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‘Please help us’

Refugee crises may have faded from the headlines, but Anglican ministries say demand for resettlement in Canada is growing—as global turmoil increases and U.S. resettlement numbers hit all-time lows. See p. 10.

PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY/ACT ALLIANCE

Refugees and migrants line up for food in a city park on the Greek island of Chios. Many refugees who crossed by boat from Turkey sought shelter in the park.

Resurrection comes to Fort McMurray

Four years after devastating wildfire, residents continue journey through trauma to renewal

Matt Gardner
STAFF WRITER

When Harvey Tulk returned home to Fort McMurray after the 2016 wildfire that caused one of the largest evacuations in Canadian history, one of the first things he did was volunteer at the local food bank.

Demand for food was high as residents began to trickle back into the community. Grocery stores in the Alberta oil town were in the process of restocking their supplies. But volunteers at the food bank soon found that feeding the community would be more difficult than they had imagined.

“All the food that was there had to be thrown away because it was contaminated by the fire…. We had to clear out all the food, put that in the garbage, clean the facility…then get new food to put back,” Tulk recalls.

The *Edmonton Journal* reported in August 2016 that the Wood Buffalo Food Bank had to destroy 53,527 items of food after the wildfire, due to possible smoke contamination. This loss was coupled with a major increase in need. Arianna Johnson, then-executive director, estimated at that time that 94% of people requesting their services had never visited a food bank before.

▲ In 2016, volunteers ask for help to send aid to victims of the wildfire in Fort McMurray, Alberta.

PHOTO: ERIC BUERMEYER/ SHUTTERSTOCK

Years after the wildfire, demand remains high. In a Bloomberg report from last October, current executive director Dan Edwards estimated that a decade ago,

See REBUILDING, p. 6

Church leaders support Wet’suwet’en as some agreement emerges

Joelle Kidd
STAFF WRITER

On March 1, hereditary chiefs of the Wet’suwet’en Nation and senior government ministers announced they had reached “a proposed arrangement to acknowledge land title rights established more than 20 years ago in a Supreme Court decision,” according to reporting by the CBC. The agreement, still tentative as of press time, came after months of conflict over the proposed construction of a pipeline through Wet’suwet’en territory. No agreement on the future of the pipeline was reached.

In the midst of that conflict, leaders of the Anglican Church of Canada declared support of the hereditary chiefs.

A Feb. 6 statement calling on the Government of Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to “immediately cease their occupation, arrests, and trespassing on Wet’suwet’en sovereign territory” drew signatures from more than 70 ecumenical church leaders.

The statement of solidarity with Wet’suwet’en Nation pipeline opposition, released by Toronto Urban Native Ministry in the diocese of Toronto, was signed by several Anglican bishops, including National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop Mark MacDonald and National Bishop of the Evangelical

See STATEMENT, p. 13

PM# 40069670

ANGLICAN VOICES ▸

‘Where there is love’

Reflections on caring in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside

By Philip Murray

THE FIRST TIME I went to Providence Health Care’s Crosstown Clinic on Vancouver’s notorious Downtown Eastside (DTES) was a surreal experience. Walking down Abbott Street, one encounters a true menagerie of urban living: fashionable business people; students; tourists; street people; drug dealers; and many people with walkers, wheelchairs or scooters.

The DTES is one of Canada’s poorest neighbourhoods and is ground zero for British Columbia’s opioid crisis. The Crosstown Clinic has been helping to address this crisis since 2011 by providing medically prescribed injectable heroin (diacetylmorphine) and hydromorphone for people with chronic and severe opioid use disorder who don’t benefit from other conventional treatments. Clients come into the clinic up to three times a day to self-inject medicine. There they are supported by nurses, care aides, doctors, social workers and myself—a spiritual care practitioner.

The first time I witnessed the clinic at work I found myself thinking, *What on earth are we doing here? Are we really providing free drugs to heroin users?* The clinic is firmly rooted in the philosophies of patient-centered care and harm reduction, so there is no expectation that clients will work towards abstinence or attempt to control or reduce their substance use.

▲ **‘Jesus Washing Peter’s Feet’ by Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893)**

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS: PRESENTED BY SUBSCRIBERS 1893

Is this not enabling self-destructive behaviour? Should we really be doing this?

It didn’t take me long to hear the stories and learn about the impact that trauma, abuse and attempted genocide have on people, which sadly is very real and ultimately leads to tremendous pain and suffering. Bodies, minds and spirits get broken. While we have the ability to heal, deep scars can remain and treatment can turn into desperate need and addiction.

Some are here because of the over-prescription of opioids like oxycodone after an accident or other physical trauma. Some were born into families where addiction was prevalent and learned about substance use from the adults around them. Some suffer from physical, sexual and emotional violence and abuse. Many are Indigenous and live with the legacy of the Indian Act, residential schools and the Sixties Scoop. Mental health challenges, such as debilitating and uncontrolled depression, anxiety and schizophrenia, are prevalent—and this just scratches the surface of the challenges facing those on the DTES.

It also didn’t take me long to learn that the thoughts which ran through my head that first day were informed by stigma—the perception that people who live with a particular characteristic that is considered undesirable are undesirable themselves.

Stigma occurs on three levels: social, self and professional. Social stigma is “a belief held by a large faction of society in which persons with the stigmatized condition are part of an inferior group”[1] (like being from Nazareth—John 1:46). Self-stigma occurs when stigmatized beliefs held by society are internalized by the individual who is identified to be part of the stigmatized group, resulting in the individual feeling guilt or inadequacy in terms of their core identity and belief about themselves (as when the Samaritan woman asks Jesus, “How can you ask me for a drink?”—John 4:9). Professional stigma occurs when these beliefs are internalized by health-care professionals and impact the caregiving provided to people in this population—just as I held the belief that those with addictions issues need help getting “clean and sober,” and we should not be providing access to a clean and safe supply of the drug their bodies and minds need.

My belief has changed as I have learned that the pain these people live with is very real and present on physical, mental and spiritual levels. Substances, particularly opioids, are very effective at relieving this pain, if only temporarily. As anyone knows who has taken a pain reliever like ibuprofen (e.g. “Advil”) to relieve a headache, a stimulant like caffeine (in coffee or tea) to get going in the morning, or a depressant like alcohol (wine, beer, scotch, etc.) to relax at a social gathering or after a hard day at work—substances effectively shift our experience of life. And when life is full of pain and suffering, any shift is welcome.

The difficulty with opioids is that while the relief is very effective in the moment, the pain ultimately returns, and we end up feeling horrible as the drug leaves our system. Having another dose makes everything good again, but it doesn’t quite provide as much relief as before, and the withdrawal is worse. This leads to a vicious cycle: pain, use, relief, withdrawal, more pain, more use, some relief, more withdrawal, even more pain, and on and on, as our body gets used to the drug being in our system. Over time the amount needed for relief increases. Soon our entire life can be focused on getting that next dose, no matter what—which inevitably can lead to criminal behavior, broken homes and broken lives.

For those at the Crosstown Clinic, everything changes. I have begun to see our clients for who they are: beloved children of God who need help and support to cope with the significant challenges they face in life. We respond with love and compassion, providing access to a safe and clean supply of the medicine they need and surrounding them with medical, social and spiritual support. When this happens, the cycle of stigma, shame and anxiety about having to steal or sell possessions or bodies in order to get that next fix is broken. And sometimes, they begin to see themselves as beloved children of God facing significant challenges in life.

Some end up making decisions to reduce their dependence on substances, and others decide to pursue education and work opportunities. Some seek reconciliation with estranged families. For others, the struggle continues. But everyone is impacted by the love and compassion present at the Crosstown Clinic. And where there is love, there is God.

Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas deus ibi est. ■

Philip Murray, MDiv, *is a certified spiritual care practitioner with Providence Health Care in Vancouver.*

[1] Ahmedani B. K. (2011). “Mental Health Stigma: Society, Individuals, and the Profession.” *Journal of social work values and ethics*, 8(2), 4-1–4-16. (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3248273/#R31)

TRENDS ▸

> **“There’s a huge potential for evensong. It’s a service that anyone… is welcome to attend—you don’t need to be baptized, you don’t need to be a firm believer. It’s as difficult as opening the front door.**
>
> —Matthew Whitfield, director of music at St. Thomas’s, Toronto

PHOTO: MICHAEL HUDSON

The Cathedral Church of St. James in Toronto offers a weekly choral evensong service.

Evensong renaissance

Is choral evensong an as-yet untapped opportunity for Canadian churches to reach out?

Tali Folkins
STAFF WRITER

Last spring, All Saints’ Anglican Church in Huntsville, Ont., decided to try something new. Spurred by a parishioner now in his 90s, the church began offering choral evensong four times a year.

The parishioner, who has since moved to another city, had always loved evensong and had wanted his fellow congregants to experience it, says the Rev. Lynda Mee, a vocational deacon who serves as the church’s office administrator. He suggested it to the church’s priest at the time, who approved the idea. They engaged a local choir, along with some of the church’s own talent, and advertised the services locally and on All Saints’ Facebook page. As the *Anglican Journal* was going to press in February, the church had held four evensong services, with another one planned for March.

Levels of attendance at the services might surprise anyone who takes evensong for an out-of-date relic.

“We’ve been getting somewhere between 90 and 110 people that are coming out to this service—on 4 o’clock on a Sunday afternoon, which is probably not the most popular time for people to be wanting to go to a church service,” Mee says. Attendance on a typical Sunday Eucharist at All Saints’ is normally in the order of 70 people, she says.

Many of those who attend are parishioners of All Saints’, and some of them bring family from out of town to the services. But it’s possible that some of those who come aren’t even churchgoers, Mee says. She sees the popularity of the service as a sign of the potential of evensong to bring more people to Anglican churches.

“This service is a great way to reach out, probably, to people who don’t attend regularly,” she says.

Clearly, those who come are drawn by the music, Mee says. But there’s something else about evensong’s appeal that she finds hard to put into words.

> **“It’s something that I think you can almost soak yourself in.**
>
> —The Rev. Lynda Mee, vocational deacon at All Saints’ Anglican Church, Hunstville, Ont.

“I can’t say it’s the quiet of the service—because it isn’t quiet, because of the music…. The words aren’t coming to me…. It’s something that I think you can almost soak yourself in.”

‘The way it…washes over you’

On a late winter Sunday evening in Toronto, wet snow falls on slushy sidewalks. It’s been a messy day, and vehicles and people are sparse. But inside St. Thomas’s Anglican Church, the air is warm, rich and layered. A choir of some 30 voices chants psalms and sings canticles from the Bible. The small congregation joins in on prayers and hymns. Voices dip, hover and soar, and incense penetrates the vibrating air.

There’s something about evensong that leaves Canon David Brinton, interim priest at St. Thomas’s, also somewhat at a loss for words—and, like Mee, settling on the image of immersion to describe the experience.

“It’s not—what is the word—it’s not very rational. It’s about the feelings, the emotions and the way it…washes over you,” he says.

Evensong originated with the Church of England in the sixteenth century, though its roots go considerably farther back. Early Christians followed the Jewish tradition of praying at fixed times of the day; from this tradition vespers (evening prayer) and compline (night prayer) evolved in the Middle Ages. The English reformers established evensong by borrowing elements of both vespers and compline, Brinton says.

The service is centered around two canticles, or songs from the Bible: the Song of Mary or Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), which had been the traditional vespers canticle; and the Song of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32), also known as the Nunc dimittis, which was the traditional canticle for the night office. Sunday evensong typically includes a sermon, though daily evensong services through the week normally do not. The Eucharist does not form part of evensong, although—rarely these days, Brinton says—Eucharist may follow it.

Evensong is unusual among Canadian churches; Brinton says he knows of only two in Toronto—St. Thomas’s and the Cathedral Church of St. James—that offer it weekly. The service has been growing in popularity in the UK, however. In a February 2019 article in *Cathedral Voice*, a UK journal, Oxford University musicologist Kathryn King wrote that choral evensong “appears to be experiencing a renaissance.”

Five or six hundred people come to evensong at Westminster Abbey every weekday, King wrote, with more than 1,500 or more attending the service on Sundays.

By and large, this trend does not yet seem to have reached Canada, says Matthew Whitfield, director of music at St. Thomas’s. Even apart from the devotional aspect of the service, it’s unfortunate that more Canadians aren’t attending evensong, he says, because it gives life to a long and rich tradition of music.

“The material within evensong, especially the ‘Mag’ and ‘Nunc,’ have been inspirational for composers for centuries,” he says. Music at St. Thomas’s, for example, could include compositions ranging from the medieval abbess and mystic Hildegard of Bingen to present-day Estonian composer Arvo Pärt.

“Within evensong you can cover six centuries in a single service…. Musically, there’s a vast body of work that people are missing out on by not being here.”

Whitfield says he believes evensong’s resurgence in the UK may have to do with the combination it offers of beautiful music with a low demand for participation—a draw for people who may feel uneasy about taking part in church ritual.

See EVENSONG, p. 15

GUEST COLUMN ▸

Lessons in liturgy from *The Two Popes*

By David Harrison

THERE WAS NO way that I was going to miss *The Two Popes*, the 2019 biographical drama film about Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, because I am a sucker for all things papal.

At the same time, I was also more than a little apprehensive to see the film, because I feared that its message would be, essentially, "Benedict = bad and Francis = good."

Don't get me wrong. There is no question that Pope Francis has forged a fresh and deeply appealing approach to his papacy. He has declined to live in the luxurious papal apartments, eschewed fancy vestments and motorcades, and demonstrated by word and action a preferential option for the poor and marginalized. By choosing a papal name never used before, Francis signalled his style would be different, and he has been good to his word.

As a result, there has been, in many circles, a strong reaction against his predecessor, Benedict. Known for his theological acumen and conservative disposition, Benedict was also notorious for his taste for red papal shoes, lace albs and damask silk vestments. He even restored the use of papal vestments that had fallen into disuse. (This includes his rather unfortunate experiment reviving the papal camauro. Google "Pope Benedict Santa hat" and you'll see what I mean!)

Again, don't get me wrong. Although I recognize Benedict's theological prowess, I land on a different side of many theological and social issues. Still, there was something about Benedict's papacy and, in particular, his liturgical style, that I did appreciate, and which I suspect might signal something important in the evolution of the liturgy of the church in the West.

Holy Week is the summit of the church's liturgical year, inviting us to walk with Jesus "from the glory of the palms to the glory of the resurrection by way of the dark road of suffering and death," as the *Book of Alternative Services* (BAS) puts it. In many Anglican parishes the shape of that week has been profoundly influenced by the BAS; until its advent only a few Anglo-Catholic parishes would have observed the particular rites and ceremonies for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Great Vigil of Easter.

The BAS was a result of the Liturgical Movement, which reached its zenith in the mid-1960s with the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church. Almost overnight, Vatican II upended almost everything about Roman Catholic liturgy. Latin gave way to vernacular English. Baroque-style vestments were discarded.

Anglican worship was similarly reformed. "Prayer Book English" was, in many places, sidelined in favour of a modern idiom. Altars were pulled away from the wall, or new "nave altars" created. Suffice it to say that liturgy in most Anglican parishes today bears little resemblance to what happened 60 years ago.

▲ **The two popes, in the flesh: Francis (left), known for modernizing many elements of the papacy, and the more traditional Benedict XVI (right).**

COMPOSITE PHOTO: PHILIP CHIDELL/ SHUTTERSTOCK

Once in a while in my parish, we celebrate according to what we call the "Old Western Rite." This is, essentially, the way the Eucharist was celebrated before Vatican II, but in Prayer Book English and with bits and pieces of the *Book of Common Prayer* pasted in. I enjoy the process of rehearsing and celebrating in this manner, but it also always leaves me aware of the need for liturgical reform pre-1960s. I am grateful for the Liturgical Movement: for its focus on the community gathered to celebrate the Eucharist, its inclusion of different liturgical ministers and the connections that are made between what and how we pray and how we are called to live our lives.

But I have also increasingly become aware of what might have been lost in the grand sweep of the Liturgical Movement. I wonder if we have lost some sense of the mysterious, the numinous, the transcendent, in our effort to make the liturgy approachable and comprehensible? Is there any merit in a liturgical language which is "other than," and not what we use in day-to-day life? Can language with a different cadence and tone draw us to a different space, where we step outside *chronos* (ordinary time) and into *kairos* (sacred time)? Have we put too much store in saying the "right words," and not enough in the non-verbal aspects of ritual—things which appeal to the senses of smell, taste, touch and sight?

During his eight-year pontificate, Benedict XVI made several moves to rein in some of what he seemed to see as the liturgical excesses and errors in the implementation of Vatican II. He did this by making celebrations using the pre-Vatican II rite more normative than they had been, and through his own celebrations and style. This included, on occasion, returning to the pre-Vatican II orientation for liturgy, with the priest standing and facing the altar in the same direction as the congregation.

For most of my 20 years of ordained ministry, I have celebrated the Eucharist, at least some of the time, with (as it is said) "my back to the people." In my last parish this was a necessity, as we worshipped in a small country church building with no room to move the altar away from the wall. In my current parish, which has a celebration of the Eucharist every day, most of the weekday celebrations are in a side chapel where the altar is against the wall. While I have absolutely no objection to celebrating "facing the people," as I do now every Sunday, I do think that something was lost in the wholesale movement toward free-standing altars.

Most of us have witnessed, I suspect, a priest who seems to think that standing behind the altar is an invitation to put on a one-person show, where personality prevails over prayer. But even without this particular problem, is there not something theologically rich about all of the people of God facing in the same direction to pray and to worship? Is there not something appropriate about doing this facing east, the liturgical direction for prayer, toward the rising Son? I've heard the arguments: "I don't want to turn my back on my people," or "It's too impersonal." One teacher of mine even said it felt to her as if she were "driving a bus." I wonder, though, whether these sentiments, albeit pastorally informed and motivated, actually put too much emphasis on the person of the priest separate from the gathered community. There is, in so-called eastward facing celebrations, a kind of anonymity which obviates the risk of a priest-centred, personality-driven liturgy.

I was glad—and relieved—after watching *The Two Popes*, because it didn't fall into the current zeitgeist of celebrating Francis while dissing Benedict. In fact, the movie presents a nuanced and sensitive rendering of each man, showing both of their strengths and gifts, and also their vulnerabilities.

It is too soon to say whether Benedict's brief papacy will have a lasting effect on the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church and, potentially, the church more generally. Historians will have a better perspective on this in a few decades' time. In the meantime, I prefer to see the gifts both popes bring to the church. Together, they give us a glimpse of the glory of God, both by eschewing worldly luxuries and by worshipping God in the beauty of holiness. As we walk the Way of the Cross this month, may we catch a glimpse of the ineffable reality of death and resurrection—wherever, and however, we gather. ■

The Rev. Canon David Harrison *is rector of Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Toronto.*

> **"I wonder if we have lost some sense of the mysterious, the numinous, the transcendent, in our effort to make the liturgy approachable and comprehensible?**

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EDITOR: Matthew Townsend
GUEST MANAGING EDITOR: Joelle Kidd
ART DIRECTOR: Saskia Rowley
STAFF WRITERS: Tali Folkins, Matt Gardner, Joelle Kidd
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Alice Namu
CIRCULATION: Marlina Farales

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CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS:
Editor: editor@anglicanjournal.com
Director, Communications: jvecsi@national.anglican.ca
Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome but prior queries are advised.

ADVERTISING:
Larry Gee
593 Balmy Beach Rd.,
Owen Sound, ON
N4K 5N4
Phone: 226-664-0350
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Email: advertising@national.anglican.ca

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SINGING WITH JOY

Waiting for hope

By Linda Nicholls

AS A YOUNG PERSON in the church, I was taught that the first words to be spoken on Easter morning—and to everyone you met that day—were: "ALLELUIA, CHRIST IS RISEN!" and, in response, "THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED, ALLELUIA!" I cannot say I always remember to do that—but many times in the Easter season I make it my greeting. Sometimes it startles those I meet, but often it is responded to enthusiastically. Every time it is said or heard, I feel within me an intense joy, a reminder of the sure and certain hope on which our faith is founded.

Contained in these few words is the explosive power of God that nothing can defeat. If death itself is powerless before God, then there is nothing to fear and nothing to stand between us and the love of God. Every year, through Lent and Holy Week, we walk with Jesus, invited to see our complicity in sin and Jesus's unfailing call to the life of love, compassion, justice and mercy.

We walk with Jesus into the destruction wrought by human collusion with political forces, religious protectionism and fear. We take with us the pain of our own lives when, despite our best efforts, relationships have been broken; around us the planet groans under the effects of climate change; political leaders undermine moral principles; racism continues to infect our world and actions; and inaction for Indigenous justice continues. The list of pain and agony in the world is endless. We enter the emptiness of death and despair on Good Friday when hopes have been crushed and then into the numbing grief of waiting on Holy Saturday—waiting for something stronger than death, stronger than our sin—waiting for hope.

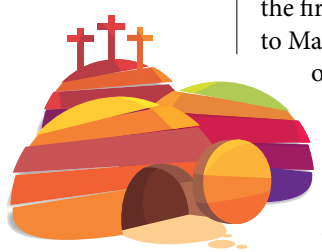

IMAGE: ALEKSANDR PASECHNIK/ SHUTTERSTOCK

The empty tomb of Easter morning and the first appearances of the risen Christ to Mary Magdalene and the disciples offer that hope, even if it is a hardly believable hope. Death can be defeated? Jesus lives? It would take the disciples days and weeks to fully comprehend the power of this hope. Then it fuels a passion, joy and proclamation that echoes through the centuries and continues to fuel transformation in hearts and minds and communities. With the resurrection of Jesus we see and know the full extent of God's commitment to us, by entering into death and restoring life.

The early church offered baptisms at Easter Vigil so that the newly baptized would rise to their new life in Christ at the dawn of Easter morning—cleansed, renewed, ready to live this hope. Over the course of each year we find ourselves pulled into the currents and whirlpools of attitudes, expectations, powers and human dynamics that tempt us to place our hope elsewhere. Every year we need the cleansing and renewal of Lent and Holy Week leading us into the power of the resurrection. Every time I shout, "Alleluia, Christ is risen!" a burst of joy and delight is released in my heart as I know that in God is the sure and certain hope that nothing can destroy.

May our Easter celebration release this joy in every heart to give us courage to live the life of faith!

Alleluia, Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia! ■

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

WALKING TOGETHER

An unmistakable sign

By Mark MacDonald

THOUGH THE CHURCH of my youth taught about the Second Coming of Christ, there were not many specifics, nor was there much guessing about when, where and how. Later, I met Christians who were very passionate about these things. Despite what Jesus said about not knowing the day or the hour, this didn't seem to slow many folks down. Interpreting the signs was popular—quite a big business, as I recall. Around the time I was in high school, there was a lot of speculation about who might be the anti-Christ. There was a fairly long list of politicians who were identified. I hear that this speculation is still alive and well.

One of the clearest statements Jesus made about the character of the time before his return is in Matthew 24:12—"And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold." Though love is not easy to count or calculate, this statement is stark and vivid. Still, it is not so surprising that it doesn't get much pulpit time. It does hit very close to home.

PHOTO: CRAZY NOOK/ SHUTTERSTOCK

If love is the unmistakable and directly identifiable character of the movement of Jesus (John 13:35), this prediction would say that a lack of love—we might say, the lack of compassion—is one of the clearest markers of the advance of evil. Though love is the pre-illumination of the World to Come, the lack of love signals the forces associated with the breakdown of the integrity of the web of life. Of final conflict between the forces that rebel against God and the forces that announce the dawning of the age of justice and peace.

So, perhaps we can't make this into a clear and sharp picture of what the end of time will look like. This does, however, point us in two very critical directions: on one hand, away from those forces moving toward destruction, signalled by their lack of love; on the other hand, moving towards the good signalled by the forward movement toward God, humanity, Creation, and the World to Come.

This energy, this motivation, this warmth, this peace, this justice, is poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5) and, by that, is a sign of God's presence. Without love, even the loftiest statement of faith and the most pious act of devotion are judged utterly false. With love, we find ourselves not far from the World to Come. ■

Archbishop Mark MacDonald *is national Indigenous archbishop of the Anglican Church of Canada.*

LETTERS

Palestinian state more than 'wishful thinking'

From the editor: We have received many letters and comments about the January 2020 issue of the *Anglican Journal*. We will publish and discuss those in an upcoming issue. —M. Townsend

The Anglican Journal *welcomes letters to the editor.*

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

I was intrigued by Margaret Rouhani's reaction ("Letters: Talking about Israel and Palestine in a post-truth era," Feb. 2020, p. 4) to the excellent cover article in the December edition of the *Anglican Journal* ("You weep before you get to Bethlehem," Dec. 2019, p. 1). Intrigued by what seems like a knee-jerk, biased reaction to the lengthy article's one-line reference to Mahmoud Abbas as "president of the State of Palestine." Rouhani responds by saying that "no such state exists (outside of wishful thinking)." This statement requires correction.

As of 2019, 138 of the 193 United Nations member states have recognized the State of Palestine, and since 2012, the designation "State of Palestine" has been used on official United Nations documents. This designation can also be found on Palestinian postal stamps and official documents. In 2013, international media reported that Mahmoud Abbas was given the right to sit in the General Assembly's beige chair, reserved for heads of state waiting to take the podium and address the General Assembly. This reflects Abbas's position as President of Palestine, whether Margaret Rouhani cares to acknowledge it or not.

Locating the "truth" in the ongoing Israel/Palestine conflict is not an easy task, something that I learned first-hand from both Israelis and Palestinians while on a recent two-week KAIROS Canada delegation to that region. But to dismiss and reduce the State of Palestine to an act of "wishful thinking" betrays an unwillingness to afford the Palestinian people with the basic dignity they deserve.

The Rev. Andreas Thiel
Windsor, Ontario

PHOTO: MARGARET BLANK

A Malcolm Guite-inspired piece at an international art quilt exhibition

Poetry and prayer

I would like to thank you for your full-page article on the Rev. Malcolm Guite, priest and poet, in your February 2020 issue ("Something Understood," Feb. 2020, p. 3). I've enjoyed a live concert featuring Rev. Guite and Canadian singer-song-writer Steve Bell, and was thrilled to have Rev. Guite autograph my copy of his book *Sounding the Seasons*.

This book has inspired me for some years now. I use it on an ongoing basis on our parish blog; most recently, I read "Candlemas" to the congregation at its Morning Prayer service (Feb. 2).

Moreover, as a textile artist, it inspired my piece entitled *Incarnation to Resurrection: Reflections on the Colours of the Church Year*, which was juried into an international art quilt exhibition, sponsored by Studio Art Quilt Associates (SAQA), that is touring through 2021. Currently in Europe, it returns to North America to be shown at a variety of US venues later this summer.

Prayer in poetry...and poetry as prayer...comingled with music and inspiring art: ancient, yet ever new ways of expressing our faith.

(Mrs.) Margaret Blank
Lacombe, Alberta

EASTER PEOPLE ▸

Rebuilding after wildfire a long, slow process, Fort McMurray Anglicans say

“I always like to remember, it even took Jesus three days.

—Diane Strickland, critical incident responder, trauma and grief counsellor, and ordained United Church minister

Continued from p. 1

around 2,000 people used the food bank each month. Today, monthly averages remain around four times that number.

For almost four years, Fort McMurray has been recovering from the fire which, at the height of evacuation, forced more than 80,000 people to flee their homes. From May 1, 2016 until it was officially declared out on Aug. 2, the raging wildfire destroyed more than 2,400 homes and buildings and displaced thousands of residents.

In the aftermath of the disaster, local churches played a vital role in helping the community rebuild. Among them was All Saints’ Anglican Church, and one of the congregation’s most tireless volunteers was Tulk.

Originally from the town of Fortune, Nfld., Tulk had served there as mayor, city councillor and a school board trustee. After the collapse of the Newfoundland fishery, Tulk and his wife Lynn sold most of their possessions and moved to Fort McMurray, where they eventually found jobs working in supply management for Shell.

A lifelong Anglican, Tulk had previously served as a people’s warden, greeter, lector and member of the vestry at his congregation in Fortune (coincidentally enough, also called All Saints’ Anglican Church). After relocating to Fort McMurray, he joined All Saints’ Anglican Church there and became a reader, vestry member and team leader of various ministries.

The day the fire came to Fort McMurray and evacuations began, Tulk remembers most people retaining their composure as they hurriedly drove to oil sand work camps outside the city. He describes the situation on the roads as “organized chaos.”

“We had a few drivers that were on the road that panicked because they couldn’t find their children or they couldn’t find their pets…but overall, it was pretty calm,” Tulk says.

Others recall the situation differently. Dane Neufeld, rector at All Saints’, had been in church on the morning of May 6 when he saw a massive plume of smoke billowing over a hill.

▲ **Harvey Tulk describes the landscape around Fort McMurray and effects of the wildfire in this shot from the film *This is Home*.**

PHOTO: RED LINE MEDIA

He and his wife prepared to leave the town with their four children. Soon the sky had darkened and a mandatory evacuation was called. Only one radio station was operating as residents fled, and most stores and services were shut down.

“Things were a bit chaotic and people were running around…. Society’s suspended for a little while and nobody knew what was going on,” Neufeld recalls.

For some residents, their escape included some truly terrifying experiences.

“We were sent in different directions when we came out of the city,” Neufeld says. “But we had good friends who, with their van full of kids, were driving through walls of flame and they thought they were going to die.”

Compton Vigilance—a retired electrical technician and former member of the congregation at All Saints’ who moved to Fort McMurray with his wife Carolle in 1979—had just arrived home from grocery shopping on May 6 when he learned residents had been given an hour to evacuate. He quickly gathered some belongings and hit the road with family members.

“By the evening we were heading down Highway 63 bumper to bumper through embers,” he remembers. “I had a full tank of gas but my son was driving on fumes when we got to just outside of Conklin.”

Tulk had a similar experience. Despite the slow pace of traffic, he managed to drive to a Shell camp more than an hour away with only a quarter-tank of gas.

“I never had enough gas to get there, but I did,” he says. “I always say, somehow or another, God helped me get there.”

After staying in work camps, many evacuees moved on to Edmonton. Vigilance and his family stayed at his sister’s place in the city. Tulk and his his wife, son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter stayed in an Edmonton hotel for six weeks, paid for by their insurance and Shell.

Meanwhile, Neufeld and his family ended up living in Calgary with his parents for two months. Much of the rector’s time was spent trying to track down members of the congregation, whether by phone or by driving through southern Alberta, to make sure they were safe.

During his enforced exile, Neufeld helped plan a service in Edmonton at St. Augustine’s Anglican Church. Members from two local Anglican churches attended.

“Tons of people showed up…. It was really quite a powerful time,” he says.

By June, some people were being allowed back into Fort McMurray. All Saints’ Church began holding services once again that month.

Tulk returned and threw himself into work to help those affected by the disaster. Through his position at Shell, he helped set up reception centres offering clothes, food, water and information for people coming back into town. Many companies held barbecues for returning evacuees.

Along with his work at the reception centres, the church and the food bank, Tulk also helped out at local soup kitchens. The sheer volume of his volunteer work led to Tulk being prominently featured in *This is Home*, an award-winning documentary about the Fort McMurray wildfire, in which residents refer to him as a “super-volunteer.”

The initial period after their return to Fort McMurray was a busy one for the town’s population.

“It was a pretty chaotic number of months because everyone’s coming back and cleaning up their houses,” Neufeld says. “People are taking stock of the damage and trying to figure out where they’re going to stay…. It was definitely a challenging time, and people were tired. But there was also energy…. People were exhausted and disoriented, but also motivated to rebuild.”

Some, such as Neufeld and Tulk, were fortunate in that their houses were undamaged. But thousands of other residents lost their homes in the inferno. Compton and Carolle Vigilance saw their house destroyed and ended up buying a new home in Edmonton. Sadly, Carolle died of cancer in 2018.

“We lost our house and a vehicle and all belongings left behind; memories of pictures, memorabilia, and friends,” Vigilance says. “Trying to get what [it was] insured for is still a sore point with me; I took what was offered because of my wife’s illness, not to have her suffer any longer.”

▲ **Flames and smoke engulf Fort McMurray at the height of the wildfire.**

PHOTO: RED LINE MEDIA

▲ **A community garden built on All Saints’ property is a visible sign of residents coming together to create new life.**

PHOTO: WILLI WHISTON

Many people faced financial challenges or difficulties finding new homes. But as the city sought to rebuild, support began to arrive from outside.

An outpouring of solidarity and donations from across Canada gave a boost to those in need. The Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF) made a significant contribution as Anglicans from coast to coast donated what they could to help the beleaguered residents of Fort McMurray. By the one-year anniversary of the fire, PWRDF had received more than $280,000 in donations.

Such was the level of donations that All Saints’ formed a committee to distribute funds from PWRDF and others. That committee ultimately had to make some “hard choices,” Neufeld says, in determining who would receive money based on need.

Within the All Saints’ congregation alone, at least 12 families’ homes were destroyed, while half a dozen others’ houses were partially burned or badly damaged.

A large portion of PWRDF funds went to help people with little or no insurance pay their living expenses. PWRDF partnered with Habitat for Humanity to help rebuild houses. Other recipients of funding included youth and homeless shelters, kids’ camps and a community garden on the property of All Saints’—a visible sign of residents coming together to create something new and living.

Along with rebuilding physically, many residents had to rebuild psychologically, overcoming the trauma of the disaster and in some cases the loss of homes and property.

In a display of ecumenism, churches from all denominations got involved in providing pastoral care to those affected. One particularly strong partnership was between the Anglican and United churches. Neufeld says Diane Strickland, a critical incident responder, trauma and grief counsellor, and ordained United Church minister, played a crucial role in supporting him in providing pastoral care.

For nearly two years after the fire, Strickland spent one week per month in Fort McMurray providing post-disaster recovery support. She often visited All Saints’ Anglican Church, gave a sermon there and offered counselling.

▲ **A modified sign welcomes displaced residents back into the city seven months after the evacuation.**

PHOTO: RED LINE MEDIA

In helping people deal with trauma, Strickland says, much of pastoral care involves simply listening and recognizing the struggles that others are dealing with.

“People don’t often talk about the disaster very much at all,” Strickland says. “They talk about everything else that is falling apart. They talk about the fact that there are traumas from their whole life that are suddenly alive again, even if people have been through therapy and dealt with this over many years. It’s like the trauma channel in our life gets turned on.”

Strickland has a background in field traumatology and experience in other disasters. After the 2013 Alberta floods—the costliest disaster in Canada’s history until the Fort McMurray wildfire—she spent a year at High River United Church offering spiritual care and flood recovery support to those traumatized by the flooding.

She notes that there are typically several common phases as people experience disasters. First there is a sense of euphoria as people work together to overcome the disaster.

“It’s almost a high, because [for] people, whatever constrained the best part of themselves, it’s not constraining them anymore, and they’re offering it,” Strickland says.

The next phase involves facing consequences of the disaster. Part of this means coming to terms with what Strickland calls “the uneven hand of disaster…the fact that one person’s house is taken and the next person’s isn’t.” Where people tend to struggle more, Strickland says, is “the uneven hand of recovery—why [for] some people, things work out better for them and not for you.”

The ongoing struggle of many Fort McMurray residents today reflects how much of a challenge it can be to recover.

A 2019 study by the journal *BMC Psychiatry* found a significant rise in mental health issues affecting adolescents in Fort McMurray compared to those in Red Deer, including severe depression and suicidal thoughts. The effects of the fire in Fort McMurray were also compounded by a drop in oil prices, leading to increased unemployment, slowed economic growth and an increase in bankruptcy and divorce.

Through her years of work with those affected by disasters, however, Strickland has seen another phase, in which people begin “believing in this massive capacity to rebirth their lives.”

Given her background in ministry, she connects these phases of disaster to the experience of Jesus’s followers throughout his crucifixion, death and resurrection, which Christians observe during Holy Week. Between commemoration of the crucifixion on Good Friday and the resurrection on Easter Sunday, she says, is a period of uncertainty on Holy Saturday.

“I always like to remember, it even took Jesus three days,” Strickland says.

After a disaster, people experience a similar feeing of uncertainty. But even the resurrection of Jesus, Strickland says, did not mean an instant return to business as usual.

“People didn’t know who Jesus was,” she says. “They were disoriented by his presence. They were heartened when they had that moment, like when Jesus says Mary’s name and suddenly she knows who it is that she’s talking to. That’s a wondrous moment. But it’s not some victory march.”

Significantly, the next major celebration in the church calendar 50 days after Easter is Pentecost, which marks the descent of the Holy Spirit onto the apostles and other followers of Jesus.

For Strickland, the presence of the Holy Spirit is visible when people begin the process of “rebirth” after trauma.

“I had a client this morning and I was watching the same thing…. The Spirit’s at work, and he’s choosing this,” she says. “He’s choosing to heal, he’s choosing to know that there are some things that are going to be gone and maybe gone forever, and he’s still going to be in his life and he’s still going to love and he’s still going to participate in life.”

Despite all the challenges facing Fort McMurray since the wildfire, Tulk also describes a new spirit that has made its presence felt among residents.

“If there is anything good” that came out of the fire, he says, it’s that “neighbours became neighbours.”

“This is a diverse community,” Tulk says. “There are people here that live next door to people for 20, 30 years, and they don’t know who that neighbour is…But now, the fire brought out the human compassion of people. They feel…we’re all part of one. We’re all [one] flock. We’re doing it together.

“It brought out that confidence that your neighbour understood what you were going through and you tried to help. That’s the other thing: people realized just how willing other people were to help. When you help somebody, you feel good and it makes them feel good.”

In his own reflections, Vigilance describes the meaning of the wildfire in even more expansive terms.

“The fire,” he says, “was and is an example of cleansing and spiritual awakening.” ■

Many more stories remain to be told about Fort McMurray, a city where environmental and economic concerns reflect the most urgent global issues of our time. Forthcoming issues of the Anglican Journal *will explore these stories in greater detail. To be continued…*

GOOD FRIDAY MOMENTS ▸

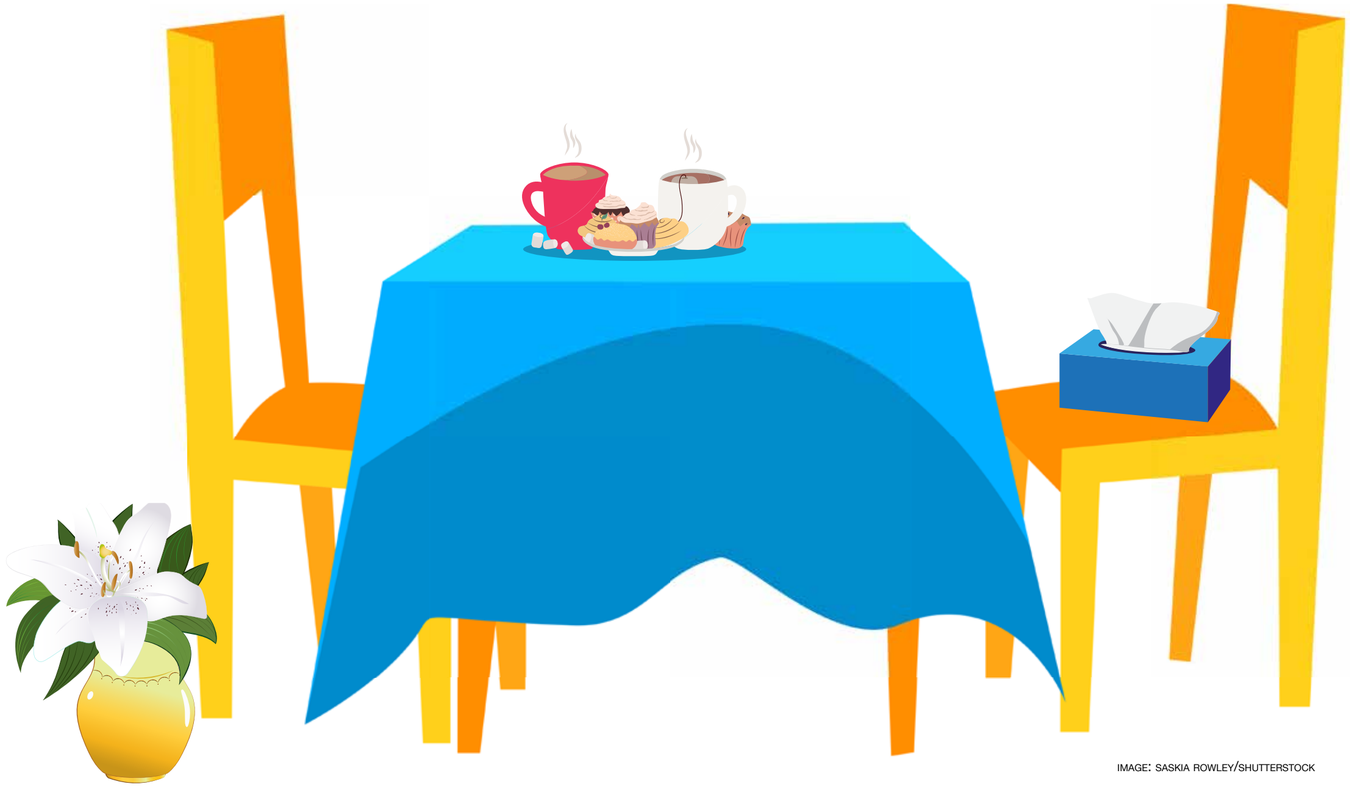

IMAGE: SASKIA ROWLEY/SHUTTERSTOCK

When we breathe our last

Around the world, death cafés allow people of all faiths (and of none) to gather and discuss one of life's greatest mysteries: its end

Joelle Kidd
STAFF WRITER

BEFORE EASTER, the Lenten season begins on Ash Wednesday with the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Christians on that day live with a reminder of their mortality smudged on their forehead. On Good Friday, they remember the death of Jesus on the cross.

For the remainder of the year, this frankness about death and dying is less commonplace.

"In church…we can't get away from some of our liturgical expressions. You know—'death is over,' 'we've conquered death,' all of those things. Those start to say that death is not a good thing, that we need to conquer it," says chaplain Joanne Davies, an oblate of the Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine and the priest chaplain and spiritual care coordinator at St. John's Rehab in Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Toronto. "The thing is, we still die. We believe in eternal life; we have faith in eternal life. We have faith because of Christ. But we want to talk about conquering death.

"Jesus died. He died a death. His breath stopped, his body suffered. But we tend not to be entirely comfortable with that."

Tea, cake and mortality

In recent years, some have been combatting this discomfort by hosting death cafés—a casual event centred around tea, snacks and open conversations about death.

The first death café was held in the UK in 2011 by Jon Underwood and his mother, therapist Sue Barsky Reid, who created the concept based on the ideas of philosopher Bernard Crettaz. Underwood envisioned the event as a welcoming space for a "straightforward and open discussion about death."

The death café concept is a social franchise, meaning anyone can host an event and use the name, provided they follow the guidelines on the death café website.

(Underwood died in 2017 at age 44; the site is now run by Barsky Reid and Underwood's sister, Jools Barsky.)

"I always wanted to start one, because what it's tapping into for me was a desire to create a safe space for people to simply be able to talk about death," says the Rev. Brenda Nestegaard-Paul. "We have such an anathema about talking about death in our society, and I would suggest that we're not even that comfortable in a lot of our churches."

Nestegaard-Paul first heard of the death café concept when she saw one advertised on another church's bulletin board. She hosted her first death café in November, at Trinity Anglican and Lutheran Church, Port Alberni, B.C., where she serves as pastor/incumbent.

"I tried to create a very warm type of ambiance, a very welcoming ambiance," she says. She put on background music and set out tables with cloths and centerpieces for a café feel. "It's very low-key."

About half the attendees were from the church, she says, and the other half from people outside the congregation.

Death café discussions are open to people of all faiths, or no faith, Nestegaard-Paul notes. "It's not about trying to explain to somebody [the] right-ness [of] one's own thoughts and beliefs, it's all about just being able to talk about what everyone wants to say [about] death." Some of the attendees were atheists or agnostics, she says. "It was really interesting seeing the dynamic in the circle, and how at the end our commonality—our mortality being our commonality—it really helped to diffuse any tension that sometimes might have been felt there."

It's also nice for people to know they can come to an event in a church and not be proselytized, she suggests. "The default often that people will come into is assuming that…[a minister or church member] is going to make them feel like they're wrong, or they're damned, or however they wish to articulate or understand that. So to actually have an experience where people might have different ideas, totally different ideas from them, and not accept their ideas as being truth, but that they were still respected and cared for, cared about—that's a pretty positive thing."

The death café website specifies that death cafés must always be offered "with no intention of leading participants to any conclusion, product or course of action"; "as an open, respectful and confidential space where people can express their views safely"; "on a not-for-profit basis"; and "alongside refreshing drinks and nourishing food—and cake!"

The model is also specified to be discussion-based and non-hierarchical, and it doesn't include having specific topics, set questions or guest speakers. They are not bereavement support groups and don't offer counselling.

The event drew a variety of people, Nestegaard-Paul says: those who were thinking about or planning for their own death, others who had grieved the loss of a loved one, people who were curious, and others who felt very comfortable talking about death and wanted to share their insight.

"I found it really refreshing, hearing the broad perspective that was represented around the circle. It was delightful to hear how people were really listening to one another and hearing one another."

When Nestegaard-Paul hosted the death cafés in November, her husband was in the midst of a long illness. A scheduled café was cancelled in January, after her husband died at the beginning of the year. Hosting the death café "simply affirmed why I think death cafés are important," she says. "Because I was hosting these, I think it helped people realize, *oh, she is really comfortable talking about death and dying and all of tha*t, because they knew what I was going through personally with my husband.

"Sometimes in our culture we don't know how to be with one another, to be with someone who is grieving. Our default is to say nothing…. For anyone who is grieving, one of the best gifts we can give them is to give them the space to be able to talk about their loved one who has died. I knew that intellectually. Now that my life partner has died, I know the truth of that by experience. So, anything that we can do to help people prepare for death, talk about it, I think is a very positive thing."

The church will be hosting more death cafés in the spring, says Nestegaard-Paul, and is planning to hold a "death festival" later in the year which will explore different rites and rituals around death.

Death is not something to be fearful of, she says. "When we fear it, or we get superstitious about talking about it, or get caught up in our culture—or certainly when you're caught up in the health-care system, where it is life at all costs, quite frankly, [and] death is seen as a failure—it does very damaging things to us. Mentally, emotionally, spiritually, physically." Nestegaard-Paul says she sees death as "normal."

"It's part of life."

A moment of 'complete and utter transcendence'

Part of the importance of talking about death is acknowledging that it is ambiguous and unknowable, says Davies. "We need to talk more about it, I feel, so that we can learn to live in that unknown—and to actually come to love that unknown—because that's the transcendent part. That's the mystery part."

Davies says she was surprised to see an avoidance of talking about death in the health-care field, even though it is encountered quite often. Often in cases of terminal illness, she observes, the patient is the one who brings up the topic of death. "It's my experience that when we're finally faced with it, the majority—not everybody—but the majority of people who are dying, they find they want to talk about it. I think that…as a chaplain, that was the part that really influenced me. It kind of hurt me, when I realized that those who are dying want to talk about it."

Davies says that for many people who work in health-care, and are focused on healing, a patient's death can feel like a failure.

John Beckman, a professor who teaches moral theology and health-care ethics at Regis College, the Jesuit school affiliated with the Toronto School of Theology, agrees. "With contemporary medicine, there's the view of many that it's medicine's responsibility to keep us from dying, and that if we or a loved one dies, the medical profession must have screwed up."

Contrary to what most might assume, Beckman says, studies[1] have shown that physicians typically overestimate how long a patient is going to live and refer patients to palliative care later than perhaps they should. "The problem [with] overly optimistic prognoses, because [of physician's] inability to confront and be honest with their patients, is that patients overwhelmingly wind up dying where they don't want to die—like in a hospital, when they want to die at home. They way too often don't put their affairs in order, they don't say goodbye to their loved ones."

When asked what a "good death" might look like, Beckman muses, "I think it's the opposite of what most people think it is. I think most people, when you ask them how they want to die, they go, 'Painlessly, in my sleep, when I'm not aware of it, instantly.' Now, certainly, for most of the history of Christianity, Christians would have thought that was the worst possible death. Not being able to make sure you're right with God and with others, to put your affairs in order, to say goodbye to people." A good death, in his view, is "one which allows you to put your affairs in order…financially, emotionally, socially, spiritually, morally."

He adds, "Part of what it means to be human is to depend on others and to learn to have the virtues of dependency to accept that, and not, 'I…don't want to be a burden.'" While there are times when respite is needed in the care of a chronically ill loved one, he says, in general, "you should want to be a burden. At certain points, everybody needs to be a burden and we need to bear each other's burdens. That's what it means to love other people."

It is difficult to speak about hope when talking about death, says Davies, but "there is hope…our faith tells us there is. For the death that I've experienced in hospital, some of them, the passage to death was not at all nice. As much as we tried to help people with pain there's still pain, and there's discomfort…for others, it's like a fairytale, you know? The person all dressed in white with a smile on their face, all through." But, "The part that's the same for everyone is that moment when the breath stops, and the heart stops, and there is a deep peace in the room, a deep, deep peace. Not of a door shutting and an ending, but of something so much greater than us. An absolute, awesome moment of complete and utter transcendence. You can feel it. It's palpable."

For Christians, talking about death—asking questions and working through fears—is a way to "grow deeper in their faith so they realize it's not something they need to be scared of," Nestegaard-Paul says.

"We're an Easter people. We are a people who believe that death does not have the final say… Paul writes in Thessalonians: 'We grieve, but not as those that have no hope.' And it is because of that, that we are able to find joy even in the midst of our sorrow, we are able to laugh even in the midst of the pain. Yes, as followers of Jesus Christ, death is not the enemy.

"Having said that—we should not minimize the loss of our loved ones in the flesh, which is the other reason that we need to talk about death," she says. There is a danger of interpreting Christ's "defeat" of death as instruction not to cry, not to grieve. "That's not true either. The fact of the matter is, when you lose someone in the flesh, that is a tremendous loss. And it is felt in the body, it is felt in all essence of who we are…. But because of our faith, the gift of this faith, we also know that it's a 'see you later,' and not a 'goodbye.'" ■

[1] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC27288/

PHOTO: SFAM PHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Talking about death in the time of MAiD

The question of a "good death" is one that has been at the centre of a national conversation since 2015, since Canada's Supreme Court ruled that parts of the country's criminal code that prohibited medically-assisted deaths were in violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Medical assistance in dying (MAiD) has been legal—for adults over 18 whose death is "foreseeable"—in Canada since 2016, with public consultations underway this year to potentially widen eligibility requirements. Davies sees these changes as useful for opening up conversations about death.

"I think it's helpful…. It's also forcing people to hear from folks who are suffering, anticipating death, and have realized they want death, and that there is safety in that. I'm not talking about people who commit suicide because they can't face life; these are people who have lived their life, they generally have reviewed it and where they've been," people who see death as a new beginning. "Death will…in many ways give them their life back, because it will give the people around them the memory of their life as they knew them, as well….and bring them into something new that celebrates the life that they had, rather than it being all about this difficult moment of dying."

Beckman, who is extremely opposed to the practice, believes it to be spurring the wrong sorts of conversations. "The best thing we could do would be to get euthanasia away from physicians…. Why do we need physicians, whose job is supposed to be to heal people, to make them well, why would we want to confuse them in what their job is?"

What makes a good death, just as what makes a good life, may well be different for everyone, Davies notes. "You can't ever say to someone, 'I want you to have a good death and this is how it should be.' Apart from the celebrating of life and them being able to talk about it, it's up to the person." ■

GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS ▸

Five years after the ‘Syrian surge,’ refugee sponsorship levels remain high. Is it enough?

Joelle Kidd
STAFF WRITER

> “Shall we say, the volunteers aren’t jumping out of the woodwork as they did in 2015-16.
>
> —Tony Davis, Refugee Sponsorship Coordinator (North), diocese of British Columbia

A supporter waves an image of Alan Kurdi during a protest rally in front of the US Consulate on January 30, 2017, in Toronto.
PHOTO: ARINDAMBANERJEE/SHUTTERSTOCK

In the fall of 2019, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, sent a letter to Jack Palmer-White, Anglican Communion’s permanent representative to the United Nations. The letter, “Refugee Sponsorship: A Canadian Anglican Perspective,” outlined the Anglican Church of Canada’s work in this area since the late 1970s, when the government of Canada implemented its private sponsorship program in response to the so-called “boat people,” refugees from Southeast Asia.

While many Anglican dioceses have held sponsorship agreements for decades, there has been a marked increase in refugee sponsorships since 2015.

According to Nicholls’s letter, from 2015 to late 2019, a total of 5,192 people have been resettled as refugees through Anglican Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs), and an additional 3,558 submitted applications were being processed. She also wrote that at the current rate of sponsorship, “it is expected that dioceses across Canada will continue to submit applications to resettle 400-500 people per year for the next several years.”

Canada was the first country to offer a private sponsorship model for refugees. Sponsorships can be made through an SAH, an incorporated organization that has signed a formal agreement with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). In the case of the Anglican Church of Canada, these SAHs are held at the diocesan level; 15 of 30 dioceses are currently SAHs.

In 2015, news outlets published a photo of the lifeless body of three-year-old Alan Kurdi, a Syrian refugee, washed up on a Turkish beach. At the time, Syria’s devastating civil war had been ongoing for four years. Yet Canadian aid groups, including the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), reported a dramatic spike in donations which many traced directly to the publication of the photograph. Canadians were moved not only to donate—that year, interest in refugee sponsorship jumped exponentially.

Before 2015, the majority of dioceses that had a refugee ministry were working on a couple of cases a year and staffed by volunteers, says Suzanne Rumsey, public engagement program coordinator for PWRDF. Rumsey helps coordinate the network of Anglican SAHs across Canada, and organizes a day-long meeting for their coordinators that takes place before an annual government-run SAH conference. “The refugee coordinators…have been up to their eyeballs since 2015, and some dioceses have been able to put more resources, financial and staffing resources, into sponsorship.”

Almost five years later, those numbers haven’t gone back down, Anglicans involved in refugee ministries say.

Crest of a wave

Rumsey characterizes this as a “wave” followed by an “echo effect.”

“We have this wave of 25,000 Syrians coming to Canada. They in turn are asking…their sponsors to sponsor family members.”

“Shall we say, the volunteers aren’t jumping out of the woodwork as they did in 2015-16. [Then] they were beating down our doors to get involved,” says Tony Davis, refugee sponsorship coordinator (north) for the diocese of British Columbia. (Davis covers the north end of Vancouver Island, while another volunteer works out of the Victoria office.) At that time, most sponsors were people coming off the street. “Now the sense of urgency is gone…so what we’re seeing now is a greater request for family reunification, extended families. Our focus is on that.” Along with Syrian refugees, they also have more requests from people originally from Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea.

Joyce Couvrette has seen a similar shift in the diocese of Ottawa.

Before 2015, the diocese’s refugee ministry was run solely by volunteer Don Smith, a retired rocket scientist. There were a small handful of parishes, “very faithful sponsors, a couple of applications every year, a couple of landings every year, very low-key,” says Couvrette, now the refugee ministry officer for the diocese. But then, she says, came the “Syrian surge.”

“Alan Kurdi’s photo was published and the Canadian public was really galvanized.”

As luck would have it, the diocese had been approached earlier by a group of lawyers in the community who wanted to sponsor through the diocese’s SAH. They created a contract for services, which became the blueprint for many other groups that began to come forward looking to sponsor Syrian refugees. “We were nicely placed to be ready for a huge onslaught of community interest,” says Couvrette.

At the time, she worked in the diocesan office, and can remember watching strangers come in off the street to ask if they could help sponsor. As interest grew, Ottawa bishop John Chapman knew the ministry had to expand; he tapped Couvrette to move into working full time for the refugee ministry as its first paid employee.

Through a number of complex factors, the government calculates each year how many spots will be allocated for each SAH, determining the maximum number of cases they will be allowed to take on in the year. The diocese of Ottawa’s allocations shot up in 2016 and have been steadily growing, Couvrette says. While much initial interest came from “sponsor-the-stranger types,” the echo effect has meant that requests remain high. “Once [the sponsored family] arrived, the sponsoring groups spent their year and…often became good friends afterward.” Groups often want to help bring over remaining family members.

“Inevitably the newcomers here are, sadly, getting calls, day in and day out, from their relatives overseas, saying, ‘Please help us,’” says Couvrette. “We just have way more people looking for sponsorships than we have the capacity to provide.” The ministry has limited spaces, and a limited pool of volunteers; often newcomers don’t have the resources or are not eligible to sponsor alone and need a group to partner with them. (“Constituent groups” are groups in the community that sponsor under an SAH’s agreement.)

Before moving to the diocese of Niagara, the Rev. Scott McLeod ran the diocese of B.C.’s refugee ministry “off the side of his desk,” he says. When he took on the role in Niagara, he imagined it would be the same way, but soon requests began to flood in.

> “The need has not been any less—it wasn’t any less before 2015. It’s just that response has increased.
>
> —The Rev. Scott McLeod, diocese of Niagara

McLeod is still a volunteer—his full-time work is in parish ministry—though the refugee ministry has grown fivefold since 2015.

“That’s one of the weird aspects of this work,” he says. “The need has not been any less—it wasn’t any less before 2015. It’s just that response has increased.”

Because Niagara has a comparatively small ministry with no full-time staff, McLeod says, they mandate that sponsoring groups have a connection to a parish in the diocese.

In the diocese of B.C., Davis says, their ministry has partnered with the local Roman Catholic diocese and several other faith communities which do not hold a sponsorship agreement with the federal government. The diocese of Ottawa, Couvrette says, has partnered with settlement group Jewish Family Services of Ottawa.

Couvrette says that she has enjoyed the way the ministry has connected the church with the surrounding community. “It’s interesting, people who would never darken the door of a church, I think they were just grateful to know that we would help them. No strings attached.”

However, the main focus remains helping to rescue and resettle displaced people, and it can be a difficult job.

“It is very stressful work,” Couvrette admits. “I’m not trying to whine about it. But you do have to have resilience, because of all the people you can’t help.”

For SAHs, the overwhelming need can be exhausting. “Some dioceses have been able to put some more resources in, others not,” says Rumsey. “The coordinators are feeling pretty exhausted. On one hand, the need is so great and they want to respond; on the other, they’re just feeling like there’s so much more to be done, so much more needed.”

▲ Canadians increased their involvement with refugee resettlement during the height of the 2015 refugee crisis—welcoming people escaping war in places like Syria.
PHOTOS: STACEY NEWMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK

Policy matters

Most privately sponsored refugees in Canada either come through the Blended-Visa Office Referred (BVOR) program or by sponsoring a specific refugee or family known to the sponsor.

The BVOR program connects sponsors with refugees that have already been screened and referred by bodies like the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Sponsors are expected to provide six months of financial support and 12 months of “social and emotional support.”

BVOR refugees typically arrive in three to four months, in Couvrette’s experience. The diocese of Ottawa has paired many volunteers with BVOR sponsorships through the BVOR fund—a philanthropic fund created by the U.S.-based Shapiro Foundation and G. Barrie Landry—which pays for BVOR sponsorships, requiring sponsors to provide emotional rather than financial support.

Applications for sponsoring a refugee you know take much longer, typically at least a year, and are not eligible for financial assistance from the government. Sponsors are required to provide one year of financial, social and emotional support after the family arrives in Canada.

Private sponsorship has advantages, Couvrette notes, including the network that comes along with having a group of Canadians to support a newcomer family.

Canada’s unique sponsorship model is beginning to be adopted by other countries like Sweden and Germany, Rumsey says. Still, although she says private sponsorship is a “wonderful program,” Rumsey worries about a trend toward the government allotting fewer spaces for government-assisted refugees and more for private sponsorships, “essentially, privatization of refugee sponsorship.”

According to the most recent annual report from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN refugee agency, Canada admitted the largest number of resettled refugees in 2018. The UNHCR report also estimated that 70.8 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violation at the end of 2018, and identified 1.2 million refugees in need of urgent resettlement. That number is expected to grow to 1.44 million in 2020.

Canada has felt the effects of changes south of the border, Rumsey notes. Since taking office in 2016, U.S. President Donald Trump has reduced refugee resettlement to “historic lows,” according to the Pew Research Center. In 2020, the U.S. plans to admit a maximum of 18,000 refugees—down from a cap of 30,000 in 2019—which would be the lowest number of refugees resettled in the country since its refugee resettlement program was created in 1980.

In November, a case was brought before Canada’s Federal Court by challengers including the Canadian Council of Churches (of which the Anglican Church of Canada is a member), Amnesty International, and the Canadian Council for Refugees (of which PWRDF is a member), asking the court to rule that Canada end its Safe Third Country Agreement with the U.S. on the grounds that the U.S. no longer meets the standard of a safe third country.

The agreement currently mandates that asylum seekers apply for refugee status in the first “safe country” they enter. Critics of the agreement say that it has led to an upswing in irregular border crossings from the U.S. into Canada since 2016.

Finding hope

For now, Anglicans working in refugee ministries are simply continuing to try and keep up with demand.

The diocese of Ottawa has recently reworked its structure so that the refugee ministry is under the direction of Archdeacon PJ Hobbs, the diocese’s director of mission, and has hired a new staff member to replace Smith, who will soon be retiring from full-time volunteering.

When asked how Anglicans can respond to the global refugee crisis, Couvrette quotes her colleague. “As Don said this morning… ‘Some Anglicans have time, some have money, some have both.’ Do what you can. You know? Make donations. Join your parish sponsoring group. You can do both in some cases.”

“The refugee situation worldwide, it’s absolutely depressing,” says McLeod. “The level of need in terms of refugees is absolutely linked to the state of the world, so the fact that there’s more refugees means that things are not getting better…. But the UNHCR had a slogan for World Refugee Day a number of years ago, and it was ‘one refugee without hope is too many.’ There’s a lot of wisdom in that, because we can’t respond to the needs of 70 million displaced people…. But you know, group by group, sponsorship by sponsorship, we can help a family or a person at a time. That certainly makes a difference.”

For Davis, the most rewarding part of sponsorship is seeing the children. “I get my greatest kicks from watching the children. You see them…arrive, and they’re timid. They’re full of smiles, but they’re shy, and you can tell they’ve gone through some pretty traumatic things. And then [you] watch them blossom.”

Rumsey quotes the writer and dissident, and former president of Czechloslovakia and the Czech Republic, Václav Havel: “Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.”

“You can’t find hope in the state of the world. It has to be something inside you. But also sort of a conviction that you’re not taking something on because you know it’s going to be easy, or that there’s going to be, necessarily, a positive outcome—but because it’s the right thing to do,” says Rumsey.

“I think that’s why a lot of the folks that engage in this do this work. They know it’s the right thing to do. It’s the commitment to welcoming the stranger…. If we’re going to be people of faith, Christians, that’s part of what it’s about.” ■

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‘In tune with creation’

How the Anglican Church of Canada is taking on climate change

Matt Gardner
STAFF WRITER

Record-breaking temperatures. Melting polar icecaps. An entire continent literally on fire. And around the world, youth-led mass movements demanding action in response.

The global climate emergency has reached a new level of public awareness in recent years, spurred by phenomena such as the Fridays for Future movement—youth climate strikes—led by Greta Thunberg. Recently, scientists cited climate change as a factor in the unprecedented intensity of bushfires in Australia in 2019-20.

In the face of this crisis, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, has called on the church to take action on climate change, calling stewardship of the earth and the care of creation “a core responsibility of our faith.” The primate compares concern of young people for the future of their planet with the fear of nuclear annihiliation she experienced growing up during the Cold War.

“The question,” she asks, “is how do we proclaim that vision of creation as a gift of God that we are called to steward and that we should be at the very forefront of those that are fighting for it?”

The church’s response to the climate emergency has found expression in numerous venues, through the work of Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice (PWSEJ) and through ecumenical initiatives. But supporting all the church’s efforts at the national level to confront climate change is Resources for Mission, which is tasked with raising funds for all General Synod ministries, including PWSEJ.

As a ministry of General Synod, the work of PWSEJ to coordinate the church’s response to climate change is based to a large extent on donations made through Resources for Mission.

“The ministries of the church are supported directly by the work that Resources for Mission does, and we couldn’t do some of those ministries without the support of the people who respond to Resources for Mission,” acting general secretary the Rev. Peter Wall says.

The immediate body tasked with formulating sustainable environmental policies across the Anglican Church of Canada is the Creation Matters working group, a subgroup of the PWSEJ coordinating committee.

At their most recent meeting on Jan. 31, Creation Matters members decided to break into small groups that would determine how the church can put into practice three resolutions from General Synod 2019 related to climate change.

“With the small groups, we’re able to do more, I think, and get into…the actions that we’re asked to take and do something with them,” co-chair Gerald Giles says.

These groups will focus on three resolutions. Resolution A201 encourages Anglicans to reduce their use of single-use plastics—a major contributor to carbon emissions through their production and refining—with a goal to ending their use by parishes and dioceses no later than 2023.

Another resolution is A202, which encourages dioceses to celebrate the annual Season of Creation from Sept. 1 to Oct. 4, and directs Creation Matters to network and share resources.

▲ Protesters participate in the Global Climate Justice Strike, part of the Fridays for Future movement, in Toronto, September 2019.

▸ Thousands of people (and some furry friends) took part in the September 2014 People’s Climate March in Vancouver.

PHOTOS (FROM TOP): EXPATPOSTCARDS AND SERGEI BACHLAKOV/ SHUTTERSTOCK

Finally, Resolution A203 encourages the Anglican Church of Canada and Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund to support the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development and produce resources for Anglican parishes and dioceses to raise awareness of the goals.

Though these resources are still in the early stages of development, they will likely include practical recommendations to help parishes and dioceses reduce their carbon footprints.

“What do we have to do so that we live in accord with what we believe?” Primate Nicholls asks. “That calls us to do the greening of our churches…living in ways that are in tune with creation, to the degree that we’re able to and can change.

“We’re caught up in all the systems that everybody else is,” she acknowledges. “If you live out in the country, you can’t decide you’re never going to drive again…. But you can live more sustainably than we do now, and we start where we are, and we start small.”

PWSEJ director Ryan Weston expects that resources produced by Creation Matters will also offer theological reflections on the stewardship of creation, as well as advocacy tools to push governments and other institutions towards environmentally sustainable policies.

“There’ll probably be some liturgical prayer pieces…. There’ll probably be some policy pieces…because we know that the impact that we can have at a personal or at a congregational level is not significant enough to address what needs to be addressed,” Weston says.

Among the climate-related motions carried at the last General Synod was Resolution C003, moved and seconded by youth delegates Brynne Blaikie and Alexa Wallace, respectively.

The resolution commits the General Synod to recognize, on behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada, that there is a global climate emergency; to encourage Anglicans to prioritize the baptismal covenant and fifth Mark of Mission (“To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth”); to seek collaboration with other Canadian faith communities to “strengthen our voice on climate change”; and to urge the PWSEJ coordinating committee to organize more sustainable meetings of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Wallace, a postulant for the diocese of Saskatoon who serves as Sunday school and youth ministries coordinator at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, welcomes the possibility of new resources for climate action.

“With my position at the cathedral, I work with children and youth all the time,” she says. “What we discovered experiencing the last Season of Creation is there’s really been no resources prepared to work with children and youth. There are a couple programs from the churches in southern Africa, but that’s it…. They’re good programs, but it’d be nice if there were more.”

Besides developing its own resources, the Anglican Church of Canada is also responding to climate change on an ecumenical and interfaith basis.

Networking is a major priority for Creation Matters. As part of that effort, the church is working towards coordinated action through its membership in organizations such as KAIROS Canada, Citizens for Public Justice, the Canadian Council of Churches and the Anglican Communion Environmental Network.

Some members of Creation Matters, such as co-chair Nancy Harvey, have also been active in the Fridays for Future movement. “I have grandchildren and really, really worry about the future for them,” Harvey says.

The ranks of those concerned for the future of the earth span all generations.

Blaikie, who first brought Resolution C003 before her fellow youth delegates at General Synod, says addressing the climate emergency is an obligation for all who live and depend on the earth. But, she believes, it may also determine the future of the church.

“One of the biggest problems the Anglican Church faces is a decreasing number of young people in worship,” Blaikie says. “Some young people do not feel any connection to faith communities. I believe one of the biggest ways to connect with younger generations is showing support for what they find important. Now is the time to actively make the life of the earth a priority in our faith.”

Deborah Barretto, director of Resources for Mission, concurs with the need for the church to prioritize the climate crisis and hopes her department can help.

“We have to change people’s ways of doing things nationally, but also globally,” Barretto says. “I think if we can play a part in that, that’s important…. But I still think we have a long way to go in making people aware of what needs to be done.”

Contributions to Resources for Mission to support the church’s climate ministry can be made through individual one-time donations, monthly donations or planned gifts. To learn more, visit anglican.ca/gifts. ■

PEOPLE

▲ Alexander
PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Bishop of Edmonton 'called out of diocesan episcopal ministry'

Joelle Kidd
STAFF WRITER

Bishop Jane Alexander, bishop of the diocese of Edmonton, says she will be stepping down from her position July 31, with "no idea" what she will be doing next.

"I have no need to say, 'What's the next big thing?' The big thing is always just serving Jesus wherever he puts you," says Alexander. "So, I know that's what I'll be called to do, but what that looks like? I have no idea."

Alexander announced her resignation in a letter Jan. 26.

In an interview with the *Journal*, Alexander said that she had been feeling a change coming for a while. "Sometimes I think we think of discernment as something that happens once and then we go, 'There, you're done.' But that's never been my experience of it. I think we get called into places and called out of places, and I was aware…easily a year ago, that something different was changing…. I've come to the conclusion that I'm actually being called out of diocesan episcopal ministry."

The prospect is sad and a little scary, she says. "I love this ministry very, very much. I love the clergy and people of the diocese of Edmonton. It's been just an absolute blessing." At the same time, she says, she is confident that God has a plan for the diocese.

She says she hopes the diocese will carry on in the good work that it has been doing. "We've come a long way in terms of our work [with] poverty, and also being a church that looks outward and stands in the gap, I would say. That tries to be in the place where people are the most vulnerable; open to different forms of church so that people can have a community that maybe doesn't look like it used to look; and a focus on a ministry of relationship and meeting people as Jesus met them."

Alexander says she plans to step down at the end of July. While the date of the following episcopal election remain to be set, she estimates it will likely take place around September.

Alexander will not attend this summer's Lambeth Conference of bishops in Canterbury. ■

▲ McKoen
PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Lincoln McKoen elected bishop of Territory of the People

By Tali Folkins
STAFF WRITER

An Ontario-born priest with a background serving in parishes in Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario and British Columbia will be the next bishop of the Territory of the People—and the first elected since the territory gained formal status as a diocese.

Archdeacon Lincoln McKoen, currently rector of St. Peter's Anglican Church in Campbell River, B.C., was elected on the fourth ballot at an electoral assembly held Jan. 25 at St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral in Kamloops, B.C. On May 8, McKoen will succeed Andrews, who has served the Territory of the People as suffragan bishop since 2009.

Reached by email, McKoen said he found it "overwhelming" to have been elected bishop.

"When you let your name stand and fill out the profile information, it gives a good snapshot of who you are, but after that point you are totally in the hands of the Holy Spirit working among the electors," he said. "I was quite humbled at the results of the first and then subsequent ballots. It's a massive, sacred trust that is placed on me by God and the people of the Territory."

Andrews will remain bishop suffragan until McKoen has been elected and consecrated. ■

Statement opposes 'forced removal'

Continued from p. 1

Lutheran Church in Canada Susan Johnson.

The statement notes the opposition of the Wet'suwet'en clan chiefs to the construction of the pipeline and says that the "militarized forced removal of the Wet'suwet'an from their own territory" is in violation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and is "consistent with the colonial practices of genocide."

Conflict over the Coastal GasLink project, a $6.6 billion, 670-km pipeline running across northern BC, centres around the issue of free, prior and informed consent. Coastal GasLink claims to have consulted with Indigenous groups and negotiated "signed agreements with 20 First Nations communities," according to its website, including the Wet'suwet'en First Nation band council. Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs—the traditional leaders of the nation's governance before the Indian Act—however, oppose the pipeline and say they never consented to the project.

The Anglican Church of Canada also released a statement Feb. 11, signed by MacDonald; Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada; Archbishop Melissa Skelton, metropolitan of the ecclesiastical province of British Columbia and Yukon; and several other bishops. MacDonald also penned two online opinion pieces on the matter.

Some Anglicans publicly disagreed with the church leadership's stance, taking to social media and sending letters urging Anglicans to avoid "taking sides" in conflicts. Joseph Quesnel of Tracadie, N.S., wrote the *Journal*'s editor to share his own concerns about the Feb. 11 statement. "Canada has an internationally respected process of Indigenous consultation and accommodation that other states with Indigenous populations envy," he wrote. "Our constitution through Section 35 has recognized a legal doctrine that requires the Crown–through private parties–to engage in good faith negotiation with Indigenous peoples on projects that involve them and to mitigate any adverse effects. A substantial amount of time and good faith effort went into consultation and accommodation with the communities involved in the Coastal GasLink project. This statement ignores all that work and downplays the benefits of these signed agreements to the well-being of the Indigenous communities involved."

In "Why I stand with the five traditional leaders of Wet'suwet'en—especially now," posted Feb. 25, MacDonald addressed the "anger and divisiveness" generated by the conflict and expressions of solidarity. "The claim of the five traditional chiefs contradicts the approval of the pipeline by locally elected leaders, elected under a system imposed by the Canadian government," he wrote. "Although all should attempt to understand the issues involved, it is a matter that the Wet'suwet'en must work out for themselves and, most likely, one that will only be understood well by those who understand the complexities of their law from inside. All those who disagree with the five chiefs should be respected, especially the elected officials.

"Certainly, all the parties involved, including the government and the corporate interests related to the pipeline, must be a part of the conversations moving ahead." ■

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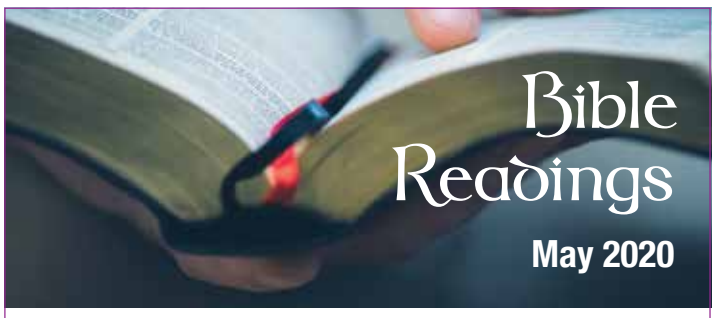

DAY	READING	DAY	READING
☐ 01	Matthew 10:1-15	☐ 17	Acts 17:1-15
☐ 02	Matthew 10:16-31	☐ 18	Acts 17:16-34
☐ 03	John 10:1-10	☐ 19	Psalm 47:1-9
☐ 04	Acts 5:1-16	☐ 20	Luke 24:36-53
☐ 05	Acts 5:17-42	☐ 21	Acts 1:1-11
☐ 06	Psalm 31:1-13	☐ 22	Matthew 28:16-20
☐ 07	Psalm 31:14-24	☐ 23	1 Peter 4:7-19
☐ 08	Ezekiel 37:15-28	☐ 24	1 Peter 5:1-14
☐ 09	John 14:1-14	☐ 25	John 17:1-17
☐ 10	Proverbs 31:10-31	☐ 26	Acts 2:1-21
☐ 11	Acts 6:1-15	☐ 27	Numbers 11:16-30
☐ 12	Acts 7:1-22	☐ 28	Exodus 19:1-20a
☐ 13	Acts 7:23-38	☐ 29	Romans 8:18-30
☐ 14	Acts 1:12-26	☐ 30	John 7:25-39
☐ 15	Acts 7:39-60	☐ 31	Luke 1:39-56
☐ 16	John 14:15-31		

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TRENDS

Evensong has ‘huge potential’ to reach outside church

Continued from p. 3

‘Music that’s dedicated to a higher purpose’

For this reason, he says, it could be a significant but as-yet largely unexplored way for the Canadian church to reach out to the unchurched.

“There’s a huge potential for evensong,” he says. “It’s a service that anyone who appreciates the aesthetic, and especially the music, of the service is welcome to attend—you don’t need to be baptized, you don’t need to be a firm believer. It’s as difficult as opening the front door.”

At least one other reason has been given for evensong’s English renaissance: a 2017 Religion News Service article cited a website, launched in 2015, that allows evensong enthusiasts to locate the services being performed nearest to them, saving them the effort of searching on a church-by-church basis.

Choralevensong.org, co-founded by former music student and chorister Guy Hayward, provides evensong times and other details as well as general information and news updates. It now regularly gets 400,000 hits and 10-12,000 unique visitors per month, Hayward says.

The site currently covers the UK, but Hayward says he would like to expand its search capability to other countries, including Canada, and is interested in finding a Canadian partner to help him do this.

Hayward says he began working on the site partly out of gratitude for what sacred choral music has given him spiritually over the years, even though he’s not a churchgoer.

“I really like the idea of music that’s dedicated to a higher purpose, and I think that’s what choral evensong is,” he says.

Popular atheist author Richard Dawkins admitted to having “a certain love” for evensong, in a 2013 interview with the magazine *The Spectator*, and Hayward says he doesn’t believe it’s necessary to be a Christian to enjoy and benefit from the sense of transcendence that evensong powerfully conveys.

“You experience the music resounding in these beautiful buildings, echoing in the stonework and the beautiful stained-glass windows, and the robes, and the liturgy, and the repetition through time—the linking with all the humans that have done this before you. It’s quite a full-on experience, actually, that goes way beyond specific kind of beliefs.” ■