismantling!) the mini golf course, the participants were treated to "make-your-own-ice-cream-Sundaes." This was also a blast (though apparently the chocolate-orange ice cream isn't

all it's cracked up to be) and it gave the students some time to socialise with new friends.

While all these things were going on, the adults had the opportunity to attend a workshop run by Joyce Wilton. We dis-



cussed topics from the developmental stage of our students and the spiritual needs of pre-teens, to the importance of leadership teams and congregational ownership of youth ministry. This was an enormously helpful learning experience which introduced leaders not only to the information presented in the workshop itself, but to the resources of the diocese. We were all given a handbook designed to help and support us in our ministries.

The evening ended with worship time. Each participant was given play-doh with which to shape a symbol of something we wanted to offer to God. This worshipping experience was accessible and understandable to the students and it was moving to see each participant come forward and lay down his/her offering before the cross. Music leadership was provided by Jamie Barnes of the NYC Band, and the youth and their leaders praised God together before going our separate ways.

I would like to take this opportunity to do two things. First, I would like once again to thank Joyce and everyone else at the DRC who worked so hard to make this event happen. Second, I would like to encourage anyone and everyone who works with middle school students to participate in the next Junior Youth Connections planned for St. George's, St. Catharines on April 16, 2006. It is a thoroughly positive experience and your students and your leaders will benefit from it!

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Wisdom of our Youth

ERIN MARRIOTT AND CRAIG FAIRLEY
YEAR 2 YLTP LEADERS

Although the title may sound like an oxymoron to some, the delegates from the Youth Leadership Training Program (a three year program) who were meeting at Canterbury Hills over the last weekend in October had a different experience. In Bothwell House, those about to go into their third year met to prepare for their final year of YLTP and had the opportunity to address the participants in the Looking Forward; Trends and Directions in Youth Ministry Conference (who were also meeting at Canterbury Hills) during their Saturday evening worship!

The youth who did the homily answered the question: What are the most important things youth leaders need to know about leading youth? It was set within the context of singing "Draw the Circle Wide," (the way only Niagara youth seem able to) accompanied by the NYC Band. Not surprisingly, the YLTP youths' answers expressed a wisdom beyond their years and reflected the objectives we should all have as leaders of any group:

- Help us build connections
- Expect the unexpected
- Be yourself
- Be willing to try new things

- Follow through on your commitments
- Trust us
- Foster Respect
- Give us flexibility, but with purpose
- Listen when we need to talk
- Accept us for who we are
- Remember your own youth
- If you're not excited, we won't be excited
- We need to learn from our mistakes but please, don't set us up for failure

Wise words from our future leaders of today...our leaders of tomorrow!

The Youth Leadership Training Program will see 15 more youth commissioned as leaders for the world by June 2006. The program has a 25 year history. Where are the commissioned leaders from past years today? Where will this fresh batch of leaders be? You will find them in our churches, in businesses, schools and social service agencies in our communities. In all of these settings, you will find people whose lives have been inspired, nurtured and enhanced by their relationships with YLTP graduates. The ripple effect of positive leadership flows through our diocese and beyond its borders to continually 'draw the circle wide'.

It is almost time to begin registering a new group of budding leaders for the next session of YLTP during March Break. Think



Front: Laura Dawson, Lorraine Pratas, Kristi Boulton, Paul Lukosius, Craig Fairley (Staff). Middle: Christine Pugh, Vanessa Olton, Hanna Calderwood, Steff Browning, Dave Gould, Dean Sutton-Greenhalgh. Back: Rev. Erin Marriott (Staff), Clair Macaulay-Newcombe, Alicia Archbell, Jenn Cummings, Rebekah Clause, Trish Gould

about those around you between the ages of 13-15 who might make great leaders and encourage them to apply. Remember, we all have a responsibility to draw the circle wide, have our hearts touch far horizons,

and dream dreams larger than we have before! This is the leadership the Youth Leadership Training Program fosters; these are the kind of leaders we need in our communities, our diocese, and in our world!

Regional Youth Ministry



From Left: Chris Saayman, Rev. Stephanie Pellow, Julian Rossiter, and Trish Gould planning cluster youth activities at Greater Wellington open space.

CHRISTYN PERKONS & JOYCE WILTON
CONSULTANTS IN YOUTH MINISTRY

North Greater Wellington

One of the key areas of interest in the New Niagara process was the need for more regional youth ministry; that is, parishes wanted help creating joint youth ministry with other parishes that were geographically close. In response to this, Niagara Youth Ministry was able to use Bill Mous (the recipient of a Millennium Grant) to interview many parish priests across the Diocese to try to identify more specific needs and potential clusters of parishes. With encouragement from the Rev. Peter Scott of St. Mark's, Orangeville, and the Ven. Bruce McPetrie of St. Columba's, St. Catharines, we began this regional work with Open Space events hosted by their parishes.

Twelve people committed to youth and youth work; clergy and laity, youth and adults from St. Mark's, Orangeville, St. Alban's, Grand Valley, All Saints, Erin and St. John's, Mono Mills (Diocese of Toronto), met on October 15th for an Open Space event around the idea of developing youth ministry connections and activities among the Anglican churches in that geographical area.

The enthusiastic group ended a successful, collaborative morning with plans well underway for youth events beginning with a guided Bruce Trail hike on Sunday, November 13th. Also in the works are a youth canoe trip in the summer of 2006, a youth worship service developed by participants to be hosted by St. John's in January, and a youth

forum on social justice issues in March hosted by St. Alban's. As well, there are tentative plans for a confirmation retreat this winter depending on the level of interest. Details will be sent to each of the parishes in the cluster as plans are finalized.

In closing the Open Space event, participants spoke to their delight in the concreteness of the plans, the shared leadership across clergy/laity and youth/adult participants, and their anticipation of the joys of youth activities beyond the parish walls. This small but mighty group left on a high about the possibilities of doing youth ministry together. You'll be hearing more about their activities!

St. Catharines Area

The best laid plans don't always work out the way you had expect-

ed, but with God's presence it's amazing what can happen! On Saturday October 22, the plan was that representatives from the nine parishes in St. Catharines, lay and ordained and all ages, would gather in an Open Space format to talk about the possibility and future of cooperative Area Youth Ministry in that region. Invitations went out in July, reminder notices were sent to parishes in September and emails followed but in the end due to busy schedules, miscommunications and whatever else, only a few showed up - What do we do now, we asked each other?

Well, as the Spirit would lead us and as Open Space philosophy states, "who ever comes are the right people", and so it was. Gathered were the area Archdeacon, a professional youth worker, a local parish priest and a parish volunteer/parent, all of whom were ready to roll up their sleeves, name the issues, work together and think positively about St. Catharines' ability to minister to youth.

By the end of our morning together, we had hopes and dreams for a number of joint ministries and plans of how to begin to work together to make them happen. We will unveil these plans in subsequent issues as they begin to formulate and take shape, so stay tuned as St. Catharines Area Youth Ministry is launched.

Are you in a cluster of parishes with the potential to do joint youth ministry? Are your youth eager to participate in group youth ministry but you don't have enough young people to make it happen? Call Joyce (x440) or Christyn (x460) at the Diocesan Resource Centre (905-527-1316) to talk about regional youth ministry in your area.

Advent Activity Resources

Looking for activities for Christmas and Epiphany for your church school or your home? The Children and Family Ministries Library has several resources that you are welcome to borrow.

Debbie O'Neal's **Before and After Christmas** offers a host of ideas for activities and crafts in the days leading up to Christmas and after Christmas. There are accompanying Bible passages that families could read together which complement many of the activities.

In **Advent Arts and Christmas Crafts** by Jeanne Heiberg, ideas run the gamut from tree decorations to Advent and Epiphany crafts to a variety of Christmas Creches ranging from simple to more complex.

Advent Workshop for Kids offers yet another array of crafts suitable for both family and church school Advent and Christmas activities as well as a simple Epiphany drama.

Finally, both **Best of Blessings: Advent, Christmas & Epiphany** and **Gathering: Resources for Worship Planners** offer crafts, dramas, prayers and other liturgical suggestions for all aspects of the season.

Any of these resources can be borrowed for a three week period by calling Christyn Perkons, 905-527-1316 x460 or emailing christyn.perkons@niagara.anglican.ca.

United Church offers Youth Ministry Training



Front: Sonya Bolek (St. John's, St. Catharines) and Donna Ellis (Christ Church, Woodburn). Back: Rev. Kathy Morgan (Christ Church, Woodburn), Rev. Erin Marriott (St. Paul's, Jarvis/Christ Church, Nanticoke), and Christyn Perkons (Diocesan Staff).

BY DONNA ELLIS
CHRIST CHURCH, WOODBURN

Christyn Perkons and Joyce Wilton, Consultants in Youth Ministry had been searching for some time for a youth ministry training program designed for adults working with youth. Their criteria; relevant material, affordable price, geographical proximity and theology compatible with Anglican practice, made it a challenging search. In 2002, they "discovered" the NEOS program operated by the United Church of Canada at their Five Oaks Retreat Centre under the direction of Andrea Butters.

The NEOS courses focus on the foundations of intentional

youth ministry; worship, leadership, outreach, faith development and current issues. The revolving leadership team (volunteers and paid staff) brings a wealth of knowledge to each program. These programs are currently offered three times a year and run Friday night to Sunday afternoon. To earn a Youth Ministry certificate, you must attend six programs, two of which are compulsory; "Beyond Bowling: Faith development with Youth" and "Nuts and Bolts of Youth Ministry". Five Oaks encourage all denominations and faiths to take full advantage of this wonderful program.

Says Donna, Youth Leader

from Christ Church, Woodburn, "I have been a Youth Ministry volunteer for nine years and had been searching for some formal training. This program was exactly what I was looking for. Each program I attended gave me effective strategies for ministering to the youth in my church. I met other youth leaders and was able to share experiences and learn new ways of meeting the spiritual needs of the youth. The weekend is spiritually uplifting and I always return energized and ready to continue in youth ministry. This past April, I completed my sixth course, and was awarded the NEOS Youth Ministry certificate along with six other

participants. I would highly recommend the training to anyone involved in youth ministry or considering it, paid or volunteer."

Sonya Bolek from St. John's, Port Dalhousie comments, "The NEOS program at Five Oaks is wonderful! It is a chance to network with other youth leaders and get some inspiration and ideas. The grounds at Five Oaks are sacred; walking there is just enough to infuse you with the Holy Spirit and give your faith a burst. I would recommend any of the NEOS Youth Ministry training programs."

For more information about the NEOS program: www.five-oaks.on.ca

All My Relations... the Journey Continues

CHRISTYN PERKONS
PROGRAM CONSULTANT

All My Relations meandered down the peninsula to St. George's, St. Catharines on Sunday, October 16th. Over 80 participants spent the afternoon and early evening with local indigenous leaders. The event opened with the Thanksgiving Address given by Jackie Labonte which acknowledges the gifts of the Creator and asks a blessing on the gathering. Then traditional pipe teachings were shared by pipe bearer, Dave Labbe. The community drum (Bill Russ and friends) held participants rapt with three songs before everyone moved to one of five workshops: Native Cooking, Dream Catchers, Drum & Dance, Native Spirituality and Bead Bracelets for Young Children. Amazingly, the cooking class had more pre-teen chefs than adults, and they turned out a fabulous feast under the direction of Ted Sider from Beantree's Cafe.

The group feasted on Squash Soup, Organic Greens with Green Onion Vinaigrette, Fry Bread (scones), Wild Rice with Cranberries, Corn Casserole, and Blueberry Dumplings. The feedback from the group about the aboriginal workshop leaders and all the activities was glowing. In fact, folks are asking Rev. Val Kerr, who coordinated the event with Christyn Perkons, Diocesan Program Consultant, just when the next All My Relations event is scheduled. So, don't worry if you missed the fun this year; plans are already underway for another All My Relations event next October with more food and new workshops. In the meantime, if you are looking for New Agape resources for your parish (either people or materials), please contact Christyn at 905-527-1316 x460. More pictures of the All My Relations events can be found at www.zipsqueal.com (click on All the Pictures).



Jackie Labonte assists Jennifer Fleury with her dream-catcher.

This Holy Season: Preparation and Celebration

PETER WALL

I am writing this piece while enjoying absolutely glorious autumn weather on a mountain top in Tennessee, visiting the beautiful University of the South and its impressive School of Theology. Seems an odd place and odd weather to be contemplating the events of later this month when we will keep our winter feast of Christmas.

I was visiting a friend one day recently in his office and he was playing as superb new recording from England of church choirs singing Christmas music - the hymn "See Amid The Winter's Snow" was playing as I was listening, and I queried my friend about listening to Christmas music so early. He replied that it wasn't the seasonal music that he was listening to so much as it was a new choir that he had not heard before. He then went on to say that, for him, it wasn't Christmas until the Offertory at midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, when "See Amid the Winter's Snow" was the only hymn appropriate for that moment! There, in a nutshell, is Christmas for us all - a particular set of practices and routines, all set in the



Peter Wall

traditions of families, friends, parish, etc. Each of us has our own moment - a favorite hymn, a particular food, a certain gathering of those close to us - for us, those are the moments which 'define' Christmas.

We will, in these days which lie directly ahead, be preparing (as I encouraged in my last column) for the annual celebration of the birth of Jesus. We need to remember that we call this feast 'Christmas' but its proper name is The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We celebrate His birth - we will spend most of the rest of the next three and a half months remembering his life - even though we must acknowledge that, for many who will worship with us over Christmas, that hour or so they spend (often on Christmas Eve) is the only exposure to this magnificent person's life they will get, in church, for most of another year, unless they are part of the group which will also be with us on Easter morning!

Because Christmas and its liturgies form so important a part of our life as Christians, it is important to plan liturgies carefully and sensitively. Just like my friend, everyone has their 'moment' - it may be a particular

hymn, a particular time of the day, the presence of significant family members or friends, a particular portion of scripture, a particular flavour, and a particular aroma! For many, too, we must remember, Christmas brings its own special tears and emotions, often if one is keeping Christmas for the first time without someone special and fondly remembered.

All of these considerations need to be held in mind when we who are parish leaders (both lay and ordained) are planning liturgies for the season. Traditions are important, and play a huge role at this time of year. The warmth of our welcome to the visitor, the ease with which those unfamiliar (or even minimally familiar!) with our services find their way round bulletins, prayer books and hymnals, the sincerity of our invitation for all to participate in worship - all of these qualities; will be long remembered and deeply appreciated. At the same time, there is a temptation for liturgical planners to do the 'same' thing, year after year. After all, Christmas doesn't change, does it? Perhaps not but we change... Look at some of the new Christmas hymns, for example... Remember to keep the beginnings of a season and hold off on hold off on hymns like

We Three Kings or The First Nowell until Epiphany. Good King Wenceslas (irrespective of those who edited "Common Praise") is not a Christmas hymn, but rather is particularly apt for St. Stephen's Day, now kept on August 31!

One should not, however, lose the opportunity to sing that wonderful tune - Tempus adest floridum - so try it with its good Advent text during December, at Hymn 109, Common Praise. In what ways can we who are lectors, lay readers, clergy, church school teachers work together to bring the age old and most beloved of Biblical texts to life? Can the readings be done dramatically or read by a number of voices? How can the children of the parish be part of those Christmas liturgies (I am not speaking of the pageant here, but the actual liturgies themselves)? Are there much loved and deeply meaningful passages of 'secular' literature which deserve a place in our seasonal liturgies? Can we or should we adapt them for liturgical use? In other words, in what ways can the already deeply moving liturgies of Christmas be made even better so that they provide refreshment, stimulation, and comfort to God's people? May God's abundant blessing be with us all this Holy season.

Getting To Know You

The Reverend Audrey Conard & the Reverend David Howells

• Spiritual Directors

FRAN DARLINGTON

The title "spiritual director" may seem intimidating to those who have had little or no contact with people who offer this ministry. Actually, "intimidating" is the last thing it is meant to be, and the last word anyone who knows them would use to describe the Reverend Audrey Conard and the Reverend David Howells, Spiritual Directors in the Diocese of Niagara.

Rather, time with David or Audrey gives rise to words such as gentle, humble, warm and gifted with a delightful sense of humour, added to perceptive, wise, patient and deeply faithful.

Both David and Audrey emphasise that this is a ministry of listening and discernment, and readily explain the word "director." Audrey admits the "unfortunate connotation" of the word, particularly in this era of self-actualisation, explaining: "The word 'director' does not necessarily mean to tell people what to do. It's more (a matter of discerning) 'What direction are you heading?' In this case, it's the Spirit doing the directing."

David's explanation is similar: "One of the things a Spiritual Director needs to be able to do is to use (their) training and experience to listen and try to discern what the Spirit is saying to the person. It's not about control or intimidation...it's about being accompanied by a guide who gives you direction which you need to affirm or ask for clarification on."

Seeing the Wood for the Trees

David tells this story on himself: "When I go and see my Spiritual Director, often I go and talk about all the things that are happening in my inner life, how that relates to my work, my family and my prayers. When my Director reflects back what he thinks he hears, I'm often startled by the clarity and obviousness of what he hears and what he says, but I'm so close and so tangled up in my life, I can't step back far enough to see the wood for the trees!"

Audrey identifies three participants: "Between the two of us (director and directee), we'll recognise the presence of the Spirit in daily life. A huge part of spiritual direction is helping people learn how to pay attention to their lives, motivations and the presence of God. It's key that they have to believe God is present and active in life. If not, we're just talking."

Why consider finding a spiritual director? David: "The reason you see a spiritual director is when you find that your spiritual journey isn't moving, or seems to be going in circles, or seems to be flat, tired and empty." He continues: "I think there are two levels in the Christian journey. You join the church... God gave you something that brought you in, some gift, some touch of love, and some sense of God's presence. A lot of people are there, and experience their journey through the community and culture of the Anglican Church... Another

level of spiritual direction is for when you want to go beyond maintenance in your spiritual life...to take the call to saintliness seriously. You want to follow the call to be Christ-like, to be serious about the conversion of life and seeking the face of God. Here, you need someone to keep you objective, someone to be accountable to."

Not Psychotherapy

Audrey explains: "Our task is to listen for the Spirit, not to fix anything, not to get ahead of God... It's not psychotherapy, or career counselling, (though) some stances are similar... Because the focus is on the directee, it's not just a casual, friendly conversation. We know things in our head, but it doesn't necessarily follow that we live that way. What follows from that is the mutual work that is in addition to recognising the Presence in one's life - making real the words and images."

David is clear: "We're trying to bring people into a relationship with God - that's what being clergy is all about. (We have) to live a life of focused prayer and meditation...When I'm directing someone, I offer my reflections, encourage them to listen and see what rings true for them, because a lot of what I say is intuitive, so they have to play their part in listening to discern whether what I have said rings a bell for them, or is just my stuff and doesn't resonate for them."

David explains his commitment: "You should take your spiritual director seriously. They give you their focused attention. They enter a relationship with you that can be costly - I have found taking someone through spiritual direction exhausting. Accompanying (someone) in the (Ignatian Spiritual) exercises means you have to be there, you can't go away on weekends, and you find out all sorts of painful things that you can hardly bear. The spiritual director makes a commitment to that person, that relationship. Spiritual directors pray for their people, hold you in their heart."

With a gentle smile, Audrey also affirms her commitment to those who approach her: "...at its simplest, it's going to sound simple - but I love my directees, and I pray for them. It seems to be true that God can use that for transformation... Directees bring their prayer and life, and we look at it together once a month... It's really gracious to have someone trust you with their spiritual life. This is a very humbling ministry, in that you get to see what is going on, that the Spirit is present, and joyful!"

Responsibility

David and Audrey agree that a directee also has responsibility. Audrey: "One way of discerning is (to ask) if a person is serious about their prayer life - that and lived life... One of the benefits is accountability, having to pay attention...keeps the person coming because they're going to present it somewhere...If a person is coming for spiritual direction and remains in the relationship, right away we know we are talking with people who care." David: "You should do the work your spiritual director gives you to do. If you just want to poodle along, go and have a nice chat with your rector once a month."

Addressing another issue, David says, "You should pay your spiritual director. For

most directors, this is part of their income," suggesting, "You should pay at least what your time is valued at per hour."

Audrey explains: "...spiritual direction isn't for everybody. You need to be able to be self-reflective. Some folks have all the rhetoric and all the theology, but they just want to chat with you... Sometimes people come expecting to learn techniques, and sometimes I do teach different ways of prayer, but primarily it's about one person's personal growth in relationship to God...They need to be open to the transformation that the Spirit will offer."

God Leads

David adds: "If you're serious, God will lead you to the right place. It may take a while. For the first time or two...both director and directee have to listen to their hearts to see if this feels right." Then, "In the spiritual journey, you'll need to change directors...It's as if God says, 'This person for this part of the journey, and then you need to change. And you'll know!'"

Both theologically liberal, David and Audrey work with people from many Christian traditions, men and women, clergy and lay, discovering where the Christian community is growing spiritually.

David and Audrey are priests in this Diocese, David currently the Rector of the Church of St. David and St. Patrick in Guelph, and Audrey an Honorary Assistant

with a scholarship in Creative Writing. Audrey also writes poetry: "When I realised what I was writing was praying, a lot of things started to shift." After many questions and years of study, Audrey was ordained in 1993, and has consistently held half-time parish ministries as well as her work in spiritual direction: "That's what God seems to be doing with my ministry, half and half spill over into each other. It all seems highly irregular to me - but God does what God wants to do!" Audrey also co-ordinates the Diocesan Companions program, a mentoring relationship between a trained group of clergy and lay people with newly ordained clergy and licensed lay workers. She serves on the Diocesan Candidates Committee, part of the discernment process for people exploring the call to ordained ministry, and leads occasional quiet days and retreats.

David

David was born in Uganda, brought up in England from age 7, and ordained in 1981 in Durham Cathedral, England. He immigrated to Canada in 1984 with his wife, Lucy Reid (Ecumenical Chaplain at the University of Guelph, and also a priest in this Diocese). David served in the Dioceses of Montreal and Moosonee before coming to Niagara, where he shared the University chaplaincy with Lucy for three years. He served as Rector of St. John's Church, Rockwood, for seven years before his

appointment almost six years ago as Rector of "St. D. & P." David and Lucy parent three young people, Tom 19, Kate 17, and Ben 15. David also crafts seasonal liturgies which he posts on the parish web-site. He reads widely in Buddhist and Hindu spirituality in western communities, finding "spiritual life is vibrant. There's liveliness there..." He also reads The Economist magazine, to "know what's going on in the world, more than on television." He pokes a little fun at himself too, saying, "The only books I read now have to be short, and have pictures."

Where to Start

If you are interested in exploring this ministry, the Diocesan Resource Centre has a list of spiritual directors for southern Ontario, and your rector will support your search. David advises, "You should do (spiritual work) with someone you have no other relationship with, not your rector, and your director cannot be a friend," though the Gaelic name for this ministry is 'Anam Cara,' or 'Soul Friend.' Some directors choose to call themselves Spiritual Companion or Guide. Whatever the label, such people are crucial to the ongoing discovery of God's working in our lives, and this Diocese is richly blessed in David and Audrey, and many others, clergy and lay, who offer this ministry among us.



The Reverend Audrey Conard



The Reverend David Howells

at St. Cuthbert's Church, Oakville. They are both trained in Ignatian Spirituality, following the pattern developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit Order in the 16th century, and taught, in this Diocese, especially at the Ignatian Retreat Centre for Spirituality at Guelph called Loyola House.

Audrey

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, Audrey and her husband, Bruce, moved to Canada in 1973 with their first daughter, Sabrina. Then, "knowing we would become citizens, the first thing we did in Canada was have a Canadian citizen!" - a second daughter, Hilary. Bruce took a position with Inco in Mississauga; he recently retired as Vice-President of Safety, Health and Environment. Audrey twinkles as she describes her work for Safety, Health and Salvation! "An English Literature major,

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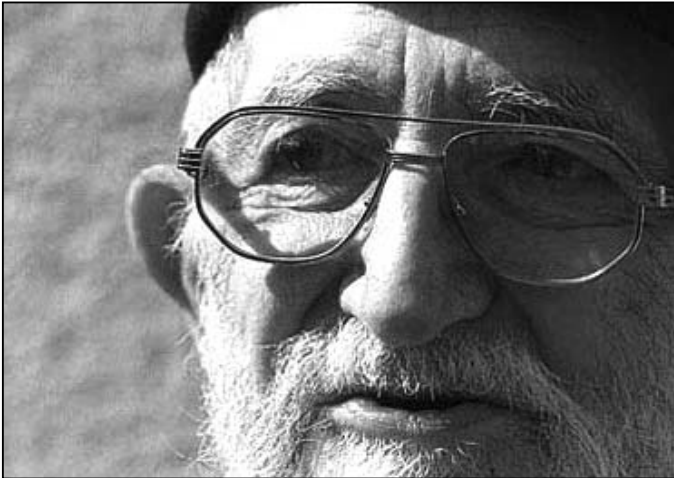
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EDITORIAL



Where are the Prophets?

CHRISTOPHER M. GRABIEC

It is interesting to note that 93 year old Abbe Pierre, the popular French (Roman) priest (who has topped French popularity lists for so long that he withdrew his name last year to make way for others) has spoken out with substantial criticism of his church. In his recent book "My, God...Why?" he asserts the possibility of Christ's marriage to Mary Magdalene. He admits to his own weakness and failures against the vow of celibacy. He states that neither the current Bishop of Rome, nor his predecessor (John Paul) have put forward a single decisive argument showing that

ordaining women priests would be against the faith. He approves of civil unions for homosexuals and calls for the marriage of the clergy. One wonders if they will suspend this 93-year-old from his "active duties" as a priest!

Although many of these things may not (or perhaps may) be issues to most of us in the Anglican church, the editors of this paper, have to admire this 93 year old priest for his ability to speak out in areas that he feels are important, even if that means that he takes stands against the legitimate authority of his church.

What about us? We have so many issues

in this church about which people surely must have strong feelings. Our church (along with others in Canada) has experienced a huge crisis with regard to residential schools. We continue to have on-going responsibility. Have we learned anything? What do we have to say? Where are we going in the future with the issues that caused this very problem?

How about the issue of same sex marriage? We have folks who feel strongly on either side of this issue. What have we said lately about it? Where are we going? Will those on either side simply remain silent in the hope that the issue will go away? It won't go away - but people may as a result of our silence!

How about the issue of hiring gay clergy in our parishes? Who's talking about that these days? The United States ordained a gay bishop and the Church of England turned one down. What do we feel in our Canadian Anglican hearts?

What about parish closures? Last month Lynne Corfield wrote a brilliant essay on the pastoral issues involved in the closures of Anglican Churches (and parish communities in Niagara). Have we learned anything? Will we continue to stand by and allow "fate" to handle this issue? Fate will only handle the issue with ongoing pain and the division of peoples. Where are the prophets?

What about our ongoing dissatisfaction with liturgical reform in the church. Some are happy to never see the BCP for the rest of their lives. Others lament the fact that it is not the exclusive liturgy of the Anglican Communion. Where are those who need to speak about our future direction? Will our church continue to dwindle as we bicker

ourselves into oblivion?

This list could go on for pages. The editors of this paper are not advocating one side or another at this point. However, what we are asking is where are our prophets? Abbe Pierre reminds us that it is our role to speak out in society. It doesn't matter whether you feel that you are a "conservative or evangelical" Christian or a "raving liberal" Christian - YOU MUST SPEAK. It is in exercising that gift from God that we are able to discern our future direction.

It may well be that some Anglicans feel that we will not listen to them. The community will listen to that which is worth hearing! Recently Evangelical Anglicans formed their own newspaper - the Anglican Planet. It's not a bad paper. However is it not a sign of division in the church? Many feel that it is another blow to our unity and makes us look foolish in the society that surrounds us. We feel that a paper should reflect the thoughts of all of us. Let it be said by the Niagara Anglican that we will listen to all opinions. We certainly may not agree with what is said (on either side of an issue) but we will listen. If the church is to thrive it will be because we - the people of God - hammer these things out and reach consensus.

So here it is. We are calling upon all members of the church to exercise their prophetic role and to speak the truth that they feel in their hearts. No one (clearly no one) has the definitive answer. What we believe is that in listening to one another, we will begin to hear the power of God's Spirit speaking among us. It will then be up to us to live the call of that Spirit in the world around us.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE PUBLISHER'S ADVISORY BOARD

Our thanks to Lynne Corfield for the incredible amount of work and energy that she put into last month's article on the Niagara Falls parish closure issues. We know that Lynne put a great deal of herself into this article. The journey has been long and difficult, but we believe that the local community is beginning to see light and feel hope once again. We received the following comments from a couple in Niagara Falls who asked us not to identify them. We know that these people have suffered a great deal through the changes, but were appreciative of Lynne's efforts in this article:

"We would like to offer (Archdeacon Lynne Corfield) our congratulations on writing such a thorough and well-researched article; it was written with clarity and with compassion for all the churches that have been involved in this tumultuous period.

Thank you for a job well done."

JOHN H. LAWRENCE

Congratulations. I read the November edition last night. It was great. Lynne Corfield's piece on the Niagara Falls Ministry was far too long but the important thing was that it was there and gave me an appreciation of that part of the Diocese. Every Archdeacon should have this as required homework to do for their deaneries in the future. And I loved my "scathing remarks", under my breath, after reading Ian Dingwall. A good 'lefty' writer whom I could tangle with any day!

MICHAEL GRANT

Many thanks to Lynne Corfield for her (Niagara Falls) summary, beginning with the "grim reaper" and ending with the progress that has occurred since then. I feel much better. I was a parishioner of St Stephen's 1951-1961. In Feb 03, I also sent my comments about the closing. They are only buildings but the fixtures are forwarded to other parishes in memory of great times past.

We at St. Michael's Hamilton, have a new envelope secretary from a closed parish in Hamilton. It has been a win-win situation for our parish and especially for her.

The new editors have transformed the paper towards more human interest articles to which all can relate. Keep up the good work.

STEPHANIE PELLOW
DEACON IN CHARGE, ST. ALBAN'S GRAND VALLEY

Dear Chris Grabiec,

Thank you for your editorial, "Is there Anything for Which we can Give Thanks" in the October edition. With acknowledgement from the pulpit, I used some of the ideas and quoted a sentence in my Thanksgiving sermon. I appreciated the relevant resource and hope I was able to create increased interest in reading the paper among parishioners. I wanted them to know the paper is well worth the read from start to finish.

GERDA SCHROEDER
ORGANIST AT ALL SAINTS SINCE 1953

Dear Editor,

I wish to pay tribute to the fine ministry of Rev Brian Burrows at All Saints Church in Niagara Falls. The high calibre of his sermons, week by week, with his tremendous devotion to pastoral care, along with his willingness and ability to sing the services, has brought a complete turn-around in the fortunes of our church. When he came in February 2004, there were few vital signs left at All Saints. In short order, after hearing from our evangelism contact, people who had not been a part of the Anglican community for years, plus many from the churches which had been closed, came to hear the Gospel message he presented in all its power, and they stayed. We have increased our numbers by more than 100% and the church of All Saints is now humming with renewed vitality and burgeoning faith, looking to the future with hope, sure and steadfast.

We are sad that we have to say farewell to Brian Burrows, as he retires at year's end, yet we are thankful that his outstanding ministry has put All Saints on such a firm foundation to start the New Year. We look forward with anticipation to a new ministry as we enter the 150th year of our church at All Saints, Niagara Falls, in 2006.

Niagara Anglican

NEWS • PERSPECTIVES • REFLECTIONS • FOR A GODLY COMMUNITY • DECEMBER 2005

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Let Your Voice be Heard:

The Niagara Anglican welcomes submissions from readers as Letters to the Editor. All submissions must include a name, telephone number, and e-mail or physical address of the author for verification purposes. The newspaper reserves the right to edit submissions.

What is the World Coming to?

JOHN BOTHWELL

Days are shorter, nights are longer and winter storms are on the way, so it must be Advent again!

This is the season when Christians prepare to celebrate Jesus' "First Coming" to a manger at Bethlehem, a story that is often overly romanticized. And then we are warned about his "Second Coming", often in a manner that seems really scary, especially when some preachers may thunder about the rapture, the tribulation, Armageddon, and other fearsome possibilities. So let's think briefly about both of these events.

The stories of Jesus' birth as they are recorded in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke are romantic and miraculous. That is because, like all the New Testament authors, Matthew and Luke wanted their readers to understand that Jesus' birth was a unique Act of God. That is why they wrote about a mystic star, the angel choir, adoring animals, a virgin mother and a perfect baby.

As a result of this emphasis in the Gospels, we often forget the humanity of Jesus and worship "Jesus the Miracle Worker". And sometimes we assume too glibly that He will always deliver miracles, especially if we pray long enough and hard enough. Then, as a result, those who feel their prayers are answered are delighted; and those who are disappointed, experience doubt or disillusionment.

More mature Christians however, recognize that although God can and does work miracles, they are extraordinary and occasional events, and that God works normally through natural ways and ordinary people:

- water, bread and wine
- laying on of hands or touching
- silence or great music

- warm accepting communities
- a word of personal support, or a note of thanks

The supernatural is usually hidden in the heart of what is natural. That is the norm, and the eyes of faith, the same eyes that recognize miracles, can usually discern it there.

- I get worried when I hear "true religion" defined too narrowly, in terms of...
- speaking in tongues.
- when it is expected that even those who are baptized must be "born again."
- when visions and miracles are an expected norm.

Experiences like these are wonderful no doubt, but they are granted only to a few. Therefore, along with



John Bothwell

author Karen Armstrong, I am convinced that the essence of true religion in our confused and divided world of today is compassion. Today, God has no hands but our hands, no feet but our feet, and it is with our eyes that she looks with compassion on poverty, injustice and suffering.

And that brings me to Advent's second emphasis, the "Second Coming" of Christ. The New Testament's apocalyptic passages are enjoying new popularity today. For example, the Left Behind series of popular novels has sold over fifty million copies of stories that describe what might happen during "the Rapture" and in the Tribulation, the Battle of Armageddon and other events described in the Book of Revelation.

If you feel these apocalyptic images are authentic, then that is your choice, they are in the Bible after all. But frankly, I find any literal application of them to today's world is spooky and depressing. For modern mainstream Biblical scholarship has shown that such passages were addressed to Christians who were being persecuted by the Roman

Empire and therefore were written in code language (the word "apocalyptic" is from the Greek for "cover" or "hidden"). Thus the Imperial authorities would not understand their dire images, but Christians would look beneath those images to the real message, which was, "In the end, God's Will, not Caesar's, will prevail!"

Modern scholars also point out that there is an alternative understanding of Christ's Second Coming in the New Testament, which was described by Wm. Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury in the early 1940's in these words:

"In power God's kingdom (the Reign of Christ) was established when Christ was lifted up on the cross. From that moment it was true that 'He cometh with clouds'. But not all people have eyes to perceive, and so the time when every eye shall see Him is still in the future. This is the truth in the expectation of Christ's return, or Second Coming".

In other words, the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, together with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost have made the apocalyptic return of Christ unnecessary. For God's renewing Spirit is continually coming and abiding in our midst!

Still, some day human history could come to a violent and tragic end. But in my view, it is humanity's deadly and destructive habits, rather than an act of God that would be the likeliest cause. Please read Ronald Wright's Canadian best-selling book *A Short History of Progress* for further details.

So when, in the Holy Eucharist, we unite in saying "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again!" we need not assume that a great apocalyptic event is implied by that third exclamation. For God's abiding Spirit is with us now and always, seeking renewal of the whole world and its people. Therefore, this Advent let us pray that all humanity and especially we Christians will not ignore that possibility!

Living by the Compass



Lucy Reid and Fred Evers

Continued from Page 1

in-recovery to Mennonite-turned-Buddhist, with many denominations in between. The common denominator is our desire to create a spiritual community in the midst of our work world.

Anchoring Ourselves in the Changing World of Work

Whatever the book we're reading, the group also acts as a supportive group for personal sharing about life and work. Members have gone through job changes, illness, bereavement and other vagaries of life. The university has down-sized, expanded and cut back again. The questions that repeatedly come to the fore are: How can I anchor myself in something deeper than the changing work world? How can I care passionately about my work, but also let it go and entrust it to God? How can I find balance in a high-stress work setting, and treat those around me with respect even when I don't like what they're doing?

Out of the group has come a book, co-authored by myself and professor of sociology Fred Evers. Fred is known to many youth in the diocese as a former staff member at NYC for several years, and an enthusiastic guitar player. He told me once that he wanted to be able to integrate the NYC Fred with the sociologist Fred - the Christian with the academic. Several coffees and conversations later, we wrote *Working with Spirit: Engaging Spirituality to Meet the Challenges of the Workplace*, published last year by the Anglican Book Centre. In it we have told many stories arising out of the group, looking at some of the difficulties of the work world, and at some of the gifts that a spiritual path of faith can offer, to weave together work and spirit, employment and vocation.

My initial conversation with Tom about seeing all people with God's eyes led to an exploration of spirituality in work. My teachers have been the people who made this exploration with me, and were honest about their struggles, longings and joys. This has been an aspect of ministry that I didn't train for, and didn't plan, but it became a blessing to me.

Expectations

R. D. GLENN

From the first Sunday of Trinity we expect Advent. We expect it to come within twenty or so weeks. We expect the green to be removed from our churches, and replaced with blue or violet. We expect Christmas and all of the joys of that season. With Advent, many of us expect to find ourselves dragged into crowded malls against our will and better judgment. We expect to find caffeine crazed shopaholics clutching and grabbing over-priced trinkets in misplaced attempts to express a love best articulated through the gift of time. We expect to spend this holy season paying two dollars for a cup of mall coffee and complain-



R. D. Glenn

ing about the ignorant person ahead of us in line.

Expectations. We condition ourselves to expect certain things. Repeated miracles become matters of expectation, and so the

world is robbed of wonder. The sun rises and sets, the planets maintain orbit, and the seasons change accordingly. We expect all of this to happen. Expectations quickly become solidified. We define our life in terms of it's adherence to our expectations. Anything outside of the expected is labeled anomaly. Certainly any problems occur outside of the domain of our expected and even prescribed order.

We Dream of Deliverance

And so Advent comes, as expect-

ed. We are transported back two thousand years to life in 1st century Palestine. Life is not easy. In fact, eking out an existence under Roman rule is difficult at best. Being a non-citizen in this distant province of the Empire means oppression, both religious and economic. Generations of oppression have taught us that upward social mobility within the system is impossible. So we dream of deliverance from beyond Pax Romana. We dream of deliverance from God himself. We have come to expect a deliverer - one who will be God's regent on earth. One who will use his political and military might to overthrow the wicked oppressor and restore justice and peace. So strong are our convictions that we can prescribe his lineage, his pedigree and even his mode of deliverance. He will be royalty, a king like David. The coming king will conform to our expectations and he will deliver us.

Now with the benefit of 20/20

hind-sight, and two thousand years of theological reflection we know how the story really goes. The king is born in a manger, and his kingdom is like a little leaven worked into enough dough for 12 loaves (Matthew 13:33). He brought a kingdom not of the military sword, but of the foot-washing towel (and a borrowed one at that). A new reality where serving was greater than military might and dying was better than killing. His kingdom gave prominence to the marginalized, embraced the poor, and forgave the sinful. Not what one might have expected; not by a long-shot.

A Season of Counter-Culture

For me, Advent is a season of surprises. It is a season of revolution and counter-culture; exceeding goals, while shattering and redefining expectations. It is the time of year when I am called to identify and journey with the oppressed. It is the season when I not only look back to the incarna-

tion of God in Jesus of Nazareth, but I also look forward to his coming again.

The situation for many in the world today is not much different from that of 1st century Palestine. Two thirds of the world is oppressed by unfair trade, unmanageable national debt, and the massive wake of Western Capitalism. Earliest Christians proclaimed the simple kerygma, "Maranatha". One word in English, it is two in Aramaic. Maran atha means 'our Lord has come'. I head into this Advent season looking for a coming deliverer.

But, what if he comes in the 21st century equivalent of a manger? What if his rule is totally comprehensive? What if God does what He does best, and surprises us ... again? This Advent season, I expect the unexpected.

Next month's columnist is Bill Checkley, a Trinity College student, reflecting on his recent ACPO experience.

Temporarily Yours: A Story

MARNI NANCEKIVELL

Eric Williams sighed as he put down the phone. He'd been warden of St. Stephen's in the Pines for exactly three months before Susan, their parish priest, had resigned. She had left two weeks ago. And now he was left with lots of questions and a constantly ringing telephone. It seemed like everyone at St. Stephen's felt anxious about their future. He tried his best to reassure people and help them contain their anxiety but it just wasn't working. All folks at St. Stephen's wanted to do now was to find a new rector and move on... quickly. Susan's four years at St. Stephen's had been good years, for the most part. Now they wanted to get back on track as soon as possible.

A telephone call came from Arch-deacon Currie at the Synod Office. It was to tell Eric that the Bishop had appointed an Interim Pastor, the Reverend Canon Ann Bell to come to St. Stephen's in the Pines while the Parochial Committee conducted the search for the new Rector. Eric and Sandy Richards, the other warden, were to have lunch with her downtown tomorrow.

Too Young, Too Old

The next day dawned bright and sunny. "Perhaps it is a good omen!" Eric thought to himself as he combed his hair preparing to leave the house for his lunch meeting with Canon Bell. He hoped that she'd have some experience as a parish priest. He didn't think that someone who was too inexperienced would do for St. Stephen's. On the other hand, he hoped that she wasn't so experienced that she was retired. St. Stephen's was a busy place with lots of life. He knew the entire Parish Council hoped for someone who would fit in to their life at St. Stephen's; even if she'd be there for only a month or two...and even if she'd only work Sundays, for the most part.

Eric and Sandy waited nervously in the restaurant for Canon Bell. Sandy didn't have much more experience than Eric had as she'd stepped in as warden part

way through last year. Playing with his wine glass, Eric surreptitiously eyed the door while he pretended to hold conversation with Sandy. Finally, a middle-aged woman came in the door, said a few words to the maitre d' and walked over to their table. "She looks, kind of, uh...professional!" he remarked to Sandy. "Um-hmm" she responded while the woman approached.

First Meeting

Canon Ann Bell was a woman over 40 with a friendly open face and sparkly brown eyes. "Eric, Sandy?" she inquired. "I'm Ann Bell." She shook hands with them both.



Marni Nancekivell

Eric felt somehow that he should get the conversational ball rolling after they had retreated behind their menus and then emerged to place their orders. "Well, Canon Bell... uh, we're looking forward to having you join us at St. Stephen's for a while. I don't imagine you'll have too much to do other than on Sundays. Susan left us pretty well organized. So, all we want you to do is to take the Sunday services - and not make too many changes. Hopefully we'll have a new rector in place within two or three months and then we can get back on track. Do you have any experience being a parish priest?"

Ann smiled. "Please, Eric, Sandy - call me Ann. I want to tell you how excited I am about joining you at St. Stephen's. But what it sounds like you're expecting of me is simply that I be your supply priest. That isn't what I am. I will be with you as a trained Interim Priest. I am an experienced parish priest who has been the incumbent of several parishes in the past. But now, my specialty is Interim Ministry." Seeing the confused looks on Eric and Sandy's faces, she inquired "Do you understand what Interim Ministry is about?"

Feeling their anxiety mounting about understanding neither the process nor the language attached to it, Eric and Sandy shook their heads in unison. They felt like naughty school children who had been caught by

the teacher without the correct answers to their homework.

Intense Time

Ann smiled and said "Let me explain it to you. We know that a time of transition, like the one you're going through right now at St. Stephen's in the Pines, is an intense time for any congregation. There are lots of feelings bubbling up. I'll bet you feel all sorts of conflicting things - like anxiety, grief, fear and sadness - all mixed in with excitement about the new possibilities in your common life.

"Yes" said Eric, exhaling slowly. "You're certainly describing what I'm feeling."

"Me too" said Sandy. "Except I'm also feeling a bit angry with Susan for leaving when things seemed to be going so well for us in the parish. We thought that we had a really good working relationship. Now, I feel - I don't know, almost abandoned. Then there's the Diocese to deal with. We can't see the Bishop for another four weeks and we want to get this process started. Still, I suppose we're not the only parish that he has to deal with."

"That's true" said Ann, "and that is why I am going to be there to work in your midst. Along with being a time of intense feelings, we know that the time of transition is also a ripe time for growth and learning."

Hearing this Eric could feel himself bristling. "We're not really interested in growing and learning. We're interested in getting ourselves a new rector, ASAP!" He placed his water glass down on the table a bit too loudly, for emphasis. Feeling a bit sheepish, he said "Susan was with us for four years. Bob Blackburn before her was with us for 11 years. That's the kind of priest we're looking for. He was creative, dynamic energetic and caring...just the kind of person we need now."

"Yes" observed Ann. "I also understand that he left here after having a breakdown. And you replaced him very quickly with Susan. I know Susan. She felt that people of St. Stephen's wanted her to be a savior who would do it all. At this Sandy said "Yes, she did tell us that. She didn't feel able to cope with all of the demands of the job."

"Is that the way she phrased it?" inquired Ann.

"No" Sandy admitted. "She said something more like you did. Susan said that the people of the parish were truly the 'ministers' and that she was there to support us in our own ministry. Except that we expected her to do it all."

Fundamental Tasks

"You see" said Ann, "that is why I am here. To work with you and to work through issues just like that one. You see, there are some fundamental tasks that go with Interim Ministry besides overseeing the ongoing operation of the Parish. You need to come to terms with some of the history of your parish. That means telling your story. Dealing with grief and celebrating your strengths."

"And as soon as we do that, then we can move on to select a new rector?" asked Eric hopefully.

"Well, not quite..." Ann drew a deep breath. "Out of 'telling your story' you will inevitably begin to work on your evolving identity. In other words, what is St. Stephen's in the Pines without Bob or Susan? What is God asking you to do to do or to be in this time and place?"

"I don't know Ann" said Eric. "This sounds like a lot of work. Frankly, I don't know if I'm up to it. I mean, I work for a living. This church stuff, well, you know, it's extra. Already, Elaine Jansen, the envelope secretary has told me that she wants to step down, so Sandy and I have to find someone to replace her. To tell you the truth, I'm not sure that I'm up to doing all that."

Ann responded "Eric, does it help to know that inevitably there

are leadership changes when a priest leaves?"

Eric sighed in relief. "Really? You mean it's not just us?"

Smiling broadly Ann responded "No, it's not just you. I will be with you to help you with just that kind of information. And I'll help you to firm up your ties with the Synod Office."

Sandy said "Well, Susan used to be pretty much our liaison with them; you mean you'll be the liaison during the interim time?"

"No" replied Ann. "But what I'm here to do is to help you to build your own relationship with them. And I will assist you to recognize the resources that are there for you - both people and programs."

Coming to Terms

Eric began to relax at hearing this. He had thought that having an Interim was just another one of those meaningless hoops for them to jump through. Now, he was beginning to see that this whole process did have a point. Obviously, the Diocese really did want them to be ready for their next rector. Perhaps if they came to terms with some of their patterns as a congregation, maybe the next priest wouldn't go after four years or have to leave after having had a breakdown because everyone was expecting them to do it all.

Eric exchanged a meaningful glance with Sandy, and for the first time, extended his hand to Ann. "Ann, we welcome you as our Temporary Shepherd. You know things about this process and about us that we didn't know about ourselves. We'll enjoy working with you...until it is time for us both to move on."

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In the Meantime

MICHAEL THOMPSON

We awaited the births of each of our children, now thirteen, sixteen, and nineteen, with a sense of anticipation and not a little anxiety. But I can safely say that before they were born, we couldn't see past the horizon of their births. Even the third time, we still kind of thought we'd get to keep the baby.

But it's not just a baby you take home from the hospital. It's a toddler and a preschooler, a ten-year old and a teenager. A young adult, a grown-up, and if you're lucky, a friend.

You get the first Halloween and the last one, Christmas morning and hockey practice, strep throat, broken bones, and the biggest smile you ever saw coming home from the summer camp. Some of what comes is light, some of dark, and some if it grievous. The story you bring home from the hospital is more than just the story of a birth - it's the story of a life unfolding, of a soul seek-

ing its own true north, of a frothing joy and of a sinking sorrow embodied in a single life.

We don't know, I guess, who was there when Jesus took his first steps, but we will hear again who gathered as he took his last. We don't know who his best friend was growing up in Nazareth, but we see the power and grief of friendship as he entrusts his mother and the beloved disciple to each other. We don't know which of the meals his mother prepared was his favourite, but we do know that his last meal



Michael Thompson

was a fulcrum on which all generosity and hospitality will now forever rest. We know that in the long unseen meantime of his childhood and through most of his adult life, he was waiting, living in anticipation, of the purpose that would come crashing into history and transform it forever.

If we are preparing for Christmas in this month of December, in this season of Advent, if we are anticipating the

birth of a baby and then think we can go on with our lives, I have three children you should meet. After their birth, we didn't get on with our lives, back to business-as-usual, to the patterns and practices that had shaped our lives before their birth. Instead, they turned our lives inside-out, turning to us again and again to respond to the emerging shape of their lives in our midst. And though this is hard work at times, it is hard work that means something. (And I wonder if hard work that means something is the best we can hope for, given all the hard work we already give to just the way things are.)

I suppose the choice, then, is whether we bring the child home. Once that choice is made, the rest more or less follows. After the Christmas Eve service, will we take the baby home, or leave him there for the clergy and a few volunteers to look after? The next day, will we awaken to the beginning of a whole new life, or will we leave an orphaned baby in the manger?

If we take the baby home, the rest of our lives will embody the consequences of that choice. When he proclaims hope, we will know hope. When he challenges us to let go of comfort for com-

passion, of self-interest for love, of fear for trust, it will not be easy for us to look him in the eye and say no. The Kingdom he proclaims will butt up against our stuckness and passivity and call us to be and to act in the world in new and unfamiliar ways. That is to say, bringing this baby home will change our lives, as have all the babies ever taken into all the households that have loved them.

But the issue isn't just what happens if we take the baby home at Christmas. It's also what happens if we don't. In that regard also, I have three children you should meet. The transformation they have worked in our lives, in our household, is essentially the work of joy. And not having that in our lives has become, in the end, unthinkable. For one thing, they give us a relationship with the future that is more than just passive curiosity. They awaken us to choices that might otherwise be lost in the clutter of routine, of comfort, of habit. They shake us out of ruts and awaken us to truth and song and yearning that we might otherwise not encounter.

In so doing, they teach us ourselves from a new angle, illuminated in a new light, lifted in a new song. The shape and character of

our lives grow, I think, by the demands they make and the joyful discovery of our capacity to respond, to patch together something for them out of the bag of gifts and love entrusted to our care. So in the end, we do not simply bring a baby home from the hospital or from the manger. We bring home a whole new life, the shape of which unfolds over a lifetime.

We have Advent to prepare for that whole new life, for the coming not only of a king, but also of the kingdom. We have these darkening weeks to light candles and sing hopes. We live these weeks, in some way, in a womb ourselves. Around us all the beauty and terror suggests not only the birth of Jesus, but our own birth as well.

We have Advent to learn as much as we can of our desire for that birth, of hunger stirring within and around us for the "more" that we know life must hold. We have Advent to learn how our ancestors learned to express that hunger as expectancy, and how God entered that expectancy in Mary's body, and grew there, and was born.

We have Advent to decide if we can name the hunger, trust the expectancy, and assist at our own new birth by taking the baby home.

Is there a Roadmap for the Stages of Faith?

MICHAEL PATTERSON

I will assume that for most Christian people, it is acknowledged and accepted that this thing that we call faith is like a long journey. And like any journey, the landscape is constantly changing, some parts of our trip may be more easily navigated than others, much of the way may be unfamiliar and there are many times along the way that we may need to ask for directions. However, in the course of the trip, we often encounter familiar and comforting rest stops that provide reassurance that we are indeed heading in the right direction. In this journey we call Christian faith, one such destination of comfort that appears on the horizon is this season we call Christmas.



Michael Patterson

the stream of people who have left the church. He asks, 'Is there vinegar in the wine or are the wineskins so rigid and dry that they have cracked with much of the wine leaking away?' Fowler's premise, in other words, is that healthy faith development has led people to outgrow inflexible church structures and practices and unsympathetic or restrictive leaderships. The Church, he contends, has not been responsive or understanding of the various stages of faith and has generally counted on the familiar theological resting posts of Christmas and Easter to provide all it believes is necessary to keep them moving along the way.

Stages of Faith Like Stages of Human Development

Fowler describes at least six stages of faith (brevity precludes their descriptions at this time). Just as there are commonly observed 'normal' stages of human development - childhood, adolescence, adulthood etc. - so too, Fowler argues, there is a similar process in the development of faith, with stages in which recognizable, distinctive characteristics are observable.

In some passages of scripture (e.g. 1 Corinthians 3:2, Hebrews 5:11-14) we see the analogy of normal human development being explicitly used to make points concerning spiritual growth. We see here an expectation that characteristics of our faith will change with time. And it should be surprising and distressing when a person's faith development becomes fixed at an immature stage, as it would be if physical or emotional development was stunted or delayed.

What conclusions can we draw from understanding the development and changing nature of faith? How might this relate to Christians who leave the church and what

are the implications for churches and individual Christians?

All People are Different

The first thing that this reminds us is that all people are different; the shape of one's faith and the nature of their pastoral care needs change over time and yours may be different than mine. One size does not fit all! Further, this is not just a case of finding a church or style of worship that fits, because the fit will change over time. What fits comfortably today may be the wrong fit in future years.

As such, our church programs and practices which do not allow for individual differences; which do not contribute to individual thought and dialogue will fail and people will go elsewhere to have their emerging spiritual needs met. We must adapt and grow as members of our community grow in faith.

Also, unity and uniformity are radically different. Where leaders of our churches seek to impose or expect uniformity on the basis that it keeps the community unified, there will be high levels of dissatisfaction and the only option for those who may wish to disagree will be forced to leave. As we increase efforts to hear and understand individuals within the congregation, particularly those with different perspectives, it will build up the community and enhance the spirituality growth within.

Another implication for understanding the changing nature of faith is that wherever I am and wherever you are, although we may be in completely different places, that is ok! Growing in faith is not like getting through high school passing grade by grade. Each stage has its own gifts and limitations. Each stage is appropriate for its own time and we grow in faith not of our own accord (it cannot be forced) but by God alone. To pressure or to suggest to someone what to believe or how to believe will be damaging and destructive.

Image of a Coiled Spring

Fowler provided an analogy that I found particularly useful. It is the image of a coiled spring. Fowler says that, "a coiled spring, when under pressure, compresses until it is strong enough to push back against the pressure. And our faith, when under pressure, compresses until it is strong enough to push back! One sure way to destroy a spring is to stretch it out beyond its intended length and a sure way to destroy someone's faith is to stretch it out beyond its current stage." With people at different stages in the same congregation, we need to provide teaching, forums for discussion and opportunity for ministry at many levels. It is appropriate for churches, especially those who value evangelism, to develop different programs to meet the varying faith needs of the community. We must be creative and innovative - one size does not fit all. The unfortunate part of this is that, if we do not, we rarely get a second chance.

The question is, how far will we go? To what extent will we seek to meet the varying needs of our faith community? Do we truly understand that the varying and changing faith needs of people within our communities are 'normal'? Are we willing and able to discover if we are meeting the needs of our people? People are leaving; we need to understand why and we need to be responsive to offer the Gospel in ways that meet them in their time and space and not our own. That is evangelism - that is the essence of the great commission to go and make disciples. What better time than at the beginning - the Baby in the manger - do we have. After all, the angel said to us, "...for see - I am bringing you good news of great joy for ALL the people: To you is born this day a Saviour who is Christ the Lord!" The journey is long, the destination is clear; it is a matter of meeting the needs along the way.

ADVENT

Hope and Love Become Incarnate: A Midwife's Story



BETH MURRAY DAVIS

As a midwife, it is impossible for me to think about the season of Advent without thinking about pregnancy and birth. It is the perfect season for midwives as Christians the world over stop to celebrate pregnancy and birth. In Advent we all seem to play the

role of both an expectant mother and a midwife, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly."

The Pregnancy

Excitement and uncertainty can be felt as we prepare for something that we know will change our life forever - a new child. Our home is prepared for our new arrival, and we are filled with longing and hope. As the expectant mother feels a sense of anticipation, during Advent so do we. Just as a mother anticipates her due date we use calendars that countdown the days until Christmas. We prepare our homes with wreaths, candles and the dressings of Christmas just as an expectant mother prepares the nursery for her new baby. The pregnant mother's body prepares for giving birth as her hormones change to initiate labour and as the baby inside her womb grows and begins critical organ functioning. Her whole body seems to identify with the refrain, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly."

A midwife nurtures others through a journey of change, providing encouragement to those facing challenges, and fos-

tering confidence and empowering families to take responsibility for their decisions. A midwife must also have a strong sense of faith in the normal physiologic process of birth trusting and having confidence in the human body despite the mystery of birth. During Advent our role as the midwife is demonstrated in our acts of kindness towards others as we prepare our hearts for Christ... and in our support for those less fortunate through food drives, volunteered time and donations. The renewed desire to be with friends and family through the holiday season is another way we accompany others on their journey. In all we do, we embody the refrain, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly."

The Birth

This is the moment when the expectant mother's anticipation, the midwife's support and encouragement and the season of Advent culminate.

Last year on Christmas Eve, I did not sing Christmas carols. I did not go to church. I did not spend time with my own family. Could it still be Christmas without all the familiar traditions? Despite missing all the events that I thought were necessary in order to celebrate Christmas, I was filled with more hope and joy than I had ever felt on that holy night. I spent last Christmas

Eve helping a mother and father welcome their first born son into the world. It's the privilege of my job to be able to celebrate new life on a daily basis. Yet, in our quiet hospital room listening to the first cries of a new baby and watching him look around with bright eyes at his new surroundings, I was aware that all around the world on that holy night others were celebrating the birth of a baby too.

The Incarnation

Birth is the moment when hope and love becomes incarnate in human form. Birth is always a miracle, and in its mystery we see God. God's presence is in the ingenious system of how life unfolds from single cells, how the female form grows and nurtures life, and how the human body gives forth life in a symphony of contractions and pushes. In the holy moment of birth the world changes forever. In a matter of seconds, a woman's life changes and she is now a mother. In a matter of seconds, she goes from the all consuming, hard physical work of labour and birth to holding her newborn child in her arms. Yet in those seconds when life changes, time stands still and becomes infinite. And in that infinite expanse of time, we feel God in us. God's love incarnate in human form, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Advent: Opening Our Doors

Continued from Page 1

that the retail world has stolen the true meaning of Christmas from us. I have heard all the arguments from some Christian groups, who say that we cannot say "Peace on Earth" on the face of the Hamilton Mountain (to appease our Muslim and Jewish brothers and sisters) but in order to battle secularism we must say "Merry Christmas" because at least Christ is in the word. As a professional liturgist (at a point in my journey) I had all the arguments about why we should not decorate our churches until Christmas and we should only and religiously maintain the more stark (albeit beautiful) Advent décor. I've heard it all, but as I watch our churches dwindle and see fewer young faces, I have to ask - what are they thinking about us? Whatever are we thinking about them (our young and un-churched) and the world around us?

It's Time to Change

What I know about the weeks before Christmas is that I absolutely love them in every respect. What I believe about Advent is that it has a message which is so powerful that it can shake the very

world we live in. Let me explain.

When I was a member of a religious order of priests (in a previous part of my life), the one wonderful thing that my order taught us was that hospitality was at the centre of our religious life. The table always had extra seats, so to speak. It became part of the fabric of my being, my way of existing. I still treasure that gift. Our home has guests in it often three or more times a week. It sometimes feels odd if we



Christopher Grabiec

are alone at dinner. That sense of hospitality increases in me during the days before Christmas. I believe it increases in everyone. We all go to one another's homes for dinners and drinks, and most of us prepare food and entertainment lovingly for others who come to our homes. It's true we have commercialized Christmas (with no offense to good retailers who are trying to make a living like the rest of us), but the fact is that most of us who hate spending our hard-earned money do so gladly during this sacred time when we choose to give so much to others. Maybe the décor gets a little out of whack but in the end, for most of us, it's about warmth and coziness and bringing others into our lives to enjoy it.

What goes on in society really isn't so bad. Gifts for the sake of

gifts, does not make sense and if that's what a person is about, then they have some work to do. Most of us, have worked with that and are trying to let gifts be an extension of our love; a sign and even a symbol of the love that we have for one another. Could it be though, that as a church we have ignored the contemporary gift of this season and relegated it some annual historical and perhaps meaningless holiday? Have we forgotten the great and truly ongoing gifts of God's Spirit during these holy days?

Okay, the birth of Christ is an odd thing. There isn't anything warm about it. For heaven's sake he was born in a barn with dirty animals and manure on the floor!! (At least that's what the scriptural accounts tell us). Mary couldn't have been as pleased as the nativity scenes make her look. Oh, and this wasn't a very nice birth anyway - they weren't married when she conceived and people knew it. We've tried to make it quaint and it really wasn't. Christmas and Advent (its extended preparation) aren't about that "baby" event anyway. They are about the fact that God has become incarnate and that God continues to be incarnate among us. They are about the fact that the incarnate God, we know as Jesus of Nazareth, taught nothing more than hospitality, love and acceptance of all people. He hung around with prostitutes and tax col-

lectors and burly men. He talked to women that he wasn't supposed to talk to and he even touched lepers and blind people from whom everyone else kept their distance. Oh yes, and he could really host a dinner party - let's just say he truly gave of himself when he did. He hasn't stopped either! Seriously, think about it, the birth of Christ is all about the fact that we his followers are a people who want to be as hospitable, as caring, as giving, as forgiving and as life-giving as he was. Don't you think we have something to teach society during these days of Advent?

Opening Our Arms

I'll go out on a limb and say that this is one of the best times of the year that we as Christians can input into our society. We can teach people more than they have ever dreamed. All we have to do is live it ourselves and then open our arms to them.

Isn't it time to stop worrying about the rules and get into the spirit? Sure Advent is about wreaths and candles. It's about listening to John the Baptist: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord". But it's more about becoming the people that Christ calls us to be. It's more about opening our arms and our hearts to everyone in our lives. It is about giving gifts; spiritual, loving and even material if that's a good symbol. It's about warmth and the glow of a fire which represents the burning love within us. It is about putting down our swords and turning them into instruments of peace,

love and forgiveness. It's about factions within the Church(es) putting aside their differences and realizing that they are dividing the Church and making fools of it at the same time. It's about accepting the straight, gay, lesbian, rich, poor, sick, healthy and those of us who have fallen from grace in any number of ways. It's about bringing an end to rivalry and distrust in our churches and yes, even between parishes and our bishop and his office of ministers. Even those of us who believe that we are righteous are sinners as much as anyone else. It's about joining our hands together as a community of Anglicans, opening the doors of our churches and unconditionally accepting those people that God created - just like us - and showing them our unconditional love.

Maybe society is ahead of the church (at least in its current state) - who knows. Maybe that's what people are saying by staying out of churches. I truly believe that God has gifted us with wisdom and love and that the time is upon us to accept those gifts and offer them to others. Advent is so important. We shouldn't let this one go by. Stop the division, stop the judgment and stop the fighting. Anglicans should be who we are called to be - a people one with the incarnate God. Open the doors of your church and your home to everyone that you can - enemy and loved ones alike. See if the world doesn't begin to wander back into our churches and once again take their seats at the table

Advent and the Workplace

A Message of Hope

DAVID BROWNING

Two manufacturing companies merged. The larger company decided that some management positions were redundant. A manager was given a choice: move hundreds of miles away to their new head office or take a severance package. As the manager thought about the impact on his family and other personal issues, he saw his choice as being between a rock and a hard place. His stress was enormous.

Professionals in service organizations are exhausted! Their organizations continuously cut personnel without making work go away. The norm for those who remain is 50-70 hour work-weeks. Everyone in these organizations knows what these work loads do to productivity, safety and health. But, in these workplaces, people are expendable. Money and politics rule!

These pastorally disguised vignettes are symptomatic of a much wider story in today's economy. Whether we are white collar, blue collar, or wear no collar at all; whether we work in manufacturing, agriculture, the service sector or government; we all know people who are battered in the workplace through no fault of their own. What really hurts: they are helpless to control what's happening to them. Who really listens to them and cares?

The measure of these stories takes perspective from the place we give work in our lives. Most of our waking time and energies are spent in the workplace. Because so many workplace cultures confuse being and doing, many people take their sense of being and self-worth from what they do. When what they do changes, so does their self-worth. Take away what they do or overload them, and their self-worth can - and tragically, often does - shatter.

In workplaces, where people are expendable commodities, the human spirit suffers. Hope grows weary and weak in such an environment. Is there good news, and what and where is it?

Thanks be to God that while we cannot always control what happens in our lives, what is done to us need never be the last word or deed. God, who is revealed in Scriptures stories, and encountered through the liturgical seasons of the Church, stands with us! The season of Advent, with its stories, hymns, litany and collects, celebrates God being with us, and feature God's gift of hope. Advent focuses our attention on God, Good News about God, and how hope will bless us. Advent's message of hope is espe-

cially comforting for the workplace-wounded among us.

Advent's message of hope is well-timed for we who live and/or work within our Diocese of Niagara. Many of us are employees, pensioners and/or stockholders in the steel and automobile industries. We know how increasing operating costs at home, and growing competition from overseas, are pushing some of our companies toward bankruptcy. Many organizations which are still strong are laying off people, and renegotiating (reducing) their pensioners' benefits and/or income.

Retail, hospitality and service sector employees are struggling. Most seldom are given enough hours to become 'full-time.' As part-time, they won't qualify for medical, dental, pension and other benefits. Those who are full-time are often overloaded and exhausted. Their numbers are cut, but their workloads are not. Reports of 50-70+ hour weeks are common. So are the cries from people whose workloads have doubled... or more... from personal cutbacks.

Following are Advent messages of hope, offered especially for the workplace-wounded.

God is Committed to Us

Two Advent readings declare God is committed to loving and being with us, and then give us the measure of God's commitment. Isaiah 64: 1-9 and Psalm 80: 1-7, 16-18 use plain language and raw passion to express God's commitment. Their point is: 'come as you are' to God. Isaiah talks about bringing our awe and frustration, fear and battered hope, anger and exhaustion, to God. The psalm takes this point a step further. It adds passion. It expresses frustration and awe, pleas and praise, resentment and disappointment, in strong words and feelings!

Both writers encourage us to be bold in our relationships with God. Let us be candid in what we think, feel and say to God. When we are upset at something, somebody or God, let say so! God wants to know how we think and feel. Much of Scripture says, 'come as you are.' We don't have to suppress our feelings or sanitize our language with the false veneer of politeness or 'churchy' language.

God's commitment is never influenced by how we address God. God's commitment has everything to do with God. No word, feeling or scream from us will ever change that! To recognize how committed God is to us gives fertile ground for hope to grow within us. And, there's more...

God Empathizes with Us

In God's commitment to us, God expresses divine empathy with

us. Advent focuses on God's greatest act of empathy - coming to live among us in Jesus, to experience life as we do. Advent's readings, collects and hymns feature God's empathy.

Advent's stories in Mark, Luke, Matthew and Revelation talk about God's empathy with human suffering. Metaphoric language about the sun and moon becoming dark, and stars falling from heaven, say: "I know what it is like to feel as though your world has come to an end. Sometimes, our worlds do come to an end, and it is a frightening, terrible experience! A business collapses. A job is lost. A career ends. Our health breaks under far too much stress. Our patience, feelings, ability to think, and sense of self-worth, are vulnerable to being battered by events we cannot control. Our relationships with other people suffer. Hope grows dim and the future looks dark."

God's has empathy for the workplace-wounded among us.

Knowing that God empathizes with us, and has experienced everything that we do, including crucifixion, gives our hope new life. Advent's readings, hymns and prayers speak frankly about suffering. They remind us how impersonal it often is; no one is immune from it. Life is unfair. Often, there is nothing we can do to change it. Our worlds can and do end. But, for we who are God's people, suffering is never the last word!

Advent makes the point: as

the people of God look back in time, and remember what was good and what hurt them, we recall how God was there! God enabled the persecuted to survive; the suffering to heal; the despairing to have hope; and whatever was dying to have new life. Then, as we look back in our own lives, we see God always present with us. The importance of God 'just being there' can never be overstated. Sometimes, we feel alone; but, in fact we never are!

Advent's biblical and liturgical pieces help us see anew - or, perhaps for the first time - how much God empathizes with us. God's empathy for us is one of the bedrocks on which Christian hope stands. Hope is different from the world's wishful thinking, because it comes from God, and is grounded over and over again in human experience - other people's... and our. Advent invites us to celebrate hope in story, song and prayer.

God is Faithful

From Genesis through Revelation, scripture describes God's faithfulness to human beings. Mark 13: 31b records Jesus saying about faithfulness, my words will not pass away. In other passages, Jesus said, "Come to me all who are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. I love you and have carved your name in the palm of my hands. I love you so much, if a mother were to forsake her own child, I will never forsake you..."

God's faithfulness is also expressed in Isaiah 40: 1-11: "Comfort, O comfort my people...speak tenderly. Prepare the

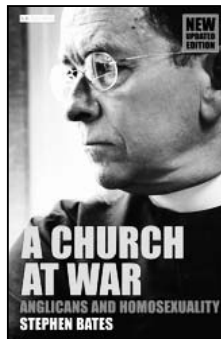
way of the Lord, make straight in the desert the way of the Lord (a military image for God's determination and faithfulness to stand by us) See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules. He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep."

Who can read these expressions of God's faithfulness and not be deeply stirred? They don't just passively invite us; rather, they urge us, passionately, to look beyond ourselves and what's happening to us at the moment, and recognize how God is always present with us. Scripture records how God has helped other people in the past. Scripture also encourages us to look back in our own lives, and recall how God was there in the darkest and brightest times in our lives. Hope has a track in personal and public history, and Advent celebrates it.

In summary, Advent's theme is hope for daily living. Since so much of our time and energy is spent working, and since workplace cultures and events impact deeply on us, Advent's message of hope is vital to us. We have hope because God is committed and faithful to us, and stands with us in empathy. Hope is so unlike the world's wishful thinking. Hope is God's gift to us, with a history of delivery and fulfilment in people's lives.

Thanks be to God for hope! Thanks also be to God for Advent, which features and reminds us about hope. This Advent, may our hope be rekindled, blessed and nurtured - especially as we work.

BOOK REVIEW



A Church at War

Anglicans and Homosexuality

Stephen Bates

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Being something of an outsider is one of the strengths that Stephen Bates brings to his book. Born and raised a Roman Catholic, he is none-the-less the son of a devoted Anglican father and is married to a Charismatic, Evangelical Anglican. Their children are being raised in that tradition. All of this serves to deny suggestions he is hostile to Evangelicalism, even as he frankly and honestly discusses the reality of a determined conservative minority bidding to seize power in global Anglicanism and recreate in it their own narrow and destructive image. It is an engrossing and exciting narrative.

The book focuses on the Anglican Communion, one of the great pillars of Christianity with its 70 plus million members in 164 countries and its internal struggles around gay sexuality. The intensity of these struggles could tear its prized global unity apart, where the ordination of women, union talks and the Lutheran/Anglican full Communion and the recognition of ministry have failed to accomplish this.

Much of the book is centred in the journey of the Church of England through these troubled waters, but it also recounts the challenges raised by the Churches of Canada and the United States, together with the support and/or rejection encountered in other provinces of the Communion and the outcomes. The archaic nature of the Church of England's established status within the state is seen in all of its worst aspects; power, politics and revenge.

Internally and internationally the lines are drawn and the justification of positions indicates just how bitter and divisive the dispute has become. There are interviews with leading figures on both sides, both liberal and conservative. The list of the struggle's casualties runs from activists in the grass roots and forefront of the Gay and Lesbian movements to the present occupant of the chair of St Augustine and it is not over yet. It is not a pleasant story, but one that needs telling.

Stephen Bates is the Guardian's religious affairs and royal correspondent. An Oxford trained historian, he has been a journalist with the BBC, The Daily Telegraph, the Daily Mail and for the last 13 years the Guardian. He is a regular broadcaster as well as a writer, contributing to a wide range of publications.

ADVENT IN OUR PARTNER DIOCESES

Advent in Cuba: As Christmas Approaches

MIGUEL TAMAYO ZALDIVAR
BISHOP OF CUBA AND URUGUAY

Christmas is approaching, and the Advent Season is preparing us to celebrate the faith and the joy of our God who comes to us and finds us through Christ.

For this season the Church always presents to us the messages of the prophets, and this year among them we wish to select John the Baptist: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD!". Upon John, related to Jesus, last one of the prophets and Jesus predecessor, befell the responsibility to make his the proclamation of Isaiah, and to call his contemporaries to the awareness that the Messiah, the promised one was near.

He was one of the prophets who preached a very radical message, so much so that, like most of them, it cost him his life. And if we wish this message to mean something in our days, we have to ask ourselves:

What does it mean "prepare the way for the Lord?"

If we do not limit ourselves just to this phrase, and look at the context, we will hear what can point to us its meaning: "Make level in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain". This tells us that to prepare means to clean, to purify and to renovate.

If we apply this to our personal lives and to the life of our community, it would be to make a personal and a community conscience analysis that would lead us to ask forgiveness for the evil we have done, and the good we have not done; a conscience analysis that would be an act of thanksgiving for what God has done in our lives, what he has done through our lives and to admit that we have yet to respond much better to God in our lives. Advent is this opportunity. And we are invited to make good use of it.

Advent in the Diocese of Uruguay



ANDREW PONT
EPISCOPAL ASSISTANT,
DIOCESE OF URUGUAY

activities alongside other young people from different parishes of the church.

Another exciting event last Advent was a staging of the Christmas story for the young people of the church. In the hall of Holy Trinity Cathedral, a "time machine" complete with sound effects and computer graphics, whisked the children back through time to Bethlehem, at the time of Jesus's birth. Here they witnessed a re-enactment of the Christmas story including a real live baby Jesus (courtesy of 2 month-old Nicole Echazabal, daughter of Cuban missionaries Dr. Livan and Yudit), before the children themselves dressed up and acted out the Christmas events (this time with a doll playing the part of Jesus!). This was followed by games, singing and craftwork activities. The event was open to all the children from the church including those from the Dajú Bilú, the church's centre for the assistance of infants and families, located in the Old City of Montevideo, a very poor area of the capital city of Uruguay, where the Holy Trinity Cathedral is located.

The Dajú Bilú centre helps around 45 children each year. These children, aged between two and four, from poor families living in the Old City area, are assisted through education, provision of healthy meals, socialization and psychological assistance where appropriate. The program has been developed in partnership with the National Institute of the Child. The aim is to provide pre-school support to the children of families who cannot afford private nursery care, and therefore overcome some of the education and socialization disadvantages that these children would otherwise face when they start school.

In the Diocese of Uruguay we are delighted that we are now in a companion relationship with the Diocese of Niagara and we hope that perhaps some of us will be able to experience Advent with each other at some point in the future.

Sacred Walk for Healing Christmas Gospel Jamboree

FIONA BROWNLEE
DIOCESE OF KEEWATIN

What do you do when your people are devastated by youth suicide in their communities? What do you do when parents come to you and say that they do not how to raise their children; they were never taught because they were taken away to residential school? What do you do when you know violence and abuse are ripping apart communities? Well Bishop Gordon Beatty, the eighth Bishop of Keewatin, came up with the idea of walking across the Diocese of Keewatin to raise up the issue of healing for all.

As a result of that Sacred Walk people from the diocese now come together every year just before Christmas and Easter for a diocesan wide Gospel Jamboree.

This Jamboree is a chance for people to share their stories of healing and reconciliation, to share their musical gifts with each other and to hear the Gospel of Jesus be preached. Each evening a healing service is offered where people can come for healing prayers and laying on of hands. This has become an integral part of the ministry that the Jamborees offer.

For the first time last year a local Anglican Winnipeg church offered to host the Christmas Jamboree. People were welcomed into St. Stephen's Anglican Church with open arms. They held a traditional Christmas feast for the local congregation and the visitors on the Saturday night and had the Keewatin guests preach at the Sunday service. This was such a success that St. Matthew's

Anglican Church (which has an active downtown ministry) is going to be hosting this year's Gospel Jamboree.

Advent in the Diocese of Keewatin would not be complete without our annual trip to Winnipeg for the Christmas Gospel Jamboree. It has become a chance to see old friends, make new ones, and to see healing happen in people's lives. This year's Jamboree is going to take place on Friday, December 9, Saturday, December 10 and Sunday, December 11 at St. Matthew's from 7 pm to midnight every night. So, dear friends from the Diocese of Niagara if any of you are in the Winnipeg area that weekend come and experience a Gospel Jamboree and see what all the excitement is about.



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Lynda Kealey Celebrates 10th Year of Ordination

SUE CRAWFORD

What is God calling us to do? We may start out in one profession or job, but somehow there comes a time in our lives when we realize what God's purpose really is for us on earth.

I know that Lynda Kealey, priest in charge of St. Michael's Church, realized this following her retirement as a nurse instructor. Lynda celebrated her 10th year of ordination a few weeks ago at St. Michael's Church on the East Mountain of Hamilton.

Lynda attended Harvard Divinity School and indicated that it was the highlight of her life. Following Harvard she was ordained Deacon January 8th 1995 at St. Christopher's, Burlington. On September 17th, 1995, Lynda, along with Kristine Swire and Victoria Hedelius were ordained Priests at St. Christopher's.

Lynda came to St. Michael's in March of 1999. Her homilies, which focus mainly on the gospel on Sunday morning, have always been a highlight of the service for me personally. Her interpretations are always rich and meaningful and relate to our everyday lives. I can't think how fortunate we are that Lynda finally realized God's true purpose for her.

- **The Reverend Canon William Thomas**, retired from full time ministry, was issued a Bishop's Permission to perform the office of Honorary Assistant at Christ's Church Cathedral, Hamilton, effective September 1.
- **Archdeacon Robert Grigg**, retired from full time ministry, passed away on October 27. Archdeacon Grigg is survived by his wife, Betty, and their son, Chris, and his family. He was ordained deacon in 1957 and priest in 1958. Archdeacon Grigg served in various capacities in Niagara: Deacon in Charge at All Saints, Erin; Rector of Christ Church, West Flamborough and Curate at St. James, Dundas; Chaplain to the Hamilton and District AYP; Rector of St. James, Guelph; Rector of All Saints, Hamilton and Rector of St. John's, Ancaster. The service was held at St. James, Dundas, on November 2, with the Internment of Ashes at St. John's Cemetery, Ancaster. Prior to ordained ministry, Archdeacon Grigg served overseas with the R.C.A.F. 427 Squadron as a navigator during WWII. He also worked for a short time for the Department of National Defence.
- **The Reverend Graham Thorpe** was issued a Bishop's Permission as Honorary Assistant at Holy Trinity,

Welland, under the supervision of the rector.

- Our deepest sympathy is extended to **Sonya Bolek**, Parish Administrator at St. John's, St. Catharines, on the death of her mother on October 29.
- **The Reverend Brian Burrows** will complete his ministry as interim at All Saints Mission, Niagara Falls, on December 31.
- **The Right Reverend John Bothwell** will complete his tenure at St. Paul's Church, Westdale, on November 30. Archdeacon Paul Jackson will assist the parish for the month of December.
- **The Reverend Vickie Edgeworth-Pitcher**, rector of St. John's, Burlington, was elected Regional Dean of Trafalgar on October 11.
- **The Reverend Tom Evans**, Deacon, was issued a Bishop's Permission to perform the office of Honorary Assistant at St. John's, Cheapside, effective October 1, under the supervision of the rector.
- **The Reverend Lynne Thackwray**, rector of All Saints, Hagersville and St. John's, Cheapside, has been appointed Co Coordinator of Niagara Continuing Education (NCE), assisting the Reverend Peter Scott, for a two year period.
- Congratulations to **Wendy Duncan**, Diocesan Controller,

on the birth of her first grandson, Owen, born on October 29.

- Deepest sympathy is extended to **Mr. John Pettit and the Reverend Barbara Pettit**, and family, on the death of John's mother, Elsie Davidson, on October 28. Elsie was a long time and faithful member of St. George's Church, Guelph. The service was held from her parish church on November 2.
- Deepest sympathy is extended to the bereaved **family of Norma Watson**, O.N., a long time and faithful member of St. Luke's, Burlington, who died on October 9 in Muskoka. Our thoughts are with her husband, Rusty, and their sons, Tim and Jeff, and their families. Funeral service was held from her parish church on October 13.
- Deepest sympathy is extended to the **family of Norman Groves**, a long time and faithful member of St. Luke's Church, Burlington, who died on October 29. Mr. Groves was a dedicated member of the Bishop's Advisory Committee on Church Buildings. The internment of ashes and a service celebrating his life was held on November 2 and the parish of St. Luke's, Burlington.
- Happy 50th Anniversary to **Len and Carol Snell**, of Grace Church, Waterdown. They were married September 24, 1955 at St James Dundas.

Bishop's Calendar December 2005

- 4th, 10 a.m. - Grace Church, Waterdown, Parish Visit and Dedication
 4th, 4 p.m. - Christ's Church Cathedral, Hamilton, Service of Evensong
 6th, 10 a.m. - Cathedral Place, Meeting of Archdeacons
 6th, 5 p.m. - Meeting of Synod Council
 11th, 10 a.m. - St. John's, Ancaster, Service of Dedication
 11th, 4 p.m. - Christ's Church Cathedral, Ordination
 12th, 6:30 p.m. - All Saints, Hamilton, Anglican Business and Professional Women
 13th - Region of Undermount, Quiet Day
 17th, Evening - St. Simon's, Oakville, Anniversary Dinner
 18th, 8:15 a.m. and 10 a.m. - St. Simon's, Oakville, Anniversary Service
 18th, 7 p.m. - Christ's Church Cathedral, Carol Service
 24th, 7 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. - St. Paul's Church, Hamilton, Christmas Eve Services
 25th, 10 a.m. - Christ Church, Flamborough, Christmas Day Service

Teenage to Old Age... with Psalms on the Side Featuring John Bell

4th Annual St. Christopher's Leadership Conference

March 3 - 4, 2006

St. Christopher's (662 Guelph Line, Burlington)

John Bell, an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland and a member of the Iona Community, will lead four workshops.

March 3

9:00 am Faith and Frailty
1:00 pm The Last Journey

March 4

9:00 am God in Touch with Teenagers
1:00 pm Rediscovering the Psalms

Participants may register for one or all workshops!

Fee (including lunch): Whole Day \$40, Half Day \$25

Registration Deadline: February 26, 2006

For more information contact Helen Hicks at 905-634-1977 or check out the web site www.stchristophersburlington.com

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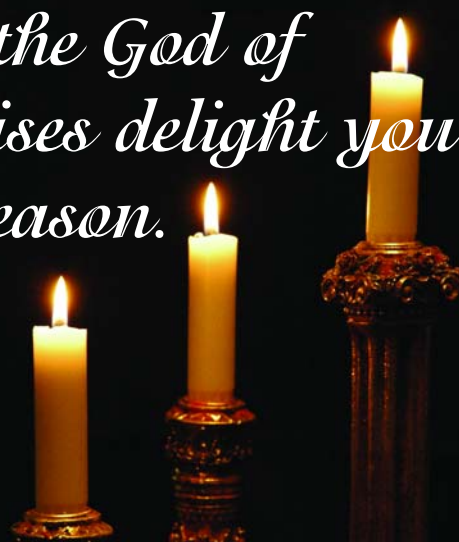
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