



JOURNEY TO DAMASCUS - A PANDEMIC VERSION
Recognizing the injustices to which we have been blinded.
Page 9

HOW DO YOU START SHARING A PRIEST IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PANDEMIC?
Learning Church: News from across the Diocese of Huron.
Page 6



IT'S PHISHING SEASON, AGAIN!!
MEDIA BYTES: A few tips to help protect yourself from the deluge of scam emails.
Page 10

HURON CHURCH NEWS

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Come, Holy Spirit, come: Church in a liminal time

Pentecost and the insurgency of the Spirit – Pentecost then and now: From Bishop Todd Townshend's sermon (following Willi James Jennings' commentary on Acts) at the 181st Diocese of Huron Synod opening worship service, London, Ontario, Sunday May 16, 2021

There is something about living in the Spirit that feels a little windblown.

It feels a little like casting lots to decide. It feels less “strategic” that we might like... when what we really want is control.

But the reality of Christian life—is that every common moment, every administrative act, every organizational gesture has ALWAYS been best taken in the posture of praying and waiting, asking for the power of the Spirit to come, waiting in expectation and readiness, standing in the shadow cast by the presence of the Holy Spirit. And then, when the time is right, the waiting-in-prayer moves forward in an action fully of God.

It's like learning a new language. You have to submit to the ways, the structures, the cultures of the people who can speak it. All of the sounds, sayings, practices, habits of mind and body, and all of the hopes. We are learning, continually, the language and culture of Christ. And the Spirit is our teacher.



Bishop Todd Townshend at St. Paul's Cathedral on May 16. The Synod opening worship service was livestreamed for the entire diocese, as were the Synod sessions on Sunday afternoon and Monday.

I pray that this will be our WAY in what I also pray will be a post-colonial period of life in this church. We have come to confess that the ways of our colonial past led to catastrophic outcomes. Our colonizing ways revealed our utter helplessness in the face of difference. We tried to conquer it.

Instead of this, repudiating these ways, we can learn to “join”... To join with one another, not to conquer one another. Join together with something or someone a bit different from us. To trust that our differences will create just the right distances between us. We join together but leave room for just

the right distance. This is space in which we can relate to one another. Without trying to blur the other into our life. Without swallowing the differences that can create new relationship. We can work to create a new space together that works for more people. Thereby making it a better place for us, too.

Think back to that first experience of Pentecost. Those listening that day – after waiting long time for something to happen – those listening were amazed and perplexed. They asked, “what does it mean?” “What are we supposed to do?” – it was not obvious.

What was obvious was that God was doing something. The Holy Spirit of God was taking them into the lives of people they didn't know yet. People who they didn't understand yet. They were being joined together in love. The love that cannot be tamed, controlled, or fully planned.

It is the same Spirit unleashed on us— even though God knows that we're sleepy, weary, anxious people. But God also knows, we are faithful, committed, loving people. Eager-to-know-the-Spirit people—that's all we need to be.

Come, Holy Spirit, Come.

(Full text of Bishop Todd's sermon: www.diohuron.org)

Bishop's Charge to Synod: Pages 4-5

A year in review and a glance into our future

SYNOD POPULAR REPORT: Shaping our mission and ministry by yielding to the Life of the Spirit

By Allie McDougall

The 181st Synod of the Diocese of Huron opened on Sunday, May 16 with the Synod service livestreamed for the entire Diocese from St. Paul's Cathedral in London, Ontario.

The service started at 10:30 a.m., with The Right Reverend Todd Townshend, Bishop of Huron, as celebrant and preacher.

As in the last year's annual gathering of the Huron representatives that took place in September, no faithful were present in the cathedral's pews due to the pandemic restrictions in the province of Ontario. Thanks to the new video equipment installed at the cathedral, the faithful across Huron were able to watch the service at which Ven. Rosalyn Kantlaht'ant Elm was collated as Archdeacon for Reconciliation and Indigenous Ministry.

With participants gathering virtually for the second year,



the 181st Synod of the Diocese of Huron was convened to its first working session after the service, at 12:30 p.m., broadcast live from Church House in downtown London.

Bishop Todd Townshend began the proceedings with a land acknowledgement, followed by an opening word of prayer. He took a moment to acknowledge the efforts of all who have made a second virtual synod possible, and welcomed a number of new clergy. Rev. Canon Marian Hag-

gerty then offered a touching Commemoration of the Faithful Departed, remembering all synod members who have died in Christ.

Following a “year in review” slideshow, Bishop Todd offered an informal reflection on our current context. He acknowledged and thanked the Diocesan Executive staff for their incredible hard work in navigating this challenging time.

Considering the reports of the archdeacons, Bishop Todd

declared that he has never felt more hopeful for the future of the church. He encouraged us not to follow trends but to discern individual communities' gifts and needs as we strive for the spiritual health of congregations and wider communities. He highlighted the importance of sharing of good financial stewardship through wise investment, collaboration, and exploration. He also took time to give thanks to Canon Paul Rathbone for 20 years of faithful service as Diocesan Secretary-Treasurer as he embarks on a well-deserved summer sabbatical.

Bishop Todd's charge to Synod this year was delivered in two parts, serving as an extension of last year's charge, this time focussing on the theme “Yielding to the Life of the Spirit”.

The first part of the charge explored what it means to live yielding to the Holy Spirit's direction, and how this might

shape us for mission and ministry as a diocese. Bishop Todd shared that he believes we are already equipped to dive into life yielding to the Spirit by virtue of our existing practice and traditions, but that we must be centred on generating new life, and not simply operating efficiently. The cultural context of the Diocese of Huron has shifted from the idyllic post-World War II period, and the liminality of this moment calls us to respond with the assets we have at our disposal to adapt to our new reality.

A summary of the financial report for 2020 indicated a diocesan operating deficit of \$3,000, a \$15,000 surplus from Camp Huron, and a diocesan accumulated surplus of just over \$300,000. The full report is available from the office of the Secretary-Treasurer.

Synod Popular Report: Go to Page 3

Signs of hope in the times of fear and doubts

Greetings to the 181st Synod of Huron from the companion diocese of Amazonia

By Bishop Marinez Bassotto

Greetings to the esteemed brother in Christ, Bishop Todd and to the dear friends of the clergy and laity of the Diocese of Huron at this time of meeting of the Diocesan Synod.

Our dioceses are experiencing companionship in a way that a few years ago could not have been imagined. In the life of humanity, we live times of fears and doubts, times of social isolation and restrictive measures of all kinds, times of darkness and great pain. Paradoxically, this has also been a time of solidarity, of concrete gestures of love and looseness through social networks.

I want to briefly report our reality here in Brazil and especially in the Amazon.

Since last year, the COVID-19 pandemic made inequalities worse, exacerbating hunger, racism and hate speech, the extermination of black, indigenous, riverside populations, be it for disease or for violence. It has unmasked the greed of those who do not have any commitment to the life of our common home, the lack of love and care for environmental justice. It increased our pain, suffer and fears.

The neglect of the politicians, above all the federal government, and lack of rapid action had a direct impact on the lives



Bishop Marinez Bassotto at the cathedral in Belem

of the poorest communities, causing hundreds of deaths. COVID-19 spread through the entire region, the second wave with the new Brazilian variant has been a tsunami for the Amazon region. In some states, like in the Amazonas, there was a sharp increase of more than 200% of cases. It would be ironic, if not tragic, to know that the people in the middle of the Amazon – one of the places that helps the whole planet to breathe – has suffocated to death. Suffocated by a lack of oxygen, suffocated by the irresponsibility of authorities who should have acted in time. Suffocated by the actions of a denialist government that likes to flirt with death. Suffocated by a society that subjects weak, sick and poor people to all kinds of injustice and death.

At this moment when I send this greeting, we are again in lockdown in the city of Belem,

and in the entire metropolitan region, and also in lockdown in the entire Episcopal Anglican Church in Brazil until at least Easter.

But we have not only bad news; we also have many signs of hope. Vaccines are arriving slowly, but they are arriving and this is cause for great joy. We managed to carry out our solidarity actions with the distribution of basic food baskets and hygiene kits to many families. We maintained our unity through various online events and permanent training with the clergy and laity. We are having moments of worship and virtual services on Facebook and Youtube every morning since mid-March of the last year. These moments of adoration bring together people from all over Brazil and other parts of the Anglican Communion.

We have had the constant presence of people from the

clergy and laity of the Diocese of Huron, praying in communion with us. This cheers us up, and encourages us a lot. In all this challenging time, we felt the presence of God by our side and we never felt alone. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been supported by you through your prayers, your constant presence in our morning prayer lives, through messages from Bishop Todd, through frequent contact with members of the Companionship Committee, and also through financial assistance that was sent to us and that helped us to maintain the ministries in the Amazon, and to carry out our solidarity actions for the most vulnerable people and for the indigenous communities.

Our hearts are filled with deep gratitude to God, and to each one of you!

You make a big difference in our lives and in the lives of the people of the Amazon. We want to express our gratitude for the willingness, support, care and affection that you have towards us and affirm that it is reciprocal. We pray daily for our family in Huron. We pray of the lives of your leaders, especially for Bishop Todd, for his family.

Be sure of all our love for you.

+Marinez, Diocese of Amazonia

Prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit

By Linda DeBurger

As I reflect on my faith journey prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit is a big part of the journey.

Prayer has deepened my faith and my relationship with the Lord. Prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit gives me strength in dealing with daily life especially during the pandemic.

I pray little prayers during the day. Lord I need help, I need wisdom, and sometimes the words to say in certain situations.

I meet weekly with three ladies to pray for our needs of our community, and world and the needs of others. We have



seen many prayers answered over the years. These prayers are not always answered the way I think they should be answered. Sometimes it is yes, no or wait.

What I thought was impossible the Lord has made possible. Our oldest son was estranged

from us for five years. I prayed each day that the Lord would give us back the relationship he wanted us to have. One day, our son called needing us, as he was at rock bottom. He did not know how we would respond. We reached out with love and went to him, and yes, we have a new relationship. The relationship the Lord wanted us to have.

In my life I have worked as a Registered Nurse. Each day as I went to work, I prayed for wisdom, knowledge, and discernment to be able to handle whatever came through the door. I worked in a first aid room in a factory, so I never knew what might happen. Each day I felt the Lord was with me.

My husband and I owned and operated a funeral home for many years in a small town. We felt this was a ministry that the Lord had given to us. We prayed for each family we served for comfort and strength for the coming days, and also healing for their broken hearts. We also prayed for ourselves that the Lord would give us wisdom, knowledge, and compassion when helping the grieving families. We were amazed at how the Lord helped us with this ministry.

Prayer gives me strength, courage, and comfort knowing that the Lord is only an ask away.

Linda DeBurger is the Parish Outreach Representative from Christ Church, Dresden.

More awards for the Huron Church News

Our newspaper won two third place prizes at this year's Canadian Christian Communicators' Association (CCCA) competition. The 2021 CCCA Awards of Merit were given to Rev. Chris Brouillard-Coyle's article "Breaking bread: live from the kitchen floor", printed in the Huron Church News June 2020 edition; and to Rev. Andreas Thiel's "excerpts from a chaplain's diary" titled "Surely the Lord is in this place..." published in October 2020.

CCCA (formerly Canadian Church Press) is regarded as one of the most active and broadly based ecumenical organizations in Canada. Some 60 Canadian church publications are members of CCCA. Huron Church News won third place in general excellence category in 2020.

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Examining diocesan structures and culture

From Page 1: Popular Report

A video greeting from both Bishop Marinez Bassotto of our companion Diocese of Amazonia and the Companionship Committee were shared.

Bishop Marinez spoke of the shared struggles between our dioceses and reported on the hardships and victories of the Amazonian people. She assured us of the ongoing prayers and deep love for Huron held by our sisters and brothers in Amazonia. The Companionship Committee encouraged us to persist in prayer and consider offering financial support. We continue to offer prayers and solidarity with our treasured companions.

Throughout the day, multiple video updates were shared about the ongoing work of ministries, partners, and committees around the diocese. These included updates from Canterbury College and Renison College, Camp Huron, and an encouraging testimony from faith witness Ms. Linda DeBurger.

The first session concluded with a video honouring recent retirees and their accomplishments was shared. We look forward to celebrating these individuals and their faithful service in a more fulsome way once this is safe to do and give hearty thanks for their numerous contributions.



Collation of Ven. Rosalyn Kantlaht'ant Elm as Archdeacon for Reconciliation and Indigenous Ministry. Synod opening worship service, Sunday, May 16, 2021

Synod reconvened at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, May 17th following a brief service of Morning Prayer led by Ven. Kristen Aikman. A letter of support and encouragement from Rt. Rev. Anne Germond, Archbishop of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario, was shared prior to the presentation of the second part of the Bishop's Charge.

Part two of the charge focused on the stewardship of our material resources, particularly the question of our buildings.

With hope and optimism, Bishop Todd highlighted that while we face decline, we re-

main well-positioned to continue to persist in mission. Diocesan Council will be working to develop resources for parishes as they navigate this season. The structures and culture of the diocese will be examined to determine what might be changed or altered to ensure we are not limited by them.

The charge concluded with a revisitation of the four-fold vision outlined at last year's synod and how we have already begun the work of being a learning, just, diverse, and new church.

After a presentation from Social and Ecological Justice

Huron, a motion sponsored by SEJH members Ms. Caroline Sharp and Rev. Andrew Wilson that Synod encourage Church House and all churches to adopt the "Moving to Light Green" initiative and its recommendations by 2022, with progress to be tracked in vestry reports beginning in 2023. The motion was carried.

Another motion from Canon Chancellor Mr. Jim Ferguson and Vice-Chancellor Mr. Chris Sinal to allow for the use of electronic means to hold electoral synods, and to amend the

phrasing of Canons XVIII and XXI was carried in both the lay and clergy orders.

As in the first session, the day was featured several video updates from the congregational coaches, the Anglican Foundation and their new "Say Yes to Kids" post-pandemic initiative, the Justice League of Huron, the Refugee Committee, and Proud Anglicans of Huron.

Mr. Peter Andersen offered another thoughtful reflection as a faith witness. Rev. Canon Greg Smith supplied an update on the tremendous fundraising effort of the diocese in raising \$386 417.55 for the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund.

The election of lay and clergy delegates and alternates to Provincial and General Synod were announced and accepted, as were the deanery nominations for Diocesan Council.

With the business of the day drawing to a close, the 181st Synod of the Diocese of Huron concluded with many thanks and acknowledgments to all who contributed to making our second online synod a success.

Synod will reconvene in-person in May 2022, conditional on the safety of public gatherings at that time.

Allie McDougall is a Huron postulant for priestly ordination.

Where the faith is: Building something we'll never see finished

By Peter Andersen

When I was asked to do a Faith Witness segment for Synod I really had to think about what to focus on. It's not that easy; thank you to those who've written years of homilies for me to listen to.

I've decided to share with you a story of something I love to do, which is work with my bees.

We began keeping bees in 2015, in part as a reaction to the news of the decline of honey-bee populations, and in part because I've always loved agricultural work. We thought we would keep some bees, harvest some honey and wax, maybe sell some and put a little money into our church. What began to happen as we spent time with these creatures was really something quite different.

Honeybees are an entirely social insect with distinct roles within the colony; there couldn't be a colony without each other. Honeybees are one of the few creatures on earth that work as a community to build a home and then work together to create food stores and raise their young.

Queen bees live for 4-5 years; they will generally only leave the hive once, and that is for

a mating flight. Once she has done that, she won't leave the colony again, and will spend her days laying brood, her pheromones fill the hive and let the 100,000 or so bees at work know that she is alive and well.

Worker bees are all females, daughters of the queen. They spend the day harvesting pollen, nectar, and building wax foundation for brood and honey and raising up their sisters, the colony's next generation. Spring and summer workers live a substantially shorter life than the queen, only 15 to 40 days; their winter counterparts will live longer between 140 and 300 days. Their job is to protect the queen through the cold of winter and see her into the spring. The late summer bees will raise up the winter ones for a spring they will never see; they will have faith that their work has been done well and that the next generation is secure.

Bees work very hard to create the structures they need to survive. One bee will visit between 75 and 3000 flowers a day; she'll produce 1/12th of a teaspoon of honey in her foraging life. The wax, honey, and brood foundation they create is many lifetimes' of work. It takes

thousands of honeybees to create the necessities of life for a colony, a viable community.

For all this work and investment, should things begin to go wrong in the colony, disease, lack of space, or something else, they'll leave. The queen will decide it's time to go and be gone; the brood laying will stop. Her pheromones in the hive will cease; things will become very broken. The generation upon generation of work of the colony will be lost without their queen.

For a time, a queenless hive is still full of hard working and viable bees, resources like pollen, honey and wax foundation. As time goes on, if the colony is allowed to remain without a queen, when summer ends they'll die. There'll be no winter bees, and the generational work will be gone. The countless hours and energy of building honey and brood foundation will be lost to moths and mould. The frames will be useless, and will most likely be burned. It is a surprisingly sad event to witness.

An intentional intervention by a beekeeper stops this. The queenless but viable hive with all its resources, wax foundation, pollen, and honey, its

generations of work, and its remaining workers, added onto the top of a queen right colony will not only allow the queenless hive to survive with all its lifetimes of resources, but make the new combined colony stronger, more viable. The added population adjusts to the pheromones of the new queen, and often leads to successful overwintering. Some of these colonies become the strongest in our yards.

I see God at work in our lives and in the Church as I see the work in a bee yard. The queen is like the Holy Spirit, life giving, providing comfort and reassurance when we're going in the right direction, and letting us know when we aren't. I think we can feel Her absence like the pheromone leaving a hive. It doesn't mean all is lost, it means we're going the wrong way and we need to do something different. We need to intervene to make intentional change. In my experience, the sense that the Spirit is moving in a new direction, and deciding to follow, has brought the most needed renewal and greatest reward.

We don't need God to be the beekeeper, but we do need to pay attention for the moments

when we need to be, when that intentional intervention is required.

The efforts of a faithful old worker laying a stone foundation of a church for their community generations ago shouldn't be lost because the Spirit is moving in a new direction. We need the courage, the faith to follow, to preserve the generation after generations work, and to put it to the use it was intended, for the building of the community of Christ, in whatever new form that takes.

Like the old worker, and like our beloved bees, we're building something we'll never see finished. That's where the faith is; that's what the bees have been teaching me.

Peter Andersen is a parishioner of St. Aidan's Church, London.



Yielding to the Life of the Spirit: building upon sheer possibility

Bishop's Charge to the 181st Synod of the Diocese of Huron, May 16-17, 2021

By Bishop Todd Townshend

For seven straight Sundays in the season of Easter, we've heard a passage from that unique book in the Bible, The Acts of the Apostles.

Like the book of Genesis, it's a story of new beginnings. Jesus has lived, he's died, he's been raised from the dead, he's appeared to his disciples in many ways, and now he has ascended to the right hand of God the Father, the Creator of all. The book of Acts begins with the Ascension story, and the people of Jesus waiting for the coming of the promised Holy Spirit.

Willie James Jennings, in his commentary on Acts, says that this isn't really about the birth of the church, as we sometimes say; it is more about how the disciples of Jesus were drawn into the disrupting presence of the Spirit of God. The stories show the willingness of God to invade their every day and every moment to send them, and lead them, down pathways they never imagined. Acts teaches how people of faith can yield to the Spirit—how people of faith can yield to the life and movement and disturbances of the Holy Spirit of God.

By one definition, "to yield" to something or someone, is to give up possession of it, or your claim on it. In our case, it is to surrender our possession of, to relinquish our position over, to submit ourselves to... God. Yielding to the Spirit can be a beautiful thing. The penalty for failing to yield is the loss of relationship to the power that drives the universe, and the frustrating inability to know and experience the fruits of the Spirit, which are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, and other excellent things.

To yield to the Spirit is to actually believe in God the Spirit. To trust that the Holy Spirit is trust-worthy. To know that this is not just any spirit, this is the same Spirit that moved over creation, that moved in the patriarchs and matriarchs, in the prophets, in Mary—by whom Jesus was born—the Word, now in the flesh, who sends us the Spirit. This Holy Spirit is the very breath of God who brought you into existence. The same Spirit that helps you in your weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought—we do not know how to do anything as we ought—but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. This is the wind of God that powers the world; every molecule, every atom, every super-string of vibrating energy in the cosmos... the One who brings us real hope, and a real future.

So, we make way for that Spirit. We do not want to yield



We will remember that structures are meant to support and uphold us, as we are faithful. Not the other way around.

to the spirit of the times, nor to the spirit of our own will, but rather to seek the direction of the Holy Spirit of God, the giver of life, the one who makes all things new.

Again, this is not as easy as it sounds; the movement of the Holy Spirit can be hard to see. Sometimes, it takes practice.

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I believe that our inherited, in-culturated, incredible Christian practices—seasoned and shaped by the Anglican experience and its wisdom—are all we need right now as a central "strategy". Practices like: 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 every generation we learn and re-learn them anew and we practice them together. These activities shape us, then we go deeper into them seeing that they become richer and richer as you go, and we find that we are drawn into a way of being in the world that allows us to live more fully and abundantly in Christ. It's one of the ways that God makes us "new".

If there is a way though all of "this", it will be mediated by our participation in the simple, central, Christian activities that have proven, over time, to make disciples. I think that's what we need to focus on right now.

And, as I said last fall, we will need to make room, make time, make space for these practices

to take on central importance in our life together. Which refers to that idea of "shifting the centre of gravity" of the activities around which our common life revolves.

I continue to believe that our Strategic Goal: is to shift the centre of gravity in our practices from an emphasis on operations to an emphasis on renewal and new creation, better revealing the marks of mission by becoming: a learning church, a just church, a diverse church, a new church.

The KEY: to be willing to go more deeply into the practices of the church, fully open to God's desire for us and for the world, focusing on Jesus and yielding to the life and movement of the Holy Spirit.

How we operate, how we function, is very important. So, the operations of our churches can be renewed, too, as we keep our eyes on our primary mission. Most of what happens in our church happens locally, in the congregations and parishes and in your lives at home, at work, at play. I'm asking you to imagine ways to shift the centre of gravity there. But this Synod concerns itself also with the working of the Diocese of Huron as a whole. So, I'd like to focus now on some of the ways we will begin to renew operations and shift energy to Christian practices in our diocesan structures.

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As I learn more about how we operate as a diocese, I am both grateful for the incredible work that people have done, and continue to do, and I'm recognizing that much of the current system or "platform" was designed to serve another time. Some of it still works very well. Some of it does not.

We need to go back in time a bit to see how much the things around us have changed. Think back to about 1950.

The 1950's and 60's were a time of settling, and building, and expanding in the Diocese of Huron. Some of you lived through these years and will remember it. As Canadian society settled into the post-war boom, the church thrived. Some of us think of those days as the "norm" for church—the golden era of church—but I don't. When compared with two thousand years of Christian life, those years were not normal. They were an anomaly of sorts, a blip on the long timeline.

Bishop Luxton's vision at the time, and it would it have been mine too, I'm guessing, was to build the church out into every direction possible. They came together and built schools, houses of worship, parish halls, gyms, offices—and they gathered the people in. They did it. It was an incredible accomplishment, and we are the inheritors of that. We have inherited incredible assets, spiritually and physically. However, some of these assets were built for a different time. A time of stability and growth, when the church was one of the central places in society and in the neighbourhood. It was a buffer against anything that smelled like the chaos and death of a World War.

Today we do not live in a stable, monocultural, peaceful, growing church-society relationship. Some have spent the last forty years recognizing that and lamenting it. Some have even felt the burden of responsibility for this so-called "decline" of the church. The leaders over the past forty or fifty years have been just as good, or better, than the leaders of the church in any other time. It's just that the entire milieu, the environment, had changed and continues to change. More and more of the people in our churches do not recognize—and do not desire—the 1950-1970 Anglican Church of Southwestern Ontario. I'm an old guy—a grey-beard bishop—and I don't remember that time. Never lived it. I was three years old when it was effectively over. Which, if that's true, means that for fifty years we've been simultaneously living a kind-of-death and a kind-of-embryonic-developing-new way of living and being.

Some people call a season like this a liminal time. It comes from the Latin *limen*, meaning "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—for good or for ill. That's

the scary part. The outcome is not pre-determined.

This is why yielding to the power of the Holy Spirit, the giver of life, is a good focus for today. We are in a time of following, of trying simply to keep up, not really seeing where we are going. We can make some educated guesses about our likely trajectories, but we are always stepping into an unknown future—we walk by faith, not by sight. At some point, even travelling in a fog, we decide that we are going to put it into gear and really get going with the Spirit. And as we follow the Spirit and watch for her movements, we keep up the work of preparing ourselves, pruning our branches, and cultivating whatever seeds God sows into our soil.

Our "soil" is fertile in many places, thanks be to God, we have been given many assets. We have two kind of assets. The first is people, wonderful people. In them we see the divine-human relationship coming to life in faith and action. The assembly gathered for worship. The disciples sent out into the world.

The second kind of asset is physical. We have land, buildings, vessels, the scriptures, water, bread and wine. All of these non-living physical assets are simply "media". Each of them is a medium in which, or with which, God relates to us. We consider them holy, but they are only holy because God brings them to life as "a means to an end". The "end" is you, me, us—the living—and our relationship with God.

Physical assets are the means by which God will reach out and embrace us. They are necessary. They are crucially important. We need to make sure that we are using the best media possible. We know that God will use any means necessary to love us. It's the nature of God, who has no physical body, to kindle life into matter, to breathe life into clay—or whatever else is at hand—and to love the creature infinitely.

Right now, we are beginning pour some of our energies and focus and money into developing digital media spaces for communication, community building, and Christian formation. That's another "land" we can inhabit for the sake of the Gospel. Over the past fifteen months, we've seen that God makes good use of it for meeting, learning, seeing and hearing one another.

As we go, we will challenge ourselves to hold the physical assets lightly and to think of them as a beautiful, cherished, means to an end. Not the end itself. We also remember to hold the creaturely, living, assets closely. We will challenge ourselves to cherish the expansion of the



human. We will challenge ourselves to grow disciples of Jesus. To expand the number of people who are good disciples and good disciple-makers. And only then to consider what physical structures we need to support that activity. We will remember that structures are meant to support and uphold us, as we are faithful. Not the other way around.

Stewardship of our Inherited Resources in a Liminal Time

In this time, perhaps any time, the ministry of a bishop is to receive the Holy Spirit, and to stir up the grace of God, without fear. Ours is spiritual work, in service to Christ, who loves us into loving the world, by the power of that same Spirit. But spiritual work happens in physical, fleshly, people and places. How can we open ourselves to the leading of God when it comes to the spiritual use of our assets and our operations?

First, I think, we do this by being brutally honest with ourselves about some of the biggest challenges.

1. Physical Structures: property and buildings

What percentage of your overall budget goes to the maintenance of your church buildings? We live in Canada, we need a roof, walls, windows, plumbing, electrical, and heat. Some of our communities have inherited a building already paid for, others have mortgages; all have maintenance.

This year alone, the insurance increases on those buildings—the increase to the premiums alone—took another \$625K out of the system across our diocese (on average, a 92% increase). Altogether, our buildings are insured for over \$440M. This assumes that we would replace our buildings just as they are, should there be a total loss. How many of you would actually do that? I love church buildings, they are holy and often beautiful. But we don't need \$440M worth of them—for ourselves. Because there is only one insurance company left who will sell us insurance, we are setting up a task force to do the research and to negotiate some new options. There are options, even with this one company. Please stay tuned.

This points to a critical issue. These buildings were not built

to weigh us down and put us out of business. They were built to serve communities.

Twenty-five years ago, we had 250 congregations. Now we have about 170. That is down about a third. Several groups that study this stuff anticipate that one-third of existing churches in Canada will close over the next ten years. Let's say it's not quite that bad, and we are left with 125 church buildings in 2031, when I'm about to retire – about half of what we had when I was first ordained.

Even then, if you took a person who was gripped by the Holy Spirit and trained in discipleship and ministry, and you said, “here you go, we want you to be the Anglican Christian presence in Southwestern Ontario, and you can have these 125 buildings, and these 25,000 or so Christians, and this bit of money in trusts and all that—to start a diocese—she or he would say, “Alleluia! The LORD provides!”

Ask any church planter, that's a seriously good start. That's not building from scratch. That's a golden opportunity. Right now, we have 30 % more human and physical assets than that scenario. That's a platinum opportunity. Not to mention that—the power of the Holy Spirit wants to clothe us with power from on high! We have assets. They are God-given. Maybe this time of challenge will also liberate us for something new in our communities.

By this time next year, I expect that the Diocesan Council and I will have found a way forward with policies, guidelines, resources, and training to support you in preserving, restoring, and repurposing our physical assets to serve our neighbourhoods in the name of Christ for generations to come. This will be your decision. I want to see church communities thrive, not close. So, I'll do everything in my power to make sure we are looking at all of the options. There are resources out there and we will bring some of them together for you over the next year or so.

2. Organizational Structures: the people and processes that make it happen, or not

In the many attempts I've made, over the years, to have a big strategy for reorganizing myself, my workplace, or my community, I've repeatedly

learned the truth that management guru Peter Drucker made famous, “culture eats strategy for breakfast.”

The Diocese of Huron has a culture, is a culture, of sorts. Culture is simply the ideas, values, customs, patterns, and social behaviour of a particular people or society. It's our habits, it's our automatic ways of being, and it seems like the most natural things in the world—unless you've come from another culture. Part of the reason we've been able to be resilient in the pandemic is that part of our culture is very healthy and good. It serves us well.

Parts of it do not serve us well, however, and it's hard to see what's what. Therefore, we will have to experiment with some things, try them differently, experiment, assess it after a while and see if it's better. If it is, great, keep going. If it's not, try something else. This will create some discomfort and some conflict, but we can embrace that.

By this time next year, we will have had a close look at the following things to see if the current arrangement still serves us well: Diocesan Council, the committee structures, vocational discernment and formation, Deaneries and Archdeaconries, and the ways in which we exercise and share episcopal ministry.

+++

Every organization has structures AND dynamics. They work together. What about the dynamics, the movement, the activity that these structures intend to support? Here, I'd like to comment on the four overarching priorities I laid out last September. These describe our activity, our dynamics, the forces that provide movement.

Since September we have aspired to be a more learning church, a more just church, a more diverse church, and a church open to every kind of Resurrection “newness”.

A learning church

A disciple is a pupil of Jesus, learning of him and living in him. Well, I'm delighted to say that we are a church eager to learn. There has been a marked increase in study groups, workshops, speaker series, podcasts, reading groups, listening groups, EFM groups, and all kinds of learning and

We have assets. They are God-given. Maybe this time of challenge will also liberate us for something new in our communities.

catechetical formation. Part of the reason is that we were restricted from getting together so we embraced digital media which, as it turns out for many of us, made participation easier.

There is still a very important place for gathering to learn in-person and in-community, but this has been a huge gift that will supplement what we have always done to support learning and formation. In the next year, we hope to provide more content, accessibility, pathways, and programs for being a continuously learning church. Stay curious about Christ, my friends!

A just church

Justice, in our religious tradition, is “to make right”, to put right. We seek to be a church that makes wrongs right and avoids injustice in the first place. What does God's justice look like when it happens? What does it look like in the lives of faithful people? A just church prioritizes relationships and lives in right relationship with God, one another, and the natural creation.

Here, I would like to point to the work being done to learn and do more about dismantling racism, reconciliation with indigenous peoples, creation care, addressing economic injustices, equitable vaccine distribution, refugee sponsorship, and so on. These things can become more central for more of us and we can follow those in our churches who have been up to their elbows in the work for decades. A special thanks for the leadership given by the Justice League of Huron, the Refugee committee, and many the other justice-seeking teams and people in our church.

We also will have to exponentially ramp up our response to the climate emergency. When we can circulate again in relative safety, our eyes cannot veer from the two things that threaten us more than this coronavirus: inequality and environment degradation. By this time next year, we will have worked through ways to lead our communities in making a real, measurable difference in these areas. The work has begun and it continues and there will some updates about all of this work as we go, through videos and other means of communication. I look forward to that work.

I also look forward to continuing to work with Indigenous Anglicans as we partner in new and creative ways to be together in Christ. This is something Archdeacon Rosalyn Elm and I will be launching into more deeply both on-line and in-person this September. We seek God's justice together.

A diverse church

In the feedback from last Synod and in the time since, this was the area where I seemed

to cause the most confusion. It may have also revealed that not everyone wants diversity in the church. Some organizations, some churches, are affinity groups—based on shared characteristics and interests. We are drawn to people who are similar to us, who like the same things. That's ok, it's often good. It just can't be all that we do. In some locations, it's just the demographic reality that there is little diversity in the population. But even that will change soon.

I still maintain that if we want to see a beauty that we've never seen before in our churches, then we should foster a more diverse membership. The future of Canada is going to be multi-traditioned, multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-racial, multi-gendered—and so needs to be the future of the Anglican Church.

Maybe “unity in diversity” will become our motto someday, when we are a more radically hospitable church, joyfully embracing difference and diversity.

A “new” church

In a liminal season like this one, we ready ourselves for new beginnings. Like the new beginnings we see in the Acts of the Apostles. A new beginning is usually a very satisfying reorientation, a sense that we finally found a new equilibrium, and a renewed sense of identity and mission starts to come better into focus.

I don't know if this will happen over the next few years or over the next few decades, but I believe it will come.

For those who love the idea of everything becoming new, this is fun. For those who dread it and are concerned for what will be lost, this is not fun. The “new” I'm referring to here is neither of those, merely.

This is the deepest, truest, form of “new” possible. The kind that is good news for all. It is the kind of “new” that we hear described in the creation stories. It is the kind of new that what experience at the empty tomb of Jesus. Sheer possibility. That is what our church is built upon. Faith in the possibility of a new creation, a new creation that is stretching out before us and that the Holy Spirit of God promises to lead us into. The whole history of the people of God has included liminal times like this. God always led them through—each and every time—to the new thing promised.

Therefore, we embrace it and continue to ask, in every decision, every grief, every opportunity, “could this newness be the work of God? Is this a possible place where God's new creation may take root?”

(This is the edited version of Bishop Todd's Charge to Synod. For the integrall text - and video - visit www.diohuron.org)

St. George's and St. Columba share in a new way

By Rev. Margaret Walker

So how do you start sharing a priest between two parishes in the middle of the pandemic? Could we envision a way of doing church now and into the future?

A way of doing church that would take advantage of the technology that is now so prevalent and would also work when we are permitted to gather in our churches, and share time together over a coffee.

One of the challenges of sharing a priest is that the service at each location has to be at different times, times that are about two hours apart to allow enough time for the first service and then driving to the second church. Another challenge is that the priest rarely gets to spend much time with the church with the first service. Since prior to sharing St Columba Waterloo and St George's New Hamburg's ser-



If you don't need a pulpit for preaching it makes a good stand for the TV

vices were at almost the same time, either or both parishes would have had to make major changes to their service times.

The plan was to stream from one church one week and from the other church the following week. One week the priest

would be live and in-person, the other week the priest would be live and on-TV. The benefits are that everyone can meet in their parish for worship and fellowship every week (once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted), service times only changes

slightly, the priest can stay for coffee and fellowship, no inappropriate rushing (no speeding tickets or accidents), and mileage costs are significantly reduced. And if sickness or weather stop a parishioner from coming to church for the service then they will still be able to watch it on Facebook. We are ready for the next ice storm.

For the first six months of the pandemic, neither parish was streaming their services over Facebook or YouTube, so most of the technology for streaming needed to be acquired. We were shopping in August for large screen TVs, computers, cameras, and selecting streaming software. The set-up in each location uses the same technology, which means that tips can be shared, if needed. The operators can run the set-up in the other location, and there is a chance that between them they can train the priest to use it for funerals. A joint

Facebook page was set up for worship so that parishioners go to the same place to watch the service regardless of where it is being streamed from.

Since September, we have made several upgrades including increasing the number of cameras from one to two, and adding more microphones so that no one shares. The priest is very appreciative of the new overhead lighting at St George's, which greatly reduces the shadows on speakers faces.

We are looking forward to the time when we will gather together for worship. Sharing a priest is not so obvious when everyone is watching from home. Will it be more or less comfortable to watch from a pew with fellow parishioners compared to watching from the sofa alone?

Rev. Margaret Walker is Priest-in-Charge at St. George's New Hamburg and St. Columba Waterloo.

Outdoor Learning Church: Holy Week tour in Cottam and Essex.....



Last Supper on the Holy Week Tour

We knew that we were not going to be able to hold Easter services within the church building this year, but wanted to make it a memorable one for everyone.

We came up with an idea for a parking lot "Holy Week" tour and within two weeks, we had it planned out and put together. Each stop had a sign with a short bible verse and reference, along with questions for reflection.

Rev. Chris Brouillard-Coyle created QR codes so that those with cell phones could scan the codes. This then brought them to the parishes' website to read full Bible verses. Each stop/place of reflection was adopted and decorated by members of Trinity, Cottam and St. Paul's Essex. One stop offered free seeds to visitors to help in creating beautiful gardens.

As we were putting up the signs and decorating, a resident from nearby came to see what we were doing. We explained and she offered thanks and prayers for our work.

Most parishioners from both churches attended the Holy Week "tour" and with the help of a welcoming sign near the road, many from the community also attended. We heard time and time again how wonderful and how meaningful it was to many. We look forward to doing this again next year.

Later in April, some ladies from Trinity visited each member of the church to bring some cheer and encouragement. Those visited were serenaded with song from a safe social distance and presented with a plant and prayer cards. It's important to stay connected with members of our parish family.

Pat Jackson, Trinity, Cottam.



Easter Garden in front of St. George's, Thorndale

On Palm Sunday Weekend, before the current shut down, St. George's, Thorndale was able to have a masked outdoor family gathering to create an Easter Garden at the front of the church.

It was so good to be together, and the children and adults enjoyed working together to make the empty tomb, the crosses, and to place the flowers to make the garden. The children also painted the Happy Easter banner and butterflies to add on Easter Sunday.

We left the Tomb closed until Easter Sunday, when I had the pleasure of rolling the stone away, adding more flowers in bloom and the butterflies. The children did a great job of working together to make this beautiful garden for Easter. We learned all about the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus and we hope that it brought as much joy to the many people who walked by the church as it did for the people of St. George's. The Lord is Risen, Alleluia.

Rev. Patty Dobbs Luxton

All Saints' bell tolls 99 times to honour late Prince Philip

The bell at All Saints' Anglican Church tolled 99 times Thursday April 15 in honour of Prince Philip who died April 9th at the age of 99.

Beginning at one o'clock in the afternoon, the rector Rev. Robert Clifford led a small group of social distanced volunteers to ring the historic bell, every minute to toll the life of the Duke of Edinburgh, the consort to Queen Elizabeth II. Among the volunteers were Father Clifford, Mary Beth Swain (People's Warden) who timed the one minutes toll, ringers included Justin Skalaa, Reverend Bev Diet, Gale Carter, Joan Carter, and Sharon Hillier.

There has been a bell at All Saints' for almost 165 years. All Saints' has held royal memorial services since Queen Victoria. We are in the Windsor city hall square, center for many memorials for the community. Within the chapel is a tapestry from the 1953 coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in Westminster Abbey. As well, near our pipe organ is a cross fabricated from a wooden beam from St. George's Chapel in Windsor Castle.

Thom Smith

Rev. Robert Clifford was one of the volunteers ringing the historic All Saints' bell on April 15



ANGLICAN CHURCH WOMEN

Bloom where you are planted!

Several years ago, I bought a sewing/embroidery machine. As it had so many features, I took several classes to learn its many complex functions.

One of the classes was a sunflower with the caption "Bloom Where You Are Planted" It crossed my mind that this would be a good topic for an article.

Quite often, we are unsatisfied with what God has given us. We want more, a better car or home. We want to be prosperous and successful. We want, we want. Do we ever ask Jesus where we should go or where we could be used most? Do we consider that we are not our own but His? God takes us beyond our own aspirations and ideas for our lives. He molds us for His purpose like a potter.

If you select your own spot to be planted, you will be like an unproductive empty seed. If you allow God to plant you, you will be very fruitful. I will begin to recognize His claim of ownership on me and that my



"body is the temple of the Holy Spirit."

Living a life of faith means never knowing where you are being led, but it does mean knowing and loving the One who is leading.

Never seek anything other than the approval of God, and be prepared to go where He will send us.

How often are we satisfied with what we have? Are we always asking for more? God has planted us exactly where He wants us to be, where He feels we are most useful to Him. Do we thank Him for the blessings He has bestowed on us? NO, not

normally, but if we need something we don't hesitate to ask.

Life is full of uncertainty and expectancy, and on occasion we feel lost, but God is always there if we turn to Him. He wants us to walk in faith. As the Bible says in many places, Jesus asks us "will you follow me?" God said to Abram "walk before Me". "Behold I have come to do your will, O God." (Hebrews 10:9)

The Lord expects an unrestrained adventurous spirit in those who trust in Him.

God guides our everyday choices. If we choose what He doesn't want He will give us a

sense of restraint, and we must listen. Am I striving to work for God or myself? You can never give another person what you have found, but you can cause him to have a desire for it. We cannot dedicate our gifts to God, as we cannot dedicate what is not ours. One thing we can dedicate to God is the right to ourselves. God wants us to submit completely to His will.

We have no business being concerned about where or how He engineers our circumstances if you are truly trusting the Lord. He has saved us completely, and it is an insult to Him for us to ask Him to do what He has already done. Don't make plans without first consulting God; He seems to have a way of upsetting plans made without consulting Him.

Remember, bloom where you are planted in God's beautiful garden. "Harvest what you plant" Plant good and you will harvest good. Thank God for all His blessings.

Barbara Jackson
Diocese of Huron ACW
Council President

In Memory



Waterloo Deanery

The Church of the Holy Trinity, Kitchener

Win Yardley
Christine Irish
Gwen Linley

St. John the Evangelist, Kitchener

Jean Davidson
Pamela Fisher

Matching gift and diocesan teams boost AFC's Say Yes! to Kids Campaign

By Michelle Hauser

"We really didn't know what to expect when we launched the Say Yes! to Kids campaign," says the Rev. Canon Dr. Judy Rois, Executive Director, Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC).

"This is AFC's first-ever peer-to-peer fundraising effort—a new idea for an established charity—and we have been surprised and impressed by the spirit of creativity and generosity with which it has been embraced across the country."

Say Yes! to Kids is AFC's response to concerns about COVID-19's impact on young people. This national campaign is meant to have local impact by supporting champions for children, youth, and family ministry across the country as we face a post-pandemic world.

"The donors I have talked to in the Diocese of Huron understand the importance of helping children in our communities," says Diane Dance, AFC Representative for Huron, and captain of the Huron Says Yes! to Kids fundraising team, "Those of us supporting the campaign feel this is our way of building a better, more compassionate world. The Say Yes to Kids campaign is a step in the right direction."

Locally, the Huron Says Yes! team is closing in on the half-

way point of its \$5,000 goal. Nationally, between online and offline donations, the campaign is nearing the \$20,000 mark of the overarching \$100,000 goal.

The target is achievable thanks to an extraordinary matching gift of \$25,000. The generosity of donors in the Diocese of Huron will be matched, dollar-for-dollar.

To date there are close to ten Say Yes! to Kids fundraising

teams registered, championed by bishops, diocesan staff, AFC's diocesan representatives, and individuals who are passionate about ministry and outreach to young people.

"These teams are putting the fun in fundraising," says Dance, "From community cleanup initiatives to Epic Online Game Nights, Canadian Anglicans are Saying Yes! to Kids in so many creative and wonderful ways."

In some dioceses, teams are rallying around specific ministries they hope will benefit from the campaign.

Since 2011, and the launch of the Kids Helping Kids Fund, AFC has invested over \$1 Million in ministries that benefit children, youth, and young adults in Canada. Canon Rois says AFC will rely on the strength of its granting program to quickly turnaround Say Yes! to Kids campaign proceeds by funding a Request for Proposals (RFP) for youth-focused initiatives in fall 2021.

Say Yes! to Kids launched on April 6 and will run until June 30. Visit www.anglicanfoundation.org/kids and join the Huron Says Yes! to Kids team or make a direct donation to the local effort.

Michelle Hauser is the AFC Development Consultant.

PASTORAL PROGRESSIONS



Rest In Peace

Please keep in your prayers the family and friends of The Reverend Canon Susan (Sue) Paulton who died on April 1. She is survived by her husband, Robin, children Hannah, Christian and Bonnie and many grandchildren.

Canon Sue was ordained a deacon November 8, 1998 and a priest May 11, 2004. She served the parishes of the Church of the Ascension, St. David's, St. Barnabas, St. Luke-in-the-Fields, St. Mark's, St. David's and St. Mark's and St. Andrew's (LaSalle), all in Windsor. She retired as the rector of St. David's and St. Mark's and St. Andrew's at the end of 2020.

Canon Sue was a member of the Deacons' Board, the Corporation of Canterbury College,

the Bishop's Chaplain Committee, the Parish Education Committee, and the Congregational Coaches. She also served as the Regional Dean of Essex and was named to the Cathedral Chapter of Canons in May 2012. May Sue rest in peace and rise in glory.

Mrs. Elva Farmer died on Saturday April 3rd. Mrs. Farmer was the mother of the Reverend Karine Snowden, now serving in the Diocese of Niagara. May Elva rest in peace and rise in glory.

Margaret Kennedy, the wife of the Reverend Gordon Kennedy, retired deacon from All Saints, Waterloo. Margaret, who died peacefully on Sunday, was a long-time parishioner at All Saints' and received the Bishop's Award of Excellence in 2010. May Margaret rest in peace and rise in glory.



Pride and the pandemic: drawing our rainbows outside the box

By Sydney Brouillard-Coyle

There are those who may find pride parades frivolous and superficial, while others find them to be outright disgusting (often those who are queerphobic and transphobic). However, for many queer and trans people, this is a place of safety, of belonging, and community.

We are often erased from mainstream media; spoken over by those who claim to be allies; and altogether banished from the church. So, in the midst of a global pandemic, how do we celebrate pride? When pride parades are shut down, where can the queer and trans community gather to celebrate who we are? How can we continue to highlight the voices of queer and trans individuals through masks and social distance?

I am fortunate that my own pride community has, in many ways, grown since the beginning of the pandemic.

I work at Trans Wellness Ontario, an organization who seeks to “enhance and sustain the health and wellness of transgender, genderqueer, two-spirit, non-binary, queer and questioning communities and their families”. I am surrounded by an excellent team of people who use my real pronouns, who celebrate me for who I am, and help lift me to my greatest heights – in many ways, we are family to one another.

At Trans Wellness Ontario, I have worked with incred-



Mika Baumeister/Unsplash

There is so much about our society that has changed in the last year. But one thing that we need to work to keep is the community that is created during pride – a safe space of love and celebration.

ible clients and been able to see them flourish through my ministry as a peer mentor and group facilitator. I have collaborated with organizations and communities seeking to better understand how to be allies to the trans and queer community through our educational programming. It is incredibly fulfilling work that has made me more confident in myself, and created a pride community that I never thought I could have.

I know that I am very lucky to have this community. Not all

queer and trans individuals can say the same.

As the pandemic hit, queer and trans individuals who utilized local pride centers as safe drop-in spaces found the doors closed, or the programming moved online. Queer and trans people are at higher risk for underemployment or unemployment due to discrimination, harassment, and invalidation of their experiences. Gender affirming surgeries and hormone replacement therapy is continuing to become harder to access as waiting lists grow and medical procedures deemed “non-essential” are de-prioritized. Organizations servicing queer and trans individuals have been de-privileged, with workers unable to access vaccinations, despite the fact that they often provide vital outreach work. Queer and trans individuals are more likely to be isolated from their typical community or school supports, or stuck in households that do not affirm or accept who they are. Rates of suicide attempts,

intimate partner violence, and declining mental health continue to escalate, day after day, with no clear end in sight.

As we enter the month of pride, many queer and trans people are mourning what used to be – the joy of hearing Lady Gaga’s “Born This Way” blasting from the speakers on the float in front of you; the rainbow outfits and pride flags wrapped around so many of the attendees; the smiles, greetings, and hugs as a community comes together to celebrate who we are with the annual pride parade. While it is essential to continue to keep each other safe by social distancing, wearing masks, and avoiding large gatherings, it is also essential to find a way to preserve this opportunity for a community to be with one another.

How do we celebrate pride during a pandemic? It starts, first and foremost, by reaching out to local organizations who work with queer and trans individuals to find out what they need. Many are suffering from a lack of funds or donations, and are having difficulty in maintaining their programs or adapting them to virtual settings.

Work with your church leadership to offer pride-related initiatives for your congregation and community – invite a guest speaker, or host an educational workshop taught by queer and trans activists. Consider fun events that can be done safely, such as a social distanced pride drive-through, creating pride-related sidewalk chalk, or online events such

as movie streaming or games nights. Fly the rainbow pride flag in-person at your church, share pride-related things on your social media and website, and engage in conversations with queer and trans people about how to be allies once pride month is over.

There is so much about our society that has changed in the last year. But one thing that we need to work to keep is the community that is created during pride – a safe space of love and celebration. Yes, we may not have a traditional parade – but there are so many options to provide this space of love and visibility. We just have to brave enough to draw our rainbows a little outside the box this year, in the hopes that next year, we can gather together again as one beautiful, rainbow family.

Sydney Brouillard-Coyle (*ney/nem/nir*) is co-chair of Proud Anglicans of Huron and music director at St. Paul’s Anglican Church. *Ney* were the diocesan youth delegate to General Synod 2019, and serves as a consultant to Faith, Worship & Ministry on developing Trans Liturgies.



Understanding the water in which we swim

By Rev. Canon Val Kenyon

Is anyone, anywhere not talking about life post-pandemic?

So much of what I am reading lately is, not unlike the phenomenon of Covid itself, trying to grasp something that in many ways is still taking shape. I think it would be fair to say that long-range planning of any kind is especially challenging as we know that a post-pandemic world will be different, but we are not exactly sure of the details of that difference. That is to say, we are trying to plan for a time, in which the context still remains unclear. And if there is anything we have seen displayed in a very vivid manner before us over the past year or so, it is that context matters.

To be fair, this is not exactly news. For example, we knew that the quality of ground out of which something is



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

birthed, the characteristics of the environment in which something or more importantly someone is striving to exist matters. For our context, our environment, the situation in and out of which we operate have a definite impact on what is born, produced, or even possible. While a prayer of the faithful on a sunny day is a beautiful expression of their faith, that same prayer uttered in the midst of a storm, takes on a whole different meaning, inviting us into unfamiliar new

worlds. Covid has reminded us of this, and I think we are slowly getting more adept at understanding or at least becoming aware of the water in which we swim.

Central to the approaches within Education for Ministry is an understanding of context, in particular the context out of which each of the book of Scripture were written. Were they born in times of celebration, of opulence, of battle, of exile, of occupation or of wandering? Were they written over

Central to the approaches within Education for Ministry is an understanding of context, in particular the context out of which each of the book of Scripture were written.

time or all at once, and if written over time, just how many years does the story they are telling span? Were they written in the time they are describing or later, perhaps benefiting from the gift of hindsight? What do we know about the writer and about her or his impact or perspectives on what was written? Did peculiarities of language, customs and writing styles long since passed, influence the writing in any way? Was there a particular situation, crisis, or need to which the writer was responding?

At the core of an EfM group lies a commitment to and real engagement with the context

out of which both our sacred readings and many centuries of traditions in the Church have taken shape.

If you are interested in learning more about all that EfM has to offer, we will be hosting an Open House on

Tuesday, June 8th at 7pm by Zoom

If you, or anyone you know, would like to attend, or have any other questions about EfM, please be in touch with Libi Clifford, the Diocese of Huron EfM Coordinator or myself Val Kenyon at EFM@huron.anglican.ca

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

A journey to Damascus – a pandemic version

By Rev. Chris Brouillard-Coyle

“Now as (Saul) was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’” (Acts 9:3-4)

We know from the Book of Acts that Saul was a devout and powerful Jew who saw those who followed the Way of Jesus as perverting the Jewish faith.

Using the weight of the high priest, he vigorously sought to round up and bring to justice these disciples. He wanted to hold all who practiced this evolving faith accountable for the ways in which they differed from tradition.

God had a different plan for Saul. His conversion on the way to Damascus provides a profound reminder that God, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. For this conversion to be complete, however, Saul had to be open to the working of the Spirit challenging him to reflect deeply on his faith and life choices.

The fact that you are reading a Church-based periodical suggests that you are already converted. You don't need to be knocked to the ground to believe in Jesus Christ. There are standards and practices to

SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE



Luca Giordano. Conversion of St. Paul

Dig a little deeper, and we may also be aware of the reality that this pandemic is highlighting the ways in which priorities and privileges have enabled injustice and inequality.

which we adhere that demonstrate our faith as Christians: Attendance in worship, generosity in giving of our gifts of time, talents, and treasures, an active prayer life. These mark us as people of faith. While all of these are wonderful things, what might we gain when we, like Saul, remain open to the working of the Spirit challenging us to reflect deeply on our faith and life choices?

There is a reason we say we ‘practice our faith’. It is a reminder that we have yet to perfect it. There are always things we can learn and ways in which we can improve on our efforts to embody what God has revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

How might a deep reflection on our faith and life help us to recognise the injustices to

which we have been blinded? To what extent might we find ourselves called to transform our relationships with God and the world? Might self-exploration invite us to ‘yield to the life of the Holy Spirit’ in new and profound ways?

Throughout these pandemic times, a lot of time and energy has been expended on exploring what is needed to keep people safe and what we can do to engage in familiar experiences, like worship. Dig a little deeper, and we may also be aware of the reality that this pandemic is highlighting the ways in which priorities and privileges have enabled injustice and inequality.

We see this most profoundly in the realities of those who have been called ‘essential workers’ while all too often being treated as expendable. These are some of the poorest paid workers in society, often making minimum wage which is far below what is needed for survival. In fact, many churches provide food and clothing through food banks and clothing cupboards.

These workers lack the privilege to work from home. Early in the pandemic, it was suggested that they be given a wage increase to compensate for the risk of coming to work so that we could continue to have access to essential goods. Even where this was given, it has long since been halted. Meanwhile CEOs, executives,

and shareholders received significant bonuses last year.

Added to their reality is the fact that most have little power. In some cases, they have been exposed to COVID without their knowledge as infected workers continue to come to work to ensure they can put food on their tables.

How many of these individuals have we looked in the eye in our efforts to respond to human need with loving service? What might we gain when we, like Saul, remain open to the working of the Spirit challenging us to reflect deeply on our faith and life choices? Can we do more to embody the love revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as it particularly relates to these, our neighbours? ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’

There are people in our very midst who are persecuted by the injustices that are enabled by the ways in which we participate in this world. The pandemic has revealed some of these challenges. How might our choice to ‘yield to the life of the Holy Spirit’ be inviting us to engage differently? To what extent are we being invited to transform the unjust structures of society through a pandemic version of a journey to Damascus?

Rev. Chris Brouillard-Coyle is a tri-chair of SEJH and a tri-chair of Justice League of Huron.



Camp Huron Day Trips and Stayovers

Overnight camp operations have been suspended for another season due to COVID-19

This summer we will once again welcome visitors to enjoy our beach, sit in shady spots for picnics, watch sunsets and marvel at the starry night sky. A much smaller staff will be employed to maintain the grounds, beautify the site, say prayers in our outdoor chapel, and safeguard our corner of God's wondrous creation, as we tend the spark of camp spirit and fan the flames of a Christ-light that will shine in and around this holy place and guide us back to the camp programs we know and love next year, next year, next year.

Registration will open on June 14, 2021 at noon

For more information and to sign up, please go to camp-huron.ca



Reintroducing prayers for relational growth

Allow me to start this month's article by throwing out an argument for us to consider; one that, whether you agree with it or not, is likely one of the most significant challenges facing Anglicans at this particular time in the life of our Church.



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

Okay, here it is: Anglicans (at least, Anglicans in Huron) are losing our capacity to foster new relationships. Do you agree?

This past weekend Anglicans from across Huron gathered virtually for the Bishop of Huron's Prayer Conference hosted by the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer. Immediately prior to the conference, participants were invited to fill out a questionnaire to provide a glimpse as to who they were and how they perceived the vitality of the congregations they call home. Roughly half of the attendees were AFP representatives, the remaining were divided up between clergy, lay leaders and parishioners.

Perhaps reflecting the average age of Anglicans in the pews



Ravi Roshan/Unsplash

in our diocese (my research estimates 71 years), 88% of the participants of the conference were over the age of 60. Roughly half have been attending their home congregation for more than 20 years. Newbies to their congregation (less than three years) only accounted for 16% of attendees.

When asked about the relational vitality of their home congregation (the patterns of incoming new relationships vs. membership loss) 14% reported that they were seeing growth (new members) in their faith community. The remaining participants shared a mixture of experiences from sharp decline to "holding our own".

The final questions put to the conference attendees were regarding their perception of congregational motivation around growth. In response to the question: "does your

congregation ever talk about a desire to grow?", 45% shared – "all the time!", 41% said "sometimes" and 14% admitted "rarely."

Returning to my opening argument, throughout the conference I laid out some of the challenging statistics of our diocese that reveal that the vast majority of our congregations have not been seeing the same levels of membership growth and ministry vitality that had been experienced in past decades. There are different responses to this reality: congregations can choose to see it as a challenge requiring engagement, adaptation and a new approaches to ministry, or they can choose to lament these trends in a much more passive way.

My proposal for those congregations deliberately seeking to foster new relationships

is to begin praying for this change regularly! We pray to God when we are sick. We pray when we are dying. We pray when we come together in worship and thanksgiving. Why is it that more congregations don't pray to discern growth in their communities?

Not only does prayer bring us into a closer relationship with God and with those whom we are praying for, but prayer also has the power to shape and change us.

If we are praying to God for more bums in the pews and dollars in our bank account, then we are far more inclined to see new members only for what they can provide for us (the Church of generations past). However, if we pray to God to invite others into our faith communities to be served by us, embraced by us and celebrated, then our prayers will become a reorientation away from the fear of losing things that are familiar to an embracing of the diversity and vibrancy that comes from each and every new relationship.

I think that prayer is the starting place for relational growth. I also think that many (most) of our congregations struggle with finding new ways to meaningfully connect with non-members. If we, as a diocese, are truly called to be an invitational, diverse Church, perhaps now is the time for us

to begin praying together for that change and transformation to take place.

Where to start? Here are new prayers to consider including within your primary worship services.

EMBRACING/GATHERING
Prepare us, O God, to welcome the guests that You are inviting to be embraced, served and loved by Your Church. Help us to appreciate the gifts of diversity that each guest will bless us with. May we place the needs of others before our own in order to foster new relationships in You. This we pray in the name of Jesus who summons all people to Himself. Amen.

PROCLAIMING/SENDING
God of Mission and Renewal, may the faith that sustains us and the love that You have shared with us spill out beyond the walls of this sacred space. Equip and enable us to speak of our relationship with Your Son to others and to invite them to "Come and See" for themselves. This we pray in the power of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Grayhame Bowcott is passionate about fostering congregational relationships and sharing our Anglican vocation with others.

*He serves as rector of St. George's, The Parish of The Blue Mountains.
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It's phishing season, again!!

Recently, there has been a barrage of phishing emails sent across the diocese.



**MEDIA
BYTES**
**REV. MARTY
LEVESQUE**

A Phishing email is made to impersonate someone; in our case it is often the parish priest. The email then asks for help or a favour. The unsuspecting recipient responds, and then will be asked to purchase Google Play or iTunes cards. This is just one of many scams that are used to prey upon people.

I wrote on this phenomenon before, but with the recent deluge of scam emails, I thought



it best to update this piece as there are a variety of ways to protect yourself from falling victim to such scams. Here are a few tips to help protect yourself:

1. Never send money to someone you have never met face-to-face. And don't do it if it's someone you know asking you to use a wire transfer, a prepaid debit card, or a gift card like iTunes or Google Play

(those cannot be traced and are as good as cash). Pick up the phone and call the person to verify it is them.

2. Don't click on links or open attachments in an unsolicited email. Links can download malware onto your computer and/or steal your identity. Recently, a major pipeline operator in the US fell victim to this type of ransomware (malware blocks access to your computer

until you pay a ransom to have access restored)

3. Scammers are great at mimicking official websites, fonts, and other details. Just because a website or email looks official does not mean that it is. Even Caller ID can be faked. Always contact the company directly by opening a new browser window, or by calling and speaking to someone at the organization.

4. Never share personal information with someone who has contacted you unsolicited, whether it's over the phone, by email, on social media, even at your front door. Best practice is to thank them, and call the company back to verify the call was legitimate.

5. Always check the email address or URL to see it is legitimate. Case in point, the recent email sent to parishioners at

All Saints' Waterloo was not from a diohuron.org address, that is used by all clergy in the diocese, but was from "Marty Levesque <pastorfr3@gmail.com>". This was an attempt to impersonate me and prey on the generosity of the people at All Saints'.

The World Wide Web, much like the world itself, is a wonderful place full of interesting information and great people. But much like a market in a tourist centre, where the best deal is available only to you and pickpockets lurk around the corner, we need to take a few steps to protect ourselves and each other.

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

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Hope springs eternal

Whenever I fall into any wounded thinking patterns, I cannot find my way out until I return to Hope.



AS I SEE IT

REV. JIM INNES

Until such time, I endure the slow drift of cloud that blocks the sun's warm embrace. It is often a painfully sad wait. And, at times, my mind is shrouded by an increasingly cold shadow.

As I ponder this sense of Hope, what pops to my mind is the phrase "Hope springs eternal." It was coined by the poet Alexander Pope (1732). It speaks to his sense of how men and women keep on hoping despite circumstance. He believes it is a Hope grounded in an innate sense of a future walk in glory.



Unsplash

"What future bliss, he gives not thee to know, But gives that Hope to be thy blessing now."

Hope springs eternal in the human breast:

Man never is, but always to be blest:

The soul, uneasy and confin'd from home,

Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

(An Essay on Man')

I am delightfully captivated by his inferences to the almighty power of God that moves us towards what St. Paul would call "something greater than we ask or imagine."

In fact, the entirety of Pope's Epistle (from which this verse was taken) speaks to future glory. It infers that we are organized into some more extensive plans. That we are but a tiny part of an incomprehensibly complex universe. Everything that happens, happens for a reason. And in that reason, God has a specific purpose for every element of the created order.

Despite this idea containing a nasty fatalism (which exemplifies Pope's times), it provokes warm thoughts of a supreme power that holds my life in some graced-filled purpose. And, such power has been, and always will be, embracing me in ways that are both seen and unseen.

Yet, I am afraid that Pope may find such sentiment can

drift into pride. Because to think that God's general plan has 'Me' specifically in mind is bordering on unrestrained ego.

Pope writes:

Ask for what end the heav'nly bodies shine,

Earth for whose use? Pride answers, " 'Tis for mine:

For me kind Nature wakes her genial pow'r,...

For me, health gushes from a thousand springs;

Seas roll to waft me, suns to light me rise;

My foot-stool earth, my canopy the skies."...

"No, ('tis replied) the first Almighty Cause

Acts not by partial, but by gen'ral laws;

(Epistle 1, section 5)

I must admit there is enough truth in this 'verse to pull me up short. Its caution is a wind gust of humility that takes my breath away.

Too often, Hope is conditional on circumstances going our way. When the truth is, I would argue, Hope is a source of pow-

er unto itself... unconditional. And I thank God for that!

Nonetheless, as I see it, humility ought not to distract us from the notion that we are created as significant parts of the greater whole. Ego or not, we are essential. And Pope had an excellent grasp of the systemic importance of each element (humans included) dancing together in some harmonious unity.

So, in Hope and towards Hope, let me end with the final verse in Pope's first Epistle.

"All nature is but art, unknown to thee;

All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;

All discord, harmony, not understood;

All partial evil, universal good:

And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,

One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right."

Rev. Jim Innes is the rector of the Regional Ministry of South Huron.

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Does success equal happiness?

A group I belong to recently had the opportunity to listen to the Canadian author and humorist, Terry Fallis, offer an introduction to his book "Albatross".



A VIEW FROM THE BACK PEW

REV. CANON CHRISTOPHER B. J. PRATT

It is a worthwhile read for those who want to explore some of the realities of relationships of friends, family, and mentors who are placed in Toronto settings which are familiar to the writer. Anyone with a love for the use of fountain pens and golf will find these elements used to enhance the story.

At the heart of the book the seed of a question is planted in the reader's mind.

Does Success Equal Happiness?

In the midst of the pattern of life which we have been experiencing in the cycle of lockdown restrictions, which have been our reality for more than a year, many of the "extras" of life have been unavailable to us. The concept of "going out" is an idea which we remember with fondness.

If we are still given the opportunity to connect up with others, we see their faces on



Razvan Chisu/Unsplash

the screens of our computers. We put ourselves on "mute", so that we may listen to whomever is speaking without being the cause of any technical glitch or audible feedback. The new politeness which is a part of these gatherings may be a learning we might take into the post pandemic future... but I doubt it.

The politeness of our interactions is only one element in our new pattern of life. After spending time in the Internet defined presence of others, all we have to do is direct our arrow to the box that says, "Leave Meeting",... and we are home! No commuting is necessary. The complexion of the familiar post-meeting parking lot conversations where the content of the meeting is re-hashed, reappraised and reviewed take extra effort. It is clear that any social media connection lacks the dynamics of a person to person, in person conversation.

These questions of interpersonal relationships only take on significance if they take part when we are a member of a group in which we have made a commitment. How many social groups or activities used to fill our calendars? Why did we affiliate ourselves with that group? Was it to make a difference in the world or to advance our own status? Do they bring us happiness?

Jesus clearly outlined the challenge we all face. "What will a person gain by winning the whole world, at the cost of their true self?" (Luke 9:25)

The experience of being engaged in work which permits us to live a pattern of life which brings us comfort, or at least allows us to put a roof over our heads and food on the table, may be a pattern of life which shaped the framework of our world in the past. These days, there are individuals, (you may, in fact be one of them),

who do not have a clear vision about what the future, when we are able to define it as being "post-pandemic", holds for you.

Short-term goals of the past may not be sufficient in providing signposts for the way forward. Bigger goals of academic achievement, or employment with promotional benchmarks measuring success may not sufficiently answer the question asked of us as we seek to define what brings us happiness or how would we describe our "true self".

I remember well what it used to be like to be caught up in a crowd of people, who gathered in celebration or protest. I have been part of the crowd witnessing Stanley Cup parades in Montreal and Philadelphia. I was swept up in the enthusiasm of the crowds who were brought together for the first Earth Day gatherings in 1970. I have protested increased university student fees and the Vietnam War. In those settings, the sentiment of the crowd provided a great personal excitement. Yet it was not in the energy of the crowd where I found my "true self".

In the peace and quiet of personal prayer, the opportunity is there for you to listen to the still small voice of God calling you to discern the way forward. I suspect that anyone who has experienced a vocation to ordained ministry will be able to identify that moment of clarity when the framework for the future began to take shape

in their lives. This moment of clarity does not simply apply to ordained clergy. It applies to all of us who seek to nurture our "true self", and experience true happiness in our own lives. We yearn to discover how true happiness may be lived out in relationships with those individuals whose lives intersect with ours.

As people who build our lives on a foundation of faith and in relationship with our Lord, these Covid days may indeed prove to be a gift, when we have the opportunity to describe what would bring us true happiness. As a part of that journey of introspection there will be moments when clarity of vision for the future begins to take shape.

William Shakespeare caught these sentiments and placed them in the mouth of Polonius, in his play "Hamlet" (I, 3):

This above all: to thine own self be true And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man.

I suspect that if you put time and energy into defining for yourself what brings you happiness then you will be able to look towards a future which is filled both with hope and promise.

Rev. Canon Christopher B. J. Pratt has retired from full time parish ministry, but continues to officiate priestly ministry in the Diocese. chriscpratt@diohuron.org

'Love is the most excellent way'

I have an informal policy when I go book shopping: I always pick up something a little bit off beat.



MOSTLY ABOUT RELIGION

REV. CANON KEITH NETHERY

Sometimes I find good things; (author Peter Enns is an example) and other times not so good (I'll not bother with any of the examples.) I usually go to the bookstore, even though the selection in the theological realm is much more limited than shopping online, because, well, it's just the way I like to acquire books.

I usually buy six, or eight, even ten books at a time. They cover a wide range of theological and spiritual opinions and options.

The off-beat book I pick up usually gets left till last. Thus, the book I want to write about I purchased close to a year ago. I knew the name of one of the authors, so I took it off the shelf, gave it the once over and popped it in the pile. After taking it home, I picked it up



Hush Naidoo/Unsplash

a couple of times to read, and opted for something else.

But finally, the time came for "Why I Left/Why I Stayed."

Tony Campolo is a long-standing preacher, teacher, and author in the Evangelical tradition in the United States. While I had heard of him and I think even read some short articles he had written, I didn't know that much about him.

I remembered there was a bit of controversy when he began to stand up for LGBT rights. Given the circles he travelled in, it was a brave stance. I knew nothing about his son Bart Campolo, nor did I know that he had been a Christian pastor, or that he had walked away, now calling himself an atheist. But the idea of a father and son collaboration given what would seem to be a very difficult fami-

ly time intrigued me. I am very glad that I decided to purchase the book, and enjoyed it much more than I expected. In fact I learned a lot!

My experience of situations when an atheist and a believer have a conversation is that there is a lot of finger pointing, raised voices and claims of I'm right and you, well you're nuts! Maybe an exaggeration, but makes a point. There is none of that in this book.

Having two people who are in a deep, loving, familial relationship talk openly about a current and painful disagreement in a mature, even life-giving way, allowed the temperature to be dialed down and positions discussed politely, but with passion. There is no doubt that Bart's decision to denounce his faith hurt Tony

deeply. Bart recognizes this, but gently says, I can only be who I am. Father and son are not afraid to tackle any discussion. They go toe-to-toe on humanism, grace, the cross and death – to name just a few subjects.

So, here's what I found most interesting. Because of the style of the discussion, and the deep honesty with which multilayered positions came forward, I felt that I didn't have to defend or prosecute. I had the opportunity to listen to two very intelligent, very passionate, very caring people tell me what they honestly believe, in a manner that allowed me to process the conversation and, perhaps surprisingly, find places where I both agreed and disagreed with each of them!

One of the most moving parts of the book is when Bart describes in detail his work as a humanist chaplain at a major US university. I was struck by his deep love and care for people, especially those who were the most marginalized and disadvantaged. It was foreign to think of someone putting their entire being into this work without any faith motivation. I felt like I'd like to sit down and have a chat with Bart!

It was heartwarming, but a little edgy, to listen to the relationships between the two

families. Bart's mom is thanked by both her husband and son for her part in the unfolding of this relationship. What could be really a weird family scenario, remains one of love and care because of the deep commitment to these relationships by all who are involved.

Father and Son wrote separately until the final chapter, when they penned their thoughts together. They discussed scripture, the need to listen to each other deeply, the pain of the lost connection. And they plead with all of us to step away from judgment of the other and into a place of willingness to journey with difference.

The closing words of their chapter together moved me deeply.

"As we said at the beginning, while we come to it differently, each of us always reaches the same conclusion about this life: Love is the most excellent way. Moreover, each of us is both sure and content that the other has found that way. For now, at least, that is enough." Life changing words that we all need to hear and understand.

Rev. Canon Keith Nethery is the rector at St. James' Westminster, London.

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Mountain climbing anyone?

Many Canadians enjoy the opportunity to go hiking during the summer months.



LAUREL PATTENDEN

We are drawn to wooded trails in the wilderness, or groomed trails in our parks. The adventurous amongst us might seek rock climbing or mountain climbing.

I am not that adventurous! In fact, when I think of mountain climbing, my mind tends to focus on Julie Andrew's singing "Climb Every Mountain", and picturing her spinning like a whirling dervish on the grassy hills. My adventure would lean more to the "forge every stream" line in the song! No need for me to reach any summit to enjoy the view of an eagle. No need for me to have that type of mountain-top experience. I wonder what draws people to climb a mountain?

Jesus frequented the mountains. He met temptation on a



Laurel Pattenden. Many Feathers, Ink and markers

mountain, fed the five thousand on a mountain, was transfigured on a mountain, taught and commissioned the disciples on a mountain.

I think if we were quizzed by someone about Jesus and mountains, many of us would think of the Sermon on the Mount. Where Jesus was sitting with his disciples, teaching and instructing them. What do you think the disciples thought during this long discourse of instruction? While they listened do you think they felt

blessed, salty, beacons of light and humble in their piety?

After many, many months of the Covid 19 pandemic, I'm not feeling all that blessed and definitely not all that salty. My light has certainly dimmed if not totally extinguished some days.

How about you? Is your light under a bushel basket? Your prayers languishing in the pandemic fog or fatigue?

This summer, I think I could be drawn up a mountain. Not any mountain, but that moun-

tain where Jesus sat, to hear the words he spoke, to listen to that sermon. Not for the sake of a mountain climbing adventure, but for the adventure of hearing the words of Jesus. To hear the blessings, and see them falling on the heads and hearts of the poor in spirit, those who are mourning, the meek amongst us, those of us thirsty for righteousness, the pure-hearted, and peacemakers. To hear, see, and feel those blessings, the beatitudes of Jesus, fall upon all of us.

The fatigue and weariness of this pandemic has dissolved our saltiness. To have the words of Jesus spoken within earshot to remind us again of our saltiness. To hear his words to boost our light; to take it out from under a basket of tiredness.

This summer, I could be drawn up that mountain. To hear this sermon of Jesus. I think that the priorities of the pandemic are the priorities touched on in this sermon. The Lord's prayer, praying for God's kingdom and our daily bread, is a perfect pandemic prayer. Hearing Jesus' compassion in saying "So do not worry about tomorrow" would help us to contain, limit and ground our worry. Being guided to release our judgements of our neighbours' behaviour during the pandemic. Being made aware of our own behaviour during this time of the pandemic. The needed spoken words of the Sermon on the Mount are needed to be heard again.

Yes, this summer, I could be drawn up that mountain. Bare foot. To sit on holy ground. To listen to the sermon. To hear the words of Jesus. Priorities during a pandemic.

Laurel is retired and likes to spend her time in her art studio.