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HURON CHURCH NEWS

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'THE WORLD NEEDS WHAT WE DO'

185th Synod of the Diocese of Huron: Popular Report

By Allison Agius

SURROUNDED BY the warmth and reverent glow of our Cathedral, we gathered for the opening worship service of the 185th Synod of the Diocese of Huron, on Friday evening, October 18, 2024.

During his sermon, Bishop Todd talked about the importance of the Cathedral in being part of who we are as a Diocese since our founding. Bishop Todd continued by announcing that in preparation for Huron's hosting General

Synod in June 2025, the nave of our Cathedral would undergo a renovation; an investment in ourselves that would see the pews removed and replaced by cathedral chairs, as well as a new substructure and floor.

The congregation listened as the main message of the sermon shifted to the healing power of God's love in and through Jesus.

Following the service, delegates, clergy, and distinguished guests gathered in Cronin Hall for a time of fellowship and refreshments; a welcomed time to reacquaint with colleagues.

"Sometimes we behave as though there will be nobody around in ten or twenty years and we'll just shut out the lights. Maybe that will happen in a few places, but not in most of them. We will be changed by God over that time, but it will be for the sake of life. I wouldn't be here if I thought that God was done with us." Bishop Todd at Synod opening service. Photo: Charlotte Poolton

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Restorative justice takes centre stage at conference

By Rev. Miles Schell Rodnick

ONTARIO FAITH-BASED organizations with a heart to serve the incarcerated and their families gathered on October 18-19 at a conference held at Christ Church St. James (Anglican) in Etobicoke to share insights around restorative justice practice.

Entitled 'Toward Justice That Transforms', the 2024 conference focused on the theme 'What is Missing in the Landscape of Justice in the GTA?' and delved into what that sense of justice would look like.

Representatives from a variety of groups, including Dismas, Kairos Prison Ministries, Catholic Charities of Toronto, Christ Church St. James, Threshold Ministries, Sisters of St. Joseph, Restorative Justice Housing Ontario, and Prison Fellowship, were on hand to discuss potential avenues to better assist those behind bars and their families.

While we are familiar with the expression "it is what it is", this is in fact not good enough, according to the discussion that surfaced among participants. They were reminded about Psalm 72:1-4 and the prison letters from St. Paul which invite readers to think about justice



and how difficult it is to grasp its true practice. Conference participants were asked to define what would God's justice look like.

History has taught us that human justice holds a person down for retribution's sake, where God's justice heals and lifts people up. During the discussion, participants looked at 2 Corinthians 11:23-24 where Paul lists the punishments he received from the hands of others in contrast to Philippians 1:3-11, the fellowship (Koinonia), which comforted the imprisoned Paul both emotionally and in practical ways.

We might do well to be encouraged with our Diocesan plan Turning to Grace which describes a space made for a just church and where there could be room for church fellowship to the incarcerated. Looking forward, we might embrace the many expressions of reach-

ing-in rather than locking-up to experience an extraordinary compassion that is driven by mercy.

Conference attendees were left with the message that God's children are not despicable but rather hungry and longing to experience a 'God of a Christian' type of justice, and to be loved and to have fellowship in their complicated and often painful stories.

Participants were reminded of how the storytelling process awakens us to who we truly are, and that companioned with sacred listeners at the helm, we can start a journey toward healing, and that words of love - "your story matters to me" - can help a person find their way to freedom as God's Justice and lead to transformation.

Rev. Miles Schell Rodnick is Vocational Deacon — Prison Ministry. He serves at St. John's, Cambridge.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH:

TURNING TO GRACE... with a little help from Hudson



**Lillian Scorrar-Olsen with her son Hudson.
Synod opening service, October 18, 2024.
Photo: Charlotte Poolton**



Turning to Grace

AT 185TH SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF HURON
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'Stay close to Jesus, church, and we will be fine'

Bishop's Charge to 185th Synod of the Diocese of Huron, October 19, 2024

By Bishop Todd Townshend

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE is one in which we receive and embrace and indwell the language and culture of Christ... the goal is to be permanently-present in the language and culture of the Gospel.

We are not there, yet. Not fully. But that's the goal.

It is not surprising that we are still burdened by the challenges of keeping the ship afloat—keeping the operation going well, and all sorts of other things. There is a lot to do. Yet, we still need to regularly step back and recommit—to a culture shift in our church, to a prioritization of the kind of time, energy, and resources needed to do the central mission—which is: the joy of coming alongside the Holy Spirit and the Risen One in the work of worshipping, serving, reconciling, and healing.

The center of gravity is Jesus. We gather around him. We find our movement in his ongoing life—his mysterious but real life in us and among us. Stay close to Jesus, church, and we will be fine.

Stay close to Jesus.

There. If you tend to drift off after the first few minutes of the Bishop's Charge, there you have it: Stay close to Jesus. That's my charge.

However, if you feel like I should keep going a bit to earn my keep, I can say more. Starting with some very brief updates on work we've done together, then moving on to recapitulate some themes of our work, and finally to lift our eyes to the future and our part in it.

I don't want to make this a long, detailed update on how we are doing (that information is available on other ways) so here are just three key areas we continue to address: **People, Property, and a Plan.**

1. People:

Vocational discernment and leadership development is vitally important right now. Everyone in the church has a vocation—it comes from God through your baptism. At this point in your life, what is your gift to give? What is God drawing out of you for the sake of all? The engagement and ministry of lay people is the most important resource to be developed in the church. The most important. May the Holy Spirit stir up God's people!

In addition to this, some people in the church have a call to ministry in holy orders. Who will be the deacons and priest and bishops of the future? This is an interesting question because the gifts and



Once you really commit to living out your baptism, once you really commit to living a Christian life—it is both a holy delight and a sacred task. It involves a lifetime of small conversions—a continuing conversion to the fullness of the Gospel.

training that are needed are evolving. What kind of leadership does the church most need?

How can we organize the work of lay and clergy ministry leaders for the needs of today and tomorrow. Please remember, we are keeping an eye on what the church needs now and in 2050 and beyond.

One example of this reorganized leadership is our experiment with Archdeacons over the past two and a half years. As promised, after two years we commissioned an independent study of what impact and value there has been in increasing capacity for the ministry of Archdeacons. A report has been received and will be discussed at Diocesan Council very soon. Basically, the report says that the new way of resourcing Archdeacons has been very helpful, and we want to strengthen it further. We are working on ways to provide that support and leadership. Thank you, Archdeacons for your very effective ministries.

2. Property:

In various places around our diocese, Anglicans are taking seriously the challenge and opportunity of our inherited land and aging property. With the help of some resources and consultants we have started several major projects that will see churches redeveloped and reused: for housing, for community hubs, for places where the arts can be developed and performed, and for service to those in most need. Spaces are being reimagined and partnerships are being formed. Some diocesan properties have been sold to others for good use and the resources

have been reinvested in other ministries of our diocese.

Our diocese is consolidating resources in strategic and creative ways, and this is really important work. Thank you to all who are courageously and faithfully undertaking this task. We are consolidating, tending and tilling, pruning and growing, and it is good.

3. Plan:

And, of course, today we will have the opportunity to launch a Diocesan Plan, "Turning to Grace" which was developed from the wisdom and love of this diocese for our work over the next number of years.

I am grateful to all of you who contributed to the Diocesan Plan that is proposed now in its final form. In some ways, it is not the final form—that only happens as it becomes a reality in your lives and in your communities. I pray that it will be guide for you, a catalyst for your faith, an encouragement for your service.

Instead of repeating what you will hear in the presentation later this morning, I'd like to use the remaining time hold up a continuing "charge" from me to you—but, I pray, from Christ to all of us.

What is a "charge"? It is "to charge", or to entrust, someone with a task or responsibility.

It also could mean, "to charge" like you would a battery-operated device! OR even, "to charge" as in "the world is charged with the grandeur of God" (Gerard Manley Hopkins)

Here is an ultra-succinct summary of that last five changes to Synod. One sentence each:

1. Remember who we are and what we (2020)
2. Live in community by yielding to the life of the Spirit in your (2021)
3. Expect to meet the Risen Jesus along the (2022)
4. Be ready to sing the Lord's song in a strange new (2023)
5. Continually turn to the God of (2024)

These are things to do—not just ideas. They involve a total-community, full-life, plunge into the language and culture of Christ and his Reign.

I know that this is very abstract language. But you already know what I'm talking about.

You know that, once you really commit to living out your baptism, once you really commit to living a Christian life—it is both a holy delight and a sacred task. It involves a lifetime of small conversions—a continuing conversion to the fullness of the Gospel. It involves developing, over time, a set of dispositions, perceptions, appreciations, and actions that make possible the life of faith in Christ. This is the habitus of the Christian Community in action.

We are in a time where it is essential that we spend the time to develop these habits again and to offer them to anyone who seeks such a life.

I seek such a life! That is why I pray that I may be open to the continuing conversion of heart and mind and soul and strength—that only God can provide, and only the church can help me to live.

So, turning to grace involves a life of continual conversion to the goodness of God and a habitual way of living that becomes a resource for healthy life in community.

Deepen your practices of Prayer, Fasting, Study, Worship, Confession, Forgiveness, Sabbath, Scripture, Sacraments. All of it leading

This is for sure: people will continue to be drawn to Christ, and humans will always need healthy spiritual communities, and even now babies are being born who will embrace these ways—in their own ways. They, like us, will turn to God and find grace.

us to love and serve the poor, the weak, the lost, in Christ's name. God is found in these practices. Or better, God finds us in and through them.

A word about the future...

This continues to be a liminal time. From the Latin *limen*, it means "threshold". Something is ending and something else is beginning and the two exist overlapping and at the same time. Already, but not yet. It's still the same faith, we still carry out the same practices in community, but we slowly begin to practice them in new ways and in new places. This is potentially transformative.

As I've said before, sometimes we behave as though there will be nobody around in ten or twenty years and we'll just shut out the lights. Maybe that will happen in a few places, but not in most of them. We will be changed by God over that time, but it will be for the sake of life. I wouldn't be here if I thought that God was done with us.

There is a deep wisdom in the Anglican way of Christian life. I am quite confident in that. I think that you will see, decades from now, communities living and thriving in these Anglican ways. We have a lot to learn, especially from the resurgence of life in Indigenous communities. But there is a very deep, very alive spirit in our traditions—and when all of them come alongside one another, it is powerful and beautiful.

This is for sure: people will continue to be drawn to Christ, and humans will always need healthy spiritual communities, and even now babies are being born who will embrace these ways—in their own ways. They, like us, will turn to God and find grace. They, like us, will be led by the Holy Spirit of God and the one through whom all things are made, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Turning to Grace at Synod: Popular Report

From Page 1

OUR SATURDAY gatherings began early at the Lamp-lighter Conference Centre, with a service of Holy Eucharist celebrated by The Rev. Canon Stephen Harnedek assisted by Rev. Susan Bagshaw.

Following our call to order, and messages of welcome, we took a moment to remember our faithfully departed and churches that have closed. Rev. Kimberley Myer and representatives from the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer led us in morning prayers from our newest resource, Pray Without Ceasing. Following a few official orders of business, Bishop Todd addressed Synod with an inspiring charge “the world needs what we do,” healing, grace, gospel, and hope even if much of the Western World feels otherwise. The world needs us to be peaceful, healthy communities which requires us to shift our centre of gravity to one in which we receive and dwell in the language of Christ and the gospel. We face many challenges and there is still much to do.

Bishop Todd spoke about three key areas of focus; People (vocational discernment and leadership development), Property (churches redeveloped and strategically consolidating resources), and Plan (the launch of Returning to Grace; our new Diocesan plan). God is not done with us; there is a deep and vibrant spirit in the Anglican tradition and people will need healthy spiritual communities within which to find the grace and love of God.

The Finance report generated ardent discussion following



” **We are going where we have never gone before, take my hand and let’s journey together.**

— **Rev. Hana Scorrar,
Indigenous Ministries Missioner**

the news that current financial statements have not been done for the past four years. Review engagements are being proposed for the years 2020-2021, while full audits will be done for 2022 and 2023. While pension and retirement benefit plans are strong, 2023 saw a significant shortfall in the budget with an additional shortfall expected for 2024. Archdeacon Stephen McClatchie noted that feedback regarding revision to the diocesan plan “Turning to Grace” was helpful and honest. “Turning to Grace for Parishes” will soon be available. The full plan can be found on the Diocesan Website and motion was passed to launch the plan.

Rev. Hana Scorrar addressed Indigenous Ministries within the Diocese. She shared an emphasis on gifts and empowerment as we grow together; within the Indigenous com-

munities, they are the church everyday—not just Sundays “building disciples and equipping saints;” everything is a ceremony and there is always celebration. There is an emphasis on spiritual renewal, “you can’t build a house with the same rotten boards” and storytelling “through stories we understand the world, create community and foster connectedness.” Storytelling offers the opportunity for truth telling and expression of emotions which holds the power of healing in the church.

Throughout our day, we heard three poignant and inspired testimonies from Morgan Sherlock (St. Aidan’s, London), Jeanne Sanchez (Filipino Worshipping Community, All Saint’s Waterloo), and Gloria Aykroyd (St. John’s Tillsonburg). We also enjoyed musical interludes and hymns led by

Marque Smith and Rev. Matt Martin.

Following lunch, another spirited discussion followed the motion regarding ACW membership on Diocesan Council. Requiring a two thirds majority from both laity and clergy votes, the motion was unsuccessful. Nominations to Diocesan Council from Deanery Councils were presented, and nominations to General Synod were introduced for a vote via electronic emailed ballot which closes on Monday October 21.

PWRDF announced they will adopt a name change in Spring 2025 and will be known as “Alongside Hope”; note the website will remain the same. They are proud to be designated one of the top 100 charities in Canada. Rev. Canon Dr. Greg Jenkins suggested that everyone can support them through prayer if financial donations are not feasible.

Canterbury College recently welcomed their new Principal, Rev. Dr. Jennifer Boyes-Garbin and they will be offering three new workshops for clergy in January to facilitate continuing education.

Dr. Daniel Smith brought greetings from Huron College and shared that the newest residence opened in September, they experienced their largest ever first year class this year and are looking forward to the Robert Orr Lecture with Dr. Kwok Pui Lan on November 7, 2024 at 7:00pm.

Renison University College welcomes their new president Rev. Dr. Marc Jerry. He shared that they are looking ahead and preparing for the future as they thanked Dr. Wendy Fletch-

er for her 10 years of service as President.

The Congregational Coaches introduced the *Revive Program* to empower and equip lay leadership within the churches. The Diocese of Huron has purchased license for the program which means that it is free for our churches to explore.

Camp Huron challenged us to imagine what could be. Rev. Canon Gerry Adam reported that numbers are climbing again post COVID, and the long-awaited bathroom upgrades are complete. The “Say Yes to Kids” Campaign raised \$25,000 in bursaries to assist with the cost of sending children to camp; no child will ever be denied the chance to experience camp due to a hardship with cost. Rev. Canon Dr. Adam thanked Rev. Chris Travers for his leadership this past summer.

The College of Deacons project focused on food insecurity among the students at Huron, Canterbury and Rension Colleges. Through the generosity of parishes throughout the Diocese, they raised a total of \$9100.00 in gift and grocery cards. The cards have been presented to the Chaplains of the schools to support students in need.

The Synod gathering was pleased to honour and acknowledge Clergy and Staff who retired this past year.

After final announcements and notes of thanks the 185th Synod of the Diocese of Huron was adjourned.

Allison Agius is a parishioner of Christ Church, Colchester, and a postulant in the Diocese of Huron.

FAITH WITNESS AT 185TH SYNOD

My lifelong journey with faith



JEANNE SANCHEZ
FILIPINO WORSHIPPING
COMMUNITY,
ALL SAINTS, WATERLOO

FAITH IS A PROFOUND belief and trust in someone greater, and in my case, that is God—our Creator.

My journey of faith began early in life, shaped and nurtured since childhood. As a young child, I sang songs of worship and offered prayers as soon as I learned to speak.

My mother, who worked in a church, instilled in me and my sibling the importance of seeking God in all we do. Whether before meals, at bedtime, or during life’s big events, we turned to Him in prayer.

My very first prayer was a simple, heartfelt song that we sang together before every meal. And here is the song, I share:

God is good, and God is great,

And we thank Him for our food.

By His hand, we must be fed,

Give us, Lord, our daily bread. Amen.

I now teach this song to my children, and it fills me with joy to hear them sing it before meals, just as I did.

The church has always been central to my life. Its yard was

my playground, and Sundays were sacred, spent worshipping the Lord with songs and prayers.

This Sunday tradition grew with me and remains a part of my life today. It’s hard to imagine a Sunday without attending church unless truly unavoidable. I strive to pass this reverence on to my children, teaching them the significance of worship and the comfort and peace that come from singing praises to the Lord.

These practices are the nourishment of my faith: praying to God, praising Him

through song, and focusing on the bright side of life.

Through faith, I find my daily strength, happiness, and purpose—morals I hope to pass on for generations to come.



FAITH WITNESS AT 185TH SYNOD

A SOGGY, MUSHY BAG OF MATTER CALLED FAITH



MORGAN SHERLOCK
ST. AIDAN'S, LONDON

WHEN TANYA contacted me and invited me to do this today, there was immediate reluctance. I feel very uncomfortable doing this right now in my faith journey. I am currently in a space of conflict with my belonging in faith and journey uncertain at best.

Like I often do in times of hesitation or indecision, I lean on what best practice would I share with young people as a parent or as a high school teacher: read the question, process slowly, and commit to giving it your best shot. I do not speak about my journey with confidence, I share my journey with thanks.

Church has been a formative part of my life but initially only through the commitment and presence of my maternal grandparents. For them it was still part of social fabric of our small market town. On being in church I chose not to sing, my gran insisted I sing to “keep up appearances” and make it look good, I opened my mouth and let her rip, my gran who could see no fault in her grandchildren and would always defend her view that each of us was perfect, with great haste elbows me and says “stop singing, stop singing”.

However my faith didn't really settle, grow and disrupt within me until I moved to Canada in 2015 and started to attend St Aidan's Church on Oxford St W. There I found a community and leader who were equally enigmatic, cohesively ambitious and hopeful, and composers of the symphony of liturgy, stewardship and discipleship. It is here I draw my faith statement from.

My sense of faith is a soggy mushy bag of matter that each of us tries to solidify on ongoing basis. Sometimes we are successful; and sometimes, after being successful, that solid state reverts back into the soggy matter until we've tended

to it again. Currently, I stand here with my soggy matter unable to add substance, trying to tend to that bag with and in love, with and in daily life, with and in prayer. With my own mental health and my discomfort with transition, my church cannot offer the grounding and stirring up I currently am lacking.

My sense of faith is discipleship. One of best lines about church-going I heard came from a talented, well known priest. He said to another individual: “Going to church is not just about receiving, it is also about recognizing the gifts you have and the gifts you can share”.

Some of the most formative parts of faith for me have been in participation. It has been a journey to recognize why but from being in Education for Ministry (EfM), director of children and youth, regular bartender for events and involved in many adult education opportunities there has been a common theme. A healthy safe faith community is able to encourage participation that is embedded in the liturgy, sacredness and congregational elements of worship. For me as an individual these experiences were humbling moments of listening and learning. The pride, gratitude and focus that I sometimes egotistically long for, was held in the collective and a healthy church community truly felt like a sum of all its parts.

My sense of faith is learning. On discussions of hospitality I once remember the diversity of the St Aidan's community being questioned. How could we do good work with such a homogenous looking group? This perception – as real and heart-felt as it may be when shared – valued the community on the look of the few photos on social media and not on the depth of conversation going on inside, outside and about the community. EfM for me was the best representation of how

I experienced this. Committee and group forming had be reframed so each iteration of EfM or any other gathering was not extra to the community but a microcosm and continuation of the community. It was a sacred grounding experience that regularly disrupted, challenged and settled my ongoing embracing of my faith. It held a rawness that empowered collective authenticity within the church community.

Today, even though I'm not attending church, I thank the church continuously for emboldening me with a sense of faith that I can be proud of.

As a teacher in teacher's college I was told do not mention religion. *Don't mention faith, don't make other people feel uncomfortable or alienated.* As I look being a teacher and confronting some of our complex challenges with our young people, it is only when I mention Faith, only when I mention Grace, only when I mentioned the idea of prayer, that young people actually start being vulnerable, feeling safety and a sense of belonging – not because I'm telling them they should believe what I believe, but because they are seeing it's complicated for me too.

Every day, we are rewarded in education with the new outlook and experience of the world around us for better or worse. It goes back to that messy matter of faith that I discussed at the beginning of this statement. Statements of grace and faith and leaning into prayer help me work collectively from this dysregulation to regulation. It's not ironic, it's not an accident that for me my grounding and my sense of principles as a teacher are found in routine, listening, community music, intentionality, grace, and baptismal promise. It is the same Aidan's community that lives within me every single day even though I can't walk through those doors right now.

THROUGH GOOD TIMES AND HARD TIMES, WE PRAY



GLORIA AYKROYD
ST. JOHN'S, TILLSONBURG

SEVENTY THREE years ago, I was born ten weeks premature, 3 lbs. 4 oz., and not expected to live. My dad, an underground miner at INCO in Sudbury, was in the Toronto General Hospital with a broken back, his second time, fearing he would likely never walk again. Mom and my older three siblings at home.

When doctors told mom I was not going to live, my uncle paid to have my dad transported to Sudbury, to see me and say goodbye. They called me “Gloria”, to give glory to God for my birth, praying for my survival. My mom's faith never wavered through all of that, and throughout her life. She was my faith guide, my angel on earth.

Dad did walk again, and I lived. One time when I was five or six, in hospital because of asthma, a nurse, who to me seemed really mean, told me to stop crying. When I told mom, she said whenever I was feeling alone or afraid to talk to Jesus, that he was always by my side. It worked!

Many experiences prepared me to choose social work as a career. I first worked at the Children's Aid Society in 1974, then at the HIV / Infectious Diseases Care Programme at St. Joseph's Hospital in London in 1991.

A number of my clients had felt abandoned by their church, by their God and were able to talk about it. I faced many challenges, but also was so blessed. Attending International AIDS Conferences

broadened my knowledge and wisdom about AIDS. In 2000, in South Africa, I was in an auditorium with 20,000 others. The chanting in of Nelson Mandela, a man of faith who came out of jail after many years teaching love and justice, not vengeance, touched my soul. Another time I attended a private meeting with Archbishop Desmond Tutu when he came to St. Joseph's. He held my hand and thanked me for my work. What a humble man, full of faith and love.

Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Tutu! The only other person I wanted to meet in person was Jesus, but not quite yet.

Married fifty years, I know God chose Bob for me. We made it through his first heart attack over three years ago and then recently his second. We made it through heart wrenching circumstances with our two daughters, but got through it with Jesus by our side. Our oldest had a catastrophic ruptured brain aneurism and fought to live. Forever changed, including from a recent scare, God knows what his plans are for her. Our youngest has been diagnosed with a condition that has known risks for stroke and aneurisms, but at this time she is doing well, thanks be to God.

As human beings we all have a need for connection. Knowing prayers have been said for us has been a huge comfort. As we pray for one another it strengthens our own faith. Through good times, and hard times, we pray. We don't always get the

outcome we hope for, but we know He is by our side.

As part of our Lenten Bible Study in 2023, Father Osita asked each of us to do our own statement of faith, our own creed. Here is mine:

I believe God that you were sad with the state of our world and your children.

I believe you were willing to save us by sending your Son Jesus to be borne by Mary and raised as human so people could see and witness your glory.

I believe you loved us so much that you sacrificed your son for us – for all time, for all people, whomever.

I believe Jesus is the risen Lord and when we follow your word and repent, all our sins are forgiven.

I believe that upon my human death I will rise in glory to be with you.

I believe you are with me all the time.

I believe you chose Bob to be my faith sharing husband.

I believe you have been present in the sparing and ongoing healing of our daughter Vanessa.

I believe you kept me alive to be her mother. I know you have plans for her and for me.

I believe you chose me to be Meredith's mother.

You know what I believe God! There is so so so much more. I will continue to talk with you God, but I will listen more than I will talk.

Thank you Father! Amen!

Trinity Simcoe Autumn Snippets



HARVEST THANKSGIVING

At Harvest Thanksgiving, it has long been the custom of the people of Trinity Church in Simcoe to give their support to The Simcoe Caring Cupboard, a local food bank that the parish was instrumental in founding many years ago.

This year the people of Trinity were asked to donate non-perishable items for children's lunch boxes to help local families in need.

True to form, the parishioners answered the call and were generous in their donations that were placed before the altar on Thanksgiving Sunday and blessed before being delivered to the food bank.

"At this time of year we are reminded to be grateful for the bounty that God provides for our needs in creation. In thankful response, to all the blessings that we enjoy, we respond in loving generosity to those who are less fortunate and need assistance. This is Faith in action: making a difference in our local community", commented Rev. Paul Sherwood, Rector.



Churchwarden Liz Rotherham (Alan's widow) with Bishop Terry.

LET IT SHINE!

On Sunday, October 20, the parishioners of Trinity Simcoe were graced with the presence of Bishop Terry and Di Dance for a special Sunday service.

Bishop Terry had been invited to come to dedicate and bless a new votive candle stand and Icon that had been donated to the church in memory of parishioner Alan Rotherham.

After he preached a very rousing sermon, Bishop Terry blessed the candle stand and then the Icon with prayer and holy water. The Icon, from Ukraine, depicts the Transfiguration of Our Lord. This was chosen because Alan was born on the Feast day: August 6.

"It also seemed very fitting to have an Icon depicting Christ's radiant divinity, placed above the lights of peoples votive prayers", said Rev. Paul Sherwood, Rector. "This is a beautiful and sacred gift to the church, and I'm pleased that people are already using it."

Prepared by: Rev. Paul Sherwood

'Where is God?' and 'Women in Scripture': Events at St. George's of Forest Hill, Kitchener



Jeff Poolton's "Where is God? A Faith Journey in Song" Concert was an inspiring September evening with beautiful music.

Jeff Poolton has been singing all his life, and now makes his living as an entertainer, with much of his focus on performing for local retirement homes and charitable organizations. From his early beginnings, singing himself to sleep in his crib, to his experiment as a 'parking lot entertainer' during the early days of Covid 19,

Jeff has never stopped looking for new ways to bring his music to the world around him. The first of Jeff's 5 albums, "Welcome to my World", is a collection of 13 songs, arranged chronologically, to tell the story of his life growing up with Cerebral Palsy, while paying tribute to those who inspired him on his journey.



The Women of St. George's of Forest Hill, Kitchener enjoyed a delightful and delicious potluck lunch with our Archdeacon The Ven. Megan Collings-Moore. Our Archdeacon led us through a bible study and discussion on "Surprising stories about Women in Scripture". It was a wonderful time of fellowship and laughter together. Thank you Megan!

Prepared by: Mary Ann Millar

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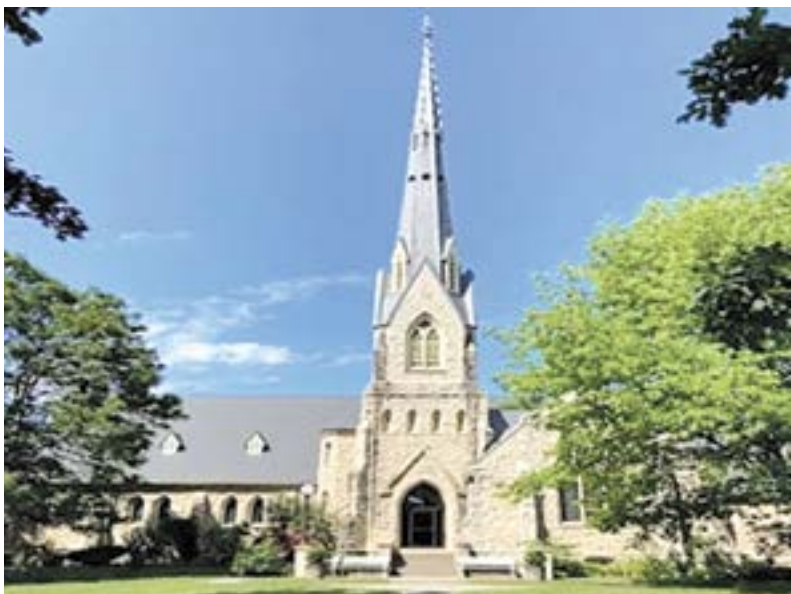


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St. George's Anglican Church, Owen Sound, celebrates 175th anniversary



On Sunday, October 6, 2024, St. George's Anglican Church celebrated the 175th anniversary through a service of baptism and confirmation for nine parishioners, including a reception of two new members and a reaffirmation of two current members.

This Anglican celebration was led by Rt. Rev. Todd Townsend, Bishop of Huron, and assisted by Rev. Canon Mark Loyal, rector of St. George's and the Reverend Carol McCurdy, priest assistant. After the service, all attendees were invited to the Parish Hall for lasagna dinner, complete with various menu options, salads, garlic bread, cake and tea, or coffee. Much thanks to the Hospitality, Stewardship and 175th Anniversary teams.

Throughout the past 175 years, our focus has always been on worship and building a faith community. In recent years there has been a visible shift from acts of faith within our church walls to outreach within the larger community. There are many churches and faith groups that share much in common with St. George's. Our vision for the future 175 years at St. George's will lead us further in collaborating with others to seek peace and prosperity for everyone in our shared community.

To find out more about our present activities and our future plans read the integral version of this article: <https://diohuron.org/news/st-george-s-anglican-church-owen-sound-celebrates-175th-anniversary>

By Anne Seymour

ST. GEORGE'S Anglican Church was built on its current site in 1881; however, the history of the Anglican community in the area starts from a much earlier date and has gone through many iterations since 1849.

Following completion of the survey of the Sydenham area in 1840, pioneers settled in the surrounding townships and the village of Sydenham began to take shape. The nearest settlements were at Goderich, Barrie and Elora.

Bishop John Strachan of Toronto visited in 1845 but returned to Toronto believing that Sydenham was years from being ready for the appointment of a clergyman from the Church of England. However, in the autumn of 1846, Rev. Alphonsus William Henry Rose, a graduate of Cambridge University, visited the village and travelled extensively throughout the area undertaking initiatives, which hastened the formation of a Church of England congregation in the community.

In the spring of 1849, it was decided that there was a vibrant congregation of the Church of England. Bishop Stachan moved quickly to make an appointment of a resident clergyman. In the summer of 1849, Arthur Hill Ringland Mullholland, a promising theology student and a native of County Down,

Ireland, was ordained a deacon. The Bishop sent Mullholland with a special license to administer the Sacraments to a new missionary parish that today would cover all of Bruce and Grey Counties.

The parish's first place of worship in Owen Sound was in a log house near what we would now find in the area of the Granite Club. The second place of worship was in a log building where the Metro store now stands. Finally, in 1852, a permanent Church facility was built on the corner of what is now 10th Street East and 5th Avenue East.

The Village of Sydenham was incorporated as the town of Owen Sound in 1857. As the town grew, it became clear that the congregation was outgrowing the small parish church on Boyd Street. Reverend Rose had bequeathed three lots in his will to the adherents of the Church of England at the corners of what are now known as 10th St. East and 4th Ave. East. These lots became the basis for plans to erect a new St. George's Church.

Our present-day St. George's Anglican Church was opened and dedicated by Bishop Hellmuth on August 7, 1881. In 1898, our Parish Hall was constructed, initially to house the Sunday school.

Bishop Williams celebrated the consecration of the Church on October 3, 1920.

Meanwhile in 1867, in St.

Vincent Township, Reverend Watson was holding services out of a schoolhouse. The Anglican community in that area needed a church. The first site on Lot 34, Concession 9 was chosen as a site for the St. Thomas church. The church of St. Thomas served the Anglicans in St. Vincent township until 1889. Prior to 1889, Anglicans of Sarawak and Kepler were part of the Warton Parish, but they separated from the main church. Reverend Bray was appointed to serve Anglicans at St. Johns in Sarawak, All Saints in Wolseley, and Brookeholm in Owen Sound north.

Due to a fire in 1890, Anglicans in the area proposed a new church. The plan was to move the original St. Thomas church in St. Vincent township to 2310-3rd Avenue West, a property overlooking Owen Sound harbour and St Thomas opened officially in 1901. Soon a new building was proposed as the congregation exceeded the space of the old church. Lots were purchased on 4th Avenue West for a modern church. The St Thomas church opened at 1331, 4th Avenue West in November 1926 until 2017 when the congregations of St Thomas and St. George's amalgamated and now worship together at St. George's Anglican Church.

Anne Seymour is St. George's, Owen Sound deputy warden and chair of the Finance Committee.

A True Story



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Find out which of our events will interest you at www.renison.ca/RIM



PASTORAL PROGRESSIONS

Appointments

Bishop Townshend appoints the Reverend Dr Sean Davidson as Regional Dean of Lambton, effective 1 September 2024. Sean is the Rector of Trinity, Sarnia.

Bishop Townshend appoints the Reverend John Maroney as Regional Dean of Kent, effective 1 September 2024. John is the Rector of Christ Church, Chatham.

Bishop Townshend appoints the Reverend Bob Masters as the Rector of All Saints, Windsor, and the Rector of St. Augustine of Canterbury, Windsor, effective 1 December 2024.

Bishop Townshend appoints the Reverend Colin Pearce as the interim priest at All Saints, Windsor, effective 1 October 2024.

Bishop Townshend appoints the Reverend Stephen Yeo as Priest-in-Charge (part-time) of St. Hilda's-St. Luke's, St. Thomas, effective 1 October 2024.

Announcement

Bishop Townshend announces that the Reverend Allie McDougall, having successfully completed her curacy, has now been appointed the Vicar of St. Paul's, Stratford, St. Stephen's, Stratford, St. James', Stratford, and St. James', St. Marys, with primary responsibility for St. Paul's and St. James's, effective 1 October 2024.

Induction

On behalf of Bishop Townshend, the Venerable Jane Humphreys inducted the Reverend Elise Chambers as the Rector of St. David & St. Mark, Windsor, and St. Andrew's, LaSalle on Sunday, 27 October. Thee preacher was the Reverend Canon Dr. Gordon Maitland.

Rest in Peace

The Reverend Canon David Morris, died on 3 September 2024.

David was ordained a deacon on 18 April 1958 and priested on 5 December the same year in the Diocese of Niagara. After ministry in the Yukon and in the Bahamas, he came on the strength of Huron as Rector of Christ Church, London, in 1975. In 1980, he was appointed Rector of All Saints, Waterloo, from which position he retired in 1998. Canon David served as Regional Dean of Waterloo and was named a Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral on 27 May 1990.

The funeral service was held at All Saints' Anglican Church, Waterloo, on Tuesday, 17 September 2024.

Please remember Enid, Michael, Julia, Jonathan, and the rest of David's family and friends in your prayers. May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace.

ANGLICAN CHURCH WOMEN



ACW PRESIDENTS' CONFERENCE.
Diocese of Huron ACW hosted the ACW Presidents' Conference at St. James', Stratford from September 26 to 29. Representatives from all ACW across Canada attended. A perfect segue to Huron hosting General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada in June 2025.

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Byron
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In Memory

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When ministry doesn't go as planned

EVERYTHING WAS SET! After months of careful planning, through the generosity of donors who had gifted resources to make it possible, and after many conversations to bring together a dynamic team of music directors, we were ready to relaunch the Apple Valley Youth Chorus.

On opening night, after weeks of advertising and reaching out to youth ministry organizations in our community and recruiting a team of volunteers to prepare the snacks and set up the practice space, we were counting down to the final reveal! How many brand-new youth choristers would show up?

In the weeks leading up to the first practice, numerous parents emailed us to inquire about registering their children. Prior to the pandemic, before the Youth Chorus had been forced to close down, more than two dozen local children were connected to the ministry. Would they come back?

We were ready, and it seemed like all the planning, praying,



**GROWING
BEYOND THE
DOORS
REV. CANON
GRAYHAME
BOWCOTT**

volunteering, and excitement would pay off. However, things didn't end up working out that way.

On opening night, despite the posters around town, the many inquiries from parents, and the invitations that had gone out to past members of the Youth Choir, only five children showed up for practice. Of those five, two of them were my own! As the start time for the practice came and went, I watched as the looks of enthusiasm and excitement on the faces of my volunteers quickly morphed into disappointment. This isn't what we had expected. Where were all the other children who had once been members of the choir? Where were the new children, whose parents had inquired about registration?

What do you do when ministry doesn't go as planned? Every church and congregation has examples of times when, despite the best attempts at organization, faithfulness and prayer, ministry does not work out the way that we intend. For some congregations, the disappointment of a poorly attended event, an underwhelming fundraising campaign, or the lack of volunteers to make activities possible is enough to dishearten and paralyze the ministry efforts of a community. Sometimes, we even read God into our failures – perhaps God didn't want it to happen to us?

In these moments, it is important to take a pause, step back, and appreciate the aspects of the ministry that did come together. Sometimes a great blessing, or new understanding can be gleaned from even the most profound disappointments.

In our case, we had successfully put together the funding, volunteer backing, and musical leadership to make a Youth Choir reboot possible. And, while it was true that only five

choristers joined up, the truth was that there were five more choristers than we had to begin with. It was also important to recognize what this ministry meant to those five young girls. They were receiving mentorship, lovingly prepared snacks, musical instruction, and an opportunity to make new friends within a safe, church-sponsored environment.

Yes, we had to get over our own sense of disappointment that the choir wasn't as large as we had hoped. And, yes, we had to reexamine our expectations of what a group of five girls would be comfortable doing (community concerts might not be the best fit for five children growing in their own confidence as singers). Yet, at the end of the first practice, something beautiful had happened. Echoing through the halls and sanctuary of our church, we could hear the sound of our girls, in two-part harmony, no less! That sound had been missing for a very long time.

Sometimes ministry doesn't go as planned. But church congregations who desire to grow

in new relationships with others always find new and creative ways to constantly adapt what we do, often in getting over our disappointments or readjusting our expectations, to keep trying new things until something beautiful happens. For us, that something new is the opportunity to reconnect with a younger generation, a generation that we believe God is calling us to learn from and to serve. And so, let's not get discouraged! Where might God be calling you, or perhaps your congregation, to learn from something that didn't quite go as planned in your own ministry context? What might you try differently the next time around?

May God grant us flexibility and patience in the times when ministry doesn't go according to plan!

Rev. Canon Dr. Grayhame Bowcott serves as Rector of St. George's, The Parish of The Blue Mountains, and as Program Director for the Licentiate in Theology program at Huron University.

grayhamebowcott@diohuron.org

A well-poured Guinness (Moving from a dark narrative to a dark beer)

A FUN COMMERCIAL...

In a London pub, three people take their first sips of Guinness as "The Rhythm of Life" by Sammy Davis Jr. plays in the background. The scene shifts into a mesmerizing backward-in-time sequence as the trio appears to move from the bar and out into the street in reverse. Their clothes changed from modern-day London to the Edwardian period, the early 1900s, and the street features changed from electric lights to gas lamps. Buildings disappear frame by frame, reverting the city into a small Anglo-Saxon settlement and making it disappear completely.

Their backward journey continues through dense woodland, and their clothing and hairstyles regress to styles from the Bronze Age. The sequence then depicts a close-up of the characters transforming into Neander-



**AS I SEE IT
REV. JIM
INNES**

thals, followed by a freeze in an ice-age glacier.

Emerging from the glacier as primitive humans, they continued to walk backward with a more monkey-like gait and soon turned into chimpanzees. From there, they quickly regressed into several species, finally becoming mudskipper fish that could breathe on land and in water.

The next-to-final scene shows one of the fishes expressing distaste for the muddy taste as they sip water from a murky puddle. The commercial ends with a product shot of three pints of Guinness accompanied by the slogan, "Good things come to those who wait."



We can only hope all our murky water turns into the smooth richness of a well-poured Guinness. Who knows what life will evolve into?

Who knows, indeed! If only the moments we suffer came attached to the future moment when we no longer agonize. Patience then would be so much easier.

When faced with challenging moments, such as a devastating s-storm or a period of depressing boredom, patiently waiting

it out is easier when we believe that life is ultimately kind to us. However, such optimism is difficult to attain.

As I see it, this hard-to-attain optimism can result from trust breaches occurring quite early in life. As babies, we are a bundle of nerves and needs, and if we are distressed or traumatized, we begin to build a dark narrative about a 'bad' world we must survive. Even if we start with a sense of trust, subsequent experiences can severely damage that trust, leading us to believe that the world is hostile.

Though it is common for people to move from a dark narrative to a much brighter one, people who have survived trauma or experienced ongoing disappointments can sometimes become stuck in a cycle of negativity. This can lead to defensive or impatient behaviour and a pessimistic outlook, which only exacerbates their challenges. As a result, they may find them-

selves at odds with others and view the world as an adversary.

Patience is resilience, and it is born from an optimistic hopefulness. It has developed for me through my faith in a loving God who has a "good" plan for my life. Some people find resilient patience by drawing strength from their community or supportive relationships during challenging times. Others have naturally possessed resilient patience since a young age due to being surrounded by affirming individuals in 'bad' times and in 'good'.

It's important to break free from negative cycles and embrace a brighter narrative. Inevitably life will have us sipping murky waters, but let us hold a hope that 'good' things come to those who wait, like a well-poured Guinness.

Rev. Jim Innes is the rector of St. John's, Grand Bend with St. Anne's, Port Franks.

jiminnes@diohuron.org

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New beginnings: How are our hearts as we launch into Advent 2024?

Advent Activities 2024

CREATION

- Invite someone to discover part of God's beautiful Earth with you
- Donate supplies to an animal shelter
- Pick up litter
- Take a shelter dog for a walk
- Discover God's beauty by walking a new trail
- Support a cause that supports the Earth

GRATITUDE

- Write a note of gratitude to God
- Reflect and record how much joy the Advent season has brought you

READ & WATCH

- Read Luke 1:39-45
- Read Luke 2:1-20
- Read Luke 3:1-6
- Read Luke 3:7-18
- Read Luke 21:25-36
- Watch a film version of the Gospels, like *The Chosen*
- Study the life of Jesus written by scholars

FRIENDSHIP

- Call and check on a friend or family member
- Listen to someone's story

SHARING

- Give a treat to a community helper
- Take a shut-in to lunch
- Bake or buy cookies or muffins and share them with co-workers, friends, or people in need
- Drop off a veggie tray to a nurse's station at the hospital, the police station, fire station or EMT depot
- Donate what you can to a food bank or community pantry

CHILDREN

- Read to a child
- Adopt a local school and supply them with snacks and other necessities

CENTRING

- Use a centring prayer to hear God's voice
- Listen for God's voice in music
- Set aside time and place to hear the Holy Spirit's voice

KINDNESS

- Let someone go ahead of you in line
- Smile at everyone today

SECRET ACTS

- Pray for every neighbour on your street
- Hide a happy note for someone to find
- Do a secret act of kindness

SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Fight for a cause Jesus would support
- Read the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. Then act.

Advent Activities 2024: Gisele McKnight,
The New Brunswick Anglican

On these first, fresh days of Advent, as we again sing our songs and light our candles, preparing for the celebration of Jesus first coming to us, we offer our hearts anew to God and to the work of God's kingdom in our midst.

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

Proverbs 4:23

Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down...

Luke 21:34a

By Rev. Canon Val Kenyon

Have you ever heard the expression, "Well begun is half done", meaning that if you get off to a good start in any endeavor, your chances of success are greatly improved?

The first time I heard this expression it was from the lips of the "practically perfect in every way", Mary Poppins, in Disney's film of the same name. While an odd cultural and cinematic reference to make as we begin a new liturgical year, it came to mind as I considered the value of "beginnings", a timely topic as we enter Advent.

We seem to value auspicious beginnings, that is, beginnings that contain within them something that suggests/symbolizes that future success is likely - for example, a festive dinner on New Year's Day that sets the tone for a year of abundance. Have you ever noticed the attention that gets paid to our clothes on the first day of school or as we begin a new job? Then there is the practice of new shoes for a treasurer who is delivering a budget. Beginnings matter. Beginnings are important to us. As our calendar rolls into



Education for Ministry is spiritual, theological, liturgical, and practical formation for lay people. EfM is about integrating faith and life, and communicating our faith to others.

December, we stand at the beginning of a new church year.

Many of our readings in Advent are challenging, offering us quite graphic and cataclysmic descriptions of difficult times feeling even harsher in contrast to the perky "Jingle Bell" tunes and Christmas movies that whirl around us. Yet in the midst of all of this Jesus offers both encouragements to pay attention to what is happening all around while at the same time staying attuned to the condition of our hearts. It is out of our hearts that courage and enthusiasm flow, with the heart being the innermost, central part of our being.

So, how are our hearts as we launch into Advent 2024? Are they expectant, joyous, peaceful, or weighed down, burdened, restricted in some way? Perhaps a little of each if you are like most. Life can knock us about somewhat. Yet, no matter from where we are starting, the state of our hearts and how to attend to their health seems like a good

question to take with us into this new season.

On these first, fresh days of Advent, as we again sing our songs and light our candles, preparing for the celebration of Jesus first coming to us, we offer our hearts anew to God and to the work of God's kingdom in our midst.

We do this, not because we have the answers to all of our questions or our hearts are in a state of perfect calm, but we freshly commit our hearts to God because it is in the gift of this anticipated Christ Child where our hearts will ultimately find their rest. And in the end, surely that is as auspicious a beginning as one could ever hope for.

With every blessing of the season, from your Education for Ministry Team within Huron, Libi Clifford the Diocese of Huron EfM Coordinator and myself, Val Kenyon at EFM@huron.anglican.ca

Rev. Canon Dr. Val Kenyon is
EfM Animator in Huron.
EFM@huron.anglican.ca

The lessons of a child: Advent 2024

By Rev. Chris
Brouillard-Coyle

HIS FIGURE was thin and worn with tattered clothes. A man in his forties, his cheeks were sunken, and face blackened with a hopelessness that made him seem twice his age. His eyes cried out in pain and loneliness as he watched the multitudes pass him by. He seemed invisible to the majority. The rest looked at him with disgust or pity. He didn't know what hurt the most.

A young child, walking with their mother happened across the man. The child stopped suddenly, staring right into the man's eyes. They held the gaze for a time while the mother tried to pull the child away. But the child refused to leave.

"It's time to go," the mother said.

"What's wrong with that man?" asked the child innocently. Reluctant to answer,

SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE



the mother tried again to pull the child away. But the child persisted, refusing to leave.

Hoping to break the child's spell, the mother responded, "he's homeless."

"Let's help him," the child said.

"We can't. There is nothing we can do. Now come," But the child persisted.

"Why?" The child asked with the innocence of youth.

With a deep sigh, the mother responded, "The problem is just too big. Now COME!"

Just as the mother tried to again continue their journey the child reached into a pocket, pulled out half of a chocolate bar and handed it to the man. On instinct the mother reached out to stop this, and then pulled

back as she saw the man smile and her child's eyes radiate a beautiful sense of innocent love. It was in that moment that her eyes were opened to the man's painful reality. All these people ignoring him, carelessly passing him. And, in the meagre offering of one small child, she saw hope return to his eyes.

We can all learn something from the child in this story. We all have the potential to bring hope to those who are vulnerable and hurting. There are countless unhoused people all around us in city centres, on street corners, outside shopping malls, and hidden in parks and neighbourhoods. Most are regularly made to feel invisible, despised, and

pitied. A small gift can make a big difference.

What anyone can do:

- Treat them like human beings, look them in the eye, acknowledge their presence, even if you don't have anything to give;
- Offer information – find out where they can go for a meal and let them know
- Offer food – snacks like granola bars, fruit, muffins; sandwiches; you never know how long it has been since someone has eaten.
- Pick up a coffee – especially in the cold months, a hot coffee or tea or hot chocolate can go a long way to warm someone up.
- New, warm socks – can make a huge difference for people outside on cold winter days.
- Care packages – including basic toiletries like toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, etc, that can help them

feel human again.

- Period products – anyone who has had to buy period products knows these are expensive. Giving these to those on the street who need them is incredibly valued!

- Spare some change – don't let judgement and assumptions stop you from showing love to your neighbour.

Bottom line, imagine the people you are seeing loitering around your town are family members. How would you want them treated? How would you want to be treated? As we enter the Season of Advent, that time when we prepare to meet God with us, the tangible, human presence of God in our world, one way we can prepare is to acknowledge the least of these who are the siblings of Jesus and, by extension, our siblings and doing as Jesus would do.

Rev. Chris Brouillard-Coyle is
a co-chair of SEJH.

Advent and Christmas blues

AT THE TIME of submission, it is a blustery All Saints Day.

The secular celebration of Halloween is over, the Church finds Herself in the middle of the Triduum of the Dead, and across social media are memes and TikToks of Christmas decorations going up, set to the opening bars of Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas is You." It is only a matter of days before we can expect to hear Christmas music on the radio and be inundated with the pressure to purchase and consume. Given the dedication of October's edition of *Field Notes* to the complexities of Allhallowtide, I would be remiss not to comment on the fiasco that is secular Christmas and the complete erosion of Advent from cultural practice outside the Church.

I gathered that public awareness of the season of Advent was basically gone when I noticed the proliferation of the sale of Advent calendars. What began as a quaint tradition among German Protestants, who were excitedly counting down the days until Christmas, has exploded into a whole new market of heedless overconsumption. Alongside the treasured, straightforward chocolate offering, you may now find Advent calendars containing beer and spirits, cheese, lingerie, cannabis, luxury makeup and skincare, and even Advent calendars for dogs. Is there a product that can be mass-marketed? There's probably an Advent calendar to go with it!



Sophie Popplewell/Unsplash



FIELD NOTES

REV. ALLIE
MCDUGALL

Advent and Christmas have effectively been flattened into a new thing that is almost entirely divorced from their origins and beholden to the almighty dollar.

What is additionally troubling is that for retailers and the especially eager lovers of Christmas, there is no gap, no breathing room between the festivities of Halloween and Christmas. The four weeks of Advent that precede Christmas Day are no longer seen as a time of preparation for the season, but an expansion of Christmas itself throughout the entire month of December, and even further back into November. Advent and Christmas have effectively been flattened into a new thing that is almost entirely divorced from their origins and beholden to the almighty dollar.

This bloated Franken-Holiday becomes tiresome very quickly. By the time most folks

get to Boxing Day and certainly by New Year's Eve, they are ready to pack up the decorations and snuff out the Christmas spirit. There is only so much cheesy music, rich food, and credit card debt a person can take before the entire enterprise leads one to the brink of sanity. And why? For what purpose? Nostalgia, familial expectation, the dopamine high of new stuff, and feeling cozy in the cold and dark?

I know I must come across as cranky, hyperbolic, and Scrooge-like. But really, this problem is not a new one. Charlie Brown and Linus Van

Pelt have reminded us of this every year since "A Charlie Brown Christmas" aired in 1965. I will not fault people who find comfort in Christmas during these trying and uncertain times, but I believe the named examples are portents that we have completely lost the plot when it comes to the right observance of Advent and Christmas.

Corporate greed holds this most sacred of feasts in a chokehold, and even those who are not engaged in the life of the Church feel this, particularly at this time of great economic stress and uncertainty. Christmas can quickly become burdensome and upsetting if the quality of the holiday is contingent on excess and the appearance of prosperity.

We must also consider how this cultural shift impacts people who spend Christmas sick, alone, and in obscurity. The world is obviously not beholden to the pattern of time that the Church is ordered by, but just like the Christian observance of Allhallowtide, we have the resources to offer a different way to those who would celebrate this holiday with the Church.

Choosing differently about Advent and Christmas can come across as radical and peculiar, even countercultural. In the experience of my own family, prioritizing the liturgical and spiritual dimensions of these seasons has made us look a little bit odd to friends and family. But it's worth it.

Advent as a season of contemplation, restraint, prayer, and preparation to receive the gift of the Incarnate Christ is

a healing balm to the chaos that often accompanies secular Christmas celebrations. Holding off on the encroachment of Christmas into Advent and celebrating the 12 days of Christmas takes tremendous pressure off families who build so much expectation and scheduling into only two or three days. Simplifying gift-giving, spending less, attending Mass, and slowing the pace of life allows us to savour the true gift, the true joy of Christmas – the birth of the Christ Child and the consummation of the plan of salvation for all people.

Secular Christmas is not going anywhere – it is celebrated widely by people of non-Christian faiths and no faith at all – but Christians should prayerfully consider how they engage with it. Holding onto the fulsome observance of Advent and a spiritually re-engaged celebration of the 12 days of Christmas are treasured practices that can help keep the Christmas blues away and open one's heart to receive the Incarnate Jesus anew. It might be new to you, it may rub against the secular world's approach to the holiday season, and it could even be strange enough to engage the people in your life in a conversation about the true hope of Christmas. Is Christ not worth a bit of weirdness? No matter how you keep it, I pray that you have an enriching, contemplative Advent and a joyous Christmastide.

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We want Jesus close to us, so let us pray...



ANGLICAN FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER

**ADVENT -
we are invited
into a time
of personal
reflection and
time with Jesus.**

By Rev. Kimberly Myer

As we enter into the month of December, the beginning of Advent leading into Christmas, which is a time of waiting and preparation, I am waiting and preparing for my replacement hip surgery in November. Many of you understand that during a time like this, prayer is necessary, and it is what keeps Jesus near us. It brings about comfort and peace during a scary time.

Advent and Christmas are no different. We want Jesus close to us. Through prayer, this can happen. Advent – we are invited into a time of personal reflection and time with Jesus. Taking the time to look back over the past year and what needs to change to

improve our relationship with the Lord, and celebrate what we have done well.

One of the best resources for Advent is the lighting of the advent candles every day through Advent. To be accompanied by a devotional reading for the day and spending time in meditation upon the reading or having a discussion with someone about what does it mean to you here and now and what is Jesus saying to us.

To set aside time to focus on Jesus keeps the world from taking over Christmas which is very easy to allow to happen when we get caught up in the decorating and the shopping. There are ways to still stay focused on Jesus. Prayer before you go shopping and remember those who may go with-

out. Asking Jesus to intervene on their behalf.

A prayer for the volunteers who are watching over the Salvation Army kettle and that people will be as generous as they are able in giving of their treasures. Saying a prayer for all the shop owners, managers, and employees that they are granted peace during this hectic time and that during these long hours, they can still find quality time with their families.

A prayer for all the first responders and those who work in jobs where they are needed to be there through Christmas. Pray for those who this may be their last Christmas here on earth and their families. Giving thanks to Jesus, since they have to leave behind their loved ones

and that he will be bringing them home to be with him.

A prayer of gratitude for our family and friends we will see or talk to at Christmas. Advent and Christmas can be the most beautiful and magical time of year as we keep Jesus as our focus and caring for others through prayer and helping wherever we can. As we continue to wait for Jesus to come again may he fill your daily thoughts.

The Executive of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer wishes you all a very blessed Advent and Christmas and may the light of Christ fill your season with love, Kimberly+

Rev. Kimberly Myer is AFP Diocesan Rep & The Rector of St. John the Evangelist, Leamington.

Invitation to the experience of prayer and devotion

THE CACOPHONY of Christmas commercialism, with all of its jingles and expensive advertising, felt like it had started early this year. No sooner had we stepped away from the table at our Thanksgiving gatherings, even before we had invested in any Halloween treats, we were being encouraged to acquire “stuff”, that would change, yes, and even enhance our lives, more than we could ever ask or imagine.

Then, just as I was pondering what special item I would acquire to gift you with, Dear Reader, I encountered an insight as to what would truly enhance our lives, even much more than we could ever ask or imagine. Bishop Townshend recently reflected:

“...In addition to being a learning, just and diverse church, we would benefit from being a praying church.”

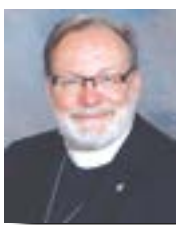
In his Charge to Synod 2024, our Diocesan Bishop went on to say:

“So, *Turning to Grace*, involves a life of continual conversion to the goodness of God and a habitual way of living that becomes a resource for healthy life in community. Deepen your practice of prayer, fasting, study, worship, confession, forgiveness, sabbath, scripture, sacraments. All of it leading us to Love and Serve the poor, the weak, the lost in Christ's name. God is found in these practices. Or better, God finds us in and through them.”

In a recent prayer experience following the pattern of the Prayer to the Four Directions, I was drawn to note that as in that particular devotional prayer there is a physical act of turning to different points in the compass, I also heard the quiet whisper of a question



Photo: Charlotte Poolton



**REV. CANON
CHRISTOPHER
B. J. PRATT
A VIEW FROM
THE BACK PEW**

family we seek to support each other in the life of our community of faith. As a deanery family, at our best, we support each other and the ministry we offer in the local communities we serve. As a diocesan family we are drawn together in an historic ministry in Southwestern Ontario which has been a faithful witness for many decades. As a part of the Anglican Church in Canada we learn from others through the diverse experiences of the Church throughout Canada, and we live with the impact that the Church has had on the history of our nation. As a part of the worldwide Anglican Communion we speak with a prophet's voice, calling those who generate conflict in our global village to discover peace as a viable option to be claimed and cherished.

You may imagine, in the midst of life's turmoil, what a personal joy it was for me to read these words:

*My dearest Lord,
be a bright flame before me,
be my guiding star above me,
be the smooth path beneath me,
be a kindly shepherd behind me,
today and evermore.*

(St. Columba, c. 521 - 597)

which is asked in the Service of Holy Baptism.

“Do You Turn to Christ?”

How easy is it for you and for me to build the activities of our busy daily lives on a foundation of our faith? Taking time to engage in prayer and have a conversation with God may feel like it takes a great deal of time and effort. However, if we remind ourselves of the Baptismal commitment we have made or which we re-affirm when we witness a Baptism, then, as we turn to Christ and have Him as the compass point towards which we orient our lives, there is an ease for us as we enter into a time of prayer.

We do not live our lives in isolation. Every facet of our identity as Christians who live out our faith within the framework of the Anglican experience gives us the gifts and insight which, in turn, deepens our faith. As a part of a parish

This brief prayer comes as part of a collection of thirty-one prayers, one for each day of the month, which has been put together in a collection, entitled “Prayers Through the Ages”.

The collection, which is readily available through the Diocese of Toronto website, is intended for the use of anyone seeking an inclusive and accessible prayer resource. I share it with you: www.toronto.anglican.ca/spiritualrenewal

The call to renew our personal prayer life is neither new nor radical. The Anglican experience of the Christian Faith has always been rooted in a pattern of Prayer, Sacramental Worship and Service. In our foundational Book of Common Prayer our days may become structured around services which are entitled, *The Order for Morning and Evening Prayer*, “Daily Throughout the Year”! There is a brief prayer service for use at mid-day and the service of Compline may be offered later at night. A shorter form of *Prayers for Families* may also be used on a daily basis. If you take a moment to read the *Introduction to The Divine Office* found in the Book of Alternative Services (pages 36-43) you will be able to delve deeply into an overview of how the liturgical life of the Church has evolved over time.

Another thoughtful resource for you to consider is reading through *The Archbishop's Test*, written by E.M. Green in 1914. You will find it is available on the Internet.

The circulated eleven-page story, although it is couched in the language and culture of what now feels like a different world, has a resonance with our own time, even as it has a history stretching back more than a century. One of the

essential messages of the brief story (spoiler alert!), is that we have the devotional tools at our disposal to engage in a relationship with God which is built on a foundation of a life pattern of prayer.

And so, my Christmas present to you is one which you already have. I suspect that there will be those who will criticize my action of “re-gifting”. If I could wrap up each of the devotional resources that I mentioned, and place them under your Christmas Tree, I would. However, more than the resources themselves my gift to you is an invitation to an experience. It is an experience of prayer and devotion which is both life changing and life affirming. Being open to the power of the Holy Spirit moving in your life is a joy during this Season of Celebration as we listen well to the familiar story of how God's Son came into the world. Prayer is both an opportunity to speak and an opportunity to listen.

Phillips Brooks wrote words which are a part of many celebrations during the Christmas Season:

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given

As Love imparts to human hearts the blessings of God's heaven!

No ear may hear His coming; but in this world of sin,

Where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in.

(O Little Town of Bethlehem - Hymn 120)

May that be true in your life and mine.

Rev. Canon Christopher B. J. Pratt has retired from full-time parish ministry but continues to offer priestly ministry in the Diocese.

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Marketing tools for churches: Google Ads and Google Ad Grants



**MEDIA
BYTES**

**REV. MARTY
LEVESQUE**

By effectively utilizing Google Ads and Google Ad Grants, churches can enhance their online presence.

CHURCHES ARE increasingly turning to digital marketing tools, such as Google Ads and Google Ad Grants, to expand their online presence and connect with potential congregants and seekers.

These powerful platforms offer unique opportunities to reach people searching for spiritual guidance, community, and worship services.

Google Ad Grants provides eligible nonprofit organizations, including churches, with up to \$10,000 per month in free advertising. By utilizing this

valuable resource, churches can:

- Increase visibility and reach a wider audience by appearing in Google search results for relevant keywords like “church near me,” “Sunday service,” or Anglican.

- Drive website traffic and attract visitors to your church website, where they can learn more about your congregation's beliefs, upcoming events, and community outreach programs.

- Generate leads and encourage potential members to sign up for email newsletters, attend services, or volunteer.

To maximize the impact of Google Ads, churches should

consider the following strategies:

- **Keyword Optimization:** Identify relevant keywords that align with their target audience's search intent, such as “Bible study,” “youth group,” or “Christian counseling.”

- **Compelling Ad Copy:** Craft persuasive ad copy that highlights the unique benefits of attending your church, such as a welcoming community, inspiring sermons, or meaningful worship experiences.

- **Targeted Landing Pages:** Create dedicated landing pages that provide specific information about the service or event being advertised rather than

landing on the home page.

By effectively utilizing Google Ads and Google Ad Grants, churches can enhance their online presence, connect with a broader audience, and ultimately fulfill their mission of sharing the Gospel and building a stronger faith community.

If you are interested in learning more about Google Ad Grants, please visit <https://www.google.com/grants/faq/>

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