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PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Winter journey

Three miniature magi make their way through snow in a Slovak diorama. With January here, is it time to pack our crèches away and forget about them for another year? For a reflection on Epiphany by the acting primate, see p. 5.

Indigenous church prepares mental health initiatives for men and youth

Sean Frankling
Matthew Puddister
STAFF WRITERS

The Indigenous Anglican church is beginning work on mental health ministries amid a national epidemic of suicides and overdoses in Indigenous communities, Archdeacon Rosalyn Elm, the church's Indigenous ministries coordinator, told the Council of General Synod (CoGS) in November.

The programs, which are still in the planning and research stages, are aimed at bolstering mental health ministries in the North. The first area of concern, Elm said, was programming

for Indigenous men, who she told the *Anglican Journal* were particularly underserved by mental health services in northern Canada—but were also coming together to help each other. Both realities became evident for Indigenous Ministries, she said, when they held listening circles for survivors of abuse by Ralph Rowe, a former Anglican priest and Scout leader convicted of 75 sexual crimes against children in northern Ontario and Manitoba.

First Nations leaders and mental health professionals in the documentary

See **YOUTH**, p. 3

Some readers may find content in this issue distressing. For a list of crisis lines and other support resources across Canada, please visit: <https://bit.ly/4g87jA7>

'At a crossroads'

General Synod starts cuts to Council of the North as 'gloomy' financial future foreseen; CoGS mulls changes to church structure

Sean Frankling
STAFF WRITER

Mississauga
The Anglican Church of Canada's national office has a balanced budget ready for 2025, Amal Attia, treasurer of General Synod, told Council of General Synod (CoGS) at its latest meeting in November 2024. While a plan has been approved to draw on reserve money to keep the budget stable through the year, some cost-cutting measures have

already begun—including a gradual plan to reduce funding to the Council of the North—and more cuts will be needed in the years to come, she said.

The national office is projected to run a surplus of \$26,953 thanks partly to a plan to supplement 2025's budget with the national office's investment income. Doing so will buy the church time to make difficult decisions about its future, said Attia.

See **HARD**, p. 2

Next Archbishop of Canterbury could be from outside U.K., scholar says

Matthew Puddister
STAFF WRITER

A desire for institutional change following the resignation of former Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby could mean the appointment of a successor from outside the United Kingdom—though the main priority for the committee tasked with filling the role is likely to be restoring stability to the Church of England, an Anglican scholar says.

Welby—who as Archbishop of Canterbury served as spiritual head of the Anglican Communion and senior bishop of the Church of England—resigned Nov. 12 after an investigation found he failed to inform police upon becoming aware of rampant physical and sexual abuse by the late John Smyth, a prominent lawyer and volunteer at Christian summer camps. As this story was being written in late November, abuse survivors and others were calling for more Church of England leaders, alleged to have known about the abuse

and failed to act, to resign.

Christopher Brittain, dean of divinity and professor of Anglican studies at the University of Toronto's Trinity College, says members of the Anglican Communion frustrated with the Church of England may feel emboldened in calling for change, and this may sway to some extent the Crown Nominations Commission (CNC), which is responsible for appointing the Archbishop of Canterbury.

"What could be part of the conversation is, 'Yes, we can see the importance of signalling to the Communion and maybe even to the Church of England that we're open to change,'" Brittain says. He says this could mean the nomination of someone with ethnic origins outside the U.K. or from outside the U.K. altogether.

At the same time, however, the scandal will have left the CNC with a desire to bring some sort of relational and reputational recovery to the Church of England—and this

See **OUR**, p. 7



▲ Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby speaks from the pulpit during his 2022 visit to Canada.

PHOTO: ANGLICAN VIDEO

Hard to forecast beyond 2025, CoGS hears

Continued from p. 1

It is difficult to make projections about what future years will look like based on existing trends, Attia told CoGS, as those decisions will depend on uncertain factors like investment income and parish donations from which dioceses draw their contributions to General Synod—as well as uncertain outcomes of decisions already made, such as the plan to share office space with the United and Presbyterian churches. But the general trend in revenue is downward, she said. The church's average annual revenue from diocesan proportional giving shrank by about \$2 million dollars between 2018 and 2024 according to numbers she presented, while inflation has raised costs across the board.

Revenue, she said, is declining \$200,000 to \$250,000 per year, and if she were to provide forecasts based on this and estimated expenses for 2026 through 2029, she would be “painting a gloomy, gloomy picture.”

“I [would be] basically telling you guys we would not be here in 2029,” she said.

Attia spoke to CoGS on the first day of its fall meeting, which ran Nov. 8-10. Much of that day's conversation was about money, as well as the shape the church's future governance structures will take as it finds itself, as Archbishop Anne Germond, acting primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, said in her opening remarks, “at a crossroads.”

The budget Attia presented pegs revenue for 2025 at \$9.4 million and expenses (which include \$923,000 for next summer's meeting of General Synod in London, Ont.) at \$10.7 million. It plans for \$883,865 to be transferred from internally designated assets, the type of transfer normal for years when General Synod meets. But it also includes using up to four per cent per month of the 2024 return on the Consolidated Trust Fund, an investment trust held jointly by General Synod and several dioceses. That adds up to \$650,000 across the year, though Attia said she expects the church to need just \$350,000, depending on 2025's diocesan contributions.

Council of the North funding reduced

One cost-cutting measure already implemented by church leadership is the reduction of funding to the Council of the North by \$100,000 each year until its total funding is equal to 25 per cent of each year's proportional giving by the dioceses.

The Council of the North is a group of northern dioceses that gets financial support from the national church and ministers to many remote and Indigenous communities. In 2007, the council agreed to an annual five per cent reduction in funding beginning in 2012 to help ease the burden on national finances that were beginning to strain under shrinking church attendance and donations, Attia told CoGS.

The church was able to keep the budget steady from 2014 to 2021, and decided not to make the cut in those years. However, General Synod managers and officers eventually settled on the idea of reducing Council of the North funding by \$100,000 each year, starting in 2024, until it reaches one-quarter of proportional giving, according to a document explaining the decision and submitted to CoGS in



▲ **“I [would be] basically telling you guys we would not be here in 2029” if asked to forecast national office finances for 2026-2029 given current trends, General Synod treasurer Amal Attia told CoGS.**

PHOTO: MATTHEW PUDDISTER

advance of the November meeting. In 2024, the council received \$2.05 million, down from the \$2.15 million it had been receiving annually since 2013.

Between 2018 and 2023, the annual amount of diocesan proportional giving declined by about \$2 million from about \$8 million to about \$6 million.

“Dioceses are increasingly informing the General Synod that they are unable to support General Synod at the same levels as previously,” the document reads. “Continuing to bear the reductions in revenue solely from General Synod operations while maintaining the Council of the North grant at the current level is increasingly unsustainable. We need to find a way in partnership, to bear the consequences of reduced revenue together.”

In September, the synods of two ecclesiastical provinces, Ontario and British Columbia and Yukon, passed resolutions calling General Synod to review the impacts of that funding cut “and find ways to continue to fund this ministry.”

Bishop David Lehmann of the province of Caledonia, chair of the Council of the North, said he understood the need for General Synod to cut spending amid the ongoing decline of resources. However, he said, even with cost-cutting measures in place in the North, rising costs from inflation have meant ministry in northern Canada is already stretched thinner than ever.

Beyond 2025

While acknowledging the unpredictability Attia cited in General Synod's finances beyond 2025, Canon Patricia Dorland, chair of the financial management committee (FMC), which oversees financial decisions made at the national church level, told CoGS she believes the church's governing body must find some way to make long-term financial plans.

“In the years ahead, there will be new challenges and new opportunities as we discern what it means to be the Anglican Church of Canada, and sorting out the financial implications is one important piece of that sorting,” she said. As General Synod outlines priorities for the general secretary, FMC and CoGS to allocate money to, she said, they have to have some sense of what will be available to spend on that work. “We can't go year by year right now ... We can see that we're not going to be the same kind of church three years from now as we are today and we have to be prepared.”

In the following session, Canon (lay) Ian Alexander, chair of the financial planning working group (FPWG), tasked with creating a multi-year financial plan for the national church, said the group was working out how the church could go about that kind of multi-year financial planning. To begin the process, he said, the FPWG had brought a list of questions for CoGS to discuss, including how the annual budget could best be communicated to CoGS and how CoGS would organize the decisions about how to adapt to the gloomy financial outlook Attia described.

“We may have to start looking some of that gloom squarely in the face,” he said.

CoGS to hear ideas on church restructuring in March

CoGS also heard from members of a primatial commission tasked with re-examining the structures of the church. Retired dean Peter Elliot and the Rev. Kyle Wagner, members of the commission—the formal name of which is Reimagining the Church: a Primate's Commission on Proclaiming the Gospel in the 21st Century—presented some preliminary results of a survey of clergy, staff and other Anglicans as well as church governing bodies across the country. The survey asked respondents to rate their agreement with seven “hypotheses”—intentionally provocative proposals meant as conversation-starters—and how urgently they viewed the change called for in each one.

According to a chart Elliot showed CoGS, the most popular suggestions were reducing travel at the General Synod level and improving diversity of participation in governance. Least popular was a hypothesis proposing discontinuing the *Anglican Journal* as an independent journalistic entity funded by General Synod, with 38 per cent of respondents agreeing and 31 per cent against.

Other hypotheses call for the elimination of either General Synod or the ecclesiastical provinces; returning to a model in which the primate is also a diocesan bishop; and dismantling the “colonial foundations” of the Council of the North.

The commission will make recommendations to CoGS on what to do with the hypotheses based on the feedback it has received at the council's next meeting in March, Elliott said. It will be up to CoGS, he said, to decide whether to bring resolutions to General Synod based on the data the commission provided.

Also at CoGS, Germond announced she had appointed two Indigenous clergy to join the commission. They are the Rev. Rod BrantFrancis, diocese of Ontario and the Rev. Vincent Solomon, diocese of Rupert's Land. Some bishops of the Council of the North raised concerns earlier in the year that the commission had no Indigenous members.

Also new to the commission is Bishop Rachael Parker, of the diocese of Brandon. ■

“We may have to start looking some of that gloom squarely in the face.”

—Canon (lay) Ian Alexander, chair, CoGS financial planning working group

INDIGENOUS CHURCH ▶

Youth program will focus on peer counselling

Continued from p. 1

Survivors Rowe estimate Rowe abused as many as 500 children in Indigenous communities.

The church is looking for opportunities to create its own ministry resources and to partner with existing programs offering care to Indigenous men, Elm said. “We are primarily doing the research and proposal-making, whereas the men themselves are going to be the ones that are going to lead the way in how they want to set up their healing practices,” she said.

The Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) is also creating a youth program for peer counselling called *The Fire Talks*. This program—still taking shape as of Elm’s address to CoGS, with estimates of its duration ranging from seven months to a year—will result in participants getting a certification for peer counselling. “We’re trying to combat the difficulties that our youth face today on a ground level,” Elm said.

Statistics Canada lists men and boys; First Nations and Métis youth; and people living in Inuit regions in Canada as among the groups with the most elevated suicide rates. According to a 2018 study from the Canadian Federation of Medical Students, the suicide rate among Indigenous youth is five to six times that of the general Canadian population.

Indigenous Ministries is working with partners to determine how it can help youth to support each other spiritually and mentally, Elm said. The Primate’s World Relief and Development



▲ **Archbishop Chris Harper (left) speaks to CoGS Nov. 9, accompanied by Indigenous Ministries leaders Archdeacon Rosalyn Elm (centre left), Rosie Jane Tailfeathers (centre right) and Canon Murray Still (right).**

PHOTO: SEAN FRANKLING

Fund, she said, is one of the partners conducting initial research.

Also at CoGS, National Indigenous Archbishop Chris Harper announced he would slow down his schedule of travel in 2025 following two years of extensive visits to church communities across the country.

Harper said ACIP had opened its doors for bishops from the non-Indigenous church to join them for any meeting. “You don’t need an invitation, because you are family,” he said. “And my prayer is that one day it’ll be reciprocated so that I don’t have to ask permission to come to the dioceses to talk to my own people.” In the Anglican church, it is typical for bishops to await an invitation before visiting another bishop’s diocese.

Harper described his travels across the country as a profound experience of connecting with Anglicans and sharing the message of the Indigenous church across the country. But he also said in some places, he had received insensitive

or inaccurate comments from non-Indigenous Anglicans and clergy. As examples, he described one congregation asking him to “bring his feathers and his drum and come sing and dance” for them, and others where leaders told him they didn’t think they had any Indigenous people in their dioceses. His hope, he said, was that ACIP’s gesture of openness to the bishops would continue the work of bridge-building he had begun in his travels across the country.

“I’ve told people that it’s easy to find an angry Indigenous person who will want to berate you, who will want to come and tear you down and punish you for the pain that they feel inside. But it’s hard to find an Indigenous person who’s going to want to come and invite you to walk with them and to find a road appealing in peace for us all to walk together,” he said.

The latter is the approach he hopes he and the other Indigenous church leaders can foster going forward, he added, because it is the only way to build understanding of the past harms and future opportunities between both parties.

“What we need to do is start being able to relate with each other. And the only way to do that is to stay at the table and dialogue, but dialogue with respect.”

At the same session of CoGS, Canon Murray Still, CoGS representative from ACIP, said he and other Indigenous church leaders were working on planning the next Sacred Circle, tentatively scheduled for early May 2025. ■

World must act to stop Gaza genocide, diocese of Jerusalem aid worker says

PWRDF says funds for Anglican-owned hospital still getting through

Matthew Puddister
STAFF WRITER

A ceasefire and the free passage of humanitarian aid into Gaza are urgently needed to halt a genocide in progress, an aid worker with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem says.

The diocese of Jerusalem runs the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital, which, as this issue was being prepared in late November, was the only hospital still functioning in northern Gaza. The hospital is struggling to cope with a flood of patients amid Israel’s bombing campaign and its blocking of aid such as food and medicine, Sawsan Aranki-Batato, programs development officer for the diocese, told the *Journal* in an Oct. 23 interview.

Aranki-Batato said due to the difficulty of getting humanitarian aid into Gaza, local medical suppliers are providing what they can to Al-Ahli Hospital. However, she added, the hospital is going through medicine and supplies very quickly. “We need advocacy for unlimited humanitarian aid to Gaza to save the lives of all people, because the number of wounded is dramatically increasing these days,” Aranki-Batato said.

Israel declared a “total blockade” of the Gaza Strip on Oct. 9, 2023, blocking food, water, medicine, fuel and electricity from entering Gaza and conditioning the lifting



PHOTO: EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF JERUSALEM

Doctors at Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza perform leg surgery on a patient.

of the blockade on the release of hostages by Hamas. Since then, Israel has partially lifted the blockade but aid making it into Gaza as this story was being prepared in late November was reported to be close to its lowest level during the entire war.

Israeli forces behave “as if we are not humans in Gaza,” Aranki-Batato said, bombing residential buildings and killing entire families, targeting medical staff and ambulances. The Gaza Media Office reported on Oct. 7, 2024 that Israeli attacks on hospitals in the previous year had killed 986 medical workers; targeted, destroyed and damaged 131 ambulances; and rendered 80 health centres and 34 hospitals inoperative.

She described a growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza that hospital staff are struggling to cope with. “The lack of

drinkable water, the lack of hygiene standards, the lack of proper sanitation, overcrowding in shelters all have resulted in catastrophic public health [and] infectious diseases,” Aranki-Batato said.

October 2024 Israeli airstrikes on Jabalia refugee camp, a few kilometres from Al-Ahli, saw a sharp uptick in the number of injured and traumatized people at the hospital, she said. “We have inpatients in the corridors, in the church, in the chapel. Wherever there is a space, we have a bed or mattress with a patient” to receive treatment, she said.

The lack of other operational hospitals has meant Al-Ahli is overcrowded to three times its capacity; on average, 700 patients a day arrive, she said, and the hospital, which has 80 beds, has 150 inpatients per day. Many patients have suffered from burns. Most of the wounded have broken arms and legs. Staff now perform up to 30 surgeries per day.

Medical staff who used to work at other hospitals now work at Al-Ahli. “They work around the clock to meet the crushing flow of patients,” Aranki-Batato said. Many of these health workers are themselves becoming traumatized. “They mention to me many times that we passed through several wars—2014, 2021. They never saw the cases that they are dealing with now,” she said.

Israel has targeted Al-Ahli Hospital three times, she said, including the destruction of its solar panels used to generate electricity.

Donations from the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF)

have helped Al-Ahli continue providing services to thousands of people, Aranki-Batato said. At the beginning of the current conflict, PWRDF donated \$30,000 in emergency funding to the hospital. Following consultations with the diocese of Jerusalem, PWRDF donated \$175,000 from February to July 2024 to enhance access to health care and education for Gazans impacted by the war, and has allocated a further \$100,000 for the period from August 2024 to January 2025.

Despite Israeli restrictions on aid, communications and marketing coordinator Janice Biehn said, PWRDF’s aid to Gaza and the West Bank—partnering with a range of church-affiliated international aid organizations—has continued to fund these ministries, with donations going through the Anglican Alliance directly to the diocese of Jerusalem.

“Money transfers have been able to go through,” Biehn said. “While it’s true supplies are hard to come by, the funds are getting to their intended location and the health care and education ministries of the Diocese of Jerusalem are able to use the funds.” PWRDF also supported a Canadian Foodgrains Bank relief program funded by a Humanitarian Coalition appeal in 2023, she said, and made an emergency appeal for Lebanon through the ACT Alliance in the fall of 2024.

PWRDF donations are crucial to the ongoing operations of Al-Ahli Hospital, Aranki-Batato said. “Without your contribution, we would not be able to do what we’re doing now.” ■



Failure or defeat?

Book excerpt: Hope in Christian witness requires seeing what is working against it

By Jesse Zink

IF YOU'RE A sports fan, you might be familiar with the difference between failure and defeat.

Your team can work hard all year, practice well, come together to execute their plays—and still lose in the championship. Or your team can be the kind where it's clear right from the outset that they are not going to make the playoffs, who struggle to muster the energy to get suited up and out of the locker room, and whose players are more focused on their next contract and not their next game. The first team has been defeated. There was simply a better team out there. The second team has failed. It hasn't even really tried. There may be agony but there's no shame in playing confidently and losing. What is problematic is being unable to even enter the arena, or playing the game so poorly you might as well never have suited up.

If you are in ministry today it can be very easy to feel like a failure. Lots of us are working hard to put together interesting programs, preach compelling sermons, and lead engaging worship. Yet sometimes these efforts just don't gain traction. People don't show up. They stare off into the middle distance distractedly, or glance at their phones too often. In my experience, we tend to describe this as failure.

The trouble with thinking that we have failed in ministry is that it places tremendous weight on our human action. But the current state of the church is not simply a result of human action. It is also a result of the societal structures in which we minister. Christians are not the only ones trying to form people in a way of life. There are other powers that may be stronger than our efforts at formation. It is time to reframe our conversation in the church from one of failure to defeat. We are struggling to transmit our message from one generation to another because there are powerful structural forces that make it less likely for people to



▲ **The hard work that may go into writing compelling sermons doesn't always succeed in holding people's attention, the author writes. But this doesn't necessarily mean failure.**

PHOTO: JAMES DALRYMPLE/SHUTTERSTOCK

consider religious affiliation and church membership in the first place.

In my view, the dominant structural forces that shape us today are economic. We live amid economic structures that propound a damaging set of values that are antithetical to the Christian gospel. It is hard to proclaim a gospel that declares our salvation is not dependent on our action but on God's, while at the same time living in an environment that incessantly proclaims that we are to be judged by our ability, our performance, and our deeds. It is hard to form people into an economy of giving and receiving if the dominant messages we receive are that we are to understand ourselves primarily as consumers who should find meaning through consumption. It is challenging to form people into a Christian community that meets for worship and service when labour practices of the gig economy, "side

hustles," and algorithmically designed work schedules prevent your community from gathering together on a regular basis. It is next to impossible to teach people that there are values independent of price—values like truth, love, or hope—when the market has taught us that the only value that matters is paying the lowest price of all. None of this is to make excuses for Christians. But if we are serious about the future of Christian witness then we need to think not just about what we are doing but about the structural context in which we find ourselves.

When Jesus was hanging on a cross, he, his good news, and his kingdom sure seemed like they had been defeated. But what Jesus on the cross was not was a failure. He had, in sports parlance, left it all on the field. He had lived confidently, spoken with authority, confronted the powers directly, and the powers had won. But the great good news of the Christian gospel is found in precisely this: defeat is not the end. Victory is coming. Jesus was defeated but that does not mean we need to be defeatist. Quite the opposite.

If we cannot see the powers and structures of this world that are working against Christian witness, then our best efforts will simply not be good enough. A defeatist cynicism will be not far behind. But there is another path. That path is to see with clarity those powers that obstruct God's reign and then cultivate communities in Christ that form people to live in hope, resist the powers of this world, and be a foretaste of the kingdom Jesus proclaimed and enacted. Yes, these powers shape and affect even us who proclaim that we live by the values of a different kingdom. Yes, we will almost certainly be defeated at times in our efforts to form people in the life of the reign of God. But that does not mean we have failed. It simply means that in that defeat God is waiting and working to bring forth new life in the way God has always done. ■

Canon Jesse Zink is Principal of Montreal Diocesan Theological College, an ecumenical seminary affiliated with McGill University. He is the author of *Faithful, Creative, Hopeful: Fifteen Theses for Christians in a Crisis-Shaped World* (Church Publishing, 2024) from which this essay is adapted.

Two suggestions for the church calendar

Acting Primate Archbishop Anne Germond's article, "On giving thanks for, and emulating the saints" (November, p. 5), is quite inspirational. Archbishop Tutu was, as the article points out, "a spiritual and moral giant and one of the greatest bridge-builders of our time."

It is to be hoped that the acting primate's article will encourage more people to be added to the Anglican Church of Canada's Calendar of Holy Persons.

Two people who should be added to the calendar, Lucius Oille and George Johnson, were important moral exemplars for my own life. Oille, a founding member of my parish, brought pure water to our community in the late 19th



PHOTOS: LEFT: ST. CATHARINES MUSEUM N-1004; RIGHT: PUBLIC DOMAIN, WIKIPEDIA
(L-R:) **Lucius Oille, who created a waterworks system, and George Johnson, who worked to vaccinate the Mohawk against smallpox.**

century. He created a waterworks system that was protected by a restored forest. George Johnson, a Mohawk Confederacy chief, worked for the Anglican church to vaccinate his people against smallpox. He protected his nation's Carolinian

forests, enduring three attempts on his life for his conservation efforts. Johnson inspired the first reforestation efforts in Canada and turned the Ontario Fruitland Grower's Association into our country's first environmental

protection group.

John Bacher
St. Barnabas Anglican Church
St. Catharines, Ont.

Alongside Hope disappointing new name for PWRDF

As a long-time contributor to the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), I am dismayed by the name change ("PWRDF to change name to Alongside Hope," December, p. 1). Whatever the failings of the current name, at least it described what the fund was about. Alongside Hope is meaningless—just another saccharine term in a world full of such.

John Plommer
Victoria, B.C.

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.

BRIDGES ▶



What changes will we embrace in 2025?

By Anne Germond

“Well, so that is that.” These are the words that begin W.H. Auden’s poem, *For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio*. It’s time to take down the tree and return the decorations and the crèche to their boxes for another year. There are still plenty of leftovers to eat, even though we no longer have the appetite for those rich foods because the Christmas feast, is, in Auden’s words, “already a fading memory” along with all the promises of the Christ Child.

There is some truth to this. Another Christmas is over and it’s time to get back to the reality of life as we know it. Here in Canada we are entering the coldest and the darkest time of the year, which impacts many of our family members, our neighbours and our friends. Many are overwhelmed with a sense of hopelessness and fear, or a deep disappointment that Christmas did not deliver on its promises. The longer, warmer days of spring are eons away. Let us hold these people in our hearts and prayers and keep checking in on them—not just through text messages but in person.

While *that* may be *that* and our journey to Bethlehem’s stable is over, *that* is not all there is. As we enter a new year we do not leave the Incarnation behind but rather allow the light from the stable to enter into it and let it shine on our daily lives.

Epiphany is the first season to greet us in 2025. In this holy season we recall two journeys that the magi



PHOTO: KOTO IMAGES

made—the first to the Child and the second away from him. Now, I think that the second journey was as important as the first because on that journey there was no star to guide them, there were no precious gifts to carry and there was no Holy Family to welcome them at the end of it. All they thought

awaited them was the dread of returning to Herod and their homelands.

The magi might have said, “Well, that is that,” and gone back to business as usual. But they didn’t, and in that lies the whole point of this new season as we carry the Light of the World into 2025, the year in which we will be commemorating the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea. The magi left the Child touched and forever changed by what they had experienced. They knew their old way of life had died and so, embracing a new way of being, they followed a dream instead of a threat and chose a different way home.

Perhaps the real test of Christmas is how well we make the journey through the season of Epiphany—not the journey to the crib but the one away from it. What dreams will we follow? What changes will we embrace in our daily lives? Our hands are empty now, open to receiving the new thing God is ready to give us.

Every new year begins with singing and dancing, which is such a wonderful antidote to our January blues. Don’t pack away the crèche too soon—at least not until the Christ Child has wiggled their way firmly into our hearts. With Christ our ever-present guest we will find the strength to be a people of promise even while the old order of time runs its course. ■

Archbishop Anne Germond is the acting primate of the Anglican Church of Canada.

FEATHER AND SAGE ▶



On reflecting light in the season of the Great Moon

By Chris Harper

FEATHER (prayer ascending):

Almighty One, the new year stands before us, uncertain as the day ahead. Open our hearts and eyes to know with humility that you journey with us and to see your hand working in all things new. Guide us not to focus on the diminished light of the month we call *Kisepisim* (Ki -Seh-pih-sim = Great Moon), but to see that even in the darkness, your light shines brightly as the great moon above. In this month and year to come, walk and guide us as we step forward with faith and boldness, to not hold onto the things that bind us in the moment, but to strengthen us to new life in you. Help us to humble ourselves in the year to come that we might seek new life in your Son, bless us to walk the “good road,” forgiving as we would pray to be forgiven and loving as we know we are loved through your grace and mercy. Put peace in our hearts that we might be peace to all in the seasons ahead. Humbly we lift our prayer to you and pray in the name of Him who makes all things new. Amen.



PHOTO: RAWPIXEL.COM

SAGE (wisdom or truth offering):

January always comes with such great anticipation and expectations. It is also the month when we traditionally take a moment to reflect on the year past and make resolutions of change for the new year ahead. We do so because we see in ourselves those things that hold us in moments and events of the past which often are not life-giving, and we in our hearts know that we are called to new and lifegiving promises in the good word given through Jesus Christ. New month, new year ... New Life.

Change and transition ever seem to be before us. Our response ever seems to be frustration and fear, but I truly believe in the power of prayer. When all else is beyond me and my frustration, I pray it out and peace returns. In glimpsing the year past and reaching out to welcome the new, I will try not to seek perfection in others, but to see the beauty that is possible in all things around us. I will seek not to be darkness but reflect the light of hope, forgiveness and peace reminded to me in the season of the Great Moon, the month of January, when the daylight is

minimized and the brightness of the moon is expressed and revealed in its reflection off the snow. Like diamonds in the snowy fields, light reflects back on all the world. The darkness can never swallow us up; light and hope are revealed in all around us.

In this coming year of 2025, may we all be humbled to not be so hard on ourselves and others; may we seek peace and healing to be instruments of peace and healing; and may we lift up a new level of forgiveness and grace as we would seek an equal measure reciprocated. May you walk in the light of Him who is peace and who makes all things new. May you be blessed to be a blessing to all around you in 2025.

Then the one on the seat of honor spoke again. “Behold,” he said, “I am making all things fresh and new.” Then he added, “Write these words down, for they are true and trustworthy.” (Rev. 21:5 from *First Nations Version: An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament*) ■

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

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'Our hearts break' over abuse: Germond

Continued from p. 1

consideration may end up carrying more weight.

"I don't know if that's going to be their priority—'First thing we need to do is save the Communion,'—I suspect that's not what the commission is going to be focused on," he says. "They'll be talking about that. But first thing [they'll want] to do is bring some order to the Church of England and to the place of the church in the United Kingdom. It's very rocky right now."

The case, he says, reveals a failure by the Church of England as an institution to respond adequately to decades of abuse.

Archbishop Anne Germond, acting primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, reiterated the church's commitment to safety.

"Our hearts break for the children and young people who were abused by Smyth and further victimized by the lack of meaningful action on the part of the church," Germond said in a public statement the day of Welby's resignation.

The acting primate noted that in 2022, Welby visited Canada to listen to residential school survivors and to apologize for the church's role in abuses that took place at residential schools.

"We mourn that today's news will add to the pain of survivors, and we hold them in our prayers," Germond said.

The CNC examines and interviews candidates for Archbishop of Canterbury before putting forward a name to the Prime Minister, who in turn passes on this selection to the King. The commission has 17 voting members, including five representatives from the Anglican Communion outside the Church of England.

U.K. newspaper *The Independent* reported on Nov. 13 that it was unlikely any candidates for Archbishop of Canterbury would be named until late spring 2025.

The Church of England on Nov. 7 released results of the investigation—led by independent reviewer Keith Makin—into

Smyth, who the report said subjected about 30 boys and young men in England and more than 85 in Africa to "traumatic physical, sexual, psychological and spiritual attacks." From the 1970s until his death while under investigation in 2018, the report said, Smyth carried out abuse that was "prolific, brutal and horrific."

The Makin Review found that from July 2013, months after he became Archbishop of Canterbury, Welby knew about the abuse that took place in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but did not inform U.K. police or authorities in South Africa. Investigators said if Welby had reported Smyth to authorities at this time, many victims would have been spared abuse.

Welby faced calls to resign from victims of Smyth as well as some members of the Church of England's General Synod, who started a petition calling on Welby to step down because he had "lost the confidence of clergy."

In his statement of resignation, Welby said when he was informed of Smyth's abuses in 2013, he was told that police had been notified and he "believed wrongly that

an appropriate resolution would follow."

"The Makin Review has exposed the long-maintained conspiracy of silence about the heinous abuses of John Smyth," Welby said. "It is very clear that I must take personal and institutional responsibility for the long and retraumatizing period between 2013 and 2024."

Precise timing for his departure, he said, would be decided after a review of his obligations in England and the Anglican Communion. In the meantime he planned to follow through on commitments to meet survivors and delegate his other responsibilities.

"I hope this decision makes clear how seriously the Church of England understands the need for change and our profound commitment to creating a safer church," Welby said. "As I step down I do so in sorrow with all victims and survivors of abuse."

"The last few days have renewed my long felt and profound sense of shame at the historic safeguarding failures of the Church of England. For nearly twelve years I have struggled to introduce improvements. It is for others to judge what has been done." ■

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- 1 Malachi 3:1-12
- 2 Luke 2:22-40
- 3 Isaiah 6:1-13
- 4 2 Chronicles 26:1-15
- 5 2 Chronicles 26:16-23
- 6 Psalm 16
- 7 Psalm 138
- 8 1Corinthians 15:1-11
- 9 Luke 5:1-11
- 10 Jeremiah 17:1-13
- 11 Jeremiah 17:14-27
- 12 Ezekiel 31:1-9
- 13 Ezekiel 31:10-18
- 14 Song of Songs 4:1-15

DAY READING

- 15 Psalm 1
- 16 Luke 6:17-26
- 17 Genesis 45:1-15
- 18 Genesis 45:16-28
- 19 Psalm 37:1-22
- 20 Psalm 37:23-40
- 21 Luke 6:27-40
- 22 Luke 6:41-49
- 23 Psalms 92-93
- 24 Psalms 95-96
- 25 Galatians 1:1-12
- 26 Luke 7:1-17
- 27 Luke 9:28-43a
- 28 2 Corinthians 3:7-4:2



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