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IMAGE: DUDAREV MIKHAIL

TRIMMING OUR SAILS

AS CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE CHURCH'S STRATEGIC
PLANNING BEGIN, LET US CONSIDER HOW WE RESPOND
TO THE MOVEMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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**“If you wish to be perfect, go,
sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor,
and you will have treasure in heaven;
then come, follow me.”**

— *Jesus (Matthew 19:21)*

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■ When the rich young man approaches Jesus to ask about access to eternal life, Christ sets a very high bar. After the exchange in Matthew 19, Jesus tells his disciples, “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

It’s easy to see why the fellow left this conversation crestfallen. There is perhaps no prescription in the Bible so unpalatable, so unfathomable. As a North American living in the realities of capitalism, I scarcely know where to begin. So I find it easy to empathize with the young man: he comes to Jesus with a desire for eternal life, for a way to treat his sin-sick soul—and the cure seems worse than the disease. Perhaps I’d walk away, too. Maybe I do, and am walking away, all the time.

Christians are called to hear such challenges and then to act, and I don’t think we face this task only as individuals. As a denomination, the Anglican Church of Canada will have to address questions about its resources and its financial future. This summer’s General Synod revealed that diocesan contributions to the church’s national office have seen declines, and the Council of General Synod has been charged to consider, over the next triennium, the overall strategic planning and direction of the church.

As the *Anglican Journal* team discussed *Epiphanies*’ second issue, which considers the relationship between the church and economy, we’ve tried to raise questions consistent with Christ’s humbling commandment about wealth. Our assumption is this: if you want to discuss the church’s strategic direction, the conversation might be enriched by starting with questions not focused on bottom lines. We suggest questions aimed at discerning how and whether the church is building up the kingdom of God. What does it mean for the church to invest responsibly? Why does the church employ clergy who aren’t compensated for their labour? What can we learn from monastic vows of poverty? Should the church take a stance on debt? Can and should the church resist a theology of abundance? How can Christians appropriately share their wealth?

Answers to the above might provide an essential foundation for the work of re-birthing the church. Such questions have the power to re-frame conversations about the church’s future, illuminating plans related to strategy—structure and finance—with the light of Christ.

To borrow imagery from the Maritimes, balance sheets tell us about the soundness of a ship’s hull. *Is the ship leaky? Is it buoyant? Is it seaworthy?* Discipleship and mission, though, are about the size, shape, and condition of the ship’s sails. This is about where we’re going and by whose power, not about our means of conveyance. As Jesus says in Matthew 6:21, the verse from which this issue’s title is drawn, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

For those seeking a line-by-line explanation of the Anglican Church of Canada’s budget or five- to 10-year financial forecasts, the pages ahead may not satisfy. We have not elected to undertake that task with this issue, nor have we aimed to dissect the state of the church in *Epiphanies*, as a publication. In many ways, that task lies at the feet of the *Anglican Journal*, which lives up to its name by tracking decisions, happenings and changes within the church. Look for more in its upcoming issues.

Epiphanies, as its name implies, is meant to enlighten the church around issues of consequence. With *Epiphanies*, we are less concerned about the state of the church than its movement. We hope this issue provides some thoughtful exploration of the ways the church is pressing forward on economic issues—sailing ahead, perhaps through challenging seas.

Let us pray for the well-being of this ship of the church, commissioned by God and entrusted to Christians. Let us pray that our ship continues to float—but also that the breeze is constant at our back, pushing us forward across uncertain waters with a holy wind. ■



The *Anglican Journal* is blessed with three talented staff writers, each of whom now has at least a few years’ experience observing and writing about the Anglican Church of Canada. As part of exploring the use of our own resources at the *Journal*, each writer will serve as managing editor *pro tempore* of one of our upcoming issues, while I continue to serve as supervisor, editorial, providing leadership and final editing of each. This issue of *Epiphanies* has been managed by Joelle Kidd—who has aided in the planning, organizing and shaping of the content ahead. The December issue of the *Anglican Journal* is being similarly managed by Matt Gardner, while Tali Folkins is helping with the January issue. Please join me in giving thanks to their efforts and their insights!