



Lamentation over Christ

By ANGELICO, Fra

(b. ca. 1400, Vicchio nell Mugello, d. 1455, Roma)

1436-41

Tempera and gold on panel, 109 x 166 cm

Museo di San Marco, Florence

The Lamentation was made for the Dominican confraternity's oratory, the façade of which was painted with scenes from the Passion of Christ. It portrayed the loving compassion of the Virgin, Mary Magdalene, and other saints as they mourned the death of Jesus and prepared him for the grave.

The bottom of the painting is damaged.



Pancake Supper on a Saturday?



Photo: Anne King and Gordon Cooper prepare cooked pancakes to be distributed at the Annual Pancake Supper at St. Mark's Halifax. With last year's storm on Shrove Tuesday and the predicted storm the same time this year, St. Mark's held a very successful supper on Saturday February 6th. As it turned out, another storm did cancel many Shrove Tuesday events again this year.

Shrove Tuesday - a brief history

Shrove Tuesday is the day we think about being 'shriven' – confessing our sins and receiving the cleansing and release of forgiveness. The word 'shrove' drives from an Anglo-Saxon word 'shrift' meaning to hear someone's confession, or 'shrive them'. So Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, when he makes it to land, and needs to be released from the burden of his guilt, says to the hermit: 'O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy Man.'

It was the duty of priests especially to hear the confession and grant forgiveness and spiritual counsel to those who were facing execution and when prison chaplains failed to do this properly, with time care and attention, there was a complaint that people were being 'given short shrift', which is where that phrase comes from.

Malcolm Guite, Chaplain, Girton College, Cambridge

COLUMNIST

Excitement mounts at St. Bart's

Well, we have seen our new incumbent more than once from a distance as he and his wife visited the renovations going on at the rectory. He sure does have red hair as Orin mentioned, but Orin forgot to mention that he is also a very large man. He has to be well over six feet with a look of Prince Harry about him! His name is Jason Lewis and he is a fellow from rural Nova Scotia, having grown up on a farm in the Valley. His wife is as tiny as he is large. She too comes from the same area of the Provence and I think they may have been high school sweethearts.

Everyone here is very curious about our new neighbours and we cannot wait to welcome them into the parish and community. They drove out one Sunday and joined us at the



ST. BART'S BY THE BOG

Sarah Neish

morning service. "High and Mighty" Jim was behind the altar that particular Sunday and "Give'em Hell" Larry was preaching. I'm not sure if this was the best combination for our new 'fella' to see. The two extremes were in full flight so to speak. It was a Sunday in early Lent and Jim was in his Lenten array, all sackcloth and ashes. He does like pomp

and ceremony. Larry on the other hand could care less about such things pertaining to Liturgy but he does love to pound the pulpit and was in fine form that Sunday.

A tall Prince Harry look-alike with a tiny woman by his side stood out amongst the small congregation at St. Bart's and I have to say, Jason did not do anything to hide who he was. I think he was impressed with the music as we sang Lenten hymns with great gusto and the mixture of 'high and low' church gave the worship a very eclectic flavour. I hope Jason comes to appreciate the help that these retirees can offer him in his first parish.

We met his wife Miranda, his very pregnant wife I might add! The baby will arrive shortly after they move here. Once final exams and graduation are

over the move will happen but I think these two may be coming out to St. Bart's more often and we will be overjoyed to welcome them into their new parish, new job, new home and new life here By the Bog. The Parish Council would be fine with an early move into the rectory. It is always nice to see lights on in the house.

This is the beginning of a new ministry for us here, By the Bog. The Archdeacon was adamant that Miranda was here as a partner to Jason in marriage, not in ministry and we were never to expect that we were getting two for the price of one! Besides, she will have her hands full with her own studies and a new baby. Sounds like a busy household to me!

I'll keep you posted,
Aunt Madge



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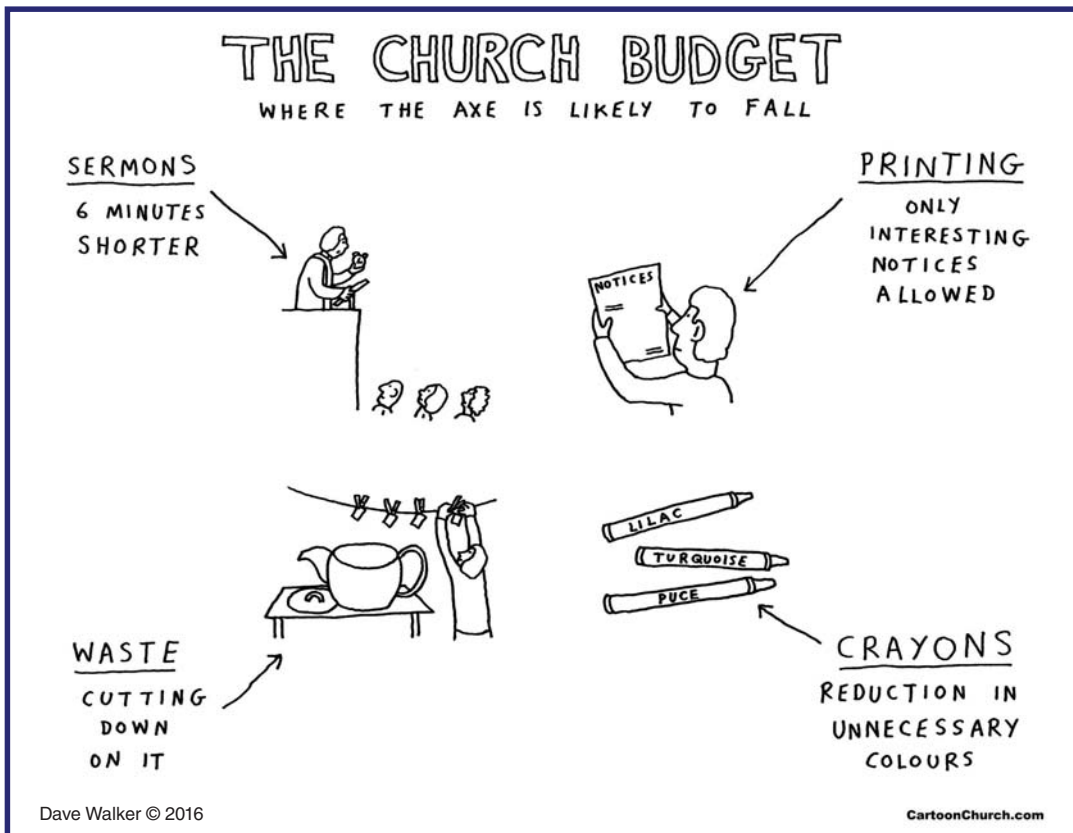
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ARCHDEACON'S MESSAGE

I love Lent



Archdeacon Mark Kingsbury,
St. Francis by the Lakes, Lower
Sackville

I love Lent. It is one of my favourite times of the year. I look forward to it every winter, and get excited about the possibilities that this holy season brings every year. I begin pondering my Lenten journey early in January, and anticipate the encouragement the opportunities present. I am not sure how many others share in my enthusiasm, but I try to stress the beautiful potential found in these sacred forty days.

Our liturgy in the Book of Alternative Services invites us to observe a holy Lent, by self-examination, penitence, prayer, fasting and almsgiving, and by reading and meditating on the word of God. There are so many different ways we can each embrace these words. We will all hear different sermons, different reflections on how we can give expression to our Lenten journey, but this invitation draws us into a profound intimacy with ourselves, our God, and each other.

To begin, I am so thankful for that phrase of "self-examination". Over the decades I have been able to focus on my life, and make positive, healthy changes in how I approach my life. I have made significant improvements in my mental wellbeing, my physical well-being, and my spiritual well-being. Lent has enabled me to move beyond unhealthy life choices, break foolish habits, and refocus my attention on things that are beautiful and celebrate life. The invitation rings true this year as well. How can I make some improvements in how I look at myself and the world around me, improvements that enhance life and cause me to rejoice in my God?

But the Lenten journey is not a season that focuses on me and me alone. The journey inward inspires to begin a journey outward, to give more of ourselves for the ministry of our Church. This outward journey can be done however our calling is expressed, but our God enables us to reach beyond where we are to go where we will become. Lent calls for the next step, challenging us to grow from safety and satisfaction to places of

growth and excitement.

I think what I love most about Lent though, with all its glories, is that it draws us closer to the celebration of Easter. We are indeed people who embrace challenges and opportunities for growth, we are people who give of ourselves for the sake of others, and we are a people of the new and risen life of our Christ. The new life of our Risen Saviour is one that calls us into a deeper relationship with God and each other. We are an Easter people, called to love a little deeper, embrace a little longer, enjoy nature a little more, appreciate our friends and family more, and sing and dance louder and prouder. Live the new life of our God.

My Lenten discipline this year, by the way, is to be more intentional about spending time in sketching, drawing, and finishing a few paintings I started but have neglected for a few months, all the while playing music in the background. Lent, a time to draw closer to God through music and art. I pray all of us will have a beautiful, holy and sacred Lent.

*"Create in me a clean heart, O God
and renew a right spirit within me*

*Give me the joy of your saving help again
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit."*

Amen

**Lent calls for
the next step,
challenging us to
grow from safety and
satisfaction to places
of growth and
excitement.**

Mark +

(Ed. note: This is the third of several guest columnists throughout the year in lieu of the regular bishop's column. They offer a different point of view from their perspective and offer the bishop a break from his monthly contribution. Hope you enjoy.)

“They are preaching a different Jesus!”



Rev. Dr. John Roddam

March can be bleak in the Maritimes. There is an old aphorism that “if March comes in like a lamb (mild weather), it will go out like a lion (stormy weather) and vice versa. Of course we prefer the better weather.

Jesus is also The Lamb of God and The Lion of Judah. We too prefer the images of the Gentle Shepherd – Jesus gentle, meek, and mild. Yet, Jesus is the One who will come to judge the quick (living) and the dead as both the Nicene and Apostles Creeds affirm. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Many followers maintain He is alive today and still forgives sin and offers eternal life for those who have repented and turned in faith to believe in Him. As we are converted to Christ we enter into a relationship with God that the

Prayer Book calls “a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour.”

Famous Canadian Evangelist John G. Lake (1870 to 1935) was approached by the Bishop of London to address the clergy of the Church of England. Lake had planted 1,250 churches in Southern Africa in 5 years. Well-known London Bishop Ingram sent a delegation by steamer to “check out” Lake while he was in Africa. In 1913, “Dr. Lake” addressed a synod of CofE leaders. Ingram described the message as the best he had heard regarding Primitive (Early Church) Christianity and commended the text for careful study by the clergy.

In the fall of 1914, Lake founded the Healing Rooms in Spokane, WA. (NOTE: The Healing Rooms have been re-established. There is one in Dartmouth at Lutheran

Church of Our Saviour! See: <http://healingroomsforhalifax.ca/>)

The success of these rooms was so profound that one of the three hospitals in Spokane went out of business! Lake visited many Churches upon His return to North America. One of the statements he uttered has haunted me. Lake was shocked at the state of the Church and opined, “They are preaching a different Jesus!”

Could that be said of us today? Are we preaching an anemic and powerless Jesus? One who is simply an example of “good living” rather than the Saviour of the World! As I studied in seminary 30+ years ago, I wondered why the church in North America was struggling while the Church in the 2/3s world is growing in leaps and bounds!

Since then, I have taught

leaders in the Chinese Underground Church where 35,000 people PER DAY come to Christ. I’ve ministered among Church Planters in Northern India where last year (2015) 5,500 Churches were planted. These experiences have changed my perspective.

I believe our clergy and people need to encounter Jesus Christ afresh in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the fire that fuelled the Early Church and renewal movements that have arisen since.

The Jesus proclaimed in places where the Church is growing is the living Lord who heals, delivers, and saves! AND the fruit is evident there – healings and other miracles abound! We need this Gospel proclaimed in our parishes. Then we will see growth... profound growth!

Feedback on John's articles is welcome - email john_rodham@hotmail.com and copy to diocesantimes@gmail.com also!

My thoughts on “Still Alice”

BY REV FAYE FORBES

AS I WALKED through the doors of the Royal Bank Theater in the QE II Hospital, I could smell the popcorn. The surprise was the amount of people who came out to screen the movie “Still Alice” and take part in the discussion. To say that there was standing room only, is a gross understatement! The movie was done well depicting the symptoms and realities of Alzheimer’s Disease. The discussion that followed was continual until we ran out of time. I’m sorry that there were still some unanswered comments. It just goes to show that people are interested in how the many lives are affected and what they can do to make life easier with love and dignity.

“Alice” and I walked hand in hand through the onset of the symptoms and the disease although hers progressed much faster than mine (maybe that was literary licence, or maybe not...) As she lost her daily living capabilities she continued to gather peace and hope through her own spirituality, and the relationships with her family, which at times were fractured due to the disease. There were times of denial, doubt, anger, confrontation. All emotions that we encounter daily with the



Panel discussion members after the screening of “Still Alice” at the QEII Health Centre auditorium in January. From left: Françoise Baylis (Bioethicist/Philosopher, Dalhousie School of Medicine), Rev Faye Forbes and Sultan Darvesh (Neuroscientist/Geriatician, Dalhousie School of Medicine)

journey with Alzheimer’s.

The discussion was non-stop; the questions as varied as the audience. Thanks to Faculty of Medicine, Novel Tech Ethics at Dalhousie University, the Alzheimer Society, Drs Sultan Darvesh and Françoise Baylis who sponsored and sat on the panel with me. As a panel we responded from the medical and ethical viewpoint as well as from someone who walks with the disease on a daily

basis. The concerns of the audience were raised from those dealing with a loved one, an educational standpoint and all the “what if” questions.

Alzheimer’s and dementia are diseases that touch almost everyone at some point in their lives, whether it is themselves, family or friends. There are more than 17,000 Nova Scotians living with the consequence of this disease at present and that number is

expected to double (possibly triple) in the next 10 years. Even though we are a society of grey heads, Alzheimer’s is not an old people’s disease nor is it a normal part of aging. With the diagnoses happening earlier and earlier in life - some in the 40s. So to help people understand how all these lives are changed, how to help, what to say (or not say). Everyone at the theater left with some new knowledge and understanding.

Since there are so many symptoms and affects from Alzheimer’s, everyone’s case is as individual as the person. A stereotypical misconception is that we are stupid – and that somewhere in the disease process we have lost all our life lessons and feelings. Most times we have not and just find things harder to communicate. It is hard when you know how to do something in your mind but cannot figure out how to communicate that idea or how to make your fingers do what you want. Alzheimer’s is more than just forgetting things, it destroys your way of life, robs you of the things that were important and meaningful to you. And it does that to all the family as they become 24/7 caregivers.

I am a person-centered personality. I want the public

to understand why I might be slow to understand and respond, why I might be forgetful, why I cannot do the things I used to do etc. And in spite of these drawbacks to “normal” living, I am still the same person I always was, with the same feelings. There are a lot of people who think there is nothing wrong with me because they see no physical signs but people with dementia to have a hard time carrying out daily activities. That is the heartbreaking part. There is a lot of living left in me and I intend to make the most out of every minute. My journey has enabled me to embrace fully God’s grace (even on the bad days). I look at and see and do things differently now.

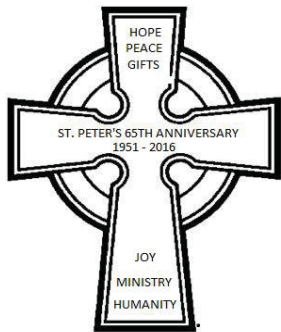
Alzheimer’s and dementia research has come a long way in the last decade yet there is still a long way to go. Knowledge and education are the fuel that enables the engine of improvement to run smoothly- whether it is in daily living, research or medicine. Each and everyone should be embraced by thoughtfulness, caring, and a smile as they will assure the person with Alzheimer’s a sense of safety and security.

Blessings,

Faye+

St. Peter's Birch Cove 65 Years a Parish

1951 - 2016



The St. Peter's Anniversary Celebration Team Sixty Five (ACTS) has chosen the Celtic cross as a visual symbol to attract your attention to this important anniversary year. Themes for the anniversary year 2016 are based on the Church Calendar Seasons.

Advent	Hope	Nov 28 - Dec 23, 2015
Christmas	Peace	Dec 24 - Jan 5, 2016
Epiphany	Gifts	Jan 6 - Feb 9, 2016
Lent	Humanity	Feb 10 - Mar 26, 2016
Easter	Joy	Mar 27 - May 14, 2016
Pentecost	Ministry	May 15 - Nov 27, 2016

A special Anniversary Collect has been prepared by members of 'ACTS'.

Collect for St. Peter's Sixty-five Year Celebration

Nourishing and life-giving God, You teach us to love one another and sustain us through all our trials as we journey through this earthly life. Guide us, your church of St. Peter's as we celebrate our past and open our eyes to new possibilities as we continue with your great ministry.

May we continue to preach and practice your good news with all whom we encounter and may we experience the hope, peace, joy, gifts, humanity and ministry of this, our anniversary year. This we pray through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen

Plans are in place for each Church Season. We have completed the Advent, Christmas and Epiphany planned events. In particular presentation of a newsletter has been electronically sent to all parishioners with an email address. The newsletters include excerpts from the Parish archives which have proved to be a popular feature. Hard copies of the Newsletters are also available from the Church office.

'ACTS' will keep you informed of future events.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Archdeacon Glenn Eason resigned as rector of the Parish of Amherst effective April 1st, 2016, at which time Glenn will enter retirement.

Rev Ian Wissler appointed rector of the Parish of Chester effective June 1st, 2016.

Rev Louis Quennelle appointed priest-in-charge of the Parish of Blandford effective January 17th, 2016.

Rev Ron Barkhouse will retire as associate parish priest within the Parish of Western Shore effective January 31st, 2016.

CLERGY QUIET DAY: Wed, March 16th, 6:30pm - 9pm and Thurs, March 17th, 8am - 12:15pm followed by lunch.

Presenter Sr. Constance Joanna SSJD joined SSJD in 1984 and took life vows in 1991. She has served as the Reverend Mother for the sisters and as interim CEO of St. John's Rehabilitation hospital. She is a spiritual director, retreat leader, a priest and a Canadian by choice. She holds a PhD from the University of Minnesota and has been an adjunct faculty member at Wycliffe College for many years. She is currently teaching a course entitled "Benedictine Spirituality and the Foundations of New Monasticism". She is familiar with the changing dynamics of priestly ministry having served in several different parishes in the Diocese of Toronto as interim priest in charge.

Why compassionate conversation is the best foundation on which to build mission success

To Refresh Your Memory of Last Month's Article

Last month, I shared with you how we, at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Beaver Bank, began the community

we didn't share only the good stuff, but also the really hard stuff. We didn't share only the peaks, but also the valleys. We didn't share just the things that made us look our best, but also where we felt most

weak and ineffective. We shared our past joys and hurts and our deepest hopes for the future. We spoke and listened to one another without judgement, with openness and acceptance of who we are -fully- as children of God. Out of the depths of that caring, wholly honest and compassionate conversation, we built a bridge of understanding; first, to each other, and then, from the heart of the parish out into the mission field of Beaver Bank, where we now stand on a new mission frontier together.

We made a promise that night: to always speak the

truth in love to each other and we've kept that promise for the last four years, without fail. By keeping that promise, the trust that we now share gives us the team energy we need to tackle the multitude of challenges that being a small church in this world entails.

Out of that mutual trust, we were able to invite the community to take part in our mission conversation, asking them to speak their truth in love to us as a parish. Hearing that truth has empowered us to build even more meaningful mission partnerships within



Rev. Cathy Lee Cunningham, Part-Time Rector of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Beaver Bank and Founder, The Vocapeace Institute

the community. As a parish, we now stand on a new bridge, not alone, but together with key leaders in the community, ready to meet the callings of this new 21st century ministry frontier, rooted in mutual understanding and in common ground.

This is the moment that we have prayed for, the one that powerfully merges our capacities as a parish with the many capacities already present in other community organizations. This is the bridge that leads us straight into the heart of the real pains, challenges and unmet human and environmental needs of Beaver Bank, to a place where we can bring all of our collective resources to bear, to maximum effect, to make a real difference where God has planted all of us to serve. And, while we know that we have only just begun to scratch the surface, with compassionate conversation as our foundation, nothing will be impossible with God as the future unfolds.

A Great Starting Point: The Charter for Compassion

This past May, I presented a resolution (seconded by Cynthia Pilichos, Team Leader of the Healthy Leadership VSST) commending the

Charter for Compassion to all of our parishes, Diocesan VSSTS and groups, for study and exploration. The Synod passed the resolution and many parishes in the Diocese have undertaken different ways of responding, by studying and adopting the Charter.

Wearing my congregational consultant's hat during my presentation at Synod, I shared that one of the top causes of conflict that can lead parishes to a place of impasse, stagnation, division and/or derailment, is actually disagreement over vision, mission and money. It is a given that when we undertake to explore, envision and implement mission visions and plans together, we first need to commit to learn and practice communication skills that build bridges to deeper understanding. If we fail to do this and end up divided over the mission itself, we aren't able to accomplish anything. Further damage is caused when the local community sees us as unable to resolve our own differences, making it virtually impossible for us to reach out with mission credibility. I have seen this happen time and time again to parishes that have become stuck over conflict and let it get out of control. Nine times of ten, one of the first concerns named in those parishes is: "The community thinks we're hypocrites because we can't stop fighting. They're right. We've lost our credibility."

For those of you in this place: if you choose to learn new communication skills and move forward by speaking the truth in love, there is always hope!

Studying the Charter for Compassion can be a great place to learn how to rebuild broken bridges or build entirely new ones. For those of you who don't yet know about the Charter, here's a quote from

the public literature produced by the organization:

"In 2008, Karen Armstrong won the TED Prize for her wish to create a Charter for Compassion. Thousands of people contributed to the process and the Charter was unveiled in November 2009. Since then, the Charter has inspired community-based acts of compassion all over the world. From Seattle to Karachi, Houston to Amsterdam, in schools, houses of worship, city governments, and among individuals everywhere, the Charter is transforming lives."

Whether your parish is stuck, stagnant, or downright conflicted, learning compassionate communication skills (and practicing them!) can be a new, God-given path to unleashing reconciliation, understanding, visions, missions and community bonds that you never thought possible. It's never too late to start!

In next month's issue I'll tell you how to do just that: Start. And how I can help.

NEW WEBSITE LAUNCH and A FREE E-BOOK FOR YOU! I'm in the final stages of the redevelopment of the website for my consulting practice, The Vocapeace Institute, launching April 23rd, 2016. It's a sacred digital space where you'll find all kinds of spiritual, practical and worship resources, book reviews, and useful links, as well as my weekly blog. Some of you have already visited and signed up to receive my weekly multimedia toolkit and my new e-book, *THE VOCAPEACE WAY*, which I'm giving away on launch day. If you haven't done so already, please go to www.vocapeace.com to join the growing global community of subscribers! Once you sign up, you'll be taken to a special page I've made for you on all things compassion, to help get you started with compassionate conversation and thinking now.

Compassion

We urgently need to make **compassion** a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, **compassion** can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, **compassion** is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

The Charter for Compassion, www.charterforcompassion.org

engagement phase of our mission plan by undertaking a community drive and conducting interviews with key community leaders. I promised to share the "secret sauce" of our success with you this month, so, here we go!

The Not-So-Secret Secret Sauce is "Right in the Bible": Speaking the Truth in Love

The success of our mission journey in Beaver Bank actually began in the first conversation we had together, during the search process for a new rector. In that conversation

St. Francis by the Lakes Anglican Church

presents our 13th Annual Dinner Theatre Experience

Shadow Soul Lane

Youth Performance (6-18 years)
4PM, cost \$6 (veggies, pizza, ice cream)
Saturday, April 9

Afternoon Performance 19+
2PM, cost \$15 (cheese, crackers, dessert)
Sunday, April 10th

Early Evening Performance 19+
*5PM, Sunday, April 17th
Evening Performances 19+
*7PM

Friday, April 15
Saturday, April 16 (*limited tickets)
Thursday, April 21
Friday, April 22 (*limited tickets)
Saturday, April 23

*Evening meal: Salad, roast beef dinner, and dessert
Wine, beer, and pop available for purchase at each show
Tickets \$30 each / non refundable/ no reservations
Meals not available as take outs

Tickets available At Box Office ONLY
St. Francis by the Lakes Anglican Church
192 First Lake Drive, Lr. Sackville
Box Office Hours:
Sunday, March 6, 13, 20, April 3: 11AM-12PM
Thursday, March 10, 31: 6PM-7PM
Tuesday, March 15: 7PM-8PM



Photo: Actors preparing for the upcoming dinner theatre at St. Francis by the Lakes next month.

It's A New Day!

Something to Talk About

BY REV. LISA G. VAUGHN

The ability to communicate is vital to a species' survival, according to neuro-anthropologist Dr. Terrence Deacon. The same goes for the church. Effective communication is central to the health and potential thriving of a congregation.

Quite simply, communication is the process of exchanging information between individuals or groups of people. It is the sharing and receiving of a message that conveys thoughts, feelings, intentions and ideas. It is also easier to define than to live out, as miscommunication is common.

Relationships within the church that are nurtured to be open, honest and exhibit integrity, reveal the depth and genuineness of faith. When we strive to have our conversations reflect Christ's nature, it helps us grow in holiness. It is also very attractive to non-Christians.

To be clear, effective communication does not mean there are no tensions and conflicts within church groups. As one wise priest in our Diocese said, "Where there are two or three gathered together, there shall be irritation." It is normal and human to have disagreements in parishes.

Author Robert Warren writes in *Developing Healthy Churches*, "The Church does not demonstrate the love of God by never having conflict, but by the way it handles it. ... This includes getting beyond social niceties."

Here are ten tips for improving communication in congregations:

(1) **Ground all interactions in love.** Jesus said that the defining characteristic of his followers would be the love they have for one another (John 13:35). That is, love in words and actions. Endeavor to say what needs to be said with love. Try to hear it with love. Approach interactions with others with gentleness and respect.

(2) **Be open.** Consider all the facts and opinions when discussing an issue. Seek first to understand before jumping to conclusions. There's an old saying, "If you never have to change your mind, you're probably not using it!"

(3) **Listen well.** Concentrate on what the other person is saying. Listen closely and intentionally value the ideas and views of others. Ask questions to clarify. Paraphrase what the person said to confirm your understanding. Greek philosopher Epictetus,



said, "We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak."

(4) **Be humble.** Remember who you serve! Discussion is not about looking good, being right or winning. Carefully self-check your ego for any destructive pride that may creep in. Remember: "It's not about you!"

(5) **Be honest.** Relationships grow in trust and intimacy when there is transparency and candor. Emotionally mature Christians express opinions, desires, aspirations and feelings freely. Embrace the courage of your convictions and authentically speak them.

(6) **Be aware of how you say it.** Monitor your body language, choice of words and the tone as you communicate. Ensure that the message is not tainted with negative signals or insensitive inflection.

(7) **Keep your emotions in check.** Watch that defensiveness, overwhelming sadness and boiling anger don't interfere with your sharing and listening. If necessary, request a break in the discussion time or excuse yourself to cool off.

(8) **Face reality.** Be sure to discuss important issues, even if there is a potential for conflict. Avoiding and denial can only lead to long-term suffering. And remember, creative tension is a good thing.

(9) **Stick to the topic.** Focus on offering productive exchanges on the business at hand. Avoid personal insults or digging up ancient history. If it is "water under the bridge", then let it go.

(10) **Honour others.** Communicate without blaming. Express positive feedback. Encourage and

build one another up, even if you differ in opinion.

One key foundational point to keep in mind while interacting with others in the church is that of unity in the midst of diversity. We are each created as unique and precious children of God. It is perfectly okay to agree to disagree. Christians, following the teaching of Jesus, are people who choose to be committed disciples in community. We forgive as we have been forgiven. We endeavor to affirm one another in our motives to do the right thing together for the mission of the Gospel. And so, we commit to continuing the relationship.

The New Testament writers offer wisdom about healthy Christian communication:

- You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. (James 1:19)
- Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. (Ephesians 4:15)
- So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:25, 29)
- Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone. (Colossians 4:6)

A helpful resource that can be adapted and embraced by a congregation is called a Covenant of Holy Manners. This is a mutual agreement between parishioners (including clergy) that names the values, quality and approaches to healthy and holy interactions. (There are various forms available on the Internet.) This is one effective way to develop accountability and nurture a culture of authentic Christian conversations.

Lastly, when communication is done well, it not only positions the church advantageously in terms of thriving, but it also glorifies Christ.

Rev. Lisa G. Vaughn is the Diocesan Parish Vitality Coordinator. For articles, inspiration and insights on congregational vitality and mission see the Facebook page "Parish Vitality Coordinator - Diocese of NS & PEI."

St. Mark's marks 150 years

In January, 1866 the first St. Mark's opened on Russell Street in the North end. Built and furnished by the clergy and congregation of St. George's, this church endured for 51 years until destroyed in the Halifax Explosion. To honor the opening 150 years ago, member of St. Mark's joined the congregation of St. George's for an Evening Epiphany Service. Rev. Vivien Hanon, a former member

of St. George's and current Assistant Priest at St. Mark's was the preacher.

On Sunday, January 10th - a 150th Anniversary Epiphany Lessons and Carol Service was held at St. Mark's. Special music was provided by the Capella Regalis Choir of Men and Boys. Bishop Ron Cutler, Bishop Sue Moxley and former clergy and members of St. Mark's attended. During 2016,

a number of former clergy who gave leadership at St. Mark's, were students there or who were raised there will return to preach on a Sunday. Fr. Jim Purchase on February 14th. Fr. John Smith on March 13 and Fr. David Dellapinna on April 10th.

Photo: Rev. Vivien Hanon preaching at St. Mark's memorial service.



VCM 2016 - Embody

Experience. Pray. Learn.

Three days of adventure and learning are in the planning for this year's Vital Church Maritimes conference. Lay and clergy leaders, reserve the dates - Sept. 29, Sept. 30 and Oct. 1 - for this retreat-like event being held in a beautiful coastal setting of Nova Scotia's South Shore. VCM 2016 will be held at Atlantica Oak Island Resort & Conference Centre in Western Shore.

The 2016 conference theme is "Embody". Details about topics and presenters are not finalized. We are considering workshops and panel themes to explore ways to build Christian community



through...

- Sports, fitness and games
- Open-air experiences & pilgrimage
- Food ministries
- Movement and

Worship

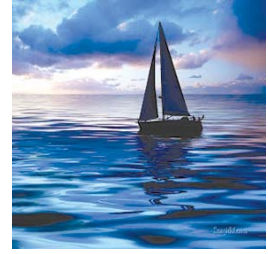
- The Arts (painting, music, carpentry, etc.)
- 'Godly Play'

Guest speaker is The Rev'd. Dr. Cameron Harder, from Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon. He is the author of "Discovering the Other: Asset-based Approaches for Building Community Together."

Conference registration is not open yet, but will be available before the summer season. Watch the "Vital Church Maritimes 2016" Facebook page for updates.

Come about

BY REV. LEONARD BEDNAR
RECTOR, TRINITY CHURCH
HALIFAX



When I was a teen, my father took up sailing. We had a small boat which was very responsive to the wind. We could have a very nice sail even in the lightest breeze and enjoy an exciting sail in high winds. One interesting fact about sailing is that you can sail in almost any direction, except straight into the wind. So if the wind is blowing from the direction you hope to travel, you must "tack" back and forth against the wind and waves. The term used by sailors for all the actions that must take place in order to change tack (change course) is "coming about". Depending on how big the crew is, and what size of sail craft you are in will determine the finer details, but the basic events are the same. The skipper calls "ready", the ship comes in close to the wind and picks up speed, ropes or winches are manned as the crew gets ready to work fast and keep their heads down. The skipper calls "Come about!", and pushes the tiller all the way to the leeward side. The ship moves fast into the wind, then suddenly the wind filling the sails slips free, the boom comes amidship with a rush. If all goes well, the momentum of the ship carries the crew forward as the ship continues to turn. The ship rocks and reals, and the sails flap wildly in the force of the wind with a sound like loud clapping of hands. Then with a "whomp!" the wind fills the other side of the sail and the boom swings over smartly and with great force to the other side of the ship. Meanwhile, all hands are equally wild in trying to adjust the various ropes to make sure the ship does not lose too much speed and stall, or be rocked so violently that it is capsized, damaged, nor anyone injured or lost overboard.

Tacking up wind is an exciting time in sailing. But as you might imagine, as the wind gets stronger and stronger, the risks increase with trying to "come about" in order to travel up-wind. At that point there comes a choice. There are ways to trim the sails in order to limit the effects, or lighten your load (see Acts 27:18), but strong winds can mean rough seas, and greater risk. There may come a time when you will be forced to consider a different direction. The ship and crew can decide to "run with the wind". Rather than sailing with the wind in your face, you feel it at your back, sweeping you along. You can no longer go in the direction you were trying for, yet there still lies 180 degrees of new direction ahead of you where the wind is blowing to. If you choose to change direction before the seas are "angry", you can even hoist the "spinnaker". I am sure you have all seen pictures of sailing craft with a huge brightly coloured sail out front. That is the spinnaker. It can be a beautiful sight. Jesus said, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (John 3:8) May God bless you and me with such a wind to sail by. And may God bless each of our congregations and our church with fair winds, and following seas as we either come about, or run with the wind.

MISSION (is) POSSIBLE:

Diocesan stories of people responding to God's call

A "Wow!" worship environment

by Rev. Lisa G. Vaughn

THE SENSE of holy in the church was palpable. "You could feel the Holy Spirit here," said the rector of St. John's, Truro.

Rev. Laurie Ramsey described their adventures in worship installations as "truly amazing." Three times the Spiritual Development team designed intentional environments to create worshipful moments for their members on a Sunday morning.

After taking the Diocesan Reimagining Church course, leaders at St. John's were looking for ideas to try Fresh Expressions in their parish. They discovered this model and offered it the first Sunday of Advent (twice) and Lent. The main 10 a.m. Eucharist service was replaced with a two-hour opening of the beautiful stone church whereby pilgrims could explore a fully decorated and interactive worship experience.

Last year's Lenten set-up was called "Journey to Jerusalem" and focused on the events of Holy Week and the Passion. Two gentlemen greeted people at the door, providing a map as well as encouraging guidance to first-timers. Participants travelled from station to station, taking in craft activities, reflective drawing, viewing sacred artwork, listening to storytelling with Godly Play and sharing in



Photo: Foot washing station at St. John's, Truro.

impromptu music and singing at the piano. There was a foot-washing station and a special chapel set up for private prayer with a priest. Another station offered an opportunity for the faithful to write a message to God on a prayer wall. Beautiful Holy Week-related sacred art photographs were projected unobtrusively on a screen.

People could stay as little or as long as they wished. Most of the 90 or so who attended stayed for the entire two hours.

Laurie said many of the parishioners gathered in groups to talk and pray together. Others chose to sit and reflect quietly in the beautiful atmosphere. A few people were so spiritually moved that tears welled up in their eyes. "It was a super-powerful

experience!" she said.

One woman remarked to her priest, "There's a lovely feeling in the building today."

Each time St. John's puts on a worship installation in their church the word spreads farther in the community. One parishioner brought her sister who was not an active service attender. Other senior members invited their adult children, saying "This is different, but you'll like it."

The special seasonal drop-in time is designed to engage all age groups and various levels of Christian maturity.

"You have to go out on a limb and do something different," said Laurie. "When you do, you discover God is there!"



Dinner Theatre Plays

by Heather D. Veinotte, Playwrite

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It's about the world

Summary from the Table Talks at Synod 2015 (Part 3 of 3)

The bishop's Charge to Synod was given in three parts, each with distinct themes: where we are, what can be, and what will be. Following each part of the Charge were reflections from clergy and an opportunity for the table groups to have extended conversations about each theme. Notes were taken at each table and they were collected and reviewed. Three themes were evident and there is a growing consensus that these should help direct our efforts. The three themes that emerged were: Worship, Formation and Mission. This final portion of the report from Synod focuses on 'Mission'.

Mission

The constant theme over the last year in the diocese is that, "It's About The World." In no way is this intended to be a denial of the very real and practical needs of the Church as an institution, but to refocus our efforts in terms of the Biblical imperative to match our will with God's. God is motivated to do all that God does, according to John 3.16, because "God so loved the world..." To be a Christian community with a mission is to be a people who seek God's will. There is a clear desire recorded in the notes from the table talks that we want



The Right Reverend Ron Cutler, Bishop of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

greater engagement in the world and by collaborating with the wider community.

The table talk notes encourage us (as a diocese, and parishes and individually) to focus on God's call to be less concerned for bricks and mortar and more focused on building connections with each other and the wider community (with other Anglicans, other churches, other community groups). To help achieve this, there is a clear recognition that the local parish needs to "listen" to the wider community and get to know them better. Sharing and networking are a priority. We also need to recognize the difference between 'mission' and 'outreach'. Outreach finds

is motivation in Mission, but cannot replace Mission. The two go hand in hand.

The scripture that we most often look to when we think of mission is Matthew 28:18-20, where Jesus commissions the disciples. He sends them in the same way that he himself was sent in God's mission to the world. He tells them to make disciples of all nations, to baptize and to teach. These words are echoed in the first two of the 'Marks of Mission' of the Anglican Communion:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.
2. To teach, baptize, and nurture new believers.
3. To respond to human need by loving service.
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation.
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the face of the earth.

William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942-44 reminded the church that "The church is the only organization that does not exist for itself, but for those who are outside it." One of the tests we need to apply to any action or program that we are contemplating

as a congregation, parish, or diocese is - who are we serving? If we are asking the question: How does the church benefit? Or what's in it for us? **Then the action is not Missional.**

There is a hope emerging from Synod that people and parishes in our diocese will be trained and empowered for mission. That new and creative ideas will come as we encourage one another to be creative and to push the boundaries. Intentional time to listen for the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit is foundational to this effort. Alan Roxburgh, in his book *Missional, Joining God in the Neighbourhood* says "question with a primary focus on the church only misdirect us. At this point in our history we need to be asking radically different questions. What is God up to in our neighbourhoods and communities? How do we join with what God is doing in those places?" God's spirit is moving among us but as the members of Synod noted, we are frequently too preoccupied with the business of the church to recognize God's activity in the world.

Some of us are eager to get on with it, but it is important to acknowledge that getting on with it includes getting everyone talking about the

mission of the Church. It is time to get the topic of mission on the agenda of every parish council meeting, on the agenda of regional meetings, ACW meetings, youth group meetings. Anywhere and everywhere we meet, people should be talking about what God is calling the Church to do and be in the world. Somehow, we need to make the mission of God and the ministry of the Church more visible to everyone in the congregation and wider community.

Mission is simply the work of the Church, the Body of Christ and being a people guided by God's mission is to love that which God loves. It's about the World because God so loved the world.

Conclusions

The notes from the table talks from Synod were filled with hope, encouraging the Church to "hang in there," and to continue to seek out the gifts individuals have for the building of the Body of Christ. We can encourage people to be more involved, after all, we are more than a parish, and we are the Body of Christ in the world and for the world. We are one of many, we are part of community, and we love one another (and others).

Exploring new horizons

BY REV ED TREVORS
PARISH OF CHRIST CHURCH
SHELburne

Let me jump right into it, last year our parish received a grant from the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program to increase and improve our ministry to seniors.

Like many places I assume, we are concerned about the future. It grows increasingly more difficult to pay bills and when we have to discern whether to use assets to perform even the most basic maintenance on our aging buildings, those decisions are becoming more and more difficult to make. So when the time comes to replace things like tables and chairs, add amenities like pew cushions, or renovate our kitchen, there is little reason to even ask the question - how can we afford things that appear so extravagant?



Maybe I'm presumptuous in thinking other parishes can relate, but if you can, if you know what it's like to be focused on maintaining the parish necessities and don't feel like you have the ability to do more, then I'm happy to tell you about a federal grant program called New Horizons for Seniors. From their website, "Organizations that want to help seniors make a difference in the lives of others and in their communities

are eligible to receive federal grants and contributions funding." Again, I don't want to sound presumptuous, but isn't this exactly the type of organization that our parishes are trying to be?

In total the Parish of Christ Church Shelburne received \$25,000 in order to help make our facilities more accessible, available, and useful to our seniors, the seniors of our community, and the community as a whole. We

used these funds to install pew cushions, replace existing tables and chairs in our hall with new lighter, folding, and comfortable versions, and to renovate to our hall kitchen, making it more spacious and accessible.

This year we have applied for further funds to assist us in replacing the windows in our church hall - we think were originally installed by Methuselah and his buddies - and to replace existing cabinet shelving in our kitchen with sliding drawers. These projects will make the space more accommodating to our current volunteers and others that use our facility, and make the building itself more comfortable and energy efficiency.

It is a detailed application, and does require some time, but the people of the department involved are wonderfully helpful and patient, and the process is not overwhelming. If you

are interested in making similar improvements to assist your parish in making a difference and don't mind a little paperwork, then I would encourage you to familiarize yourself with the information on the New Horizons for Seniors Program web page and apply for funding for your project when the next call for proposals for projects is open. While the application for project funding is detailed and does require some time to complete, we have found the departmental program representatives to be wonderfully helpful and patient, and the application process is not overwhelming.

Individuals are welcome to send in questions or request a call back through the following general delivery email address: ATL-NHSP-PNHA-GD@servicecanada.gc.ca.

May God bless all you offer in His name.

Trinity Church in Liverpool has ignited

BY ALLIE COLP

Trinity Anglican Church in Liverpool has Ignited. Their new youth group just started, and the organizers are ecstatic.

Katelyn Leslie, Jaime Kelley, and Kaylee Oickle have high hopes for the group, and have support from their church, community, and local clergy from different denominations. Katelyn says that they decided to start this youth group to give young people in their community a "fun environment, where they could not only get together and socialize but also come together and experience God's word and learn about

Christ."

Their hope is that the group will grow and will become a community that will have a positive impact on those who are part of it. Ignite will meet every two weeks at the church hall. They will play games, enjoy snacks, and have time for devotions and discussions.

This new ministry expands on the existing youth and family ministry at Trinity, where they have Sunday school and regular family services.

Photo: Youth group organizers at Trinity Anglican Church, Liverpool.



Katelyn Leslie

Kaylee Oickle

Jaime Kelley

CLAY Gathering needs you

by Allie Colp

The countdown is on - we are down to less than 6 months to go until the Canadian Lutheran and Anglican Youth Gathering - and people all across the country are getting ready for it. Alison Stephen is busy rounding up a group of 16 youth and 2 other leaders, and will be bringing them all the way from the Diocese of British Columbia. The Diocese of BC is Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, and one community on the mainland of BC. Members of their team come from throughout the diocese: Tofino, Ucluelet, Maple Bay Cowichan Bay, and Duncan. To make the most of their long journey to the East Coast, the Home Team is planning on spending a



few days in Nova Scotia before heading to Prince Edward Island for CLAY.

While they are in NS, they will be spending time with young people from New Germany who are also attending CLAY.

The Canadian Lutheran Anglican
Youth Gathering
Charlottetown, PEI
August 17-21, 2016

Together they will explore a number of places - including Kejimikujik and Peggy's Cove - and then will hop on a bus and head to Charlottetown. The two Home Teams are hoping to connect on some of

their activities in the lead-up to CLAY, so that they can get to know each other a little bit before meeting this August. One way in particular that they hope to connect is through the National Youth Project:

Right to Water. There are various reflections and activities available from justgeneration.ca, and they hope to use social media to share their experiences with each other. Alison's BC home team, and home teams from all across the country will join home teams from Shelburne, Fort Sackville, Truro, Dartmouth, and maybe more for CLAY at UPEI from August 17-21. All in all there will be hundreds of Lutheran and Anglican youth gathered. It's going to be lots of fun, and there's still time to register as a participant and we still need more volunteers to help make it happen. Please e-mail Allie (acolp@nspeidiocese.ca) if you're interested!

Meet Cassidy Coombs!

Cassidy is the new justgeneration.ca Diocesan Ambassador for the diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Justgeneration.ca is the youth initiation of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund and the goal of a Diocesan Ambassador is to engage young people throughout the diocese in the work of PWRDF. Cassidy answered a few questions so that everyone can get to know her a little bit:

Where do you go to school?

I go to school at Central Kings Rural High School.

What grade are you in?

I am in grade 11.

What makes you passionate about social justice and the work of PWRDF?

I am passionate about social justice because I believe that everybody should be treated fairly. I would like to help contribute to the world in a way that will allow all people to live with dignity and be respected. I wish for everyone to have the justice they deserve and have a voice to speak up and act. I am excited to begin working with PWRDF because I agree with their mission to improve the lives of others through

development, relief, and justice.

What are your interests/hobbies?

I really enjoy playing sports. I participate on the basketball, soccer, softball, and hockey team. I love sports because I get to spend time with my friends, use my leadership, I enjoy the competition, learning new skills, and being part of a team. In addition I enjoy school. I love to learn and challenge myself in my courses. I also like to play the clarinet in my school's concert band. I am a member of the dance committee, and the Beyond Borders group. Beyond Borders is a group all about making change. I am also a member of the western kings 4H club.

What do you hope to do in your new role?

I hope to make a change in my role as Diocesan Ambassador. I hope to educate people and get people inspired to make a difference. I think that justice is important and everyone deserves to be treated fairly. I would like to learn more about social justice and with what I learn be able to engage/inform other youth about the topic. I am hopeful that somehow I will be able to improve the lives of others.



Photo: Cassidy Coombs, the new justgeneration.ca Diocesan Ambassador

Teach us to pray: prayer changes things

Last spring, Bishop Ron sent an email, asking how I'd like a trip to Newfoundland. "Well, who wouldn't?" I thought, but I just knew there must be something more to his question. The "more" turned out to be attendance at the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer Consultation at the Lavrock Centre, near St. John's. Lured by the prospect of returning to a province where I had spent many happy years, I was pleasantly surprised by the truly consultative nature of the gathering. I was also genuinely inspired by the people I encountered, fifty in all, from all across this vast country and wide church of ours.

Since 1983, the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer (AFP) has been mandated to encourage the ministry of prayer in Canada. As a resource to the Church, the AFP aims to foster a habit of prayer among Anglicans, providing resources to engage individuals and groups in conversation with God.

As a parish priest, I know that the Church has not always done a good job of teaching people "how" to pray. As Anglicans, we enjoy the rich tradition of our common books of prayer. Many of us have come to rely on the words of others to help us to pray and I am one. As a writer, I have always loved words, loved



Rev. Frances Drolet-Smith
Diocesan Representative, the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer

their cadence and music, their nuance, and the poetry that sounds make. The words of our traditional and contemporary prayers (especially for me, the psalm prayers) have been a sustaining part of my prayer life. As a person who enjoys sewing, the quote "A day hemmed with prayer is less likely to unravel", offers an accessible metaphor. But so often our prayer is a last resort rather than a first response. Imagine the difference in our lives if we "hemmed" our day with prayer: at its beginning, at its ending – and in the moments in-between. A prayer doesn't need poetic words, nor does it need to be long. "Help!" is sometimes the only – and best – prayer we can muster because in that single word we acknowledge our need of God. Another great prayer is "Thanks", which we

can never pray enough, and another is a little wordier: "What do you want me to do, O God?" Still, many of us could use some help in learning "how" to pray.

Prayer is essentially a conversation and like all good conversations, there needs to be a balance between talking and listening. Prayers are not always formed with words; there are pregnant pauses, creating spaces where faith – and trust – can grow. Prayer can be movement, as in a dance, or an activity. Brother Lawrence described prayer this way when he practiced the presence of God while

doing the dishes. Prayer can be music, for the "one who sings prays twice", mused St. Augustine. Prayer can also be expressed in art or other creative pursuits. The shape of our faith expresses our experience of Christ. Deepening our prayer can give us access to that experience with more consistency – and when we need it most. The AFP wants to help us do that.

Does prayer have a purpose? Does it matter if we pray? Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has said "Praying is simply sitting before God and allowing him, through Jesus, to shape

who we are." The graphic accompanying this article is an invitation to effect change, make that, real change, simply by entering into the conversation. In future articles I'll share what I've come to know about prayer from my own practice and what I've learned about praying from those with whom I have prayed.

Prayer changes things. Prayer also changes people. More on that next time.



artwork © Karla Domacher

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Quiet Day

Saturday, March 12, 2016
10 AM – 2:30 PM

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Sponsored by the Anglican Church Women, Nova Scotia Board

A Lenten Journey for spiritual renewal in preparation for Holy Week with meditations offered by AST Postulants

Join us at
Christ Church, Lantz (1135 Hwy. 2)
Program will start – 10:30 am
Lunch provided

What? Lenten Quiet Day 2016 – Leaders of Courage, Serving by Faith with meditations offered by AST postulants

Who? All welcome - women and men - all ages and stages

When? Saturday, March 12, 2016
10am – 2:30 pm; program start – 10:30
lunch provided

Where? Christ Church, Lantz (1135 Hwy. 2)

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March Clues

ACROSS:

- 1 – "David _____ of the Lord: 'Shall I go and attack these Philistines?' "asked (1Sam. 23:2) (8)
- 5 – Coin money (6)
- 9 – Joseph of _____, a secret disciple of Jesus (John 19:38) ((0 11 – Deprive of covering (5)
- 12 – Secret _____, i.e. spies (6)
- 13 – People who believe that God does not exist (8)
- 15 – "Tell the older women to be _____ in behavior" deeply respectful (Titus 2:3) (8)
- 16 – "I have set my king on _____, my holy hill" a hill in Jerusalem (Ps. 2:6) (4)
- 19 – Fury (4)
- 20 – "Jesus said ..." I will ask you one _____ "query (Mark 11:29) (8)
- 23 – "He (God) who did not _____ his own Son "refrain from giving (Rom.8:32) (8)
- 24 – Steady (6)
- 27 – Run away to get married (5)
- 28 – Members of a strict Jewish sect (Matt. 22:23) (9)
- 29 – Miriam was the _____ of Aaron (and Moses), a sibling (Exod. 15:20) (6)
- 30 – Bruised (8)

DOWN:

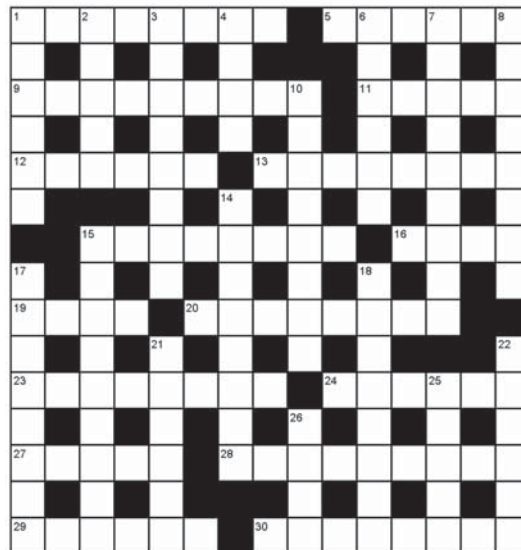
- 1 – Major prophet (6)
- 2 – Twenty-four sheets of paper (5)
- 3 – Sedentary (8)
- 4 – Repetition of sound (4)
- 6 – Soft, subdued colour (6)
- 7 – "If any of you suffer as a _____" follower of Jesus (1 Peter 4:16) (9)
- 8 – Laying open to danger (8)
- 10 – Amaze (8)
- 14 – "He will deliver you from six _____" misfortunes (Job 5:19) (8)
- 15 – "(Simeon) was _____ and devout" morally upright (Luke 2:25) (9)
- 17 – Some icebergs (8)
- 18 – Regard with suspicion (8)
- 21 – Solid food made from milk (6)
- 22 – Rented (6)
- 25 – Pronounce holy (5)
- 26 – Prefix that means peculiar to (4)

Bible Crossword

by Maureen Yeats



March Puzzle



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— George Herbert

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Ask the Lord, “make my heart like yours”

BY BISHOP RON CUTLER

I recently came across the Lenten reflection written by Pope Francis last year, and was struck by how it connects with the prophetic role which the deacon's ministry identifies for the whole church. It is also a quality of the Christian life which is reflected in our traditional 'keeping of Lent'. Here is an abridged version of what the pope wrote:

“Indifference to our neighbour and to God also represents a real temptation for us Christians. Each year during Lent we need to hear once more the voice of the prophets who cry out and trouble our conscience.”

God is not indifferent to our world; he so loves it that he gave his Son for our salvation. In the Incarnation, in the earthly life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, the gate between God and [humanity], between heaven and earth, opens once for all. The Church is like the hand holding open this gate, thanks to her proclamation of God's word, her celebration of the sacraments and her witness of the faith which works through love (cf. Gal 5:6).

God's people, then, need this interior renewal, lest we become indifferent and withdraw into ourselves. I want to reflect on three scripture passages.



The Right Reverend Ron Cutler, Bishop of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

of how we should wash one another's feet. Only those who have first allowed Jesus to wash their own feet can then offer this service to others. Only they have “a part” with him (Jn 13:8) and thus can serve others.

Lent is a favourable time for letting Christ serve us so that we in turn may become more like him. This happens whenever we hear the word of God and receive the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. There we become what we receive: the Body of Christ. In this body there is no room for the indifference which so often seems to possess our hearts. For whoever is of Christ, belongs to one body, and in him we cannot be indifferent to one another. “If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honoured, all the parts

In order to receive what God gives us and to make it bear abundant fruit, we need to press beyond the boundaries of the visible Church... every Christian community is called to go out of itself and to be engaged in the life of the greater society of which it is a part, especially with the poor and those who are far away. The Church is missionary by her very nature; she is not self-enclosed but sent out to every nation and people.

Her mission is to bear patient witness to the One who desires to draw all creation and every man and woman to the Father. Her mission is to bring to all a love which cannot remain silent. The Church follows Jesus Christ along the paths that lead to every man and woman, to the very ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8). In each of our neighbours, then, we must see a brother or sister for whom Christ died and rose again. What we ourselves have received, we have received for them as well. Similarly, all that our brothers and sisters possess is a gift for the Church and for all humanity.

Dear brothers and sisters, how greatly I desire that all those places where the Church is present, especially our parishes and our communities, may become islands of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference!

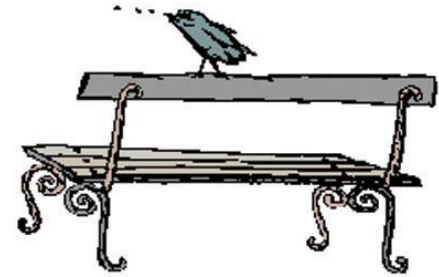
3. “*Make your hearts firm*” (James 5:8) - Individual Christians

As individuals too, we are tempted by indifference. Flooded with news reports and troubling images of human suffering, we often feel our complete inability to help. What can we do to avoid being caught up in this spiral of distress and powerlessness?

First, we can pray in communion with the Church on earth and in heaven. Let us not underestimate the power of so many voices united in prayer!

Second, we can help by acts of charity, reaching out to both those near and far through the Church's many charitable organizations. Lent is a favourable time for showing this concern for others by small yet concrete signs of our belonging to the one human family.

Third, the suffering of others is a call to conversion, since their need reminds me of the uncertainty of my own life and my dependence on God and my brothers and sisters. If we humbly implore God's grace and accept our own limitations, we will trust in the infinite possibilities which God's love holds out to us. We will also be able to resist



The view from the Deacon's Bishop's Bench

the diabolical temptation of thinking that by our own efforts we can save the world and ourselves.

As a way of overcoming indifference and our pretensions to self-sufficiency, I would invite everyone to live this Lent as an opportunity for engaging in “a formation of the heart”. A merciful heart does not mean a weak heart. Anyone who wishes to be merciful must have a strong and steadfast heart, closed to the tempter but open to God. A heart which lets itself be pierced by the Spirit so as to bring love along the roads that lead to our brothers and sisters. And, ultimately, a poor heart, one which realizes its own

poverty and gives itself freely for others.

During this Lent, then, brothers and sisters, let us all ask the Lord, “Make our hearts like yours”. In this way we will receive a heart which is firm and merciful, attentive and generous, a heart which is not closed, indifferent or prey to the globalization of indifference.

St. John Chrysostom “No act of virtue can be great if it is not followed by advantage for others. So, no matter how much time you spend fasting, no matter how much you sleep on a hard floor and eat ashes and sigh continually, if you do no good to others, you do nothing great.”

How greatly I desire that all those places where the Church is present, especially our parishes and our communities, may become ISLANDS OF MERCY in the midst of the sea of indifference!

1. “*If one member suffers, all suffer together*” (1 Cor 12:26) – The Church

The love of God breaks through that fatal withdrawal into ourselves which is indifference. The Church offers us this love of God by her teaching and especially by her witness. But we can only bear witness to what we ourselves have experienced. Christians are those who let God clothe them with goodness and mercy, with Christ, so as to become, like Christ, servants of God and others. This is clearly seen in the liturgy of Holy Thursday, with its rite of the washing of feet. Peter did not want Jesus to wash his feet, but he came to realize that Jesus does not wish to be just an example

share its joy” (1 Cor 12:26).

2. “*Where is your brother?*” (Gen 4:9) – Parishes and Communities

All that we have been saying about the universal Church must now be applied to the life of our parishes and communities. Do these ecclesial structures enable us to experience being part of one body? A body which receives and shares what God wishes to give? A body which acknowledges and cares for its weakest, poorest and most insignificant members? Or do we take refuge in a universal love that would embrace the whole world, while failing to see the Lazarus sitting before our closed doors (Lk 16:19-31)?

What's new with The Diocesan Times?

The Diocesan Times is a newspaper that is the work of many hands. Recently we were fortunate to add three new regular contributors - Allie Colp who keeps us informed of youth events and activities, Rev Frances Drolet-Smith who writes about prayer and the impact it can have on us and Rev Cathy Lee Cunningham who writes about spiritual, practical and worship resources. A very warm welcome to you and all contributors!

We continue to have guest columnists writing for the bishop's regular column. This month features Archdeacon Mark Kingsbury in that role. In addition to offering a different view, these guest columnists allow the bishop to take a break from his regular column - although this month Bishop Ron has outdone himself writing both the deacon's column and a piece on Synod 2015.

The FIRST edition of The Diocesan Times is



Paul Sherwood

Editor

available as a PDF on the diocesan web site. It is a large download (13Mb) with more than 30 pages. It was a post-WW II newspaper (Jan 1946) and reflects those times. Rebuilding the nation and the church were first and foremost.

Next month is our annual campaign to ask donors for their support of the newspaper. We're counting on you so we can continue to share your stories and good news.

The Flock from the
Anglican Parish
of Stewiacke &
Shubenacadie
presents our



14th Annual Dinner Theatre
production, ***'Trapped'*** by Heather
Veinot.

Tickets, including a hot roast beef
dinner and dessert, are just \$25.
Tickets may be obtained at our
Box Office at St. James' Hall,
Shubenacadie on March 5th or
12th from 9am 'til noon.

Show dates are **Friday** and
Saturday (*April 22 & 23 and 29 &
30*) at 7 pm

For ticket sales after the second
box office, call 902-758-3876.