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THE DIOCESAN TIMES



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OCTOBER 2026 A SECTION OF THE ANGLICAN JOURNAL

Serving the Anglican Church in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

Christ Church launches a public lecture series on issues that matter

Christ Church, Dartmouth, is inviting the wider community to take part in a new monthly lecture series exploring some of the most important social issues facing our neighbours today.

Christ Church in the Public Square: Public Theology & Dialogue began on Sunday, September 20, 2026, and will continue with gatherings on October 18 and November 22. Each event begins at 1:00 p.m. at Christ Church, 50 Wentworth Street, in downtown Dartmouth. Everyone is welcome.

The series reflects Christ Church's longstanding commitment to bringing faith into meaningful conversation with the concerns of the wider community.

The new lecture series will provide a welcoming space where people from across the community can listen, learn, ask questions, and engage in thoughtful conversation. Its theme—*"Conversations about things that matter in the neighborhood"*—expresses a desire to connect public theology with the realities people encounter in their daily lives.

The opening lecture took place on September 20 and featured Dr. Anders Hayden,



Photo by Sincerely Media on Unsplash

associate professor in the Department of Political Science at Dalhousie University. Dr. Hayden spoke on *"The Economics of Poverty,"* inviting participants to consider the economic systems and public choices that contribute to poverty and inequality.

On October 18, acclaimed CTV News and TSN Sports Network journalist Paul Hollingsworth will lead a conversation on mental health. His presentation will offer an opportunity to reflect on a subject that affects individuals, families, and communities, while encouraging greater understanding and openness.

The fall series concludes on November 22 with Emma

Halpern, Executive Director of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia. Her presentation, *"The Justice System and Critical Supports for Marginalized People,"* will explore the experiences of people navigating the justice system and the importance of strong community-based supports.

The themes of poverty, mental health, justice, and marginalization are closely connected to the life and outreach of Christ Church. The parish has operated a food and clothing bank for approximately 40 years in partnership with Feed Nova Scotia and local organizations. It also supports community meals, the Dartmouth Community Fridge and

Garden, and other programs responding to food insecurity and social isolation.

These ministries embody the conviction that churches are called not only to speak about faith but also to listen to their communities, confront injustice, and participate in the work of building a more compassionate society.

Through Christ Church in the Public Square, the parish hopes to create room for respectful dialogue across different experiences and perspectives. The lectures are intended for the whole community—not only church members—and no previous theological knowledge is required.

CHRIST CHURCH
IN THE
PUBLIC SQUARE

Public Theology & Dialogue

Conversations about things that matter in the neighbourhood.
MONTHLY LECTURE SERIES • SUNDAYS AT 1:00 PM

SEPTEMBER 20 1:00 PM	 Dr. Anders Hayden Associate Professor, Department of Political Science Dalhousie University TALK TOPIC: The Economics of Poverty
OCTOBER 18 1:00 PM	 Paul Hollingsworth Acclaimed Journalist, CTV News & TSN Sports Network TALK TOPIC: Mental Health
NOVEMBER 22 1:00 PM	 Emma Halpern Executive Director, The Elizabeth Fry Society of Nova Scotia TALK TOPIC: The Justice System & Critical Supports for Marginalized People

CHRIST CHURCH, DARTMOUTH
50 Wentworth Street
All are welcome.

The presentations begin at 1:00 p.m.:

September 20: Dr. Anders Hayden — The Economics of Poverty (Concluded)

October 18: Paul Hollingsworth — Mental Health

November 22: Emma Halpern—The Justice System and Critical Supports for Marginalized People

The series will be held at Christ Church, 50 Wentworth Street, Dartmouth, at the corner of Wentworth and Ochterloney streets. The church has an accessible side entrance and accessible, family-friendly washroom facilities.

For more information, contact Christ Church at 902-466-4270 or christchurch@christchurchdartmouth.com.

New diocesan toolkit sparks revitalization for local parishes



BY LISA VAUGHN

Congregations across the diocese have a fresh digital resource at their fingertips with a new dedicated webpage highlighting five proven tools for parish revitalization. Designed to support churches of every size, shape, and context,

the newly unveiled easy-to-follow guides offer practical approaches for parish communities seeking renewed purpose and vibrant local ministry.

Parish revitalization often carries the reputation of an overwhelming undertaking, yet meaningful renewal takes far less time and effort than most teams assume. Rather than asking congregations to do everything at once, these resources are built on the principle of starting small, helping communities identify their unique gifts, and build steady momentum upon early

growth successes. The process enables leadership teams to clarify their highest-impact goals, move to being more mission-shaped, and focus their energy where it matters most.

Whether a parish chooses to run the material independently or seeks guidance from the Synod Office for coaching, each tool provides clear, intentional next steps to discerning God's call for their growth.

Headlining the webpage launch is an exciting new flagship resource: the Parish Mission Action Plan (PMAP), A

Congregational Guide to Discerning and Living Out God's Mission Locally. Adapted with permission from celebrated Anglican models in the Diocese of Niagara, the Diocese of Southwark's published MAP materials, and others, the PMAP offers a prayerful, hands-on framework that any parish can easily lead in-house.

The PMAP condenses deep discernment into just four 90-minute sessions, structured for either a four-week study or a focused weekend retreat. Guided by ready-to-use surveys and discus-

sion prompts, congregations explore foundational themes: Faith Formation (nurturing disciples), Reshaping Parish Culture to Enable Ministry, Engaging the Neighbourhood, and Prioritizing and Committing.

By the end of the four sessions, parishes walk away with a clear, realistic roadmap concentrated on two to three achievable priorities, grounded in where God is already active in their surrounding community.

- Cont. on page 4

Our finest gifts



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

Dear Diocese,

Sandwiched between Season of Creation (September 1 – October 4) and World Food Day (October 16), Harvest Thanksgiving (October 12) is the next big celebration on the church calendar. The time of year when we decorate our churches with donations of fresh produce, then deliver those veggies to the local food bank. Kudos to you all for helping alleviate hunger, at least temporarily. It is important work that makes a significant difference in people’s lives.

Kudos to those parishes that are engaged in supporting Feed Nova Scotia or offering food in community cupboards or fridges at a time when so many Canadians suffer from food insecurity, requiring an immediate charitable response.

I first learned about food insecurity, AKA hunger, during a Canadian Foodgrains Bank Food Study Tour to East Africa in the winter of 1999. Not only was that the kickoff to exploring my call to ministry, but that experience resulted in a lifelong passion about food justice.

In East Africa, I was inspired by the work of churches in both delivering food aid to hungry people (charity, the Band-Aid solution) and actively working towards ending hunger (food justice, the permanent solution) through organizations like Alongside Hope and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

But we don’t have to travel thousands of miles to understand hunger issues and to meet inspirational people committed to ending hunger. They can be found right here in our backyard. And we can sometimes be totally oblivious to the work those heroes are undertaking.

One of my greatest discoveries was in 2025, shortly after I was appointed priest in charge of the Church of the Apostles at the corner of Bayers Rd and Connaught in Halifax. I had no idea that a huge housing



City Kidds Escape Society



Tina Raftus

project was hidden behind the houses and trees across the street, a street I had driven down for over 20 years. It wasn’t until the morning I visited St. Andrews Community Centre to introduce myself to the staff and director that I learned that a food justice miracle was taking place a few hundred feet from the church.

“You need to meet Tina,” the community centre manager said to me. “She operates the community garden.”

“Community garden!” I replied.

“Yes, I’ll show you. Follow me.”

The manager promised to connect me with Tina, but, before he had a chance of making the introduction, in my great excitement, I looked her up on Facebook as soon as I returned to my office that Friday afternoon. Tina Raftus, a lifelong resident in the housing project and natural community leader, responded instantly. We arranged to meet early the next week.

What she showed me was

amazing! It wasn’t the small community garden I was expecting. This was an urban farm that covered acres. Container garden boxes with veggies, a blueberry field, and numerous fruit trees covered city land. That morning Tina told me about her dream and the story of how what I saw spread out before me happened.

Ten years before, concerned about the health, physical, emotional, and social well-being of the 1,000 children in the housing project, Tina established the City Kidds Escape Society.

Tina gets excited when the children are enthused about planting veggies and picking fruit. She pounds the pavement soliciting funds from various government agencies. She is on a first-name basis with all elected officials and has a way of charming people, but then again, who can argue with a woman so devoted to improving the lives of disadvantaged children? Her goal has been to turn their lives around, and at the 10th



anniversary celebration, she pointed out successful adults who grew up in the housing project, who return just to see her.

A few years ago, Tina received well-deserved recognition, the Queen’s Jubilee Medal. Tina is a royalist and passionate about history. She teaches the kids about both using flower gardens that focus on themes, e.g., the sinking of the Titanic. But the real reward for Tina is to watch those children grow up to be healthy and successful.

More than once this year I have had conversations about the importance of charitable works in relation to food, shelter, and clothing. (Matthew 25:31-46)

More often than naught, they evolved into a conversation about how charitable works should be balanced with justice.

Deal with the immediate while also working towards long-term solutions. A world where there is no hunger.

Charity is temporary relief, but as three refugee women

in Sri Lanka said to me a long time ago, “You are very nice people, but you come and you go, and nothing changes. Carrying on the work of permanent solutions, justice can be a “game changer,” moving people from dependency to self-sufficiency. That involves working towards a different world where, as a Roman Catholic priest from Cape Breton, Fr. Moses Coady once said, people are equipped to take charge of their own economic destiny, living out the proverb, “Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day; teach a person to fish and you feed them for a lifetime,” offering people the opportunity to become self-sufficient.

Thank you, Tina, for devoting your life to that.

Thanksgiving blessings,
The Rev. Marian Lucas-Jefferies
Coordinator, Diocesan Environment Network

PS: Don’t forget to send us pics and stories about your parish’s Season of Creation worship and activities. endionspei@gmail.com

The last word, and the word after



BY BRYAN HAGERMAN RCT
OUTREACH COUNSELLOR
ST. PAUL’S CHURCH, HALIFAX
WWW.BRYANHAGERMAN.CA

I went to a nice niche coffee shop near our home a few weeks ago for the first time, and although the beverage was great, I felt it was a bit expensive. After commenting on the price, I left and went on my way. At first I didn’t think about it, but I suppose some would say, “Good for you! You had ‘The last word!’ But what word did the owner process internally as I walked with my dog down the street with my pricey coffee? With some help, and having thought this through, I went back, apologized, and bought another coffee and some bread. My apology wasn’t ‘The last word’ either, I am sure. I hope! I don’t know what his internal ‘word after’ was, and it doesn’t matter. I needed to correct a wrong because it was a wrong. I didn’t on this occasion have ‘the last word.’

When we think of last words, many memories could be conjured up. It could be someone’s last will and testament, outlining what will be left behind when someone passes, either to loved ones, friends, or charitable causes. It could be the last words that someone ever spoke. Some famous last words are Oscar Wilde’s “Ether that wallpaper goes, or I do” and Jane Austen’s “I want nothing but death.”

Sometimes last words are the final utterances before passing. Jesus’s last words as recorded on the cross were, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Then there are the words spoken by him to Paul on the Damascus Road, as recorded in Acts 9. The most chilling among them is “Saul, Saul, why do you



Photo by Ben Garratt on Unsplash

persecute me?” (Acts 9:4). His last words before he ascended into the abode of God were, “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt 28:19-20.) The last word in the Bible is “Amen.” (Revelation 22:21)

In the 70 years that I knew my dad, we exchanged thousands and thousands of conversations and an untold number of words. But his last words to me were the most memorable, precious, comforting, and unforgettable. As he lay near death in hospice, those words would prove to be the most important he ever said to me in my life. “I love you!” I cherish those last

words. I am still processing them through ‘the word after.’

There are many last words (we say or think) in the run of a day. We consider them the last because perhaps there has not been an audible reply. They can be as simple as a goodbye or the tail end of a conversation. The ‘word after,’ the internal inaudible dialogue, will be largely dependent on us. It could be a sigh, a painful or happy expression, inner rage and anger, encouragement, confusion, and sadness. The ‘word after’ may be unknown and unrecognizable because it is unspoken. However, body language could serve as a virtual ‘last word’ and will give some indication of a thought process. Words are again terribly important, spoken or not; they either shatter or shutter the emotions of the one left behind. We may think improperly,

and even haughtily, that we have had the ‘last word,’ but alas no! However, they may be received internally like that of a small boat riding unexpectedly over the wake of a sea-going and massive cargo ship or cruise liner.

But what about words that deeply hurt and offend us? They cut to the core of who we are, they ring into the deepest depths of the soul, and they leave us utterly pained, bruised, and emotionally damaged. Words of this nature spoken in anger may ruin a relationship. And they cannot be taken back. They can be retracted, an apology offered, and amends made, but the relationship will never be quite the same.

So the ‘last word’ and ‘the word after’ are crucial. If we are careful, we can responsibly choose both sets. Words spoken on any given day to

anyone can largely affect (for bad or for good) the mental and emotional well-being of ourselves or of others. That is why words are important.

In James chapter 3, the writer gives us an indication of the power of the tongue.

“Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.”

We need to consider our words, last, and after carefully, given the emotional hurt they can convey or how they lift up another’s spirit. Well-being is greatly affected by WORDS!

New diocesan toolkit sparks revitalization for local parishes

- Cont. from page 1

Leaders and parish councils are invited to explore the new webpage to discover the right pathway for their congregation’s next chapter of ministry. Other featured tools are Mission, Vision, and Goals—A structured audit of a parish’s identity, values, mission

priorities, and future goals.

Pathways: Exploring Parish Models—A guide for considering significant structural options such as amalgamation, ecumenical shared ministry, property repurposing, and community partnerships.

The Healthy Churches Handbook—Robert Warren’s

resource for assessing congregational health and guiding intentional renewal, based on the Seven Marks of a Healthy Church.

From Evidence to Action: 8 Common Factors to Congregational Flourishing—A guide based on the Church of England’s Church Growth Research Programme, exercises

to engage practical priorities for congregational development.

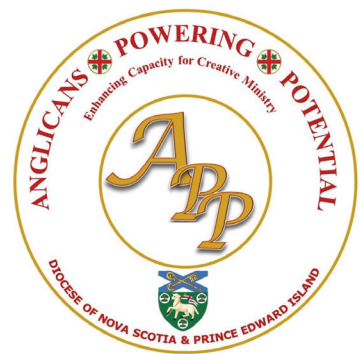
Explore the new revitalization webpage—you might be surprised by how simple and energizing the right tool can be for your parish’s future. See what fits your community’s unique context or reach out to the Synod Office for

assistance.

Visit the webpage: nspeidiocese.ca/pages/revitalization

(The Rev’d. Canon Lisa G. Vaughn is the Diocesan Director of Mission and Ministry Development. misiondirector@nspeidiocese.ca or 902-789-4840)

“... a whole of society response!”



BY CYNTHIA PILICHOS FOR ANGLICANS POWERING POTENTIAL

I expect that those in our communities committed to justice and peace, to respect and dignity extended to all, would agree that it requires more than a handful of advocates to achieve that desired outcome. It, indeed, requires “a whole of society response!” A tall order? Decidedly!

At the conclusion of Nova Scotia’s Mass Casualty Commission (MCC), it was identified in its report that making progress in addressing the epidemic of gender-based violence required “a whole of society response.” The MCC’s Progress Monitoring Committee, following a 3-year mandate to report on progress with implementing the recommendations identified in the MCC Report, clearly stated in their August 31, 2026, final report that significant progress on many of the recommendations requires the engagement of everyone, not only government departments, at whatever level.

I started composing this column on the day that the Progress Monitoring Committee published its third and final Annual Report on progress made with these recommendations that pertained to community safety and well-being, emergency management readiness, gender-based violence response and prevention, policing reform, and access to firearms.

The Monitoring Committee consisted of representatives from the April 2020 mass casualty victims’ families, the governments of Nova Scotia and Canada, municipal governments, the RCMP, policing associations, gender-based violence (GBV) advocacy and support sectors, and Indigenous and African Canadian



Photo by sayan Nath on Unsplash

community organizations. Altogether, the Progress Monitoring Committee assessed and reported progress on 90 recommendations.

“The committee was pleased to see meaningful progress in a number of areas connected to emergency response and public safety; however, there is still much more work to do, notably on those recommendations that are more complex and interconnected or that require long-term societal response,” said Myra Freeman, Chair of the Progress Monitoring Committee. “As our mandate concludes, I hope one lasting legacy of the Committee will be recognition that independent oversight plays a vital role in maintaining momentum, ensuring transparency, and holding governments and agencies accountable following a public inquiry.”

(Turning the Tide Together: the Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission/mass-

casualtycommission.ca)

Trauma therapist Kristina Fifield, a Progress Monitoring Committee member for the gender-based violence response and prevention arm, spoke on CBC Radio’s Information Morning on September 1. In addition to mirroring Myra Freemans’s remarks, Kristina offered very specific next steps needed for a more effective response and prevention approach to GBV, intimate partner violence (IPV), and extreme violence. Kristina packed a lot into 9 minutes, and what she had to say regarding needed next steps is well worth more than one replay.

Fortunately, my summer included much of the activity that is associated with the season—family time that included travel, sun, sand, swimming, great food, reading, and relaxing. It also involved a “deeper dive” into aspects of gender-based violence and the myriad ways it presents

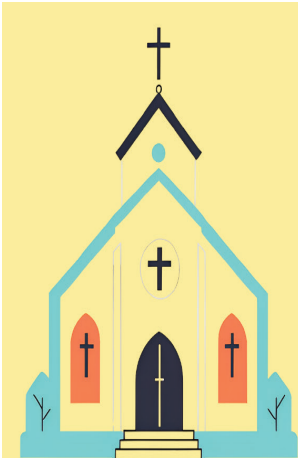
itself. I can appreciate that this particular “deeper dive” sounds anything but relaxing. However, having fewer demands on my time (than the September to June months require) provided the space to do some of this type of “diving and swimming.”

It crystalized for me the need to invite men into the enterprise of addressing gender-based violence, specifically to surface and interrogate the underlay of systemic patriarchy, misogyny, and colonialism that we all fall victim to. Why? Because we are all contributing to its perpetuation in ways we do not even recognize, let alone acknowledge.

Despite enormous efforts, locally, nationally, and globally, to address GBV, such that there is perceivable progress, that desired outcome eludes us. Anglicans Powering Potential advocates that a start to “a whole of society response” to gender-based violence is to engage key leaders, especially

men of influence and in titled leadership roles, in surfacing and interrogating the underlay of systemic patriarchy, misogyny, and colonialism that is such a given in all our systems, insufficiently recognized and acknowledged.

There are many men who want to be on the right side of gender-based violence, the most pervasive and persistent human rights violation globally. They do not see GBV as solely a “women’s issue.” Indeed, they see it as a “men’s issue.” So, this is a call out to the men, and those identifying as male, in our diocese (or wherever). APP is exploring avenues to open up this conversation and invite in “all of society.’. Stay tuned! Wouldn’t it be amazing if the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island were to be a leader in initiating “a whole of society response” to our epidemic level of GBV? Amen to that!



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

For All the Saints, October 2026

BY THE REV. JOHN K. MORRELL
EXCERPTED FROM STEPHEN
REYNOLDS’ “FOR ALL THE
SAINTS”

Following September’s article on three martyrs from the 3rd, 19th and 20th centuries, the two readings for October continue to reflect martyrs of the 2nd and 19th centuries. From the early church to the present time, Christians in many different nations of the world suffer hardship, persecution, and even death for their beliefs. These martyrs took place in Antioch, Syria, and East Equatorial Africa near Lake Victoria.

October 17th—Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, Martyr, c. 115

Ignatius was the second bishop of Antioch in Syria, who was caught in a persecution of the church around the year 115 and condemned to suffer death in the public arena. The authorities decided to send him all the way to Rome for execution of this sentence. He was put in the custody of ten soldiers and escorted along a route that led through cities with large Christian congregations. There was a lengthy stop-over at Smyrna, on the coast of Asia Minor,



Photo by Polina Rytova on Unsplash

and Ignatius took the opportunity to write letters to the four churches that he had just passed through.

There was another stop-over at Philippi in Macedonia, where Ignatius wrote another three letters, two back to churches in Asia Minor and one forward to the church at Rome. Taken together, these seven letters were Ignatius’s last testament. He exhorted each church to gather in unity under its bishop, most especially at the Eucharist, and he urged the churches to reject certain heresies about the person of Christ. Above all,

Ignatius urged the churches to rejoice with him in the prospect of his own martyrdom for the sake of Christ. He embraced his fate passionately, even with a joy that we may find hard to fathom. Ignatius wrote in his letter to the church at Rome: “I am God’s wheat; let me be ground by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found pure bread for Christ.”

October 29th—James Hannington, Bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa, and His Companions Martyrs, d. 1885

Today we remember James Hannington, the first Anglican bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa, who was murdered with most of his company while trying to enter Uganda in 1885. Hannington was raised in a wealthy Congregationalist family but in his youth conformed to the Church of England, went to Oxford, and chose to enter the ordained ministry. He combined two qualities that Victorians found especially attractive in their clergy—he was a first-class athlete as well as a priest with heartfelt religion. After five years in an English

curacy, he volunteered his services to the Church Missionary Society for work in the Victoria Nyanza district. When the Society decided to organize this district into the diocese of Eastern Equatorial Africa, Hannington was their choice for first bishop. He was consecrated in June, 1884, and a year later was heading inland from Momba’sa with a large party of European and African Christians.

He hoped to open a more direct route to the people around Lake Victoria and, after two months on safari, decided to divide his party and proceed with a smaller group. Five days later, the bishop and his companions reached the eastern shore of Lake Victoria.

In the meantime, news of Hannington’s approach had reached Mwanga, the king of Buganda, who immediately ordered the European party to be seized. Hannington and his companions were ambushed, captured, and then subjected to privation and torture for over a week. On October 29, 1885, they were butchered. The bishop’s last words were, “Go, tell Mwanga I have purchased the road to Uganda with my blood.”

Saying Yes to Kids across Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

There is a long and faithful history of children’s and youth ministry in the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. From parish-based Sunday schools and summer camps to community outreach programs and partnerships with local organizations, generations of Anglicans have understood that investing in young people is not optional—it is essential to the life of the Church.

In recent years, that commitment has found new expression through Say Yes! to Kids, a national initiative of the Anglican Foundation of Canada that invites parishes to raise funds for locally led ministry with children, youth, and families. Since it was established in 2021, Say Yes! to Kids has generated more than \$120,000 for youth-focused programs in the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

What makes the program distinctive is its grassroots nature: each parish identifies a need in its own community and responds with creativity, compassion, and faith. Across the diocese of N.S. and P.E.I., that response is taking many forms.

Some parishes are creating spaces of joy and belong-

ing through summer camps and day programs. At St. Mark’s Halifax, for example, a week-long community youth camp is being planned with a special invitation to newcomer families—offering safe, welcoming childcare for 30 children, along with activities, culturally appropriate food, and support for families navigating a new home.

Others are addressing more immediate needs. St. Francis by the Lakes Lower Sackville is supporting a school breakfast program so children can begin their day nourished and ready to learn. St. Luke’s Dartmouth is walking alongside children and families experiencing crisis, partnering with Bryony House Women’s Shelter to offer safety, dignity, and hope. Trinity, Halifax, is building community among newcomer families through tutoring, shared meals, and youth programming. Christ Church, Amherst, continues its strong tradition of summer day camps that welcome children from across the wider community.

Each of these efforts is local. Each is different. And yet together, they tell a single story: the Church showing up for young people in practical, life-giving ways.

For the second year in a row, Bishop Sandra Fyfe is helping to strengthen that shared witness through a diocesan-wide campaign: Bishop Sandra Says Yes! to Kids.

Her team is not focused on a single project. Instead, it exists to support all participating teams across the diocese. Gifts to her campaign are shared, extending the reach of parish ministries and ensuring that more children and youth can benefit from these initiatives.

It is a simple but powerful idea. Some donors will feel called to support their local parish team directly—and that remains essential. Others may wish to contribute to the broader diocesan effort, especially if they do not have a direct parish connection. Bishop Sandra’s campaign creates that opportunity: a way to support the whole network of ministry at once.

In this way, Say Yes! to Kids becomes more than a collection of individual fundraisers. It becomes a shared commitment—one diocese, many ministries, working together to ensure that young people are seen, supported, and given every opportunity to thrive.

At its heart, this work reflects something deeply Anglican:

the belief that the Church is called to carry the Gospel faithfully from generation to generation—not only through worship and tradition, but also through practical acts of welcome, compassion, formation, and hope. In supporting

children and youth today, these parishes are helping to ensure that the Church’s witness continues to live, grow, and flourish in the generations still to come.

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Tracing the path to women’s ordination



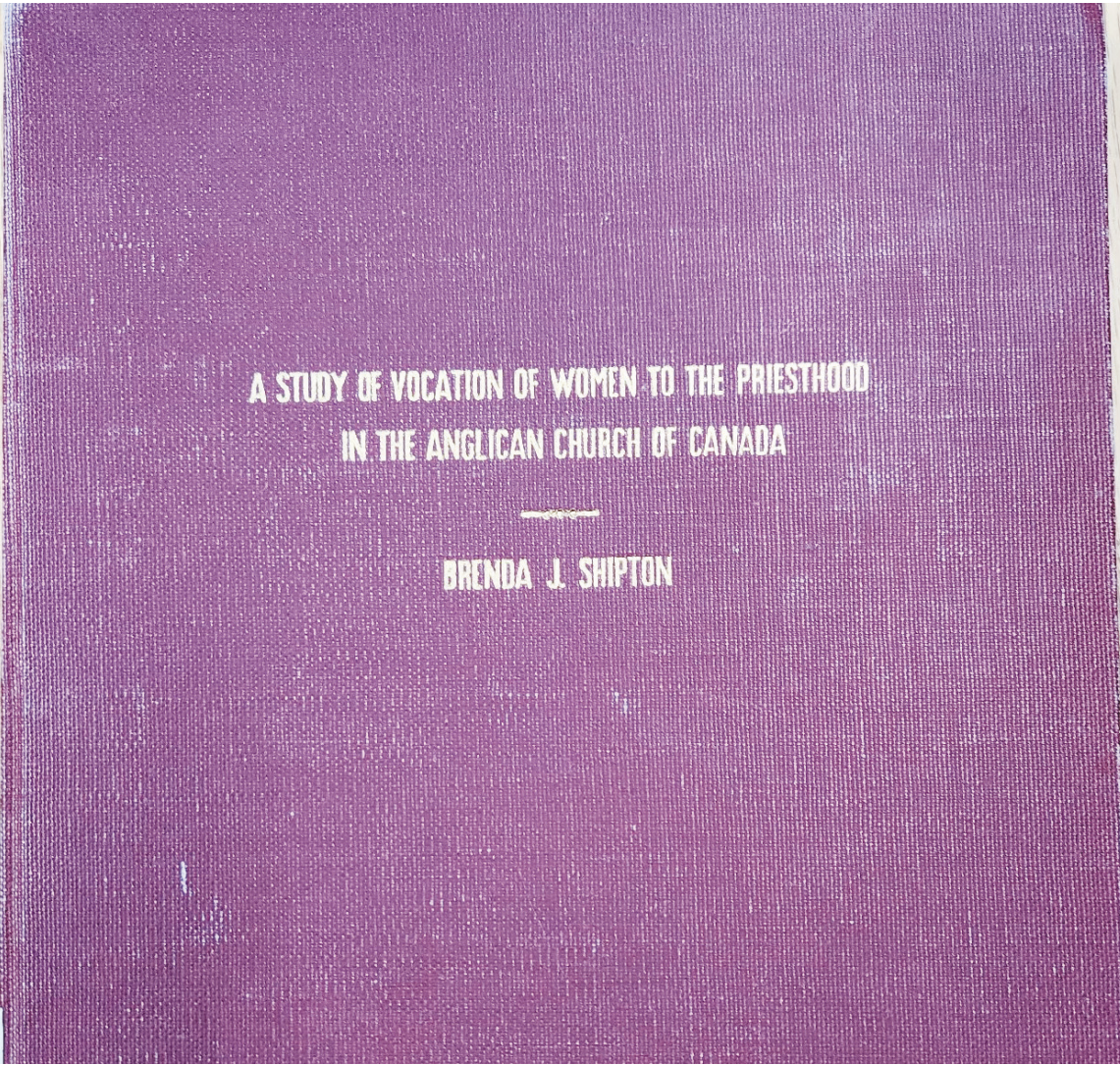
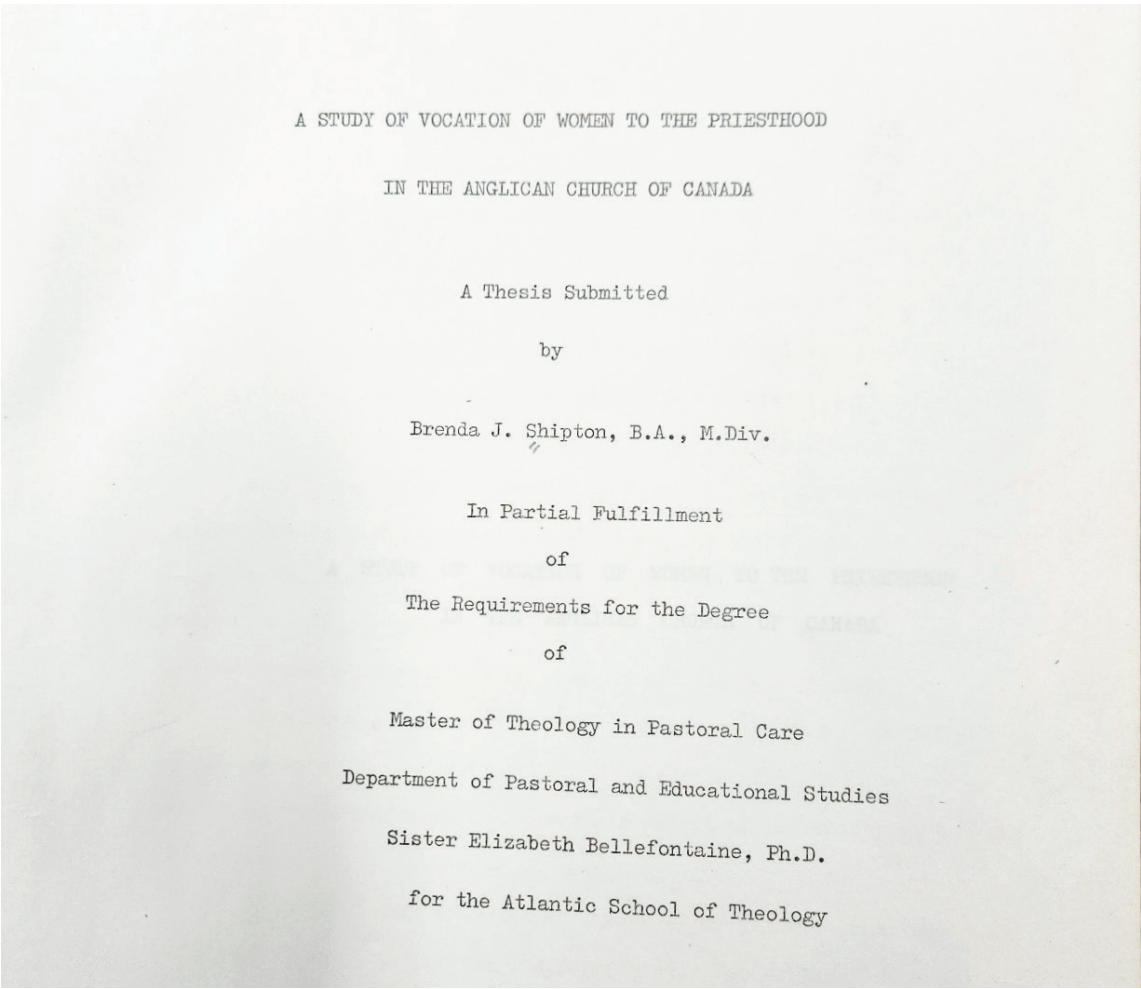
BY THE REV. TAUNYA J. DAWSON
CHAIR, DIOCESAN ARCHIVES COMMITTEE
DIOCESE OF NOVA SCOTIA AND P.E.I.

On Monday, November 30, the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women as priests in the Anglican Church of Canada will be celebrated at All Saints’ Cathedral in Halifax. The ordination of women to the Anglican priesthood was first approved by the Anglican Church of Canada in 1975 and first practiced in 1976 when six women were ordained in the dioceses of Cariboo, Huron, Niagara, and New Westminster. The Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island has been ordaining women since 1979, when Brenda Shipton (née Pierce, now the Rev’d Canon Brenda Clark) was ordained by Bishop George Arnold.

This upcoming celebration reminded me of reading Brenda’s (unpublished) master’s thesis, “A Study of Vocation of Women to the Priesthood in the Anglican Church of Canada,” which offers some insight into how the first ordination in our Diocese came to be. She completed this thesis in 1977, a year after the first six women were ordained in Canada and two years before her becoming the first woman ordained in the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

Her thesis describes how the church administration traditionally viewed women in the church and how they were generally discouraged from leadership roles. She examined concepts of vocation and priesthood prior to engaging on the issues relating to female ordination. She relied extensively on Scriptural and liturgical references to explain these concepts and their importance to the priesthood and the process of selection.

Employing a questionnaire as a primary research tool, she examined the vocations of Anglican women, both those seeking ordination and those not. Her thesis provides a summary of data, together with anecdotal selections from responses that describe the vocation experiences of these



women. The data suggest similarities in the views and experiences of many of the women. She concludes that vocation is “individual and personal,” but “it also comes to the Person within the context of the community of the Church.” It requires testing and ratification. The responses demonstrated a fascinating picture of the experience of these women within their commu-

nities and congregations, their expectations of and motives for ministry, and their convictions. Her analysis goes on to explain the unique and important role of the priesthood and its functions within the Church: “to be a messenger, a watchman, a steward; to be a shepherd, a pastor, a servant.” She highlights apparently contradictory views on female ordination from Scriptures, especially the Epistles, but also focuses on the unique role of women described in the Gospels. She continues with an analysis of Church traditions, arguing that “an all-male priesthood is not one of those traditions that is tied to scripture and the creeds of the

Church.” Her analysis of the empirical evidence led her to an affirmation that vocation is not a personal choice but a state of being chosen (cf. John 15:16)—challenging the opponents of female ordination to explain how God might call someone in whom such vocation could be considered heretical.

Brenda Clark would later publish her autobiography, “Call the Priest,” in 2019, in which she describes her early sense of vocation and later being taught that girls can’t be ordained. Readers can journey with her as a student studying theology, pursuing ordination as a deacon and priest, her work as a chaplain, and eventually as a rector.

Another source that provides insights into the early days of women’s ordination in the Diocese is Kirby Walsh’s book, “A Deeper Imprint: The Footsteps of Archbishop Arthur Gordon Peters.” He notes that, after Brenda’s ordination, “... there were further ordinations of women. By 2001 there were 23 women priests in parishes and another four on clerical leave.” He later notes that there couldn’t be “... a more certain affirmation of the wishes of the people in the diocese on the question of women’s ordination than the election on November 22, 2003. After three ballots, Sue Moxley was elected, by a clear majority in both the lay and clergy houses, as Suffragan Bishop.” Bishop Sue would go on to be elected Bishop on October 20, 2007, and installed on November 23, 2007.

In consideration of the history of the ordination of women in the Anglican Church of Canada, a number of sources preserved in our General Synod and Diocesan Archives were consulted, further demonstrating the importance of preserving our heritage. This November, let us indeed remember and celebrate all those Anglican leaders and women who led the way!

Sources:

Clark, Brenda Pierce. “Call the Priest.” 2019.
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Caring for our coastlines: How citizen scientists are monitoring climate change

BY EMILY F. ROWE

Wooden frames line the beach at Clam Head Provincial Park outside Halifax, stretching from the road down to where plant life transitions to sand and rock. Citizen scientists carefully identify and catalogue the plant life growing within each frame. They're measuring coastal changes to better understand the challenges that face the communities that live here.

Anglican aid agencies from the U.K., the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines, hosted by Alongside Hope, as well as people from the Diocese of Nova Scotia/P.E.I., visited the beach to see first-hand how communities are making the land more resilient to climate-related disasters, such as Hurricane Fiona in 2022.

Examining the plant life in the frames, we can see that grasses and other plants on the upper part of the beach are essential for holding the beach in place against the tides and storm surges. Sea plants were washed up along the shore, bringing nutrients to the beach.

The scientists study the size and shape of the sand, known as granulometry. Holding some dry sand in the palm of their hand, they hold their phone in their other hand and take a photo, zooming in to make the grains as large as possible. These are compared to a card that lists many options for size and shape, and this is recorded at three locations from the bank to the water.

Finally, a string line is placed on the beach at 150° north-

west, along which measurements are taken using two levels. The instrument used is called a protractor, and this determines the grade of the beach; it is measured from the top of the berm to the low water mark, and the slope can vary a great deal over time.

All of these measurements and plant identifications are recorded and uploaded to the ESCOM (Eastern Shore Citizen Science Coastal Monitoring) Network database at the low tide of the full moon each month. The information can then be accessed by the public and shared amongst the citizen scientists.

The Deanery Project in Lower Ship Harbour is also committed to research into sustainability, permaculture, traditional skills, the arts, and community building.

The property was once an Anglican Church camp, but after falling into disrepair, it was put up for sale in 2011. Reclaimed and bought by the community, it was restored using local clay and natural materials, both as a commitment to sustainable construction and as a hands-on teaching opportunity for architecture students from Dalhousie University in Halifax.

Today, this 25-acre property of oceanfront, field, and forest operates as a non-profit, funded by grants and sustained as a true "labour of love." Current Executive Director Kim Thompson, along with Greg Puncher, who will soon be taking over the role, both spoke passionately about their love for this space. It's a vibrant hub that offers everything from kayaking and

stained glass workshops to music jam sessions (including a brand-new recording studio), workshops on growing your own food, and even an upcoming "dawn chorus" event where birding experts guide you in listening to the birds as they wake and sing their morning songs.

This day on Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore offered so many inspiring conversations with people who are passionate about our world and how we can best live in it, preserving it for the future by using it wisely today. This shared responsibility, so clear from these experiences, shows the local, place-based connections that will continue to inspire and shape the global partnerships of Alongside Hope and the Anglican Church of Canada moving forward.



Clam Head Beach Provincial Park



Crystal explains the vegetation counting process to Will



Detail of the inside of the walls at The Deanery Project -- local clay and straw



Discussion with Bishop Sandra on the beach



Granulometry at Clam Head Beach Provincial Park



Group on the shore at The Deanery Project



Group photo in parking lot, Clam Head Beach Provincial Park



Leah and Bishop Sandra inspect shells, The Deanery Project



Main Hall, The Deanery Project



Main space in The Deanery Project from the entrance



Main space in The Deanery Project



Relaxing at The Deanery Project with Kim and Greg



Rev. Lorraine Otto looks at vegetation on the upper beach at Clam Head



Rocket stove at The Deanery Project



Stuart and the protractor 01



Stuart and the protractor 02



Stuart and Will



Stuart, Anne, Bishop Sandra, and Crystal on the beach at The Deanery Project



The Deanery Project's clay hut, built in 9 days by architecture students



Earth oven built by local youth



Tiny house of local clay and wood built by architecture students



Whole group on the beach at Clam Head Beach Provincial Park



Wooden frames for vegetation examination

And on the sixth day, God created the razor



BY STEPHEN JOSEPH IRÉNÉE WEISS
CANDIDATE FOR HOLY ORDERS,
ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA
NOVICE, ORDER OF ECUMENICAL FRANCISCANS (OEF)

I have been asked several times about my beard.

Apparently, when you are discerning a religious vocation and walking around with a reasonably substantial amount of facial hair, people begin to wonder whether there is some theological significance behind it.

Is it a Franciscan thing? Is it an Anglican thing? Is it biblical? Or did I simply forget where I put the razor?

The answer is considerably less exciting than people might hope. I am simply a hairy man.

At least, I am hairy in most places. The top of my head appears to have entered into a different theological understanding of the matter. Hair grows enthusiastically on my face and elsewhere, while the hair on my head seems to be slowly discerning a call to leave.

I do not have a tonsure, although perhaps nature is gradually giving me one.

For those unfamiliar with the term, a tonsure was the traditional practice in some Christian religious communities of cutting or shaving part of the hair from the head. Different forms developed over the centuries, but the familiar image is that of a medieval monk with hair around the sides of his head and a shaved circle on top. It became a visible symbol of religious life, humility, and dedication to God.

Mine, unfortunately, requires considerably less maintenance.

All of this got me thinking. Does the Bible actually say anything about whether religious people should have beards? And while we are asking that question, why are some people covered in hair like bears while others have heads as smooth as a baby’s bottom?

So what does God have against—or perhaps in favour of—hair?

The Bible is surprisingly hairy



Photo by Marek Studzinski on Unsplash

Hair appears throughout Scripture far more often than we might expect.

One of the earliest memorable examples is poor Esau. Genesis tells us that when he was born, he came out “red, all his body like a hairy mantle” (Genesis 25:25). Esau was apparently so hairy that when Jacob later attempted to impersonate him, Rebekah placed goatskins on Jacob’s hands and neck (Genesis 27:16).

Think about that for a moment. Your brother is so hairy that someone can disguise himself as you using part of a goat.

Suddenly I feel considerably better about my beard.

Then, of course, we have Samson. Samson’s famous hair was connected with his Nazirite vow. A Nazirite was a person in ancient Israel who made a special vow of dedication to God. According to Numbers 6:1–21, this included abstaining from wine and other grape products, avoiding contact with the dead, and allowing the hair to grow without cutting it. The uncut hair served as a visible sign of the person’s consecration to God.

Judges 13–16 tells the story of Samson’s dedication to God and the command that no razor should touch his head. His uncut hair was therefore much more than a hairstyle. It was an outward sign of his consecration. When Delilah had Samson’s hair cut, the real issue was not that Samson somehow stored supernatural power inside his follicles. His hair represented a covenant and calling that he had repeatedly failed to honour.

Numbers 6 gives us the broader background to the Nazirite vow, including the instruction that during the period of dedication, “no razor

shall touch the head” (Numbers 6:5).

So perhaps my opening title needs a footnote:

And on the sixth day, God created the razor—except for Nazirites.

What about beards?

The Hebrew Scriptures also contain instructions concerning beards.

Leviticus 19:27 says, “You shall not round off the hair on your temples or mar the edges of your beard.” That verse has influenced Jewish traditions concerning facial hair for centuries. But Christians have generally not understood it as a universal command requiring every Christian man to grow a beard. It belongs within the holiness laws given to ancient Israel, and its precise historical background is debated.

There is also something important here that modern readers can easily miss.

In the biblical world, hair and beards could carry social meaning. Cutting someone’s beard could be an act of humiliation. In 2 Samuel 10, some of David’s servants have half their beards shaved off by the Ammonites. David tells the embarrassed men to remain in Jericho until their beards grow back (2 Samuel 10:4–5).

Apparently, there are some pastoral emergencies for which the appropriate response really is:

Stay home until your beard grows back.

Jesus had a beard ... didn’t he?

Ask someone to picture Jesus, and chances are they will imagine longish hair and a beard.

But here is an interesting problem. The Gospels never actually tell us what Jesus’ hair or beard looked like. Not

once.

Our familiar image of Jesus developed through centuries of Christian art and cultural tradition. Historically, a Jewish man in first-century Judea probably would have worn facial hair, making a bearded Jesus entirely plausible. But Scripture never gives us a physical description detailed enough to settle the question.

Perhaps that absence itself tells us something. The Gospel writers cared enormously about what Jesus said, what Jesus did, whom Jesus welcomed, how Jesus loved, and ultimately who Jesus was. They apparently did not consider his grooming habits essential to salvation.

Then Christianity got complicated about hair

As Christianity developed, attitudes toward hair became remarkably diverse. In some traditions, particularly Eastern Christianity, long beards became associated with priests, monks, and spiritual maturity. In other Christian traditions, clergy were expected to be clean-shaven. Religious orders adopted tonsures. Customs changed from century to century and from culture to culture.

Even within Christianity, therefore, there has never been one universal holy haircut.

Franciscan tradition gives us another interesting example. St. Francis of Assisi is commonly portrayed with a tonsure, reflecting the religious customs of his time. Yet the deeper Franciscan emphasis was never supposed to be about achieving the correct hairstyle. Francis sought simplicity, humility, poverty, fraternity, and conformity to Christ. You can shave your head perfectly and still completely miss that point. And you can have a beard halfway to your knees while being ab-

solutely unbearable to everyone around you.

Hair is not holiness.

But why are we so hairy—or not?

That brings us back to the question that started wandering around in my head. Why do some human beings have enormous amounts of body hair while others have very little? Why can one man grow a magnificent beard while another struggles to produce three determined whiskers? Why does hair sometimes disappear from the top of the head while continuing enthusiastically everywhere else?

Biology gives us explanations involving genetics, hormones, ancestry, age, and the complicated development of human beings over an enormous period of time.

The Bible doesn’t attempt to explain any of that.

Genesis is interested in a different question.

When Genesis declares that humanity is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26–27), it does not tell us whether Adam had a beard. It doesn’t tell us whether Eve had curly hair. It doesn’t tell us whether either of them would eventually have gone bald.

Those questions simply aren’t important to the theological message.

Human dignity does not come from hair. It comes from God.

So should a religious person have a beard?

Here, finally, is my answer to the question people occasionally ask me. Should someone pursuing religious life have a beard? If you want one.

Should you shave? If you want to.

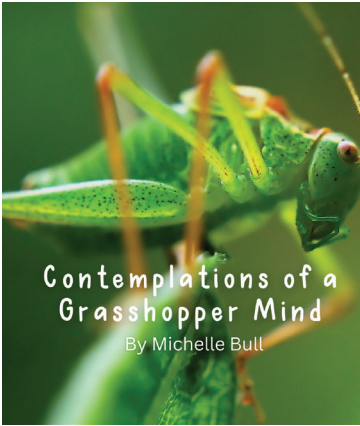
Should you have long hair? Depending upon your community and its customs, why not?

Should you shave a traditional tonsure into the top of your head?

Well, perhaps speak to your religious superior before appearing at the next gathering, looking like a thirteenth-century monastery has suddenly reopened.

Christianity has used hair symbolically throughout its history, and those traditions deserve respect. But a beard does not make someone more Christian. A clean-shaven face does not make someone less Christian. A bald priest is no less holy than a hairy monk, and neither has any spiritual advantage over the other.

Thanksgiving



BY MICHELLE BULL

I remember reading years ago what St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thess 5:16-18).

I thought he was crazy. How are we supposed to be thankful for all the lousy stuff that happens in our lives? How are people supposed to rejoice in the midst of illness, financial turmoil, and poverty? Or worse, in war or famine or plague?

Part of the problem was that I read it wrongly. It doesn’t say give thanks for all circumstances but in all circumstances. Even so, I wasn’t very good at this. I would tend to focus on the problems and complain about them. I’ve realized that other people aren’t always keen to listen to me complain, and if they do, it drags us both down. I still do it, of course, but not quite as much.

As I’ve gotten older, and, if I’m honest, actually have more things to complain about, I’ve started to discover



Photo by roya ann miller on Unsplash

the truth of this instruction of St. Paul’s. I’ve been struggling with various health issues and long wait times. There’s a lot I could complain about. And I do!

But in the midst of all this, I’ve also discovered there’s good stuff. I’ve discovered how kind people can be. An old friend saw that I’d found a stick and was using it as a cane. He took me into his front hall and gave me a choice of all his canes.

But there’s more than that. I still see so much beauty around me. Birds singing, flowers blooming, and autumn leaves like fountains of colour against the sapphire sky. I can’t see that without a song of thanksgiving arising in my heart.

And so many other things:

I have a comfortable house. I am still eating well. I have free healthcare, even if it’s like molasses in January waiting for treatment. At least I can get it, eventually, without mortgaging my house. And I have a loving family, with three kids and their partners who enjoy spending time together with us.

I have friends, people who love me, people I can open my heart to, people who will comfort me in sorrow, sympathize with my problems, and pull me up short when needed. How precious are friends who are willing to tell me off from time to time, in a kind and supportive way, and keep on being friends?

There is so much to be thankful for, even in the midst of some serious problems. The

trick is to notice this, to pay attention.

There’s something else, too. I don’t believe God sends misfortunes to test us or anything. But I do believe that when misfortunes come, as they do in any life, God helps us to make the best of them. God also helps us to grow from them. I know people who are totally capable of finding the worst in a bad situation. God helps us find the best.

Here’s an example. My first real experience of grief came when I was 19 and my brother died. It hadn’t really hit home before that this could happen to young people, to me. It was very hard. And I was fortunate to have friends and a church to help me through that.

Now, I’ve realized some-

thing else good, besides deep friendships, came from that: I learned compassion and empathy. Suffering can lead to bitterness, but it can also lead to empathy, as nothing else can. Empathy grew from my grief, and it grew because I shared it with God, not always politely!

That’s just one example. In almost any situation when things get tough, God is right there, helping us cope, drawing friends to us to help us through, and using it to transform us into someone more caring and more wise. God doesn’t send this stuff, but God uses whatever raw material turns up.

And we can see this if we look for it. We usually find what we’re looking for, so if we spend our energy looking for problems and things to complain about, we’ll find them. But if we make a point of noticing the good stuff and searching for how God is working in us in a situation, we’ll find those.

That’s the thing: God doesn’t take away our problems because we’re Christians. We have the same kinds of problems other people have. And we have to deal with them, but with God’s help. And God sends us beautiful things as blessings at the same time, and God works in us to draw good out of the bad. The trick is to watch for it. And when we do, we can indeed give thanks in all circumstances.

Anglicans Powering Potential Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island



Anglicans Powering Potential are re-imagining Bonhoeffer’s spike as a series of nails of varying sizes and shapes, to remind us that we can make a difference, that small things can have a big impact. Interested? Email: app.nspeidiocese@gmail.com



“We are not simply to bandage the wounds of the victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spike in the wheel itself” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

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Honouring Saints Theodore and Chad in Cathedral Needlepoint



BY CYNTHIA PILICHOS FOR THE CATHEDRAL NEEDLEPOINT BOOK PROJECT

The standing members of the current Cathedral Needlepoint Book Project (Elissa Barnard, Charlotte Cochran, Jane McKay-Nesbitt, Gay Osler, and Cynthia Pilichos) continue to be inspired by the sacredness, beauty, artistry, and stories of the Cathedral’s needlepoint cushions and kneelers that were stitched by so many throughout the Diocese in the 1980s and 1990s. We are in awe of these stitchers! It was an amazing enterprise of faith, love, skill, and organization, one that created a great bond between the cathedral and the parishes in the diocese. We are indebted to so many from those decades, as well as others currently, who are helping to move the book project from



dream to reality, a reality that seems imminent (hopefully late November 2026).

We especially appreciate the opportunity to highlight features of the enterprise, past and present, in The Diocesan Times, with this monthly column, made possible through edited text written by the aforementioned current Book Project Committee members and two student interns from the summer of 2025: Tideal Andrew and Margot Peluso-Pope. We were, and are, truly blessed!

Drawing on Margot’s work of last summer, the March 2026 column of Sacred Art: Needlepoint in the Cathedral explored briefly the concept of needlepoint being both textile and text. Successive

columns (April, May, and June 2026) continued to draw on the research and writing that Margot did regarding the cushions in the Canon Stalls of the Cathedral’s Chancel. These cushions convey symbols of the saints of the early English Church, taken from the beautifully carved woodwork that forms the back of the stalls. The Cathedral choir enjoys the beauty and comfort of these cushions on a regular basis! It is a testament to the colour fastness and quality of the Persian wool of the cushions, as well as the excellent handwork of the stitchers, that these cushions retain their original beauty and resilience, revealing symbols of the lives of these saints ... and what lives they were!

The saints already profiled in The Diocesan Times are St. Joseph of Arimathea, St. Augustine of Canterbury, St. Dunstan, and St. Thomas a Beckett (April 2026); St. Paulinus of York, St. Aidan, St. Oswald, and St. Cuthbert (May 2026); and the Venerable Bede, St. Swithun, and St. Anselm (June 2026). With a new academic year underway, this column highlights two saints and their cushions that say something about the learning enterprise and their institutions (St. Theodore of Tarsus and St. Chad of Mercia, both of the 7th century (CE).

St. Theodore (602-690), originally from Tarsus (Turkey), whose feast day is September 19th, is best known for his reform of the English Church and his establishment of a school in Canterbury. St. Theodore and Hadrian, an African monk, founded the Canterbury School in 669, and it became the primary monastic school in Anglo-Saxon England. St. Theodore accomplished many things while serving as the seventh Archbishop of Canterbury from 668 to 690, with one of his primary concerns being the achievement of “unity where there had been division and order where there had been chaos.” St. Bede wrote in his Ecclesiastical History of the English People that St. Theodore was “the first archbishop whom all the English obeyed.” His cushion, consecrated in 1988, depicts

part of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s coat of arms not shown on St. Augustine’s cushion: atop the pallium sits a bishop’s mitre (headdress) and liturgical cords. This cushion, stitched by Needlepoint Project member then and now, Charlotte Cochran of the Cathedral was a gift from the Alexandra Society of the University of King’s College (of which Charlotte is an alumna), and the King’s (former) crest is stitched in blue in the lower right-hand corner. The Alexandra Society was an Anglican women’s organization in the Diocese that supported theological education, initially at the University of King’s College Divinity School and then at Atlantic School of Theology.

St. Chad of Mercia (620-672), whose feast day is March 2, was an Anglo-Saxon monk, missionary, abbot, and bishop. He was a student of St. Aidan at the monastery in Lindisfarne and went on to be the Abbot of Lastingham Abbey and the Bishop of Northumbria, Mercia, and Lindsey. He introduced Christianity to the Mercian kingdom in what is now the English Midlands. St. Chad’s faith involved a passion for Biblical analysis. His cushion, stitched by Frances Davies and Anne Patterson of the Cathedral and consecrated in 1989, depicts a Bible crossed with a bishop’s crozier (staff in the shape of a shepherd’s crook, symbolizing the guardian and pastoral role of a bishop to all his “flock”). As a staff member, the bishop’s crozier offers a practical function to support

walking. St. Chad travelled through the countryside, leading the rural Northumbrians, Mercians, and Lindsey people to the light of God. The Bible symbolizes his passion for Biblical analysis.

In beginning this column by acknowledging our appreciation for the incredible support of so many for this book publication project, we extend huge thanks to those who have made financial contributions to help realize the production of Sacred Art: Needlepoint in the Cathedral—so, so appreciated! We continue to welcome donations as we move ever closer to publication. Further, have your contribution be 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. Financial support will be publicly recognized (unless otherwise requested).

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, N.S. B3H 2Z1.

Cathedral website: www.cathedralchurchofallsaints.com Click. “Give” and choose Needlepoint Project from the dropdown menu.

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Sept. Puzzle Answers

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It has been a blessing to witness the incredible generosity and faithful connection to faith communities and communities at large.

The Parishes of St. Nicholas and St. John’s have celebrated the amalgamation of a new parish and now worship together at the Larry Uteck Boulevard site, effective May 14, 2026. The net sale proceeds of the sale of the St. Nicholas church building have been transferred to St. John’s to continue to fund the costs of ministry.

There were funds left in the parish operating account, and in transferring the funds to St.



John’s for the costs of ministry, the fine folks at St. Nicholas wanted to thank community partners in Bayrides, an accessible and affordable door-to-door transportation service in the community, and the St. Margaret’s Bay Food



Bank. They have donated \$5000 to each of those agencies who have been so supportive of St. Nicholas.

Barb Berringer voiced the collective feelings of the congregation of St. Nicholas in recognizing the tremendous contribution of the surrounding community to the life of St. Nicholas over the years.

Darryl and Cindy Spidell continue to honour the partnership between St. Margaret’s Bay Food Bank and the new congregation by gathering food and delivering it to them for those in need in our community.

“Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Jesus’ love ...”

Someone said yes

BY ANGELA RUSH

October has arrived. That time of year when Thanksgiving becomes the focal point of many. We gather and share a wonderful meal with family and friends. The familiar smell fills the home—roasting turkey, baked apple pie, and bubbling gravy. Outside there is that smell of autumn, a bit of dampness mixed with that specific raked leaf aroma. It’s not an easy scent to describe, but you definitely know what I mean. We share in conversation things that we are thankful/grateful for. It is that one time of year that we really dig deep and feel it and share it.

For me, October brings with it something that happened 20 years ago, something I will be forever grateful for, and even though the outcome was the hardest part of my life, I am filled with thankfulness and gratitude for something a stranger did.

In April of 2005, my daughter Meghan became critically ill. She was diagnosed with something called HLH. Hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis was the clinical name for her disease. After being induced into a coma when she first entered the hospital, the protocol was set out for an 8-week plan. This did not eradicate the illness and led to her needing a bone marrow transplant, if she had any chance to live.

I have written a book about her journey and thought that I would share part of it here.

... “An email arrived September 22nd, a blessing, I should say, someone said YES. The date was set for admission to Sick Kids in Toronto for October 16, 2005, and the transplant would take place on October 27th.

Meghan received a perfect match from an unknown male donor that came from over-



Photo by Benjamin Wedemeyer on Unsplash

seas, somewhere in Europe. He was also apparently middle-aged, we were told. How do you ever find the words to thank someone for that? There just weren’t the words to say how I felt, how we all felt for someone who stepped up to the plate like this to save her life by giving the gift of his marrow. I was at a complete loss for words, and the poetic side of me took over. Poetry was something I wrote often, inspired by God. So here it was, everything that transpired that day while I worked at my desk in my home office downstairs

Someone Said Yes

I’ll never forget that moment; it all caught me by surprise.

As I read that special email, tears flowed freely from my eyes.

I called out to my daughter, “Sweetie, I need to talk to you.”

She hummed and hawed, a typical teen, “Oh, Mom, do you have to?”

Please come here; it’s real important I need to talk to you right now.

“Okay, okay, I’m coming, sheesh, relax mom, don’t have a cow.”

I looked into her pretty blue eyes; sit here, I’ve got something to say.

“Um, okay, Mom, you’re freaking me out. Why are you acting this way?”

As I looked at her with tears, my words were—someone said yes.

Our prayers were heard and answered, sweetie—someone said yes.

We held each other/we cried a lot/we were overwhelmed with emotions inside.

Gratitude, happiness, love, and joy—all we felt we could no longer hide.

“Do you think it will hurt him? I don’t want him to feel any pain?”

When he gives me his marrow; to give me my life back again.”

“Yes, it will hurt a bit, but I thank God for what he is going to do.

It’s the most incredible act of love, and he’s doing it just for you.”

My friend, you are our silent here; who you are would be a guess.

You’ll be treasured and loved always; thank you for saying yes.

Meghan continued her journey. Her perfect 10 out of 10 match was grafted within her, and she was given more time with us. Sadly, she developed a secondary illness about 10 months later. Cancer had taken its hold now in her blood. Her new diagnosis was ALCL, and it was grim. She fought bravely, and with so much love and faith, God called her home, and she passed away on April 18, 2007.

Her journey through all of this is so inspiring and heart-breaking at the same time. My therapy became writing her story, “Meghan’s Beads.” Every now and then when I think my life is hard, I pick up my book and read a bit; boy, things truly get put back into perspective real quick. We, as a family, lived this journey with her. We witnessed many moments where prayers were actively being answered.

I will be eternally thankful for the man who said yes. He gave me two more years with my girl. For that I also thank God, as He truly was the author of all of it. Each chapter of her journey was led and directed by Jesus through faith and prayer.

Perhaps when you enter into this month of giving, think about donating blood. Or, even take it to the next level and become a bone marrow donor. What you give is the beginning of someone’s miracle.

“And my people will be filled with the things I give them,” says the Lord (Jeremiah 31:14).