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WELCOMING THE STRANGER

## Homelessness 'can happen to anyone'

### At church encampments, unhoused share challenges of daily survival

Matthew Puddister  
STAFF WRITER

First in a two-part series

James Patrick Andrew Smith was 16 years old when she first came to Toronto.

Originally from Moosonee, Ont., Smith—who is a member of Moose Cree First Nation and identifies as two-spirited, an Indigenous term for gender-nonconforming people—grew up in foster care. She lived in Toronto for two years before she met her uncle at the 21 Park Road Respite Centre, a local homeless shelter.

Smith, now 24, says it was her uncle who introduced her to Sanctuary. A non-denominational church that supports poor and homeless residents in Toronto, Sanctuary provides meals, street outreach, a health clinic, an arts program and Sunday worship services. Her uncle, who was homeless and has since died of alcohol-related causes, had been a member of the Sanctuary community for about 25 years.

"He said, 'Just come to Sanctuary whenever you don't have a place to go,'" Smith recalls. "So it's always been my go-to place. I feel safe here."

"Homelessness isn't fun right now," she adds, speaking to the *Anglican Journal* on a cold December evening. "But having a community to be a part of is comforting. It made sleeping on church property feel like home."

The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH), a national advocacy organization, estimates there are



▲ James Patrick Andrew Smith stands outside Sanctuary, a non-denominational church that serves poor and homeless people in downtown Toronto.

PHOTO: MATTHEW PUDDISTER

between 260,000 and 300,000 unhoused people across Canada. A study of 11 communities by CAEH found chronic homelessness in them increased by 40 per cent between February 2020 and October 2023.

Church grounds have become a common place of refuge. The Church of St. Stephen-in-the-Fields, an Anglican church in downtown Toronto, in recent years often had more than 25 people at a time camped out on its property, priest-in-charge the Rev. Maggie Helwig says.

One response of municipal governments has been to forcibly clear these encampments, as Toronto did Nov. 24 when city crews removed tents at St. Stephen-in-the-Fields. Although

St. Stephen-in-the-Fields had permitted people to sleep in the churchyard, a city notice said the land was a transportation right of way and public property and that those camping were obstructing the street. Crews also put up fencing and concrete blocks to prevent people from returning to shelter there.

Sanctuary outreach worker Greg Cook says the city has also repeatedly cleared encampments at Sanctuary, located near high-rise condos at Toronto's bustling Bloor and Yonge intersection.

"We always had a rule that if people wanted to sleep on our property, that was fine," Cook says. "They just couldn't leave a structure up." However, with rising

See GETTING BY, p. 7



PHOTO: GORODENKOFF

## Mission into Eco

### M.Div student explores ministry in a virtual world

Sean Frankling  
STAFF WRITER

As many Anglican leaders look for alternative ways of being church in the 21st century, one M.Div student at Halifax's Atlantic School of Theology is investigating ways of branching out into digital gathering spaces. In a research project he's

developing as part of his degree, Blane Finnie, a postulant to priesthood, has built several church buildings and run daily services in Eco, an online multiplayer video game that simulates a world in which players must cooperate or compete to survive, typically harnessing natural resources,

taking specialized roles and trading with one another in an in-game economy.

Finnie has focused his efforts on one server, a dedicated computer with its own group of players that hosts a separate game world. Within that server, Finnie has gathered the resources to build

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Dioceses team up to cut costs



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Bishop Martin Mate mourned



**ANGLICAN VOICES ▶**


# DISCIPLESHIP: Flavour of the month?

Living as an apprentice in the Kingdom is essential to the Anglican life—even if it won't save our church

By John Bowen

## Second in a two-part series

**J**ESUS'S LAST INSTRUCTION to his apprentices is often known as the Great Commission: "Go and make disciples."

But what if we translated that into the language of the trade school? "Go set up satellite campuses to train apprentices in the ways of the Kingdom." Which of course is what they did, all around the world. We call them churches.

Why are we encouraging this thing called discipleship? Because discipleship is the essence of the Christian life.

## Discipleship then and now

"Well," you may say, "That's all very well. But Jesus is no longer around for me to traipse around the villages of Galilee after him. How can this work in today's world?"

It is true that the practicalities are different. But the principles are the same. Bishop of Oxford Steven Croft has suggested that Mark 3:14 captures the main themes of discipleship: Jesus "appointed twelve to be with him and to be sent out to preach and to have authority to cast out demons." In other words, there are two halves: being with Jesus, and then going out in ministry—a coming in and a going out.

In today's terms, we spend time in the presence of Jesus when we read the gospels, alone or in a group, or when we hear them explained on a Sunday morning. Prayer also puts us in the presence of Jesus to listen for his voice. And so does congregational worship—above all as we come to his table week by week.

But then there is the going out, the learning by doing. How does that work? It's not that difficult—in theory, at least. Sometimes it's in the big choices we make: What work should I pursue? Who (if anyone) should I marry? How should I use my leisure time? How should I use my money? If we really believe that God is remaking the world through Jesus and is inviting us to participate, then no decision is too big to be included.

Of course, in our daily lives it is more often the small choices that are guided by



PHOTO: GO SLOW

**“We desperately want to save our lives—and that of our church. But Jesus tells us that doing things merely in order to survive is counter-productive: It's actually a guarantee we will die.”**

our commitment to discipleship: Should I stop and speak to this panhandler? What can I afford to give to relief efforts in the Middle East? Would this deal my office is proposing be an ethical one? What is our church's responsibility to these new refugee claimants? Have I the courage to apologize to my spouse (or, even harder, my child)? You and I make such decisions every day.

We may object that Jesus is not present in person to guide and challenge, encourage, and forgive, in the way he did with the Twelve; surely that makes it much harder for us than it was for the first apprentices. But the secret is this: the Holy Spirit is actually the spirit of Jesus—the active presence of the same Jesus who trained the Twelve. Strangely enough, Jesus himself seems to suggest that the presence of the Spirit is *better* than having him present in the flesh ("But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." (John 16:7)—though I confess I don't fully understand how.

## What of the future?

In light of this, I can't help asking myself: Will encouraging this kind of radical discipleship save the Anglican Church of Canada? Maybe—and maybe not. Philip Jenkins and other historians have

documented how over the past 2,000 years whole denominations have come into being, flourished (sometimes for centuries) and then slowly died out. Such things are largely beyond our control.

In that case, is it worth encouraging discipleship? Yes—a thousand times yes. But why, if not for survival?

The answer is that Jesus is not terribly

interested in survival. In fact, he warns, "Whoever wants to save their life will lose it." (Matthew 16:25) We desperately want to save our lives—and that of our church. But Jesus tells us that doing things *merely* in order to survive is counter-productive: it's actually a guarantee we will die. The only way to truly save our lives, says Jesus, is to give them away—the way Jesus models for his apprentices, the Kingdom way.

So if encouraging discipleship is not just the latest strategy for survival, what is it? It is not code for being a nicer person, or being more religious or giving time to more good causes. At its root, discipleship is the heart of Christian faith. Discipleship is individuals and communities passionately committed to the living Jesus and learning from him the ways of the Kingdom. It is churches whose whole *raison d'être* is following the leadership of God in what Jesus calls the renewal of all things. As one young church planter explained it to me, "God is changing everything, and we can be a part of it!"

Is discipleship the flavour of the month? Maybe it is right now. But it's a flavour worth getting used to. I didn't have Chinese food until I was 19 (I obviously had a deprived childhood) and I remember being startled at first by its wonderful and exotic flavours. Over the years, of course, that new flavour has become a regular and much-appreciated part of my diet. Maybe the same can happen with this new flavour we call discipleship. ■

**John Bowen** is an emeritus professor of evangelism at Wycliffe College, Toronto. His most recent book is *The Unfolding Gospel: How the Good News Makes Sense of Discipleship, Church, Mission, and Everything Else (Fortress 2021)*. He is a member of St. John the Evangelist parish in Hamilton, Ont.

**LETTERS ▶**

The Anglican Journal welcomes letters to the editor.

Since not all letters can be published, preference is given to short correspondence (300 words or less). All letters are subject to editing.

## Struggling to identify the innocents in Israel-Palestine

The article "Pity the Innocents" (December 2023, p. 1) was carefully balanced. And all can agree on recommendations that we work for peace. My struggle relates to identifying the innocents, so that progress can be made. As we all know, this task is complex. Of course the children and some of the youth in Gaza and in Israel are innocent. And adult Palestinians have valid grievances against Israel. However, it is not



IMAGE: EVELLEAN

clear to me whether most of these same Palestinians are strongly committed to the Hamas vision. How many disagree with Hamas and work to redirect or weaken them? Similar questions can validly be asked of all citizens of Israel. How many disagree with the severe limitations inflicted on the Palestinians, and are they working to affirm and strengthen them as a people? Innocents were certainly

killed during the bombing of Israel, and innocents are being killed during the bombing of Gaza. I do not know whom to support nor who or what will eventually bring peace and broad well-being to the area. I believe that many, like me, are struggling with this matter. What signs of light and hope exist?

**Sam Aylesworth, retired Anglican priest**  
Calgary, Alta.

SINGING WITH JOY ▶



# Remembering the humanity of our leaders

By Linda Nicholls

**T**HERE IS GREAT excitement when someone in your family or parish is ordained. A sense of pride and joy permeates the congregation and there are immediately higher expectations, as if the person suddenly became more holy or closer to God. Deacons read the gospel and prepare the eucharistic table. Priests and bishops are given the authority to preside at sacramental events. They baptize, marry, absolve and bless. They declare what God has done and is doing in the lives of God's people. They become the image and presence of God for others in those moments—a weighty responsibility.

The process of becoming ordained is joyful, and being ordained is a privilege that elicits reverence and awe. But there's also a danger—that authority will be attached to the ordained without reserve, and to the person rather than the office of deacon, priest or bishop. Both lay people and clergy may forget that the power held in these ministries belongs to God alone. Lay people may grant—consciously or unconsciously—undue authority to clergy. For their part, clergy are sometimes not aware of the authority they are granted or of the boundaries that should be placed on their roles and relationships.

We envision our ministries in a hierarchical way, with archbishops, bishops, priests and deacons “above” lay people. I would rather we envisioned ministry in circles of connection and accountability. God's work is supported by the sacramental and pastoral leadership of



▲ **Ordination, though joyful, carries with it a risk that “authority will be attached to the ordained without reserve,” the primate writes.**

PHOTO: GRAHAM LACDAO/  
ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

clergy but is carried out by laity in every sphere of life—in family, school, workplace and community. We speak of “servant leadership” as the model for serving people in their callings.

Why am I focusing on this relationship? February 2024 marks the 16th anniversary of my consecration as a bishop and this year I will have spent 39 years in ordained ministry. It has been a tremendous privilege to walk alongside parishes and dioceses as a deacon, priest,

suffragan bishop, diocesan bishop and primate in the ministries to which I have been called by the church. So many have invited me into intimate moments in their lives of joy and sorrow, of pain and celebration. I am humbled by their trust and faith as we come before God together. I am also aware of times when expectations far exceeded my personal gifts or capacities and I struggled to be recognized as a human being, unable to meet all these expectations. I hear stories from other clergy and bishops of the times when unmet expectations have spilled over into rudeness, frustration and anger expressed to them inappropriately.

Please remember the humanity of your leaders. Like you, they love God and have offered themselves in service to God and the church. The laying on of hands in the service of ordination confirms the presence of God's Spirit for a particular ministry but does not magically bring superpowers to meet all expectations. All the people of God, lay and ordained, long for the same fullness of life, grounded in God's love that forgives, renews, restores—and invites us to find the joy of the reign of Christ in one another's gifts.

A well-known chorus includes the line, “They will know we are Christians by our love.” It is a reminder that how we treat one another is a witness to the world of God's love. May it be known in all our relationships. ■

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

FEATHER AND SAGE



# A call to prayer amid the world's rush and roar

By Chris Harper

**FEATHER:** Creator God, we thank you for the rising sun and its course through the day, reminding us of the significance of every moment and event. Awaken our hearts and minds to your hand and truth within the journey of the day. Speak to us to always guide us; when we wander too far from you draw us back; keep us guarded within your circle of love and peace. Open our eyes that we might see truth in all that is around us and see your light drawing us from the darkness of our hearts. Help us to always walk in humility and be better today than we were yesterday and the day before; bless

us that we might be your faithful messengers and ambassadors of your mercy and peace; bless us that we might be a blessing to others. May our prayers and service be a sweet offering rising to you always. This we pray as children of your creation in Christ. Amen. *Hiy Hiy, Miigwetch.\**

**SAGE:** Family, home and community stand significant in our lives as human beings and Christians—individually as the reason we worship, work and strive to progress, and communally as we grow, support others and are in turn nourished by them. No member of this triad stands independent; they are each drawn and bound

together with a powerful force called prayer. The world around us rushes and roars, speeding headlong without regard to prayer, future and consequence, and we see this progression through daily newsfeeds. We must remember that we are called to be a people of a lived-out belief and faithful prayer, taking time to slow down enough to pray and meditate, to speak with the Almighty and listen for God's word and guidance. This new way of being—doing all things prayerfully, letting prayer encircle all the things that are important in our private and corporate world—can and should be the expression of the life we live with faith.

I ask your prayers for our shared Indigenous ministries as we hire new staff in Toronto and open a new office in Edmonton. Please also pray for our Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) and all members, especially the Elders, of the Sacred Circle. ■

\**Hiy Hiy* is Plains Cree and *Miigwetch* is Ojibway/Assiniboine for “thank you.” Both are said traditionally after a prayer, and using them together denotes respect for the first peoples of Canada's West and East.

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

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# In-game church piques players' interest

'I didn't anticipate the level of engagement ... People are very hungry': Researcher



▲ “The first day, some people were surprised by the church ... but since then, I've had people attend worship every single day,” says Blane Finnie.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Continued from p. 1

churches and held worship services by speaking over the game's voice chat. He even collects donations to an in-game charity account from which other players can withdraw when they need help to survive or keep their virtual businesses afloat.

The idea, he says, is to get a sense of how players react to an overt Christian presence in an otherwise secular online meeting space. The server he uses is small, with around 20 people total, but the degree of interest other players have shown has exceeded his expectations.

Online games are playing an increasing role in culture and social life; according to one industry report, the global gaming market was valued at \$159 billion (U.S.) in 2020, almost four times more than the global movie industry, at \$41.7 (U.S.). Games may also allow churches to form relationships with people who might otherwise seldom encounter Christian ideas, Finnie says.

With the data-gathering portion of his project in full swing, Finnie sat down with the *Anglican Journal* to talk about the response so far. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

## What's the game like?

Eco was originally designed as an educational game. Imagine Minecraft, but the world has an ecosystem on it. There's trees and animals and fish, the players take professions and you need a mixture of professions to accomplish anything. The game is essentially a secular place; there's no inherent religion in the game in any way.

I've acted as transparently Christian as possible and have tried to use iconography as well as gameplay to behave in that way. I started in the server with the church. I conduct nightly services—Compline, which usually precipitates religious conversation. I offer charity so people can come and just take money if they need money.

It's a social game. I've got a lot of engagement with players talking about whatever they want to talk about. When the server run is done, I'll be contacting several of the people who engage with me or potentially didn't engage with me and just debrief them on all this.

## So it's a transient community?

Yes and no. It is transient, but a lot of players tend to come back to the same servers because they also get to know each other and they want to play together. We're now down to around 20. It's a very community-focused game because if you don't know your neighbour, you can't really accomplish anything.

## One of the first things I heard about your project is that you were trying to see if you could disrupt the economy by giving things away for free. Is that a correct representation?

Not exactly. I am trying to cause disturbance in any way that would work, whether that be in the economy or in the culture of the server, because I want responses. That's where the data will come



▲ A screenshot shows one of several church buildings Finnie has constructed inside the Eco game world, complete with signs explaining aspects of the project and introducing discussion topics for meetings.

SCREENSHOT: BLANE FINNIE

from. I don't want to damage the economy because that would just be an attack on the community. No one wants that.

There are exceptions. The soup kitchen gives away food that's getting old for basically nothing. I do give away bread and wine for almost nothing as well as I'm able to. The most disruptive thing that I do is I collect alms from people that have more money than they want, and then I give money away completely free. There's no strings attached. You just come by and you just take money if you want.

## But money is generalized enough that it doesn't affect any specific person?

Absolutely. Everyone on some level knows that if somebody is poor and they come and they collect some money, that puts them back in the economy. Most of the players look very positively at this.

Engagement has been significantly higher than I expected. The first day, some people were surprised by the church and really surprised that there was actually worship happening in the church. But since then, I've had people attend worship every single day. And I've had fairly long conversations. I've had one request for a pastoral visit. The alms has seen a lot of engagement.

The first night, one of the people that came to worship identified as being pagan, and we have at least one atheist regularly coming to worship.

## What would be a typical conversation your worship services would start?

Topics range from what you might describe as theological confusion or religious education components, about the afterlife or about polytheism, about the history of Christianity and just misunderstandings about theology generally.

Some conversations have ended up being about American politics (there are lots of Americans in this group); others have been about sex and relationships, marriage and pornography, things like that. Or [we'll talk about] the inability to talk about these things in public spaces [in the players' lives outside the game] or have a forum where this is acceptable conversation; it's a very broad spectrum. They're taking these conversations

seriously, and I think they seem to value that there's a space to have these conversations.

## What does holding an in-game worship service entail?

I shortened things for the nature of the community, but for the most part, it's been the Compline service in *Common Worship: Daily Prayer*, which is a publication of the Church of England. Last night I asked the other players, and we did Compline from the *Book of Common Prayer*. There's one person so far that's been participating in the psalm. The psalm has been done responsively, which is nice, but mostly it's me. Like I said, data is still being accumulated. The backgrounds of players are very diverse.

## What would you say was your average attendance at the services?

Probably four. A small service would be two or three, and a big service would be five or six. There's some regulars and some that come not nearly as regularly. There's some also attending as community, so they're looking for their other friends to show up.

## What can we say in terms of application of the lessons you will have learned here when you're finished? Do you think having a regular project of outreach through online games is a good idea for churches in general?

To be ignoring video games as a cultural force is really problematic. They're one of the biggest cultural forces in the world. Video games make liberal use of religious imagery and religious content, either in the form of villains, or in some cases there's now what we call empathy games—games that deal with moral issues head on. It's a very important part of our culture.

We've compartmentalized religion enough that people don't have access to spaces where this can be explored, and they end up looking for ways to explore it. I didn't anticipate the level of engagement I got though, which tells me that people are very hungry. The old principle of, if they're not going to come to you, go where they are—it works. Churches need to go where people are. People are on video games, so we should be there too. ■

# ‘Sticks in a bundle’ Financial pressures drive dioceses to increased collaboration

**Matthew Puddister**  
STAFF WRITER

As revenues shrink, many dioceses across the Anglican Church of Canada are increasingly collaborating with one another to find savings—and in at least one case have discussed merging.

On Oct. 16 and 17, councils from the three dioceses that cover the civil province of Saskatchewan—the dioceses of Saskatoon, Qu’Appelle and Saskatchewan—met to discuss ways they could work together more closely in finance and administration. They also spoke about shared camp events and agreed that clergy in any one of the three dioceses could lead worship services in the others. According to a Council of the North news release, published in the *Saskatchewan Anglican* diocesan newspaper after the meeting, representatives also considered the formal union of two or more dioceses.

In the end, none of the three dioceses supported a merger. Representatives from the diocese of Saskatchewan were not interested in a merger with the Qu’Appelle or Saskatoon dioceses due to what they considered differences in culture and traditions. Those from the dioceses of Qu’Appelle and Saskatoon, meanwhile, felt their dioceses had many commonalities, but that the large area resulting from a merger could not be served by a single bishop and therefore a suffragan bishop would be needed—and having to pay for two bishops would negate much of the rationale for a merger.

Bishop of Qu’Appelle Helen Kennedy says the move towards greater collaboration flows in part from diminishing resources, including less funding, smaller congregations and fewer people to serve those congregations.

Archbishop Greg Kerr-Wilson—metropolitan of the ecclesiastical province of Rupert’s Land, who was present for the discussions—says while bishops in those dioceses had been engaged in conversation about increased work together for several years, the last year has seen more formal discussion.

“I think pooling resources is a key driver ... the desire to be able to use the resources they have the most wisely and most effectively for the mission and the ministry of the church, rather than using the resources up for administrative stuff,” Kerr-Wilson says.

Some metropolitans from the Anglican Church of Canada’s other ecclesiastical provinces also report increased collaboration among their dioceses—for similar reasons.

“The pandemic taught us that ‘sticks in a bundle’ (or dioceses) working together are far stronger than individual sticks (or dioceses) going it alone,” says Archbishop Anne Germond, metropolitan of the ecclesiastical province of Ontario. “We have a very strong executive provincial council and have worked together on social justice issues like homelessness and elder care.”

The seven Ontario dioceses are also trying to figure out how they can make work together on items such as payroll more efficient, she adds.

Archbishop Lynne McNaughton, metropolitan of the ecclesiastical province of B.C. and Yukon and bishop of Kootenay, says the six bishops in her province currently share numerous programs in common, including a safe church training



PHOTO: O. BELLINI

program. Some dioceses have also been sharing payroll information. “We all have diminished personnel, diminished volunteer [and] lay ministry support,” she says of the situation in her province. “We have shortages of clergy. We have vast geographical distances and fewer and fewer people and less money. That’s across the board.”

It all means the moment is ripe for finding ways for dioceses to avoid duplicating their efforts, she says.

“I think that that’s why this moment has some readiness about it that wasn’t there in previous generations or previous administrations ... All of the dioceses, even the traditionally more resourced dioceses, are dealing with those kinds of shortages, or they’re dealing with parishes that are having to figure out what we do with less money.”

Another common area of work is the province’s shared eco-justice committee, which includes representatives from each diocese. Refugee sponsorship has also become a major area of shared work, and the province is exploring other kinds of partnerships for it, McNaughton adds, including, potentially, ecumenical or interfaith ones.

Previous years have seen serious discussion about a potential merger between the dioceses of Quebec and Montreal, which were the same diocese before 1850. More than a decade ago, representatives from each diocese formed the Quebec Montreal Partnership Initiative with a mandate to explore if there were ways for the two to work more closely together in mission and ministry. In 2015, then Quebec bishop Dennis Drainville stood as a candidate in the diocese of Montreal’s episcopal election and expressed his support for the two dioceses uniting. And current bishop of Quebec Bruce Myers says the question of cooperation was one of the earliest conversations between

himself and current bishop of Montreal Mary Irwin-Gibson—although, he adds, they agreed immediately that exploring ways for the dioceses to work more closely in mission and ministry made more sense than folding them together.

Myers says the size of the Quebec diocese would mean that any potential merger would “create an unmanageably large geographic territory.” He also notes that there is a contextual difference in ministry, between the largely rural diocese of Quebec and the mainly urban diocese of Montreal.

Instead, the two dioceses look for areas where they can collaborate. Both dioceses invite representatives from the other to gatherings such as diocesan synods, clergy retreats and lay reader training events. Myers and Irwin-Gibson have issued joint pastoral letters in situations that affect both the dioceses of Quebec and Montreal, such as after the 2017 mass shooting at a Quebec City mosque, and open letters to the premier of Quebec and other lawmakers regarding “pieces of legislation that we have thought for different reasons were problematic,” Myers says.

While it makes sense for dioceses that are all within one civil province to save money on things like administration and advocacy, he adds, the ecclesiastical province of Canada is spread over five

different civil provinces, which presents more jurisdictional hurdles. Still, while different ecclesiastical provinces and dioceses might adopt different solutions, he says discussions about ways dioceses can work more closely together are likely to continue.

“I think it’s good to be continually and regularly asking those questions,” Myers says.

As ecclesiastical provinces and dioceses explore opportunities for greater collaboration, the Anglican Church of Canada is also rethinking church structures at the national level.

In 2023, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, announced the formation of a primate’s commission to evaluate current church structures and suggest possible alternatives. Nicholls said she formed the commission in response to questions that arose from the strategic planning process in the 2019-2023 quadrennium, which involved nationwide consultations with Anglicans at all levels.

“We have a national church structure and model of governance created in a different time and context,” Nicholls told Council of General Synod in November. “The question that kept emerging was, if we were to develop a national church today, what would we imagine?” ■



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PHOTO: MATTHEW PUDDISTER

**Unhoused people continued to sleep outside Toronto's Church of St. Stephen-in-the-Fields even after city crews cleared tents and put up a fence around the churchyard.**



▲ **"We end up losing the majority of our possessions seemingly nightly," Hayashi says.**

PHOTO: MATTHEW PUDDISTER

## Getting by on 'survival instinct'

**Continued from p. 1** homelessness and a lack of shelter spaces, Sanctuary began allowing people to put tents up on its property, which led to the city taking the church to court for breaking bylaws. Under Toronto's Streets Use Bylaw, people are not permitted to erect tents and other structures on city streets. The City of Toronto withdrew its lawsuit after Olivia Chow became mayor in June 2023. But a fence remains around the park surrounding Sanctuary, put up by city crews to prevent people from setting up tents on church property.

Despite the fence at Sanctuary, some people continue to sleep on church property. Others who stop by for meals sleep wherever else they can.

Smith, who has been able to couch-surf since the weather turned colder, slept in a tent on the Sanctuary parking lot with her partner for her first few years there.

"It was cold," Smith says. "We had candles we'd have to light up at night and be very careful that we don't light our tent in flames when we would sleep and roll around. We'd use tarps to cover the tent and get off the ground. We'd use wooden planks ... use Styrofoam to put on the bottom of the tent floor, so it was warmer and insulated. Just survival instinct."

Ryan Hayashi, 45, also slept in a tent on Sanctuary property while he could, along with his wife Rebecca and their dog Maddo. The city's court battle with Sanctuary eventually forced them to vacate, after which their tent was stolen.

Having a tent, Hayashi says, "made a huge difference. Sure, we couldn't lock the door. But it was our space and it helped our dog feel a lot more comfortable ... [We] could literally keep our belongings safe."

"It can happen to anyone," Hayashi says of homelessness. Hayashi has a bachelor's degree in English from Queen's University and worked in publishing, then trained and worked as a watchmaker. Rebecca has a PhD in Canadian history from McMaster. The two have managed campaigns for the provincial and federal NDP.

Both became addicted to opiates after Hayashi tore a ligament in his leg in his

mid-20s and a doctor prescribed him OxyContin. They stuck to prescription drugs until the cost became prohibitive, Hayashi says. They tried to get a roommate, he adds, who was addicted to crystal meth and threatened them at knifepoint.

About a year ago, he and Rebecca were evicted from their apartment. Shell-shocked, they stayed in their apartment building near the roof for a few days until police came to throw them out for trespassing. Police would not allow the couple to take their belongings, Hayashi says. According to Ontario law, landlords can keep, sell or throw out anything tenants leave behind after moving out. The couple became homeless in winter with little more than the clothes on their backs.

Currently unemployed, Hayashi describes a daily struggle for survival, spending much of his time panhandling. With the city clearing encampments, he and Rebecca find shelter wherever they can: stairwells, parking garages.

Theft is a constant problem. "We end up losing the majority of our possessions seemingly nightly," Hayashi says.

His health has also declined. In the past year, Hayashi says, he almost died twice: the first time from pneumonia and sepsis; the second after suffering a brain bleed from a man hitting him in the back of the head—the "result of me having something that he didn't at the time," Hayashi says.

A further indignity is the contempt those experiencing homelessness often face. Hayashi recounts sitting in the rain on a piece of cardboard with his dog outside a Yonge Street post office two weeks earlier.

"I wasn't panhandling," Hayashi says. "I wasn't in the way of the sidewalk... It was well after they had closed... This guy walks by and he just spits out loudly enough for me to hear, 'Filthy homeless.'"

"I am not impacting your life in any way," Hayashi recalls thinking. "I am not asking for anything. But all of a sudden I'm not human." ■

*The second part of this series will focus on the experiences of parishes across the country in hosting encampments of unhoused people.*

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## BIBLE READINGS

### DAY READING

- 1 Psalm 19
- 2 1 Corinthians 1:1-17
- 3 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
- 4 Psalm 77
- 5 Psalm 107:1-22
- 6 Psalm 107:23-43
- 7 Numbers 21:1-9
- 8 John 3:1-17
- 9 John 3:18-36
- 10 2 Chronicles 36:9-23
- 11 Jeremiah 25:1-14
- 12 Jeremiah 29:1-14
- 13 Jeremiah 31:23-34
- 14 Psalm 119:1-16
- 15 Hebrews 5:1-10
- 16 Genesis 14:17-15:6

### DAY READING

- 17 Psalm 110
- 18 John 12:20-36a
- 19 2 Samuel 7:1-17
- 20 Isaiah 50
- 21 Philippians 2:1-11
- 22 John 12:1-19
- 23 Mark 11:1-11
- 24 Mark 11:12-33
- 25 Hebrews 10:1-18
- 26 Mark 14:1-26
- 27 Mark 14:27-52
- 28 Mark 14:53-15:20
- 29 Mark 15:21-47
- 30 1 Peter 4:1-11
- 31 Mark 16:1-8

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## PEOPLE ▶

# Remembering Martin Mate

Newfoundland bishop was gentle builder of community inside and outside church

Sean Frankling  
STAFF WRITER

In the early 1980s the Rev. Reuben Hatcher, now retired, was serving as a prison chaplain at Her Majesty's Penitentiary in St. John's during a hostage-taking that dragged on through Christmas. A simple phone call with his bishop, he says, was enough to give him the peace and strength he needed to go on.

"I spent all Christmas Day and Boxing Day trying to talk the characters down who had a guard handcuffed in one of the offices. And I talked about it with the bishop, of course, and he was very helpful to me because it was a very stressful time," he says.

That bishop was Bishop Martin Mate, and the kindness and dedication to ministry he showed during this incident was typical of him, Hatcher says. Mate, who led the diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador from 1980 to 1992, died Nov. 28 at the age of 95, and is being remembered by those who knew him as a peacemaker with a tireless dedication to community.

Born in Port Rexton, a small town on Newfoundland's east coast, Mate was ordained in 1953 and served in the diocese as a deacon, priest and curate of the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in



▲ Bishop Mate as a parish priest in 1960

PHOTO: GENERAL SYNOD ARCHIVES

St. John's before his election as bishop. Hatcher, Mate's friend of 50 years, now retired and in his 80s himself, says Mate was gifted with exceptional intelligence. He graduated high school at age 15 and went on to become a teacher before teaching himself Latin as a prerequisite to seminary study, says Hatcher.

Likewise, Bishop Sam Rose, the diocese's current bishop, remembers Mate for his calming presence—even, sometimes, despite his impressive physical stature. One of his earliest memories of Mate, he says, was when the bishop came to his church to preside over Rose's

confirmation ceremony when the latter was around 12 years old.

"You can imagine being a little boy with a group of other little children in the church waiting on a very nervous day in my life, in our lives, to see this incredibly tall man come out with a mitre on, which made him perhaps a foot and a half even taller," he says. "Yet he had this very gentle, loving, caring way about him that made you feel at ease and made you feel comfortable ... He put all of this fear and intimidation of seeing the bishop and being confirmed by the bishop aside as soon as you got to hear him speak."

Both Rose and Hatcher commented on Mate's concern for the province's future and that of the church. For Mate, that took the form of advocating for innovations like the *Book of Alternative Services*, introduced during Mate's tenure and now standard across the Anglican Church of Canada. And it showed in his work on social issues, they said. Mate presided over the ordination of the Rev. Trudy Gosse, the diocese's first woman member of the clergy in 1985.

Rose says he also remembers Mate for his dedication to community. When the cod-fishing moratorium devastated communities across the diocese, Mate travelled from parish to parish ministering to residents. He and the other bishops in Newfoundland and Labrador even led town-hall discussions for them and advocated on their behalf with the federal government, says Rose.

Mate is survived by his five children, Caroline Tilley, Elizabeth Downer, Phyllis Mate, M. John Mate and Carl Mate, as well as eight grandchildren. ■

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