

By Matthew Townsend
EDITOR

‘THE COLONIZING INSTINCT IS ALL OVER US’

Is colonialism in the past? The Rev. Graham Singh, priest at St. Jax in Montreal and executive director of the Trinity Centres Foundation—which helps “transform church properties for community impact”—doesn’t seem convinced. In this podcast

conversation, Matthew Townsend, editor of the *Anglican Journal* and *Epiphanies*, talks with Singh about decolonization, the church and changes that may yoke those subjects together. This conversation has been edited for brevity and clarity.



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Well, good morning, Graham. It's wonderful to talk with you. How are things in Montreal?

Good morning, Matthew. Well, we're trying to be very glum and sober about it all, but actually quietly, God is on the move. And there are many good things happening.

COVID is extremely difficult. You know, funerals—tiny funerals—and weddings happening, and gatherings changed forever. But at the same time, boy, there's some light at the end of the tunnel. I had two meetings last night, with two different parishes, and everybody was in the comfort of their own homes, you know, having a gin and tonic. And I realized there are some good things coming out of this, as hard as it is.

That does sound fundamentally Anglican. At home with the gin and tonic.

Yeah, you can definitely tell which churches we were talking to from that.

So we're talking today about a number of subjects, and central among them is colonialism. And you know when many people in the church think of Graham Singh, they think of St. Jax, they think of Trinity Centres, they think of the property questions that loom large within the church. But they may not think of you, at least initially, around the subject of colonialism. And so I was quite interested to find that you actually wrote your master's dissertation, at the London School of Economics, on the subject of colonialism. Say more about that.

Deep at the heart of Canadian Anglicanism, there's a heck of a lot of conversation around colonialism. Take your very traditional Jamaican church verger who is steeped in 16th-century English traditions, but grew up in the Caribbean, and you realize, "Oh, this is a colonial story. How does that happen?" Then you see people with names like "Graham Singh" and you realize, "OK, hold on. There's some Canadian and colonialism mixed into there! How did this happen?"

My mother's family left England; they were a Scottish family that lived in England, they left after the second World War and came to Canada. And then on my father's side they left India in the mid 1800s through the system of indentured labour, which was a response to the abolition of slavery in 1838. And they went to the Caribbean. If you see somebody with an Indian-looking name, you may find that they are from the Indian subcontinent—or you might find they're three or four generations from South Africa, East Africa or the Caribbean. And of course, that's the Indian diaspora. So that's how our family came to be. My parents met in Canada, both as medics, but there's a colonial story in my bones, to put it that way.

And so when I went to England to study, there was a fascination about what happened. My grandfather had actually been the minister of justice in my father's country of British Guiana, and he died before I was born. So there was a family fascination to investigate this ancestor of mine and something in my bones that said this is an important story for today.

How would you define decolonization in the context of the church?

Decolonization commonly refers to the European colonization of the New World. The Commonwealth, the different French overseas territories [are examples]. Each European nation had its own version of this kind of colonialism, starting from around 500 years ago. Moving out with ships, beginning to trade, beginning with military forces in cases like India, taking over through trade agreements in cases like Africa, a military extraction of slaves. This is the colonization we think of very often.

There are other forms of colonization, far more ancient forms. Through biblical times we see the different "-ites"—the Jebusites and Hittites, and they're all moving around, and often this is a colonizing move. So colonialism is something that's existed for a long time, but often we think about European colonization. We think of people like Jinnah and Nehru in India, decolonizing India, we think of the American Revolution, and we think



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“Decolonizing in the case of the church would look like understanding what things were like before we came.”

of the Caribbean. South Africa, East Africa, we think of the end of the British concept of slavery, the beginning of indentured labor. That's how all those Indians got over from the Indian subcontinent, and we look at these processes.

Let's talk about British [decolonization] for a minute, because it has a huge relationship to Canada. The general pattern was, you're a bright young person from that country. You train well, you probably came from a good family. And then you go to England and you become, generally, a lawyer. That was the best training, and then you went back to your country and you negotiated how the colonizing entity

was going to leave. And that negotiation usually recognized what the colonizing entity—let's call it the British Empire—left in place. So in the case of India, we can talk about railroads and the English language and systems of accounting, systems of trade. And in many ways, there are many good aspects of that. But there's also recognition—the good, the bad and the ugly of what's been left over.

So decolonizing in the case of the church would look like understanding what things were like before we came. What did we contribute? So immediately in Canada, we have the First Nations narrative; you have to be very serious about that. Then, what did

we give? Well, we gave something of who Christ is. We're very happy about that. We also gave all kinds of legal and political assumptions around Anglicanism, for instance, and we can look at Methodism and Presbyterianism and Catholicism, their own political accoutrements.

So if we were to decolonize, we're then saying, "What are we happy about what we've left? What do we regret having left? And how do we leave that with the people who are there—who are, in a sense, local now?"

This is the question for the church. If we were to extract the parts of what it meant to be the colonial church that we're not happy about, what would it mean to step back?

And in a biblical sense, what would it mean to prune something that we might recognize is not being fruitful, such that the remaining branch could be more fruitful? So decolonization is a broad term used in many ways, but I think those are some of the ways in which you might apply it to the church today.

As you mentioned, we often address colonialism at the *Anglican Journal*, in the Anglican Church of Canada, in Canada itself. This is a topic that we come back to again and again around Indigenous issues in Canada, in the Indigenous church, but more broadly, as what it means to be Canada as a place that was started as a colonial interest. One of the things that I find any time we publish anything that touches on colonialism—and it can be a soft touch on colonialism—we tend to receive feedback, often criticism that suggests that, you know, "Colonialism, colonization, that's in the past." Quite recently we had a comment on the *Journal* website that pointed out, you know, "My ancestors came to Canada. This was many generations ago, anyway. I don't have anything to do with this." So, the comment said that we might be dwelling in the past. So let's start with—this is the \$20,000 question—is colonialism over? Is colonialism in the past?

Well, I would say unequivocally no. Not only is it not in the past—it's in our bones. We're still doing it. We're still instigating colonialism all over the

place. In some ways you could say this is the natural outcome of culture.

When we come to love part of our culture, we want to see it exported and to see it dominate. In the Bible these are known as powers and principalities, created things that come to control us. We're meant to shed them and find ourselves only in Christ, but of course we colonize the church all the time with our ideas and our assumptions. And often the reforming instinct in the church is to say, "Let's get back to who Jesus really was." And then we fight about what we meant by that. So colonialism, and the colonizing instinct, is all over us.

And it's hard to talk about, you know. If you say to somebody—and I get this all the time—somebody says, "Oh your name is Singh. So clearly you're Sikh." Then I think, "Hold on, you know, I'm a priest in an Anglican church. So how do you think I'm a Sikh?" And I want to say, "Well, you're maybe stepping a little bit too close into my identity, more than I might have invited you." I'm not very sensitive about that at all, but others might say to somebody, "Well, where'd you come from in China?" And they're actually Vietnamese. And they kind of want to say to you, "Know what? I didn't really open that level of conversation with you. I'm a Canadian and I'll [choose to] tell you about my family background if it's relevant." What I mean by that is we all come from these different places, but we don't always like to talk about it.

And when I go back to that same Jamaican verger who's very proud to be an Anglican and go through those old English traditions, there is a wonderful part of that. That's a real part of that person's culture, but we can't forget that a Black Jamaican [historically, likely] ended up in Jamaica through slavery, for the most part, where they were stripped of the religions that they came from; stripped of their names; they were forcibly converted to Christianity; given Christian names, Christian culture, Christian dancing, Christian music. And this now becomes the Jamaican Anglican culture. So yes, it's a proud part of that person's identity. And yes, it came into existence through colonial strife. So how do we end it? Well, we can make peace with it and say, "That's OK. That happened. And now we're



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going to move on.”

But it's still there. And this is a time when Black Lives Matter is a very specific story about the Black journey. And for those of us who come from other minority racial cultures, we have a lot to learn from Black Lives Matter. And the big answer, Matthew, I believe, is that the story of what happened is important, relevant and must not be swept under the rug.

As you say, it's not just something that's in our bones, but it is something happening now. And one of the things I appreciate in

your dissertation is that we tend to think of colonialism as something that wears a tri-corner hat and a puffy shirt. But we get to see the colonialism of John F. Kennedy in the '60s, as he's relating to this British colony that is on the way to becoming an independent nation, that is on the path to decolonization. So that kind of colonialism wears a necktie and is a part of our modern story. So how do you see colonialism present now in Canada in the 21st century? Do you see it as something that is perhaps more familiar to us—that's not really archaic?

We have some wars going on around us. To start, we have a Sino-American trade war going on right now. We have a whole new discussion around oil and energy security. These are largely led by our friends from the United States, and we see the echoes of them with the idea of replacing political or economic partnerships with pure, pure economic protectionism, which has its own colonial impact—“I’ll trade with you, but we’re going to protect our own things first. And if you want to play ball by those rules, we will play ball with you.”

And today, looking at what’s going on with those aspects, now we have all kinds of justice to [consider]—you know, who gets to see the vaccines first? How do we talk about language and culture? During this time, what’s going to happen with the American election? And of course I mentioned it before—I mentioned it probably several times on this podcast, Matthew—Black Lives Matter is a movement that’s meant to shake us to the bones, where our initial understanding of what this means probably needs to be laid down. And we need to think about it again and again and again. How many Black bishops do we have in the Anglican Church or Canada? Of the First Nations bishops that we have, how many of them are the core leadership of the church? And how many are kind of ostracized as conservatives? You know, what is our presence in the senior leadership of the church?

If we go to there, these are issues that we’re facing every single day.

You recently published a few op-eds on the subject of the church in this moment, in the COVID moment, as well as the Black Lives Matter moment. You had a piece in the *Montreal Gazette* and a similar version in *Municipal World*, albeit with a pointier headline, “Hand over Canada’s white churches to the charities who need them.” So where did this come from, and why do you think this is a racial issue? Because you mentioned white churches and white people in this op-ed.

I’m very proud to be published twice in *Municipal World*. How often as church leaders do we get a good hearing amongst Canadian urbanists?

The reason that I wrote about this is the original colonial problem.

We know who came here. We had no Chinese immigrants to Canada 150 years ago. So it makes sense that no Chinese churches or religious organizations got land at that time. The groups that came over at that time were English, Scottish, French, Irish, etc. So it’s normal that they were given land as part of the whole story of building these cities. There is an immediate First Nations problem with what I just said, and that has to be dealt with separately; I have addressed it in some ways.

What then comes up, though is, what happens next? One hundred and fifty years ago these enormously valuable lands were given. There was no real contract around saying, “OK, guys, we understand you’re here first [so you get this land for churches]. But over the next 150 years, Canada is probably going to change. And even though we give you these lands now, we want to make sure that you share them in the future.”

That never happened, right? But now what’s happening is we’re not using those lands for the same purposes of culture, community, perhaps even religion and faith. We’re selling them, and we’re selling them not to redistribute that wealth for other organizations and activities that might need it, but we’re selling the buildings to prop up the old ways that we know aren’t working, for heaven’s sake! We know that these models of church that we live under haven’t been working since World War II—every one of our theological colleges, all of our scholarly literature talks about how the models of church we’re using are not working. Yet we’re selling these precious capital assets that we were given in a colonial settlement to keep funding the old ways!

That’s my objection, and that’s why, at the time, if we said, “Look, we could sell a church building for \$10 million. We’ll give \$5 million to local charities and we’ll give \$5 million to prop up the rest of what we need to do as the church”—by the way, that’s never the proportion. Usually it’s \$9 million goes to



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ST. JAX

“We know that these models of church that we live under haven’t been working since World War II.”

fund some black hole in church books somewhere, and a few hundred thousand goes to support the local charities. Well, a lot of those local charities, especially in urban areas, would say, “We don’t want the money, we want that space. That building and that location is where we need to do our work from. Don’t sell it, we need to use it. By the way, we can’t run it ourselves. And we as charities don’t really want to run your weird old buildings. But we’d really like *you* to run them well, so we can keep using them and maybe we should pay more fairly.”

So it’s really not so much where the land came

from in the first place, but the divestment. The sale of the assets. And I believe, Matthew, that the average Anglican, the average Canadian is looking at us, the way we’re selling church buildings, and they’re asking, “What’s going on? Is this right, what’s happening?”

One of the things you’re saying in the piece, and I quote here—“No recently deconsecrated church that I know of has been wholly dedicated to work amongst First Nations peoples. What few Black-majority

churches we have are closing at a far faster rate than white ones. This is not news. But what is news is the church's engagement with Black Lives Matter on the one hand, while on the other hand quietly continuing to divest of these assets, to the benefit of propping up the old colonial ways. And this, when Canada's non-religious charities are in such desperate need"—that really hit home to me. And I think of the criticism that we tend to hear when these kinds of statements are made—and that was a very bold headline—that, you know, "You are racializing this issue. Why are you dragging race into this?" Well, as you've sort of laid out in the article, and in what you just said, race is very much a part of this landscape already. The church has allowed itself to stay quiet while it benefits from a status quo—for example, in this case, rising urban land costs which have displaced many people. The church has been able to sit and wait in the hopes of cashing in on very lucrative properties, with the negative impacts of that affecting predominantly people of color.

If you want to test this out, think about your typical Canadian town where you have your beautiful big, stone, "tall-steeple-by-the-river church" that's, you know, the kind of "proper Anglican" church, right?

And then you might have your outlying, slightly suburban church, maybe 1950s-, 1960s-built "beaten-with-the-ugly-stick-of-church" kind of building with, perhaps, a more ethnic community. Perhaps they're a little bit more open to sharing their building. The building itself is not worth very much; the land isn't worth all that much.

And the socio-economic background of the congregation is such that the operating expense of the church may have failed earlier. Well that building, now, it's quietly sold. A condo tower goes up, of some modest variety. A few hundred thousand or a few million dollars are put back in.

In a sense, some of those have gone quietly.

What we're left with now: What do we do with the big old one by the river? Which we thought, "Well, that one will never die. There'll always be such-and-

such family, plus such-and-such family will always leave their fortunes to this church."

What happens when the old granny dies and the grandson says, "Like hell is another dime of my family's fortune going to go down the drains of those awful churches"? And we've been told that. We were told that, Matthew, on a call we organized with bishops around Canada [with] philanthropic foundations who lead all of the major family foundations in Canada. They explained very clearly to the bishops on a call that we ran for Trinity Centres Foundation that granting foundations are sick and tired of the way the churches are managing, effectively, an impact investment portfolio that their families funded. This is evidenced by the plaques on the front pews, you know, the brass ones that explain this wing of the building was built by such-and-such industrial family.

Well, those families are pissed off. They haven't been in the church in ages. They feel no remaining compulsion to have their children baptized. They're out. And of course these grand old buildings were never funded by, you know, the ordinary churchgoer; they were always funded by the ordinary churchgoer plus those of extraordinary means. And those who have extraordinary means checked out a long time ago, and they're not going to come back until we significantly mend our ways. And they are dealing with justice issues in their enterprises and their companies and they're wondering, "Why is the church so slow on this?"

And I'll say another thing. We have spent a huge amount of time on two issues in the Anglican Church. One is the issue of human sexuality, and the other is our response to residential schools. On our response to human sexuality, I think there's a fairly good presence now, where many churches are known as being particularly queer inclusive, LGBTQ+ friendly. There are all kinds of ways in which this is expressed in Anglican churches. I think there's a reasonable position of integrity to say, "We spent time on this, and here's the presence. Now we're trying our best." (What we've not seen—we haven't seen tens of thousands of people who appreciate that position come back to the church, right? We haven't seen a *massive* uplift.)



PHOTO: CAROLINE THIBEAULT

St. Jax has received coverage from the *Anglican Journal* for its modernizations, including rental of its space for a circus.

But when it comes to First Nations issues? I really mean it! I mean, where is the First Nation centre that comes out of some deconsecrated church? Or, for heaven's sake, why would it need to be deconsecrated? Why doesn't every diocese in Canada hand over one of its buildings, or a certain proportion of its wealth, to actually engaging in physical places where our First Nations sisters and brothers can dwell within our cities? We haven't seen it, and I would say, in that sense, there's a lack of integrity in what we've been talking about versus what we've been doing.

I certainly read that in your piece. There's, I think, a call-out to that sort of hypocrisy. Of saying we support something.

I love how I've said "lack of integrity" and you've turned that to "hypocrisy," and you're right, that's where I'm going. I didn't quite use that phrase—I guess "hypocrisy" is actually aimed at one particular person, which is not my intention. But I think as an organization, we have to own some hypocrisy in this area. Let me say this, you cannot be, you know, a capitalism-bashing Anglican leader and say, "Well, why did the rich hoard all this money, you know,

these terrible capitalists?" when we as the church are far worse. We're hoarding as the church in Canada. We are hoarding over \$30 billion worth of land, buildings [and cash].

And yet we're lamenting that we have no more money left. We don't know where to go, for heaven's sake. If God were to speak to us and say, "For heaven's sake, my children, you have everything you need to do everything that you feel called to do by me, but you need to share what I've given with you properly"—you know, we're not hearing that call.

I'm preaching this Sunday on reformation. Reformation—being reformed into the people that God wants us to be. But also understanding the big waves of the history of the church which come through reformation, we should be people known as plague specialists, an organization experienced in pandemics and global crises. We've been through it all. We are the oldest, largest organization in the world, the Christian church taken all together. We need to be speaking out about reformation, and this is a reformation moment. But reformation moments start with people nailing their complaint to the wall. And there are many of us out there doing that now. We've been doing it for years.

Now it's the time for reformation. For reformation! We are all part of the greatest reformation and revival of the church ever seen. I say reformation because we know how badly things have gone. It needs to change. Reformation because people are calling out for new ways, and it behooves us to listen and to talk about them as you've been doing. And as part of what this conversation is.

But also revival, if we really study the history. It's kind of you to bring up my studies at London School of Economics and decolonization, and yes, I do hold a master's degree in history. There are historians amongst us that we need to [help us] look back and realize the answer to reformation is not management consulting. It's revival. It's saying, "Holy Spirit, come. Come and have your way with your church. Holy Spirit, testify to all things of who Jesus is and how he needs his church to be shaped in these days. Let us let go of the ways that have become false idols." You know, the golden calf.

It can't just be revival, by the way. Right? It can't

be just saying, "Lord, bring renewal to the church. Come on, just do it without repentance, without that part of reformation of saying, 'We went wrong here. We did wrong. We need to mend our ways.'" It's all in the Scriptures, I believe, and it's right in front of us.

Do you think that this mix of what's perhaps necessary right now in terms of repentance, reconciliation, reformation, decolonization—do you think that it's perhaps a tall order to tackle all of these at the same time?

Well, it would be if we're relying on our human power to do it, which is what marks us out as different from the rest of the world. It's what makes us people of faith. And if we're truly students of the Reformation, we realize the European Reformation of 500 years ago didn't happen because all of the different cities that went through the Reformation said, "You know, this is overwhelming, let us break this down and we'll deal with this over the next 20 years in an organized way. In fact, let's establish the synod schedule for the next 20 years of the Reformation."

That's not how it happened. It happened by the Spirit breathing through a complaint and causing it to happen in miraculous ways. In that case, there was a new technology, the printing press. In our case, today, we have a radical globalism that's been hyperextended because of COVID that's giving us, effectively, a new reality on which to work. So anything which says, "I believe gradual change..."—why?

We've immediately been introduced to universal basic income [through the Canada Emergency Response Benefit]. What a huge objective reached, what a huge issue of justice reached for better or for ill. We're going to deal with the inflationary pressures of it now for a long time, but it's there, it's changed our economy in one swoop.

You know, how dare we say to the rest of society—who are forced to receive radical, radical change—how dare we say, "Well, that's fine that you're dealing with radical change, folks, but the church is the same yesterday, today and forever." No, that's not true. *God* is the same yesterday, today and forever, and His church has changed significantly over these



 CAROLINE THIBAUT  photographe

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“I don’t think this is the time for gradual change.”

last 2,000 years. So I would say my response to that, Matthew, would be: I don’t think this is the time for gradual change. I think it’s a time for a *massive, massive* move of unity and honesty and repentance. And financial planning around the biblical concept of jubilee.

And that seems to be a consistent message that you offer when discussing the work of Trinity Centres, the life of St. Jax, your consultation with other churches across Canada—that this is not specifically a call to let go of the wheel, that you’re asking

parishes to engage in financial planning, which will have radical outcomes, I think. At least this is what I read in what you write, and what I hear in what you say—that you’re asking people to do a great deal and to really transform how they think about the church, but you’re not asking them to do it without a plan.

What I found is that there are very, very few stated diocesan plans about what to do about church property. And one of the first objections is, of course, a diocese doesn’t have full control over what

happens, anyways, because the parishes like to hold on to their own control.

I think that's a big—not that it's really needed, but I'll just throw it in here—it's a big defense of our bishops and archdeacons who we might blame, saying, "Why aren't they doing more about this?" Well, we've inherited a system in which it's difficult—the bishops can't just, you know, snap their fingers and make some of these things happen. So we do need regulatory reform, especially where we have four parishes in one square kilometre. Which happens. Do you know Cambridge, Ontario, has four Anglican churches? And 150,000 people, max. It's very spread out. It's a very suburban kind of environment.

Well, they're all trying to figure out what they're doing. They've reached out—that's not a secret—to say, "How might we deal with this? Well guess what, we don't have a clear strategy."

With the Trinity Centres Foundation, we've set ourselves up to be ready for when an entire diocese wants to come up with a plan that they don't necessarily want to execute, but if they were to bring on a group that says, "We'd like to run this." And we're actually in conversations with a number of Roman Catholic dioceses, in particular, who are looking at this, and that's very exciting. The other way that may come is effectively through a bankruptcy trustee type of situation. And we've written a letter to CPA Canada, who runs the accounting standards for Canada, to say, "How are you auditing church organizations? What are the questions you're asking?"

Normally if you were a company and you were selling capital assets, the way that we are selling capital assets, to cover operational losses, every one of your financial reports would have a massive red line over it saying, "Extreme warning from the auditors. This is it; this organization is in major trouble."

Right? But church organizations, for some reason, have a pass on this. And one of our questions to CPA Canada is, "Why is that the case? Why are you applying a different set of standards to this category of charity, than you would to other categories of charity?"

And the second is, we're saying, "Have you run any projections as to what would happen if the sale of church buildings were suddenly stopped or suddenly slowed down?"

And I don't mean that as a threat, but it is a policy issue that we're exploring. In Ontario, a school building cannot be immediately sold. You have to prove that you've tried to sell it to other schools first on a closed market for that category. And then you can sell it on the open market. Which makes sense, right, sense to most people who'd realize, *Well, that's school lands that were given. And maybe another school needs it.* And its neighborhoods have been built up around these buildings, assuming that there was a school there, etc.

We don't have any regulation like that in Canada for churches—for places of faith, as they're called in the urbanistic language—and I believe we should.

So I'm going back to the overall subject of this particular digital magazine to which this podcast will be attached—we're looking at assumptions that the church might benefit to re-examine before entering 2021. Everyone's talked about how 2020 is a challenging year; I'm sure you've seen all the memes float by on Facebook and Twitter. We all like to make fun of 2020. But there's no evidence that 2021 is going to be particularly easy. What do you think the church should really reconsider before entering the next year? And given all that we've talked about, what would be dangerous for us to move into 2021 and still be grasping onto?

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I think one of the most dangerous things to miss when we're talking about organizational change is the conversation around money. There's no other organization that wouldn't talk about the impact of its activities on its budget. There's no family that wouldn't talk about the impact of its purchase of a house or somebody getting a new job without the impact on the family finances.

The most important thing the church needs to look at now is the impact of COVID on the finances of the church and realizing that that question, answered, well, can release mission in an incredible way.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ST. JAX

“The most important thing the church needs to look at now is the impact of COVID on the finances of the church.”

Let me say this another way: There's no point talking about mission whilst excluding the financial reality that underpins it. It's like the orchestra playing on the sinking *Titanic*; for heaven's sake, it's time to get on the lifeboat and then figure out life from there.

Given what we've been talking about in this conversation in terms of decolonization in the world, decolonization in the church—the move towards opening up conversations as well as opening churches to different uses—what should we be doing in 2021? And what perhaps should we be pruning?

The end of John's Gospel gives us the best answer to this question. Jesus prays that we are to be one, just as he and the Father are one for a particular purpose, that the whole world would know that God is one.

This is a call by Jesus to church unity, and I believe the most important thing we need to prune is the subtle assumption that we as Anglicans are better than other types or other parts of the church. I'm not even going to get into multifaith questions—I think our respect for other faiths in the Anglican church is pretty good. I think it's a lot harder with our respect for other churches. If we were to understand that the Pentecostals have so much to offer, Baptists

have so much to offer. The house churches, the Chinese-, Spanish-, Arabic- and Farsi-speaking house churches, have so much to offer.

Yet when they come across our radar, they often come, as you know, as the renters in the afternoon, who we don't really see even though their congregations are kind of five times larger than most of the Anglican ones. So to me it's a John 17 correction to our assumptions of church unity, which if we really deeply got would actually answer all of these property questions; we wouldn't dare sell a building without seeing if another church needed to use it.

To me church unity is a vital piece. The other piece is understanding the difference between instructional worship and participative worship.

Instructional worship of: *You stand, you sit in the place where I tell you, and you stand and sit when I when I tell you to do that as the priest. Do what you're told. Be part of this religion.* Yeah, this ended a long time ago. And what we've seen that's bearing fruit in the church is a participative form of worship. We see this in other forms of learning—much shorter presentations, the podcast inviting into a conversation of equals. Our styles of worship need to deeply reflect the call to participative forms of worship that we're seeing working. So those would be the two things I point to: church unity and a truly, truly participative, re-formed style of worship.

And a far more transparent governance—and I'm not talking about abuse issues. I'm talking about the everyday big priorities. What are the big, big priorities? And let's really, really talk about them, and for heaven's sake, stop talking about them mostly as clergy. But rather, as the people of God, leading the church of God.

So what's ahead for you in 2021?

Looking ahead for me, life at St. Jax is a joy. We have

a wonderful community. We're very multicultural. We continue to grow in healthy ways. And I think we're learning how to do the truly mixed mode of online and in-person worship. I think that'll be a continued learning through 2021.

I'm also excited with Trinity Centres Foundation. I think we're getting clear. We've been trying to turn the combination dial on the safe of trying to figure out, how do we unlock a new type of finance for churches that are trying to change for a new day? We have a number of granting foundations in Canada that are helping us establish a fund, which will be available for churches that need to do this pre-development work properly.

Often they get, you know, Uncle John the architect and their friend Joe, who was a real estate broker 10 years ago, to come together and come up with a new idea. This is insufficient, and it ends up leading to the kind of panic decisions that happen with insufficient planning.

And so what I'm excited about with Trinity Centres is what I think will be the establishment of a fund from which churches can borrow to pay for that work to be done. And we're spending more and more time on that. You know, we've helped the United Church in Toronto sell to the Boys and Girls Club of Toronto, and then we created a deal where they were able to rent back the space from the building they'd sold and they actually took the money they got from the sale, and we [helped create] a vendor take-back mortgage to help them do that. We've got another building in Toronto that's being bought, an old Catholic building being bought by another congregation. Very excited to see that happen. We've got a church in Calgary that's developing a four-acre piece of land.

These are the fun stories that make up what Trinity Centres Foundation is, and I think in 2021 we're going to see those stories really blossom. I'm looking forward to seeing that. ■