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Pandemic puts vulnerable food workers in focus

Tali Folkins
STAFF WRITER

The people who come from other countries to work on Canada's farms have never had it particularly easy—but the pandemic has added a sharp edge to the stressful conditions under which they work, says the Rev. Antonio Illas, the diocese of Niagara's missionary to migrant farmworkers.

In addition to hard work and the vulnerability that comes with working in a foreign country, they also face with COVID-19 a risk to their lives and health, and to the income they need to provide for themselves and their families back home.

"If they test positive and are isolated, they are very stressed out. It's very scary, because they won't generate income," Illas says. "It's very ironic that the people who work in the field—the people who harvest

for us, for the food security of the Canadian population—they themselves are very vulnerable in this pandemic."

The migrant workers that Illas ministers to are not unique in this respect. Since COVID-19 began to spread through Canadian workplaces, the threats of death, illness and income insecurity have loomed larger over many on the front lines of Canada's food sector—and the conditions under which they work have drawn increased attention.

Among the workplaces that have attracted national news coverage is the Cargill meat-processing plant in High River, Alta.—a massive facility that accounts for more than a third of Canada's entire meat-packing capacity. The plant was shut down for two weeks in April after an outbreak of COVID-19, reported to be the largest

▲ **Migrant farmworkers, pictured here before the pandemic, receive bikes donated through the diocese of Niagara's Migrant Farmworkers Project.**

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

known outbreak in any facility in North America. Nearly half of its 2,200 employees contracted the disease, two of whom died. A relative of a plant worker, visiting from the Philippines, also died of the illness.

A May CBC story reported that some employees (unnamed in the article, on the grounds that they feared reprisal for speaking publicly) were alleging unsafe practices, including having to work at close quarters with one another during the outbreak. According to the story, most of the workers at the plant are either

See **MIGRANT WORKERS**, p. 6

Faith leaders decry Quebec's church-specific attendance limits

Matt Gardner
STAFF WRITER

"Inconsistent." "Illogical."
"Incomprehensible."

These are some of the words Bruce Myers, bishop of the diocese of Quebec, used to describe new COVID-19 restrictions by the Quebec government limiting attendance in public places, which religious leaders across the province say unfairly target places of worship.

On Sept. 21, Myers joined other faith leaders in denouncing the government's decision to limit attendance in places of worship to 25 to 50 people, at the same time as cinemas, theatres and concert halls can still host up to 250 people. He endorsed an interfaith statement criticizing the government for "once again putting places of worship in the same category as bars," a connection religious leaders call "unjustified and false."

Bishop Christian Rodembourg, president of the Quebec Assembly of Catholic Bishops, signed the statement in the name of the Quebec Interreligious Roundtable (QIR). Formed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the QIR includes the Anglican dioceses of Quebec and Montreal and other Christian denominations, as well as Muslim and Jewish groups.

The statement calls on the government to reclassify places of worship in the same category as concert halls and theatres. It also asks that a "frank and open channel of communications be established" between faith leaders and government authorities.

While faith communities expected new measures in response to an uptick in infections, Myers expressed bafflement at how the restrictions are being applied.

He offered the example of the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Quebec City, which in addition to hosting Christian worship is often used as a concert venue.

"Under the guidelines that have just been ratified by the government, we could have a concert in the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity with 250 people," Myers said. "But we'd be forbidden from having a Christian liturgy with more than 25 people—even though it's the exact same building and both groups of people will be subject to the same precautions around physical distancing, wearing a face covering and

See **WORSHIP RESTRICTION**, p. 8

CoGS mulls possible changes to General Synod membership, Order of Bishops



SCREENSHOT: JOELLE KIDD

General Synod's chancellor, Canon (lay) David Jones

Joelle Kidd
STAFF WRITER

Changes to the composition of General Synod—including reducing the number of voting bishops—may be in the works after discussions on church governance by the Council of General Synod (CoGS) Sept. 12.

The discussions, led by General Synod's chancellor, Canon (lay) David Jones, will be used by the working group to inform proposals brought forward at the March 2021 meeting of CoGS.

Resolution C005, passed at General Synod in 2019, tasks CoGS with reviewing "the composition of the membership and the rules of order and procedure of General Synod" and recommending changes at the 2022 General Synod.

Jones' presentation drew on a survey of CoGS members from its July meeting, which had focused on the proportional method used for determining the number of elected clerical and lay members a

See **REPRESENTATION**, p. 8

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2 Sask. bishops join interfaith call for suicide prevention



4 On the suffering—and suffocation—of neighbours



SUICIDE
PREVENTION ▶

‘It affects everybody’

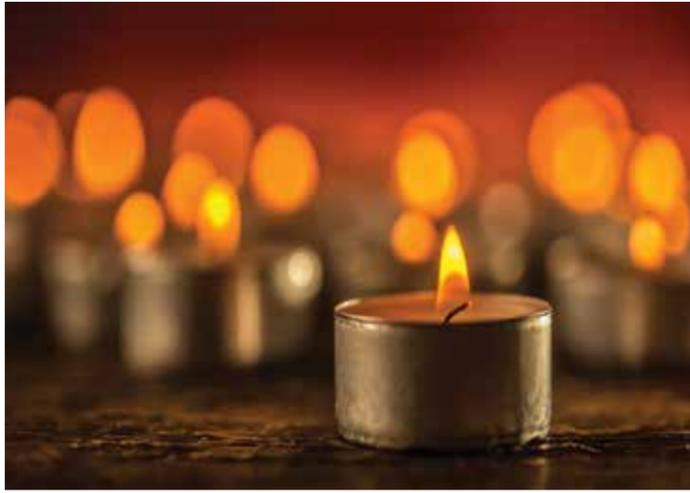
Sask. bishops sign
interfaith statement on
suicide prevention

Matt Gardner
STAFF WRITER

Four Anglican bishops have joined religious leaders across Saskatchewan in signing an interfaith statement that calls for greater efforts to prevent suicide.

Bishops Michael Hawkins, Adam Halkett, Chris Harper and Rob Hardwick—representing the diocese of Saskatchewan, area mission of Missinipi and dioceses of Saskatoon and Qu’Appelle, respectively—all endorsed the statement. Representatives of other denominations and faiths included Roman Catholics, Ukrainian Catholics, Presbyterians, Unitarians, members of the United Church of Canada, Jews, Muslims and Bahá’ís.

The statement calls on “faith communities, the Government of Saskatchewan and all sectors of society to work together to establish a comprehensive and effective suicide prevention strategy.” Possible measures include the creation of laws and programs that address common risk factors for suicide; education on risk; and building capacity to address the needs of youth, young adults and Indigenous people.



▲ **Bishop Adam Halkett describes the confluence of intergenerational trauma, drugs and violence as “a real tough battle for all,” especially youth.**

PHOTO: MARIAN WEYO

The faith leaders released the statement on Sept. 10, World Suicide Prevention Day. The statement notes that 10 people on average die of suicide each day in Canada, with approximately 144 suicides per year in Saskatchewan alone.

Suicide is the leading cause of death in northern Saskatchewan for people between the ages of 10 and 49. Higher rates of suicide are prevalent among First Nations, Métis and Inuit, especially youth.

“It affects everybody,” Halkett said of suicide in northern communities. The Missinipi bishop linked higher suicide rates among Indigenous people and other social ills with continuing intergenerational trauma caused by residential schools.

“Our youth are kind of lost because of the residential school impacts, and the drugs, the gangs, domestic violence [with] young couples and of course the war with meth coming into our communities,” Halkett said. “It’s a real tough battle for all.”

The diocese of Saskatchewan has worked to prevent suicide in numerous ways. St. Alban’s Cathedral hosted its second annual vigil on Sept. 10. The diocese has co-sponsored programs to support applied suicide intervention skills training, and it has held prayer walks.

“One of the things that frustrates me is that occasionally politicians will show and express that they’re concerned about this issue, but that is not the level of alarm that the rate of suicide in Canada’s north deserves or needs,” Hawkins said.

On Sept. 14, Hawkins, Halkett and other faith leaders took part in a meeting with Deputy Premier Gordan Wyant and Minister Responsible for Rural and Remote Health Warren Kaeding on suicide prevention. Hawkins called the conversation frank and, at times, difficult.

Roman Catholic Archbishop Donald Bolen, who also signed the statement, said communities must “prayerfully discern how we can accompany young people and bring the joy of the Gospel to them, to do what we can to sow seeds of hope, meaning and purpose.” ■

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REFUGEES ▶

As federal government appeals Safe Third Country ruling, Church-led advocacy organizations keep fighting

“If we say that we have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and it applies to everyone in Canada, then that includes refugees who come to make a claim here, however they arrive.”

— Suzanne Rumsey, PWRDF public engagement program coordinator

Joelle Kidd
STAFF WRITER

The federal government announced Aug. 21 that it is appealing a recent Federal Court decision that struck down the U.S.-Canada Safe Third Country Agreement—but the Anglican-affiliated organizations that brought the original legal challenge are pushing the government to drop the appeal.

In a decision released July 22, Justice Ann Marie McDonald ruled that the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), Amnesty International, the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) and a number of individuals were litigants in the case. (The Anglican Church of Canada is a member of the Canadian Council of Churches; the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF) is a member of the Canadian Council for Refugees.)

The agreement mandates that refugee claimants request refugee protection “in the first safe country they arrive in”—meaning that would-be refugee claimants can be turned back if attempting to cross the U.S.-Canada border.

Critics have argued that the STCA encourages irregular border crossings into Canada and that the U.S. immigrant detention system is not humane enough to qualify the country as safe. Among the testimony of litigants in the case was that of Nedira Mustefa, a Muslim woman from Ethiopia who was detained in the U.S. after attempting to enter Canada as a refugee. Mustefa told the court that she was held in solitary confinement and did not know when or if she would be released.

In her decision, McDonald stated that Mustefa’s treatment alone was enough to “shock the conscience,” a legal standard used to determine a breach of fundamental justice.



▲ A young girl, part of a family of asylum seekers, crosses the U.S.-Canadian border at Roxham Road in Champlain, N.Y., as a patrolling Mountie directs her to go to the nearby tent for processing along with her family.

PHOTO: DANIEL CASE/
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The CCC—along with the CCR and Amnesty International—has opposed the STCA since it came into effect in 2004, says CCC General Secretary Peter Noteboom, and the three organizations launched a previous legal challenge which won in Federal Court but was overturned on appeal.

The CCR and CCC are now both calling on the government to drop the appeal. PWRDF will be distributing the CCR’s calls to action through its networks in the coming weeks, Public Engagement Program Coordinator Suzanne Rumsey says.

While PWRDF’s work is not directly impacted by the Safe Third Country Agreement, “it’s part of a larger piece about what kind of a country we want to live in,” Rumsey says.

“If we say that we have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and it applies to

everyone in Canada, then that includes refugees who come to make a claim here, however they arrive,” she says.

“I think there would be some people who would say that the U.S. has never been a safe third country, but certainly since President Trump came to power, he’s been implementing ... anti-immigration policies that are making it more and more unsafe for asylum seekers in the U.S.”

“It’s part of the Christian faith to always welcome the stranger,” says Noteboom.

“Holding to that high standard of the principles of justice and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms being available to all that arrive in Canada is, I think, the standard that we should be reaching for,” he says.

In a statement, the Hon. Bill Blair, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, said that the appeal was based on the assessment “that there are factual and legal errors in some of the Federal Court’s key findings.”

In response to a request for comment from the *Anglican Journal*, a spokesperson for Blair reiterated the government’s belief that there are errors in the decision. “The decision suggests all asylum claimants who are ineligible under the STCA and turned back to the U.S. are automatically detained as a penalty. This is not the case. The U.S. remains a party to the UN Refugee Convention.”

The spokesperson also said that the STCA “has served Canada well for 16 years” and “remains a comprehensive vehicle for the fair, compassionate and orderly handling of asylum claims in our two countries.”

“I’m grateful for Canada’s generosity to refugee claimants,” says Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, “but trying to evaluate where that line is between what compassion and justice dictate versus the realities of being able to house and provide for people who arrive, is certainly challenging.” ■

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On the suffering of neighbours

Matthew Townsend
EDITOR

A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

—Isaiah 40:3-5

WHEN WE moved from the United States to Canada in 2018, my spouse and I faced two questions from inquisitive Canadians: "Why on earth would a Floridian move to Canada?" and "Is it because of Trump?"

Canadians have heard me hesitate before answering such questions, but not from a lack of answers. We relocated to Canada for a variety of reasons: an excellent educational opportunity for Kate, more equitable access to health care and a preference for the Canadian way of doing things. We aren't refugees; we came by choice, deciding we wanted to become Canadians. We're like many immigrants who call Canada their new home. We want to be here.

I know that many Canadians—including Canadian Anglicans—will be glued to the news on Nov. 3, as the American election draws to a close. I know this in part because they've told me, but also because of the revelations of 2020. This is the year in which hundreds of thousands of Americans have suffocated—most in ICUs, but some in forest fires and under boots. I think most Canadians now see leadership in the United States as crueler than they had imagined. To many people in Canada and the world, this election matters deeply. Hence, their questions of me have shifted: "Aren't you glad you're here now?" and "Have you registered to vote?"

If there is again a hesitation in my response, a fumbling of words and ideas, it's because I've yet to translate observations of my home country into a tongue understandable by Canadians. This is a broad generalization, but I think Canadians who ask these questions of me tend to assume that Canada is just a slightly better version of the United States—kinder, smarter, more apologetic—and that life for most Americans, outside of political turmoil, isn't terribly wretched. Such views place Canadians into a paradox of sorts: they measure themselves against a place that doesn't measure itself, a place that can't find a way to protect the dignity of the weak and inhibit the appetites of the powerful. There are people of great depth, beauty and kindness in the United States of America, but tens of millions of Americans struggle against an engrained cruelty, now laid bare for the world to see. People who fall through the cracks of electoral, judicial, medical and ecclesial systems are left to lives of toil, ruin and pain.

Americans are asked to work for better. Kate and I both devoted our youthful energies to trying to make a difference there. We participated in domestic missions; we opened our home to asylum seekers and migrants; we moved to a diverse neighbourhood; we organized and lobbied; we spent time in rural places and talked with people there; we went to Black



▲ **"This is the year in which hundreds of thousands of Americans have suffocated—most in ICUs, but some in forest fires and under boots."**

IMAGE: WINSLOW HOMER/ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

Lives Matter protests and farmworker rallies and labour marches; and, of course, we voted, allowing our faith to guide our participation within the civic world. I am certain we could have done more, but we were involved. Upon entering our middle years, we concluded that these efforts, which were exhausting, just weren't enough. Many people in America dream of change and work hard for it, but many others seem convinced that certain problems are unsolvable and innate, even in the presence of unparalleled wealth and incredible thirst for change.

Rolling a stone uphill as others kick it down is an invitation to despondency and martyrdom. We didn't feel called to that, so we're in Canada now. God willing, we'll vote by mail. But, my friends, I must state that I firmly believe it is the responsibility of the Christian to remember that voting is, at best, a necessary but insufficient means of bringing about the Kingdom of God on earth. I make this point because I fear that faithful Canadian and American Christians have fallen into the habit of viewing political elections as our best means of addressing problems in our sin-sick world. As we are cajoled into voting by promises of collective transformation, we continue to hear the sirens sing of individual power, money and status—driving us to seek, as Bishop of Cuba Maria Griselda Delgado del Carpio put it in January 2020's *Anglican Journal*, "value derived from crushing others."

Voting is one way that Christians can resist the pressure to crush others, but its power is constrained by what we believe politics to be in the first place. Ballots offer a glimpse of where we might go based upon where we've been, with a choice of incremental changes that might move a society backward or forward. Torment can be abated by these processes, but it can also be enhanced. In the meantime, we continue to discover incrementalism's limits in the face of systemic crises. For example, Americans might thank Barack Obama for legislation that put an end to the "pre-existing conditions" clauses that denied millions health care, but health-related bankruptcies continue. Climate

change hasn't stopped. Deindustrialization continues. Shifts in political winds have done little to bring many Americans closer to hope, change and greatness. If they aren't to be found at a ballot box this month, this might be why: Voting can roll pebbles up that hill, but boulders tend to sit still—or roll back. I suggest that American cynicism is a learned response—something to afford more pity than contempt.

Yet I would also argue that as neighbours, Americans deserve more than Canadian pity. Here on this side of the border, what can Canadian Anglicans do to address the suffering they see?

First, we could lead Canada in considering actionable ways to help American neighbours. Canada has a long history of providing shelter to Americans placed in impossible positions by their government: the enslaved and the conscripted, for example. Perhaps Canadians—Indigenous and non-Indigenous people sharing this task—could discuss whether they'd permit, after the pandemic, a greater flow of struggling American immigrants to start a new life here. A recent Canadian legal decision around the Safe Third Country Agreement might open just such a door, starting with asylum seekers who have been imprisoned in the States for the crime of seeking refuge.

Canadians could also look closely at the country's business dealings (including church investments) with America and decide what might help rather than harm. Allegations made in August that Toronto-Dominion Bank increased its stock in private U.S. prison corporations—about which TD offered a jargon-filled explanation of the increase's temporary nature and the company's commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—show just how easy it is to imperil poor Americans on this side of the border. To move beyond such missteps, Canadians could begin to think of the United States as a neighbour with real problems—problems that trap people in unacceptable circumstances. Decisions made here affect those circumstances.

Second, we could also begin to think

“Ballots offer a glimpse of where we might go based upon where we've been, with a choice of incremental changes that might move a society backward or forward. Torment can be abated by these processes, but it can also be enhanced.”

SINGING WITH JOY ▶



Sharing the gifts that we have received

By Linda Nicholls

THE FIRST MONTHS of the pandemic were filled with grief for all that we had lost. We lamented the isolation, the fear of illness, the end of worship services and so many other changes to our lives. Gradually we have regained some connections, and life has taken on a new shape of careful engagement under restrictions of space and masks.

However, as we entered the fall, I have found myself grieving again—but for different reasons. This grief is not for what I have lost or miss. Rather it is for the painful reality of all that I have and enjoy that others do not. I am immersed in gratitude for so many privileges. I live in a country that is managing the pandemic relatively well and whose leadership is committed to the well-being of all its people. If I were to get sick, I enjoy a health care system that is available and skilled. I can work from home and have the resources to connect online whenever and wherever I need to. I do not fear violence due to my race. I live in relative peace and safety. Most things for which I am grateful are gifts. They have come to me because of where and when I was born. I did not choose them or earn them. Some came from my parents' generation and others from the community around me, past and present, who work for the good of all.

I have taken advantage of the opportunities and gifts given, but I do not



▲ **“The privileges I enjoy are not equally shared within Canada, as Indigenous peoples know well.”**

IMAGE: MEANDERING IMAGES

deserve them more than those who do not and cannot access them. At least once a week, and sometimes once a day, I receive an email from a refugee desperate to find a safe country. Their stories are heart-wrenching pleas for the safety of their own and their children's lives.

I live in southwest Ontario, where so many migrant workers supply the food on our tables—yet are not protected adequately in their employment from COVID-19 or have sufficient job security to be able to raise a complaint. The privileges I enjoy are not equally shared within Canada, as

Indigenous peoples know well. So what do I do with the grief? I need first to live with gratitude and not take my privileges for granted, expressing thankfulness to God and to all who contribute to the safety, health and well-being I enjoy. Then I must ask, “How may I contribute to offering the same to others? How will I use the resources I enjoy of health, wealth, education and voice to assist in the change needed so that all will have what they need?”

Every parish I know that has sponsored a refugee family or assisted migrant workers has talked about what they have received, not what it cost, and have been enriched by their encounters. In a time when some talk only about protecting what we have, I pray that the Christian community will talk more about sharing and giving. Speak up for refugees; sponsor a family; support migrant workers in your community; write to your MP or MPP when policies that affect those on the margins are being written or changed; speak up for compassion and justice. That is what it means to fulfill our baptismal promise “to strive for justice and peace and respect the dignity of every human being.” Let's open our eyes to see those who do not enjoy what we do and ask what needs to change. Let grief at the injustices around us energize our words and actions in the name of Christ! ■

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

WALKING TOGETHER ▶



Artifacts of the future

By Mark MacDonald

THERE ARE MANY things that make the Four Corners area of the southwestern United States a wonderful place. Among the most powerful is the constant presence of artifacts from the past: human-made, physical remnants of the Anasazi peoples who lived there long ago. Their glorious, advanced culture is never far from view, seen in the dwellings whose ruins are everywhere and found in the beautiful pieces of pottery that appear so often as you walk across the land. These artifacts announce a presence that fills the imagination with what once was. It is a presence that makes you think hard about the strong and the weak of life and the larger destiny of creation in the heart and mind of a just and—thankfully—merciful God.

As those who have received the gospel of Jesus, we hold both the promise of a World to Come and its presence among us now. This is a different kind of presence, glorious, thought-provoking and full of the



▲ **“Look for the artifacts of the future among the poor, those in prison, those on the streets and those on their sick bed.”**

PHOTO: ADAM JAN FIGEL

imagination that gives birth to new life. We see the World to Come, says the elder St. John Chrysostom, in the Eucharist and in the love of neighbour. These are among us as artifacts of the future, God's future. In them we taste, feel, and see Jesus and the life that will be. First seen by those who witnessed the resurrection of Jesus, this life that

will be is now seen in the love that is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (Romans 5:5).

After you live in the Four Corners for a while, you learn where to find the best places to discover ancient artifacts. In the same way, as we follow Jesus in discipleship, we begin to learn where to find the artifacts of the World to Come. Despite what we might expect from our experience in the worldwide culture of money, the truly wonderful artifacts of life, the artifacts of the future, are found far away from the things that are bound to the values of this world. Look for the artifacts of the future among the poor, those in prison, those on the streets and those on their sick bed. When we carry the love of Jesus, it is in these places that we most clearly handle the first physical and spiritual sensations of a new heaven and a new earth. ■

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

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MIGRANT WORKERS ▶

“If you go to any migrant community, they will all have the same prevailing fear of being kicked out of the country if they get sick or hurt.”

—The Rev. Andrew Wilson, rector of St. John the Evangelist, Leamington



Migrant workers fear illness, deportation: priests

Advocates say not all employers recognize workers' rights, safety

Continued from p. 1

immigrants or temporary foreign workers, and feared that the loss of their jobs would threaten their ability to remain in Canada.

The *Anglican Journal* attempted to arrange an interview with a Cargill employee, but was told he was not comfortable speaking to news media about the situation at the plant.

The facility reopened after bringing in a number of measures intended to boost employee safety, and by late August, the union that represents employees there said the company was being “generally responsive” to its concerns. Meanwhile, outbreaks occurred at several other meat-packing plants across Canada, including another Cargill plant in Calgary.

The coronavirus also spread among Canada’s migrant farmworkers.

In recent decades, as Canadian farm labour has grown increasingly scarce, farmers have increasingly turned to migrant workers from overseas. Many come under the federal government’s Temporary Foreign Worker Program, established in 1973.

As of late August, 1,300 workers had tested positive in Ontario alone, according to Justice for Migrant Workers, an advocacy group, and three had died. Complaints surfaced of poor conditions on some farms, including allegations of inadequate spacing between bunks in labourer lodgings.

One hotspot for the disease over the summer was the Windsor-Essex region of southern Ontario, which includes the town of Leamington, an agricultural hub known as the tomato capital of Canada. Since 2002, the Migrant Worker Community program, a Leamington-area charity, has offered a

▲ During the pandemic, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has promoted a program, launched in 2019, to help temporary workers escape abusive employers and find work elsewhere in Canada.

PHOTO: NITO/SHUTTERSTOCK

range of services to migrant farmworkers. Among its partners is the Anglican Church of St. John the Evangelist, which—until the pandemic hit—provided space for a welcome centre and volunteers to support it.

The Rev. Andrew Wilson, rector at St. John’s, says one of his concerns is a tendency for misinformation both about and among migrant workers to spread through hearsay. This has made it difficult for the workers to know with certainty what risks they face.

“If you go to any migrant community, they will all have the same prevailing fear of being kicked out of the country if they get sick or hurt,” he says. “We even had a fellow who came here who wanted to know what to do about his back, because he had hurt himself quite badly—but was afraid to tell anybody at work because he didn’t want to lose his job. Now would he? I don’t know, but it’s that rumour thing.”

An Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) web page spells out the rights of migrant workers in Canada. According to law, employers cannot (among other things) force them to work if they are sick or injured, have them deported or have their immigration status changed.

“Migrant workers have the same rights to workplace protections under applicable federal, provincial and territorial employment standards and collective agreements as Canadians and permanent residents,” says Béatrice Fénelon, communication advisor for IRCC.

Advocates for migrant workers, however, argue that in practice, migrant workers don’t always enjoy the rights they’re entitled to by law. In early July, Ontario Premier Doug Ford said all but three or four workers on one farm in the Leamington area hid when health workers arrived to test for COVID-19. The workers, he said, were afraid that if they tested positive they’d lose their jobs or be sent home.

Complicating matters, Wilson says, is

the fact that the conditions among which the migrants work and live, and the help they receive from their employers, can vary considerably.

“A friend of mine used to be a manager. If one of these guys were hurt, he would take them to the hospital and stay with them—that’s just what they did. But we also know through the organization that quite often if someone needs to go to a doctor they just get dumped—they drive them to Emergency, and go, ‘Red door—go through there.’ And there’s not a permanent translator at the hospital.”

And while many employers care deeply about how their workers have been coping with the pandemic, Wilson says, others—at least according to some allegations—haven’t allowed them to be tested.

The pay the migrants receive is good compared to what they would receive for the same work in their own countries, he says, and most of them seem to enjoy their time in Canada. On the other hand, some experience mental health problems because they spend so much time away from their homes and families—eight to 10 months of the year.

In a 2015 article (“Migrant farm workers find support, community in Niagara church,” October 2015) a migrant farm worker in Niagara told the *Anglican Journal* his hourly pay of \$11 per hour in Canada was a day’s wages in his home country of Mexico, and was the reason why he kept returning to Canada every year. But his repeated lengthy stints away from home had caused the breakdown of his marriage, he added.

Beyond the question of how their pay compares to what they’d receive at home, it’s also worth asking whether it’s equitable by Canadian standards, Wilson says. Agriculture is big in Leamington, and at least some local people have done very well by it.

“Two hundred trucks a day leave this

Continued on p. 7

“The next time you eat your apple, or your cherries or your fruits, be mindful that it’s hard migrant farmworker labour that made this possible.”

—The Rev. Antonio Illas, the diocese of Niagara’s missionary to migrant farmworkers



PHOTO: DSOLEIL STUDIOS

A small group of farmworkers tends a field in Richmond, B.C., during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Temporary immigration ‘unjust’ for farmworkers

Continued from p. 6

community full of food—that’s a lot,” he says. “There’s a lot of money here. There’s a lot of Ferraris in town. That’s no exaggeration.”

Though the pandemic has meant increased stress for some of the vulnerable people in Canada’s food sector, it has also brought some action on the part of government. In July, the federal government announced it would spend \$58.6 million in protections for migrant farmworkers—money that would go toward, among other things, increased government inspection of farms and the creation of mandatory requirements for worker housing. In August, Ontario Divisional Court restored an order by health authorities limiting the number of quarantining migrant workers in one Ontario county to three per bunkhouse. (The order had previously been successfully challenged by a farmer who argued it threatened Canada’s food supply.) The federal auditor general is also reported to be reviewing the policy governing migrant workers in Canada.

Fénelon says the federal government has been taking other measures also, including collaborating with the Canadian Red Cross and the province of Ontario to set up temporary living quarters to allow self-isolation of workers in the Windsor-Essex County area in which Leamington sits. The department is strengthening its inspections of worker sites, she says, and penalties for employers who don’t comply with regulations are stiff. Meanwhile, she says, a program in place since June 2019 has allowed foreign workers with employer-specific work permits who believe themselves to be mistreated by their current employer to apply for open work permits, which allow them to look for work with a different employer and may result in their old employer being investigated.

“The safety of foreign workers is a key priority for the government,” Fénelon says.

Some, however, say current policy doesn’t go far enough. Advocacy groups including KAIROS Canada—of which the Anglican Church of Canada is a member—have held protests this summer and fall in cities across Canada, calling for migrant workers to be given permanent residence. In a June letter to the federal government, Susan Bell, bishop of the diocese of Niagara, expressed her support for this position—which Illas



▲ **Social distancing requirements on buses have made bicycles—and the Bikes for Farmworkers program—increasingly important for migrant labourers.**

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

says he wholeheartedly supports.

“The current system of temporary immigration status for migrant farmworkers, I believe, is unjust,” he says. “It doesn’t afford these migrant workers the opportunity to stay in Canada in retirement if they wanted to. I have a migrant worker who’s been coming to Canada for 31 years, and if he was to retire this season he doesn’t have a right to remain in Canada and enjoy retirement—he has to go back to Mexico.”

“These migrant workers ... they spend more time in Canada than in Mexico ... and when they retire they have to go back.”

Permanent residents of Canada are entitled to most of the social benefits that Canadian citizens enjoy. They are also eligible to apply for Canadian citizenship.

The Anglican Church of Canada has been working to raise awareness of the plight of migrant workers in the food sector as well as other areas of the economy—in Canada and beyond, says Andrea Mann, the church’s director of global relations.

“National church initiatives with diocesan social justice leaders from coast to coast have raised further issues of migrant labour exploitation in Canada’s food, natural resource and entertainment industries,” she says. “Collaboration with Anglican Communion groups and networks have deepened the church’s awareness and strengthened global solidarity for migrant justice.”

The origins of Illas’s ministry go back to 2013, when the Rev. Javier Arias, then rector of St. Alban’s Anglican Church in Beamsville, created an outreach ministry for local migrant workers, including a Spanish-language service followed by a communal meal. Over the years the project grew, partnering with other churches, businesses and organizations in the area

to provide a range of services, including providing them with donated bicycles to help them get to their work sites. In 2018, the diocese of Niagara announced it would make it a regional ministry, hiring a full-time missionary. Illas has filled this role since the spring of 2019. The project has also been supported by the Anglican Foundation of Canada.

As the pandemic has placed new strains on migrant farmworkers and new demands on their employers, Illas’s ministry has also changed. Before the pandemic started, the Migrant Farmworkers Project included, in addition to the bicycle service, Sunday mass and common meal, a clothing bank, a clinic providing free medical care by volunteers, farm visits and pastoral care to those who request it. Restrictions imposed since the beginning of the pandemic meant organizers could no longer offer the clothing bank, medical clinic and worship service, Illas says—but new forms of ministry arose in their place.

A donation of food from a local grocery wholesaler was the genesis, he says, for a grocery bag drop-off program. A grant by United Way Niagara, funded by the government of Canada, then allowed organizers to complement their usual grocery delivery with traditional Mexican food. They have also started delivering clothing to the workers to fill the need left by the closure of the clothing bank.

The bicycle ministry will likely continue to be critical to workers as the pandemic stretches on, Illas says. Before it hit, organizers were able to provide some transportation to workers in a school bus; other volunteers gave them a lift in their cars. But social distancing requirements have made this very difficult, Illas says—and the bicycle ministry therefore all the more critical.

When Illas talks about his ministry to other Anglicans, he often ends on the same note, he says.

“The next time you eat your apple, or your cherries or your fruits, be mindful that it’s hard migrant farmworker labour that made this possible,” he tells them.

“When you are at the communion table and you are partaking of the sacrament, when you are partaking of the blood of Christ through that wine, be mindful.... The flowers on the altar that we see every Sunday ... be mindful of the hard, back-breaking labour of our migrant farmworkers in the fields and greenhouses that make those flowers possible.

“Without migrant farmworkers, Canada would be in desperate need of Canadians to go out to the fields and do this labour.” ■

COVID-19 ▶

Worship restriction 'doesn't make any sense'

Continued from p. 1

hand sanitizing.

"In fact, in the church setting, we're subjected to more restrictions and guidelines than, say, a concert would be. It's this inconsistency and illogic which has gotten a reaction out of me, because it simply—objectively speaking—doesn't make any sense."

Another source of confusion and frustration, Myers said, is that faith organizations have been largely unable to engage in direct dialogue with the government. He notes that in other provinces, bishops have often been invited to meetings with public officials and have helped craft safety guidelines.

In Quebec, the government contacted faith organizations early on to help their communities understand the danger of the virus and to do their part in reducing transmission. But since then, Myers said, "it's been pretty much silence." Emails and phone calls to the government do not receive a response; letters go unanswered.

The lack of response from the government is particularly inexplicable, Myers said, given that "religious communities in Quebec have been incredibly proactive and very much in solidarity with the rest of society in trying to flatten the curve and get through this pandemic as quickly and safely as possible."

He pointed out that it was faith organizations that developed the first draft of safety protocols that were subsequently approved by Quebec public health authorities and the provincial government.

"There hasn't been a single documented,



▲ **Myers:**
"There hasn't been a single documented, confirmed outbreak of COVID-19, to my knowledge, traced to a place of worship in Quebec."

PHOTO: RENTA NISHIHARA

confirmed outbreak of COVID-19, to my knowledge, traced to a place of worship in Quebec," Myers said. Meanwhile, "one of the worst outbreaks of COVID-19 in the province was at a bar here in Quebec City—and yet we're subject to more stringent restrictions than bars and restaurants are."

"Anglican churches went the extra mile in Quebec by remaining closed through the entire summer to in-person worship," he added. As the diocese started reopening churches in the fall, new restrictions which Myers said appeared to be "illogical and incomprehensible" have been handed down.

Leaders of other faith communities on the interfaith roundtable expressed similar grievances.

"There's not a doctor in the world who will tell you that sitting in a bar

is safer than sitting in a church," said Rabbi Reuben Poupko, representative of the Council of Montreal Rabbis. "Yet somehow, the government decided that bars can remain open until 10 o'clock with some restrictions, and movie theatres can stay open—but somehow churches and synagogues should be treated differently. That disparity is troubling."

Imam Hassan Guillet, representing the Muslim community in Quebec, said that faith communities have strived to ensure places of worship do not become centres for spreading the virus.

"Experience told us that the dangers come not from the places of faith; the danger came from other places," Guillet said. "So to be treated like the other places that are contributing to the propagation of the virus, it's unfair and it's counterproductive."

Adriana Bara, executive director of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism, said that while faith communities will respect decisions of the government, "we want to be taken in consideration and to be consulted."

Religious leaders were still awaiting the government's response at the time this article was written. The same day the statement was released, Cardinal Gérald Cyprien Lacroix, Roman Catholic archbishop of Quebec and primate of Canada, spoke at an outdoor press conference.

"We hope to be heard, and finally, after so many attempts, to have the opportunity to enter into direct communication with public health and government authorities," Lacroix told reporters in French. "We want to continue to be united, partners. But for that, we have to talk to each other." ■

A CHANGING CHURCH ▶

Representation of smaller dioceses discussed by CoGS

Continued from p. 1

diocese is entitled to send to General Synod. Dioceses are organized in tiers based on attendance. However, 20 out of the church's 30 dioceses are currently in the lowest tier.

The July survey revealed that 74% of CoGS members wished to keep the current basis for determining the number of delegates, but that most (83%) wanted to "spread out" the 20 dioceses in the bottom tier among other tiers; 70% of members also said they wanted to keep the minimum number of elected clergy and lay from each diocese at two from each order.

The survey feedback created a "conundrum," Jones said, as most people were in favour of keeping the minimum number and spreading out the bottom tier, yet the majority also voted to keep General Synod the same size or make it smaller.

Jones offered three possible solutions to offset the increase: to reduce the number of delegates that the largest dioceses are entitled to; to include youth delegates as part of diocesan representation rather than in addition to the elected members; or to reduce the number of bishops in the Order of Bishops.

There are several issues related to the size of the Order of Bishops, Jones told CoGS.

The number of bishops as well as the proportion of bishops relative to the other orders has increased over time; bishops now make up 18% of General Synod. Jones noted that this imposes a financial cost and also gives bishops more influence in votes by all orders.



PHOTO: CRIS FOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK

“The question is, should the mere consecration as bishop automatically make you a member of the governance body?”

—Canon (lay) David Jones, chancellor of General Synod

asked Jones.

CoGS members broke into small groups via Zoom to discuss the material and complete a survey.

While the survey results do not represent a formal vote and were not entirely complete at the time of the meeting, the responses indicated that the group felt it was most important to spread out the dioceses, followed closely by keeping a minimum of two clergy and two laity representatives in each diocese, and that keeping General Synod the same size or smaller was not as important; that a slight majority would not accept the increase of size of General Synod; that a majority would consider changing the youth delegates to be included as part of the elected clergy and lay delegates; and that an overwhelming majority wished to consider changes to the Order of Bishops.

Members were also shown three potential models for changing the membership in the Order of Bishops. Model one would allow dioceses the same number of bishops as clerical delegates (additional bishops would have the right of voice but not vote); model two would do the same but would have additional bishops vote in the Order of Clergy; and model three would change the composition of the Order of Bishops to consist of an equal number of bishops from each ecclesiastical province.

During a time of response to the presentation, National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop Mark MacDonald expressed discomfort with the fact that the process was "not addressing issues of systemic racism ... in the way in which we're ordered."

While he voted in favour of making the Order of Bishops smaller, MacDonald said, "I have noticed the coincidence that the question of the size of the [Order] of Bishops is raised as more Indigenous bishops are being brought forward... I think it would be gross and evil if we did not address the issue of the fundamental inequities in Canadian society that are reflected in the makeup of our deliberative bodies."

In the material provided by the Governance Working Group, Jones also included a memo written by the Rev. Monique Stone, the mover of Resolution C005 at General Synod 2019, in which she suggested removing representation by population and giving each diocese equal representation. ■

FREELY RECEIVED, FREELY GIVEN ▶

“There had been so many examples of generosity through the pandemic—some I experienced myself, and also I’ve had a front-row seat watching the recipients of the foundation.”

—Canon Judy Rois, executive director of the Anglican Foundation of Canada

Podcast explores generosity ‘as an outlook, as a worldview, as a way of life’

Joelle Kidd
STAFF WRITER

“The management of money and generosity were concepts I think I learned from my parents,” says Canon Judy Rois, executive director of the Anglican Foundation of Canada. Rois remembers that growing up, she and her sister were taught to divide up their weekly allowance: to save some, spend some and give some away. In learning to do this, Rois says, she learned about the benefits of giving. “There really is something inexplicably satisfying about watching someone unwrap a gift and respond with unadulterated delight. At the same time, there is great satisfaction in giving back to the world around us.”

This story opens the first episode of a new podcast from the Anglican Foundation. Called *Foundation Forward: Ideas that Inspire*, the podcast was launched in August. It “invites Canadians to talk about generosity: why it’s important, and how they express it.” Short episodes, between five and 10 minutes long, are posted on the first Monday of every month.

Rois came up with the idea for the podcast a few months into the COVID-19 pandemic.

“There had been so many examples of generosity through the pandemic—some I experienced myself, and also I’ve had a front-row seat watching the recipients of the foundation.... So being both giver and receiver of generosity has been profoundly meaningful, and I decided I’d like to ask a variety of Canadians about the topic, and see what they had to say,” says Rois.

“The generosity theme really appealed to me,” says Christopher Dawes, the podcast’s host, “because it’s not a simple and frank appeal for support—[though] organizations like the Anglican Foundation certainly need support. But it was more about understanding generosity as an outlook, as a worldview, as a way of life.”

Dawes—who met Rois when at St. James’ Cathedral in Toronto, where she was the vicar and he the organist and music director—had some experience with radio and had previously created a podcast as part of his graduate work in music criticism at McMaster University.

Dawes says he and Rois are both fans of podcasts, and that listening to them formed his opinions on their format. “I was always ripe to get back into it, especially something with an intriguing ideological premise to it.”

Rois says the show’s format was inspired by a podcast by Stephen Lewis, the UN



▲ **Christopher Dawes, host of a new Anglican Foundation of Canada podcast, hopes listeners will be moved to live generously—not just to give donations.**

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

Secretary-General’s special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa and co-chair of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. “I came across his podcast where he posted short, intelligent, well-crafted talks on a variety of topics,” says Rois. “They were short, but they were so excellent in content that I listened to every one of them.” She was also inspired by the Rev. Brian Pearson, a retired parish priest in Calgary, whose regular blog posts Rois found to be both concise and thought-provoking.

Pearson is featured as the guest in the podcast’s second episode. Rois lends her voice to the first. For these first two episodes of *Foundation Forward*, the guests wrote and recorded a scripted piece on their own, which Dawes edited into the podcast. While they expect to continue this format with some guests, others prefer to be interviewed, Dawes says.

The short and sweet format allows guests to tackle a huge topic—generosity—in intriguing ways without the burden of attempting to be comprehensive. “You’ve got a broad topic but no one person is going to cover it exhaustively. The idea is, in fact, that this person has one take on it and this person has another, and then gradually ... a picture emerges,” says Dawes.

The December episode of the podcast is set to feature author Lawrence Scanlan, whose book, *A Year of Living Generously: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Philanthropy* celebrates its 10th year in

publication. To write the book, Scanlan spent a year volunteering with different charities and organizations, a different one each month.

Scanlan “wrote about not just those experiences, but what he found himself discovering and what he found the world doing around him in this context,” says Dawes.

Other upcoming guests include Douglas Graydon, retired chaplain and director of spiritual care for the diocese of Toronto; Anglican writer Michael Coren; Danielle Griffin, executive director of Aboutface in Toronto; and former dean of Christ’s Church Cathedral in the diocese of Niagara Peter Wall.

“[Wall] says something that I love... ‘It’s a privilege to be asked, and it’s privilege to give.’ He always says, don’t be afraid to ask people, because it’s a privilege to be asked to give,” says Rois.

“People do give out of a sense of duty, but what the Scriptures say is [that] God loves a cheerful giver.... It is a privilege to have the capacity to give to others, whatever that might be—your money, your voice. It’s a delight to give.”

Generosity is a topic that has been on Rois’ mind—in addition to the podcast, she recently completed a book for kids ages 8-14, called *Generous People are Everywhere*. The illustrated book tackles questions like “what is generosity? What does it look like? What form does it take? Are generous people happier?” says Rois.

Generosity is by definition about going “beyond expectation,” Dawes says. “The world can be kind of dehumanizing at times, whether the systems that we work in, the systems of power, the systems of time and the way we live our lives. It can dehumanize to a great degree. But there’s nothing that brings you back quite like an act of generosity that you witness.”

Living generously is “something that we want to encourage in people that follow the podcast,” says Dawes. “The hope, eventually, perhaps, is that the Anglican Foundation benefits from donations as part of that culture. But we also know that people who adopt this way of thinking about generosity will enrich the world and the people around them so much, and that’s what the world needs.”

The *Foundation Forward* podcast is available at anglicanfoundation.org/podcast or through Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts and Spotify. ■

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EDITORIAL

(continued) ▶

Canadians can fight cruelty abroad—and here

“If we are to build a world that conforms more closely to a heavenly kingdom—in which we become repairers of the breach, restorers of the streets—then we must accept that our call to glorify God in the world is one that demands all we can muster.”

Continued from p. 4

of Canada differently. As we observe our neighbour’s fraught election, perhaps we might reflect upon the cruelty present here, in Canadian systems. Just as Canada has a history of offering safe haven, it has also placed people in unacceptable circumstances. I have never had to explain America’s adherence to a survival-of-the-fittest doctrine—or its theories on “good genes,” to use President Donald Trump’s phrasing from a September rally—to Indigenous Canadians. And though Canada has offered escape for people facing systematic oppression, it hasn’t always offered hospitality and care. Ask a Black Nova Scotian how well Canada has accommodated Black Americans who escaped slavery (or Black Canadians who live here, now), and you may get an unsettling answer.

Amidst such soul searching, Canadian Christians might have a “come to Jesus” moment. Some of this work is underway; Anglicans can continue the deep examination that our church has undertaken about the racism and colonialism to be found in its DNA. We can explore how our church can increase diversity among its leadership and membership. We can continue the process of surrender, confession, repentance, reconciliation and evangelism, all of which are related.

And then there’s restitution. We in the church can, as the *Book of Common Prayer* suggests, “show forth thy praise, Not only with our lips, but in our lives.” What are some ways that we—especially those of privileged class and colour—might show forth God’s praise in ways that extend beyond promises of inclusion? Lately, I’ve turned to guidance from Isaiah 58:6-12:

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?



▲ During a 2013 Episcopal Church-supported summer camp in Lyons, N.Y., children of farmworkers head to a civics lesson led by a local judge. Several asked how deportation proceedings might affect their parents and loved ones.

PHOTO: MATTHEW TOWNSEND

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you

shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

If we are to build a world that conforms more closely to a heavenly kingdom—in which we become repairers of the breach, restorers of the streets—then we must accept that our call to glorify God in the world is one that demands all we can muster. Our hearts, our souls, our strength and our minds belong to God’s purpose, to Christ’s comprehensive plan for us

After the American election has passed, how will Canadians live that plan out? How will we make the crooked ways straight, the rough roads smooth? How will our light shine in the darkness? How will we love our neighbour as ourselves? ■

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DAY READING

- 01 2 Samuel 7:1-17
- 02 2 Chronicles 26:1-23
- 03 2 Chronicles 34:29-35:6
- 04 2 Peter 3:1-18
- 05 Ezra 1:1-2:1
- 06 **Mark 1:1-8**
- 07 Nehemiah 8:1-18
- 08 Isaiah 61:1-11
- 09 Psalms 126:1-127:5
- 10 Psalms 128:1-129:8

DAY READING

- 11 John 1:1-14
- 12 John 1:15-28
- 13 **Isaiah 40:1-17**
- 14 Isaiah 40:18-31
- 15 Romans 14:1-12
- 16 Romans 14:13-23
- 17 Romans 15:1-13
- 18 Romans 15:14-32
- 19 Romans 16:1-16
- 20 **Romans 16:17-27**

DAY READING

- 21 Isaiah 62:1-12
- 22 Psalms 97:1-98:9
- 23 Matthew 1:18-25
- 24 Luke 2:1-20
- 25 Hebrews 1:1-14
- 26 2 Chronicles 24:12-22
- 27 **1 John 1.1-2.2**
- 28 Jeremiah 31:1-14
- 29 Jeremiah 31:15-30
- 30 Jeremiah 31:31-40
- 31 Galatians 3:26-4:7

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*“I am the Lord’s servant,”
Mary answered. “May your
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— Luke 1:38



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