

ANGLICAN JOURNAL

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VOL. 150 NO. 7 SEPTEMBER 2024

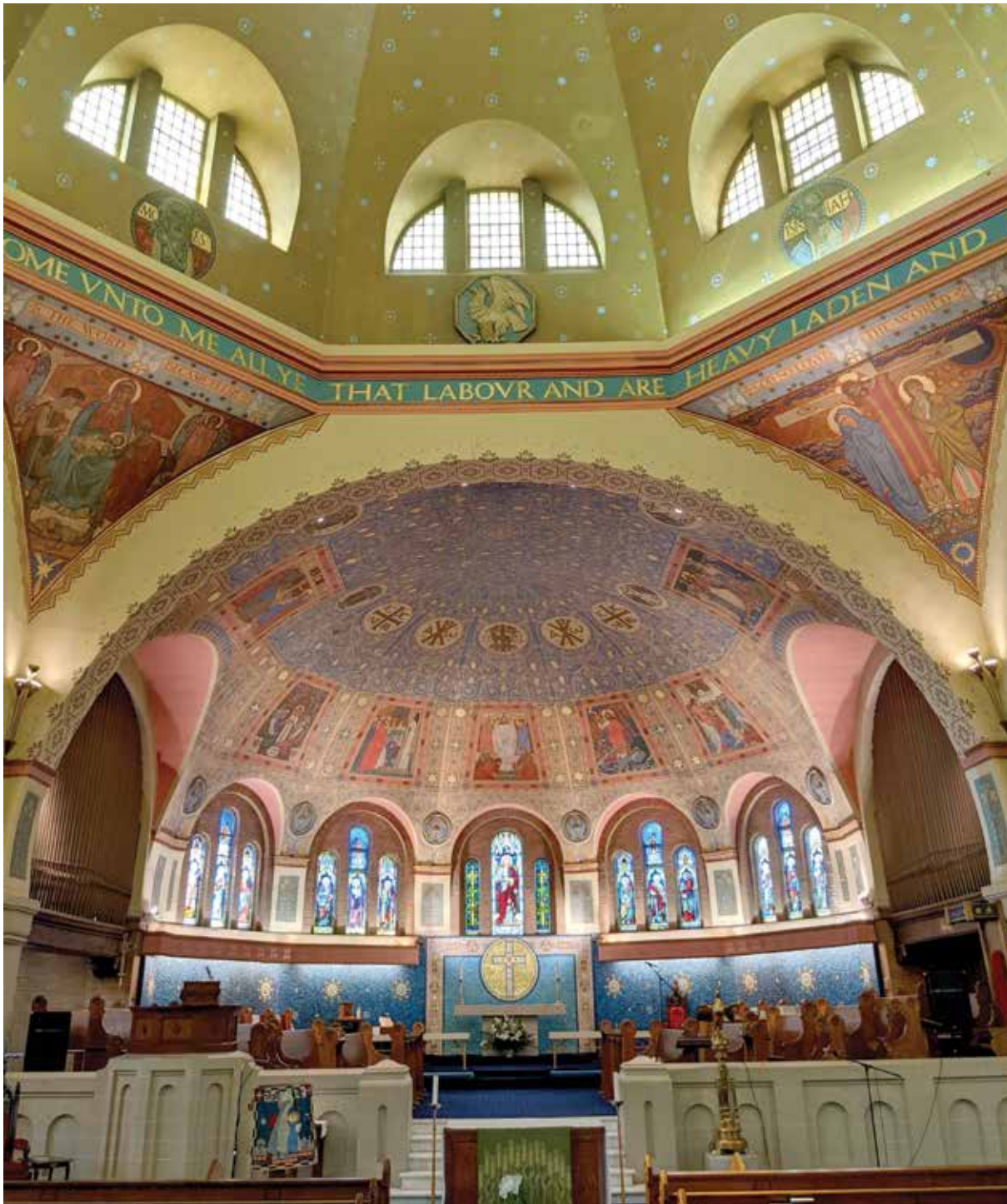


PHOTO: JESSICA MACE

Lost to the flames

A fire June 9 destroyed Toronto's historic St. Anne's Anglican Church, along with the only known religious art by Canadian artists from the Group of Seven. St. Anne's housed murals painted

by Group of Seven members that portrayed the life of Christ and decorated the chancel and dome. But the parish is planning to rebuild. See full story on p. 10.

Commission asks: Time to axe General Synod, *Journal*?



Sean Frankling
STAFF WRITER

Eliminating General Synod and the *Anglican Journal* are among a set of measures some members of the Anglican Church of Canada are being asked to ponder by a primatial commission tasked with finding solutions to the church's structural challenges.

The commission, officially titled Reimagining the Church: Proclaiming the Gospel in the 21st Century, Structures & Resources, was proposed to the Council of General Synod (CoGS) in March 2023 and has been meeting since the fall of that year. This summer, chair Archdeacon Monique Stone shared with the *Journal* a document, written by the commission, with seven "hypotheses" outlining these measures.

Stone says the hypotheses are deliberately stark statements, aimed at provoking strong opinions—not necessarily an outline for the church's final course of action. But they do represent vital issues the commission believes the church needs to begin talking about immediately in preparation for next year's meeting of General Synod—the decision-making body of the national church—and the anticipated process of restructuring to follow. The commission, says Stone, is sharing the document with General Synod members from each of the four ecclesiastical provinces and Sacred Circle; the Council of the North; and the House of Bishops. It plans to share the substance of their responses with General Synod next June—but doesn't expect everything to be resolved by then.

"This is the beginning of a journey that will extend past 2025," she says. "Our commission does not have preconceived

See 'INTENTIONALLY,' p. 6

▲ "This is the beginning of a journey that will extend past 2025," says commission chair Archdeacon Monique Stone.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Departing Nicholls reflects on trials and joys of primacy

Sean Frankling
STAFF WRITER

Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, will retire this month, leaving Archbishop Anne Germond, metropolitan of the ecclesiastical province of Ontario, as acting primate until the church elects

a permanent successor at General Synod 2025. Nicholls announced in May she would retire on Sept. 15 and said she looked forward to standing alongside her fellow Anglicans not as a leader, but as a friend, teacher and mentor.

Nicholls, the church's first female primate, was elected in 2019, just as the church reached a controversial settlement on the same-sex

marriage debate which had rocked it for many years.

She began her term by announcing a planned review of church mission and ministry aimed at adapting to challenging times, and signaled her intention to improve the church's inclusivity and work on systemic racism.

See 'IT'S BEEN,' p. 11

12

Welcoming newcomers to Christianity



13

Clinic operates out of Barrie church



15

Herbert O'Driscoll mourned



16

Anglicans protest for peace in Gaza



PEOPLE ▶

Bishop of the Arctic leaves post with predictions of renewal

Sean Frankling
STAFF WRITER

Bishop of the Arctic David Parsons has announced he will retire Dec. 31, 2024. In a career he describes as beginning with a small voice calling him to share the gospel despite his reluctance, Parsons today says his greatest highlight was meeting the people of the Arctic, whom he was called to share it with.

After a youth that included stints as a worker for Canada Post, for Canadian National Telecommunications and as a door-to-door salesman, Parsons began his career in the church in 1987 as a member of the Church Army (now known in Canada as Threshold Ministries), an evangelistic association with Anglican roots. Since then, Parsons has been a chaplain for seafarers, a diocesan refugee coordinator and an administrator for a hospital hostel.

He was ordained a priest in the Anglican Church of Canada in 2004 and served in the parish of Inuvik before becoming regional dean of the Mackenzie Delta. He became bishop of the Arctic in 2013.

People from the rest of Canada often don't realize how close the relationship is between clergy and lay leaders in the diocese of the Arctic, says Parsons. There, the small size of communities and the distances in between create the opposite



▲ Bishop David Parsons, right, accompanied by the Rev. Abraham Kublu, who serves at Saint Jude's Cathedral, Iqaluit

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

of isolation, he says: a tightness and interconnectedness to life and a trust and reliance on the guidance of clergy. He describes it as an honour to serve, guide and spiritually feed communities that are hungry for the Bible.

Known for not shying away from speaking out publicly when he believes the church has taken a wrong turn, Parsons says he believes the church in Canada's South could learn much from Northern Christians.

"The people of the North are very biblical. [In] the South, the Anglican church is not very biblical. They don't talk about it, they talk about other things,

alternatives," he says. "For some reason or other, when we're dealing bread to people now, it's never the bread of life, it's just bread ... And the church needs to get back on track."

That focus on spiritual life is something he'd like to try to share with Anglicans in the South in his retirement, says Parsons.

Though he's tired from years of travel and would also love to rest, he says what he would love to do in his heart is travel in a camper across Canada and invite people from the Arctic to share their stories of faith and interconnectedness with the churches they visit along the way, bringing a fresh perspective to Anglicans discouraged by years of membership decline. "People need encouragement, they need hope," he says. "I think people got the wrong message, thinking this is post-Christianity. This is pre-Christianity."

That's the message he wants to leave the church with as he retires: "Get ready for revival." He believes the church should see declining membership and familiarity with Christianity not as a cause for mourning, but as an opportunity for the gospel to reach people dissatisfied by the answers the secular world has provided them.

"We need to reach the poor, but what about the poor rich people, the poor middle-class people?" he says.

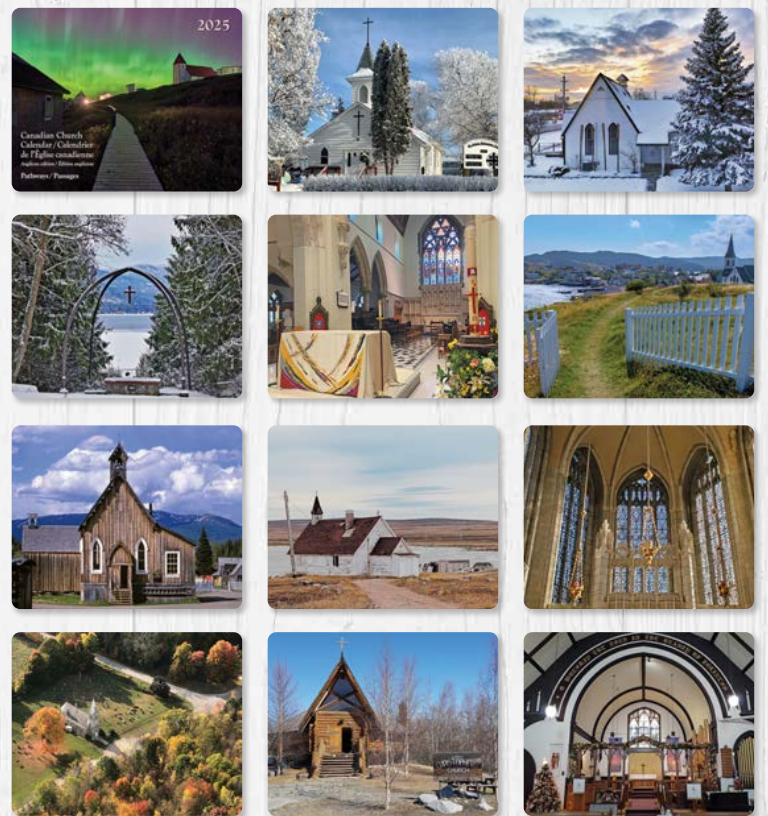
He urges the church to invest in discipleship resources and training for new Christians, not just to try and reach potential members, but because he is certain a flood of new members will be on their way, driven by the cultural gap in meaning left by secularism.

"Are we ready for the multitudes? We need to be ready," he says. ■

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NATIONAL NEWS ▶

“I think that’s probably the best way to see Paul’s words ... about being an ambassador of a great cloud of witnesses going before us—but also to see the beauty and glory of God’s creation.”

—Archbishop Chris Harper

‘God is saying, “See, this is something beautiful” ’

Province of Rupert’s Land changes name to Province of the Northern Lights

Sean Frankling
STAFF WRITER

After a vote with no objections at its 2024 synod, May 26-28, the ecclesiastical province formerly known as Rupert’s Land will officially become known as the Province of the Northern Lights beginning June 1. The name is designed to better reflect the perspectives and influence of the numerous nations and groups of Indigenous people who live within the province’s area, according to the provincial metropolitan, Archbishop Greg Kerr-Wilson. He says the new name will go into use immediately in common usage, while the province’s chancellors, specialists in church and secular law, are working on changing it on official church and government documents. He also confirmed new graphic design materials would be commissioned to go along with the new name, including, possibly, a new coat of arms.

The old name is a holdover from the name given to a vast swath of what is now Canada, named for the first governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company, Prince Rupert of the Rhine (1619-1682), who was also a grandson of King James I. Kerr-Wilson described the name Rupert’s Land as “about as colonial as it gets,” dating from a time that saw “a bunch of guys from England showing up and claiming a big chunk of land as their own without paying any attention whatsoever to the people living there.” The new name, he said, has deep significance to people across the province, which is by far the largest of the Anglican Church of Canada’s four ecclesiastical provinces, spanning the three civil Prairie provinces, northern Quebec and most of the Canadian Arctic. The northern lights are visible from every region in the province at some time of year, he said.

National Indigenous Archbishop Chris Harper, who was present for the vote, said the change was a meaningful step toward reconciliation in the Anglican Church of Canada. It was part of a journey, he said “to make it something that is more embracing



▲ The word for northern lights in the languages of several Indigenous peoples translates to English as “dancing spirits,” according to National Indigenous Archbishop Chris Harper.

PHOTO: SMIT

and welcoming, inclusive to all peoples, all nations.”

During the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdowns slowed down church operations and gave church leaders more time to think deeply about the institution and its structures, Kerr-Wilson said. He had a conversation with then-national Indigenous archbishop Mark MacDonald in which the two agreed to investigate a name change and kicked off a series of consultations by Zoom with the province’s Indigenous bishops over the following two years.

The Province of the Northern Lights was one of two finalists that emerged from that process, which were brought forward by the Indigenous bishops for consideration at the provincial synod. The other was the Province of Auroramit, or “People of the place of the Northern Lights,” from the Latin phrase “aurora borealis” and an Inuktitut suffix meaning “people of.” The names were first discussed at the province’s 2022 synod, but the final decision was not made until the 2024 meeting this May.

In that discussion, members suggested changes and other options, such as the Province of Living Waters or the Province of the People of the Northern Lights. But in the end, Kerr-Wilson said, a group of Indigenous representatives said the northern lights were spiritually significant

to many Indigenous peoples across North America, representing in some cases the presence of their ancestors. For that reason, he said, they endorsed the name Province of the Northern Lights, which won the final vote with no hands raised against it.

Harper added that in the languages of the Plains Cree, Swampy Cree and Woods Cree as well as those of several other Indigenous peoples, the word for northern lights translates to English as “dancing spirits,” which he said illustrates both an image of the peoples’ ancestors being present with them and the parallels between that image and Paul’s description of the saints as a “great cloud of witnesses.”

“I think that’s probably the best way,” he said, “to see Paul’s words in that [image] about being an ambassador of a great cloud of witnesses going before us—but also to see the beauty and glory of God’s creation, to see that energy coming in from the sun and how it comes through the magnetic pole and how it shifts into something we can see with our eyes ... God is saying, ‘See, this is something beautiful.’”

Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, attended the province’s synod. She held up the name change in her primatial address at a May 31 session of Council of General Synod, to cheers from the floor.

“It was wonderful to be there for that conversation,” she said, “as they thought about a name that would represent the geography and people and experience of that part of our country. That name seemed to capture hearts and minds not only because of the physical nature of the northern lights but because of the metaphorical nature of being the light of Christ.”

The decision leaves one Anglican jurisdiction still named after the German-English prince: the diocese of Rupert’s Land, which covers part of southern Manitoba and the southwestern corner of Ontario. Bishop Geoff Woodcroft told the *Anglican Journal* the diocese is not currently discussing a name change, though the conversation might come up at some point. ■

Richard Reed elected 13th bishop of Saskatchewan

Matthew Puddister
STAFF WRITER

▶ **PEOPLE**

The Rev. Richard “Rick” Reed was elected the 13th bishop of the Anglican diocese of Saskatchewan after having been chosen on the fifth ballot in an election May 11.

Currently priest-in-charge at three congregations within the diocese—St. David’s in Prince Albert, Emmanuel in St. Louis and St. Stephen’s in MacDowall—Reed takes over the office of bishop after his predecessor Michael Hawkins resigned in April 2023 due to health problems from long COVID-19. Diocesan Indigenous Bishop of Missinippi Adam Halkett has served since Hawkins’ retirement as interim bishop of Saskatchewan.

The election, which took place at St. Alban’s Cathedral in Prince Albert, saw five nominees in total. These included Reed, the Rev. Blessing Shambare from the diocese of Athabasca, Canon



PHOTO: BRODY ALBERS

The Rev. Richard Reed (right), bishop-elect of Saskatchewan, with Bishop of Missinippi Adam Halkett

Claude Schroeder from the diocese of Qu’Appelle, Canon Iain Luke from the diocese of Saskatoon and the Rev. Beryl Whitecap from the diocese of Saskatchewan.

Born and raised in Nashville, Tenn. in 1967, Reed was baptized in The Episcopal

Church, but had become less sure of his belief in God by his early 20s. “It was the influence of two of my best friends who had both had their own encounter with Christ that led me back to the Lord,” he recalls, adding, “That’s why relationships are so important in the church, because it’s through friendship and inviting people that you know and have built a meaningful relationship with that you’ll see most of your church growth.”

Reed says he began attending church on a regular basis and became a voracious Bible reader. He served as a short-term missionary in the Christian organization Youth With a Mission, spending three years in Calcutta, India.

In 1998 Reed moved to Canada to attend Regent College in Vancouver, where he earned his master’s degree in Christian studies. Ordained as a deacon in 2005 and a priest in 2006, he served as incumbent of the Killarney Parish Group in the diocese of Brandon for five years.

From 2010 to 2019 he served as rector of Christ Church and St. Peter’s in the diocese of Algoma before returning to the diocese of Saskatchewan.

Reed says one of his priorities as bishop of Saskatchewan will be strengthening the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Anglicans. He notes that the largest population of Anglicans in the diocese of Saskatchewan are Cree.

“We have to recover that sense that we’re one church,” Reed says. “Even though there’s this self-determining church and the Sacred Circle ... we’re still brothers and sisters in Christ.”

He adds, “I think this is one of the things that’s going to be key to the future of the diocese—that our Indigenous church community really has something to offer the churches here in the South and we do them. So my real emphasis is going to be to build those relationships.”

Reed is to be consecrated Sept. 6. ■

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.



IMAGE: FLASH VECTOR

Anglicans are doing much good—but it's hard to get the word out

I certainly understand where the Rev. Trevor Jones is coming from (“Church talks too much to itself,” March, p. 4). There is much impressive ministry being done across Canada—by parishes, the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund, the Anglican Foundation of Canada and by dioceses— but it is very difficult to get anything about a church on television or in the daily newspapers.

The only thing I can suggest is the next time you see something positive that the common person can relate to, share it with a friend. Hopefully word of mouth will help.

Murray Fox
St. Titus Anglican Church
Vancouver



IMAGE: BAPPI DEB

Church's focus should be on teaching faith in resurrection, eternal life

The wave of the woke has pushed the church three steps forward and the church needs to take two steps back.

The totalitarianism of the Romans and the concept of slavery were not the priority for Jesus. Perhaps the new primate to be elected in 2025 will return to the priorities of Jesus, St. Paul and St. Peter. Faith in the resurrection and the life everlasting is the most difficult for me and maybe many others in the church. Perhaps these could be the priority.

Bruce Timms,
St. Catharines, Ont.

It's good to be disruptive—but in a way that makes sense

Regarding the deacon who wants to make an example of Royal Bank and its cosiness with the oil industry (“Interfaith climate activists arrested at RBC sit-in protest,” June, p. 6): I write because I invest in the Canadian oil industry—and I am proud of that, because Canada has only three sectors for worthwhile investment: commodities, financial services, and I forget the third!

Methinks the learned deacon and his entourage upsetting the regular business in a bank win no favour with the bank’s customers either. To make a plucky statement on fossil fuels killing the planet, I suggest going over to Tim Hortons and interfering with the three-times-a-day drive-thru, where in this country thousands of litres of gasoline are burned while customers wait for a brew. I ask, are we serious on wanting to cut down on oil consumption?

The church wants to get involved in disrupting things—that’s good. But hey—where are the smarts in setting a reasonable objective and going about the process in a way that makes sense to all?

Peter Miller
Moshier Corner, N.S.

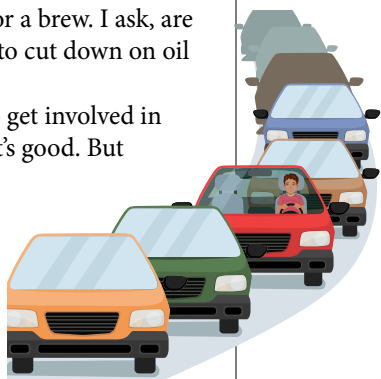


IMAGE: TEN STUDIO

West Indies voice missed at MRI at 60 conference

I was privileged to attend the MRI at 60 conference (“Decolonizing hopes emerged at 1963 Anglican Congress—but Global North still dominates Communion, MRI at 60 conference hears,” June, p. 12) although I was disappointed that many others did not take the opportunity to attend and learn more about the watershed Toronto Anglican Congress of 1963.

Neither of these meetings included a speaker from the Church of the Province of the West Indies (CPWI), and speakers at MRI@60 spoke as if the church in the Caribbean region was a part of mainland North, Central, or South America.

The Church in the Province of the West Indies is among the oldest provinces in the Anglican Communion. Long before the church arrived in Australia, New Zealand, India, or Pakistan, it arrived in the West Indies with the original English settlers in the early part of the 17th century. The clergy, for the most part, were state chaplains to the English



PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

The Church of the Province of the West Indies is among the oldest in the Anglican Communion, writes Fields

officials and planters, but when most of the islands gained their independence from Britain, the region began to raise up its own episcopal and clerical leadership.

Part of the development in the region was the sending of missionaries to England, Canada, and the United States of America, what one may call South-North MRI. The West Indies church has given the Church of England its first Black bishop in Wilfred Wood; the Anglican Church of Canada its first Black bishop in Peter Fenty; and many other clergy and lay people who have

given much to these mission fields.

Long before this, there was the Pongas Mission from the Caribbean to West Africa in the late 19th century (1850-1963). The mission began when Hamble James Leacock, son of a wealthy slaveowner from Barbados, and John Henry A. Duport, a descendant of slaves from St. Kitts, sailed from Barbados to Southampton, England on July 15, 1855. They were joined by J. W. Weeks, the newly appointed second Bishop of Sierra Leone, who was on his own journey to Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Currently, in the region, there is South-South MRI work happening with African priests who are now serving in the CPWI.

The Church in the Province of the West Indies has, and will always have its place in the Anglican Communion.

Canon Stephen Fields
Sub-Dean and Vicar of St. James Cathedral, Toronto



IMAGE: WIN WIN ARTLAB

Canadian Anglicans should not be silent about oppression of LGBTQ people elsewhere in the Anglican Communion

I found the article “Being Anglican in an Interconnected World” (May, p. 4) troubling, not so much because of what it said but because of what it didn’t say about the need for Canadian Anglicans to speak out against parts of the Anglican Communion where LGBTQ rights aren’t respected.

I am the proud mom of a trans daughter, and we came to the Anglican church to heal; we’d found a lack of support for her in evangelical churches. I too treasure community and relationships, and with some whose friendships we value, we have had to “agree to disagree” as long as they are respectful of our stance. Differing opinions make us stronger unless they bring harm to individuals.

In many largely Anglican African nations, however, individuals are jailed and even killed for being 2SLGBTQ. How can followers of Jesus, with his message of love, remain silent while governments carry out murder? “Love your neighbour as yourself!” is a commandment we often hear. It does not allow us to choose which neighbour to love! So as much as it is good to be respectful of other opinions, the real question for me is, “How can we call ourselves Christian and followers of Jesus if we sit back and do nothing about this? We MUST speak out! If we remain silent

under the guise of protecting community, we too are complicit!

The following quote beautifully encapsulates what I am trying to say:

“We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist.”—Robert Jones Jr.

Grace Williams
St. Paul’s Cathedral
Kamloops, B.C.



IMAGE: EAMESBOT AND FAHMI98

New education fund should not be for women only

Although the establishment of the Archbishop Linda Nicholls Theological Education Fund (“Nicholls to retire Sept. 15; Germond to step in as acting primate,” June, p. 1) is a worthwhile project, I am very displeased that it focuses exclusively on women. At this time when it is increasingly difficult to attract people to the clergy would it not be a better idea to be inclusive? It appears to me that the purposeful exclusion of men is divisive and discriminatory. Can you imagine the reaction if an important new fund were announced for men only?

Brenton Haliburton
St. Alban’s Anglican Church
Dartmouth, N.S.

SINGING WITH JOY ▶



Leaving with a ‘heart overflowing with gratitude’

By Linda Nicholls

ONE OF THE ways we deepen joy in our lives is by the practice of gratitude. The worries and pains of daily life can easily pull us into a continuous state of discouragement or depression. When we stop and consciously look for moments of grace and goodness, our perspective is shifted like the turning of a prism when suddenly a rainbow of colour and joy can be seen. Some may call this “looking for the silver lining.”

Even in the darkest of circumstances there is joy. In the movie *Life Is Beautiful* the father of a family in a Nazi concentration camp finds ways to give his young son glimpses of humour and love, and builds memories to cherish. In good times, gratitude builds an even larger reservoir of joy and hope when we acknowledge even the smallest gifts.

I am in the last days of my ministry as primate and of active ordained ministry after nearly 39 years since my ordination as a deacon. These days are filled with opportunities to reflect with gratitude on the people and places I’ve come to know and the ministries in which I have been privileged to share. I’m thankful for the many wonderful parishioners and colleagues who taught me about living God’s love, and for the parishes and dioceses that seek to live into the gospel. I also give thanks for the painful times



The church has faced many challenges during the last five years, the primate writes—but has remained resilient.

PHOTO: MURATART

of conflict and struggle that called for forgiveness, change and renewal; they have strengthened my faith.

Little did I know, when I was called to ordained ministry, that it would weave together my love of music and teaching with opportunities to share in the lives of people and communities across Canada and around the world. It brought me into ministry with teams of skilled laity, deacons, priests and bishops, reminding me that we need one another for the work of the gospel.

As I look over my last five years as primate, it strikes me that it would be easy to be discouraged by the significant challenges the church has faced—from the pandemic to financial concerns, from conflicts in the church and the world to misconduct by individuals. These challenges have been, and continue to be,

painful for us. However, I am far more aware of, and deeply grateful for, the resilience of our church!

Thank you to each of the bishops of our church who offer dedicated leadership to each diocese, Sacred Circle and the Anglican Military Ordinariate.

Thank you to the clergy and lay people across Canada who live our baptismal vows from coast to coast to coast—loving God and loving their neighbour as each context needs!

Thank you to the strong, skilled team at Church House and all the laity who serve our church on committees and councils.

Thank you to the national Indigenous archbishop, Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples and Sacred Circle, who walk with us in self-determination and mutual interdependence and continually teach me new ways to live in faith.

My heart is filled to overflowing with gratitude for our beloved church, faithful and resilient, as I now return to the pews. There I will pray for all who will exercise leadership in the coming years and for the work and ministry of God’s people for the sake of the gospel in the Anglican Church of Canada.

Thanks be to God! ■

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

FEATHER AND SAGE ▶



A prayer and offering for the Season of Creation

By Chris Harper

FEATHER (Prayer): Creator of all, the seasons stand to glorify your name through every passing moment and all creation lifts up thanksgiving for your handiwork. We thank you for this new day and the opportunities that open before us like petals of the flower. In this Season of Creation, we, the children of your hand, acknowledge that we have been distracted by our own work and reflection. We acknowledge that we have failed or stained your beauty in the work and creatures of this world. Please help us by guiding us back to the right path of your ways and purpose. Walk with us that we may in humility treat each other better, that we may seek to see the blessings, and your truth, in the moments and beauty before us all. Put peace in our hearts and bless us that we may be a blessing to others that join us in our journey of life and faith. Amen.



PHOTO: EFOART

SAGE (Offering): The passing seasons and moments remind us that time is precious (Ecclesiastes 3:1), and that the past cannot be changed; they also remind us, moving through the present, that the steps that we take should be guarded and guided. We, the people of the church, have all inherited a legacy of the past, the same that we as Canadians have inherited: a past that is con-

sistently affecting our present and will touch our future. We either in futility and ignorance can try to ignore the past or we can start to effect change, that the generations to come may be able to look back and see that we humbled ourselves in the moment and sought to learn and improve.

Our shared journey through time and season have blessed us all with precious moments to do the best that we can with and before all. Humbly recognizing that none of us are perfect and that we all have transgressed, may we treat each moment—and the people around us—as precious. May we go forward with an open hand, heart and mind, remembering that we are ambassadors of Christ in all we say and do (2 Cor. 5: 18-20). May we as children of the Almighty One and children of God’s Creation be a blessing to our world and to others before us. ■

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

ANGLICAN JOURNAL

First published as the *Dominion Churchman* in 1875, *The Anglican Journal* is the national newspaper of the Anglican Church of Canada.

EDITOR: Tali Folkins
ART DIRECTOR: Saskia Rowley
STAFF WRITERS: Matthew Puddister, Sean Frankling

EDITORIAL POLICY: Since 2019, the *Anglican Journal* has been tasked by General Synod with producing content of “the highest standards of journalistic responsibility, accuracy, fairness, accountability and transparency” that is “fact-based, fact-checked and in-depth, tackling important issues, asking and answering difficult questions.” General Synod, as publisher, respects and defends its journalistic integrity. While General Synod retains the right to intervene in stories which have the potential to bring the church into disrepute, it expects to exercise that right rarely, if ever; in cases of unresolvable conflict or disagreement, General Synod has the right to order changes, but the changes so ordered must be publicly noted in the *Journal*. The policies and practices that govern the *Journal* can be found in full online, at bit.ly/41fG5Q.

MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT: Alicia Brown
CIRCULATION: Fe Bautista
ADVERTISING MANAGER: Larry Gee

PUBLISHER: General Synod, Anglican Church of Canada
The *Anglican Journal* is published monthly (with the exception of July and August) and is mailed separately or with one of 16 diocesan or regional sections. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada for our publishing activities.

EDITORIAL BOARD: The editorial board exists to advise the editor on journalistic matters; it does not exercise direct authority over the operations of the *Anglican Journal*. It can be reached at ajedboard@googlegroups.com.

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ISSN-0847-978X CIRCULATION: 35,500

Funded by the Government of Canada



“We are all grappling with huge structures that made sense at the height of Christendom, but are now vulnerable.”

—Archdeacon.
Monique Stone



▲ Dean Peter Elliott

‘Intentionally provocative’ documents broach deep restructuring of church

Continued from p. 1

answers to how those conversations will unfold or what the answer to those conversations will ultimately be.”

The seven hypotheses are:

1. It is time to dismantle the colonial foundations of the Council of the North to fully “embrace mutual interdependence with the Indigenous church.”
2. It is time to dismantle the racism and colonialism that is built into our governance structures in order to diversify participation.
3. It is time to eliminate one level of structure—either General Synod or the ecclesiastical provinces.
4. It is time to examine returning to a model where the primate is also a diocesan bishop.
5. It is time to (further) reduce travel and meeting costs, both financial and environmental.
6. It is time to re-vision Church House.
7. It is time to end independent editorial journalism funded by General Synod.

Several other churches, including the United Church of Canada, says Stone, have responded to declines in membership by removing levels of their governance. The Anglican Church of Canada may need to follow their example, she says.

“Maybe it’s not ‘eliminate,’ but maybe it’s ‘vastly restructure who does what,’” she adds, reiterating that she expects many in the church would rather take a middle path than forgo any national office outright. “I think we need to explore and learn from other churches in the communion and other ecumenical partners,” she says. “We are all grappling with huge structures that made sense at the height of Christendom, but are now vulnerable.”

When she first proposed the commission to CoGS, the national church’s smaller executive body, which meets twice a year, Nicholls said she hoped it would find “creative, lifegiving solutions—even radical solutions” to help the church adapt to post-pandemic realities. Challenges included parishes struggling to afford their clergy, dioceses struggling to meet their local, regional and national financial responsibilities and the national church’s responsibility to support ministry in regions that are not financially self-sustaining. The church would also need to consider its approaches to cultural change and its redefined relationship with the Indigenous church, she said.

Devolving General Synod’s powers

The work of the commission was discussed by CoGS at its latest session,

▲ **The thing that can make a difference in the struggles of Canadians, Hartin says, is contact with Jesus Christ—something the church can best help with at the parish level through meaningful teaching, listening and pastoral care.**

PHOTO: DANIEL
TADEVOSYAN



▲ The Rev. Cole Hartin

May 31-June 2. One of the council’s first agenda items was a meeting (held behind closed doors, on the grounds that allowing General Synod staff to attend might make it unsettling for them and difficult for CoGS to speak freely) to discuss the church’s problems in light of a document written by another member of the commission, retired dean Peter Elliott. In it, Elliott summarizes the history of General Synod to examine its original intended purposes. The document also considers how those might be served in a church which no longer enjoys the much larger number of members which made the size of its structure practical.

One possible solution, he suggests, is “devolving” some of the functions currently served by the office of General Synod in Toronto, also known as Church House, down to the level of church dioceses or provinces. One way devolving the powers of General Synod might work, Elliott said in an interview with the *Anglican Journal*, is for dioceses to specialize and collaborate on work they would then share with one another. For example, one diocese might take on the responsibilities of workshopping new liturgies, while another might specialize in creating resources for social justice work.

A key takeaway from the history of General Synod, according to Elliott, is that it was never intended to be a top-down structure which told the regions of the church what to do. Rather, he said, its history shows it was designed as a way for dioceses to combine their resources to strengthen their work on priorities they share. Historically, that has facilitated work like a united stand against apartheid and bringing the nation together to work on reconciliation with Indigenous people, he says.

This fits into General Synod’s three core functions, according to the hypotheses document: connecting networks of Anglicans across Canada to each other, Sacred Circle and the global church; convening meetings, collaboration and expertise to steer and refer work of concern to Anglicans nationwide toward the bodies best suited to handle that work; and communicating information about the church, its history and liturgical materials from one part of it to another and to secular society.

What the church’s national body has not historically succeeded at, according to Elliott, is consistently implementing the strategic plans it has drawn up, such as the Five Transformational Commitments and, before that, Vision 2019. This includes attempts by the national church to reverse or mitigate the decline in attendance numbers that has continued since the 1960s.

“Every strategic plan has included steps intended to arrest this decline. None has had any demonstrable impact,” his

document states.

Like the committee’s seven hypotheses, Elliott says, these statements from his *Evolution of General Synod* are “intentionally provocative.” They highlight the limitations of national church structure and are intended, he says, to state the need for change as bluntly as possible in order to provide a starting point for conversations about what the national church has, what it needs and how those needs will change as societal change accelerates.

“How can there be some forecasts that will help the church navigate through these incredibly changing times?” he says. “I think the only way to do that is to have some broad-based conversations so people can hear each other. For me, I would rather the changes are made by choice than by the attrition of financial resources.”

Solving the church’s financial problems is not part of the commission’s formal mandate, and, in another email to the *Journal*, Stone wrote that the commission won’t be tackling the church’s financial challenges at this stage. Nevertheless, she added, financial challenges are among the impetuses behind the formation of the commission, and any action taken in response to the hypotheses will be in response to current financial realities.

Financial woes at national office

In a May 31 presentation on the national office’s 2023 financial statements, General Synod’s chief financial officer, Amal Attia, told CoGS that dioceses continued to have increasing trouble making their annual contributions to the national office as donations at the parish level continued to fall. General Synod, she said, ended 2023 with revenue of \$9.4 million and expenses of \$10.6 million, before transfers. It had a surplus for the year of \$391,000, she said—but only thanks to an injection of \$1.617 million from reserves, investment and depreciation.

Diocesan contributions are by far General Synod’s largest source of revenue, but Attia said these have been trending downward for more than two decades, and she expected them to shrink by about \$200,000 a year across the whole country in the next couple of years.

Nicholls told CoGS it would no longer be practical to make incremental cuts to programming. Rather, she said, it is time to make proactive decisions about what work the church wants to hold on to going forward. The church will need to investigate either dropping entire sections of programming at the General Synod level, significantly restructuring church governance or possibly seeking new sources of revenue, she said. She asked CoGS to discuss what information it would need in order to bring

See Full, p. 7

Watch for more coverage of the commission’s work—on hypotheses, for example, not covered in depth here—in upcoming issues.

OFFICE OF
GENERAL
SYNOD ▶

Leases signed for joint national office space with United, Presbyterian churches

Construction ‘well underway’ on new facility, general secretary says

Matthew Puddister
STAFF WRITER

It’s official: the national office of the Anglican Church of Canada and those of the United and Presbyterian churches will be moving in together after signing leases to share space at a redeveloped church site in downtown Toronto.

General Secretary of General Synod Archdeacon Alan Perry said in a May 7 staff email, followed by a public news release the following day, that all three churches had signed leases to share national office space at the renovated site of Bloor Street United Church, located at 300 Bloor Street West in the Annex-University of Toronto neighbourhood. Construction on the new facility is “well underway,” he added, with a target to move in by spring 2026.

Perry confirmed in the summer of 2023 that the three churches were preparing to enter into a lease agreement,



▲ From top: logos of the Anglican Church of Canada, Presbyterian Church in Canada and United Church of Canada.

PHOTOS: CONTRIBUTED

but the lease was not yet signed.

“The agreement reflects the churches’ ongoing commitment to nurturing ecumenical relationships and cooperation, to reducing costs and to lessening their carbon footprint,” Perry said. An attached information sheet said the move would save money for the Anglican Church of Canada by reducing underused space, such as that taken up by a bookstore it used to run and various meeting rooms. Asked by the *Journal* how much money the move would save, Perry said the national office does not yet have a specific number to share. It does not currently have concrete numbers for operations costs at the new building or a firm plan for the property it owns at 80 Hayden Street, current location of the Anglican Church of Canada’s national office, he said, though it would share information as it becomes available.

The information sheet said combining the three offices under one roof would reduce space requirements and energy use. The new building, it said, will feature a high-performance thermal envelope—the exterior structure that separates inside air from outside—and LED lighting to

help save energy. It will also incorporate recycled materials such as exterior stonework removed during demolition of the old site.

The new facility will include a renovated Bloor Street United Church as well as office, community, commercial and worship spaces. Anglican, United and Presbyterian church archives will be moved to the new building and share space, while meeting and video production spaces will also be shared.

Perry recently met at the construction site with the Rev. Michael Blair, general secretary of the United Church of Canada, and the Rev. Victor Kim, principal clerk at the Presbyterian Church in Canada, to see progress on the facility. They offered prayers of blessing for the safety and well-being of the construction workers.

Kim called reaching a formal agreement between the Anglican, United and Presbyterian churches to share the facility “a happy day for all of us.”

“I’m very excited about the possibilities of what this partnership will produce in the years to come,” Kim said. ■

“The agreement reflects the churches’ ongoing commitment to nurturing ecumenical relationships and cooperation, to reducing costs and to lessening their carbon footprint.”

—Archdeacon Alan Perry

Full independence from church one possibility for *Journal*, chair says

Continued from p. 6

recommendations to General Synod when it next meets, in June 2025—the soonest the church as a whole will be able to vote on any such decisions. CoGS responded by voting to form a working group to create a multi-year financial plan for the national office, taking into account its options for stemming financial decline, increasing its revenue and proceeding if neither of those proves possible.

To fund the national office while the working group prepares long-term scenarios, CoGS approved a resolution to supplement the 2025 budget with the office’s financial reserves to buy time while the decisions are made.

The commission also suggests the church consider eliminating the *Anglican Journal*, or perhaps cutting it loose from General Synod’s purse strings, as suggested by the seventh hypothesis.

“That is not to say that we would stop communications and we would stop journalism,” says Stone. But the commission does question whether true independence is possible for a publication both covering and funded by General Synod.

In one possible scenario, she says, “maybe the *Anglican Journal* is its own independent publication and continues. If there’s a market for that news story and those news stories, then does that have to be handled in the General Synod office? Are there other publications and media organisations that would have interest in providing the platform?”

In reply to a followup email about the possibility of another scenario—that General Synod might keep the *Journal* but make it a vehicle for communications, rather than journalism, Stone responded, “The commission feels that

communications is one of the key roles of General Synod for the church across Canada. With that in mind I suspect that any outcomes of future implementation work will seek to continue to support and grow the General Synod’s role in that area.

“What that looks like is unknown. However, I suspect some form of national communications vehicle(s) will be needed and what the hypothesis is asking [Canadian Anglicans] for is an exploration into what those vehicles would look like.”

Another commission member, the Rev. Cole Hartin, currently serves as associate rector at Christ Church Episcopal in Tyler, Texas and was previously the rector of St. Luke’s Anglican Church in Saint John, N.B. Hartin says he believes each of the hypotheses is worth considering as a course of action for the church—and in the core idea that the church must grapple with reforming a national structure built for a much larger organization. He’s just not sure that any effort or campaign from the national level will address the underlying problem of falling attendance. He says he doesn’t know exactly what structure would be best to manage that.

“Frankly, I don’t think it matters that much,” he says. “For most Christians it’s not a material question for their day-to-day life of faith.” The thing that can make a difference in the struggles of Canadians with finances, social change, grief and ambient low-grade depression, he says, is contact with Jesus Christ. That’s something the church can best help with at the parish level through meaningful teaching, listening and pastoral care, he says.

“To me that puts all of the national structures into perspective—that they’re dispensable in an ultimate sense—but we need some kind of structure to get things done.” ■

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PHOTO: TIM SMART

FAITH IN ACTION

A REFLECTION BY DION LEWIS,
DIOCESE OF MONTREAL

I VOLUNTEER BECAUSE my faith calls me to it. The gathered community can only gain when all its parts are involved in its support. I truly enjoy sharing my gifts as it encourages and strengthens those with whom I volunteer. I hope that the work I do gives hope to all those it affects. I have learned so much and I am so grateful for the opportunities it has given me. The few times I get to see the results of the work, I am encouraged to give back even more. Seeing others act out their faith helps me continue to act out my faith. Love abounds. ■



PHOTO: ANDREA MANN

The Primate meets with clergy from the dioceses of Amazonia and Brasilia of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil at the cathedral in Belém.

PRIMATE'S OFFICE: REPRESENTING THE CHURCH

WITH TRAVEL POSSIBLE again in 2023, Primate Linda Nicholls was able to journey across Canada and around the world as a representative of the Anglican Church of Canada. In February, she travelled to PWRDF projects in Kenya, to a conference on human trafficking in Tanzania and to the Anglican Consultative Council meeting in Ghana. In May, she joined the young adult pilgrimage to the Holy Land, delighting in the gifts and leadership of these amazing Anglicans. In November, she visited the diocese of Amazonia, as our partnership with the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil deepens. She also travelled to more remote areas in the dioceses of Yukon and Caledonia during Holy Week and made a fall visit to Labrador, including Rigolet, the southernmost Inuit community in the world.

The Primate gives voice to General Synod

commitments and advocates for those who need our assistance. In April, she joined other mainline church leaders in Ottawa to speak to MPs and others about our grave concerns for Palestinians, and especially Palestinian Christians, in the Holy Land. Little did we anticipate what would unfold later in the year. We continued to speak up against violence—the horrific violence of Hamas on October 7 and the unrelenting violence in Gaza in response. Our advocacy in partnership with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem continues.

The Primate also met with and supported the other Metropolitans and the House of Bishops and worked with the General Synod staff and Council of General Synod to carry on the daily work of the national church. It was a rich and fulfilling year. ■

GENERAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE: PLANNING ASSEMBLY

IN 2023, the General Secretary's office planned and managed the meeting of General Synod at the Assembly, a joint gathering in Calgary with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC). In addition to celebrating our full communion relationship with the ELCIC, we welcomed guests representing the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Episcopal Church. We added another full communion partner by entering into a



new agreement with the Moravian Church. General Synod also approved the five transformational commitments

that had emerged from the work of the Strategic Planning Working Group.

With the election of new officers and committee members, we are now engaged in the tasks determined by General Synod. We are also planning for the next General Synod meeting in London, Ontario, in 2025.

We are very grateful for the many generous donors who provide faithful support for the work of General Synod. ■

ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH RELATIONS: DRAWING THE CIRCLE WIDER



THE ANGLICAN CHURCH of Canada has been in full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada for nearly 23 years—a source of immeasurable blessings. A wonderful celebration at Assembly 2023 saw us expand the circle further by establishing a full communion relationship with the Moravian Church in North America (Northern Province).

Full communion offers opportunities to learn and grow in our understanding of the great diversity of the Body of Christ, by drawing upon the uniqueness and gifts among other followers of the Jesus Way. In a changing church, full communion at the national, regional, and local levels also offers exciting potential for spiritual and institutional revitalization, and a path to greater sustainability in ministry. God willing, the full communion circle will continue to be drawn wider in the coming years, "that all may be one" (John 17). ■



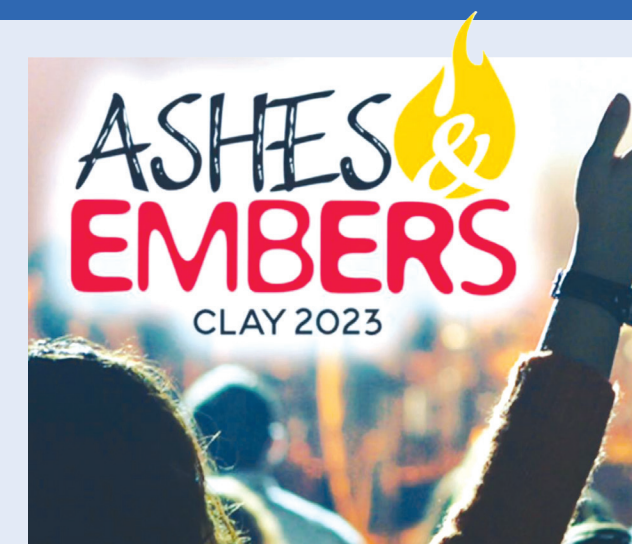
PHOTO: ANDREA MANN

Children participate in an outreach program at Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City, managed by the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.

GLOBAL RELATIONS: INSPIRING PARTNERSHIPS

GLOBAL RELATIONS, along with other General Synod ministries and in partnership with the Canadian Companions of Jerusalem and the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, hosted a journey of pilgrimage and discovery in the Holy Land for 20 young adult Canadian Anglicans during the 2023 Easter season. This remarkable experience continues to resonate through the pilgrims' ongoing relationships with Palestinian Anglican young adults and in the formation of their faith for discipleship.

Another highlight in 2023 was the renewal of partnership with the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil, in support of the Primatial ministry of Archbishop Marinez Bassotto and companionship between the dioceses of Amazonia and Huron. Travels within the northeast Amazon basin and meetings with Indigenous women's groups, local parishes, clergy, lay leaders and young adults will inform and inspire deepening partnership for years to come in areas of mutual importance. ■



YOUTH MINISTRIES: SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

ENERGY and excitement were palpable at the 2023 Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth (CLAY) gathering in Waterloo, Ontario. Built around the theme *Ashes and Embers*, it was the first in-person CLAY event since 2018 due to the COVID-19 pandemic—a chance to be together once again and create community.

The pandemic was a difficult time for most people and especially for youth and youth leaders. Young people struggled with isolation through lockdowns while youth

leaders worked hard to support them.

CLAY brought together more than 300 youth, leaders, volunteers, and clergy. Keynote speakers encouraged each person to celebrate his or her uniqueness as a creation of God. Sometimes it is hard to be faithful to who we are in a world that tells us to be someone different. The young people gathered at CLAY found a place where they are loved and accepted within a community of faith. Everyone left the gathering excited to be able to meet again in 2025. ■



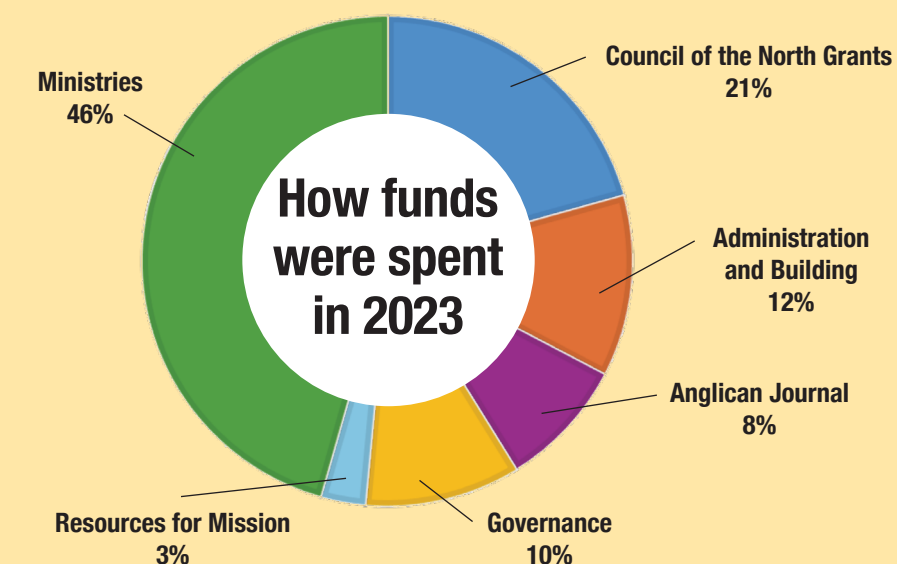
PUBLIC WITNESS FOR SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE: ADVOCATING FOR JUSTICE

THE PUBLIC WITNESS for Social and Ecological Justice (PWSEJ) ministry of General Synod gives national expression to the work of the whole Church to build the world of justice God calls us to. PWSEJ has developed resources and tools for parish and diocesan use, led ongoing advocacy with the federal government, and developed collaborations with ecumenical, interfaith, and civil society partners around shared areas of concern and action. The ministry

continues to support local capacity to advocate for social and environmental justice through learning opportunities, regional gatherings, and volunteer involvement with national networks and partners. PWSEJ works closely with other General Synod ministries using a holistic approach that integrates shared priorities across ministry areas. ■

Financial snapshot

For more information on detailed audited financial statements, please visit the Anglican Church of Canada website at anglican.ca/about/departments/fm/financial-information



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"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

—Romans 8:28



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**ENDANGERED
LEGACY:
CHURCHES
AT RISK ▶**

“ We will remain here. We will serve this community for generations to come. This is a resurrection moment and I commit myself to that.”

—The Rev. Don Beyers

Parish vows to rebuild historic Toronto church destroyed by fire—and keep it a home for Canadian art

Matthew Puddister
STAFF WRITER

First in a two-part series

St. Anne’s Anglican Church in west Toronto has launched a fundraising campaign to help rebuild after a fire destroyed the historic church building and irreplaceable artwork, with \$45,370 raised as of July 31.

Speaking at a June 11 vigil outside the burnt remains of St. Anne’s, the Rev. Don Beyers, the church’s rector, had a simple message on behalf of the parish. “We are here,” Beyers said. “We will remain here. We will serve this community for generations to come. This is a resurrection moment and I commit myself to that.”

The rector expressed thanks to “our beautiful mother, this church, for her service to us for over 100 years. She’s been a beauty and she’s been a gem to us. But like every good mother, she will give birth to new life.”

No injuries were reported in the early-morning fire June 9. While exterior walls remained standing, the central part of the church—a designated National Historic Site of Canada—was razed to the ground, along with artwork including murals of the only known religious art by members of the Group of Seven. Beyers said no one was present and that the church was locked and secured at the time of the fire.

Toronto Fire Services was still investigating the cause at the time this article was written, but police have said the blaze is not considered suspicious.

Unique architecture and ornamentation

A Byzantine Revival-style church built in 1907 and 1908, St. Anne’s housed murals, painted by three Canadian artists from the Group of Seven collective, that decorated the chancel and dome. The church commissioned Group of Seven member J.E.H MacDonald in 1923 to supervise the creation of art depicting the life of Christ in the building’s interior.

Jessica Mace, postdoctoral fellow in Canadian architecture and landscapes in the department of art history at the University of Toronto, said St. Anne’s, with its spacious dome and mosaics, was the first Byzantine-style church designed in Toronto.

“The building itself was a really unique example of architecture in the city and in Canada,” Mace said.

“It was really quite exceptional for an Anglican church at the time [to be] ornamented, say, in the same way as a Catholic church. It just wasn’t the case for Protestant churches in the early 20th century, so that was unique in itself.



▲ L-R: Bishop Kevin Robertson, suffragan bishop of the diocese of Toronto; the Rev. Hannah Johnston, assistant curate of St. Anne’s; the Rev. Don Beyers, rector; and Olivia Chow, mayor of Toronto, at the June 11 vigil

PHOTO: MATTHEW PUDDISTER

“But then to boot, to have one of the preeminent artists of the time, James Edward Hervey MacDonald, one of the founding members of the Group of Seven, take charge of the ornamental program and to bring on some of the who’s who, some of the elite of Canadian artists at the time—that was just really, really special.”

The Rev. Lawrence Skey, rector of St. Anne’s from 1902 to 1933, was a member of the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto, through which he knew MacDonald. He commissioned artwork for the new church and put MacDonald—who like other Group of Seven members also worked as a commercial graphic artist—in charge of the project.

MacDonald brought in fellow artists including Group of Seven colleagues Frederick Varley and Franklin Carmichael. The mural they produced included a full figurative cycle of paintings depicting scenes from the life of Christ, including the nativity—for which Varley snuck in his own self-portrait as one of the shepherds—the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and his ascension into heaven. Sculptors Frances Loring and Florence Wyle also designed reliefs of the Four Evangelists, set in octagonal frames at the base of the dome.

Bishop sees hope in resilience

While insurance might help pay some of the expense of building new facilities, the church says fundraising will have to cover much of the cost of rebuilding. The Rev. Hannah Johnston, assistant curate, said the parish hopes to incorporate contemporary Canadian art in a new church, including works by “Indigenous artists, queer artists, Black artists, women artists—all the artists who were excluded in the 1920s.”

Beyers told the *Anglican Journal* July 22 that while it was early to estimate a

timeline and cost for rebuilding, he and other parish leaders were set to begin consulting with vestry members, diocesan officials and community members and partners to determine next steps. The first consultation meeting was set to take place in the following weeks.

Along with Beyers, speakers at the vigil included Bishop Kevin Robertson, suffragan bishop of the Anglican diocese of Toronto; Johnston, who was ordained at St. Anne’s just two weeks before the fire; Mayor Olivia Chow, city councillor Alejandra Bravo, and Davenport MPP and Ontario NDP Leader Marit Stiles.

Robertson, who had also attended the ordination, extended welcome at the vigil on behalf of the diocese of Toronto.

“White is the colour we wear at Easter,” he said. “It’s also the colour we wear at baptisms and at funerals as a reminder of our new life in Christ, and that new life comes out of death. That is the message that we need to hold to so dearly tonight and in the days ahead—that in the tragedy and travesty of this terrible fire, there is new life which will come out of death, that we are a resilient people and that this is a resilient neighbourhood.”

Stiles expressed sorrow for the loss of St. Anne’s. “Many people who have relied on the kindness, on the advocacy, on the caring of this parish—from all of those people in our community, I want to thank you the parishioners for what you have given and will continue to give,” she said.

Donations to help rebuild St. Anne’s can be made at gofundme.com/f/stannesfire. ■

What risks are faced by other historic and culturally significant churches across Canada? See the October issue of the Anglican Journal for the second part of this series.

Jasper wildfire destroys heritage church



PHOTO VIA FACEBOOK

A burning St. Mary and St. George seen from a distance July 24

Matthew Puddister
STAFF WRITER

A historic Anglican church in Jasper, Alta. is gone after a wildfire burned the nearly 100-year-old building to the ground July 24.

Bishop of Edmonton Stephen London confirmed in an open letter that St. Mary and St. George Parish was destroyed along with many homes in the town of Jasper, located in Jasper National Park.

“Jasper is a special place, a place where people have said they feel closest to God,” London said. “We are all heartbroken. There are no words.” The bishop expressed gratitude to those who risked their lives to fight the fire and evacuate 25,000 people. He asked for prayers for the community and parish.

Architect A.M. Calderon designed St. Mary and St. George based on the blueprint of a 14th-century English Gothic

church. Built in 1928, the church included gifts from supporters such as Freeman Freeman-Thomas, Viscount Willingdon, who as governor general of Canada laid the building’s founding stone.

In 1985, Alberta’s Ministry of Culture designated St. Mary and St. George a Historic Resource, part of the English Gothic revival movement and the only remaining ecclesiastical structure designed by Calderon. The

church was a favourite site for weddings and a popular tourist destination; it also hosted Queen Elizabeth II during a 2001 visit.

Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, lamented the destruction of St. Mary and St. George in an email to bishops. “Our hearts go out to all affected—and our prayers for +Stephen and all providing support and care,” the primate wrote. ■

PRIMACY ▶

‘It’s been an incredible journey,’ primate tells CoGS

“Something was profoundly broken in my relationship with the whole church at General Synod last year. Not my faith. Not my relationship with God. But maybe a naïve trust [in] the church that I’d given my life to and thought I understood. And I clearly didn’t.”

—Archbishop Linda Nicholls

Continued from p. 1

Nicholls was primate during an often turbulent and challenging time for the church. Months after her election, a church statistics report warned the church might be out of members by 2040 if the current rate of decline continued. In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, drastically altering church life.

She also found herself steering the church through controversies, first over Church House’s handling of a draft article for the *Anglican Journal’s* then sister magazine *Epiphanies* in 2021, followed by the resignation of then-national Indigenous archbishop Mark MacDonald after an allegation of sexual misconduct. Her tenure was also marked by a number of accomplishments, including aiding in the continuing emergence of the Indigenous Anglican church; speaking out with other Canadian church leaders for peace and compassion in Israel/Palestine; and leading the church on improving inclusiveness, reducing internal racism and reducing its carbon footprint. Perhaps most significantly, she established a commission to look at radical solutions to the church’s financial and structural problems (See “Commission mulls axing of General Synod, Journal,” on p. 1 of this issue.)

Nicholls has served as chair of the Anglican Roman Catholic Dialogue in Canada is a member of the third Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. She is also regional representative for the Americas on the Anglican Communion’s Primates’ Standing Committee.

‘Deeply hurt by the church’

In a wide-ranging question-and-answer session with Council of General Synod (CoGS) May 31, Nicholls shared what she saw as some of the highlights of her time as primate, her accomplishments and also the work she wished she had been able to see to its conclusion. She also shared her feelings on two incidents she said had caused her immense personal pain while in office.

In response to a question from the floor asking what aspect of her had most profoundly changed during her time in the primacy, Nicholls told CoGS, “It’s a difficult question to answer because the thing that’s most profoundly changed is having been so deeply hurt by the church. #ACCtoo was horrific, absolutely horrific ... General Synod [2023] was hard. And I think what it flipped in me was maybe that I had been too naïve ... So what’s changed for me is a wound that’s very painful.” Her voice stayed steady, though thick with emotion.

The first incident she referred to was the social media backlash after news came out about the 2021 sharing of the *Epiphanies* draft article, sent by Church House leadership to four Anglican institutions. The draft article cited three people who had made allegations of sexual misconduct at those institutions in the past and who had agreed to speak to *Epiphanies* on condition of anonymity. #ACCtoo was the hashtag and name of an online group that contended the draft contained personal information potentially identifying these complainants and demanded a set of responses by church leaders for the harm it said the sharing of the article had caused.

Nicholls said she was “completely gobsmailed by social media” during this



▲ The next primate, Nicholls told CoGS, “needs to be someone who is skilled at making change and working with change, able to give voice to both fears and hopes and dreams and hold the anxieties. And hold it all without exploding.”

PHOTO: ANGLICAN VIDEO

“When the primate turns up somewhere, people feel like they’ve been visited by the rest of the church. I’ve always found that both a joy, and a delight and surprise.”

—Archbishop Linda Nicholls

period. “I regret that we’ve not been able to come to any kind of reconciliation or resolution on that,” she added. “There are many truths in that whole story and some of them can never be told publicly, ever.”

The second painful incident she referred to was the failure of a resolution, at the 2023 General Synod, to amend the canon governing a primate’s retirement. Currently, primates are required to retire upon reaching age 70, like other bishops in the church. The amendment would have allowed a primate to continue in the role until the next General Synod if their birthday fell within a year of the upcoming gathering. In two separate votes, enough members of the Order of Bishops voted “no” on the resolution to prevent it from reaching the required threshold of a two-thirds majority in each house (bishops, clergy and laity). At the time, then-chancellor of General Synod Canon (lay) David Jones stipulated that the motion was not aimed at the current primate, but was designed to create a procedure for any time a primate would age out of office with less than a year left in their term. But the immediate result of the votes was to require Nicholls to retire earlier than she would have wished.

“Something was profoundly broken in my relationship with the whole church at General Synod last year. Not my faith. Not my relationship with God. But maybe a naïve trust [in] the church that I’d given my life to and thought I understood. And I clearly didn’t,” she said.

‘I hope it will become a grace’

Still, Nicholls added, she was looking forward to supporting the leaders who came after her, as well as to spending time in the church without the burden of responsibility that comes with being a leader. Of the wound she said she received in the office, she said, “I hope it will become a grace at some point.”

Nicholls was also asked about the highlights from her time in office and some of her key achievements. One, she

said, was the gratitude she had received from Anglicans for the sense of connection and hope they said they got from her online work during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the hymn sings—live streaming sessions in which she played piano and sang worship songs for audiences at home, she said, “which I just thought were my chance to do what I love to do, which is to sing and play.”

Likewise, she said she was pleased with the work she had done with the Strategic Planning Working Group, which responded to the pandemic by pivoting from coming up with a fixed strategy to a process of listening to Anglicans across the country about their hopes for the future of the church. That work formed a basis for the five transformational commitments which now inform much of the national church’s work, outreach and worship. And she said she was deeply affected by the power of the office of the primate to represent the whole church wherever she went visiting. “When the primate turns up somewhere, people feel like they’ve been visited by the rest of the church,” she said. “I’ve always found that both a joy, and a delight and surprise—when I show up and people are so grateful that the rest of the church cares.”

One regret, she said, about her early retirement was that she would not be present to see through the process of listening and drafting a primatial apology to the victims of Ralph Rowe. Rowe was an Anglican priest and scout leader in northern Manitoba and Ontario who sexually abused hundreds of young boys during his travels across the province in the 1970s and ‘80s. The apology is part of the settlement of a class-action suit reached in fall 2023.

Asked what priorities she would stress if she were writing a letter to her successor as primate, Nicholls named the transformational commitments, and the work of the primate’s commission on finding a sustainable new structure for the national church. And with respect to the needed changes, she added, “We’ve certainly heard lots of comments about things people don’t like. And I have to say we’re really good at complaining. We’re not so good at proactively offering a way forward ... So I think the next primate needs to be someone who is skilled at making change and working with change, able to give voice to both fears and hopes and dreams and hold the anxieties. And hold it all without exploding.”

Everywhere she went in her travels across the Anglican Church of Canada’s dioceses, Nicholls told CoGS in the spring meeting’s opening remarks, she saw local communities working on the church’s central transformational commitment: inviting and deepening life in Christ.

On the evening of June 1, CoGS held a banquet and hymn sing in the primate’s honour, including performances of songs serious and humorous, speeches and the presentation of a gift: a customized canoe paddle bearing the crest of the Anglican Church of Canada.

“You have taken us ... practically to hell and back, and you have brought us out,” said Archdeacon Alan Perry, general secretary of General Synod. “No one can take that away from you.”

“It’s been an incredible journey,” said Nicholls in her closing remarks. “It’s going to take me some time to unpack what it has meant.” ■

MISSION ▶



PHOTO: SEAN FRANKLING

The Rev. Ben Tshin, of St. Paul's Bloor St. in Toronto, says a sense of belonging often develops as people voice their questions about faith.

'The most mind-blowing "I don't know" I'd ever heard'

How does the church welcome newcomers' desires to believe and belong?

Sean Frankling
STAFF WRITER

The Rev. Ben Tshin is a priest at St. Paul's Bloor Street in Toronto. Tshin says many of those who engage with St. Paul's for the first time do so through its ESL program, which invites members of the communities in to hone their English skills and—perhaps more importantly—find a sense of belonging among people who have similar experiences as newcomers to Canada. Often, he says, it attracts people whose English is already very strong, but who are just looking for somewhere to make friends. In the process, he says, the program exposes them to the church's sanctuary space, developing a sense that they are safe and welcome there even as they form community ties.

Becoming a Christian is a matter of both believing and belonging, says Tshin. And while many people might expect that belonging to be a matter of fitting into a community of people who have found the same answers, he says it's more common in his ministry that a feeling of belonging develops as people voice their questions about spiritual belief.

"You don't need to have everything sorted in your mind about what faith is or isn't," he says. Nor should we assume people proceed, in linear fashion, from believing to belonging, he says. "People are looking for belonging at the same time as they're looking for believing. And sometimes belonging might go first."

It's common, says Tshin, for visitors to the ESL program to go on to the church's Alpha program to find out more about the faith itself. In past years, he says, anywhere from one or two people up to seven per year have made that jump. In that way, people who began not even necessarily looking for a church so much as any place to gather with others ended up asking deeper questions about their lives and where faith fits into them, he says.

And when they begin to ask those questions or even to try out Sunday worship, he says, it's important for the church to send the message that everyone, not just new members, is in the process of faith formation. Churches can do that by including explainers on liturgy in the service or the bulletin and encouraging newcomers to feel safe asking the questions that naturally form around faith.

"If you keep on telling them, 'We

“People are looking for belonging at the same time as they're looking for believing. And sometimes belonging might go first.”

—The Rev. Ben Tshin

are learning, not just you, and we have questions, not just you—I think that might be a helpful posture of openness,” Tshin says.

Richard Liu, a new Canadian, Christian convert and parishioner at St. Paul's Bloor, says something else that makes him feel comfortable asking those questions is a culture of openness to engage with outside belief systems and traditions. He tells a story of a Bible study at one church he visited where a parent was expressing fear of sending their child to university, hotbed, in the parent's view, of “bad ideas” and perspectives hostile to Christianity.

“On a personal level, that lack of willingness to engage with people outside of the church was quite troubling to me,” he says. The experience made him feel less safe to share his own doubts and uncertainties.

Masha Koyama grew up in a nonreligious family and became a Christian after studying the King James Bible in a university English course. Like Liu, she says she shopped around for a church where she felt leaders and parishioners were open to her experience and perspectives.

“I wouldn't say I was looking for a congregation that matched what I believed in in some total or complicated way. But I certainly didn't want to go somewhere where there was a pronounced ideology that I disagreed with ... And also [wanted one] where people were accepting of the parts of my identity which in some contexts are ideological, although not really to me.”

Koyama eventually landed at First Lutheran Toronto, where she says the presence of queer people in church leadership helped her feel at home as a trans person. But more important than shared identity or ideology, she says, is the willingness of a congregation to welcome even people they disagree with.

Loving people who disagree is fundamental to Christianity and should show in the way churches listen to and welcome new members, she says.

'A story that connects the dots'

The Rev. Geoffrey Ready, an Orthodox priest and director of Orthodox Christian studies at the University of Toronto's Trinity College, says he has seen a decline

in familiarity with Christian ideas, stories and modes of worship even among theology students entering his program. But for him this is far from a sign of defeat. Ready thinks of it as an opportunity to engage with some of the ideas students are bringing with them from their own backgrounds.

“There is with the younger generation today a real instinct for things like justice and addressing climate change or fighting racism, but they don't know where to ground that at all,” he says. “They don't have a story that connects the dots.” In some conversations he's had, he says, digging into the reasons why someone feels it is important to safeguard the environment will quickly unearth their desire to connect to something larger than themselves and find deeper meaning, which makes for a short jump to talking about God and creation.

He believes a culture where a Christian background is no longer the default is actually a better starting point for that conversation. When most people were Christian, he says, it was easy to simply associate with Christianity for the benefits of fitting into the mainstream and keep living a materialistic life.

And like Tshin, Ready believes the process of formation necessary to bring people seeking answers into the fold as Christians is far more complex than just instilling intellectual belief. It's a matter of welcoming them into a community and encouraging them to participate in group prayer and liturgy and build habits of Christian behaviour. That's what eventually prompts people to return to questions about truth and purpose, he says.

“The more recent answer has always been ‘Let's get them into a subgroup and teach them things, put the thought in their head. Well that's just not how human beings work. What you want to do is get people to belong first,’ he says.

For his part, Liu says the most important part in feeling he belonged was realizing other Christians—even clergy—struggled with some of the same questions he did. In the process of finding a church where he could work out whether Christianity would be a part of his identity, he tried out several congregations. The first was an English-speaking one where he couldn't quite connect with the

See **A FEELING**, p. 13

COMMUNITY ▶

‘Synergy of values’: Barrie church hosts free health clinic for homeless and marginalized residents

“We have people coming in ... terrified because they’re not always well received at the hospitals and the after-hours clinic.”

—Brenda Brown

Matthew Puddister
STAFF WRITER

Hundreds of Barrie, Ont. residents have received health care they might otherwise not have received thanks to a free clinic operating out of a local Anglican church.

Compassionate Care Without Barriers (CCWB) provides care to people who are homeless or facing other barriers to medical treatment. Located at Trinity Anglican Church, Barrie, the clinic books appointments every Monday morning from 8 a.m. to noon.

A two-person volunteer team runs CCWB. Registered nurse practitioner Brenda Brown provides medical care to patients. Jo-Anne Flood, former Catholic school board worker and current part-time municipal worker, handles the administrative side.

Patients receive care, referrals and drug prescriptions. Along with serving poor and homeless residents, the clinic offers care to people who may not have health cards such as refugees and international students.

Brown had treated more than 250 people at the free clinic, which opened in July 2023, when she and Flood spoke to the *Anglican Journal* May 23.

“The whole thing with Compassionate Care Without Barriers is removing all barriers to getting quality health care,” Flood says. “We don’t refuse anybody based on anything ... Whatever can be done within the clinic is done for free.”

Flood and Brown had long discussed the idea of a free health clinic to respond to needs of homeless and otherwise marginalized residents. Their plans brought them into contact with Trinity Anglican Church, which has a long history of providing outreach programs in Barrie’s downtown core.

From 1993 to 2014, Trinity hosted the David Busby Street Centre, a community non-profit that provided outreach, drop-in and shelter services for residents experiencing or facing the prospect of homelessness. After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it formed a coalition of churches to provide free breakfasts.

Flood and Brown reached out to Canon Simon Bell, Trinity’s priest-in-charge, to describe their idea for CCWB. Bell immediately took to the idea and offered them the use of church space to host the clinic.

Practical difficulties can prevent poor and homeless residents from accessing the treatment they need through the public health-care system. Brown remembers a homeless patient with a wound on his shoulder who came into the clinic. He had gone to an emergency room and was given an appointment to see a surgeon. But after he returned to his tent, his paperwork



▲ Nurse practitioner **Brenda Brown** at the doors of **Compassionate Care Without Barriers**

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

got wet to the point of illegibility.

“He came back to see us and said, ‘I missed my appointment. I can’t go back. What do I do?’” Brown made a referral and spoke with the doctor’s office, who said he would have to go back to emergency, get another referral and go through the process again. Eventually they set up another appointment with the surgeon.

Brown describes the challenges patients like this homeless man, who did not have good communication skills, can face in an overburdened public health-care system.

“When he goes in there and he tries to represent himself as to what’s happening, if he doesn’t answer the questions that they want, they become frustrated, because they have so many patients in the waiting room and they just really need to know what they have to get at,” Brown says. “He’s already timid, he’s already traumatized, and he doesn’t know how to communicate, so that makes it worse.”

Theft is another problem for unhoused people trying to access care. The patient Brown was trying to help had left his property in the bush and was worried about it being stolen while he was away. Many of Barrie’s poor and homeless also face judgementalism when trying to access health care in settings outside the clinic.

Public health-care workers are very

busy, Brown says. “They really want to help. They’re good people. That’s why they do what they do.” Yet communication difficulties can lead to frustration.

“We have people coming in [to CCWB who] are terrified because they’re not always well received at the hospitals and the after-hours clinic,” Flood says. “Their ailments get brushed under the rug because they’re an alcoholic or they use drugs.”

Many parishes across Canada have parish nurses, who integrate faith and health by providing pastoral care and prayers as well as health advocacy, counselling and education. Bell says numerous parishes in the Anglican diocese of Toronto have had a parish nurse at one time or another, and services similar to those provided by CCWB, Bell says, have been offered in Toronto at All Saints and Church of the Redeemer through their outreach programs.

Nurse practitioner-led clinics operating out of churches, on the other hand, are more rare. Neither Flood nor Brown were aware of similar clinics providing physical care run out of churches. Any nurse practitioner-led clinics Flood knew of were led by a

physician or team of physicians who bill the Ontario Health Insurance Program (OHIP) and pay their staff salaries, whereas nurse practitioners are unable to bill OHIP for their services.

While CCWB has no real funding, Flood says it has received donations; one local company gave medical equipment worth \$4,000. The clinic is also looking into other funding options. She says the space provided by Trinity has helped make the clinic’s operations possible.

For Bell, Trinity’s support for CCWB reflects the call to love everyone that is central to Christian ministry.

“There’s a synergy of values between Trinity and Compassionate Care because we’ve been trying to do the same thing ... At the end of the day, that’s also saying we are here to love everybody,” Bell says. “We have a particular community of need who we touch base with every day, but we are here to love everybody.”

In a recent service, Bell compared grace—God’s benevolence to humanity—to dropping a pebble in a pond, which causes ripples to emanate outward.

“I think it changes the nature of the broader community in which we work and live in that it said, ‘They can be compassionate. Why can’t we? They can be gracious. Why can’t we?’

“That theological conversation in the city is really important.” ■

A feeling of not fitting in where everyone has all the answers

Continued from p. 12

congregants across the cultural barrier. Then followed Chinese-speaking churches where he could better grasp the social and cultural context. But he didn’t get what he was looking for in a spiritual home, he says, until he landed at St. Paul’s Bloor Street in downtown Toronto.

“I asked [one of the priests] a very long-winded question with a lot of nuance, a lot

of detail. This is something that I had done at every church I had visited ... because I wanted to know of the shepherds of that church, how do they approach things?” he says. “He looked at me and he said, ‘I don’t know.’ And this was the first time I had heard a priest acknowledge that they didn’t have all the answers. This was the most mind-blowing ‘I don’t know’ I’d ever heard.”

The sense he had gotten at some churches was that parishioners and clergy were already certain in their answers to the big questions of life, says Liu. At some, people had talked about ideas and perspectives they disagreed with as if they were dangerous. Liu, who was still figuring out the answers to his questions about the faith, says that made him feel that if he didn’t also have his answers figured out, he

didn’t belong, he says. The priest’s uttering those three little words, “I don’t know,” let him feel like it was okay that he didn’t know either. And when the priest offered to look for the answer with him, he says, it let him feel like a member of a larger community of curiosity.

Liu continues to attend St. Paul’s Bloor Street, where he recently facilitated an Alpha course in Mandarin. ■



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Gordon is a retired United Church of Canada minister and lives in Montreal. Ordained in 1980, he served congregations in Nova Scotia and Ontario before providing spiritual care as a hospice chaplain to patients and families in Florida and Massachusetts during 35 years of ministry. His memoir "Called! A Longshot's Story" was published in 2021.

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BOOK



REBELS WITHOUT A CAUSE: Two Unfinished Symphonies

Two young women, living parallel lives, were handed similar daunting diagnoses of cancer by their doctors, with uncertain prognoses. Both of them, known to be community movers and shakers, decided to increase their workload, in spite of being faced with unexpected challenges and dangers.

They decided to support their hometowns by sand bagging in the face of floods and teaching literacy in cases of new immigrants. They worked for Welcome Wagon to assist city newcomers and even Child Find in continental cases of children in need. They also worked for long hours in soup kitchens. They ignored any feelings of self-pity and took the "Bull by the Horns" in supporting those in need, which, in spite of glitches and mountains of unforeseen difficulties, brought to life the inspiring Biblical passage: "If you did it to the least of these, you did it unto me" (Rough translation).

They were fighting for their lives and yet not giving up on helping humanity during endless conflicts and global upheaval. To order this inspirational book, please contact Mary Shepherd, illustrator and editor, at 514-487-0126. Or email at: marymathilda@hotmail.com.



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Herbert O'Driscoll remembered as beloved writer, preacher and educator

Matthew Puddister and Sean Frankling

STAFF WRITERS

Author, hymnist, liturgist and former dean of Vancouver's Christ Church Cathedral Canon Herbert O'Driscoll died at home in Victoria, B.C. on July 25 after a four-year struggle with melanoma. He was 96.

Friends and colleagues remembered O'Driscoll for his prolific writing, vibrant preaching and work in theological education. He wrote more than 50 books, lyrics to dozens of hymns, and led many spiritual retreats and pilgrimages.

"Herb has been such an important voice in our church—with a gift for words that touch the heart, lift the soul and inspire faith afresh," Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, said in a staff email. "May he rest in peace with God whom he served with such joy during his life," she added.

O'Driscoll was born in Cork, Ireland in 1928, educated at Trinity College Dublin and ordained in 1952 at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. Immigrating to Canada in 1954, he served in parishes in the diocese of Ottawa, as a naval chaplain and beginning in 1968 as



O'Driscoll distilled complex theology through storytelling, said Ian Alexander, a friend.

dean of Christ Church Cathedral in Vancouver. There he became a frequent speaker on local radio, oversaw fierce debate on the fate of the cathedral building amid financial concerns and hosted a visit from the Dalai Lama in 1980.

Close friend Canon (lay) Ian Alexander remembers that as a teen, he met O'Driscoll at a noon Eucharist while working at Vancouver radio station CHQM. The two developed *One Man's Journal*, a popular syndicated radio feature in which O'Driscoll gave a daily two-minute spiritual

reflection.

Alexander praised O'Driscoll's ability to distil difficult theological and spiritual ideas through storytelling. "He was an outstanding preacher himself and he was able to help others to improve their preaching in a way that led them to speak to a wider audience more effectively and directly," he said.

After a decade and a half as rector at Calgary's Christ Church, Elbow Park, O'Driscoll retired in 1993 but remained an active church member, serving as honorary assistant at Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria and continuing as an author and hymnist. O'Driscoll also served as warden and teacher at Washington D.C.'s College of Preachers, where he developed a unique method of education in preaching based on practical exercises and peer feedback.

In 2022, the Vancouver School of Theology honoured O'Driscoll and his wife of 69 years by establishing the Herbert and Paula O'Driscoll Forum in Preaching and the Liturgical Arts, which includes an annual masterclass in preaching based on the style he had developed. ■

Moosonee votes to have own bishop again

Sean Frankling

STAFF WRITER

The synod of the diocese of Moosonee, which straddles parts of northern Ontario and Quebec, voted unanimously June 26 to elect a dedicated bishop for the first time in a decade.

It will likely take more than nine months to create a profile of the diocese's demographics and ministries, select candidates for bishop based on how well they fit the profile and hold an election, says Archbishop Anne Germond, metropolitan of the ecclesiastical province of Ontario and currently the bishop ministering to Moosonee.

In 2011, the diocese voted to become a mission area of the

Anglican Church of Canada—having the metropolitan serve as bishop—due to financial difficulties. At the time, Germond says, the diocese was overstuffed, the bishop's residence was in need of costly repairs and donations had fallen to the point where the diocese could no longer afford the salary, travel expenses and other requirements of maintaining its own bishop.

That decision took effect with the retirement of former bishop of Moosonee Thomas Corston in 2014. Thereafter, then-provincial metropolitan Archbishop Colin Johnson served as bishop until Germond succeeded him as metropolitan in 2018. First Corston, then Archbishop Fred Hiltz, former primate of the

Anglican Church of Canada, have served as assistant bishops to Johnson and Germond.

In a decade with no bishop of its own, the diocese of Moosonee has saved enough money to support one again, says Germond.

One thing that will be important for the new bishop is a passion for making faith relevant and exciting to the diocese's youth, she adds. Where confirmations in other dioceses she visits might turn up two, three or a dozen young people, she says confirmations of up to 200 people at a time are common in Moosonee. That shows a genuine interest on the part of the local youth which the church should work to develop into meaningful discipleship, she says. ■



BIBLE READINGS

DAY READING

- 1 Jude
- 2 3 John
- 3 Job 1:1-15
- 4 Job 1:16-2:10
- 5 Psalm 26
- 6 Mark 10:1-16
- 7 Mark 10:17-31
- 8 Psalm 90
- 9 Job 23
- 10 Amos 5

DAY READING

- 11 Hebrews 4
- 12 Hebrews 13:5-21
- 13 Leviticus 4:1-21
- 14 Psalm 104:1-18
- 15 Psalm 104:19-35
- 16 Psalm 91
- 17 Mark 10:32-45
- 18 Luke 4:14-30
- 19 Psalm 2
- 20 Acts 13:1-15
- 21 Acts 13:26-40

DAY READING

- 22 Hebrews 6:15-7:14
- 23 Hebrews 7:15-28
- 24 Psalm 126
- 25 Mark 10:46-52
- 26 Job 42
- 27 Psalm 34
- 28 Deuteronomy 32:1-22
- 29 0 pt 32:23-44
- 30 Romans 2:1-16
- 31 Romans 2:17-29

Gaza pilgrims call for 'just peace'; bishops protest hospital closure

Matthew Puddister and
Sean Frankling
STAFF WRITERS

Ottawa

Spring and summer 2024 saw many Canadian Anglicans continuing to look to the Holy Land with concern, as the ongoing Gaza war spurred a peace-seeking pilgrimage to Ottawa in May and words of protest after an Anglican hospital in Gaza was temporarily closed in July.

More than 120 Christians marched to Parliament Hill on May 22 for a public prayer vigil calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and “just peace” in Israel and Palestine. Organized by ecumenical advocacy group KAIROS Canada, the Ottawa event was part of a global movement of Gaza ceasefire pilgrimages. Pilgrims called for an “enduring and sustained” ceasefire in Gaza; immediate flow of food, water, aid, fuel and humanitarian assistance; release of all captives; ending all arms transfers to Israel; and “ending occupation so a just peace can begin.” Anglicans, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Mennonites and United and Orthodox church members participated in the Ottawa march.

Official death tolls indicate at least 39,000 Palestinians and 1,400 Israelis have been killed, although some believe the number of Palestinians killed could be significantly higher; in a letter published in the medical journal *The Lancet* in July, three public health researchers state that “it is not implausible to estimate that up to 186 000 or even more” people have been killed in the Gaza Strip since the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas and Israel’s subsequent attack on Gaza. The UN reported in January that 1.9 million civilians, or 85 per cent of Gaza’s total population, had been forcibly displaced. There has been widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure including schools, hospitals, mosques, churches and residential neighbourhoods.

Anglican hospital in Gaza evacuated

In July, escalating Israeli attacks on Gaza City resulted in evacuation by Israeli authorities of Al-Ahli Arab Hospital, owned by the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. Archbishop of Jerusalem Hosam Naoum, backed by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, called for reopening the hospital and protection for its humanitarian work.

“In the face of intense Israeli bombardment, this closure puts injured and sick people in even greater danger,” Welby said.

By July 10, Al Ahli Arab Hospital received permission from Israeli authorities to reopen. Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, and Will Postma, executive director of the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), said in a statement that the reopening was welcome news. However, they noted “the chaos of the evacuation and now restart has added pain and trauma to many vulnerable people,” adding that the situation called for “stable, consistent healthcare and refuge.”

Agencies across the worldwide

“We must demand more from our government to do what it can to add its voice to that of international bodies for justice and peace.”

—Archbishop Linda Nicholls



PHOTO: MATTHEW PUDDISTER

Rula Odeh speaks to the Gaza ceasefire pilgrimage in front of the parliament buildings.



PHOTO: MATTHEW PUDDISTER

Pilgrims gather on Parliament Hill.

Anglican Communion including PWRDF have offered aid to Al-Ahli Arab Hospital. Donations can be made through PWRDF’s Gaza and West Bank Emergency Appeal at pwrdf.org/give-today, and through the Companions of Jerusalem at anglican.ca/gr/provinces/jerusalem/companions.

KAIROS Canada interim executive director Leah Reesor-Keller said more than 150 congregations in Canada had participated in ceasefire pilgrimages, walking or rolling all or part of 41 km—the length of the Gaza Strip. Ottawa pilgrims gathered in Minto Park before walking down Elgin Street with banners calling for a ceasefire and peace in Gaza. The march ended at Parliament Hill, where pilgrims heard speeches from representatives of each denomination.

Rula Odeh, a Canadian of Palestinian Christian heritage and board chair of the Canadian Friends of Sabeel, a national pro-Palestine ecumenical group, also spoke. Odeh shared the story of her father, a 90-year-old survivor of the Nakba (Arabic for “catastrophe”), the word many Palestinians use to describe the consequences of the 1948 foundation of the state of Israel—war between Arabs and Jews with massacres and atrocities on both sides, followed by expulsion of many Palestinians from their homeland.

“We Palestinian Christians, as with all Palestinians, are stunned that yet another Nakba is being waged against us,” Odeh said. She cited Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, who reported there were “reasonable grounds”

to believe Israel was committing genocide.

“As Palestinians, this is what we feel is happening to our people,” Odeh said. “It is extremely urgent to end the genocide and the humanitarian catastrophe.”

Odeh called on churches to ask Canada’s government and Parliament to uphold international human rights laws.

“Palestinian Christians have been a continuous presence in the Holy Land for over 2,000 years, and we cannot give up on our siblings from the cradle of Christianity,” she said.

‘To do nothing is to be complicit’

Anglican Bishop of Toronto Andrew Asbil read out a statement from Nicholls, unable to attend due to a prior commitment.

The primate said the Anglican Church of Canada “stands with all who are seeking an end to the violence, a permanent ceasefire, immediate provision of humanitarian aid, an end to all exports of arms to Israel and intermediaries, the release of all hostages, and a return to discussions that will lead to justice—recognizing the continuing need to address the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands and the need for a peace that will lead to the thriving of all who live in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank.”

“We must demand more from our government to do what it can to add its voice to that of international bodies for justice and peace, and to use its economic and political influence wherever possible,” Nicholls added. “To do nothing is to be complicit.”

Zionist and Jewish advocacy organization the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) offered a mixed response to the pilgrimage. Richard Marceau, CIJA’s vice president for external affairs and general counsel, described the calls to action as “warmed-over statements from liberal churches who have been very critical of Israel even before Oct. 7.”

Marceau criticized the calls for making few demands on Hamas. He said it was irresponsible for churches to minimize that the Canadian government lists Hamas as a terrorist organization, which had committed its own human rights abuses in Gaza. “That is why I think those churches have lost their moral compass,” he said.

Marceau expressed sorrow for the humanitarian crisis and said he agreed with calls on releasing captives and ending occupation. However, he said “a ceasefire can only happen when the hostages are released and Hamas lays down its arms... If Hamas stays in power in Gaza ... it will start again.”

On genocide accusations, Marceau said Israel could not be considered guilty of genocide unless it was deliberately trying to force Palestinians out of Gaza.

“Are there extremists in Israel who have said this? Yes, unfortunately there are extremists in every country... Those are people who should be condemned because that is not a way forward,” he said. He argued that Hamas is a genocidal group whose goal is the eradication of Israel. ■