

Fasts focus
on creation

Priest remembers
the River Jordan



Church garden
brings joy

The Anglican

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MARCH 2021

FaithWorks surpasses goal

Anglicans
give
generously
during
pandemic

BY STUART MANN

LET it never be said that Anglicans in the diocese don't rise to a challenge.

In 2020, one of the most difficult years in living memory, Anglicans and corporate donors gave \$1.6 million to FaithWorks, the diocese's annual outreach campaign.

The amount not only surpassed the goal of \$1.5 million but was the second-highest total in the appeal's 25-year history.

Despite lockdowns and other COVID-19 restrictions, donors gave \$300,000 more to the campaign than they did in 2019.

Shelagh McPherson, the chair of FaithWorks and a member of St. Martin in-the-Fields in Toronto, says she is "blown away" by the response. "It's about loving your neighbour, and in the midst of their own problems, people have kept their neighbours in the forefront of their minds," she says.

FaithWorks provides financial support to 15 agencies and ministries, all based in the diocese, that serve the needs of people who are Indigenous, homeless, hungry, at-risk women, children or youth, immigrants or refugees, or struggling with HIV/AIDS. Since it was founded in 1996, it has raised \$35 million.

Peter Misiaszek, the diocese's director of Stewardship Development, says there were several reasons for the 2020 campaign's success. It included two "challenge grants" in which donations were matched, dollar for dollar, up to \$100,000 each. The grants, which were made possible by two generous donors, raised more than \$200,000.

In March, FaithWorks started to publish FaithLines, a bi-weekly electronic newsletter that featured stories and testimonials about the work of the agencies and ministries. The newsletter, edited by FaithWorks campaign manager Peter



FaithWorks' ministry partners North House Shelter in North Durham (above) and Flemingdon Park Ministry in Toronto (above right) provide food for local residents. The Rev. Phil Gearing (bottom right) walks for FaithWorks while members of All Saints Church-Community Centre in Toronto provide Christmas cheer to those in need. PHOTOS COURTESY OF FAITHWORKS, THE REV. PHIL GEARING AND ERIKA WAR

Mentis, kept clergy and laity in the diocese informed and substantially increased online givings.

The campaign included successful direct mail appeals in Pentecost and Advent, and the diocese held its first FaithWorks Sunday in late November, which provided an opportunity for parishes to focus on the appeal.

Mr. Misiaszek says he was expecting a dip in parish givings due to the pandemic, but instead there was a 15 per cent increase. Parishes and individuals found new and inventive ways to give. St. Christopher, Richmond Hill held an online table tennis tournament, raising \$24,000. The annual Schomberg Country Run, held online and in person, raised \$22,000. The Rev. Phil Gearing walked 10 km a day for 100 days, raising several thousand dollars.

A new feature of the campaign was that if donors indicated their parish with their donation, the parish would be credited with the amount and would receive 15 per cent of the donation, paid in the early part of 2021. This is similar to the longstanding practice of parishes receiving 15 per cent of their parish contribution.



Mr. Misiaszek says the additional money raised in 2020 could be used to establish a fund that would help FaithWorks' recipients with immediate, pressing needs. Currently, the money is allocated at the beginning of the year. "We want to be nimble enough to respond when some immediate needs become apparent," he says. "In 2020, there were some needs and we would have wanted to respond in that way."

Eighty-five per cent of parishes in the diocese participated in the 2020 campaign, and he hopes that will jump to 100 per cent this year, the appeal's 25th anniversary. "We want to get every parish on board, and I think we can do that," he says. The goal is \$1.5 million and another challenge grant is already lined up.

Carol Reist, executive director of The Dam, an agency that works with at-risk youth in Mississauga, praised FaithWorks for its achievement. "It is amazing that they've

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Faithworks tops goal

Continued from Page 1

been able to not only reach their goal but surpass it, when so many other agencies and campaigns are not reaching their goal," she says. "It speaks to the faithfulness of the Church, that the Church is there in these times of crisis to step up and make sure these ministries are funded across the diocese. That's beautiful. This shows how strong and great the campaign is."

She says FaithWorks is The Dam's most consistent funder, having supported it every year since the campaign began. "We know we can count on FaithWorks every year. That means we can keep offering a stable ministry and programming to youth."

Bishop Andrew Asbil thanked everyone who gave to the appeal. "I am deeply grateful to all those who have supported FaithWorks during this challenging year. Your resolve to look after the least among us in the face of such adversity is truly inspiring, and gives me hope for the future. I am reminded of the prophet's words: 'What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.' (Micah 6:8) In 2020, we did that."



CAMP NARNIA

People of all ages enjoy St. John the Evangelist, Port Hope's Camp Narnia, held online on Sunday mornings in January and February. Participants made Narnia-themed crafts and enjoyed Narnia-themed live music by Elizabeth Barlow and Saskia Tomkins. Residents of Port Hope, Bowmanville and Grafton participated. In Lent, the church planned to hold Hobbit Camp, linking the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien to the Easter story. PHOTOS COURTESY OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST



BRIEFLY

ACW general meeting planned for April

All are invited to the diocese's Anglican Church Women's annual general meeting via Zoom on April 17 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. This year's meeting will feature an address from the Most Rev. Linda Nicholls, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, and its theme is "Challenged to Move Forward".

The invitation with the registration link was emailed to each church and information is also on the diocese's website, www.toronto.anglican.ca.

Dioceses hold joint FLAME conference

For the first time ever, the Diocese of Toronto and the Diocese of Montreal branches of FLAME (Fellowship and Learning for Anglican Men Everywhere) held a joint online conference. Fifty-six men took part in the two-day event, which was held in October. The conference included plenary sessions,

presentations, small group discussions and worship. The guest speaker was Bishop Dan Herzog, the retired bishop of Albany, New York. He took participants through four discussions that were available online as YouTube videos.

"With a mix of men from Toronto, Montreal and points in between there were many new-found friendships from that day," says Alan Sweet, a member of the organizing committee. "Many times throughout the weekend, the small groups felt as though they were all in the same place together and not hundreds of kilometers apart."

The success of the conference inspired two additional online

events. The first was a FLAME breakfast held on Jan. 16, attended by 26 men. The Rev. Doug Nicholson from the Diocese of Montreal opened with prayer and a homily, and a robust discussion ensued.

A second breakfast is scheduled for April 10 at 9:15 a.m. For times and location, visit www.flameconferencetoronto.ca. This is an open invitation to all Christian men and there is no requirement to have attended a FLAME event in the past.

Black heritage service will be online

The diocese's annual Black heritage service will be held on Zoom on Feb. 28 at 4:30 p.m. The service, which is in its 26th year, is usually held at St. Paul, Bloor Street but will be held online this year due to COVID-19 restrictions. The theme, "God's People: Grounded in Faith, Filled with Hope, Called to Action," reflects the context of the Anglican Church's response to the issue of anti-Black racism and bias. A new feature of the celebration will be a moderated dialogue between Bishop Andrew Asbil, the Bishop of Toronto, and two young members of Black Anglicans of Canada, Aleshia Johnson and Brittany Hudson. The service, sponsored by Black Anglicans of Canada, will be on Zoom and streamed live on YouTube. For more information, visit the diocese's website, www.toronto.anglican.ca.

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Anti-racism initiative underway

Anglicans share experiences in listening sessions

BY ALLAN MCKEE

IN December, Bishop Jenny Andison, the diocese's Diversity Officer, announced that the diocese would be embarking on anti-racism and anti-bias training for all clergy and staff in the diocese. "We are starting this journey" she says, "so we can build up capacity in the Church to begin to dismantle the barriers that are preventing us from reaching all people with the good news of Jesus Christ."

With listening sessions conducted in congregations across the diocese, the first phase of the plan is now complete. In January and February, Bernadette Arthur, the founder and lead cultural strategist at Co:Culture Collective, who is leading the 15-month anti-bias and anti-racism training, held listening sessions with members from different congregations and heard about the issues, challenges, obstacles and hurt experienced by Anglicans because of racism and bias in the Church.

Participants expressed a range of experiences around belonging and inclusion in parishes and in the diocese more broadly, Ms. Arthur says.

"We heard things like, 'I've found belonging in my local church, but I've experienced barriers to accessing diocesan resources and have felt tokenized by leadership,'" she says.

The experiences shared at the listening sessions will be used to inform the training that will be

rolled out over the coming months. "If we're finding that there's a pattern with people's experience of belonging on the parish level, we'll allow those experiences to inform how the training is designed," she says.

The listening sessions will inform the content and focus of the training, to ensure that it is relevant to the context of the Diocese of Toronto. "We'll bring in quotes and stories that we heard," she says. "It will help us scratch the areas of community life that's itching."

The training will address issues of racism and bias at both a parish level and at the structural level of the diocese. It will help promote gender, racial, sexual and ability diversity and inclusion in parishes and in the leadership of the diocese. It will do so using an intersectional lens and biblically inspired approaches.

"Through individual and corporate prayer, and sustained commitment to the learning, unlearning and relearning process, we expect that this journey will result in a different, transformative way that ministry is happening in the diocese. Ministries will operate in a way that people know they are welcome and are able to fully participate in all areas of diocesan life," she says. "People would know on a gut level, 'I belong here. I am accepted and loved.'"

With a more inclusive culture, the Church would have a greater capacity to identify issues, address



UNITY

Clergy from Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic churches in the Greater Toronto Area take part in an online Chinese worship service at St. James Cathedral on Jan. 16. The service, watched by more than 600 people, began the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in the diocese. The week is held around the world in the middle of January to celebrate and promote Christian unity. PHOTO BY ALBERT TAN

divisive behaviours and develop solutions that reflect the values of the diocese as a faith community. But first, the hard work of addressing racism and bias in the Church needs to be done so that Anglicans can live out the mission that God calls them to.

In the next few months, a group of clergy and lay leaders will be trained to deliver the anti-racism and anti-bias workshop to clergy and staff. "It's been really promising and encouraging to see the high level of interest and commitment to this work from people across the diocese," Ms. Arthur says.

Fasts focus on creation

THE Bishop's Committee on Creation Care has produced a resource for Anglicans who want to undertake a fast during Lent that focuses on creation and issues related to the climate crisis.

A Fast for the Earth: Lent 2021 provides a fast for each week of Lent, which begins on Feb. 17 and ends on April 3. It begins with a meat fast followed by a consumption fast, a food waste fast, a water fast, an injustice fast, an electricity fast and an ignorance fast. It concludes with a resurrection feast for Easter on April 4.

Each fast begins with a passage from scripture related to the subject, followed by a short reflection on how the subject is harming creation, and then some suggestions for how to give it up for the week or make long-lasting changes that will benefit creation.

The guide, which is easy to read and includes attractive illustrations, contains lots of helpful links to other resources for people who want to learn more. There are also tips such as doing the fasts with a friend or just focusing on one fast throughout Lent.

"At the start of the biblical story, we are called to 'serve and observe' the creation (Genesis 2.15)," writes Sylvia Keesmaat, co-chair of the Bishop's Committee on Creation Care, in the introduction. "But sometimes we don't know what to observe or how to serve the land and creatures that surround us. This Lenten resource is provided to help us in our walk as servants of creation."

A Fast for the Earth: Lent 2021 can be found on the diocese's website at www.toronto.anglican.ca/creationcare.

A CALL TO MUSICIANS



Now in its second year, The Bishop's Company Cabaret is looking to celebrate artists within our Anglican community as we raise funds to support the continuing work of the Bishop's Company. We aim to share this evening with everyone in the Diocese of Toronto and provide a selection of diverse performances that reflect our community at large. All are welcome to apply.

Submission Deadline: Friday, April 2nd – share examples of your work and let us see what we can expect

Selected Artists will be notified: Friday, April 30th

We thank all applicants for their interest, however only those selected will be contacted.

Once selected, artists will need to submit a bio, photo, social media links (if applicable) and pre-record a performance for viewing on the evening of Friday, October 15th. **Final submissions are due September 17th.** Any late submissions will result in exclusion from the event. The content must be recorded specifically for the use of the Cabaret. After our live streaming event, a recording of the evening will be shared on the Diocesan YouTube Channel. The Bishop's Company is willing to work with the artists on cross-promotion.

Submissions and enquiries can be made to bishopscompany@toronto.anglican.ca

Check us out on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Bishops-Company-TO-100116965145599/>

Last year's Cabaret can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTquH6sShhc>

The Diocese is on
Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.
To connect, visit
www.toronto.anglican.ca



We must do our part – together



On Ash Wednesday, the presiding celebrant invites us to step into Lent with these words: *I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Lord, to observe a holy Lent, by self-examination, penitence, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, and by reading and meditating on the word of God.* While the practice of fasting has long been a part of the Christian tradition, especially during Lent, it's not one that I have observed very well. I have made attempts in the past with some degree of success, but to be honest, somewhere around Lent 4 my focus wanes.

This Lent feels different, however. The Lenten Fast came early to our home this year. Mary and I decided to participate in our own version of Dry Feb, by abstaining from alcohol for the month. We invited our circle of friends to offer recipes for alcohol-free mocktails for us to try. We would rate the recipes at the end of February and choose our favourite. A donation would then be made to a charity of the winner's choice, equal to the value of what we might have spent on alcohol. I won't tell you how much that was! Part way through February, we decided to extend the practice of fasting by participating in A Fast for the Earth: Lent 2021. The Fast resource created by

BISHOP'S DIARY

BY BISHOP ANDREW ASBIL

Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat and the members of the Bishop's Committee on Creation Care is available on our website.

The resource invites us to be mindful, soulful and deeply aware of the footprint we are leaving behind as we tread this life. What better time to do so than during a global pandemic. Navigating our lives during this time has been very difficult. Social distancing, living through lockdown and staying home has helped to flatten the curve and save lives. Many of us have made the necessary adjustments and we work from home. And yet at the same time, many have lost their employment, suffered economic hardship and struggled with mental health issues and the effects of domestic violence. Being mindful and deeply aware of the plight of our neighbour as we pass through this time is critical. After all, like it or not, we are on the threshold of a paradigm shift, for the sake of the whole creation.

Scientists are using this time of pandemic to measure the effects of lockdown on the environment. And the benefits are noticeable. The reduction in air, water and noise pollution levels has had a beneficial effect on ecological

restoration. As industries and transportation have shut down, there has been a drop in greenhouse gas emissions. It was reported that levels of air pollution in New York were reduced by nearly 50 per cent because of the measures taken to control the virus. It was estimated that levels of NO₂ and CO₂ emissions were cut in half in China during the lockdown. Nitrogen dioxide is emitted from burning fossil fuels, the biggest culprit being motor vehicle exhaust. Across Ontario, the level of NO₂ demonstrated a reduction from 4.5 ppb to 1 ppb.

Week by week, A Fast for the Earth: Lent 2021 invites us to curb our appetites, watch our consumption, manage our waste, preserve resources, loose the bonds of injustice and unplug for the sake of the earth. The global climate crisis compels us to change. Dwelling during this pandemic proves that we *can* change. For the sake of all life, we must do our part – together. By being intentional and prayerful in our choices, old patterns will fade so that new life will come. It's the promise of Easter, and that same promise rests with you and me. As St. Paul reminds us: *Moreover, if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive through his Spirit who lives in you.* (Romans 8.11)



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Canon Stuart Mann: Editor

Address all editorial material to:
The Anglican
135 Adelaide Street East
Toronto, Ontario M5C 1L8
Tel: 416-363-6021, ext. 247
Toll free: 1-800-668-8932
Fax: 416-363-7678
Email: smann@toronto.anglican.ca

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The Most Rev. and Rt. Hon. Justin Welby, Lambeth Palace, London, England SE1 7JU.

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The Most Rev. Linda Nicholls, Church House, 80 Hayden St. Toronto, ON M4Y 3G2 Tel: 416-924-9192

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The Most Rev. Mark MacDonald Church House, 80 Hayden St. Toronto, ON, M4Y 3G2 Tel: 416-924-9192

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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Jesus is our peace in the midst of the storm



I recently attended a virtual retreat led by Brother James Koester of the Society of St. John the Evangelist in Boston. Normally I like to find a quiet place to be on retreat. But with COVID-19, bringing Brother James into our living room through the power of Zoom was the next best thing. The theme of the retreat was "Praying in the Dark: Awaiting the Dawn" which seemed particularly appropriate as we journey through Lent in the midst of a pandemic!

One of the Scripture texts offered for reflection by Brother James was the story of Jesus stilling the storm (Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25). Remember the richness of this story as it is recounted in three Gospels. Jesus and his disciples were in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. A storm swelled up that was so violent that the boat was almost swamped by the waves, and the disciples were terrified. Yet Jesus was somehow asleep at the back of the boat. The disciples woke Jesus with the cry, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" He responded, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus says to the elements: "Peace! Be still!", and there was suddenly a dead calm. And the disciples asked themselves in amazement, "Who is this that even

BISHOP'S OPINION

BY BISHOP KEVIN ROBERTSON

the wind and the sea obey him?"

This familiar story is beautifully depicted by Rembrandt in his painting from 1633 entitled, "The Storm on the Sea of Galilee". (You'll have to settle for viewing the painting online because the actual piece was stolen from a museum in Boston in 1990 and has never been recovered.) If you google it, you'll see the vivid portrayal of the panic-stricken disciples trying desperately to control the boat which is being tossed in the waves. One of them even looks like he is about to lose his lunch over the side! All the while, Jesus is reclining serenely on a cushion in the stern. No wonder the disciples were distraught!

For me, this story begs the question, "What are the storms raging around and within us?" Certainly, this year-long storm of COVID-19 shows little signs of abating. Sure, there are vaccines on the way and the reopening of the economy is now taking place. But it may be a long time before the clouds part and the sun shines through once again. Or what about the storm of systemic racism that continues to beat down on our Church and society? Here too, the forces around us and within are heaving us into places that

are tumultuous and unsettling. Fear, dread and uncertainty are well-known emotions for all of us at times.

But here's the thing: just as the disciples in the midst of the storm cried out to Jesus, "Lord, save us!", so must we. "We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves" (BCP, Collect for the Second Sunday in Lent), but "God's power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine" (BAS, Prayer After Communion). Our salvation is in God alone. Only Christ can rebuke the raging forces with which we contend every day. Only Christ can bring us to a place of true peace.

The image of a boat has long been used to describe the Church. The term "nave" – the part of the church building where most people sit – comes to us from the Latin word for "ship", and if you look up in many of our churches, you may be reminded of an overturned boat. The Church is able to move through the storms of life to the peace that is promised in God's love because Jesus accompanies us and prevails over all things.

This Lent, may we listen for the voice of the one whom even the wind and the sea obey: Peace! Be still! May we place our trust in the one who lived, and died, and rose again, that we might have life, and have it abundantly.

I wish you a holy Lent and the gift of God's deep and abiding peace.



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Many students feeling strain, financial hardship



BY THE REV. ANDREA BUDGEY

The chapel at Trinity College is quiet these days – except for a few weeks in the fall, all services since March have been on Zoom.

The same hush extends over the whole college, and over most of the universities and colleges in Ontario and beyond. Students have had to adjust to a bewildering succession of changes over the past year, many abruptly having to abandon residences in March and almost all switching immediately to online learning formats (with their instructors, in many cases, staying one step ahead of them). The summer was a period of enormous uncertainty, of suspended and competing realities. For many, it was impossible to find the summer employment they would ordinarily have relied on for their next year's expenses, and they were not eligible for CERB or EI; at the same time, loosened restrictions in many places created a hope that universities and colleges might re-open on a near-normal basis in September.

After a few weeks of mixed remote and in-person teaching early in the fall term, however, all instruction (except for labs) moved fully online, so that even the greatly reduced number of students living in residences found themselves

in front of computers much of the time. Institutions continue to offer recreational and extra-curricular activities, and counselling and support services, all in online formats. In some ways, this makes more of the benefits of academic life accessible to students living off-campus, or with their families in other cities, provinces, and even other countries, but the combined weight of Zoom fatigue and isolation with the usual exhaustion of student existence has serious emotional and spiritual consequences for many. And for students in health care, the performing arts, or in high-performance athletics, many aspects of their programs have been suspended altogether, so anxiety about completing degrees and diplomas on schedule, and launching careers, is particularly acute.

Some students, of course, are making the most of living at home, but it can be difficult to live in their childhood homes without reverting to childhood patterns. For any whose families fail to support them in their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or their career choices, or for those in abusive family situations, lockdown can be a traumatic experience, and opportunities to earn money to move out and live on their own are drastically curtailed. Many graduate students support themselves as sessional instructors and are having to deal with all the issues and expectations sur-

rounding online learning. A great many foreign students live with heightened worry about the pandemic situations in their home countries, and sometimes with concerns about their family's health or even with circumstances of grief and loss.

In this context, campus chaplains work hard to maintain contacts and opportunities for group interaction in a variety of formats – online liturgies, Bible studies, discussion groups, meditation sessions, and purely social gatherings – without adding to students' overall fatigue, and to be available for one-on-one conversations in whatever way is most helpful to students. We monitor carefully whether students might be in need of more formal clinical counselling, or whether they might benefit from being connected with congregations in the wider community.

What can congregations offer students in the current situation? If the student has been part of that congregation because of a previous family connection, it may be as simple as maintaining contact, and reaching out periodically to ask, "How are you doing?" "Is there any kind of support you would like us to offer you?" At the same time, it's important to remember that the process of individuation, of distinguishing themselves from their parents, may also involve a separation from aspects of family life like church attendance. And of course, it's crucial to be aware that stu-

dents may have more problematic or conflictual relationships with their parents than other members of the congregation necessarily realize, so that our commitment to making churches safe and loving environments may be best expressed by offering young people the space and distance they require to develop in healthy ways.

Congregations that have recently welcomed students to their online gatherings must be sensitive to the variety of needs these students bring – they may be seeking to explore spiritual questions, or simply find a supportive community, but they may also be hoping for one-to-one connection or practical assistance. The importance of this last element cannot be overestimated: for all the spiritual, emotional, and psychological stresses of the pandemic, financial hardship remains for many students the most difficult and intractable thing about this crisis. Anything which church communities can do to alleviate this practical need, whether in the form of parish bursaries, care packages, or referrals to services, can be a genuine witness to God's love, helping students find the security to live fully, discern their vocations, and accomplish the work they have to do.

The Rev. Andrea Budgey is the Humphrys Chaplain at Trinity College, University of Toronto.

We all have a stake in building a healthier Ontario

This is a summary of "A Healthy and Resilient Ontario," a brief submitted to the Provincial Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs by Bishop Andrew Asbil and the Social Justice & Advocacy Committee. You can read the full brief on the diocese's website at www.toronto.anglican.ca/sjac.

Over the past year, Anglicans throughout the Diocese of Toronto have gone above and beyond to preserve the health and safety of our parishioners and those in the wider community, while continuing to find new ways to serve those in greatest need. We all have a stake in building a healthier, more resilient Ontario. The following recommendations are based on our social justice priorities of poverty reduction, affordable housing and environmental stewardship.

Poverty Reduction

This government recently released its first Poverty Reduction Strategy. Unfortunately, the primary target of the new strategy is merely to increase the number of social assistance recipients moving to employment each year, failing to address the fact that employment in itself is no guarantee of escape from poverty, and that those who must rely on social assistance find themselves in ever deeper poverty in Ontario.

At a minimum, a good job should provide sufficient remuneration to lift workers and their families out of poverty and food insecurity. Yet more than 10 per cent of food bank users in Ontario get their primary income from employment, and the proportion of employed people accessing food banks has risen by 44 per cent in the past four years.

Minimum wage workers have only seen a raise of 25 cents per hour in the last

two years. A lack of pay equity between precarious and full-time workers gives employers an incentive to offer precarious, low-wage jobs. In addition, the lack of paid sick days forces lower-paid workers to choose between losing pay and going to work sick. This is bad enough at any time, but during the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is unconscionable: a threat to the health of workers and the public in general.

Many of the people working minimum wage, precarious jobs without paid sick days are "essential workers" in the service and retail sectors, without the luxury of working from home during the current pandemic, and on whose labour we all depend. Not only that, but these workers are disproportionately women, migrant and racialized workers – which deepens the inequities they face. They deserve better.

Recommendations:

1. Immediately bring the minimum wage up to \$15/hour.
2. Require employers to pay part-time, temporary and casual workers the same rate as their permanent, full-time employees doing the same work.
3. We join with the Decent Work and Health Network in calling for seven paid sick days on a permanent basis and 14 additional paid sick days during public health emergencies.

Poverty reduction must address the insufficiency of social assistance rates for those who rely on income supports. A recent Welfare in Canada report shows that all family types on social assistance in Toronto fall below 75 per cent of the Market Basket Measure, Canada's official poverty line, putting them in deep poverty.

Recommendations:

4. In the short term, re-instate the Emergency Benefit for Social As-

sistance Recipients to raise social assistance by \$100/month for single individuals and \$200/month for families.

5. Over the long term, align social assistance rates with the Market Basket Measure (MBM) for each community and index them to inflation so that people on social assistance are able to meet their basic needs.

Housing

We are glad to see your government introduce the Community Housing Renewal Strategy as well as greater penalties for landlords who evict tenants in bad faith. We are also glad to see that the province has frozen rent for 2021 and put a moratorium on the enforcement of eviction orders during the current state of emergency. However, much more needs to be done to make housing affordable for Ontarians. Fifty-six per cent of renter households in Ontario cannot afford the rent on an average two-bedroom apartment in their community. Vacancy decontrol still allows landlords to raise rents without limitation between tenants. And without rent relief, a temporary moratorium on enforcement of residential evictions, will only result in a tsunami of evictions to be enforced when the moratorium expires. In fact, Bill 184 now makes it easier than ever for tenants in Ontario to be evicted for falling behind on rent. To keep low-income Ontarians from becoming homeless as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we need rent relief to help bridge the gap. A program to distribute the arrears between renters, landlords and the government would help to ease the burden on landlords and tenants alike, preventing a spike in evictions and subsequent homelessness.

Recommendations:

6. After the 2021 rent freeze, institute

rent control for all residential rental units in Ontario.

7. Institute vacancy controls to limit the amount by which landlords can raise the rent on a unit between tenants.
8. Establish a program for rent relief that distributes the burden of residential rental arrears between landlords, tenants and the provincial government.

Environment

Our diocese extends over 26,000 sq km of south-central Ontario, overlapping with much of Ontario's Greenbelt. We are concerned about the increased use of Ministerial Zoning Orders to override environmental protections for these lands and waters, particularly wetlands surrounding the Great Lakes. Wetlands not only provide essential wildlife habitat and opportunities for public recreation, they play an important role in preserving water quality, sequestering carbon, and preventing flooding, thus mitigating the effects of climate change and extreme weather. Eroding Ontario's environmental protections during the COVID-19 pandemic is a short-sighted move that will result in greater costs and harm to Ontarians in the long run. Rather, we must ensure that the health of the land, on which millions of Ontarians depend for food, water, and sustainable recreational use, is adequately protected.

Recommendations:

9. Resist the use of Ministerial Zoning Orders that circumvent protections for environmentally significant areas and bypass public consultation.
10. Support expansion of the Greenbelt to protect more of Ontario's farmland, water sources and natural areas.

We urge your government to implement these measures in the 2021 Budget.

Memories of the Jordan River la

Famous sites have drawn pilgrims for centuries

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (Mk 1: 9-11)

BY THE REV. CANON CLAIRE WADE

ON Jan. 10, some Christian denominations, including the global Anglican Church, commemorated the "Baptism of the Lord" by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. According to the scriptures, the Holy Trinity – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – are here manifested together: the voice of the Father speaking from heaven, the physical presence of Jesus the Son being baptized and the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove. (Mk 1: 10-11)

That afternoon, I received an uplifting email from a couple who had been part of a pilgrimage group that I had organized and led to the Holy Land a few years ago. As St. Mark's account of the sacred event was proclaimed during the service they



Baptismal sites at Qasr el Yahud, Israel looking across to Bethany beyond the Jordan. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE REV. CANON CLAIRE WADE

attended that morning, vivid memories took them back to the Holy Land. They recalled the day they stood on the bank of the Jordan River with their fellow pilgrims. The scripture passage (above) was read to the group and, using the baptismal liturgy (The Book of

Alternative Services, page 158), we renewed our baptismal vows. Standing in the river, I sprinkled the pilgrims with water, using a sprig from a eucalyptus tree nearby. We then said some prayers and broke out in song from our song sheets – good old, "Shall we Gather at the River?" Other groups of pilgrims joined us in singing!

After posing for and taking copious pictures, we were to return to our waiting "deluxe air-conditioned sightseeing motorcoach," as the trip's brochure advertised, to continue our sacred journey! Ah, but the only way back to the coach led through the attractive, overpriced souvenir shop! As is the expectation, we stopped to shop for souvenirs. The list of beautifully displayed items ranged from soup to nuts, but among the popular items were spices such as *za'atar*, where the main ingredient is biblical hyssop (Ex 12:22; Jn 19:29). Hyssop is a flowering herb of the mint family. *Za'atar* is made of hyssop crushed and mixed with olive oil, sesame seeds, garlic and salt for dipping bread. This simple and tasty treat was enjoyed in the area in the first century, as it still is today. But perhaps the most purchased products were honey made from local dates and a special blend of date honey with sesame seeds. Well worth the time and cost – part of the trip's adventure!

But this popular spot is not the recognized site of Jesus' baptism. It is a convenient place with easy access to the river, set up to accommodate pilgrims like us who would desire to remember Jesus' baptism and either renew their own baptismal vows (as we did) or be baptized by full immersion in the river. The place long venerated by the Church and pilgrims as

the original site of the baptism of Jesus and of the ministry of John the Baptist is shared between Israel and Jordan. In Israel, it is located on the west bank of the Jordan River just above where it empties into the Dead Sea. Interestingly, it is within sight of Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947-8 and was home of the Essene community where John the Baptist could have come from. The baptismal site in Israel is called "Qasr el Yahud" or "Fortress of the Jews." Right across from there, on the east bank, is biblical "Bethany beyond the Jordan" or "Al Maghtas" – Arabic for "immersion" – in Jordan. A yellow line of floating balloons in the middle of the river marks the border between the two countries at that point.

The Gospel of John names the place of John the Baptist's ministry at the Jordan as "Bethany beyond the Jordan," later named "Al Maghtas": *Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him (John the Baptist), "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Eli'jah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water; but among you stands one whom you do not know, even he who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." This took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. (Jn 1: 24-28).*

Bethany beyond the Jordan has been visited by international pilgrims and venerated as the original place of Jesus' baptism and of the ministry of John the Baptist since Byzantine times (c. 324 – 638CE). Various archaeological digs over the centuries have uncovered the ruins of a large monastery on a high place known as Elijah's Hill and a sprawling area near the riverbank

with ruins of more than 20 Roman and Byzantine churches and chapels, pools for baptism, dwelling places for pilgrims and some caves where desert hermits would have lived. The site was closed for decades due to the thousands of landmines planted there and left over from the 1967 Six Day War between Israel and Jordan. The mines were cleared, and in 2015 Bethany beyond the Jordan was re-discovered and designated a World Heritage site by UNESCO.

According to early local tradition, Bethany beyond the Jordan is also the place where Joshua and the Israelites crossed over into the land of Canaan at the end of their wilderness journey from Egypt. (Jos 3:14-17) Local tradition also holds that from this place, the prophet Elijah was "taken up to heaven by a whirlwind." (2 Ki 2:1)

Qasr el Yahud on the Israel side has not been designated a World Heritage site but was uncovered and renovated and opened to pilgrims around 2010. Just two years ago, the Rev. Canon Geoff Sangwine (of St. Peter & St. Simon, Toronto) and I (of St. Thomas, Brooklin), co-led a Holy Land pilgrimage with some of our parishioners and friends. We visited the impressive complex of Qasr el Yahud with its massive buildings, stone plaza and steps, sheltered chapels for services, and easy access to the river for baptism. There, beside the always-murky waters of the Jordan, we solemnly renewed our baptismal vows, read corresponding scripture, said prayers and sang a hymn. We looked longingly across the river towards Bethany beyond the Jordan, in Jordan, just yards away! Unfortunately, swimming across the narrow divide was not an option; we could only access the



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And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.
Hebrews 13:16

Ginny, former client

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The Rev. Canon Claire Wade and the Rev. Canon Geoffrey Sangwine lead prayers at Qasr el Yahud at the Jordan River.

ruins of biblical Bethany beyond the Jordan by visiting the Hashemite Kingdom itself!

Celebrating Epiphany at the Jordan River

In the Orthodox Church, Epiphany commemorates the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River rather than the arrival of the Wise Men, as the Western Church celebrates on Jan 6. Since the mid-1800s and even earlier, thousands of pilgrims from Orthodox churches around the world would arrive in droves to the area annually to mark the occasion. Bishops and priests would preside over elaborate liturgies of baptisms and renewals of baptisms and enact ancient traditions such as the blessing of the water by immersing holy crosses in the river and releasing white doves into the air, reminiscent of the Holy Spirit. Myriads of frenzied pilgrims would immerse themselves in the water numerous times as if to relive their baptisms over and over. Russian Orthodox pilgrims have been known to come to the river dressed in their white burial shrouds or with them draped over their arms as they enter the muddy river. Those shrouds would then be kept for their burial. In 2021, despite the pandemic, it is reported that pilgrims still come in relatively large numbers to celebrate Jesus' baptism at the Jordan.

In my previous life as a tour operator, I specialized in organizing and leading study tours and pilgrimage to biblical lands. The Holy Land, in times of peace and war and in-between, has provided the "mother of all Christian pilgrimage" experiences for centuries. It is the ideal pilgrimage destination for the three monotheistic faiths—Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In 10 days or so, Christian pilgrims can reach most of the accessible sites of both Old and New Testaments (some are seen from a distance). Pilgrims would read scripture at its geographical location, say prayers and sing hymns throughout the land.

The Rt. Rev. Kenneth Cragg, famed biblical scholar and Anglican bishop of Jerusalem and later Cairo, proposed that the combination of the biblical story and place, through the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, can be a means of grace – can be sacramental. The Rev. Dr. Stanford R. Lucyk, who has led pilgrimage worldwide for 40 years, contends that just as linking the Word to bread and wine is sacramental, so likewise linking biblical geographical place to the applicable biblical narrative can be a sacramental experience. One may cruise the waters of the Sea of Galilee and reflect on corresponding scripture and gain insight into the miracles of Jesus around that freshwater lake that Matthew,



The Jordan River, Israel

Mark, Luke and John tell us about. On another level, those seeking a cure from conditions like psoriasis may sample the therapeutic waters of the Dead Sea and be healed (there are proven documented cases) or one may simply "float" on the amazing Yam ha Melah or Salt Sea (Gen 14:3) near the infamous cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18-19), referenced numerous times throughout the Bible, even by Jesus himself. Overnights would be spent in key locations, ideally ending up in the eternal city of Jerusalem – the goal of all pilgrimage.

Enroute, lasting friendships are developed as the community of pilgrims share, eat together, engage with the scripture on location and pray and care for each other. Not only do pilgrims encounter the ancient ruins but also the "living stones" of the land such as the wonderful people who work to preserve the sacred sites; the colourful merchants who peddle their wares everywhere and those who would look after us daily. We also engaged with local Christian communities – the brothers and sisters of St. George's Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem, and with others. There were sometimes opportunities for interfaith outreach with local Jews and Muslims. The stories and memories so impact and enrich one's spiritual experience and do last for a lifetime!

The season of Epiphany and its focus on Jesus' baptism and ours, and how we live out our baptismal vows, give way to the solemnity of Lent and our preparations to commemorate Holy Week, then to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Saviour. The words of St. Paul to the already-established Christian community in Rome express our eternal hope: *Do you not know that all of us who have been*

baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if

we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. (Rom 6: 3-6)

The Rev. Canon Claire Wade is the incumbent of St. Thomas, Brooklin.

Hello Self-isolated Gardeners



With the COVID-19 pandemic changing our lives daily, many of us can begin to appreciate the feeling of uncertainty that most refugees face every day. If you are looking for ways to be happy, healthy, and become more self-reliant, you can by ordering garden-ready plants.

They cost \$4 each and will be shipped to your home directly on the date of your choosing.

You can also give them as a gift for family, friends, or newcomers you care about! And, a portion of your purchase goes to AURA!

Thank you.

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- Visit Plantables at www.plantables.ca
- Choose your garden-ready plants (free delivery for 12 or more)
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- Choose a delivery date
- 10% of your purchase will help AURA continue to support refugees



www.auraforrefugees.org

Visit our website at www.toronto.anglican.ca

Garden showers us with blessings

With spring on the horizon, Cathy Pearson reflects on the joy that the garden at St. Stephen, Maple has brought to parishioners and members of the wider community.

BY CATHY PEARSON

Establishing “sacred space to nurture body, mind and spirit” wasn’t a priority for the Rev. Jeff and Becky Potter as they surveyed the dense forest beyond the rectory’s garden gate. It was 2016 and they had just arrived at the new church plant of St. Stephen, Maple.

Neglected for over a decade, the forest included dead trees that needed to be felled for safety reasons, and overgrowth that needed to be removed. The wildflowers could stay – snowdrops and blue Siberian squill, likely planted years earlier by the then incumbent and an avid gardener, the Rev. Dr. Ramsay Armitage.

During a clean-up day months later, the volunteers had a revelation. “We were all standing back there, and we started to realize just how much potential was held in that space” recalls Becky.

Plans unfolded. Karen Shea, the church’s pastor of outreach and a garden expert, created the master design. She laid surveyor flags where natural pathways and areas for worship, contemplation and a workable garden were envisioned. She was careful to respect natural areas and the animals, insects and birds that had come to depend on the space.

Tieg Dawe, the sexton, built perimeter fencing and summoned heavy equipment to clear swaths, which were then covered with landscape fabric and topped with



Scenes from the garden at St. Stephen, Maple. PHOTOS BY KAREN SHEA AND SHAWN SMITH

specialty mulch to support those with mobility issues. A carpenter by trade, Tieg designed and constructed a raised platform with overhead pergola, slant-backed benches, a gabled pavilion sheltering one of two 18-foot tables and planter boxes.

Once complete, we were anxious to share our beautiful new garden, and word spread that there was fun to be had at the Saturday morning program, welcoming local children and parents, rain or shine. From planting vegetables to building bat barns and garden crafts, there was something for everyone. Neighbours often dropped by, coffee cup in hand, to check out the action and learn about bee-keeping, storybook illustration and earthworm husbandry.

Another blessing, weather permitting, was praising God in the garden, thanks to a portable keyboard and sound system powered by lengths of extension cord. As often as possible, we held weekly church dinners in the garden too, because food always tasted better there.

Summertime found us inviting community members into our space for annual



fairs and music concerts. Gracing our worship stage was local, world-renowned Celtic guitarist Tony McManus. There was nothing like being serenaded on a balmy evening in the open air under the stars.

If it’s true that “you reap what you sow,” then it’s not at all surprising that St. Stephen’s has been literally showered with blessings from our hallowed garden space. Naturally, all this came to a screeching halt last spring, when restrictions sadly shut our community garden gates to any type or size of parish or public gatherings. And so it remains.

The invaluable handful of committed volunteers have continued diligently tend-

ing, watering and weeding since then. It’s amazing how quickly nature attempts to reclaim itself and take back the established garden space for its own when unused for long periods. And wildlife abounds!

Perhaps it’s time to turn some patch of ground laying fallow into your very own church community garden. Masters of their respective crafts, Karen and Tieg are available to offer sage advice and can be reached at St. Stephen’s.

Cathy Pearson is a member of St. Stephen, Maple. The Rev. Jeff and Becky Potter now minister in the Diocese of Niagara.

This year, our Lenten journey can take on deeper meaning



BY MURRAY MACADAM

I gaze out my living room picture window at a snowy landscape. The frigid scene seems to mirror my spirit.

It has been a long winter, its length stretched by news that numbs us: the daily COVID-19 death tally, today’s case count and frustration at being isolated as if under “house arrest.” And this is only the news deemed newsworthy. I’ve just edited a book about the other pandemic, happening beneath the headlines: the poverty pandemic, involving roughly five million Canadians, with a million reliant on foodbank handouts, living in shabby housing and facing bleak futures. I’ve always been a news junkie but I’ve cut back on following the news. One can only absorb so much.

Then I crouch down at a low table in front of that sun-drenched picture window and fill 10 small clay pots with earth. I carefully put three or four tomato seeds in each one, press each seed into the soil,

then gently water them.

And wait.

Waiting is tough at the best of times, at least for an impatient guy like me who doesn’t relax easily. Nowadays, waiting is even harder. We’re waiting to get our long-awaited vaccine shot. We’re waiting for life to return to normal with the small pleasures we took for granted before COVID-19 snatched them away. We’re waiting for spring, when life seems easier and warmth invigorates our mood. As we wait, it’s easy for anxiety and fear to creep in.

Is it possible to think of this period of enforced waiting, when we are involuntary monks of a sort, as an invitation into the life of the Spirit? Accepting that invitation is difficult. As a lifelong social activist, contemplation does not come easy to me. Perhaps you’re in the same boat. We’re resistant to the inner life because we’re wrapped up with the issues we see in society – in the outer life – that demand our response.

American theologian Howard Thurman caught the essence of this dilemma in his poem, “How Good to Center Down!”

How good it is to center down!

To sit quietly and see one’s self pass by!

The streets of our minds seethe with endless traffic;

Our spirits resound with clashings, with noisy silences,

While something deep within hungers and thirsts

For the still moment and the resting lull.

Our Lenten journey this year can take on deeper meaning, if we accept God’s invitation and find that still point within our souls. Doing so can help us think about our fear in new ways. Yes, it’s understandable to worry about the future in these uncertain times, when so many have had their livelihoods and health harmed by the pandemic, or even lost their lives. Yet fear does nothing to stop bad things from occurring. But it can paralyze us.

Entering into the Spirit more deeply can help us come to grips with the reality of suffering in our world – not to burden our spirits even more than they already are, but to be aware that suffering is part of our human condition, and an integral part of the Christian story. Sometimes it’s

easy to be so focussed on the resurrection that we gloss over the reality of Jesus’ suffering on the cross, and what he endured leading up to his crucifixion.

Contemplation can help us to take the long view, to see beyond the challenges of today, towards a brighter future. And move into action. Every positive action we take, no matter how seemingly tiny, can bear fruit – whether it’s planting seeds that will grow into lush plants, getting outdoors to bolster our health and spirits by enjoying God’s creation, using the miracle of technology to connect with friends online, or writing letters to friends without computers.

Spring is traditionally a time of rebirth, imbued for us as Christians with deeper meaning as we celebrate new life through the resurrection. Let’s not pass up this opportunity, both for ourselves and our hurting world. To paraphrase Bruce Cockburn, let’s dig deep into our faith to kick at the darkness of our times ‘til it bleeds daylight.

Murray MacAdam is a member of St. John the Evangelist, Peterborough.

I see a new heaven and a new earth

The Rev. Don Downer, OSE, was asked to speak on the healing of Creation by the Bishop's Committee on Healing at a refresher day for the diocese's healing ministries. Jane Winstanley, a committee member, interviewed him for *The Anglican*.

Jane: How long have you been concerned about Creation and the state of the earth?
Don: I have been immersed in nature my whole life. Even as a child I would go for walks with my father and grandmother. They noticed every animal and bird, every insect and plant, and I learned to see them too. That training on how to be out in nature and observe it carefully has continued to be an important part of my life.

Jane: What triggered your concern and got you involved in the issues of global warming and climate change?
Don: Well, my university courses were mostly in the sciences – chemistry, physics, biology. So, when I started to hear and read scientific reports saying that the world is in trouble – the glaciers melting, the temperatures rising, coral reefs dying – I took those reports very seriously. Based on solid empirical data, the natural world is already changing rapidly and about to change radically. We are destroying the natural world and ourselves along with it. That is my motivation, and that is what triggered me to say, “We have to do things differently, and we have to do them now.”

Jane: You speak about the Order of the Sacred Earth (OSE). Tell us about that.
Don: I have been following and reading the work of theologian Matthew Fox for over 40 years. Initially with the Dominican order, he is now a retired priest in the Episcopal Church. Matthew has been very influential in the development of my personal theology. His books *Original Blessing* and the *Cosmic Christ* resonate



The Rev. Don Downer, OSE

deeply. He is convinced that the earth is dying and needs to be cared for in a global way. Based on a dream, he formed a new order, the Order of the Sacred Earth. An individual joins the Order simply by taking the sacred vow: “I will love and care for the earth in the best way that I can.” That’s it! There are no rules or regulations, no institution. Each person must decide what that vow means in their own life circumstances. This movement of “spiritual activists” brings likeminded people of all faiths, or no faith, together to live out their sacred promise. All around the world, people are making this commitment. In that there is hope! Another of Matthew’s basic convictions is that older people should work with, listen to, support, encourage, and mentor younger people. So, the OSE is being managed and run and led by young people. And I think it is a wonderful model, bringing together the wisdom of age and the energy of youth. My primary identity is now as a member of the Order of the Sacred Earth. I’m still an Anglican priest – retired!. But when I sign things now, it is as Don Downer, OSE.

Jane: What I find really encouraging about your talk is your emphasis, not just on what we need to *stop* doing, but also what we can *start* doing.

Don: Preparing this project, I looked at many documentaries, some of which are negative and scary. But they are also real. Things are bad and going to get worse. And these documentaries are the most powerful way to see all this! I have listed the best of these visual resources, ones that show what can and is already being done to make a positive difference. Experts have already collected and analyzed evidence-based solutions to many of the problems that confront us. For example, Project Drawdown has evaluated, summarized, and recommends 80 doable solutions to reduce carbon emissions that contribute to global warming. We know much of what needs to be done. Many are already being tried. And we know what a huge difference it will make if we do these things on a worldwide scale. One that was new for me is the whole area of regenerative agriculture. This is a method of farming enriches the soil while raising the meat and vegetables that we need. If we used regenerative agriculture practices, so much would change for the better. If we grew our coffee under shade trees rather than out in an open field, we would have better coffee, save the soil and provide shelter for birds and animals. Win, win, win! To save the world, we need to make all our decisions – political, economic, and social – that make nature our first priority, not the last!

Jane: We know and yet we don’t change or even want to.

Don: Yes! I am frustrated at times. So many people, so many of our systems and structures, are still in denial. And it is never easy to change. We think change is going to be too hard, too costly. But, if we try to save our economy by continuing the way we are, we won’t have an economy to save. So, what

practically and logically makes the most sense? The only sensible way forward is to put the environment first – above everything else, even profit. Many of these things are actually not that hard to do. We just have to *stop* doing certain things and *start* doing others and we know what many of those are! We know we must stop our reliance on fossil fuels. We must move quickly to wind power and solar power and other alternate sources of energy.

Jane: Is there anything else you want to add?

Don: What we have been talking about so far is about survival, about saving Mother Earth and ourselves as well. However, I am convinced we have the potential, not just for our planet to survive but to thrive. We can make things even better than they were and certainly way better than they now are. To put this in biblical language, “I see a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and first earth are passing away with all the self-centred greed and pollution and destruction. And I see forests stretching as far as the eye can see, clear blue skies and clean oceans filled with whales and fish and all the creatures that live in the sea. I see cities filled with green growing trees and plants and gardens and living things.” Simply put, we need a much bigger vision! How do we become co-creators working with God in God’s Creation? We are capable of making this planet an incredible place. Not just preserving it but giving our children and grandchildren an even better world than we have ever known. I think that is possible. And I want to do that. I hope you can make that your vision, too.

To watch the Rev. Don Downer’s presentation “Healing/Caring for God’s Creation,” visit his website, www.DonsNaturePhotography.com.

Parish websites offer inspiration, resources



Churches have responded to the pandemic with exciting worship innovation and adaptation. They have found new ways to maintain contact with congregants, to socialize

and to seek financial support. The parish website is an important gateway and tool for successful parishes. Indeed, an updated, easy to use website is a necessity.

Parish websites provide seekers and congregants with a window into the goings-on and peculiarities of church life. Most sites are effective at identifying the who’s who of any church community, plus when service times are available, what sort of ministry takes place, how members contribute to the world around them through outreach and how they experience fellowship.

With the advent of COVID-19, websites have become more than just an information portal: they are *the* way we conduct worship and are Church. For many, the website is now the first point of contact for virtual worship, online giving and personal contact.

I take a particular interest in websites – especially those run by churches. As a stewardship wonk, I frequently draw on the resources provided by parishes as

THE STEWARD

By PETER MISIASZEK

indicators of leading practices, what they are doing to keep information fresh, how they are innovating, and what they might be doing to set themselves apart from others. The level of creativity embraced by parishes in our own diocese is remarkable, and I want to share some of these examples with you. All of the following church websites can be easily found by searching for them on Google.

From a stewardship perspective, most parishes have done a pretty good job of promoting online giving, though Christ Church, Brampton and St. Paul, Bloor Street have taken things a notch beyond. Both sites go to great lengths to explain stewardship, provide examples of how to give and invite giving through a variety of vehicles. The former offers personal testimonies that affirm the benefits of giving and invite support for parish ministry.

There is more to discipleship than giving and Little Trinity (Trinity East) in Toronto and Christ Church, Oshawa place special emphasis on small group ministry. Other parishes that have taken this ministry online include the Parish of Craighurst and Midhurst, the Church of

the Resurrection in Toronto and St. Mary and St. Martha, also in Toronto.

Prayer resources abound as well. If you are looking for quiet inspiration and contemplation, check out the websites for St. John the Evangelist, Peterborough and Trinity, Bradford. I am particularly partial to St. Bartholomew, Toronto and also St. Olave, Swansea as they provide daily livestreaming of morning and evening prayer.

Outreach to migrant workers is a priority at St. Paul, Beaverton and St. Saviour, Orono. The Rev. Canon Ted McCollum and the Rev. Augusto Nunez, along with a host of volunteers, provide outreach, worship, and personal support to farm workers in the Durham Region.

Are you looking to start a blog on your parish website and need inspiration? I’ve come across three that might be helpful: St. James the Apostle, Brampton, All Saints, King City and Church of the Ascension, Port Perry. When he was a curate at Ascension, the Rev. Phil Gearing kept a daily blog as he walked 10 km a day for 100 days to raise funds for FaithWorks over the summer in 2020.

Sometimes you come across things you just don’t expect on a website, like rebranding at St. John the Baptist, Oak Ridges, whimsical theatrical performances by professionally trained actor the Rev.

Ken McClure at the Parish of Haliburton and the third annual Ping Pong Relay for FaithWorks, held by St. Christopher, Richmond Hill. The latter raised over \$21,000, contributing to a very successful overall FaithWorks campaign.

I know that other parishes are engaging their neighbours and parishioners creatively. For the foreseeable future, parish websites will continue to be the first point of contact for those seeking worship and faith-filled engagement with their community. Many will continue to provide virtual worship long after the pandemic is over. We may not prefer online worship, especially for those of us accustomed to a more solemn experience, but there is no doubt that more and more people are being attracted to church via a virtual experience.

Given this reality, perhaps we should make the best of the opportunity at hand. Beyond worship, we have the capacity to use our websites to promote prayer, study, discipleship, generosity, outreach, fellowship and fun. It is all within our grasp. Reach grants from the diocese, and both volunteer and staff support, are available to parishes to help get you started or move to the next level. I invite you to make the most of it.

Peter Misiaszek is the diocese’s director of Stewardship Development.

Work underway on environment motion

This is an update to Synod and the diocese on the Environmental Synod Motion. It was received by Diocesan Council at its meeting in December, 2020.

At the diocese's Synod in November, 2019, the following motion was passed:

"Moved by the Rev. Canon David Harrison and seconded by the Rev. Dr. Stephen Drakeford that Synod requests the Bishop's Committee on Creation Care, working through a creation care lens and in the context of our developing relationship with Indigenous peoples, to develop and propose environmental policies and resources for all diocesan operations that reflect the need to increase the use of renewable energy services and decrease our carbon footprint. In particular, Synod requests a review of and development of policies pertaining to:

1. our spending practices;
2. our travel policies;
3. our land use and development;
4. the creation of a fund to assist parishes to reduce their carbon footprint;
5. the creation of a fund to assist clergy to purchase or lease zero-emission vehicles;
6. the curtailment of the purchase of

single-use plastic products, with the intention of ending their use no later than the beginning of 2023, taking into consideration the accessibility needs of our communities;

7. developing modules for clergy and lay formation on the connection between creation care and the gospel;
8. and promoting reduced consumption as part of a Christian Rule of Life.

"Synod and the diocese shall be provided with a report on the work of the Bishop's Committee on Creation Care and the progress made on these issues by June 30, 2020 and every six months thereafter until the next Regular Session of Synod."

The Bishop's Committee on Creation Care has met monthly since July 2020 and by Oct. 1, 2020, had established three working groups: one on liturgy, one on education, and one specifically focused on the environmental Synod motions passed in 2019. The Synod Motion Working Group includes the Rev. Dr. Stephen Drakeford, seconder of the motion, as well as Bishop Andrew Asbil, the Rev. Deacon Alison Kemper, and Elin Goulden, staff member. All three working groups have been meeting regularly since October 2020.

The Synod Motion Working Group has

identified items #2 (travel policy), #6 (plastics reduction) and #8 (promoting reduced consumption as part of a Christian Rule of Life) as immediate priorities for action; items #1 (spending/investment practices), #3 (land use and development) and #7 (modules for clergy and lay formation) as intermediate priorities; and deferred items #4 and #5 to the longer term.

1. Travel Policy: Bishop Asbil has instructed the diocese's executive director to provide a benchmark of what the "normal" (pre-pandemic) travel budget is for the diocese's staff and volunteers. Departments are also being asked to consider how to conduct meetings and other diocesan business after the COVID-19 pandemic is over, and to what extent travel budgets can be reduced by moving meetings online. Members of the Synod Motion Working Group are researching options for carbon offsets for necessary travel as well as coming up with guidelines to help evaluate what travel is necessary post-pandemic.

2. Plastics Reduction: Members of the Bishop's Committee on Creation Care and others throughout the diocese were encouraged to comment on the federal government's proposed regulations to ban certain single-use plastics. Plastic-reduction ideas

from government, non-profits, parishes in our diocese and the neighbouring Diocese of Niagara which have already made progress in this area are being compiled and the Synod Motion Working Group will work with the Education Working Group to create a resource for parishes and individuals in our diocese, available by Spring 2021.

3. Promoting reduced consumption as part of a Christian Rule of Life: Members of the working group are working on creating a "Rule of Life" resource based on the baptismal vows found on p. 159 of the BAS and the Five Marks of Mission.

Looking ahead, the Synod Motion Working Group hopes to find opportunities for collaboration with the diocese's Investment Committee on investment policy as well as with the diocese's Affordable Housing Working Group (which has already been working on a theological framework around land use). The Education Working Group of the Bishop's Committee on Creation Care will likely take the lead on the development of modules for clergy and lay education but the Synod Motion Working Group will work to facilitate collaboration with diocese's staff and volunteers involved in programs for clergy and lay education.

Group working on affordable housing plan

This is an update on an affordable housing plan for the diocese. It was received by Diocesan Council at its December, 2020 meeting.

At the diocese's Synod in November, 2019, the following motion was passed:

"That this Synod request Diocesan Council (or its successor) to respond to the affordable housing crisis across the diocese by developing an affordable housing plan. This plan will: determine the feasibility of building affordable housing on diocesan owned lands; prioritize strategic partnerships with industry experts in the fields of planning, development, and affordable housing provision; establish specific achievable targets (e.g. 250 units by 2024)."

A requirement of the Synod motion was to report back to Synod and the diocese by November of 2020.

A Property Working Group consisting of

Sandra Marki (chair), Bob Baird, the Rev. Keith Joyce, George Lewis, ODT, Heather McGregor, ODT, the Rev. Jesse Parker, the Rev. Stephen Shaw, Rob Saffrey and Livia Assuncao has been working to draft a framework for approaching church redevelopment projects. Work on this motion has been delayed by the state of emergency related to COVID-19. However, the Property Working Group is working towards presenting an affordable housing plan to Synod in November of 2021.

The establishment of an achievable target that includes dates is difficult for the following reasons:

- Although the diocese owns lands, they are not vacant pieces of land. Church properties come with worshipping communities. Designating church properties as being available for housing developments without consideration of local communities would not likely

be a successful strategy. Instead, what will more likely be successful is an approach that encourages parishes to assess their own situation and, where appropriate, look to maximize the value of their ministry assets by considering alternate uses of their property.

- The needs of each community and allowable uses of property will vary – housing will not always be the most appropriate use.
- The discernment process for each parish and the time to bring a development plan to completion is significant. This makes a target date for providing a set number of housing units difficult and somewhat arbitrary.

At its meeting of Dec. 14, 2020, the Property Working Group decided that the first step in responding to the Synod motion was to establish a solid theological underpinning. With the assistance of the Rev. Dr. Jason

McKinney and Heather McGregor, ODT, the working group will, at its next meeting, look to establish this underpinning.

A tentative work plan for the group includes:

- Establishment of theological values to underly a housing policy.
- Review the framework for existing projects (Epiphany and St. Mark, All Saints Church- Community Centre, St. Mary and St. Martha, St. George by the Grange) to assess and make changes.
- Develop material for group meetings to educate and encourage parishes of the options available for their properties.
- Review previous work done cataloging properties in the diocese and identify properties that are most suited to development.
- Propose a framework for property development in the diocese.



Ornaments created by Doris Huggett as favours for the Tea Party Boxes that were sent to long-term care and retirement homes. PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. PETER, ERINDALE

Church holds online teas for seniors

BY THE REV. MARIA NIGHTINGALE

IF this pandemic has taught us nothing else, it is how to do traditional events in a new way. St. Peter, Erindale has a longstanding tradition of offering a Seniors Tea three times a year. Although we could not meet in person this year, we created a tea party experience at Thanksgiving. We created a YouTube video that included a short worship service, entertainment and a sing-along.

Several days in advance, tea party boxes containing seasonal plates and napkins, party favours and knitted prayer squares were dropped off at participating long-term care and retirement homes. A number of people from the parish were involved in creating and shopping for the items that went into the boxes, including our Prayer Shawl Ministry team of knitters, and Doris Huggett, who made favours for all of the

residents who had signed up to participate in the tea. Sharmini Arulanandam recorded the musical accompaniment for the hymns and sing-along, and Lenna McLaughlin helped with the organizing and filming of the video. People at the long-term care and retirement homes gathered safely in small groups to watch the video together and to enjoy the treats.

The event was so well received we decided to do another tea at Christmas, and this time the church of Trinity-St. Paul, Port Credit joined in the fun. As well, a larger number of St. Peter's parishioners participated by recording themselves singing or playing Christmas carols for the sing-along portion. We were fortunate to be able to film the worship portion of the video in the sanctuaries of St. Peter's and Trinity-St. Paul. It was a wonderful, collaborative effort encompassing people of all ages and two parishes.

One hundred residents from five different long-term care and retirement homes were registered to participate. We plan to hold another online tea at Easter.

The Rev. Maria Nightingale is the associate priest and chaplain to seniors at St. Peter, Erindale.

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PRAYER CYCLE

FOR MARCH

1. St. Paul, Perrytown
2. St. Peter, Cobourg
3. St. Saviour, Orono
4. The Chapel of St. George, Gore's Landing
5. Threshold Ministries (formerly The Church Army)
6. The Anglican Fellowship of Prayer
7. Bishop Andrew Asbil
8. Holy Spirit of Peace
9. St. Bride, Clarkson
10. St. Elizabeth Church, Mississauga
11. St. Francis of Assisi
12. St. Hilary (Cooksville)
13. St. John the Baptist (Dixie)
14. Mississauga Deanery
15. St. Peter (Erindale)
16. St. Thomas a Becket (Erin Mills South)
17. Trinity-St. Paul, Port Credit
18. Trinity, Streetsville
19. Ascension, Don Mills
20. Our Saviour
21. York Mills Deanery
22. St. Cyprian
23. St. George on Yonge
24. St. John, Willowdale
25. Incarnation
26. St. Matthew the Apostle, Oriole
27. St. Theodore of Canterbury
28. Palm Sunday
29. Holy Week
30. Holy Week
31. Holy Week



CANADA BRIEFS

Vancouver Island diocese installs first woman bishop 1

VICTORIA – The Rt. Rev. Anna Greenwood-Lee was consecrated and installed as the 14th bishop of the Diocese of British Columbia on Jan. 30. She is the first woman bishop of the diocese. The consecration and installation service was broadcast via livestream from Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria to more than 1,300 viewers around the world.

Bishop Greenwood-Lee, a native of Edmonton, was ordained in Calgary in 2000. In 2006, after serving in the Diocese of Toronto, she returned to Calgary to help turn around the then-struggling parish of St. Laurence. During her 14 years as incumbent, the parish flourished. The Wisdom Centre, run out of the church, offers courses, retreats and seminars designed to revitalize both corporate and individual spirituality in the 21st century.

Cathedral tree given to local wood carvers 2

FREDERICTON – When a summer storm last summer struck and felled a large basswood tree on the east end of Christ Church Cathedral's property, congregation member Eric Hadley volunteered to step in and help with the cleanup.

Unlike many large trees felled by windstorms, Mr. Hadley, a retired forester, saw that the roots of this tree had remained firmly planted while the tree trunk itself had snapped. Closer examination revealed considerable rot within the tree.

Since there were other basswood trees on the property, it seemed like a good idea to check for any signs of visible rot, in case they could also fall over and cause damage to the cathedral building itself. Sure enough, just outside the main door and directly in line with the stained glass window over that door stood another big, old basswood, showing what Mr. Hadley believed to be signs of rot. The tree had to be removed.

Enter Calvin Thompson, the manager of First Nations rela-

tions in the City of Fredericton. He contacted cathedral officials to see if there would be an interest in offering the wood to the St. Mary's First Nations community. The answer was a resounding yes!

Renowned Indigenous woodcarver Percy Sacobie was delighted to accept the offer. Basswood are known as a softer hardwood and have long been the wood of choice for Indigenous carvers, coveted for its featureless, fine-grained, white wood that doesn't splinter or chip easily. It's like carving butter, said Mr. Sacobie.

In addition, Bob Clowater of the Fredericton Woodcarvers was interested in obtaining some of the wood for the group's 17 members. Thus, the venerable old basswood tree came down on Jan. 7. The center two-thirds of the trunk was totally rotten, leaving only a rim of solid wood partway around the outside. The rotted hole extended about 25 feet up the trunk.

The Fredericton Woodcarvers took three pieces, each about one metre in length from the upper portion of the trunk, and Percy Sacobie took all the remaining trunk. Other than the limbs, the entire trunk will be used.

The New Brunswick Anglican

Shelter finds safe housing for homeless women 3

OTTAWA – Just before Christmas, 34 homeless and vulnerable women boarded a bus at the Cornerstone Emergency Shelter on O'Connor Street for a short ride into an uncertain but hope-filled future. When they reached their destination in downtown Ottawa, some of them were literally moved to tears to discover new private or semi-private rooms with washrooms and support services with built-in physical distancing.

Their new home is the Physical Distancing Centre for Women, which is a Cornerstone Housing for Women partnership with the City and Shepherds of Good Hope. Cornerstone is supported by the Diocese of Ottawa.

The shelter on O'Connor Street housed 61 women until the pandemic restrictions made the numbers in the old building unsustainable. Within two weeks of the move, the original group of 34 welcomed another 40 women. Staff expect the Physical Distancing Centre for Women to reach capacity early in 2021.

CrossTalk

IN MOTION

Appointments

- The Rev. Ian LaFleur, Incumbent, St. Stephen, Maple, March 1.
- The Rev. Jacqueline Daley, Incumbent, St. Margaret, New Toronto, April 1.

Vacant Incumbencies

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

Bishop's Direct Appointment Process

- (receiving names):
- St. Bede, Toronto
- St. Anne, Toronto

Parish Selection Committee Process

- First Phase - (not yet receiving names):
- St. George, Allandale, Barrie
 - Parish of Lloydtown

Second Phase - (receiving names via Area Bishop):

- St. Paul on-the-Hill, Pickering

Third Phase - (no longer receiving names):

- St. Matthew the Apostle, Oriole
- St. John, York Mills
- St. Nicholas, Birch Cliff
- St. Paul, Lindsay

Celebrations of New Ministry

(Dates pending)

- Trent Durham**
- The Rev. Peter Gachira, Incumbent, the Parish of Lakefield.
 - The Rev. Shelly Pollard, Incumbent, St. Martin, Bay Ridges, Pickering.
 - The Rev. William Roberts, Priest-in-Charge, St. Mark, Port Hope.
 - The Rev. Jennifer Schick, Incumbent, All Saints, Whitby.
 - The Rev. Bonnie Skerritt, Priest-in-Charge, St. George, Newcastle.

York-Scarborough

- The Rev. Molly Finlay, Priest-in-Charge, St. John the Baptist, Norway.
- The Rev. Andrew Kaye, Incumbent, St. Margaret in-the-Pines, West Hill.

York-Simcoe

- The Rev. Eyad Ajji, Priest-in-Charge, Evangelists, New Tecumseth.
- The Rev. Ian LaFleur, Incumbent, St. Stephen, Maple.

Conclusion

- The Rev. Daniel Cranley will conclude his appointment as Incumbent of Church of the Transfiguration on Feb. 28. He has accepted a full-time appointment in the Spiritual Care Department at the

University Health Network.

Retirement

- The Rev. Richard Newland has announced his retirement. His last Sunday at St. Dunstan of Canterbury will be May 30.

Death

- The Rev. Pamela Lucas died on Feb. 1. Ordained deacon in 2000 and priest in 2001 in the Diocese of Winchester (England), she transferred to the Diocese of Toronto in 2009 and served as a full-time hospital chaplain and psychotherapist at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto. She served as a volunteer at Mount Sinai Hospital in 2009 as well as Rouge Valley Hospital, and served as an honorary assistant at St. Monica, St. Peter, Carlton Street, St. Leonard, St. Cyprian and most recently at St. Augustine of Canterbury, all in Toronto.



MESSAGE OF HOPE

St. Mark, Port Hope's sign sends a message of hope to the community. The text is taken from Romans 5:3-4. PHOTO BY ANNE DRAM

NAME THAT CHURCH!

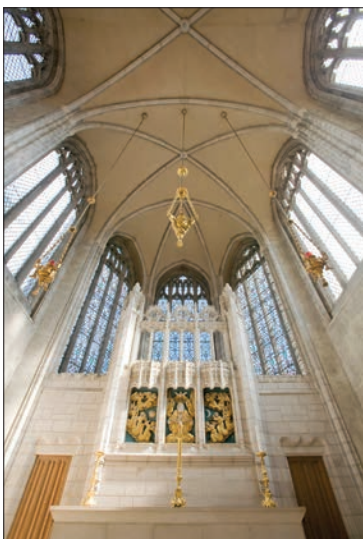
Now that we're all spending more time at home, it's time to take The Anglican's Name That Church Quiz. See if you can name the churches shown on this page; they're all in the Diocese of Toronto. The answers are provided below. Enjoy!
PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HUDSON



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



10



9

- 1. St. Andrew-by-the-Lake, Toronto Island
- 2. St. John the Evangelist, Port Hope
- 3. Trinity College Chapel, Toronto
- 4. St. Matthias, Bellwoods, Toronto
- 5. St. John, Willowdale
- 6. Trinity, Streetsville
- 7. St. John the Baptist, Richmond Hill
- 8. St. John, Craighurst
- 9. St. Stephen, Downsview
- 10. Ascension, Port Perry

ANSWERS