



**NUKING THE FAMILY, REBUILDING THE VILLAGE**  
How to incorporate children in the life of the church?  
**Page 12**

**ARE OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD HIGH MAINTENANCE?**  
We can easily ignore and avoid what it takes to maintain relationship with God.  
**Page 4**



**THE FALL OF X = THE RISE OF BLUESKY**  
The downfall of Twitter and your church: What to do next?  
**Page 10**

# HURON CHURCH NEWS

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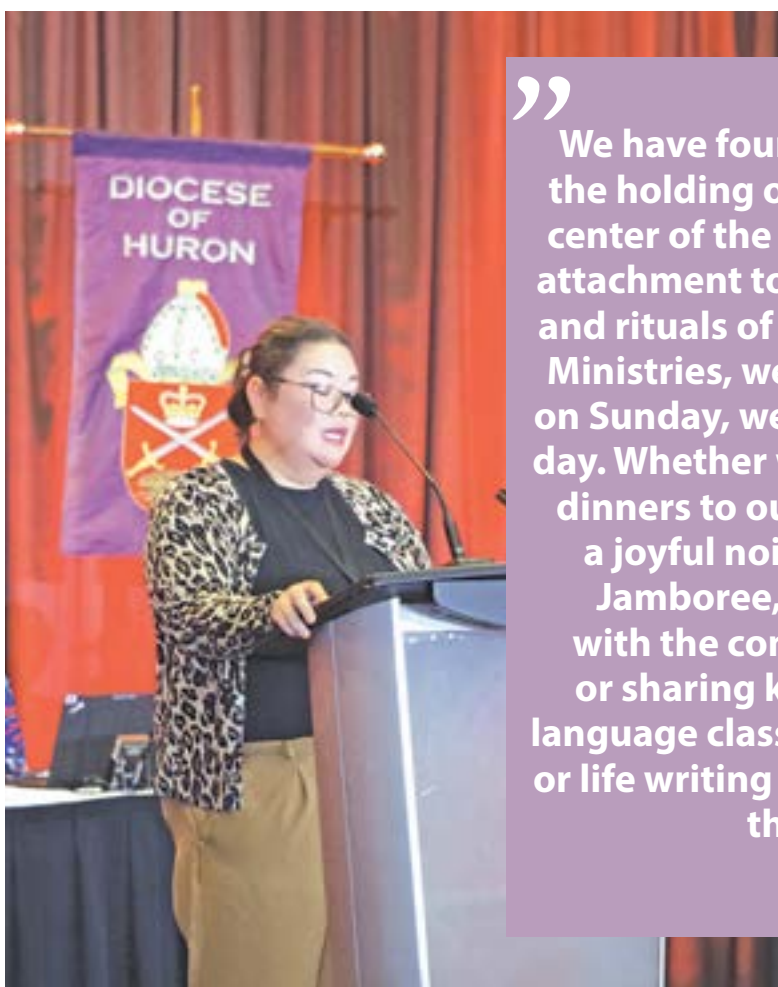
## Christmas and beyond: What is the best gift we can offer?



**THREE WISE MEN.**  
Wall mosaic in Basilica Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, Italy, completed in 526. The Magi wear trousers and Phrygian caps as a sign of their Oriental origin.

▶ Page 9 BEING CHURCH IN A SEASON OF SECULAR COMPETITION ▶ Page 2 PRAYER IS OUR STAR OF BETHLEHEM ▶ Page 10 'LIFT UP YOUR EYES': MOVING OUT OF THE DARKNESS

## Indigenous Ministries at Huron Synod: A long road to walk, without a map



” We have found great meaning in the holding of sacred space at the center of the circle, rather than an attachment to symbols of privilege and rituals of power. In Indigenous Ministries, we do not go to church on Sunday, we are the church every day. Whether we are delivering free dinners to our elders, or creating a joyful noise with our Gospel Jamboree, or playing games with the community's children, or sharing knowledge through language classes or basket weaving or life writing or Bible study, we are the church.

— Rev. Hana Scorrar

▶ Page 6-7

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

## Graceful outreach: Garlic, kids and butterflies



Trinity Community Garden Harvest Festival in Port Burwell is helping the Caring Cupboard community food bank.

▶ Page 3 OUTREACH MINISTRY IN HURON

## Prayer is our Star of Bethlehem – it will lead us to our Lord

By Donna Whiteside

**I**F YOU ARE like me, the New Year brings the annual tradition of self-improvement resolutions, the removal of the Christmas tree and the glittering decorations are gently wrapped and placed in storage to return again with the next Advent season.

Christmas is over.

But is Christmas really over? What happened to the twelve days of Christmas? You know, the twelve days between December 25<sup>th</sup> and the arrival of the Magi, the Epiphany of the Lord and the prophetic gifts offered to the Christ child.

Centuries before the birth of Jesus, Daniel was placed in charge of the wise men in the province of Babylon. These wise men were referred to as the Magi. Scholars who sought truth from ancient



### ANGLICAN FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER

writings and astrologers who studied the heavens.

In their quest for truth, they found and followed the star that led them to the Christ child. With gifts of gold, a customary gift for royalty; frankincense, burned at ceremonial worship of deity; and myrrh, a key ingredient to prepare bodies for burial; all three gifts revealed thought-provoking implications that related to the life and ministry of Jesus.

We may not have a Star of Bethlehem to lead us to our Lord and Saviour, but we do have prayer. It is our direct connection and communication with God to offer our gifts of love, thanksgiving and praise.

*Jesus, light of the world; lead us out of the darkness that we may be willing and able servants to bring the faith, hope, joy and love we found in the worship of Advent, to the lost, the broken and the lonely. Grant us the strength and courage in this new year to be Your disciples of peace and love. Amen.*

As we enter into this new year, may the Epiphany of our Lord bring new insight and meaning to your prayer life, your time of worship and the love of God. God's Blessing in 2025.

*Donna Whiteside is an AFP Huron Executive Member.*

## HURON CHURCH NEWS

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*Warmest wishes to all our readers for a*

**BLESSED CHRISTMAS**

*and a*

**HAPPY NEW YEAR**

**HURON CHURCH NEWS**

*75 years with you*

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FOR YOUR SUPPORT**

## Expanding our London Good Food Box program



**INSPIRING CHANGE:**  
Members of our Good Food Box Program are learning about our Christmas Traditions. Sharing special moments in faith, friendship and the fellowship of our Good Food Box group.

AS WE EMBARK on the journey of growth with our London Good Food Box program, we find ourselves at an exciting crossroads—not just fulfilling the immediate needs of our community but also unleashing the transformative potential that lies within our collective efforts and dedication. (<https://www.londoncyn.ca/london-good-food-box>)

Each month, over 20 passionate individuals come together for a vibrant gathering, one that transcends mere meetings. It is a rich exchange of ideas, a space steeped in inspiration, filled with heartfelt conversations centered around one of humanity's most basic needs: food. This monthly congregation is fueled by a shared commitment to combat food insecurity and foster a sense of community and belonging amid our challenges.

Through these inspiring discussions and collaborative brainstorming sessions, we have tapped into an undeniable truth that has emerged: the demand for an expanded range of offerings in our program is more crucial now than ever. Our mission goes beyond just providing food; we aim to empower individuals to make the most of what they have available to them. In our community, many individuals grapple with the challenge of limited access to essential kitchen tools, which significantly impairs their abil-

ity to convert basic, humble ingredients into wholesome, nutritious meals. Something as simple as a hand beater, an essential yet often underappreciated kitchen tool, can make a world of difference—not just in terms of extending food resources but also in nurturing creativity and innovation in cooking.

In response to these pressing concerns, we are thrilled to unveil an exciting new initiative: the establishment of our Kitchen Lending Library. This project aspires to give access to our community members with essential small appliances and kitchen utensils that many of us often take for granted. Picture the possibilities that emerge when a neighbor can access a blender to whip up nutritious smoothies, a food processor to prepare fresh dips, or even a set of measuring cups to ensure their culinary creations are just right. By launching this lending library, we aim to foster self-sufficiency, rekindle the joy of cooking, and encourage newfound culinary adventures.

Now, we turn to you—our compassionate community members who possess the heart to make a difference. If you find yourself with small kitchen appliances or utensils that you no longer use, we invite you to consider donating them to our pantry. Your generosity can play a pivotal role in paving the way for someone

else to learn, experiment, and flourish in their kitchen endeavors. Every whisk, every mixing bowl, and every appliance that you could part with holds the power to ignite creativity, cultivate culinary skills, and nourish not just bodies but also spirits.

Together, through the transformative power of sharing and unwavering community support, we can illuminate the pathway toward food security for all. Let us join hands and ensure that every individual has the tools they need to explore the art of cooking and experience the immense joy of sharing meals with their loved ones. With each small act of kindness, we can inspire monumental change and pave the way for a future where everyone has access not only to healthy food but also the essential means to prepare it with love and care.

Reimagine the possibilities with us—together, we can transform kitchens into bastions of hope, nourishment, and inspiration! Let us embark on this journey hand in hand, creating a ripple effect of positivity and empowerment within our community. The future is bright, and with your support, we can cultivate an environment where every meal shared is a celebration of connection, nourishment, and shared humanity!

*Just a Bunch of Friends,  
Member of St. Mark's Network*

## Community Garden Harvest Festival in Port Burwell



**Grace Zoner and Min Lee at garlic table: Garlic stem decorations were sold and \$400.00 was raised for the purchase of playground equipment at the Port Burwell Public School.**

Trinity, Port Burwell, kicked off the season of Thanksgiving with an annual event we call the Trinity Community Garden Harvest Festival.

This event highlights the culmination of the growing season in the church's garden. This is a spacious plot of land behind the church hall that has been set aside to grow a large variety of edible foods. Everything grown in the garden is free to anyone in the community who wants to partake of the garden's bounty.

This is part of our partnership with the Caring Cupboard community food bank. The garden is organized and maintained by members of Trinity's congregation, including, Henry and Grace Zomer, Randy and Heather Taylor, along with community partners, Min Lee and Ben. In addition to the adults, the children of Port Burwell Public School have been part of a program which sees the children learning the practicalities of gardening as they help to plant, weed, and finally harvest the produce that has been grown.

This year the festival has grown even larger with the addition of presentations by the Otter Valley Naturalists and Ron Allensen of Monarch Landing. The Port Burwell Home and School Association shares information on activities and programs.

Members of the congregation give out free ice cream, water, coffee and tea to all those who attend this event. Garlic stem decorations are sold as well and this year \$400.00 was raised, all of it going to the Port Burwell Public School for the purchase of playground equipment for the students.

*Rev. Larry Edwards*

## Wind, Strings & Wood for Women's Interval Home



**Canon Davis Memorial raised \$2,000.00 for supportive housing for Women's Interval Home.**

**A concert was held on October 26 at Canon Davis Memorial Church with the Wind, Strings & Wood as group of musicians playing.**

## Children's Community Closet at St. George's of Forest Hill



**St. George's of Forest Hill, Kitchener held its Fall Children's Community Closet on October 26. We are so thankful for the multitude of donations of children's clothing, toys and books. This Outreach provided over 100 families with the basic needs for their children.**

# Are our relationships with God high maintenance?

By Rev. Greg Little

I RECENTLY spent a couple of days looking after our (I really should say my wife's) cat while Lorna was away visiting a friend.

This was the first time this opportunity fell to me. Trixie the cat and I have a rather strained relationship as she has never really trusted me after being taken in as a cat which was homeless (but not feral as Lorna pointed out). We have speculated about this with no real answers' forthcoming. In any case, Trixie and I both survived the experience.

However, what became clearer than ever before was that Trixie is a very high maintenance cat. We have all probably experienced or know about relationships that are high maintenance as opposed to some that are less so. Trixie is definitely high maintenance. I know that

Lorna has no question about it being worthwhile.

As a result of this experience, I got to wondering about the relationship between God and people. Is that relationship high maintenance and, if so, so what?

In my experience personally and as a Spiritual Director, it seems that the relationship between God and people takes a lot of conscious effort on the part of the people of God. Often, we are not aware of how God is present and active in our lives. As modern people in a secular world, we have forgotten how to recognize that presence. We may be aware of what it takes to recognize where God is present in our lives. However, we often do not know how to respond to that. If people are part of a Christian community, hopefully they will be given information about how to identify and respond to that presence. They are called

to gather together as a community to worship God and, hopefully, are encouraged to study scripture, to pray regularly, study, and to share that experience of God with others through acts of kindness and Christian charity.

However, even if we know God's presence and blessing in our lives, we can easily ignore and avoid what it takes to maintain that relationship. We might have good intentions about doing more to keep God in our conscious awareness and deepen that relationship but things in life seem to get in the way of doing that. We can sometimes, conveniently or not, forget to make that effort. Sometimes life does seem to get in the way of doing those things.

If we neglect to keep up our end of the relationship, the relationship will wither and even die. However, God is always present in our lives and that relationship can

be resurrected and reestablished.

I will use an analogy to illustrate this. Everyone dreams, and scientific studies have shown that dreams are necessary for our psychological and physiological health. Many people will be aware that they dreamed last night when they awoken in the morning. However, many people have difficulty remembering their dreams. However, if they pay attention to their dreams, they will begin to remember them more frequently and in more detail. They can pay attention by recording their dreams and making associations with the images in the dream. In that way, dreams are also high maintenance. They require attention, and work to maintain the relationship that you have with your dreams.

Now I believe that dreams are one way in which God maintains the relationship

with us. Culturally we have forgotten the language of dreams – dreams are, in effect, God's forgotten language in our culture today. But, even if you don't subscribe to this understanding of dreams, they are important for our health and wholeness as human beings, and it is beneficial to pay attention to them. Regardless, it takes two to tango. We must keep our part of the bargain – our part of the relationship. It definitely is a high maintenance relationship; it requires work to maintain but it is definitely worth it. That is exactly with same with my relationship with God.

My relationship with Trixie – not so sure but I will keep trying.

May you be blessed to keep working on your relationship with God.

Rev. Greg Little is Honorary Assistant at St. John the Evangelist, Strathroy.

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## New upper hall dedication at Holy Saviour, Waterloo



Bishop Todd Townshend visited Church of the Holy Saviour in Waterloo on All Saints Sunday, November 3 to officially dedicate the new upper hall.

Construction began in June 2023, and was completed this October. The new entrance

from the parking lot is on-grade, with no stairs or ramps between it and the narthex. An elevator goes to the lower parish hall, also a new nursery and choir rooms. The elevator also avoids the three steps between the old and new halls on the main floor.

More than \$1.2 million has been raised within the congregation, with ongoing fundraising to reduce the approx. \$800K mortgage.

The congregation is eager to host community groups in the enlarged space.

Chuck Erion

What's that, flying in the AYR?  
Is it a bird? Is it a plane?  
It's your favourite SUPERHERO!



**Firefighters, nurses, and detectives; veterinarians and doctors; Bobby Orr, Wonderwoman and the queen. And a lot of balloons to make the event more festive: a group photo taken on Superhero Sunday, November 3, in Christ Church, Ayr.**

The people of Christ Church in Ayr came out dressed in the costume of their favourite Superhero on November 3.

We had Wonderwoman, firefighters, nurses, detectives, veterinarians, doctors, Bobby Orr, the queen and more.

The church was decorated in superhero balloons and a banner. And the hymns and sermon made it clear that, unlike the superheroes of the comics, or even actual humans, our true superhero could truly save the world.

Of course, we are talking about Jesus, Superhero!

Rev. Jenny Sharp

## A True Story



**“It’s not about how long you live, it’s about how you live your life.”**

*Life wasn’t about being popular; it wasn’t about the so many things that Meghan thought it was.*

*She was about to discover for herself what truly mattered most in life. Her journey would take her to death’s doorstep and back more than once while becoming the young woman God intended her to be, a perfect picture of His grace.*

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We invite you to join us at one of our upcoming events. Participation is free, but you can support the work of the Renison Institute of Ministry by making a donation during registration. Each event includes parking and refreshments as part of the day’s activities.

Find out which of our events will interest you at [www.renison.ca/RIM](http://www.renison.ca/RIM)



AFFILIATED WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

# Not being afraid of innovation, growth, or even failure

Presented at 185<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Diocese of Huron (October 19, 2024) on behalf of Huron Indigenous Ministries Team, and on behalf of Ven. Rosalyn Kantlaht'ant Elm, Archdeacon for Reconciliation and Indigenous Ministry

By Rev. Hana Scorrar

**W**E WERE ASKED by Bishop Todd to speak to the theme of where we are in Indigenous Ministries and what we have learned. I think the things we have learned could fill the entire day with discussion, but I hope to offer a few thoughts on how Indigenous Ministries has been shaping itself in new ways and how they might inspire reflection and exploration for the rest of the Diocese.

Firstly, before I dive into any of this, I need to profusely thank the team we have been working with the past year: Elaine Burnside, John Paul Markides, Maggie Weigers, and Leah Arvidsson, and a special thank you to Sam Thomas, who while not a part of the team technically, was certainly one in our hearts; these amazing leaders, along with the remarkable lay leadership that exists in Zion Oneida, St Andrew's Chipewa-Muncey, the Parishes of the Six Nations, and St John's Walpole, have made this journey that we are on incredibly rich and meaningful. Without their help, Ros and I would not be able to accomplish the amount of work we have done. And they all, clergy, students, and laity, have been a blessing to us both, in more ways than they can probably imagine.

Their passion for their ministries, their willingness to dream big God sized dreams with us, their flexibility and enthusiasm for chaos and experimentation, and most importantly, their ability to work cooperatively, are really and truly why I can stand here this morning to tell you about the revival we are experiencing in our Indigenous communities.

And that's where I want to start: **collaborative ministry and community building.**

Since Ros and I first began this journey together as priest and archdeacon, we have held at the centre of our work the need for collaboration and relationship. Particularly relationship that echoes traditional ways of knowing and being; relationship built on trust and love, vulnerability and courage. Our team, whatever the iteration, had always been founded on lateral or transformational leadership; with the emphasis on giftedness and empowerment, rather than hierarchy. We view our specific roles as a function of the ministry, a responsibility to each other, and as relational to the community.



Rev. Hana Scorrar's presentation at Synod on October 19, 2024.

This is fundamental to the way our ministry works. We are not afraid of innovation, growth, or even failure. We are not afraid of vision and creativity in others. We want our team and the communities we serve to feel inspired and encouraged, to feel their voices are heard and valued, and to feel that we are not a movement with singular leadership, but a leaderful revival with space for all who feel a heart's call to some form of ministry. We teach each other, and we learn from each other, and we grow together. We have confidence in our gifts and the gifts of others, but no ego. And there is always celebration for one another. We see our ministry as an Acts church, many places and people coming together as one, the body of Christ, the image of God in community.

Yet, this understanding of church, this way of being with one another, has done nothing but strengthened our understandings of priestly ministry, and I hope I can speak for those who work with us, helped shape the discernment and formation of those on our team, and those in our communities who are hearing a call.

We have found great meaning in the holding of sacred space at the center of the circle, rather than an attachment to symbols of privilege and rituals of power. In Indigenous Ministries, we do not go to church on Sunday, we are the church every day. Whether we are delivering free dinners to our elders, or creating a joyful noise with our Gospel Jam-boree, or playing games with the community's children, or sharing knowledge through language classes or basket weaving or life writing or Bible study, we are the church. We are building disciples and

equipping our saints, through food and friendship and faith.

Deeply embedded in this way of being is the traditional understanding that ceremony is life. It is the parts that are held in the longhouse or the cathedral, but it is also the parts that are held in the fields and the shores of the sea, the city square and the community center. Everything we do is ceremony, because everything we do shares in the ongoing creation of our universe. Thus, the purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationship or bridge the distance between the cosmos and us. So why should sacred space not exist in the grocery store line when someone needs to confess?

By reshaping our concept of sacred space and sacramental ministry, we have rooted our priestly ministry in the mission and life of the community and given room for others to live into their God-gifted purpose as the hands and feet of Christ. For others to find their unique gift to give and their own vocation. It has provided significance to the varied work our communities do, be it visiting the long-term care patients, working with the unhoused and those with food insecurity, or creating learning opportunities for those who have been separated from their traditional ways; and reminded us all that we do the work of Christ together which has given our communities renewed energy and determination as well as a way to envision a futurity that embraces a new way of being.

That futurity of the Indigenous Church, and we honestly believe, the whole of the Anglican Church, however, must be established on newness. And that is the second concept I wish to share this morning: the importance of being new.

There is a famous quote by Audre Lorde that I love: "For the master's tool will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change". Now, while that may seem harsh and bleak to some, I think it echoes the Biblical ideas that Christ and St Paul put forth of the Kingdom as being a space of newness, or transformation, revival, yes, but not the simple revival of breath and blood, but the spiritual revival of being unraveled and remade, housed within a body that is not like the one before. To frame this in perhaps more hopeful language, we cannot build a house with the old, rotten boards. It cannot stand.

We can love that old house; we can treasure the memories it holds. We can mourn the passing of time and the inevitable lifespan of finite things. We can even tear apart the old building to rescue and recycle what is still strong and healthy. But we cannot ever rebuild the exact same house.

We in Indigenous Ministries have been actively engaged in the learning of this. Because we know, especially for Ros and me as cradle Anglicans, how heart-wrenching it can be. How complicated our feelings can be around the aspects of church that are no longer life-giving. That are tied to exertions of control and supremacy, that are tied to ideologies of dominance and sovereignty. Which are sometimes very hard to parse out or unravel from our own nostalgia or desires for influence.

Yet, the need for newness in Christ is evident throughout the Gospels and Paul's letters; a sign of the commitment of his followers to not just walk away from material things, but the willingness to put aside power structures. Newness is integral to the building of the Kingdom, and it is at the heart of the work of the Gospel. To be made new, to shed the ropes that bind us in harmful ideologies, to disentangle ourselves from the social constructs that we have established to limit and exclude. To be made new is the only way forward. We must be willing to be made new, over and over and over again. To become more loving, more gracious, more reflective, more forgiving, more just.

This newness for Indigenous Ministries has been modeled in many ways, big and small, from the removal of the pews in Zion for the creation of

a circular worship space, to the creation of cultural revitalization programs and connections with community resources such as the Language centers, to giveaways of dinners, pumpkins, and Christmas presents. We are finding new and revitalized ways to engage with our communities and asking ourselves where we are now and what do our people need today, rather than what used to work, what did we do 20, 50, 100 years ago, or what did we look like when we were full on a Sunday morning. The circumstances in which our churches are situated are not the same as those of decades ago, and the societal environment in which we find ourselves has changed. The solution of yesterday will not necessarily work for tomorrow, and we are having to engage with the question of what are we capable of?

But much like Jesus in Matthew 17 is not to be confined to a tabernacle or a tent by Peter, we are not confined within the walls of our historic buildings or the structures of our forefathers. Like the Spirit at work in the world, we are making community amidst the people. And in this commitment, we are finding new ways to practice the traditional ways of understanding land, place, and space; as we make the landscape of the Gospel the location of our Dish with One Spoon, the long ago treaty made between the Indigenous nations of this area to share the beaver hunting grounds, the resources, and to live and work in cooperative relationship with one another, we can see our dish as the table of the Lord, where we all sit as guests, sharing the gifts given by the Host of the Most High.

And with the mindset of being guests, we can see our purpose in mission and ministry as one of invitation and welcome rather than control or constraint. We are not a museum or a renaissance fair, we are not re-enactors of worship but creating and discovering worship as an outpouring of the community, not the preferences of the priest or the longest members attending. We are reclaiming and reinventing the ways in which we speak symbolically and the ways we interpret story.

That is my final concept that I wish to share from what we've learned: the importance of story.

That feels like a very obvious concept to share, and perhaps not one worth mentioning, but I think it is important for many

**What is to be healed must first be recognized as broken, as sick, as in need. With the chance to articulate and communicate the hurt, the pain, we can begin restoration. Thus, it is through the understanding of our sacramental duty first to healing and absolution, rather than a focus on baptism or Eucharist as the entrée into Christian life, which gives space for story.**

reasons. In this day and age where there is so much discussion around misinformation and disinformation and who has the right to facts and what is an opinion, the need for storytelling is more apparent than ever. Storytelling helps create community, it fosters emotional connection, it shares important information and conveys experiences we do not have access to. It is a fundamental part of humanity. And it is through stories that we first begin to understand the world.

It is through stories that we develop the ability to think symbolically and to speak the language of metaphor and parable. Without the skill of meaning-making and interpretation, we are left without the capacity to think critically about the rites and rituals we use, how the signs and signifiers of patriarchy, racism, colonialism, classism, ableism, homophobia and transphobia, prejudices and judgements exist entrenched in simple actions or words, we abdicate the responsibility to be good interpreters.

In the face of darkness, our stories are essential to creation. Our stories of hope and redemption, our stories of radical love and abundant grace, our stories of salvation and resiliency. And more than ever, it is vital to recognize the stories of those who are often left out of the history books. Storytelling allows for a multiplicity of voice, and the opportunity to listen with open hearts and minds to the marginalized and the traumatized. As someone who works with a few different communities who have experienced both religious and societal trauma, the ability to truth-tell, to express the deep feelings of betrayal and the sadness and confusion of a disruption between the Gospel love of Christ and the actions of the world, has great healing powers.

This is the power of the reconciling church, as Bishop

Todd spoke of last night, the power of healing. Yet, what is to be healed must first be recognized as broken, as sick, as in need. With the chance to articulate and communicate the hurt, the pain, we can begin restoration. Thus, it is through the understanding of our sacramental duty first to healing and absolution, rather than a focus on baptism or Eucharist as the entrée into Christian life, which gives space for story.

Story also has, as I mentioned before, the ability to convey meaning and it is a practice of knowledge-keeping. And it is crucial to the process of decolonization to practice storytelling. The need for story to disrupt the quote unquote universal, objective, a priori colonial understanding of the world and interpretation of liturgy, of Scripture, is essential and important praxis to our work.

We utilize Bible Study and Gospel-based discipleship to examine both Scriptural texts and traditional stories in conjunction with each other, holding them in juxtaposition to allow for a more holistic approach to understanding. By looking at the Bible stories through a decolonizing lens, we can investigate concepts like the priesthood of women or same-gender marriage, what is a sin or what does reconciliation really require of us. And yes, all of these are topics that have come up. We can discuss, for instance, how matrilineal society views very differently the role of a woman, or how a people of the land exist in exile when separated from Creator and Creation. We can scrutinize the interpretations that have been given to us, looking at the stories of colonized people through the eyes of colonized people, rather than privilege and power. And we can adopt Indigenous methodology as our guidepost, where we look for relational ways of understanding.

This allows for exploring story as a communal act, where what is shared is important and valuable. We can look for connections between our traditional tales and the narratives of the Bible and begin our interpretations with what joins our understandings. The construal of story through an individualist lens opts to focus on what is rare and unique, but to view story through a collective viewpoint is to understand humanity as linked throughout time and space by commonalities and ordinary experiences. It is to see a diversity of story as precious and indispensable to understanding greater truth, rather than an impediment to a simplified and exclusionary singular voice.

Finally, story can allow us to find our authentic selves. It can give us space to reflect on our past and articulate our way of

approaching the world. It can illuminate our deepest, darkest parts and give voice to the quiet joys. It can set us free, it can open our hearts and minds to new ideas and new relationships, and it can heal.

And that, really, is what our decolonization work is about. Healing and reconciliation. Not just for our Indigenous communities, but for all of us. And that work is hard. Really hard. Extremely hard. It breaks your heart, and it cracks you open. But that's how the light gets in.

What I have offered this morning cannot begin to encapsulate all that our work in Indigenous Ministries has given us, has taught us, and I don't know if I could, even if I had all day, give you the blueprints for how this healing work, the work we all share, needs to unfold. I cannot say, I can only share these reflections. But I would like to offer a little story of my own before I finish.

Recently, my sister and I lost our grandmother, our Bachan. She was one of the people I was closest to in my family, and she was a touchstone for all of us. She was one of the strongest people I know, even though I teased her all the time. She was a Japanese internment camp survivor. And at the camp she was in, the conditions were extremely rough. But there was an Anglican priest and a group of Anglican nuns who demanded to be let in to be with the Japanese. To teach the children and to bring healthy, fresh food and other things they desperately needed. When she left the camps, my Bachan, having never been Anglican before, looked for an Anglican church. She found one in Chatham, and there, with her Buddhist husband, they found connection and friendship. And the young couples who welcomed them, even though they couldn't eat at the same restaurants or live in the same neighbourhood, they became family.

I am standing here this morning as proof of the power of loving your enemy. I am only Anglican because of the radical love people of this church showed. And I believe the way I do because I know that there is immense power for healing and reconciliation within us.

We have a long road to walk, and neither Ros nor I have a map, nor does anyone with a title, I hate to break it to you. Where we go we have not been before, but while this road is long and winding, we are going together, and that is something. So, take my hand, and let us travel with hope, with faith, and with abiding friendship. Thank you.

Rev. Hana Scorrar is Indigenous Ministries Missioner in the Diocese of Huron.

## Iona dedication of the Mohawk Bible



Elaine Beattie, Nancy Dodman, Caro Penny (Iona Warden), Jordan Murray at Iona dedication of the Mohawk Bible

Back in June 2024, a new Mohawk translation of the Bible was presented to Iona Abbey, Scotland, by a group of Canadian Pilgrims from St. Aidan's Anglican Church, London.

The group was also comprised of Iona associates from Toronto, and the United Kingdom. It participated at *Duthchas & Everyday Spirituality* retreat at Iona Abbey, focused on native language and land concept of belonging, and led by professors Mairead Nic Craith and Ullrich Kockel, who have links with Western University.

The translation took seventeen years to complete. It was led by Harvey Satewas Gabriel, an elder of the Bear Clan living in Kanasetake, a Mohawk settlement in southern Quebec. The project was supported by the Canadian Bible Society, the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada.

Read Sherman, Iona Associate and United Church Minister in Montreal who knows Harvey, wanted this Bible to be at Iona Abbey – available for all as a testament of God's steadfast love in spite of the darkness of colonization. Garry and Nancy Dodman (Iona associate members) were leading a group from St. Aidan's, London on pilgrimage to Iona in June and were delighted to take this sacred book with them.

Coincidentally, perhaps, Elaine Beattie, another United Church Minister from Ontario, was at the Abbey that week. She also knows Harvey Satewas Gabriel and could speak some Mohawk and so was able to read from Genesis at the dedication, to the glory of God.

Nancy Dodman, Iona Associate Member and Regional Coordinator for Canada.

### FROM 'PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS'

(Rev. Jordan Murray at the dedication of the Mohawk Bible)

*This bible is a powerful symbol of the Holy Spirit's will to refresh and restore all things. To take the which is broken and make it whole, that which is sick, and make it well, and to seek and find that which has been lost...*

*We pray today for justice – Oh God of justice, we offer our prayers this morning for clean drinking water, for healing from the ongoing trauma of residential schools, for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, for their loved ones, for righteous anger in the face apathy expressed by police and government. For strong indigenous communities, mental health and wellness, for climate justice for all...*

*We pray today for humility – God who makes the first last and the last first, may we repent of the arrogance which took these sacred words and used them as a tool of oppression and violence. For the denial of the humanity of Indigenous peoples, for those who have denied the sacredness of indigenous spirituality throughout history and today. For the unwillingness to recognize the ways in which God was at work in Indigenous communities long before the arrival of Europeans...*

*We pray today for reconciliation – Giver of all healing, healer of every wound. We pray for the strength and conviction to participate in the work of repentance and re-building of relationship, as equal partners with Indigenous people. We pray for fulfillment of unheeded calls to action, for the recognition of treaty rights, for self-determination for Indigenous communities, for the growth of Indigenous language and culture, as the foundational fabric of the tapestry that is Canada...*

*We pray today for peace – We commit before almighty God, to living a different story. God's story of new life, where the sins of yesterday no longer chain us, but where through God's grace we are set free to live as kin in the promised Kingdom...*

*Where our ancestors left a legacy of harm, may our legacy truly represent, in hope and action, the ways of Jesus the peacemaker, following paths of justice, humility, reconciliation and peace.*

## PASTORAL PROGRESSIONS

### Appointments

Bishop Townshend announces that the Reverend Dr. Craig Love, having successfully completed his curacy, is now the Rector of St Thomas the Apostle and St Luke's, Cambridge, effective 17 November 2024.

Bishop Townshend announces that the Reverend Jamie Baxter, having successfully completed his curacy, is now the Rector of St James', Wallaceburg and St James', Port Lambton, effective 24 November 2024.

Bishop Townshend appoints the Reverend Canon Dr Stephen Hendry as the Rector of Grace, Brantford, effective 1 December 2024.

Bishop Townshend appoints the Venerable Dr. Osita Oluigbo as the Rector of the Church of the Ascension, London, and the Rector of St. Mark's, London, effective 1 January 2025.

As of that date, Archdeacon Osita will step down from his current role as the Archdeacon of Eastern Huron and will be styled the Reverend Canon Dr. Osita Oluigbo.

Bishop Townshend appoints the Reverend Matthew Kiewetter as Regional Dean of Waterloo, effective 1 December 2024. Matthew is the Rector of St Andrew's Memorial Church, Kitchener.

Bishop Townshend appoints the Reverend Patrick Martin as Interim Priest-in-charge of St. John's, Tillsonburg, effective 1 January 2025. At of that date, Patrick will have successfully completed his curacy.

Bishop Townshend announces the following interim appointments:

- The Reverend Sharla Malliff, as Interim Priest-in-charge of St George's of Forest Hill, Kitchener, effective 1 December 2024.
- The Reverend Canon Christopher Pratt, as Interim Priest-in-charge of St James', Cambridge, effective 1 December 2024.

### Resignation

Bishop Townshend has accepted the request of the Reverend Andra O'Neill to resign as the Rector of St. Mark's, London, effective 31 December 2024. From 1 January 2025, Andra will hold a General Permit of the Bishop of Huron.

### Induction

On behalf of Bishop Townshend, the Venerable Jane Humphreys inducted the Reverend Steven Maki as the Rector of Holy Trinity-St. Paul's, Chatham, on the Feast of the Reign of Christ, Sunday, 24 November 2024 at 3:00 p.m. The preacher was Maya-Mele Okazaki.

### Retirement

Bishop Townshend accepted the request of the Reverend James ("Jim") Innes to retire as Rector of St. John's-by-the-Lake, Grand Bend (with the Worshipping Community of St. Anne's, Port Franks), effective 31 December 2024.

Jim was ordained Deacon on 29 May 1988 and Priest on 30 November that same year. He has also served the parishes of Christ Church, Forest and

St. John the Evangelist, Kettle Point; Trinity, Port Burwell and St. Luke's Vienna; St. John's, St. Thomas; and Trivitt Memorial, Exeter. Jim has also provided interim ministry at various times at Grace Church, Ilderton and St. George's, Middlesex; New St. Paul's, Woodstock; St. James', Ingersoll; St. James', St. Marys; and St. Peter's, Dorchester.

Bishop Townshend accepted the request of the Reverend Canon Dr Gordon Maitland to retire as Rector of St. John's (Sandwich), Windsor, effective 31 March 2025. His last Sunday in the parish will be 2 March 2025.

Canon Gordon was ordained to the diaconate (3 June 1990) and the presbyterate (9 May 1991) in the Diocese of Niagara. He came on the strength of Huron in 1996 and has served the parishes of St John's, Port Rowan (with St. William's, St. William; Memorial Church, Port Ryerse, St. John (Woodhouse), Simcoe, Summer Church of St. Andrew's, Turkey Point and Christ Church Chapel of Ease, Vittoria); the Collegiate Chapel of St. John the Evangelist (Huron College); Church of the Transfiguration, London; St. George's (Walkerville), Windsor; and St. John's (Sandwich), Windsor. In addition his many years as a member of the Doctrine and Worship Committee, Gordon has been a member of the Archives Committee, the Education for Ministry Dialogue, and represented the Diocese on the Trinity College Corporation. From 2008 to 2016 he was the Director Christian

Studies at Canterbury College and, from 2016, represented Canterbury at the Ontario Provincial Commission on Theological Education (OPCOTE). He was a participant in the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation (IALC) from 1995 to 2001. Canon Gordon has been the National Chairman of the Prayer Book Society of Canada since 2011, in which role he will continue after his retirement. On 19 February 2023, he was named to the Chapter of Canons of the Cathedral as a Canon Catechist.

Bishop Townshend has accepted the request of the Reverend Canon Robert Park to retire as Rector of St. Mark's, Brantford, effective 31 December 2024.

Canon Rob joined the Diocese of Huron in 2022 from the Diocese of Niagara, where he served from his ordination to the diaconate and presbyterate in 1995. On 23 February 2023, he was named a Canon of the Cathedral in recognition of the dignity that he held in Niagara.

### Induction

Bishop Townshend extended congratulations and his episcopal blessing to the Reverend Canon William ("Bill") Ward & Julie Vannoord who were married on November 2 at St. John the Evangelist, London, where Bill is rector. The Reverend Matt Arguin officiated.

### Rest in Peace

The Reverend Rob Dorr, died on Thursday, 14 November 2024.

Rob was ordained a deacon on 12 May 1983 and priested

on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord the following year. He served the Church of Ascension, Windsor; St. Andrew's, LaSalle; Trinity Anglican, Port Burwell; St. Luke's, Vienna; St. John's, Port Rowan; St. Williams, St. Williams; St. Andrew's by-the-Lake, Turkey Point; Church of The Good Shepherd, Woodstock; Christ Church, Huntingford; St. Paul's, Port Dover; and Trinity Church, St. Thomas. Over his ministry he served as Regional Dean of both Norfolk and Delaware.

The funeral service was held at St John's, Tillsonburg, on 25 November, with Bishop Townshend presiding. Please remember Carol and the rest of Rob's family and friends in your prayers.

Please keep in your prayers the family and friends of the Rev. Erwin Oliver, who died on 5 November 2024. Erwin was ordained a deacon by Bishop Ragg on 1 May 1974 and priested on 8 May 1975. Before retiring in 1998, he served as the incumbent of Six Nations East; Trinity Church, Norwich, St. Charles' Church, Durham, St. Mark's Church, Scotland; Christ Church, Delaware, St. Andrew's Church, Chippewa, Zion Church, Oneida. For a time, Erwin was assistant and then priest-in-charge of St James the Apostle, Port Lambton and Holy Trinity, Sombra.

The funeral was held at Walpole United Church, Walpole Island, on 11 November, with Bishop Bob Bennett and the Reverend Canon Mark Loyal presiding.

## ANGLICAN CHURCH WOMEN

On behalf of the Diocese of Huron Anglican Church Women (ACW) & the ACW National Presidents, we would like to give a GREAT BIG THANK YOU to everyone that helped make the 2024 National President's Conference in Stratford a HUGE success.

From all those that helped make Meals (Lasagna, Prime Rib, breakfasts/snacks,) we were well fed, prepping & organizing Fun Events (Fashion Show, Scottish Dancers), Transportation (back & forth from church to hotel, Saturday free-time events), Church Services, Welcome Reception, Swag Bag Donors (cookbooks, ornaments, pocket angels, recipes, etc.) and all those who came out to the Public Events, making our Delegates feel welcome. St. James A.C. for agreeing to be the host Church for all meetings, services & meals. The clergy, kitchen team, tech team, etc.

We can't thank everyone enough and they are numerous. It took a village to bring this wonderful conference to light. Thank you everyone for "Letting Your Light Shine!"





# Being church in a season of secular competition

**S**T. GEORGE'S CHURCH, in the Village of Clarksburg, Ontario, is the oldest continuously operating institution in our community. Since 1862, there has been a ministry presence in what is now called The Town of the Blue Mountains. Since that time, countless businesses and community organizations have come and gone, including restaurants, banks, shops, and even other churches.

In many ways, it is a privilege to have endured more than 162 years in our community, especially noting that each business venture hopes to be successful and to outlast its competitors in the revolving door that is sustainability and relevancy. Our congregation, as members of the oldest institution in town, doesn't take our long-established reputation of trust and service in our community for granted.

However, it is times like in the Christmas season that we come face to face with the reality that most businesses spend little thought in considering the events, routines, and intentions of others. Whether it is in the annual Village Christmas celebrations, the pileup of seasonal children's activities (dance, music lessons, art classes, and sports), or the numerous shopping advertisements, churches often struggle



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

to carve out a piece of the time, attention, and support of local residents as we host our seasonal worship services, outreach ministries, and fellowship events.

Three Christmas concerts hosted on the same day? Yup, that's happening this year. Girl Guides, dance, and the church-sponsored youth choir all competing on Wednesday nights? Of course! Is there any space left to put up a poster advertising our upcoming Christmas services on the community announcement boards? They are all already covered with ads from all the local businesses, each selling their wares.

How is God calling us to be Church in the midst of all of this secular competition? This is a question that my congregation has been given much thought to, not because the question is a new one, but because we deeply care about the community we serve, and we believe that God is calling us to reach out to them in new ways.

Here's what we've come up with this year! Instead of our choir hosting our own inde-

pendent Christmas concert this year, adding to the competition of the other four churches in our small town, we've decided to join together with our local United Church in supporting their event. In teaming up with them, we will likely double the average attendance at the event and our two choirs will have the opportunity to sing together. Any donations collected at the concert will support a third community organization that purchases Christmas hampers for local families. An added bonus is the fact that our two congregations have been growing ever closer together, and as the United Church is exploring future possibilities to maintain their presence in our community, they are wondering if further partnerships with their Anglican siblings might be the way forward?

In another example, this past November, despite our congregation planning to host local youth ministry events through our own church's leadership, we discovered that this would run in competition with another similar youth project. After some thought and prayer, we decided to throw our support behind the proposal of another organization, and to offer our church as a free venue for the initiative. The end result was a series of pop-up youth events (for Grade 7&8s) that brought together over a dozen youth

participants, and members of their families over a series of Mondays. For almost all of the youth participants, this was the first time they had ever stepped foot in our church. Our warm welcome and hospitality made a great first impression and we hope to partner with them again in the new year. The truth is, had we gone ahead with our original plans, we likely wouldn't have had the critical mass of participants for the events to be successful.

A further recent decision made by our Parish Council members this year was to take out memberships in our local Chamber of Commerce and our Clarksburg Business Association. This not only allows for our church to advertise throughout these networks, but it also gives us a seat at the table in conversations that discuss the economic needs found in our community. We hope that our new memberships will allow us to seek out new partnerships where we can continue our ministry of communicating to others who we are as Anglicans, and how we feel called to serve others in the neighbourhood.

Each of these decisions is a special point of engagement, where our leadership team has recognized that while there is incredible competition in our community for time, attention, and financial support, there

are often all sorts of ways to engage the residents in our community in ways that emphasize relationships first.

Many churches are coming to recognize that, while we all rely upon financial support to survive (in a secular market that has grown absurdly competitive), our greatest resource is found in the relationships that we seek out and maintain. An important question for all churches to be asking themselves is this: are we continuously expanding our relational networks? If the answer is: no, then it is apparent that we need to explore trying new approaches, even in the face of secular competition.

God calls all Christians to be sent out, to seek new ways of fostering community connection to enable us to share our faith stories, our gifts from God, with others. The greater our ability to establish new relationships, the greater our chances of being a vibrant church over 162 years, and, God willing, for 162 years more!

*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.*  
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# Duality – when great achievements coexist with flawed beliefs

**I**N THE LATE 19<sup>th</sup> century, a complex individual was born on January 14, 1875, in a small village in France. Not only did this person excel as a musician, but made their mark as a philosopher and theologian, culminating in a doctorate awarded for their research on the historical figure of Jesus.

Despite leading a fulfilling life, they felt a profound calling to serve humanity. In 1913, they took a bold step by enrolling in medical school, driven by a determination to acquire the skills necessary to make a meaningful impact on the lives of those in desperate need.

Their attention soon turned to addressing health concerns in Africa. Together with their wife, a dedicated nurse, they established and operated a hospital at a mission station in Gabon, then part of the French colonies. There, they faced significant challenges posed by devastating diseases like malaria and sleeping sickness.



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

Immediate action was crucial, yet the resources available to them were sorely inadequate. Medical supplies, transportation, utilities, housing, and communication networks fell far short of what was needed to effectively serve the community.

Working within these harsh conditions, they and their growing team literally risked their lives to provide medical attention to locals, some of whom had never seen a doctor before. Their remarkable humanitarian efforts did not go unnoticed; in 1952, they were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. And, true to their mission, they allocated the prize money to enhance the African hospital and expand its facilities. All the while,



they organized concerts and lectures throughout Europe to raise funds for these vital causes.

Reflecting on this, I shrink at the thought of what today's insurance companies would say about liability! And, in all seriousness, I truly shrink at the idea of spending an entire career stressed by such poverty and deprivation. The decision to take on this work was not simply an act of selflessness; it was a daunting sacrifice.

The person in focus is Albert Schweitzer, a complex individual whose personhood sparked controversy. In his lectures and discussions, he emphasized a philosophy rooted in respect for all living things and highlighted the importance of helping others. However, despite this admirable teaching, he harboured paternalistic and racist views toward his African patients. This attitude mirrored the colonial mindset of his era, leading to a complicated legacy.

Dr. Schweitzer's life embodies a 'duality' characterized by both his admirable humanitarian work and some very troubling aspects of his beliefs. This duality illustrates the complexity of human nature, where great achievements can coexist with flawed beliefs, often influenced by the times we inhabit.

The duality present in the legacy of certain historical figures and institutions has become a big issue for us today. And the issue persists in both subtle and not-so-subtle ways.

Many leaders and celebrities are celebrated for their contributions while simultaneously criticized for personal behaviour or controversial beliefs. Musicians express themes of social justice and equality through their works while living lives that conflict with these ideals. Many companies promote sustainability and social responsibility while simultaneously engaging in practices that harm the environment or exploit labour. Movements advocating a desire for peace adopt aggressive tactics. The list could go on.

The issue creates a knot in my belly. It is scary to navigate this duality. Not only do we live in the sunlight of flawed historical figures and institutions, but we also live in the shadow of their shortcomings. It is crucial to recognize and critically assess this duality in ourselves and others. The work is nonstop.

*Rev. Jim Innes is the rector of St. John's, Grand Bend with St. Anne's, Port Franks.*  
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# 'LIFT UP YOUR EYES': Moving out of the darkness

*Arise, shine; for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.<sup>2</sup> For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you...*

*4 Lift up your eyes and look around... 5 Then you shall see and be radiant;*

*your heart shall thrill and rejoice... They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.*

Isaiah 60:1,2,4a,5a,6b

**By Rev. Canon Val Kenyon**

**A**S WE ENTER this season of the great light and the coming of the wise ones, we hear in the words of Isaiah a challenge to his people to move out of the darkness in which they found themselves, and into the brilliance of God's new day. For in Isaiah's time, the children of Israel found themselves, dwelling in the



thick darkness of Babylonian exile; they found themselves strangers in a foreign land; they found their temple destroyed, their homeland invaded, and themselves swimming in a sea of chaos, despair and darkness.

Isaiah did not deny this darkness; his acknowledgement of it was quite clear. More often than not, darkness is the place from which we start. And what exactly is his encouragement from this place of darkness?

*"Arise, shine for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you."*



**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.**

Isaiah's point is a simple one. While the darkness may be thick, even very thick at times, it is not a complete darkness. And as we have all likely experienced, it does not take a great deal of light to break into the darkness. If we can believe that the light is shining, somewhere, it just remains for us to look for it, or as Isaiah encourages us, to "Lift up your eyes and look around".

Isaiah tells us if we can take this advice then we will see and we will be radiant; and our hearts shall thrill and rejoice!

If we give ourselves to looking for that light, for that presence of God in and around us, working through us and working through others, a gift awaits us, no less important than the gifts of the magi to the Christ Child. For as we begin to move in the direction of God's light, we are gifted with the question of just how we might also participate in carrying something of that light into our world.

During this season of the shining of the great star into the darkness, a brilliant, expansive season of hope that

makes clear God's embracing of all the peoples of the earth, Education for Ministry sessions continue to meet and encourage one another to "lift their eyes", to catch a glimpse of where and how God's light is shining in their lives and in the lives of their communities. They, each in their own way, set themselves like those searchers of so long ago, to find the one beneath that shining star, hopeful that God's light will ultimately confound the darkness and that love in the end will triumph.

Interested in learning more about these Education for Ministry session?

Please reach out to Libi Clifford the Diocese of Huron EfM Coordinator or myself, Val Kenyon at [EFM@huron.anglican.ca](mailto:EFM@huron.anglican.ca) and watch for future in-person and virtual Open Houses.

Rev. Canon Dr. Val Kenyon is EfM Animator in Huron.

[EFM@huron.anglican.ca](mailto:EFM@huron.anglican.ca)

## The fall of X = The rise of Bluesky

**T**HE FALL of the Roman empire has been quick, but Blue Skies are ahead. Over a million people sign up for Bluesky every day, and an equal number or more are fleeing X, formerly known as Twitter.

The downfall of Twitter has been predicted since the first day Elon Musk walked in with a sink after purchasing the company. The lack of privacy controls or discourse moderation has turned Twitter into an ugly, almost usable place. And as reality finally sinks in, individuals have had enough.

This does not mean that Bluesky is the new social media platform that we all should flock to. In fact, the downfall of Twitter ought to



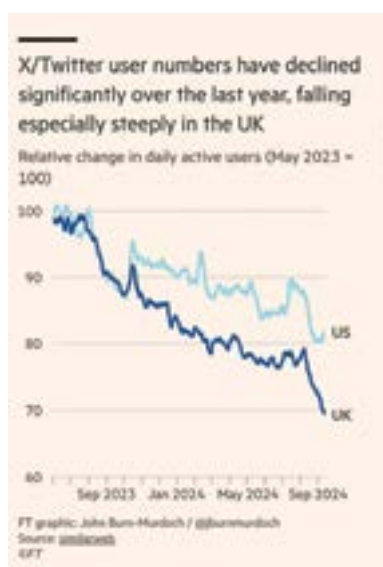
**MEDIA BYTES**

**REV. MARTY LEVESQUE**

be properly lamented. Twitter was the last Public Square where ideas could be shared and discussed.

There will be societal repercussions to the loss of Twitter as the siloing of individuals will continue. Echo chamber platforms allow like-minded individuals to connect, but dialogue and civil discourse are nonexistent among those who disagree.

For the church and evangelism, this presents a new and distinct problem. How do we



find seekers now? Are we to split time between Twitter, Facebook, Bluesky, Mastodon, Instagram, Threads, TikTok and YouTube? To name just a few platforms.

The answer, I believe, is missional. There will not be one right answer, but rather an answer for your specific community. Even with the fracturing of the social media landscape communities and neighbourhoods tend to find one another and form. And while the Public Square may be no more, pockets of community will form and continue to exist.

These will be different for each neighbourhood and city. Some neighbourhoods will have large Facebook Groups, while others connect via Bluesky or Twitter, and others have migrated to Threads. The key takeaway though, is really getting to know your neighbourhood, micro-targeting your church's offerings to the mission field and letting go

of the larger meta-narratives that Twitter filled as the Public Square.

We are in a time of transition with social media yet again. This time, we are returning to smaller, niche neighbourhood groups. And while the loss of the Public Square is worth lamenting, there is also an opportunity for the church to focus aggressively on its particular and individual mission field.

By doing so, and being intentional about being local, we can and will reach people in our neighbourhoods with the love of Christ.

Rev. Marty Levesque is the rector of All Saints' in Waterloo. He served as diocesan social media officer.

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# Glance in the rear-view mirror but keep your eyes on the road ahead

**A**S I THINK BACK across the years to January 4, 1979, I remember it as a different time and a different world. That night, as my Bishop placed his hands on my head and affirmed my call to ordained ministry, I entered into the life of the Church which over the decades has undergone a radical transformation.

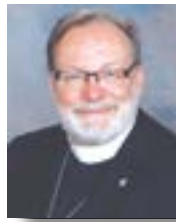
A few hours after my ordination I preached at my Father's funeral service in the parish which he had served as Rector for more than a decade. It was a place where I had been a Crucifer and Acolyte, where I had been confirmed, where I had been ordained and was the home of a Parish Family that had nurtured my faith journey over the years.

Anniversaries mark moments in time when it is a viable option to look into the rear-view mirror and look into the past. None of us are encouraged to live in the past, but it is never amiss, from my point of view, to think about those moments which have shaped us and helped to make us into the people who we are. Moments of the past may, in their own way offer inspiration which will impact the reality of the present.

Throughout my experience of ordained ministry I have



David Beale/Unsplash



**REV. CANON CHRISTOPHER B. J. PRATT**

**A VIEW FROM THE BACK PEW**

found the Seasons of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany to be filled with a wide variety of profound feelings. Year after year, going from the deep valley of personal sadness and grief, stopping at every place along the way to reach the mountain top of joy, then sliding back down the emotional slope in a relatively short time frame is very wearing.

In parallel to this personal roller coaster of emotion is the unchanging structure and

pattern of the Church Year. Advent invites us to live as a community of faith, waiting for age-old Divine promises to be fulfilled. The Christmas Season heralds the joy-filled news that God's Love for God's world is to be found in the person of Jesus. The days of the Season of Epiphany shape the framework of discovery as we are reminded that each of us is on a personal lifelong journey of faith that leads us to the Christ Child as we claim Him as our Saviour.

Reflecting on decades of ministry also provides an opportunity to reflect on how the world has lurched from crisis to crisis, from moments when messages of threatening devastation have been a regular feature of the ever-changing news cycle.

**Our place, wherever it is, allows us the opportunity to look around us and see where our words and actions may make a difference.**

As that reality is inescapable, reflecting on the past, another truth emerges.

As much as the volatility of the world's news rocks our lives each day, the reality of our story of faith remains unchanged and unchangeable. Although how we tell our story of faith may be influenced by our time and by other cultural influences, the story of faith remains as a solid foundation upon which we may build our lives.

We are the focus of Divine Love. That Divine Love has been fully expressed in the person of Jesus. The Divine Love which calls us to care for each other and the world in which we live is something upon which we may rely.

In a recent Homily, the Reverend Nadia Bolz-Weber reflected on how we are part of a much larger story. A very small part, yet an essential part of a story in which God's presence is a dependable constant. She said:

*When we have one arm reaching back to the hope of the Prophets and one hand reaching forward to the future of God's Promises we get to*

*stand firmly in the reality of today and not have that reality consume us. (NB-W St John's Cathedral - Nov. 24, 2024)*

Claiming our place in the ongoing story of God's presence in God's world does not mean that we, as individuals, will change the world. It may mean that we do have the opportunity to change our world. Our place, wherever it is, allows us the opportunity to look around us and see where our words and actions may make a difference.

At a time in the calendar year when new resolutions are made, which are either life changing, or are quickly consigned to a convenient trash can, as people of faith we may seize the opportunity to revisit our Baptismal Covenant and use it to discern how through our faithful witness, through our words and actions we may bring God's Love into God's World.

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# Church has a role to play in speaking truth to power

**By Rev. Chris Brouillard-Coyle**

**I**N THE BIBLICAL story of Jonah, the prophet is tasked with telling the entire city of Nineveh that the ways they are behaving, the path they are on, will lead to their destruction.

It is a favourite tale for Sunday schools because Jonah's initial resistance leads to him being eaten by a whale. Jonah's experience inside the whale is enough to transform his position and he does as he is called to do. He tells Nineveh to repent, to change their ways.

Jonah isn't the only Biblical character tasked with speaking truth to power and telling people to repent of their ways. Esther risked her life for her people. Daniel spent time in a lion's den after confronting the king of his time. Nathan had the unenviable task of helping King David realize the sinfulness of his actions regarding Uriah and Bathsheba. Then there were the many prophets, each in their own

## SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE



time and in their own ways, tasked with teaching and proclaiming truths and challenges to the people and those in authority.

By the time we get to John the Baptist, we aren't shocked when he refers to the powerful Pharisees and Sadducees as a 'brood of vipers' (Mt 3:7). We find hope in the words Mary as she sings her song of praise: "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty." (Lk 1:52-53). We believe what we hear in Jesus' first sermon as he reads from Isaiah "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to

proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Lk 4:18-19).

This tendency to speak to truth to power, to engage with society, to seek to transform the unjust structures that contribute to marginalization, is deeply embedded in our Bible stories and our history as Christians. Jesus upset the powerful to the point where they sought to destroy him. Following Jesus' footsteps, others have done likewise throughout history. While the ideal of the separation of church and state was created to ensure that church did not abuse its power through the state, it remains important to not abandon the foundational aspects of our faith – that greatest commandment to love God and love neighbour – in the ways we engage with the state.

Church has a role to play in speaking truth to pow-

er especially when those in power cause harm to those who are vulnerable. Loving our neighbour, respecting the dignity of every human being, means that we have a responsibility to ensure that people are treated with dignity.

There are people of faith who are leading the way, challenging those who fail to see the value of safe injection sites, those who treat homelessness as a crime, those who willfully devalue the well-being of individuals who are gender diverse, and more. Our Marks of Mission include transforming unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind, and pursue peace and reconciliation and there are examples of people of faith actively engaged in this work.

What more can each of us do to contribute to this important, faith-based work? As you reflect on your goals for 2025, consider doing one thing each month for those who are vulnerable. Read a book and/or engage in educational activities about the

needs and gifts of vulnerable communities. Participate in some form of activism: write a letter, sign a petition, share information, attend a rally, or talk with those in power. Engaging in social justice activism doesn't have to be overwhelming. Commit to do one thing each month this year. If you need inspiration, go back to the Bible. Activism is part of our story. It is part of who Jesus was and who we are called to be.

As we prepare to enter 2025, may we hold before us the words of the prophet Micah (6:8): "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Knowing what the Lord requires of us may we actively engage in ways that seek to transform the unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind, and pursue peace and reconciliation.

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

# Nuking the family, rebuilding the village

The seasons of Christmas and Epiphany offer us a natural entrée into reflecting on the spirituality of infants and children.

At this time, we give special attention to the infancy of Jesus and His (to put in modern parenting terms) milestones – birth, circumcision, presentation, epiphany, and His passage into ministry at the time of His baptism. These are festivals that highlight the significance of the very young and innocent in the plan of salvation, their rightful role in the conversations of the Church, and God's intention to bless humanity through the gift of children. Children matter to God, so much that He became one. This should be a point of loud proclamation on the Church's part, at a time when rising numbers of young people are declining to have children and families are struggling to survive under the increasing cost of living.

"It takes a village to raise a child" is an adage that is well-intentioned but has been largely abandoned in recent years. The pandemic intensified loneliness and isolation across demographic groups and families with children faced their own set of issues.

Lack of postpartum community support elevated maternal mental illness. Remote school and work taxed parents' ability to provide financially and support learning. Women exited the workforce in droves to respond to the demands of the home and are struggling to return to their old careers. The expense



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## FIELD NOTES

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MCDUGALL

of raising children under economic strain has turned the possibility of having a child into a luxury for those who can meet the financial expectations of a capitalistic society.

The myth of the nuclear family has essentially died. The model of one parent in the workforce and one working in the home is not attainable for most Canadians. Two or more incomes are required to meet the basic needs of a household with growing children.

The answer to these pressing concerns mustn't be continued birth rate decline and pessimistic misanthropy about the future. Children are not a special interest group; they are not expensive lifestyle accessories. They are us.

Our theological grounding as Christ-followers depends on the Incarnation, of Jesus entering our humanity in the form of a helpless infant. The care and nurture of children should be at the forefront of the Church's priorities, yet preoccupation with aging congregations and bemoaning the absence of children we don't have prevents this from happening.

Every Anglican church wants more children, but do they want to exert the effort that's required to minister to their needs? Children are typically loud, often sticky, and frequently oblivious to their surroundings. This is not conducive to the worshiping environment prized by typical Anglican sensibilities. Hospitality to children must be more than tolerating their behaviour (at best) or siloing them in a disused nursery or Sunday school room, which is not the gesture of care that it used to be.

Educating children in the faith and incorporating them

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into the life of the church is effortful, but not impossible. For as much as kids enjoy being "entertained", they also thrive off music, symbolism, ritual, and activity, which our liturgical tradition is well-appointed to offer.

Not every parish can offer a flashy, elaborate children's program but they can give great thought to how children are supported in the life of the community, make commitments to supporting parents, and consider ministry to children in their annual budgets. Ministering to children is something that must be done by all orders of the Church and should not be foisted upon parents as another expectation to live up to. This is not a natural inclination in many parishes, but to overlook children and families entirely is not going to foster seeds of cultural change.

As a mother of a toddler, I can vouch for the desperation that young/new parents feel to be connected to a village.

One needn't speak to a parent for very long to realize how burned out, frustrated, and anxious many people are as they navigate a system that is hostile to supporting healthy families across tax brackets. Safe, trusted adults who show an investment in their children's well-being are at a premium, as are mentors in childrearing and household management. The power of a church community that is prayerful and supportive beyond the Sunday service eases the burdens that parents feel and affirms to children that they have value in their worshipping community. The age of the privatized, nuclear family that keeps to itself is gone, if it ever truly existed. The village must be rebuilt to stand in the gap, for the sake of parents and children alike. Our future as a common human family and as the family of church depend on it.

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*For a child has been born for us...*

**MERRY CHRISTMAS  
HAPPY NEW YEAR**