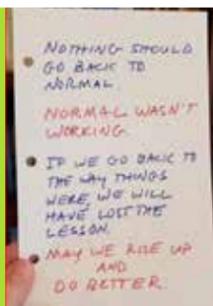


A Missional Initiative at St. James' Dundas

Parish praises Mission Action Plan process.

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Bishop's Charge to Synod

Bishop highlights God's work through diocesan Mission Action Plan.

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Order of Niagara "Are the Church"

48 individuals recognized for lay ministry in the Diocese of Niagara.

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A section of the Anglican Journal



NIAGARA ANGLICAN



A Gathering Place and a Sounding Board for the People of the Diocese of Niagara — Since 1955

DECEMBER 2022

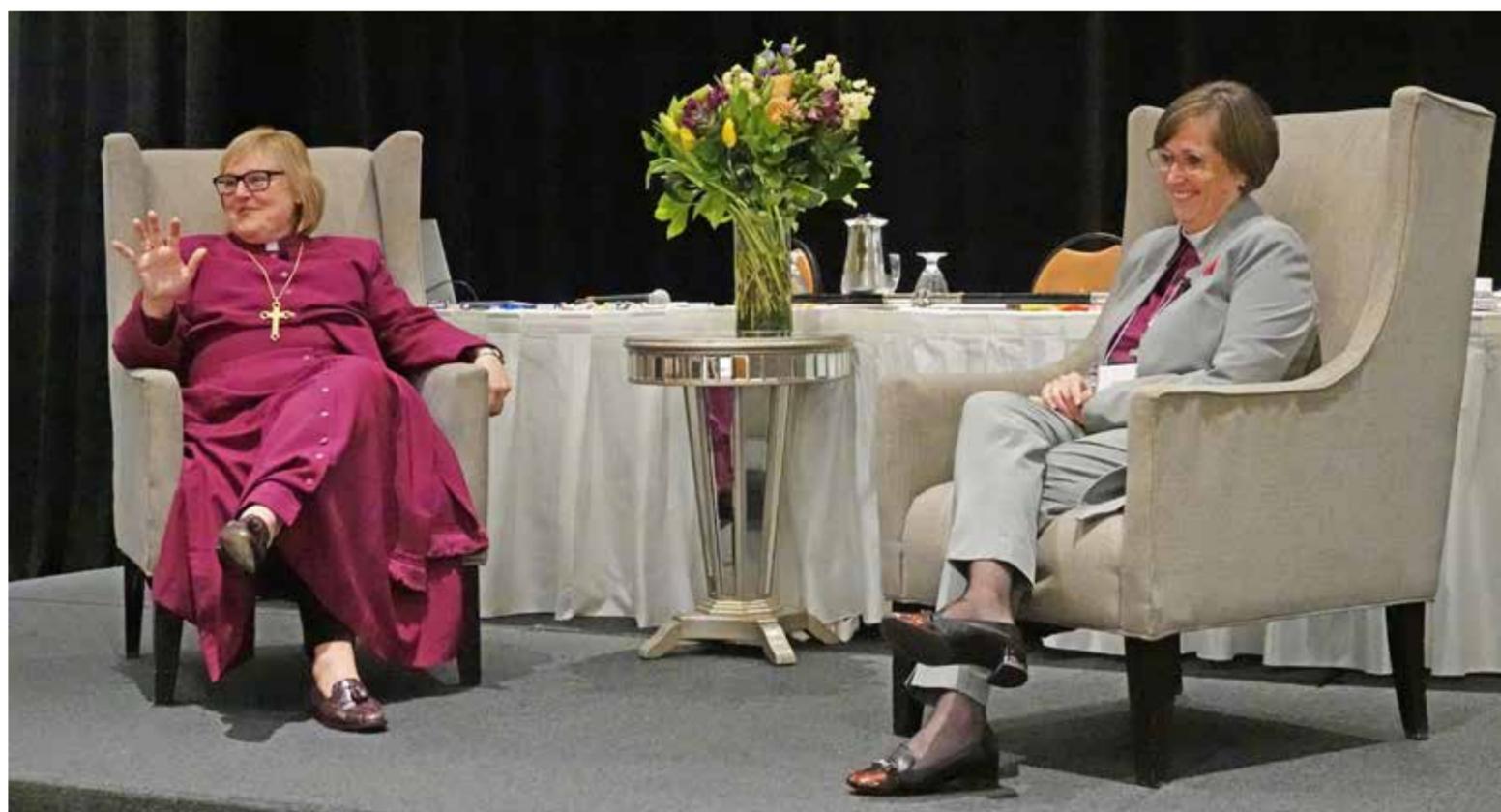
“Inspired and Inspiring”

148th Synod of the Diocese of Niagara

NEARLY 250 people from across the diocese gathered for the 148th Synod of the Diocese of Niagara with theme “God Church for God’s Mission.”

The Synod of the Diocese of Niagara is an annual meeting in which elected parish delegates, both clergy and lay, and other representatives discern together on mission and ministry in the Diocese of Niagara, which normally includes financial updates, changes to canons and policies, and the governance of the diocese. This year, Synod was convened online for the evening of November 4 and in-person during the day of November 5, at the Burlington Convention Centre.

Bishop Susan Bell delivered her charge to Synod, encouraging Synod members to “cast their anxieties on God” and that as people of faith “we expect God to act.” In her charge, Bishop Bell addressed the challenges of this present time, including the slow growth of attendance as parishes return to in-person worship, and the lower-than-expected revenues forecast for 2023, both at the diocesan level and in individual parishes. At the same time, the bishop pointed to several new ways at which God is at work through the diocesan Mission Action Plan, such as the Niagara School for Missional Leadership. “In this liminal space of discontinuous change – in this time of great anxiety and anguish for



Bishop Susan Bell and Archbishop Anne Germond share about their experience at the Lambeth Conference.

Synod photos: Contributed

the future of our Church, we have been working carefully, intentionally, expectantly and following our MAP through the present and on into the future.”

Synod members also heard presentations about God’s flourishing mission in a variety of contexts: Susie Kim, a missionary in Hamilton, spoke about the importance of being known in neighborhoods, encouraging all Christians to be visibly present, and in relationship with those in their communities. The diocesan Anti-Racism Working Group, led by Naomi Kabugi, spoke about the upcoming launch of diocese’s Anti-Racism Curriculum,

featuring six sessions. Renée Anderson and Brian Galligan invited members of Synod to the join Niagara-Huron Cursillo movement, a ministry which helps Christians explore and live the fundamentals of being Christian. Sharon Miller, director of Canterbury Hills Camp, shared stories about a vibrant season of ministry over the summer months and what is in store in the coming year.

Sue Carson spoke about the urgency of action on the climate crisis and the important work of Climate Justice Niagara. She noted that 14 churches are in the process of conducting walk-

through energy audits, with an aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 10 per cent in five years. This initiative has become a national endeavour under the banner, Net Zero Churches.

Synod members also heard from Canon Christyn Perkons, director of congregational support and development, and Emily Hill, parish development missionary, who spoke about the Mission Action Plans for both the diocese as well as parishes. At the end of the presentation, Bishop Susan Bell took a moment to laud Canon Perkons’ 20 years of “faithful and extraordinary ministry” in Niagara as

she prepares to retire in the new year; Synod members responded with a standing ovation.

This year, the Synod of the Diocese of Niagara hosted Archbishop Anne Germond, metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario. She brought greetings to the Synod on Friday evening in which she encouraged the Diocese of Niagara to remember the “long and varied history and vital place” the diocese holds in the wider Church.

Speaking about the Niagara School for Missional Leadership,

See SYNOD Page 2

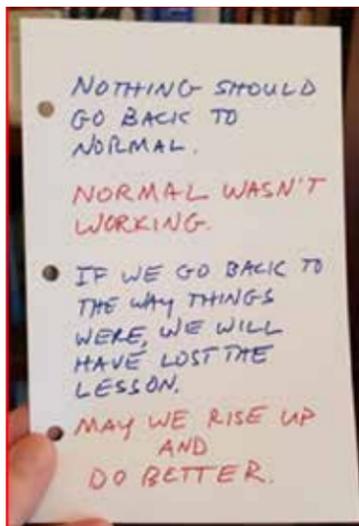
A Missional Initiative at St. James, Dundas

CANON ROBERT MORROW

Following up on the excellent article by Emily Hill in the November edition of the *Niagara Anglican*, this contribution summarizes the experience of one parish—St. James, Dundas—in the process. It should be noted that the process worked extremely well, even in a time of transition. The Mission Action Plan process began with the Very Reverend Peter Wall as our interim Priest-in-Charge and was concluded after the arrival of the Reverend Canon Leslie Gerlofs.

The parochial committee submitted a parish profile to the diocese in late 2021. One of the parish's "aspirations" when looking for a new priest, was to find one who "possesses an ability to cast a missional vision for the future of St. James." Following up on this, a small committee to examine the notion of "Missional Initiatives" within the parish was established.

Since we were at this time developing a budget for 2022,



it was decided to put a budget line for this initiative into the draft budget, which was passed by vestry. Funds were used to assist five of the six members of the committee to join in courses offered by the Niagara School for Missional Leadership. The response to these courses by participants was highly complementary. Each of the participants provided a "Missional Moment" for our regular e-blasts going out to parishioners. This set the stage for the implementation of the Mission

Action Plan process. During the summer, one of the members of the committee took a major step forward and did the homily for the congregation—with much success and appreciation from those in attendance and watching from home on YouTube.

The committee met on a regular basis and planned the meetings leading to the development of our Mission Action Plan. To keep the process simple, we purposely avoided asking for food preparation from parishioners and provided snacks following the one-hour sessions; this initiative was appreciated by all involved—and especially those not involved in providing snacks.

We have submitted our Mission Action Plan, but we know that we have much to do in terms of implementation. The committee recommended to the corporation that implementation of the Missional Action Plan be slow and deliberate, with an overview of the complete plan with feedback from the plan and optimum parish

involvement. At the same time, we already have three areas which are in the planning stage for early 2023.

As a committee, we have worked to do on our vision and mission statements, and some directed revision of our actions in adult faith formation. We also have reflected on the process as we put it into practice. We would have made a few changes if we were rolling back the clock and doing this again from inception. Among these would be to allow more time between each of the four sessions to allow for a fuller understanding of the vocabulary, the parish snapshots, and time for reflection. We also looked at the possibility of hybrid meetings to involve those

not able to come in person. We did offer the sessions on-line, but with viewing only. We spent much time looking at the role of facilitator and, although we didn't come up with a recommendation in this area, we thought that some parishes might benefit from a diocesan facilitator.

The bottom line is this—the Mission Action Plan process is detailed, prescriptive, and doable. Our role as a parish is to follow this up with an implementation plan that follows these same three criteria.

Synod

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the archbishop reflected on the growing and important role within other dioceses. "Its impact is further reaching, extending to the dioceses of Algoma and Moosonee with lay and ordained registered and participating in it," said Archbishop Germond.

On Saturday afternoon, in one of the highlights of the Synod, Archbishop Germond and Bishop Bell reflected together on their shared experience at the recent Lambeth conference, a gathering of Anglican Bishops from around the globe, which recently met over the summer.

Archbishop Germond encouraged members to remember that "you as a diocese are a gift to our Church," through the leadership of Bishop Susan Bell, the countless gifted clergy and lay who "are all doing their part to build up the body of Christ." Even the very geography of the Diocese of Niagara, Archbishop Germond urged, was a gift, including the resources available as a result.

Towards the end of Synod,

members passed the 2023 diocesan budget, representing an investment of 3.6 million dollars in ministry. Nearly 80 per cent of parishes assessed using the three-year rolling average for their Diocesan Mission and Ministry (DMM) contributions will see a reduction in their 2023 DMM compared to 2022. An incentive for parishes completing their parish Mission Action Plan will also continue to support parishes to bring new missional initiatives to life.

Synod elected the following members to the roles of regional representatives to Synod Council: Patricia Davis (Brock), Anne Gould (Greater Wellington), Bev Groombridge (Hamilton-Haldimand), and Byron Nicholson (Lincoln). Additionally, Synod elected Fran Wallace and Canon Sue-Ann Ward (clergy), and David Montgomery (lay) as representatives from the Diocese of Niagara to the Corporation of Trinity College, for a two-year term.

After giving her assent to the



Canon Christyn Perkons addresses Synod. It was announced that she will be retiring in the new year.

actions of the Synod, Bishop Bell gave thanks for all who contributed to making it a Spirit-filled gathering, especially members of Synod to whom she reiterated words of gratitude from her charge, "I thank God for all of you constantly. Your service, your commitment, and your presence as the Church is what it's all about... You are beloved."



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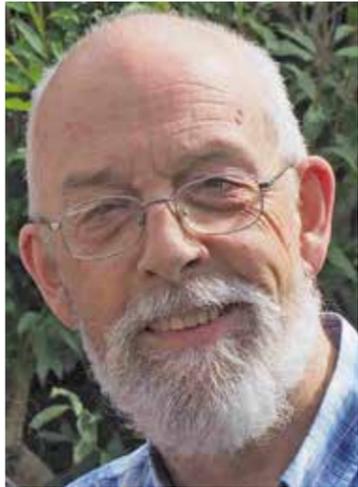


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In other words

Will They Come Back Next Week?

The Challenges of Preaching at Christmas

**JOHN BOWEN**

We've seen them. We know them. We've shaken our heads over them, worried about them, prayed for them. Who are they? They are the "C&E" churchgoers—they turn up at Christmas and Easter, but that's it. But do we simply shrug and accept this as a sad but inevitable reality? Or is there something we can do to persuade them that it might be worthwhile to come back sooner than Easter—maybe even next week?

Some of the answers are obvious—a genuinely welcoming community; liturgy that is done well; music that delights the ear and touches the heart; and quality refreshments afterwards, for a start. Those things take an enthusiastic congregation. But there is another part of the service that is primarily the responsibility of one person: the sermon.

So here's my question for preachers: How do we preach at Christmas in such a way that the occasional visitors say, "Wow! That's amazing. Maybe I need to come back and hear more"—instead of, "Ah yes, the boring sermon. Another reason I gave up on church 20 years ago. I remember it so well"? Here are some modest suggestions.

Name people's hang-ups—whether or not we share them

Many people outside the Church assume that church folk don't understand their doubts and reservations around church stuff. To name those things helps people relax: "Wow, the preacher knows how I think, and seems to think it's normal!" What should we name?

Here are just a few:

- *Difficulties with the historicity of the story:* "Many of us have a hard time believing things happened just the way they're described in the story."
- *Difficulties with adult belief:* "We think the Christmas story is OK for kids, but not for adults."
- *Difficulties with the incarnation:* "To say 'he came down to earth from heaven' makes it sound as though Jesus was an alien being visiting from another planet."
- *Difficulties with faith:* Mark Twain said, "Faith is believing what you know ain't true."

We can address those issues, but we need to start by naming them as legitimate concerns. Otherwise the hearers are always thinking, "Ah, but if you knew my questions, my doubts, my experience, you'd understand why I'm not here more often." If we can disarm those reservations, it can make people feel included, not left outside.

Avoid religious jargon

Every profession has its own vocabulary. We need it to be precise and efficient. Once we are among ordinary people, however, our language has to change. Have you ever had a doctor diagnose your symptoms without you understanding a word? That doctor obviously never learned the noble art of

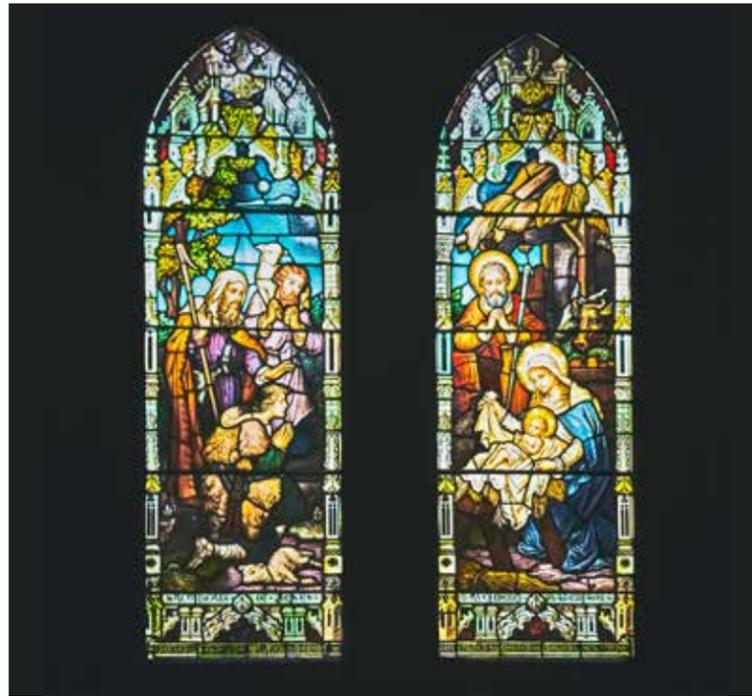


Photo: Mitch Hodge/Unsplash

translation.

Religious professionals also have their own special language—which seminaries are very good at teaching. But when we are trying to communicate the best news in the world to people who have never heard it, we need to translate that language into everyday speech. For example:

- Instead of using the technical term "incarnation," talk about "the author writing himself (or herself) into the script of the play."
- Talk about "Matthew's biography of Jesus" rather than "the Gospel of Matthew." It's not obvious to an unchurched person what "a Gospel" is, but they understand "biography."
- Talk about "the story" rather than "the text." Only scholars talk about "texts" (apart from the phone kind).

Do something surprising—even if it's outside our comfort zone

We live in a multi-media age. Words alone seldom stick in the memory. Our sermon is far

more likely to be remembered—and discussed over Christmas lunch—if it is more than words. Why not consider things like:

- Having a roving microphone in the congregation. Ask questions that invite a one- or two-word answer. "What comes to your mind when you think of Christmas?" is simple and sure to get people involved—don't ask for stories or you might never get your microphone back!
- Preaching from the aisle rather than the pulpit. People in our culture feel that informal equals sincere, and formal equals inauthentic. It's not necessarily the case, of course—but it's what people assume.
- Including a short dramatic sketch on the subject of the sermon. I remember one such at Trinity Anglican Church Streetsville many years ago—even now I find it moving.
- If you have the technology, showing an appropriate video clip. The website textweek.com, which includes lection-

ary resources, has a tab called "movie index," which offers lots of good ideas.

If some of these suggestions seem somehow beneath our dignity, let's remember that this is, after all, the festival of the humiliation of the Word.

Speak from the heart—and take time to find it

This is maybe the hardest, and so I mention it tentatively. I would suggest that our sermon preparation is not complete until we ourselves have been touched afresh by the reality of God become a human being, until we feel the utter goodness of the Good News, and our sermon-in-the-making is more than words. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks," says Jesus. Let's pray that our hearts are full to overflowing before we speak. People recognise authenticity—and equally they recognise when we are just saying the words without feeling them.

Sacramental preaching

Preaching at Christmas is always a challenge. But if we believe that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," the sermon can be a sacrament of that same incarnation—with our words offering the hearers a taste of the love of that God who enters our world and speaks to us "right where we are."

Will the Christmas & Easter attenders come back next week? That's up to them in their relationship with God, of course. Our job is simply to represent the Gospel as best we can—and then to leave the rest to God. After all, if God loved us enough to come to earth for us, we can trust God to look after it.



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Publisher: Bishop Susan Bell
905-527-1316
bishop@niagaraanglican.ca
Editor: Connor Jay
editor@niagaraanglican.ca
Advertising: Angela Rush
905-630-0390
niagara.anglican.ads@gmail.com
Art Director: Craig Fairley
Imagine Creative Communications

Proofreaders: George and Trudi Down
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Mailing address:
Cathedral Place
252 James Street North
Hamilton Ontario L8R 2L3

For a complete staff directory and more information, visit the diocesan website: niagaraanglican.ca

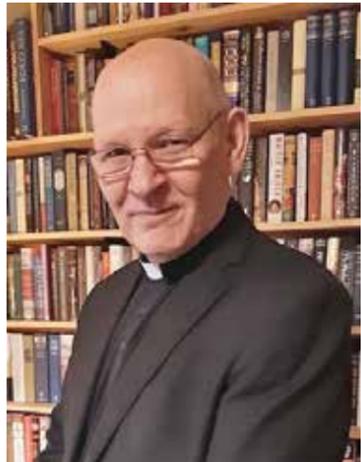


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**CALLED TO LIFE
COMPELLED TO LOVE**

Remembering Christ's Birth

He Came for the Poor and Suffering



THE REVEREND MICHAEL COREN

Along with many of my fellow clergy, and members of our congregations, I work on the front lines of poverty, suffering, and deprivation. It's always been that way and always should. But at Christmas this inevitably comes into sharper focus. It's because of the season—God becoming man—but also due to the juxtaposition of generosity and joy on one side, pain and loss on the other. This Christmas is the worst I've seen in five years in terms of a decline in aid and support, and a decay in public and government concern for the least fortunate in society. I use the word "fortunate"

on purpose, because running parallel with the struggle of the forgotten is the wealth of those who are—yes—fortunate. Spare me the talk of initiative and industry. Of course, there are countless people who have worked their way to stability and even comfort, and all honour to them. But look at so many of those with financial, media, and political power and ask if family, wealth, and privilege had no influence. How, then, could they viscerally empathize and fully understand?

Understand, for example, the young woman who cried recently as she sat in a coffee bar, relishing the sandwich I'd bought her, and explained how she's tried her local politicians, foot banks, legal clinics, everyone. Some were helpful, though never sufficiently, others downright indifferent. "I just can't pay the bills" she said, wiping away tears, "but I've got a son to support." She then told me she was about to start as a sex worker. "A lot of my friends are doing the same. No choice. Please, don't judge me." I said I'd never dream of doing so, but begged her to come to me any



Photo: Ev/Unsplash

time for help, and to keep trying the alternatives.

Then there are those who earlier this year were told that they have to repay \$1,000 of government money that helped them survive the pandemic. It's because there's a clawback for those who earned less than \$5,000 the preceding year. They did earn it, but it was sometimes minimum wage cash and they didn't declare it—technically wrong of course. But non-declaration of a few thousand dollars gained working in often dirty and even dangerous conditions is apparently a dreadful sin for the poor, but substantial tax

avoidance by the rich who use good accountants or offshore accounts is considered clever and astute.

Or how about those without homes, people living in tents who have been evicted by local councils and often aggressive police who claim to care about the inhabitants' wellbeing and safety, but provide little alternative for them? It's hard not to wonder if the optics are more significant than the reality. Remember, shelters can be terrifying for people with mental health challenges or addictions.

And the hidden or working poor, who have jobs and may look smart and in control but are obliged to use foodbanks, or choose between heating and eating. I meet people like this all the time, wonderful people who are nevertheless ashamed of their condition when in fact they should be proud of their courage, and angry at the way they're being exploited.

All I can offer is, if you like, street theology. "Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself." The rest, I am convinced, is a footnote. I don't speak to them of faith and God unless asked to do so, which is more often than you might think, and I only

pray with people if they request it. In my experience, there's far less cynicism about Christianity among people who are struggling than those who are not. I do what I can with local officials, the police, politicians, and social workers, and many of them do all that they can to improve the situation. It changes some things but it can't change all things.

It's getting worse rather than better, and those who could make an authentic difference from places of authority seem cemented in tired arguments and partisan squabbling. I'm often staggered by the moral and practical gap between what is discussed in public life and what happens in the real world.

Christmas matters, and we should relish and cherish it. But in so doing we also need to remember what it means and what the birth of Jesus represents. A baby, so acutely vulnerable, born to poor refugees who lived under occupation. He would grow to manhood and live with the rejected and marginalized. He came for us, all of us, and had a special love and message for the poor and suffering. Never forget that. Especially at Christmas.



I am grateful for my family. I am also grateful for my faith.

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A Green Offering to God

How will your church reduce greenhouse gas emission?

IRENE PANG

During Synod 2021, 98 per cent of participants voted in favour of a motion to reduce parish greenhouse gas emissions by 10 per cent in five years. Since then, Climate Justice Niagara has supported 14 parishes in completing walk-through energy audits and some analysis of their carbon footprint to create their five-year plans.

Data suggests that the first 14 churches to take part are collectively creating about 200 tonnes of greenhouse gases per year. This indicates a huge amount of pollution coming from our churches and hence the urgent need to de-carbonise the way we gather and do ministry. The benefit of collecting data by a walk-through on energy audit allows congregations to assess their current situation and start asking healthy questions. For example:

- Why is the current energy bill much higher than last year?
- How many tonnes of greenhouse gas did our parish emit last year?
- What are the most carbon-intensive units in use—gas stoves, furnaces? What are the plans to phase them out?
- Is there heat leaving or cold air coming in from windows and doors?
- Are there rooms that occasionally used but are heated or cooled all through the week?

Winter months are an ideal time to conduct an energy audit because it is easier to detect heat loss during cold days. Some easy and effective projects like weather stripping, caulking, and air duct insulation can be done quickly and yield immediate improvement.



Here is an overview of how to conduct a walk-through energy audit:

1. Contact Climate Justice Niagara (CJN) to register your parish.
2. Parish will receive a unique code, and two forms to be filled out.
3. Start collecting utility data, ideally of year 2021 and 2022, and continue for another few years.
4. Assemble an energy audit team of two or three people (CJN facilitator/ building committee/ office administrator/ warden), bring a measuring tool, start filling the form as you walk through the building. It may take two to three hours.
5. After receiving the completed forms, CJN will start the analysis work. You can expect a few follow-up questions to clarify some of the data you've submitted.
6. Parish will receive a report and some suggestions. The energy audit team can present the results to parish councils or corporations.
7. Parish starts discussing about what retrofits could be started. The goal is to formulate a five-year plan to reduce

greenhouse gas emissions by 10 per cent. Using the energy audit result as a baseline, and by keeping track the utility data, parishes can see the relative and incremental improvement with the changes it made.

Climate Justice Niagara is here to help! We are happy to arrange virtual meeting to answer your questions. For more information, email Sue Carson (St. James, Dundas) at d.carson@sympatico.ca or Irene Pang (Grace Church, Waterdown) at irenepang@proton.me

Apply for Youth Leadership Training Program 2023



“Life changing, fun, moving, challenging and filled with Jesus” are all words previous participants use to describe the Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP). We are now accepting applications from youth ages 12–15 across the Diocese of Niagara.

The Youth Leadership Training Program is a three-year leadership training opportunity offered by the Diocese of Niagara during March Break to equip young people to take on active leadership roles within their parishes and communities.

YLTP's is a residential learning experience that fosters growth in the following areas: call, stewardship, community, spiritual enrichment, fostering self, and the heart. Participants will learn to organize and lead worship, social events, and a project of their choice in year three. If this sounds interesting to you, please apply today!

YLTP Dates: March 12, 2023- March 15, 2023

Location: Canterbury Hills (Dundas)

Application deadline: January 31, 2023

To Apply: Contact Sarah Bird: sarah.bird@niagaraanglican.ca



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Bishop Susan Bell's Charge to 148th Synod



Editor's Note: This has been condensed for length. To read Bishop Susan Bell's Charge to Synod in full, please scan the QR code at the end of this article.

I stand before you—as your bishop—in a bit of a quandary. A quandary because I am deeply aware that we are in a liminal space here this morning. If I am too negative in my reflections, then I am relying on what is seen only in this moment and am not trusting in God. If I am too positive, then I risk not seeing clearly what is in this moment. So, here we are, in this liminal space. May God speak through these words.

First, let me say that I know many of you are scared. I can feel the anxiety in the room and in the many meetings and conversations I have every day with parishes. This anxiety is one of those roaring lions in 1st Peter we talked about last night. I also know that you're feeling vulnerable.

And I know you'd like me—us—to fix it. Fix it so that money is not the roaring lion you need to fear anymore. Fix it so that the people come back—and that the ones we've lost to death and disinterest will be replaced by new committed, energetic, and generous givers. Fix it so that things don't feel so fragile. Just fix it.

I wish I could fix all that too.

Truly I do. But you know I can't. And you know that's not the way this works. God is the one in charge here. The way it works is just how Saint Peter states it in his letter: 'Cast all your anxiety on God because God loves you.'

I stand here in humility, as your chief shepherd, with a fair sense of where we are and where we need to go in this liminal space. I also have a sense about something else: that we have to embrace where we are right now—and not try and escape it, push it away, or even avoid it. That our very liminality is part of our journey together—part of what brings us together so that we can resist the lions that prowl.

But there's more to it than that. Because while we come together to discern our present and future, we are the people who expect God not only to care for us, but to work for us: I want us to remember that we expect God to act, especially in moments such as this...

What is open to us as people of faith, is just that: to move forward in faith. Now faith is not certainty, but it is an attitude of expectation: of expecting the God of life to act. We are constantly and deeply listening for God's voice and acting in faith, monitoring that action, harvesting learnings, and then listening again—and slowly by the grace of God, sticking to God, sticking to each other, we discern our way forward. It's not a comfortable place to be because we are essentially dependent upon God and each other, but that is the way of the Church—always has been.

Let me return to that attitude of expectation. We are shortly—in a month or so—to enter a whole liturgical season dedicated to the fact that we are a people who live in expectation that God will act in our world—powerfully, forcefully, miraculously for good by bringing into it a Saviour for our redemption. We are a people who because of our faith in Jesus Christ; are also called to pattern our ways after God's ways—to become more and more like Christ individually and corporately. We are a people who expect to partner with God to co-create the kingdom right here, right now. We are a people who expect, who

lean with the wind of the Holy Spirit that brings change, and life and growth. We are a people of expectation, ignited by the irresistible love of our Saviour, Jesus.

So, it seems to me that we are in an already and not yet space right now. We have been moving—with faith, hope, and love—through the ravages of the pandemic and we still have a way to go yet. Let me remind us all that we are only midway through the 3-5 years that has frequently been the forecast for the pandemic. There is still water to go under this bridge. And we are feeling the effects—as a result we feel slightly smaller in person. We are feeling poorer—by our own standards—but we are not poor—more on that later. We are tired and we feel discouraged. Some of that discouragement is warranted but some needs a corrective based in reality.

For instance: and let me clear—what follows is not to deny our recent experience, but it does put it in necessary context. We are all concerned about attendance: through the necessary closure period, we faced some attrition—through death, movement, and attenuation of relationship. All unfortunate; mostly all unavoidable. But fact, nonetheless. Anecdotally, where we stand mid-pandemic, is that our people have returned at a rate of 50-65% generally. I know there are places where the figure is lower or higher but this seems to be the average, if slow, trend.

I thank God for all of you constantly. Your service, your commitment, and your presence as the Church is what it's all about.

Our online numbers have mostly remained strong though, which is interesting. That is an added constituency that have come to our communities who,

for a variety of reasons have not been able to attend church in person before now. It's important to acknowledge that these online numbers are real; church is real for them—sometimes a lifeline—and our investment in technology with which to welcome them is a now permanent and real fixture. This is a creative addition to our worship and Christian education and community offerings across the diocese. It is here to stay—and those people who access us online may well become in-person disciples over time—that's mission in action folks and it is an area of growth and we must continue to embrace it.

Let's talk about other numbers too. We have experienced some worrying attrition in our stewardship as well. Our diocesan revenue is forecast to be down about 23% in 2023. We all feel that drop. That is why our pre-investment draw deficit is so high. And we are all drawing on our rainy-day funds to buy us time to recover from this downturn. Thanks be to God for our forebears who have provided us with the wherewithal to weather these multiple storms. It is, in part, because of their generosity that we can continue to be the presence of Christ in our communities, by investing in our common mission and the support of our parishes.

And I know you are all feeling the pressure of lower revenue. It's a kind of steady, anxious drumbeat. But it's important to distinguish between how something feels and what is actually happening in fact. Based on some careful analysis done by our Treasurer, Kemi Okwelum, we have discovered the following:

1. Nearly 80% of parishes assessed using the three-year rolling average for their Diocesan Mission and Ministry contributions will see a reduction in their 2023 DMM compared to 2022. This means that across the diocese we will have assessed parishes at over \$400,000 less in 2023 than in 2022.
2. In addition, we know from those parishes on a single-year assessment, that 2021 showed a positive change in revenue; it would seem that many parishes within the diocese are rebounding from

Bishop's Charge

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

their low watermark.

These are facts—not feelings; signposts that are reminding us of God's daily provision. I am not saying things are fine and that there is no cause for concern. I am saying there is built-in help for the period of recovery we are in, and there is cause for some cautious optimism if parishes continue on this same trajectory.

As you can see, we are watching our situation very, very carefully as we chart a faithful course into the next season of the Church's ministry. And we are living into the expectation that recovery is not only possible, but because our ministries are vital, recovery is probable. But only time and our efforts will tell whether it will be a full recovery or not. What I do know is that if we expect failure, that is what we will create. So, let us cast all our anxiety on God, and put our whole trust in God as a policy—as a way of being. If we pray and work in expectation that God's provision will prevail, the picture will be different. This is not Pollyanna thinking. This is faith, hope, and Godly work in action.

Now, before the pandemic we were already in stormy waters—we knew that—we really did know that. And by God's grace our scriptural image for writing our Mission Action Plan was Jesus calming the storm. I wonder if you remember our cross-diocesan consultations in the "before times," the special day of prayer and discernment we spent at the cathedral together, dreaming together? And the result of all that was the MAP. The Mission Action plan for the Diocese of Niagara—a direction to travel in by the Grace of God for three to five years. Little did we know that we were about to enter seriously stormy weather with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now what do you do when the weather is stormy, when you don't know what is ahead of you; when you are unsure where to go? You need to follow the MAP. You must follow a map out of the darkness and the confusion—together. So that's what we've done and are doing...

Our first articulated goal was to: create and implement opportunities to ignite and strengthen faith. And the

primary vehicle for this has been the Niagara School for Missional Leadership, the NSML.

There are incredible educational offerings through the school... And lest anyone think they are only for the ordained, let me assure you that they are for the whole of the body of Christ. We have very intentionally made sure that they are for every Christian—we are all laying hold of our vocations as Christians as never before and we all need encouragement and support in that. In addition, as the shape of theological education continues to shift in these times, our diocese has been working a little ahead of that curve.

The NSML now has a full training programme for deacons—and anyone seeking orders as a deacon in Niagara will be required to complete these courses to fulfil their educational qualifications for diaconal orders. The programme is accessible, contextual, and financially reasonable. And our school is supporting other dioceses around the country now too in their missionally shaped Christian education and spiritual formation. It is, by the grace of God, making a difference for our whole Church... This school is a vehicle to strengthen and ignite faith and to nourish the seeds of mission-shaped leadership in us all.

Our second goal was to: Reimagine diocesan culture and adapt our structures to enable ministry and mission.

This past year has been one of continued transition and change. It's been good but very hard work. We have bid goodbye to many of our long-term and faithful Synod staff... For each, it has been time for them to imagine a new chapter in their lives. We—I—am so grateful that they travelled with us through the worst days of the pandemic when we needed their experience and deep knowledge of the diocese. We miss them all very much in their own ways.

As we have waved goodbye to our faithful and dedicated directors and support staff one by one, we have also seized the moment for reorganization, redeployment, and careful stewardship of resources. We no longer have a director model of

senior leadership. We are leaner and we have right-skilled our staff for this present moment with a communications coordinator and two missionaries—one focused on shaping our parishes missionally and on their support and development and another dedicated to turning outward to our communities to work in partnership to make Christ's name known and to plant new forms of ministry. We have taken a moment of loss and used it to mission-shape our structures. In so doing, you will see in the budget that we have been able to realize more than

It is an affront to the Creator and an affront to the body of Christ that we could—when the power to change things lies in our hands—let our fellow humans languish in pain and bewilderment because of the ravages of the climate crisis.

\$100,000 in savings in personnel costs of the diocesan office.

Continuing our focus on leadership, over the past three years we have continued to build a fund that supports our ability to train our new clergy. One of the challenges we have experienced—and which has grown to crisis point in recent years is that often seasoned clergy with gifts and best practices and creativity to share have been in parishes that for a variety of reasons have not had the resources to support a curate—or trainee priest. Now that means we have had to leave opportunities on the table for good training in unique circumstances. Well, not anymore. We have a differentiated curacy fund where I am now able to offer assistance to parishes to employ a curate for a period not exceeding two years. I ask that parishes contribute

sacrificially to this employment, but I am now able to assist. This is a really exciting development and a significant investment in the leadership of our diocese. It's also a recognition of the fine leadership we currently have in our clergy corps and a way to share the human resources of our diocese as equitably as we are able. We will continue to build our investment in this fund and to use it well. I am pleased to say that we now have a healthy succession of candidates for ordained ministry in our diocese, as you may have noticed at our recent ordination services...

In the last part of our MAP, we say that we will: prioritize social justice action with an emphasis on environmental justice...

Now we all know—even if the World Health Organization had not declared the climate crisis the single biggest threat to human health—that this is the most crucial issue of our time. We all know that. Storms like Hurricane Fiona that devastated our eastern seaboard and forest fires that terrorized communities like Lytton, B.C. are no longer flukes, one-off's. They are now normative. And that is a scandal. It is a scandal that we can allow these things to be normalized and accepted. It is an affront to the Creator and an affront to the body of Christ that we could—when the power to change things lies in our hands—let our fellow humans languish in pain and bewilderment because of the ravages of the climate crisis.

One of the things that came home to me forcefully at the Lambeth conference—where the climate crisis was a first order issue—was the power of corporate action. Did you know that we are 85 million strong around the world? That Anglicans are in 165 countries? That we are the third largest Christian denomination in the world? We Anglicans are 20,000 or so strong in the diocese of Niagara. Individually, we can change a lot of lightbulbs; we can drive a number of electric or hybrid cars; and we can compost and recycle a lot. That's all great—it really is. All climate action is good action.

But, where we can make a truly significant contribution for our children and our grand-

children and fulfil our baptismal vows, is in acting together—corporately—in speaking our values and beliefs in the work we have been entrusted with—to safeguard creation. Folks, it's time. Won't you join me as we advocate for our concerns as Christians? For God's creation? For solid, sustained action on this most important issue? For our children and grandchildren who have not created this crisis but will have to live with it?

The responsibility for the care of creation runs like a skein of gold throughout our scriptures and through our prayer books. This is first order business and our children and grandchildren need us to act and to not be complacent. Climate Justice Niagara will lead us well in advocacy and by coordinating our involvement in movements like the Communion Forest.

So, there you have it. Three examples of how—in this liminal space of discontinuous change—in this time of great anxiety and anguish for the future of our Church, that we have been working carefully, intentionally, expectantly and following our MAP through the present and on into the future. And God has blessed our faith in the future...

I thank God for all of you constantly. Your service, your commitment, and your presence as the Church is what it's all about. To our clergy, I see you—I see your gifts and your heart and dedication to God and to your people. You truly fulfil Jesus's commands to love God and love your neighbour. In these trying and exhausting times, please know that we all see your sacrifices—your joys and your sorrows. You are beloved.

And now, in the midst of trying times, with hearts full of faith in the One who calls to be One in Christ, to God be the glory.



Scan this QR code for the full text of the Bishop's Charge.

Cursillo's Role in God's Mission

THE REVEREND BRIAN GALLIGAN

Beginning in Spain in 1948, Cursillo has been successful throughout the world in enabling Christians to discern their vocation, become equipped for mission, confidently witness for Christ through their faith, study and action and to take leadership roles in helping God's Church fulfil God's mission.

Cursillo (Cur-see-o) meaning "course" in Spanish, was featured in a "missional moment" at our recent diocesan Synod. Presented by Lay Director Renée Anderson and Spiritual Director Rev. Brian Galligan, who both were commissioned into their positions by Bishop Susan Bell and Bishop Todd Townshend, the Niagara-Huron Anglican Cursillo is led by a Secretariat elected by members from across our two dioceses.

Cursillo involves attending a three-day weekend residential course to hear, discuss, and witness talks given by both clergy and laity. There are also explanations of Anglican theology, worship services accompanied by both joyful and meditative music, together with time for prayer and reflection. During the weekend participants are



Photo: iStock

introduced to the benefits of being part of a small Christian support group that meets on a regular basis following the weekend, to encourage one another in their faith, study and action. This is along the lines of the "cell" groups recommended by the Fresh Expressions Movement and described by the Church of England Mission-Shaped Church working group. Other supports recommended to assist participants following their weekend are to make a commitment to a "rule of life" for their walk with Christ, to seek out and regularly meet with a spiritual advisor and to attend regional witness and wor-

ship gatherings, called Cursillo Ultreyas.

Within this Christian life structure, many participants find themselves open to encountering God in their life and discerning God's plan for their life. Supported by a faithful and caring wider community many find themselves open to, and able to develop a growing relationship with Christ. This is often accompanied by a sense of being empowered to accept apostolic responsibility and consequently many participants can be found engaged in volunteer ministry leadership positions, throughout the church.

So how do people sign up?

Well in the first instance they don't. Every participant first needs a sponsor who has already attended a weekend and is ready to make a commitment to support their participant, before, during, and after the weekend. Before inviting someone to attend a weekend, the sponsor must first speak with their prospective participant's priest to see if they think that attending a Cursillo Weekend, would be a good step at this time, in their parishioner's faith formation. The priest must then agree to meet with their parishioner before the weekend to discuss Cursillo and to sign their registration form. They agree to meet again after attending their weekend to discuss how they are feeling and whether the priest can offer them help in discerning God's possible call for their life.

Typically following a weekend, the participants (now called Cursillistas) do feel drawn to want to make a difference in the world and their priest's guidance is essential in helping them take the next steps on their Christian journey. While the goal is, that with the support of the Cursillo method and their parish priest, the laity will find a way to live out their baptismal covenant in

missional leadership positions, some have felt strongly called to the Sacraments and have responded by following the path to ordained ministry. Not surprisingly, Cursillo has the strong support of our bishop and primate, and you are invited to explore Cursillo as a method by which both clergy and laity, can be motivated to become more actively involved members of God's Church for God's mission.

As we seek to respond to the Great Commission and proclaim the Gospel to all nations, the Cursillo mission statement suggests that we: Make a friend, be a friend, and bring a friend to Christ. The Cursillo method equips and supports people to do just that. Our next weekend will be offered in the spring of 2023 and so we encourage existing Cursillistas right now, to think about who they might wish to sponsor for that weekend. Next arrange to meet with your prospective participant's priest to see if they agree that they are ready to take this next step in their faith formation, before inviting your participant.

For further information about Niagara-Huron Anglican Cursillo, check our website at niagaracursillo.org.

Grassyplain After-Funeral Services

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*Merry Christmas
& Thank You!*

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And So it is Christ Mass

THE REVEREND DEACON HEINO CLAESSENS

At the risk of sounding heretical—and I don't mean to offend anyone—I ask what's all the hubbub about Easter? As a Christian who knows Christ as the Son of the triune God, isn't the resurrection an inevitable event? In confessing Christ as Lord and accepting His invitation to follow him in His "way" I find Christ's incarnation at Christmas to be so awe inspiring that it elevates the "Word becoming flesh to live among us" over that of the resurrection at Easter.

That "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son," profaning Himself to be one with us in the flesh—showing us "the way, and the truth, and the life"—what incredible love is that! That is singularly profound, continuously taking my breath away.

A fellow deacon, St. Francis of Assisi, was inclined to think

so too. Unlike most Christians of his day who considered Christmas one of the lesser feasts, St. Francis promoted Christmas to be the "Feast of Feasts." Francis' love for Christmas was commemorated in a special way in 1223 with the first Christmas creche, shaping how we celebrate Christmas today. As with Francis, the profundity of God not only loving all creation, but for Christ to profane himself to be one of us, to be born, to live, and to die like one of us, blows my mind.

A fellow Franciscan, John Duns Scotus (1265-1308) argued that the reason for the incarnation is love. The incarnation is God freely choosing to end His invisibility and show who and what He is to creation. What makes this spirituality so beautiful is that through the Incarnation, God is a loving God centered on love, and not on sin and atonement making this focus a game-changer.

In 2015, the polling institute

Angus Reid, reported that for many the understanding of Christ and His work is primarily based on Christ dying for our sins and a destined salvation after death for those who believe, an understanding that for many is unattractive, to say the least. For me, an alternative recounting to God redeeming us from sin, would be that God loves us and redeems us by being with us, proclaiming and showing by example the kingdom at hand.

Per Franciscan theology, redemption is an act of love first and foremost, not an act of saving us from sin—and the first act of redemption is the incarnation. Emphasis is on the imitation and love of the humanity of Jesus (orthopraxis), not just worshiping his divinity (orthodoxy). It's the humility and humanity of Jesus that makes Him imitable, accepting Jesus' invitation to follow Him engaging us in Kingdom living. Francis' heartfelt desire was to

be like Jesus—his simple rule for the Franciscans was "To follow the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and to walk in his footsteps."

Our contemporary minds seem to refuse being in awe anymore. We are only aware of what is wrong, and incapable of rejoicing in what is still good, true, and beautiful. As deacons we are called to be in the world, of the world, and to preach the good, true, and beautiful to the church. To preach the love of Christ, the awesomeness of His birth and life, His life-giving teachings, and examples of how He is the "Way" leads to life.

By making it our "missionalministry"—a phrase I have coined to express that a

missional perspective inevitably leads to doing ministry—to live by Jesus' example and sharing when asked the purpose, the why, of our ways, I have experienced a far greater receptiveness to the good news of Jesus Christ of Christmas than that of Easter.

Christmas is a reminder that God's unselfish, life-giving love began with incarnation. An ideal love that may well take precedence over the idea that we are so sinful that we only need God's expiating forgiveness. I wonder, what would our world be like in continuous Christmas? Alleluia! Christ is born; The Lord is born indeed. Alleluia!



Celebrating Citizenship at St. John's Jordan

BRENDA LANE

Four years ago, parishioners and friends of St. John's Church, Jordan were thrilled to welcome the Syrian family they had sponsored to Canada. On October 30 of this year, the church celebrated their new Canadian citizenship with a heritage potluck lunch after church!

This lovely family—Hrant, the father, Talar, the mother, children Anthony and Celine and grandmother Sylva—have settled in nicely to daily life in Canada. Hrant is a self-employed contractor, with the help of Talar who looks after the finances. The children are happy and doing well at school, in Grades 1 and 3, speaking English like it is their first language. Sylva has moved in with an elderly lady and is acting as her caregiver. Sylva at first found learning the language difficult but with time her English has improved immensely.

The family has been attending St. Gregory's Armenian Church in St. Catharines (the first Armenian church established in Canada). They, along with parishioners from this church, decided to "pay it forward" by sponsoring



another Syrian family themselves! They organized a community BBQ fundraiser in June and about twenty parishioners from St. John's Jordan were happy to attend, along with the mayor of St. Catharines and a bishop who travelled from Montreal. They raised the funds to bring a mother, father and two children here and have set them up in an apartment with furniture etc. It took them over two years because of the pandemic but they say it was made much easier because of what they learned from St. John's and friends.

St. John's Jordan and community members began the immigration process in January 2016. During the slow vetting procedure, we talked to them on cell phones from war-torn Syria. Their house had burned down, Hrant was out of work, some days they had no food,

and they had to keep moving. But through it all was the hope that one day they would make it to Canada. After two and a half years of filing paperwork, raising over \$40,000, finding them an affordable place to live, furniture, etc., they finally arrived in Canada in September 2018! It was a great day!

This wonderful, very hard-working family are so grateful to be in Canada. Their next door neighbour was out shovelling two feet of snow one day last winter and shouted to Hrant, "How do you like Canada now, eh?" He threw his arms up in the air, jumping for joy. "I love it!" he cried. When asked what it means to have their Canadian citizenship, Talar replied "It means everything! It means hope, it means we have a future, it means our dreams have come true!"

This is a small example of the Mission Action Plan at work. Parishioners of St. John's Jordan coordinated with members of the local community to sponsor this family, and when asked, St. John's parishioners were more than willing to support and help St. Gregory's with their sponsorship. Two families have now been given a future!



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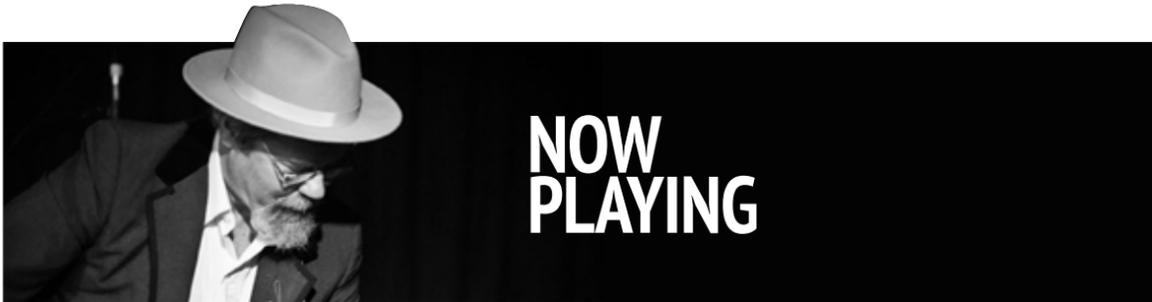
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In the Darkness... In the Womb of the Soul... Incarnation

THE VENERABLE MAX WOOLAVER

This is how the incarnation begins. It has always been this way, and it will always be this way, in darkness, endless, perpetual incarnation in every human soul: "Let us make humankind in our image." In the beginning the earth was without form, darkness covered the face of the deep, as darkness often covers our human experience, God said: "Let there be light, and there was light."

Moses, Abraham, Samuel, Jacob, Elijah all speak of epiphanies of grace and divine presence in moments of impossible choices, sheer terror, impossible loss, personal danger... And yet, divine presence, divine revelation.

Isaiah spoke of one servant prophet: "We counted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted." And yet this servant prophet spoke: "Morning by morning he awakens me, wakens my ear to listen as one being instructed." This is awak-

ening; this is enlightenment, the presence, the incarnation of the divine Image within us. This is the Word of God birthing a sanctifying consciousness within us. This is the birth of Christ within the world, within you. Your soul is the cradle, the stable over which the angels sing. Incarnation comes to us, speak to us, forms us, brings light to us—births us.

This is the human experience of God emptying God's Self for our enlightenment that we might become enlivened in God,

in Christ, in the Holy Spirit. This is the divine experience of the Word sent forth into the dark world, forming the world, forming the unique expression of who you are now and who you will become. This is the eternity of life which suffuses your every breath. This is your eternal Natal Day.

This is nowhere more profoundly on display than in the story of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Her flesh bore divinity with the accompanying threat of the deepest scandal, and beyond censure—the threat of death.

The Bible, which unflinchingly portrays human despair now records the birth of a new consciousness, a truth contemplatively understood, the

fulfillment of all the prophets have longed for. As St. Paul experienced and records: "That which was hidden for generations but has now been revealed to his saints... the riches of the glory of this mystery: Christ in you, the hope of glory!"

We often pray: "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We can likewise pray: "Your heart live in my heart; your soul live in my soul; your mind live in my mind; your strength live in my strength."

It was the will of God to birth the material creation and it is the will of God to birth your consciousness of God. Along with the birth of Christ this Christmastide, we celebrate your birth in Christ.



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Eight Courses Announced for NSML Winter Term

Courses focused on climate change, the rural Church, business as mission

The Niagara School for Missional Leadership has announced new courses for the winter term starting in January, 2023. Courses are designed to speak to the opportunities and challenges that parishes and communities are facing. NSML offers a community of learners who explore holistic ways of engaging your community by integrating faith, justice, and compassion in contextualized, incarnational ways. Courses are led by experienced, effective, missional practitioners, who help participants to lead vibrant communities of faith.

Christian Foundations II: Reformation and Transformation

*Instructor – Patrick Paulsen
Mondays, 7:00pm - 9:00pm,
January 23, 2023 - February 13, 2023*

How did we get from Jesus preaching and teaching in Judea and Jerusalem to the modern-day church? While the first course in the Christian Foundations series explores the formation of the church as a distinct group of Jesus-followers, there's a lot of story left to tell! Patrick Paulsen's greatest passion is teaching people to see Jesus in his proper context—as a first century Jew in the historical setting of the intertestamental period.

Patrick holds a Master's degree in Applied Science and a Master's degree in Theological Studies. With the Reverend Canon Dr. Judy Paulsen, and Bishop Susan Bell, he co-wrote *Christian Foundations*. He also wrote a three-part series called *Know the Flow: (1) The Story of Israel from Abraham to Jesus, (2) Jesus in His First Century Context and (3) The Story of the Early Church, Canon and Creeds*.

The Rural Church: Fostering Relationships without Shortcuts

*The Reverend Dr. Tim Wray
Thursdays, 7:00pm - 9:00pm,
January 12, 2023 - February 16, 2023*

In "The Way" of Christ, the ends are the means. In other words, how we go about fostering relationships, examining our intentions and seeking God's wisdom should resemble the goal that we strive towards. There are no short cuts, silver bullets, or pre-packaged programs to save the day. Real community is formed by real relationships. Faith communities are just the same, but they are additionally flavoured by the expectation that God is actually a member of the community! Such a living faith seeks the promises of God in the everyday affairs and looks for their fruit. How do we lead others into this ancient way?

The Reverend Dr. Tim Wray is a bi-vocational minister who serves as an ELCIC pastor in Airdrie, Alberta and lives and ranches in nearby Irricana. He is active on the board of Circle-M, Centre for Rural Community Leadership and Ministry, sits on his Synodical Ministry Team for Care of Creation, and is a contributor to the ELCIC sermon offerings for small and vacant congregations.

Can Business Be Mission? How Everyday Followers of Christ can Influence Businesses for Mission

*Christopher Houston
Tuesdays, 7:00pm - 9:00pm,
January 10, 2023 - February 14, 2023*

Businesses, we buy from them, work for them, invest in them, sell to them. For decades, most businesses have been focused on only one thing, profit. That is changing. More

and more, customers, employees and now investors and clients are asking businesses to make things happen for the good of others, and not just make money for themselves. As followers of Jesus, we can help steer them in ways of justice, good stewardship, and even grace.

This course explores how we can influence businesses towards creation stewardship, care for others, and justice for all. Chris Houston is a business consultant who helps his clients bring about fundamental change in the organizations they lead. Chris holds a Master of Business Administration from the Ivey Business School in London, Ontario.

Missional Preaching

*Bishop Susan Bell
Tuesdays, 10:00am - 12:00pm,
January 24, 2023 - March 7, 2023*

How do we connect God's mission, and therefore the mission of the church, with the culture in which we live and speak in ways that help people make sense of their lives and their purpose through the lens of the Gospel? How can our words as preachers help others follow Jesus' Way of Love more closely? How can we equip people to share their transformed lives in a way that opens a generous door into faith and Christian community?

The Right Reverend Susan Bell is the current bishop of Niagara. Bishop Susan loves studying scripture and the ways that it bisects, directs, and shapes the lived reality of believers. Bishop Susan was the Canon Missioner for the Diocese of Toronto. Bishop Susan is captivated by God's dream for us of a new heaven and a new earth and is committing her life to trying to live and work that dream out in the Church she loves and serves.

So You Want to Facilitate the Mission Action Plan Process...

*Canon Christyn Perkons
Wednesdays, 7:00pm - 9:00pm,
January 11, 2023 - February 15, 2023*

Perhaps you've read the Parish Mission Action Plan guide—and while you're excited about the potential for this initiative, you're also trepidatious about facilitating the process. On the one hand, you can see the process laid out and it looks easy on paper but on the other hand, you're looking for some support as you get started. This course will take you from preparation to launch!

Canon Christyn Perkons is the Director of Congregational Support & Development for the Diocese of Niagara. Christyn is passionate about discerning where God is at work in our neighbourhoods and inviting us to come alongside Him. The faith community that nurtures Christyn is St. Christopher's in Burlington, where she writes and offers intercessions and co-writes contextual liturgies that open space for people's hearts to encounter Jesus.

The Persistent Parish: Pursuing Missional Movement in Cozy Congregations

*The Reverend Leanne Friesen
Tuesdays, 3:00pm - 5:00pm,
March 7, 2023 - April 18, 2023*

This course is designed to explore the missional movement in churches that may struggle to make space for mission in the midst of their longstanding practices. Some may refer to this as learning about how to "reboot" or "revitalize" a congregation. We will see that that space for mission can be created in churches of any age, size, or history. Together, we'll walk a path that uncovers best practices rooted in experience and

creates space for questions, wonderings, and mutual learning.

The Reverend Leanne Friesen is the Lead Pastor of Mount Hamilton Baptist Church, where she has served for seventeen years. Leanne has been part of leading this 100-year-old congregation through missional renewal. Leanne also speaks at numerous conferences and retreats, and runs a ministry called "Grieving Room" online. Her first book will be published next year.

New Missional Monasticism

*Canon Ian Mobsby
Tuesdays, 9:00am - 11:00am,
March 7, 2023 - April 18, 2023*

This course is aimed at those who are interested in New Monasticism and new forms of Christian spiritual/religious ecclesial communities in the context of building new expressions of Church, including the Fresh Expressions initiative. It is aimed at those who either have no, or little experience, of such communities, or who want the space to explore them more practically and theologically.

Canon Ian Mobsby, is the Canon for Mission Theology in the Diocese of Niagara and a life long practitioner of mission and forms of new monasticism in an Anglican context. Ian has founded three missionally focused new monastic communities. Ian is a Trustee of the St. Anselm Community in Lambeth Palace and a member of the College of Bishop's Advisory Council of the relations of Religious Communities and Diocesan Bishops' in the Church of England. Ian is the Assistant Dean for Fresh Expressions and Pioneer Ministry in the Diocese of Southwark, and Guardian of the New Monastic Society of the Holy Trinity.

Niagara Anglican Deadlines and Submission Guidelines

Deadlines:

February – December 23
March – January 27

Submissions:

News, Letters, Reviews

(books, films, music, theatre)

– 400 words or less

Articles – 600 words or less

Original cartoons or art –

Contact the Editor.

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

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

Questions or information:

Contact the Editor at
editor@niagaraanglican.ca

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Order of Niagara Recipients “Are the Church” says Bishop Susan Bell

48 lay people admitted into Order of Niagara during November

Each year the Order of Niagara recognizes the faithful dedication of lay people, honouring substantial contributions to ministry in their communities.

Parishes are invited to nominate a person for the Order of Niagara annually, someone who has faithfully given of themselves to their parish, diocese, and the wider Church. It is an important way of honouring the vital ministry of lay people in the diocese. The Bishop may also appoint members to the Order.

Since its inception, there have been over 1200 people inducted into the Order of Niagara.

Recipients may use the initials O.N. after their name. They are encouraged to wear their medallion at diocesan services, on diocesan occasions, and when the bishop visits their parish.

Here are a selection of those who were inducted into the Order of Niagara during a special worship service on October 30th, 2022 at Christ's Church Cathedral. Those featured here represent the wide range of ministry initiatives and missional dedication that is abundant in the Diocese of Niagara!

Emma and Graham Cubitt

Bishop's Appointees

Graham and Emma Cubitt are husband and wife and are both Bishop's appointees to the Order of Niagara this year. They are each, individually, worthy recipients of this honour, and remarkable examples of faithful discipleship. Together, they are an extraordinary force for advancement of God's reign in the city of Hamilton, our province, and our world.

Emma is the principal architect with Invizij Architects which specializes in ecologically responsible design. She is well-known for designing the unique buildings developed by Indwell, an affordable housing charity based in Hamilton, now



Photos: William Pleydon

building homes across Ontario. In recent years, her focus has been on passive house design, or ultra-low energy buildings to help our community lead the way towards a low carbon future. Emma has been a strong advocate of responsible housing intensification in Hamilton and has been an advocate for laneway housing as a sensible response to a growing need.

Graham is the director of projects and development with Indwell, which now houses more than one thousand tenants. The charity has opened 214 new units since September 2021 and has more than 760 units under construction or pre-development. Graham and Emma know how to make things happen!

As missional disciples, Graham and Emma have brought their entrepreneurial skills to many projects in Hamilton and beyond. They were instrumental in creating the Mustard Seed Food Cooperative, and Hill Street Community Garden. Most recently, Emma and Graham have purchased and transformed an abandoned mill in Paisley, Ontario, and converted it into a beautiful community space, available for retreats. As stewards of this resource, they provide accommodations “rooted in historical and ecological preservation, with a community focus.”

Graham and Emma live in a little section of Hunter Street in Hamilton, where several like-minded Christians live as neighbours and make community with other neighbours. Potluck dinners and other events are shared in a vibrant neighbourhood and open circle of friends. Much good for the city comes out of these relationships.

As active parishioners of the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Hamilton, they lead by example. Graham is leader in the parish's Stewardship Team. Emma serves on the Climate Justice Committee and is a key member of the Eco-Locke collaboration between neighbourhood churches on and around Locke Street in Hamilton. Graham and Emma have both been recognized by Environment Hamilton as Environmentalists of the Year.

In all that they do, Emma and Graham are inspired by a biblical vision of God's promised reign. Their passion for affordable housing, ecological justice, food security, and the common good in their neighbourhood comes from their deep Christian faith. To know them is to be inspired by that same vision.

Patricia Wilson

St. Luke's, Smithville

Pat has been a member of St. Luke's for almost 50 years, and during that time has been and still is a very active member. She regularly reads scripture at the Sunday service, participates actively in the ladies guild, faithfully assists with church fundraising events, and has organized and managed our member call program during the COVID-19 pandemic.

She also manages St. Luke's

relationship with and fundraising for Community Care in Smithville (food, new warm clothes, Christmas gift cards, turkeys, cash donations, etc.) and has been responsible for other outreach programs in the past.

In the past year, Pat has also taken on Climate Justice responsibility for St. Luke's, and is organizing the monthly review of St. Luke's efforts to reduce the church's carbon footprint. This is a new area for her, and she has jumped into it with passion, becoming a strong advocate, participating in the meetings and conferences, and making presentations to the church, parish council, and ladies guild on a regular basis. She does all of this, despite several back surgeries and chronic discomfort. She is an amazing woman!

Erick Nettle

St. Christopher's, Burlington

Erick has been involved in the life of our congregation for about 10 years, serving as a warden through painful changes in clergy leadership and through the trying months of COVID-19 lockdowns. Erick was tireless through the COVID-19 pandemic, performing daily inspections of the church building when other wardens were prevented from assisting because of compromised immune systems or needing to care for vulnerable family members. He was deeply involved in setting up the equipment that was needed to record and later live-stream worship services. Erick was a cheerful and creative member of the team that planned online gatherings for children aged 4-14 when children's programs were

unable to meet in person.

Erick is a member of the altar guild, caring for arrangements at the 11:30 worship service. Erick is a trusted leader, generous with his time, and skilled in bringing his expertise as a business person to support the work of St. Christopher's, Burlington. Erick has also made noteworthy contributions in the diocese and in the broader community. Erick is an energetic supporter of the committee working to re-unify the Masri family in Canada. He was involved in networking with the Halton Islamic Association, and other community partners to shore up support for the 10 family members, who fled to Turkey from Aleppo in 2014, to join their brother's family in Burlington in the spring of 2022. Erick was an active member of the re-unification planning team, and he was instrumental in coordinating a fundraiser for the re-unification project with the North Burlington Rotary Club.

Although he is reluctant to talk about the ways he volunteers in the community, the community at St. Christopher's, Burlington are proud of Erick's leadership and support for community organizations. One example, is the recognition he received when he volunteered technical expertise to film the Tunos Decanos de Iberoamerica, an organization celebrating Portugese-speaking culture around the world. (Erick was working in his third or fourth language when he connected with Tunos on a recent project!) Other organizations recognize Erick's many gifts and benefit from his technical skills, generously shared. St. Christopher's is proud of the work Erick does in the name of the congregation.



Sierra Robertson, ON



The Bishop with Graham Cubitt and Emma Cubitt.

