EPIPHANIES

FROM THE ANGLICAN JOURNAL

Differences

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

Galatians 3:28

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COVER IMAGE: Protesters in Toronto rally in support of Wet'suwet'en preventing the construction of the Coastal GasLink pipeline in January 2019.
PHOTO: UNDR/SHUTTERSTOCK

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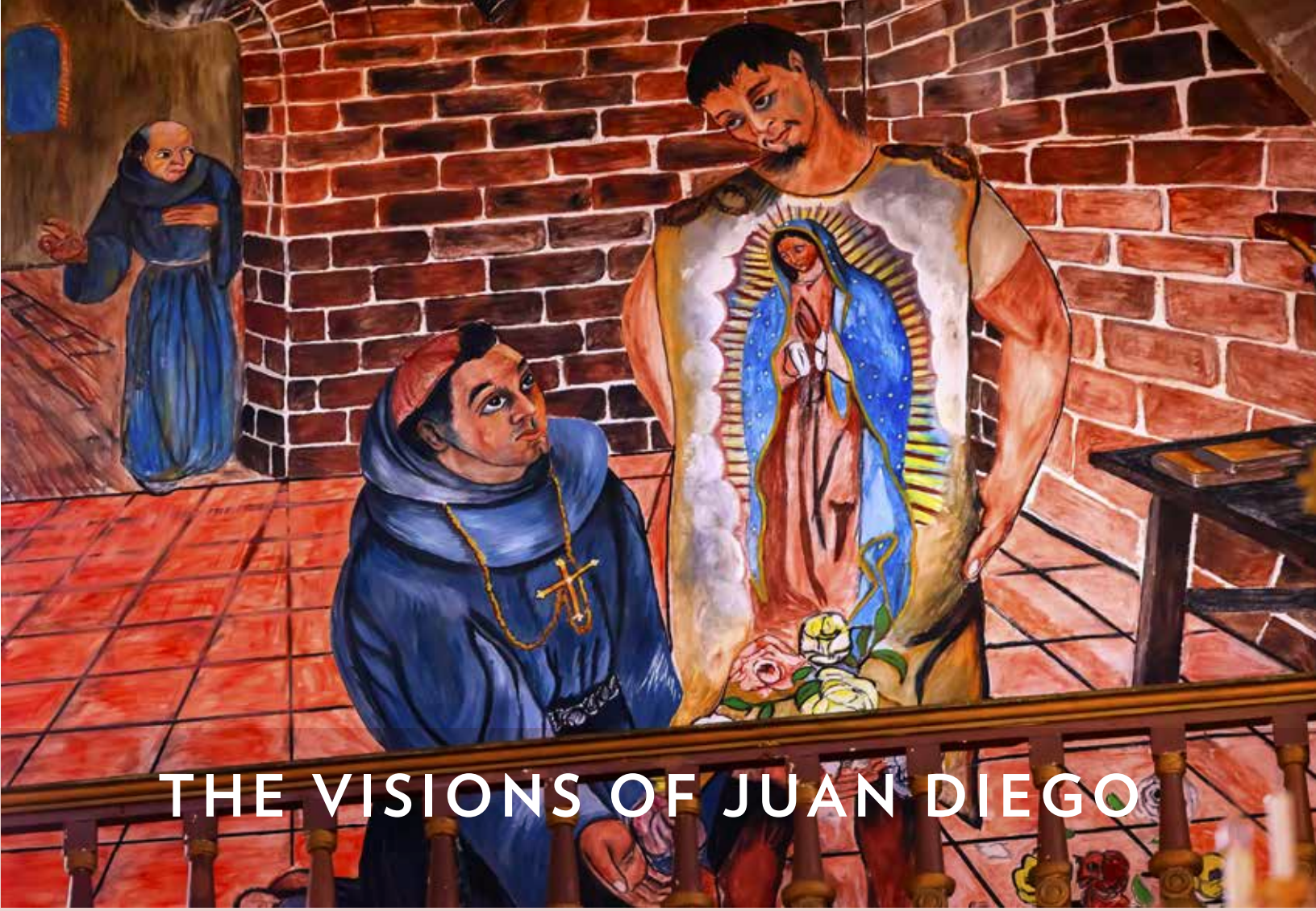


THE VISIONS OF JUAN DIEGO

IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK/BILL PERRY

By Matthew Townsend
EDITOR

In 1531, three years before the Church of England was born, the seeds of an Indigenous church were planted.

Many Canadians may not be familiar with the story of St. Juan Diego, who encountered a Marian apparition on the Hill of Tepeyac, which later became part of the village of Guadalupe, outside Mexico City. Growing up in Florida, though, I frequently encountered icons, candles and churches dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe, and so I feel a certain attachment to her. Juan Diego is said to have encountered the Virgin Mary four times, with another appearance to a family member. She spoke to him not in Spanish (or Latin) but in Nahuatl, a language of the Aztecs—for Juan Diego was, himself, Indigenous. She asked for a church to be built on that site. On her final appearance to Juan Diego, she arranged roses in his cloak; when he opened his cloak before the archbishop, later, the flowers fell away and revealed an image of the Madonna.

Church leaders immediately doubted Juan Diego's claims. Evidence is sparse, and as far back as the 16th century, Roman Catholic clerics wondered if Indigenous beliefs in the Virgin of Guadalupe missed the doctrinal mark. Over the centuries, scholars have wondered whether he made the whole thing up. Some have wondered if Juan Diego existed. The Catholic Church's decision to beatify and canonize Juan Diego (in 1990 and 2002, respectively) saw public opposition. There is much more to read on this.

I, for one, believe that Juan Diego encountered

the mother of God. I am neither an historian nor a theologian, but something about the story meshes well with my read of the Magnificat, the song Mary sings after her visitation by the angel Gabriel (Luke 1):

"My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

It's in the Magnificat that we see Mary speak directly to differences—not the differences we are born with or that make us rich in diversity, but the differences we impose upon one another. The proud, the powerful and the rich be advised: God favours the lowly, the hungry and the conquered. The unwed mother and the elderly. It's not much of a stretch to imagine this holy lady visiting a people who are all of these things—in fact, the history of Marian visitations worldwide is tied to the poor, the oppressed, the othered and the conquered. God doesn't just ask us to treat one another fairly; God, the God-bearer and the angels physically show up among the suffering, the poor and the outcast.

This issue of *Epiphanies* explores the differences we find between us—and like Mary or St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians, we consider here the differences human beings define, the lines we draw and categories we form that separate us from one another and from God. We consider the people with whom God is deeply present and perhaps speaking—people marginalized by society, but not by God. I wonder what they might share with us in the pages ahead.

It is easy to be proud of (and, at times, frustrated with) the progress the Anglican Church of Canada has made in setting aside differences. It is important that we recognize, I think, that we are merely following God's call to renounce our human pettiness—and to realize that God is already out in front of us in this regard. I do believe that the Virgin Mary visited Indigenous Christians in 1531, spoke to them in their own tongue and charged them to build a church that would be theirs. It took more than 200 years for the Roman Catholic Church to afford Guadalupe papal honours. Canadian Anglicans signed off on the idea of Indigenous self-determination, in their own context, later still.

We have as a church, at times, been behind God in appearing to and advocating for the people rejected by (or crushed under) empire. Yet now—and especially in a time of pandemic—we are blessed by a God who reminds us of our duty to let go of our differences, that we all may be one. Thank God that God is ahead of us.

By Linda Nicholls
PRIMATE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

THE DIGNITY OF DIFFERENCE

At the 2008 Lambeth Conference, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, then chief rabbi in England, was a guest speaker at one of the plenary sessions. As he began to speak he wondered how he, a rabbi, had ended up being invited to speak to a room full of Anglican bishops! Having read several of his books I had no doubt that he was the right person to speak to us as we wrestled with our differences. Rabbi Sacks has reflected on the nature of difference and the challenges of a living in a multifaith, globalized world where differences have been polarized to such an extreme that to many, enmity and violence appear the answer. In his book, *The Dignity of Difference (2002),* Rabbi Sacks writes, *"One belief, more than any other...is responsible for the slaughter of individuals on the altars of the great historical ideals. It is the belief that those who do not share my faith—or my race or my ideology—do not share my humanity."* Once the other is not seen as human then discrimination, violence, denigration or indifference become easily acceptable. On a visit I made recently to a former slave market in Zanzibar, Tanzania—now the site of the Anglican Cathedral Church of Christ—I noticed a display that included a chilling quotation from the diary of a British army officer. In it, the officer spoke of a dying slave as "it" through his description of ordering the disposal of the man's body, now useless to him.

We do not have to look far to see the effects of dehumanizing the other due to race, gender, sexual orientation, politics or theological conviction. Although all human beings share 99% of our genetic structure, we find ways to cast out those who are different, as if by making the other an enemy we become more human. Strangely, we also profess to hate absolute sameness. The science-fiction TV series *Star Trek: The Next Generation* featured a community of cyborgs known as the Borg, who had been forcibly assimilated into a collective in order to serve "perfectly." They were clearly considered an enemy, and efforts were made to destroy this collective!

Sacks offers us a vision of difference as good, as a gift of God. Differences invite us into new perspectives, new ideas and experiences that expand possibilities and keep us from the arrogance of believing our own way is the only right way to live. Jesus crossed the boundaries of differences repeatedly in his ministry, using love as the guide. He ate with tax collectors and sinners; healed Gentiles; and disrupted ideals of religious purity. My own experiences of living in another culture; working with people with a variety of disabilities; and engaging ecumenical dialogue, each has humbled me and taught me the gifts the other brings to my life and faith. Sacks writes, *"The glory of the created world in its astonishing multiplicity; the thousands of different languages spoken by mankind, the proliferation of cultures, the sheer variety of the imaginative expressions of the human spirit, in most of which, if we listen carefully, we will hear the voice of wisdom telling us something we need to know. That is what I mean by* the dignity of difference.*"* If we deny or persecute difference, we lose something we need to know.

God invites us to discover more about ourselves, our world and God through the gift of difference. May we have eyes to see, ears to hear and willing and open hearts to learn.

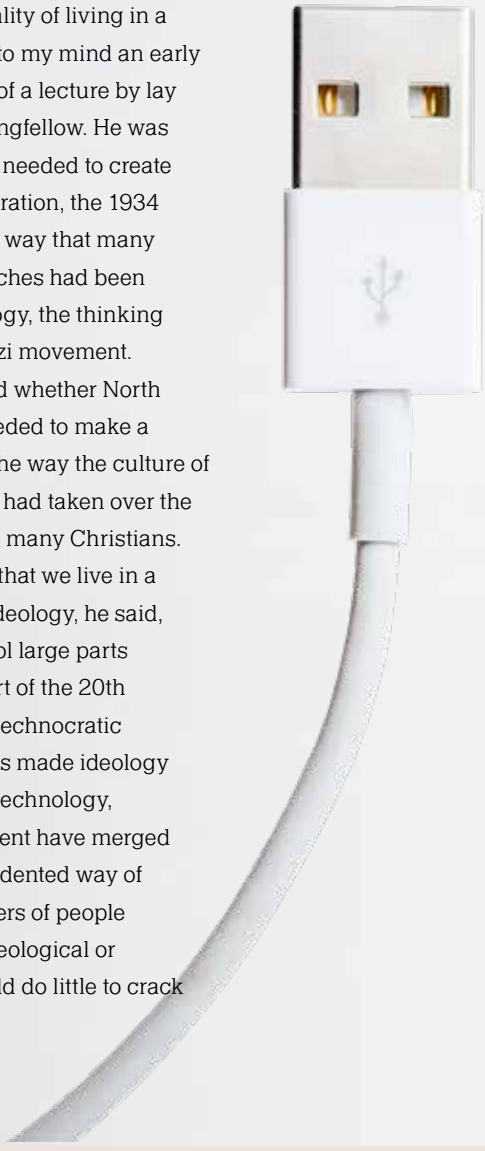
PHOTO: THOMAS KINTO/UNSPLASH

By Mark MacDonald
NATIONAL INDIGENOUS ANGLICAN ARCHBISHOP

TECHNOCRATIC SOCIETY AND THE WORLD TO COME

Our descent into the reality of living in a pandemic has brought to my mind an early 1980s audio recording of a lecture by lay theologian William Stringfellow. He was asked if North America needed to create a kind of Barmen Declaration, the 1934 statement opposing the way that many German Christian churches had been taken over by the ideology, the thinking and teaching, of the Nazi movement. The question concerned whether North American churches needed to make a statement confronting the way the culture of money and the military had taken over the lives and thoughts of so many Christians.

Stringfellow replied that we live in a very different context. Ideology, he said, was necessary to control large parts of society in the first part of the 20th century. In our era, the technocratic nature of our society has made ideology unnecessary. The way technology, business, and government have merged has created an unprecedented way of controlling large numbers of people without ideology. An ideological or doctrinal criticism would do little to crack the dominance of technocratic society.



Stringfellow's insight seems even more powerful and accurate today. The structure and rhythms of our life, in all of its aspects, are dictated by this efficient, monumental and historic swirling together of the forces of technology, business, and government. Most of us are so completely immersed in these forces that we barely notice the way our imaginations and behaviour have been captivated. Further, we are unable so see, like the rich man who could not see Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), the poverty, injustice and exclusion that accompany this merger that seeks to both control society and create massive wealth for fewer and fewer people. Despite its many and great gifts, technocratic society now demands a price that a free and ethical people should refuse to pay. For Christians, it would seem that it demands a submission that is dangerously competitive with our obedience to and worship of God.

The hold and power of technocratic society has been seen at two levels in recent months: the massive and angry reaction to Indigenous blockades—on Indigenous land—and the seemingly easy way that all

We began by submission to technocracy, can it be that we can rise in a community that cares for the least of us, demands justice for the oppressed, and knows the rule of God that sustains the universe? Can we now imagine a society where technology, business, and government join together to pursue these things?

of society, including Christian churches—with very little comment—adapted to the measures of a pandemic shutdown. Now, before I lose a bunch of you, let me also say right away that these events also have shown some cracks in what has often seemed to be an unbeatable union of forces.

It is possible that the dust and anger raised by the blockades may lead to a better understanding of Indigenous issues in Canada. It has shown to a larger and larger number of people that Indigenous peoples, whose own land has been blockaded from wealth development for two centuries, are also necessary to the communal and cooperative proposition we call Canada. Further, the claim of Indigenous peoples to justice and fairness is seen by more and more people in Canada, through the ethical teachings of religion and philosophy, the rulings of the courts, and the universally recognized standards of ethical behaviour among nations, like the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We have a long way to go, but we have seen a crack in a system of prejudice that once seemed never to be overcome.

In regards to COVID-19, the churches, like most of society, were caught in the headlights of pandemic preparation. I was feeling lost in the lack of theological and spiritual response to the crisis, as we appeared to give up everything but private devotion: a devotion that never has demonstrated much power to combat injustice. However, deeper community, more thoughtful moral and theological reflection, and a hunger for the life of Spirit that sustains Creation have all sprung up in the cracks that this pandemic has created in the formerly unquestioned dominance of the technocratic culture of money. We began by submission to technocracy; can it be that we can rise in a community that cares for the least of us, demands justice for the oppressed and knows the rule of God that sustains the universe? Can we now imagine a society where technology, business and government join together to pursue these things?

There is a certain and special calling in these recent events for those of us who submit to the rule of a God who asserts power and authority as a child, as one of the poor and as a convicted criminal upon the Cross. We are called, first, to be free, no matter what visible or invisible chains they try to place upon us.

We are called, second, to worship and obey, no matter what power is held by the forces that tell us to bend the knee. We are called, third, to love, no matter what indifference is raised by greed and a culture of self-indulgence. In the Cross, we see the only antidote to the power of the technocratic takeover of our bodies, minds, and souls.

In the Resurrection of Jesus we see a new world coming.

PHOTO: ADAM BIRKETT/UNSPLASH

By Matt Gardner
STAFF WRITER

TAKING SIDES

Statements of support by Anglican leaders for the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs sparked debate on social media about the role of the Anglican Church of Canada in responding to such disputes. What can history and theology teach us about the role of Christians in situations of conflict or injustice?

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.

—Desmond Tutu

Drummers lead a rally against construction of the Coastal GasLink pipeline on Wet'suwet'en traditional territory.

PHOTO: UNIST'OT'EN CAMP VIA FACEBOOK

> **The one who first states a case seems right, until the other comes and cross-examines.**
>
> **—Proverbs 18:17**

Solidarity blockades and protests erupted across Canada in the first months of 2020 after the RCMP moved against camps set up to block the construction of the Coastal GasLink pipeline in unceded Wet'suwet'en territory.

After initially setting up a roadblock on Wet'suwet'en land on Jan. 13, the RCMP led a raid against one of the camps occupied by Indigenous activists who describe themselves as land defenders. The RCMP's stated goal was to enforce a court injunction preventing disruption of pipeline construction.

Dozens of people were arrested during the Feb. 6 raid and in the following weeks. These arrests included three of the five Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs who opposed the building of the pipeline in their territory without the "free, prior and informed consent" of their nation's traditional leaders, as stipulated by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

In response to the police raids and arrests, supporters across Canada—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous—rallied behind the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs. Protests were held at government offices and buildings, and blockades set up at ports and railways. Perhaps the most impactful was the blockade set up by members of the Mohawk First Nation on a stretch of railway in Tyendinaga, Ont., which caused Via Rail and the Canadian National Railway to shut down the railroads for several weeks. The economic impact of these blockades led Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to demand: "The barricades must now come down. The injunctions must be obeyed and the law must be upheld."

Debates over the blockades and protests eventually made their way into the Anglican Church of Canada. On Feb. 11, the church put out an official statement expressing "disappointment, distress and ongoing concern" over recent events on Wet'suwet'en territory, following up from a preliminary statement on Jan. 11 when tensions were mounting.

In this second statement, church leaders called on the government to "meet and speak to the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs and to have the RCMP stand down as they de-escalate the situation." Primate Linda Nicholls and National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop Mark MacDonald signed this statement, as did six other Anglican bishops and archbishops.

On Feb. 18, the *Anglican Journal* published an article which reported that 71 church leaders had signed a statement of support with the Wet'suwet'en pipeline opposition. The statement called on the Canadian government and the RCMP to "immediately cease their occupation, arrests, and trespassing on Wet'suwet'en sovereign territory." Along with Anglican leaders were representatives of other Canadian churches.

Among those affixing their names to this statement

Matriarchs beat drums and call on ancestors as RCMP approach the last Wet'suwet'en camp on Feb. 10.
PHOTO: UNIST'OT'EN CAMP/TWITTER

RCMP cross the bridge leading to Unist'ot'en Camp in Wet'suwet'en territory.
PHOTO: UNIST'OT'EN CAMP/TWITTER

were MacDonald, Indigenous Ministries Coordinator Canon Ginny Doctor and National Reconciliation Animator Melanie Delva, as well as National Bishop Susan Johnson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. The *Anglican Journal* subsequently published two columns by the national Indigenous archbishop expressing his support for the "five traditional leaders of Wet'suwet'en."

The response among Anglicans on social media was swift. Many backed the church's support for the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and its call for the government and police to step down:

- "I am so glad that church leaders are taking a stand here. It does this younger Anglican great comfort and hope for the future of the Church and the world."
- "I am so thankful that the Churches have given this statement.... Our dear brothers and sisters living their faith in Wet'suwet'en give us such good example of how to be Christians. I know that so many young people are looking for a direction of how to live in faith, and to live in the courage that Christ asks us to hold in our hearts. This is the most beautiful moment of our Churches living into the message of the Gospel."
- "I am very proud of the Anglican Church leaders for taking this courageous stand as allies, leading and setting an example for colonial settler society. It is fitting, since they were one of the original perpetrators of the residential school genocide and some have continued in white supremacy ways to this day.... As a Métis person from Anishinabe, Treaty 3, Tyindenaga Mohawk, Cree and Salish parents I am only attending the Anglican Church because they are serious about their apology and are taking action in the stand with the Wet'suwet'en Nation.... I am proud to see a remnant of true believers in Jesus rise up and stand for truth."

Others expressed dismay that the church appeared to be supporting blockades that were affecting Canada's economy, and noted that elected band councils of the Wet'suwet'en had come out in support of the pipeline.

Some Anglicans, however, offered a different opinion: that in such disputes, the Anglican Church of Canada should not "take sides" at all.

A sampling of comments from the *Journal* Facebook page offers examples of this view:

- "I think it would be preferable if the churches worked to find a solution to this impasse, instead of taking sides and thereby creating more division. We are supposed to be peacemakers."
- "I support the First Nations in this issue. But it is not the church's place to take sides. As a church we are Peacemakers or should be."
- "Why doesn't it seem to matter that many First Nations people have given their consent for this

Oil pipeline in the mountains
PHOTO: PEYKER/SHUTTERSTOCK

> **Most of the native people in this area want this pipeline. Sad to see a church encouraging division in this country.**
> *—Facebook comment*

project? Why is our church supporting one group over another?"

- "Most of the native people in this area want this pipeline. Sad to see a church encouraging division in this country."

One of the most strident voices suggesting it was not the place of the church to "take sides" in this case was Joseph Quesnel, an Anglican from Tracadie, N.S. of northern Ontario Métis background.

Currently taking theology courses at the Atlantic School of Theology with an eye to potentially joining the vocational diocanate, Quesnel worked for more than 15 years as a policy analyst at the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, a Winnipeg-based think tank where he researched and wrote op-eds and commentary on topics related to Indigenous governance. Quesnel also served as editor of the now-defunct national Indigenous newspaper *Drum/First* and has appeared in numerous newspapers and media outlets addressing questions related to Indigenous issues.

Most recently, he worked as a program manager at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute in Ottawa, overseeing its "Aboriginal Canada and the Natural Resource Economy" project. This project seeks to bring together "a team of experienced experts" in the field of resource development to examine how "two sides—First Nations and business" can "work together to ensure our development of natural resources is safe, stable and reliable."

In his Facebook comments to the aforementioned *Journal* articles, Quesnel said that the church had "lost its way" by "supporting one side over another and "adopting a simplistic narrative about this complicated dispute." Responding to the article about church leaders signing the statement of support, he expressed anger and embarrassment that his church "would issue such an inflammatory and biased statement."

"The Anglican tradition," he added, "is moderate restraint and balance. None of that is in this statement."

These comments by Quesnel and other Anglicans were a major force in the writing of this *Epiphanies* article, which examines what it means for the church to take sides. Quesnel was happy to share his thoughts when the *Journal* reached out to him for further comments, while stressing that these were purely his own opinions and that he was not representing or speaking on behalf of any parish or diocese.

"I think in general, the church should promote peaceful resolution to disputes and good relations between the two or more sides in dispute," Quesnel says. "When it comes to issues involving gross injustice between groups, I think the church should side with the most marginalized and repressed groups." Thus, he believes "the church took the right side" when it

> **I am so glad that church leaders are taking a stand here. It does this younger Anglican great comfort and hope for the future of the Church and the world.**
>
> *—Facebook comment*

Supporters rally in support of hereditary chiefs
PHOTO: UNIST'OT'EN CAMP/FACEBOOK

supported ending apartheid in South Africa, or when it backed the civil rights movement in the United States.

In the case of the conflict between Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and the government, Quesnel believes that "the church should identify most with the Indigenous side in general, as the most disadvantaged."

However, he characterizes the matter as "an internal government dispute between two Indigenous bodies," and as such is not "about gross injustices" like South African apartheid and U.S. racial segregation. Rather, he says, it is about divisions between the hereditary chiefs, as well as between the hereditary chiefs and the elected band leadership.

"The matter of how an Indigenous community feels about this project is for them to resolve internally," Quesnel says. "Canada has a constitutionally mandated doctrine of duty to consult and accommodate Indigenous communities who are impacted by resource development."

Coastal GasLink, he adds, appears to have undertaken such consultations. "If the community feels there were flaws in the consultation process, they have legal mechanisms to challenge that."

Quesnel believes that the role of the Anglican Church of Canada in any conflict is to "be on the side of peaceful resolution." In the case of the standoff involving the Wet'suwet'en, the church "should call for governments to listen to both the dissident hereditary chiefs, the elected leadership, and the Wet'suwet'en people in general. It should call for the government to be as generous to the Indigenous side as possible as the disadvantaged party."

"It should call for peace at blockades sites. But, I think the church should call for an end to blockades that threaten to harm people and their livelihoods."

Delva, however, responds that Anglican leaders did take a mediatory role in publicly expressing their support for the Wet'suwet'en hereditary leadership.

"I would say that in releasing the statement, the Church is playing the role of peacemaker," Delva says.

"If the hereditary leadership had been consulted in good faith from the beginning, we would be in a very different situation. If the RCMP pulled out and construction ceased, real talks would be possible. People could meet without being under duress."

The question of whether Christians and the church should "take sides" in situations of conflict and injustice is an old one. According to one church historian, it is a debate that may go all the way back to Constantine, first Christian emperor of Rome.

Louis DeCaro, Jr. is an associate professor of church history at Nyack College's Alliance Theological Seminary in New York City, and has served as a pastor at two multiethnic congregations. DeCaro notes that

John Brown portrait, 1859. Reproduction of daguerreotype attributed to Martin M. Lawrence. PHOTO: PUBLIC DOMAIN

during the first 300 years of Christian history, Christians occupied a very different position as a persecuted sect who were all "on the same side" against the might of Rome.

In the wake of Constantine's ascent to power, Christianity began a shift that would take it from a marginalized faith to the state religion. But with that shift came new questions.

"When Christians become sharers of power, then what happens?" DeCaro asks. "It's easier to be perhaps pure of heart and consistent with the gospel of Christ when you're the one who's bleeding. But once you start wielding power, for better and for worse—this is our issue. This is our history."

Much of DeCaro's own research focuses on one of the most vivid examples in history of Christians "taking sides": the issue of slavery in the United States.

In particular, he has authored numerous works about the Christian abolitionist John Brown, who in 1859 led an armed raid against a federal armory in Harpers Ferry, Virginia hoping to spark a movement to overthrow slavery. Brown was tried for treason and hanged, but his actions accelerated the events that would culminate in the U.S. Civil War.

In 19th-century America, the vast majority of the population identified as Christian. The question of slavery, however, was the subject of intense debate among self-identified Christians. Both pro-slavery and anti-slavery voices quoted passages from the Bible to justify their positions.

"I wish I could say that abolitionism, or maybe to put it more specifically, the end of slavery was primarily driven by the movement of the church or Christianity," DeCaro says. "But I think in fact, the church failed to do that. It's funny, because it was very much a religious culture 150-plus years ago. The church was central to life in both the North and the South."

Reflecting society as a whole at this time, the American abolitionist movement was "replete with Christians," he says. First to call for the abolition of slavery were the Quakers, followed by other Protestant groups. All of the major abolitionists during the antebellum era, such as William Lloyd Garrison, were Christians, and the abolitionist movement in its early phases was strongly evangelical in spirit.

The abolitionists were also a non-violent movement

John Brown and his men raid Harpers Ferry Armory in 1859, part of an effort to spark a slave uprising.

PHOTO: INTERNET ARCHIVE BOOK IMAGES

and identified as pacifists. DeCaro compares them to the "Martin Luther King Jr. wing" of the civil rights movement, in that their strategy largely based itself on a campaign of moral persuasion—"that you're going to change the hearts of slaveholders by telling the stories of the oppressed and by preaching at them and calling them to justice."

As a result, though the abolitionists did extensive work such as publishing anti-slavery newspapers, their efforts were comparatively limited in scope.

The 1840s and '50s would see the growth of a more political abolitionism, as the movement was increasingly joined by formerly enslaved people such as Frederick Douglass. Though these black abolitionists were also Christian, their horrific stories of slavery led to an increasingly militant tone in the movement.

With the beginning of the 1850s, DeCaro says, "you're starting to see the possibilities of slavery ending peacefully coming to an end." Developments such as the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 and the Dred Scott Supreme Court decision in 1857 caused a reaction among abolitionists in the North.

"They became, more and more and more, advocates of using strategic attacks and so forth, although really, nothing was being done," DeCaro says. "And that's the significance of John Brown, because John Brown was the only guy who made a plan and then actually tried to enact it."

Brown himself defined his opposition to slavery as an expressly religious movement.

A Congregationalist in the Reformed tradition with a Calvinistic background, Brown was very devout and had a high view of the Bible. Influenced by the theological ideas of postmillenarism—the idea that the Second Coming of Christ would follow a great worldwide movement of Christians towards justice—Brown felt with an intense fervour that he had been called by God to work against slavery.

He also sharply criticized the pacifism that dominated the abolitionist movement, once proclaiming: "These men are all talk. What we need is action—action!" In leading the raid against Harpers Ferry, he hoped to destabilize slavery through the South by arming slaves and leading a mountain-based campaign to disrupt the economic operations of the slave system.

But Brown's attempted raid of Harpers Ferry met with wide condemnation from most sectors of society, even those ostensibly opposed to slavery—including the established churches.

Though there were people within each church on both sides of the slavery debate in the 19th century, the Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church did not split over slavery. However, all other Protestant denominations "split hard" over their contrasting views

I think sometimes Christ is mistaken as if the philosophy that he was teaching was a total political philosophy or a total political strategy. It's not.... It's a worldview.

— Louis DeCaro, Jr.

on slavery, DeCaro says.

The southern Protestant churches were unified in their condemnation of Brown, calling him a "criminal" and a "terrorist" who reflected the worst intentions of the North. Meanwhile, the churches of the North were divided between anti-slavery churches and those who saw the South's "peculiar institution" as acceptable. The Episcopal Church appeared to have made no official statements about slavery one way or the other.

"Many of the churches that condemned John Brown were allegedly anti-slavery, but believed that this was a matter that God had to take care of in his own time," DeCaro says.

"They didn't believe in interfering. So he was widely condemned by traditional churches—even some of his own colleagues. In fact, he had a cousin who was a renowned clergyman and theologian, and this cousin wrote him a letter in jail basically saying, 'We think you've lost your mind.'"

But what must be realized, DeCaro says, is that by the time John Brown took action in 1859, "there were no options. There really weren't any options."

Brown's acts "have to be weighed into what's possible. Obviously he's willing to take up arms and fight if necessary, and kill if necessary. But in that situation, I really think that that was all that there was left to do."

DeCaro emphasizes that each situation must be looked at in its own context, and that Christians should strive as much as possible to live in peace. Supporters of the Wet'suwet'en in Canada, he notes, may view the blockades as "a better measure as opposed to violence."

"The Christian can ask of himself, 'What should I do as a Christian?' But what should the Christian do as a citizen?" DeCaro asks.

"I think sometimes Christ is mistaken as if the philosophy that he was teaching was a total political philosophy or a total political strategy. It's not.... It's a worldview. But as citizens go...if there are gross injustices, people are suffering, and the state is not addressing the issues, then some direct action has to be taken. That was Martin Luther King's strategy. He did it non-violently but he still became disruptive.

"So I personally would say, there's a basis for direct action. But again, one has to 'count the cost,' to use the words of Christ.... You have to be prepared to pay the price, because once you take a certain route, there are going to be certain consequences. I think that that's hard—that every Christian activist who's going to take action against injustice has to count the cost and then be prepared to take the consequences. Because John Brown was prepared to die."

One 20th-century figure who, like John Brown, was prepared to accept the consequences of taking action against injustice was Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

A German evangelical pastor, theologian and founding member of the Confessing Church, Bonhoeffer became known for his resistance to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. Like Brown, Bonhoeffer was a marginalized figure who garnered little support from the established churches of his day.

In the 1930s, Bonhoeffer established an underground seminary in Germany. During the Second World War, he gained a position at the military intelligence office

thanks to connections from his brother-in-law, who occupied a high rank there. Ostensibly tasked with making contacts with neutral nations, Bonhoeffer instead used his position to serve as a "double agent," trying through his church relationships to make connections between Allied forces and the German Resistance.

After Bonhoeffer embezzled money from the military intelligence office to help 14 Jews escape to Switzerland, he was arrested for misappropriation of funds. His trial was postponed through 1944, when files were discovered linking him to the failed assassination attempt against Hitler. Imprisoned at the Flossenbürg concentration camp, Bonhoeffer was executed by hanging in 1945, only weeks before the end of the war.

Barry Harvey, a professor of theology at Baylor University in Waco, Texas and an ordained Baptist minister, has conducted extensive research into the life and thought of Bonhoeffer. In his book *Taking Hold of the Real: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Profound Worldliness of Christianity*, Harvey suggests that according to Bonhoeffer, Christians are compelled to participate in "profound this-worldliness": to act in the world out of self-understanding of what this world is and what is possible.

"To be a Christian is to participate in both God's judgement on, but also the redemption of, the world," Harvey says. "It puts you, if you will, in harm's way.... [Bonhoeffer] talks about it in terms of being 'for others'. Christ is the one for others, and through faith we participate in that, which ultimately means taking actions that might...involve breaking one or more of God's commandments."

The actions during the war of Bonhoeffer, who saw himself as a pacifist, illustrate that conviction. While writing clandestinely against the Nazi dictatorship and its persecution of the Jews, Bonhoeffer took actions in the background that Harvey says "otherwise ran against his understanding of Christian discipleship."

"Whether or not ultimately [Bonhoeffer] was in favour of the assassination attempt, he did participate in a conspiracy against Hitler and the National Socialists, which, in a certain sense, could be viewed as breaking God's commandment," Harvey says. "But the situation demanded it, because the injustice was so egregious that he couldn't ignore it."

In his own writings, Bonhoeffer uses the metaphor of

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PHOTO: BUNDESARCHIV BILD 146-1987-074-16

"Whether or not ultimately [Bonhoeffer] was in favour of the assassination attempt, he did participate in a conspiracy against Hitler and the National Socialists, which, in a certain sense, could be viewed as breaking God's commandment. But the situation demanded it, because the injustice was so egregious that he couldn't ignore it."

— Barry Harvey

a cart on a hillside that is running out of control down the hill. For anyone faced with such a situation, the only way to stop the cart is to throw oneself into the spoke of the wheel.

But Bonhoeffer's own attempts to confront the Nazi regime also marginalized him from mainstream German life, including the established churches. Bonhoeffer fell out of favour after teaching at the University of Berlin because he did not support either the Nazis or a movement known as the German Christians, which Harvey calls "oddly reminiscent of some things going on here in the United States—a very nationalistic understanding [of Christianity], including a claim that God had given Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist state to Germany as a kind of revelation."

The Rev. Tony Harwood-Jones, a retired Anglican priest in the diocese of Rupert's Land, sums up the isolation that Bonhoeffer faced among fellow Christians across Germany.

"His society went into an atrocious state, and he spoke for the Christian mindset, but it was not shared by his fellow Lutherans," Harwood-Jones says. "Many Lutheran pastors wore jackboots and had swastikas up in the front of their churches."

Faced with such a situation, Bonhoeffer had strong criticism for those who tried to evade their moral responsibility as Christians to stand against injustice. Harvey quotes from a letter that Bonhoeffer wrote from prison to one of his close friends after 10 years of the Nazi dictatorship, reflecting on what had happened to them and what they had learned:

> In flight from public discussion and examination, this or that person may well attain the sanctuary of private virtuousness. But he must close his eyes and mouth to the injustice around him. He can remain undefiled by the consequences of responsible action only by deceiving himself. In everything he does, that which he fails to do will leave him no peace. He will either perish from that restlessness or turn into a hypocritical, self-righteous, small-minded human being.

"There's no *not* taking sides if there is injustice there," Harvey says. "Not for Bonhoeffer."

Is it fair to compare the response of the Anglican Church of Canada to the standoff between Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and the Canadian government with the response of Christians to some of history's worst atrocities, such as slavery and the crimes of the Nazis?

Some Anglicans, such as Quesnel, believe the answer is a firm "no"—arguing that "gross injustices" such as apartheid and segregation simply do not compare to the dispute over the authority of the hereditary chiefs and the Coastal GasLink pipeline.

Harwood-Jones says that if one were to make

The horrors of Nazism and the Holocaust, Harvey suggests, compelled Bonhoeffer to take actions that "otherwise ran against his concept of Christian discipleship."

PHOTOS: PUBLIC DOMAIN

comparisons between the Wet'suwet'en standoff and episodes such as the abolitionists' opposition to slavery or Dietrich Bonhoeffer's opposition to the Nazis, "it does imply a conclusion."

"Everybody knows [today] that Dietrich was on the right side and he lost his life for it," Harwood-Jones says. But at the time, he says, "Dietrich wasn't well-received by his fellow Lutherans."

When looking at such episodes in the present day, he adds, Anglicans do so with the "judgement of history." As an example of this judgement closer to the history of their own church, Harwood-Jones cites the Indian residential school system.

At the time the residential schools were set up, he says, the "mostly British overlords in Canada" thought they were doing a favour to Indigenous children by sending them to school and that their parents would thank them for the "wonderful opportunity." The Anglican church ran many of these residential schools and echoed such views.

But with the passage of time, and the coming forward of Indigenous survivors to share stories of the physical, sexual and emotional abuse they suffered in the schools as children—and the conclusion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that the schools' attempt to eradicate Indigenous languages and cultures was a form of "cultural genocide"—church leaders now view the residential school system in overwhelmingly negative terms.

For Anglicans who worked in the schools and sincerely believed they were doing the right thing, such radical shifts in opinion can be difficult to comprehend.

"I was pastor to an old priest and I held his hand [at] his deathbed," Harwood-Jones recalls. "He was crying, because he had been the principal of a residential school and he had loved his kids and his kids had thrived, and he felt so hated now by Canadian society."

"I warn people today…the things we think are good today will be vilified 100 years from now if we're not careful," he adds. "So we don't want to be too dogmatic. If you want to say the [Wet'suwet'en] hereditary chiefs are on the right side of God, and that the church should support them, well, be my guest. But you will get blowback."

During the blockades in support of the Wet'suwet'en, Indigenous activists experienced one type of blowblack in the form of confrontations with counter-protesters—

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— The Rev. Tony Harwood-Jones

some associated with the far-right Yellow Vest Canada movement, who forcibly dismantled the blockades while police looked on. At another point, a bomb threat was made against Mohawk blockaders in Tyendinaga.

Some of the rhetoric by public figures at the peak of the blockades echoed language used against the likes of John Brown.

Writing in the *National Post* on Feb. 11, columnist Stephen LeDrew called for police action against those he deemed "lawbreakers." Activists supporting the Wet'suwet'en through rallies and blockades, he wrote, were not engaging in acts of protest, but rather "insurrection." At a meeting of the House of Commons public safety and national security committee on Feb. 27, Conservative MP Doug Shipley asked Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Minister Bill Blair whether the blockades were being deemed as "terrorist activity" under the Criminal Code of Canada. (Blair replied that they were not.)

In his own ministry, Harwood-Jones has learned much about the views of those confronting Wet'suwet'en land defenders and their supporters on the ground. Though formally retired as a priest, he has kept busy by accepting the position of chaplain to the Manitoba RCMP Veterans' Association.

For the purposes of this article, Harwood-Jones emphasizes that he is speaking simply as an "observer." But in serving as a chaplain to retired RCMP officers, he has learned something about the predominant mentality among police who confront Indigenous land defenders or those who have erected blockades.

By and large, Harwood-Jones says, police officers "favour law and order." If asked, he believes, the majority of police would say their job is simply to enforce the law. "We've employed these people to support the law of the land, not their own opinion," he says.

Harwood-Jones cites a reflection sent to the RCMP Veterans' Association by James Forrest, communications director for the association. In this article, entitled *Charter Trumps Everything*, retired police incident commander James Hardy Supt describes how police officers themselves often feel caught between opposing sides—between enforcing federal and provincial statutes, and facilitating protests and tolerating "some" civil disobedience, the latter guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Supt writes:

> The police officers in Canada are dedicated but, in many cases, demoralized. Recruiting is becoming difficult. Despite the community involvement that a majority of our officers participate in, it is never enough. We are split between social work and law enforcement. Our people are dedicated and will be there when you need them, but in my opinion, our officers are having an increasingly difficult time figuring out what the rules are. We are an extension of Canadian society. Canadian society will have to determine what the police role is.

Protesters in Toronto rally in support of Wet'suwet'en preventing the construction of the Coastal GasLink pipeline in January 2019.
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PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/UNDR

Faced with a situation in which grievances have been expressed both by Wet'suwet'en land defenders and by those impacted economically by blockades, leaders of the Anglican Church of Canada—particularly those involved in Indigenous ministries—have supported the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs, as documented earlier in this article.

For Canon Doctor, whether the church should take sides in situations of conflict or injustice depends on the movitation. In the specific case of Wet'suwet'en land defenders, she believes her decision to support that "side" flows from the commitments made by Christians in the baptismal covenant.

"When we are baptized, a covenant is made between us and God.... Part of that covenant is that we will strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being," Doctor says.

"So for me, it's a no-brainer. Yes, the church needs to take sides, if you truly believe and support your covenant.... If we are really baptized Christians in the Anglican Church, then yes, we need to be on the side of justice. From my standpoint of view, it is a point of justice because people are defending lands that were taken from them, or lands that could be taken from them."

Another commitment made at baptism, Doctor says, is to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation. The Marks of Mission also remind Anglicans of this commitment, and the need to transform unjust structures.

"If you put a pipeline through any land—not only Indigenous land, but any lands—you are putting that in jeopardy because of damaging leaks...and that's a given," Doctor says. "Every day I read about pipelines leaking or catching fire or whatever. It's catastrophic to the land, and people don't see it. People just see the money side, and that's their main ambition."

The national Indigenous archbishop, Doctor points out, has spoken many times about idolatry and how it leads the focus of people away from God. One idol, Archbishop MacDonald has said, is the "culture of money" which he calls on Christians to reject.

While supporters of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs describe the pipeline standoff as another manifestation of centuries of colonialism, opponents of the blockades focus on the blockades' harmful economic effects. How should the church navigate such a dispute in which two sides claim grievances?

"I think what's important here is the history, and to look at the history of Canada and First Nations people and to see how the history [informs] the situation today," Doctor says. "When [opponents of the blockades] look at that history, they will see that it's something that is repetitive and it's something that can be fixed, can be straightened out.

"But again, it comes down to accepting that Indigenous people have inherent rights, and one of those rights is the right to live on their lands, and the right to be free to live on their lands, and the right to protect

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>
> *— Ginny Doctor*

their lands.... If we're truly going to be in a move towards reconciliation, people need to understand those rights and how they come into play."

Delva suggests that the question "Should the church take sides in situation of conflict or injustice?" is more complex than one might assume.

For one, there are often more than two sides to a story. In the gospels, she notes, Jesus will often identify and land on a "third way" when people try to get him to choose one option or another, forcing them to examine the question from a completely different perspective.

In the case of Wet'suwet'en, Delva believes that the Anglican Church of Canada in fact did not take a side. Rather, the statements signed by the primate and national Indigenous archbishop say that they support the right of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary leadership to be consulted and to give free, prior and informed consent. Finally, Delva believes that there is a distinction between "conflict" and "injustice."

"When there is conflict between groups of equal power and privilege, then I can see how the church could act more as an intermediary, a 'peace-maker,' Delva says. "But injustice is something different. Injustice happens when a group with power and privilege uses that against another group.

"That is what is happening in the case of the Wet'suwet'en. Jesus was very clear about our need as Christians to take a stand against oppression. When there is injustice, I do believe we must take a stand. Jesus told us the side we should land on—that of the poor, widowed, orphaned, oppressed."

Quesnel acknowledges that the "two issues presented" in the standoff between those supporting the blockades and those opposing them were not equivalent. But he aims his main criticism at those who erected the blockades.

"The blockaders acted outside the law and did not seem to have much care how their behaviour impacted many other people, including many vulnerable people.... These blockaders act on their own accord and seemed very callous towards the general public," he says.

Maintaining that there is nothing incompatible between calling for the blockades to end and supporting Indigenous rights more broadly, Quesnel says that Indigenous rights in Canadian society are "rights embedded within a constitutional structure."

The realization of those rights, he adds, takes place through the courts and lawful processes. He supports the right of the Wet'suwet'en to appeal the pipeline project and says he would support the court's decision if it ruled the project did not meet required standards.

"It is not appropriate to fight over these specific legal rights out on the streets or on the backs of Canadian workers," Quesnel says.

"Indigenous rights are not absolute rights and the church should not treat [them] as such. The church is also responsible to all Canadians, not just one segment, even if it is an underprivileged one. Taking a position in

Police officers make an arrest during a raid against a blockade in Tyendinaga Mohawk territory on Feb. 24, 2020.

PHOTO: REUTERS/CHRIS HELGREN

favour of Indigenous rights is fine, but there are problems when that right comes into tension with the right of Canadians to engage in their jobs and livelihoods and the right to have the necessities of life."

Quesnel argues that UNDRIP "does not somehow make the elected [band] government illegitimate in our system." UNDRIP, he says, "is an aspirational, non-legally binding document that should not be used to further conflict within Indigenous communities."

Quesnel's views echo those of both Conservative and Liberal federal governments, who have expressed similar attitudes towards UNDRIP.

When the UN General Assembly first adopted UNDRIP in 2007, there were only four nations who opposed the declaration: the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. In 2010, the Conservative government of Stephen Harper endorsed UNDRIP, but called it merely an "aspirational" document and never took any concrete action to apply its principles in Canada

In 2015, the Liberal election platform pledged that the party, if elected to form a government, would "enact the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, starting with the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." In May 2016, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Carolyn Bennett stated that the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau was committed to "fully adopting [UNDRIP] and working to implement it within the laws of Canada."

Just two months later, however, Minister of Justice Jody Wilson-Raybould called UNDRIP "unworkable" and dismissed it as "a political distraction." Following the 2019 re-election of a Liberal government, Trudeau immediately signalled his intention to push forward with expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline. In his support of the Coastal GasLink pipeline, Trudeau finds himself opposed to the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs who do not support the building of a pipeline on their land and claim that the Wet'suwet'en traditional leadership has not give its free, prior and informed consent, as required by UNDRIP.

In explaining why she signed the statement supporting the Wet'suwet'en pipeline opposition and calling on the Canadian government and RCMP to withdraw from Wet'suwet'en territory, Delva cites the endorsement of UNDRIP by both "our country and our church."

She also notes that Council of General Synod unanimously passed a motion stating that the Anglican Church of Canada stands in solidarity with Indigenous peoples "in asserting and advocating their right to free, prior, and informed consent concerning the stewardship of traditional indigenous lands and water rights, and in acknowledging and responding to their calls for solidarity."

Delva says that actions taken by the Canadian government and the RCMP in the standoff with

> **We as settlers who force elected leadership on Indigenous communities have no right to later throw elected leaders under the bus and say their voices are not valid. That is what colonial 'divide and conquer' looks like. The hereditary leadership was left out of this process. We are saying that that is not right.**
>
> *— Melanie Delva*

Wet'suwet'en land defenders and supporters contravene many articles of UNDRIP, including:

- Article 10, which states that "Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories";
- Article 18:, which notes that "Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decisionmaking institutions";
- Article 22, requiring that particular attention be paid to the rights and special needs of Indigenous elders, women, children and youth, and that states in conjunction with Indigenous peoples should take measures to protect Indigenous women and children from "all forms of violence and discrimination"; and
- Articles 25-29, which give Indigenous people the right to control their traditional territories and to conserve the environment therein, and that states shall establish and implement assistance programs for Indigenous people to conserve and protect these environments.

The Anglican Church of Canada, Delva says, has taken clear stances on UNDRIP, Indigenous rights and reconciliation.

"We have said that these are things we 'back'. We have also said that we will take our lead from Indigenous peoples on these issues. Now that I have seen the backlash to the stance that the church has taken on Wet'suewt'en, I wonder if the church really understood what those commitments really mean in the 'real world'.

"We obviously need more education on UNDRIP, its articles, what they mean both literally in terms of what the words and phrases of the articles mean, but also what they 'look like' in situations such as this. If we are committed to what we say we are committed to, I do not see how we could act differently with integrity."

Contrary to those who would make distinctions between elected band councils and hereditary chiefs, Delva says, "respecting Indigenous authority and self-determination means respecting *all* of it.

"We as settlers who force elected leadership on Indigenous communities have no right to later throw elected leaders under the bus and say their voices are not valid. That is what colonial 'divide and conquer' looks like. The hereditary leadership was left out of this process. We are saying that that is not right."

In evaluating the impact of the protests and blockades, one must acknowledge another fact: they appear to have been effective.

On March 2, after days of negotiations, Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and senior ministers of the federal government reached a tentative deal centred on Indigenous rights and land titles.

While work on the Coastal GasLink pipeline resumed shortly thereafter, Chief Woos, one of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary leaders, said that the central dispute over the

Police tore down the red dresses that were hung to hold the spirits of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two spirit people. They extinguished our sacred fire.

— From a report published on Unist'ot'en Camp website, "Reconciliation is Dead. Revolution is Alive."

pipeline remained. *The Canadian Press* reported that Woos called the agreement a milestone for all parties, but also said the "degree of satisfaction is not what we expected."

"We are going to be continuing to look at some more conversations with B.C. and of course with the proponent and further conversation with the RCMP," Woos added. "It's not over yet."

The RCMP raids and subsequent wave of solidarity across Canada, however, have changed the views of many Indigenous and non-Indigenous people regarding the very idea of reconciliation.

On Feb. 10, the RCMP moved into territory of the Unist'ot'en, or Big Frog Clan, who describe themselves on a website for the Unist'ot'en camp as "the original Wet'suwet'en Yintah Wewat Zenli distinct to the lands of the Wet'suwet'en." A description of these events on the Unist'ot'en camp website bore the headline: *Reconciliation is Dead. Revolution is Alive*. It reports:

"On February 10, RCMP invaded unceded Unist'ot'en territory, arresting and forcibly removing Freda Huson (Chief Howilhkat), Brenda Michell (Chief Geltiy), Dr. Karla Tait, and four Indigenous land defenders from our yintah. They were arrested in the middle of a ceremony to honour the ancestors. Police tore down the red dresses that were hung to hold the spirits of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two spirit people. They extinguished our sacred fire.

"We have had enough. Enough dialogue, discussion, negotiation at the barrel of a gun. Canada comes to colonize. Reconciliation is dead.

"It is time to fight for our land, our lives, our children, our future. Revolution lives."

Hearing the words of this headline, Doctor expresses her hope that reconciliation is still alive.

But the mention of revolution, she adds, is "playing like a record to me" as a "child of the '70s." During the 1970s, Doctor witnessed the radicalization of Indigenous protest in forms such as the American Indian Movement, which resisted government authority through actions such as the occupation of the abandoned Alcatraz prison from November 1969 to June 1971.

"I think revolution has always been there—maybe not as stark and maybe not as hard-hitting as it has become in Canada now, but it's always been there," Doctor says. "Our people have always stood their ground. If they see something, an encroachment on land, they definitely rise to protect it. I witnessed it where I grew up, where they were trying to expand the road onto what was our Indigenous land. They did it without consultation, and this of course was before 'free, prior and informed consent.' They just thought they had the right to do that.... The people rose up, they protested and they stopped it."

"We have so little left that yes, we have to revolt," she adds. "Yes, we have to protect it. Otherwise we'll end up with nothing."

Like DeCaro in describing the outlooks of John

I think revolution has always been there—maybe not as stark and maybe not as hard-hitting as it has become in Canada now, but it's always been there.

— Canon Ginny Doctor

Brown in the abolitionist movement and Martin Luther King in the civil rights movement, Doctor believes that there are some cases where direct action is necessary. For many years in both Canada and the United States, she notes, it has been a popular form of protest to go on walks. Many Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists, for example, have gone on walks to bring attention to issues such as missing and murdered Indigenous women. "But when it comes right down to it, what good does it really do?" she asks.

When the Wet'suwet'en and their supporters took direct action, Doctor acknowledges, the blockades indeed disrupted the economy. But for those in positions of power, she says, "that's the language they know and that's the language they speak to.... 'Oh, we're losing money!'"

In this way, direct action forces those in power to listen. Mohawk people in particular, Doctor says, "have been famous for that. They're more prone to direct action than any other Indigenous people I know." At both the takeover of Alcatraz and the railroad blockade at Tyendinaga, Mohawks played a leading role.

When she studied at the King Center in Atlanta on non-violent approaches to social change, Doctor learned that there are different steps on the path to reach reconciliation.

"One of those steps [is that] when all else fails, you have to take direct action," she says. "But that direct action has to be peaceful, it has to be non-violent, and I truly believe that that's what our people are trying to do.

"They're not prone to do violence against anyone. But if you look at the whole situation, you'll see that violence is being done to our people again—either through physical intimidation or through the violence that comes from desecrating the land and desecrating your spirituality as people. That is violence in another form."

What, then, is the role of the church in relation to such disputes? In answering that question, Harwood-Jones offers something of a reality check.

Decades ago, when he was rector of a large parish in Winnipeg, one of his parishioners was a minister of the provincial government. In those days, the Anglican Church of Canada frequently issued what were known as "memorials" to the civil government offering the church's position on various issues.

One day, Harwood-Jones remembers, the government minister asked him, "Do you know what happens to churches' memorials?" Answering his own question, the minister said, "File 13"—a synonym for a garbage can.

"In many ways, the church's voice on secular matters is becoming increasingly irrelevant in the increasingly secular environment of Canada," Harwood-Jones says. Statistics seem to bear his opinion out. For example, a 2013 demographic study by the Pew Research Center, "Canada's Changing Religious Landscape," indicates that the fastest growing religious identity in Canada

Vehicles from Wet'suwet'en and supporters block a road on traditional territory.

PHOTO: UNIST'OT'EN CAMP VIA FACEBOOK

between 1971 and 2011 was "religiously unaffiliated." For that reason, Harwood-Jones suggests, popular reaction to church statements in general seems to be a collective shrug.

"The primate issued something in favour of the Wet'suwet'en? OK. It didn't hit any media that I saw," he says.

"We have to realize that at this point, we are no longer an arm of the state.... We have to speak to each other and to the world around us from a position of marginalization. And then we need to think about the issues that face our society."

Then there is the question of to what extent statements made by Anglican leaders reflect the will of the church as a whole. Harwood-Jones points to the example of divisions within the church over same-sex marriage.

"When a primate speaks out, who are they speaking for?" he asks. "They might be speaking for a sense of God's calling that this matter needs to be addressed in a certain way. But they're not speaking with the voice of the church, necessarily. You just need to go to some conservative Anglican churches to find that out."

Given the relatively marginal presence of the church in secular society, Harwood-Jones believes that the job of the church in a dispute such as that involving the Wet'suwet'en is simple: "The role of the church is to see to its Indigenous members and what they want."

In the diocese of Rupert's Land, for example, Harwood-Jones is currently on a board that is creating canons to give Indigenous elders a formal voice in diocesan synods. Manitoba, he notes, has a large population of Cree and Ojibwe people. Many are members of the Anglican Church of Canada and some are members of the synod.

"If our bishop makes a public stand on a matter affecting Indigenous folks, he or she is going to hear from our elders. That's reconciliation.... Listening to marginalized voices means listening to the Indigenous folks who feel they're not heard in our settler-dominated synods."

Responding to Anglicans who suggest that the role of the church in the standoff between Wet'suwet'en and the Canadian government and RCMP is to act as a "mediator" or "peacemaker" between the two sides, Doctor offers a skeptical view.

"That's kind of pie-in-the-sky to me, because the peacemaking needs to be done between the two parties that have stakes in it, and that's the Wet'suwet'en and the government, or whoever," Doctor says. "Those are the two that need to come together and talk and make the peace.... If the church gets called in or invited in, that's a whole different thing.

"But you have to remember that a lot of our First Nations people don't trust the church.... How can they be a peacemaker, and what have they done to really make peace, in terms of reconciliation and in terms of becoming right with God and...becoming right with so many injustices that have been done? What has the

church actually done? So I don't know that the church is the best institution to be invited in as a peacemaker."

In navigating between opposing groups in situations such as the Wet'suwet'en standoff, Delva finds the teachings of MacDonald on systemic racism to be helpful.

"The success of the colonial enterprise relies on the 'grassroots' people turning on one another—attacking and blaming the people we can literally see in front of us," Delva says. "It takes our focus away from the system that animates and supports ongoing injustice.

"When we as settlers focus our anger at people on a blockade, we are not using our energy to focus on the system that has planted, fertilized, tended the seeds of injustice that have led to these actions, and in so doing, we are not addressing the core of the injustice. If we do not do so, this will be ongoing."

The historical record of the Anglican Church of Canada, Delva points out, is a "pretty mixed bag" in terms of how it has responded to colonialism.

She recalls a quote by Dr. Hilda Hellaby, a deacon who worked for decades with Indigenous people, particularly the Gwich'in. In a letter Delva discovered years ago in archival records, Hellaby wrote, "When in doubt, choose the losing side. The winners don't need you, they're doing okay."

For Delva, those words stuck with her as "something Jesus would have said." In her personal opinion, the Anglican Church has often—perhaps even always—supported or been the "winners." But at the same time, "there have always been grassroots Anglicans who resisted."

During the internment of Japanese Canadians in the Second World War, Delva notes, "the church as an institution voted to support the internment, *but* there were many grassroots Anglicans who spoke against the Church's stance, and even chose to be interred with the Japanese."

While the Anglican church was deeply involved in the Indian residential school system and land occupation, "there have always been individual Anglicans who have blown the whistle, called for justice, refused to be part of systemic injustice, and they have often paid a high price for it.

"I feel that the institutional church is now wrestling with what it means to do things differently, and that is shaking people up a bit, and maybe that is a good thing."

LEGAL SCHOLAR WEIGHS IN ON WET'SUWET'EN STANDOFF

The standoff involving Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs, elected band councils, Coastal GasLink, provincial and federal governments, and supporters and opponents across Canada is an "extraordinarily challenging issue," according to a legal scholar with substantial experience in Indigenous law.

PHOTO: THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERISTY

Bradford Morse, law professor at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, B.C.

Bradford Morse is a law professor at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, B.C. Over a career of more than four decades, he has taught courses on Canadian and comparative Indigenous law and served as a legal advisor to numerous First Nations, government departments and royal commissions. From 1984 to 1993, he served as general counsel to the Native Council of Canada (now the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples).

Supporters of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs who oppose the Coastal GasLink pipeline often cite the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Canada was initially one of four countries to oppose UNDRIP, but later reversed its position and supported the declaration. However, there is currently no law at the federal level committing the government to adhere to UNDRIP.

Under international law, Morse says, UN declarations are not seen as treaties, which are formally considered law. Enforcement mechanisms exist for treaties, but do not exist for declarations such as UNDRIP. Instead, UN declarations are seen as "international customary law," to which countries are viewed as obliged to adhere unless they formally renounce them. But international customary law is only enforceable through the intervention of other nation-states.

The only jurisdiction in Canada that has enshrined UNDRIP in law is the B.C. government. Yet it was B.C. Premier John Horgan who subsequently said the "rule of law" demanded that the Coastal GasLink project go ahead, arguing that permits were in place and courts had approved construction.

Morse suggests that differing interpretations of the law pose the question: "Whose consent counts?" He notes that all five elected band councils in the Wet'suwet'en Nation approved the pipeline and entered into formal agreements with Coastal GasLink.

On the other hand, five traditional Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs argue that they have not given consent for the project. But Morse points out that male hereditary chiefs in 2019 stripped traditional titles from female hereditary chiefs, who supported the pipeline. Furthermore, two of these male chiefs had previously run to be chiefs on the elected band councils but were defeated.

While acknowledging that the band councils were colonial institutions imposed on First Nations by the Indian Act, Morse says the defeat of hereditary chiefs in band council elections "speaks to them not having support within their own individual First Nation." But their opposition to the pipeline "became a wonderful story. It's a story in which people could pillory the federal government and be seen to be…on the side of the weak…. It's a complicated situation, which people have wanted to [portray as] white hat, black hat."

On the question of civil disobedience to protest the pipeline, Morse notes that common law provides for the right to protest on public property,

> **I think the church leapt into a very complex situation, choosing one side within the Wet'suwet'en Nation against the other, larger side within the Wet'suwet'en Nation.... [That was] well-intentioned, but ends up being somewhat colonialistic.**
>
> *— Bradford Morse*

as long as one is not preventing people from entering their own homes or workplaces.

In the case of the railway blockades in Tyendinaga, Mohawks set up the blockade on their own traditional territory.

"One of the tragic stories of First Nations across Canada is just under a third of all the First Nations have railways through their lands," Morse says.

"The federal government, which has constitutional jurisdiction for railways, also had it of course for reserves. It made it very easy for them to seize reserve land and give it to CPR, CNR, local and regional railways. Similarly we have highways and lots of pipelines running through reserves from days when the federal government just decided to do it on its own."

Canada, Morse says, must come to grips with issues related to traditional Indigenous land across the country. Even on treaty territory, he says, the idea that Indigenous peoples "consented" to surrender their land by signing the treaties is complicated by the fact that the Crown misrepresented what the treaties meant.

"There was no way that the negotiations encompassed the Crown making very clear that there would be a wave of Europeans coming in the tens and then hundreds of thousands and then millions—and people from not just Europe, but from around the world, they all come in and occupy 99% of their traditional territory," Morse says.

Through the lens of UNDRIP, he adds, one focuses on the will of the entire people, not just the leaders—whether traditional or elected.

"The challenge really is that, I think, the [Anglican Church of Canada] has intervened on the side of what appears to be clearly a minority view," Morse says. "It's done so because of the popular protests elsewhere in the country.... But they've leapt to a conclusion that the traditional chiefs are in fact the ones who are the legitimate governors of the territory and they weren't consulted, and hence government's in breach.

"If the church is going to intervene and choose a side, it's got to do so based on careful examination of the circumstances.... I think the church playing the role in mediation is a very helpful one," he adds. "We've seen that done in the past. But in this particular case, I think the church leapt into a very complex situation, choosing one side within the Wet'suwet'en Nation against the other, larger side within the Wet'suwet'en Nation.... [That was] well-intentioned, but ends up being somewhat colonialistic."

To learn more about the church's rationale for its statements of support for the five Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs opposing the Coastal GasLink pipeline, we invite you to read the article "Church leaders sign statement of support for Wet'suwet'en" and Archbishop Mark MacDonald's column "Why I stand with the five traditional leaders of Wet'suwet'en—especially now," both published by the Anglican Journal in February 2020.

Service participants prepare to make their way down the aisle of St. Paul's Bloor Street, Toronto, at the diocese of Toronto's 25th annual Black history service, February 23, 2020. PHOTO: TALLI FOLKINS

BLACK ANGLICANS OF CANADA AIMS TO GIVE LIFE TO CHURCH'S RACIAL CHARTER

By Tali Folkins
STAFF WRITER

> **Within our diocese [of Toronto], for one, the charter…is not well known. It's been widely distributed, because it's an official policy statement of the church, which means every diocese in this church has seen it or received it. But there has been no response to it.**
>
> *— Brother Reginald Crenshaw*

If you didn't know the Anglican Church of Canada had a racial justice charter, you're probably no different from many other members of the church, says Brother Reginald Crenshaw, a member of the Anglican religious community Order of the Holy Cross and part of the leadership team of Black Anglicans of Canada (Bl.A.C.).

In fact, the church has had a charter committing it to take action for racial justice since 2007—but not many Canadian Anglicans seem to know about it or to have acted on it, Crenshaw says. This, he says, has to change. It's one of the reasons why Bl.A.C.—the establishment of which was discussed decades ago—has at last come into formal existence.

"Within our diocese [of Toronto], for one, the charter… is not well known," Crenshaw says. "It's been widely distributed, because it's an official policy statement of the church, which means every diocese in this church has seen it or received it. But there has been no response to it.

"One of the reasons why our group has re-emerged is that there has been very little institutional life given to this document across the country, except probably with Indigenous peoples, because they've organized around these things as well."

The origins of Bl.A.C. go back to 1994, when a group of Canadian Black Anglican clergy and laypeople began meeting to discuss the creation of a national association with local and diocesan chapters, much like the Union of Black Episcopalians in the U.S. For various reasons, Crenshaw says, an organization did not immediately result from these meetings, though they did bear fruit in one way: the tradition of an annual Black history service in the diocese of Toronto, the 25th anniversary of which was marked this February.

A turning point in Bl.A.C.'s creation came, as it turned out, with a service in 2017 in Toronto to raise funds for relief efforts in the wake of a hurricane that had swept through the eastern Caribbean. Galvanized by their success, the clergy and lay Black Anglicans who had organized this service met to talk about how they could work together for racial justice.

Eventually a group of 32 clergy and laity from the diocese recommended forming an organization to "create a strong Black voice within the Anglican church," Crenshaw says. In July 2018, Bl.A.C. was formed.

A call to racial activism

A Charter for Racial Justice in the Anglican Church of Canada, drawn up by the church's anti-racism working group, was received by Council of General Synod (CoGS) in 2004 and formally approved by General Synod in 2007. The document commits the church to fighting racism in various ways, and provides the theological rationale for doing so. It also includes a brief history of racism in Canadian society and in the Anglican Church of Canada.

Bl.A.C. hopes to give the charter life partly by encouraging thought and discussion around the issues it raises, Crenshaw says.

Participants in the 25th annual Black history service at St. Paul's Bloor Street form a procession before the service begins, carrying flags of their countries of origin.

PHOTO: TALI FOLKINS

"When we talk about institutional racism and discrimination, there's very little discussion in the church about these issues at all," he says. "In fact, there's a general silence on them—giving the impression that they are of minimum importance and don't really exist in the church. So awareness and education are the key pieces here."

But there's more to the charter than raising awareness, Crenshaw notes. It also commits the church, he says, "to support and participate in the world-wide struggle for racial justice in church and society, as advocates and activists"—a statement he hasn't seen in similar charters.

"It's calling for direct action—not just intellectual discussion of an issue or even just acknowledgement of an issue—but being active in changing our society and changing our church structures."

In an address to CoGS last November—her first as primate of the Anglican Church of Canada—Archbishop Linda Nicholls said she hoped the church would soon start working to deepen its commitment to the charter.

Nicholls said she believed systemic or institutional racism was at the heart of some of the challenges involving Canada's Indigenous people, and that she'd seen discrimination against racialized people in the church.

"I've seen the pain amongst clergy of colour who are very clear when I ask them, 'Have you been a victim of racism in our church?' and every one of them nods," she said.

Crenshaw agrees that many Black clergy, especially those who have immigrated from the Caribbean and Africa, have not been given a chance to fully participate in the life of the church.

"There are many ways in which they are ignored and not really included in representation on diocesan councils where they should be," he says.

The exclusion of Blacks from full participation in the Anglican Church of Canada has historically taken subtler form than legally enforced segregation—but have been hurtful nonetheless, he says. For example, it was not uncommon for new Black arrivals at Anglican churches as late as the 1970s and '80s to be told they'd be happier in the "Black" church down the street. Alternatively, a majority-Black congregation might be led by all-white leadership teams—though this is less common than it was a few decades ago, Crenshaw says.

Bl.A.C. wants to increase awareness in Canada of the issues many Black Anglicans are facing, and to spur the national church to action in living up to its racial justice charter. Crenshaw describes its specific goals as furthering the empowerment, inclusion, participation and representation of Black Anglicans in the church. These goals are to a great extent concerned with increasing the participation of Blacks in church leadership roles. But they also aim at cultural changes—allowing a fuller expression of Black Canadian culture in the church's liturgy, for example.

Among the group's current priorities, Crenshaw says, is to strengthen its base in Toronto and then to expand to other cities in the province, and then nationally. Another is to build relationships with other Black and otherwise racialized communities and groups beyond the Anglican church, to collaborate with them.

The leaders of Bl.A.C. were formally installed, by Peter Fenty, area bishop for York-Simcoe, at the diocese of Toronto's Black history service this year. The service's 25th jubilee ran three hours and featured speeches, prayers, song and traditional dancing and drumming.

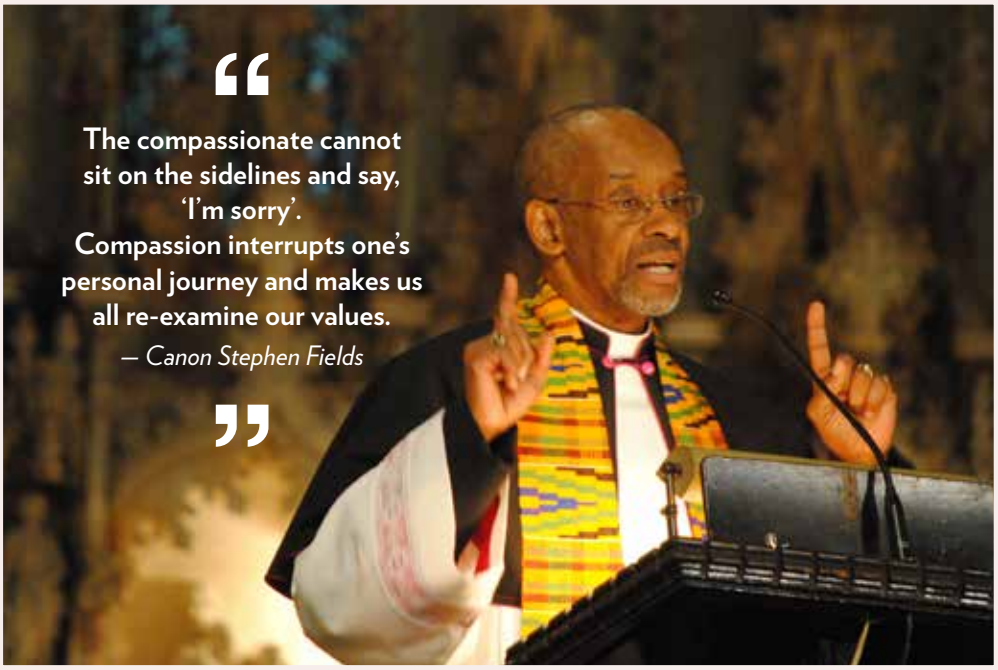
In remarks to the congregation, Canon Donald Butler, priest at the Church of St. Andrew, Scarborough, Ont., said the 21st century continues to see a lack of confidence in Black leadership—even among Blacks themselves. For this reason, he said, it's important that the Black community work together to develop confidence in its leaders.

"I believe that those who are affected the most by marginalization, victimization or other oppressive behaviours must be at the forefront of any action or struggle that would mitigate the causes that create harm in their lives," Butler said. "Don't get me wrong—we need allies, we need other people to stand and walk with us… but we must never, ever depend on other people to do for us what we should and can do for ourselves."

As a newcomer to Canada 31 years ago, Butler said, he felt unwelcome—and he often still feels unwelcome here now, he added to applause from the congregation.

"That is not only my experience. If we do nothing, things will remain the same," he said.

In a sermon, Canon Stephen Fields of Holy Trinity Thornhill, Ont. called on those sympathetic to the challenges faced by Black Anglicans to action. "The compassionate cannot sit on the sidelines and say,



‘I’m sorry’,” Fields said. “Compassion interrupts one’s personal journey and makes us all re-examine our values.” Fields also called on the church’s seminaries to include courses in anti-racism, to more applause.

The issue of representation of racialized minorities in the church has come up more than once at CoGS. At its meeting last November, Canon (lay) Noreen Duncan, representative to CoGS of the U.S.-based Episcopal Church, praised the council for its reconciliation work but advised it to “look in the mirror.” Duncan said she perceived a lack of racialized people among the members of CoGS. She also said she believed the church should actively encourage these people to involve themselves in its leadership—partly because many of them represent areas of potential growth in the church.

“It’s not just a question of wondering when are the African, Asian and Caribbean members of the congregation going to volunteer,” she said. “You have to point them out. Bring them out for a tea…and ask them, ‘Please help us.’”

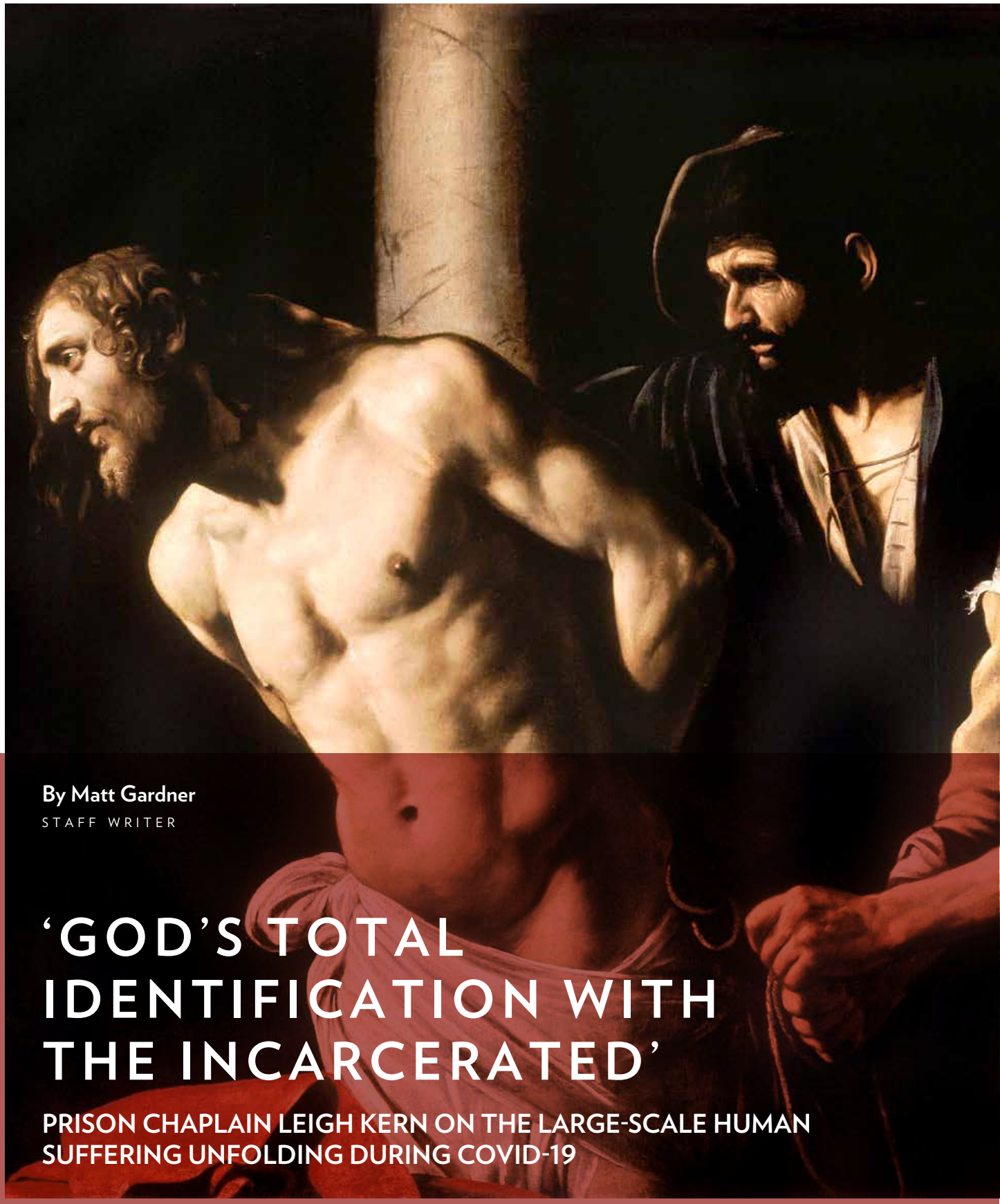
On March 21, 2020, as this article was being written, the Anglican Church of Canada, its full communion partner the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the United Church of Canada released a joint letter committing themselves to “recognize and celebrate” the International Decade for People of African Descent, proclaimed by the UN in 2013. The decade, spanning the years 2015-2024, has a number of goals, including protecting the human rights of people of African descent, promoting their heritage and fighting racial discrimination.

“Through this International Decade we hear a call for our churches to do more to address anti-Black racism in Canada and globally,” the letter states.

The three churches also say they have historically been allied with “colonial governments and oppressive structures” and have helped perpetuate “injustice and violence, both directly and indirectly, to people of African Descent,” including their enslavement.

The letter states that the churches celebrate people of African descent and are strengthening their commitment to “addressing the root causes and current manifestations of anti-Black racism within the church.”

To that end, it continues, the churches are planning to “gather and share resources that encourage conversations across our churches,” to foster understanding of human rights and help eliminate racism, hoping to work with their interfaith partners and others who share these goals.



By Matt Gardner
STAFF WRITER

‘GOD’S TOTAL IDENTIFICATION WITH THE INCARCERATED’

PRISON CHAPLAIN LEIGH KERN ON THE LARGE-SCALE HUMAN SUFFERING UNFOLDING DURING COVID-19

CHRIST AT THE COLUMN, CARAVAGGIO. ART: MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE ROUEN/WIKIPEDIA

As Christians on Good Friday considered the incarceration and execution of Jesus Christ, the *Anglican Journal* offered this in-depth discussion of the reality prisoners face during the COVID-19 pandemic—from the universal spectre of death to the consumption of toilet water as resources dwindle—and how you can help.

From March 24 to April 2, detainees at the Laval Migrant Detention Centre took part in a hunger strike demanding their release, citing the threat posed to incarcerated groups by the COVID-19 pandemic. As of April 4, some detainees had been released, but 20 remained in the facility due to the requirement of individual detention hearings before release.

In Ontario, the Ministry of the Attorney General on April 9 confirmed that more than 2,300 prisoners had been released from provincial jails in an effort to stop the spread of COVID-19 through correctional institutions. As of this writing, the total population of inmates in provincial jails had decreased to 6,025.

For an Anglican perspective on the case for releasing prisoners, the *Journal* spoke with the Rev. Leigh Kern, coordinator of Indigenous ministries and reconciliation animator for the diocese of Toronto. A prison chaplain who regularly ministers to inmates, Kern has called for the depopulation of correctional facilities to prevent the spread of the virus.

The conversation has been edited for clarity.

The Rev. Leigh Kern, coordinator of Indigenous ministries and reconciliation animator for the diocese of Toronto photo: michael hudson

> **"As Christians, I think—as a society, really —we have turned our backs on prisoners."**
> *— The Rev Leigh Kern*

What is your involvement in advocating for the rights of prisoners, particularly in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic?

This issue of COVID-19 in prisons is exacerbating the public health crisis that we already have. I do prison chaplaincy in my job, so every week I enter institutions and support prisoners. The underlying health conditions of prisoners are already substantially lower than the general population.

Prisoners that I work with often have long histories of childhood abuse, poverty in childhood and sexual violence, growing up in group homes. Many are Sixties Scoop survivors. Many prisoners I work with are residential school survivors. They're people that have already borne the brunt of many of our social harms, and they are people that have not been prioritized in terms of adequate resources for their mental, physical, emotional well-being. They're people that have borne the brunt of systemic racism—Black communities, brown communities, migrant communities, and Indigenous communities. Working with prisoners, I already support them through underlying mental health issues and challenges, physical health problems.... We have a disproportionate level of people with...diabetes, mental health issues, even cancers.

It depends on the institution, but in many institutions, prisoners are confined to their cells all hours of the day. Many prisons don't have outdoor yards where people are able to go outside. The prison I visit, they don't ever get to go outside and their windows are frosted. You can imagine that not seeing the sunlight, not being able to smell the grass or see a tree, these things have a very significant impact on people's physical health.... Many men I work with, they literally pace their cells all day long just to get exercise, so they are not able to move around [much outside their cells] at all.

Being confined is hard on a good day. But then facing down the news that COVID-19 is present in their institutions—COVID-19 is present in the institution that I do prison chaplaincy [in], so I haven't been able to support or see any of the prisoners that I work with. It's present in most institutions, through guards and also through the prison population, as people are still being arrested and admitted to prisons.

People feel like they're a sitting target. Many of them have had a lot of trauma in the health-care system. In some prisons, for example, you have to be strip-searched before you receive any medication. Medication and health care are provided by the institution, which is the body with power in the relationship. So people have a lot of trauma also around accessing health care, and many prisoners I work with inside have a really hard time being able to even see a doctor or a psychiatrist or a social worker.... A lot of people with ongoing conditions aren't able to even access things like medication on a good day.

Now with COVID-19 spreading through institutions,

THE TAKING OF CHRIST, CARAVAGGIO. ART: NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND/WIKIPEDIA

most institutions and some staff also feel unsafe. [When] less guards [come] in to work, then the prison isn't able to keep itself clean, prisoners aren't able to be fully supervised, and when that happens, they move to what's called lockdown.

Lockdown is what most of our prisons are at right now with COVID-19…and this really gets back to the fact that our prison system and our corrections system and our migrant detention system, our refugee support system which criminalizes migrants…these systems are not set up to maximize and safeguard the health and security of the people that are living in these institutions.

As the church, I think it really calls us to ask the question of, what are these institutions for? Because as the general public, as taxpayers, we consent to these institutions and their practices and their policies. But the way that the prison system works, from my perspective, it's very much based around punishment.

I work with men [where] some of them have harmed people. When I first started doing this work, it was at CAMH [the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, located in Toronto]…maybe six or seven years ago…. I worked with people who had harmed others through sexual violence.

What I learned doing that work is that hurt people hurt people. The people that are incarcerated, even those with violent charges, are themselves often victims of violence and systemic violence and systemic barriers that have made life very, very hard. They haven't been able to receive the kind of support systems such as

mental health care that they've needed in their lives to heal from trauma and to be able to create a life of safety around themselves, which we all need to be able to thrive.

I really think our prison system's problems are being exposed through this crisis, because we see that our prisons aren't equipped to deal with a public health crisis. The conditions of lockdown are very penal, very punishing for people, and it causes massively significant, detrimental mental health impacts on prisoners.

Prisoners that I've worked with in supporting them and their release often talk to me about being diagnosed with PTSD from the impact of incarceration. I work with many people that have found the experience of being in prison extremely traumatizing, [which] causes massive strains on their family systems. Seventy-five per cent of women that are incarcerated are mothers.... All the men that I work with in prisons are Indigenous men and all of them are fathers. [When] we think of incarceration, it is not just the individual, what the prisoner is going through. It's also the impact that prisons have on families and the impact of prisons on communities as a whole.

We see Indigenous communities, black communities, migrant communities as having very disproportionate levels of their family members being incarcerated. The stress that that puts on mothers and on families is massive. Of the men that I support, many of them come to me with so much anxiety every day.... "I talked to my girlfriend on the phone yesterday and she's losing her apartment because of me being incarcerated. She's working two jobs and taking care of two of our kids, and she's not able to pay the bills anymore. So she's now losing her housing because her husband is incarcerated."

We know that there are social determinants of health. Prisoners and the families of prisoners, due to the carceral system, are put at much greater levels of vulnerability and risk. That's part of also how the system perpetuates itself, as these kids now are put at danger of vulnerability through their family systems being attacked essentially through the carceral state.

I'm really passionate about this. It's a world that is hidden to most people, and it's a world that is visible to prison chaplains. So I think we have a really important role to play of witness and working alongside these prisoners and their families to tell their stories and how brutal it can be.

Recent articles have reported on the spread of disease at the Rikers Island jail complex in New York, where hundreds of inmates and guards have tested positive for COVID-19. These reports describe how overcrowding and the lack of sanitary facilities allow the virus to spread easily and suggest a looming humanitarian disaster. Do you see the same kind of conditions in Canadian prisons?

Oh yeah, absolutely.... The stats just, as of today even, are at least 41 prisoners, 56 staff members and one contractor of the Canadian carceral system have tested positive for COVID-19, based on numbers received April 7.... So we see that COVID-19 is already present in our prisons. Since that has happened, I have not been allowed to—obviously—enter the prison that I do chaplaincy at, and the prison has been mostly on lockdown.

Lockdown itself has detrimental impacts on people's health. Being on lockdown for the prisoners that I support means being confined to a cell that is about the size of a bathroom stall. Their cells are really small, and there's one other person in the cell. As we know, many of our institutions, like [in] the U.S., are overcrowded. Two people confined to a cell about the size of a bathroom, and they've got one toilet, a frosted window, no TV, no access to the phone. When you're on lockdown, you're basically deprived of any kind of stimulation beyond maybe a book that you can rent out of the prison library system.

From my perspective, and also from many international perspectives, this kind of isolation is a form of torture. They lack stimulation, they're not able to access the support of health care—chaplains, for example. I'm not able to talk to anyone. Being on lockdown is very similar to being in solitary confinement. They don't have any stimulation, you're confined to an extremely small quarter, and some prisoners even in Ottawa reported having to drink water out of their toilet because they weren't being given water during lockdown.

Different units in the prison can be experiencing different things. Some units have reported to

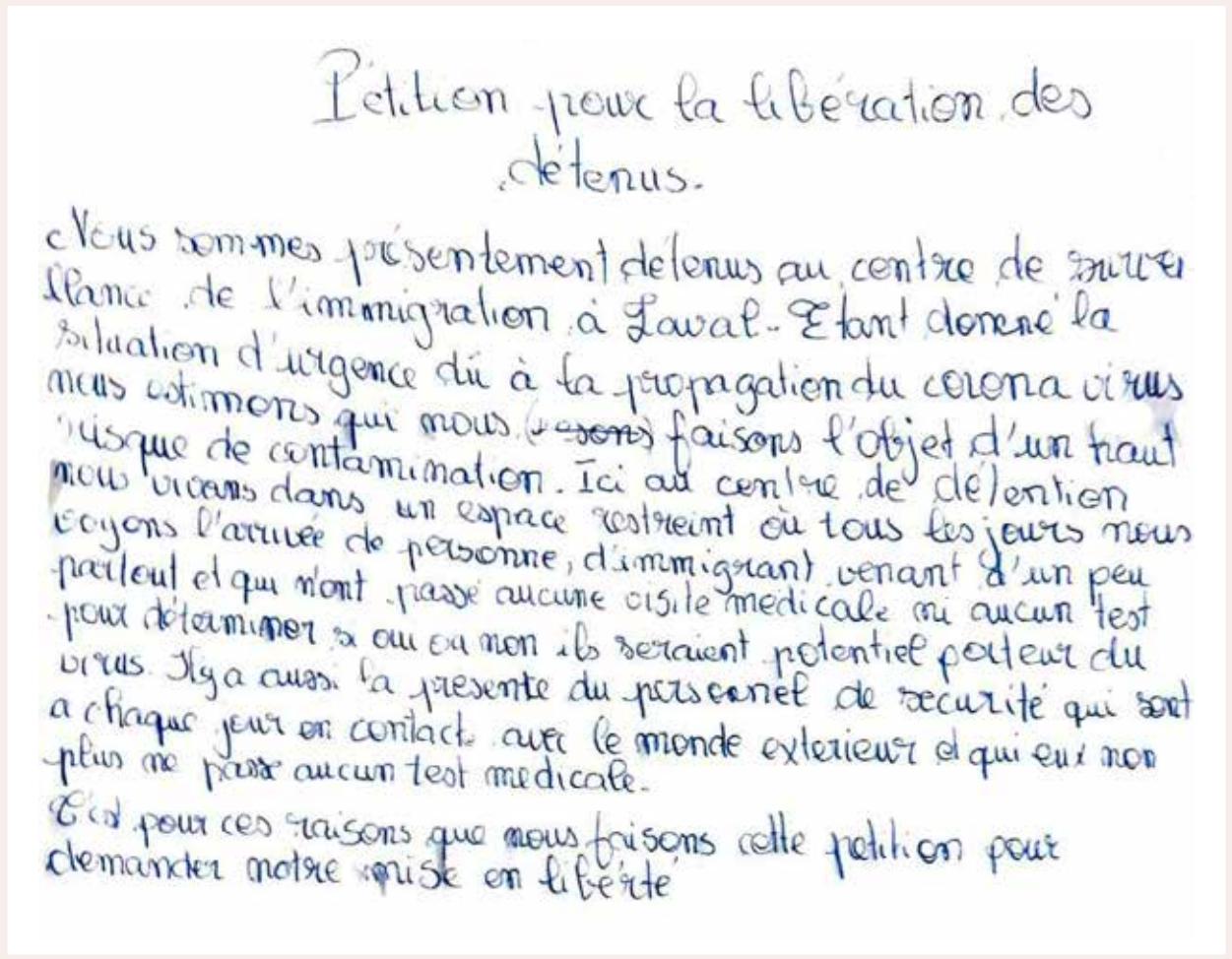
THE CROWNING OF THORNS, CARAVAGGIO. ART: KUNSTHISTORISCHES MUSEUM/WIKIPEDIA

whistleblowers on the outside that they don't have access to food or drink or cleaning supplies as frequently as they need. Prisoners that I work with often have reported not being able to access medications, not being able to brush their teeth, to shower, to use the bathroom in privacy. When you're on lockdown, all those things are taken away, so it very much feels like a punishment for prisoners. Being on lockdown is like hell.

For many prisoners, of course, they have really important relationships in their lives, and they're not able to receive those support systems. A lot of Canadians right now are surviving having to be isolated to their homes through the Internet, through social media. But most prisoners have no access to any of those resources that the rest of us draw upon to support our emotional, spiritual, physical, intellectual, mental well-being. Prisoners are not able to draw on those same resources, and it's an extremely painful and degrading experience.

The migrants that are being detained in Laval and who have been on hunger strike [against] the conditions of their lockdown report feeling totally powerless. They hear that COVID-19 is present in the general population, it's in communities, and they have no control over who is coming in and out of their personal space. They have no access or right to tell people, "Don't touch my cutlery," or "Don't do this." The guards are the people that hold the power in these situations, and are often responsible for having to physically discipline prisoners. As statistics say, 56 staff members at Canadian corrections have tested positive for COVID-19. We know that likely then, that number is much greater.

People don't trust that the staff themselves are going to be protecting the prisoners from contracting the virus, and they have no agency or control over protecting themselves. So the migrants at the Laval detention centre went on hunger strike to protest these conditions



Pétition pour la libération des détenus.

Nous sommes présentement détenus au centre de surveillance de l'immigration à Laval. Étant donné la situation d'urgence dû à la propagation du corona virus nous estimons qui nous (~~sont~~) faisons l'objet d'un haut risque de contamination. Ici au centre de détention nous vivons dans un espace restreint où tous les jours nous voyons l'arrivée de personne, d'immigrant venant d'un peu partout et qui n'ont passé aucune visite médicale ni aucun test pour déterminer si ou ou non ils seraient potentiel porteur du virus. Il y a aussi la présente du personnel de sécurité qui sont à chaque jour en contact avec le monde extérieur et qui eux non plus ne passe aucun test médicale.

C'est pour ces raisons que nous faisons cette pétition pour demander notre mise en liberté

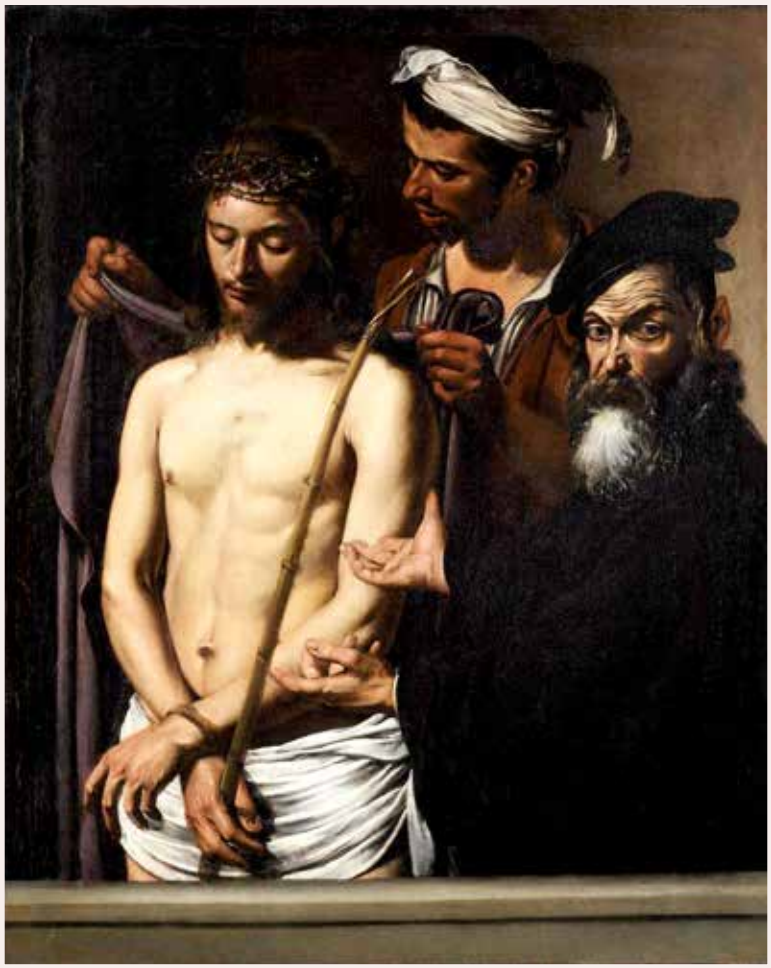
Laval detainees' letter

and say, "Our lives are not disposable." We've seen about 10% of the prison population of Canada being released right now. But what that means is that there are still 90% of prisoners that are in lockdown situations, that have almost no access to things like a private bathroom or showers or even hand sanitizer.

Our prisons are not equipped to deal with this public health crisis, and really, to me, it says something. It shows us what our prison system is like: that it's based on principles of control and punishment, very much the same logic of the Indian residential school system.

To me as an Anglican, somebody that was born into an Anglican family, I believe that we have a responsibility to study colonialism and to study the Indian residential school system, and study that same logic of taking people out of their families, removing them forcibly from their communities, and bringing them to a detention centre far away from their family; far away from their community, their cultural life, and isolating them for the purposes of "reform"—changing their spirit, "killing the Indian to save the child," so to speak. I think that our prison system is built around the same logic of the Indian residential school system—of this paternalistic power that is going to intervene in the lives of these vulnerable people, scoop them out of their situation, and then ultimately confine them, control their movements, and then think that they're going to come out of that experience somehow a better person.

But what we see [in] prisoners I work with especially is…a revolving door. I see people that have been criminalized their whole lives for being poor and living on the streets and using drugs to cope with the experiences of trauma that they've had in their lives. I see these men being released from prison, released



ECCE HOMO, CARAVAGGIO. ART: GOOGLE ART PROJECT

to the streets with no supportive housing, not enough shelter beds—and our shelter system also is not safe. We know that COVID-19 is present in our shelters and our shelters are a terrible and embarrassing situation: people sleeping on yoga mats and confined to small spaces with not enough adequate social distancing. These are not safe and healthy environments for the human body or the human spirit, and these are the kinds of conditions that many prisoners are released to. They're released to poverty and the violence of homelessness. Then we see them falling through the cracks and being criminalized and vulnerable and then they're back in prison.

As Anglicans, we worship a crucified God. We worship a God incarnate who was not accepted for who he was, who was rejected and beaten and criminalized and arrested. God's total identification with the suffering servant, with the one that is belittled and brutalized and humiliated; God's total identification with the incarcerated and the criminalized to me shows us that we can never turn away from these communities—that God has identified with these communities and said, "What you do to them, you do to me."

Jesus didn't say that about any other communities, right? He said, "When you feed the sick, you are feeding me. When you visit the imprisoned, you are visiting me." As Christians, I think—as a society, really—we have turned our backs on prisoners. The reality is that men, women and queer people that are incarcerated are living in inhumane and brutalizing conditions—conditions that are not adequate for their mental, spiritual, emotional or physical well-being. With COVID-19, many prisoners feel like they are awaiting a death sentence; that they are extremely vulnerable and their families are living with so much anxiety that their husbands, their partners, their

THE FLAGELLATION OF CHRIST, CARAVAGGIO. ART: MUSEO DI CAPODIMONTE/WIKIPEDIA

best friends, their business partners are not going to be alive in the coming months.

The experience of the fear that they are all going through is something that weighs on my heart every single day. But prisoners don't have access to their social networks whatsoever, and the fact that that is acceptable to Canadians is so painful for me to think about. Bell Canada has a private contract with Corrections Canada, so they control the phone lines. The range [a common area cell] for example that I go to, there are about 20 or 30 prisoners at any given time on this one range, and there are only two, maybe three phones, so people have to take turns on the phones, etc. It can be quite political. There's definitely a sense of scarcity. There's not enough health resources, there's not enough phones, there's not enough staff, there's not enough mental health nurses. There really is a very extreme sense of scarcity for prisoners, not even including the factors of lockdown.

Even on a good day, a prisoner can only use a pay phone, they have to call collect and it can only be to a landline. That obviously of course causes so much struggle in communities, as many people don't have a landline, especially people living in poverty. They might not keep the same address for long enough in order to be able to hold a landline. Many people just have cellphones, so aren't even able to be in touch. Prisoners aren't able to call their children and hear their voices. When you're living in total isolation, like in lockdown, that is just so detrimental, and if you're on lockdown, you can't even make any calls.

That's also one of the demands that prisoners' human rights organizations are making right now, is for the depopulation of prisons: the release of prisoners to their families, their communities, to do community-based

I think that the church should be calling for treating prisoners with basic human rights and dignity, which is not currently happening.

— The Rev Leigh Kern

sentencing, which would be a push in the right direction as a society to think more about decarceration. Instead of investing hundreds of thousands of dollars of resources every year into jailing people and imprisoning them, we could put those resources into building cultures of community well-being that help people heal from the social factors that put them at risk for being criminalized.

A press release by the community organization Strength in SISterhood, comprised of former female inmates, calls for the release of all women prisoners from the Canadian correctional system, saying that women in prison pose little risk to public safety. "At the very least," it calls on Correctional Services Canada to release all women over 50, all women with underlying health conditions, and all women who are near or past their parole dates.

Do you think such a demand should be made for male or other prisoners? What should the church be calling for?

I think that the church should be calling for treating prisoners with basic human rights and dignity, which is not currently happening. I think that people talk and put a lot of emphasis on this idea of public safety, and to me, that is problematic because it obscures this issue of, *what is violence?*

Violence is not just one person with a gun. Violence is also the fact that Indigenous, Black and migrant communities are often put in such vulnerable situations where they don't even have access to basic things like housing. It's not just a question of who's safe and who's not, but what does social safety actually mean to all of us? Does it mean that people are punished and confined to tiny cells and they have to drink water out of toilet bowls? Or does it mean that we are investing our resources in building more halfway houses and putting [forward] more financial resources, so that people exiting prison aren't going to the street and facing a reality where they have little to no options?

Many of the people that I work with, they are not incarcerated because they committed violent [crimes] or sexual assault. Many of them are incarcerated for poverty-related crimes, including things like doing drugs. When we think about who is in our prisons, we do see an overrepresentation of people from marginalized and oppressed communities. Who is in our prisons does not reflect the crimes that are committed socially. Over 70% of prisoners have not been convicted of any crime, but they cannot afford bail. So it's much more disproportionately people who are poor that are in prison than people who have done the worst things to harm society. For me, as a prison chaplain, that's a very painful thing to see.

In the neighbourhood I live in, someone was convicted of sexually harming a minor. But that person was able to pay bail, and so has never been to jail as he awaits trial, and he lives in my neighbourhood. I have to go into jail and visit the prisoners whose wives are now facing eviction from their apartment because their partners are incarcerated and so they're not able to make ends meet or to have childcare. Maybe they've lost their job. These massive pressures [are] being put on poor families, and their partners haven't been convicted of a crime. The crime maybe was a small charge of selling drugs or something like that to survive. And yet this person is in jail for two years, while the guy in

THE DENIAL OF SAINT PETER, CARAVAGGIO. ART: METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART/WIKIPEDIA

my neighbourhood who sexually assaulted a child is awaiting trial. He's innocent until proven guilty, right? But our system punishes poor people and it puts them at a greater disadvantage.

So when we talk about public safety and we think about our prison situation, most people in jail have not been convicted of any crime. When we think about depopulating our prisons, I think we should, instead of focusing on this fear that prisoners are dangerous, think that prisoners are people who are part of our community. They are not separate from us. They're not other. They're not demonized. But our God himself identified with them and he also was incarcerated.

Fear of incarcerated people—thinking that they're bad or dirty or that poor people or homeless people are inevitably going to get the virus and are going to get sick, are going to die, they're just going to be casualties of this COVID-19 crisis—that kind of indifference is borne out of our prejudice against poor people. We see their lives essentially as disposable, because we know that keeping these people confined to these overcrowded and often unsanitary conditions where they don't even have support for basic social, emotional, physical needs—keeping them confined to these conditions during a public health crisis is only possible because we already think of them as less deserving of the things that the rest of us have access to.

To me, that's what the message of Jesus totally turns on its head. The message of Jesus turns everything on its head. It says, instead of prioritizing your own personal wealth, your comfort, your well-being, your security over the needs of somebody who is poor, who is disadvantaged, who is historically oppressed—instead of prioritizing our own comfort and sense of security, we are called to serve. We are called to see God in those whom our society has totally cast off as disposable. We're called to go to those places to listen, to witness, to lift up the hunger strike and the letters of the Laval prisoners or these women [Strength in SISterhood] who are in solidarity with their sisters who are incarcerated. But it's our job to listen to those voices and lift them up, because they matter.

They matter so much to the heart of God. Holy Week is about following the footsteps of someone who was

"From my perspective, the church's role is to listen to the voices of prisoners and their families, to listen to their concerns and to support them in lifting those voices up."

— The Rev Leigh Kern

brutalized and penalized and demonized by the state—following that person through his public execution, and then ultimately to his resurrection where he turns all the powers and principalities of the world on their head, including our idea of the laws of nature and what is even physically possible.

A lot of people have positive energy around addressing the COVID-19 crisis in saying, *this is a time of great loss, of great grief, of great suffering—and it's also a time where we see the opportunity for transformation*. I see this with our prison population.

We already know that prisons are tools of punishment, that people don't come out of them rehabilitated; that people don't come out of them transformed into a better person, but that prisons break the connections and circles of community that help people be well. They do this through isolating them, through taking people far away from their homes, and through confining them to very difficult conditions that would be hard for anyone to come out of not traumatized.

What specifically should the Anglican Church of Canada be calling for?

Specifically, I think that what we should call for is a comprehensive plan that involves families, involves community stakeholders, involves organizations, but is a comprehensive plan on how crises are addressed in prisons.

I think that what we are seeing is that depopulation is the best condition [for minimizing spread of the virus] because COVID-19 is already present in our prisons. Just as we have introduced comprehensive plans for supporting people that have lost their jobs, we need to see adequate resources going into the provisions of building adequate and safe supports for people exiting prison—because even right now, people get out of prison and most of them are released to the streets. Many of them are released to a life of poverty where they have no other option but to engage in things that are deemed illegal to then support their survival.

If the government was able to invest more in community stakeholders, in creating supportive housing and more shelters that are more dignified, that have more privacy, more autonomy for people, then we would see people being able to be released from prison with the adequate supports that they need. But instead, what is happening is that people are saying, "Oh, we don't have those supports to release prisoners to. We don't want to just release people to the street. So we're going to keep them incarcerated." But the reality is that when people get sick in prison, their recovery rates are much lower than if they were in the general population or if they were in a hospital.

When you're sick, you end up being forced into solitary confinement, and that is not a good condition for people to be able to recover. There are many reports out there of people who are sick in solitary confinement. They don't do well. They don't recover as well, and of course there's just a massive risk for infecting others that are on the same range, as people aren't able to socially isolate in prison. It's not possible. It's not safe for the prisoners or the guards when we're looking at something as severe as this COVID-19 crisis.

From my perspective, the church's role is to listen to the voices of prisoners and their families, to listen to their concerns and to support them in lifting those voices up. Ever since this crisis began, I've been engaged with

THE ENTOMBMENT OF CHRIST, CARAVAGGIO.
ART: VATICAN MUSEUMS/WIKIPEDIA

writing my members of parliament, writing [Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness] Bill Blair, and engaging in raising my voice about this and in calling for the dignity and well-being and adequate care of people that are incarcerated. Part of that too is: instead of criminalizing people further through this public health crisis, to move to principles of community care and well-being where we actually prioritize the health and safety of people that are most vulnerable at this time.

That means measures to depopulate the prisons, to create a comprehensive plan of safe and adequate housing for poor communities, which we know are overrepresented in our prisons; to really do everything that is possible to reunite prisoners and their families during this time so that they can take care of each other and not live with the anxiety of *is my partner going to die in jail from this?*

Anything else you'd like to add?

The Corrections and Conditional Release Act says that parole may be granted at any time to an offender whose physical or mental health is likely to suffer serious damage if the offender continues to be held in confinement.

Criminal Code of Canada: Exceptional cases
121 (1) Subject to section 102—and despite sections 119 to 120.3 of this Act, sections 746.1 and 761 of the *Criminal Code*, subsection 226.1(2) of the *National Defence Act* and subsection 15(2) of the *Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act* and any order made under section 743.6 of the *Criminal Code* or section 226.2 of the *National Defence Act*—parole may be granted at any time to an offender

- (a) who is terminally ill;
- (b) whose physical or mental health is likely to suffer serious damage if the offender continues to be held in confinement
- (c) for whom continued confinement would constitute an excessive hardship that was not reasonably foreseeable at the time the offender was sentenced; or
- (d) who is the subject of an order of surrender under the Extradition Act and who is to be detained until surrendered.

Exceptions

- (2) Paragraphs (1)(b) to (d) do not apply to an offender who is
- (a) serving a life sentence imposed as a minimum punishment or commuted from a sentence of death; or
- (b) serving, in a penitentiary, a sentence for an indeterminate period.

I think that that is really important. We already have it in our law that parole can be granted to people whose physical or mental health is likely to suffer under the conditions of confinement. COVID-19 has created a condition where most prisons are functioning in a state of lockdown, which in my experience as a prison chaplain is absolutely traumatic and detrimental to the mental, physical, emotional, spiritual well-being of prisoners in confinement.

So I think part of this too is holding Canada accountable to its own laws. We already have the conditions to be able to release people. It's just we have to put the energy and the resources into doing it well so that prisoners are released to their families; released to communities of care; released to adequate, socially supportive housing so that we are not just neglecting their needs.

St. John's Anglican Church, Lunenburg, NS. PHOTO: THE REV. LAURA MARIE PIOTROWICZ

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By Joelle Kidd
STAFF WRITER

BOTH/AND

ACCESSIBILITY IN THE CHURCH IS ABOUT MORE THAN PHYSICAL ACCOMMODATION. FOR THESE ANGLICANS, ACCEPTANCE COMES FROM THE VERY CORE OF A CHURCH'S THEOLOGY.

PHOTO: RICARDO-IV-TAMAYO/UNSPLASH

The Rev. Matt Arguin was at a mall one day when a long-haired, bearded man with a large cross around his neck walked up to him.

"Do you believe that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior?" the man asked.

Arguin, who was wearing his clerical collar at the time, felt the urge to stifle some laughter, but responded that he did. A priest in the Anglican Church of Canada who lives in London, Ont., Arguin has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair. The conversation continued, as Arguin recounts in the book *Disability and the Way of Jesus: Holistic Healing in the Gospels and the Church*, with the man asking, "So if I prayed for you right now, do you believe that he would make you stand up and walk?" "He might, but I don't think it's very likely," said Arguin.

"Why not?"

"I think it might be possible that God made me this way, and I'm not sure it's something that needs to be healed."

The man stammered a response and left, leaving Arguin with "the feeling that my reply had caused some sort of short-circuit in his faith logic," the priest writes.

The interaction in the mall is not the only such experience Arguin has had. "I've literally had people stop me on the street to pray that I would get up and walk," he recalls. "And you're just kind of sitting there awkwardly, right?" He laughs. "So it's one of those things that you do come across—I wouldn't say, come across it all the time, but…it's not something that can be glossed over."

Caitlyn, who asked that her last name not be used for the sake of anonymity, recently began attending an Anglican church. She grew up Catholic, but has tried many Christian denominations in her search for a church. "I do think that the Anglican church I go to now is more inclusive than a lot of other churches I've gone to in the past, especially in regards to disability issues of various sorts," she says.

Caitlyn identifies as having a mental illness. Recently she wrote about her experience with church for her priest, who suggested publishing it on the Anglican Church of Canada's MinistryMatters blog.

"When I started the article, I'd really just stumbled across a video on YouTube of a Christian faith healer.... [It] was a person with bipolar disorder that she was healing, and she was telling him to say, you know, 'I am no longer bipolar, in Jesus's name.'"

There are different kinds of disability...It's not this single, monolithic thing," says the Rev. Matt Arguin, a priest in the diocese of Huron. "It's actually quite broad, quite diverse."

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

In some denominations, Caitlyn says, mental illness is conflated with evil, or even demonic possession. The solution to the experience of symptoms is to banish it through prayer or faith, meaning that if one's health does not improve, "then you are doing something wrong."

"[It's] a lot of shaming and blaming and saying that there's no way to be a 'both/and,'" Caitlyn says—something which flies in the face of what she's learned in her own recovery.

"A lot of my own recovery is choosing 'both/and' rather than 'either/or.' You can both have symptoms and you can experience joy in church—not necessarily you have to have no symptoms and then you will have joy. Instead of either/or, I definitely have shifted my own thinking to a 'both/and'.... When, I think, churches focus on saying that it is either/or, then that is exclusionary."

The implication, Caitlyn says, is that if you're not joyful, "then you are missing out on the Holy Spirit" and that if you had accepted God's peace, you would no longer have negative emotions.

"I think that both/and is a healthier way to move towards, for parishioners and clergy to look at things that way, rather than [as] one or the other."

Caitlyn has been to churches in other denominations that put an emphasis on physical healing through faith.

Huron College, in London, Ont., recently made its chapel more accessible with the construction of a ramp, which was partially funded by a grant from the Anglican Foundation of Canada.

PHOTO: ANGLICAN FOUNDATION OF CANADA

"There are people I've spoken [to] that have said that's been helpful to them; however…they see it as part of their recovery," rather than "the moment they got healed."

In some more charismatic churches she has attended, Caitlyn says, "If you're crying or you're upset, people will come to you without asking and lay their hands on you and say all these things to try to get rid of the crying, when in reality, my personal opinion—and I think a lot of clinicians would agree—is that suppressing emotion actually increases suffering."

Having someone pray for your healing and "feeling awful when it doesn't happen," can be quite harmful, she notes. "They do say…in some faith healing-type services, 'this is your faith that heals you'…[which gives] this idea that you are actually in control of your pain and your suffering. And I just think, we're a lot more complicated than that. You know?" This either/or way of thinking can lead to a heavy sense of guilt, she says, or a resistance to seeking other treatments for mental health or other disabilities.

For those who live with disabilities or chronic conditions, the way the Bible talks about healing can seem troublesome.

"I think some people see Jesus as a healer, and for them that's a positive thing—when you call out to Jesus, well, 'Jesus heals people in the Bible, so he's going to heal me too,'" says Caitlyn. However, she says, we get only a limited picture of healing from the Bible. "I think healing takes on different forms for different people."

Caitlyn says she has heard many people speak about demons Jesus casts out in the Bible as a representation of mental illness. While this representation of healing may give comfort to some, she prefers to see other aspects of Jesus's ministry as related to mental health.

"Jesus spent a lot of time sitting with people, hanging out with people, who were maybe not the most popular. And I think a lot of people with mental illness have isolation…or a variety of reasons, [some of which] might just be stigma. I think if we want to be like Jesus, maybe instead of trying to do the healing in that kind of overt way, like healing you from your demons—what would Jesus do? Maybe he would sit and have a coffee with you…. Maybe it means having coffee with somebody that's super isolated or [is] struggling to just access services. Maybe it means advocating for that person who can't advocate for themselves."

If you've met one person with autism you've met one person—I guess as with all of us, if you've met one human being, you've met one human being.

— The Rev. Wayne Parsons

"The thing is, in my experience of the church—not necessarily of the Anglican church, but the church more broadly…you will have denominations that like to pray for healing and wholeness," says Arguin. The story recounted in *Disability and the Way of Jesus*, he notes, is one of several times that people have stopped him in public to pray that he would get up and walk.

However, Arguin says he's come to understand healing in a slightly different way. "I think there's a difference between healing and a physical cure, which is not necessarily the same thing."

In the gospels, Jesus's acts of healing were not only about curing ailments, Arguin says, but reintegrating people back onto the communities that had ostracized them. Curing the lepers was less about eliminating their physical suffering, and more about bringing them back into the society that shunned them.

What would it mean for a church to focus on this reintegration aspect of healing instead of a cure?

When framed in this way, healing begins to look a lot like accessibility.

For many Anglican churches, accessibility often starts with retrofitting historic buildings that were not built to accommodate those with mobility issues. The Anglican Foundation of Canada in 2019 gave significant grants to churches for renovations to help improve physical accessibility in their buildings.

However, accessibility in churches and ministries takes many forms across Canada.

On the third Sunday of every month, guests gather in the parish hall of All Saints Anglican Parish in Conception Bay South, Nfld. The lights are dimmed. A comfy couch and loveseat are set out, as are a range of items: colourful interlocking mats, weighted blanket, medicine balls. A visual schedule sets up the next half hour, listing opening prayer, story time, Bible study, activity time and snacks.

While it may look a little different from the typical Sunday morning, the scene is a church service that All Saints, under the guidance of its rector, the Rev. Wayne Parsons, is now offering for children with pervasive needs and their families.

Parsons has been rector at All Saints for just over a year. When he started, he felt led to reactivate a mission group at the church. "We started meeting almost every Tuesday night…one of the things I talked about was this and it kind of gained some traction," says Parsons.

Starting a service for those with pervasive needs that make typical church services hard to sit through has been a dream of Parsons for a while—it's a struggle he's known personally. His son Noah, now 11, has autism, and is not able to attend a typical church service.

Parsons says the church partnered with the Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador to complete some training. He also went to schools in the area which offer services for kids with pervasive developmental disorders "and looked at some things that they had offered, what they had used—for calm-down corners, and for sensory needs and stimulation."

Pervasive developmental disorders comprise a diagnostic category referring to disorders characterized by delays in socialization and communication skills, such as autism, Asperger syndrome and Rett syndrome. Often these disorders include heightened sensitivity to sensory stimulation.

Traditional liturgy can be inaccessible to people with sensory needs, Parsons says. "The restrictions…of sitting

Bakers at Trinity Youth Project prepare buns for two diocese of Edmonton parishes running food security programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. PHOTO: CLARK HARDY

in a hard pew, having loud noises of an organ or piano, singing, if there are people clapping—[these] things are really distractions and bothersome for people with sensory, particularly hearing, needs."

But for parents of children with these kinds of needs, he adds, there is also the question of whether they would be welcomed in a typical service. "If there's any noise or disruption, you know—will that disrupt the flow, the mood of the liturgy, the mood of the congregation?.... Would it be welcomed [or] would it not be welcomed?"

Holding a special service allows the church to cater to children with pervasive needs disorders as well as allow a "safe space," Parsons says, "[so] that they can come [into] a very sensory-friendly, familiar environment."

Of course, Parsons says, "If you've met one person with autism you've met one person—I guess as with all of us, if you've met one human being, you've met one human being." They have tried to be broad-minded in their solutions, and encompass the best practices they've learned.

Parsons says his son is already excited to go to church every month, and looks forward to spending time with the other kids.

Not all churches may be able to offer a separate service for people who have pervasive needs disorders, but if a church wants to be more pervasive needs-friendly, Parsons says, they can start with a few practical things: softening lighting, or leaving lights off if the church has lots of windows; limiting live music or choosing quieter forms of music; and creating a calm-down or sensory area.

"I think education, as well, to the congregation, is a big thing," says Parsons. Effective communication "can dispel any myths or biases or things that people may feel, if people talk about it very openly in a respectful and professional environment."

The most important thing is to listen to the needs of your community, he says, both in and outside of the church.

■ ■ ■

Listening to individual needs is the key to ministry for Clark Hardy, who runs the Trinity Youth Project, a ministry of the diocese of Edmonton based out of Holy Trinity Anglican Church.

The ministry works with youth, ages 15-24, who

> **We have buildings that are 125, 150-plus years old, and you're not going to be able to change the space or reconfigure the space 100% of the time.**
>
> *— The Rev. Matt Arguin*

are "facing a variety of different barriers in life" as they transition into adulthood. "It could be anything from struggles with mental health to experiencing homelessness, growing up in the foster care or children's services system, living in poverty in general, being involved in the justice system—all kinds of things might be going on for them," says Hardy.

Hardy has been working with at-risk youth since 2016, and he has noticed that no matter what supports or resources are offered, if the youth he works with don't have a supportive community, it is hard for them to maintain jobs and healthy habits. "I started seeing what I call the redemptive potential…of local parishes, to kind of be that supportive community."

The ministry began in 2017 as an art program run out of Holy Trinity, and in 2018 expanded to become a diocesan ministry. In addition to the art program, Trinity Youth Project now runs a social enterprise which employs youth to bake in Holy Trinity's kitchen.

"It started really small-scale. Over the course of last summer, we started doing various farmers' markets in Edmonton, started taking on larger catering orders," Hardy says. "We did all the breakfast goodies for the synod here in Edmonton last fall. We did 200 pounds of shortbread cookies for a church out in Onoway. We did 70 dozen pretzels for a new Christmas market in Edmonton." All of these sales go to fund the project and pay the youth who work in the kitchen.

The ministry is not specifically targeted at youth facing any particular disability. But Hardy's program offers a model of accommodation and accessibility.

Some of the youth are facing physical limitations. "My senior baker, who's been with us since last February when we started, she's got some pretty severe health issues that can limit how long she can stand and how long she can work, those things," Hardy says. "So it's just making small adjustments to bring a stool into the kitchen so that she can sit down, making sure that she can take breaks when she needs to.

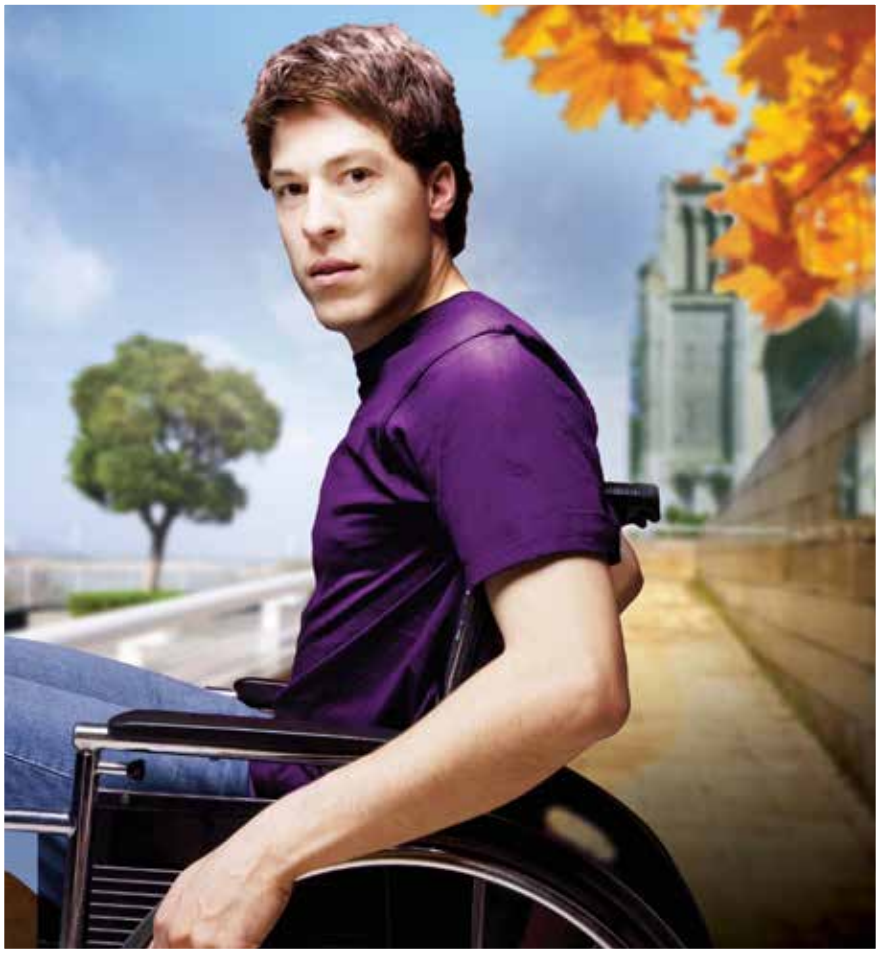
"I have another youth that has a bit of a cognitive delay, and she has a lot of knee issues…. Similar[ly], with her, [it's about] setting up a workstation where she's able to sit the whole time. And she usually needs extra support, either from myself or another volunteer…helping her go through the recipes. She's really passionate about baking…but obviously, just working in a typical baking environment wouldn't be realistic for her at this point."

Accessibility comes from an approach that identifies people's needs and addresses them creatively, Hardy says.

Most of the accommodations are made on a case-by-case basis, he says, but the program is also set up with the youths' needs in mind—in general, baking sessions are usually three to five hours long, in contrast to employment programs which require regular Monday-Friday schedules and six- to seven-hour shifts.

"It's just not realistic if you're maybe a youth that's staying at the shelter, maybe you're couch-surfing, you're in and out of jail, maybe you're dealing with under-treated mental illness—all of those barriers…. Some of them need extra support with social skills, or even emotional regulation and things. So how do we create a space that's safe for them to still work, still make some income, but in an environment that's adaptive to their needs? That's kind of where the vision for the baking program came from."

In an ideal world, churches would be fully accessible for everyone from the get-go. But of course, Arguin points out, "we…live in the real world."



Anglican voices say accessibility within the church should include seeking input from those with physical disabilities and making sure conversation does not stop at the physical space.

PHOTO: ANGLICAN FOUNDATION OF CANADA

"We have buildings that are 125, 150-plus years old, and you're not going to be able to change the space or reconfigure the space 100% of the time." This is understandable, he says—but he urges new ministries or new communities to think of accessibility from the beginning. "Don't try to adapt it after the fact—try and have it in the forefront of your mind."

The best way to embrace accommodation is to ask and to listen, he says. "One of the very important steps is to take people with disabilities, whether they're in a wheelchair or whether they have another form of disability—say if they're blind or deaf or whatever it happens to be—take somebody with a disability and get their input, say, 'How do we make this more accessible? How do we encourage the growth of ministry in this place?'"

Asking the question of someone with lived experience will always beat one-size-fits-all attempts at accessibility like provincial standards, he says.

"I think this is really important too: when you make spaces and ministries accessible for the disabled, you also by extension make them accessible for everybody," says Arguin. A bigger bathroom or fewer steps means everyone can participate fully, and eliminates challenges that arise when parishioners get older or lose mobility for other reasons. "It doesn't just benefit those who have 'natural disabilities,' those who are born with a disability. It also accommodates and empowers those that eventually will have their mobility changed or challenged in some ways."

When we think about accessibility in the church, Arguin says, there are two different levels.

"There's the level of physical accessibility—so, how is your building in terms of, are people able to get in and out? Are they able to get up to key parts of the church building itself, the altar, the fellowship centre? Do you have accessible bathrooms? All of those practical questions.

If you're coming to accessibility in the church as simply accommodating somebody, or simply as fulfilling the needs of provincial legislation, that's different than saying, 'We're doing this because this is what we're called to do.'

— The Rev. Matt Arguin

"But then you also have what I consider another, perhaps even more important, dimension, which is: how do you involve disabled people in the ministry of the church? Not just getting them into the building, but seeing them.... What gifts do they offer to the church, whether that's preaching or teaching or doing the things that a priest does, in my case. It's sort of discerning, how do we also enable them, anyone who has a disability, to bring their gifts to the church?"

Arguin sees improvement in these areas in the church, though it's always "a work in progress."

"Having a person with a disability in active ministry, it's not—at least in my experience—a norm yet. So it takes a little bit of negotiation as to, how do we make this work?"

The best practice for accessibility is asking, not assuming, Caitlyn says. "I've [seen] that for sure...the idea that, 'this is what you need.' A lot of times people, I've found, even with the most severe mental illnesses, they tend to know what they need." Churches and leaders should think about asking "What do you need right now from me?" and "What can I do to be supportive?" she says.

"I would much rather have somebody ask me than tell me what I need. Because I'm definitely not an expert on mental illness—but I'm an expert on *my* mental illness.... Giving people that power back is really important, because it often gets taken away in the medical system, and when you're marginalized in different ways, it gets taken away. And I think the church can give it back to people."

One change Arguin would like to see is the creation of a "cohesive theological vision for disability in the church."

"If you're coming to accessibility in the church as simply accommodating somebody, or simply as fulfilling the needs of provincial legislation, that's different than saying, 'We're doing this because this is what we're called to do.'

"We're called to empower everyone in the church to exercise their ministry and their identity as ambassadors for Christ and to be leaders and teachers. How you answer that question determines, to a large extent, how accessible you're going to make your church."

Arguin says a national position or theological statement on the Anglican Church of Canada's views on disability might be helpful in this regard, noting other denominations have begun to do this. "I think on the national level it could be helpful to get some guidelines and some theological reflection that's quite apart from, 'well, this is what you need to do legislatively.'"

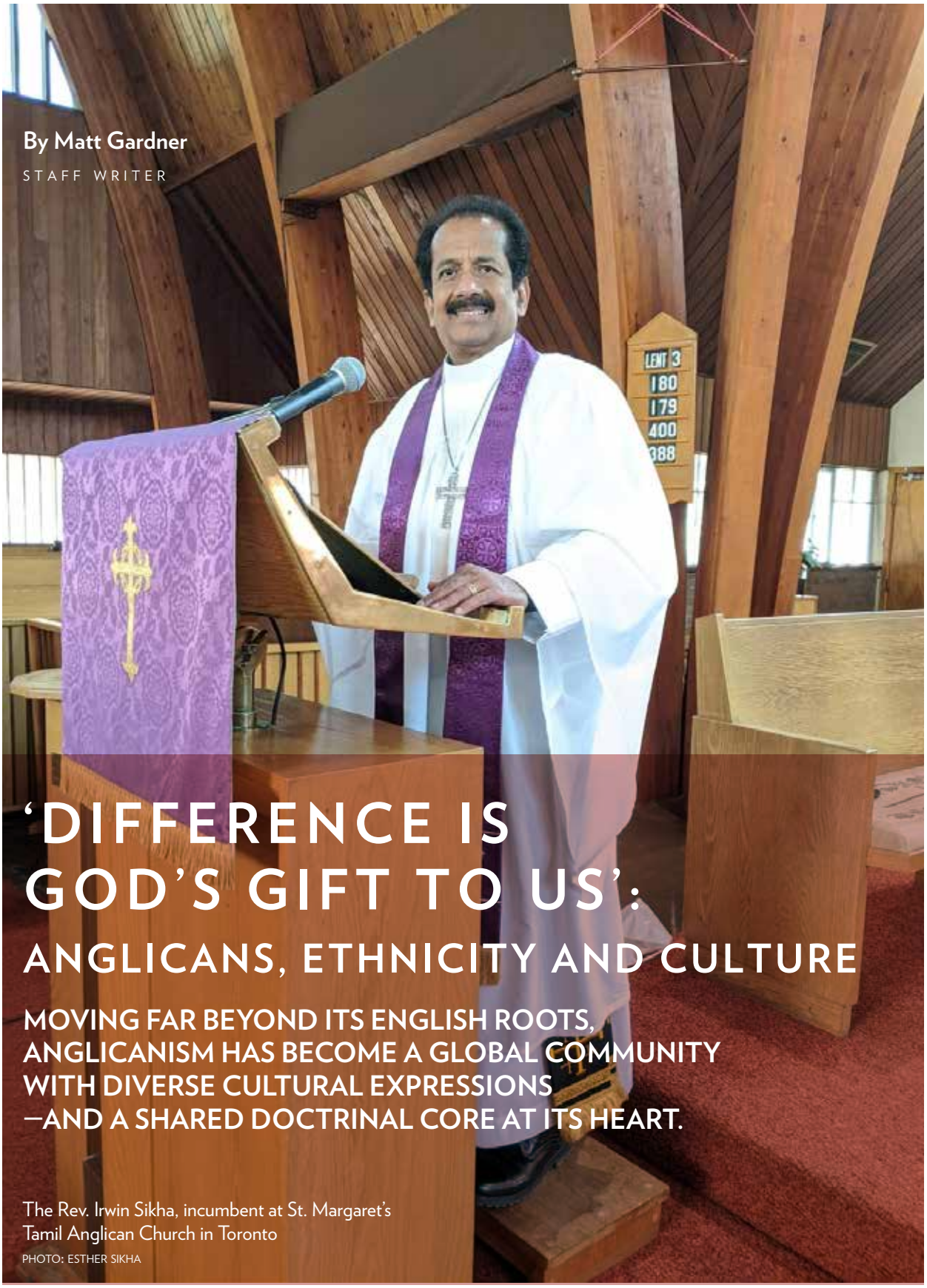
Ultimately, he says, there are two crucial prerequisites for churches when talking about disability and accessibility. The first is making sure to collect input and experience from people who actually have disabilities.

"I guarantee you that you have some churches that say, 'Oh, we don't have anybody disabled in our church.' I guarantee you, you do, because again, there are different kinds of disability.... It's not this single, monolithic thing. It's actually quite broad, quite diverse."

The second is to make sure the conversation doesn't stop at the physical space.

"It also has that theological and spiritual dimension that makes sure that we affirm the gifts and talents that everyone offers, regardless of what their state is physically or mentally, emotionally," Arguin says.

"Everybody has gifts to offer the church."



By Matt Gardner

STAFF WRITER

‘DIFFERENCE IS GOD’S GIFT TO US’:

ANGLICANS, ETHNICITY AND CULTURE

MOVING FAR BEYOND ITS ENGLISH ROOTS, ANGLICANISM HAS BECOME A GLOBAL COMMUNITY WITH DIVERSE CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS —AND A SHARED DOCTRINAL CORE AT ITS HEART.

The Rev. Irwin Sikha, incumbent at St. Margaret’s Tamil Anglican Church in Toronto

PHOTO: ESTHER SIKHA

Two centuries ago, a Hindu priest in India encountered an Anglican missionary from the British Isles. The Hindu was the latest in a long line of priests who had served for generation after generation at a local temple; the Anglican was a priest and physician. When the Anglican attempted to share the gospel with his Hindu counterpart, he received a strong rebuke.

In that region of India, people worshipped a snake, the cobra, representing a serpentine race in the pantheon of Hindu gods referred to as the nāga. The priest admonished the missionary for teaching something foreign to his people, who had practiced their spiritual beliefs for centuries, and sent him away.

Shortly thereafter, the same cobra that the priest worshipped bit his wife. At this time he had travelled to another village to save the life of a man also suffering from a snakebite, pulling him in an oxen cart. By the time the priest returned home, his wife had died.

The priest killed the snake and sought out the Anglican missionary. "Tell me," he said. "Tell me about this God you're talking about."

From that moment on, his family tradition no longer produced Hindu priests, but Anglican priests. Today, this man's great-great-great-great-grandson, the Rev. Irwin Sikha, is a sixth-generation Anglican priest and incumbent at St. Margaret's Tamil Anglican Church in Toronto.

"He received Christ, and he was thrown away from his family," Sikha says of his ancestor. "His whole family was pushed away. He served the Lord, and after that… from every generation, God has chosen at least one person [from my family] to be an Anglican priest."

While Anglican worship in India retains its English and British roots, church culture often reflects Indian traditions in art, music, clothing and ritual.

Anglicans in the Church of South India, for example, will often go barefoot in worship. When preparing to get married, Indian couples may consult wedding astrologers and schedule the wedding on a date with more auspicious positions of the stars and planets—a traditional practice that remains even when the wedding takes place at a Christian church.

"Culture and religion…are so intertwined in India," Sikha says. "It's very spiritual. Everything is spiritual."

In India, it seems, the most effective Anglican ministry is that which expresses Christianity in a manner most familiar to the people.

Is the Anglican Church of Canada an ethnic church? For Canadian Anglicans accustomed to thinking of Canada as a predominantly English-speaking place with a single national identity, answering that question may be a bit like trying to see the water you're swimming in, or like trying to hear your own accent. *What accent? I don't have an accent.* But Anglicans with cross-cultural experiences suggest there are a few reasons to take the church's very name—Anglo, Canadian—as a clear marker of ethnicity.

With its origins in the practices and beliefs of the Church of England, Anglicanism has long contained a strong influence from English national culture and identity.

The Rev. Jesse Zink, principal of Montreal Diocesan Theological College, recalls a seminary student who did a field placement at a German Lutheran church. During his time there, the student observed that this church viewed its ethnic identity as part of its religious identity, celebrating Oktoberfest and hosting many German-themed events. Its worship, however, was not dissimilar from that in the Anglican Church, prompting the student to suggest to Zink that Anglican churches are in some sense "English ethnic churches."

"I hadn't thought about it really in that way before, but it makes a lot of sense," Zink says. "Clearly, the Anglican church in its current form and existence owes a lot to the work of the Church of England, especially the Anglican Church in Canada, which used to be called the Church of England in Canada. So there is that core sense of relatedness."

The influence of the Church of England and English culture is readily apparent in the Canadian church. The official flag and crest of the Anglican Church of Canada each include the Cross of St. George, a red cross on a white background—which is also the national flag of England. Worship and liturgy are generally in the English language, and English choral music makes up a large part of church hymnals.

Bishop Jenny Andison (second from left) meets with Anglican clergy in India. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Elsewhere in Toronto, another Anglican comes from a family tradition of Christian ministry on the Indian subcontinent.

Bishop Jenny Andison, bishop suffragan of the diocese of Toronto and area bishop of York-Credit Valley, is a fifth-generation Anglican clergyperson. Like previous generations of her family, Andison was born and bred in England and preached the Christian faith throughout the subcontinent, living in both India and Pakistan. Her ancestors had a long history of involvement in the Church Missionary Society (CMS), one of the historic missionary societies of the Church of England now known as the Church Mission Society.

Andison's father was a medical missionary in Pakistan, where she spent part of her childhood. Her grandfather worked with the CMS in a part of the former British Raj, now part of Pakistan. Her great-grandfather built many Anglican churches in what is now Pakistan, and her great-great grandfather also spent time there.

Besides England, Canada, India and Pakistan, Andison has also lived in Japan and Singapore. Through her experiences, she has come to see the transformative power of the gospel in countries around the world.

"The Good News of Jesus is good news for everybody.... That's not a theory for me, I've actually seen it with my own eyes," Andison says. "That's very powerful when you realize Jesus is both in culture, but transforms culture. I've seen how beautiful that can be...and how the Anglican tradition at its best has contributed to the rich diversity of the body of Christ around the globe."

"I've also seen how the Anglican church has struggled in different countries to effectively enculturate itself...and how easy it is to mistake English culture with the gospel."

The gospel, Andison says, cannot be known outside of culture; even Jesus lived within the specific cultural context of first-century Palestine.

"There's no neutral gospel that is not filtered through human experience," she says. "God knew that, which is why God became incarnate as Jesus."

While it has been largely displaced in worship by the *Book of Alternative Services* (BAS), the *Book of Common Prayer* remains the foundational prayer book for Canadian Anglicans, as it does for Anglicans around the world. But even the BAS includes numerous litanies for Elizabeth II as Queen of Canada, England and the United Kingdom.

Despite this enduring English influence, Zink believes "that's not the whole story" when it comes to the meaning and cultural expression of Anglicanism.

From its inception, Zink says, Christianity has crossed cultural barriers and frontiers. The Christian faith began as essentially "a sect of Judaism" that "crossed a cultural frontier and entered the gentile world.... As it did, it changed, and Christianity has continued to do that."

"Anglicanism is no different in that way," he adds. "Anglicanism throughout its history has been able to cross cultural boundaries and as it does that, it comes to new understandings of itself."

Zink cites the example of 19th-century abolitionists who, as members of the Church of England, worked to end the slave trade in the British Empire.

"Part of their work for abolitionism came about because they understood that Africans could be Christian too and were made in the image of God, and when they understood that, that cultural difference was

There's no neutral gospel that is not filtered through human experience. God knew that, which is why God became incarnate as Jesus.

— Bishop Jenny Andison

no barrier to the spread of the Christian gospel," he says.

A more recent example of Anglicanism crossing cultural boundaries, he adds, is the development of a self-determining Indigenous church within the Anglican Church of Canada.

"It's an example of allowing the Anglican tradition—the Christian tradition—to flourish in another cultural expression other than the kind of English-speaking expression that we're so used to.... I think that part of our job [for non-Indigenous Anglicans within the church] has been about providing the space for that flourishing to happen."

Across the Anglican Church of Canada, diverse cultural expressions of the church are flourishing in many different ways.

Many new Anglicans are immigrants from non-English or non-Western backgrounds, leading to an increasing number of church services in languages other than English or catering to different nationalities and cultures. But English cultural traditions continue to make themselves felt, even among immigrants to Canada. The *Anglican Journal* in its June 2019 issue documented the rise of Chinese ministry in Toronto and Vancouver, two cities with large populations of Chinese immigrants or Chinese-Canadians. In the Metro Vancouver area, roughly half the population is from an Asian background, the majority being ethnic Chinese.

Douglas Fenton, executive archdeacon for the diocese of New Westminster, says that the influx of people from different cultural backgrounds poses questions for Anglicans: "How are we the church intersecting or engaging or interacting with this enormous group of people? And to what degree are we being welcoming, hospitable, generous and effecting ministry with or among them?"

The diocese of New Westminster, he says, currently has two small parishes that are predominantly Chinese, offering services in Mandarin and Cantonese.

"Our struggle is finding materials and liturgy and so on that's been translated or is accessible," Fenton says. "Oftentimes, even some of the stuff that comes out of [China's special administrative regions of] Hong Kong and Macau is very English."

The case of Hong Kong illustrates how immigrants to Canada who enter the Anglican Church retain a degree of English or British cultural influence. From 1842 to 1997, Hong Kong was a colony of the British Empire.

Decades ago, Hong Kong was the primary source of Chinese immigration to Canada. In recent years that distinction has shifted to mainland China, where there is far less exposure to English or Anglican traditions.

"I think the challenge there is that they are coming from a place where religion itself was effectively outlawed," Fenton says.

"If we're talking about mainland Chinese and all the tribal groups that exist in mainland China...how do we help them bring that into their faith and life within the context of a parish church on Sunday? I think those are questions that we haven't, in my experience at least, begun to even contemplate and wrestle with."

In Toronto, Anglican churches also display a rich mix of cultures. But as area bishop of York-Credit Valley, Andison believes that the biggest challenge is less in reaching different cultures and more in reaching younger generations.

Local congregations, she says, "are increasingly linguistically and ethnically diverse...in parishes that

> **Anglicanism throughout its history has been able to cross cultural boundaries and as it does that, it comes to new understandings of itself.**
> *— The Rev. Jesse Zink*

are what we call diaspora congregations, where you've got Swahili speakers worshipping together, and then Cantonese speakers worshipping together, and people from Ghana worshipping together and people from Tamil Nadu worshipping together. But we also have really mixed congregations, where it's people from all over the world in one congregation.

"Where I think we're still really struggling in Toronto is, there may be increasing linguistic and racial diversity, but…we're not connecting nearly effectively enough with children and young people of all cultures and races. When you talk about diversity, diversity of age is an issue as well. There's a lot of work for us to do."

In his own experience, Sikha has seen many of these phenomena first-hand: the key role of the British Empire in spreading Anglicanism; the ability of Christianity to cross cultural barriers; the ways in which the church manifests itself in different cultures; and the challenges of reaching youth of all ethnic backgrounds.

Though the Anglican Church of Canada today tends to view colonialism in negative terms due to its association with the oppression of Indigenous peoples, Sikha takes a different view. He believes that the colonization of India was a "blessing", citing accelerated development that included airports, railways, schools and Western medicine. Through the history of British India, he says, Christians there became "more British, more English."

"It was to our advantage…. That why I'm able to speak English like this now, to communicate in English," Sikha says. "My father was also an Anglican priest and when he committed to serve the Lord, he had to study theology. He went to England and he studied in a seminary there, and his commitment was to serve in India."

Towards the end of his seminary training, Sikha's father undertook practical training at various churches in England around the time of the Second World War. He eventually became an incumbent, got married, and he and his wife had daughters in England.

Though happy in England, Sikha says, his father experienced a vision from God that would prompt him to move with his family back to the subcontinent.

"One night, the Lord spoke to him and said, 'What was your commitment? You committed to serve me in India among the Tamil people, and what are you doing here?' So he literally left everything and came back empty-handed to India."

Irwin Sikha would be born in India. His family eventually settled in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, where Tamil is the official language.

It was through growing up in this region that Sikha learned how to speak Tamil. But initially, he says, his father's decision to move back to India displeased other members of the family.

"We were so mad at him when he [told] the stories [of] how he lived [in England] and how life was…. Our family, our culture was so British in our home," Sikha recalls. "But outside it was so Indian. That's how it was. Then as I grew up, there were many scholars and Tamil literate people, highly educated people, who received the Lord."

Yet among those converts, he says, there was a desire to express their new faith in a way befitting their own experience; to illustrate that "we don't need to kill our culture to be Christian."

Upon reaching adulthood, Sikha followed the family tradition and became an Anglican priest himself. To

All our churches have to fine-tune ourselves and be sensitive to who our community is around, and make ourselves so that when they come in, they don't feel that they've come to an alien place.

— The Rev. Irwin Sikha

understand the experience of preaching in India, he suggests, one must realize the sheer diversity of cultures within the country.

"Every province has their own language, their own culture, their own food habits, everything.... In India, you go to another province, you're a foreigner," Sikha says. "You can't communicate to anybody because you don't know their language."

With so many different languages across India, the only common language is English. As a priest, Sikha typically found himself assigned to churches where people from different states congregated. Though he gave services in Tamil, often he found himself leading worship in the *lingua franca*: English.

In 2002, Sikha made the decision to move to Canada, funding the trip with money from an export business he owned. His reasons for moving to Canada were not certain even at the time for Sikha, who had never travelled outside India. He had expectations of Canada being a "Christian country" with "churches everywhere."

Upon arriving in Canada, Sikha was alone and didn't know anyone. During this time, his wife sent him money from India on a regular basis. On a typical day he would buy a token and ride the subway, talking to people about Jesus and sharing the gospel.

Most of the white people he spoke to, Sikha recalls, said that they had attended church or Sunday school as children, but no longer did. When he asked they why they stopped attending, he says, "they didn't have a big reason to give me."

On one occasion, Sikha encountered a young man from the Caribbean who was wearing a cross around his neck, and was surprised when the man said that he was not a Christian. When Sikha asked him why he was wearing a cross, "he gave me a sheepish smile and he says, 'For fun.'"

"In India we don't wear a cross like that.... Only a bold Christian would wear a cross," Sikha says. "I used to wear a cross all the time, to say I'm a Christian. That day I called my wife and I said that God needs us here."

After Sikha's wife moved to Canada and found a job as a software engineer, he began ministering to people personally, including a number of Tamils. Initially starting a church in his home, he rented out space at a Chinese church in Markham for a congregation that grew to more than 20 people. Eventually he applied with the Anglican diocese of Toronto to become the incumbent at St. Margaret's Tamil Anglican Church.

During his interview, he remembers, "I was talking to them how all our churches have to fine-tune ourselves and be sensitive to who our community is around, and make ourselves so that when they come in, they don't feel that they've come to an alien place."

Preaching in English to a mixed congregation, which includes both Tamils and non-Tamils, Sikha strives to combine both traditional Anglican worship with contemporary elements that can attract younger people, including second-generation Tamils.

"Personally, I won't like to change any word in the liturgy," he says. "To me it's very precious. It's so grounded in scripture and so powerful and very well-defined what I believe. My liturgy tells me what I believe.... I can't see myself altering anything in that."

Tamil culture, however, tends to prefer more "intensity" in worship, Sikha says.

"The preaching should be like that. If you preach like the typical Anglican, it's very difficult for them. They won't listen. So I've altered those things a little bit."

Congregation at St. Margaret's Tamil Anglican Church PHOTO: ESTHER SIKHA

Where piano was not encouraged in his early years as a preacher—Anglicans in India tended to favour the organ—music at St. Margaret's utilizes drums, piano and guitar.

Sikha is currently attempting to organize a band to bring more contemporary music to younger Tamils, many of whom have left the church in recent decades. That shift does not mean abandoning Christianity altogether—many have joined the Pentecostal church, known for its lively forms of worship.

"That's the thing I'm going to do this year, form a music band…so they can hear me when I talk, so that they listen and understand what I'm saying," Sikha says.

Any discussion of whether the Anglican Church is an "ethnic" church must also take into account ways in which the church historically tried to impose English language and culture on those from non-English backgrounds—a practice that at its most extreme meant the attempted eradication of other languages and cultures.

In its commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, the Anglican Church of Canada is still struggling to overcome the legacy of the residential school system, in which the church harshly punished Indigenous children for speaking their traditional languages.

Yet one of the foundational texts of what it means to be an Anglican condemns such an approach in the strongest terms. The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, written in the 16th century, historically defined the doctrine of the Church of England and today remain part of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Article XXIV of this doctrine makes clear the perspective of Anglicans on the matter of language: "It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the Primitive Church, to have public Prayer in the Church, or to minister the Sacraments in a tongue not understanded of the people."

Bishop Andison calls Article XXIV an example of "Anglicanism at its best." But in comparing this article to the practice of Anglican missionaries, the historical

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the Primitive Church, to have public Prayer in the Church, or to minister the Sacraments in a tongue not understanded of the people.

— Article XXIV of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion

record shows a wide disparity regarding the spread of the gospel in native languages—a disparity that largely depended on the attitude of individual missionaries.

While some missionaries learned the languages of the people they encountered and made an effort to adapt their teachings to the local culture, others enforced the use of English believing in their own cultural superiority.

"If there was any place where [Anglicans] were exterminating local languages, they'd not paid attention," Andison says. "We sort of betrayed our own heritage."

Andison recalls attending a Mandarin and Cantonese church for Chinese New Year in which church leaders asked her not to wear black or white, which are considered bad luck on the holiday, but red. She thanked them and wore a red blazer.

"I would have been sending a culturally insensitive, negative message through my clothing, maybe inadvertently," Andison says. "Language isn't just words. It's also clothing, music, food."

The need for Anglicans to "minister the Sacraments in a tongue understanded of the people" has a special resonance in Quebec, where the respective predominance of English and French has been a fraught political issue.

Traditionally, Zink says, the strength of the Anglican diocese of Montreal has been tied to the strength of the city's anglophone community. Many Anglican churches in Montreal are named after St. George, further betraying the church's English origins.

"If you look back 50 years ago or 60 years ago, before the [independence] referenda, when Montreal was much more firmly an anglophone city, the Anglican Church was much stronger then," Zink says. "Part of what it means to be an Anglican church in Montreal is to both seek to serve our local community of francophones, anglophones and allophones, but also to stay in touch with the larger Anglican Church of Canada."

The availability of liturgical texts in languages other than English is another challenge for the church in non-English speaking areas.

"It really bothers me, I have to say, when the General Synod passes liturgical revisions and reforms and only makes those available in the English language," Zink says.

"I appreciate it takes great resources to translate things, and if we're going to translate into French, we also translate into Cree or Inuktitut or whatever other languages that we need," he adds. "That increases the amount of resources needed. But the fact that the General Synod can just sort of pass that, and as far as I can tell, not say anything about the fact that these are only in one language, is a real indication of where we stand as a church."

In Quebec, even the very name of the church can pose an obstacle.

"The name of our church in French is l'Église anglicane du Canada, and that's not maybe the most positive thing when you're trying to reach out to francophones," Zink says.

While General Synod has previously considered changing the name of the church in French to L'eglise episcopale du Canada, its official name remains L'eglise Anglican.

"That seems to proclaim this association with English identity," Zink says, "which in this part of the world is a real political statement to make."

Anglicanism is changing now. It's not the Church of England. It's not only the English church now.... But the spiritual [aspect] is the same thing.

— The Rev. James Liu

The association of Anglicanism with English identity is not limited to the culture, language and name of the church. It also has a theological component, through the enduring influence of English theologians from around the time of the Protestant Reformation. Their views on church doctrine greatly inform the question of what it means to be Anglican from a theological perspective, including for Anglicans from non-English cultural backgrounds.

In the diocese of Toronto, Chinese ministry congregations that conduct services and activities in Mandarin and Cantonese recently held a series of seminars that introduced parishioners to the history and theology of John Wycliffe, Thomas Cranmer and Richard Hooker. By studying the ideas of these leading figures from the English Reformation, congregational leaders hoped to encourage faith formation and foster a greater understanding of Anglican liturgy and theology.

The Rev. Morning Wang, assistant curate and associate of Mandarin ministry at St. George on Yonge, says that when it comes to practically teaching people about God, "We need some powerful instruments. And according to Richard Hooker, the liturgy, the sacrament, is a powerful instrument [for] our internal life."

As part of their devotional life together, Chinese Anglican congregations in Toronto lay significant emphasis on reading the prayer book and the weekly distributed daily office.

The Rev. James Liu, assistant curate at St. James' Cathedral, points out that regardless of culture, Anglicans are "one family" united in what they believe.

"Anglicanism is changing now," Liu says. "It's not the Church of England. It's not only the English church now... But the spiritual [aspect] is the same thing. We do have different cultures.... We have Chinese culture, but what we believe is the same thing [as] the English side. It's Anglican."

What, then, is at the core of Anglican belief? As Bishop Andison observes, "You're going to get different answers from different people." But she points to a number of popular ideas about what it means to be Anglican.

One is the Anglican self-identity as "a reformed catholic expression of historic Christianity," in which the church traces its "catholic" roots all the way back to Jesus and the disciples, but views itself as subsequently "reformed." Another, related perspective is the frequent description of Anglicanism as *via media*, or a "middle way" between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.

Yet another answer is one extrapolated from the ideas of Richard Hooker, which views Anglicanism as understanding Christianity through "three pillars": scripture, informed by reason and tradition.

Finally, in terms of church structures, Anglicans are a denomination with a truly worldwide scope.

"Like the Roman Catholic Church, we're one of the global denominations," Andison says. "Not all denominations are global, and I think that's one of our gifts.... We are part of a global family that we learn from... at our best selves. We're challenged by one another and we're fed and nourished by one another around the globe."

In Canada, the existing church is also crossing paths with different understandings of Anglicanism through an influx of refugees and immigrants.

There's this real opportunity, I think, before us as to how we respond to the migration that we see taking place around the world—and to what extent are we going to be open to allowing that to transform ourselves, our understanding of the Christian gospel, and our churches as well?

— The Rev. Jesse Zink

Near St. George's Anglican Church in downtown Montreal, where Zink attends worship, is a YMCA hostel where new arrivals to the city often live. In 2017, thousands of people fled the United States seeking political asylum in Canada after the Trump administration's crackdown on immigrants. Unable to claim asylum at the official border crossing, they crossed the border illegally. After being arrested by the RCMP, they declared asylum and were brought to Montreal to enter the Canadian immigration system.

"These people are coming from all over the world: Uganda, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Haiti," Zink says. "Many of them are Christian, because it's the nature of Christianity today that Christianity is growing in strength in the non-Western world, and so they bring their Christianity with them.... Some of them are Anglican, and so they look for a close Anglican church and it happens to be the church that I attend."

Over the last two years, Zink has seen a rise in newcomers to Canada at St. George's who are looking for a church, and are "not from a white anglophone background, as many other people in that congregation are."

At one welcome for 10 new members in the fall of 2019, not one of the new parishioners was born in Quebec, Canada or the United States. Instead they were from Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

"When we talk about the growth of Christianity around the world, in the non-Western world, that's not something that's happening over there," Zink says. "It's something that's happening over here.

"These people are coming to us, and they're wanting to worship God with us. That is a tremendous blessing. It's a tremendous opportunity. But I'm also going to say it's a challenge for your standard old English-speaking, mostly white Anglican church in the diocese of Montreal.

"There's this real opportunity, I think, before us as to how we respond to the migration that we see taking place around the world—and to what extent are we going to be open to allowing that to transform ourselves, our understanding of the Christian gospel, and our churches as well?"

One way the Anglican Church of Canada is addressing the challenge Zink describes is through an increased commitment to anti-racism. Since becoming primate, Archbishop Nicholls has made opposing racism a central focus and urged Anglicans to do the work necessary to tackle racism as a systemic issue, both inside and outside the church.

Besides attitudes towards migrants to Canada, racism has also found expression in the church through its historic attitudes towards Indigenous people and its role in colonial projects such as the residential school system. But racism can also appear in more subtle ways.

"There are different kinds of racism," says Fenton, who coordinates the Dismantling Racism program in the diocese of New Westminster. "By that I mean there's the overt kind, and then there's the kind where you don't recognize that you're a racist and doing racist things, even while you're being nice."

Fenton recalls his own experience growing up, when he faced prejudice due to his Métis heritage.

"Nobody was overtly racist against me," he says. "But now, looking back, they were against my family. It

wasn't until I was almost ready to leave high school that I realized that even some of my best friends had this sort of second-class understanding of who I was because of being Métis."

Part of welcoming people from different cultures and backgrounds into the church, Fenton says, involves making sure everyone feels truly welcome and a part of their church community and has the opportunity to share their own gifts.

He recounts the presence of many Iranian Christians at Anglican services on Vancouver's North Shore shortly after the shooting down of UIA Flight 752 in Iran, which led to the deaths of all 176 passengers and crew aboard.

"In moments like that, people are quite delighted that we have Iranian Christians and we can feel very smug and self-righteous.... My wonder is, what happens to them in three months' time?" Fenton says. "Are they sitting around the outside or at the back again? Or are they welcomed and invited into places of leadership and respected for the gifts they bring to the community? Are they just making cookies because everybody likes Persian cookies, or [is one of them] the treasurer in the parish?"

"Yes, it's important for us to have prayer books and hymn books in languages other than our own, and Bibles in languages other than our own," he adds. "But at the end of the day, I think it's really about attitude and the way in which people know that you want them to be there and that you really appreciate and love, respect and care for them because of who they are."

If at its best, Anglicanism is about spreading the gospel "in a language understanded by the people," members of the church are increasingly taking that lesson to heart.

Bishop Andison offers the example of Christ Church St. James, a "middle-class Caucasian congregation" in Etobicoke with a significant food bank ministry. Over time, the congregation noticed that more and more people from Mongolia were coming to their food bank.

"To make a long story short, they've started having Bible studies," Andison says. "They've baptized some Mongolians. They now have a small worshipping Mongolian Anglican community...because they've been able to take the gospel as Anglicans and they've gone and gotten Mongolian-translated Bibles."

Christ Church St. James has also connected with a Mongolian pastor in the United States, and sent one of their new Christian converts away for training so she can become a lay evangelist to Mongolians.

At her last episcopal visit to St. James a few months ago, Andison saw that the congregation now has simultaneous translation of its services, with one woman translating the liturgy from English to Mongolian for the 15 Mongolian members of the congregation.

"I just think that is an example of Anglicanism at its best," Andison says. "If they saw a need, they said, 'Great, we're going to share the good news of Jesus with them'...and they went and figured out, 'How can we get Mongolian resources to do this?' That kind of stuff is happening all over the diocese of Toronto, which I think is exciting."

St. Margaret's Tamil Anglican Church is another such example, tailoring its service to members of the Tamil community in Scarborough.

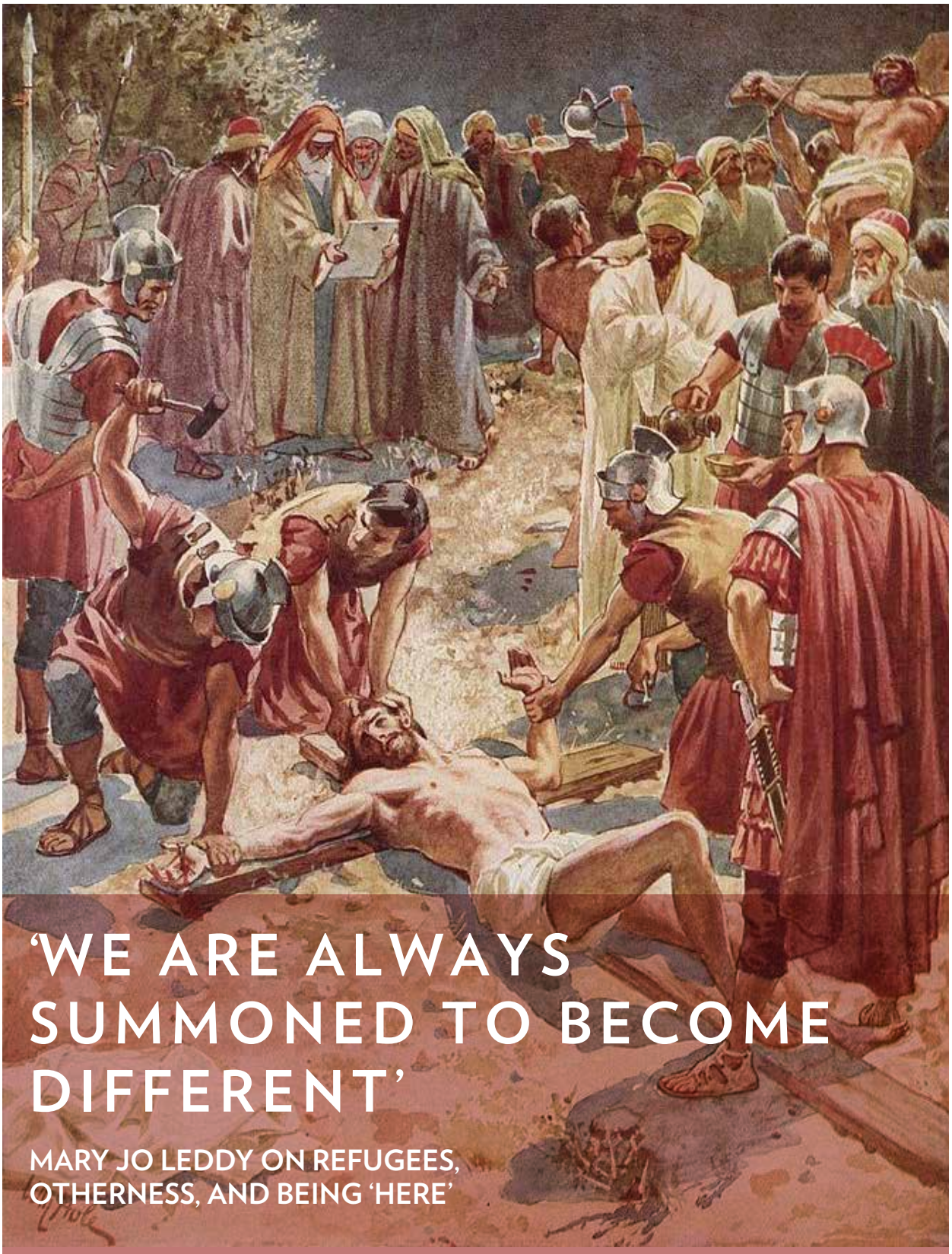
Sikha, who describes being "good friends" with Andison since before she was a bishop, praises her efforts to adapt to the different cultures of parishes across Toronto and to "preach in their language, the expression of what we speak."

"A big majority of immigrants are spiritual people, people who care about religion," Sikha says. "So [if] we can reach out to them and bring them into the church, to concentrate and give our attention more to immigrants would be a nice thing."

Christian history, Zink says, shows the extent to which people of different backgrounds can learn from and transform one another.

"I think that difference is God's gift to us," he says. "I think that that's the story of creation, that creation is in some ways the process of differentiation: light from dark, land from sea, woman and man...I see difference as a great gift. But it can also be threatening to many people, and it can be challenging, and so that process of engaging with difference is deeply Christian....

"I think it's necessary to be a Christian to engage with difference, and yet there are all kinds of ways in which it can go off the rails. To be a Christian who engages with difference takes a lot of prayer and support and commitment, and I'm hopeful that that's what we can continue to do."



‘WE ARE ALWAYS SUMMONED TO BECOME DIFFERENT’

MARY JO LEDDY ON REFUGEES, OTHERNESS, AND BEING ‘HERE’

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS
The Life of Jesus by William Brassey Hole

By Tali Folkins
STAFF WRITER

Much of Mary Jo Leddy's work has involved the building of bridges. In the mid-1960s, while still in her teens, Leddy joined the Congregation of Our Lady of Sion, a Roman Catholic group aimed at fostering Jewish-Christian relations. (By 1980, she had completed a PhD dissertation at the University of Toronto dealing with the Holocaust.) In 1991, while on the board of the *Catholic New Times*, a publication of which she was founding editor, Leddy helped found Romero House, a Toronto home for refugees which she has served as director of ever since. (In 1994, Leddy announced she was leaving Our Lady of Sion, explaining that it was with Romero House that her true vocation lay.)

Through much of that time, Leddy has found time for teaching theology at the University of Toronto's Regis College and for writing numerous books, which have explored themes such as gratitude (*Radical Gratitude*, 2005); the role of newcomers in bringing us to a deeper knowledge of Christ (*The Other Face of God*, 2011), and most recently, Canadian identity (*Why Are We Here?*, 2019).

Epiphanies spoke with Leddy about her vocation and the role that difference can play in our lives.

This interview has been edited for length.

It seems a prevalent theme of your life's work has been the "other." Why is that?

I don't think I would have put it that way at that time, or even now, but it's a convenient way of describing, I guess, a widespread interest in other people. Maybe I could say if you go back to my thesis, my first breakthrough in terms of how I saw the world was when I began to see it through the eyes of Jewish people, like what it meant to look on the cross and say, "This isn't just a wonderful Christian symbol; it's also had a very sad history with some Jewish people." So as I began to see the world through the eyes of Jewish people, many of whom became friends, certainly some of whom became very significant mentors for me—I think once you make that first breakthrough to a different way of looking at the world and seeing that as a very good thing, everything else gets easier. I really feel that. If you are able to cross

Mary Jo Leddy, director of Romero House in Toronto
PHOTO: MARAN NAGARASA

that bridge to another person who's quite different, it's much easier with everybody else.

Why do you say that—how does it get easier?

Well, I don't know—I mean I don't have a recipe for explaining why it's true. I just know it's true, that once you see the world through a different set of eyes it's not as big a leap to see it then through another set of eyes. You know that it's valid, that it's important, that you really can see the world differently.

What do you teach at Regis College?

They're very kind; they let me teach whatever I want to teach, so it's a pretty big spectrum. Right now it's Christian theology after the Holocaust. I do a course on Wendell Berry, I do a course on doing theology in the Canadian context, and I've just written a new book [*Why Are We Here?*] on that. I'm doing a couple of courses in the area of the literary imagination and theology, and then in the past I've done things like spirituality and culture. A lot of what I teach would come in under that.

You've said that the biggest gift refugees bring to Canada is their hope. Can you tell me a little bit about what you mean by that?

Well, I think that any of us that are involved in social justice work have a lot to complain about this country. I think right now about the Indigenous peoples and their struggle for a measure of justice and respect. We have a long way to go on a lot of things. But I do treasure the basic insight of refugees that this is a place where you can hope, and it's very, very touching to me.

A woman arrived with five children under eight and a little overnight case; she had taken a plane from the Middle East to New York, and then went in to Port Authority, got a bus to Buffalo, and then walked across the bridge, not speaking a word of English, on her own, and she said as she crossed that bridge, she felt she was going to a place where she could hope again. So that is so important to remember, for all of us—that no matter what, this is a place where we can hope.

Is it your experience that refugees retain this sense of hope?

No, I think it's an initial thing many of them come with. And then they can have many discouraging experiences. The immigration system is not kind. Finding jobs, finding housing is a big struggle, so some of them, their hope is dimmed a bit. But I think most of them, regardless of negative experiences, even negative experiences of racism, they really still say this is the best country in the world to be in. And that's a bit shocking to me. And it's an important shock.

Why do you say it's a bit shocking to you?

Well, because I take this country so for granted, as I think many of us do. And that's sad. We should never take it for granted.

We don't appreciate—

Where we are.

You mean, in a way, how good a country it is to live in?

No, not that. That's a bit Pollyanna for me. But it's—I'm just trying to think of how I can say this. It's so simple: that this is a place where even if life is difficult, you can still find reasons to hope. And that's amazing, really.

In your book, *The Other Face of God*, you write that fear of the stranger and the foreigner is symptomatic of an aging culture. Do you think that applies to Canada?

I don't think we can generalize about this. And there is a very interesting and important dynamic that takes place, in the nature of a self-fulfilling prophecy: if we expect and anticipate that Canadians will not welcome strangers, that in fact becomes the case. And if we think of Canadians, if we think of church groups, as open, welcoming people, in fact, that's what they become. And I know this from giving many talks about refugees and often being onstage with a politician who's very anti-refugee, and the politician will say, you know, "Our country's being overrun by immigrants and they're taking our jobs, they're breaking the queue," and people will say "Yes, yes," and they clap. And then I begin to speak and talk about people's hopes in the country, what it's cost to leave their own country, and people clap and say, "Yes, that's true," and I say, "You too could welcome people," and they say, "Yes." So there's something important in that.

If you expect the worst in people that's really what you get, but if you expect the best—and at this point I do expect the best from church groups. I think now over 30 or 40 years since we welcomed the Vietnamese boat people, thousands of Canadians, grassroots people at their local parish and congregational level, thousands of people have spent thousands of dollars sponsoring refugees, welcoming them. There is an extraordinary base of support that has been created through the church sponsorship networks. That's really important to remember. Thousands of people now know there are reasons why people have to leave their country.

Something else that you wrote in that book intrigued me: You talked about the importance of not assuming God to be like us. Do you think that difference or otherness plays an important role in human salvation?

Yes, otherness for sure. You know, we are always summoned to become different than we are now, more than we are now. It's a great religious temptation going way back to what the prophets said about idolatry—the

temptation to make God like us, whereas the summons is for us to become more like God. It's that simple. I mean look at the artwork, the way in which we paint Jesus, God. God is always more than what we make of God. That's basic. That's fundamental.

Do you think God uses otherness among humans as a way of teaching us the nature of himself?

Well I don't know how God does things—I wouldn't presume to pontificate about that! I do think, in my experience, it's just a blessing to know people who are different from us. And they call us to become more than who we are right now.

What led you to write your most recent book, *Why Are We Here?*

Well, it's a bit of a long story. It actually is a book that took me almost 30 years to write. Many years ago, I was the editor of an independent Catholic newspaper with a focus on social justice, and through that work I became very aware of liberation theology in Latin America and how powerful that was, when people began to think and pray in ways that were coherent with their context. And it would be a much longer story, but suffice it to say at some point I realized that while I was writing about the Latin American context and the theology that grew up there, I had no real articulation of my context, which was Canada. And I began to wonder, "Why is that so?"

As Canadians we think our context is boring, same, not of great interest, not as interesting as Latin America or the theology that developed out of Europe, for example. And I began to see that that is what happens when you live in a colonial context. And Canada has always been a colony—of France, of England, of the U.S.—and what happens when you live in a colony is, you always think about what's happening elsewhere, how it affects you, what it means, and you have no real insight into *here*. And as I began to ask that question I really began to read books on Canadian culture, Canadian literature, and began to teach courses on this. And I knew the students found it helpful. It shaped the way I was beginning to look at what I was doing.

So finally, after 30 years, I thought, "Well, I'd better write this out, and hopefully it will be helpful to other people." It's a small book—it's just 100 pages—but it's very condensed. It's something I've thought about for a long time.

How do you think the world is doing now when it comes to reconciliation with the other? Have divisions between people been increasing or decreasing in recent decades?

That's a really important question. I don't know. Obviously at times there are outbursts, not just of racism but of genocide, and I know that because the minute this begins to happen, we begin to get refugees that are fleeing. So I know it's real, and it's terrible when the differences become really destructive.

On the other hand, there are many things that are just so much better. The whole ecumenical movement, with Catholics and Protestants—I mean, there are extraordinary things that have happened, and somewhat quietly, you know—how comfortable we are to go to each other's services, for people to marry people from a different Christian church. It's done so simply, so normally, and yet when I think of it, in my lifetime, so much has changed. I think of my mother's family, which was a mixed marriage of wealthy English landowners with a Catholic girl, and how they had to flee because of that. That's gone. So I guess it depends on what you look at. I can't generalize, really.

What gives you hope these days?

Well, I certainly always find hope in what's happening at Romero House, in the people here. Every day—this sounds very simple, but you see good people doing good things, and you have a choice to notice that or to just pass it by. You know, you can miss a lot of goodness every day. But if you're looking for goodness, you will find it. You will. You will find it.

By Edmund Laldin

ANGLICAN VOICES

FOR ALL OF YOU ARE ONE IN CHRIST JESUS!

PHOTO: MUHAMMAD MUZAMIL/UNSPLASH

The title of this reflection is the latter part of Galatians 3:28. This line summarises the essence of the Christian faith and relates to the prayer of Jesus recorded in John 17:21. It says, "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." St. Paul, through this simple yet profound line, impresses upon the community that their unity and identity exists because of their membership in the body of Christ. This reality had overcome any obvious differences of age, gender, ethnicity and/or status in their society. St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 further develops on this concept of unity by using the example of the human body. Every part of the body is unique, distinct and interdependent on the others with a primary role to ensure that the body functions and lives in the best possible manner. Thus, the members of the body of Christ are unique and are commissioned to offer their best to the glory of God through their interdependence on one another.

Unfortunately, unity of the body of Christ has been understood and practiced in a hierarchal and oppressive manner over the years: hierarchal, because power and authority have been vested in the dominant culture; oppressive, because of the dominance and suppression of different viewpoints and cultural practices by the dominant culture. The criteria of the dominant culture can vary, from ethnic background to theology or liturgical practice and preference. Labels such as evangelical, conservative, liberal, high or low church are examples of various dominant cultures within the church in general and the Anglican Church of Canada in particular. Furthermore, Caucasian Canadians continue to hold religious, doctrinal, spiritual and liturgical authority at all levels of the church. Thankfully, in most cases, the body of Christ learned to live with their differences and to unite itself.

Missionary movements brought the gospel and the message of salvation through Jesus Christ to all parts of the world. In the Indian subcontinent, missionaries developed education and health-care systems along with the conversion of the masses and establishment of churches. Missionaries primarily evangelized to the downtrodden, poor and untouchables in the subcontinent. Although conversion to Christianity assured the love of God through Jesus's own sacrifice and resurrection among the converts, it did not change

The Rev. Edmund Laldin, incumbent of the Parish of St. Saviour, Winnipeg

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

their status in society. They were and continue to be untouchable. Missionaries and their institutions were the only people and places which offered love, acceptance and hope to them. This acceptance and restoration of dignity and integrity perpetuated enormous respect for the Europeans and especially missionaries. Missionaries not only made them members of the body of Christ and heirs of the kingdom of God, but also accepted them with open arms—this was the reality and gift to pretty much every one of them. As a young child (five years old or so), I remember going with Miss Audrey and Miss Sharon to the slums of Karachi, Pakistan. The highlight of the trip was having either some candy or ice cream towards the end of our journey. Incidentally, I do not remember any activities in different locales. Being in a car, and having a place of honour during those meetings (and a treat), made me the happiest child in the world. Miss Audrey and Miss Sharon, and by extension every European missionary, represented goodness and love of God to me.

The majority of new Anglican Canadians from the global South, regardless of their country of origin, have been struggling to find a spiritual home in the Anglican churches. For Canadians of Pakistani and Punjabi heritage, Anglican churches have been disappointing at many levels. Obvious reasons for these feelings can be discrimination, racism, interpretation of the

holy scriptures, marriage equality, music, liturgy or attitudes towards their customs and traditions. All of the above have exacerbated the angst, disappointment and isolation and consequently a departure from neighbourhood churches. However, I believe these reasons are symptoms of a much deeper and underlying issue: the expectations from and the image of the Anglican church community. One of the main reasons for Pakistani Christians to emigrate to Canada is to have their dignity and integrity affirmed and restored at various levels of the society and culture. Pursuit of material and physical goods, the best education for their children and affinity to fellow Christians are the ways to earn acceptance and respect in their new homeland. Canada in many ways resembles the missionary institutions and missionaries of their ancestors' time; an oasis in the desert where there is shelter, food and comfort because of the will of and blessings from God. They can appreciate and rationalize discrimination outside of the church walls, but find it difficult and crushing to face the same in their churches. This results in isolation, spiritual and religious crises and rejection.

Moreover, it mimics the society and circumstances of their homeland. Furthermore, this profound disappointment changes their image of Caucasian persons—Caucasian Anglicans are supposed to restore dignity and integrity regardless of differences of opinions and practice of faith. Instead they have changed from the ways of their ancestors and become an instrument of societal prejudice and discrimination. Evangelical and free-standing churches and denominations, because of the baptism of the believer, provide spiritual shelter, immediate acceptance and a sense of belonging. On a side note, new Canadians from Pentecostal and Roman Catholic churches, according to research, join their denominations and stay because of the universal primacy (Roman Catholic) and the baptism of the believer.

Personally, I have and continue to struggle at times with my place in the Anglican Church of Canada because of discriminatory and racial incidents. All of those incidents chip away the image of Caucasians. However, because of a chaplain at my seminary and two professors, I dealt with this disfigured image and arrived at a conclusion that I may not belong to them, but they belong to me. This was a gift and learning from the seminary. As a priest, I have tried to engender the spirit of belonging through my words and actions among all congregants. It is done through my utmost respect for diverse theological opinions and their personal theology, as well as open dialogue and appealing to the passages from 1 Corinthians, Galatians and the prayer of Jesus. It is time for the Anglican Church of Canada to appreciate, respect and accept new Canadians with a resolve to nurture and challenge their faith while preserving their integrity, dignity and cultures.

THE REV. EDMUND LALDIN *is incumbent of the Parish of St. Saviour, Winnipeg. The primary focus of his ministry is to cultivate and nurture a culture of inclusion. His areas of research are liturgy and its relevance to post-modern society and millennials.*

By Lyds Keesmaat-Walsh

ANGLICAN VOICES

ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES

Lyds Keesmaat-Walsh (right) prepares the Eucharist with the Rev. Molly Finlay during the Pride service at Church on Tap, a monthly event at Christ Church Deer Park in Toronto. PHOTO: MICHAEL HUDSON

I'm one of the lucky ones. Most queer Christians' stories are stories of rejection, stories of trauma, stories of being told they're not welcome in the churches they call home. But that was never my story. I'm one of the lucky ones.

I don't remember the first time I found out someone was LGBTQ+ in my church, so many of them were out, and welcomed, and loved, and affirmed before I was even born. I grew up in a congregation that has been blessing and marrying LGBTQ+ couples for as long as they've been able to. I'm one of the lucky ones.

I remember, though, the first time I told someone I thought I might be queer. I was carpooling with my old priest to the 9 o'clock service. I was deep in the closet about being trans and non-binary and still thought I was a girl. I had just gotten home from a trip to Central America where I'd developed a crush on a female friend of mine. I had no idea what it meant and had no idea what to do. As my priest and I drove, and I told her about my trip, I blurted out, "...and then I realized that I had feelings for her, and I don't know what they mean, and what if I'm gay, and I'm so confused!" My priest was my safe person to talk to, the first one I came out to, my

safe haven in the confusion of coming out to myself. My priest was out herself. I'm one of the lucky ones.

When I first started going by Lyds as a placeholder name until I find one that fits, my parishes and diocese made that transition easy and flawless. When I stood up at "members' time" at my diocesan synod and talked about how there wasn't a bathroom at the venue that I could use, our secretary of synod apologized to me. At the next synod, a gender-neutral bathroom was provided. My parishes and diocese are taking active steps to become more trans-accessible and a safe space for me and the rest of the trans community. I'm one of the lucky ones.

I've been able to preach at, serve at, and have a dance party at Pride services and Pride parties in more than one of my church communities. I've danced to drag queens doing Gospel Drag after listening to those same queens reading the gospel, and serving them the Eucharist earlier that evening. I've marched in Toronto Pride with my church family, with my priests, with my bishops. I'm one of the lucky ones.

(Trigger warning: The next four paragraphs will talk about General Synod 2019, self-harm, and suicide.)

I've always been one of the lucky ones, but I guess everyone's luck runs out at some point. I arrived at General Synod 2019 still on a "dancing with my queer community at a Pride party after church" high. It was so soon after Toronto Pride that I was still trying to wash the glitter out of my hair. I had some great new outfits and flags that I'd gotten at Pride, and I was ready to throw them on in celebration at seeing my national church family say I could get married—at seeing the canon be changed to something that didn't erase my non-binary identity. That's what I arrived at General Synod ready for. I arrived ready to keep being one of the lucky ones.

But that's not quite what happened. I put on my super queer outfit. I made myself visible on the floor of synod. I spoke my truth about how, even though I am one of the lucky ones, the homophobia in the church has impacted my mental health; and about how it impacts the mental health of hundreds of queer folk across the country and around the world. I shared things I never talk about, about feeling suicidal and about my struggles with self-harm. I poured my guts out to the people in that room, pleading with them to think about the lives of those for whom this is personal as they voted; hoping and praying as hard as I know how to hope and pray that it would be enough, that the church would choose love and life over exclusion and death.

I remember so clearly the moment the voting closed and what felt like an eternity as we waited for the results to be posted on the screen. I remember already being in tears from the fear of what was about to happen. I remember my bishop holding me as I cried and prayed over and over again: "Please God, please God, please, please, please, please." I remember the moment I saw the results posted. The moment those "please"s turned into a wordless wail, as my heart broke for my church.

The few days following the marriage canon vote were some of the hardest of my life, both for me and for the people I love who were at General Synod with me. I, along with some of the other youth delegates, very publicly made it clear that we weren't going to take the failed vote laying down. We received overwhelming messages of love and support, but also became the target of negative comments and even a couple of hate blogs. So much of what we were doing was being seen by the whole church. A photo of me in tears seemed to be everywhere I turned. But there was also so much happening behind closed doors that we were hiding. In the second half of General Synod, another queer youth almost attempted suicide. I had to give a self-harm tool to one of my bishops as it was the only way I would be safe from relapse. [*Editor's note: The term "self-harm tool" refers to an object that could be used to harm oneself. At the request of the author, we do not describe the object here to avoid triggering anyone who might be at risk of self-harm.*] When General Synod drew to a close I very nearly checked myself into a hospital so I would be safe, instead of taking my extra week in B.C. to visit friends.

The trauma has continued past General Synod. I have nightmares about General Synod and did end up relapsing into self-harm in the fall, and I am still struggling to overcome the shame that comes alongside a relapse. I know another youth delegate who has flashbacks and nightmares that can hit with no warning. The trauma of General Synod is something that will stay with many queer and allied Anglicans for a very long time. I know that it wasn't just those of us at General Synod who felt it. I know that it was Anglicans across the country who were, and still are, very traumatized by

what happened that Friday night.

And yet, despite all the crap, I'm still one of the lucky ones.

I had a parish to come home to that hung rainbow ribbons out front of the church the Sunday after the vote failed, to show that they are still a safe place; a parish where I was invited to preach and tell my story of General Synod; a parish where I was set to be confirmed on the next Pride Sunday by my out bishop; a parish where, when I find a name that fits and I'm ready to share it with the world, I'll be able to mark that change and important milestone in my life in the liturgy, in my community. I'm one of the lucky ones.

I live in a diocese that has had guidelines in place for queer marriages since General Synod 2016 and will have full equal marriage by this Pentecost; a diocese that knows it still has work to do on becoming a place where all members of the LGBTQ+ community are safe and equal; and it's a diocese with people in it willing to put in that work. I'm one of the lucky ones.

I'm one of the lucky ones because my life has always been full of LGBTQ+ people working to make this church a better place: by holding fussy babies during communion; by choosing songs that are so theologically rich they shaped my faith as much as most sermons I've heard; by coming as a priest to a tiny two-point parish and inviting the very few youth hanging around over for dinner every other week; by showing me what covenant love looks like; by fighting this fight to fully belong and be fully welcomed in our church since long before I was born. I'm one of the lucky ones because my life has been shaped by so many faithful LGBTQ+ folks without whom I would not be who I am today, and without whom this church would not be the place it is today; because of the people who have come before me and fought so that I could be one of the lucky ones.

And now it's my turn—it's our turn—to continue the fight so the next generation will have more lucky ones. So my story is no longer a rare one.

LYDS KEESMAAT-WALSH *is a queer and trans young Anglican from Toronto with a passion for social justice and the church. They are a member of the Council of General Synod, the Faith, Worship and Ministry coordinating committee, and the diocese of Toronto's diocesan council.*

POSTSCRIPT

ON RELIGION AND POLITICS

PHOTO: JULIAN WAN/UNSPLASH.COM

Over the last few months, as the publication of this issue has been delayed due to COVID-19, the editorial staff and I found ourselves wondering: Will people be interested in an *Epiphanies* focused entirely on the subject of differences? Would they want to take a deep dive into challenging topics related to racism, for example? Or would readers, after months of daunting news about COVID-19, prefer lighter fare?

As protests against anti-Black racism and police violence emerged across the United States—and then spilled into countries worldwide, including Canada—it seemed we had our answer. And it turns out, of course, pandemics don't bring societal inequalities to a halt. As Ryan Weston, lead animator of public witness for social and ecological justice for the Anglican Church of Canada, pointed out in June's *Anglican Journal,* it turns out that pandemics might actually exacerbate the disparities and differences we've built into our communities.

This has been a challenging issue to assemble. On such subjects as these—on the way we treat and mistreat one another because of the way God made us—the work never seems done. There are interviews we wish we had. There are angles we didn't catch. There are voices that have gone unheard. There are places where we may seem to editorialize, counter to our intent. If you've read to this point in the issue, you may have struggled with items that might feel incomplete, out of date, unbalanced or imperfect.

I know some among you are also concerned about the ways in which the church engages in political matters in the world at large. I understand this. As

someone who grew up in the United States, I have seen the way in which Christians have weighed in on an incredible diversity of topics, sometimes very controversially. I have known Christians who have held vigils during countless executions, in efforts to end capital punishment. I have known Christians who have advocated for the removal of education related to evolution from public schools. I have known Christians who have advocated for the right of children to receive early education and care, and I have known Christians who have sought to abolish abortion—also viewed by many as advocacy for the rights of children. As the church engages such differences, we often find ourselves more than aware of the disagreements that exist in our congregations, it seems. It's easy to see why some would view the church's engagement of political issues as a shortcut to division and disunity. I think this is a legitimate concern.

Likewise, the image of the president of the United States standing before an Episcopal church, holding up a Bible and decreeing that America "is a great country" should give us some pause. Politicians aren't always shy about using religion to forward their own agendas. There is an endless history, as old as time itself, of holy books and holy words being used by powerful people as means to draft and manipulate new followers. Thus, we should assume that there are people out there who are ready and willing to exploit our faith to meet their ends.

Then there's the theological side of things. How do we know if we're not straying from the Jesus Way with the statements we make, the causes we support, the changes we seek? Are we protecting the least of these? Or are we too drawn into earthly matters? What if our advocacy runs against the grain of the traditional teachings of the church? What if our political ideals seem opposed to the Scriptures themselves?

With all this—the risk of disunity, exploitation and theological drift—it may indeed seem unwise for the church to say anything about the ways of the world, including our differences. Yet as has been said again and again, Jesus was never shy about the injustices of the world, to which he brought healing, redemption, harsh words, actions and, ultimately, his crucified body. The bar is high. So, speaking for myself, I think the church should not be afraid of participating in political discourse when we perceive injustice in the world. But we must also be patient with one another—recognize that we are called to love God and each other, and that not everyone we encounter in the fight for justice will care about our integrity. For every cause we support and every injustice we decry, we must pray, dwell in Scripture and seek the fellowship of other Christians, even and especially those who disagree or who are different from us.

So, thank you for reading this—even if you disagree with some or much of what you've encountered. For any dissatisfaction or concern you may feel because of this issue, please accept my apologies. We have all sinned, and we all fall short in the glory of God. I do hope that this issue has been stimulating, though—that at this providential time in which the whole world has turned to questions of discrimination and hatred, our work will offer some space for holy contemplation and, hopefully, holy action.

In Christ,

Matthew Townsend
Editor

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