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THE DIOCESAN TIMES



JANUARY 2026 A SECTION OF THE ANGLICAN JOURNAL

Serving the Anglican Church in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

New Year's spiritual resolutions: Finding grace and community

BY JENNIFER ANANDANAYAGAM

There is no question about the fact that most of us feel a sense of “newness” in the air when January arrives. Resolutions, goals, promises – all of these buzzwords fuel good intentions to eat better, exercise more, and perhaps even pick up a new spiritual practice.

New Year's spiritual resolutions may not be as popular as some of the more secular goals out there, but they do exist. For Rev. Cate Ratcliffe, Rector, Hatchet Lake and Terence Bay, it's tied to a beautiful devotional journal which was gifted to her.

“If I'm completely honest, I'm not the best with follow-through, especially if I don't have external motivation,” shared Ratcliffe. “So I've



Photo by Tim Mossholder on Unsplash

started this devotional with the beginning of a new year a few times now, and I usually make it until about April before the habit falls by the wayside.”

The minister does, however, feel like 2026 will be the year when things change. “I find intentionally setting the time aside to be very meaningful,

to read scripture, reflect, and listen – usually with a nice cup of tea in hand.” There is something centering in the practice for Ratcliffe. It's a way

to prepare for whatever – expected or unexpected – might be coming her way. “And the number of times it ends up being relevant for the day, or that I reference it and reflect on it that day is definitely something.”

Part-time rector for parishes of Musquodoboit and Ship Harbour, Rev. Dr. Dawn Dickieson-Leger, shared that as an Associate of the Order of the Holy Cross, she is committed to joining in their rule of life, including daily prayer.

“I also commit to daily spiritual reading and for the beginning of the year, I will read daily from the Rule of St. Benedict with reflections by Joan Chittester,” shared the priest.

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Building bridges beyond Sunday: Applications open for The Connectors EIGHT

BY REV. CANON LISA VAUGHN
DIRECTOR OF MISSION AND
MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT

Do you have an interest in ministry that reaches people who might never come to Sunday morning worship?

Applications are now open for The Connectors EIGHT (2026–2027), a peer learning community designed for lay people and clergy who want to explore what mission looks like today and how to build bridges with those outside traditional church life.

The Connectors brings together 10 pioneering participants for 10 two-day residential retreats over the course of a year. This is a skill-building environment for faithful Anglicans who want to reach out to others but aren't sure how. Emphasis is on practical approaches to cultivating relationships with people seeking authentic community -- and introducing them to the God who loves them.



Participants engage in discerning prayer, deep discussions, provocative teaching, goal-setting, guest speakers, and mutual support. As the name suggests, the focus is on three vital connections:

- With one another through peer support



- With the community through servant leadership and mission.

Past participants describe the experience as transformative. One shared, “Mission isn't about grand gestures -- it's

about meeting people where they are and listening to their needs.” Another reflected, “I always thought mission happened far away. Now I know it starts in my own community.”

For many, the program sparked new confidence: “Connectors gave me the confidence to pray out loud and share my faith beyond the church walls,” a recent participant said.

Connecting with God, one another, and new people in the community.

INTERESTED? APPLY TODAY! www.surveymonkey.com/r/ConnectorsEIGHT

Applications for The Connectors EIGHT (2026–2027) are being received now. Deadline: January 30.

Grow in confidence to share your faith naturally and respectfully.

Learn practical tools for engaging with people who are not active in a faith congregation.

Deepen your spiritual life through prayer, discernment, and reflection.

Develop leadership skills for missional ministry in your parish and community.

Join a supportive network of peers committed to reaching new people in new ways.

Top benefits of joining The Connectors

All program costs -- including travel, accommodations, and materials -- are covered by the Diocese. This investment is about the future vitality and growth of parishes as we learn how to reach new people, in new places, by new ways in our neighbourhoods.



Jennifer Anandanayagam
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Published monthly except in July and August by The Diocesan Times Publishing Company.

Online editions available via the diocesan website:
www.nspeidiocese.ca

Printed by and mailed from:
Webnews Printing Inc.,
North York, ON

Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the management board of The Diocesan Times, the diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island or any representative thereof, except where expressly stated.

All material subject to editing.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE:
The first day of the month BEFORE the month of publication:
e.g., the deadline for the November edition is October 1st.

Prayer is for the people

BY JON HALLEWELL

A couple of years ago, I was at a retreat with some fellow Anglican clergy. We would begin these semi-regular gatherings with a “check-in,” sharing how we were doing personally and in ministry.

During each retreat, we prayerfully set personal and ministry goals – a helpful discipline familiar to many in the workplace. We encouraged one another and held one another accountable, not in a way that fostered shame – many of us regularly missed our aspirations – but at least we were moving in the right direction.

On one occasion, a close friend began to lament that he was falling short in his prayer life – a feeling many of us can relate to. As he spoke, I sensed the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and found myself blurting out, “Prayer is for the people, not people for prayer.” Tears welled in his eyes, and we both recognized the Spirit’s freedom in that moment – where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

The thought echoes Jesus’ words that “the Sabbath was



made for people, not people for the Sabbath.” The same truth applies to all our religious activity and perhaps even to the ways we organize our lives. Is what we’re doing helping us? Is it producing life and a deeper sense of connection to God and one another? Paradoxically, it may be that the most fruitful thing we can do is to stop – and make room for connection.

The psalmist says, “Be still, and know that I am God.” Stillness is increasingly rare in our culture. Yet if we want our ministry to flow from our knowing of God, we must cultivate it. For that reason, we’ve been intentionally embracing stillness as the core discipline

of our weekly prayer group.

When we arrive, we chat briefly about what’s on our hearts and anything we’ve been sensing or wrestling with during the week. We then pray the Collect for Purity (probably just because it’s one of my favourites) and sit together in silence – at least 20 minutes, often longer. We close by sharing what we’ve sensed in that time. Some might call this listening prayer. We’re not bringing a list of requests so much as seeking to capture God’s heart. There’s time elsewhere for intercession; this is time for listening.

It’s amazing – though perhaps we shouldn’t be surprised

– how often there’s overlap in what we sense. Frequently, what one person hears answers a question another has been wrestling with. Most of the group describes this gathering as the highlight of their week. I feel the same way: when challenges come, I often think, at least the prayer group is coming.

Prayer is for the people. It’s as James writes: Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you. I try to pray this way alone (when I don’t fall asleep), but sharing the journey with others is a special grace.

In fact, as I write this on the eve of our next gathering, one of our members just texted to ask if she could bring a friend who doesn’t attend church. Her own experience of connection has made her want to share it. Not what most people imagine when they think of a prayer meeting – but then again, prayer is for the people.

Jon Hallewell is the parish priest for Eastern Passage and Cow Bay, a song writer, and an aspiring pizza chef and bread baker.

the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is both the seed and the fruit of this striving for ‘unity in diversity’. This time of shared prayer, reflection, and fellowship invites Christians of different traditions to deepen our relationships and to live and witness together throughout the year.

Since the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948, many other Christian denominations around the world have come to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and since 1968, the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC and the Roman Catholic Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity have collaborated to produce materials for use over this eight-day period.

The theme and resources for this year’s eight days of prayers were prepared by the Christian Churches of Armenia – both Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant.

Resources are available at the website:

www.weekofprayer.ca

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – January 18 – 25, 2026

SUBMITTED BY REV. JOHN K. MORRELL

What is it?

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is an annual ecumenical celebration. Christians around the world are invited to pray for the unity of all Christians, to reflect on scripture together, to participate in jointly organized ecumenical services, and to share fellowship.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity began in 1908 as the Octave [eight days] of Christian Unity, and focused on prayer for church unity. The dates of the week were proposed by Father Paul Wattson, co-founder of the Graymoor Franciscan Friars. He conceived of the week beginning with the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, which was then kept on the General Roman Calendar on January 18 – the same day that the Anglican Church kept the Feast of the Confession of Saint Peter – and concluding with the Feast

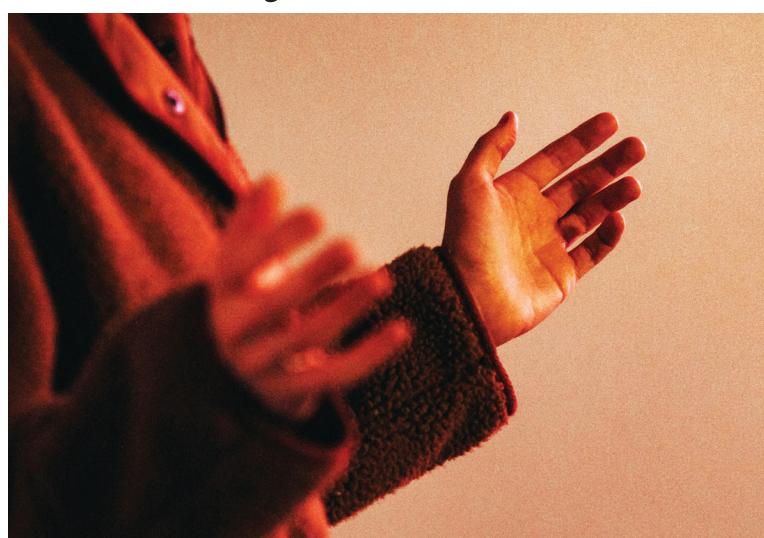


Photo by Jon Tyson on Unsplash

of the Conversion of Saint Paul on January 25.

Why does it matter?

In the Gospel of John, Christ prays for his disciples before going to the cross. He asks that his followers “may all be one,” as he and the Father are one, “so that the world may believe” and have life in his name (John 17). Christian unity is here made central to the very being of the church and to its mission and witness.

Today, we live with divisions even as we yearn for the unity promised and commissioned by Christ. The long and often painful history of Christianity has sundered our churches for theological, liturgical, and political reasons. Many Christians now strive to heal these divisions, yet honour our diversity, through ecumenical dialogue, common action, and relationship-building. They also come together to pray for unity, joining Christ in his prayer to the Father.

The worldwide celebration of

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BISHOP'S COLUMN

Separating the seed from the chaff: Living into our baptismal promises



BISHOP SANDRA FYFE,
DIOCESE OF NOVA SCOTIA AND
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



Photo by Michael Burrows © Pexels.com

I suspect many of us don't remember our baptism. That's because we were probably infants at the time. That's been part of the custom and tradition of the Anglican Church. However, many of us have likely attended a baptism within recent memory, or a service commemorating the Baptism of the Lord on the first Sunday after the Epiphany. If so, we might remember that before the baptism takes place we're all asked a series of questions. It's part of what's called the baptismal covenant in The Book of Alternative Services. After three questions that ask about our belief in God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are asked six more questions, which all begin: "will you..." They talk about attending worship, returning to God after we stumble, being a living example of our faith, serving and loving others, respecting all people, and caring for the earth. These questions remind us that while the rite of baptism is one of the sacraments of the Church offered at a specific point in time, the life of baptism continues long after that. How, though, are we to live this life of baptism? What does that even mean?

One of the intriguing images in Matthew's Gospel connected to baptism comes from John the Baptist. He will baptize with water, he says, but one is coming who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

John continues by saying: "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:12)

This might be a scary image, because we've often been taught to associate fire with hell. But this isn't what John is saying or what he means. John understands that baptism is about cleansing (in his case with water) and about making a new beginning, turning away from all that is harmful and turning towards all that is good. Still, he believes that when the Messiah comes, he will cleanse us in a deeper way, burning away all that is not helpful to our growth. If we think of it in that way, maybe we can redeem or reclaim that image.

If you're not familiar with a winnowing fork or a winnowing fan (a better translation of what John is talking about), it's something used as part of the process of cleaning grain. It would have been well known in the agricultural communities around where Jesus grew up, and perhaps is now to anyone who grew up on a farm.

After threshing the grain to try to separate the grain or seed from the chaff, the farmer would use a pitchfork or a large fan or basket to throw the grain into the air. The light chaff would be carried away

by the wind, while the seeds would fall to the ground or back in the basket; the heavier chaff would then be separated from the seeds and be burned. As I understand it, during this process there was a constant fire, and the chaff provided fuel for that fire (so even the chaff had a purpose).

All of this, then, was a process of sorting. Essentially, you were separating what could grow (the seeds) from what could not (the chaff). And maybe that's kind of what it's like to live into those promises we make every time someone is baptized. Maybe that's a process of sorting, too: trying to determine what in our lives helps us to grow and what does not. And then taking the next step – trying to cultivate the things that help us grow (doing more of those things) and trying to get rid of, or stop doing, the things that don't.

When we "separate the wheat from the chaff," it helps to remember that there is no moral judgement when you're separating grain. There are simply seeds that will grow or be ground to be used as flour, and chaff that will either blow away and help to fertilize the ground for next year's crop or be burned as a source of fuel. It's all part of the same wheat. Why is it, I wonder, that we tend to understand this image as about separating people. It's not like some people are wheat (or seeds) and some are chaff

and Jesus is somehow going to sort between the two – and we have to hope we're in the right category. Instead, I think it's a reminder that in making promises to walk in the way of Jesus, our lives are a constant sorting process: What helps us to walk in that way? What practices help us to grow (exercise, prayer, reading, study, silence, sleep)? What takes us off track? And what do we need to do to get back on track or, as the First Nations Version of the New Testament might say, what helps us to "walk the good road?"

It might help if we remember that in every one of those six baptismal promises that focus on the life of baptism, after we say, "I will," we then say, "With God's help." The Church, in her wisdom, knew that we couldn't even begin to tackle this journey of faith alone, and God knows that, too.

As we begin a new calendar year, when some of us will state intentions about changes we want to make in our lives, may we exercise discernment and grace. May each of us lovingly consider what helps us to walk in the way of Jesus and what does not, knowing that we all change and grow – and outgrow – ways of thinking and living and being. May we continue to trust in God's presence along the way, and know that God will continue to work in and through us, seeds, chaff and all, today and every day.

EQ – Stepping into the other's shoes



BY BRYAN HAGERMAN RCT
ST. PAUL'S CHURCH HALIFAX
OUTREACH COUNSELOR
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He took her to the fair, dad and daughter. Having quickly examined the grounds, the five-year-old said, "I want to go on that one," pointing to the Ferris Wheel. Dad trembled! He was drawn to a chilling memory from his pre-teen years, on a Ferris wheel. It had been a scary experience. For a moment, he froze, but her little hand tugged him towards the ride. Sitting in the wobbly chair with his child, Dad began to panic. His breathing became rapid, and he felt a sudden fear rushing up within himself. A call to the one administering the ride to let them off fell on deaf ears. A myriad of sounds at the fair drowned out his voice, but not his inner emotional world. Sensing his



Photo by Omer Mopoz on Unsplash

fear, his panic, her little hand grabbed his firmly, and she said, "It's okay, Dad, I'm here. It will be okay." That was all he needed. She had entered into his fear, his panic, and communicated empathy and courage. The panic and fear subsided. It was going to be okay. It was okay.

That little girl, although only five, already had Emotional Intelligence, EQ.

Emotional Intelligence is not to be confused with IQ, the Intelligence Quotient. However, the latter is not unimportant. Daniel Goleman first coined the phrase (emotional intelligence) in the early 90s and wrote the classic book on the topic, 'Emotional Intelligence'. EQ is simply the ability to understand, to manage one's emotions, and to recognize the emotions of those around you. It is the ability to get into their

shoes, and to express empathy to the individual. Nothing heightens and improves a relationship, creating trust and emotional safety, like feeling what someone else is feeling and then expressing it to them in a way that validates those feelings. This is emotional self-awareness at its best.

A decade ago, Goleman told the Harvard Business Review, "The most effective leaders are all alike in one way: They all have a high degree of what has come to be known as emotional intelligence. It's not that IQ and technical skills are irrelevant. They do matter, but ... they are the entry-level requirements for executive positions." It can also be stressed that the most effective people are those who have learned to communicate with emotional intelligence. Imagine a leader who cared that much to place the other first and their agenda last?

Emotional intelligence is not transactional; it is communicated voluntarily and with kindness as we carefully enter into the space of the other who is having a difficult emotional moment. It is a combination of words, strengthened with body language, and a selfless caring

attitude. It is also a sacrificial endeavour with a cost. It costs our time, our emotional effort, and the willingness to enter into someone's inner pain. And entering into another's threshold of pain can cause momentary pain for the empath. However, as we do so, we help carry a heavy burden.

People with EQ communicate this ability to the point where emotional safety is a space created. Vulnerabilities are unleashed. Trust is deepened. Emotional health is strengthened. It is crucial, however, that as we enter into the shoe of the other, we must get out of our own. Many either can't, don't realize they should, don't care, or don't know how to do it.

EQ is an emotional caring enterprise. The words of empathy are, "I understand how you feel," "That must be difficult for you," "I'm here for you," "That sounds difficult," "It's understandable that you feel that way," "I can see how hard this is for you."

Symptomatic of EQ is the ability to listen, to validate, to share words of understanding, and to care. When the little girl stepped into her dad's shoes, she introduced him to an

emotional safe place. This was not about her; it was about the other. Empathy does not come from a specific personality style or trait. It is a decision, a choice, a gift given. Some have this natural ability, others can learn empathy, yes, learn. It is about feeling another's pain and communicating that. When we empathize with the other, we lean emotionally into their personal space, creating safety and comfort.

In stepping into the other's shoes, we enter into their innermost emotional space, feeling for them, with them, understanding and communicating that we get it. When someone leans into our emotional space, they are not crossing our boundaries. They are carrying care into it. They are listening, validating, and feeling our feelings.

The other on the receiving side of empathy feels a connection, a powerful, "I'm cared for," and "I'm being listened to." An emotional lifeline is being offered. It may seem surreal at first, but quickly it becomes true, radically altering an inner troubled world. Yes, this is emotional drama unleashed at its best.

New Year's spiritual resolutions: Finding grace and community

Cont. from page 1

Focusing outward: The community, service, or relational growth of spiritual resolutions

"If your spiritual practice is not drawing your attention to the work of God in the world or the world's suffering, it is time to give that some prayer and reflection," shared Dickieson-Leger.

Spiritual practices should fuel us out of isolation into community, so to speak.

"The aim of a spiritual practice is to draw us into a space and time of communion with God, not in isolation, but so that we can carry God's eyes and ears and heart with us," explained the rector.

One way to ensure this happens is to add a prayer list to your spiritual practice, per Dickieson-Leger – one that includes global and community events.

Ratcliffe agrees.

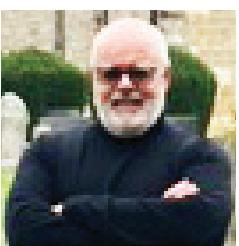
"I have a friend who talks about how our relationships as Christians follow the shape of the cross: first comes the



Rev. Cate Ratcliffe



Rev. Dr. Dawn
Dickieson-Leger



Dennis Cole

vertical line, which is our relationship with God, and then from that comes the vertical line, which is our relationship with the rest of the world, reaching outward," sketched the minister. "Not to mention that our spiritual time usually involves improving our listening to the Spirit and God's call to us, which typically involves an outward focus."

Licensed Lay Minister from the Anglican Parish of New London, P.E.I., Dennis Cole said that his parish's theme – "endeavouring to highlight the importance of the parish church family as the Body of Christ and a community of believers as a fundamental of our faith" – provides a blueprint for him.

"As St. Francis of Assisi said, 'Preach the Gospel at all times,

and if necessary, use words,'" shared Cole.

Keep on keeping on

Have you picked up a practice with vigour and enthusiasm only to realize a few weeks down the line that you simply couldn't find the time to hold on to the habit? We've all been there.

The trick is to be forgiving and kind, according to these spiritual leaders.

"God is the God of love and second chances, full of grace, and aware of what it is like to live fully as a human being, caught up in the mess of things in the world of day to day," reminded Cole. Struggles may come but the key is learning to forgive and move on, per the LLM. "Just as Christ forgives and shows us how to carry on

toward the goal."

Taking a single yet poignant first step toward a deeper spiritual life in January could also mean not overthinking any of it.

"Just do it," urged Ratcliffe. Look at whatever step you take as an opportunity for growth and one step in your journey, added the rector.

"You're not going to be immediately at your imagined destination, it's a journey and will take time to get there," added Ratcliffe. "Each step is important, and worth celebrating."

It helps to steer away from an "all or nothing" perspective too, according to the priest.

"If you miss a day, if you forget about your goal for a deeper spiritual life, you don't have to give up on the whole thing," she shared. "Each day is a new beginning, and we can treat it as such."

Dickieson-Leger reminds people that a year is a long time and a lot can change in 12 months.

"Commit only as far ahead

as you can imagine," shared the priest. "Try it for a week, maybe a month, or a liturgical season. Epiphany is seven weeks this year, for example. Try a spiritual practice until Ash Wednesday."

Something Dickieson-Leger practises is picking an intention for the year, which is more about a way of being than a particular action.

"I spend some time in the 12 days of Christmas to sit and pray, considering the year I've had, and how I want to enter into the new year." This "intention" helps inform her spiritual practices throughout the year.

In fact, Ratcliffe talked about less doing and more being in her personal life and in the life of her parish, too. Sabbath rest, in particular, is something she encourages.

"I think we could all do with listening to that commandment from God to take rest in our lives, to set time aside to be with God, and to get away from the busyness of life and the hustle and bustle, as Jesus so often modelled for us."

Perusing a past, forging a future



BY CYNTHIA PILICHOS FOR ANGLICANS POWERING POTENTIAL

As Christians, we believe in and pray to the one God, repeating this belief every Sunday when reciting the Apostles' or Nicene Creeds. However, the Roman gods, based on the Greek gods of mythology, are present with us daily throughout the year, as the names of a number of our months and days of the week come from the names of these gods of ancient mythology. Janus is the Roman god of beginnings, transitions, and doorways, often depicted with two faces looking in opposite directions, symbolizing his ability to see both the past and the future. It is this Roman god who has given us the name for January and who provides me with a symbol for a reflection and planning process related to the common practice of making New Year's resolutions in January. While Janus may have had the foresight to see the future, our human endeavour is that of planning a future and then preparing for it, while not knowing its outcome. In doing this reflection and consideration process for Anglicans Powering Potential (APP), I feel that we are in a continual liminal space (from the Latin "limen" or threshold). To be in liminal space is to be on the precipice of something new, a scary time of moving from the known to the unknown ... but ... we remember that not only will God make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert (Isaiah 43: 18-19), he also does his best work with his people in liminal space. This knowledge, along with one of my favourite quotations of Corrie ten Boom's, "Never be afraid to trust an unknown



Photo by Lydia Griva: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/ancient-golden-coin-on-dark-background-30123614/>

future to a known God," is helpful, as both the knowledge and quotation serve to reduce discomfort with uncertainty.

Anglicans Powering Potential, a diocesan entity unique to the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, is the successor to the former Anglican Church Women Diocesan Board. Our successor entity benefits, thankfully, from being founded on four key pillars of the former Anglican Church Women Diocesan Board: 1. Sound financial stewardship, with some endowed money; 2. Fundraising ability; 3. Partnership-building capacity; and, 4. A missional focus.

APP had a vision for a different future, one that would be grounded in the 4th Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion worldwide: To seek to transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind, and pursue peace and reconciliation. Why? Because "our relationship with God drives our intuition and hunger for social justice ..." (Heath S.)

With the foundational strength of the former Board to build on, we imagined a gender

inclusive/gender expansive network, so a different composition, as well as a different purpose (enhancing capacity for creative ministry) and function (awareness-raising, advocacy, and action – the 3 A's), with the emphasis on social transformation. APP's particular justice focus is gender equity and the many manifestations of gender-based violence.

We feel deeply that the relevancy of the church in today's society (regardless of denomination) requires us to show clearly that we are not only to "clothe the poor, feed the homeless, and comfort the afflicted" (Richard L), as important as these "tending" acts are; we are also to be a disciple of the "courageous social warrior, Jesus Christ" (Richard L), by striving to do what Dietrich Bonhoeffer notes as "not simply to bandage the wounds of the victims beneath the wheels of injustice, but to drive a spike in the wheel itself." APP imagines the spike as a series of nails of various sizes, as even small nails can do damage to the wheel of injustice, just as small acts of

justice-building can make a difference. Ultimately, with God's help, we seek to bring to life our baptismal covenant of "striv[ing] for justice and peace among all people, respect[ing] the dignity of every human being."

Since launching APP in the late fall of 2023, we have been involved in getting the word out about APP, leading and engaging in a number of workshop and learning events, participating in Synod 2025, primarily by presenting a resolution on the misuse of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), building partnerships (especially community collaborations), raising funds, awarding bursaries, and supporting a number of initiatives, all related to the 4th Mark of Mission. February's column will highlight a few key elements of what has been accomplished and what is being planned for 2026. Here is one for this January column, however: a financial appeal for the YWCA's Nova Scotia Transition and Advocacy for Youth (NSTAY) program in support of youth who have been sexually exploited and human trafficked.

See the APP ad in this issue.

How to contribute ...

Via cheque – Payable to Anglicans Powering Potential, NSTAY in the memo line, addressed to Marjorie Davis, 204, 111 Pebblecreek Dr., Dartmouth, NS B2W 0L1

Via e-transfer – To app. nspeidiocese@gmail.com with NSTAY and your name and postal address in the message field

We welcome your interest. Please email the address noted above or cjp2320@gmail.com

A prayer that Bishop Sandra Fyfe shared with us early in our journey of Anglicans Powering Potential coming into being remains a guidepost as we navigate a new future and a new calendar year:

"O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us" – Evangelical Lutheran Book of Worship



PARISH NEWS AND EVENTS

Do you have pictures or details of events you'd like to see published in *The Diocesan Times*? Email us at diocesantimes@gmail.com

Our finest gifts



BY THE REV. MARIAN LUCAS-JEFFERIES
COORDINATOR, DIOCESAN ENVIRONMENT NETWORK

Dear Diocese,
Blessed Epiphany everyone!
"Epiphany," in Greek means "appear, reveal, shine, give light." The light of that Christmas star they followed was a gift that led, as I read, "the wise ones to discover the birth of a new hope, a gift to the world, a baby who would himself be called "the light of the world."

These past 2000 years, people who call themselves Christians have not only been called to devote their lives to following that light called Jesus, but to respond to the call, to reflect that light through our actions, our relationship with each other, and with all of God's creation. And from time to time throughout history, God gives us the gift of some very bright lights, who lead and guide us, who are shining examples of how we might



Carole Aylard

live, who inform, inspire, and motivate us.

One of those special lights, one of God's gifts to the world, someone who devotes hours each week to keeping you informed is Carole, the editor of the Diocesan Environment Network (DEN) Enews. Carole and her team of contributors cause the lights to go on — epiphany moments.

Eva and Jessie inform us about how to advocate for

environmental justice. Claudia brightens our lives with her column in the Enews that covers everything from gardening to recycling, encouraging us to reduce waste with delicious recipes for home baking.

Carole not only collects the information from the contributors but shines a light on organizations and people who care passionately about God's creation expressed by the actions they take to protect it.

Carole produces weekly editorials that are informative, engaging, motivating, and (excuse the pun) enlightening. She is constantly looking for ways to improve the publication, and looking for contributors. She is spreading the news, sometimes good, and sometimes news that calls us to action.

Carole Aylard, a long-time member of The Church of Saint Andrew in Cole Harbour, an expert on plants and gardening, certified recycler (yes there is such a thing), still finds time for her grown children, grandchildren, friends (I happen to have the

honour of being one of those friends), paddling her kayak, playing the trombone, or creating breathtaking liturgical vestments (those fancy things clergy wear on Sunday mornings).

In a world where the church has so much to offer, and competition for people's attention is stiff, the ability to be able to share information is important. There is a learning curve that comes with effective use of social media as a blessing, rather than a curse, to share the message of hope that we, as people of faith, want to communicate.

Our call to ministry as the baptized, as followers of the one baptized so long ago, but one still present to us today, as individuals and as a community of followers, living out our baptism, responding to God's call, as followers of Jesus, is to continue to light the way, spreading the good news through the DEN Enews.

Please note: A year or so ago, Carole moved the Enews to a different format, one that requires subscribing (at no

cost). If this article caused you to realize that you haven't been receiving the Enews for a while, you can re-subscribe by scrolling to the bottom of the newsletter page on the following link. Type in your email address and hit send. It is simple and easy.

Link: <https://den-newsletter-7c4806.beehiiv.com/p/den-news-4900>

Or you can find a copy of the Enews on the DEN Facebook. Search for "Environment Network Diocese of NS & PEI" on Facebook.

If you want to contribute to the Enews, the deadline is Friday afternoon each week. Email endionspei@gmail.com

Delivery by email is on Tuesday morning at 9 a.m.

Blessings from the outer world,

The Rev. Marian Lucas-Jefferies

Coordinator, Diocesan Environment Network

For All The Saints – January 2026

SUBMITTED BY REV. JOHN K. MORRELL

EXCERPTED FROM STEPHEN REYNOLD'S "FOR ALL THE SAINTS"

January 28 - Thomas Aquinas, Priest and Friar, Teacher of the Faith, D. 1274

Born in Italy, which was part of the Kingdom of Sicily, Thomas Aquinas was destined for ordination by his family. He became a Dominican friar who spent most of his adult life teaching in universities, mostly Paris and many other schools and universities in Italy. His powers of concentration were legendary. He once stood in front of three different scribes and dictated three separate works at the same

time, without losing the train of his thought in any of them. Thomas was also a man of constant prayer: his students often found him kneeling beside his desk when he was working on a difficult theological question. He understood that he had his gifts to help the Church lay hold of "the truth as it is in Jesus."

Unlike many other theologians at that time, Thomas saw no contradiction between human reason and God's revelation. He once said that God gives grace not to destroy creation but to make it perfect — to raise it above itself, so that the whole human being, through its reason, might actively share in God's own life. The Church has gladly confirmed this insight — and

particularly by our own Anglican tradition.

January 30 - Charles Stuart - King of England and Scotland, 1649

Today we remember Charles I, who became King of England and Scotland in 1625. A shy man with refined tastes and a mild stutter, he was, in private life, a devoted husband and a loving father. As Supreme Governor of the Church of England, Charles's commitment to its life was whole-hearted. He usually began his day with two hours of private devotions, and he loved to attend the public liturgy, especially the Lord's Supper.

For eleven years, Charles counted himself "the happiest king in Christendom" — and with good reason. Since

England was at peace, he had no need to support a standing army or a large navy, and therefore no need to summon Parliament. His government was able to meet its needs by exploiting the customary prerogatives of the Crown. But behind the nation's apparent tranquillity, Charles's subjects seethed with grievances; and when he finally did call a Parliament, its members proved militant in their demands for redress and reform.

In 1642, he felt he had no choice but to raise the royal standard against them. After three years of civil war, Charles's armies were defeated in the field, and he was taken prisoner. Parliament wished to reform the Church of England according to a presbyterian

model, but Charles refused to surrender episcopacy and the Book of Common Prayer. An attempt to renew the civil war led the House of Commons to set the King on trial. The tribunal's verdict was a foregone conclusion, and Charles was sentenced to death.

On January thirtieth, 1649, he stepped out onto a public scaffold. "I have a good cause," he said, "and I have a gracious God; I will say no more. But a little after I go from a corruptible to an incorruptible crown, where no disturbance can be, no disturbance in the world." The King knelt, said a brief prayer, then laid his head on the block. He died under one stroke of the axe.

Visions of a stone Cathedral

BY THE REV'D TAUNYA J. DAWSON
CHAIR, DIOCESAN ARCHIVES COMMITTEE
DIOCESE OF NOVA SCOTIA AND P.E.I.

As we are poised to begin a new liturgical year, I remembered that, in 2025, our Cathedral building turned 115 years old, or perhaps, as they say, "115 years young". The Cathedral congregation has recently embarked on a "Rising Up" plan, intended to shape the Cathedral and its position in the community and the Diocese. The plan also includes maintaining and restoring the Cathedral building itself.

While reflecting on this and researching the history of the Cathedral, I was reminded of an inspiring letter (held by the Diocesan Archives) written by Bishop Hibbert Binney at Christmastide in 1872. Binney had become the fourth Bishop of Nova Scotia in 1851. He was a Tractarian, raised out of the Oxford Movement, and for him the sacramental life of the church – celebration and prayer – was key to the religious well-being of the Diocese. His letter petitioned members of the "Church of England in the Diocese of Nova Scotia" to support his vision of building a Cathedral Church.

In 1864, the wooden St. Luke's Church, erected on Morris Street in 1845, became the "pro-cathedral" when Binney decided to leave St. Paul's Church. Shortly thereafter in 1865, he obtained from Queen Victoria "letters patent" for a "Dean and Chapter" with permission to have a stone Cathedral for the Diocese built.

He dreamed of a Cathedral that would suit the needs of the expanding suburbs in the West End of Halifax. Perhaps, St. Luke's was becoming too small for the congregation and special gatherings. We might certainly pray to have such problems today!

This was not necessarily well-received in Nova Scotia. In his letter, Binney expressed his disappointment in the initial response, noting that he thought that "... the hearts of Churchmen would have been stirred within them, and that zealous men would have been anxious to erect, to the Glory of God, a building for public worship in harmony at least, with the most advanced structures appropriated to secular purposes ..." My heart was with him as I read this. Great



Interior of the Cathedral © Diocesan Archives



Painting of the Cathedral, which hangs in the hallway of the Cathedral Office

things can be accomplished only when we work together, have faith in God, and give freely of what we have.

The Victorian age – like our own – was one of rapid progress and "development." The Church at the time expanded its buildings, not only to meet the needs of growing (mostly urban) populations, but to offer a visible alternative to the built opulence that came out of industrial capitalism. Beautiful public architecture could reflect the glory of God, not just the wealth of the rich or the proliferation of railway stations.

Bishop Binney felt that "... there ought to be in every Diocese one Central Church, testifying to the love of the people for the House of God," and urged his Diocese "to make this house of Prayer worthy of the purpose for which it is designed ..." And his perse-

verance paid off. The Cathedral stands today as a testimony to our love of Christ.

Binney would die on April 30, 1887, five years after writing this letter, and would not see his vision realized during his time on earth. The cornerstone of the Cathedral would be laid three months later, on August 12, 1887. Binney's vision would come to fruition 28 years later, on September 3, 1910, with the sixth Bishop of Nova Scotia, Bishop Clarendon Lamb Worrell, celebrating at its official opening.

His legacy continued in the Cathedral with the high altar and a carved oak pulpit, funded by the will of his wife, the late Mrs. Mary Binney, who had died in 1903. Her father, William Blowers Bliss, sharing Binney's grand vision, had previously donated a site for the cathedral on Robie Street at the head of Spring Garden



© Diocesan Archives

Road. The pulpit itself bears the statues of five great preachers: Saint Paul, Saint Peter, Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Augustine, and Saint Columba. Like much of the wood carving in All Saints', this is the work of the English craftsman Robert Thompson, "the Mouse Man," whose carved mice appear in subtle locations within his works. (You will have to come to the Cathedral and look for them!)

Our Diocese contains many extraordinarily beautiful church buildings. Our buildings are our footprint in our communities. They are where we meet, pray, and do God's work. They are a visible manifestation of Christ's Church here on earth. And they are monuments to the sacrifices that our predecessors made to create such places of beauty and calm. As we look forward, we should also celebrate the firm foundations that we have

inherited.

A fine example of perpendicular gothic revival style, the Cathedral Church of All Saints' has long been a sacred place, where members and visitors have prayed and worshipped throughout successive liturgical years. It has offered shelter, warmth, and light during times of trial. It has also itself been a victim of storms and natural powers – and has risen again, in its present glorious form.

So, when you visit the Cathedral, pause on your way to the altar to take a look at the carved Cathedra Bishop's chair, which graces the top right-hand side of our chancel, and reflect on what Binney's vision achieved. Our Diocesan spiritual home is more than just an old stone building; it is a sacred space where we can all gather to offer our love and prayers to God.

Stones, souls, and... Documenting the deconsecration

INTERVIEW BY JENNIFER ANAND
DANAYAGAM

PHOTOS © MICHAEL G. WINTERS

For Michael G. Winters, a deconsecrated church building, at each stage of its life, holds special interest. Winters believes that the structures "feel" an immense sense of pride when they're dedicated as a home of faith for a faith community, but that they also "feel" regret, change, and loss when this blessing of consecration is removed. The structure, then, assumes a new and secular life, leading to more "feelings."

"Their stories must often include many emotions of heartache, from losing its purpose in life and beloved congregants, and often, the result of abandonment, decay and demise," shared Winters. "The building might also experience a feeling of rebirth and renewal, if it is one of the fortunate structures which become a private residence or community facility."

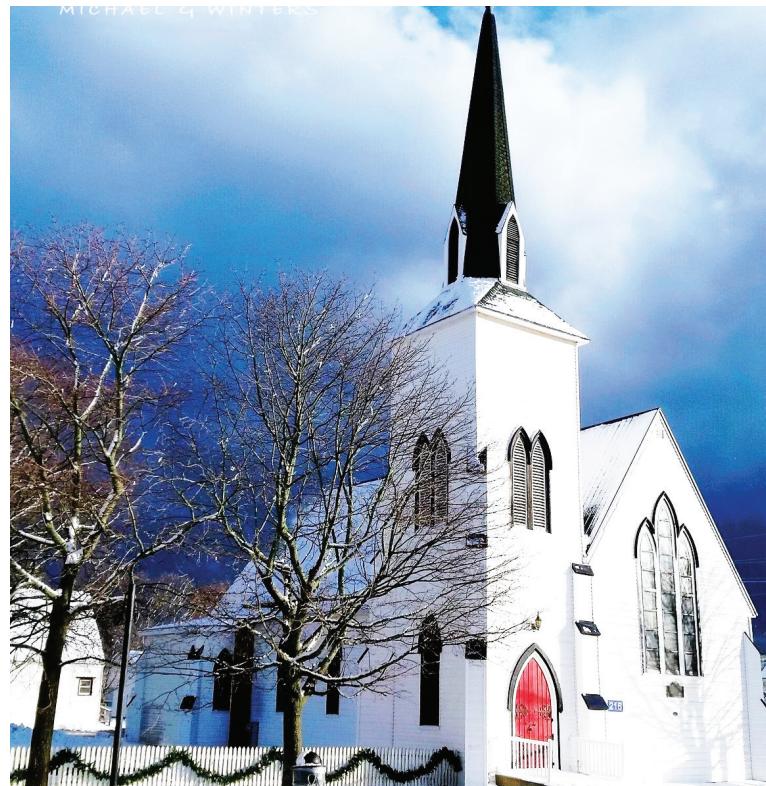
Winters, an Anglican himself, was born and raised in Parrsboro, Cumberland County, N.S. Before retiring from active employment in Vancouver in 2016, and moving back home to the East, he'd imagined a retirement project that would breathe life into two of his passions — travel and photography.

This is how "Anglican churches in Nova Scotia" began. Anyone who's ever searched for anything related to Anglican churches in the province on Facebook, would've come across the page.

"My vision also included creating content of a spiritual nature that would be personally meaningful," explained Winters. "As an Anglican with a long-standing curiosity about church architecture and history, I decided the ideal project would be to travel the roads of Nova Scotia to locate, photograph and later research, every active and existing deconsecrated Anglican Church structure in this beautiful province."

Following are some excerpts from my chat with Winters, where he walks me through his experience of documenting deconsecrated Anglican churches in N.S. There is mystery and heartache, but there is also hope in his account.

How many deconsecrated Anglican churches have you identified and documented so far in Nova Scotia?



St. George's Anglican Church, Parrsboro. Winters' childhood church.



Michael Winters

During my travels, I have located many deconsecrated church buildings that are still standing — perhaps 12 or so that have remained as property of a parish and maintained in good condition, and there have been a few that still belong to a parish but regrettably, have been not been provided with a satisfactory upkeep. Of the deconsecrated structures that have been sold to private interests, around 17 have been marvelously restored as beautiful residences, and 14 that are currently in private ownership, with no set plans for their future use. I have enjoyed seeing two that have become museums, two that have been re-imagined as community art centres, and two others that are now bed and breakfast operations. I have gone to the sites of 23 former Anglican church buildings that have been purposely demolished, plus three that were lost as a result of acci-



Simon Gibbons monument, Parrsboro

dental fire or arson. I am happy to know of at least seven Anglican Churches that I visited were, after deconsecration, quickly sold for use by other faith communities.

I have also visited the grounds of many previously deconsecrated church buildings that have been demolished. Fortunately, in many of those cases, the location has been commemorated with an inscribed stone marker or the bell from the former church. It has been disappointing to have seen or learnt that the buildings that have been sadly left to rot and ultimately return to the ground upon which they once proudly stood, have succumbed to major damage by humans or hurricanes, or have been the unfortunate victims of arson.

Can you share an example of a deconsecrated church with a particularly unique or surprising



MICHAEL G. WINTERS

Example of restored church: St. Alban's, Lequille

history?

Very recently, I learned about the former St. Paul's Anglican Church in the tiny community of Point Cross, near Chéticamp in Inverness County. A documented history of St. Paul's tells us that, "in the late 19th century, Saint Paul's Anglican Church was erected in Point Cross to meet the spiritual needs of young men from the Isle of Jersey. These men were brought to Chéticamp to work for the Philip Robin Company. The Robins were in the practice of bringing young men over from the Isle of Jersey to work short contracts. These workers were Protestant, being descendants of the French Huguenots who settled in Jersey to escape religious persecution. To meet the workers' spiritual needs, Saint Paul's Anglican Church was erected in Point Cross on land belonging to the Robins. The funds to finance its construction were raised by residents of the Isle of Jersey, much like money would be collected for mission work today. Existing evidence points to 1884 as the year of construction. One of the planks on the inside of the belfry bore the signatures of three Jersey carpenters who worked on the church and the date 1884. In the late 1900s, with Jersey's population dwindling, the church's maintenance became

too much of a financial burden, and the "Old Jersey church," as it came to be known, was left to the mercy of the elements. The unavoidable result was that the structure weakened and eventually collapsed in a vicious gale on December 06, 1984."

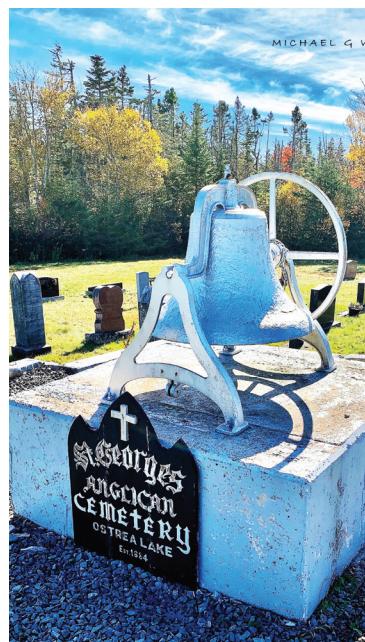
What are some of the most common reasons you've found for these churches being closed or deconsecrated?

Without a doubt, I find throughout the whole faith community, that it is the ever-increasing decline in church attendance that contributes to church buildings being closed. There are, of course, several "reasons" that may cause fewer and fewer people to "go to church," and those may include societal changes such as opportunities to view webcast services online, a transition away from parental values for younger members of our communities, and age-related and health issues for older citizens. Today's economic situation may, for many, cause fewer dollars to be placed in the collection plate. The "old money" that was long collected in well-established churches is just no longer there, as wealthy families pass on, and people moving away from small towns and villages to find employment in larger areas doesn't help church attendance in smaller communities.

Second chances for deconsecrated churches of Nova Scotia



Example of restored church: Holy Trinity, Stewiacke



Example of monument: St. George's, Ostrea Lake

were used to build a new structure atop the stone walls that once supported the church, creating a new style, beach-side residence that visibly is very modern-looking, yet still resembles the outline of the previous church.

In your research, have you found examples of communities successfully re-purposing a former church building in a way that continues to honour its history?

There are many former (deconsecrated) Anglican church buildings remaining across the Province of Nova Scotia, but unfortunately in my opinion, very little care is given to them by many of their individual owners. It seems it is only when a community gets involved do great things happen.

St. John's Anglican Church in Arichat was deconsecrated in 2014, and after a very success-



Historic old Trinity Anglican Church, Middleton

What have been some of the most interesting or unusual second lives these deconsecrated buildings have taken on?

The large majority of existing deconsecrated Anglican church buildings that I have visited, or documented without yet visiting, have found new life as residential structures, whether that has resulted in it becoming a single

large, grand home or reconfiguration as beautiful, individual condominium units.

I have seen a few put to use as various entities, including antique and/or craft stores, art galleries, bed and breakfasts, and museums. One church building was brought down to its foundation walls, and many of its salvageable, strong wooden beams and components

ties, and understandably, local residents become upset at what they believe they will be losing. Their first thought seems to be, "oh no, another church will be torn down." I always try and let them know that will not necessarily be the case, but if the site is re-purposed, there is a good chance a renovated, restored, or new structure will be created, one of which the community will be proud.

Is there a particular deconsecrated church that resonated with you on a personal level, and if so, why?

I have a fondness for the several church buildings in Nova Scotia that were designed by the Reverend Simon Gibbons, who was Canada's first Inuit Anglican Priest. Gibbons' story is one of adventure and resilience, and particularly speaks to me because of his deep faith and his ability, under difficult pressure, to "get things done!" Simon Gibbons served in several parishes in the province, and ended his long life of dedicated ministry, as rector of my childhood church, St. George's Anglican, in my hometown of Parrsboro, Nova Scotia.

I have occasionally visited the site of one of his former churches in Neil's Harbour, and still-existing churches in Baddeck and Jordan Falls; however, several reminders of Simon Gibbons' lifelong work greet me each time I visit my home town. When I drive along the highway in tiny Moose River, Cumberland County, I always slow down to get a glimpse of, or stop to admire one of his creations, tiny St. Mark's. This is still a beautifully-kept structure with its Gibbons' distinctive bell tower roof, formed like four diamonds whose lower points mark the corners of the tower. This design was also once seen nearby at St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church, long deconsecrated and demolished in Diligent River, only a few kilometres on the other side of Parrsboro. When I go to my ancestral grave sites in St. George's Anglican Cemetery, I also usually walk a few steps away from my parents' graves, to visit there, the beautiful stone monument that marks the burial site of the Reverend Simon Gibbons.

ful community initiative, was taken over by the Friends of St. John. After a loving and wonderful restoration, the beautiful St. John Centre for the Arts now graces the former church site and enhances the history of both the former church and the village and local area of Isle Madame.

It was a totally different story for the former All Saints Anglican Church, which existed in Granville Centre, Annapolis County for just under 200 years. In 2009, after All Saints had been deconsecrated, it was dismantled and put into storage. It passed its 200th birthday in pieces in a warehouse, before being sold and shipped to Abita Springs, Louisiana, where it was re-constructed and served as that community's Baptist Church. Given its age and long local history, many Granville Centre residents wondered how history was used, abused, or ignored when it was sold. Incidentally, the building, once so important to the early Anglican church history of Annapolis County, is, or was recently, up for sale again.

What has been the community reaction to the closing and re-purposing of these churches in the various towns you've visited?

When I speak with people about Anglican churches that have been closed and deconsecrated, the first emotion they tell me they are experiencing, is one of sadness, whether or not they have ever been associated with the church. Church buildings have long been considered the hub of many small communi-

We can do better

BY ANDREW SHERIN

Scott MacAfee, Chairperson, National Advisory Council on Poverty said in his letter introducing the 2025 Report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty, "I'm heartened to report that countless individuals and organizations across Canada are deeply dedicated to improving the daily lives of others. They hold their communities close to their heart and care for those in need of support. As we move forward, we must find better ways to support them, and to look out for one another." The report is entitled, "We can do better: it is not a safety net if the holes are this big."

In my last column in December, I quoted Erika Shea, New Dawn Enterprises — "Everyone is doing their best, it is just not enough." In the Chronicle Herald on November 16, 2025, Ash Avery, Executive Director of Feed Nova Scotia is quoted as saying, "[Our] partners are just not able to keep up with demand, we're definitely just all really stretched to the limit."

So as we enter a new year, 2026 — what is the state of poverty in Canada as presented in the report? After six years (2015-2020) of a declining rate of poverty nationally, the rate has increased in the period 2021 to 2023 albeit more slowly between 2022 and 2023, meaning nearly 4 million people are still experiencing poverty in Canada. Nova Scotia had the highest rate of poverty of any province in Canada (12.9 %, 2023). Prince Edward Island had a lower rate at 11.3% and notably the highest welfare benefits for a single parent with one child at 86% of the poverty line threshold. The highest, but still represents a family living in poverty. The federal government has a target of reducing the number of persons and families experiencing poverty by 50 % below the 2015 level by 2030. Can we meet the target? Is 50 % reduction good enough?

One section of the report is entitled, "Why it matters. Reducing the suffering caused by poverty matters because poverty is persistent, poverty is an ongoing struggle, poverty is dehumanizing, poverty is systemic, poverty can be the result of discrimination, poverty is divisive and erodes social cohesion, and poverty needs to be prevented."

So what are the better ways



Photo by Levi Meir Clancy on Unsplash

Scott MacAfee is talking about? Let's have a look at what the survey conducted by Carleton University's Charity Insights Canada Project (CICP) says — that the non-profit sector faces compounding crises — rising demand that outpaces organizational capacity, financial unreliability that prevents long-term sustainability, and workforce turnover that interrupts both programs and client care. For those in our churches supporting food banks and other initiatives directed at food insecurity, this is a stark reality. Community organizations, including faith groups, are identified by respondents quoted in the report as the most helpful, where staff and volunteers treat persons living in poverty with dignity and respect.

The report makes recommendations to the Government of Canada for transfers to the provinces, but the recommendations are also relevant at other levels of government.

Fund the core operations of non-profit groups that help reduce poverty and support people experiencing poverty.

Provide stable, long-term, operational funding for non-profit organizations.

Provide fair and equitable wages and working conditions for their employees.

Allow flexibility to meet the complex and evolving needs of individuals.

Encourage the development and implementation of initia-

tives that focus on early interventions and prevention.

Include an accountability framework with clear criteria.

Focus on equity to help ensure that the funds serve individuals experiencing poverty — particularly those made most marginal.

In addition to continuing and strengthening the initiatives you and your congregation are already doing to help individuals and families living in poverty, I suggest that you write a letter to your Member of Parliament and/or relevant provincial politician asking them if they have read the report and how they will take action on the recommendations. As a congregation, develop a relationship with a local organization serving individuals and families living in poverty in your community. How can your congregation best help them serve the community?

In closing, I want to quote from the report. "The Council believes that everyone deserves a life with dignity, where systems treat people with respect and provide them with opportunities to achieve their goals. By accepting poverty, we are accepting the dehumanization and marginalization of others. People need humanity, someone to listen to them, to guide them, to wake them up when needed. Yes, housing, food, security are important, but there is a need for dignity and hope as well. Money is not the only need: they need hope."

Some words heard by the Council from persons experiencing poverty:

"The whole system is very judgmental."

"We are already poor. We are all humiliated, and we need to be appreciative for the small amount we get."

"Too many people are comfortable and don't know what it is like to be uncomfortable, so they don't care if people are homeless."

As communities of faith, are we judgmental, do we care?

On community organizations:

"The support I got here was amazing. I wouldn't be alive without it."

"It is pure love as soon as you walk through the door."

"Programs like [this one] restore some sort of hope."

"I want people to know that there is help out there. I needed to know that when I was younger."

"They treat us with respect."

"Help comes from each other."

In both the November and December DT, it was reported there were 1,132 persons identified by Point in Time count (PiT) as experiencing homelessness (1,009 adults and 123 children) in HRM. These were the figures for the 2024 PiT. In October 2025, a new PiT was conducted by the Affordable Housing

Association of Nova Scotia and the Mi'kmaw Friendship Centre. The 2025 HRM Point-in-Time Count identified 1,150 individuals experiencing homelessness on the night of 15 October 2025. The number of unsheltered persons increased from 151 to 197. Better information on hidden homelessness (e.g. couch surfing) was also acquired but not considered a complete count.

Community Roots

Bringing kids' ministry to your community again this summer

BY ALLIE COLP

It's that time of year again already. Soon applications will open for parishes to apply to participate in the Community Roots Day Camp program.

Community Roots has been an ongoing program in our diocese since the summer of 2018, and each year participating parishes have been able to offer a full week of fun and engaging day camp for kids while local volunteers were also trained and equipped to continue to do meaningful ministry beyond the summer months.

While nearly 20 parishes in the diocese have been part of the program in some way, there are still parishes who just aren't sure what it's all about, and aren't sure whether or not Community Roots would be a good fit for them. So, I've put together a list of four things that might make your parish just right for Community Roots this year!

You're a parish with an active Sunday School looking to connect more with the kids and families who are part of your church.

We've absolutely had par-



ishes just like these be part of our program in the past. Our summer staff team comes in with all of the supplies, does a bit of camp-specific training for volunteers who already have experience of ministry with kids, and a special kind of magic happens. In the first year of a parish participating in the program, our staff take on most of the leadership, freeing up volunteers to focus on building relationships with campers, and when you're starting from an established base, a week of camp offers so much time to get to know one another better, and to learn and grow together.

Your parish has a few families who attend regu-

larly, and a few kids who come sometimes when they are visiting grandparents, and you aren't sure how to get something started for them.

I can't tell you how many parishes have told me that this is their situation, and that they wish they could do something like Community Roots, but they feel like that isn't enough, but I can tell you that every time one of those parishes has decided to go for it anyway, they were surprised at how it went. Community Roots can provide an opportunity for casual or loose connections that kids or families have to your church community.

Your parish used to do vacation bible school or some other children's ministry, but hasn't for a while and you'd like to try to do something again, and need some help to make it happen.

We might be a few years past the height of the pandemic, but the repercussions of that time on many ministries is still felt very keenly. Year after year, our summer staff are skilled at breathing a little new life into places that need it, and bring people up to date on best practices for working with children, and help get things going again. We take care of all of the registration and administrative work of the program, which

can help shake off some of the nerves that come with picking something back up again.

You are a parish with a heart for your neighbourhood, looking for new ways to make connections and serve your community.

We don't have the actual statistics on this, but approximately 80% of our campers don't have any connection to the church hosting camp, so we know that this is a meaningful way to make new connections. Families in communities throughout the diocese are searching for quality programs for their children in the summer, so we know that there is a need that we can help meet. So, if your parish is looking for new ways to love your neighbours well – this might be it.

Applications for parishes to participate in Community Roots in the summer of 2026 will open in late January. Stay tuned to Net News for more details, or contact Allie at youthandfamily@nspeidiocese.ca at any time to talk about whether or not this might be the summer for your parish to give Community Roots a try.

Planning with purpose

Getting your legacy program off on the right foot in 2026

As vestry season unfolds, many parish councils and stewardship committees are taking stock of the year behind them and planning faithfully for what lies ahead. For some, this is the moment when a familiar refrain is heard: "We should really do more about legacy giving."

It's an area of stewardship many churches aspire to strengthen but rarely find the right moment — or the right tools — to begin. Resources from secular charities don't always translate to a faith-based context, and conversations about wills and bequests can feel awkward or out of place in parish life.

"We often hear from parishes that they want to start the conversation about legacy giving, but they're not sure how," says Michelle Hauser, Development and Communications Officer for the Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC). "That's exactly why we created the Legacy



Talk Parish Toolkit — to make it easier, more natural, and more spiritually grounded."

Rather than focusing on fundraising, Legacy Talk connects legacy giving to gratitude, discipleship, and hope for the future of the Church. Each seasonal toolkit aligns with the

rhythms of the liturgical year, offering clergy and lay leaders reflections, bulletin inserts, sample messages, and practical templates that can be adapted to any parish setting.

The Vestry Season Toolkit provides a Parish Council Checklist — simple, concrete

steps that help normalize legacy giving as part of a parish's ongoing stewardship practice:

Add legacy giving to stewardship discussions; include a legacy paragraph in the vestry report; mention bequest options in bulletins or on your website; and thank legacy

donors when appropriate.

"For many churches, the checklist is a great place to start," says Hauser. "It helps parishes move from 'we should do something' to actually feeling confident about making legacy giving part of their spiritual DNA."

Other editions — Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Ordinary Time, All Saints', and Advent—Christmas — offer reflections and resources to build a year-round rhythm of gratitude and generosity.

"Our hope," says Hauser, "is that 2026 will be the year more church communities feel inspired to take that next faithful step — turning good intentions into lasting impact."

To explore or download the full Legacy Talk series, visit anglicanfoundation.org/legacytalk.

Alongside Hope partnership with Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre

BY GILLIAN POWER, JEANINE CUDMORE, AND LEAH MARSHALL

What is your relationship to the land? Organizations like the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM), which exist to help Indigenous peoples and nations to gather, generate, and transfer their cultural knowledge, create programs and experiences that bring people back to the land. CMM, an Alongside Hope partner, has been working for much of the last decade on building and expanding the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre.

Nine Elders from throughout Nova Scotia have worked as an Advisory Council to bring together Mi'kmaw perspectives on the past with the scientific work of geologists and archaeologists working on the late Pleistocene and early Holocene periods. With enthusiasm and insight, they have distilled what they want to protect and shared and communicated for future generations at the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre. The development of the Paleo Catalog is one way to work towards and share a Mi'kmaw science model that incorporates Mi'kmaw stories, knowledge, and patterns. This centre will eventually house 4,500 belongings excavated from the site between 1963 and



1965 – now set to be returned once the facility is complete and secure.

Executive Director Tim Bernard and Elder Dr. Don Julien shared that the centre will welcome visitors to learn about Mi'kmaw history, language, and culture, while also offering healing spaces for Residential School Survivors and their descendants. Designed to be net-zero carbon, the building reflects a commitment to honouring the past while protecting the future.

Christ Church Dartmouth hosted a visit from Tim Bernard at its service on Sunday, November 23. MDCC and specifically the return of Mi'kmaw belongings from the Smithsonian, were a focus of their

last Lenten Alongside Hope fundraising at Christ Church.

Tim Bernard described the project as “one step closer” to reality – a place of stories, healing, and community where Mi'kmaw people can share their knowledge and connection to the land. He confirmed the architectural designs are complete, with construction tenders planned for spring 2026, shovels in the ground by summer 2026, and an opening projected for November 2028. The total project cost is \$48.5 million, with a \$10-million funding gap remaining.

One of the programs that is currently available through the cultural centre is a beautiful 4.4 km-long interpretive trail. Interpretive signs along

the trail tell the history of the sites and of the Mi'kmaq people. This has allowed the Mi'kmawey Debert Elders' Advisory Council to tell the 11,000-year history of their people in their own words. The trail, along with other initiatives, is being used to help members of the Mi'kmaq nation to rediscover their history and take pride in their vibrant culture.

“Picture an ice-age landscape with mastodons, caribou, and giant beavers wandering over the tundra that covered Mi'kma'ki more than 11,000 years ago. Imagine communities of people who lived at the base of the Cobequid Mountains for more than a thousand years. This is the story of the Mi'kmawey Debert Interpretive Trail.” (MDCC, 2025).

A dynamic and meaningful centre for Mi'kmaw people and for visitors from across Nova Scotia, Canada, and the world, this will be “a coming home place.” Visitor experiences will encompass archaeological sites, outdoor trails, and immersion in Mi'kmaw worldviews and perspectives of the near and distant past. It will be a place for people to go to celebrate who the Indigenous people are, have been, and will be. They will ask their own questions and tell their own

stories to each other and the world.

The future cultural centre is dedicated to sharing, protecting, and exploring the stories and lives of the earliest ancestors and those who have come after them in Mi'kma'ki.

“It will be a place for understanding, healing, and reconciliation for Mi'kma'ki and beyond.” (cmmns.com)

Alongside Hope is supporting the three-year project “Home to Mi'kma'ki: Phases II and III” in partnership with MDCC, valued at \$50,000 per year (\$150,000 in total). The project is being implemented from November 2024 to October 2026. The project is supporting community members associated with MDCC and staff to travel to the National Museum of the American Indian (NMIA), part of the Smithsonian Institute, to repair, restore, and stabilize historic artefacts belonging to the Mi'kmaw People. These historic artefacts will be returned to Mi'kma'ki and be displayed in the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre when it opens for people to learn more about the culture and heritage of Mi'kmaw People.

St. Francis by the Lakes Anglican Church in Lower Sackville receives AFC Community Ministry Partnerships grant

St. Francis by the Lakes in Lower Sackville, N.S. is one of 12 ministries across Canada that is receiving support through the Anglican Foundation of Canada's 2025 Request for Proposals: Community Ministry Partnerships.

In collaboration with Beacon House, the parish will provide donated computers, hands-on technology support, and one-on-one guidance for guests navigating housing systems, employment applications, and essential online services – helping to reduce digital isolation for vulnerable neighbours.

This initiative is supported through a \$2,800 grant from AFC's Community Ministries Fund.

AFC's 2025 RFP reveals partnerships of depth, imagination, and care

On a winter afternoon in Lower Sackville, N.S., a parish volunteer sits beside a guest at Beacon House, the local

shelter. Together they lean over a donated laptop from St. Francis by the Lakes, working through the small steps that open doors: creating an email address, accessing job postings, checking on housing applications. It is quiet work, almost invisible, but it is the kind of steady, neighbourly help that makes someone feel less alone.

Scenes like this one emerged repeatedly in AFC's 2025 Request for Proposals (RFP) on the theme of Community Ministry Partnerships. “They came from rural parishes and urban churches, from Atlantic Canada to the Prairies to Southern Ontario,” says Dr. Scott Brubacher, Executive Director. “Each proposal carried a simple message: that community ministry is strongest when Anglicans work shoulder to shoulder with the people and organizations who share their concern for well-being, dignity, and belonging.”

The strength of the proposals – and the depth of partnership they revealed – led the AFC Board to release additional funds beyond the \$50,000 envelope originally allocated for this RFP cycle. In total, more than \$80,000 was awarded to 12 applicants, representing a group of ministries across the Anglican Church of Canada that are grounded in trust, relevance, and sustained relationships within their communities.

Partnerships that inspired

“As we read through the submissions, certain partnerships stood out,” explains the Rev. Natasha Henderson, Chair of the AFC Grants Committee. “Not because they were large or expensive, but because they inspired us: showing how a parish can develop deep relationships with other organizations in the community, meeting the needs of its neighbours.”

RFP 2025 Grant Awards

Category A – Local (up to \$5,000)

- Anglican Parish of St. Mary's, Clarenville, NL (Diocese of Central Newfoundland) – \$5,000

- St. George's Anglican Church, Goderich, ON (Diocese of Huron) – \$5,000

- St. Mark's Anglican Church, London, ON (Diocese of Huron) – \$5,000

- St. Mark's-by-the-Lake, Tecumseh, ON (Diocese of Huron) – \$4,400

- St. Matthew's Anglican Church, Florence, ON (Diocese of Huron) – \$5,000

- St. Francis by the Lakes, Lower Sackville, NS (Diocese of Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island) – \$2,800

- St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church, Napanee, ON (Diocese of Ontario) – \$5,000

- St. Helen's Anglican Church,

Ottawa, ON (Diocese of Ottawa) – \$5,000

- Parish of All Saints, Leask, SK (Diocese of Saskatchewan) – \$3,100

Category B – Regional (up to \$15,000)

- All Saints' Anglican Church, Waterloo, ON (Diocese of Huron) – \$15,000

- Grace Anglican Church, Brantford, ON (Diocese of Huron) – \$10,000

- St. Philip's Anglican Church, Etobicoke, ON (Diocese of Toronto) – \$15,000

AFC will announce the theme of the 2026 RFP following the February meeting of the Board of Directors. Connect with AFC via www.anglicanfoundation.org/ to stay informed about this and other special funding opportunities.

Needlepoint in the Cathedral (with a diocesan reach)



BY CYNTHIA PILICHOS FOR THE CATHEDRAL'S NEEDLEPOINT COMMITTEE

The compelling desire to honour and preserve the sacred and beautiful art of the needlepoint kneelers and cushions in the Cathedral, and the many who made this artistry possible, is the inspiration guiding the current Cathedral's Needlepoint Committee. That is why the goal of the current Needlepoint Committee is the production of a book of photos and text that has the potential to do just that — honour and preserve this incredible story of faith and love.

It was the goal of the original Needlepoint Committee in the 1980s/90s to have the beautifully designed canvases (by designer Geoff Smith of Monomia, Toronto) completed,

so there was a quest to secure stitchers to do this beautiful handwork.

The inspiration for the needlepoint kneelers and cushions in the first place was that of the then Dean, the Very Rev. Austin Monroe. Dean Monroe had seen needlepoint kneelers and cushions in the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., when he had attended a North American Deans' Conference there, and he had a vision for similar beauty in our diocesan Cathedral in Halifax.

However, not only was there motivation for there to be sacred art pieces of beauty gracing the Cathedral, there was the Dean's vision of how such an enterprise could be a connective link for the parishes to the Cathedral. How? The invitation would go out to welcome stitchers in the parishes of the diocese to do the actual needlepoint stitching of kneelers and cushions.

Happily, the invitation was accepted by many parishes, as stitchers from the following parishes in the noted regions participated: Cape Breton: Neil's Harbour with Ingonis and Sydney Mines/Baddeck; Chebucto: Apostles (formerly St. Philip's), Cathedral,

Emmanuel (Spryfield), St. Augustine (Jollimore, deconsecrated), St. George's, St. James (Armdale and Herring Cove), St. Margaret of Scotland, St. Mark's, and St. Paul's; Chignecto: Christ Church (Amherst & Lantz - ACW), Maitland, St. George's (Parrsboro), St. John's (Truro); Dartmouth: Christ Church; St. Alban's (Woodside), St. John's (Westphal) and St. Luke's; Northumbria: Christ Church (Stellarton), Good Shepherd (Tidnish), St. Bees (Westville), St. James (Pictou), St. John's (Arichat); Rivers to Trails: All Saints (Bedford), French Village (St. George's, St. Paul's), St. Luke's (Hubbards), and Waverly; South Shore: La Have/Blue Rocks, St. Augustine's (Conquerall Bank), St. John's (Lunenburg), St. Martin's (Western Shore), Trinity (Liverpool); Valley: Annapolis, Port Greville, Rawdon, St. John's (Cornwallis & Wolfville) and St. James (Kentville).

The original Needlepoint Committee had the task of creating kits for the stitchers, wherever they were in the diocese. These kits had everything the stitcher would need: the canvas with the printed design on it; the many coloured Persian wool strands, cut to

appropriate lengths; instructions; and contact information for how to secure help, if needed. Often it was the rector of the parish who would be the "delivery person" for these kits to the parish stitchers and then the conveyor of the finished product back to the Cathedral.

The current Cathedral Needlepoint Project is appealing to the parishes and individuals in the parishes again, this time to contribute to the production of the book of photos and text. How? First, with your prayers for the success of the book production process, and, second, with your financial contribution towards the production of the book that will showcase this sacred art, tell the stories conveyed in the designs, and honour the creators (75 women and 3 men, with more about them in the February 2026 column).

Contributions can be made in memory of, or in gratitude for, a loved one. If so, please be sure to include the name of the person(s) being memorialized/honoured with your contribution.

Via cheque: payable to the Cathedral Church of All Saints, Needlepoint Project in the memo line, addressed to the

Cathedral Church of All Saints, 1340 Cathedral Lane, Halifax, NS B3H 2Z1.

Via e-transfer: treasurercas@eastlink.ca with Needlepoint Project in the message field. Include your name and postal address in order to receive an income tax receipt.

All financial support for this project will be publicly acknowledged/recognized, unless the donor wishes otherwise. Plans are underway to place a framed scroll in the Cathedral that will recognize all donors.

One never fails to be impressed by the scope of the original project in the 1980s/1990s — the number of participating parishes, the number of stitchers, and the organization of the whole enterprise are significant commendable features. The original project did create a great link between the parishes and the Cathedral. May this same link be there and enhanced with Phase 2 — the book production process. Your prayers and contributions for the success of this honouring and preserving of sacred art and its creators are so welcome and so appreciated.

On November 1, 2025 St. Francis by the Lakes, Lower Sackville marked the feast of All Saints with a celebration of new ministry, and a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the parish.

The new rector, the Rev. Will Ferrey, was presented with symbols as he was formally welcomed into his new role, which began July 16. The Rev. Dr. Dawna Wall preached

a wonderful and thought-provoking homily, and the Rev. Archdeacon Brianna Andrews presided over the celebration of new ministry.

Over a 100 people, including parishioners, guests, and clergy from around the diocese joined together to thank God for 50 years of mission and ministry, and to help launch the newest phase of parish life. The service was followed by a

parish potluck, and a time of fellowship and reminiscing of all the wonderful memories in the parish. A special song, "St. Francis is Fifty," which was written by parishioner Bob Strong, was also sung. The parish has locally made commemorative candles in a variety of scents available for purchase. Contact rector@st-francisbythelakes.ca for more info.



Rev. Dr. Dawna Wall, Rev. Will Ferrey, and Archdeacon Brianna Andrews

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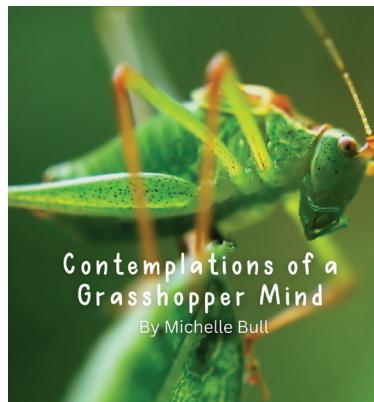


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New Year's resolutions



BY MICHELLE BULL

January! A whole New Year. A new year with no mistakes in it yet, as I believe Anne Shirley said in L.M. Montgomery's books. A blank slate we can do whatever we like with. Within reason. It has possibilities, potential. It's kind of exciting.

My association with New Year is resolutions. Well, parties, too, but not lately — it's too late to stay up. But every year growing up, I would make resolutions, a lot of resolutions. I had categories: school work, social life, fitness, diet, spiritual life, keeping my room tidy, etc.

Only I noticed something, over the years. However resolved I had been on January 1, by the end of January, most of the resolutions were broken, even forgotten. That would be because, in most cases, I didn't really want to keep them. Usually they were things I thought I ought to do but didn't want to, or I would have already been doing them.

But every year, there was the hope that a New Year (which is really a pretty arbitrary date, if you think about it) would help me in my half-hearted self-improvement project. But no, it didn't.

Why do we want to change our habits? Well, usually there's something about ourselves we don't like. So, for many years my resolution was to exercise more and to diet. I actually did it once and it worked and stayed for a few years. Mind you, I don't think it was because of the resolutions. I think I was just feeling good about myself, and I decided I wanted to be healthier.

There's a good side and a bad side to New Year's resolutions. On the good side, we need goals in our lives. We need a little idealism. We need something to live up to. At least, I do, some ideal of what my life could be like — things like living more like Jesus, being kinder, more caring, more compassionate. I find it helps to have role models, sometimes even fictional ones, but



Photo by Nik on Unsplash

real ones are better.

It's good to have someone who gives me hope that it is possible to be the kind of person I want to be. Because a lot of people in this world will tell me it's hopeless, that I'm way too idealistic, and that I can't live that way. So it's helpful to be able to say to myself: it is possible and it is worth working toward.

The bad side of resolutions is when they become punitive or self-critical. If we want to exercise more or lose weight because we care about our health and want to be the healthiest person we can, fine. If it's because we've taken in the narrative that says all women should look like someone on the cover of Vogue, and we don't measure up unless we do, well, that's not so good.

Other than the fact that it's depressing, the main problem with this is that we rarely, if ever, are motivated to make positive changes in our lives because we feel lousy about ourselves. Hence, we abandon our resolutions before the end of January.

So what do we do? When all is said and done, I doubt if this "bootstraps" approach is very helpful. A more helpful approach might be to remember first that God loves us just as we are. Only then can we

spend a little time looking over the last year and seeing where we've done well and what areas might need a bit more work, and even there, how far we may have come, not just how far we still need to go.

We could invite God to help with this process, and try to remember that God isn't a mean guy with a clipboard writing to pounce on our mistakes and punish us. God might be more like a proud parent, seeing our accomplishments and rejoicing in them. And then we can offer

the year past to God, as a love offering and perhaps for God's forgiveness and healing, too, in places. And then offer the year ahead to God for God's help and blessing.

Ultimately, it's the Holy Spirit that helps to transform us into the people God created us to be. We don't need to beat ourselves up for our real or imagined lack of perfection. We can accept that we're works in progress, but we don't have to agonize about it. Understanding that we're loved, even here

and now, just as we are, maybe even learning to love ourselves, takes some of the pressure off. And instead of starting the year laden with guilt, maybe we can look ahead with a sense of confidence and hope: a fresh opportunity to become more fully who we are.

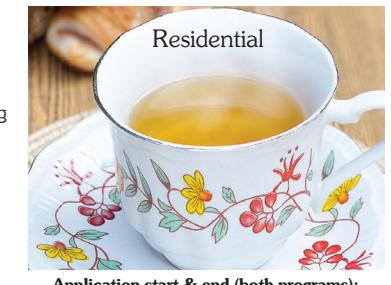
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September 2026 – June 2027

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- ↳ Learn to cultivate peaceful and creative ways of living in a diverse intentional community
- ↳ Appreciate silence and solitude as well as community and service for a healthy life
- ↳ Put down deep roots of spiritual intimacy with God and each other
- ↳ Develop a personal path to ongoing spiritual growth



Application start & end (both programs):

January 1, 2026 – May 1, 2026



Cost:
Residential Companions: sugg. \$150/month.
Companions Online: sugg. \$100/month.
If cost is a hindrance, assistance is available.

Open to women of all Christian expressions, **Companions Online** is an opportunity to become "monastics in the world," living a Benedictine rhythm of prayer, work, study, and recreation. Online Companions learn to develop practices that support and nurture their spiritual life from the comfort of their homes.

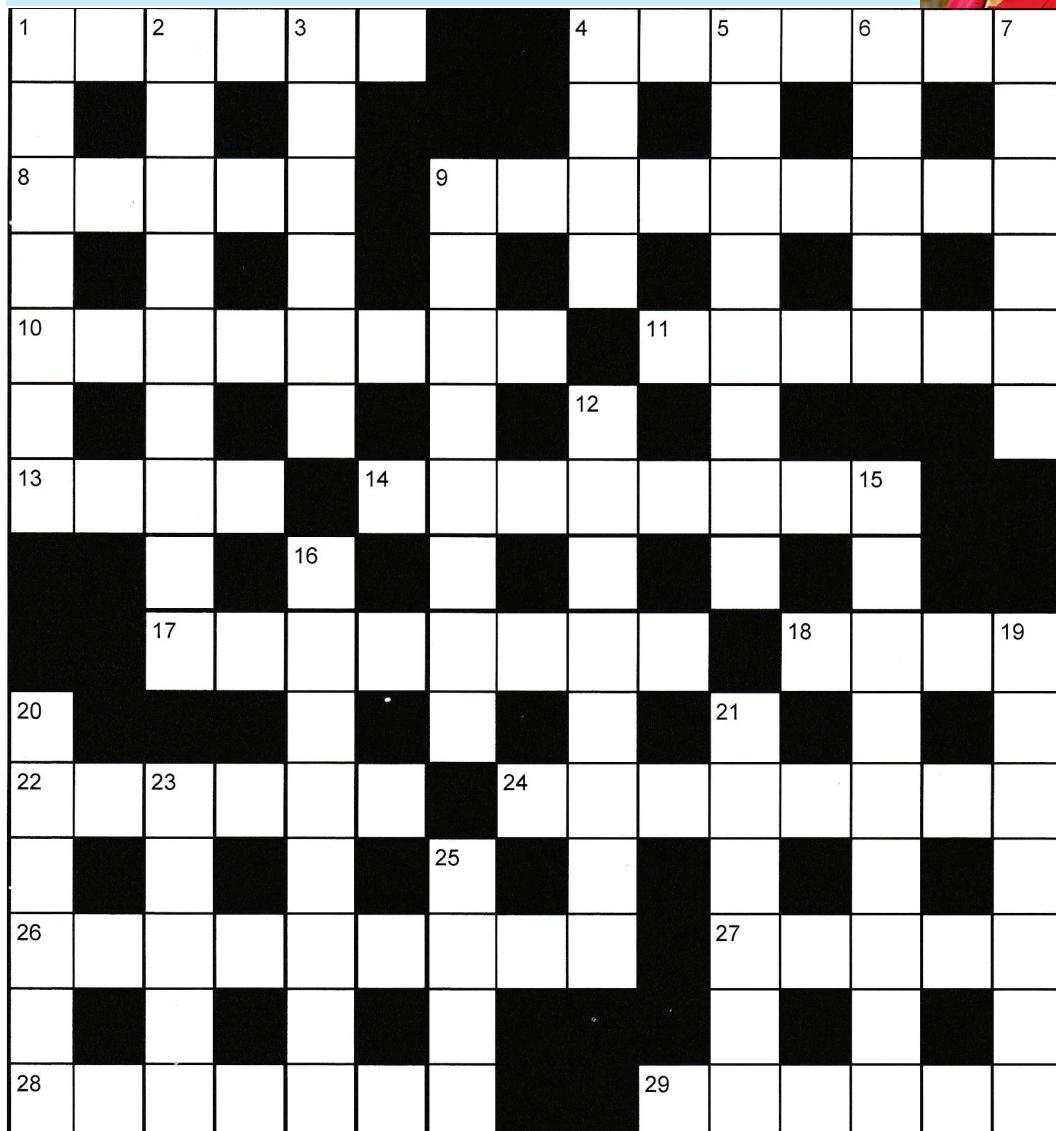
They meet regularly for classes and discussion groups, and commit to times of personal prayer at home. They share in book studies, participate in online worship and sometimes screen a film relevant to spiritual growth and self-understanding. Online Companions also develop spiritual disciplines that follow the liturgical year.

To learn more about either program, or to apply, email:
 Canon Sr. Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas, SSJD, at
companions@ssjd.ca, or phone St. John's Convent:
 416-226-2201, ext. 304

The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine

January Bible Crossword

BY MAUREEN YEATS



December Puzzle Answers



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January 2025 Puzzle Clues

ACROSS:

- 1- Consents to (6)
- 4- Old Testament female Judge (see Judges 4) (7)
- 8- Indentation of a shoreline (5)
- 9- Person who cares for Communion vessels in church (9)
- 10- Certify (8)
- 11- Nepali mountaineer (6)
- 13- One of Jacob's wives (see Gen.29) (4)
- 14- Ruminant with hollow horns (8)
- 17- Meddled (8)
- 18- Metallic element (4)
- 22- Sister of Moses and Aaron (see Exod. 15:20) (6)
- 24- Opacity of the eye's lens (8)
- 26- Interchanges (9)
- 27- Walk on (5)
- 28- A day of the week (7)
- 29- Jacob's other wife (see Gen. 29) (6)

DOWN:

- 1- One of David's wives (see 1Sam. 25) (7)
- 2- Unwilling (9)
- 3- Old Testament person and the book named after her (6)
- 4- Packet of playing cards (4)
- 5- Resort city in England (9)
- 6- Helicopter blade (5)
- 7- Mother of Samuel (see 1Sam. 1) (6)
- 9- Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and others (8)
- 12- Any drink other than water (8)
- 15- Mother of John the Baptist (see Luke 1) (9)
- 16- Weakened (8)
- 19- Fortress in a city (7)
- 20- Influence (6)
- 21- A sister of Lazarus (see John 11:1-6)(6)
- 23- Refasten shoelaces (5)
- 25- Another sister of Lazarus (see John 11:1-6) (4)

Standing with Survivors, Investing in Hope

APP is inviting you to support **NSTAY (Nova Scotia Transition and Advocacy for Youth)**, a survivor-led program through the YWCA Halifax for youth who've experienced trafficking and exploitation.



NSTAY's work is **non-judgmental, trauma-informed, and rooted in compassion**. Anglicans Powering Potential (APP) is partnering with the YWCA to support NSTAY to help young people take steps toward healing and reclaiming their future. Contributions of \$20 or more receive an income tax receipt.

How to contribute . . .

- ✓ **Via cheque . . .** payable to Anglicans Powering Potential, **NSTAY** in the memo line, addressed to Marjorie Davis, 204, 111 Pebblecreek Dr., Dartmouth, NS B2W 0L1
- ✓ **Via e-transfer . . .** to app.nspeidiocese@gmail.com with **NSTAY** and your name and postal address in the message field

God with us

BY ANGELA RUSH

God with us – Three simple words that I am reflecting on as I begin the draft of my January article.

Right now it is November 24 and I am trying, with God's guidance, to put together my next piece. It isn't easy because my mind is wandering in a million directions. Lord, please let it come together and make some sense – this is my prayer.

One wandering thought is that one month from today it will be Christmas Eve, yikes. Okay, let's just put that thought aside for the moment and focus.

As you read this, we will be past all of the hustle and bustle. We will also be past that special world changing event of Christ's birth, what we call Christmas. "What comes next?" I think to myself. "What did Mary and Joseph do with this new born baby?" "What will we do?" They travelled. They hot-footed it out of Bethlehem and fled to a city called Nazareth in Galilee. It was a message from God, delivered by an angel, they listened and they obeyed. We too must listen and obey. For me, it's to get this article to come together, it's the nudge from God.

So, here it is, January. The beginning of what we refer to as a new year. For Mary, it was the celebration of her son's birth, Jesus. Mary and her family are likely travelling, looking for their new home to settle into. The Three Kings were also en-route to visit the child. We traditionally picture the nativity with the three kings around the baby in the manger as the place the gifts were given. However, biblically, it was probably later that they arrived. Some even say it could have even been when Jesus was two years old. However, I am going to go with January as their arrival. Why? Well one year while hosting a high



Photo by Marcos Paulo Prado on Unsplash

school student from Spain, I had a girl named Claudia teach my family about Three Kings Day that they celebrate in her home in Valencia. She insisted that this was when the wise men arrived and it was when gifts were given. Thank you Claudia for that life lesson. Who knew that it would help me write this article, well God did of course.

Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh – the three gifts from the Magi

The three gifts given were likely from three very specifically chosen magi. Gold, well it is a gift of monetary worth. Melchior gave this to the young couple who would have to travel and flee for their lives. Likely they used it as capital to pay for their travel and

lodging as they had to start over more than once. Balthazar gave frankincense; a gift given in a spiritual sense. It is an aromatic resin that comes from the Boswellia tree. It was used for religious and spiritual rituals. You can't get more spiritual or Christian than Christ himself. Myrrh is a spice or oil. It is extremely valuable and used in the embalming process to mask the odour of a decaying body, foreshadowing Jesus's death and burial. It is a symbol of his humanity and the sacrifice he would make for the world. These three gifts from three kings were definitely predetermined by God, is my belief.

Happy New Year

The three words of a fresh new beginning for all of us.

It is January 2026; we make resolutions that involve becoming a better version of ourselves, or what we picture ourselves to be, or what we desire ourselves to become. Lose those 10 pounds, work harder and be more effective, try not to get angry as often, be kinder to family members, be a better friend, or go to church more often. Whatever the resolution is, sometimes it gets broken, most often it does. I have a suggestion. Perhaps you can simply reach out to God and give your life over to him again (it's not a one-time offering you know) and ask him to direct you and guide you how he chooses. Turn the ever-breaking resolution into a Godly promise. "Lord, I give you my life, I promise to follow your lead, please show me the

way". Then listen to his voice and enjoy the journey, just as Mary and Joseph listened. This could be your aha moment, when you discover what you are to do next.

God with us

The three words of Christmas. The King is born, a heavenly gift to the world.

God with us – perfect words to describe the absolute essence of Christ's birth and his life with us. He is here, he is flesh and blood, and he is our king sent to us from the heavens above. God himself came as Jesus to free us, love us, save us, guide us, and so amazingly be with us. God with us. In closing, I give you a few more threes to ponder – Peace on earth, you are loved, and God bless you.



Paul G. Conrod, CIM

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