



DECEMBER is a month to

Celebrate the Birth

"I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. Today in the town of Bethlehem a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."
(The Gospel of Luke)



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A section of the Anglican Journal

DECEMBER 2017

Christmas greetings from Bishop Michael



*O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee
tonight.*



Bishop Michael and family.



(Above and below) Investitures to the Order of Niagara.



Bishop Michael and Susan surrounded by children in Ghana.



Photos: Submitted

As I look back on the first Christmas Eve service that I shared in as a very new bishop, ten years ago, I was filled with a whole host of hopes and fears! What was true then, continues to be true a decade later—that we live in and minister in a church and a world that rarely experiences the peace and stillness of which this wonderful Christmas hymn speaks. When we reflect upon the last line of this first verse, one could possibly be forgiven for struggling to find hope and meaning in this promise: "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight."

As I come to this last celebration of Christmas for me as the Bishop of Niagara, however, I want to acknowledge and give thanks for the ways in which so many hopes and dreams have found expression in our work together and that so many of our fears as a church have been laid to rest.

On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day we will open our hearts once again to the story of a man and a woman whose circumstances were not of their own choosing. Matthew's gospel tells us that Joseph's first thought, when he was told that Mary was pregnant, was to have her dismissed quietly. Luke tells us that Mary's reaction was one of fear and disbelief. It sounds familiar!

As they discerned their future, God spoke to them and compelled them to embark upon this long and challenging journey as a family, and they drew strength from each

other and from the presence of God who walked with them every step of the way. In this holy season, I also give thanks that this has been our experience in the Diocese of Niagara, in much of what we have set out to accomplish.

As we come, once again, this year to celebrate the birth of our saviour, Jesus the Christ, we seek to fully embrace the truth and the promise that God is with us, that God loves us and is inseparable from our human experience and reality. We understand that this does not mean that, from now on, everything will be perfect. We know that Christmas was the beginning of yet another journey that would take our Lord to the cross.

The story of the birth of the Christ child reminds us, nevertheless, that there is no situation and no life that is beyond the reach and the desire of God to enter into and to change in new and dramatic ways. It has been my great privilege to witness the gift of this transforming love in parishes and in ministries across the diocese of Niagara and in the many places I have traveled to around the world.

For me this beautiful hymn, O little Town of Bethlehem continues to be a meaningful prayer and steadfast promise:

*O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.*

*We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!*

Susan and I wish you every blessing for a holy and joyous Christmas season and a very happy New Year.

Michael Bird



The royal Christmas tractor

REBECCA CLIFFORD, CALEDONIA

By December 2016, Mum's mobility had become an issue. It was Caledonia's turn to host Christmas and we needed to find a way to get Mum into our house with minimum fuss and bother.

Every entry to the place had stairs, but we'd been through this before when Mum had had her knee replaced. My husband Ron constructed a series of ramps and pulley-drawn platforms—the "Queen Mary"—but these pieces had since been repurposed.

Rising to the challenge, Ron, being a farm-raised, milk-fed boy, is always keen to use machinery. He put forks on the tractor, nailed plywood to a skid, slid the skid on the forks and nailed a jig to the plywood top. The jig held a sturdy wooden deck chair securely in place.

When the folks arrived, Ron backed the tractor up to the car. Mum stepped onto the skid, did a slow pivot and lowered herself into the deck chair. My brother took pictures but they didn't turn out as he was laughing so hard.

The rest of the family stood on the front porch in anticipation. Ever one to make an



entrance, Mum did the royal wave from the deck chair as Ron inched the tractor across the lawn, backed it gingerly to the top of the steps and eased the lip of the skid onto the porch.

Appropriately, we sang "God Save the Queen" and Mum stood with my brother-in-law's help and inched over the door frame into the hall to our applause.

At the end of the evening, Mum exited the same way, serenaded with "So Long, Farewell, Auf Wiederzehen, Good Bye" from The Sound of Music.

Nothing the Clifford family does should really surprise anyone by now.

Writer's note: This is (and I emphasize this) a true story. Really. I promise ... about how we managed last Christmas with my Mum's mobility issues.

Going missional: what are we talking about?

DAVID J. ANDERSON

We hear the word "missional" a great deal these days. We hear it on the lips of church leaders. We see it in the titles of many new books. Is this just the latest buzzword or fad to hit the church?



The word "missional" has a history worth paying attention to.

"The Missional Church" conversation emerged out of discussions in North America and the United Kingdom in the late 1980s. Much of this was initiated by the writings of Lesslie Newbigin, who had returned to the United Kingdom after decades of work as a missionary bishop in India.

He saw with fresh eyes the challenge of the church in its changed context in Western society. The days of Christendom were over and a post-Christian society had taken its place. The Missional Church conversation has very much been about how the church can approach the changed landscape in Western society. All of this is to say that the word "missional" has a history.

Being a missional church is not a program or a strategy. It doesn't belong especially to large, medium or small congregations. Being missional is not

just about doing stuff. Being missional is about who God is and what the church is called to be in the context of a rapidly changing world.

Understanding what it means to be missional begins with a renewal of our understanding of God as one who sends, and is sent, to redeem the creation. Jesus' announcement of the reign of God was the good news that this redemption draws near. Being missional, therefore, begins with an understanding of the *missio Dei*, or the mission of God. God is the primary agent of mission. The church is missionary in nature because God sends the church into the world to represent and be a sign of the reign of God, and to participate in the divine life of mission.

We tend to worry about the survival of our church. Sometimes, our thoughts and motivations for doing good work in our communities are not unrelated to this. We want to show our neighbours that the church is relevant. We would like our neighbours to fill our pews and our offering plates. We wish people would go to church.

The Missional Church conversation asks us to rethink some of this. What if, instead of asking how we can survive, we ask the basic question about what the church is and what it is called to be? What if instead of thinking about Christianity in terms of going to church, we thought of it as being the church, not only on

Sundays, but in every moment of our everyday ordinary lives? If we are participants in God's mission, then we should ask about what God might be doing in our lives, neighbourhoods and cities. How can we join God in what God is doing and seeking to do?

If you want to think about what it means for your parish to be missional, begin by having a prayerful look around. What are some of the needs in your neighbourhood? How might a biblical imagination inform your understanding of what God might want to do? How can you come alongside God and others to participate in what God is doing?

I believe this talk about being missional is more than a fad, but a genuine renewal across the church. I hope and trust that our continuing reflection on the nature of God, and how that informs the nature of the church, is not something that will go out of style.

The Venerable David J. Anderson is Rector of the Church of St. John the Evangelist Hamilton, Archdeacon of Undermount (Hamilton-Haldimand) and a recent graduate of the Congregational Mission and Leadership Doctor of Ministry program and Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. This article is the first of a short series about "Going Missional."
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A Christmas Carol with a new spin

NANCY BLACKIE

Despite being written in 1843, Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol is a timeless story that remains an everlasting classic, and was, in fact, his own personal favourite out of all his works.

The Church of the Epiphany Oakville and St. Elizabeth's Burlington are putting a new spin on their joint Carol Service to present a dramatic reading of A Christmas Carol on Sunday, December 10th at 3:00 p.m.

The afternoon will include readers and choirs from both parishes, as well as guests—soloist Jill Gibson from Dunnville and trumpeter, Burlington's Natalie O'Donnell. Hot cider and

tasty treats will be served during intermission!

As a popular author in demand, Charles Dickens toured extensively around England. During this time he became keenly aware of the plight of children working in appalling conditions in tin mines or industrial institutions while receiving little or no education.

Rather than trying to appeal to the public through articles or speeches, Dickens became inspired to write of the children's poverty-stricken lives through story-form.

After A Christmas Carol was published, Dickens began touring with presentations of the dramatic reading, donating the

proceeds to charities, promoting education and health.

In view of this, there will be a free will offering which will go towards supporting the Children's Aid Foundation of Halton.

We invite you to get into the spirit of Christmas by joining us for a great afternoon of storytelling and music!

The event will be held at The Church of the Epiphany, 141 Bronte Rd, Oakville. For more information, contact the church office (905-827-2546), epiphanyoffice@cogeco.net or epiphanyoakville.com

Nancy Blackie is a member of The Church of the Epiphany.

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HOLLIStorial**I AM – GOD – THAT I AM****HOLLIS HISCOCK**

God's name – I AM – flashed across the electronic sign spanning a four lane major highway.

I almost somersaulted inside my vehicle.

Reversing while travelling 100 km per hour was not an option. I wanted to corroborate what I thought I saw.

Within minutes another sign confirmed God's name front and centre.

I felt a sense of virtuous pride, thinking God had achieved such visibility and prominence on a transportation communication network.

Then, I recognized what it really was.

They were advertising the Invictus Games. The second I in INVICTUS and the AM in GAMES were coloured gold, the rest black and gray. Together these highlighted letters were juxtapositioned as – I AM – God's name for God.

You see, when God recruited Moses to travel to Egypt to lead

God's people from slavery to freedom in a new land, he asked, "If they do not believe me, who can I say sent me?" God replied, "Tell them I AM THAT I AM sent you and they will know."

I AM THAT I AM denotes abstraction, yet the I AM refers to the present tense and THAT indicates God is gender neutral.

Centuries later, when the time was right, the abstract infinite God became a finite personality.

When a baby was born in Bethlehem's stable, the intangible I AM THAT I AM God was transformed into a visible human person, Jesus Christ. However, Jesus never surrendered his I AM THAT I AM nature.

Years later, when Jesus began teaching, he would use I AM to clarify truths and insights about God and referred to himself as I AM.

He was not just talking about himself or referencing himself; actually he was pointing his listeners back to his divinity (God) ... Jesus never lost his divinity by



The Invictus Games logo made me do a double-take when I saw God's name, **I AM**, on the highway sign.

becoming human.

As the I AM, Jesus acknowledged his coming from the I AM of the past, but also challenged his followers to be the I AM of the present; in their own situation, century or generation.

Let's look at some examples.

When Jesus said I AM the bread of life (John 6:51), it means he wants us as today's I AM (followers of God) to provide physical and spiritual bread to all people so each can live to their full life potential.

When Jesus said I AM the light of the world (John 8:12), it means he wants us as today's I

AM (followers of God) to shine the light in the dark places of injustice and inequality perpetuated by people abusing their power.

When Jesus said I AM the door (John 10:9), it means he wants us as today's I AM (followers of God) to become fully inclusive and accessible so that everyone can enter and be accepted totally.

When Jesus said I AM the good shepherd (John 10:11), it means he wants us as today's I AM (followers of God) to imitate the good shepherd in searching out, caring for, protecting and helping those who are in need and less fortunate, travelling the highway of life.

When Jesus said I AM the

resurrection (John 11:25) and I AM the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6), was he speaking about himself or referring to the I AM THAT I AM (God)? If it is the latter, then Jesus wants today's I AM (us) to be pointing beyond yourself to God.

That highway sign took me back to meet the I AM of Old Testament days, brought me forward to the first Christmas when I AM became human in Jesus, and then to the present when each of us becomes the I AM of today and tomorrow.

**Share your Christmas happenings****Christmas is coming ...**

We know you will be extra busy ...

We know some exciting events and worship will be happening in churches and parishes around Niagara Diocese.

We would like you to share your "Christmas glad tidings" with readers of the *Niagara Anglican*.

Send us ...

- **Photos** (high resolution, action shots, captions, photographer's name, permission to publish children's pictures from parents or guardians, etc.)
- **A short article** (300 words or less) about your Christmas experiences

Because of our deadline dates, timing is crucial. We need to receive your Christmas items **by January 3, 2018 at the absolute latest** (earlier would be greatly appreciated).

Send items to editor@niagaraanglican.ca

Thanks and have a peace filled Christmas.



I WANT TO GET GOD: SOMETHING AWESOME FOR CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR, BUT WHAT DO YOU GET THE GUY WHO MADE EVERYTHING?

THE CHRISTMAS CHECKLIST

Copyright © 2015 Dave Walker. This cartoon originally appeared in the Church Times.

NIAGARA ANGLICAN

The official publication of the Diocese of Niagara, published 10 times a year from September to June as a supplement to the Anglican Journal.

The Diocese of Niagara lies at the western end of Lake Ontario, encompassing the Niagara Peninsula, Hamilton, Halton Region, Guelph and portions of Wellington and Dufferin Counties.

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Printed and mailed by:
Webnews Printing Inc., North York, ON

Available online at:
niagaraanglican.news (blog)
niagaraanglican.ca/newspaper (PDF)

Subscriptions: \$15/year.

Submissions:
Submission information and deadlines are printed elsewhere in the paper.

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252 James Street North
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Well done, thou good and faithful servant

CHRISTYN PERKONS

The Venerable Doctor Stephen Hopkins, known to all as Steve, had a profound impact on people, parishes and the institutional church, both locally and nationally. Steve helped reshape who we are and how that identity is expressed.

A lifelong Anglican who was active in the church as a child, teenager and young adult, Steve's first vocational call upon moving to Toronto from Montreal was at the Fred Victor Mission, where he facilitated long-lasting and positive change in the lives of homeless people. That passion for transformation and facilitation brought Steve to Niagara as the Director of Program after nine years as a Program Consultant in the Diocese of Toronto.

Steve had an intense curiosity about the inner workings of the church—how people and the institution might interact at their best. He functioned as a "guide on the side" for parishes seeking to reclaim their vision of



Photo: Bill Mous

their role in God's story, hoping to engage parishioners more fully in their spiritual journeys and connect with people in the larger community.

Steve was deeply committed to the connection between faith and daily life. He consistently communicated that people are loved by God as they are and invited by God to become all that they can be, their most authentic selves.

Steve's authentic self eventu-

ally included ordination.

The worshipping community, under Steve's guidance, became a safe space in which all were welcomed and included without judgement or barriers. Encouraged to learn and use interpersonal skills that better reflected God's love for them and others, people became more vulnerable to one another, less defensive in their daily interactions.

Driven by a deep sense of integrity, Steve modeled those behaviours in one-on-one relationships, small groups and in his facilitation of community gatherings. Steve also modeled how to mend the fractures we inevitably create, humbly expressing remorse and a deep desire to restore relationship. Those relational skills he encouraged, rooted in an abiding sense of God's love, went well beyond those with whom Steve personally interacted—they permeated family life, work life, civic life and diocesan life.

Out of Steve's commitment to authenticity came an insightful

appreciation for the value of contextual liturgy—liturgy written to reflect the aspirations and experiences of particular faith communities. He repeatedly brought together people with various skill levels, in an atmosphere of prayer, exploration and play, to craft multifaceted explorations of scripture and its correlation to daily life.

Flourishing at St. Christopher's, contextual liturgy written by teams of laity and clerics reflecting themes chosen by the congregation created a powerful impact, not only in the worshippers, but also in the broader church. Steve's writing and presentations to other parishes, dioceses and denominations saw the spread of parish-developed liturgy across the broader church.

Perhaps the most significant of Steve's gifts was reminding people that while they have little control over what happens to them, they do have control over the story they tell about their lives. People can choose to tell their life stories from the

perspective of injustice, grief and blame or they can frame their stories in terms of gratitude for the gifts of particular people, places and experiences, the moments of God's grace and the delights of love, received and given. Steve chose to live out of grace and gratitude ... and invited others to do likewise.

Steve died on October 28, 2017 having served Niagara as Program Director, Secretary of Synod, parish priest, territorial archdeacon and Archdeacon for Ministry Leadership Development.

This world is more compassionate and just because those whose lives he touched continue living his legacy of faith, vulnerability, authenticity, gratitude, integrity and grace.

Canon Christyn Perkons is Director for Congregational Support and Development in Niagara Diocese and a member of St. Christopher's Burlington. christyn.perkons@niagaraanglican.ca



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Happy Christmas memories

PATRICIA ING, GUELPH

The Second World War had just ended. I was about 11 years old, spending Christmas in the village of Christon, Somerset, England.

My family consisted of Mum, Dad, two older brothers who served in the Royal Navy, two younger sisters, dog Tippy and cat Ginger.

Rationing was in place; we all had a ration book with stamps. My father worked on a farm and my mother did domestic work. We children never went without food. Extras, like milk and eggs, were always available. My dad made cheese and clothes were handed down - my special green dress ended up being worn by my baby sister.

Christmas was very important and special, as it still is to me today. Mother decorated the living/dining room with homemade trimmings, paper loops and bells, put up for her birthday, December 19th.



Photo: ingimage.com



Photo: Submitted

Our Christmas presents came in a brown paper bag, not stockings as we could not afford them, only to wear. In the bag would be an orange, an apple, a shilling to spend, a piece of brown paper and string to wrap, tie and buy. Everything was wrapped in soft paper which we kept to use in the toilet, having only squares of newspaper otherwise. We had one doll to share. My father made a crib out of bits and pieces of wood and painted it red, the same colour as mail boxes.

Mother took us three girls to St. Mary's morning church service, while my dad stayed home

to cook a roasted chicken dinner with all the trimmings, including Christmas pudding made by our mother. We always wore our best Sunday clothes, including hats, to church. We used the Book of Common Prayer. Before being confirmed in 1946 we had to know the services of the Eucharist, Matins and Evensong by heart. Still today, I do not need a book to follow the Eucharist.

After dinner, we had a visit from the wife of our local Member of Parliament. Her Christmas tradition was going around the village with gifts for all the children—I received a lovely bracelet.

In the afternoon we attended Sunday school, and then walked over a mile to the next village to attend Evensong in St. Andrew's church, where my mother sang in the choir.

Our radio was a Black Bakelite Philco which ran on accumulator batteries that needed to be kept filled with some kind of acid from the local garage. As a young girl I used to check behind the radio to see where the people were.

These happy memories remain of those days.

The scent of Christmas

REBECCA CLIFFORD, CALEDONIA

Grandma smelled of «nnamon.

She had a great shelf of a bosom just right for the cuddling of grandchildren. Her skin imbued with the scent of Christmas, she would ice cookies the way old world masters spatula'd oils on canvas.

Steeped in this invisible cloud of fragrance, she would whisper me to sleep with stories of a childhood in Ottawa or Ireland, a million years

a million miles away.

With her camel humps bound in an iron brassiere of modesty, she inspired me, the newest magi, to bring «nnamon to the kitchen crèche, where my mother baked trays of baby Jesuses as pigs in blankets.

Author's note: I concocted this poem from my memories of my grandmother who came to stay for the holidays when I was young.

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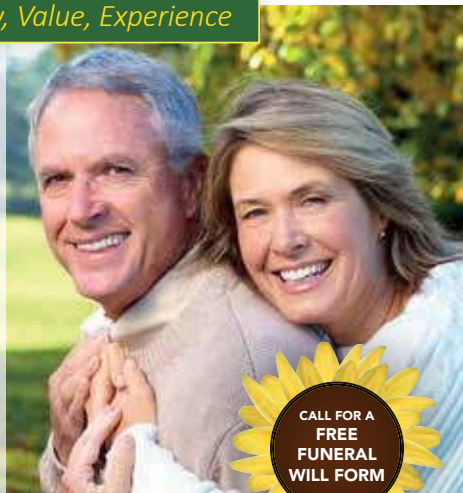
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The joy of the return: the prodigal son and his older brother

BAHMAN KALANTARI

There are a few ways to understand this marvelous and superb parable. (Luke 15:11-32)

The key to do so, perhaps, rests in the identity of the older son.

First, we need to say something about the father. The father represents the god - revealing himself through the presence, life, mission, teachings and ministry of Jesus.

Who do these two brothers represent?

If the older brother represents the Pharisees, the prodigal son might represent the ones who have been labeled as sinners and have now come to follow and embrace Jesus. If the older brother represents the Judeans, the prodigal son might represent the Gentiles. Or, if the older son represents the Judeans who reject Jesus, the prodigal son

might represent the Judeans who have decided to embrace Jesus.

There is a tiny problem with these interpretations. The older son, in his conversation with the father, reveals something that goes beyond the dichotomy between two rival groups within the community, or between the community and the outsiders.

When the older son refuses to go in the house, the father begins to plead with him. This is the irritated older son's response: "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command." (29a NRSV)

The older son has always been with the father, had total access to what he had and has worked loyally and obediently, like a slave for his father. Let's not forget that the father does not deny that his older son has

worked for him like a slave.

These are not necessarily the characteristics of the oldest son of a father in Jesus' time and land. The oldest son, the first-born, will get two thirds of his father's property after his death. He will be the next chieftain of the extended family. He will be the bearer of all kinds of blessings that could be transferred when and how he wishes. If this is the case, does the oldest son need to work for his father like a slave? No, he only needs to obey the rules and regulations with respect. There is a huge difference between a dutiful son and a slave.

And we should keep in mind that the older son says: "I have never disobeyed your command." If the father represents God, we need to ask: who has ever been an ideal person, stainless and pure and spotless, like

this? Of course no human being! Therefore, we have an alternative solution.

Perhaps the older son represents the angelic host and the prodigal son human beings.

Humans feel lost from time to time in the vast and unknown universe. The Lord of the universe acknowledges human uniqueness, human free will, human struggles, their separation from their origin, and their tendency to lose track. This is the reason why the Lord cheerfully stretches out his arms for humankind when it returns to him. The Lord celebrates, throws a party, rejoices and laughs when humans realize their true selves, their roots.

The Lord also teaches the angelic host to celebrate and rejoice with him. Humans are the masterpiece among all other beings. A human, returning to



his or her source through his or her decisions, is worthy of praise in the whole universe. When they return, the Father's realm is joyfully opened to them with festivities and celebrations.

Humans may experience the worst, but joy will be the result of their return.

The Reverend Bahman Kalantari is Rector of The Church of Our Saviour The Redeemer Stoney Creek. oursaviourtheredeemer@bellnet.ca

St. Nicholas

YME WOENSDEGHT

On December 6, we celebrate the feast day of St. Nicholas.

I have fond memories of celebrating Sint Nicolaas or Sinterklaas as a young child with other Dutch families in New Westminster. We'd all be together in a large hall, with our hearts in our throats, waiting for Sinterklaas to arrive with his mischievous helper Black Peter ("Zwarte Piet"). We could barely contain our excitement, wondering if Sinterklaas would reward us for being good, or if Black Peter would take us away for being naughty.

Many countries in northern and Eastern Europe celebrate the good saint by giving gifts and engaging in other festive activities.

We don't know very much about St. Nicholas. He was born in 280 AD, in modern-day Turkey. We know he was a priest, and later became a bishop. He seems to have been quite well off, and that he travelled around the country helping people anonymously with gifts of money or by providing other necessities.

One of the famous stories about St. Nicholas is how he helped a poor man who had no money to give to his three



daughters on their wedding day. He dropped bags of gold into the stockings which the girls had left to dry by the fire.

Although this story is most likely to be legendary, it does capture the spirit of generosity and wisdom of this ancient bishop.

The early church remembered him as a generous giver of gifts to the poor, and the protector of young children. St. Nicholas was eventually named the patron saint of children and sailors, as well as of Russia and Greece.

As a result of his growing reputation for kindness, generosity and wisdom, Christians began to venerate him. By 450, churches in Asia Minor and Greece were being named in his honour. By 800, he was officially recognized as a saint by the Eastern Catholic Church.

Over time, St. Nicholas was

transformed into the modern day Santa Claus — although St. Nicholas probably wouldn't recognize himself in this fat, jolly man with a white beard. The modern Santa has been thoroughly commercialized. Old Testament scholar Peter Enns writes, "St. Nicholas probably had better things on his mind than making sure nice children get an Xbox or an iPad."

In a very funny monologue on Saturday Night Live, Chris Rock notices that "there are no sacred days anymore. We commercialize everything. Look what we did to Christmas! This is Jesus' birthday! Now I don't know Jesus, but from what I've read, Jesus is the least materialistic person to ever roam the earth. No bling on Jesus! He kept a low profile, and we turned his birthday into the most materialistic day of the year. As a matter of fact, we've turned it into a whole season of materialism."

Indeed! We are being swamped by consumerism. We spend money we don't have on stuff we don't need. We have lost our way.

Perhaps in this season of anticipation, we could profit by reclaiming the spirit of St. Nicholas. He shows us again that we discover God's grace in our lives by giving freely and

generously to people who are in need. We don't discover joy in the pile of presents stacked under the Christmas tree; we find deep joy in giving ourselves to others.

Our world needs people who are ready to give of themselves in this way. May the spirit of

Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, fill your celebrations this season and throughout the year.

The Reverend Yme Woensdrecht is the Incumbent at Christ Church Cranbrook. ymew53@telus.net This article first appeared in The High-Way – Diocese of Kootenay.

Bowling for animals

St. George's Lowville supported Milton Area Christian Churches with the annual bowl-a-thon.

The bowl-a-thon was to raise money for the animals for the pageant On the Way to Bethlehem.

"Our group raised \$320 for the cause," wrote Petra VanHelvoort, and a "fun time was had by all."



Left to right are Nathan VanHelvoort, Petra VanHelvoort, Jenn Lukawecky, Caleb Lukawecky, Anne Henry and Don Henry.

Photo courtesy of Petra VanHelvoort.

Live for the good of others: Adrienne Clarkson

ELEANOR JOHNSTON AND WAYNE FRASER

"May only the truth be spoken. May only the truth be heard." The Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson adopted as the motto for her personal coat of arms this eloquent truth from the Collect for the Nativity of John the Baptist, frequently heard as the short prayer beginning a sermon. So too, Madame Clarkson spoke today's truth to the Bishop's Company. Her presence symbolized a fitting conclusion to the ten-year leadership of Bishop Michael Bird who has encouraged Niagara Diocese — in fact, the wider Anglican communion — to engage in justice issues.

Clarkson spoke of her immigrant beginnings in Canada. Her parents had been married in Hong Kong by Bishop Hall who had, during WWII, ordained the first woman to the priesthood. In Ottawa, Clarkson's family was taken into Christ Church Cathedral and she participated fully in the life of the church.

Madame Clarkson spoke highly of her public school teachers. Her Anglican English teacher in particular inspired

her to hone her writing and speaking abilities. On his advice she worked hard and won a scholarship to Trinity College. Sixty years later, she still counts as friends many of those she met there. That continuity of community, she claims, makes us human.

The sequel to *Blade Runner* led her to ask the questions, "How do we tell if someone is human? How do we face challenges and go on living?" In the face of the madness of the current American administration and the threat of nuclear annihilation, how do we live our lives? Clarkson answers, "As we always have — for the good of others."

Working together, Canadians can do what is possible for the common good. By that she means we must work to ensure that others, even those who disagree with us, have the same rights. Love is not enough, Clarkson claims. We need understanding and a social infrastructure which protects and creates. Quoting from her favorite American novel, Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, she underscored that "everyone behaves badly

— given the chance." Knowing the truth of this, we must create social structures so people have the least chance to behave badly and harm others.

Clarkson acknowledges that her own life story as an immigrant has become an example of what is possible for anybody in Canada. "You arrive with nothing, but through education and the generosity of this land, you build a new kind of country." Immigrants and refugees "shift and change," keeping a little of the old and adapting the new.

She praised Niagara Diocese for its initiatives on behalf of refugees and migrant labourers. Immigrants "live a personal Calvary" as they struggle towards better lives. When studying in Europe, Clarkson remembered, she had to go to the police station to obtain her "alien" card. In contrast, Canada in the 1950s established many places for people with TB to go to get better. Foreigners in Europe were seen as threats, whereas Canada welcomed strangers with a helping hand. The previous federal government wanted to take back medical care from refugees, but we must speak against that kind of



Photo: Hollis Hiscock



Bishop Michael Bird addressed more than 380 guests, thanking them for their attendance and support over the years.

Photo: Bill Mous

country, Clarkson asserted. We must always work to help others become fully human as we were created to be.

What, then, is your personal motto, that of your parish, your church?

Clarkson's address calls us to a wider perspective beyond power politics. "Haunted by Anglican influences," Clarkson and Bishop Bird advocate for civic

and spiritual engagement. Her speech reinforced the prophetic voice of Bishop Bird over the last ten years.

The most important truth for all of us, concluded Clarkson, is to make life positive for others.

Eleanor Johnston can be reached at eleonorjohnston@gmail.com and the Reverend Wayne Fraser at fraserwayne@gmail.com

Small Parish Transition and Survival: "Here we go again"

RICHARD BRADLEY

Parishioners at St. Aidan's Oakville recognize the signs: an effective, part-time incumbent retires; the bishop meets with the corporation; an outside "facilitator" is identified; a "discernment process" is set up; a "parish profile" developed—and there is an over-riding sense of déjà vu. Here we go again!

St. Aidan's has been a small parish for many years. Average combined Sunday attendance at the 8:30 a.m. Celtic service (set up a few years ago as a form of "fresh expression" in liturgy) and the 10:00 a.m. family Eucharist is under 50 souls. Like many small parishes in Niagara, the arc of St. Aidan's story includes rapid growth and development in the 1950s and '60s followed by gradual decline due to significant demographic, social and cultural change.

In 1970, with the closure of the



Canadian Armed Forces Central Command Headquarters, located within the parish, St. Aidan's membership took a sharp downturn. In the intervening years, our story has been a roller-coaster ride—deficit budgets, diminished resources and energy and impending closure—followed by renewed vision and leadership, action plans and hope for a sustainable future. The cycle continues, and at each upturn, it seems harder to muster the drive and energy needed to carry on.

Telling our past stories,

examining our current mission and relevance, and trying hard to discern a viable future for our struggling parish will be a difficult journey.

In recent times, we have already taken this journey twice—once in 2005 and again in 2012. Each of these dates marks a time of transition when the parish was seeking new leadership. As we move into this next transition period, we recognise the daunting nature of the task because we have been there before.

At the same time, we are bolstered by growing opportunities to serve our community. Oakville's official plan includes significant intensification and new zoning for residential and business development, especially along the Kerr Village corridor, and the creation of a "transit hub" at Speers Road and Kerr Street. The West River area itself, with St. Aidan's positioned

squarely in the middle, is undergoing much turnover, renewal and refurbishment. Many low income and single parent families, as well as new immigrants round, out the patchwork quilt of St. Aidan's parish. There are burgeoning needs all around us.

We are also bolstered in the knowledge that we are not alone; other parishes face similar challenges. We can look to examples of parish mergers or "two-point" configurations to see what's possible. Perhaps there is an opportunity for us to partner with another faith community to share the load. And help is available.

Diocesan staff can assist with expertise, planning, information and connecting parishes with common concerns. Articles on parish renewal and leadership (e.g., the late Steve Hopkins' articles on leadership issues in this and last month's *Niagara Anglican*, and John Bowen's

outline on leadership styles that appeared last April and May) are helpful for framing parish conversations on future direction, mission, success and sustainability.

What will this round of introspection, analysis and dialogue yield? Will we discover new truths and insights about ourselves? How do our West River community neighbours and our program partners see us evolving? What leadership style and skills should we bring to our mission? Is there a realistic, manageable path forward? All of these are good questions to ask, but none are as important as this: how can our small parish best proclaim God's "good news" story?

Richard Bradley is a parishioner at St. Aidan's Oakville.

A way forward

MICHAEL BURSLEM

Among the advantages of old age are a long memory and the ability to compare the past with the present.

The past isn't necessarily better, but different.

Relating to our church buildings, to me, the biggest difference is the loss of the sense of "awesomeness"—the holy. For one, the building isn't used for worship as much as in the past, barely two days a week, compared with daily Eucharists.

Is this just nostalgia for the past, or have we truly lost something? We can hardly say that our lives are more busy, because before we had modern conveniences we spent more time in everyday chores.

I don't believe that the loss of "the holy" is due to new liturgies and other changes in the church, the biggest being the ordination of lady priests. It's certainly not due to the structural changes, pulling the altar from the "east" wall or by removing pews. I don't believe having more contemporary worship and music will restore it, though there is a place for them,

though I doubt they'll add to our numbers.

To me the loss of "the holy" is due principally to the lack of reverence to the Blessed Sacrament. The liturgical churches—Eastern Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Roman Catholic, the Lutherans and ourselves—all claim the bread and wine to be truly the glorious, resurrected body and blood of Jesus Christ, not just a symbol or metaphor.

I (*mea culpa*) in the past have used the offensive "S" and "M" words, as our Reformed brethren, in refuting Aristotle's teaching in the church. But the Anglican churches have never denied the Real Presence. The body and blood of Jesus are a foretaste of heaven on earth, "medicine of immortality" as Bishop Ignatius of Antioch wrote in the second century after Christ.

If we truly believe this, I think that today we treat Jesus in the sacrament extremely casually, if not disrespectfully. We don't need to say, "Lord have mercy" 1,000 times, as the Orthodox do, but we have glossed over our own sinfulness. Martin Luther's



priesthood of all baptized believers has devolved into the pope hood of all believers. With no pope, we're a pope unto ourselves. (Again, *mea culpa*) This, I believe, is a recipe for obsolescence and empty churches.

It may have been right to reject papal authority 500 years ago, but today to have any relevance in a world hostile to God I believe our wounds have to be first healed. I'm merely suggesting a way forward for the divided Western church.

Pope Francis is not so much a pontiff, but a big brother, a fellow follower of Jesus Christ. As much as we've disagreed with one another in the past, excommunication and schism in the body of Christ—the church today—should be relegated to history.

*Michael Burslem is a member of St. George's Guelph.
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Christmas Carols

MAY GIBSON

We hung a bright star in the window
That Christmas out in the west
Our hearts were hushed and waiting
For God's Christmas gift to us.

Lights shone and voices were merry
And carols echoed in space.
It was comfort to know that His mother
Knew the perils a mother must face.

Dawn and my arms were empty
Carols sounded—but distantly there,
Was it on earth or their echo in heaven?
I knew not—too weary to care.

But I heard them again at evening
They roused me to happiness new.
For I knew the gladness she felt
That life had been spared to us two.

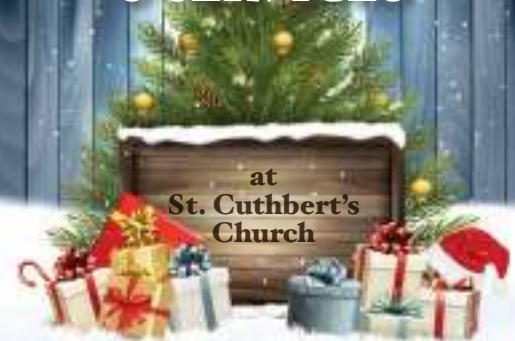
So the star twinkled on in our window
A symbol of joy, faith and love.
And each Christmas I'm humbly grateful
For the gift all others above.



Image: ingimage.com

(Iris Newbold of Burlington wrote, "This poem was written by my mother, May Gibson, shortly after the Christmas Day birth of my sister Evelyn. Mother told of hearing the cheerful voices and Christmas carols. She thought of Mary and the birth of her son, Jesus. She gave thanks for the Christmas gift given to her and her husband Herb. We continued to hang a Christmas star in our window for many years.")

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Narrative budgets: an idea whose time has come

JAMES NEWMAN

In 2010 at Christ's Church Cathedral Hamilton, something special happened.

Regular parishioner giving increased by 30% over giving in 2009.

What's even more remarkable is that the increase has held every year and into 2017 despite the loss of several exceptionally generous parishioners. Our average annual gift in 2016 was \$2,142. And the impact is more than financial—there is a fresh new spirit in our parish.

While we can't be certain, we believe that our narrative budget development process was instrumental. We believe that change will result in almost every parish that focuses on these key fundamentals: understanding their mission and ministry, strengthening hospitality and welcoming, building community involvement, being specific about their needs, thinking positively and strategically and clearly communicating their



Cover of the Cathedral's narrative budget

parish story through the end product—a narrative budget.

It's a process.

It takes a rector and a parish corporation plus a helper or two who are strongly committed to keeping Christian stewardship softly simmering all year long, and then carefully brought to the front burner for about 15-20 weeks prior to Vestry.

It takes a consistent focus on mission and ministry to build clarity of vision and foundational values, real discipleship and enough credibility to ask parishioners for specific increases in giving.

It starts with communicating that Christian stewardship is not about money, or paying the bills or keeping the church from closing. It's about our relationship with God. Our giving back is a way of saying thank you to God.

We are to give generously—the best of our time, abilities and possessions back to God's mission in the world in gratitude for God's endless love for us, and for all God has done for us. We are to give from a theology of abundance, not scarcity. The Most Reverend Douglas Hambidge, a former Anglican Bishop from British Columbia, says, "If the people of the Church ever grasp what giving is all about there will be no need for special appeals, drives and campaigns."

Your narrative budget becomes a living document that follows the sacred story of your parish from year to year.

The mission of a parish can get lost in traditional line item budgets, but adding a parallel narrative budget to your reporting system helps your parish understand what's being done about outreach, evangelism, social justice, pastoral care and much more.

A well composed narrative budget educates and inspires everyone!

Of course it's essential that stewardship and abundance be preached regularly, and not only by the rector.

We ask parishioners to make brief commentaries outlining why they love, support, promote and endorse our parish. They'll speak about a highlighted ministry of the week and how they have benefitted, about a personal growth experience and about generosity. We only request that they "speak from the heart".

If you are not directly connected to the narrative budget process, there are many positive things you can do.

You can pray for a spirit of generosity in the hearts and minds of all Anglicans. You can focus on abundance, and be an example of generosity to others. You can make a formal written intention or pledge—it's not a contract and can be changed if circumstances change. You can give thanks.

Just as our parish thanks us for our gifts and resources, we need to give thanks to God for all that we have and all that we are.

*For more information or to receive a copy of a narrative budget, contact James Newman, a parishioner of Christ's Church Cathedral Hamilton.
newmanjf@cogeco.ca*

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Finding baby Jesus

**DIANA DUNCAN-FLETCHER,
CARRYING PLACE**

My family moved to Port Dalhousie (now in St. Catharines) in 1978.

Our children were all toddlers at the time. We lived in the big old rectory a block away from our church, St. John's. With three children under the age of three, life was pretty busy. The first year was a blur of activity and getting to know the parishioners.

The following year, as Christmas approached, the children were old enough to introduce the idea of Advent. We had an Advent wreath on our dining room table and each Sunday we lit the candles.

In the church there was a beautiful nativity crèche. It had in it a variety of animals surrounding the Virgin Mary and Joseph. The sheep were on a bed of straw further out, and in the distance were the three Magi.

The manger was, of course, empty waiting for the birth of the Christ Child. Our children all knew this as a very important part of the Christmas story.

There was an active Sunday school at St. John's, managed by a much-loved superintendent, Mrs. Thompson. She owned and operated a little shop right in the middle of Main Street. Every child knew her well. She loved all children and freely gave out penny candies to them when they came to see her.



In 1979 she took time to talk to all the children about the importance of Christmas. I remember my son telling me how she emphasized the fact that the manger remained empty because we were waiting for Jesus to be born.

There was to be a ceremony and one of the little girls was to put baby Jesus into the manger at the early service on Christmas Eve. Mrs. Thompson had asked the children themselves to decide which child should have this honour. It had apparently been unanimous that a child with some learning disabilities be given this opportunity.

On Christmas Eve disaster struck.

Baby Jesus was nowhere to be found!

Each child in the Sunday school looked everywhere. The usually unflappable Mrs. Thompson was distraught.

Then, at the very last possible moment, a little boy who had been visiting his grandparents for a couple of weeks, arrived. He went to see what all the fuss was about, and then looked at Mrs. Thompson and told her that if she looked in the pocket of her coat she would find the missing baby. Apparently, she had stressed the importance of keeping the Christ Child safe until Christmas Eve.

What safer place than in the pocket of the kindest Sunday school teacher he had ever encountered!

Mrs. Thompson dug deep into her pocket—sure enough the Christ Child was there! Everyone gave a sigh of relief, and the service began with a sweet little girl placing the baby reverently into his manger.

Thirty-eight years have passed since that incident. Our children are grown up and there are now grandchildren to teach the Christmas Story. Gordon Kinkley, the Rector of St. John's at that time, has retired, and life has moved on happily for us all.

Mrs. Thompson died a few years ago, but is certainly remembered by many—especially at this time of the year—for that special night.

WWII and Christmas

**KATHLEEN MCDONALD,
MOUNT HOPE**

Christmas, in England, was a very exciting time for children, which didn't start until about a week before the big day.

We decorated the parish church with holly, ivy and flowers before the Christmas services. We were unaware of the many difficulties due to war.

At home we strung streamers in each room and mistletoe in a doorway. We got the Christmas tree and it was put up on a table on Christmas Eve. No room for a big one and it was taken down on twelfth night. No fancy lights were available because these were during the war and post WWII days. We had old glass baubles which came from my grandparents and lots of silver tinsel. The war years were difficult for our parents who were

not wealthy and because they had a son and daughter with "wish lists".

My parents were very creative and our gifts were just what we wanted! Often my mother and father made things for us. We would have a roast chicken for Christmas dinner, which was a great treat. My father worked on my grandfather's farm, so he was gone very early in the morning until late in the day.

On Christmas morning my brother and I jumped out of bed and went into bed with our mother to open our gifts. Each gift was noted, so our thanks could be conveyed to the person who gifted us! My mother passed in 1980.

When Dad was about 84 years old, I wrote this verse for him at Christmas in 1995, which describes our happy childhood.

MEMORIES

The door to the workshop was locked from inside
For weeks before Christmas, there were things he must hide.
A doll's crib and aerodrome, he worked on with care –
Father Christmas he knew soon would be there.

On those cold winter nights, with his pipe and his cap,
He was in the workshop, to the door never answered a tap.
And while he was busy, Mum too never stopped,
She knit and she sewed and she baked quite a lot.

Then they finished their projects, just in time - what a team!
To bring to their children a real Christmas dream.
The children were up bright and early next morning,
And into Mum's bed came without any warning!

HE'S BEEN! OH! HE'S BEEN! They cried out in joy
Bringing with them their gifts for a good girl and boy!

*Written Christmas 1995 by Kathleen McDonald
kat.mar.443@hotmail.com*

The tradition continues – holiday house tours

JENNA ANDERSON

What has become a Christmas tradition, for many people in Dundas and beyond, is the 42nd Annual St. James Anglican Holiday House Tour.

Having evolved since the first tour which took place in the mid-70s, this year's tour offers six unique homes, both modern and historic.

The House Tour has become a full day of activities which includes shopping the Dickens Lane artisan market, buying locally made baked goods or socializing in the church's parlour.

Visiting Dundas, known as the "valley town" for its location



104 Park St. W is one of the homes open for the Holiday House Tour
Photo: Submitted

at the bottom of the Niagara Escarpment on the Western edge of Lake Ontario, is an experience in and of itself. It boasts lush mature trees on every street in the historical district, trees which will surely be covered with snow and Christmas lights by the time of this year's

house tour.

This year's tour takes place on Saturday, December 2nd from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. More information at stjamesdundas.ca or 905-627-1424.

Jenna Anderson is a member of St. James Dundas.



Church leadership – what's needed, what's not (Part two)

STEVE HOPKINS

(Editor's note: We were shocked and saddened to learn of Steve's passing from his journey on earth to eternal life on Saturday, October 28, 2017. We give thanks for and celebrate his life, especially his faithfulness, passion, dedication and contributions.

We offer our prayers and support to his family: Elizabeth, Clare and Rose, and his sister Nancy, during this time of loss and grief. We also commend his spirit into the everlasting care of our loving God.

This two-part series of articles resulted from a sermon Steve preached at the ordination of the Reverend Ann Turner in June 2017, and encapsulates his philosophy and practice of the ordained ministry in the church.)

"After 30 plus years working with congregations in trouble, I learned when clergy and lay leaders get into trouble and the church experiences a failure in leadership, it's often due to one or more of four issues: failure of rapport, abdication of responsibility, lack of skill and lack of integrity," Steve wrote in part one of this series. Last month he dealt with failure of rapport and abdication of responsibility. In

this Niagara Anglican he tackles lack of skill and lack of integrity.

Lack of skill

Church leadership is very complex because it demands such a wide variety of skills. We must work hard to keep up with these demands.

Curiosity and feedback are so important to the church's future. We need to honestly assess ourselves in order to discover where our skills are excellent and where we need to learn or change. This can't be done sitting alone or fretting through sleepless nights. We need the mirror of a community to help us see ourselves as we truly are.

Two gaps in leadership skills concern me: influence and inspiration.

Often, church leaders don't know how to influence others to enhance the community's capacity to solve problems, live faithfully and embody the gospel.

Some don't know how to inspire others with a vision of God's work or being a faithful church in mission. They can't motivate others – individually or collectively – with a compelling vision of an alternative life-giving and life-changing future.

Leadership can be defined as the capacity to influence and the ability to lead followers. The

days are long gone that we could make anybody do anything just because we think we're the boss. Church leaders today need to inspire people on a path to greater faithfulness.

Lack of integrity

Churches run into real trouble when the life and character of their leaders fail to embody the gospel they proclaim.

Parishioners and neighbours outside the church have a finely tuned sense of dishonesty. They expect us to "walk the walk", not just "talk the talk", so we need to manage the integrity gap, not by "dumbing down" but by "living up".

We leaders are in real trouble when we can't see the gap or when we don't appreciate the real impact of our words and behaviour. People learn far more by what they observe than by what we preach.

Grace

These most critical capacities for leadership can't be learned from books, colleges, spiritual directors or mentors alone.

They can tell you about rapport, responsibility, skill and integrity matters, but they can't create them on their own. Instead, we learn them in a complex interplay of behaviour

modeled by good leaders, sustained interactions with people who offer honest feedback, supportive communities that evoke maturity and individuals with a hunger to learn and lead.

That is a gift of grace.

The miracle of the church is that God calls broken, self-centred, deeply flawed, hopeless people into an impossible vocation of discipleship and mission. Sometimes only God knows how the gifts of grace coalesce to nurture great leaders, yet each in turn must be curious enough to keep asking "how I can improve my skills and make the most of my God given gifts?"

Broken and flawed people do emerge as leaders who can develop deep rapport with others (even those who disagree with them), who take responsibility when they should (and step back when they shouldn't), who are life-long learners and knowing the gap in their own faithfulness, as disciples are committed to narrowing it.

It takes a whole church

They say, "It takes a village to raise a child." It's becoming clearer to me it takes a whole church to nurture a leader.

Let us commit ourselves to be active participants in that wider community of faith that



Photo: Bill Mous

nurtures church leaders.

Let our faithfulness influence them, our common life be a model worthy of emulation, our dedication to God's mission inspire them, our honesty nurture the best in them and our awareness of our own brokenness or flaws encourage them to lives of increasing faithfulness in discipleship.

The Venerable Steve Hopkins was Rector of St. Paul's (Westdale) Hamilton and the former Archdeacon for Ministry Leadership Development.

Animals and Christmas

Born in a stable, Jesus would have been surrounded and serenaded by the sounds of farm animals.

Their very presence provided warmth, comfort and soothing as the baby adapted to his new world.

The blessing of animals happens around the globe, as well as in many parishes in Niagara Diocese.

The animals pictured here symbolize their role at Christmas as part of God's creation.

▶ At St. James Dundas, the Reverend Jean Archbell blessed the rabbit held by Carleone Hardie.

Photos: Submitted



▲ Karen Galer's Sugar Bun met Gloria Howard's Hobo for the first time at the blessing of the animals service at St. Michael's and St. Gabriel Hamilton.

Deadlines and Submissions for Niagara Anglican

Deadlines:

February – December 30

March – January 25

April – February 25

Submissions:

News, Letters, Reviews

(books, films, music, theatre) – 400 words or less

Articles – 600 words or less

Original cartoons or art –

Contact the Editor.

Photos – very large, high resolution, action pictures (people doing something).

Include name of photographer. Written permission of parent/guardian must be obtained if photo includes a child.

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

Questions or information:

Contact the Editor at editor@niagaraanglican.ca or 905-635-9463.

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Through a Canadian stained glass window

John Antle

DENNIS M. GOLDSBERRY

The Reverend John Antle (1865-1949) was born about 70 miles from St. John's, Newfoundland, in the sealing-and-fishing port of Brigus.

Because his father was captain of a ship, John was acquainted early with sea navigation.

He attended school in Brigus, leaving home at seventeen. Supporting himself by teaching, he attended Queen's Theological College, St. John's, Newfoundland, and graduated at age twenty five. He was ordained to the diaconate (1890) and the priesthood (1892).

After five years in the ministry in Newfoundland, John and his family emigrated to Roslyn, Washington.

In 1899, he became Rector of Holy Trinity Church in the Fairview Parish of Vancouver.

After the bodies of four dead loggers arrived in Vancouver on a ship capable of doing only nine knots an hour, John realized proper medical care might have saved their lives.

With a hundred-dollar grant and a fourteen-foot dinghy, he surveyed the medical needs of the coast of British Columbia. By 1905, with the financial help of the Missionary Society of the Church of England, John ran the ship Columbia, which functioned as a dispensary, hospital, library and chapel

for the British Columbia coastal communities. He also trained as an anesthetist to help control costs.

John's Columbia Coast Mission grew rapidly.

At its peak, the mission provided annual examinations for children, and pre-and post-natal care for both mother and child. Such care greatly reduced infant mortality.

He devised an insurance system for loggers that allowed treatment at the most convenient mission hospital, but with the migratory nature of logging, the insurance was only partially successful.

The Columbia Coast Mission operated three hospitals, two ambulance ships, one hospital ship, five churches and two native missions.

John retired at age seventy, but continued to sail.

In 1939, he purchased a boat in the United Kingdom and sailed to Vancouver, through the Panama Canal.

During the Second World War, he was in charge of an Anglican parish on Mayne Island.

John died in 1949. His funeral was held on board his ship Columbia, and he was buried at sea at Manson's Deep, off Bowen Island.

Dennis M. Goldsberry is a member of the Church of the Ascension Hamilton.

As we celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary, we looked back at the role of the church as told through stained glass windows.

The Church of the Ascension Hamilton has 10 stained glass windows in their Chapel of the Holy Spirit dedicated to Canadian Anglican pioneers. For more information about the windows go to www.ascensionchurch.ca.

Note cards featuring the historic windows can be purchased through the church.

The Niagara Anglican thanks the Church of the Ascension Hamilton for sharing the stories of our church's history through their stained glass windows during Canada's 150th anniversary.

◀ The window's inscription reads: "The Columbia Coast Mission was started in 1905 by the Rev. John Antle, former Newfoundlander. It brought the ministry of the Church of England to loggers, fishermen, lighthouse keepers, Indians and remote settlers along the shores of British Columbia."

Riding for peace

STUART PIKE

I have been working with Sheikh Abdullah Hatia, the Imam of the Halton Mosque on several projects.

One was organizing Muslim, Christian and community groups to help fill in the gaps when hundreds of government assisted refugees from Syria arrived without some of the basic things they needed.

We also organized a multi-faith festival called "One Burlington" which happened in August, this past summer.

One time, when Abdullah arrived at St. Luke's for a meeting he walked in with his helmet, and we discovered at that moment that we both ride motorcycles!

We decided that after the festival was over we would organize a multi-faith ride for peace in the fall.

On Saturday, October 21, we met at the Halton Mosque just after their midday prayers, rode to St. Luke's for a photo op and then continued to Steel Town Garage Co., which is actually an

espresso café for motorcyclists, on Barton Street, just around the corner from the Cathedral in Hamilton. The owners, Jeff and Tania, gave us free coffees!

Joining us were Darwin and Marilyn Allen of St. Luke's and Scott McLeod, who is our diocesan resource person for refugee sponsorship. Scott travelled all the way from St. Catharines for the event. Darwin led us back to Burlington on some lovely twisty roads including Old York Road and the aptly named Snake Road.

So there were just the five of us for our first annual Ride for Peace.

Next year we'll get bigger and would like to invite other faiths to join us.

I'm thinking the twisty road is an analogy for a bit of the journey that Abdullah and I and others in many faith communities have travelled over the last couple of years.

There have been significant bumps in the road even over this past year, starting with a horrendous shooting at the Mosque in Quebec City at the

beginning of the year, and the violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, just the week before our multi-faith festival.

Abdullah said at the festival that when those wreaking violence are working hard, all people of faith have to work even harder than they are, to show what true faith is really

about. That's what we've been working at here in Burlington.

And as for the twisty road, well it's a lot more fun when shared with friends and travelling on a motorcycle!

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Darwin Allen, Abdullah Hatia, Stuart Pike, Scott McLeod and Marilyn Allen participated in the first ride for peace.

Photo: Submitted

