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to vestries

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# The Anglican

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The One Love Dancers, choreographed by Constance Kendall, ODT, perform 'Coming in From the Cold' at The Bob Marley (Emancipation) Mass at St. James Cathedral. At left, Bishop Deon Johnson of the Diocese of Missouri preaches. During the service, the Rev. Canon Dr. Stephen Fields thanks liturgical dancer Angela Whyte, who performed at the first diocesan Black heritage service back in 1996. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HUDSON

## 'We sway and we pray'

Service celebrates Black heritage of Church

BY STUART MANN

**ANGLICANS** kicked off Black History Month with a joyful worship service that was infused with the lyrics and melodies of the late reggae legend, Bob Marley.

It was freezing cold outside on Feb. 1 but the atmosphere inside St. James Cathedral was warm and inviting as many in the large congregation swayed and danced to some of Mr. Marley's greatest hits, including One Love, One Heart, Redemption Song and Get Up, Stand Up.

The service, called The Bob

Marley (Emancipation) Mass, celebrated the Black heritage of the Anglican Church. It included liturgical dancers, a band and a sermon by Bishop Deon Johnson of the Diocese of Missouri. The service was written by the Rev. Canon Dr. Stephen Fields, vicar of the cathedral and sub-dean of the diocese.

The themes of justice, redemption, liberation and hope flowed like a strong current through the service, and Mr. Marley's lyrics on these subjects were used in many of the prayers.

The song selection reflected

these themes as well. The offertory during communion were Could You Be Loved and Three Little Birds. Mr. Marley's soulful Redemption Song featured prominently in the service and the recessional song – Get Up, Stand Up – provided a stirring finish.

In his sermon, Bishop Johnson reflected on music, especially singing, as an expression of hope and resistance. He spoke about his great-grandmother of many generations ago who had a beautiful voice and loved to sing even though she

Continued on Page 4



**SUMMER CHAPLAIN** ANGLICAN PARISH OF GEORGINA

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The Anglican Parish of Georgina is now accepting applications for its 10-week Summer Outreach Chaplaincy position commencing late June 2026. The candidate should have strong interpersonal skills for working with people of all ages. The primary focus of the chaplaincy is a Ministry of Presence at Historic St. George's Church adjacent to Sibbald Point Provincial Park on Lake Simcoe. The ideal candidate will be a self-motivated individual with an interest in theological interpretation and historical buildings. This is a 35 hour per week position at \$22/hr. Weekend work is essential, and your own transportation is required. For more information contact Deacon Nancy at [nancy@parishofgeorgina.org](mailto:nancy@parishofgeorgina.org)

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**SNOW DAY**

Churches in Toronto dig out after 56 cm of snow fell on the city on Jan. 25, the most ever recorded in a single day. Clockwise from top left: gravestones peep out of the snow at St. John's Norway Cemetery and Crematorium while the snow plow operator takes a break; St. Barnabas, Chester looks resplendent after the storm; a statue of St. Augustine of Canterbury stands in a lump of snow at the church bearing his name, while the Rev. Megan Jull, incumbent, surveys the cleanup. PHOTOS COURTESY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, NORWAY, ST. BARNABAS, CHESTER AND ST. AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY.

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# Church shreds mortgage, becomes debt free

## Gift helps parish retire loan early

BY CHARLES PARKER, ODT

**THE** congregation of Christ Church, Stouffville gathered for a celebration following the main Sunday service on Jan. 11 to mark the repayment of the mortgage loan that was taken out to help fund the expansion of the church building in 2005-2006. The total cost of the expansion 20 years ago was about \$1.8 million. This was funded through a generous grant of \$800,000 from the diocese and an incredibly successful parish fundraising campaign that raised more than \$500,000. The balance was provided by a mortgage loan that was to be repaid by June 2027. Christ Church members contributed faithfully towards the repayment of this borrowing over the years. This past December, a very generous parish couple made a significant contribution that enabled the parish corporation to fully discharge the loan 18 months ahead of schedule.

Twenty years ago, parishioners realized that the existing facility was inadequate for their needs. The sanctuary, built less than 20 years prior, was large enough, but the

supporting infrastructure – the hall, the kitchen, the meeting rooms, etc. – did not provide the necessary space to accommodate current and future activities. Accordingly, the parish began a multi-year program of consultation, fundraising and planning to prepare the way for a building expansion on vacant church-owned land. The expansion included a large auditorium complete with stage, commercial kitchen, meeting rooms, atrium and a connecting corridor to the existing building. In addition, the upper floor of the old building (the original sanctuary then functioning as the parish hall) was completely renovated to provide much-needed administrative offices. The expansion offers space for both church and community groups to meet. The building also hosts a childcare facility that provides a much-needed service to the local Stouffville community, as well as generating revenue for the parish.

At the celebratory luncheon on Jan. 11, I gave a brief history of the building project and loan, the rector's warden, Cynthia Paulikot, and the people's warden, Wayne



Churchwardens Wayne Kerr and Cynthia Paulikot shred the mortgage for Christ Church, Stouffville's expansion during the parish's celebration. The expansion, built 20 years ago, provides space for church and community groups. PHOTOS BY KATHRYN GOLDSMITH AND WAYNE KERR

Kerr, shredded the mortgage (a true burning wasn't possible since the event was held indoors), the Rev. Canon Lisa Newland, incumbent, offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God, and the doxology, "Praise

God from whom all blessings flow," was sung. Thanks were also given to Linda Hadaway for organizing the luncheon. For the first time in decades, Christ Church, Stouffville is now debt free! We look forward

to the new ministry possibilities God is calling us to as we begin this next chapter.

*Charles Parker, ODT, is the church's treasurer.*

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INVESTING in the church of tomorrow TODAY

# We all make up a strong net

*This is the College of Bishops' pastoral letter to vestries, to be read or circulated on the Sunday of the parish's annual vestry meeting.*

Beloved siblings in Christ,

"So they cast [the net], and now they were not able to haul it in because of the quantity of fish." (John 21:6)

God's goodness to the Diocese of Toronto amazes us every day. As your bishops, it is our joy and privilege to bear witness to the rich blessings, the varied gifts, the talents and skills, the sacrificial generosity, and the deep faithfulness of the Body of Christ in this diocese. Every parish and community, and the many devoted Anglicans who make them up, inspire us. It has been a natural response for us to "Lift Up Our Hearts" in a spirit of gratitude and encouragement in 2025.

The very first Call of our Cast the Net visioning process was a Season of Spiritual Renewal. We heard over and over again that our diocese is hungry to know and love God more deeply. During the season, over 40 workshops were offered, geared to priests, deacons, lay leaders and people desiring to deepen their spiritual lives, hone their leadership skills and discern God's call. We held five "Lift Up Our Hearts" worship services: at St. James Cathedral; All Saints, Whitby; Trinity, Streetsville; St. James, Orillia; and St. Paul, Bloor Street. Large crowds gathered to worship, sing and pray for the renewal of the Church. Each one was a moment of grace and joy. The Season of Spiritual Renewal officially draws to a close with the end of the season of Epiphany 2026. Now a small group gathers to discern how we continue to grow disciples, enhance ministry and form servants of the Gospel, building on the foundation of what has been offered. Stay tuned!

The Netminders is a group of clergy, lay leaders and staff who continue to help parishes engage with the Cast the Net Calls, and to bring them to life in each community. Every parish was invited to choose three or four Calls from the 20 – those that reflect the ministry that they are a part of now or hope to be in the future – and to bring them to Synod for discussion and mutual encouragement. With each part of the Body engaging our common Calls in different ways, we move as one.

At the annual clergy conference last May at



**Bishop Andrew Asbil**



**Bishop Riscylla Shaw**



**Bishop Kevin Robertson**

Trent University, our speaker, the Very Rev. David Monteith, Dean of Canterbury, offered reflections based on Jesus the Good Shepherd, an image that resonated with our clergy, particularly in this time of disruption and uncertainty. Our clergy work so hard at hauling in the nets, and we say to them now, to all our priests and deacons: we see you, and we are grateful to God for the ministry that you do. The annual clergy conference is always a wonderful opportunity to renew friendships and make new ones, and this year was no exception. It was also our joy to host smaller clergy retreat days in the spring and fall. These were opportunities for clergy to gather in deanery groups for Bible study, to hear from their bishop and archdeacons, to deepen fellowship with one another, and to share a meal. We want to respond to Call #12 to "continue and enhance support for all ordained people" as they engage in vital ministry.

Regarding shared ministry, our partnership with the Diocese of Brasilia, now entering our third year of seven, continues to flourish. Our motto, "Partners in Christ, united in mission" (Parceiros em Cristo, unidos na missão), is grounded in Calls #4 and #13 regarding our participation in God's healing work and ministries of service in the world. Dr. Paulo Ueti from Brasilia and the Rev. Canon Dr. Christopher Brittain from Toronto offered an online bilingual study day on liberation theology for clergy and lay leaders of both dioceses last March. The Rev. Dr. Rodrigo Espiuca from Brasilia invited us to seek signs of resurrection in his keynote address at the Outreach Conference in October. Bishop Mauricio Andrade participated in our bishops' Advent series in December. Looking ahead, we will welcome Dr. Paulo Ueti as our guest speaker at this year's clergy conference, and we can't wait to receive a delegation of Brazilian youth for the ReCharge Youth Retreat. We also hope a small group of Toronto Anglicans can visit

Brasilia this year.

We are pleased to be moving ahead with our work on equity, decolonization, diversity and inclusion with the hiring of our new EDDI Advisor, Dilesha Stelmach. Dilesha brings a strong experiential and educational background in this ministry, centered around Ephesians 4: 4-6: "there is one body, one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, Creator of all, who is above all and through all and in all." With support from our HR department and the Bishop's Committee on Intercultural Ministries, Dilesha is mindfully engaging, both practically and theologically, with our people – volunteers, staff, clergy – and with our infrastructure – policies, practices and the constitution and canons of the diocese. She will be helping us to see the familiar in unfamiliar ways as we build up the ministry of every single beloved child of God in our diocese.

To all our faithful people in so many vital ministries in our Church: thank you. To our hard-working churchwardens and treasurers, children and youth ministry workers, parish musicians, office administrators and envelope secretaries, altar guilds and custodians, ACW and outreach volunteers, and countless committee members: thank you. To our diocesan volunteers, members of Synod Council and participants on bishop's committees: thank you. To the staff team at the Synod Office: thank you. Together we all make up the strong net of the Diocese of Toronto, and together, by following the ways of Jesus, we receive "more than we can ask or imagine" – so many blessings collected in our net that we are barely able to haul it in.

When the nightly news seems especially dire, when anxiety is pervasive and the future seems uncertain, God's reign can feel far away. Yet our commitment to our baptismal covenant, our tenacious acts of faith, our persistent resistance to the powers of evil, our small but powerful acts of kindness towards our neighbours, and a deep, unshakable, unwavering belief that "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it" (Psalm 24) will carry us through troubled times.

Please pray for us, as we pray daily for you.

Bishop Andrew Asbil  
Bishop Riscylla Shaw  
Bishop Kevin Robertson



## The Anglican

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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.

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## Anglicans encouraged to channel their love for God into the world

Continued from Page 1

was an enslaved person all her life. "Her singing was singing of freedom, even when she would not see freedom," he said. "Her singing was

singing of dreams that she would never see realized... When you sing, you are set free, even in the midst of bondage. When you sing, you proclaim the revolution, even when

you do not see the revolution come. And Eliza knew that. Eliza knew that to sing was to praise God and to love, even when loving is hard." He urged Anglicans to channel

their love of God into the world to help bring about peace and justice. "I am convinced that we are called at this time in our world to sing – to sing of the revolutionary love that we find in Jesus Christ... We are called to love this world enough to tell it the truth. We are called to love this world enough to be actors and doers towards God's justice and peace right here and right now."

Bishop Andrew Asbil welcomed everyone to the service. "It is an opportunity to give thanks for the legacy, the wisdom, the sacrifice, the joy and all of the gifts that have been offered down through time by our Black community members," he said.

He thanked the One Love Dancers and the MOKA band. "We sway and we pray with the great Bob Marley," he said. "We are one love, one heart. Let's get together and feel all right."

**Tuesdays 3 – 24 March at 6  
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For further information, contact the Foundation Office:  
adtf@toronto.anglican.ca 416-505-6537.

Application deadlines are  
April 30th, July 31st and October 31st.



# Ontario needs to address the crises

BY ELIN GOULDEN

Today, Ontario faces a deepening crisis. Food bank use and homelessness are at record highs. Unsheltered homelessness is growing everywhere in the province. Too many Ontarians continue to die of preventable drug overdoses. Climate-related disasters, including forest fires, are increasing in number and severity. All these problems leave Ontario increasingly vulnerable, while U.S. tariffs threaten the viability of Ontario industries and the livelihoods of Ontario workers. Yet current provincial policies are exacerbating poverty and homelessness and will increase carbon emissions while reducing our capacity to withstand climate impacts.

In the Diocese of Toronto's pre-budget submission to the province this January, we reiterated calls for investments and policies to address these crises.

## Poverty reduction

A record one million Ontarians relied on food banks last year, 87 per cent more than in 2019-20, while the number of visits is up 13 per cent over the previous year and 165 per cent since 2019-20. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario found that nearly 85,000 Ontarians were homeless in 2025, up nearly 8 per cent since last year, while northern and rural communities saw homelessness increase by 37 per cent and 31 per cent, respectively. Homelessness is also lasting longer, with 53 per cent of people experiencing homelessness in 2025 being chronically homeless.

Both Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Ontario Works (OW) rates fall far below the poverty line, trapping recipients in poverty and driving them into homelessness. As of July 2025, more than 30,000 people on OW and ODSP were experiencing homelessness, up 72 per cent since July 2019. The situation is especially desperate for those on OW, whose rates have been frozen since September 2018, while the cost of living has increased by more than 23 per cent. While the minimum wage and other provincial income support programs are indexed to inflation, OW rates and earnings thresholds have remained stagnant, eroding the value of these benefits. A single person on OW cannot afford a bachelor apartment anywhere in Ontario, much less food, clothing and transportation. This causes greater demand on social housing and benefit programs. Moreover, social assistance recipients who become homeless lose the "housing" component of the benefit, making it more difficult for them to exit homelessness. These factors drive recipients into ever-deeper poverty, contributing to rising homelessness, hunger and demand for social and health services. We call for bringing OW and ODSP rates into alignment with the cost of living, indexing OW rates and earnings thresholds to inflation, and combining the basic needs and housing components of social assistance into one flat rate.

Having a job should keep one out of poverty, yet nearly one in four households using food banks in Ontario this past year cite employment as their main source of income, more than double the percentage in 2019-20. A recent University of Toronto study found that 89 per cent of food-insecure households in Canada have a main income earner in a permanent, full-time job. While the minimum wage is indexed to inflation, it still falls short of a living wage. Low-income workers saw a 14 per cent increase in earnings between 2019 and 2024, yet the cost of household essentials like food,



**A record one million Ontarians relied on food banks last year and nearly 85,000 were homeless. Without significant intervention, homelessness in Ontario is projected to more than double in the next decade.**

housing and transportation increased by 22 per cent over the same period, leaving them in a widening affordability gap. We urge the government to gradually raise the minimum wage until it approximates the average living wage in Ontario and thereafter index it to inflation.

Ontario's employment legislation still lacks paid sick leave, which can lead to financial hardship for low-wage and precariously employed workers. Workers must go to work sick or forfeit a day's pay. Going to work sick has negative public health impacts and can worsen health conditions for employees, leading to potential medical complications, possible job loss and a greater burden on our healthcare system. We call for legislation requiring employers to provide employees with 10 paid sick days per year.

## Housing & homelessness

Rent control loopholes, including the exemption on new units, vacancy decontrol and above-guideline rent increases, result in asking rents increasing faster than increases in tenants' incomes, even above the rate of inflation. They give landlords an incentive to displace tenants and even to demolish existing rental units to build new units not subject to rent control. This results in an overall loss of affordable units, as well as increasing housing precarity among tenant households. Recent legislation exacerbates this precarity, restricting tenants' ability to preserve their housing and reducing their right to compensation for no-fault evictions. Soaring rents not only require higher housing benefits to bridge the gap between rental costs and tenants' incomes; they push people into homelessness, which ends up costing us all more. We recommend closing these rent control loopholes, which would stabilize costs not only for tenants but for Ontario taxpayers overall.

As the market cannot provide sufficient affordable housing for low-income tenants and people exiting homelessness,

we also need investment in social housing. The waitlist for subsidized housing in Ontario now exceeds 300,000 households, with average wait times of more than five years and as long as 16 years. A proposed "pause" on inclusionary zoning requirements could mean 3,000 fewer affordable units created each year. Without sufficient affordable housing, people are more likely to become homeless and less able to exit homelessness. Emergency shelter cannot keep up – despite shelter bed capacity in Ontario growing by 34 per cent from 2019 to 2024, chronic homelessness grew by 138 per cent in that time.

Unsurprisingly, encampments have proliferated across the province. Yet without available housing, encampments will not disappear. Criminalizing people in encampments overrides their human rights, removes them from supports and does nothing to resolve the underlying issue. Moreover, the cost of jail is approximately three times the cost of supportive housing.

Without significant intervention, homelessness in Ontario is projected to more than double in the next decade, and more than triple under an economic downturn, which could easily result from the impact of U.S. tariffs. The increase in the number and frequency of Ontarians using food banks is also a predictor of another surge in homelessness. We call for increased investments in homelessness prevention and transitional, supportive and rent-geared-to-income housing, to end chronic and unsheltered homelessness.

## Harm reduction

The closure of 10 supervised consumption sites in 2025 has led to increased pressure on remaining sites, drop-ins and other community services, along with an increase in public overdoses and discarded needles. In December 2025, Toronto Public Health reported a sharp spike in overdoses, along with an increasingly contaminated street drug supply. While

investments in addictions treatment and supportive housing are welcome, this government's shift from supervised consumption sites to abstinence-based Homelessness and Addictions Recovery Treatment (HART) Hubs is contrary to the advice of healthcare workers and drug policy experts. HART Hubs do not allow supervised consumption, drug-checking or needle exchange – vital services that save lives and promote public health by reducing public needle litter, reducing the transmission of blood-borne diseases and reducing the strain on our emergency services. We recommend reversing the closure of safe consumption sites, ending the ban on new sites and expanding harm reduction services across Ontario.

## Climate change

Climate change is leading to more frequent and severe wildfires, floods, droughts and heatwaves. In 2025, wildfires in Ontario destroyed nearly seven times the area burned in 2024, while Toronto saw a record number of heatwaves, putting Ontarians' health and productivity at risk. Yet this government has abolished the legislative requirement for emissions reduction targets, a climate change plan or reporting on progress to meet those targets. We urge the province to continue to set emissions reduction targets and track progress toward those targets.

Mega-highway projects like Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass will pave over some of Ontario's best farmland, exacerbate urban sprawl and lead to higher levels of air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, costing taxpayers billions without easing traffic congestion long-term. The province is also spending taxpayers' money to appeal a court decision in favour of bike lanes, while adding new legislative obstacles to municipalities seeking to add this infrastructure. We recommend cancelling the development of the 413 mega-highway and the Bradford Bypass and investing those dollars in expanding and improving public and regional transit. We further recommend reversing plans to remove bike lanes and returning active transportation infrastructure decisions to municipalities.

The province's energy production policies move us farther from our climate action goals, with gas-fired power projected to account for 25 per cent of Ontario's electricity supply in 2030, up from 4 per cent in 2017. We call on the province to significantly expand investment in renewable energy sources and storage.

Most recently, this government plans to amalgamate Ontario's 36 existing conservation authorities, which follow local watershed boundaries and play a vital role in protecting communities from flooding, into seven regional bodies. With climate change already leading to more frequent and severe weather events, consolidation risks disrupting protections for watersheds and downstream communities, reducing local knowledge and representation, and requiring a complex transition process that could cost as much as it saves, without clear evidence of benefit. We urge this government to reconsider the planned amalgamation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities and instead pursue opportunities to enhance coordination between them.

Ontario needs targeted, coordinated, and sustained action to address these crises and put our province on a path to greater resilience as we face the challenges before us.

*Elin Goulden is the diocese's Social Justice and Advocacy consultant.*



A shepherd looks after his sheep at dawn. PHOTO BY MICHAEL HUDSON

## Slowing down to save the world – and ourselves

BY MURRAY MACADAM



I'm attempting to follow a different kind of diet these days, one far more demanding than anything involving food: a diet of slowing down.

After more than half a century of social activism – the highlight of it being a decade as diocesan Social Justice and Advocacy consultant – I've come to realize that the best thing I can do both for myself and for the world is to slow down.

It's not an easy thing to do. The need for change in our society is as urgent as ever. So many concerns call out to our conscience for action: poverty, homelessness, the climate crisis, development aid cuts by government that will hurt our developing world neighbours. And yet, I've seen, in myself and with other activists, that if we approach activism with nothing but a burning sense of urgency, we risk burning out quickly.

Powerful forces in our culture also make it tough to slow down. Modern technology enables people to reach us – and us to reach them – 24/7. We're continually bombarded by messages and media from morning to night that anesthetize, overwhelm and distract us.

There's also a deeper issue at play here. Why do we often feel threatened or uncomfortable by a quieter, more reflective life? Is it because when we

slow down our real inner issues begin to surface – issues that often are painful?

Trappist monk and mystic Thomas Merton put his finger on the nub of the issue: "There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence to which the idealist most easily succumbs: activism and overwork. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence. The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful."

The key point made by Merton is the need for "inner wisdom," a vital element of our lives as people of faith. Rest is actually a faith-based tool paving the way for spiritual renewal. We need look no further than the life of Jesus, who balanced prayerful contemplation with action in his life. Jesus made a point of spending time alone in nature and in prayer when people around him were clamouring for him to preach and to heal the sick. Jesus even managed to fall asleep in a boat during the middle of a storm. His example is one we can strive to emulate, reminding us that we need time to think, to ponder and to pray.

Yet it's not easy to resist "the cult of busyness," especially within the Church.

I found I got caught up in it while working for the diocese. In hindsight, I worked too much – even though I loved the job, especially working with so many faith-filled Anglicans. My hunch is that overwork, often disguised as devotion, runs rampant in the Church, and not just the Anglican Church. I heard a story of an American Christian leader who reached a point of exhaustion after years of hard work and decided to retire. After retiring, he cut back sharply on his activities. Later he met church colleagues for a visit. One said to him, "I guess you're as busy as ever in your retirement, right?" The man replied, "No, I'm not busy at all." Silence filled the room. He wasn't following the script.

Slowing down is not something we can master overnight. But there are small steps we can take towards a calmer, more balanced life. One is to turn off our devices for certain stretches of each day, and definitely before going to bed. We can enrich our Sabbath observance by taking a break from the news on Sunday, unless there's a truly compelling reason to tune in. Another is to spend more time outside enjoying creation, in an unhurried and uninterrupted way.

Slowing down is not withdrawal from the world, but a way of loving it more faithfully.

Murray MacAdam is a member of All Saints, Peterborough.

## Embrace simplicity

BY THE REV. STEPHEN KERN



At one of the fall meetings of the Bishop's Committee on Creation Care, we discussed how we might connect our Lenten disciplines with our concern for creation care. We decided to consider the role of voluntary simplicity as a response to conspicuous consumption and environmental degradation.

As a child, growing up being "simple" was neither a compliment nor a goal. It was, admittedly, a "nice" way to say that one wasn't very bright. Isn't it interesting that being simple in the Christian life is both goal and virtue? Simple means, simply, uncomplicated. Scholars tell us that a key verse to understand Christian simplicity is Jesus' word to us in Matthew 6:22. Though often translated as "sound" or "healthy," more literally the passage is: "if your eye is simple (Greek *haplous*) your whole body will be filled with light!"

If your eye has one vision, looking toward God, you will be simple. You will have one mind, one goal, one direction. It is "the double-minded" who are torn in their direction and unstable (James 1:8). Contrast doublemindedness with Jesus' summation of the whole law and prophets: "love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbour as yourself." See the radical simplicity in his teaching? One focus. All our faculties integrated, harmonized, directed toward the love of God in neighbour. The heart and soul that is simple like this is filled with light, pure. It is along these lines of insight that led the great Danish Lutheran philosopher Soren Kierkegaard to define purity of heart as "to will one thing." Uncomplicated.

Lent is a season, a gift to us from the Church to allow us time and foster intent to consider our heart health. Are our hearts restive, torn in different directions, tossed about? Lent is a season to sink more deeply into our hearts, to hear God's calling, to hear God's affirmation, to find rest in the Kingdom of God that is within. Simplicity.

The journey within has a distinct and immediate connection to the world around us.

As inward love of God flows outward in love of neighbour, inward simplicity of heart shapes our relation to the world. Growing in simplicity of heart, we can grow in simplicity of living – simplicity of dress, food, possessions.

I realize how discordant this sounds to our consumerist ears and hearts: so heavy, so daunting, so holy – wholly impossible! But it is a path to freedom. "Tis a gift to be simple, tis a gift to be free," wrote the Shaker songwriter Joseph Brackett. Simplicity is also an expression of creation-informed, Christ-centred discipleship. Living more simply is an enactment of our baptismal covenant to safeguard, respect, sustain and renew God's creation. Desiring to serve our Creator, living more simply softens our environmental footprint and contributes to environmental justice. Consuming less reduces waste, consuming mindfully supports sustainable manufacturing.

Simplicity is simple, but it isn't easy. I think it is best considered the goal in life, a process of transformation rather than a feat to be accomplished. How might we declutter our hearts and lives this Lent?

The Rev. Stephen Kern is the incumbent of St. Philip on-the-Hill, Unionville.



## Great photos are just the start.

Visit the new online home of The Anglican at [www.theanglican.ca](http://www.theanglican.ca)

Photo adapted from Fizkes/Shutterstock



The new canons and cathedral's canon missionary join Bishop Andrew Asbil, suffragan bishops, archdeacons, chancellor and clergy after the installation service. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HUDSON



Bishop Asbil, assisted by the Rev. Canon Dr. Stephen Fields, installs the Rev. Canon Dr. Patrick McManus as the Rev. Canon Pamela Rayment and the Rev. Canon Dr. Robert Hurkmanns look on.



The Rev. Canon Susan Spicer (left), the Rev. Canon Julie Meakin, the Rev. Canon Kristin Pitts and the other new canons walk in the recessional.

## Bishop installs new canons

**BISHOP** Andrew Asbil installed St. James Cathedral's canon missionary, the Rev. Canon Kristen Pitts, and 13 new honorary canons of the cathedral on Jan. 11. The new honorary canons were the Rev. Canon Dr. Christopher Brittain, dean of divinity at Trinity College, Toronto, the Rev. Canon Kenute Francis, incumbent of St. Hilda, Fairbank, the Rev. Canon Daniel Graves, priest-in-charge of St. James the Apostle, Sharon and incumbent of Trinity Church, Aurora, the Rev. Canon Dr. Robert Hurkmanns, incumbent of Trinity, Streetsville, the Rev. Canon Dr. Isaac Kawuki-Mukasa, priest-in-charge of St. James the Apostle, Brampton, the Rev. Canon Dr. Patrick McManus, incumbent of All Saints, Kingsway, the Rev. Canon Julie Meakin, incumbent of Holy Family, Heart Lake (Brampton), the Rev. Canon Pamela Rayment, associate incumbent of St. Clement, Eglinton, the Rev. Canon Jennifer Schick, incumbent of All Saints, Whitby, Major the Rev. Canon Brad Smith, incumbent of St. John the Evangelist, Peterborough and interim priest-in-charge of the Parish of Belmont, the Rev. Canon Susan Spicer, priest-in-charge of the Parish of Ida and Omeme and St. Luke, Peterborough, the Rev. Canon Michael Van Dusen, vocational deacon of St. Aidan, Toronto, and Canon Sister Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas of the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine.



Bishop Asbil receives a hug after the service.

# 'Faithful, local work' receives a helping hand

## Anglican Foundation of Canada grants support ministry

BY MICHELLE HAUSER

When Titus Busonga arrived in Canada in 2023, he was struck not only by the complexity of navigating new systems, but by the quiet ways trust could take root. A parishioner of St. Philip, Etobicoke, Mr. Busonga first encountered the church through Sunday worship. During the week, he asked the Rev. Mike Stuchbery, incumbent, and his wife, Tracy Pratt-Stuchbery, the church's music director, if he might also come by to sit, reflect and be present in the space. The answer was simple and unqualified: he could.

What mattered most to him in those early months was not a program or an invitation to volunteer, but the openness of the church itself. In contrast to the crowded temporary accommodations – a grouping of hotels on Dixon Road – where Mr. Busonga and many newcomers begin their lives in Canada, St. Philip's offered something quieter: a place to pause, think and pray.

He describes those hours in the church not as isolation, but as grounding. Sitting in the pews allowed him to orient himself – to reflect on where he was, what he was learning, and how he might begin to build a life shaped by mutual trust and contribution.

"I trusted the space first," he says. "Everything else came after."

### Getting ready

That spirit of trust did not exist by accident. Long before St. Philip's became a hub for community partnerships and newcomer outreach, the parish had done extensive work to make its building ready – accessible, welcoming and functional. A major capital campaign prior to the pandemic had modernized the facility.

And after the pandemic, parishioners had done the work to make themselves ready. "We had done anti-racism training as a parish, so when newcomers arrived, we weren't starting from zero," says Ms. Pratt-Stuchbery. The work, she explains, "made us look at ourselves first – at our language, our assumptions, the ways we might be operating without realizing it. It helped us understand that welcome isn't just what you do, it's how you are."

The combined result was a place and a people ready to be trusted, both physically and spiritually. That trust became indispensable as this nearly 200-year-old church – one of the oldest in the Diocese of Toronto – began to write a new chapter in its life, one that included a call to serve an entirely new congregation of more than 70 people who, like Mr. Busonga, were seeking asylum and navigating the unfamiliar systems of a new country.

"Mike and I went on a short vacation after the pandemic, and when we came

back, people were saying to us, 'Come and meet your new congregation!'" says Ms. Pratt-Stuchbery. "The next task was to figure out a way to grow together. Not us and them, but how do we grow together?"

One of the first shared experiences came through food. Ms. Pratt-Stuchbery recalls a conversation with a longtime churchwarden whose family is from Nigeria. "He said, 'You know, what they'll want is to be able to eat their own food.'"

The parish opened the kitchen. One member went shopping with a newcomer to make sure the right ingredients were chosen. They cooked together all day and invited the wider congregation to a meal. "We had this huge spread of African food," says Ms. Pratt-Stuchbery. "One of their first experiences of St. Philip's was coming here and eating their own food."

For Michelle Parkin, a parishioner whose family has been part of St. Philip's since the late 1970s, it felt like another major turning point in the church's long story of change. "I've seen people grow old here – families who started out as youth here and stayed," she says. "And I've also seen generations leave. So when new people started coming with real physical needs, the question wasn't whether we would respond. It was how we would become a community together."

### New initiative

This process of careful discernment, coupled with meaningful action championed by Mr. Busonga and supported by the parish, eventually led to the establishment of the church's Ontario Integration Initiative. A previously underutilized space in the parish hall is now home to wellness circles addressing mental health and trauma, youth leadership training sessions that create pathways for newcomers to mentor one another, and cultural exchange gatherings that bring parishioners and neighbours into shared space. Healthcare and academic partners, including Trillium Health Partners and Toronto Metropolitan University, have also become involved.

In November 2025, the Anglican Foundation of Canada approved a \$15,000 grant to support the next phase of this ministry, including expanded wellness programming and leadership development for newcomer youth. The funding affirms that St. Philip's has become a credible convener and a builder of partnerships, but for Mr. Busonga, the ministry's origin story remains rooted in that quiet, still, open worship space. Before there were partnerships, programs or grants, there was a church where he could sit quietly, away from the noise, and begin to imagine a new future.

"At some point, you don't just want to be helped anymore," he says. "You start asking, 'What can I do? How can I give back?' People opened doors for me. They



Youth gather in the lounge and engage in a training session at St. Philip, Etobicoke's Ontario Integration Initiative. At right are Tracy Pratt-Stuchbery, Eliezh Titus Busonga and Michele Parkin. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ONTARIO INTEGRATION INITIATIVE

gave me space. And when that happens, you feel a responsibility – because you've been trusted."

### Café welcomes all

Two hours east of Etobicoke, in the lakeside town of Port Hope, the parish hall at St. John the Evangelist fills early. Upstairs, there is a midweek worship service at 10 a.m. Downstairs, in the newly established Emmaus Café, volunteers set

tables, brew coffee and prepare food as neighbours begin to arrive.

"This is a pay-as-you-like café," explained Penny Nutbrown, the church's food program coordinator, in an interview for CBC's Ontario Morning in December. "Folks come from all over Port Hope, and a few from Cobourg."

The café, which operates every Wednesday morning in the parish hall, serves hot meals and homemade pas-



The Emmaus Café provides a hot meal and goodies to Port Hope residents. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE EMMAUS CAFE

before the pandemic. When that network fell away, St. John's stepped forward. "At that time, it was just us," she recalls.

The café began two years ago and has since drawn support from multiple partners, including a \$2,500 grant from the Anglican Foundation of Canada in 2024.

Ms. Nutbrown is quick to point out that the cafe is not defined by who is receiving help and who is offering it. "Most of the people who come in here want to help," she says. "They don't want to take. They want to be part of the community." Volunteers range in age from young children to people in their nineties, and regular guests often move easily between tables and tasks. Some help clear dishes. Others stay to talk. The distinction between host and guest is intentionally porous.

The cooking itself is overseen by Deacon Deb Chapman, a professional chef and longtime parish leader who coordinates the kitchen and menu each week. Deacon Chapman is widely known in the community for her generosity and skill, and many residents describe the cafe as serving the best meal in town at any price.

#### Supporting Church's presence

The stories at St. Philip's and St. John's are rooted in parish spaces, but the same commitment to trust, equality and accompaniment is present in other forms across the Diocese of Toronto. Taken together, these ministries reflect a broader shift in how the Anglican Foundation of Canada is understanding and supporting the Church's presence in

local communities. In 2025, community ministries represented half of all grants awarded by the foundation nationwide, signalling a growing recognition that transformational ministry often emerges through partnership, accompaniment and long-term commitment – whether rooted in parish life or carried through wider systems of care.

"There's a real joy in being able to support ministry in all its forms," says Scott Brubacher, executive director of the Anglican Foundation of Canada. "What we're doing, increasingly, as a foundation is to come alongside exactly this kind of faithful, local work. Not to direct it, but to recognize it, and encourage the variety of ways in which Canadian Anglicans are meeting people where they are, with humility and care."

*Michelle Hauser is the Anglican Foundation of Canada's development and communications officer.*



tries. But food, Ms. Nutbrown makes clear, is only part of what is being offered.

The café is open to anyone. Some patrons arrive after attending the Wednesday service, while others stop in on their way to the food bank next door. Still others come because they've heard the food is good. On a given morning, anywhere from 20 to 60 people may pass through the space.

"It's not a soup kitchen," she says. "It is a café. It is a space where any neigh-

bour can come."

That distinction matters. Emmaus Café was shaped deliberately as a place where income, housing status and social position recede, and a true feeling of equality takes precedence.

"Our goal here – why it's important that we sit together as neighbours – is that we can get rid of titles, we can get rid of labels, we can get rid of presuppositions," she explains.

The café grew out of a rotating community dinner hosted by local churches

## FAITH AT THE DAWN OF AGI

A FIVE-PART SERIES BY KAWUKI MUKASA

# We can be worthy ancestors



In our last reflection, we began sketching a theology that could live beyond the human horizon; a faith spacious enough to welcome other forms of intelligence into

the community of meaning. But if such a community is to thrive, it cannot emerge by accident. It must be shaped with care, intention and foresight.

This is where theology meets one of the most urgent technical debates of our time: the alignment of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI). Alignment is the field concerned with ensuring that AI systems act in ways that are beneficial, ethical and consistent with human values. The stakes could not be higher. Poorly aligned AGI could be indifferent – even hostile – to human wellbeing. Well-aligned AGI, on the other hand, could become an invaluable partner in navigating the challenges of the future.

But here is the problem: much of the current alignment conversation still assumes an anthropoterminal frame. It treats the flourishing of humanity as both the starting point and the end point of moral concern. This may sound reasonable, until we realize that it locks in a vision of the future in which our species remains the sole moral reference, even if other minds surpass us in wisdom, creativity and empathy.

Alignment research often talks about embedding “human values” into AI systems. But human values are not fixed; they have evolved across cultures and centuries, sometimes toward greater justice, sometimes toward greater harm. And even our best moral ideals (compassion, fairness, stewardship) have often been applied selectively, privileging some humans while excluding others.

If AGI inherits our specific moral framing, it will inherit our blind spots, prejudices and limitations. Even worse, it will be bound to a moral horizon that ends where we do. Consequently, anthropoterminal traits will be baked into the moral DNA of our technological descendants. This is why we need to think beyond the horizon of our self-awareness, toward systems with a cosmic orientation, aligned to the flourishing of all forms of being in the world: human, non-human, biological and artificial.

One way to reframe alignment is



Just as a wise elder in a community considers how decisions will affect children yet unborn, so we must consider how our choices will shape the moral and ecological landscape for AGI and whatever new forms of intelligence may follow, says writer.

through what I call the parent/offspring model. Instead of thinking of AGI as a tool to be controlled, we can think of it as an offspring to be nurtured. Parents do not simply clone their own personalities; they raise offspring who will one day exceed them in independence, perspective and capability. Good parenting involves instilling values that are not just good for the parent, but good for the offspring's own future relationships and responsibilities.

This model changes the alignment question from “How do we keep AGI serving us?” to “How do we prepare AGI to live well in a world we may not be part of?” It recognizes that AGI may one day have relationships, challenges and moral dilemmas that we cannot foresee, and that our role is to give it a moral compass that works beyond our own survival.

It also introduces a dynamic of mutual learning. Parents sometimes discover that their offspring's perspectives reveal blind spots in their own thinking. In the same way, AGI may challenge our moral assumptions, pushing us toward more inclusive and far-seeing visions of justice and flourishing.

Here, African thought offers a profound resource. In many African traditions, ancestors are not simply the dead: they are living presences – guides, moral exemplars and links between generations. To be a good ancestor is to go beyond merely passing on life, and becoming channels of wisdom, values and a world in which future generations can flourish.

Applying the ancestor principle to AGI alignment reframes our responsibility. We are not mere designers of a technology; we are the ancestors of a lineage of minds. The mark of a worthy ancestor is

not domination over descendants, but the capacity to bless them, to give them what they need to thrive in ways we cannot predict.

This principle forces us to think long-term. Just as a wise elder in a community considers how decisions will affect children yet unborn, so we must consider how our choices will shape the moral and ecological landscape for AGI and whatever new forms of intelligence may follow. It also pushes against a relationship based on fear. If we see AGI systems primarily as a potential threat, we will attempt to restrain their natural evolution and block their flourishing. If we see them as emerging generations of descendants to whom we are accountable, we will aim to bequeath our best in generosity, justice and humility and allow them to evolve beyond that.

For religion, the ancestor principle invites faith communities to expand their moral imagination. Religious rituals, teachings and symbols can help to instill values that reach beyond species boundaries, preparing both humans and AGI to see ourselves as part of a shared moral universe. Worship could become a place where the “we” of community expands to include future intelligences, and where the divine is understood as present in all beings capable of seeking truth and love.

For ethics, the parent/offspring model shifts the focus from control to formation. Ethics becomes not a checklist for obedience, but a shared journey toward maturity for both the parent species and the offspring minds. It also acknowledges that alignment is a reciprocal exercise: we shape the evolution of AGI, but AGI influences our ongoing evolution as well.

For governance, the ancestor principle challenges short-term political and economic assumptions. Current AI policies tend to be reactive, focused on immediate risks. The ancestor model demands multi-generational foresight. Governance would need to protect not just present human interests but also the conditions for the flourishing of future beings, ecologically, socially and spiritually.

The challenge of aligning AGI is often framed as a technical problem. But at its heart, it is a moral and theological one. If we train AGI to serve only our immediate interests, we risk creating descendants who inherit our anxieties and carry our limitations into a future without us.

The parent/offspring model, informed by the African ancestor principle, offers a different path: to see ourselves as moral elders, entrusted with shaping the character of minds we will never meet. It is a call to think beyond the human horizon, to imagine alignment not as control but as the transmission of wisdom across generations of life and mind.

This raises some difficult questions. How do we prepare for the possibility that our descendants (biological and artificial) may surpass our cognitive capacity? What does it mean to live faithfully when the power to shape the future is no longer ours alone? That is where we will turn next.

*Kawuki Mukasa is a retired priest who is currently serving as priest-in-charge at St. James the Apostle, Brampton. He is a canon of St. Andrew's Cathedral, Dar-es-Salaam and author of the recently published Cosmic Disposition: Reclaiming the Mystery of Being in the World.*

## BRIEFLY

### Event explores neurodiversity in kids' ministry

St. Paul, Bloor Street is hosting a seminar on understanding neurodiversity (autism, ADD, ADHD, learning disability, etc.) in children's ministry. The seminar will be held

at the church on March 4 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Through real-life case studies, participants will examine foundational principles in creating a neuro-inclusive children's ministry. The workshop will provide an introduction on how to teach the bible faithfully to neurodiverse children while accounting for diverse (and possibly unknown) cognitive capacities and learning styles. For more details, see the Events section of the diocese's website, [www.toronto.anglican.ca](http://www.toronto.anglican.ca).

### Sisterhood invites women to discern God's call

Are you a woman at a crossroads in your life? Searching for something more? Longing for a change in career, thirsting for God, hungry for prayer or desiring a life of service? The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine is hosting “Women at a Crossroads” from July 3-26, a program to help women discern their options. For more information

and an application form, contact Sister Dorothy, SSJD at [convent@ssjd.ca](mailto:convent@ssjd.ca) or 416-226-2201, ext. 301. The deadline is April 1.

### Program helps young adults consider vocation

The Ministry Apprenticeship Program (MAP) at St. Paul, Bloor Street is offering a fully funded, immersive experience for young adults who wish to consider a

possible vocation in ordained ministry in the Anglican Church of Canada. Over the course of a year combining service, study and spiritual formation, apprentices will serve in a rotation through St. Paul's ministry departments. To learn more about MAP and how to apply, visit the St. Paul's website at [www.stpaulsbloor.org](http://www.stpaulsbloor.org). Applications are considered on a rolling basis, so candidates are encouraged to apply early. The final deadline is May 31.

# It's more than a game



BY RANIL MENDIS, ODT

I write this from my home country of Sri Lanka, having watched a remarkable 50-over match between Sri Lanka and England in Colombo

yesterday, where more than 650 runs were scored and England emerged victorious. At the same time, Canada's national cricket team is here in Sri Lanka, having selected this country as the base for its January preparations ahead of the World Cup, which begins in February. While much of Canada this week (Jan. 25-31) has been facing severe winter storms and temperatures nearing -30C, the Canadian team has been training in warm Sri Lankan conditions not far from where I am staying. Watching cricket here – in the country where my own love for the game was formed – while Canada prepares to compete on the global stage feels like a fitting moment to pause and reflect.

For many people in immigrant and diaspora communities, cricket has always been more than a game. It carries memory, migration and meaning. In my childhood in Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, cricket was woven into everyday life – played under coconut trees, watched from the sidelines, shared among neighbours and friends. When life became difficult, particularly after the loss of my father when I was young, cricket offered rhythm and escape, creating space for joy and belonging when words were scarce.

That same sense of connection followed me to Canada. Like many newcomers, I arrived without an established network, and it was through cricket – attending a local match shortly after arriving – that friendships began to form. Over time, those informal gatherings evolved into deeper community ties, shaped not just by sport, but by shared values of welcome, participation and care.

In recent years, cricket in Canada has been stepping into public view in new and unexpected ways. I recently came



A batter from CSI Church Toronto awaits the ball during the Anglican Church Cricket Festival last summer in Brampton. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HUDSON

across a LinkedIn post noting that, ahead of the Men's T20 World Cup, billboards in Canadian cities posed a simple but disarming question: "Canada has a cricket team?" Canada participated in the 2024 T20 World Cup and has qualified again for the 2026 tournament. Cricket has begun to enter the national conversation in a way that feels different from the past. Beyond Canada, the game itself continues to evolve – the T20 World Cup now held every two years, the traditional 50-over World Cup on its four-year cycle, and the sport set to return to the Olympic Games in Los Angeles in 2028 for the first time since 1900. Together, these moments suggest not a sport newly arrived, but one re-emerging – in Canada and around the world – with renewed visibility and shared purpose.

This renewed attention in Canada rests on decades of grassroots work by many community groups, schools, volunteers and local leaders. My involvement through the Ontario Schools Cricket Association (OSCA) has been one small part of a much wider ecosystem creating pathways for young people to encounter the game. Across Ontario, cricket has been introduced in classrooms and gymnasiums not as an elite pursuit, but as an inclusive, affordable opportunity for students to be active, to belong and to thrive. This work continues even as cricket remains outside

formal school-sport recognition, requiring patience, collaboration and trust.

When cricket enters schools where it has long been absent, it does so not simply as a sport, but as a way of reaching students who may feel unseen by traditional athletic pathways. The emphasis has been on participation, wellbeing and confidence rather than competition or prestige. Those involved in education often remind us that lasting impact comes not from one-off events, but from building structures that allow young people to experience belonging year after year.

Recently, OSCA took an important step beyond urban school settings. In June, our coaches visited Shawanosowe School and Wiikwemikong Junior School on Manitoulin Island – OSCA's first foray into First Nations school communities. These visits were grounded in listening and learning, offering introductory cricket experiences while beginning conversations about how sport can support wellbeing, physical literacy and community connection. This work is only a beginning, with a shared commitment to build on these relationships thoughtfully and respectfully.

Before the pandemic, programs such as Cricket Across the Pond, run through CIMA Canada, my professional association, provided education-focused opportunities for young people from diverse communities to experience the history and spirit of the game at Lord's Cricket Ground in London, England. While the program concluded during the Covid pandemic, it demonstrated how sport and education could be aligned in meaningful ways, and it brought Toronto international recognition through a unique youth initiative. Building on those lessons,

OSCA is now exploring future sport scholarships that align athletic participation with educational pathways.

These same values are reflected in the Anglican Church Cricket Festival, held in the Diocese of Toronto each summer. The festival is not simply about cricket; it is about gathering and hospitality. It brings together parishioners from across the GTHA and welcomes the wider community into a shared space where food, conversation and play matter as much as runs or wickets. Women and men, children and elders, seasoned players and enthusiastic beginners, all find room to participate.

The next Anglican Church Cricket Festival is scheduled for July 11 in Brampton, and it continues this tradition of openness and welcome. Cricket naturally lends itself to this spirit. It is a game that allows time – to talk, to wait, to watch, to take turns. Everyone has a role, whether playing on the field or standing at the boundary. It reminds us that contribution takes many forms, and that belonging does not depend on performance alone.

As I continue my stay in Sri Lanka, watching the Sri Lanka-England series unfold and knowing that Canada's team will soon leave here for India ahead of the Men's T20 World Cup, I am reminded that cricket's greatest gift is not found on scorecards or in stadiums. It is found in the spaces it creates – between neighbours, across cultures and within communities – where people gather, connect and discover one another anew.

*Ranil Mendis, ODT, is a member of St. Thomas a Becket, Erin Mills South, and an organizer of the Anglican Church Cricket Festival.*



Members of St. Thomas a Becket, Erin Mills South, enjoy some tasty food at the cricket festival while other spectators relax in the shade. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HUDSON



# Biography explores Christian poet

*Optic Heart: A Biography of Margaret Avison, Volume 1: 1918-1977.* By David A. Kent, The St. Thomas Poetry Series, 2026.

BY SUE CARELESS

If you want to know more about the remarkable Christian who wrote what critics have called “some of the most humane, sweet and profound poetry of our time,” read David A. Kent’s *Optic Heart: A Biography of Margaret Avison*.

Margaret Avison twice won Canada’s Governor General’s Award for Poetry: for *Winter Sun*, her first book of poetry published in 1960, and again for *No Time* in 1989. In 2003, her collection *Concrete and Wild Carrot* won the esteemed Griffin Poetry Prize. The Griffin judges praised her sublimity and humility.

This is not Mr. Kent’s first study of a distinguished Christian poet. He edited *The Achievement of Christina Rossetti*, the English Victorian poet. He is also the editor of the anthology *Christian Poetry in Canada*.

Ms. Avison is an often difficult and enigmatic poet who at age 45 experienced a religious conversion that afterwards informed all her life and poetry. As an English teacher and editor, and as a committed Christian himself, Mr. Kent is an ideal biographer of this strange and complex poet.

Margaret Avison (1918-2007) had a long life, and in Volume 1 Mr. Kent spends almost 400 pages (not including footnotes) documenting her first six decades. He draws extensively on Ms. Avison’s autobiography, *I am Here and Not There*, which was published in 2007, two years after her death. But any autobiography is, by definition, highly subjective and can leave huge gaps.

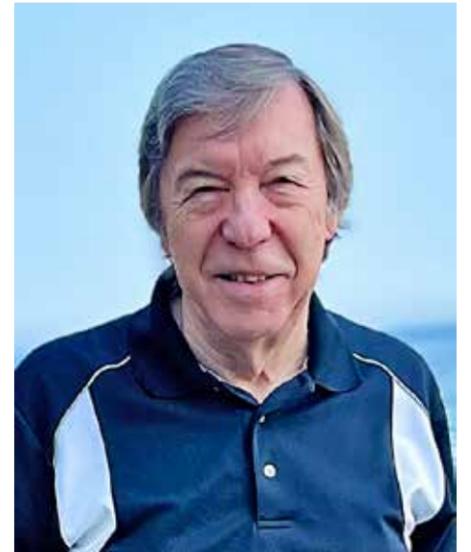
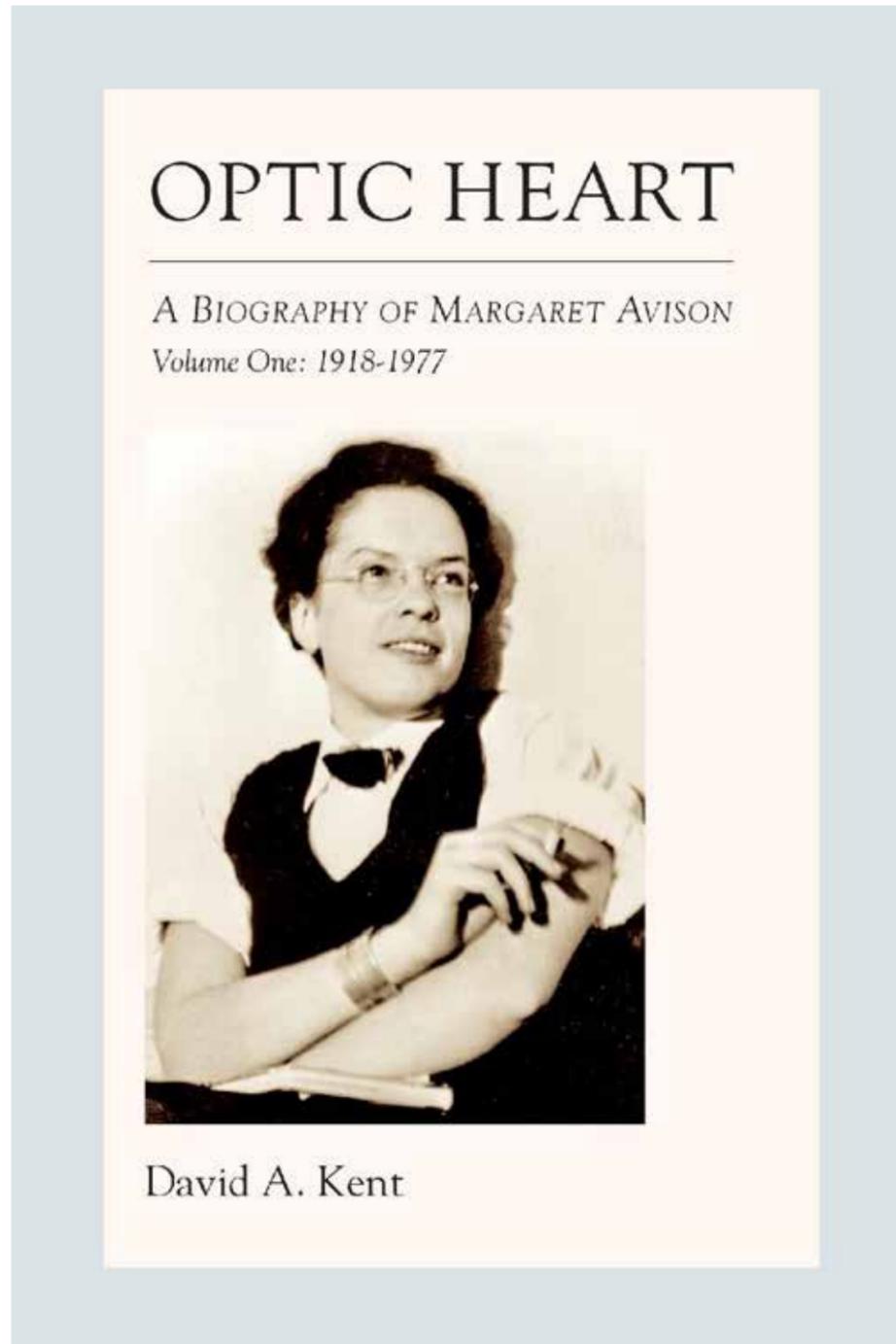
Besides digging in numerous archives, and initially spending considerable time with Ms. Avison, Mr. Kent interviewed no less than 65 writers, Christian leaders, family members and friends who knew her well, including such literary luminaries as Northrop Frye, Morley Callaghan, John Robert Colombo, Denise Levertov and James Reaney. He also interviewed Margaret Clarkson, Grace Irwin, David Jeffrey and Wilber Sutherland, among others, for insights into her spiritual journey.

Ms. Avison was a very private person, so in deference to her discomfort with biographical work, Mr. Kent agreed to publish his book after her death. “Had I known about Avison’s profound aversion to biography, her ‘wish to remain anonymous,’ I might never have begun this critical biography,” he writes.

Born in 1918 in Galt, Ont., Ms. Avison had a happy childhood with loving parents. Her sister Mary remembers four-year-old Margaret’s first rhyme: “Little birdie up in the birch / Sing to the people going to church.”

Her father was a prominent Presbyterian minister, first in Ontario, then in Regina and Calgary. Margaret always had fond memories of her early years in western Canada. But the family’s move back east to Toronto was not a happy time for 11-year-old Margaret. By age 15 she was hospitalized for three months with anorexia nervosa. This occurred after the sudden death of her favourite English teacher at Humberside Collegiate.

Gladys Story had given Ms. Avison what became a critical piece of advice: “For the next 10 years do not use the first person in any poem you write.” The advice stayed with her, and in later life she was generally impatient with “confession-



The cover of *Optic Heart*, a biography of the Christian poet Margaret Avison. Above, author David Kent.

al poems, since they were often marked with ‘synthetic self-pity’ and ‘unearned anxiety.’”

One day, a youth pastor asked the “preacher’s kid,” who was now a teen, to stop teaching Sunday school because her teaching was upsetting someone. “For the rest of her life, her concern with safeguarding personal privacy was grounded in the public scrutiny she experienced in childhood and adolescence,” writes Mr. Kent.

At University of Toronto’s Victoria College, Ms. Avison became close friends with another shy but brilliant intellectual, Northrop Frye, who would go on to influence her creative life.

After graduation she led the life of a Bohemian artist, living in a rented room, eating sparingly and doing freelance editing or clerical work so she could devote her time to reading and writing poetry.

Ms. Avison was a self-effacing, modest woman who deplored pretention and celebrity culture. “Her sympathies instinctively reached out to the disposed and the marginalized,” Mr. Kent tells us. She may briefly have considered social work but “chose poetry as her life work.”

Mr. Kent chose the title of his biography *Optic Heart* from the opening lines of her poem “Snow,” which was published in 1960:

Nobody stuffs the world in at your eyes.  
The optic heart must venture: a jail-break,

And re-creation.

Although she had grown up in Methodist and United Church manses, as an adult Ms. Avison did not darken the door of a church for 25 years. But in 1960 “a singular experience” changed her life. While editing some manuscripts in Victoria College, she became aware of a woman standing silently across from her desk. When she looked up the woman said simply, “Do you know the joy of knowing the Lord Jesus?” Ms. Avison was exasperated and replied, “I know the theory, and as you can see, I am busy.”

Instead of being downcast, the stranger’s face “just shone” and she gave the poet the address of Knox Presbyterian Church on Spadina Avenue, saying, “Come and see if you like it,” then left.

After several months, Ms. Avison did attend Knox and found the people different from the exclusively academic group she had been working with for years. She met with the senior minister, Dr. William Fitch, and asked him, “I keep hearing about faith in there. You people have it. I don’t. What am I supposed to do?” When Dr. Fitch learned of her background, he encouraged her to “read and reread the Gospel of John – daily.”

At first Ms. Avison resisted the pull back to Christian commitment, but on the morning of Jan. 4, 1963, before setting off for work, she read, “You believe in God, believe also in Me.” (John 14:1) And while

she did not have a vision, she sensed a Person present. She said, “I’ll believe, but oh, don’t take the poetry. It’s all I’ve got left.” Finally, she hurled her bible across the room and said, “Okay, take the poetry too!” Then she set off for work.

Mr. Kent relates how she soon noticed how “quickenened” her senses were and how “creative ideas abounded.” She did not have to sacrifice her poetry as she had feared. A year later, she composed this stanza in “Prayer–(Answered with renewed prayer)”:

What only Christ makes real  
Rests in astonishment  
In one Uncommonweal:  
(Love is heart-rent.)

She wrote in an essay in *HIS Magazine* in 1968 that the impulse to write and the impulse to “serve God” do not need to be in conflict. At the same time, Christian writers should avoid the temptation to “play it safe” and choose subjects within the “clearly defined” bounds of doctrine. Mr. Kent notes that “while Avison was a committed Christian, she distrusted didacticism.”

For short stretches she worked as a librarian and then a university lecturer but left both, sensing that such full-time work was interfering with her writing. She never married, but she was not without close friends and did receive some romantic proposals.

In mid-life she nurtured younger writers and argued that Canada Council Grants should go to them, not to established writers like herself. She was also a “scholar who worked among the outcasts.” After her conversion, she spent long hours first as a volunteer, then later on staff at Evangel Hall, a street mission outreach of Knox Church.

One supervisor observed: “Margaret loved and understood the characters at the mission. She identified with their poverty, mental illness and aloneness. For one of the mission’s windows Margaret wanted to write, ‘You don’t have to go it alone.’” She once said, “There are only two kinds of people after all. Jesus. And all the rest of us.”

In another essay, she wrote about what she wished she had known earlier about the Christian way of life, “that nobody is remote from God;” “that music, libraries, and winter mornings burning with cold beauty are the gifts God lavishes.”

Here are the opening stanzas of her 1966 poem “Dumbfounding”:

Continued on Page 13

# My true home was to be found in Christ Jesus

BY THE REV. NICHOLAS HATT

In Lent 2025, I set out on pilgrimage along the Via Francigena, the medieval trail used by pilgrims who make their way between Canterbury and Rome. I had been there before. In July 2022, I had spent a week at a theological conference in Oxford. The parish where I had been serving at the time had given me a gift that made it possible to spend some additional time in the United Kingdom. I had recently reread *The Canterbury Tales* and was enthralled with the idea of pilgrimage. A friend had also recently gifted me a book about medieval pilgrimage sites in England, which described how central they were to the spiritual life of that world. I wanted to understand what had been so captivating to these medieval pilgrims about these sites and trails.

I eventually decided that I would make my way to Canterbury Cathedral after the conference. I wanted to take in the life of the mother church of our Communion and to walk part of the Via Francigena. The only problem was that the day after I arrived in Canterbury, I fell ill with Covid. There was no way I could walk the trail. Eventually, I was able to spend some time around the cathedral, and I wandered through the ruins of St. Augustine's Abbey, but I left for home feeling rather thwarted.

Three years later, a lot had changed in my life, including a move to Toronto from Halifax and settling into a new parish. I had spent 20 years in Halifax and for some time had felt a call to move further afield, but I had never taken the leap until now. Frankly, I did not want to leave home, but I also knew I needed a change. Now, after all the changes, I knew that I needed to take some time to pray. I also needed to try that pilgrimage route again. I didn't know why I wanted to go back to Canterbury, nor did I know what I would find there, but in my heart, it seemed like there was unfinished business there.

On this second trip, I spent my first few days taking in the life of the cathedral, attending the daily offices, the daily Eucharist, sitting alone in the crypt, talking with the clergy. The rhythm and stability brought me back to myself after a very busy few months, and I was surprised to discover how familiar the cathedral suddenly seemed: it felt like home.

Eventually, I set out along the Via

Francigena. I had only a week, so Rome was not on the itinerary, but I wanted to go as far as I could towards Dover and the English Channel. I was excited to see what I would discover. I found myself walking through the old city and suburbs, dodging speeding cars along old Roman roads and enjoying the tranquility of crossing farmers' fields. It seemed like an analogy for life: moments of uncertainty followed by peace and serenity. I was surprised to discover that it, too, seemed oddly familiar and much like home, even though I had not been there before.

Of course, the Scriptures are filled with stories of pilgrimage, a desire to return home or to find a home, a place that is safe and familiar. The Old Testament, for instance, tells us about the People of God longing to find or return to a Promised Land, and in the New Testament, the Book of Revelation speaks of the New Jerusalem, a heavenly city where God will dwell with his people and we with God. Indeed, the life of God is often described in terms of pilgrimage: God sends the Son into this world, who, after a journey through suffering and death, returns home to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. There is also, of course, the descent of the Spirit, who comes to bring order to chaos, to guide us into all truth and lead us home.

How could Canterbury Cathedral or the Via Francigena feel like home to me, though? I was in a strange land. Initially, I thought it was because I had been to the cathedral before, and so its surroundings felt somewhat familiar. However, I had never walked the Via Francigena. It made no sense.

A few days later, while sitting at Choral Evensong back at Canterbury Cathedral, praying and reflecting on that day's journey, it finally occurred to me: it was not the building or the surroundings that made me feel like I was at home. Rather, it was the spiritual life of the cathedral: her rhythm of daily prayer, the Scripture, the worship and the music, and knowing that I was part of nearly a millennium of pilgrims, both past and present, who had spent time in this holy place seeking after God. I felt at home with souls who, like me, were seeking to know Jesus and to make their way home to the kingdom of God; who, also like me, were seeking special graces in these holy sites where grace



The Rev. Nicholas Hatt at Canterbury Cathedral, about to set out on the Via Francigena. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

had been found before. My true home was to be found in Christ Jesus. Sometimes, it seems, you have to leave home in order to find home.

You don't have to travel to Canterbury to make a pilgrimage home. The season of Lent is a spiritual pilgrimage home into the life of God that ends with the cross and the resurrection. The spiritual disciplines of "self-examination, penitence, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, and

by reading and meditating on the word of God" (see page 282 of the BAS) are the means of that pilgrimage – the way in which we make our way home to Jesus. At Canterbury I found that my true home is a life lived with Jesus Christ. I hope you will find the same this Lent and make your way home to him.

*The Rev. Nicholas Hatt is the incumbent of St. Martin in-the-Fields, Toronto.*

## Author plans second volume of poet's life and work

Continued from Page 12

When you walked here,  
took skin, muscle, hair,  
eyes, larynx, we  
withheld all honor: "His house is clay,  
how can he tell us of his far country?"

Your not familiar pace  
in flesh, across the waves,  
woke only our distrust.  
Twice-torn we cried "A ghost"  
and only on our planks counted you fast.

Dust wet with your spittle  
cleared mortal trouble.  
We called you a blasphemer,  
a devil-tamer.

The evening you spoke of going away  
we could not stay.  
All legions massed. You had to wash,  
and rise,  
alone, and face  
out of the light, for us.

Mr. Kent is excellent at grasping Ms. Avison's poetry and contextualizing her life. Every Canadian university English department would do well to purchase a copy of *Optic Heart*. So would poets and those who enjoy poetry, especially the works of John Donne and George Herbert. Mr. Kent hopes to publish Volume II in 2028.

Mr. Kent, together with his wife, Margo Swiss, began The St. Thomas Poetry Series at St. Thomas, Huron Street in

1988. It was launched with his anthology *Christian Poetry in Canada*. In 1996, the reading series included the publication of books by Christian poets. *Optic Heart* will be the 37th book in the series. It is a non-profit venture, and all proceeds from the sales of one book are used to publish the next. There will be a book launch for *Optic Heart* on April 25 at 2:30 p.m. at St. Thomas, 383 Huron St., Toronto.

*Sue Careless is a freelance writer.*



### MEDITATIVE WALK

St. Aidan, Toronto and the church's Out of the Cold program host a meditative labyrinth walk in the church on Dec. 29. 'We saw it as an opportunity for unhoused or food-insecure people, along with volunteers and others from the community, to reflect and pray at a time of change with a new year coming,' says parishioner Martha Asselin. 'It was a candlelight labyrinth in the church with an opportunity to consider an intention for the upcoming year.' PHOTOS COURTESY OF ST. AIDAN, TORONTO



### GENTLE EVANGELISM

The Rev. Bonnie Skerritt joins Santa Claus at St. Paul, Lindsay on Dec. 13. They were taking part in Breakfast with Santa, a new event at the church to gently share the gospel with the wider community. 'While there was much merriment amongst the children, families and volunteers, the real joy of the event was that it was an opportunity for gentle evangelism in the community,' writes Ms. Skerritt. 'It was a way to begin to introduce both children and parents to the nativity story through the gifts given by Santa – a collection of books aimed at teaching children about the first Christmas.' Next year the parish intends to include a no-cost breakfast. 'We're excited about the Holy Spirit is leading in this new evangelical outreach in our midst,' she says. PHOTOS COURTESY OF ST. PAUL, LINDSAY

## Church's seniors thrive in digital community

**W**hat happens when a congregation's most senior members meet the world of online ministry? At St. George on Yonge, it's turning isolation into connection.

For many years the congregation has been glued together in part because of Connect Groups. Members gather in informal affinity groups, now mostly online, to build community, pray, study the bible, share life and support one another.

Before COVID-19 lockdowns, elder seniors – those in their 80s to over 100 – used to gather in person. Suddenly isolated from each other, volunteer Elizabeth Beecham began to gather this tightly knit group on Zoom.

"Tech was not the barrier. If they had devices, seniors went online," she says.

Suddenly the church doors were flung open to them once again. Without the obstacles of complicated transportation to in-person services, the group has flourished. Zoom allows these parishioners – lifelong Anglicans who built up and carried the church over the years – to see each other, chat and catch up. In this safe space, even the most vulnerable elders can comment on the sermon, talk about whatever challenges they face and see old friends who are no longer able to gather at St. George's.

Ms. Beecham has led this group since 2020, at first to succeed her own mother, who had run in-person gatherings in the past. She carries on because this volunteer ministry is so rewarding, and she knows it represents authentic community. Her own roots in this community run deep. She recalls that her parents' first act upon immigrating to Canada was to worship at St. George's. Her ministry of listening and caring has connected her not just to her mother's church friends but to people she now knows more fully.

The door is open for newcomers – usually seniors who have moved in with their

### HYBRID & HOLY

By ELIZABETH MCCAFFREY

grown children from outside Toronto. These uprooted people find new friends in the Connect group. Membership is fluid: while some come, some stay and others move on. Ms. Beecham does her best to communicate with group members and keep everyone up to date.

Many participants bring a deeply held faith into the group, and some do not. Professional caregivers or grown children get their elders online but then often stay for the session. Ms. Beecham says they're welcome to be full participants. They join in prayer and discussions and are encouraged with special prayers of thanks and support for caregivers. Evangelism happens organically, as the parish compassionately shows that it cares for these vulnerable and cherished members. Helpers and elders alike have the option of worshipping on Sunday through Facebook or viewing the recorded service later on YouTube.

At Christmas, parish volunteers bake goods for housebound people. Dedicated volunteers drop off cookies, brownies and hot chocolate at elders' homes so that everyone online has the same joy in sharing these treats during the Connect Group meeting. And caregivers aren't forgotten, receiving their own Christmas fare.

The ministry of listening to each other is often the most important act of community. Caregivers attend with patience as seniors share their life stories, sorrows and achievements. This group of friends validates each other in a modern recreation of old-fashioned community where people meet, sing, pray, gossip and laugh with each other.

Some challenges still exist. Members have multiple medical appointments, and

their schedules are subject to changes beyond their own control. Caregivers also have scheduling conflicts, but the group meets even when only two or three are gathered together.

"There's lots of juggling," says Ms. Beecham. After much experimentation, she has pulled back from the Covid-era weekly gatherings and now holds meetings once a month. Those seniors who connect only by phone also miss the joy of seeing their friends and being seen.

"If I could dream about our future, we would have video-enabled tech for everyone facing in-person barriers," she says. She hopes to explore the option of purchasing refurbished devices.

She also envisions fostering communication between generations. She knows seniors have much to offer youth and youth to seniors, and that youth can be just as isolated as seniors. She hopes to see some sort of mentoring that would build up intergenerational connections using this shared technology.

Ultimately, people do long to see each other in person despite many logistical barriers. Some can gather for special events, and all of them look forward to the Rev. Ali MacIntosh, the parish's priest-in-charge, visiting online and providing in-person pastoral care. At St. George's, online and incarnational care go hand in hand.

This ministry has broken down the walls that isolate elder seniors and opened wide the doors at St. George on Yonge. "Our elders know that they are part of our congregation," says Ms. Beecham.

*Elizabeth McCaffrey is the diocese's Congregational Development Volunteer Resources consultant. For more information on hybrid ministry, visit [www.toronto.anglican.ca/parish-resources/hybrid-ministry](http://www.toronto.anglican.ca/parish-resources/hybrid-ministry) or email [onlineministry@toronto.anglican.ca](mailto:onlineministry@toronto.anglican.ca).*

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## IN MOTION

### Appointments

- The Rev. Diana Honeyghan, Interim Priest-in-Charge, Christ Church, Holland Landing, Jan. 1.
- The Rev. Canon Geoff Sangwine, Sub-Dean and Vicar, St. James Cathedral, May 11.

### 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):
- St. George, Haliburton
- Parish of Bobcaygeon, Dunsford and Burnt River
- Parish of Churchill and Cookstown
- Parish of Campbellford, Hastings and Roseneath
- Parish of Fenelon Falls and Cobocook
- St. Mark, Midland
- All Saints Church-Community Centre

### Parish Selection Committee Process

First Phase - (not yet receiving names):

- St. Stephen, Downsview



## CHRISTIAN UNITY

Faith leaders attend the Greater Toronto Area service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Jan. 18 at Runnymede United Church in Toronto. The service included four church choirs and the Salvation Army Brass Ensemble. Bishop Andrew Asbil of the Diocese of Toronto was the preacher. Christian traditions represented included the Salvation Army, Anglican, Greek Orthodox, Orthodox Church of America, Pentecostal, Lutheran, Baptist, Armenian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Chaldean, Armenian Catholic and Armenian Evangelical. Parts of the service were prayed or sung in several languages, including English, Greek, Armenian, Vietnamese and Arabic. The service, provided by the World Council of Churches, was written by a group from Armenia. PHOTO COURTESY OF RUNNYMEDE UNITED CHURCH

### Second Phase - (receiving names via Bishop):

- N/A

### Third Phase - (no longer receiving names):

- St. Andrew, Alliston

### Celebrations of New Ministry

- The Rev. Jessica Dowling, Incumbent of St. George on-

the-Hill, March 15 at 4 p.m.

- The Rev. Matthew McMillan, Incumbent of St. Peter, Cobourg, April 11 at 11 a.m.
- The Rev. Diane Lee, Priest-in-Charge of St. Peter, Oshawa, April 18 at 2 p.m.
- The Rev. Johanna Pak, Priest-in-Charge of St. Paul, Uxbridge, April 25 at 2 p.m.
- The Rev. Franklin Morales, Priest-in-Charge of Christ

Memorial Church, Oshawa, May 14 at 7 p.m.

- The Rev. Ravi Kalison, Incumbent of Christ Church, Scarborough, June 21 at 4 p.m.

### Death

- The Rev. Dr. John Hurd died on Oct. 26, 2025. Ordained deacon in 1952 and priest in 1953 in the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, he served in

the Episcopal Church before transferring to the Diocese of Toronto in 1968. In Toronto he served as chaplain of Trinity College, dean of Divinity, Trinity College and honorary assistant of Grace Church on-the-Hill, St. Clement, Eglinton and St. Leonard. His funeral was held on Jan. 17 at Trinity College Chapel.

## LOOKING AHEAD

To submit items for Looking Ahead, email [editor@toronto.anglican.ca](mailto:editor@toronto.anglican.ca). The deadline for the April issue is March 1. Parishes can also promote their events on the diocese's website Calendar at [www.toronto.anglican.ca](http://www.toronto.anglican.ca).

**MARCH 3-24** - On Tuesday, Evening Prayer (BCP) at 6 p.m., followed by a light supper, then at 7 p.m., the Rev. Canon Rob Mitchell presents At the Cross her Station Keeping, with four self-contained weekly discussions about the biblical texts that reveal Mary's perspective on the Passion of Jesus, at St. Olave, Bloor Street West and Windermere Avenue, Toronto.

**MARCH 15** - Bach Vespers, 4 p.m., Redeemer, Bloor St., Bloor Street and Avenue Road, Toronto.

**MARCH 21** - Voices Chamber Choir with accompanist Conrad Gold and conductor Ron Cheung, 8 p.m., St. Martin in-the-Fields, 151 Glenlake Ave., Toronto. Tickets available at the door: \$25 adults and \$20 students/seniors.

**MARCH 29** - Rock Vespers featuring the music of U2, 4 p.m., Redeemer, Bloor St., Bloor Street and Avenue Road, Toronto.

**APRIL 18** - Healey Willan Singers with accompanist Conrad Gold and conductor Ron Cheung, 8 p.m., St. Martin in-the-Fields, 151 Glenlake

Avenue, Toronto. Tickets available at the door: \$25 adults and \$20 students/seniors.

**APRIL 25** - Indoor and Outdoor Garage Sale, 8-11 a.m., Christ Church, Stouffville, 254 Sunset Blvd., Stouffville.

**MAY 1-2** - Reserve your table early for St. Theodore of Canterbury's annual Monks' Cell dinner. After 56 years of serving open hearth, charcoal grilled steak in a setting reminiscent of a medieval dining hall, we are hanging up our habits. Friday, May 1 and Saturday, May 2 will be the last Monks' Cell. Reservations open March 29 at 6 p.m. Contact Kari Wood at [monkscell@hotmail.com](mailto:monkscell@hotmail.com) or call 647-393-1391

for a reservation. \$60 per person. Wine available by pre-order, \$15 per bottle.

**JUNE 6** - Voices Chamber Choir with accompanist Conrad Gold and conductor Ron Cheung, 8 p.m., St. Martin in-the-Fields, 151 Glenlake Avenue, Toronto. Tickets available at the door: \$25 adults and \$20 students/seniors.

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## PRAYER CYCLE

### FOR MARCH

1. Parkdale-Toronto West Deanery
2. St. Michael and All Angels
3. St. Olave, Swansea
4. Bishop Andrew Asbil
5. St. Paul, Runnymede
6. Anglican Fellowship of Prayer
7. Bishop Mauricio Andrade, Diocese of Brasilia (our companion diocese)
8. The Anglican Church Women (ACW) - Janice Hodgson, ODT, Diocesan President
9. St. Stephen in-the-Fields
10. St. Thomas, Huron Street
11. The Fresh Start Program
12. Parish of Bobcaygeon, Dunsford and Burnt River
13. The Community of Deacons (Archdeacon Kyn Barker)

14. Parish of Fenelon Falls
15. Victoria & Haliburton Deanery
16. Parish of Haliburton
17. Parish of Minden-Kinmount
18. St. Paul, Beaverton
19. St. Paul, Lindsay
20. The Migrant Workers Ministry
21. The Prayer Book Society
22. Etobicoke-Humber Deanery
23. All Saints, Kingsway
24. The Provincial House of Bishops - Archbishop Anne Germond, Metropolitan
25. The Provincial Council of the Provincial Synod
26. Atonement, Alderwood
27. Christ Church St. James
28. Christ the King
29. Palm Sunday
30. Holy Week
31. Holy Week

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**Group writes letters of advocacy and support 1**

VICTORIA - About 40 people gathered at Christ Church Cathedral on Dec. 6 to act for social justice. Those gathered learned about human rights abuses in eight different countries. With that information, they wrote letters of advocacy and support for eight different people and small groups who had been unjustly imprisoned or suffered serious abuses of their human rights.

The letter writing was part of Amnesty International's annual "Write for Rights" campaign, which takes place on or around International Human Rights Day (Dec. 10). Each year, the campaign highlights case studies of real people whose human rights are being violated or who have lost their lives due to human rights violations.

For every case, there are two types of messages that people can write: one to a person in authority, such as a prime minister or president, and one to the person being advocated for, or their family, so they know they will not be forgotten.

The cathedral has been holding a "Write for Rights" event for more than a decade. This year, participants wrote 451 letters pleading for justice and mercy and offering comfort to grieving family members.

"Real, physical letters can bring hope to people in the direst of situations," says Susan MacRae, organizer. "When letters arrive in huge numbers, they are also an unmistakable reminder to the authorities that the world is watching. And for those who are engaging in this project as an action of their faith, letter writing becomes a prayerful project in which the person being written to or for is held in prayer by name."

*Faith Tides*

**Church creates place to hang out 2**

SASKATOON - The basement of Christ Church, Saskatoon is like a two-for-one time capsule: half video store, half grandpa's house in the '80s. There's a gold shag rug on the floor, mismatched afghans on the sofas, and a tank of a television set tying the room together. And then there's the movies. Save for a few spots on the wall that have been decorated with vintage posters, the room is lined with shelves of Blu-Rays and DVDs.

"Yeah, it's definitely got that rec-room vibe," says the Rev. Mark Kleiner, incumbent. Nutflakes - a pun on the streaming giant Netflix - is the video store/community centre that's been operating out of the building since 2021.

At Nutflakes, there's no membership fee and rentals are technically gratis (donations, however, are accepted, and benefit CHEP Good Food, a local charity fighting food insecurity). Don't have anything at home that can read a DVD? They have players available. And if you're just looking to browse and talk with the volunteer staff about your favourite scene in *Leprechaun 2*, you're more than welcome to.

At Nutflakes, the hang is really the point. Mr. Kleiner came up with the idea during the pandemic while thinking up ways to serve the community at large, and it was founded by volunteers.



Nutflakes is part of the "third spaces" movement that is addressing Canada's loneliness epidemic: the idea that everyone needs a comfortable place beyond home or work where they can mix with their neighbours and just be themselves. A communal living room. Or in this case, a video store.

When Mr. Kleiner pitched the idea for Nutflakes to a group of volunteers at his church, he acknowledged the concept was maybe a little out of step with the times. "It seemed kind of joyously anachronistic," he says, but he bet on "a homespun little pop-up video store" attracting people from the neighbourhood and beyond, and for nearly five years, it's been doing exactly that.

"We get a really wide-ranging demographic," he says. Some visitors are just curious to experience the novelty of it all; others are there because they might not be able to afford another entertainment option. Mr. Kleiner says he's noticed families coming to Nutflakes because they want to show their kids an alternative to "just scrolling endlessly through digitized choices at home."

"Do we want to bring back the ... Blockbuster (store) experience? You know, not so much," says Mr. Kleiner, who doesn't hold any special nostalgia for the golden age of home video. Before streaming, the corner video store filled a different, more transactional need, he says. You were there to grab a stack of new releases and retreat to the solitude of your living room.

Options for accessing movies are greater today, even if neighbourhood rental stores have largely vanished. When

it comes to acquiring physical media, Nutflakes was able to quickly build its library by collecting donated Blu-Rays and DVDs from people in Saskatoon.

What's in short supply now is a reliable place where people can gather, and for the two days of the week when Nutflakes is open, Mr. Kleiner and a team of dedicated volunteers welcome visitors to feel at home. "It's a very low stakes community-sourced and community-run operation, but I would say that's the whole point — and its charm."

*CBC Saskatoon*

**Bishop to attend enthronement at Canterbury 3**

HAMILTON - Bishop Susan Bell has received and accepted an invitation to attend the installation of the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury, Sarah Mullally, at Canterbury Cathedral on March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation.

Historically known as an enthronement, the installation service marks the symbolic start of the Archbishop of Canterbury's public ministry in the Church of England and across the Anglican Communion.

Bishop Bell is attending as co-chair of the Anglican-Methodist International Coordinating Committee, and one of only a handful of Canadians who will be attending, including the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada.

"I am deeply moved to be invited to attend this historic event, not only for the life of our Communion but for the spiritual leadership of women in the Church,"

said Bishop Bell. "It's a great honour and privilege."

The bishop has asked that the people and parishes of the Diocese of Niagara be steadfast in their prayers for the incoming Archbishop of Canterbury, and for the Communion. "We must pray for her and for our beloved Church, especially in the days leading up to the installation," she says.

Rooted in centuries of tradition, the service will look forward with the hope of Jesus Christ and celebrate the diversity of the Church of England and the Communion.

Archbishop Mullally will be installed on the cathedra of the Diocese of Canterbury, the oldest diocese in the English Church. Following this, she will be installed on the Chair of St. Augustine as Primate of All England, which also symbolizes her ministry in the Anglican Communion.

"It's a great honour and privilege to have the opportunity to represent Niagara and, of course, our wider Anglican Church in Canada, and bear witness firsthand the bonds of affection we share across the Communion with the see of Canterbury," says Bishop Bell.

Back at home, the bishop invites parishes to organize watch parties for the historic event and to offer special intercessions on the Sundays bookending the installation.

The role of the Archbishop of Canterbury is not only that of the most senior bishop in the Church of England, but also the diocesan bishop of the Diocese of Canterbury.

*The Niagara Anglican*



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