



PHOTO: MICHAEL ERDELYI

Adele Halliday, anti-racism and equity officer for the United Church of Canada, says language that equates “black” or “dark” with evil is detrimental to many.

Rethinking darkness and light

Leaders in the Lutheran and United churches on language and anti-Blackness

Joelle Kidd
STAFF WRITER

Adele Halliday still remembers conversations from a church she attended years ago. The congregation constantly associated whiteness with purity and goodness, and darkness with evil. They talked about people being “washed white” from the blackness of sin.

Language is an important part of Christian worship traditions, whether in Scripture, song, liturgy or prayer. But when this language is unexamined, the result can be alienating—or worse, perpetuate longstanding prejudices, Halliday says.

At the time, Halliday says, “I didn’t feel I had enough personal power to speak up and say, ‘Can you please stop saying this, it is hurting me, it is damaging to my soul.’” Eventually she “voted with [her] feet” by leaving and joining another worshipping community. “But for some people it means

leaving [church] completely.”

Halliday is the anti-racism and equity officer for the United Church of Canada, and has been working at the United Church’s national office since 2004 in various capacities, though always related to anti-racism or inter-cultural work.

The United Church’s work on these language issues is based in its anti-racism policy, developed in 2000, Halliday says. One major focus is discouraging the use of “dark” or “black” as synonyms for evil, and words like “light” or “white” as equivalent to goodness.

Often “there’s a particularly detrimental effect on people who are Black, like myself, or racialized in other ways, when you constantly hear ‘black is bad, black is bad,’” says Halliday. That false equivalency impacts people’s self-image as well as how they treat one another, she says.

See **SINGLE-CULTURE LENS**, p. 10

‘We can name the evil that is racism’

A conversation with Archbishop Thabo Makgoba

Matt Gardner
STAFF WRITER

The struggle against anti-Black racism is a common thread in the history of North America and South Africa. During the apartheid era, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa played a major role in supporting the movement to end the official system of racial discrimination. While apartheid officially ended three decades ago, racism continues to plague South Africa today alongside persistent economic and social inequality.

In 2007, Thabo Makgoba became archbishop of Cape Town, occupying the position once held by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. As a student in the 1970s and ’80s, Makgoba actively participated in the movement against apartheid. In his subsequent ministry as an Anglican priest, rector, archdeacon, bishop and archbishop, he continued to challenge inequality, injustice and corruption. In the last years of Nelson Mandela’s life, he provided pastoral care and presence to the former South African president and icon of the anti-apartheid movement.

The *Anglican Journal* spoke to Archbishop Makgoba to learn more about his memories of apartheid, the church’s ongoing role confronting injustices in South Africa, and his thoughts on the Black Lives Matter movement in North America. The interview which follows has been edited for length and clarity.

See **MAKGoba**, p. 8

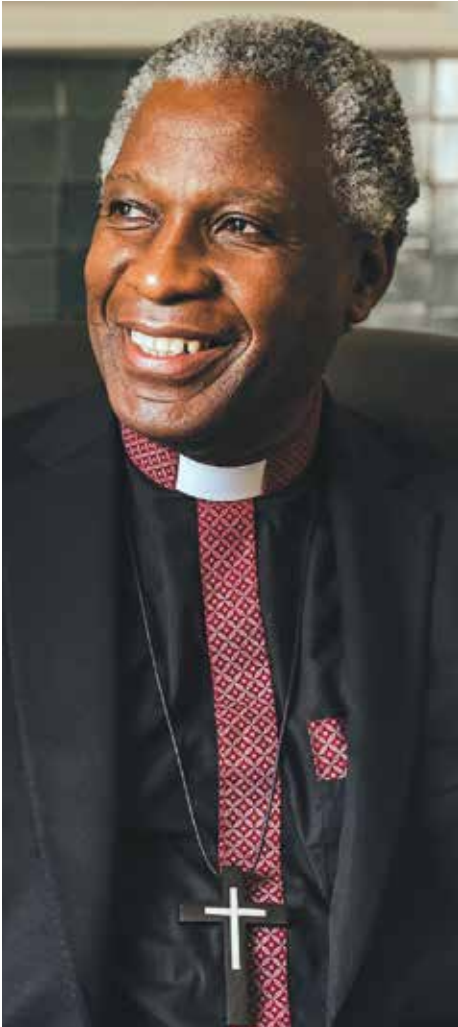


PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Thabo Makgoba, archbishop of Cape Town and primate of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa

UCC general secretary would like to see African-Canadian theology grants

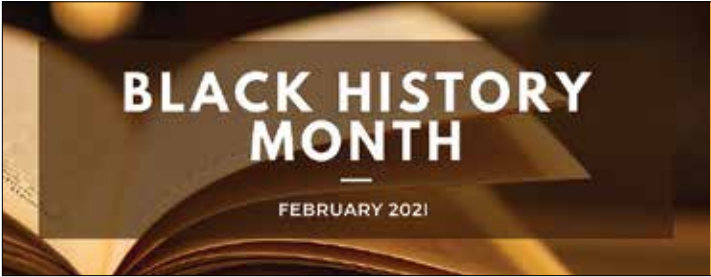
Tali Folkins
STAFF WRITER

The United Church of Canada’s recently named general secretary says he hopes to see the creation of an educational institution for African-Canadian theology, funded at least partly by payments of reparation for the colonization of African peoples.

“We need reparation that will begin

to create scholarships for theological education for people of African descent in this country,” the Rev. Michael Blair said in an Oct. 21 online roundtable hosted by Black Anglicans of Canada (BLAC). “I want to challenge us, and this is something I’m personally invested in, and would like to see: we need to develop an African-descendant institute for theological

See **BLACK STORY**, p. 6



Editorial note:
Black lives matter, and not just for a month.
We pray this is a start.

PM# 40069670

NEWS ▶

New Anglican Church of Canada resource offers theological reflection for pandemic era

Joelle Kidd
STAFF WRITER

A new web page on the Anglican Church of Canada website offers a collection of theological essays that address the Eucharist and other spiritual practices in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Eucharistic Practice and Sacramental Theology in Pandemic Times: Reflections by Canadian Anglicans” includes theological writing from 44 pastors, educators, lay leaders and bishops from across the country and the Anglican Communion.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, with in-person gathering suspended in most areas of the country, Anglicans have faced decisions about how to conduct worship—whether to suspend celebration of the Eucharist, or adapt the Eucharist for online services.

The Faith, Worship and Ministry committee of General Synod began inviting submissions for theological reflection on eucharistic practice and sacramental theology in the spring of 2020, says the Rev. Eileen Scully, director of Faith, Worship and Ministry, who holds a PhD from St. Michael’s College, Toronto School of Theology.

The collected essays “include teachings about the spiritual foundations we need to cultivate during these times, reflections on congregational experience, and elucidations of core matters of doctrine,” Scully wrote in the preface to the collection.

While the scope and subject matter of the pieces vary, “all exhibit in some way the Anglican ethos that seeks to integrate pastoral, liturgical and theological concerns together,” she wrote.



▲ Published late last year on the Anglican Church of Canada’s website, the essay collection offers views from 44 pastors, educators, lay leaders and bishops on Eucharistic practice during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PHOTO: ANGLICAN.CA
SCREEN CAPTURE

- The essays are organized into six categories:
- Spiritual roots for stressful times
 - Learning in context: Congregational life and mission
 - Discipleship and mission
 - Theological foundations and journeys
 - Reflections from ecumenical and communion partners
 - Epilogue: A theology of lament and hope, psalms for lament

The aim of the project was not to offer “positions on particular eucharistic practices and [weigh] in on their validity,” according to Scully. “Rather, it was our intention to invite a ‘going deeper’ set of considerations. In other words, instead of an approach that would directly address issues of pastoral and sacramental practice

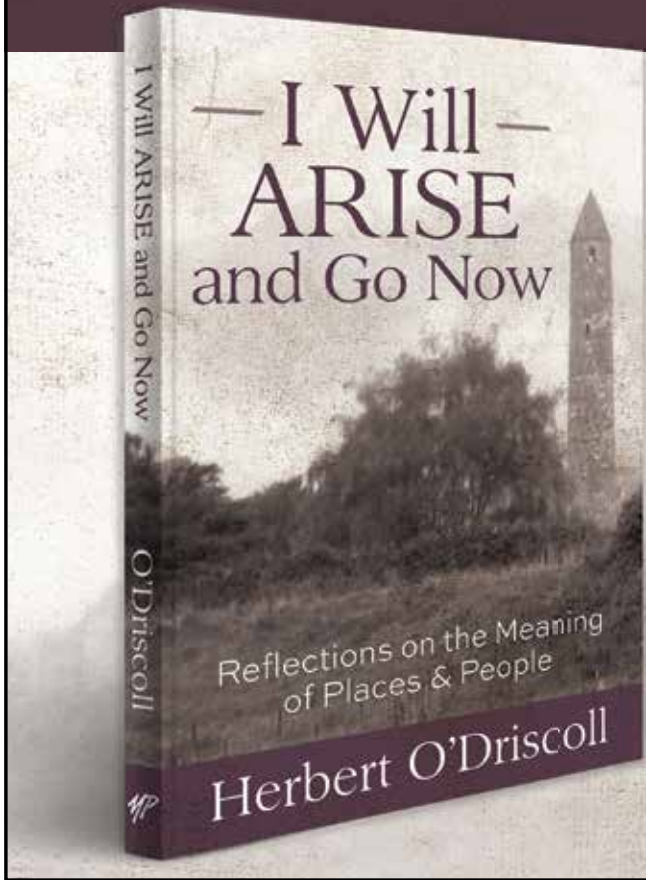
for the specific and unique time that is this pandemic time, we felt it important to invite reflections into the foundational matters of what our Eucharistic and sacramental theology is in the life of the church,” she wrote in her preface.

Scully told the *Journal* that she is “extremely grateful to all the writers who worked under pressures of time and pandemic conditions” to put the project together.

Scully is also working on a study guide with questions for discussion, as well as a downloadable PDF for those who wish to read the content of the website in e-book form. At press time both were expected to be available in January.

To read the full collection of essays, visit <https://anglican.ca/faith/ministry/pandemic-times>. ■

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Sam Rose elected bishop of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador

Archdeacon Sam Rose has been elected the sixth bishop of the diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador, after being voted in on the fourth ballot at the Nov. 28 electoral synod.

The Dec. 15 consecration and installation of the bishop-elect took place at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, with the liturgy livestreamed. Bishop John Watton of the diocese of Central Newfoundland and Bishop John Organ of the diocese of Western Newfoundland served as ordaining bishop and co-consecrator, respectively.

In an online video message, Bishop Rose said the diocese had been making plans for restructuring since its 2018 synod, but that COVID-19 has accelerated these plans.

“There are critical decisions that will need to be made in the coming months instead of the coming years,” Rose said.

“My commitment to you as your next bishop is to walk with you through these changes in faithfulness and love. We will see each other through this together so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this fleeting world may rest upon God’s eternal changelessness.”

The election of a new bishop followed the death on Oct. 8 of Geoffrey Peddle, who had served in the role since 2014. ■

—Staff

GUEST
COLUMN ►


By Scott Sharman

It was a spring afternoon on a Sunday in Edmonton. A group of spiritual and religious leaders from a variety of different traditions—Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Baha'i—stood outside the front doors of Corbett Hall on the University of Alberta campus. We had been invited there to take part in an annual interreligious memorial service for students at the university who had died during that academic year. A service of prayer and remembrance, reflecting a wide diversity of traditions, had been carefully prepared, and was to take place on that day late in the month of May, with local leaders representing different communities of belief. We had arrived in the nearby parking lot roughly at the same time, and walked to the door together. The only problem was, we found it locked.

And then someone's phone rang. "Where are you?" the person on the other end of the line asked. "It is 15 minutes before the service is set to begin at Convocation Hall, and half of the religious leaders taking part are yet to arrive," they added, with some urgency. It was then that we realized the error. In one of the emails arranging the details, someone had mistakenly given the location on the U of A campus as Corbett Hall rather than the correct place, Convocation Hall. We were a couple of blocks away from where we needed to be, and there were now just over 10 minutes until the prayers were to begin. What else was there to do but start running together?

I have often wondered what onlookers must have thought as they observed this scene: four quite visibly religious people running together down a busy city street. Fortunately, we made it to the hall on time, and the memorial service went beautifully. In fact, something about the ordinary humanity of this strange, shared experience helped these faith leaders to see their connection to one another in a very tangible way, which paid dividends in common work we were able to do together in collaboration for some years following.

I tell this story in part because it is a good story, but also because it illustrates something particularly important. Although religions and spiritual traditions are diverse, and do make truth claims about the Divine which are distinctive and not the same, they do share in the common human experiences of a search for truth, a desire for meaning and a longing for relationship with the transcendent. They do this in different ways, and with reference to different texts and stories and teachers and ceremonies. Christians, of



▲ "I have often wondered what onlookers must have thought as they observed this scene: four quite visibly religious people running together down a busy city street."

PHOTO: MR. MUSIC

course, believe that this shared human seeking and striving is responded to uniquely and in fullness in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who was and is the Wisdom of God made flesh in human history. But embracing this truth by no means implies that we cannot also affirm the goodness and honourability of the journey of seeking and finding wisdom by others who are walking on other religious and spiritual paths. Indeed, it is these two important convictions held side by side which call the disciples of the Way of Jesus into dialogue with their interreligious neighbours.

Since 2010, the week of Feb. 1-7 has been observed by many across the globe as United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW). Initially proposed by Muslim leaders to Christian colleagues, WIHW has grown year over year to include people across the spectrum of spiritual pursuit. It is now an important annual occasion to recognize the critical role which religious understanding and

friendship play in the peace of nations as opposed to the path of rivalry and violence.

In 2021 there are WIHW events taking place in various parts of the world, some close to where many *Anglican Journal* readers live. Most of these will be online due to COVID-19 restrictions—the pandemic itself serving to highlight the importance of good relations between spiritual and religious communities as a source of social cohesion, mutual concern for the common good and joint initiatives of care for those who are especially vulnerable. But of course, interfaith interchange is happening all over the place in Canada, in multifaith associations, in community service projects, in schools, in neighbourhoods, among families and friends and so on.

This year, the Anglican Church of Canada has been making an increased effort to lift up WIHW and other interreligious learning opportunities to greater attention and engagement by our churches and people. This is done in witness to the growing need for interreligious awareness and cooperation by Christians in an increasingly plural society across this land. Such dialogue and partnership with our neighbours of other beliefs is not something we invite people into in spite of their fidelity to Christ, but rather precisely because of that faith—as an expression of the promises of the baptismal covenant to "seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself" and to "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being."

The first step in moving from suspicion and hostility towards those who are not like us is always to meet someone face to face, to listen and to learn. Usually, this leads us to being able to recognize some of ourselves in the other, which opens doors. In the case of our interreligious and inter-spiritual others, perhaps we can also come to recognize something of the movement of one and the same Spirit of God in the seeking of the other—the Holy Spirit whose desire is to lead each of us, in God's time, and in God's way, to the reconciliation of all things in the fullness of time.

Who, what, and where is your first step? ■

Canon Scott Sharman is the Anglican Church of Canada's animator for ecumenical and interfaith relations. He holds a PhD in historical theology from the University of St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto.

NEWS ►

Five Regina churches merge to form new parish

Matt Gardner
STAFF WRITER

A group of five Anglican parishes in Regina are merging in a bid to ensure the long-term sustainability of their congregations.

The combined parishes of St. Luke's, St. James, St. Matthew, St. Phillip and All Saints Anglican Church—representing five of the seven Anglican parishes in the city—will henceforth be known as Immanuel Anglican Parish.

Archdeacon Cheryl Toth, representing the archdeaconry

of St. Cuthbert that administers Anglican churches in Regina, said in an interview with the CBC that the merger's aim is for congregations "to bring together resources of all kinds, people and otherwise, and be able to work together to engage in the ministry they want to have."

Bishop Rob Hardwick of the diocese of Qu'Appelle initially brought together leaders from seven Regina parishes in 2018 to consider some form of restructuring. The move

was prompted by declining congregational membership, financial difficulties and clergy vacancies.

Five parishes opted to merge in early 2020. That process will culminate in the first months of 2021 as the combined parish starts to worship together at a new central location.

Remaining church buildings will be used as temporary worship spaces to accommodate physical distancing during COVID-19 lockdown measures. Upon the

lifting of lockdown, one of the newly merged parish's five locations will become the new permanent home of Immanuel Parish while other buildings will be sold or repurposed.

Toth told the CBC that while the pandemic has slowed down the merger, with parish representatives having to meet online, "in some ways it's also focused people on why they're doing this and enabled them to build relationships together in these online working groups." ■

—With files from the CBC



White Jesus and me

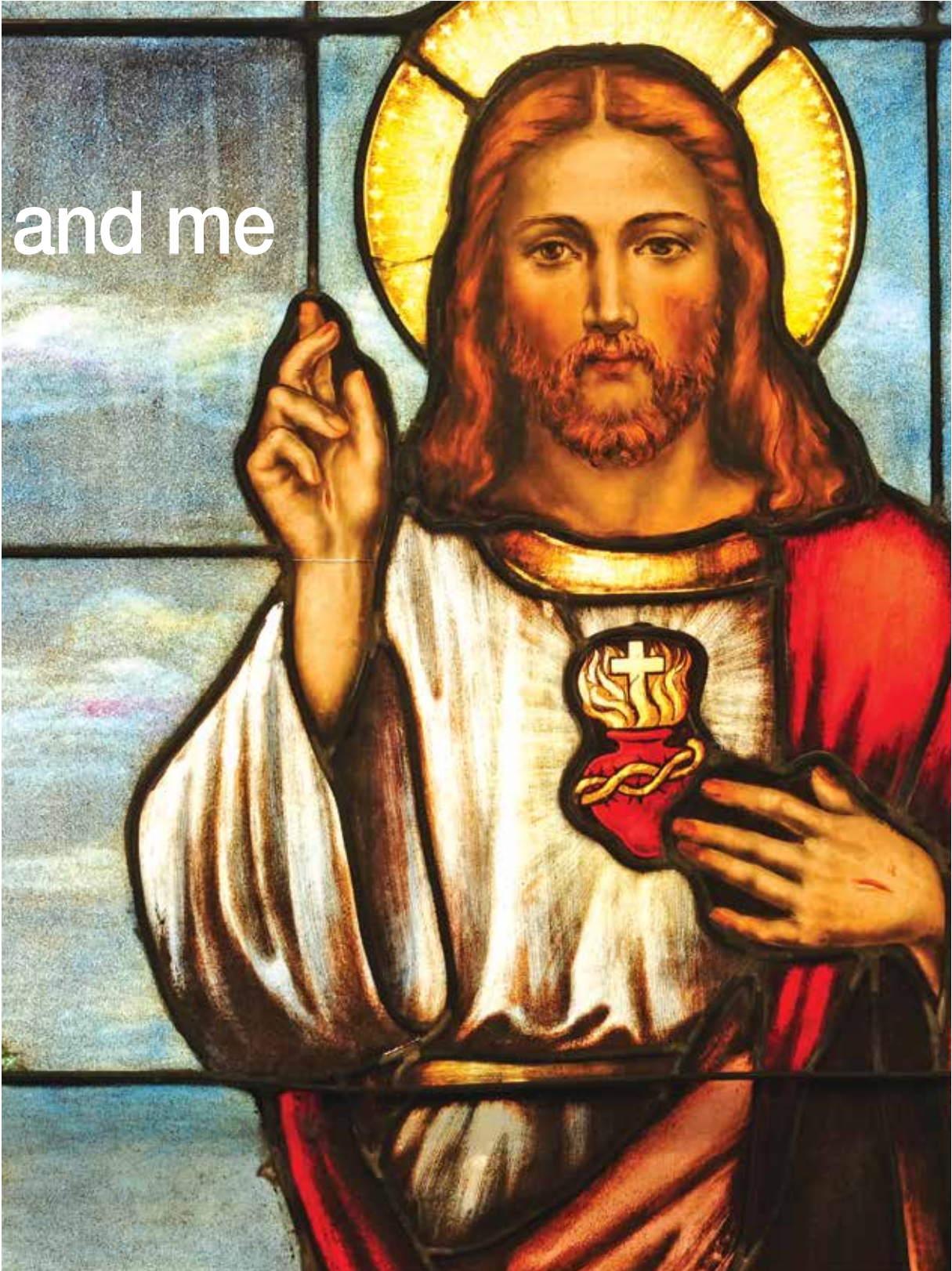
By Catherine Pate

When I first published a version of this column in September, another Black man in the United States had been shot (seven times in the back) by a white police officer. As I prepare it to be published again in February, it seems hard to imagine that this kind of violence, directed at Black people in the United States (and yes, in Canada), has come to an abrupt halt. I fear that as you read this now, a new name may be known to us all—and a new death, new videos, new bystanders, new suspensions with pay, new protests, new questions, new orphans. What won't be different is the hate. It is the same old hate.

I grew up white. But I've been Black my whole life. Born of an interracial couple in 1971—an African-American father (the great-grandson of slaves) and a white Dutch-German Mennonite mother—I was adopted by Lynn and David Pate, both of whom are white. My father is an Anglican priest and so I grew up in this church, in a suburban, middle-class white neighbourhood in Winnipeg. Most of the time I was the only Black child in my school, my church and in my community (my brother was one of two Indigenous kids, so he had it much rougher than me). But my church community was home to me. I sang in the choir, was a server, attended weekly youth group and was known (and loved) by just about everybody.

I don't have the privilege of living as a white person because I have enough melanin in my skin to appear "Black." Because I am not "too Black" I do have privileges afforded "light-skinned Blacks" that are not afforded to darker-skinned ones. For example, I've always had compliments on my hair because of its tight corkscrew curls, not the less desirable African "afro" that gets described derogatorily as woolly or coarse. I believe my skin colour has been helpful (by which I mean it's not too dark) in job interviews and auditions, but that's not to say I didn't (and don't) experience overt racism.

It really wasn't until I went to junior high school and met other Black kids that I began to see the world I had been living in with a new perspective. Through my interactions with my Black peers (there were three) and their Black families, I began to see the world through Black eyes for the first time. Suddenly, it all began to come into focus for me: names I was called as a child, exclusion from birthday parties, sideways glances at me and my parents, and the time my dad and I were refused entry at the front door of a country club and told to enter at the rear, while the other kids from our choir performing there waltzed through the front doors with their parents. I had a name to put to it all: racism. I could no longer pretend that my experience in the



▲ **"It is hard to be 'inclusive' when our language, our iconography, our music, our architecture, our programs, our leaders are all white."**

PHOTO: NANCY BAUER/
SHUTTERSTOCK

world was the same as my white sister's.

What has taken longer for me to wrestle with is how the church I grew up in, the church I loved, makes so many assumptions about its story, about what Christianity looks like and about the worldview by which it expresses itself—so many assumptions that are born from a British colonial mindset and perspective. We never, for example, questioned why all the flannelgraph Bible characters had peach skin or why Jesus in the stained-glass windows has blond hair. I remember walking up for communion at a General Synod worship service in 1998 while the rest of the folks sang "Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole, I want Thee forever to live in my soul; Break down every idol, cast out every foe; Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." I leaned over to my then-husband (who is also white) and said, "I don't want to be washed whiter than snow."

It is hard to be "inclusive" when our language, our iconography, our music, our architecture, our programs and our leaders are all white, unless by "inclusive" we mean, you're welcome to join us, but you'll have to ignore all the whiteness or "assimilate" into it. So, what is a white church to do?

We don't have to go far to find the places where the white church can take definitive action on our baptismal call to "strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every

person." Ask yourself: Who is not here with us in this community of faith, and what is it that might be preventing them from joining us? Who holds the power, and what perspectives are missing at the tables where decisions are made? What are we prepared to lose to make space for those perspectives to be heard and for them to reshape or even transform our community? Where is the voice of God's justice missing in our neighbourhoods and communities? How can our church magnify that voice?

I will soon be the last "visible minority" in paid leadership in this diocese. I have travelled around the diocese (and the Anglican Church of Canada) enough to know that there are small pockets of people of colour, including Indigenous brothers and sisters who worship and work with us in ministry. What is keeping so many of them away, and why are they not finding their way into positions of leadership? Every parish is proud to say, "We are a welcoming church." And, in my experience, most people are very friendly to me when I arrive at the door.

I guess the question is, is that enough?

Catherine Pate is the director of communications for the diocese of Islands and Inlets (British Columbia). This article first appeared in the September issue of the *Diocesan Post*, her diocese's newspaper. ■

“Ask yourself: Who is not here with us in this community of faith, and what is it that might be preventing them from joining us? Who holds the power, and what perspectives are missing at the tables where decisions are made?”

SINGING
WITH JOY ▶



Seeing God
beyond our
mirror images

By Linda Nicholls

ALTHOUGH SOME people find February a dismal month as we long for the end of winter, it is, for me, a month of good memories and celebrations. Both my parents were born in February on the same day, in the same year, in the same city—and delivered by the same doctor! A beloved niece was born in this month, and I celebrate my consecration as a bishop on Feb. 2 every year.

That date, Feb. 2, is the Feast of the Presentation, when Jesus was brought to the temple as the first-born male child to be consecrated to God. While there, Mary and Joseph encounter Simeon and Anna. Both rejoice in this meeting as they see in this child the salvation that they have longed for in Israel. For centuries, we have recited Simeon’s Prayer of thanksgiving in Evening Prayer—“Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace for mine eyes have seen the salvation of God.” What a curious story! What did they see that led them to their acclamations? Would we have seen the same?

Both were people of faith—Simeon open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and Anna, a prophetess dedicated to worship



▲ “Will we see God in those who look and speak differently than the image of our heritage?”

PHOTO: LINDA NICHOLLS, TAKEN AT THE MONASTERY OF BOSE

and prayer. Steeped in their relationship with God, they remained open to the possibilities of God at work in the world around them. They set aside other expectations to welcome, without judgment, the possibility that God was present through this infant, born of parents with no status or influence in the world. They simply rejoiced.

This Epiphany, revealing God at work in the world, invites us to ask whether we are open and willing to see God in places and people we do not expect. Our sight can be clouded by expectations or habits or attitudes shaped by our culture and history. We let our expectations of God be limited. Since Anglicanism began in England, we still live with many expectations rooted in that history. Some continue to give us life while others cloud our ability to see God at work

in other ways. I recall a friend from Europe commenting some years ago that the only people who seemed to be allowed to read Scripture in public worship were those with English accents!

February is Black History Month, when we honour and seek to learn more about the life and contributions of Black Canadians. Black Anglicans of Canada invites us to see the face of God in the lives and contributions of Anglicans who have found a home here from the diaspora of Black peoples. We are hearing more about their experiences of being ignored or dismissed within the life of the Church despite generations of Anglican heritage. Will we see God in those who look and speak differently than the image of our heritage?

During an ecumenical meeting at the Monastery of Bose, Italy, we were invited to visit its private collection of icons. This community writes icons in a variety of styles from around the world. I vividly recall the breadth and depth of the images and the gift of seeing God through different eyes and perspectives. That breadth is needed not only in art but in our human interactions, where God is revealed in unexpected people—a child, a beggar, a person deemed disabled, or someone different than ourselves. It is only unexpected because we choose not to see and be ready to embrace and rejoice. As 2021 challenges us to see God in new ways, let us pray for eyes to see as Simeon and Anna did—open and ready to recognize the presence of God in all around us. ■

Archbishop Linda Nicholls is the primate of the Anglican Church of Canada.

WALKING
TOGETHER ▶



Identity and idolatry

By Mark MacDonald

THE APOSTLE PAUL says that “enemies of blood and flesh” (Ephesians 6:12) are not our greatest challenge in life. In other words, any struggles with Creation or humanity, as they simply exist in themselves, are not the critical factor of life. Paul identifies our encounters with “rulers,” “authorities,” and “cosmic powers” (sometimes translated as “principalities and powers”) as our most crucial and consequential opponents. In a biblical and traditional view, they are spirits, messengers, or angels of God that give communities life, relate the principles that organize them and give a sense of unity to the various and diverse aspects that make up the elements of our existence. They were designed for good. Today, some of these forces are good, some are neutral, and some are evil.

The problem is that, in a world that strays from its purpose, the things which make life possible can begin to compete with the power and authority of their source, God. When they do this, when they seek to become more important than



IMAGE: RYSA VECTOR

God, misery, pain and evil are born. The ancient sages taught that this is the source of idolatry, granting honour and service to things that are created instead of offering them to the Creator.

To help clarify these forces for modern readers, theologian William Stringfellow described them as ideologies, institutions and images. With some caution, I would like to add another “I”: identity. Like the others, identity is a spirit that clearly serves an essential service. Identity gives a sense of belonging and purpose in a community of others. It can build esteem and ignite compassion. It is so important, so much a part of who we are, that it often operates unnoticed. At its best, it can motivate the sacrificial love that Scripture and our experience affirm is the heart of both Creator and creation. At its worst—when it becomes an idol—it is the source of endless division, mayhem, and, so very often, death.

When identity is an idol it despises and demeans the other. Communal identity, if not held in its proper balance with our duty to God, enables the oppression of others. As identity spreads through the

various aspects of a shared culture, it creates the systems that exclude, control, and subjugate others. This is at the heart of what is called racism and is one of the greatest factors in the motivation of colonialism.

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus shape identity towards its initial purpose in Creation and its ultimate goal in the World to Come. Further, the Holy Spirit infuses identity with the sacrificial love which is the creative force that gives birth to life. In Christ, identity, as it comes forth in the various diversities of our life—family, community, nation, for example—becomes a source of unity for humanity and creation. Our identity is neither despised nor obliterated in the life of Jesus. Instead, it is raised with him to a state of communion and healing. At a time when it has become so clear that one identity has been idolized to the devastation of others, may God grant the Church the grace to become the example of institutional authority it was meant to be. ■

Archbishop Mark MacDonald is national Indigenous archbishop of the Anglican Church of Canada.

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“I think we need to understand that we as Black folks, people of colour, and white folks, and Indigenous communities, have a task to do, and the task is to decolonize ourselves.”
—The Rev. Michael Blair, general secretary, United Church of Canada

Black story essential to our future: MacDonald

Continued from p. 1
reflection and praxis, and we need to be writing a Canadian Black theology experience.”

Blair began as general secretary of the United Church—supervising its day-to-day operations—Nov. 1, succeeding Nora Sanders, who retired after almost 14 years in the role. According to a news release from the United Church, Blair came to Canada from his native Jamaica as a young adult and began his spiritual formation in the Anglican church. He was ordained in the Convention Baptist Church before becoming a minister with the United Church of Canada in 2010. He had been serving as executive minister for the Church in Mission Unit of the United Church’s national office when he was named general secretary.

Blair’s roundtable, entitled “Our Lives Matter,” was one of a series of talks on racism presented by BLAC since July. It was moderated by National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop Mark MacDonald—who voiced enthusiastic support for Blair’s idea.

“I have felt that there’s no healthy future for our planet unless Indigenous rights are respected—but I also think there’s no healthy future for Canada unless the Black Canadian story is told and understood and embraced. I don’t think people have any sense of how important that is to the health of Canada,” MacDonald said.

“The story that you’re telling is, to me, essential—essential to the future, and the institute you were talking about, I think, is an urgent matter,” he added. “So I would say, where do we go from here?”

In response, Blair seemed to suggest the institution could be funded jointly through private contributions and reparations payments from the church.

“I think a bunch of us just need to get together and say, ‘You know, if not now, when?’” he said. “An institute like that is going to cost money, and resources will be needed. I think some of us have resources we can contribute, and part of the reparation process for the wider church is, how does it invest in this?”

Blair began his talk by saying the process of decolonization would involve peoples who have been colonized as well as those who have colonized.

“If we’re going to see a long-term change ... then I think we need to understand that we as Black folks, people of colour, and white folks, and Indigenous communities, have a task to do, and the task is to decolonize ourselves,” he said. “Often in the conversation we’ve talked about the need for white folks to decolonize themselves.... And that’s important. But I also want to say that it’s become very, very clear to me that colonization is like Kool-Aid which we all drink.... And each community has their particular work to do in decolonizing themselves.”

Part of the damage colonialism wrought on colonized Black people, Blair said, was that it defined them from outside—and has continued to do so.

“We had no say in who we understand ourselves to be—we were defined by others,” he said. “And part of the challenge is that we continue to hold those definitions that others have defined us with, as opposed to reclaiming and renaming who we are.”



PHOTO: SCREEN CAPTURE BY TALI FOLKINS

Blair: “We need to commit ourselves to rebuilding a strong Black church tradition [that is Canadian].”



▲ Blair cited this colonial-era depiction of a white medical missionary attending to a sick African, aided by a white Jesus.

PHOTO: WELCOMME LIBRARY

As an example of how this definition from outside worked on a theological level, Blair showed a colonial-era illustration, from a London Missionary Society publication, of a white missionary, clad in pith helmet, administering medicine to an ailing Black child in a tropical forest. Behind the missionary, as though directing him, stands a shimmering and white Jesus.

“In many ways, this notion that Jesus mediates God’s care and love through white folks to Black folks is part of what I think has captured our imagination,” he said. “In many ways, and for many years, many of us didn’t even blink twice when we saw a picture of a white Jesus, because we came to understand the whiteness of Jesus and we just lived with it. And those of us who were challenging the notion of a white Jesus were not warmly received on either side.”

One of the things decolonization will require, Blair said, is for people of African descent to reclaim their

own sense of who they are. But it will also require work on the part of the descendants of colonizing people.

“You need to be in a space of lament and a conversation about repentance because of how you have controlled our lives,” he said.

To reclaim their identity, people of African descent in Canada need to build communities of storytellers and elders who can serve as mentors, he said. They also need a much stronger Black church.

“The Black church tradition in the Canadian context is very weak—it’s very disconnected and discordant,” he said. “We need to commit ourselves to rebuilding a strong Black church tradition.... In fact, often what we do is we borrow from the U.S. stories, and one of the things I find myself asking is, ‘Where are the Black preachers like Martin Luther King Jr. in the Canadian context?’” Black Christianity in Canada, he said, needs to reclaim a tradition of preachers like King, who “understood the prophetic call to liberation and spoke boldly to their community and others.”

Blair also said he thought Black Canadian communities could partner with Indigenous communities to create “truth-telling spaces,” because the truth about the Black experience has not yet been fully told. “Within the Canadian context, there’s still a denial of the reality of the slave trade, and that doesn’t help any of us,” he said.

They could also learn from the way Indigenous peoples are holding members of the dominant culture in Canada to not just apologize but take concrete action, he said.

“The Indigenous communities have a patience that we in the Black community don’t have, in a sense,” he said. “I think sometimes those of us in the Black community want quick fixes, and we sell ourselves easily and we let the dominant culture off the hook from doing the hard work. I think the gift of the Indigenous experience at the moment is to say ... ‘White system, you don’t get a bye, you’ve got to do the work. We’re here to support you, but you’ve got to do the work.’” ■

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AFC-funded program helps with homework

Joelle Kidd
STAFF WRITER

The Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC) has awarded \$6,000 to a homework club for kids in downtown Toronto as part of its fall 2020 grant cycle.

St. Jamestown Homework Club is a collaboration between three Toronto churches: Rosedale Presbyterian Church, St. Peter and St. Simon-the-Apostle Anglican Church and St. Andrew's United Church. It has been running out of St. Peter and St. Simon on Bloor St. East for the past 11 years.

The club is staffed by volunteers who pick up the students from nearby Rose Avenue Public School and Our Lady of Lourdes, a Catholic school. The students play games—outside, if the weather is nice—then spend time doing homework with the help of the volunteers.

“We have four laptop computers and a printer, connected to the internet, so the kids can do any research.... We have some educational software programs which the kids can use on the computers ... and sometimes for the younger ones who are maybe six years old or so, one of the volunteers will just read a book to them,” says the Rev. Wesley Denyer, minister of Rosedale Presbyterian and chair of the homework club's steering committee.

The club is a valuable service rooted in the needs of its particular community, Denyer says. “A lot of these children are the children of immigrant and refugee families,” he says, noting that many of the parents do not speak English as a first language. The neighbourhood is also fairly low-income and many residents live with large extended families in small apartments. “[There's] not a lot of dedicated space for kids doing homework.... Helping the kids with things like reading, or even reading to them in English, is not something that would normally be happening in these families ... [and] they're often busy and their homes are kind of noisy and filled with people. So this is an opportunity for them to get that kind of support.”

▲ **The St. Jamestown Homework Club provides the use of laptop computers and internet access to kids in the downtown Toronto neighbourhood.**

▶ **Then-primate Archbishop Fred Hiltz visits the homework club.**

PHOTOS: CONTRIBUTED



The club also provides a safe, supervised place for children whose parents work and can't arrange for pickup at 3:30 when school lets out. The club runs until 5:30 p.m. weekdays.

Along with organizing and administering the program, Denyer emcees the Christmas and end-of-year parties each year and works to raise funds to keep the program running.

The homework club costs \$25,000 annually, and the three churches involved are able to fund \$6,000 each. The remainder of the cost is raised from donors and funding sources like the Anglican Foundation, which has provided \$19,000 of funding since 2014.

Rois has volunteered at the club and visits at Christmas “with a little Christmas bag for each child,” she says. Former primate of the Anglican Church of Canada Archbishop Fred Hiltz also visited the homework club during his time as primate. Even though the kids “didn't really know what the ‘primate of the Anglican church’ was,” Denyer says, they “thought that was pretty neat. That was pretty special.”

The grant for the club comes from AFC's Kids Helping Kids Fund, which was created to fund projects that improve the lives of children across Canada.

“Almost a decade ago, with the establishment of the Kids Helping Kids Fund, AFC brought children and young people into the spotlight, recognizing

that when they are given opportunities, they not only survive, but thrive,” says Rois.

“No one wants children to navigate how to survive, and yet we know it happens every day. Some children do not have families to rely upon after school, and so the homework club is there to help them with their school work in a safe, supportive environment.”

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the homework club has not been operating for most of 2020. Because the club serves kids from different schools and grades, school administrators did not want to risk mixing cohorts.

However, Denyer says, the club's dedicated volunteers were determined to keep connecting with the kids. For now, volunteers are meeting one-on-one with students over Zoom, reading together and helping out with schoolwork.

“We can't do this with 25 kids, the same way as before, but at least we can do something,” says Denyer.

“The volunteers we have are quite dedicated to this whole process and are determined that we get back to doing this, so I'm quite confident that we will indeed get back to having the homework club again ... serving this community.”

Since the club has been running for eleven years, Denyer says, there are kids who were in the homework club at its beginning that are now returning as volunteers. “It's neat that they've graduated but come back to assist with the work.... And I think, too, [of] the dedication of the churches to continue on with this—a lot of churches are struggling financially, more so over the past few years, and yet they continue to see this as a priority.”

The AFC provides grants to individuals, parishes and church organizations to fund ministry in the Anglican Church of Canada, with two grant cycles per year. Its fall 2020 grants, released in November, totaled \$210,000 for more than 45 applicants and funded building projects, ministries, and education bursaries across the country. ■

THE
INTERVIEW ▶

“ We have the best-known advocate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was elected dean of Johannesburg. The challenge then was, if you let a Black dean to be in Johannesburg, where was he going to stay? Because the rectory was in a white suburb.

Makgoba: ‘Racial capitalism is a sin’

Continued from p. 1

I read your memoir *Faith and Courage: Praying with Mandela* in preparation for this interview and was wondering if you could expand on your own experience of apartheid and its aftermath.

In my memoir, I tried to spell out briefly my family history and my history growing up as a Black child in South Africa. I think what remains unresolved even by the democratic government is the whole issue of land, where land was taken by force. Even in the township where we lived, we were removed forcibly to another township by the Afrikaans government then, by the “Peri-Urban” [police on the outskirts of South African cities].

Land tenure and disputes around land still remain an issue, and dare I say, a racial issue, because those that were forcibly removed are mainly Blacks or Africans, Indians, the Coloureds [a multiracial ethnic group].... Those are the sad terms that we use in South Africa.

Besides [my family’s] forced removals, when I tried to apply to one of the best universities in the country, Wits University, I was denied, initially, entry because it was mainly a white university. In those days, we as Black people had to prove to the minister that we were academically capable, but [also] to say the course we want to do is not available at a [Black] African university. Most of them are far away from Johannesburg.... I was denied a ministerial approval at the personal level. That was really based on racial terms. And I was detained a couple of times for the pass laws [requiring Black South Africans to carry an internal passport].

The role of the church in fighting apartheid was a major influence in your deciding to pursue the priesthood. How did the Anglican Church in South Africa respond to anti-Black racism during and after apartheid?

During apartheid, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa had powerful archbishops from this office that challenged the Bantu education that sought to put Black people into Black schools and not allow them to meet. There was vociferous challenging of apartheid.

We have the best-known advocate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was elected dean of Johannesburg. The challenge then was, if you let a Black dean to be in Johannesburg, where was he going to stay? Because the rectory was in a white suburb. Desmond Tutu was given really a heartache in terms of that. [Later] we have the Anglican Church again electing Desmond Tutu as the first Black archbishop. Now he has to come and stay here in [the wealthy Cape Town suburb] Bishopscourt, when we were segregated racially and Blacks had to stay in certain places and whites had to stay in certain places.

In terms of residential formation, the Anglican Church had Black and white theological colleges. We started sending Black students to St. Paul’s, which was a white elite theological college, to say we will not be ruled by apartheid. Archbishop Desmond Tutu challenged the international community to impose sanctions against [South] Africa as a passive means, a non-violent stance, to bring about a change.



▲ Makgoba—second from left in the top row in this photo of a Black Lives Matter demonstration outside of St. George’s Cathedral in Cape Town—says the movement has found resonance in South Africa.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

We’ve got [some] of the best schools in the country, started by monks and nuns. Inevitably in South Africa, they became schools for those that can afford [them], and those that can afford in South Africa became mainly white parents. We started challenging some of those schools to say, “Please, do accept Black children, so that there is some degree of integration.” We’re still far from that. We get accused of all sorts of racism in our schools. But those are some of the efforts that we made. We also started placing priests in the so-called white parishes in order to intentionally erase the divide of Black and white.

Based on the last two chapters of your book, which discuss the more recent history of South Africa, it seems that the question of fighting racism today is inseparable from fighting economic injustice and economic inequality.

Yes, you put your finger on it. Racial capitalism is a sin. Racial colonialism also impacted South Africa. In South Africa, unlike [with] the so-called Indians in North America who [faced extermination efforts], here the Dutch East Indian Company said, “No, we want the land, we want the resources, but we want the people as cheap labour.” Then a segregated economy started, which was racialized and weaponized. We’re still suffering that today. It was the economy in the hands of the Dutch East Indian Company, which was European and white. Blacks became cheap labour and were enslaved, and then women became at the bottom rung.

Now, even in democratic South Africa, we have won political emancipation. But we still have to look at what I call spatial segregation, where Blacks, in the main, live in squalor and poorer areas and far from their place of employment, and are less educated than their white counterparts. They’re excluded from the economic activities of the country. Women suffer a double quandary: they are Black, they are women, they are unemployed, and they are not seen.

Those are the consequences of apartheid and racial colonialism and racial

capitalism, which the church has to be literate and sensitive about. The church has to highlight the fact that if we are to regard everyone as created in the image of God; if we are to take the psalm which says “the Earth is the Lord’s and all that dwell in it,” and if we are to take John 10:10 seriously—that Jesus came so that we may all have life and have it abundantly—we need to know some of the policies that can enable all of us to obtain that parity and equality and inclusion in economic activities of South Africa.

A lot of the struggle against anti-Black racism in North America relates to police brutality. In your memoir you describe your own experience of police brutality in South Africa during apartheid, but also the police massacre of 34 miners at Marikana in 2012. It seems as if despite the democratic changes in the 1990s, there’s a certain continuity between the role of the police during apartheid and the role of the police now in enforcing economic inequality.

You’re right. There are continuities and discontinuities. We tried here in South Africa to change even the name “police force” to “police service.” We’re trying to say to the police, “Mentally see yourself as serving humanity and serving the community, rather than the police force are forcing the citizens into your way of thinking.” The bulk of all our police services are now trained in that model of enforcing the government rules, of enforcing particular ways of thinking. I see there the continuity between the apartheid police, and I see there the continuity with the police in North America.

I remember during Black Lives Matter [protests], we were under a COVID-19 lockdown, and the president dispatched the army to go and ensure that people listened to the restrictions. If you go into a leafy suburb, yes, social distancing and curfews are possible. But if you go into a slum and squalor, it’s actually unsafe indoors, where they are overcrowded there if they live in slums. ■

Fighting apartheid not ‘anti-white’: archbishop

Continued from p. 8

Have the Black Lives Matter movement and the fight against racism and police brutality in North America found an echo in South Africa?

Yes. People are following it, and it has really found a lot of resonance. It also sparked [discussion of] other issues, like gender-based violence. But there are other political priorities.

For example, there’s a school here in Cape Town where the parents and teachers agreed that some could go on a matric ball. It’s called Brackenfell [High] School. The matric ball costs 500 rands, which is something like 50 Canadian dollars. For you it may not be much. It’s a lot of money for people that do not have [a lot]. Inadvertently, only white parents and white people were able to go to that matric ball. There was a picket and the police came in; there were stun grenades shot and tear gas all over.

Another example is the farm killings. Sometimes, when we look at racial conflict, we can tend to emphasize only Black Lives Matter. That’s why it was very important to say, Black Lives Matter is a movement to highlight the killing and the discrimination and the racism towards Blacks because they are Blacks. But in South Africa, we are a non-racial country [with apartheid gone] where sometimes, people are killed because they are farmers, and most of the farmers are white. That’s why it is important to also look at violence towards whites in South Africa, and violence towards Blacks in South Africa, and violence towards women in South Africa.

Do you see parallels between Black Lives Matter in North America and your own days as a student fighting apartheid, or struggles in South Africa today?

Yes, I see some parallels, because at the heart of Black Lives Matter and at the heart of when we fought apartheid is the really biblical injunction that all of us are created in the image of God. All of us deserve respect, and all of us must be accorded dignity with which we are created. On the 10th of December we will be celebrating yet again Human Rights Day. At the heart



▲ **“If you keep your knee on [someone’s] throat and they die, you have to live with that conscience. Whether [the legal system] finds you on a technicality guilty or not guilty, you have to live with yourselves.”**

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA/
SOUTH AFRICAN
CONSULATE IN THE
UNITED KINGDOM,
“THE MURDER AT
SHARPEVILLE” BY
GODFREY RUBENS

of human rights, I think, are those biblical injunctions that humanity matters, that respect for every individual matters.

Fighting apartheid was not anti-white. Fighting apartheid was to say, “Hey, South African whites, if you demean me, you demean yourself. If you exclude us, you’re excluding yourself,” because you can never be happy when somebody can’t breathe, because you have to keep that knee on their throat. If you keep your knee on their throat and they die, you have to live with that conscience. Whether [the legal system] finds you on a technicality guilty or not guilty, you have to live with yourselves.

In North America, Black Lives Matter is a call for justice. Funding of a police that kills people because of their racial complexion ought to stop or [be] reviewed. Training of those police forces so they can actually protect everyone and see people as people, not as Blacks, is going to be very important.

Based on all the experiences in the movement against apartheid, with the student movement, the church and figures like Nelson Mandela, what do you think the role of the church is in the fight against racism and for social justice?

The role of the church in fighting against racism and [for] social justice is cut out for us. We have a number of biblical texts, and the church must always start from Scripture. Anglicans always pride ourselves that our touchstones are Scripture, tradition, experience and reason. We must go back to Scripture. [There are] some biblical passages that are outrightly racist, tribal, and look at the consequences of that when God intervenes. And we look at some of the biblical injunctions that say in Christ there’s no Jew or Gentile. We are God’s people. Then maybe once we have read our Scripture, we should look at how can we advocate for such a just society.

I know some people say, “Oh, the church can’t be involved in politics.” The church can’t be partisan; I can’t go and stand for political office and say I’ll advance the biblical texts in politics. Some can do that. But I think our true vocation is to say the rule of God is at hand, and what is God’s kingdom ... in contextual issues? We can do that in advocacy, and then we can give agency to the particular groups that are affected by that racism and exclusion. We can name the evil that is racism, because we know that racism reduces the God in you and the God in me into some smaller God, and makes one race’s God bigger than who God created us to be.

Once we name it, we can maybe create our own racial sensitization programs ... and then look at some of the things that can show that we are really serious about inclusion. How many Indigenous Canadians are in leadership positions in the Anglican Church of Canada, in government, and in other places? Is there a policy that we could advance as the church that unashamedly gives preference to those that have been maimed, those that have been excluded through racialized mechanisms, even if we are unpopular? Are we able to stand up and speak out?

So there are many things that we can do as a church—go back to our texts, advocate for change, give agency to those that are marginalized, include them in our structures, and then have what I call strong policy organizations that can change the Canadian policies and the church policies in order to reflect the beauty of diversity. ■

New issue of *Epiphanies* focuses on assumptions

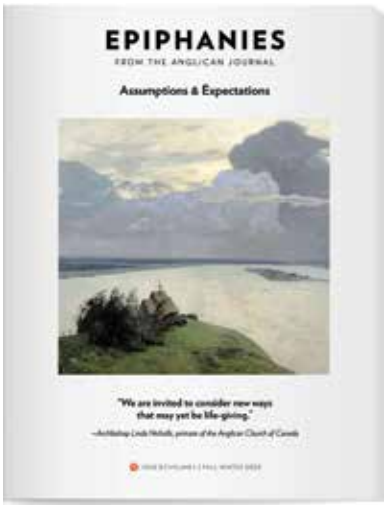
“We are invited to consider new ways that may yet be life-giving.”

—Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada

2020 turned out to be a year of shattered assumptions. The latest issue of *Epiphanies* considers a few of the assumptions that might have underpinned our expectations of this year—as well as those that may become important for the church in the months and years to come.

Read it here: <https://www.anglicanjournal.com/new-issue-of-epiphanies-focuses-on-assumptions/>

<https://bit.ly/2L4ToSl>



Epiphanies, digital magazine of the Anglican Journal

DIVERSITY ▶

“The Bible is the inspired word of God, the people who wrote it were people who were fallible and were shaped by the context of their time, who had their own biases. So can we talk about that?”

—Adele Halliday, anti-racism and equity officer for the United Church of Canada

Single-culture lens limits theology, pastor says

Continued from p. 1

Halliday says that how we read, understand and interpret Scripture, and how words like “light” and “darkness” are used, is very important. “This can make a significant difference for how people engage in the worship experience and even whether people actually see themselves reflected in the image of God and in our liturgies,” she says.

Halliday says she encourages people not just to avoid these metaphors but to consider a diversity of language around the topic—using “darkness” in positive connotations, for instance.

“How do we think about engaging this in a more expansive way, so that it’s not the only way in which it is described?”

Of course, some of this troubling language appears in our translations of the Bible itself, Halliday says. The goal is not to shy away from the language that’s there, but to talk more deeply about it, she adds. One way to do this is by engaging intentionally with passages through an anti-racist or racial justice lens.

“One thing that we don’t always talk about is [that] the Biblical writers themselves had their own biases.... The Bible is the inspired word of God; the people who wrote it were people who were fallible and were shaped by the context of their time, who had their own biases. So can we talk about that?”

Translators, too, bring their own biases to bear when shaping the Scripture. Halliday points to a verse from the Song of Solomon describing the Shulamite woman, which has been translated variously to say the woman is “Black *but* beautiful” or “Black *and* beautiful.”

“That’s a totally different connotation.... One [says] you can be both and there’s no contradiction, and the one is, ‘Well, even though this person is Black, they’re still beautiful—but that’s an exception,’” Halliday says.

Diverse language for a diverse church

“Diversifying what we read or engage [with] or study is important,” says Pastor Lamont Anthony Wells, president of the African Descent Lutheran Association (ADLA), a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

While Wells says using inclusive language is important, he identifies theological education as a way to go back to the source. The works of white writers like Reinhold Niebuhr and Dietrich Bonhoeffer are taught in seminaries as foundational texts, but the work of Black theologians like James Cone—or of Indigenous writers and writers of colour—are considered subjects for elective courses, he says.

“Why is what James Cone has said not given the same prominence, equality, as



▲ Pastor Lamont Anthony Wells: “For us, liberation theology includes the eradication of anti-Blackness in the church’s liturgy, the church’s teachings and the church’s hermeneutic and interpretation of Scripture.”

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Bonhoeffer?.... Dietrich Bonhoeffer got his impetus when he studied at a Black congregation in New York ... so the value of what we’re receiving from some of our headliner theologians is still rooted in a diversity that the church doesn’t want to accept,” says Wells.

The ADLA brought a resolution to the ELCA’s Churchwide Assembly—its highest legislative body—in 2016 which asked the church to evaluate its Christian education and seminary education department and to include liberation theology in its curriculums. (Liberation theology ties Christian teaching with social justice and political liberation of oppressed groups.)

“For us, liberation theology includes the eradication of anti-Blackness in the church’s liturgy, the church’s teachings and the church’s hermeneutic and interpretation of Scripture,” says Wells.

The 2016 recommendation was passed, but has not been implemented—church governance can tend to move “at a glacial pace,” Wells says—but ADLA continues its advocacy and he is hopeful that it will bear fruit soon.

At the 2019 Churchwide Assembly, the ELCA presented an official apology to people of African descent—“an apology for the years that the church has been complicit in language and in engagement and practice and behaviors that have been ... rooted in anti-Blackness,” says Wells, who received the apology on behalf of ADLA.

The apology was important for several

reasons, Wells says. “A problem that the church has been complicit in for hundreds of years is racial inequality,” from slavery in the United States to segregation and inequality. “It is important ... for us to move forward, because we can’t continue to go in a narrative that *everything is okay, because things seem to be more progressive than they were in ... the ’50s or ’60s.*”

Wells points to a 2015 report from the Pew Research Foundation that found that the ELCA was “the whitest church in America.”

“We are the least diverse church in America—and why is that? Because there are practices, there are behaviors, there are ... feelings and moods that prevent full inclusion, racial equality, within our ranks,” he says. The apology was “a beginning,” he adds.

“It shouldn’t just be words ... but if this is the beginning of practice, of action, then this is something that we can engage.”

Halliday too sees diversity within the church as an important part of expanding language.

The United Church’s “Vision for Becoming an Intercultural Church” stresses the importance of diversity to understanding. “Our experiences and understandings are shaped by our cultures,” the document says. “Since we cannot capture the perspective of God through our limited cultural understandings, our understanding of God is limited when we see this God through only one dominant cultural perspective.”

Halliday says she experienced this firsthand at a Bible study she attended as part of a World Council of Churches meeting.

“In this small Bible study there were people from various parts of the world, and we were all reading the same Scripture text. That was by far one of the best Bible studies I’ve ever engaged in, because people talked about, ‘This is what this means in my context’ ... Everybody brought their own understanding from their own cultural context. And sometimes they were quite different. There were things I had never thought about in my context.”

How we read and understand Scripture “is almost always better when there are more people present,” she says.

As anti-racism and equity officer, Halliday is developing a national anti-racism action plan which will include ideas for engaging with and measuring anti-racism work throughout the United Church of Canada.

Wells says he is hoping to see the ELCA address economic inequality and income gaps within its leadership. “We’re supposed to be counter-cultural, right? So if there’s any area in this world where there should be clear levels of engagement and intentionality to equality, it should be amongst religious institutions.” ■

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‘I look in the mirror, I see Absalom Jones’

Pioneering priest embodied Black faith tradition and struggle for freedom

Matt Gardner

STAFF WRITER

Each February, the Episcopal diocese of Pennsylvania celebrates the life and legacy of Absalom Jones. The first African-American to be ordained as a priest in the Episcopal Church, Jones also founded the first Black Episcopal congregation, the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, and is in the Episcopal Church’s calendar of saints.

In the view of Fr. Jordan Casson, rector at St. Michael’s Episcopal Church in Yeadon, Penn. and organizer of the annual celebration, Jones made his own ordination and sacramental life possible.

“Every Black cleric ... every Black bishop that’s been ordained, is all part of the legacy that the Rev. Absalom Jones has left for us,” Casson says.

“My interest in Rev. Jones, in celebrating his life, his ministry, his parish—which is extremely vibrant and extremely healthy—is that I see myself. I look in the mirror, I see Absalom Jones. I see him in me. And I see him in every Black boy and Black girl, Black man, Black woman who is either a priest, will be called to be a priest, or has been ordained in this tradition.”

Born enslaved in 1746, Jones worked in the fields of wealthy Anglican planter Abraham Wynkoop until the latter recognized his intelligence and ordered that he be trained to work in the house. Jones avidly learned how to read and saved up money he was given to buy books.

After the elder Wynkoop died, his son Benjamin sold the plantation along with Jones’s mother, sister and five brothers. He brought Jones to Philadelphia and opened a store there. Jones attended a night school for Black people run by Quakers and worked at the store.

At age 20, Jones married Mary Thomas, who was enslaved to a fellow member of Benjamin Wynkoop’s congregation at St. Peter’s Church. Together with father-in-law John Thomas, Jones used savings and sought donations and loans to buy his wife’s freedom.

Though Jones repeatedly tried to buy his freedom, Wynkoop refused until finally granting him a manumission in 1784, freeing him from slavery. While Jones continued to work at Wynkoop’s store, he left St. Peter’s and began worshipping at St. George’s Methodist Episcopal Church, where he met preacher Richard Allen. The two became lifelong friends and founded the Free African Society, a mutual aid organization that helped support freed enslaved people in Philadelphia.

The Free African Society held religious services and began to build the African Church of Philadelphia, which attracted Black parishioners who had left St. George’s due to racial discrimination. After Allen decided to stay with the Methodist Church, Jones accepted the call to provide pastoral leadership to the new congregation, which applied for membership to the Episcopal diocese of Pennsylvania. In October 1794, the diocese admitted the congregation as the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas. Bishop William White ordained Jones as a deacon in 1795 and as a priest in 1802.

For Arthur Sudler, director of the historical society at St. Thomas, two major themes define the life of Absalom Jones: faith and freedom.

He describes the situation in which Jones

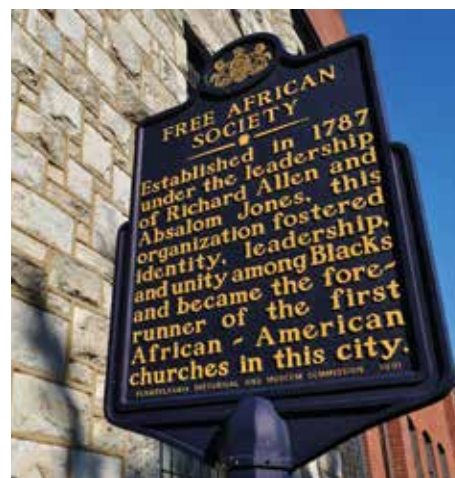


▲ Jones, who was born into slavery, became the first African American ordained in the Episcopal Church.

PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

► Historical marker in Philadelphia at 6th and Lombard for the Free African Society

PHOTO: NICK-PHILLY/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



found himself after ordination: “having charge of the congregation and having to work with white clergy with whom he could not sit in diocesan convention, and to have to deal with people in the general community who had never seen a Black Episcopal priest before—had never seen any Black man ordained in any of the denominations.”

But Jones was a pathbreaker, Sudler says, and though circumstances like these must have weighed on him considerably, they did not lessen his desire to see freedom for his people.

Jones’s ministry extended beyond church walls to include support for the abolitionist cause. In 1797, he helped present a petition to Congress in response to the Fugitive Slave Act, which guaranteed the rights of slaveowners to recover escaped slaves. The petitioners asked Congress to consider the plight of formerly enslaved people and to adopt “some remedy for an evil of such magnitude.”

Jones began a tradition of giving anti-slavery sermons on New Year’s Day, gaining fame for his powerful oratory. On Jan. 1, 1808, he gave what became known as “A Thanksgiving Sermon,” which celebrated the end of the transatlantic trade in people and was published widely in pamphlet form.

Within Philadelphia, Jones’s role in lifting up the community crossed racial lines in 1793 when the city was struck by a yellow fever epidemic. At the time, it was rumoured that Black people were immune to the disease. In response to a plea from friend

and local physician Dr. Benjamin Rush, Jones and Allen enlisted the help of Black residents to help the sick and bury the dead.

“In that work, there is clearly a selflessness, an understanding that God has called them to help their brothers and sisters even at the risk and peril of their own lives,” Sudler says.

Casson compares the role of Black Philadelphians during the yellow fever epidemic to that of many racialized people during the COVID-19 pandemic, “where frontline workers tend to be African-American or Black and brown people who—whether they want to or not—because they have to work and because [of] the way these kind of divisions still exist in America, they’re out there.... This is where we were in the late 1700s, and we’re still there in 2020.”

But Casson highlights the importance of lifting up these frontline workers prepared to sacrifice their own health due to a feeling of responsibility to others. He points to the example of a hospice nurse in his congregation who caught COVID-19 in March and recovered, but has since gone back to work.

“She still feels that this is part of her Christian responsibility to be there for those in hospice, especially those who are in hospice from COVID,” Casson says.

“The selflessness and this kind of empowerment of the Holy Spirit to help even in unprecedented times is just really I think the backbone of Black theology, regardless of denomination. But it is a Christian ethic that you see alive and well and not only [in] Rev. Jones, but Rev. Allen, his colleague.”

Jones died in 1818, but his influence continues to be felt. His work inspired later figures such as Octavius Catto, a St. Thomas vestry member and civil rights activist assassinated on election day in 1871 while trying to help Black men vote.

Sudler sees a “continual line” from Absalom Jones to activism at St. Thomas today, where current rector Canon Martini Shaw “takes a position that we will affirm marriage equality through the sacrament of holy matrimony” and parishioners can be seen “marching in the streets of Philadelphia advocating that Black lives matter.”

The annual celebration of Absalom Jones in the diocese of Pennsylvania has become what Casson describes as an occasion to “speak about our continued advancements towards freedom and erasing systemic and institutional racism in the church and in the world.” Further strengthening the legacy of St. Thomas’s founder, Sudler and Casson are currently working on a project to erect a statue of Jones.

Though Absalom Jones is most celebrated in the United States, he has also found admirers in the Anglican Church of Canada.

The Rev. Steve Greene, rector at St. Luke’s, Cambridge, and St. Thomas the Apostle, Cambridge, in the diocese of Huron, wrote a paper on Jones in seminary. He finds inspiration in the “profound spiritual strength” of a person born into slavery taking up the cross and persevering despite displacement and marginalization.

“He’s one of my boys, I can honestly say,” Greene says of Jones. “I like him a lot. What he did, his theology, his fervency, his faithfulness, his strength, his ‘I’m not going to quit’ [attitude], the things he had to do in order to proclaim the Good News—to me he’s a beast.” ■

“What he did, his theology, his fervency, his faithfulness, his strength, his ‘I’m not going to quit’ [attitude], the things he had to do in order to proclaim the Good News—to me he’s a beast.”

—The Rev. Steve Greene, rector in Cambridge, Ont.

A CHURCH IN
PANDEMIC
TIMES ▶

Moosonee priests bring baptisms home

Joelle Kidd
STAFF WRITER

The Rev. Ann Westgate, deacon of St. John the Evangelist Mistissini in the diocese of Moosonee, spent Nov. 15 to Dec. 1 travelling in the Cree Nation of Waskaganish, where she baptized 47 children, infants and teens.

Westgate was assisted and accompanied by Rita MacLeod, she shared in an email. They travelled to several families' homes and camps in the bush in order to conduct the baptisms, using a home liturgy prepared by Archbishop Fred Hiltz, assisting bishop of Moosonee, and Archbishop Anne Germond for use during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Germond, who, as metropolitan of the ecclesiastical province of Ontario, also serves as bishop of Moosonee, says they developed the liturgy after learning from the chief of the James Bay community of Chisasibi that more than 80 babies and infants were waiting to be baptized in that community alone after months of lockdown. "No baptisms had taken place since March.... [Hiltz] and I discovered that other communities in the James Bay deanery were experiencing the same thing and there were numbers of new babies born. He and I spoke at length about how we could offer the sacrament of baptism in a safe way 'for this time' of COVID-19 pandemic."

Baptism at home "is an exception to the rule and our Anglican custom of baptism



▲ The Rev. Jacob Sealhunter officiating at a baptism at home in Chisasibi First Nation.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

with the gathered community in the context of Sunday worship," Germond says. The liturgy is meant to be used at home with a small group of people present, to prevent large gatherings.

"We included very strict procedures and protocols for everyone to follow and gave permission for it to be used with the understanding that there will be a public welcome in the church proper when the community is able to gather again," says Germond. They suggested using family members in the readings and the Celebration of Baptism, and she adds that in some communities on the James Bay coast, bear grease was used instead of oil of chrism.

Germond says she and Hiltz consulted

regularly on the details of the liturgy, though Hiltz is its primary author.

Westgate says that she was honoured to perform the baptisms. "When I told [parents] to train their children in the ways of the Lord and to bring them to church I could not help but feel that the odds were stacked up against them" with churches closed and lockdown measures in place, Westgate wrote. However, she says she has seen records of and heard from elders about baptisms done at home and in the bush before the church were built in her community. "This was also the practice of the early Church to worship in the homes."

Westgate wrote that she baptized six babies all from the same family at the family's camp, with grandmothers and great-grandmothers present to see the baptism. She also baptized eight young adults between 13 and 19, from two other families.

In addition to the baptisms in Waskaganish, 21 youth have been baptized at home in Chisasibi First Nation. Westgate's husband, the Rev. George Westgate, has also celebrated two home baptisms in Mistissini.

Germond noted that clergy in the diocese are in close contact with band councils and follow their guidelines on whether or not to allow baptisms at home. Churches resumed baptisms on site when they were reopened in September, but at press time in January the area was in lockdown, and baptisms were being done at home again. ■

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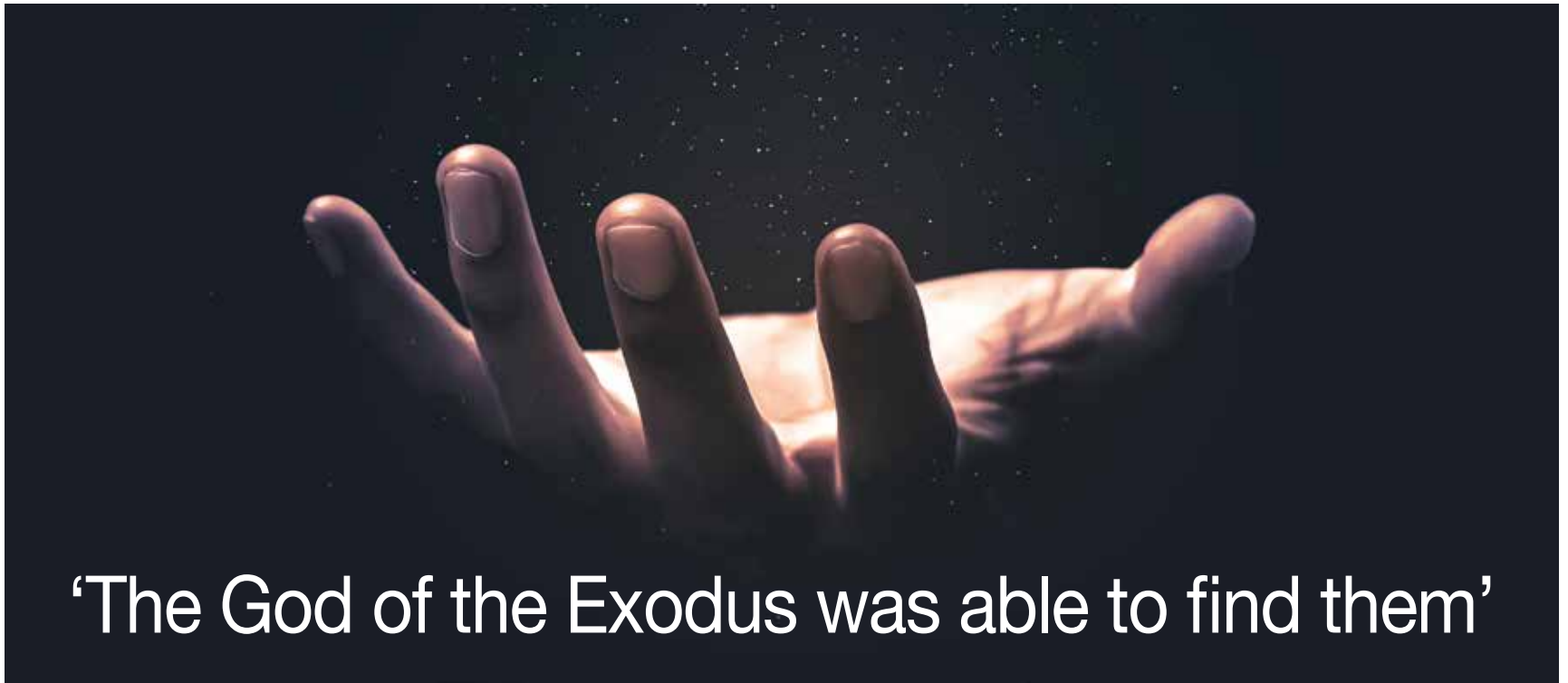
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BLACK HISTORY ▶



'The God of the Exodus was able to find them'

Black faith has held North American church and society to account for worldly injustice, theologians say



Tali Folkins
STAFF WRITER

The chief influence of Black Christianity on the wider North American church has been to hold it to the idea of freedom in the here and now—with gains that aren't going to wilt at resistance from the dominant culture, according to Black church leaders the *Anglican Journal* interviewed.

"The Black faith tradition has always been that prophetic, if you will, witness to the liberating God—that tradition that has tried to speak truth to power," says Canon Kelly Brown Douglas, dean of the Episcopal Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary in New York City and the author of several books.

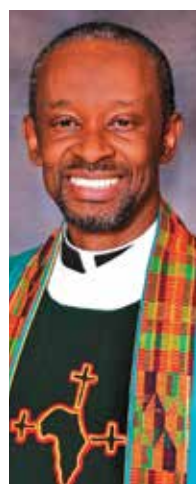
This aspect of Black Christianity arose from the history of people of African descent in North America, Douglas says. Brought to the continent as slaves, they saw in the Christian God the same high god they had worshipped in West Africa, who had created them to be free, she says.

"They somehow were able—or I should even put it another way: the God of the Exodus was able to find them. They were able to find the Exodus story and to see this God that liberated the Israelites from their oppression ... and that seemed to be the god that they knew," Douglas says. "That's why the Exodus tradition continues to be a central tradition in Black faith.... The Black faith tradition begins as a tradition that, at its centre, has an understanding of a God who is a liberator and who is one with the oppressed."

Many white Christians at the time did not understand Christian freedom in such worldly terms; indeed, the Anglican Edmund Gibson, who was bishop of London from 1723-1748, argued in favour of baptising slaves, Douglas says, on the grounds that "the salvation and freedom that come with baptism have nothing to do with earthly freedom and salvation."

Historically, African-American spirituality has pressed the church, including the Anglican church, to understand liberation in earthly terms as well, she says, and "to see the face of Jesus in the face of the most oppressed—and in this country, that has typically meant in the face of Black people as they struggle for freedom."

In the United States, Douglas says, the



The one thing you can be sure about is that as Black Anglicans, we are home—we aren't going anywhere.

—Canon Stephen Fields, incumbent at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Thornhill, Ont., and founding chair of the diocese of Toronto's Black Anglicans Coordinating Committee

Episcopal Church—which has historically been the church of colonial authorities and slave owners—is increasingly recognizing its historical role in slavery and white supremacy, including taking seriously the idea of reparations, in response to calls from its Black members.

"That's being done not all of a sudden out of the goodness of their hearts, but because of the voices that are the Black church within the Episcopal Church tradition," she says.

Douglas says she hopes this tendency will manifest itself globally, and that white Anglicans will come to recognize that their communion is largely African.

"We still act like the Anglican Communion is synonymous with 'Anglo,'" she says. "And so, I think that the more you hear voices erupting across the nation, across the globe, of people of colour—it is going to have an impact, I hope a cataclysmic impact, upon the way in which the Anglican Communion thinks of itself and conducts itself on the worldwide stage."

In Canada, Black Christians have influenced Christianity in a number of ways, says Canon Stephen Fields, incumbent at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Thornhill, Ont., and founding chair of the diocese of Toronto's Black Anglicans Coordinating Committee. For example, they've lived out their Christianity in uniquely or largely Black denominations, such as Black Baptist or British Methodist Episcopal (BME) churches. Yet it's really only in recent decades that Blacks—particularly those of Caribbean descent—have begun to influence the Anglican church, he says.

There's been a sizeable Black presence in the Canadian Anglican church since substantial numbers of people began to immigrate to Canada from the Caribbean in the 1940s and '50s, Fields says. These early immigrants were coming from a Caribbean that was in many cases still very British, where the church was mostly Anglican, and so when they came to Canada they naturally joined Anglican churches here. But where they were welcomed, it was often because they were seen as bringing a touch of exotic culture to church events, rather than as potential church leaders, he says.

"For many, it was just a matter of 'You're from the Caribbean; the Caribbean is calypso, and colour, and

food,' so any influence that Blacks had in our church as Anglicans was around occasionally providing a local experience in Canada of Caribbean tourism," he says. "That was all it was. You weren't involved in synod, you weren't involved in any power structure, no policy-making."

Over time, Black Anglicans began to talk about taking on a bigger role for themselves; meanwhile, church leaders made increasing efforts to include and involve them more in decision-making, he says. In 1992 a report by the Rev. Romney Moseley, strongly recommending the church promote diversity and inclusion in worship and leadership, was endorsed by General Synod. Three years later, the Black Anglicans Coordinating Committee was formed, to advocate for and support Black Anglicans in the diocese of Toronto, with, among other things, an annual Black history service. In 2018, Black Anglicans of Canada was established to advocate for a larger role in the national church.

Black Canadian Anglicans, Fields says, have come to leave their mark on worship as well. While keeping the theology intact, many predominantly Black congregations have moved away from worshipping in a strictly British style. They have integrated dance and Caribbean music into their services, which typically involve a lot of colour, energy and spontaneity, he says.

Fields says that in his experience, however, this kind of worship is often not embraced by non-Black Anglican congregations.

"The sad thing about it is that for some in the dominant culture, even that is seen as 'not as good as'—not Anglican or Canadian, not who we are," he says. "It's good 'over there,' we can go visit it and leave it, but to have it as part of who we are every Sunday is not on. Not in every case, but generally that's the attitude: 'It's not our thing.'"

A parishioner once wrote him a letter, Fields says, telling him that "that's not our music, to get back to Barbados."

But Black Anglicans in Canada, he says, have no intention of walking back any of the gains they've made.

"The one thing you can be sure about is that as Black Anglicans, we are home—we aren't going anywhere," he says. "This is our home, and we are going to make sure that we get a share in the work that's being done and a share in how we make decisions." ■

The Black faith tradition begins as a tradition that, at its centre, has an understanding of a God who is a liberator and who is one with the oppressed.

— Canon Kelly Brown Douglas, dean of the Episcopal Divinity School, Union Theological Seminary



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RISE IN
GLORY ▶

Sewap remembered as humble role model

Dedicated priest ‘loved the Lord’ and his ministry will live on, mourners say

Matt Gardner
STAFF WRITER

Canon Angus Sewap, a Pelican Narrows, Sask., priest whose quiet presence carried tremendous authority, has died from complications due to COVID-19. He was 72 years old.

Serving his home community at St. Bartholomew Church, Sewap also made frequent home visits to elders in surrounding areas. He was a talented musician known for playing and singing gospel hymns on guitar. His death on Dec. 3 prompted an outpouring of tributes.

Anglican Indigenous Bishop of Mississippi Adam Halkett, a close friend of Sewap’s, describes him as a “humble servant” and a “real dedicated priest.”

“He was a real role model for myself and others,” Halkett says.

National Indigenous Archbishop Mark MacDonald came to know Sewap over the years in a wide variety of contexts, from meetings and training events to his many trips through northern Saskatchewan. The two once co-officiated a funeral together with Bishop Halkett. The archbishop considers himself to have been “blessed” by Sewap.

“There is, I think, among elders a quiet authority,” MacDonald says. “It is not assertive. It doesn’t speak out or stand out. But it permeates a place and a people, and it is an authority that helps hold people together.

“Angus, by many people’s standards, would be described as very quiet. But his presence was in the community and beyond. Wherever you encountered him, and even when you weren’t encountering



▲ Canon Angus Sewap (left) was close friends with Bishop Adam Halkett, who described him as a “real role model for myself and others.” Sewap, who served as priest at St. Bartholomew Church in Pelican Narrows, died on Dec. 3 at the age of 72.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

him physically, his presence was very powerful. It had authority, it had a graciousness, it had a kindness.... He was someone who kept us together, and someone [with whom] you felt good about what you were doing because he was involved with it.”

Sewap was Cree, born on Nov. 20, 1948. Though living in Pelican Narrows for most of his life, he spent about five years studying in Prince Albert, where he became a certified electrician.

When Halkett was one year old, his parents drove through Pelican Narrows and connected with Sewap’s family. Halkett and Sewap would not meet again until 40 years later, by which time they had both become ordained.

During his training to become a priest, Sewap was a catechist and served in Sturgeon Lake First Nation. His ordained ministry lasted three decades, during which he worked on a non-stipendiary, or unpaid, basis.

Sewap’s later years were difficult. In

2012, his wife Liza died. Later, both his legs were amputated due to diabetes and he was confined to a wheelchair.

“He had artificial legs and he was really lonely,” Halkett says of this time. “And of course, this pandemic, when it hit, I couldn’t go and visit him. All I could do was talk with him over the phone.”

Near the end of his life, Sewap moved to a seniors’ residence in La Ronge. During the pandemic, Halkett says, “They had to send him home because there was no room for him.”

He adds, “When his sister called me telling me that he was home, I phoned him right away and he said, ‘Well, I’m just waiting for them to call me back when there’s room.’ During that time, that’s when he contracted that virus, COVID, and he died from it.”

When he received the news that Sewap had died, Halkett says, “I was in shock ... He was a close friend of mine.”

The late priest’s nephew Greg Sewap remembers him as an avid outdoorsman.

“Of course, he loved the Lord.... When he wasn’t reading the Bible and stuff, he would be outdoors most of the time,” Greg says. “He loved fishing, hunting, spending time at his camp ... and he loved tinkering around with motors. He was a carpenter. He was a little bit of everything.”

The two would often go fishing together. Greg remembers a time when his uncle caught a fish that ended up on both of their lines. “We were just fighting over it, back and forth.... Oh, we had a good laugh that time,” he recalls.

“He treated me like one of his own,” Greg adds. “I looked at him like a father figure. That’s why I was so close to him.”

Archbishop MacDonald says that Sewap was “very generous with his time and every aspect of his being,” adding, “He will be deeply missed. We expect that his mantle, like Elijah—his spiritual authority and presence will fall on someone, maybe many people. But his ministry will live on.” ■

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☐ 03 Psalm 19
☐ 04 1 Corinthians 1:1-17
☐ 05 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
☐ 06 John 2:13-25
☐ 07 Psalm 69:1-18
☐ 08 Psalm 69:19-36
☐ 09 Psalm 107:1-22
☐ 10 Psalm 107:23-43

DAY READING

- ☐ 11 Numbers 21:1-9
☐ 12 John 3:1-21
☐ 13 John 3:22-36
☐ 14 Ephesians 2:1-22
☐ 15 2 Chr. 36:11-23
☐ 16 Jeremiah 31:23-40
☐ 17 Psalm 119:1-16
☐ 18 Psalm 119:17-32
☐ 19 Luke 2:41-52
☐ 20 Hebrews 4:14-5:10
☐ 21 John 12:20-36a

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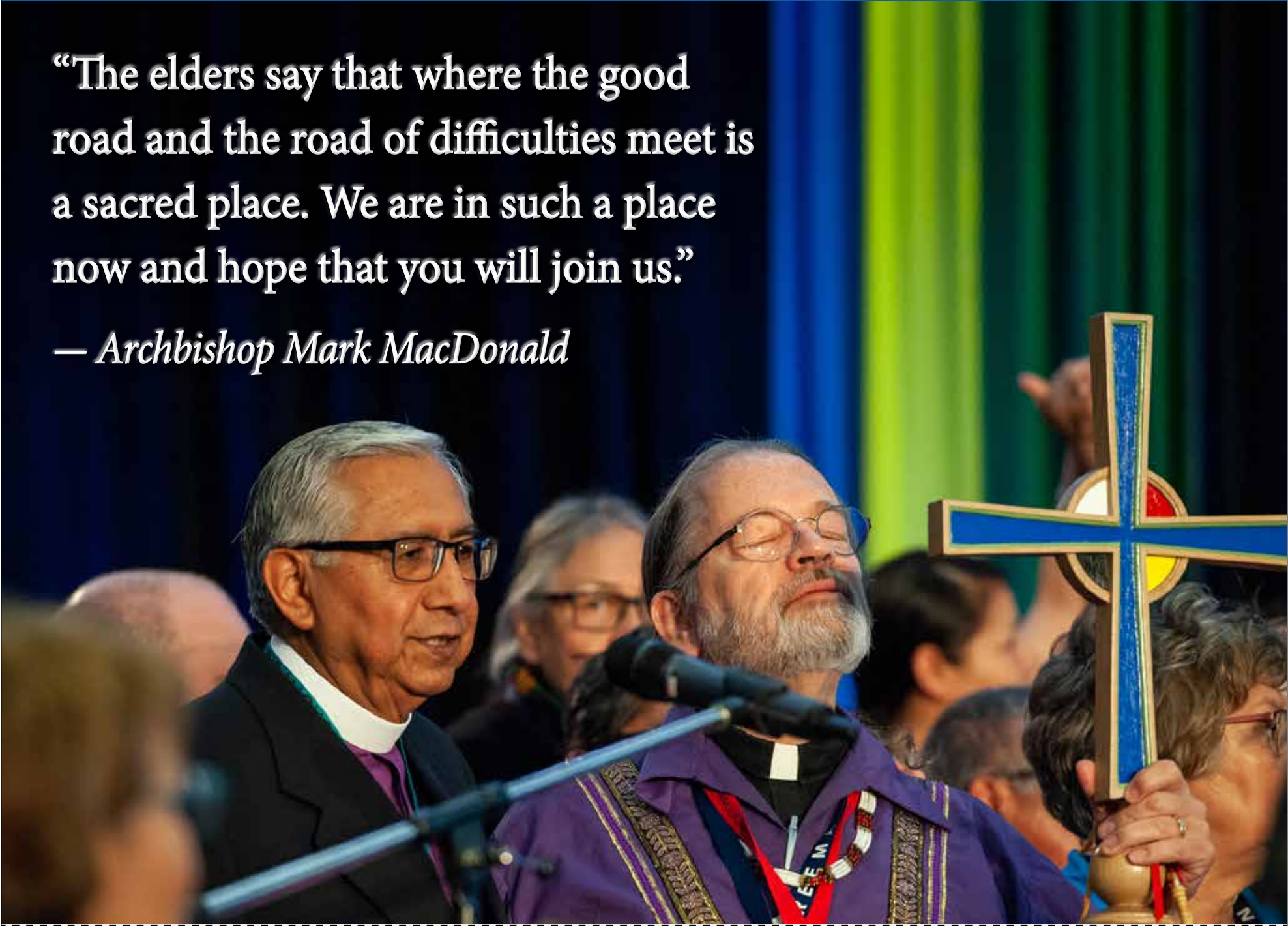
- ☐ 22 Isaiah 42:1-13
☐ 23 Isaiah 49:1-13
☐ 24 Isaiah 50:1-11
☐ 25 Hebrews 10:1-18
☐ 26 Isaiah 52:13-53:12
☐ 27 Philippians 2:1-11
☐ 28 Mark 11:1-11
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☐ 30 Mark 12:1-27
☐ 31 Mark 14:1-21

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— *Archbishop Mark MacDonald*



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