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## Proposed settlement reached in Ralph Rowe lawsuit

### \$13.25-million deal includes 'apology process' for abuse

Sean Frankling  
STAFF WRITER

A proposed settlement for decades-old abuse committed by former Anglican priest and

Scouts Canada volunteer Ralph Rowe, reached over the summer, is expected to come before a judge later this month.

The proposed settlement deal, approved by the plaintiffs'

representatives, Scouts Canada and the Anglican diocese of Keewatin, could total up to \$13.25 million, according to a copy of the settlement agreement posted on the website of Koskie Minsky

LLP, the law firm representing the plaintiffs. It also stipulates that "General Synod shall engage in a consultation process with the impacted Indigenous communities and arrive at a mutually acceptable apology process," with Scouts Canada

providing a written apology to anyone requesting it as part of the claims process.

The settlement was announced by the firm Aug. 7, but must still be examined and approved by a judge in a hearing set for Oct. 27.

See 'HIS ABUSE,' p. 3



PHOTO: MARY SCHEIDEGGER

A child points through smoky air 2.5 km from the main campus of the Sorrento Centre Aug. 26. The Anglican-operated retreat and conference centre in the Shuswap region of B.C. was evacuated for eight days starting Aug. 18 as a wildfire raged nearby.

## Western fires wreak havoc

### PWRDF starts fund for in-Canada emergencies as blazes spur N.W.T. exodus, claim B.C. Anglican camp

Sean Frankling  
STAFF WRITER

Wildfires in western Canada this summer forced residents to evacuate from Yellowknife, disrupting ministry in the already logistically difficult diocese of the Arctic, and all but destroyed an Anglican summer camp in the Okanagan Valley. In response, the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF) created a new fund for emergency responses inside Canada, which received \$22,000 in donations in its first week.

Fires in the Northwest Territories forced about 19,000 people to evacuate Yellowknife Aug. 18, sending out a long line of cars to the south towards Alberta.

See EVACUATION, p. 6



▲ Evacuee vehicles line up to use the only gas pumps between Yellowknife and High Level, Alta.

PHOTO: ALEXANDER PRYOR



▲ "For me, the important thing is that I go to church," says Cecilia Sibayan.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

## Reaching out to diaspora Christians

### Canada's religious landscape is shifting as mainstream congregations shrink and newcomers bring their own forms of Christianity. What role is there in this for the Anglican church?

Sean Frankling  
STAFF WRITER

"When I came here [to Canada] in 1996, I was alone. I was lonely and scared. The first thing I looked for is a church," says Cecilia Sibayan.

Sibayan and her husband are Igorot, originally from the northern part of the Philippines, where

Anglicans are especially numerous in the otherwise mostly Roman Catholic country.

"I go to church because I believe in it, and my family came here and joined me because we believe in the church," she says.

When she and her family arrived in Edmonton, they tried out a couple of different churches before landing at St. Matthias Anglican Church, near where they lived in the west end. Then, because Sibayan knew there were other Igorot immigrants in the area who were looking for a place to worship,

it felt natural to invite them to join. That was in the early 2000s, she says, when she and her family were the only Filipinos she saw in the pews there. But the Igorot she invited passed the invitation on, spreading word through their community groups, and the numbers grew.

Today, there are enough to sustain their own congregation, St. Peter the Apostle, which is hosted in the same building as St. Matthias with membership of around 40 people on an average Sunday.

Hundreds of thousands of Christian immigrants like Sibayan

See CHRISTIANS p. 11

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## HEARING THE LAMBETH CALLS ▶

### Interfaith Relations

The eighth of a 10-part series on the calls to the global Anglican Communion made at the 2022 Lambeth Conference.

**As Canada's religious makeup becomes increasingly diverse, Sharman says, interfaith relations will become more important than ever.**

# Canada interfaith 'mission field': Idowu-Fearon

Sean Frankling  
STAFF WRITER

The Anglican Church of Canada is in a unique position to promote understanding between people of different faiths around the world, says the former secretary general of the Anglican Communion and head of the group that drafted the Lambeth call on interfaith relations. Josiah Idowu-Fearon, who is also a past archbishop of the province of Kaduna in the Anglican Church of Nigeria, says Canada's position as a hub for immigration from diverse nations, backgrounds and beliefs gives Christians in Canada the opportunity to reach out for meaningful exchanges with people of other religions. And they will then pass their understanding of what Christianity is about on to other members of their faith both in Canada and in their countries of origin, he says.

"Canada is a mission field in terms of interfaith relations. It would be difficult for a Canadian to go to Iran to work there, but you have Iranians with you. It would be difficult for Canadian Anglicans to go to China. You have Chinese [people] living with you," he says. "So first and foremost, Canadian Anglicans ... need to stand up and say, 'Look, we are Christians. This is our faith tradition and as Christians we love everyone.'"

That's one of the ways Idowu-Fearon says the Anglican Church of Canada can live up to the call, one of 10 statements presented at the Lambeth Conference in summer 2022 that encourage the Anglican Communion to take collective action on issues of concern to the faith and the world. In some provinces of the communion, the call says, "there is the freedom to call people into baptism and discipleship, and our neighbours of other religious traditions can also become partners in work for the common good, tackling areas of shared concern such as the pandemic or climate change." Elsewhere, however, "Anglicans face hostility and even persecution."

In light of that understanding, the call encourages Anglicans around the communion to stand in solidarity with



PHOTO: DOTSHOCK



▲ **"It would be difficult for a Canadian to go to Iran to work there, but you have Iranians with you," says Idowu-Fearon. "So first and foremost, Canadian Anglicans ... need to stand up and say, 'Look, we are Christians. This is our faith tradition and as Christians we love everyone.'"**

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Christians who are persecuted; to seek understanding relationships with people from other faiths that allow them to share the gospel in respectful dialogue; and to stand up for religious freedom for—and reject prejudice against—people of all faiths. A summer 2023 update also foregrounds Christianity's debt to the Jewish tradition and the shameful history of antisemitism among Christians that has failed to honour that debt.

Canon Scott Sharman, the Anglican Church of Canada's animator for ecumenical and interfaith relations, says the church is taking a "multifaith engagement 2.0" approach to reaching out to members of other faiths in Canada. It's about finding ways for faith communities to open up to one another in ways that allow them to be completely themselves. By sitting down together with the belief that what they learn from another faith can make them better Christians, he says, Canadian Anglicans can start to see members of other faiths as real, tangible discussion partners.

As Canada's religious makeup becomes increasingly diverse, Sharman says, interfaith relations will become more

important than ever.

Both Sharman and Idowu-Fearon say it's important to remember that Christians are not only the victims of interfaith strife, but sometimes the perpetrators. And Sharman notes that while Canada has comparatively high religious freedom compared to some parts of the globe, there are still incidents of religiously motivated violence. Both say it's important for Christians to know that such violence is in no way compatible with the teachings of the Christian faith or the life of Christ himself.

Idowu-Fearon says he has been unpopular—even the target of violence himself, in Nigeria—for espousing the opinion that violence is never justified, even in defence against persecution by non-Christians.

"My conviction is this, an enemy is a potential brother or sister, and therefore it is in my own interest as a follower of Christ to extend that love to her or to him," he says. "You cannot, as a follower of Jesus Christ, choose violence. It's not allowed. It's not a popular stance to take, but it is Christ-like and it doesn't have to be popular." ■

## National office plans 2026 move-in with United, Presbyterian churches



IMAGE: COLLECDEV

**The planned building will include both residential and commercial space.**

Matthew Puddister  
STAFF WRITER

The office of General Synod is finalizing plans to move from its current Toronto building to a new location in the city, where it will share office space with the United Church of Canada and the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Archdeacon Alan Perry, general secretary of General Synod, said in a staff announcement Aug. 4 that the Anglican Church of Canada was preparing to enter into a lease agreement with the United Church of Canada in the coming months for a property at 300 Bloor Street West, owned by Bloor Street United Church.

The property is in the midst of redevelopment to include four floors of commercial space and several floors of residential condos.

Perry said the move is planned to take place in the first quarter of 2026 and will provide "a more efficient use of resources and increased collaboration among the three churches." The Anglican, United and Presbyterian national church offices will share facilities including an assembly hall,

kitchen, worship space.

"The critical advantage is the opportunity for more ecumenical engagement and collaboration among the three churches," Perry told the *Anglican Journal*.

The national office takes up the first four floors and basement of a 21-storey condominium tower at 80 Hayden Street in Toronto, adjacent to the Anglican church of St. Paul's Bloor Street. General Synod moved into the space in 2004 and assumed ownership of its part of the building in 2006.

Erik Mathieson, chief financial officer for the United Church of Canada, said its plans to share office space with other churches began roughly a decade ago. The United Church currently rents space commercially, he said, but began to look at other options after the lease on its old office expired, eventually settling on the idea of moving into the Bloor Street United Church-owned building.

"The idea was we'd be paying ourselves instead of a commercial company," he said. Being next to a church, with its outreach

programmes, would serve as "a reminder, to us folks in an office building, who we work for."

The United Church had already tried some staff-sharing with the Anglican and Presbyterian churches. While the United Church was looking at options for its head office, general secretaries from the three churches began to discuss the possibility of sharing office space.

A formal lease had not yet been signed at the time this article was written. "We anticipate being able to say more as we take steps forward," Perry said.

Construction work on 300 Bloor Street West, however, was well underway. Mathieson said redevelopment was scheduled to be finished by the end of 2025 or early 2026, after which head offices of the three churches will move in.

The Rev. Victor Kim, principal clerk of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, said Presbyterians were looking forward to opportunities for ecumenical cooperation with the planned move, addressing issues facing each denomination as well as broader social and cultural needs. ■



**NATIONAL NEWS** ▶

Some readers may find this story distressing. For a searchable list of crisis lines and other support resources across Canada, please visit: [bit.ly/3Qskhiv](http://bit.ly/3Qskhiv)



PHOTO: GENERAL SYNOD ARCHIVES

Ralph Rowe, pictured here in 1981, was a fly-in Anglican priest to northern Ontario communities and a Scout leader.



▲ Rowe was a fly-in Anglican priest to northern Ontario communities.

PHOTO: BLACK PRESS

# ‘His abuse was devastating to Indigenous communities’

Continued from p. 1

Rowe was convicted of nearly 60 sexual offences against Indigenous boys across the diocese of Keewatin in the 1970s and 1980s, though a 2015 documentary estimated he may have abused as many as 500 boys.

The settlement is the result of mediation between Scouts Canada, the diocese of Keewatin and the representatives of the plaintiffs in the class-action lawsuit against the two organizations for their failure to prevent or put a stop to Rowe’s misconduct sooner. Previously, the diocese of Keewatin and Scouts Canada accepted shared liability for their failure to stop Rowe’s abuse.

The actual diocese of Keewatin is now defunct and currently exists only as a corporation of four people for the purposes of completing the settlement of this lawsuit, after which it will be dissolved.

It’s currently expected that the Anglican Church of Canada and Scouts Canada will each pay half the cost, said Karen Webb, chancellor of the ecclesiastical province of Rupert’s Land and one of the four members of the on-paper-only diocese of Keewatin. Webb is also a member of the *Anglican Journal’s* editorial board.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders have been calling on the church to apologize for Rowe’s actions for years. Alvin Fiddler, former grand chief of Nishnawbe Aski Nation, where much of Rowe’s abuse took place, called for an apology after the suicides of two 12-year-old girls in Wapekeka First Nation, Ont. in January 2017. Carolyn Bennett, then Indigenous Affairs minister, made a similar call for an apology.

The same month, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, then primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, said he intended to make a public apology, but would need to consult first with Lydia Mamakwa, bishop of the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh, formed in 2014 from the northern region of the diocese of Keewatin. The class-action lawsuit was launched a few months later.

Neither Mamakwa nor Morris Fiddler,

**“If approved, the settlement will provide real compensation to survivors of abuse committed by Rowe through a trauma-informed and sensitive claims process.”**

—Jonathan Ptak  
Koskie Minsky  
partner

suffragan bishop for Northern Ontario in Mishamikoweesh, replied to requests from the *Anglican Journal* for comment on the proposed settlement.

In a news release, Koskie Minsky partner Jonathan Ptak described Rowe as “one of the worst and most prolific abusers in the history of this country.”

Ptak continued, “His abuse was devastating to Indigenous communities in northern Ontario and eastern Manitoba. If approved, the settlement will provide real compensation to survivors of abuse committed by Rowe through a trauma-informed and sensitive claims process.”

According to the settlement document, that process will offer two tracks for survivors to seek compensation. They may go through a simplified claims process, through which they could be eligible for between \$30,000 and \$140,000 depending on the extent and nature of the harm they suffered from Rowe’s abuse. They may also choose to go through a more rigorous claims process, which includes cross-examination by a lawyer representing the defendants intended to verify the extent of the psychological and employment consequences resulting from Rowe’s misconduct. In the latter case, they may be eligible for up to an additional \$210,000 on top of what they received through the simplified process.

Webb said she would not be able to comment on the significance of the settlement until after it was finalized, though she was willing to comment on her shock when she originally heard about the extent of Rowe’s crimes in the 1990s.

“I remember—because I’ve been an Anglican my whole life—going, ‘Well, geez, how the hell did this happen?’” she said. “I see no way anyone could possibly find any excuse for what he did.”

Members of the class covered by the lawsuit—survivors of Rowe’s abuse—are eligible to attend the Oct. 27 approval hearing and to enter testimony in support of or in objection to the proposed settlement. ■



PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Vecsi, who has served in the position since October 2019, will retire Nov. 20.

## Joseph Vecsi retiring as communications director

Matthew Puddister  
STAFF WRITER

Joseph Vecsi, director of communications at the Anglican Church of Canada’s national office, will retire effective Nov. 20.

Having served in the position since October 2019—a role he called the most challenging and often the most rewarding in his career—Vecsi said his decision to retire, announced by the national office Aug. 2, came with mixed emotions.

“I just felt that I basically accomplished what I needed to accomplish,” Vecsi told the *Anglican Journal*. “So I’m taking the next chapter in my life, which is both scary and kind of exhilarating.”

Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, said Vecsi was a highly valued colleague and advisor who would be missed. General Secretary Archdeacon Alan Perry cited Vecsi’s role in developing the digital news platform Anglican News Canada as well as an eStore for church publications, plus his work coordinating communications for Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby’s visit to Canada in April 2022.

Before working for the Anglican Church of Canada, Vecsi oversaw communications or public affairs for the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation, Scarborough Hospital, the Toronto Region Board of Trade, Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan and OPTrust, which manages the OPSEU Pension Plan. ■

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**ANGLICAN VOICES** ▶


# Crossing paths

A nearly-lifelong atheist reflects on becoming an Anglican at 82

By Graham N. Forst

**I** RECENTLY DEBATED the existence of God with an atheist/materialist colleague at Simon Fraser University.

I am an 82-year-old unable-to-retire post-secondary instructor with an interdisciplinary PhD in English literature and Kantian philosophy ... and a recent convert to Anglicanism after a life spent mostly as a hard-headed, uncompromising atheist.

My debate opponent, some 20 years younger than me, was a recent apostate from Anglicanism ... so the well-attended debate was aptly called “Crossing Paths.”

During the Q & A period after the formal debate, every question was aimed at me. One was, “How could an 82-year-old lifetime atheist and founder and chair for 40 years of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Society become a Christian?”

I was ready for the question; I had two answers.

First, I mentioned a brief exchange I'd had many years ago at the University of Toronto with the noted Canadian philosopher and Sachsenhausen concentration camp survivor Emil Fackenheim.

I was there primarily to talk over parts of my PhD thesis with my examiner, Northrop Frye. But I couldn't resist talking to Fackenheim (decked out in a garish Hawaiian shirt in the middle of winter!) when I met him.

Knowing he was an Orthodox Jew considering aliyah—immigration—to Israel, I asked him how he had kept his faith while imprisoned in the camp and knowing what happened to European Jewry during the war.

His answer was short. I relayed it to the person who asked me the question at the debate:

“Graham, if we gave up our faith after the war, we would hand Hitler his ultimate victory.”

In my second answer to the question I spoke as a Christian: “Christianity, like no other religion, offers us the exemplar of a god who suffers with us. His tears watered the soil of Auschwitz.”

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My own path to religion opened when I was very young. I am one of six children, and for some reason my Christian mom (certainly not my Jewish atheist father) picked me out of the six to take to

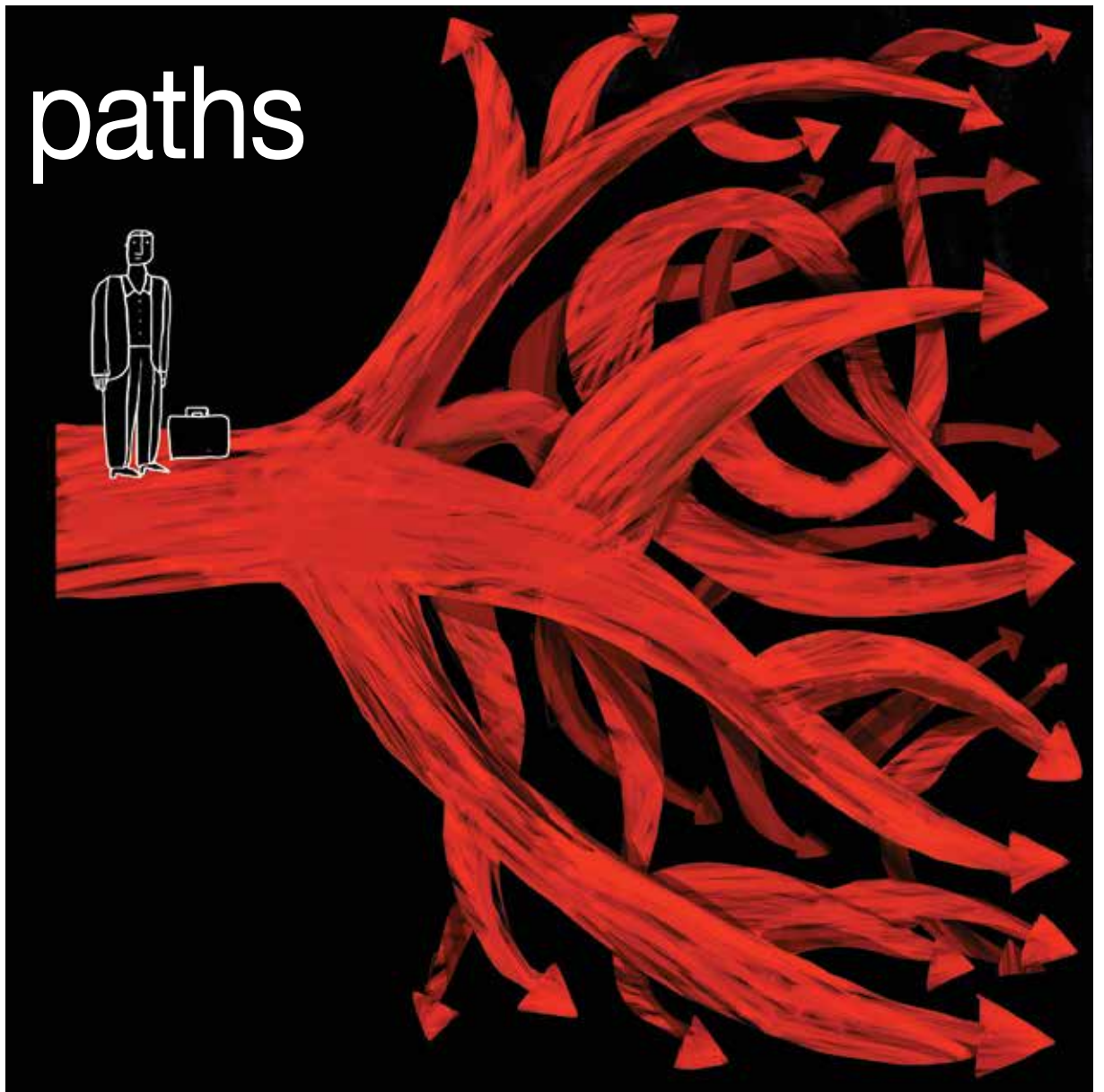


ILLUSTRATION: COMPLIT

**“I read everything I could get my hands on ... and it was revealed to me, in spite of everything I had been taught and was echoed in our secular society: One can be hugely intelligent and religious!”**

Christian pre-school and then Sunday school in the nearby United Church of Canada church. And I went joyfully, loving every minute of it.

Then, around eight or nine years old, I joined a Christian summer camp in Surrey, B.C., where the family spent summers; it met outdoors Monday to Friday mornings and I stayed with it until I was 16, which is when I started working in the summers as a waiter.

Sometimes while waiting tables, I'd slip a gospel tract under the salt and pepper shakers. And one time—this was in the summer before I started at the University of British Columbia—a customer asked me about the tract. I told him I was a Christian and thought the good news should be spread as much as possible.

At this, he opened his valise and pulled out a book with the (to me) shocking and blasphemous title, “Why I Am Not a Christian” by one Bertrand Russell.

“You read the first essay in this, and I'll read your gospel tract, and when I come back next week we'll compare our reactions.”

The book dropped on me like a bomb ... and almost immediately I shifted my first-year course load from pre-law to philosophy.

My first philosophy professor was an atheist, as were all, as far as I could tell,

the professors at UBC; and they quickly convinced me that Russell was right: all religious thought was delusory, anathema to mental health and led down (or led from) the perilous path to political conservatism.

And there I rested, complacently, for 60 years.

Then, in 2017, came the first step in my conversion.

I had just offered a course at my university called “Imagine There's No Heaven: A History of Atheism.” The course filled immediately upon its announcement, and when it was finished, I asked the dean what she thought of offering a sister course, “Imagine There IS a Heaven: A History of Theism.” She agreed ... and the course double-enrolled!

Of course, I had no credentials to teach such a course ... all the theology I knew was from my beloved John Milton—and of course my Sunday school and summer-camp teachers.

So I read everything I could get my hands on—Barth and Bultmann, Bonhoeffer, Niebuhr, Fleming Rutledge, Rosemary Ruether, Elizabeth A. Johnson, Dorothee Sölle, Karen Armstrong ... and it was revealed to me, in spite of everything I had been taught and that was echoed in our secular society: *One*

See RELIGION, p. 15

## Correction

People suffering only from a mental illness will not be eligible for medical assistance in dying (MAID) in Canada until March 2024. Incorrect information appeared in the September *Anglican Journal*.

## ANGLICAN JOURNAL

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SINGING WITH JOY ▶



# Let's lose—and find—ourselves in community

By Linda Nicholls

**W**HEN I MOVED to London, Ont. I was immediately struck by the community spirit here, something I've rarely experienced in much larger cities. Almost everyone walking by on the street nods and says hello, acknowledging your presence. Drivers politely allow you to turn into the stream of traffic without aggression. You are acknowledged as a participant in the community, respected and cared about. I realize this spirit exists in many smaller communities—and I think we should treasure it as an outward sign of the threads of connection we experience as human beings in a shared time and space.

Maybe it is because I moved frequently as a child due to the nature of my father's work and often had to build relationships in new communities and schools; maybe it is because as an adult I have seen the growth of a cocooning, individualistic spirit that denies our need for others, especially if they are different; whatever the reason, I know my heart yearns for community—for relationships in which respect, support, companionship and care are freely offered to all.

That is the kind of community that Jesus created with the disciples, taught to the crowds, and demonstrated by his words and actions. It is the kind of community that I have found among God's people—the kind that cares when you are missing from worship; that cuts your lawn when you are on vacation; that listens deeply when you are in pain; that visits with flowers, casseroles or soup when you are sick; that together reaches out into the wider world to challenge wrongs, to pick up garbage, to offer meals, to welcome strangers, to



▲ **A spirit of community, writes the primate, holds the greatest promise for human flourishing as God intended.**

PHOTO: ERICSON STOCK

protest injustice—to advocate for the well-being of all people.

Community is not always there in the church. It may be squashed by egos needing power; challenges too big for the capacity of the people; and human weakness. But it is still what I believe holds the greatest promise for human flourishing as God intended. We were created for community with one another and all creation (Genesis 1 and 2).

The world around us is in pain—physical, mental and spiritual. Creation is groaning from climate change. People are fleeing natural disasters and human conflicts. The polarization of political views cements hatred of the other side. Global economic turbulence affects all of

us, sometimes disastrously. Suicide rates are concerningly high, especially among young people in Indigenous communities.

One human response to threats like these is protection of the self alone. But the gospel calls us to find ourselves by losing ourselves in love and service of others—in community. For “it is in giving that we receive, in pardoning that we are pardoned and in dying that we are born to eternal life.” (Prayer of St. Francis). May our constant prayer and commitment be that of building Jesus' kind of community through respect and love of neighbour as self. ■

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

FEATHER AND SAGE ▶



# On being thankful in a time of anxiety and loss

By Chris Harper

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* (Philippians 4:6)

**I**N THIS MONTH of October, it is hard not to be anxious as wildfires this summer have ravaged homes and lands; floods and strong storms, rising temperatures and tornados have touched many and uncertain futures walk with us. Our natural world ravaged by our greed and ingratitude humbles us all to waken our eyes and hearts to changing our ways. Nature's true power humbles rich and poor, faithful and faithless alike. And when we, either individually or collectively fail to foresee the inevitable, or lose the ability to forestall it, and when we have nowhere else to lean ... we humbly turn to prayer. Through all our churches in every diocese we have raised our prayers and hearts to all affected.

On Oct. 4 we close the Season of Creation liturgical ministry that many churches have been following. In so doing we look now to Thanksgiving and harvest for the month that God has blessed us with. Many, however, will also be looking to what they have lost. Some people were told to evacuate their homes immediately; many of them paused to look for possibly the last time on all that they possessed and treasured, and a few said a quick



▲ **“Let your prayers go forth in ties of blessing and times of loss, for God is with us in both.”**

PHOTO: DOIDAM 10

prayer of thanksgiving for the memories and the blessing of God in those things of home and security. They may also have humbly prayed to God for help—*Almighty, through whom all blessing flow, guard us and grant us safety through this trial and lead us always in your light and peace, that we may see your face and promise in the days ahead. Amen*—before gathering their true treasures, their family members, and fleeing to safety.

How can we be thankful in prayer when all seems lost, when it's so easy for anger and resentment to rise up within—so easy to turn a hard word even against those

who are trying to understand what it's like to lose everything? It's easy to shake a fist against heaven and turn your back. But God is faithful and knows our need. Prayers across the land ascend, and God knows the prayers that fall to the ground from tear-filled eyes. So let your prayers go forth in times of blessing and in times of loss, for God is with us in both. God is faithful in all seasons, and for that we should be truly thankful. ■

**Archbishop Chris Harper** is national Indigenous archbishop of the Anglican Church of Canada.



## NATIONAL NEWS ▶

## Evacuation threatens underhoused: priest

Continued from p. 1

Among the evacuees was David Parsons, bishop of the diocese of the Arctic. The number of cars leaving the city turned distances that normally only took a few hours into all-day drives, he said. Ministering to the remote communities in the diocese of the Arctic is logistically challenging at the best of times, said Parsons, beginning with booking affordable travel. And with the evacuation disrupting communication between members of his team and the uncertainty brought by the wildfires in general, he said he didn't yet know the full impact it would have on his ministry work.

Also evacuated was Alexander Pryor, the diocese's executive archdeacon. Pryor said the scale of the exodus was overburdening to the local infrastructure. Most towns in the area, he said, have a single road in or out and the only gas station outside Yellowknife for the first 400 km has just four pumps.

There will be more and increasingly difficult challenges as the crisis drags on, he added. Many people who left in the evacuation were already underhoused and there may be no way to find them to help them get back home if they can't find a place to stay and end up mixed into the existing unhoused populations in Edmonton or Calgary—not to mention all the people who don't know whether the homes they had will still be there when they return.

To the south, in B.C.'s southern interior, wildfires brought destruction and more evacuation orders. Speaking with the *Journal* Aug. 21, Charlotte Hardy, camp coordinator at Okanagan Anglican Camp (OAC), north of Kelowna, described the situation in and around the town as "absolutely insane." The camp had been evacuated to Kelowna the evening of Aug. 17. At first those at the camp, Hardy said, couldn't see the fires, located as they were on the other side of a ridge—until finally they noticed huge plumes of smoke rising behind the camp.

"So we weren't affected by the fire until all of a sudden, we were," she said.

Spurred by news of the fire's severity and the number of parents already coming to pick up their children, Hardy and other senior staff made the decision to evacuate. They and the remaining campers climbed in a bus and left the site of their own accord at around 8:30 p.m., she said.



▲ Fire blazes atop a hill near the Sorrento Centre Aug. 18.

PHOTO: MICHAEL SHAPCOTT

▶ OAC staff pictured a few hours before the Aug. 17 evacuation. Left to right are Sophie Stirrett, Maia Embregts and Lola King.

PHOTO: CHARLOTTE HARDY



Just a few minutes later, they heard the evacuation order for the area.

In Kelowna, staff and the few campers still waiting to be picked up by their parents stayed overnight at the Cathedral Church of St. Michael and All Angels and awaited news of the camp. OAC director Ian Dixon confirmed later that day that the vast majority of the camp had been destroyed in the fire, including staff quarters, residence building, dining hall, crafts and program building and dock.

"I started volunteering when I was 13; I'm now 22 ... So it was kind of a bittersweet, weird moment for a lot of us who have been there for the [past] 10 years. Last day [of camp] for the foreseeable future," said Hardy.

A pastoral letter from Archbishop Lynne McNaughton, bishop of the diocese of Kootenay, that same day announced that the diocesan council would begin discussing the process of rebuilding at its next meeting in September. The first steps would be damage assessment, cleanup and insurance work, she wrote.

"As early as it is safe to do so this fall, we will hold a prayer service at the camp to grieve for what has been lost, to give thanks for what has been," McNaughton added.

Another Anglican-operated facility, the Sorrento Centre, a conference and retreat centre northeast of Kamloops, evacuated almost 200 guests, plus staff, after an evacuation order Aug. 18, executive director Michael Shapcott said. The order was lifted and people were allowed to return Aug. 26, but as of Aug. 30, when this issue was being prepared for publication, flames were still visible from the centre and the situation remained "dynamic and volatile," he said.

Will Postma, executive director of PWRDF, said setting up a new fund for in-Canada emergencies would offer greater flexibility to distribute money where it's needed for both and future emergencies. Unlike other funds which are set up to take care of specific projects or disasters, this one will allow PWRDF to find needs and fill them as they arise, he said.

PWRDF's new fund, announced Aug. 18, raised \$22,000 by Aug. 25, \$5,000 of which it contributed to relief in the diocese of the Arctic, the agency said. As of late August, that money had been allocated to supporting clergy who were ineligible for the Northwest Territories' employment interruption relief program, Pryor said.

Despite the stress and congestion of travel, both Pryor and Parsons said people in the surrounding communities did their best to make the journey easier. The town of Peace River, Alta., hosted a barbecue for evacuees, and the people of Fort Providence, provided them with sandwiches in great abundance, Pryor said. In High Level, Alta., he said, there was a wildfire evacuation in 2019, so they knew exactly what the evacuees would need, from fuel to prescriptions.

Pryor said he and his family were staying at a campsite in Alberta while he did his best to keep working from a laptop on a picnic table. He said he'd already heard from clergy in the parishes of St. John's in Fort Smith and St. Andrew's in Hay River who were planning how to support their communities when a return up north should become possible.

"We need to be thankful for what we have and to stick together in trusting God, even in these scary times," he said. ■

## PEOPLE ▶

## Jones to retire as General Synod chancellor



PHOTO: JIM TUBMAN

A new fund to help cover preaching training costs recognizes Jones's service.

Sean Frankling  
STAFF WRITER

Canon (lay) David Jones says he's optimistic for the future of the church as he looks forward to his retirement as chancellor of General Synod in September.

Jones has served as a chancellor in the Anglican church for 28 years, first for his home diocese of Edmonton, then for the ecclesiastical province of Rupert's Land and for the past 13 years at the national church level. During his time in the volunteer position, he says, he's had the pleasure to serve three diocesan bishops, two provincial metropolitans and two primates of the national church.

Jones stressed that he was confident that after his departure the church would have the leadership it needed to face the

challenges before it.

"I'm not leaving because I'm not optimistic. I'm leaving because I've done it for a very long time and it's time for me to go and to perhaps do some other things. The institution's in good hands."

Jones, who is 74 years old, is also a practicing lawyer and, along with his wife, Anne De Villars, the author of a textbook on administrative law in Canada. He says though he is retiring as chancellor, he will continue to work at his family's law practice alongside De Villars and one of their daughters, Victoria Jones.

To a church facing a variety of contentious issues, ranging from lingering controversy after the 2019 vote on same-sex marriage to the ongoing impact of residential schools to the controversial governance changes postponed at this

summer's General Synod, Jones offered a parting call for patience and mutual trust among church members.

"The church doesn't necessarily move instantly and these questions are going to continue. But I do think we need trust. And of course trust is earned," he says.

Among the highlights from his time as chancellor, Jones names his work in helping draw up Canon XXII, which laid the groundwork for the self-determining Indigenous Anglican church.

At the end of General Synod 2023, Nicholls announced the creation of the David P. Jones Preaching Fund, a fund set up in partnership with the Anglican Foundation of Canada, dedicated to helping applicants with fees for conferences and courses to enhance and develop their preaching. ■





# Special Report



A supplement to the *Anglican Journal* provided by the Anglican Foundation of Canada

## AFC Promotes Big-Picture View

### From the Executive Director



Dr. Scott Brubacher

In late June, I was delighted to represent the Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC) at Assembly 2023 and the 43rd session of General Synod, held in Calgary, Alberta. General Synods are important moments in the life of our

church, where delegates listen to many reports and make important decisions about the future life, governance, worship, and ecumenical relationships of the Anglican Church of Canada. These decisions have long-term impacts and therefore require big-picture thinking: the setting aside of the personal, the local, to focus on the national story.

Big-picture thinking does not always come easily to us, as a church. The local context often leaves us feeling weary, constantly demanding our individual energy and attention. How then to consider the needs and priorities of *the* church when the needs and priorities of *my* church are so urgent and pressing?

As the national foundation for the Anglican Church of Canada, AFC has spent the last 65 years—and over \$40 million dollars in disbursements—seeing and supporting that big picture. The art of big-picture thinking is what we do; it's who we are as a national foundation. In these pages, we will share how AFC's big-picture view of the Anglican Church is influencing our mission and redefining the role we are called to play as a collaborative partner with the *whole* church.

I am reminded here of Paul's exhortation to the Romans about life in the Christian community, and how we are called to support one another. Paul writes: "Love one another with mutual affection... Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord... Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers" (Romans 12:10–13).

At AFC we are equipping communities for transformative ministry—by enabling connection, fostering innovation, stewarding resources, and connecting generous donors to their philanthropic goals. In the wake of the pandemic AFC has indeed become more passionate, more ardent than ever, about increasing the scope and impact of our grants program to support community-building work

across Canada. 2021 and 2022 were consecutive years where AFC disbursed over a million dollars, our highest granting years ever, through an intentional shift in the balance of funding in favour of Community Ministries—which now comprise more than one third of our funding since 2010. These grants are supporting Canadian Anglicans as they live out their call to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world.

That we weathered a global pandemic—while also driving our grants program to new heights—tells me that the power and potential for AFC to fund transformational ministry is only beginning to be realized. A well-managed foundation is a critical part of the financial and philanthropic ecosystem of every denomination. The legacy that we have inherited, this sacred trust, is meant to benefit the church in the present, but it is also intended to stand the test of time to support future generations of Canadian Anglicans.

The church is not without its challenges, but from our big-picture perspective at AFC, I can say quite honestly that it's a very exciting time to be co-workers with you in shaping a prosperous future for our beloved church.

## Our Story

For more than 65 years, the Anglican Foundation of Canada has been a trusted guardian of the generous legacies of hundreds of Canadian Anglicans. The Foundation's endowment, faithfully stewarded by clergy and lay leaders from across Canada, has resulted in disbursements totaling \$40 million. AFC has become the philanthropic partner of choice for a visionary family of donors, now larger than ever and more than 1,100 active members strong.

In 2013, AFC issued a challenge to the Anglican Church of Canada to *imagine more*, and those two simple words have changed our conversation with grant recipients. The Foundation's role in the life of the church has gradually moved away from funding a sense of place to funding a sense of purpose.

Our church's character, while as steadfast as ever, has become increasingly innovative in responding to the challenges facing communities from coast to coast to coast. Across the church there is new hope that through faithful discipleship, vibrant worship, and compassionate social engagement, Canadian Anglicans can create stronger and more caring communities.

This entrepreneurial spirit is at the core of the church's transformation and must be upheld and sustained by a generous network of benefactors who share AFC's vision for nurturing innovation.

In these pages you are invited to learn more about the Foundation's role in funding ministry across Canada and how you can be part of this exciting journey filled with hope and possibility.



PHOTO ABOVE: The Most Rev. Chris Harper (back row, left) with Indigenous youth delegates to the 2023 CLAY gathering, sponsored by a \$25,000 grant from AFC's *Say Yes! to Kids* initiative.



## enabling connection...



The Anglican Foundation of Canada's long history of grant-making across Canada has enabled us to build bonds of friendship and establish close connections with ministry partners from coast to coast.

Every grant application is carefully considered by Foundation staff, members of the Grants Committee, and the Board of Directors. Since 2010, the Board has approved more than 90% of all grant requests. These numbers tell a good news story: that AFC is in the business of saying, "Yes! We believe in you!"

The Foundation exists to grow community and connection across the Anglican Church of Canada and, wherever possible, to share success stories so that all Canadian Anglicans can benefit from what others have learned in their ministry journeys.

Through the generosity of our donor family—past and present—we will continue to affirm and uphold the hopes and aspirations of those who come to us for support.

### Expanding opportunities for newcomer children

Emmanuel Mission Learning Centre (EMLC) began as a summer school outreach in 2014—serving students from kindergarten to grade nine who are newcomers to Canada—and has grown into a year-round learning enrichment centre for students and their parents in the lower level of Holy Trinity Anglican Church in downtown Winnipeg, Manitoba. EMLC received a \$15,000 grant from AFC's 2021 *Say Yes! to Kids* Request for Proposals and raised approximately \$10,000 as a fundraising partner with AFC in the 2022 campaign.

"The parents of many of our students are not always aware of the home-based support their children need to be successful within the Canadian school system," says Khamisa Maciek, Program Coordinator. "A year-round focus now gives students' parents an opportunity to learn more about how to support their children's education."

## fostering innovation...



In 2013, with a renewed vision to increase support for innovative ministry projects, AFC challenged the Anglican Church of Canada to *imagine more*. These two words initiated a remarkable decade of collaboration and innovation.

Since 2014 AFC has provided \$780,000 in funding through our Request for Proposals (RFP) program, which provides seed funding for new ministry aligned with the Marks of Mission.

The establishment of the Kids Helping Kids Fund paved the way for the 2021 launch of *Say Yes! to Kids* (SYTK), now in its 3rd year, which has provided over \$710,000 to more than 100 unique beneficiaries and fundraising partners in support of youth-focused ministry and outreach.

Through our members' willingness to lead change what was once just an idea is now becoming reality. Today, AFC's big-picture view across the church is increasingly one of green shoots ministries coming to life. The greatest shift has been in youth-focused programs that reveal a church determined to address the needs of young people.

### Sowing the seeds of a greener, younger church

In the throes of a global pandemic, St. John-in-the-Wilderness, Bright's Grove, Ontario, joined forces with AFC to sow the seeds of a greener church with a pollinator garden, created in 2020 with funds from AFC's Climate Care Request for Proposals (RFP). The garden quickly stimulated youthful curiosity from across the community, which was later satisfied with a Beekeeper-themed Vacation Bible School funded through the 2021 *Say Yes! to Kids* RFP.

In summer 2022, the church was fully equipped to launch a remarkable V-Bee-S. Parishioner and Beekeeper Haley Walker (above right) was joined by more than a dozen young beekeepers who braved the hive. Walker says that momentum from successive RFP funding from AFC played a huge part in the church's transformational journey, helping to grow their capacity for community-focused programs under the theme of creation care.

## stewarding resources...



Since 1957, Canadian Anglicans have trusted the Foundation to be an excellent steward of their gifts. Indeed, the successful management of AFC's endowment fund over the past 65 years is the result of hard work, expertise, and a passion for service.

Members of the Investment, Finance, and Audit & Risk Committees include Board Directors, clergy and lay, as well as carefully recruited industry professionals. This fiscal team is in turn supported by a broader volunteer pool of more than 50 individuals, serving on 16 committees, giving an estimated 1,200 hours per year to maximize the impact of AFC grants and safeguard the generosity of our donor family.

With so much care and expertise supporting its management, AFC's endowment is intended to stand the test of time. Indeed, its power and potential to fund transformational ministry is only beginning to be realized.

### Prosperity amid challenge

With the expert guidance of AFC's Investment and Finance Committee members, the Foundation was able to achieve consecutive million-dollar-disbursement years in 2021 and 2022, despite the economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and global political instability. Many factors have contributed to AFC's success: a long-term investment approach, with a conservative and diversified portfolio, and a continued focus on growing fundraising revenues have proved to be a winning strategy.

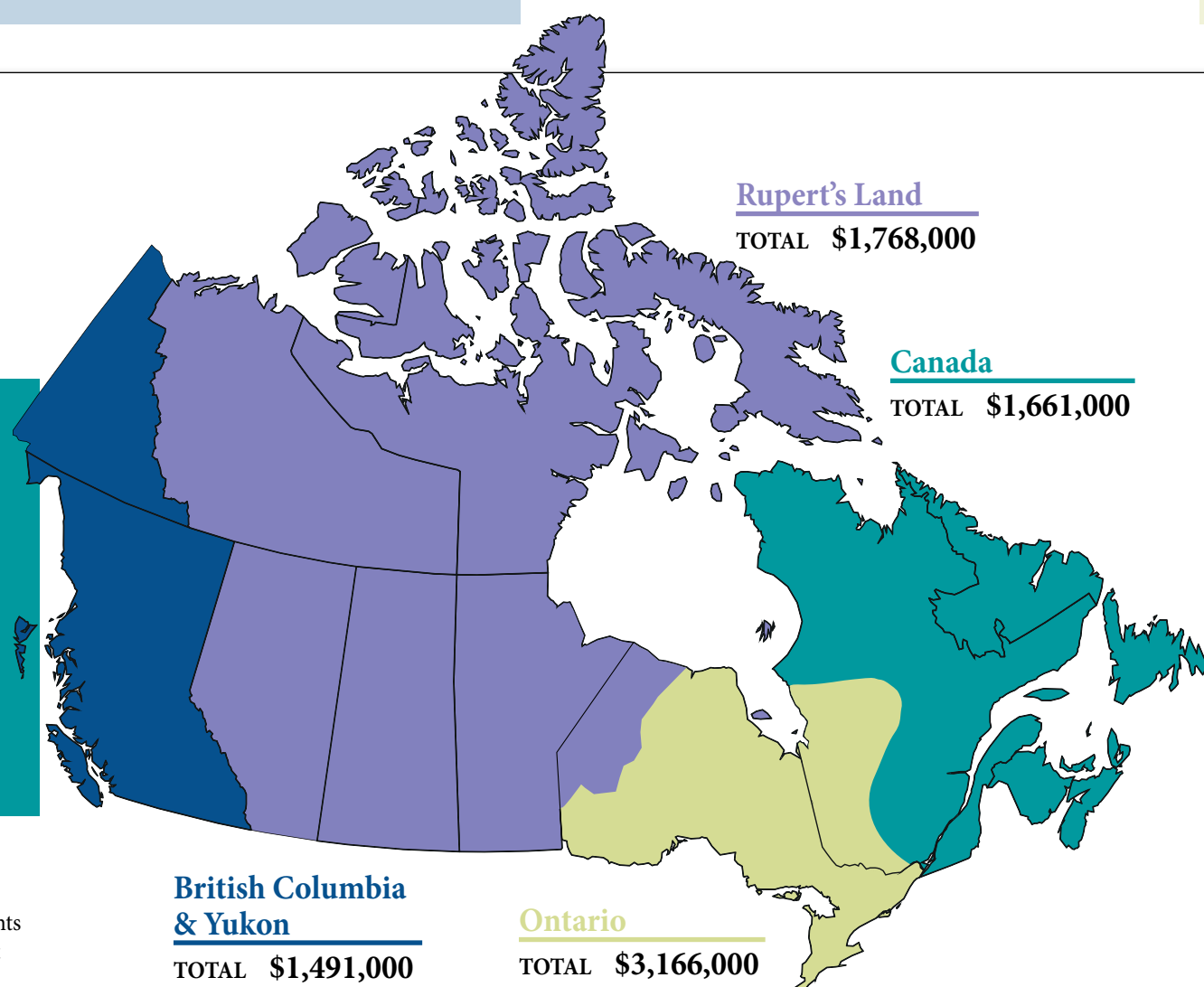
PHOTO ABOVE: AFC's Board of Directors met in Halifax in May 2023. Back row, left to right: Natasha Henderson, Robert Dickson, the Rev. Canon Bradley Smith, Michael Butler, Peter Irish, the Rev. Amy Hamilton, the Most Rev. Anne Germond, Michael Haddad, Jay Pak (AFC's Grants Coordinator), and Ron Brophy. Seated in front are Dr. Scott Brubacher, Executive Director, and the Most Rev. Linda Nicholls, Primate and Chair.

## Grants from Coast to Coast

**\$9.2 million in grants (since 2010)**

In its more than 65-year history, the Anglican Foundation of Canada has established strong connections across the Canadian church. By engaging volunteer leaders and visionary donors from every diocese across Canada, AFC ensures the geographic scope of disbursements reflects a deep commitment to collaboration, diversity, and inclusion.

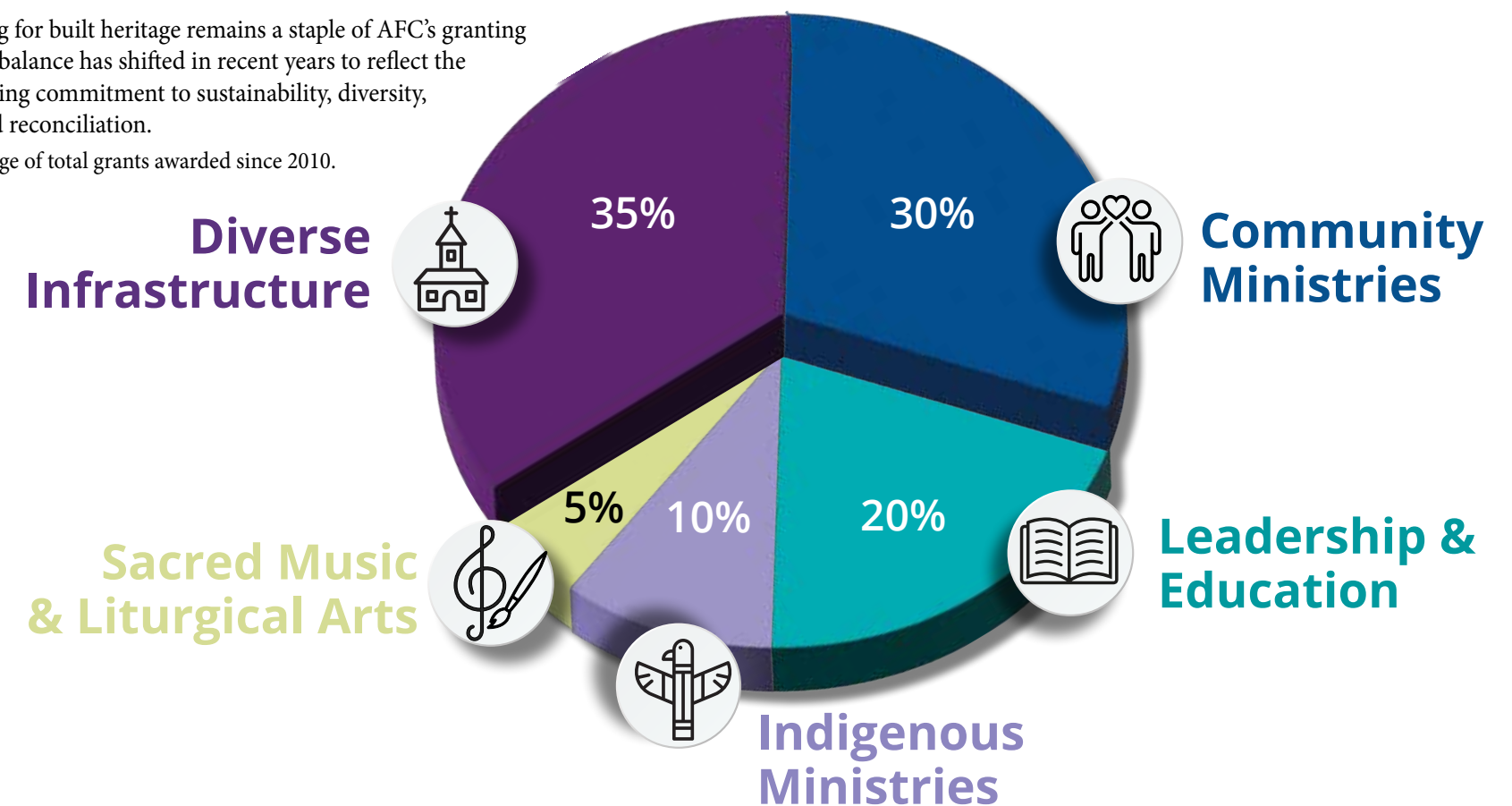
In addition to the grants to Ecclesiastical Provinces (right), since 2010 approximately \$1 million was disbursed to PWRDF, General Synod, and other national partners as grants and in adherence with the terms of the trusts and funds that are managed by AFC.



## Grant program impact zone breakdown \*

While funding for built heritage remains a staple of AFC's granting program, the balance has shifted in recent years to reflect the church's growing commitment to sustainability, diversity, inclusion, and reconciliation.

\* As a percentage of total grants awarded since 2010.





# connecting donors...

The Anglican Foundation of Canada celebrates the spirit of visionary Canadian Anglicans daily as their names are included among the more than 40 named trusts and funds we currently administer.

These trusts are the bedrock of an endowment valued at approximately \$15 million in 2022 that continues to drive our granting program to new heights year after year. Whether motivated by their love for sacred music, belief in the value of leadership and education, a vision to reduce poverty, or a desire to support the Indigenous church, an increasing number of benefactors are partnering with AFC to achieve their philanthropic goals.

And when they partner with AFC, these legacies represent so much more than money. They are a treasured inheritance of faith and compassion that will carry the church into the future, with hope and the resources needed to *imagine more*.

## Legacies inspire legacies

In 2022, the Anglican Church Women (ACW) in the Diocese of New Westminster established the ACW Council of the North Retired Clergy Fund with an initial gift of \$100,000 and a challenge for others to contribute. The subsequent momentum to build it up is one of the best examples in AFC's 65-year history of one legacy inspiring another. Not long after the seed gift was announced, an anonymous memorial gift of \$150,000 arrived. A note from the donor said, "My parents were generous people, and they would have found a project of providing housing to people who have generously served the church as a fitting way to give to others what God gave to them."

PHOTO ABOVE: AFC Executive Director Dr. Scott Brubacher (centre, left) with the Executive of the Anglican Church Women of the Diocese of New Westminster.



## Give generously today!

By partnering with AFC, you can realize your own philanthropic vision while advancing the mission of the church across Canada. Your gift will:

- Fuel innovative mission and ministry at the local level.
- Enable cherished sacred spaces to be safe, accessible, and welcoming.
- Help to sustain funding through economic challenges.
- Increase our capacity to work together for the good of the church across Canada.



# Christians largest immigrant group: Statscan

Continued from p. 1

and her family have made their homes in Canada over the past decade—a major influx in a country whose settled population has been falling away from mainline churches since the 1970s.

For some Anglican communities, these new Canadians have provided a welcome infusion of passion and people. Some leaders with professional experience in outreach to newcomers, however, say the church must take care to learn from what they bring to the Canadian Christian culture—and not see them as just a way to prop up shrinking congregations.

Services at St. Peter's incorporate elements of its members' home culture, including Filipino melodies incorporated into the liturgy, a 10-night tradition of meals hosted at a different parishioner's house each night during Christmas and a monthly service where all the songs are in Kankanaey and Ilocano, native languages of many of the parishioners.

These familiar aspects of home are deeply important to some of her fellow parishioners, says Sibayan. Their church is a place to feel welcome while they get used to their new home in Canada. She says this is especially important since a tendency in Igorot culture to wait for others to initiate social interactions can make it tricky for them to be outgoing when it comes to fitting into congregations of lifelong Canadians.

"You're looking for a group where you belong, right?" she says. "Suddenly [I'm] in a new place, I want to look for that place I'm familiar with ... But for me, the important thing is that I go to church, regardless of whether it's St. Peter's or St. Matthias."

In 2022, Canada saw record population growth of more than 1 million people, 95.9 per cent of which was due to people entering Canada from the rest of the world. And among those who arrived between 2016 and 2021, Christians make up the largest single group—527,420 compared to 260,300 Muslims and 268,240 people declaring themselves nonreligious or of secular perspectives, according to the 2021 census.

Tyndale Intercultural Ministries Centre at Tyndale University, a Christian university in Toronto, focuses on the ways in which various cultures and communities around the world influence and share faith with one another. Centre director the Rev. Tim Tang says Christian immigrants are a source of significant growth and vibrancy in Canada's Christian community. This, he says, is because of a practice those who have lived in Canada since birth may be surprised to hear about: mission work.

For much of the past few centuries, Western nations have been used to exporting Christianity to the rest of the world. But Tang says the structure of global mission work has taken on a polycentric shape more recently. That is, multiple core communities of Christians in different cultures around the world are now reaching out to other regions of the globe to share the gospel.

In Canada over the last 50 years, he says, there have been several waves of church plants from cultures in East Asia—first Chinese and Korean, and then more recently Filipino, such as Greenhills Christian Fellowship, a Baptist church planting group that has established



▲ **The Filipino congregation at St. Peter the Apostle, Edmonton, celebrates Misa de Gallo in December 2021. Also known as Simbáng Gabi, Misa de Gallo is a series of nine Mass services over Advent, traditionally held at 4 a.m. in the Philippines. "It was called the Rooster Service because the rooster heralds Christ's birth," the Rev. Eric Kregel, pictured here at bottom left, told *The Messenger*, the diocese of Edmonton's newspaper. "People would have Mass before going to work. Our congregation celebrates Misa de Gallo in the evenings."**

PHOTOS: MARGARET GLIDDEN/DIOCESE OF EDMONTON

numerous churches in Canadian cities since 2007.

Canadian-born Christians may not be used to thinking of their home country as on the receiving end of missionary work. But these forms of Christianity are finding inroads into a country where the number of people reporting no religious affiliation has grown from 16.5 to 34.6 per cent in the last two years—a growth which is happening much more quickly among lifelong Canadians than among immigrants.

In some cases, like that of Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church, which has a Chinese-speaking congregation Tang estimates at 800 or 900 people, churches started by new Canadians have attracted huge congregations of other newcomers. "But their English congregation, which is often just seen as the children of [newcomers], they're 400 or 500 strong. So they're the secondary congregation and yet larger than most Euro-Canadian churches in Canada," he says.

Sometimes different cultural groups even find common ground to join together, he adds. For some reason Korean communities and leaders, for example, have been making good connections with the Persian community. Many times, Tang says, Korean contacts have told him they've started a Persian house church.

"I'm like, 'But you all speak Korean,'" he says. "And they'll be like, 'Yeah, but we connected really well, and we get along really well.' And I'll be like, 'Okay, God bless you.'"

One Anglican congregation that has seen significant growth over the past couple of decades is the parish of San Lorenzo-Dufferin in north Toronto, which draws new Canadians and immigrants who come from Latin America, including countries like Ecuador, Venezuela and Colombia.

Twenty years ago, says the parish's priest, Canon Hernan Astudillo, the congregation consisted of one family and the church building was set to be sold off. "I begged them. I said, 'Give me an opportunity. Don't sell the building,'" he recalls.

Since then, the church has grown to a total membership of around 500 parishioners, spread across three Sunday services, with plans to add an evening service and a midweek service in the works as well.

"Sometimes people don't understand this is a process—and it's a very slow process," he says.

Astudillo attributes the church's growth to two things: the Anglican virtue of acceptance and the parish's extensive community involvement, centred on ministry and care for the poor.

He says many of his parishioners come from the Roman Catholic tradition, where back home they would not have been allowed to receive communion anymore because they were not married by the church or because they are divorced for reasons the church would not consider legitimate.

"And I don't need to punish here. I say 'Welcome,' and they feel in shock. 'Welcome, even though you are not married by the church, welcome to receive the holy communion, even though you didn't confess.' And they come because they feel accepted. In another church, they are rejected," says Astudillo.

"I am not inviting you to be converted. I'm inviting you to share the wonderful gifts of the Anglican church. I really believe the Anglican church is a beautiful church. A church with equity, a church with many gifts. Many people who are inside the Anglo-Saxon context, they don't see that."

But what he says is the welcoming

Continued on p. 12



# Outreach key to congregation growth, priests say



PHOTO: SEAN FRANKLING

Canon Hernan Astudillo leads prayer during a service at San Lorenzo-Dufferin, in north Toronto. Many of his parishioners, Astudillo says, come from the Roman Catholic tradition.

Continued from p. 11

nature of the Anglican church is only half of the formula he describes. The other has to do with a commitment to visibly and accountably reaching out to and serving the poor in the community. San Lorenzo runs a Spanish-language radio station, feeds around 300 people every week thanks in part to a partnership with Cobs Bread and, Astudillo says, has around 10 people sleeping downstairs in the church building on a given night.

The duty of the church, he says, is to extend a hand to people when they are in need, especially when they have nothing to give in return. That's what attracts people to San Lorenzo. And the miracle, he says, is that meaningful, empowering charity creates lifelong relationships with parishioners who may one day have both the resources and the heart to reinvest in the church and in their communities.

When the *Anglican Journal* visited San Lorenzo, there were three 31-gallon storage bins stacked with bread and baked goods from Cobs Bread. By the end of the service the bins were empty, as some among the parish came up and took home what they needed, even offering some to the *Journal's* reporter. And the offering plates passed forward during the offertory came back piled with bills between \$5 and \$20.

Astudillo is working on a program that will reinvest some of that money in the communities where some of the parishioners were born, beginning with Ecuador, where he's coordinating with the mayor of Guaranda, a city in the central part of the country, to provide medical supplies. Raising up parishioners, lay leaders and deacons to participate in this work is foundational to building a lasting church community, he says.

"Now you have money, how can you empower your community?" is the key question facing these parishes, he says, and answering it, ideally, both strengthens the community and cements parishioners' sense of responsibility for and belonging to it. "We're showing in the practical language what we have to do."

While some churches have seen encouraging results in attracting new Canadians from their communities, there are some caveats. For one thing, says Tang, there is the issue of integrating congregations made up of a singular cultural group with the rest of Canadian society. Holding services primarily in Cantonese at a church of Chinese newcomers puts a limit on its ability to reach out to other cultural groups and Canadian-born people, who may feel like outsiders joining a church where everyone else is from the same country—even if the church also holds a service in English.

Welcoming in more diverse cultural groups is exactly what St. Peter's has been hoping to do, says the Filipino congregation's senior pastor, the Rev. Eric Kregel. For years, St. Peter's members and clergy have been hoping to build up enough money to buy their own building and establish themselves as a parish. Having their own building, he says, could be an opportunity for them to form relationships with people in the neighbourhood—and to be seen as an independent part of a local community rather than a mono-ethnic third service sharing with another church.

Unfortunately, while the parish was

well on their way toward that goal in 2019, the pandemic stymied their plans. Numbers—and therefore donations—were slow to bounce back after the lockdowns as they were for many churches, though they're starting to show improvement now, Kregel says.

So while there is definitely a ministry opportunity to be found in seeking out and welcoming cultural groups looking for a church to call home, that doesn't mean parishes that succeed in doing so are immune to the challenges that face the church as a whole.

"We're struggling with the same things everyone else is. [Immigration] isn't the silver bullet. We still worry about inviting people, bringing people. But since we're an ethnic congregation, we're limited by ethnicity," says Kregel.

Likewise, Tang adds, while there is a great deal of faith and vibrancy entering Canada with Christian immigrants, it's important not to view them simply as a resource that can help pump up dwindling numbers in the pews.

Some shrinking Protestant denominations, he says, "see new Canadian congregations in the community only through the lens of potential renters and potential people just to keep them afloat financially."

And so it's vital for churches hoping to minister to new Canadians to check their motives and methods, he says. They should be looking for real kingdom partners, not financial answers.

Tang says the arrival of so many Christians from around the globe is likely to transform the traditional denominational landscape of Canadian Christianity. Out of those 527,420 Christians who immigrated to Canada from 2016 to 2021, Statistics Canada records only 6,570 reported themselves to be Anglican—little more than one per cent. And these new arrivals are bringing their own traditions and expressions of worship with them, says Tang, many of which may be unfamiliar to Canadians of European descent. But he's also quite certain that their flourishing represents a clear sign that God is working in Canada, even if not entirely through the denominations that were already here.

For established parishes that do want to reach out to new Canadians, he says there are certainly plenty of opportunities to connect. If the Anglican church hopes to minister to them, he says, it will be less a question of how a shrinking congregation can find some immigrants to shore up its numbers and more a question of which churches are best placed to serve which communities. The next step is identifying the needs of the specific people who have settled nearby and finding ways to meet them.

"For some churches across Canada it's about the newest Canadian that's landed in the last two years. But for other communities, it's very much about migrant workers [who are] coming in by the hundreds," he says, echoing Astudillo's belief that finding people in need nets better results in the long run than looking for people who can help the church.

Those relationships might be less direct paths to reversing membership decline, but in the long term, they're also much more fruitful than just asking, "Did we get them to show up on Sunday and sit in our hour-and-a-half service?" he says. ■



# CLAY holds first in-person gathering in five years

**Matthew Puddister**  
STAFF WRITER

More than 120 young Christians gathered in Waterloo, Ont. Aug. 10 to 13 for the Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth (CLAY) gathering, the first time the biennial event has been held in person since 2018.

Bringing together Anglicans and Lutherans between the ages of 14 and 19 plus their leaders, CLAY offers a variety of youth-oriented activities, worship services and leadership development sessions. The last in-person CLAY took place in Thunder Bay, Ont. The following gathering, originally scheduled for 2020, was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and eventually took place online in 2021.

Sheilagh McGlynn, youth animator for the Anglican Church of Canada, said 70 per cent of participants this year, including leaders, were new due to the age range of CLAY and the five-year gap since the last in-person event.

"A lot of people who came didn't really know what CLAY was or what to expect," McGlynn



PHOTOS: GENERAL SYNOD COMMUNICATIONS AND (FAR RIGHT) EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

**Young Anglicans and Lutherans participated in a range of activities at CLAY 2023 in Waterloo, which was based around the theme "Ashes and Embers." At far right, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, plays a life-size version of the board game Hungry Hippos during an afternoon activity session.**

said. "It's nice to have a bit of a fresh start, but [there was] still a bit of wondering, because CLAY had such a rich history ... We weren't sure if that same feeling would still happen and it really did ... The energy was off the charts."

The theme of CLAY 2023 was "Ashes and Embers." The Rev. Nathan Fong, one of two keynote speakers along with the Rev. Aneeta Saroop—both Lutheran pastors—said in a news release it was "about

picking up the pieces of our lives and seeing where God might be in the midst of it."

"Because we collectively had a difficult time over the past three years as a country, it's a very appropriate time to explore this," Fong said. "The truth is, God is with us always, in the sparks of hope and the raging fires of life, but also in the ashes and embers after the sparks and flames have gone down."

In their keynote discussions, Fong and Saroop spoke about

their experiences as people of colour in the church, according to the release. Fong described growing up Asian in Vancouver, his parents raising him to be as "non-Chinese" as possible to fit in, and his sadness at not being able to pass on his language and culture to the next generation. Saroop recounted how she was born Hindu, raised agnostic, baptized Christian and eventually became a Lutheran pastor. Both described their experience of "blending in" and

accepting God-given identities.

The Rev. Alexandra McIntosh, an Anglican priest who serves as curate at Christ Church Deer Park in Toronto, was a youth leader for years before being ordained. The Waterloo gathering marked her first time attending CLAY, in this case as a CLAY Crew leader.

"I think it might be one of the most energetic or most obvious examples of our churches working in full communion," McIntosh said. ■

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Contact: Lydia Hood  
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For more information about our programs contact The Provost, Queen's College Faculty of Theology, 210 Prince Philip Drive, St. John's, NL A1B 3R6. [queens@mun.ca](mailto:queens@mun.ca), (709) 753-0116, Toll free (877) 753-0116.

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# Religion: the dump of scientific materialism?

Continued from p. 4  
can be hugely intelligent and religious!

The theism course ended on what appeared in the course calendar to be a sour note: “Last Lecture: Christianity after the Holocaust.”

I had a German student in that class, about my age. I had learned German to read Kant in the original, so I always enjoyed speaking German to her. She had lived in Germany during the war, and I knew she would be apprehensive about the last lecture, thinking I was going to give a blanket denigration of German society.

The exact opposite was my intention, which was to talk about the great German religious figures who kept and fought for their faith against the Nazis: Edith Stein, Bonhoeffer, Martin Niemöller, and the courageous young White Rose dissidents, all of whom held to morality in the middle of hell.

After the class was over, a line of students formed to thank me. The German woman was at the end of the line. When she approached me, she silently reached around her neck, took off her rosary, and put it over my head, and wordlessly walked away.

Was that moment epiphanic?

Over the past six years I’ve often thought so. In late 2022, after spending some time worshipping with the Canadian Reformed Churches, followed by some months of church-shopping spurred by doctrinal differences, I paid a visit to a small Anglican church in nearby Burnaby, where I met the minister and her wife. This was late in 2022. And for many months now, I know I have found my spiritual home. I love the combination of inclusiveness and ritual and traditional hymns; also, of course, I didn’t have to “cross my fingers” any more when the issue of free will arose (anathema to the Reformed church, which is rooted in the teachings of Calvin).

I joined the choir immediately, and now perform the gospel reading from the pulpit.

Thus my eager and earnest willingness to defend my love for God and the Anglican church in the debate I referred to earlier.

The debate went well. It began with my antagonist contending that “religion is the garbage dump of scientific

materialism.”

When my turn came, I agreed with him. I said in rebuttal that I’m fine with religion being relegated to the dumpster; that’s where it belongs, if and insofar as it is a medium for male chauvinism, for discrimination against gender minorities, for scriptural literalism, for hideous teachings of hell, or pandering to human wish-fulfilment through pie-in-the-sky teachings of heaven, or interfering with women’s rights or the rights of those who wish to die on their own terms—and a panderer to political interests. So an ironic thank you Freud, and Marx, Nietzsche and Bertrand Russell and the “new atheists” for reminding us that religion should not be made the handmaiden of power structures. The god these atheists dismissed is not the loving power that guided Ruth and Esther and the poet of the psalms and the wisdom of Ecclesiastes and the beautiful scrolls of Isaiah which inspired Handel’s *Messiah*. It is not the loving power who brought us the gifts of free will, the grounds for absolute morality and conscience, the love for music, or language, or love, or the disinterested affection for natural beauty.

The great writer and humanist Elie Wiesel told me a story once when I met him in Vancouver many years ago, shortly after he won the Nobel Peace Prize. He was 15 when he was shipped to Auschwitz. This is what he saw one night in Auschwitz: some Orthodox rabbis gathered together and decided to put God on trial *in absentia* for criminal negligence. They elected a prosecutor, a defence lawyer, a judge and a jury of mixed onlookers.

God was declared guilty as charged.

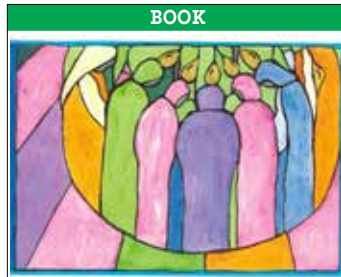
Whereupon the chief rabbi, seeing there was present a 10-person minimum *minyan* (quorum for Jewish worship), said,

“Now, let us pray.”

*Lex orandi, lex credendi!* ■

**Graham N. Forst** was born and raised in Vancouver, received his PhD in interdisciplinary studies in 1970 and has taught in post-secondary institutions in the United States and Canada for 60 years. He founded the Vancouver Holocaust Education Society in 1975. A near-lifetime atheist, he converted to Anglicanism in 2022.

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## NOVEMBER BIBLE READINGS

#### DAY READING

- 01 Revelation 7
- 02 Isaiah 26:1-19
- 03 Psalm 107:1-22
- 04 Psalm 107:23-43
- 05 1 John 3:1-18
- 06 Joshua 24:1-13
- 07 Joshua 24:14-33
- 08 Matthew 23:1-12
- 09 Matthew 23:13-28
- 10 Matthew 23:29-39
- 11 Revelation 14:1-13
- 12 Matthew 25:1-13
- 13 1 Thessalonians 3
- 14 1 Thessalonians 4
- 15 1 Thess. 5:1-11

#### DAY READING

- 16 Judges 4:1-13
- 17 Judges 4:14-24
- 18 Judges 5:1-11
- 19 Judges 5:12-31
- 20 Matthew 25:14-30
- 21 Matthew 25:31-46
- 22 Ezekiel 34:20-31
- 23 Psalm 100
- 24 1 Cor. 15:1-19
- 25 1 Cor. 15:20-34
- 26 1 Cor. 15:35-58
- 27 Matthew 24:1-14
- 28 Matthew 24:15-28
- 29 Matthew 24:29-51
- 30 John 1:35-51



