

Anglicans create
Advent devotional

Priest remembers
historic service



Book explores
Cohen's landscape

The Anglican

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RESPLENDENT

Musicians play festive music before the start of Choral Evensong and the presentations of the Order of the Diocese of Toronto at St. James Cathedral on Jan. 1. See pages 6-9. PHOTO BY MICHAEL HUDSON

Parishes asked to adopt a call or two

Study guide helps churches choose which one is best for them

BY STUART MANN

WITH the arrival of 2025, the Diocese of Toronto is moving into a new and exciting phase of its strategic plan, Cast the Net.

"We're seeing this as a season of deep, deep engagement, so that we're not isolated outposts but part of the fabric of the diocese that is moving in a compelling way," says Bishop Andrew Asbil.

In addition to the five large worship celebrations planned throughout the diocese this year, a group of clergy, laity and diocesan staff have come together to tend to Cast the Net and help parishes engage with its 20 Calls.

The 20 Calls, which were en-

dorsed by Synod along with the strategic plan in 2023, encourage Anglicans in all parts of the diocese to renew their spiritual lives, to seek justice for all, to support faithful and fruitful ministry, and to live and work as the body of Christ, each connected to the whole and each valued for their unique gifts.

"The 20 Calls are the result of hours of thoughtful, prayerful discernment," says Bishop Asbil. "They are both aspirational and challenging. They reflect who we believe we are being called to be by the Holy Spirit."

The group is hoping that parishes will embrace one or more of the calls this year. Parishes can choose calls that they are already involved

in or take up new ones – whatever best suits their capacity, context and vision.

The 20 Calls and a related study guide are available on the diocese's website at www.toronto.anglican.ca/castthenet. The group is hoping that parishes will devote some of their vestry meetings this year to discussing the calls and using the study guide. There may also be a session about the calls at the diocese's upcoming Parish Leaders Workshops in March.

Some parishes have already adopted one or more of the calls, and the group plans to highlight their efforts – and the efforts of others – through stories, social media posts and videos throughout the year. A

"Call & Response" time at Synod in November is being planned so that parishes can tell their stories.

The first of the 20 Calls is already well underway. Last spring, the diocese launched the Season of Spiritual Renewal, to help Anglicans deepen their personal and collective discipleship. Coordinated by the Rev. Canon Dr. Judy Paulsen and Jacqui Hance, the Season has provided many workshops and resources, including a booklet of daily prayers called *Prayers Through the Ages*. All the workshops and resources can be found at www.toronto.anglican.ca/seasonofrenewal.

Cast the Net and the Season of Spiritual Renewal have created op-

portunities for Anglicans to come together for learning, worship and fellowship. This past Advent, hundreds of people attended four evenings of online worship and reflection with Bishop Asbil, Bishop Riscylla Shaw and Bishop Kevin Robertson.

"That taught us something about the deep desire of Anglicans wanting to be together – to pray together and to reflect together theologically and spiritually," says Bishop Asbil.

He encourages parishes to embrace Cast the Net and one or more of the 20 Calls this year. "Knowing that you're doing something alongside every other parish at the same

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Saints past and present can inspire us

BY MURRAY MACADAM



Who are the saints for us today? Can they inspire us? A saint, based on the Latin word for “holy,” is a person recognized for a life of great virtue. They serve as excellent role models, teaching us how to live lives of goodness and generosity. Saints act as channels of God’s power and can interpret God and holiness for others.

My understanding of saints has changed tremendously from my days as a Roman Catholic child, when I believed that saints literally walked a metre or so above the Earth, as they were closer to heaven than the rest of us. The Catholic Church has a strong tradition of venerating saints and continues to formally recognize (or “canonize”) new saints, such as Oscar Romero, an archbishop in El Salvador known for his courageous advocacy for human rights and social justice during a time of political turmoil.

The commemoration of saints, people recognized as having lived holy lives, has always been a part of the Anglican tradition. As Anglicans we pray to “the communion of saints” in the Apostles’ Creed. We honour the memories of the saints, we recount their virtues and try to model our lives by their holy example.

Gregory of Nyssa, a fourth-century Roman Catholic prelate, is venerated as a saint in many Christian traditions, including Anglicanism. He was famous for his views on papal supremacy, his import of monastic principles into canon law (he was the first monk to ascend to the throne of St. Peter), and for his pursuit of anti-corruption reform within the Church.

St. Gregory’s Episcopal Church in San Francisco offers clues about how we might want to think about saints.

It features a stunning 2,300 square foot mural that encircles the rotunda walls. Mural figures include saints that might be expected, including Old Testament figures such as Isaiah, David and Miriam, along with early saints such as Francis of Assisi and Teresa of Avila. But social activists such as labour leader Cesar Chavez and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., both devout Christians, also grace the church walls.

Another feature stands out: these saints are dancing, inspired by Gregory, who wrote: “Once there was a time when the whole rational creation formed a single dancing chorus looking upward to the one leader of this dance, and the harmony of motion that they learned from his law found its way into their dancing.” St. Gregory’s has taken this message to heart in its art—and in its worship, which includes the congregation joining hands and dancing. Some may view this as a flakey San Francisco vestige from the hippie era, but I found it deeply spiritual when I worshipped there.

Who are the people in your life whom you view as saintly, through their holiness and their lives of service? I think of a former colleague, a lawyer and Christian named John Olthuis, who worked tirelessly on behalf of First Nations across Canada for six decades, including numerous trips to Labrador to win justice for the Innu. John’s spirit was not ground down by the difficult work before him and the hardships he witnessed amongst First Nations people. Instead, like the dancing saints at St. Gregory’s, John emulated joy. He has danced his way through life. His life of service was recognized through an Order of Canada award two years ago.

Many Anglicans would regard South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu as a saint due to his immense efforts to promote human rights, and in particular to oppose South Africa’s former apartheid regime. Like my friend John, he too emulated joy. Many years ago I met him at a church service in



A stained-glass window of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Rev. Florence Li Tim-Oi, the first female cleric in the Anglican Communion, graces the sanctuary of Grace Church on-the-Hill in Toronto. PHOTO BY MICHAEL HUDSON

Halifax. A long line of people waited patiently to shake hands with him. He greeted every person with warmth and enthusiasm. As the elderly lady in front of me shook hands with the archbishop, she told him that she’d just had a hip replacement.

“Then we must have a little dance,” re-

plied Archbishop Tutu, with a twinkle in his eye. He let go of her hand, then danced before her in the middle of the nave. May we all seek to live out our faith with that spirit of joy and boldness.

Murray MacAdam is a member of All Saints, Peterborough.

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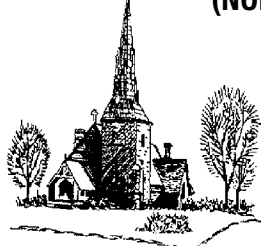
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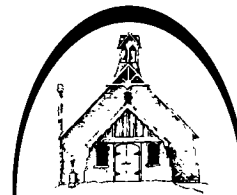
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Group promotes 20 Calls

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time, in your own unique way, is so enriching. This is not a cookie cutter or off-the-rack program. It is a changing of a culture, of which we are all a part as followers of Jesus Christ. So large parishes can learn from small parishes about what they are discovering in this walk, and vice versa. It’s about deeper engagement with the cathedral and with communities east, west, north and south. In my mind, it’s about changing the culture of the Diocese of Toronto, to see the fabric and the ministry in a new way.”

BRIEFLY

Service celebrates Black heritage

The first service celebrating the Black heritage of the Church in the Diocese of Toronto was held on Feb. 25, 1996, at St. James Cathedral. To mark the 30th anniversary of this event, the cathedral is inviting Anglicans across the diocese to a Eucharistic celebration celebrating the life and ministry of Black Anglicans in the diocese on Feb. 23 at 4:30 p.m. The preacher will be the Rev. Canon Dr. Stephen Fields. (For related article, see Page 5.)

Season seeks prayers for renewal

The Season of Spiritual Renewal, a diocesan initiative, is planning to compile some prayers for spiritual renewal that have been written by people across the diocese. Throughout January and February, parishes are encouraged to invite children, teens and other parishioners to write some prayers for renewal, then send them to the Rev. Canon Judy Paulsen, the season's coordinator. "We'd love to share these prayers with others across our diocese," she says. Canon Paulsen can be reached at jpaulsen@toronto.anglican.ca. The Season of Spiritual Renewal is also holding workshops this winter. Topics include using icons in prayer and preaching, including children and teens in worship, thinking theologically about music in worship and more. For more information and to register, visit www.toronto.anglican.ca/seasonofrenewal.

Advent series well attended

Hundreds of people attended Advent for Everyone, an online teaching series held over four evenings in December with Bishop Andrew Asbil, Bishop Riscylla Shaw and Bishop Kevin Robertson.

"I was very pleased that new parishioners who don't usually come to my Advent, Lent or bible studies came out for this one," said the Rev. Bonnie Skerritt of St. Paul, Lindsay. "It was well received and folks participated well in the conversations, answering the questions the bishops posed."

St. Paul's was one of the 14 churches that hosted a watch party during the series. At St. Paul's, 12 people gathered on site, with others joining online from their homes. "It was clear to me that my parishioners wanted to hear from the bishops and to learn from them," says Ms. Skerritt.

Christians mark unity

Bishop Andrew Asbil and other Christian leaders gathered with Christians from across the Greater Toronto Area at an ecumenical prayer service to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Jan. 19 at the North City Community Church in Vaughan. The service featured music by the Salvation Army band and choirs from across the region.



SPECIAL DELIVERY

The Rev. Andrew MacDonald, incumbent of St. Nicholas, Birch Cliff, holds kids' letters to Santa Claus before heading out on his bike to deliver replies from Saint Nick. During the Canada Post strike, the parish set up a special mailbox to let local families drop off their letters, as well as partnering with a local daycare. A small team of parishioners made sure every child got a reply before Christmas. In all, about 60 letters were delivered. PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. NICHOLAS, BIRCH CLIFF

Anglicans create Advent devotional

People across deanery share spiritual insights

BY MARTHA HOLMEN

VOICES from across Durham-Northumberland Deanery came together this Advent to share their faith and renew their connections in a new deanery-wide Advent devotional.

Titled *Awaiting the Light: Daily Gospel Reflections for Advent*, the devotional includes the daily gospel reading appointed by the eucharistic lectionary in the Book of Alternative Services. Each lesson is followed by a reflection written by a member of the deanery, which extends from Bowmanville east to Brighton along Lake Ontario.

The Rev. Canon Jesse Parker, the regional dean and incumbent of St. John the Evangelist, Port Hope, says he thought Advent would be the perfect opportunity to help people hold a space for peace in their hearts during a busy time of year.

"Advent is a beautiful, rich season theologically and spiritually, but often that's completely crowded out with Christmas craziness," he says. "I wanted to really just hold a space in people's hearts for the rich season of Advent."

Canon Parker solicited reflections from a wide range of people in Durham-Northumberland, both lay and ordained. "My hopes were high, and I wasn't disappointed," he says. "We have this huge, rich trove of wisdom, a really deep sense of faith and a desire to share that faith."

Having a breadth of voices rep-

resented in the devotional was a key part of the project, with the aim of showing the diversity of callings present in the deanery. Bishop Riscylla Shaw contributed a reflection, along with several



Image on the cover of the Advent devotional.

priests and deacons, lay readers, children's ministers and a doctoral student in theology – people who might not have a chance to preach on a Sunday but who have a wealth of spiritual insight to share.

"That's one thing I wanted to underscore – there are many ways for us to live out our baptismal vocations, and there they are on display," says Canon Parker. "It's wonderful to hear what your friends and neighbours have to say about the gospel."

Despite being one of the smallest deaneries, Canon Parker says

it has a history of shared spiritual life between parishes. In 2013, not long after he'd arrived in Port Hope, a deanery-wide "confirmation reboot" program culminated in a joint service of confirmation, reaffirmation of faith and reception into the Anglican Communion. Canon Parker says that program laid the groundwork for a spirit of shared life in the deanery that continues to this day.

"It's not unusual for people in this deanery to find themselves in each other's parishes, and with a wider emphasis now on that kind of cooperation and collaboration in the diocese with the Cast the Net calls, with the Season of Spiritual Renewal, it really felt like the time was right for an initiative like this," he says.

By the midway point in Advent, he had already heard from individuals in the deanery – and even from other dioceses – who had been using the devotional on a daily basis.

"I've been getting terrific feedback, and from some people that I don't even know and who aren't even necessarily in the deanery," he says. "It's wonderful to see how something that you know starts small can have a wide impact."

He says he hopes that impact is one that lasts beyond the Advent and Christmas seasons, helping people ground their lives in scripture and prayer.

"My real hope is that for people who don't yet have a daily devotional practice for all seasons that

this would help to bring that about in their lives," he says. "It's been an indispensable part of my own growth as a Christian, having a daily rhythm of scripture, reflection and prayer. And I hope that it can help to bring that about for people."

He says he'd also love to see the devotional work its way into the wider community to let people in the region know about what they might expect from their local Anglican church.

"I think a devotional can be a really approachable way for people to get into the faith," he says. "If the person who wrote that is a member of that church, maybe it's the kind of place that I'd like to go and spend some time."

As the church year marches on, Canon Parker says he's considering a Lenten devotional, possibly a parish initiative rather than a deanery-wide project. He also says he would consider making the Advent devotional a yearly endeavour, along with exploring more ways of bringing the people of Durham-Northumberland together.

"As we live into the Cast the Net vision of a more interconnected life in the diocese, I think deaneries are going to be a really important part of that – thinking of the deanery as a unit for cooperation and collaboration and building up those bonds of affection between parishes," he says. "I'm really excited to see just a small example of how that can yield good results, and I think the devotional is that."



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In the Anglican Communion:
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Archbishop of Canterbury:
The Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. Justin Welby,
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In Canada:
A community of about 600,000 members in 30 dioceses, stretching from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland and north to the Arctic Ocean.

Primate:
The Most Rev. Linda Nicholls,
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The Most Rev. Christopher Harper
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In the Diocese of Toronto:
A community of 254 congregations in 210 parishes covering 26,000 square kilometers. Of the nearly 5 million people who live within the diocesan boundaries, 376,000 claim to be affiliated with the Anglican Church, with about 80,000 people identified on the parish rolls. The diocese is home to many ethnic and language-based congregations, including African, Caribbean, Chinese, Filipino, French, Hispanic, Japanese, and Tamil. The City of Toronto has a large population of aboriginal peoples.

Bishop of Toronto:
The Rt. Rev. Andrew Asbil

Suffragan Bishops:
The Rt. Rev. Riscylla Shaw and
The Rt. Rev. Kevin Robertson

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GREETINGS

The diocese's bishops, archdeacons, canon administrator, chancellor and dean exchange New Year's greetings with well-wishers at the annual Bishop's Levee, held Jan. 1 at St. James Cathedral. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HUDSON



The journey has been deeply rewarding



BY THE REV. CANON
DR. STEPHEN FIELDS

As we approach the 30th anniversary of the first Black history service in our diocese, to be celebrated this year on Sunday, Feb. 23 at St. James Cathedral, I share this personal reflection.

My arrival in Toronto in the spring of 1993 to serve as the associate priest of St. Michael and All Angels, where there was a strong Caribbean presence, marked the beginning of an encouraging and mutually affirming journey, both for myself and for the community. At the outset, I should note, I was in time to see the words “death to race mixers” indelibly marked in graffiti on the exterior walls of the church building, before the vegetation that grew on the walls returned at the end of the winter. St. Michael’s was one of those few churches in the diocese known to be a place where the leadership was historically an active and strong voice for the marginalized and offered a warm welcome to all Caribbean people.

Having ministered in the Caribbean, I was familiar with the rhythms, vibrancy and challenges of the culture. However, stepping into a diocese where I was one of only four or five Black priests among more than 200 predominantly white clergy presented a new and complex reality. It was both humbling and daunting, and I was unsure about the shape my ministry would take and develop in such a context.

That uncertainty began to shift when I started receiving calls from non-white individuals seeking priestly ministrations. They wanted a pastor who would understand their experiences, someone who would empathize with their struggles as minorities in a predominantly white society and Church. One call came from the Don Jail, where the caller asked me to visit him after he saw my picture in a community paper. He told me that he was not comfortable with the white chaplain. I went expecting to see a young Black man. To my surprise, it was a young, bi-racial (First Nations-Hispanic) man.

These calls revealed a neglected spiritual and pastoral need among non-white individuals and families who often felt invisible within the broader diocesan structure. That, I soon experienced at a personal level.

It became clear that my ministry was not just about serving a congregation but about representing and uplifting a marginalized community. However, as these calls increased, so did my own feelings of isolation. I recognized that while I was ministering to others, I lacked a support system for myself, and I felt the weight of navigating my role in an environment where representation and cultural understanding were scarce.

Realizing that I could not do this work alone, I reached out to the four other Black priests in the diocese. Our conversations were very encouraging and mutually enlightening. We shared our experiences and began to discern how we could address the needs of the community we served. We saw parallels with the early Church, particularly in the story of the Hellenistic Jewish widows in Acts 6:1-6, who felt neglected “in the daily administration” until the apostles took action to address their concerns.

This similarity strengthened our resolve. Just as the apostles appointed deacons to ensure equitable care, we recognized the need to organize and advocate for a neglected community. Through



Drummers and liturgical dancers perform at the diocese’s first Black history service at St. James Cathedral in 1996. PHOTOS BY DAVID LAURENCE

prayer and reflection, we identified three key areas of focus for our collective ministry:

1. *Mutual support for clergy and laity.* We prioritized creating a network of support for Black clergy, recognizing the importance of having spaces to share experiences, offer encouragement and collaborate on initiatives.

2. *Advocacy and leadership.* We aimed to amplify the voices of the Black community within the diocese, ensuring that their needs and contributions were recognized and valued.

3. *Fostering vocations.* We committed to nurturing vocations among young Black Anglicans, encouraging them to consider leadership roles within the Church.

Around this time, the diocese launched an initiative in multicultural ministry, No Longer Strangers, which provided a platform for us to organize more formally. This initiative served as a catalyst for our work, allowing us to connect with other marginalized groups and advocate for greater inclusion within the Anglican Church. It also reinforced the importance of creating spaces where diverse cultural expressions could flourish within the life of the Church.

The defining moment of our efforts came in 1996 with the diocesan Black history service at St. James Cathedral. This service was not only the genesis of our work but also a bold statement of the vitality, colour and richness of the Black heritage within the Anglican Church. We envisioned it as a celebration of our culture and faith – a worship experience that would reflect the unique contributions of the Black community to the Church.

The service was an overwhelming success. For the first time in the history of the Anglican Church of Canada, people were turned away from a worship service because the cathedral was full to overflowing. Steelpans, Caribbean rhythms and liturgical dancers filled the sanctuary, creating an atmosphere of joyful praise and cultural pride. It was a moment that transcended mere tradition, inviting the entire diocese and wider community to witness and participate in the richness of Black spirituality.

The sermon, delivered by the Rev. Dr. Professor Kortright Davis of Howard University School of Divinity, was a powerful



centerpiece of the service. He spoke about the “five spiritual S’s” that Black people bring to enrich the life of any church or community. These S’s – suffer, serve, share, struggle, sing – resonated deeply with the congregation, affirming the unique gifts and resilience of the Black community. Here is what he said:

“First, Black people know how to *suffer*; and suffered they have, just because of the colour of the skin in which God was exceptionally pleased to place them. Second, Black people know what it means to *serve*, whether it is in enforced servitude or voluntary and selfless service. Third, Black people know what it means to *share*. They share their substance, they share their meaning, they share their lives, they share their hopes, they share their poverty. Fourth, Black people know what it means to *struggle*. Life, for them, is never easy being Black. As they struggle with all their might, they are challenged to use all of their wits and a full measure of their faith to turn every stumbling block into a useful stepping stone. Fifth, Black people know how to *sing*. They have had to sing the Lord’s song in a strange land. How could they do this? They inherited this virtue from their foreparents. Their forebears had to sing to ease their own pain. They had to sing in solidarity with each other as they protested their many common indignities and injustices. They had to sing to put strength and meaning in their lives.”

The service was more than a one-time

event; it was the beginning of a sustained effort to uplift and celebrate the contributions of Black Anglicans. It gave visibility to our community and laid the groundwork for broader advocacy and engagement within the Church. Over time, this work inspired others to join the cause, ensuring that the seeds we planted would continue to grow. We have seen new things. The number of Black priests has grown, the Church elected its first Black bishop, Bishop Peter Fenty. Our diocese appointed two Black archdeacons in the recent restructuring of its administrative protocols. Black Anglicans have taken their place in the councils of the diocese. To be honest, the momentum has waned. There is still much more to do, so we cannot grow weary in well doing.

Now, nearly 30 years later, the work we started has been taken up by a new generation of Black Anglicans, organized under the banner of The Black Anglicans of Canada. This group has expanded the vision, focusing on a national agenda of transformation. Its work includes advocating for systemic change, mentoring young leaders and creating spaces where Black voices can thrive within the Anglican Church and beyond.

As I reflect on this journey, I am struck by the power of community and collaboration. What began as a response to feelings of isolation and neglect evolved into a movement that has enriched the Church and inspired countless individuals. Our ministry demonstrated the importance of equitable representation, the beauty of cultural diversity and the transformative power of faith.

The Black history service of Sunday, Feb. 25, 1996, remains a milestone – a watershed moment when the Black community came together to worship, celebrate and affirm its place within the Anglican Church. It showed that when we honour the unique gifts of every culture, we reflect the fullness within the Reign of God.

Looking ahead, I am filled with hope. The journey has not been without its challenges, but it has been deeply rewarding. It is my prayer that this work will continue to inspire, uplift and transform, ensuring that the richness of our Black heritage remains a vibrant part of the Church’s life for generations to come. “A luta continua.”

The Rev. Canon Dr. Stephen Fields is the vicar and sub-dean of St. James Cathedral in Toronto.

Laity receive Order of the

Award honours outstanding service over the years

The Order of the Diocese of Toronto, an award created in 2013, honours members of the laity in the diocese who have given outstanding service over a significant period of time in their volunteer ministry. We give thanks to God for the work and witness of these faithful people who, in the exercise of their baptismal ministry, have demonstrated that "their light shines, their works glorify." In 2024, the recipients came from the following deaneries: Holland, Mississauga, Parkdale-West Toronto, Peterborough, York Central and York Mills.

Jack Adams, ODT

St. Luke, Peterborough

Mr. Adams was nominated by St. Luke, Peterborough for 75 years of devoted service. His leadership as churchwarden, lay reader and preacher, Sunday School teacher and Young People's Association leader, chorister and supporter of all efforts to alleviate poverty and hardship in the community have been invaluable. His beloved parish is grateful for his lifetime of Christian witness and determined hope in the life and ministry of St. Luke's.

John Amesbury, ODT

Parish of Ida and Omeme

Mr. Amesbury was nominated by the Parish of Ida and Omeme for his service as lay reader, preacher and outreach coordinator for over 40 years. He has chaired two refugee sponsorships and encouraged support of Migrant Worker Ministry, One City Peterborough, local food banks and Indigenous clean water projects. St. John's is grateful for his faithful and inspiring witness.

Evernese Benskin

St. Stephen in-the-Fields

Ms. Benskin was nominated by St. Stephen in-the-Fields for a lifetime of devoted service to her parish. Holding nearly every position that a lay person can hold, she has been churchwarden, ACW chair, office administrator, head of the altar guild, envelope secretary, and presently a sidesperson and greeter. As described by St. Stephen's, she is forthright and determined – inspiring everyday servanthood witness to her community.

Janice Biehn Douglas, ODT

St. Olave, Swansea

Mrs. Biehn Douglas was nominated by St. Olave, Swansea for her 30 years of faithful service to the parish. In all the ways she has served St. Olave's as churchwarden, Sunday School coordinator and communications coordinator, she has exemplified passion and love for her parish. Selflessly giving of her time and skills, she is a cornerstone of her community's life and health.

Pauline Bourne, ODT

St. Hilda, Fairbank

Mrs. Bourne was nominated by St. Hilda, Fairbank for her active participation in



New members of the Order of the Diocese of Toronto stand with Bishop Andrew Asbil, suffragan bishops and clergy after their investiture at St. James Cathedral

the parish community since 1978. She has taken on leadership roles consisting of churchwarden, outreach and welcoming committees, ACW and advisory board. In her leisure, she also makes abundant time to spend with her family and particularly her grandchildren.

Audrey Bowers, ODT

Holy Spirit of Peace

Mrs. Bowers was nominated by Holy Spirit of Peace for nearly 40 years of faithful, skilled service in parish leadership. She has served as envelope secretary, advisory board member, council secretary, council acting chair and chair, and participated in National Church Development and Fresh Expressions. A licenced lay anointer and server as well, she faithfully attends bible study and prayer to recharge her spiritual batteries.

Marylou Bowles, ODT

St. Matthew and St. Aidan, Buckhorn

Mrs. Bowles was nominated by St. Matthew and St. Aidan, Buckhorn for her tireless commitment to all aspects of parish life. A cradle Anglican with 30+ years in Buckhorn, she has served as churchwarden, altar guild coordinator, ACW member and caterer extraordinaire, and is a Trent Lakes Outreach Committee member. She exemplifies a disciple of Christ through her care of others and adherence to the teachings of the bible.

Marilyn Cartmill, ODT

All Saints, King City

Mrs. Cartmill was nominated by All Saints, King City for her commitment to

all aspects of ministry and organization. Chorister, chancel chair, chalice bearer and audit manager are avenues to contribute her wisdom, insight and skills to those in need and exemplify her love for her church. She is the most reliable and dedicated person, and All Saints gives thanks for her gifts of friendship, truth-telling and humour.

Brian Clarke, ODT

St. Mary Magdalene, Toronto

Mr. Clarke was nominated by St. Mary Magdalene for his exceptional service to the church and community as a leader and community creator. As a lifetime advisory board member, his wisdom is often sought regarding the parish and its people. He is noted for his care of the poorest and most disadvantaged in the community and for the ways service is rooted in his engagement with liturgical life.

Hilda Cole, ODT

Parish of Belmont

Ms. Cole was nominated by the Parish of Belmont for her almost 70 years' service to St. John the Evangelist, Havelock. Holding many appointments, notably 40 years as a lay reader and self-taught hymns-on-CD operator, she was instrumental in the beginnings of the Rice Lake Regional Ministry process and continues to participate in regional council. She passionately contributes her energy and faithfulness to serving her church and village.

Philip Conliffe, ODT

St. Martin in-the-Fields

Mr. Conliffe was nominated by the bishop

for his service in the diocesan Volunteer Corps. As a coach with the Parish Finance Advisory Committee and a Canon 24 administrator, he has helped parishes return to financial health with candour and calm wisdom while maintaining his long-standing role as treasurer of St. Martin in-the-Fields. A diligent family man of deep faith and skill, he generously shares his talent and treasure for the good of our collective Church family.

Barbara Coolen, ODT

Trinity – St. Paul, Port Credit

Mrs. Coolen was nominated by Trinity – St. Paul, Port Credit for her faithful service to parish life for the past 52 years. As chair of the chancel guild for 29 years, she has trained and led a dedicated team in care of the worship space, as well as helped to organize many events in support of the church and community. She is an exceptional role model to her parish.

Nancy Cutler, ODT

Holy Trinity, Thornhill

Mrs. Cutler was nominated by the bishop for her determined witness in every aspect of her service-oriented life. Her terms as churchwarden pre-incumbent have been selfless and stabilizing thanks to clear and coordinated communication throughout the parish and with the diocese. In her professional life as a civil servant and in her many volunteer roles in the community, she shines the gospel light with her excellent humour, disciplined mind and compassionate heart.

The Diocese of Toronto



Jan. 1. PHOTO BY MICHAEL HUDSON

Ezra Cyrus, ODT

Epiphany & St. Mark, Parkdale
Mr. Cyrus was nominated by Epiphany and St. Mark, Parkdale for four decades and counting of service to the parish. Beginning with the servers' guild in high school, he later became an advisory board member and became chair. Throughout the last 25 years, he has built the foundation for sound parish financial reporting, advice and budgeting practices.

Edith Davis, ODT

St. John the Baptist (Dixie)
Ms. Davis was nominated by St. John the Baptist (Dixie) for her many years' devoted service supporting the ministry of the parish and cemetery, particularly as churchwarden. A mentor to others in ministry, and a witness in preaching, prayer and scripture study, she has led worship as a lay reader and chorister and has represented her parish at six synods. A fun fact: she has the canons of the diocese completely memorized!

Jane De Cheverry, ODT

St. Hilary (Cooksville)
Mrs. De Cheverry was nominated by St. Hilary (Cooksville) for 30 years' service in many roles, including parish treasurer. A member of the corporation and advisory board, Sunday School teacher and daycare board member, she works hard and is always willing to roll up her sleeves. With a spirit of hope and belief, especially in challenging times, her problem-solving skills and positive spirit are an example to us all.

Olive June Dyer, ODT

Christ Church, Stouffville
Mrs. Dyer was nominated by Christ Church, Stouffville for her life-long ministry to her Church at the parish, diocesan, national and international levels. Sunday School ministry, lay reader, lay anointer, lay pastoral visitor, chalice bearer, greeter, diocesan ACW president, International Committee of World Day of Prayer, and Women's Inter-Church Council Canada appointee are a few examples. She exemplifies walking alongside in compassion, kindness and prayerfulness to serve with a generous and humble spirit.

Elizabeth Fowl, ODT

St. Matthias, Bellwoods
Ms. Fowl was nominated by St. Matthias, Bellwoods for her tireless dedication to her parish. Organized, skilled and determined, she is committed to ensuring "all things will work out," such as hybrid ministry. The key asset to day-to-day administration, including parish streaming services and envelope secretary, she is the go-to person whose self-identified best feature is her faith.

Kathleen Joy Gannicott, ODT

Trinity Church, Aurora
Mrs. Gannicott was nominated by Trinity Church, Aurora for her 35 years' dedicated service at Trinity and in Holland Deanery. A volunteer musician at her parish, she has also shared her musical gifts and talents as volunteer organist with St. Mary Magdalene, Schomberg and provided music and pastoral minis-

try to nursing home services in Aurora. Founder of Trinity's flower guild, she is also an active member of the Canadian chapter of the Compass Rose Society.

Tina George, ODT

St. Bede
Ms. George was nominated by the bishop for her work with the diocesan Volunteer Corps. Joining in 2017 to help parishes in transition with stewardship goals and as a National Church Development coach, she worked on the Episcopal Leadership Implementation Team in 2022 and currently serves on the steering committee for Cast the Net. Leveraging her corporate skills and abundant faith to the hard work of our Church and her beloved parish of St. Bede's, she is a treasure.

Kimberly Gollinger, ODT

Parish of Georgina
Ms. Gollinger was nominated by the Parish of Georgina for being a model of a committed parishioner eager to take on leadership and help others. As churchwarden, parish archivist and member of the local historical society, she knows all of the parish's past secrets and joys, and leverages this for the building up of future glory. She is a well-known ambassador in the Sutton community and a wonderful gift to her parish.

Wendy Graham, ODT

St. Anne, Toronto
Mrs. Graham was nominated by St. Anne, Toronto for tireless service to the parish in many capacities for over 58 years. She is currently special advisor to

the corporation and envelope secretary. Along with her beloved family, she is counted on for special occasions and is often the last person standing during event clean-up. Respected by all for her wisdom and grace, she is highly deserving of this honour.

Joyce Green, ODT

St. Francis of Assisi, Meadowvale West
Ms. Green was nominated by St. Francis of Assisi, Meadowvale West for her prayerful and inspired ministry in many roles, especially as director of the altar guild for over 20 years. Through her dedication to community building in organizing parish events, to her attention to every detail of caring for sacred vessels and linens, her loving and respectful service has endeared her to the parish. She is loved and adored by everyone at St. Francis.

Timothy Holman, ODT

St. George by the Grange
Mr. Holman was nominated by St. George by the Grange for nearly four decades of faithful service as the parish caretaker. With many incumbents and a changing congregation and neighbourhood, he remained a constant; a faithful, friendly presence to ensure an oasis of quiet peace for all visitors in a busy part of the city. As caretaker, he went beyond his employment responsibilities, eschewing his own comfort to care for the day-to-day maintenance of the parish.

Continued from Page 7

Walter Howell, ODT

St. John the Evangelist, Peterborough
Mr. Howell was nominated by St. John the Evangelist, Peterborough for a lifetime of service to the church. An exemplary leader in a wide variety of roles from committee chair to churchwarden, he demonstrates his commitment to the gospel and the mission of our church. With a steadfast readiness to lend a hand or organize a working party, his cheer brings joy to his parish and all who meet him.

Evelyn Hullah, ODT

Ascension, Don Mills
Mrs. Hullah was nominated by Ascension, Don Mills for her ardent faith, demonstrated in her many works by which she has served the Lord and her community. As founding and current co-chair of Café 65 – a gathering place for seniors' parish monthly outreach – she has applied her corporate expertise and skills in service to others. For 54 years, she has lived in and served her parish alongside her beloved husband and family.

William Hullah, ODT

Ascension, Don Mills
Mr. Hullah was nominated by the bishop for reflecting his passionate faith in his many works and imaginative ways to broaden community. Along with his wife Evelyn, he founded Ascension's Café 65 parish outreach ministry to seniors, using his former role as president and director of Community Share Food Bank for inspiration. Presently director emeritus, he remains dedicated to community organizations as well as his parish's initiatives to serve and support senior's ministry in Don Mills.

Thomas (Tom) Johnston, ODT

Parish of Roches Point
Mr. Johnston was nominated by the Parish of Roches Point for his universal volunteer work for the church and its buildings, services and parish community. A well-known figure in local life, he stands out for his dedication to church maintenance, liturgical assistance and playing Santa Claus every year in the Keswick parade. His welcoming spirit helps a small parish to flourish in the community.

Rebecca Jones, ODT

Holy Trinity, Thornhill
Ms. Jones was nominated by Holy Trinity, Thornhill for her exemplary witness in a 30+ year ministry. She has embodied the six promises of the baptismal covenant – worshipping, proclaiming, serving, striving, respecting and caring – into Christian education, outreach, community development and administrative leadership. Holy Trinity is especially grateful for her digital expertise, which positioned the parish's transition to online worship seamlessly during the pandemic.

Philip Kwan, ODT

St. John, Willowdale
Mr. Kwan was nominated by St. John, Willowdale for three decades of service as a volunteer. Valued for his wisdom and experience in parish ministry and as diocesan liaison, his calculated leadership has enabled good maintenance and fruitful usage of three church buildings. He has worked hard to honour St. John's tradition, as well as inspiring movement towards the future, representing inter-cultural parish ministry of multiple ethnicities.

John Lindsay, ODT

St. Peter, Cobourg
Mr. Lindsay was nominated by the bishop for dedicated commitment to service in the Anglican Church community and his particular support of outreach ministry in the diocese through FaithWorks. An avid



The Order of the Diocese of Toronto medallions are ready to be presented. PHOTO BY MICHAEL HUDSON

volunteer in his parish as well, he has served as churchwarden, lay reader and intercessor, and in his spare time was a three-term elected municipal councillor in the town of Cobourg. His faith is reflected in a warmth of heart and eager zeal for the service he offers.

Robert Longworth, ODT

St. Michael and All Angels
Mr. Longworth was nominated by St. Michael and All Angels for a lifetime of care and devotion to his church and community. With humour, intelligence, musicality and leadership, he has participated and served in every single capacity of parish life for over 80 years. The entire community looks to him as elder statesman who brings to all he does the wisdom and knowledge that he graciously shares.

Jacqueline Lue, ODT

Christ Church, Woodbridge
Ms. Lue was nominated by Christ Church, Woodbridge for her committed faith in service. Serving as churchwarden at two parishes – St. Stephen, Maple and Christ Church, Woodbridge – she has also served as counter, reader and greeter. Always willing to help with all church activities and volunteer opportunities, her ministry is exemplary to all.

Margie Lyttle, ODT

St. George on Yonge
Ms. Lyttle was nominated by St. George on Yonge for her outstanding contribution to worship and prayer in the church community and beyond. With a devotion to liturgy and people that has been transformative for St. George's, her service and prayer has been felt in the Willowdale neighbourhood. She also has legacies of involvement in the global Church, especially in Jamaica through St. Mary's Anglican Church and through the Daughters of the King for the Diocese of Southeast Florida.

Marlene Mueller, ODT

St. James the Apostle, Sharon
Mrs. Mueller was nominated by St. James the Apostle, Sharon for her devoted service and contributions to the life of St. James and its community for 54 years. Beginning with the ACW, she has

served in parish administration and in the chancel guild and prayer circle and is happy to lend a hand to any gardening and groundwork. With a depth of faith at the core of her being, her joy and service are life-giving.

Bridget North, ODT

St. John the Baptist, Norway
Ms. North was nominated by the bishop to recognize her outstanding contributions to her parish and community over several decades. With kind service, she has supported refugees coming to Canada, led as churchwarden and president of the ACW Norway group, fundraised, coordinated the prayer group for a decade and generally supported parishioners with carpooling, cards, visits and calls. She is a faithful and wonderful parishioner who has brought so much love to her community.

Benita Pong, ODT

St. Christopher
Ms. Pong was nominated by the bishop for her caring and helpful deeds that have influenced many parishioners and the Richmond Hill community. With demonstrated leadership in managing property, finances and administration, she selflessly gives her time to her parish and organizes wonderful events for the community. She is actively supportive of new immigrant ministry and outreach and, along with the Rev. Canon Philip Der, has diligently ensured that online accessibility to worship is maintained and developed effectively.

Michael Rowland, ODT

St. Thomas, Huron Street
Mr. Rowland was nominated by St. Thomas, Huron Street for his contributions to the parish's life over the past 35 years, most notably in the areas of stewardship, music and outreach. He has led every major fundraising effort, including annual appeals, capital campaigns and special initiatives. A tireless member of the Friends of Music Committee, he has also given generously of his time to refugee settlement and the Friday Food ministry.

Paul Pok Yan Seto, ODT

St. Elizabeth Church, Mississauga
Mr. Seto was nominated by St. Elizabeth

Church, Mississauga for his patient, diligent and faithful service as an outstanding churchwarden. A full-time geophysics engineer, his commitment extends beyond his professional life to enrich the life of his parish in support of its growth and vitality. His love for God shines through in heart, soul and mind as evidenced in his service to his church and congregation.

Gary Spence, ODT

St. Peter (Erindale)
Mr. Spence was nominated by St. Peter (Erindale) for his active leadership that has contributed to church growth and welcome since he was tapped on the shoulder to help with greeting in 1993. Thirty years later, with an "other duties as assigned" volunteer list longer than his list of formal roles, he has approached all ministry with kindness and a sense of humour. He values the great friendships he and his family have built along his faithful journey.

Michael Willmot, ODT

St. Paul, Bloor Street
Mr. Willmot was nominated by the bishop for his contributions to the Diocese of Toronto in expertise and talent. As former chair of the Bishop's Company, he leveraged his experience as a career investment and merchant banker in founding the annual dinner as a sponsored event and introducing the capital account that helped to establish the endowment fund for the office of the Bishop of Toronto. He continues as a lifetime member of the Bishop's Company and was lead sponsor of the 2024 dinner.

Diana Wong, ODT

St. Christopher
Mrs. Wong was nominated by St. Christopher for her devotion in sharing the gospel with others through service to her church and works in social justice and environmental issues. With visionary and prayerful leadership, she was instrumental in planting today's St. Christopher's church. Generous with her time and talent by serving as churchwarden, treasurer, Sunday School superintendent, children's choir conductor, mission chair, organist and mentor, she exemplifies Christian servant leadership.



ALL TOGETHER

Newly minted members of the Order of the Diocese of Toronto stand to be recognized, and afterwards mingle with family, friends, clergy and bishops in St. James Cathedral. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HUDSON

Visit our website at www.theanglican.ca

Church group brings joy, one satchel at a time

Christmas campaign helps older kids

BY EMILY STONEHOUSE

CHRISTMAS is the time of year for magic and kindness, and that's clear during St. George, Haliburton's annual St. Nick's Satchel Campaign.

For the past eight years, the Creative Devotions, a sewing group that is a part of the church, has gathered to create Christmas satchels – sweetly created little bags – that are filled with goodies for older kids and donated directly to the Youth Wellness Hub in Haliburton.

"We saw a need there," says Louise Sisson, the people's warden. "It was something that was started by the Rev. Ken McClure. He was very much a storyteller and loved the story of St. Nick."

The legend of St. Nick started around 350 BCE with a Greek Orthodox bishop named Nicholas, who heard that a local townsman was struggling and had to sell his three beautiful daughters as a result.

Nicholas went to the man's home late one evening and threw a small satchel of gold into a window. The gold was enough to save the man and his daughters from poverty. That story has been woven and evolved into the background for the modern-day Santa Claus.

Each year, the Creative Devotions put together 50 small, colourful satchels for youth in the community, and include three gift cards, an orange and some treats. Mary Sisson, the hub's manager, disperses the satchels to individuals in need.

The Youth Wellness Hub is "a one-stop shop for youth aged 12 to 25," she says. "It is an inclusive, positive and welcoming space where youth can access a broad range of services and supports delivered in a respectful and inclusive fashion." From April to December 2024, the hub saw 1,932 visits for activities and provided food security to about 47 youth.

Ms. Sisson says the satchels pro-

vided by St. George's are a bright spot for many of the youth in the community, particularly as that age range is overlooked during many holiday campaigns. "For older youth who may be on their own or don't have a connection to family, to get this gift is so special," she says. "We are just so grateful for this partnership over the past few years."

For her part, Louise Sisson is proud of the hard work the church has done for the community hub and shows no signs of slowing down when it comes to supporting the youth. "The hub looks after them," she says. "It gives them a place to go after school, a place to listen to music, play games and be a safe space. It's just such an awesome place to have in our community."

This article first appeared in the Haliburton Echo. It is reprinted with permission.



Mary Sisson, left, and Louise Sisson with satchels that are given out to youth in Haliburton. PHOTO BY THE HALIBURTON ECHO



ALL SET

Two young parishioners of St. Barnabas, Chester help set up the church's beloved outdoor nativity figures. The nativity display is enjoyed every year by local residents and children passing by the church on Danforth Avenue in Toronto.

PHOTO BY THE REV. LOUISE DIGHTAM

Read, enjoy and share.

Photo adapted from Fizes/Shutterstock

Visit the new online home of The Anglican at www.theanglican.ca

AWARE's annual retreat refreshes the soul

BY MARGARET ELEY

From May 3-5 last year, I attended a retreat with AWARE Peterborough for women of all denominations and ages. This annual retreat is a weekend of spiritual refreshment and challenge. It includes an excellent speaker, small group discussions, worshipful music, fun and fellowship or the blissful solitude of sitting by the lake listening to the loons.

This was my first visit, although a number of women from my parish's Anglican Church Women group have attended in past years. Helen Lee from Rosemeath was most willing to take me in her car. She and I attended a preparatory meeting one Saturday in March.

Why was I choosing to spend the weekend now? After having been in and out of church throughout my life, I joined Christ Church when we moved to Campbellford, where I have now worshipped for some years. But I find myself constantly questioning. This weekend was a new experience, one where I might find some answers.

What did I find? Comfortable accommodation by Buckhorn

Lake, superb eats at all stages throughout the day, but above all such a wonderful welcome from everyone. The approximately 120 guests, along with all the staff, were so accepting, friendly and helpful, giving the feeling of being clothed in warmth.

The chosen theme was "God lights a fire in our heart." Laurie Robertson, the keynote speaker, and the Rev. Sharon Sangster, the chaplain, together with women of the planning committee, were always available to show understanding and encouragement when needed.

Ms. Robertson gave four well-constructed talks relating to different aspects of the theme. Immediately afterwards, we divided into our designated small discussion groups to chat, talk and explore the ideas further. During the first of these, we were asked to consider the four stages of fire: flickering, flare, flame, embers. Might we care to identify our beliefs and how we share them with one or more stages of fire? Each of the highly focused talks provided much thought for animated discussion in the ensuing small group meeting.

There were two lovely services. The first was a late afternoon

Taizé service by candlelight in the Rustic Chapel. Taizé prayer is a simple, meditative form of worship, calling all to dwell deeply in Christ's presence around and within us. It was an evening prayer for all Christian faiths. The final Eucharist provided a wonderful ending to the weekend.

The nearly two days were packed with lovely music, hobby time, conversation time or just time out to sit, contemplate and soak in the feel of the lake. Of course, it was appreciated if you participated fully, but no one was judgmental if you didn't.

In any gathering there are probably as many shades of belief as people in the room, but here many women openly demonstrated the joy they found in their relationship with God.

Did I find answers? Maybe some, but very many more searching questions. Would I come again? Most certainly yes.

AWARE Peterborough is celebrating its 30th anniversary with a retreat on the first weekend in May. Learn more at www.awarepeterborough.com. Margaret Eley is a member of Christ Church, Campbellford.

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IN MOTION

Appointments

- The Rev. Dr. Connie Phillipson, Priest-in-Charge, St. George, Haliburton, Oct. 21, 2024.
- The Rev. Canon Dr. David Barker, Honorary Assistant, St. George, Haliburton, Dec. 1, 2024.
- The Rev. Margaret Milne (Diocese of the Arctic), Honorary Assistant, St. George, Haliburton, Dec. 1, 2024.
- The Rev. Dr. Monique Taylor, Honorary Assistant, St. Peter, Cobourg, Dec. 1, 2024.
- The Rev. Capt. Mark Kalvaitis (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada), Honorary Assistant, All Saints Church-Community Centre, Dec. 4, 2024.
- The Rev. Lyn Youll Marshall, Honorary Assistant, Trinity East (Little Trinity), Dec. 4, 2024.
- The Rev. Karen Hatch, Interim Priest-in-Charge, Transfiguration, Dec. 8, 2024.
- The Rev. Martha Riddell (Diocese of Ontario), Interim Chaplain of Bishop Strachan School while the Chaplain, the

- Rev. Claire Latimer-Dennis, is on maternity leave, Dec. 16, 2024.
- The Rev. Canon Derek Stapleton, Honorary Assistant, St. Paul, L'Amoreaux, Dec. 20, 2024.
- The Rev. Bob Bettson, Interim Priest-in-Charge, St. Michael the Archangel, Toronto, Jan. 1.
- The Rev. Elivered Mulongo, Priest-in-Charge, Church of the Messiah, Jan. 1.
- The Rev. James Shire, Interim Associate Priest, Grace Church on-the-Hill, Jan. 1.

Vacant Incumbencies
Clergy from outside the diocese with the permission of their bishop may apply through the Diocesan Executive Assistant, Canon Mary Conliffe.

Bishop's Direct Appointment Process

- (receiving names):
- Parish of Campbellford, Hastings and Roseneath
- St. John, York Mills (associate priest)
- Parish of Fenelon Falls and Coboconk
- St. Paul, Uxbridge
- St. Mark, Midland

- St. John, Willowdale
- Parish Selection Committee Process**
- First Phase** - (not yet receiving names):
- N/A
- Second Phase** - (receiving names via Bishop):
- Christ Church, Brampton
 - St. George on-the-Hill
- Third Phase** - (no longer receiving names):
- Christ Church, Deer Park

Ordination

- The Rev. Matthew Waterman will be ordained a Priest at St. James Cathedral on Feb. 2 at 4:30 p.m.

Deaths

- The Rev. Canon Dr. Eric Beresford died on Dec. 31, 2024. Canon Beresford was the incumbent of St. Mary Magdalene, Toronto and the spouse of Canon Janet Marshall, director of the diocese's Congregational Development department. His funeral was held on Jan. 22 at St. Mary Magdalene.

LOOKING AHEAD

To submit items for Looking Ahead, email editor@toronto.anglican.ca. The deadline for the March issue is Feb. 1. Parishes can also promote their events on the diocese's website Calendar at www.toronto.anglican.ca.

FEB. 23 - The first service celebrating the Black heritage of the Church in the Diocese of Toronto was held on Feb. 25, 1996, at St. James Cathedral. To mark the 30th anniversary of this event, the cathedral is inviting Anglicans across the diocese to a Eucharistic

celebration celebrating the life and ministry of Black Anglicans in the diocese on Feb. 23 at 4:30 p.m. The preacher will be the Rev. Canon Dr. Stephen Fields.

MARCH 5 - Ash Wednesday Exploration Day, 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., St. James Cathedral, King and Church streets, Toronto. Children and youth ages 6-18 in the Diocese of Toronto are warmly invited to Ash Wednesday Exploration Day as we explore the theme, "Experience Spiritual Renewal As We Walk in the Steps of Jesus to the Cross." We will explore the cathedral, play group games, do some crafts, meet with the bishop and worship together. For more details, contact Karyne Whalen at kwhalen@stjamescathedral.ca or visit stjamescathedral.ca/explorationday.

CANADA BRIEFS

Priest presides at solemn service

MONCTON - At least 51 people died while homeless, vulnerably housed or struggling with addiction over the past year in Moncton, according to community members who organized a memorial service to mark their passing.

Dozens of people gathered for the solemn event in Victoria Park, near downtown Moncton, in December. Names of the deceased were read over a loudspeaker one-by-one, and people affixed paper leaves bearing those names to the branches of a tree.

Local resident John Renton, part of a grassroots group called the Ragged People, which helps support homeless people in Moncton, paid tribute to friends who died from overdose and suicide.

"The invasiveness of illicit drugs is both cause and effect of the countless number of those suffering on our streets today," he told the crowd, which included staff from various social agencies and community members, some of whom wept during the service.

Mr. Renton called for an end to stigma affecting people struggling with poverty, drugs and homelessness. "I'm glad to see a good turnout of people, the media coverage, just anything to stop stigma and bring attention to the crisis is a big deal," he told the NB Media Co-op.

The Rev. Chris VanBuskirk of St. George Anglican Church - an inner-city church that provides hot meals and other services from its basement - presided over the service, which also included reflections from community members, music performed by guitarist and singer Jeremy Reid, and readings from scripture.

Mr. VanBuskirk cited the

official figure of 51 deaths but acknowledged that the true number might be higher. In 2023, at least 55 people died in conditions of homelessness and addiction, compared to at least 23 people the previous year.

"This takes a great toll obviously on families, but also on frontline workers and on volunteers who really become close with those that they're working with," he said. "Obviously, it takes a great toll on friends."

He said that efforts to get people into stable housing have improved with the introduction of the so-called Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), software that helps various social agencies and government departments to coordinate the provision of services.

But he called for more people in the community to lend a helping hand. "We need neighbours and friends... beyond the experts, just each one of us knowing that we can do something," he said.

Shannon Barry, senior director of outreach with YMCA of Greater Moncton, said there's been significant progress over the past year in terms of getting people from shelters or encampments into stable housing. But she acknowledged that it's a struggle amid an ongoing shortage of affordable housing coupled with the drug overdose crisis.

"Unfortunately, our numbers just keep growing and it's hard to stay on top of things or keep up with the inflow that we're experiencing, especially with our low vacancy rates in Moncton, but there is progress happening," she said.

Asked what needs to change, she noted that housing is a key aspect of people's recovery process. "Sixty per cent of the loss that we had this year was due to accidental overdose," she said. "So housing and addressing our toxic drug supply are definitely the ones that would have the most impact on folks that we work with day in and day out."

NB Media Co-op

PRAYER CYCLE

FOR FEBRUARY

1. Diversity Officer and Diversity Manager of the Diocese
2. Bishop's Committee on Interfaith Ministry
3. Bishop's Committee on Intercultural Ministry
4. Ascension, Don Mills
5. Incarnation
6. Our Saviour

7. St. Cyprian
8. St. George on Yonge
9. York Mills Deanery
10. St. John, Willowdale
11. St. John's Convent
12. St. Matthew the Apostle, Oriole
13. St. Theodore of Canterbury
14. The Incorporated Ministry in Flemingdon Park
15. All Saints, Collingwood
16. South Georgian Bay Regionalization
17. Family Ministries

18. All Saints, Collingwood
19. Christ Church-St. Jude, Ivy
20. Good Shepherd, Stayner
21. Holy Trinity, Clearview
22. Prince of Peace, Wasaga Beach
23. Black Anglicans of Canada
24. St. George, Allandale
25. The Clergy of the Diocese
26. St. George, Utopia
27. St. John, Craighurst
28. St. Luke, Creemore



FOND FAREWELL

Friends and colleagues attend an open house at the Synod office in December for Canon Rob Saffrey, who retired as the diocese's executive director. Clockwise from top: Bishop Andrew Asbil applauds as Canon Saffrey unveils a gift of artwork; the Rev. Canon Joan Cavanaugh-Clark expresses her thanks; Canon Stuart Mann shares some memories from earlier days. PHOTOS BY JENNIFER BOLENDER KING

Book explores Cohen's spiritual landscape

The Anglican's Stuart Mann recently interviewed Brian Walsh about his latest book, *Rags of Light: Leonard Cohen and the Landscape of Biblical Imagination*. Mr. Walsh is a retired campus minister, theologian, farmer and award-winning author who lives in the Diocese of Toronto. He gave the Snell Lecture at St. James Cathedral in December.

The title of your new book is *Rags of Light*. Where does that come from, and what does it mean?

Leonard Cohen's stunning 1984 album, *Various Positions*, closes with a prayer of a song called, "If It Be Your Will." While no one song could be said to capture the spirituality of Leonard Cohen, this is certainly one of the most poignant. Asking God whether he should continue to speak and continue his offering of song, the artist sings in the last verse:

*And draw us near
And bind us tight
All Your children here
In their rags of light*

*In our rags of light
All dressed to kill
And end this night
If it be Your will*

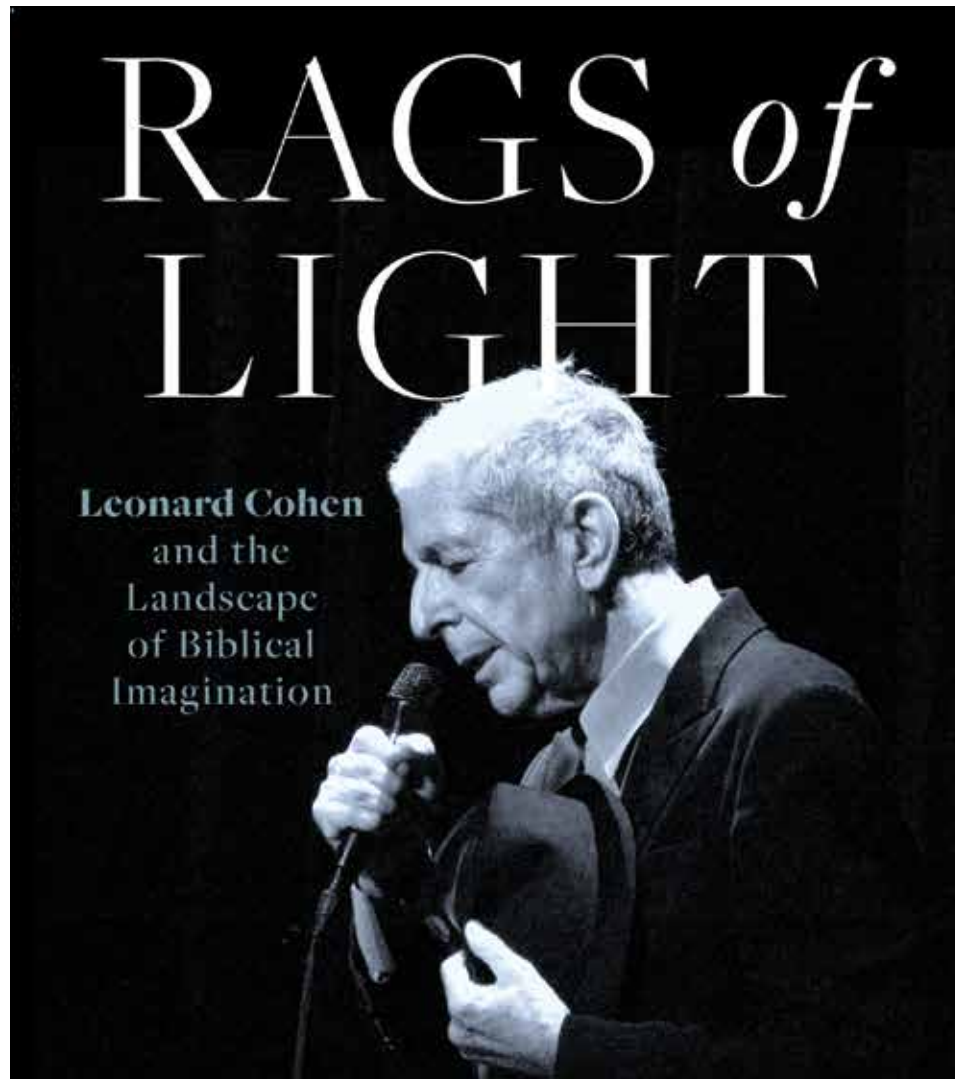
This is a prayer for the intimacy of covenant, the restoration of faithfulness, the dawning anew of light in the midst of the night of our culture and our lives. The notion of "rags of light" conjures up both the sense that our clothes are tattered, barely covering our nakedness, and the recognition that we do not have enough light to fully illuminate the path before us. Delivered with a quiet pathos, these lines evoke something of the longing at the heart of human spirituality. Cohen has given voice to that kind of longing in a way that has resonated deeply with millions of listeners around the world. The book is written in the prayerful spirit of this song, looking deeply into the "rags of light" that compose the body of Cohen's work, while hopefully taking a similar stance of humility about what it is that I am offering.

When and how did your passion for Leonard Cohen's music begin, and how has the man and his music influenced you over the years, including your faith journey?

I have been engaging with Cohen's work since a high school essay more than 50 years ago on his song "Suzanne." And while I followed his career over the years, it wasn't until I first saw him perform live that the spiritual power of his music and his personality struck a chord deep within me. A Leonard Cohen concert was a spiritual, indeed a liturgical, experience. His music and lyrics not only capture the ethos and longings of a multi-generational community of listeners, but consistently seem to resonate profoundly with the Hebrew and Christian scriptures.

And so, when I pastored the Wine Before Breakfast community at the University of Toronto, we found ourselves often going to Cohen for music that would deepen our liturgical experience. The "Cohen Eucharist" that we curated at St. James Cathedral on Dec. 8 was an example of what happens when all of the music and prayers are written by Leonard Cohen and brought into creative engagement with the scriptures for the day and the Eucharistic prayer.

Why did you write *Rags of Light*, and what is its main theme?



Well, it's all there in the subtitle: *Leonard Cohen and the Landscape of Biblical Imagination*. You see, there was nothing "generic" about Cohen's spirituality. Rather, his was decidedly and unapologetically a biblical spirituality rooted most deeply in the Torah, but also in the Christian scriptures. Indeed, he referred to these scriptures as the "landscape" within which he worked. This is, if you will, the foundation of Leonard Cohen's imagination, the beating heart of his poetry and song.

The landscape of biblical faith provides, for Cohen, the living narratives, mythology, symbols and motifs through which he describes and engages present reality with both prophetic depth and priestly compassion. And that's the heart of my project in this book. I am seeking to engage Cohen, in conversation with the scriptures, in such a way that my readers might be able to take up Cohen's own invitation to walk into that biblical landscape, and perhaps to find home there.

You include the Christian scriptures in Cohen's sense of the biblical landscape. What was Cohen's relationship with Jesus?

Complicated – which is a lot better than being non-existent. And actually, any living relationship with Jesus needs to be complicated. From the first hit song "Suzanne" to "It Seemed a Better Way" on Cohen's last album, *You Want it Darker*, Jesus has been a constant companion. Once, when asked about his relationship to Jesus, Cohen had this to say:

"I'm very fond of Jesus Christ. He may be the most beautiful guy who walked the face of this earth. Any guy who says, 'Blessed are the poor, blessed are the meek' has got to be a figure of unparalleled generosity and insight and madness."

He went on to describe Jesus as a man "who declared himself to stand among the thieves, the prostitutes and the homeless. His position cannot be comprehended." In Jesus, Cohen said, we meet a "generosity

that would overthrow the world if it was embraced because nothing would weather that compassion."

So Cohen confesses his attraction to this Jesus, and, not surprisingly, there are references to Jesus throughout his body of work. Recall that on "Suzanne," he sang of Jesus:

*And you want to travel with Him
And you want to travel blind
And you think you'll maybe trust Him
For He's touched your perfect body with
His mind*

There is a point of deep connection that engenders the possibility of faith because "maybe" you can trust him. That "maybe" sometimes moves to "you know he will find you" to "you know you can trust him" at different points of Cohen's life.

In our conversation at the cathedral after I presented the Snell Lecture, Dean Stephen Hance asked me about "It Seemed the Better Way," a song on the final album before Cohen's death. Here it seems as if Cohen has come to a final resolution about Jesus.

*Seemed the better way
When first I heard him speak
But now it's much too late
To turn the other cheek*

*Sounded like the truth
Seemed the better way
Sounded like the truth
But it's not the truth today*

Is this his last word on Jesus? "Sounded like the truth/but it's not the truth today." No, there is more. The song concludes with these words:

*I better hold my tongue
I better take my place
Lift this glass of blood
Try to say the grace*



Brian Walsh and his new book.

Holding his tongue, the poet understands his place and adopts a stance of humility rather than an arrogant militance against Jesus. Yes, there is deep doubt, ambivalence and struggle here, but the poet does not close the door on Jesus. Rather, he brings together the shocking image of lifting a glass of blood with the Jewish tradition of saying a grace, a thanksgiving, to the Lord of the Universe after a meal. This is a clear and provocative reference to the Eucharist.

That Jesus maintains a central place in the landscape of Leonard Cohen's imagination is clear until the end, not least in the devastatingly beautiful title song of the final album, "You Want it Darker."

With death ever more closely on his horizon, Cohen offers the opening lines of the Kaddish, the Jewish prayer of blessing and doxology over the dead: "Magnified and sanctified/Be Thy Holy Name." The Name, revealed in the burning bush and that dare not be voiced (Exodus 3:14), is magnified and sanctified before the death of his children. Cohen begins that prayer, but then in the next line he evocatively transposes this Jewish prayer into a Christian telling of the story. "Vilified and crucified/In the human frame." When the Holy Name enters history, when the Word of Words takes flesh – that is, when the Covenant God fully enters into the fray of violence and betrayal – the result is murder. What does the magnified and glorified Holy One look like in the midst of this relationship? Vilified and crucified. Why? Because we kill the flame.

Let's be clear: I am not saying that Leonard Cohen was a Christian. He was a Jew and remained a Jew throughout his life and in his death. But in the landscape of his imagination, indeed, in the deepest places of his spiritual identity and struggle, we will always find Jesus.

Who is this book for?

This book is written for a very broad audience. Certainly it will most directly appeal to people who have been touched in one way or another by the songs and poetry of Leonard Cohen. For those folks, I'd like to invite them into the biblical landscape of Cohen's imagination. I hope that this book will lead you deeper into Cohen as it leads you deeper into the shape of biblical faith.

Perhaps you have a sense that there is a failure of imagination in the Church and in broader society. I think that Cohen has much to teach us. Or maybe you are just interested in the relationship between faith and culture. This book could also be for you.

This book extends the invitation into the biblical landscape and spiritual struggle that is at the heart of Leonard Cohen's rich artistic contribution.

Rags of Light: Leonard Cohen and the Landscape of Biblical Imagination can be ordered through bookstores.