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A section of the Anglican Journal



# NIAGARA ANGLICAN

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JUNE 2024

# From Afghani Nightmare to Canadian Dream



Members of St. John the Evangelist's refugee committee were on hand to welcome the Akbari family at Pearson International Airport.

Photo contributed by Barbara and Brian Ruttan

## BARBARA AND BRIAN RUTTAN

The Akbari family was given a warm welcome to Canada, at Pearson Airport on February 22, 2024, by members of the Refugee Committee of the St. John the Evangelist parish, Hamilton. Sabira, Jawad, and their young son Kiarash were hosted by one of the committee members until a permanent residence was available on March 1.

The story of the family's escape from Afghanistan into Pakistan is one of secrecy and fear. Sabira believes that she would have been killed if she had stayed in Kabul. Her brother-in-law was severely beaten by the police because he refused to disclose Sabira's location. Their story became even more harrowing when they had to risk going back into Afghanistan to obtain necessary travel documents.

Afghanistan is a harsh police state fuelled, since 2021, by the religious fanaticism of the Taliban. Women and girls most obviously bear the brunt of the Taliban's debased understanding of Islam. Severe limits were placed on the education of women and girls. Women are no longer permitted to practise professions or operate businesses and must confine their activities to domestic life. Even at home, male heads of households are encouraged to do what is necessary, including physical violence, to make sure women practice their social roles properly.

Furthermore, the Akbaris are members of the minority Hazara ethnic group which has been subjected to numerous genocidal incidents over the last 150 years, the last major ones in 1997 when 2,000 died and 1998 when as many as 20,000 Hazaras were killed.

Prior to the Taliban take-over of Afghanistan, Sabira had her own business selling art and handcrafted goods and was actively involved with charities, women's groups, and social justice organizations. After the fall of Kabul, she joined with other Afghan women as a co-leader of the Afghan Women's Justice Movement, which led protests and demonstrations against the Taliban beginning in August 2021. Sabira was a prominent leader in the resistance to the Taliban's social policies, organizing public demonstrations in Kabul and building an international community of protest by internet.

The Refugee Committee at St. John the Evangelist, Hamilton, has been coordinating the efforts of many volunteers finding and equipping a

**World Refugee Day** is an international day designated by the United Nations to honour refugees around the globe. It falls each year on June 20 and celebrates the strength and courage of people who have been forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution.

According to information from the United Nations Refugee Agency for 2023, the total number of people worldwide who were forced to flee their homes due to conflicts, violence, fear of persecution and human rights violations was 110 million. This is more than double the 42.7 million people who remained forcibly displaced a decade ago and the most since World War II. Of these, 36.4 million are refugees, having crossed a border to flee for safety, half of whom originate from just three countries: Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine.

Last year our diocese—through its parishes and affiliated community groups—submitted applications to sponsor 45 refugees through our agreement with the Government of Canada.

Our diocese is also a member of the Canadian Council for Refugees a national organization committed to the rights and protection of refugees and other vulnerable migrants in Canada and around the world and to the settlement of refugees and immigrants in Canada.

To learn more about the diocesan refugee sponsorship ministry, visit: [niagaraanglican.ca/refugee](http://niagaraanglican.ca/refugee).

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# Reconciliation in Action:

## Deepening Cultural Competence

RENÉE WETSELAAR

St. Matthew's House staff, board, and volunteers, as well as community partners from the Afro-Caribbean Association (ACCA) recently benefitted from some day-long sessions at the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC). The goal of the sessions was to develop our cultural competence with respect to Indigenous history and culture. Such cultural competence is essential to the success of the 412 Barton apartments that St. Matthew's House is building for Black and Indigenous seniors facing homelessness.

Each session began in a very innovative way with a spool of yarn being passed around the room as participants were invited to introduce themselves by sharing something of their own personal history. By the end of this very impactful introduction, we experienced first-hand the importance of sharing our stories, and understanding how our individual histories effect who we are today. Our facilitators led us in a conversation about the Blood Memory they have inherited from their ancestors at birth which carries both many positive teachings and traditions as well as the intergenerational trauma of colonization.

"We can't say goodbye to a problem until we have first said hello." (Gerry Oleman, Elder, traditional knowledge keeper, mentor, storyteller, healer, and educator)

Our facilitator shared this



Brenda Jacobs, cultural capacity trainer with the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, facilitated the group session.

Photo: Contributed by Renée Wetselaar

quote to begin teaching us about Turtle Island and its history since colonization. We touched on such topics as the Creation Stories, Thanksgiving Addresses, early conservation agreements amongst First Nations, how governance was organized with Clan Mothers and Chiefs, the Medicine Wheel and Indigenous approaches to well-being, and the negative impacts of colonization.

We ended the day in a circle around a visual representation of Turtle Island which pulled together all of our learnings from the day. Perhaps most impactful was that we each took turns saying out loud the negative ways Indigenous peoples have been impacted as well as racist statements made by our government leaders through to present day.

These gatherings (both

staff and senior leadership) are funded by the Anglican Foundation of Canada.

The meaningful learning that took place at these sessions is yet another part of the work that we are stitching together towards truth and reconciliation in conjunction with our "412 Barton" project, a deeply affordable housing initiative dedicated to providing homes for 15 Indigenous and Black elders experiencing homelessness. The Diocese of Niagara made a generous donation of \$100,000 to this project, in consideration of the important work of reconciliation that we all need to continue to undertake.

St. Matthew's House is truly grateful to both the Anglican Foundation of Canada and the diocese for their deep commitment to our work.

### Niches available in our new columbarium St. Matthew on-the-Plains Anglican Church, Burlington



Purchasing a columbarium niche ahead of time can ease the stress on your loved ones when you pass away. St. Matthew's has niches available in our lovely new Canadian granite columbarium. It is located in a beautiful natural setting, surrounded by tall trees and magnolias, and close to our Quiet Garden, so your loved ones can sit and rest while paying their respects to your memory.

Come and check out the location at 126 Plains Road East, in the Aldershot area of Burlington, or contact the **Church Office** at: (905) 632-1233 or email [office@stmatthewburlington.ca](mailto:office@stmatthewburlington.ca) to make an appointment.

## National Indigenous Day of Prayer

On June 21, the Anglican Church of Canada marks National Indigenous Day of Prayer in its calendar, the same day as National Indigenous Peoples Day. This is a day to give thanks for the gifts of Indigenous peoples, to pray for the ongoing work of truth and reconciliation, and to celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures, and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

## Anniversary Celebration Planned for Synod

### THE VENERABLE BILL MOUS

In November, Anglicans from Arthur to Fort Erie and all points in between will gather at the Burlington Convention Centre for the 150th Synod of the Diocese of Niagara!

Our sesquicentennial anniversary as a diocese is a milestone worthy of celebration, especially when you begin to ponder all the lives that have been transformed through our witness to the way of Jesus, since the six western counties that now make up Niagara were carved out of the Diocese of Toronto in 1875.

So, it is only fitting that in addition to the regular proceedings of our Synod, we are also planning a special anniversary dinner in the evening of our Synod to mark the occasion. All are welcomed for this ticketed event, which is being generously sponsored by Ecclesiastical Insurance, our insurer for more than 50 years.

Archbishop Linda Nicholls, 14th primate of the Anglican Church of Canada will be our special guest. During the dinner, she will engage in conversa-

tion with Bishop Susan Bell as together they explore and lean into the Synod's theme: 'Faith in the Future', inspired by Jeremiah 29:11. "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

Through the dinner, we will also be expressing our faith in the future by raising funds to support curacies across our diocese through a fund designated for this purpose. Equipping right skilled and well-formed spiritual leaders is crucial for the flourishing of our collective ministry for the next 150 years!

I hope you will join us in celebrating all the ways God's mission of love has been lived out through our witness and ministry in Southern Ontario throughout the decades. Look for more information in September about how you can reserve your ticket for the special dinner.

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# Cathedral Café to Keep its Doors Open

The City of Hamilton has asked that the Cathedral Café, a collaborative partnership between St. Matthew's House and Christ's Church Cathedral, to continue operating its services through next winter until March 31, 2025.

This is due to the positive impact of the hard work of staff and volunteers. Through their support over 14,000 meals have been served at the Cathedral Café, between December 2023 and March 2024, to some of the most vulnerable people in Hamilton.

The Cathedral Café, centered in Myler Hall at Cathedral Place, will continue provide a safe and supportive day time drop-in space for unhoused individuals and those at risk of homelessness with a capacity for 50 people, Monday to Saturday from 9 am to 4 pm. Guests will be able to access seating, relief from the weather, friendly welcoming faces, activities, programs and services, wash-rooms and food, with the main focus being to provide breakfast and lunch daily and a place to be regardless of the weather.

Cathedral Place, home to the worship and ministry space

of Christ's Church Cathedral as well as the offices of the Anglican Diocese of Niagara, is a centralized and accessible location on James Street North that provides the space for the drop-in site, volunteer engagement and a staff hub, and includes programming space, auxiliary kitchen space and washrooms.

St. Matthew's House is a unique community support agency that provides childcare services and support services to older adults over 55. Many of the people and families that it serves face barriers which it helps them overcome through its programs and services. The agency, founded by Hamilton parishes in 1964 works in the heart of Hamilton's most challenged neighbourhoods, with people facing, on average, the highest rates of poverty in the city. This is associated with the highest rates of ill-health, mental illness and limited education levels.

Together St. Matthew's House and Christ's Church Cathedral are serving the people of their community most heavily impacted in these areas through the Cathedral Café.



Kerry Lubrick, centre coordinator (right), poses with several new volunteers.

Photos: Contributed by Kerry Lubrick



Bird's-eye view of Cathedral Café.

# Carolinian Forest Tract Lasting Legacy of Chief Johnson

## DR. JOHN BACHER

The Grand River Territory of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy is the largest intact mainland Carolinian ecosystem in Canada. I recall the wise words of a revered Cayuga Longhouse elder of the Confederacy Norm Jacobs explaining its worth several years ago to the Hamilton City Council.

Jacobs understood how the Haudenosaunee's care for the land is in stark contrast with is so unlike the pattern of surrounding municipalities. This is why he urged that the

Haudenosaunee should be paid for the pollution absorbing work of their forests by the federal and provincial governments. The only comparable stretch of intact Carolinian habitat can be found on the Walpole Island Indian Reservation.

That the Grand River Territory is such a good model of environmental stewardship is to a remarkable extent the work of the prophetic Anglican holy person, George Henry Martin Johnson. (Onwanonsyhon) He was a condoled Mohawk Wolf Clan Chief of the

Haudenosaunee Confederacy, an ancient form of government founded by the Peacemaker.

Johnson's brave conservation work triggered three assassination attempts. His caring for Mother Earth is largely forgotten; he is famous today largely as the father of the great Canadian poet Pauline Johnson.

Largely forgotten too are two short stories by Pauline Johnson which helped to publicize and explain her father's forest protection work. One of these stories "My Mother", was dedicated to her mother, Emily. She tended

to her father's wounds triggered by his patrols protecting forests. Emily Johnson's blood-stained clothes are preserved in the Woodland Cultural Center.

One Anglican priest with was the Reverend Robert Ashton. In 1870 he changed the Mohawk Institute into the infamous template for Indian Residential Schools based on his earlier experience with delinquent reformatories in England.

The imposition of harsh discipline in the Mohawk Institute followed a decision of the

Canadian government in 1857, to strip native people with band membership of political rights. This was fought by native chiefs across what was then called the Province of Canada, led by George Johnson, and his father, John Smoke Johnson.

An Anglican lay person and anthropologist, Horatio Hale, from the parish of St. Paul's, Clinton, greatly aided Johnson's forest conservation work. He recorded in his "Iroquois Book of Rites" how Johnson adapted the

See CAROLINIAN Page 7

## NIAGARA ANGLICAN

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# Ordained to the Ministry of Deacon

On May 26, Bishop Susan Bell ordained 5 new deacons to serve God's Church. The Reverend Tom Vaughan, co-rector of St. George's, St. Catharines and chaplain to the College of Deacons, preached at the service at Christ's Church Cathedral. Every blessing to them as they begin their ministries! If you believe you might be called to served in holy orders, speak

with your parish priest or visit: <https://niagaraanglican.ca/ministry/vocations>



Clockwise from Top right: The Rev. Deacons Doreen Haywood, Stephen LaSalle, Dena Thomas, Russell Wardell, and Janice Whiteley.

# Fiercely Loved Service Returns

**THE REVEREND CANON DR. PENNY ANDERSON**

Just in time for Pride month, Fiercely Loved is here! The service at Christ's Church Cathedral on June 9 at 4pm will be our fifth annual diocesan Pride Mass.

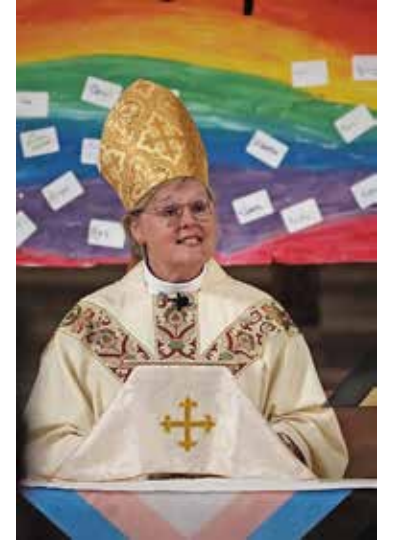
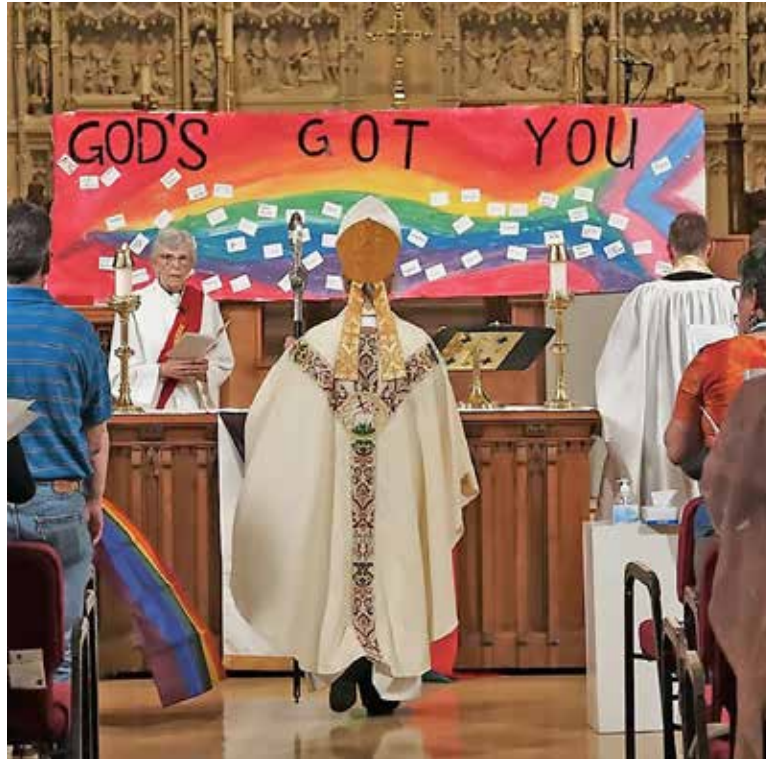
This year's Fiercely Loved will be a worship experience that celebrates Pride, and centres the

enriching gifts and experiences of the 2S&LGBTQIA+ community in Niagara.

We experience the church as a place of love and acceptance, and we trust that the welcome you receive at the Pride Mass will be God's own welcome. That's why we also invite allies and anyone who is curious to know what a Pride Mass is like. At this year's Fiercely Loved,

you can expect an uplifting Eucharist wrapped in lively music, joyful proclamation, and warm community. Children's activities are planned. Everyone is welcome!

Fiercely Loved is one of the ways we celebrate the inclusive reach of God's grace in our Diocese. You're invited!



Photos: William Pleydon



## Upcoming Summer and Fall Classes



### The Seeking Heart

A Contemplative and Spiritual Approach to Mission & Life

Are you interested in exploring a more prayerful approach to engaging in God's mission? Do you have the desire to live out God's mission in a way that both positively impacts your community and renews your spirit? If you answered yes to these questions this course is for you! Join Niagara's Community Missioner, The Reverend Canon Dr. Ian Mobsby this summer!

**Monday, July 8 - Friday, July 12, 2024 - WEEK LONG INTENSIVE IN PERSON**



### How We Do Things Around Here

Anglican Polity 101

Understanding how the church organizes itself is crucial for helping people fully participate in the life of the Church. Knowing how things work also helps the Church maintain its missionality! This course taught by Bishop Susan Bell, explores the systems and structures of the Anglican church and how this serves as a foundation for supporting God's mission.

**Tuesdays 4:30pm - 6:30pm October 1 - November 12**



### Presence, Paying Attention and Prayer

Pastoral Care Fundamentals

The love of neighbour is a calling for all disciples of Jesus. Yet, somehow by framing it as "pastoral care," we have often reserved this ministry to "pastors" and separated it from daily life. Reflecting on the elements of caring presence, paying active attention to others' needs, and prayerfully coming alongside them we will identify and practice a range of pastoral care skills.

Teacher-practitioner: The Venerable Terry DeForest this fall.

**Wednesdays 2:00pm - 4:00pm September 25 - November 13**

Visit us at [nsm.ca](http://nsm.ca) to register today! More fall courses to be announced soon!  
If you have any questions please contact the registrar at: [registrar@nsm.ca](mailto:registrar@nsm.ca)

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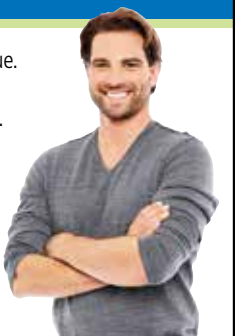


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# Reaching Out and Reaching In:

## Music Ministry as Community Engagement

**PATRICK MURRAY**

Just before I came on-board as director of music at St. John's Elora, the parish ratified a new vision statement for its next ten years of ministry. The outcome of a year-long discernment process under Canon Paul Walker's leadership, the vision included the following statement:

**Musical Outreach:** We are being called to invest in our music programming to foster faith for people from all geographies, age groups, and those thirsty for spiritual engagement and fulfillment.

Welcome to the new music director; figure out how to do this!

At the same time, it was this vision that reassured me I was up to the task. As you may know, St. John's Elora is a place steeped in musical tradition. Home to one of Canada's finest professional church choirs, the parish has also been the birthplace of several other notable musical institutions, including a choir school and the Elora Singers and Festival.

No easy mantle to assume, and yet this vision expressed an openness to change and renewal that I found encouraging. A main focus of my own doctoral research had been on how choirs were using music to engage community partners and, in doing so, re-engage themselves. Here was an opportunity to contribute to a church with a desire to do the same.

While I believed, and continue to believe, in the substance of our vision articulated above, a distinction I sought to make early on was between the concepts of "outreach" and "community engagement." In the non-profit arts sector, leaders are fast moving away from the outreach paradigm, typically associated with legacy education programs that are sometimes seen as paternalistic.



The Elora Children's Choir is open to all.



The Parish Choir, St. John's professional choir-in-residence, has been active as a professional ensemble since the 1980s.

Photos: Contributed by Patrick Murray

In its place, community engagement is more of a two-way street, with a focus on relationship-building and reciprocity. To be successful, organizations that seek to "reach out" must also "reach in," allowing themselves to be changed by the relationships they seek with community partners. As arts administrator and author Doug Borwick puts it: "the simplest distinction is that outreach is (at best) done 'for,' community engagement is done 'with.'"

And so, 2024 finds us three years into a journey to expand the ways that people are invited to engage with us musically at St. John's Elora. Asked to reflect on this journey for the *Niagara Anglican*, a few examples of our

work together stand out to me.

One of the earliest and ongoing initiatives we started together has been a once-per-month compline (night prayer) service open to anyone to come and sing. Comprising chant-based music accessible to singers of any experience, as well as more traditional choral works, the service has grown a committed and consistent new community of singers and attendees, many of whom are engaging with St. John's for the first time.

This past year also saw the launch of the Elora Children's Choir, now 25 young voices strong, under the direction of Kate Wright. In her words: "The program was designed to be

accessible to all youth in our community, both musically (no singing experience required) and financially." Funded by St. John's but explicitly not a church choir, the program has filled a gap in music education for the local community and also provided an avenue for local families to meet the church on their own terms.

Another recent grassroots musical initiative is the Song Circle, facilitated by Stan Litch. Any given Friday morning, our parish centre is filled with the sound of communal singing of what Stan characterizes as "an eclectic selection of songs that most of us seniors already know." What I admire most about Stan's work is his ability to meet people, musically and personally, where they are, as the songs they sing spark memories, conversation, and bonding—a perfect example of reciprocity in action.

Amidst these new initiatives, the beating heart of music at St. John's Elora continues to be the Parish Choir, St. John's professional choir-in-residence. Active as a professional ensemble since the 1980s, the choir came to national and international attention in the 2000s through a series of recordings for the Naxos label and several international tours.

Today, stewarding this legacy through a time in which traditional benchmarks of musical excellence are changing and broadening remains our greatest challenge, one for which the lessons of community engagement are, I believe, essential. In particular, embracing newer repertoire—especially by composers reflecting the personal and cultural diversity already present and that we wish to make present within the living church—has been a source of immense inward engagement between myself and our singers.

One specific expression of this

has been our Canadian Choral Evensong initiative, services foregrounding music by living, mostly Canadian, composers writing new sacred choral music for the Evensong liturgy. We have also welcomed several opportunities this year to collaborate on Evensong services with other church choirs within the Niagara and neighbouring dioceses, helping to re-start this uniquely Anglican tradition in churches where it had lain dormant since the pandemic.

Finally, we intentionally created opportunities for the various choirs to collaborate together on selected services each year, celebrating the many ways that many people contribute to the musical life of our community.

Initiatives like these remind me that the Anglican musical tradition is a living tradition. This means both the joyful recognition of how this music continues to connect people of faith (and otherwise) today, but also of our responsibility to shape this tradition in response to the social issues of our own time: in particular, calls for greater inclusivity within cultural and religious institutions and, in Canada specifically, efforts to redress the harms of our colonial heritage.

Music is, ultimately, a mirror of ourselves, both the community that we are (warts and all) and, at its best, the community we wish to be. While I have no definitive answers to these big picture questions above, I do know they cannot be solved by one leader alone. They will continue to require many voices to be heard, both in our singing and our decision making within musical ministry. And so, I close with a mantra that has been helpful for me: put people first, and the right notes will follow.



The Song Circle is a grassroots initiative where people gather weekly to sing an eclectic selection of songs.

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# The Creed Means Freedom

**DR. JOHN BOWEN**

Denise had been involved in church for many years before she finally gave up. One of the many things that frustrated her was the creed. "It's simply ridiculous," she complained: "just a lot of meaningless propositions strung together. How can anyone be expected to believe that stuff?" Her friend Jane thought for a moment and then said, "That's interesting. I feel so different! For me, the creed means freedom."

"Creeds" and "freedom"? Not two words you often see in close proximity. It made me think. How could those two things possibly be connected?

The creed does indeed list a lot

of strange sounding ideas. But for a start they are not random, and they are not meaningless. They are actually a summary of the whole Bible story, the whole Christian story. The first thing worth noticing is that the ideas in the creed appear in logical order.

- It begins by describing a meaningful world created by a loving God.
- Then it speaks of God's intervention in the world in the person of Jesus Christ, to deal with all the sinful and foolish things we have done to mess up and even destroy that beautiful world.
- It also speaks of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus, still at work in the world today, working in and through all those who will cooperate in continuing Jesus's work of putting things right.
- And finally it speaks of God's intervention at the end of time, to complete that work of redemption and renewal.

**What's the connection?**

But what, we may ask, could

that possibly have to do with freedom? Well, I understand freedom to be the conditions under which we can grow into the people we are meant to be, and under which life on this planet can be lived to the fullest. So here's the surprise: the creed creates just such conditions. What's the connection?

As we seek to live our lives and to find freedom for ourselves and for others, those ideas listed in the creed actually suggest a way that those things are possible:

- The idea of a Creator explains for me why there is beauty, why there is love, why there is the yearning for something beyond—even why meaning is possible in the first place.
- The idea which the creed implies but does not state—perhaps it's too obvious—is that we have damaged this beautiful world by not observing the Creator's norms. That too is freeing because it helps explain the paradox that the world is not only beautiful but also hurting and broken in many respects.

- And the idea that God in love is at work in this world through Jesus in history, and now through the Spirit of Jesus, gives me hope that in the end "all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."

So the creed tells me I am a beloved creation—a beloved child—of God. The creed tells me God has pity on my sinfulness and my brokenness, and that the Spirit of Jesus is at work to make me whole. If all this is true, then as I make my way in the world, seeking to follow Jesus, I can be sure that in the loving hands of this God I am indeed becoming all that my Creator designed for me to be. Even better: it means I can contribute my own small part to enabling the freedom of others, helping them to enjoy the fullness of life too. And that is a deeply freeing and joyful experience.

**Competing creeds**

When you think about it, everybody lives by a creed. They

may not articulate it or state it—certainly not once a week, or in point form, or in public. But everyone has a theory about the world, about the problems of the world, about who the human race should become. Not only does everyone believe some kind of creed, everybody lives out of some kind of creed. And, if we are Christians, every day as we live our lives in a secular, post-Christian culture, we are exposed to those alternative creeds, which make their own seductive claims about the meaning of life and the way to experience freedom—and implicitly pressuring us to switch creeds.

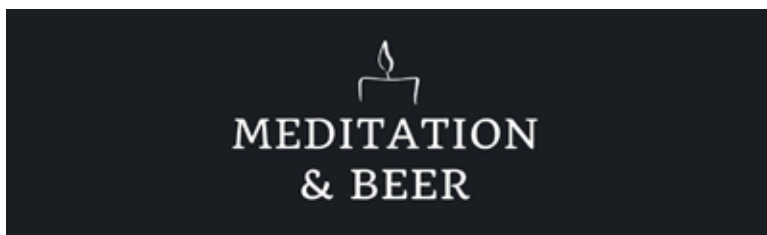
But personally I have never found a creed which sheds light on the world and on the human condition in the way the beautiful story of God made human in Jesus does. So I will gladly continue to say the Christian creed week by week. Apart from anything else, it reminds me that "for freedom Christ has set us free!"

# An Unlikely Pair: Meditation & Beer

**SUSIE KIM**

After living in my neighbourhood, forming relationships, and trying to listen for what the unchurched people I came across needed, I came up on a contradiction of sorts. The two major complaints I came across were that 1) people were busy and exhausted, and 2) people were lonely and isolated. It turns out doing a lot of stuff doesn't mean you have a lot of people around you.

These two facts of life for a certain subset of people in Hamilton together form a vicious cycle: there's too much going on in our lives and in the world, so we can't form deep relationships and exist in community; and without the power that encountering the Other in community has to change us, we keep living in the same way we always have, running from one thing to another, tiring ourselves out so we never have the time or energy to address our loneliness.



This is a kind of cycle of poverty: not a poverty of material goods, which is a cycle that the Church must vitally address, but another poverty that we have also been called to address, a poverty of Spirit.

Meditation & Beer, which has been happening weekly on Thursdays since last November at Christ's Church Cathedral in Hamilton then at Farside, a bar a block north of the cathedral, is meant to be a double-pronged

Photo: Unsplash/Gerrie van der Walt



attempt to address this particular cycle of poverty.

The format is simple: we gather in the cathedral, sit in communal silence for 20 minutes, then we socialize at the bar down the street for as long as we want to stay. In the most materialist terms, the silence is meant to give us a pause from the relentlessness of modern life, to be a little break from the busyness and the exhaustion. And, again, in the most materialist terms, the conversations over beverages are meant to help us form friendships and community. But we know nothing is simply materialist: both these parts provide a chance to encounter the Ultimate Other, the source of being and life that we Christians call by many names, the LORD, Jesus, the Triune God, the Holy Spirit, etc., in stillness and in the face of our neighbour, both places where She has promised us that She would meet us.

Since we began, many people have come and gone, but there is

a small core community forming around this weekly gathering. My prayer is that this space will be one that blesses those who are experiencing the poverty of Spirit. We have formed the community through an online platform called Meetup.com under the umbrella of Hamilton's Well (a pun on wellness but also secretly a pun on Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman at a well) and it has been a richly rewarding experience for me personally, but also an effective way to reach the unchurched.

We are a growing ministry and we could use your help! If you are located in or near Hamilton, have a heart for those poor in Spirit, and promise not to be too churchy, we'd love for you to volunteer with us. You can send me ([susie.kim@niagaraanglican.ca](mailto:susie.kim@niagaraanglican.ca)) an email if you are interested. But even if you're not, please take a moment right now to pray for all those who come to Meditation & Beer!

# Rhythms of Renewal

**ALISON STEELE**

As the children, youth and family coordinator for St. David's, Welland, I was excited to take part in my first national youth leaders' retreat. For the past few years, our focus at the parish has been on our growing children's ministry. As our children age, our ministry needs are changing, and we are now providing programming for youth. I was excited to be given the opportunity to connect with other youth leaders from across Canada.

The Rhythms of Renewal Retreat was jointly hosted by the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada and brought leaders from both churches together at the Sorrento Centre on the shores of beautiful Shuswap Lake in British Columbia for a weekend of learning, relaxing, and fellowship. The Sorrento Centre, founded in 1963, offers amazing scenic views and a welcoming environment for everyone to learn and grow. It truly is a place people can come to connect with nature and rejuvenate.

The retreat organizers worked to create a comfortable space for leaders to connect with one another, create friendships, and renew our spirits. One of the highlights of the weekend was being able to take the time to learn about ways to do creative journaling. The associate director of the Sorrento Centre,

Kathy MacDuff, was generous with her time and energy as she shared her resources and knowledge teaching us ways to create art through our feelings. As someone who loves to be creative, the idea of writing my feelings on papers did leave me feeling a bit timid, but by being guided through the process it was a wonderful way to sort my thoughts and then change them into art.

The retreat also provided the opportunity to connect and learn from other leaders about what they are doing with their children and youth. For me, one of my highlights was connecting with another leader and her family who live in Kelowna. The Hardy family took me under their wing and provided transportation, local tours, great conversation and even a home cooked meal. They helped to remind me that our Church is much larger than St. David's – as Anglicans we are a large body of people who strive to share the love God in our communities.

It is very easy for all of us to get caught up in the daily routines of our church lives and being able to take a moment to pause and reflect on the big picture and the larger church helps us to remember our calling and mission. I am so grateful for the opportunity to meet others, hear their stories, and help strengthen the wider community of youth leaders across Canada.

# Carolinian Tract a Lasting Legacy

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3**

Hai, Hai, a ritual song chanted at the raising up of Chiefs, into a warning call of the horrific dangers of spreading deserts.

Through his Condolence, a warning was given that although the Haudenosaunee Chiefs had inherited the titles awarded by the Peacemaker, they lacked "their mighty intellects; and in the flourishing region which they left, nothing but a desert remains."

In addition to protecting the forests of the Six Nations, Chief Johnson played a crucial role in restoring forests throughout southern Ontario threatened by desertification. He played an important role in changing the Ontario Fruit Growers Association, (OFGA) into Canada's first environmental protection groups.

Members of the OFGA made pilgrimages to his home Chiefswood to view Johnson's reforestation experiments with Black Walnuts and various hickories. They were stunned at the contrast between the "sterile appearance" of lands outside the reservation's boundaries, and the magnificent "lovely native park" around Chiefswood. They were awed how, "There



Chief George Johnson, seated centre, with anthropologist Horatio Hale on the left, and fellow chiefs of the Mohawk nation Source: Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

are tens of thousands of farms in Ontario that would be very much improved in real value by planting the various kinds of nut-bearing trees we have recommended."

Johnson and his band of Mohawk Forest wardens were the stars of a critical meeting of the OFGA held in Hamilton in 1879. Edmund Zavitz, who later played a critical role in reversing desertification through reforestation recalled how the event, attended by his grandfather, Edmund Prout, played a major role in reversing negative attitudes towards forests. Here Johnson and his brave band of Mohawk Forest Wardens "were heartily cheered upon taking their seats" on the OFGA board. The meeting urged the reforesta-

tion of the Niagara Escarpment in Hamilton, eventually carried out by Zavitz in the 1920s.

Johnson died on February 19, 1884, a date that should be celebrated in the Calendar of Holy Persons of the Anglican Church of Canada. Commemoration of his life through the calendar would be a way to encourage ecological restoration and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

*June is National Indigenous History Month in Canada, an opportunity to learn and honour the stories, achievements and resilience of First Nations, Inuit and Métis, who have lived on this land since time immemorial and whose presence continues to impact the evolving Canada.*



Photo: Alison Steele

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# Did the Anglican Communion change in 1963?

**THE REVEREND CANON DR. ALAN L. HAYES**

Historians from Canada and elsewhere recently met in Toronto to try to determine whether the Anglican Communion was changed forever in 1963.

Planning for the historical conference was led by Bishop Terry Brown, an assisting bishop in the diocese of Niagara. Unfortunately, he died a few days before the conference began on April 12.

Eighty people from as far away as Britain, Australia, and the Philippines gathered in person or via Zoom. Twenty-one papers were delivered. Bishop Susan Bell, a member of the Canadian Church Historical Society, chaired one of the sessions.

The historians focused on the Anglican Congress of 1963, which brought a thousand Anglicans from all over the world to Toronto for a week. The Congress endorsed a statement, prepared by the primates of the Anglican Communion, entitled "Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ" (MRI).

The Anglican Congress of 1963 was front-page news in Canada. The opening service, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury in Maple Leaf Gardens, was attended by 17,000 people, and was broadcast live by the CBC.

The timing of the event was significant because it followed the dismantling of the British Empire in the 1950s, and the creation of four new autonomous provinces in Africa; the first autonomous African province, in southern Africa, had been created in 1870. In 1963, all five African archbishops were white men from Britain. Inculturation was just beginning in the overseas Anglican world.

Before 1963, the Anglican Communion had been described as the Church of England, the Episcopal Church of the USA, and their overseas dependents. For example, until 1955, the Anglican Church of Canada was called the Church of England in Canada.

The MRI document, by contrast, affirmed that all Anglican provinces were equal partners.

Some say that MRI represented a radical reorganization and renewal of the Anglican Communion. They point to the creation of the Anglican

Consultative Council and the Partners in Mission program as partial evidence.

Others say that the result was simply a new chapter in colonialism, with the Church of England and the Episcopal Church maintaining hegemony. And MRI did nothing to change the colonized situation of Indigenous Anglicans in Canada.

Another argument is that MRI did accomplish something, but the wrong thing. It pre-empted international ecumenical discussions for church reunion, and left African and other overseas Christians saddled with divisions created by Europeans centuries earlier.

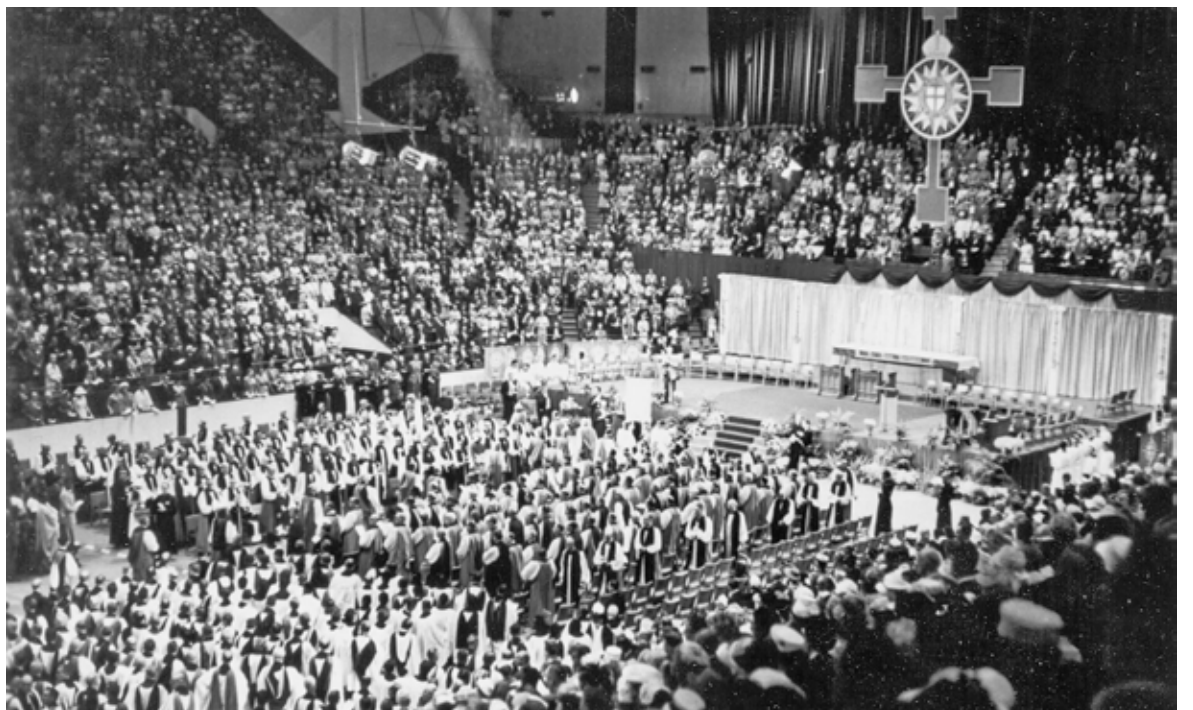
Whatever the results on the institutional level, though, many individuals were transformed in their sense of discipleship. The late bishop, Terry Brown, cited its influence in his decision to become a missionary to the South Pacific. So does Peter Coffin, the retired bishop of Ottawa, who served in Borneo in the 1970s.

Not surprisingly, at the end of the conference, the historians still disagreed. But they found that the issues remain pertinent. The member provinces of the Anglican Communion still find themselves challenged in different situations whether to look inward to their own national interests, to engage deeply with the rest of the Anglican world, or to give the priority to ecumenical relationships.



Participants, including Bishop Susan Bell, listening to one of the plenary sessions during the conference.

Photo: Matthew Puddister/Anglican Journal.



The 1963 Toronto Anglican Congress, held at Maple Leaf Gardens.

Photo: Canadian Churchman/General Synod Archive



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# Coaching Helps Clergy Run the Race Well



**THE MOST REVEREND COLIN JOHNSON**

This summer many of us will be glued to our TVs or social media sites to watch the Olympics in Paris. A few of the lucky among us might actually be there in person. The feats of these top athletes are the culmination of years of intense training and rigorous discipline. They are now at the peak of their performance, and what a thrilling spectacle to watch!

As I write this, we are also in the early days of the NHL post-

season playoffs.

What is common to both is not only great athletes but, behind the scenes, great coaches who have assisted the players to review, assess, and tweak their performances to consistently achieve their best efforts. They encourage and support them when they face challenges, and are their chief cheerleaders to celebrate their accomplishments. Elite athletes do not grow out of using coaches; they seek out the best in order to continue to grow. Coaches are critical for high performing athletes but they are not centre stage—their work is to help someone else to get there.

Over almost five decades of ordained ministry, I have had the benefit of several coaches or mentors who have been invaluable to me as I have grown in ministry. They have opened opportunities, shared their experience, gently (and sometimes bluntly) pointed out bad habits that I was developing, guided

me to new learnings and skills, and helped me reflect when things went badly wrong. They were men and women, clergy and lay. They pushed me to do better and to be better. I am deeply indebted to them. I name them as my personal saints.

The sports coach analogy is apt for an experiment that we are trying in the Diocese of Niagara. Apt, but like all analogies, not exactly translatable. Let's change the image from sports to the theatre. We never exercise ministry alone. All members of the Church—laity and clergy—are essential agents of God's mission to God's world. Within that, though, there are differentiated roles like actors in a drama. Each part is important to the unfolding of the action but only occasionally do the actors all have the same lines. Drama coaches enhance the performances. Parish rectors have a specific responsibility in relation to their parishioners, the parish community in which

they are located, and the wider diocese in which they serve. That responsibility entails a set of competencies, which are dynamic and can expand.

One of several projects I took on as the very part-time assistant bishop is to set up a coaching program for clergy newly appointed as rector. A few other dioceses are experimenting with this, too, in different ways. In Niagara, we are blessed to have a curacy training process, placing new ordinands in parishes with an experienced rector for the first couple of years. The new coaching program is designed to augment this for priests who are moving into a new parish. It is not intended for (or rather, only for) first incumbencies. Every time a well experienced rector moves to a new parish, there are new opportunities and challenges to face in a different context.

While it is still in its early stages, we have invited a small, initial group of seasoned, recently retired senior clerics to form a

pool of coaches and mentors whom Bishop Susan and I have begun to assign one-on-one to accompany a recently appointed rector in the new ministry.

The rector and coach covenant to meet for a couple of hours monthly for a year. This provides a confidential opportunity to reflect on what is happening in the practice of ministry with another experienced person “outside the system” to gain perspective, explore options, enhance growth, and to pray for one another.

It is not intended to be “the eyes and ears of the bishop.” It is not intended to remediate underperformance. It is to help a competent rector to offer the best of themselves to those they serve. It is consistent with the life-long learning that is expected of us as disciples of Christ. As St. Paul writes, we are called to run the race set before us with perseverance looking to the goal, to Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.

# Wonder, Love & Prayer



**THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN**

Late February was not kind. Within the space of 24 hours two of my friends died, both with a suddenness that chilled me. One was 69-years-old but robust, healthy, and always so full of enthusiasm and determination. I'm so grateful that I visited Britain from my home in Toronto last December and saw him twice. One of those occasions was a long, exquisite lunch in a Turkish restaurant. That will be my invincible memory but I am shaken to the core.

The other was a mere 33. Painfully and unfairly young.

I remember her as a baby, she knew my two daughters, and was the same age as one of them. I also gave her a job on a television station where I once hosted a show, not because of who she was but because she was so funny, clever, kind, and mischievous. Oh, her poor parents, her poor friends and family.

I've been ordained five years and while I've taken three weddings and one baptism I've presided at dozens of funerals. That means I've grieved with people, held them, heard them, tried to heal them. I've also been at more hospital beds with the dying than I can remember, watching death's shadow emerge ever stronger and darker. It's always so difficult but, all clichés aside, also a privilege. I'm trusted, people depend on me, and while I often feel totally inadequate, I know that it's not about me at all. All I can do is be a conduit. Pull back the curtain, reveal Jesus, and then get out of the way.

But what when it's closer to home, more personal and intimate, more severe and cutting? I always recommend that people read *A Grief Observed*, by

C.S. Lewis, “No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. The same fluttering in the stomach, the same restlessness, the yawning. I keep on swallowing.”

So, I re-read it, and as always with Jack Lewis found new answers and new truths. I prayed in a different way and asked for different strength. It helps, of course it helps. Prayer is central in all that we do but at times of agony it matters more than ever. I genuinely believe that this is only the land of shadows, and real life hasn't begun yet, but can I rationalise pain and loss, especially when it's my pain and loss? Frankly, not completely. Bad things happen to good

people, they always have and they always will. Far greater Christians than me have written on this at enormous length.

What I can and do say, and what I've reminded myself a dozen times in the past few days, is that Jesus has been there before us, suffered before us, and – vital this – suffered for us. In a divine leap of solidarity, he felt what we now feel. God became flesh, became a vulnerable, defenceless baby. More than this, a baby born to poor family living in an occupied country, and having to run from tyranny and violence. As a grown man he knew his fate, knew that the cruellest execution of all awaited him but embraced that agony out of pure, perfect love. Whatever we suffer, no matter how much we weep, God empathises because God knows and understands. Because God became one of us.

One of my friends who died was a Christian, and a priest and a bishop. That makes the entire context different and I suppose I can be more direct in my approach to others and with myself. He was also, while not old, at least someone who had

led a full life.

The young woman wasn't Christian but Jewish. Not orthodox but certainly proud of her religion, as are her parents and family. She was also so jarringly young, with so much of her life still to live. That break in the natural order, the smashing of what ought to be, and the destruction of potential, leaves an open wound.

I can pray and reflect privately about her in the same way but wouldn't dream of offering explicitly Christian answers to people of a different faith, especially at such a time and in the case of such tragedy. No, my approach at times like this, and it's certainly not the first time that dear friends who aren't Christian have died, is simply to be there. Listen rather than speak, and be present. Yes, always be present.

Faith is a dialogue, mystery is central to Christianity, and we who follow Jesus should always be careful about offering absolutes when wonder is required. I place myself in God's love, and pray the same for those who have left us and those they've left behind. Bless them.



Photo: Unsplash/Jennifer Mangan

# Camp Gears up for a Summer of Memories

ZOE OLIVEIRA

I hope this article finds you under the warm June sun, enjoying the start of a beautiful summer!

While ever similar to summers' past in its anticipated fun, laughter, and friendships, the summer of 2024 is bringing a breadth of new excitement to camp that I can't wait to see come to life. Given that you may not all be able to witness the magic (you are busy enjoying that beautiful June sun, after all), I'm excited to update you on the comings and goings of Canterbury Hills as we head into our 64th summer of programming.

For example, the biggest change this year will undoubtedly be in the number of smiling campers! With the continued operation of our Overnight Camp, Day Camp, Bridge Camp, Adventure Camp, and Leader-In-Training programs, we will see approximately 1,150 children and youth at camp over the course of the summer! This number grew because of increasing the number of Bridge Camp weeks from four to six. Even with the increase in spots, Bridge Camp remains ever popular, and registration filled quickly! This was very similar to Day Camp, where spots were also able to increase, as the addition of newly built group spaces allowed for a greater number of campers.



Of course, behind every one of these cabin groups is an ever-hard-working and caring staff team. We have a strong returning staff rate, and were blessed to find a plethora of like-minded applicants during our March hiring day at St. James Dundas. Many of these new friends look forward to joining me, the rest of the Resource Team, and our dedicated returning staff for the summer ahead. These integral members of our camp community will occupy positions across our camping programs and within our beloved Lions Hall Kitchen. Though our staff may seem like superheroes to their campers, even they need a good meal after a hard day's work!

Having mentioned our returning staff, it is only fair to recognize the wonderful work they did last summer. Over the course of registration, we have seen an increase in the number of returning campers, par-

ticularly within our Overnight Program. Way to go staffers! We love to see campers returning to our camp family, and the beautiful site with which God has graced us.

Looking out the camp office window now, taking in the natural wonders around me, I cannot help but recall a passage from the Old Testament. Ecclesiastes' assures us that there is a time for everything under the heavens.

And so, with Canterbury Hills in mind...

There is a time for the sound of children's laughter to trickle over these rolling hills. There is a time to sing 'Praise Ye The Lord Hallelujah' in the dining hall before our Friday Fiesta dinner.

There is a time to cheer on our friends as they reach the top of the rock wall, a time to indulge in an ooey-goey s'more, and a time to thank God that we have a place, and a people with which

to share in these experiences.

It's time for you to grab a cool glass of lemonade as you enjoy the June sun.

As for me, it's time to get back to work, prepping for the wonder and magic to come this

summer at Canterbury Hills Camp.

Zoe serves as the camp's assistant director. To learn more, visit: [canterburyhills.ca](http://canterburyhills.ca).



## Say Yes! to Canterbury Hills

This year the Diocese of Niagara is joining the Anglican Foundation of Canada's Say Yes! to Kids movement which helps to fund church-led programs and initiatives that support children, youth, and young adults.

You are invited to take part in building up camp bursaries and support program costs such as campout, crafting, and game supplies. And for every \$20 donated to our Niagara campaign, \$4 will also support the Anglican Foundation's grants toward national youth ministries.

To donate, visit: <https://bitly.cx/AQYx>



Photos: Contributed by Zoe Oliveira

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# An Unexpected Journey to Becoming a Deacon

**THE REVEREND DEACON  
LARRY COLLINSON**

My journey to being a Deacon, what did it take?

I was new to being a Christian, and my experience with church was not the best. A family of nine my older sisters would drag the youngest four—me being the youngest—to whatever church was giving the best item for bringing new people, chocolate bars, chips, and they even got cameras. This taught me to search out different churches for prizes. My family never owned a car, my one brother and I discovered that the Baptist and Gospel churches had picnics, we would take advantage of this and tag along, they fed us and gave us prizes.

However, one Sunday in my thirties for what reason (God must have nudged me) I got up and went to church. This is where my journey really begins. That is the building of my faith and Christianity. I became a regular attendee at Sunday services; I wanted to learn more about being an Anglican. I listened to the sermons, read the Bible, attended Bible study and asked questions.

As time went on, I became more involved in the services

as a greeters and a sides person, but the one big thing that spiritually changed me was Cursillo: the people, the talks, prayers, and the music. I asked Jesus to come into my heart. After the weekend my mother-in-law asked my sponsor, what she had done to me.

I then attended the Bishop's Diploma Course and completed all five offerings. My thanks to the Reverend Paul Whitehouse: he made it so interesting and educational. I began taking on new roles within the Church: stepping into the role of reader, crucifer, server, and reading the Gospel. Along with my wife, Jan, we attended a course on being a Licensed Lay Reader.

Was I ready for the question to be posed by my rector in 2019? "Would you consider becoming a Deacon?" I had no idea what a deacon was at the time. Canon Matthew Griffin, rector of Church of the Nativity in Hamilton, said go home pray about it, talk to Jan, and listen to what God was saying.

I asked myself, who me, a deacon? Well, I feel God was saying 'Yes' to all my doubts, to every reason I could think of the answer was do it, you are worthy. I met with my rector again and told him I would try

and invited him to tell me more about being a deacon. Matthew proceeded to tell me that the bulk of the responsibility was with the community surrounding the Church.

Now, having worked for over 50 years with the community as a career, first as community centre supervisor for 30 years with the City of Hamilton, I had a fair amount of experience in this regard. In 2001, I joined St. Matthew's House as the director for the Roxborough Seniors Centre. In 2002, for the next 18 years, I was with the Hamilton Association for Residential, Recreational and Redevelopment Programs (HARRRP) an outreach program of our Cathedral. My responsibility was to develop older adult programs and we were phenomenally successful in meeting their needs, as there was no cost to participate. We asked them what they wanted or needed.

The next task on my agenda was to learn more about the Bible, so I signed up for classes at Redeemer University and took a course on the Old Testament and one on the New Testament. As part of the diocesan discernment process for ordination, I had three interviews with a priest, a

deacon, and then one more with the bishop. In time, my call to the diaconate was affirmed and I was ordained in November of 2022.

Now my real work began. I surveyed my fellow parishioners and collected their suggestions, prioritized them and researched to see if we could obtain a grant to operate. I was not successful on all three grant applications; and this only fueled me to dig further to find others and reapply for the grants we did not obtain.

I called on a resident I had met and worked with prior, he was excellent at composing grants and requests, and I brought in another contact who was the retired director of The Hamilton Seniors Centre. Together we developed the applications and submitted them. This time we were successful! The Church of the Nativity received a New Horizons for Seniors grant for \$20,000 to support older adult programs. We now offer aerobics twice a week with a certified

instructor, a chair aerobics again with a certified instructor and beginners Hawaiian dance class. I am looking to add a book club and Tai Chi class.

Through my life, I have developed the following rules, and I would suggest that they will work for anyone.

- I may receive 99 no's before I get that one yes but that's fine (success).
- There is only one dumb question or suggestion: the one which is not expressed.
- Always ask the group you are dealing with what they want or need and involve them in the development and operation.

I feel like deacons are God's eyes and ears in our communities, and with effort we can meet the community where they are comfortable. Thanks to God I am able to do what I love for over 50 years, and I am looking forward to continuing for as many years as I left here on earth, before I join God in paradise.



## Afghani Nightmare

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

home for the Akbaris. They have an apartment in Hamilton and while Kiarash attends school (a very happy new experience for him), Jawad and Sabira attend English language classes. Jawad's focus is on finding a job while Sabira continues her resistance to the oppression of women and the Hazara ethnic group in Afghanistan through online organizing. She has already joined other

women in Ottawa meeting with the Member of Parliament Ali Ehsassi (L-Willowdale), attempting to strengthen Canada's position for the rights of women and the Hazaras in Afghanistan.

This sponsorship is undertaken through our diocese—which holds a sponsorship agreement with the Canadian government—and in partnership with Task Force NYX (TFN), a charitable organization that

supports at-risk Afghan women's rights activists and other private donations. Together, the parish, the diocese, and the co-sponsor are working to support the Akbaris as they settle well into Canadian life.

As a parish, we admire their courage and determination, and we pray for them as they build a new life in Canada.



The Akbari family celebrating Noruz in Canada Photo: Contributed by Barbara and Brian Ruttan

### Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

**Upcoming Deadlines:**

- September – July 26
- October – August 30
- November – September 27

**Submissions:**

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

**Original cartoons or art** –

- Contact the Editor.
- Photos** – very large, high resolution (300 ppi), action pictures (people doing something). Include name of photographer. Written permission of parent/guardian must be obtained if photo includes a child.

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

**Questions or information:**

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# Beekeeping Offers Insights for Healthy Parish Ministry

DR. EMILY HILL

The first time that my friend opened a beehive in my presence four years ago, I felt a stirring in my spirit. It was brought on by the sweet smell of honey, the buzzing sound of the bees in the air, the deep hum emanating from the hive, and the sight of thousands of bright yellow bees busy at work. It was a feast for the five senses, and I felt like I was experiencing something holy.

It was a joy to be able to share this story and many others with the people of St. Paul's, Caledonia on a beautiful Saturday earlier this spring. More than twenty adults and seven children gathered for "Bee Day" to hear about the spiritual, ecological, and practical aspects of being a beekeeper.

At the beginning of my workshop, the children gathered around the beekeeping supplies I had brought. As they touched the honeycomb, tried on the gloves, and smelled the honey, they asked me questions and wondered out loud about the life of bees. As their curiosity and wonder filled the room, I marveled at how beautiful parish life can be. Where else do you find different generations together, supporting one



Rector Jann Brooks is shown various beekeeping items by Parish Development Missioner Emily Hill. Photo: Contributed by Emily Hill

another, learning about God's creation, and dreaming about new possibilities for making the world a better place?

It was the first time that I had the opportunity to bring my work as the parish development missioner in our diocese and my hobby as a beekeeper together. Surprisingly (or, perhaps not so surprisingly because God is always up to something), these

two aspects of my life overlap in an interesting way.

There are many parallels that can be drawn between beekeeping and parish life. A healthy hive is like a healthy parish. Every individual is important to the group. They work together with a common purpose. Their steady commitment to that common purpose allows them to flourish while also benefiting

those outside their walls. Their work makes the world a healthier and more beautiful place to live. And there is an exquisite mystery in their inner workings that points to the magnificence of their Creator.

The wisdom of experienced beekeepers about how to work with hives could also be helpful for parish leaders. Beekeepers learn to move slowly, stay calm,

and focus because our inner state of being affects the bees. If we are anxious and move too quickly out of fear, the bees get stirred up. If we are calm and move with ease and confidence, the bees remain calm and flourish in the roles God created for them. Our role as beekeepers is to assist hives to thrive. It would be foolish to try to control the hives. Instead, we offer support so that they can live and grow in healthy ways and continue to play their vital role in the ecosystem.

S. Paul's is exploring the possibility of becoming beekeepers together. They would like to have a few hives on a nearby farm that they take care of collectively. They are seeing this as an opportunity to care for God's creation, get outside the wall of the church, and connect with their community. It would be a unique part of their Mission Action Plan. I look forward to continuing to support them in becoming more missional through beekeeping.

It is a privilege and joy to work with parishes on all aspects of Mission Action Planning. If you would like my support with anything related to parish life, please don't hesitate to reach out.

## Preaching as Spiritual Discipline: A Modern Challenge

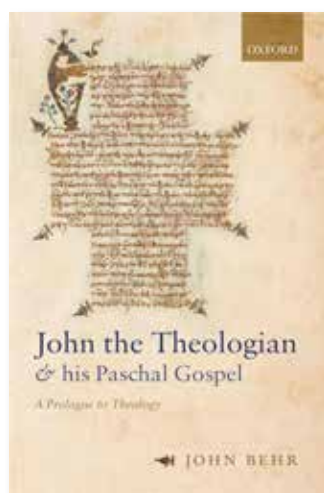


THE REVEREND DAN TATARNIC

One of the things that encourages me, as a parish priest, is the joy I see in people when they engage with solid theological and biblical formation. How many times have I heard it said, "I've been Anglican my whole life, and I've never heard this before." I'm not disparaging the past. I'm not suggesting that the generations before us were not faithful or uninterested in formation. It's just that things

have changed in the post-Christendom setting. Nothing can be taken for granted any longer.

I often say that theology is best done in the local setting and that parish priests need to be the primary spiritual directors and theologians in their parishes. In all likelihood, if you are a priest ministering in an Anglican church today, you've attained the degree of Master of Divinity. This means that each parish priest has been trained to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest scripture and tradition for the sake of preaching (teaching) the Gospel within the local communities they are called to serve. To borrow an adage from the Dominican tradition, we are called to contemplate and to share with others the fruits of contemplation. For this reason, we who are parish priests are expected to have a consecrated and disciplined life of prayer and study—not for our sake as



a form of self-care, but that our disciplined approach to wisdom will facilitate fruitfulness in the lives of those we are called to serve.

But often it is difficult to locate resources that act as good inter-locutors for this purpose. Some are so dense, they are of no practical purpose in the spiritual life, and some so bad they inspire nothing but disbelief.

Neither are good tools for sharing the fruits of contemplation.

For those willing to wade into the adventure of theological thinking with an excellent priest and scholar, I recommend John Behr's *John the Theologian and his Paschal Gospel: A Prologue to Theology* (Oxford University Press, 2021). Behr accomplishes what so few are able when writing a commentary on one of the Bible's most challenging books, the Gospel of St. John. As an Orthodox priest, grounded in both the Eastern and Western traditions of Christianity, fluent in Latin and Greek, and sensitive in avoiding the use of exclusive language, Behr's work is challenging and highly rewarding, refreshing and exciting. He really sets a new standard of forging faithful biblical interpretation in a culture that has lost confidence in its ability to interpret its sacred story.

By returning to ancient

sources and languages, Behr's research avoids the traps of becoming stuck in one particularly dominant theological tradition on one hand, and succumbing to modern mediocrity in the other. I found his ability to represent Eastern Christian interpretations to a largely Western readership an outstanding example of receptive ecumenism. And while the book might (and I use this word cautiously) be outside the grasp of the average lay-person, in the hands of a prayerful, thoughtful priest who wants to set a new standard in preaching, be just the right resource to enhance their library and inspire faith. I cannot recommend *John the Theologian and his Paschal Gospel: A Prologue to Theology* more highly for teachers of the bible who want to enter more deeply into the joy of prayer and study as a spiritual discipline for the life of the Church.