

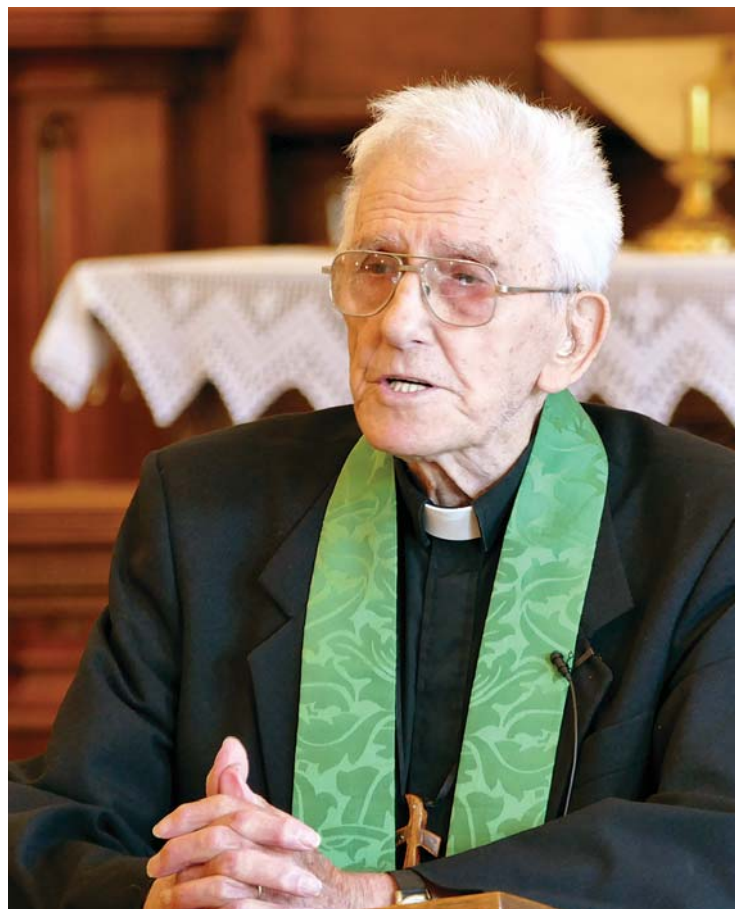


Happy Birthday to Canon Russell Elliott who celebrated his 100th birthday in July 2017 and delivered a rousing sermon at Trinity Anglican Church in Halifax the same month. Canon Elliott was ordained 76 years ago in July; he gave a 20 minute homily without a break and without notes. His birthday party in the Annapolis Valley was held at St. James, Port Williams to accommodate his many family, friends and well-wishers.

*Photo above: Canon Russell Elliott receives birthday wishes from Archbishop Ron Cutler. And probably offered a bit of sage advice.*

*Photo below: Canon Elliott delivering his homily at Trinity Anglican Church, Halifax. Visit our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/diotimes](http://www.facebook.com/diotimes) to listen to his sermon.*

*Photo below left: Canon Elliott with Rev. Peter Armstrong .*



## COLUMNIST

## O Canada

St. Bart's and Fr. J struggled with the idea of a perfect Canadian tribute for our country's 150th. Many ideas were suggested, only to be rejected for one reason or another. Special services, community feasts, a parade, fireworks...all seemed to have been claimed by some other group or organization and the Parish of St. Bart's had left such plans too late it seemed.

Then one of our oldest parishioners came up with the perfect memorial. Miss Beatrix Potter (no, not THAT Beatrix Potter!); but our own special lady who is well into her nineties but keeps her exact age a secret, Our Miss Potter, or Trixie as her family had always called her, remembered that there had been a wonderful weather vane on top of the steeple! She remembered it from her childhood but couldn't recall too many details. She did remember that there had been a date cut into the vane, but all the research and looking



ST. BART'S BY THE BOG

Sarah Neish

for old photos couldn't tell us much.

We knew that the parish had been formed and this church built just before the First World War...some thought it had been started in 1912 but not finished before many of the young men of the community joined up in '14. Indeed, there are signs that

much of the interior was left unfinished until around 1919. The Altar is a memorial to three brothers from the parish who did not come home from France.

Now that we have full altar hangings, the plate that lists their names is covered much of the time, but it is a tradition for the members of our Altar Guild to stop and say a small prayer for them whenever the hangings are changed.

So; did the weather vane bear the date of the church being started or finished? We asked some of our more senior members to have a look through old photographs to see if there was any record of the vane being installed. Nothing!

Fr. J pointed out that we were looking for a parish memorial to Canada's 150 years....so, put this on the Vane! One of our parishioners has a daughter who is a graphic artist and she submitted several designs for the parish to view and vote on. The one accepted is the number 150 and a Maple Leaf

as seen on our flag. We found a tinsmith who did a wonderful job for us and, once again, the Volunteer Fire Department came to our rescue and had their ladder truck available for installation..

On the Sunday just after July 1st Miss Trixie Potter had the honour, in place of a sermon, of reading a short memoir of her life here. By the Bog, we all sang "O Canada" and Father Jason blessed the weather vane before we processed outside to watch the property committee chair and a firefighter climb the ladder and install the gift we have given to our community and to our country. The whole congregation sang "O Canada" once again as the new weather vane began to turn in the wind.

I'll keep you posted as to weather conditions, wind direction and any other exciting events from The Bog.

Aunt Madge



## THE DIOCESAN TIMES

VOLUME 72 NUMBER 7

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Published monthly except in July and August by The Diocesan Times Publishing Company.

Online editions available via the diocesan website:  
[www.nspeidiocese.ca](http://www.nspeidiocese.ca)

**Printed by and mailed from:**  
Webnews Printing Inc.,  
North York, ON

*Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor, the management board of The Diocesan Times, the diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island or any representative thereof, except where expressly stated.*

All material subject to editing.

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE:**

The first day of the month preceding the month of publication: e.g., the deadline for the April edition is March 1<sup>st</sup>.

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## PROBLEMS

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE ONE WHILST IN CHURCH

- ① **SUMMON A SIDESPERSON. THEY HAVE FULL ACCESS TO A WIDE RANGE OF HYMN BOOKS AND OTHER SERVICE MATERIAL— THEY WILL BE ABLE TO ASSIST IN 95% OF CASES**



- IF MORE SPECIALIST HELP IS REQUIRED A **CHURCHWARDEN OR MEMBER OF THE CLERGY** SHOULD BE SOUGHT. BOTH CARRY LARGE BUNCHES OF KEYS THAT UNLOCK ALL SORTS OF THINGS

②

- ③ **IN THE HIGHLY UNLIKELY EVENT THAT YOU ARE UNABLE TO FIND HELP LOCALLY YOU CAN CONSULT A BISHOP. THEY HAVE GREAT EXPERIENCE AND QUITE A LOT OF BOOKS**



- IF ALL ELSE FAILS I SUGGEST GIVING THE **ARCHBISHOP** A CALL. PLEASE BE AWARE THAT HE IS TERRIBLY BUSY, SO CAN ONLY ANSWER THE TELEPHONE ON TUESDAY AFTERNOONS

④

## GUEST COLUMNIST

# Relinquishing control discloses the path to a deeper, more humble, faith



Rev. Dr. Carolyn Sharp,  
Rector, Parish of Neil's Harbour

The peregrine falcon is renowned for its long migrations, travelling thousands of kilometers to distant hunting grounds and returning to familiar nesting territories.

Holy wandering, or peregrination, is an ancient spiritual practice. Spiritual travellers left the familiar behind, abandoning the securities of home and kin, in order to entrust themselves more fully to God's providence. Among those who wandered in this way were Brendan whose perilous sea voyages took him to distant shores and Columba who founded the monastery on the rugged Island of Iona. On the road to famous pilgrimage sites or walking the Trans Canada Trail with Camino Nova Scotia or hiking the Cape Breton Highlands, modern pilgrims and wanderers follow in their footsteps.

The peregrine's wandering requires a special sort of reliance on grace. In recalling the Irish monks the Northumbria Community prays

*Do I assume the storms will be stronger than me?  
Christ of the mysteries can I trust you on the seas.  
Through the unknown, help me Lord,  
I will trust you and obey.  
Can I believe that God would hide his goodness from me?  
and in his time open my eyes so I can see?*

**The call of Jesus uproots us and summons us to embrace new ways of being.**

Stepping out of our comfort zone is never easy. Letting go of the habits and certainties of our lives uncovers our very human vulnerabilities. Relinquishing control discloses the path to a deeper, yet more humble, faith. The peregrine's wisdom is that the wander's

journey is a metaphor for the need of grace in all our lives. Without grace we can neither weather storms and to embrace unexpected blessings. Above all the peregrine's wanderings reminds us that we are all sojourners whose true home is found in God and with God.

Alongside the practice of holy wandering rests the equal ancient practice of stability. In his book *Abiding*, Ben Quash describes the stability as the faithful commitment to live out the Gospel in a given time and place. Perhaps more than any other, it is Benedict of Nursia who taught and promoted this way, insisting on the ways structure and routine fashion the life of faith. Gathered together not by the shared interests and pursuits of its individual members, but by the desire to grow in love of God and neighbour, the monastic community nurtures its members in the practices of living well in God's presence.

Like many others, Quash points to the continuity between the Benedictine tradition of stability and the Anglican tradition. The parish ties the life of the community to a particular location. The orderliness of worship draws the community into a sense of reverence for all that is holy. The exhortation to adopt a rule of life fashions the everyday life of faith of its members.

Like wandering, staying in one place requires a special kind of trust in God's promise. Remaining in troubled times is never easy. In a world enamoured of consumer values, the winds of instability howl at the door and rattle the windows. Conflicts and tensions test our ability to love our sisters and brothers. We discover our need for forgiveness, divine and human, if we are to continue. The wisdom of the monastery is that the community's struggle to remain faithful is a metaphor for our need for mercy. Above all, it reminds us that the true home found in God and with God is a shared home in which we are called to dwell together as sisters and brothers.

We easily see the practices of holy wandering and faithful stability as opposing practices, when in fact the life of faith is indelibly marked by both. The call of Jesus uproots us and summons us to embrace new ways of being. At the same time, our call grounds us in the blessed community of disciples that we might become like Jesus. Working together in the lives of communities and individuals, the ancient practices of wandering and abiding nurture us as we pursue the way of Christ.

Carolyn Sharp

## We have sacramentalized our people; we have not evangelized them!



Rev. Dr. John Roddam

The Fall in our culture is THE start-up time – a New Year. Is there anything in your life where you would want a re-do? a new beginning? At the end of Luke's Gospel, Jesus said, "repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in My name to all nations... Luke 24:47. This points to a fresh start!

The word 'repentance' means a change of conviction. It is deeper than a change of mind. This points to a change of beliefs... a turning to Jesus where one follows Him as Lord. For many this involves a 180-degree turnaround.

Most of us follow our own conscience and dictates. The idea of turning our will, desires, future, and self over to another is a capitulation few are willing to engage. But that

is what it means for a person to follow Jesus as Lord.

This flows out of a loving relationship, where we surrender to the persistent, loving advances of our God. Jesus' Name means "saviour." He is on a rescue mission to save and redeem us.

One of the first people I met when we moved to the West Coast in 1994 was Father Ron Barnes, a staunch Anglo-Catholic. As I got to know him, I found he was an advocate for personal renewal. He believed this began with a prayer inviting Jesus into one's life. This is the prayer –

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, I know that You came into the world to die on the cross and save me from my sins. I want my life to change. I want to commit

my heart and soul and mind to you. I invite you into my life right now. I want you to be my personal Saviour, the Lord of my life. Come, Lord Jesus into my heart. Clean the garbage out of my life. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Wash me clean and turn my life around so I can live for you. AMEN.

Fr. Barnes had that prayer on the back of his business card and he had led over 5 dozen people already that year to personal faith in Christ. His ministry was mostly to mainline denominational folk. For some reason Anglicans have stopped leading people to personal faith in Jesus and think it is foreign to our tradition. Fr. Barnes simply pointed out the fact that the prayer was written by a Roman Catholic Priest.

Perhaps that was what Pope John Paul II was pointing to when he said, "We have sacramentalized our people, we have not evangelized them!"

So... what about You, my dear reader? Do you need a fresh beginning? You might consider Jesus. There are many benefits in following Him... knowing love, joy, peace at a level you never thought possible. PLUS, you receive the forgiveness of sin, the promise of everlasting life and an abiding love relationship with the Risen Jesus Christ. Wow!! Pray that prayer and start anew today!

God Bless! John+

*Jesus, tanto nomini nullum  
par elogium!  
Jesus, for so great a name, no praise is  
adequate!*

## LETTERS from AWAY

Dear Diocese,

An anonymous Anglican Nova Scotian friend (so that narrows it down to tens of thousands) on Facebook posted tranquil morning moments on Facebook this summer. Viewing those photos had the desired effect and caused me to begin each day appreciating the miracle of creation and the beauty that surrounds me.

Sermon prep in August was done on a sailboat on the St. John River. That helped me appreciate God's creation even more. Day after day, we passed scenes of tranquility and calm interspersed with the tension and stress that comes with gusts of strong wind, flapping sails as we came about, and from time to time an uncooperative current and a boat that seemed to have a mind of its own. Life is like that isn't it?

Evenings were often spent rafted together with other boaters swapping sailing stories of special times and special places.

Barbara Brown Taylor describes the "thin places" so cherished in Celtic spirituality as special "places where the veil between this world and the next is so sheer that it is easy to step through," as "cracked doors between this world and some other, brighter place where God is no absentee landlord but a very palpable presence" (Home by Another Way).

It makes me wonder, when we are so focused on the big ticket items, the special "thin places" in awe as the eagle swoops down to snap up the fish only yards away from the boat, do we remember how fragile the planet is?

I write this article, just fresh off the boat, struggling to regain my land legs, the house still rocking. But this past week, each moment on the river brought a spectacular view. Cattle at watering holes, fish jumping leaving ripples of shimmering water, sunrise to the east

and sunset to the west. The moon popping up from behind the hill across the river. Herron and eagle in flight. That was when the words popped right out of my mouth, "I wish this moment would last forever."

I don't know about you but I want special moments, river valley or mountain top experiences to go on forever. Although it wasn't quite as spectacular, I felt like Peter on his trek up the mountain during the Transfiguration, wanting to hold on to the moment. Life changing experiences in amazing and exceptional circumstances, a frightening and yet amazing side trip, a mini pilgrimage to a "thin place" on the journey to Jerusalem.

According to Wikipedia, a pilgrimage is a journey or search of moral or spiritual significance. A time when people willingly open themselves up to personal change, when we risk being changed spiritually, from deep within and that change results in action.

The annual pilgrimage called Seasons of Creation this September can result in change in your relationship with all of God's creation and leave you in awe. I pray that you and your parish have planned to use some or all of the resources available for worship so your Sunday morning experience can lead you to the "thin place" in your heart so you are more prepared to treat God's creation with tenderness and care, taking from that rich spiritual experience what you have learned and applying it to how you live.

<http://seasonofcreation.com/worship-resources/liturgies/>

Blessings from the outer world,

Rev. Marian Lucas-Jefferies



Photo: Anchored at Oak Point, New Brunswick.



Photo above: Dancers at the PWRDF fundraiser in Lower Sackville.

## PWRDF – wasn't it a party !!

By SUE HEENAN  
PWRDF PARISH REP

On May 6, 2017 PWRDF from St. John the Evangelist Church, Middle Sackville, hosted their second annual variety show. Kelly Messervey was MC for the occasion and Sue Heenan, PWRDF parish rep, explained briefly what PWRDF stands for. Singers Dar Stutt, Don Budge, Bruce Moxley and Brian Sampson

were followed by Octopi, a men's barbershop quartet. The second half of the show consisted of Gary Thorne and the Jammers (Virginia Walker, Tim Donovan and Karen MacPherson); there were vocals, music on the accordion, base guitar, fiddle and two regular guitars. They played Cape Breton and Newfoundland music and brought the house down. People were dancing in the

aisles while others were singing and clapping in their seats. The event raised \$1000 thus far and \$100 went to the Ways and Means Committee for looking after the lunch and making the tea and coffee: a job well done. At the conclusion, EVERYBODY got up and sang Amazing Grace - it was a total success. I would say "wasn't that a party?"

Photo right: The Octopi men's barbershop quartet perform some of their favourites at the PWRDF fundraiser at St John the Evangelist, Lower Sackville.



# It's A New Day!

## Growing to 'know who you are'

by Rev. Lisa G. Vaughn

Anglicans in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island continue to ask for support to grow as disciples. Once again, written feedback from Diocesan Synod table discussions at the gathering this May reveal the yearning for Christian education, spiritual formation and ways to practice talking about the faith.

Comment sheets collected from 38 tables at Synod, including responses from lay and clergy delegates, reflect not only the longing for opportunities to learn more about the Bible, Christ and ways to mature in discipleship, but also for the creation of safe spaces in which to discover divine truths for themselves. A substantial number of requests were made for parishes to arrange times and open environments in which inquirers could ask questions and listen to one another, free from judgement.

One person remarked, "People have trouble sharing in this (faith) language because we never hear it – at



Rev. Lisa Vaughn  
Diocesan Parish Vitality  
Coordinator

home, in public, in church." Another said, "We need formats that are conducive to listening and sharing and asking questions."

Naturally, this is best done in small groups, whether they be formal or informal. For example, it could be a structured Bible study or book club, or something more relaxed like a 'coffee & conversation' time held after Sunday worship using our newly produced diocesan Faith Sharing Cards. These

gatherings may be facilitated by lay people or clergy, regardless of the level of religious education. If there are one or two people who can take up the roles as hospitality host (prepare refreshments), read a few questions and keep the conversation going, that would sufficiently work. If others have gifts in leading in prayer and worship music, those could be incorporated too. The setting could be anywhere – a park picnic table, at a council meeting, Tim Horton's, a pub or a living room.

Keeping these relaxed discussion times simple, casual and flexible is key. The less organizational preparation that is required, the better chance it will continue. The open conversation about faith topics is the goal, along with the assurance that folks can be vulnerable as they share their deepest thoughts and honest feelings.

One Synod delegate wrote, "It's about knowing you do not need to have all of the answers, but are willing to continue searching and be on that journey." Another said, "We need to be brave enough to share. This may be encouraging to others to open up and share as well."

In relation to the demand for Christian Formation, church leaders can explore the importance of such initiatives as well as examine a congregation's particular strengths by using a short PowerPoint exercise designed by the Building Healthy Parishes VSST. The group-oriented program offers a few teaching points and several questions that assist leaders to plan avenues for educational opportunities. See [www.nspeidiocese.ca](http://www.nspeidiocese.ca), the homepage Quick Links section, under "Healthy Parishes Resources." The presentation is called "Building Blocks - Christian Formation (pdf)."

There are also several lists of adult educational books, videos and online programs on the Diocesan website. See the RESOURCES drop-down bar and go under "Christian Formation Resources." There are lists of publications for Anglican identity, beginning Christian education and those intended for more mature disciples.

Some of the descriptions and details for resource ideas include: The Alpha Course, Start, Animate,

Living the Questions, Leap for Faith and Emotionally Healthy Spirituality. Another newer Anglican program for newcomers to Christianity (or returning) is called Pilgrim. Published by the Church of England, it is a short course, using video teachings and guidebooks, to drill down on discipleship. The official description says:

It aims to help every local church create a place where people can explore the Christian faith together and see how it can be lived out each day. Pilgrim takes a different approach to other Christian programmes. It approaches the great issues of faith not through persuasion, but participation in a pattern of contemplation and discussion with a group of fellow travellers. Pilgrim's approach is to start at the very beginning, assuming very little understanding or knowledge of the Christian faith. It focuses on Jesus Christ, and aims to equip people to follow Jesus Christ as disciples in the whole of their lives. It flows from the Scriptures with the primary focus of each session as a group of people engaging with the Bible together. It draws deeply from the Christian tradition, the Early Church, the key Bible texts with a distinctly Anglican foundation.

There are two parts based on our Baptismal vows: a "Follow Stage: Do you turn to Christ?" and a "Grow Stage: Will you continue in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship?"

Our Diocesan Resource Centre (lending library) at the Synod Office, has purchased this program and it is available for use. The course can also be obtained through the website, [www.pilgrimcourse.org](http://www.pilgrimcourse.org)

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. and Anglican Net News, "Six-Minute Study".

[www.pilgrimcourse.org](http://www.pilgrimcourse.org)

### The Course What is Pilgrim?

Pilgrim is a major new teaching and discipleship resource from the Church of England. It aims to help every local church create a place where people can explore the Christian faith together and see how it can be lived out each day.

Pilgrim takes a different approach to other Christian programmes. It approaches the great issues of faith not through persuasion, but participation in a pattern of contemplation and discussion with a group of fellow travellers.

Pilgrim is comprised of two stages: the Follow stage for those very new to faith, and the Grow stage for those who want to go further. Each stage contains four short six-session courses which focus on a major theme of Christian life.

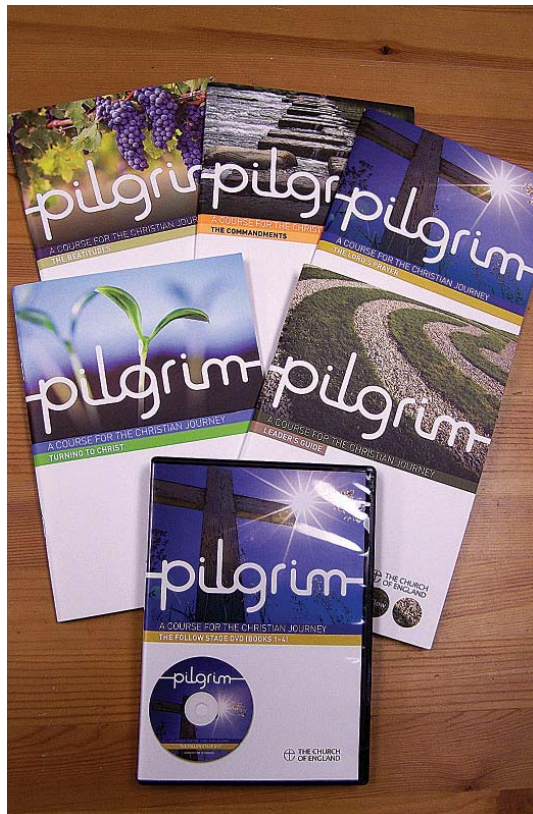


Photo: Some of the resources available from the new Pilgrim course available from the Diocesan Resource Centre.



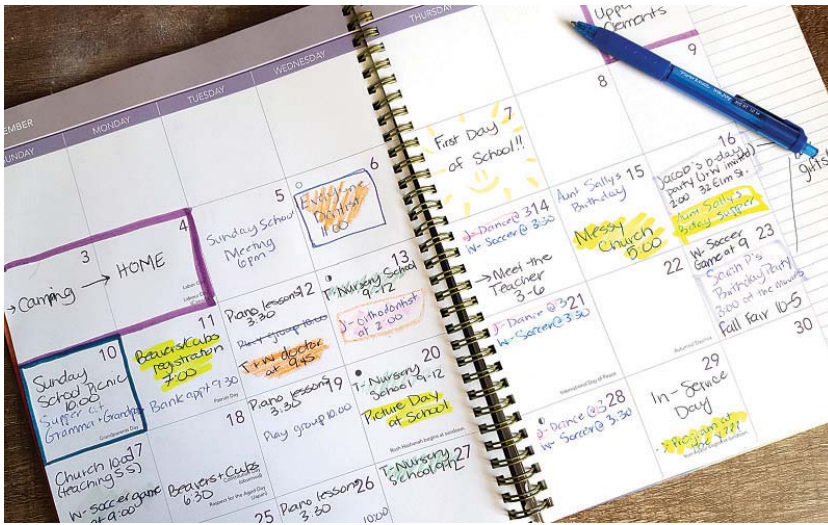


Image caption: As parents try to navigate calendars like this, squeezing in more church involvement can be challenging. How can your church help make that easier?

# 5 ways to enable parents to participate in church

BY ALLIE COLP

As we settle back into the fall, calendars quickly begin to fill back up. Committees and councils start meeting again, Sunday Schools start a fresh new year and all sorts of groups start gathering again.

It can be exciting for everything to start back up again, but it can also be daunting, especially for families with young children. Things like Sunday School and parent and tot programs are great, because they are designed just for children and families, but most other groups in church communities aren't, and so for parents to participate in those can be an added challenge.

Participation in committees or groups can get a whole lot more complicated when you don't just need to create space in your schedule to make it work, but also need to arrange childcare. Some people are able to make arrangements relatively easily, but for many families, the logistical and financial implications of childcare just aren't manageable, and so they aren't able to be involved.

This can mean that there is a whole section of your church family missing from the conversation. Parents with young children often offer a different perspective, and have different needs than the rest of the congregation, so it is important for their voices to be heard. See the sidebar for a few ideas for how your church, parish, or region might support those parents and help them be able to participate.

As with just about everything, there is no one magic solution that will work for every situation. Some of these might work for your context, and some might not. The important thing is to think creatively about what might work if none of these seem possible.

People feel more a part of something the more they are able to be involved, so take some time this fall to think about how you and your church community can better support and enable parents and young families to get involved in the life of the church.

1. Seek input from the congregation, particularly young parents, when deciding when meetings will happen. There might be times that are much better for parents, when kids are busy with something else anyway, which would make it much easier for them to participate.
2. Identify people in the parish who are willing to baby-sit. If the babysitters aren't willing to do this as a volunteer, and parents aren't able to afford it, see if there is any room in the parish budget to cover that cost. This babysitting could either happen in the home of the family or, especially if there are a number of children, could take place at the same location as the meeting, but in a different room. The latter would need to meet all SafeR Church requirements, but would create possibility for the children to spend time together outside of Sunday morning, or if it is a regional meeting, a chance to meet new kids, and maybe even do some faith formation together!
3. Create a space for children to do a quiet activity like colouring or watching a show in the same space as the meeting. This would allow parents to be in the same space as their children, eliminating the need for volunteers.
4. Be creative about how parents participate in meetings. Calling in to a meeting via video call or telephone might not be ideal, but it is generally better than not being able to be part at all. If neither of those work, seeking input from parents about topics on an upcoming agenda is another way to show them that you care and to make sure that their voice is heard.
5. Show appreciation for the sacrifice made by parents who are actively involved in ways that require them to spend time away from their children. This doesn't have to be an elaborate show of appreciation, but saying thank you or finding some other way to acknowledge and honour that sacrifice is important and will go a long way in showing parents that they are seen and appreciated.



Photo from Integrity NS/PEI: 2017 Pride Parade in Truro, NS with representatives from Integrity NS/PEI and St John's Church in Truro. Lots of fun - join us next year.

DO JUSTICE  
**LOVE**  
 KINDNESS  
 WALK HUMBLY

DYC 2017  
 MALAGASH BIBLE CAMP  
 OCT 27-29  
 GRADES 7-12

more info & registration: [sharenspei.ca](http://sharenspei.ca)

# Diocesan Youth Conference 2017

THE DIOCESAN YOUTH CONFERENCE (DYC) for this fall is shaping up to be an incredible weekend, filled with worship, sessions on social justice, time to connect with new and old friends, and to explore our faith in new ways.

The theme this year, **Do Justice. Love Kindness. Walk Humbly.**, comes from the book of Micah, and we will be using that theme to shape the weekend as we explore what each of those three pieces mean for us as people of faith. Much of the weekend will be spent in groups with youth who are the same (or similar) age, participating in various activities, going on a field trip, and hanging out outside at the awesome Malagash Bible Camp.

This will be the 15th year that DYC has happened in our Diocese, and every year has been different than the one before. So – whether you have been many times or never have before, we encourage you to register for this year!

Registration is open now, and the deadline is in October. Space is limited, so be sure to sign up soon at:

[www.sharenspei.ca/dyc](http://www.sharenspei.ca/dyc)

## VCM 2017 REGISTRATION CLOSES SEPT. 12TH

**H**urry! There are only a few days remaining to sign up for Vital Church Maritimes 2017 conference taking place Sept. 21 to 23 in Truro.

The event is open to anyone – lay and clergy – and features Church of England Missioner, Rev. Canon Phil Potter as keynote speaker. He teaches about congregational renewal, mission, leadership and hope for the future church. This year's theme is 'Streams of Hope.'

Break-out sessions will be in the style of "Open Space Technology." This method of interactive learning involves focused discussions based around a particular theme or issue. In other words, it is a marketplace of inquiry, reflection and learning.

Archdeacon Sandra Fyfe describes her past experience with OST this way: "Rather than choosing between panel



Rev. Canon Phil Potter  
 VCM keynote speaker

presentations that may or may not have been relevant or interesting to us, we were given the opportunity of hosting a conversation on a topic about which we had some expertise, or asking that someone else host a topic we wanted to learn more about." She said, "This put us in the same room with others interested in the same areas of

ministry, some of whom had significant experience and wisdom to share." Rev. Sandra enjoyed the innovative format. "It was energizing and fruitful, and the small group format gave everyone a chance to share, to ask questions, and to learn from each another."

Rev. Tammy Hodge, Regional Dean, said Open Space Technology, "is a way to engage the wealth of experience and insight of those gathered," She said, "This isn't about just one expert teaching, but about everyone asking questions and exploring answers together. It is a rich and exciting way to learn and share topical experiences and knowledge."

Diocesan Youth & Family Ministry Coordinator, Allie Colp says OST is a natural way to learn. "It allows conversation to happen organically, which makes it comfortable for people to participate," she said. "The

freedom and space to explore, wonder, and share with one another is a real gift," said Allie. "It has the potential to offer much more than a strict scheduled conversation with specific goals."

Education for Ministry leader, Bill Travis has participated in OST three times at national church gatherings, and admits he had reservations about its effectiveness. "I must say that my first impression was that it was a little disorganized and that it could not possibly work. Boy, was I wrong!" Bill explained, "The environment is interactive and exciting. It was a thoroughly enjoyable experience in every case and I must say I was really impressed with the level of cooperation it generated."

Rev. Lynn Uzans has helped facilitate large Open Space Technology processes and says it creates an abundance of learnings. She says, "When a group of people are discussing

### The four main plenary talks are entitled:

1. A new church: Hope renewed
2. A new heart for mission: Hope in the making
3. A new leadership: Hope released
4. A new future: Hope unseen

that which they value or puzzle over, the ideas that come out seem greater than the sum of all statements made."

There are three opportunities to participate in OST at this year's VCM. For more information, to view a detailed conference schedule and to register, visit: [www.nspeidiocese.ca](http://www.nspeidiocese.ca). Funding support is also available for lay and clergy.



Photo from L-R: Bill MacDonald was ordained to the diaconate on June 6th at St Luke's Church in Hubbards. This was the first ordination service in the parish and the first ordination service by our new Archbishop Ron Cutler. Shirley Carras, Cate Ratcliffe, Cherry Workman and Falen McNulty were ordained as Transitional Deacons on June 22nd, at the Cathedral Church of All Saints.

# Meet the newly ordained



I'm Bill MacDonald. As a member of St. Luke's Anglican Parish Hubbards for 50 years, I served mainly in administrative capacities until about 9 years ago. Following exposure to the Alpha Program, I felt called to be part of a new Ministry team, and enrolled in the Lay Reader's training course. Our Ministry Team grew in number and responsibilities, and eventually I found myself in discernment as a Vocational Deacon. Archbishop Cutler gave me the option of Cathedral ordination on June 22nd, or locally on June 6th. Choosing the latter proved correct as the ceremony was well attended and our congregation was delighted.



I'm Shirley (MacInnis) Carras. Like some other clergy in the diocese, I am a born, bred and still-at-heart Cape Bretoner! I grew up in Glace Bay, attending St. Mary's Church, but after moving to the "big city" I made my home in the parish of St. Thomas, Fall River, where I worshipped with my husband, Andy. Prior to heeding God's call and following my heart, I received formal education as a Chartered Accountant and spent most of my career with the Provincial Government as well as teaching part-time at St. Mary's University. I am excited to serve on the Building Healthy Parishes VSST and VCM 2017, and to work in team ministry at All Saints Church in Bedford.



I'm Cate Ratcliffe - a recent graduate of the Atlantic School of Theology's Master of Divinity Program. I am overjoyed to be the incumbent in the parish of Eastern Passage. I was born and raised in Halifax, NS. Prior to receiving my call to ministry, I received my bachelor's degree from Mount Allison in Sackville, NB. I love singing, dancing, and acting, and have performed on stage since I was 4, a passion which translates surprisingly well to leadership within the church! When not in church or on stage, I can be found reading, knitting, practising guitar, or spending time with friends, usually all while juggling a cup (or two!) of tea.



I'm Cherry Workman and I grew up and live in the rural community of Lake Ramsay, New Ross. I am married to Stephen, and we are blessed with a daughter, Lindsay and a son, Orry. I am a graduate of SMU, and worked as an Accountant at our local Credit Union. During my life, I experienced God's love in many ways and sought to 'give back' by serving in the parish and community-at-large. As I more seriously sought God's will in/for my life, God's call came as both a shock and a revelation. Here I am Lord, still seeking to love and serve You!



My name is Falen McNulty, and I am originally from Northern New Brunswick, just outside Bathurst. I grew up in a small rural area with farming, fishing, pulp and paper, and mining as the primary industries. My father was a miner and my mother is a nurse. After high school, I joined the military before returning to NB to finish my undergraduate degree in Business Administration at UNB. I have a great love of horses and dogs, as well as cross-stitching. I am now serving as the Deacon of St. George's New Glasgow, and looking forward to seeing where life in ministry takes me.



## Anglicans in Halifax Pride Parade

Members from Integrity NS&PEI, local parishes and the Diocese of NS&PEI marched in the Halifax Pride Parade in July. There were lots of smiles as the event took place on one of the sunniest days of the summer. That's Archbishop Ron Cutler in the middle.





Photo: Christ Church in Dartmouth, NS

# Older than Canada, Christ Church celebrates 200 years

## Bicentennial of Christ Church Dartmouth

JOHN GALLANT AND JUDY CARTER,  
CO-CHAIRS OF THE BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

On July 9, 2017, Christ Church of Dartmouth celebrated its 200th Anniversary with a celebration service in the historic church. The service was well attended by members of the congregation, invited guests, and by Archbishop Fred Hiltz, who is a "son" of Christ Church; Archbishop Hiltz gave a moving sermon when he recounted some of his most memorable times as a young man growing up in the parish.

The cornerstone of Christ Church was originally laid on July 9, 1817, at 2pm by the Earl of Dalhousie, so it was fitting that the 200th Anniversary service should take place on the same day of the same month, only 200 years later!

In addition to honouring Canon Peter MacDonald and Rick Chenhall,

Archbishop Hiltz gave a certificate to the Wardens and the parish for all their efforts in planning the Bicentennial services and celebrations.

The parish is continuing its celebrations with upcoming events.

- Outdoor movie night - August 27, 8:00 pm
- September 24: Blessing of Pets, 2pm
- October 14: Beans & Brown Bread supper with Ham & Dessert 4:30 - 6:30 pm
- November 4: Dance (TBC)
- November 26th: Pot Luck Luncheon (Christ the King Sunday) following the 10am service
- December 31: Wind Up of a wonderful year of 200 year celebrations with a levee following Holy Eucharist: 10am



Photo above: Primate Fred Hiltz presents a certificate of appreciation to Rick Chenhall for his years of service to the church at the parish, diocesan and national level.

Photo below: Canon Peter MacDonald was also recognized by Archbishop Hiltz for his 60th years of ordained ministry.

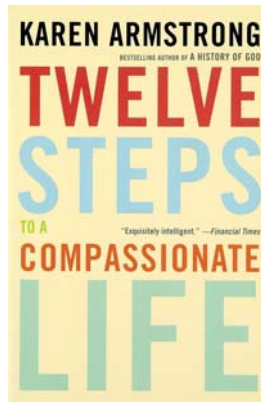
Photo below left: As the service draws to an end, Crucifer Joan Halsey, Primate Fred Hiltz, layreader Vanessa Turner, Archbishop Ron Cutler, Rector Kyle Wagner and Rev. Jane Clattenburg pose for a group photo on the steps of Christ Church.



# The transformational power of spots of time

BY CATHY LEE CUNNINGHAM, PART-TIME RECTOR, CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD, BEAVER BANK & FOUNDER, THE VOCAPEACE INSTITUTE

Greetings and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus! Happy September!



## WORDSWORTH'S "SPOTS OF TIME"

This month, we arrive at Karen Armstrong's Sixth Step to a Compassionate Life: Action, the practice of going out of our way to help one another through simple acts of kindness.

According to Armstrong, these simple acts - of which we can be either the recipient OR the giver - will then become for us a lifelong resource, a sort of memory well on which we can endlessly draw when we need to find strength, comfort, positive affirmation and spiritual discipline in the face of life's inevitable struggles.

Drawing on the works of the British poet, William Wordsworth, she names such moments "spots of time". In his words:

*There are in our existence spots of time  
That with distinct pre-eminence retain  
A renovating virtue.*

## THE NOVITIATE AND HER SUPERIOR

At twenty years old, after having passed through what she describes as "the abrasive training of the novitiate", Armstrong found herself under the tutelage of a new superior. While the new superior was tough, Armstrong was deeply moved by her concurrent capacity for kindness and compassion, especially since she knew her superior had endured great suffering.



Rev. Cathy Lee Cunningham

At the age of thirty, Armstrong's superior was a gifted young nun with a passion for teaching. Suddenly struck deaf, she was removed from the classroom and relegated to the laundry room, where she would spend decades cleaning, folding and mending, instead of in the classroom doing what she loved. A crushing blow, yet, she never became bitter.

Years later, when her beloved superior lay dying, she spoke these transformational parting words to Armstrong:

"Sister, when you came, I was told that you might be a problem. But I want you to know that you've never been a trouble to me. You are a good girl, Sister. Remember I told you so."

Armstrong counts this "one small act of kindness" as a memory that still holds fresh healing power that she draws on when things in her life feel bleak, as they did then.

## A SPOT OF TIME BETWEEN ME AND MY OWN MENTOR

During Lent of the first year of my priestly ministry, I found a lump in my neck while I was brushing my teeth. Before I knew it, I was at the QEII, with a biopsy needle in my neck, soon after which I was told that I had a "cancerous nodule" on my thyroid that would have to be surgically removed. The doctor told me there was a high rate of survival with such a cancer and a quick recovery time from the surgery. That, I could handle.

But, there was more.

When I met with the surgeon, he asked me what I did for a living. I immediately thought, "Why is he asking me that?"

I told him, "I'm an Anglican priest." He responded, "Then, you preach."

I said, "Yes!" Then, he told me that the nodule was in a very tricky place - near my vocal chords - and that there was a chance the surgery might leave me permanently unable to speak. As he continued with the details, and I began to process the implications, he sounded like the teacher in Charles Schultz's The Peanuts, "Waugh, waugh, waugh, waugh".

Soon after, I had a coffee with my beloved friend, mentor and colleague, the late Austin Monroe, former Dean of the Cathedral Church of All Saints. I'd known Austin from the time of my birth. He was like a second father to me. He knew me as well as any person can know another, to the core of my very soul. So, he knew - without my even saying - how scared I was at the thought of losing my ability to speak, preach, preside, and pray aloud - with the people entrusted to my care by God - as their priest.

Into that moment, he spoke these bolstering words (very matter-of-factly): "Well, you're not made of tissue paper, you know. You're strong." Those words became, and still are, a healing mantra for me, as Armstrong's superior's have been for her.

I'll never forget the fear I felt when I woke up in the recovery room. Will I be able to speak? Then, I remembered Austin's words: "You're not made of tissue paper." So, I spoke. Then, I sang. Then, I laughed. To boot, even though I'd been told it was cancer, there was no cancer. Even if the result had been different, that spot of time with Austin would have helped me to face it: "You're not made of tissue paper. You're not made of tissue paper." You can still be a priest without working vocal chords!

To this day, whenever I'm facing a challenge, I remember Austin's courage-bolstering words to me and I always add, "Thanks be to you, dear God!" Throughout my priestly ministry, I've heard so many stories of other people's "spots in time." Those cherished and rare moments that help us rise.

Take action  
to build a more  
*Compassionate*  
world.

Every day, do one  
act of kindness for another  
that you would like done  
for you. Repeat.

## ARMSTRONG'S THREE ACTIONS TO TAKE

Now, it's your turn. What have been "spots of time" in your own life that you can draw on - to give and to receive - strength and healing?

Once we have those moments in mind, there are three more steps to take for this Sixth Step to a Compassionate Life:

1. **Make a resolution to act each day in accordance with the positive version of the Gold Rule, to "treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself" by intentionally offering at least one simple act of kindness;**
2. **Resolve each day to fulfill the negative version of the Golden Rule, to "not do to others that which you would not like them to do to you" (Translation: When you feel like saying that mean thing or lashing out in anger, think of how you would feel and DON'T DO IT!);**
3. **Make an effort each day to change your thought patterns from negative to kind (and that includes thoughts toward your own self, too!).**

May we all create spots of time for one another as we strive to build the kingdom of God together.

I'll see you back here in the October Issue, as we consider the Seventh Step to a Compassionate Life: How Little We Know.

As always, I am ever yours, in deep love for Jesus,

Cathy Lee

In parish life, three things can take you and your mission down: conflict, burnout and fear of change. Visit [www.worldchangingcongregations.com](http://www.worldchangingcongregations.com) to learn more.

# MISSION (is) POSSIBLE:

## Diocesan stories of people responding to God's call 'Hallowed hiking'

PHOTOS:  
(Photos courtesy of Atlantic School of Theology)

BY REV. LISA G. VAUGHN

"There's God in the trees, I'm weak in the knees," Canadian songwriter, Stan Rogers once crooned. That's the experience of those who participate in "Wild Worship" – a profound sense of the holy in the midst of nature and community. Whether it is the rustling of the poplar leaves, the trek together along a grass-laden pathway, the briny breeze, the splash of seals, or the sharing of communion on the rocks -the God of creation is encountered.

Rev. Dr. Debra Burleson, Anglican Formation Director at Atlantic School of Theology, has been leading this innovative ministry outing for about five years. "Students at AST are open to various forms of worship, many are from away and are eager to get out on the land," she said. A favourite location is Duncan's Cove, outside of Halifax.

Wild Worship has three basic parts:

1. *Go for a hike;*
2. *Hold a little worship service;*
3. *Go back.*

Rev. Debra suggests the group walk together for at least 45 minutes to help participants let go of the world behind and open themselves up to the natural environment around

them. Then an informal Eucharist service is hosted al fresco, on a rock, on the grass or wherever convenient. When the liturgy wraps-up people are free to begin the return trek or wander around in the wilderness in reflective prayer. "People may go back or go on," she said. "There is no end time."

Communion worship is simplified. There are no books, only one piece of paper with scripture, and essential sacred vessels are back-packed in for the sharing of the sacrament. Rev. Debra uses a smaller round Naan bread because it is moist and less likely to blow away in the wind. She also administers the blessed wine from a small, gold chalice that was given to her by Kaye Pottie, the wife of the late Rev'd. Joe Pottie. The special cup sparkles in the sunshine, connecting the ornate origins of tradition with the rustic beauty surrounding the group.

Presiding at Wild Worship is different than Sunday morning rites inside a building. "Leaders need to let go of this directed attention," she said. "Seals played in the water behind me, a mink came across the rocks right in front of us. We allow the (participants') attention to go to what nature offers."

"I keep worship faithful to our tradition, but as simple and open as possible. Open to spontaneity and responses to nature," Rev. Debra explained. "It's about letting go."

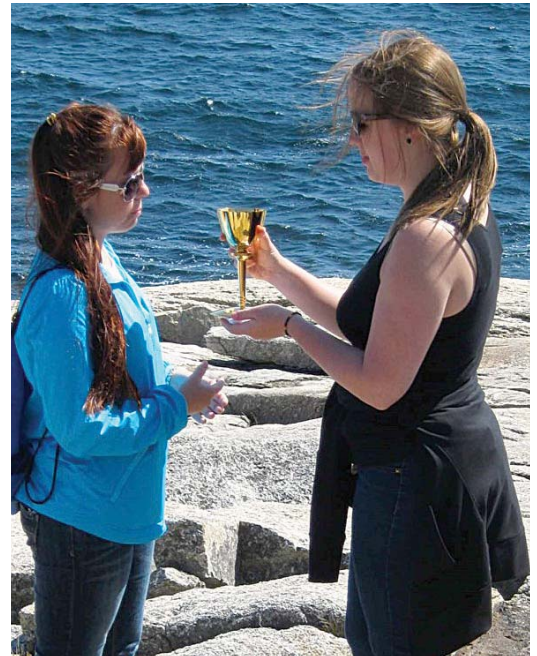
In her research, the professor

and priest has discovered there has been recent scientific studies done on how psychologically we are wired to soul-fully connect to the wilderness. "Our brains respond differently in the natural world as compared to the built environment," Rev. Debra said. "We have an inherent fascination from the things around us that trumps more calculated, intense listening. ... Natural contexts put us in the position as ready receivers, ...with an openness to the Holy Spirit."

Although Rev. Debra has not hosted Wild Worship outside of an academic theological setting, she says it has a great deal of potential to be used effectively for mission in a local church. "The Meetup culture is huge to young people, newcomers and seniors," she shared. "There is a whole infrastructure by which random people are gathering with people they don't know with the same interest to do something together."

Meetup.com is a free, online logistical tool that enables community members to connect and share a yoga class, a dragon boat ride, play cards or meet for wing night a local pub. Rev. Debra says a church leader (lay or clergy) could sponsor a Wild Worship event and open it to anyone who has an interest and spiritual yearnings.

Of course the outdoor spiritual adventure could also be planned and hosted through traditional methods

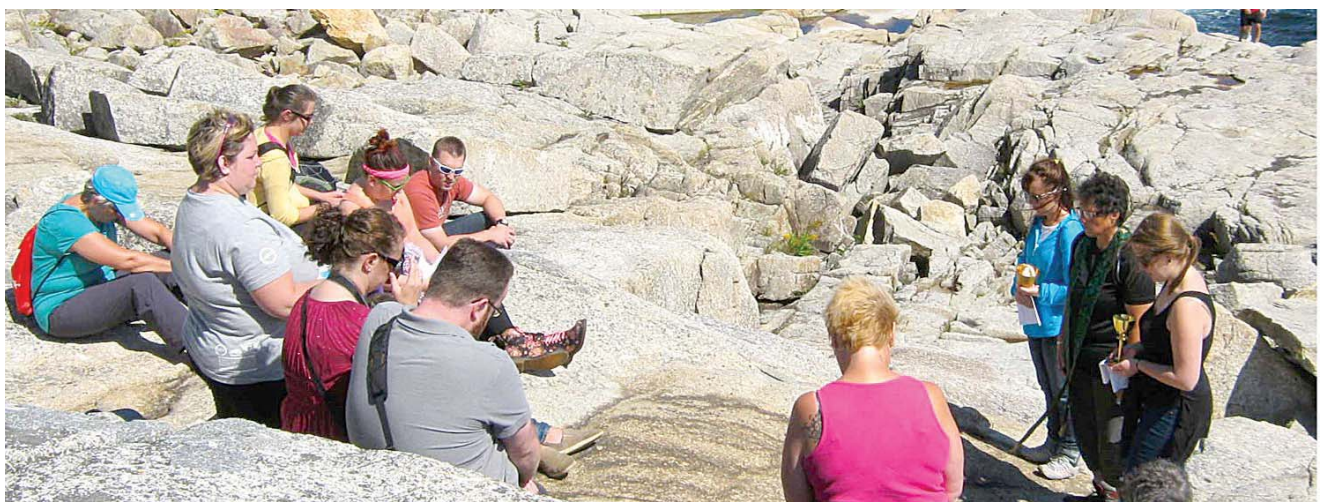


– bulletin announcements, Facebook invitations and community posters.

As for other organizational practicalities, Rev. Debra recommends that the leader complete the hike beforehand to familiarize him/herself with the terrain, hike timing and any hazards. She also reminds participants in her invitation to bring bug spray, sunscreen, a water bottle and appropriate clothing and footwear. Before the hike begins, she instructs

walkers about any safety issues involving cliffs, slippery rocks and for care to be taken with children and dogs.

The Formation Director and outdoor enthusiast says it is important not to have too many rules or too much structure. "People are drawn to being outside in the midst of the natural world," she said. "(Wild Worship) is absolutely incredibly worshipful."



# Teach us to pray:

## Cultivating gratitude

In July, in the closing weeks of my sabbatical, I spent some time at St. John's Convent in Toronto. We began our noon and evening meals by saying a prayer of thanksgiving, the preface of which was printed on a card posted at each table in the refectory. At the top of the prayer card was the title: "Grace in Ordinary Time".

Many of us are familiar with the Church calendar, with the seasons of Advent, Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Pentecost. The days which follow Pentecost can lengthen out into 20-plus weeks; the longest season of the Church's year and are referred to as "Ordinary Time", a time when we read and hear the stories of Jesus' life and ministry, the stories of our faith. Through the summer and into the fall, we hear



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

familiar parables about the Kingdom of God, stories we've heard before. After a while, well-known stories can seem sort of ordinary to us. It occurs to me that this long season is indeed a grace, a blessing, for hearing them again gives us a chance to take an in-depth

look at the extra-ordinariness of this faith of ours. In the ordinariness of this time lie extraordinary possibilities. These stories give us practical examples of what "grace" means. They are stories about "grace" set in a very different world from ours. No modern conveniences, no global warming, no politicians – sounds wonderful, eh? But what do stories about God's generosity and the call to us to be generous, have to do with high blood pressure, or an argument with our teenager or our parents, or worry about mortgage payments, or even job insecurity? Well, plenty, in fact!

**What sometimes gets in the way of grace, of receiving a gift, is pride in one form or another.** It is pride that makes us think we are the only person with a problem; that

no one else has ever had our problem before. Grace is a call to trust – in both ordinary and extra-ordinary times.

**Gratitude is not so much a behaviour as it is a way of life.** Gratitude is not so much an act as an attitude, a frame of mind. It's a simple deduction: God is generous to us, therefore compelling us to live gratefully in return. How do we live gratefully? By being generous to others. Look around your sphere of daily interactions for signs of abundance. It is all by God's grace – in ordinary time. And it is ours to give away.

St. Paul in his First Letter to the Thessalonians writes: "Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." Give thanks in all circumstances. Not just when the cancer is conquered but also when you discover more chemo is needed. Not just when you exchange wedding vows but also when you exchange the harsh words of your first quarrel. Not just when the unexpected promotion comes, but also when the unexpected layoff occurs. Give thanks in all circumstances, knowing that with God, there is always something more than we've asked for or can imagine. Giving thanks in all circumstances reminds us that God knows where we are and how we feel. How extraordinary it is to be so known, so loved, so forgiven. Grace is a call to trust – in both ordinary and extra-ordinary times.

Gratitude is a way of life. Intentionally expressing our gratitude by being generous to others actually contributes to

our wholeness, strengthens our faith, and leads us to living a grateful – and contented – life. God waits, not for our pious ritual, but for our jubilant rejoicing and our generous hand. What matters is what is in our hearts and how we choose to live. Cultivating gratitude makes grace visible. In all circumstances, thanks be to God.

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

Photo credit: Vicki Fioratos

**P.S. from Frances:**

In my June 2017 article, "Forming a Rule of Life", I wrote about my sabbatical study, in which I've been exploring how we can live more fully, on a daily basis, the promises we make in Baptism. A few of you have been in touch with me with questions and comments. It has me wondering if others of you would be willing to share your questions, experiences and insights around the value of forming a Rule of Life. Perhaps you are connected with a religious order or are curious to learn more. If so, please email me at [fdroletsmith@gmail.com](mailto:fdroletsmith@gmail.com). Kindly put "Rule of Life" in the subject line. Your contact and comments will be kept confidential. They will also be of great assistance in my on-going research - for which I am very grateful.



## MORE - Mission School UPDATES!

Did you miss the introductory session of "MORE - Mission School"? If you did or you would like a review, all of the Module #1 resources are available for access and viewing on our Diocesan webpage, under the drop-down bar "RESOURCES" (See: [www.nspeidiocese.ca](http://www.nspeidiocese.ca)). This first session of MORE that was offered in all of the regions over the past year was recorded and is now available to anyone to view anytime. This introductory material includes the entire workshop on videos (9 parts), plus the PowerPoint presentation and all the accompanying documents. Explore the definition of mission, a missional checklist, case studies and more!

Also, we have tentative details for several regions this autumn for Module #2, which looks at how to overcome challenges and

resistance to change in our churches. At press time our tentative dates are:

- Sept. 30 (Possibly Chignecto Region)
- Oct. 21 (Possibly the CB Region)
- Nov. 18 (Possibly the PEI Region)

MORE – Mission Schools are a series of day-long workshops that are being hosted regionally all over the Diocese in the next few years. MORE is based on God's desire to give the world MORE of what it really needs – hope, love, and freedom. MORE is not a program, but a way of seeing ourselves and our church transformed so we can grow! Archbishop Ron Cutler, Innovation Group members and others are facilitating the sessions. Parishes are encouraged to reserve the dates and plan to bring a team.

# BLANKET EXERCISE

*The Anglican Church Women NS Board invites you to attend an Indigenous Blanket Exercise*  
 Facilitated by Geri Musqua-LeBlanc  
 Dalhousie, Elder in Residence

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28<sup>TH</sup>**  
**7:00 P.M. TO 9:00 P.M.**  
 In the GREAT HALL of the  
 Anglican Diocesan Centre  
 1340 Cathedral Lane  
 Halifax, NS B3H 2Z1

*The BLANKET EXERCISE is an educational teaching tool to understand and share the historical and contemporary relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. PLEASE RSVP EARLY for this interactive exercise as space is limited. To register contact Connie English at 902-543-9959 or by email [connierenglish@bellaliant.net](mailto:connierenglish@bellaliant.net) or look up our Facebook page "Anglican Church Women ACW Nova Scotia Board" and register for the event there.*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Michelle Bull appointed Incumbent of the Parish of Emmanuel Spryfield, August 16th, 2017.

Rev. Cate Ratcliffe appointed Incumbent of the Parish of Eastern Passage, August 1st, 2017.

The Synod office staff are saddened to learn of the death on Sunday, August 6th, of Mr. Jarvis de Condé, the Diocesan Insurance Program Advisor.

We extend our deepest sympathy to his wife Charlene and family. The funeral service was held in the Cathedral Church of All Saints on August 14th. May he rest in peace and rise with Christ to glory.  
 Parish officers who need to discuss matters concerning the Diocesan Insurance Program may contact Diocesan Controller, Peter Flemming, at: email [pflemming@nspeidiocese.ca](mailto:pflemming@nspeidiocese.ca) or phone 902-420-0717

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**September Clues**

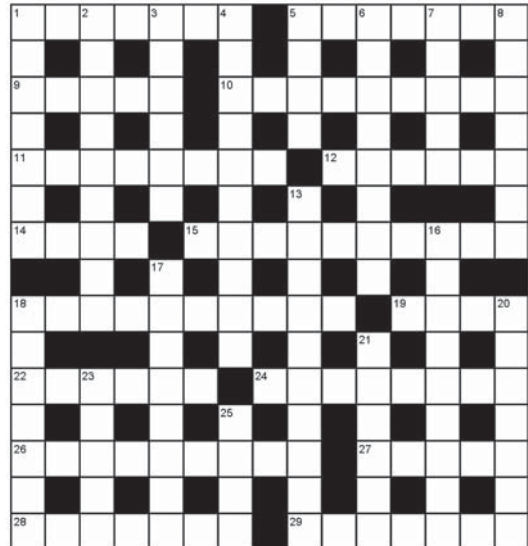
- ACROSS:  
 1 – "When the archangel \_\_\_\_\_ contended with the devil..." a named archangel (Jude 9) (7)  
 5 – Depart secretly (7)  
 9 – Number of gifts brought by the Magi (5)  
 10 – Practice (9)  
 11 – Undecided (8)  
 12 – Nova \_\_\_\_\_, a Canadian Province (6)  
 14 – "...we \_\_\_\_\_ for adoption, the redemption of our bodies" remain in expectation (Rom. 8:23) (4)  
 15 – Vanishes from sight (10)  
 18 – Roman army commanders (10)  
 19 – Mark left by a healed woman (4)  
 22 – "...special utensils, dedicated and \_\_\_\_\_ to the owner of the house" serving some purpose (2 Tim. 2:21) (6)  
 24 – One holding office (8)  
 26 – Pertaining to one skilled in gymnastic feats (9)  
 27 – Act of stealing (5)  
 28 – Membrane in the ear that transmits sounds (7)  
 29 – "(Jesus) was \_\_\_\_\_ by Satan" tried to persuade to do wrong (Mark 1:13) (7)

- DOWN:  
 1 – A Gospel writer (7)  
 2 – "If any of you suffers as a \_\_\_\_\_" follower of Christ (1 Peter 4:16) (9)  
 3 – Warns (6)  
 4 – Inflammation of the larynx, causing loss of the voice (10)  
 5 – Continuous, dull pain (4)  
 6 – Painting of the ocean (8)  
 7 – Beginning (5)  
 8 – American money (plural) (7)  
 13 – A biblical canticle (Luke 1:46-55) (10)  
 16 – One who designs buildings (9)  
 17 – Vegetable sliced and used in salads (8)  
 18 – "Take \_\_\_\_\_; I have conquered the world!" fortitude (John 16:33) (7)  
 20 – Associated (7)  
 21 – Person sacrificed (6)  
 23 – Mistake (5)  
 25 – Plant stalk (4)

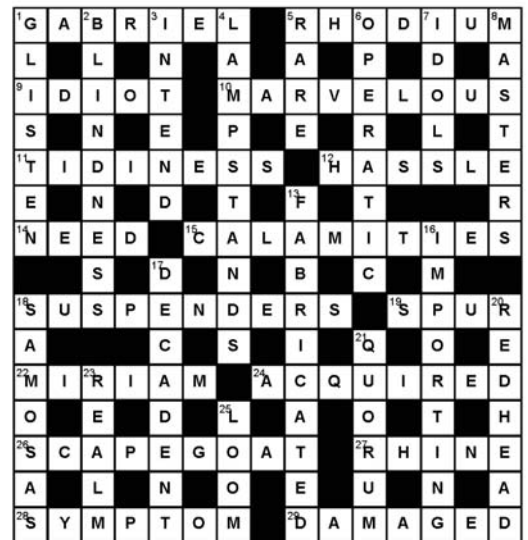
**Bible Crossword**  
 by Maureen Yeats



**September Puzzle**



**June Solution**



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Prayer the Church's banquet, angels' age, God's breath in man returning to his birth, The soul in pilgrimage, the heart in paraphrase ...  
 — George Herbert

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# Vital Church Maritimes 2017



Plans are shaping up for another exciting Vital Church Maritimes conference. This year's event for lay and clergy leaders, is being held in Truro at the Holiday Inn, from Thurs., September 21 to Sat., September 23. MARK YOUR CALENDAR! VCM, now in its fourth year, features seminar teaching and discussion on themes related to Fresh Expressions of church and mission-oriented ministries.

The 2017 theme is "Streams of Hope." Watch for an announcement soon on our keynote speaker. Registration will be open in May. Last year more than 120 people participated at VCM 2016 conference. Almost two-thirds of those who attended were lay people! See [www.nspeidiocese.ca](http://www.nspeidiocese.ca) and the Anglican Net News for updates and registration details.

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# 'Thin places': where we find God



BY DEACON MARILYN HAMLIN

When I opened my Bible to chapter 14 of St. John's Gospel, and read the words in verse 18, "I will not leave you orphaned. I am coming to you", I knew without a doubt the subject of my sermon for that Sunday. It happened to be the Victoria Day Weekend. Many people would be away. They had cottages to open, trailers to clean and relatives to visit. It seemed as if almost everyone had a special place or activity they were drawn to, a destination that was close to their hearts. But for me, that Sunday would be a day to share a reflection and give the homily at our 10:30 a.m. worship service.

**A "thin place" can be a geographical location. It can also be a moment in time.**

Every so often, I have the great privilege of preaching in my parish. I consider it a privilege for me to share the Sacred Word with the people and to help them connect with the message of Truth that draws us together in the presence of God. On some occasions, I have a couple of hours to prepare. Other times I know days or weeks in advance. Sometimes it can be a daunting task, a challenge. It never fails to be a humbling experience. But I feel confident knowing that I am not alone as I work through the stages of preparation. I am always aware that God is right there beside me. A way will

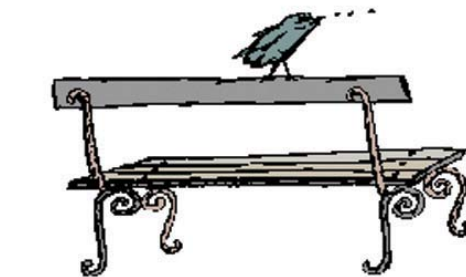
be opened. The Light will filter in.

There is a term, a metaphor, used by many to describe this powerful feeling of being so very close to God. It is called, "thin place", sometimes described as "the time or place when heaven and earth come together." I have read that it is, "a place where the veil between the world and the eternal world is thin," and also "a place where we are able to catch glimpses of the Divine". For me, a "thin place" is when the Sacred is revealed and God is reaching into my innermost being, into my very heart and soul. "It is where I am nurtured in an intimate loving relationship with God and then sent out to love and serve God's world." (Food for the Soul, 2017 -18 - SSJD).

This way of seeing God and the metaphor "thin place" seems to have its origins in a form of Christianity that was practised by the peoples of Ireland, parts of Scotland, Wales and Northern England beginning around the 5th century. Marcus Borg, a professor of religion and culture and also author says, "A 'thin place' is anywhere our hearts are opened.....It is

a means whereby the Sacred become present to us".

A "thin place" where we may experience God in all God's glory, can literally be a geographical location. It can also be a moment (or moments) in time. The influence of nature, music, art, poetry, literature or dance each have the potential to become "thin places" as do worship services, with their music, prayers, scripture readings and sermons. During these moments it becomes possible to feel the power of the Holy Spirit enter into our very being. Each of us has the opportunity to create a place



## The view from the Deacon's Bench

where the Divine is present. According to Borg, "That's when the boundary between oneself and the world momentarily disappears". I believe that's when we are reminded and are truly aware of God's promise to us, "I will not leave you orphaned. I am coming to you."

People have been making pilgrimages to "thin places" for centuries. Destinations such as Rome, Fatima, Jerusalem, Mecca, and the windswept Isle of Iona in Scotland draw millions. We climb mountains, bathe in polluted waters and pray at religious shrines. These sites are sacred for many. They are holy places. Places where a "veil" is lifted and the Divine is revealed. We feel these spiritual destinations have the potential to stimulate a rebirth within us. I've been fortunate to have visited a number of them. Gordon and I made our way to the Isle of Iona because there was a yearning to visit this place and worship within the ancient stone walls of Iona Abbey. Another journey took us to Jerusalem, city of diverse religions and cultures, a city filled with holy sites. But it is also a city filled with tensions and gun-carrying soldiers. I found my "thin place" in a boat on the Sea of Galilee surrounded by rolling green hills. That was the place where heaven and earth seemed to merge. The Presence of God was tangible. I wondered if there was one droplet of water left from 2000 years ago. I hoped that a pebble or two on the bottom of the lake might have been resting there for centuries. Perhaps blades of grass which turned green on the hillsides each Spring had been walked on by the earliest Christians.

But often it is the unexpected moments when we are not looking that become "thin places" in our lives, like the morning at St. Andrews when we signed the Covenant. I have to admit, I was taken by surprise as we made promises to be faithful and uphold one another in love. It seemed as if we were in that place where heaven and earth meet. There were no barriers between the congregation and God that morning. Something "More" was revealed in those sacred moments. I felt we were spiritually ignited and our hearts almost burned with recognition. The Light shone brightly among us.

In the words of Marcus Borg, "The Christian life is about the 'the hatching of the heart,' the opening of the self to the Spirit of God by spending time in what are called "thin places", those places and practices through which we become open to and nourished by the Mystery in whom we live and move and have our being." And because our hearts have been opened, these moments often become clearer, more vibrant, more wonderful, more sacred to us.

However, it does happen that spiritual journeys can sometimes disappoint us. Looking for that "thin place" may make it harder to find. We can search forever to find God, visiting sacred sites in popular locations, talking to brilliant theologians, and worshipping at the holiest of shrines. But maybe, just maybe, that yearning would be quenched and our search ended if we heed and act upon these words, "Be still and know that I am God!" Psalm 46:v10. And again there is that wonderful promise. We will never be abandoned, never be left alone. What more could we ask for?

Diocese of NS & PEI

## CONNECT: Youth Ministry Workshop Series



The Connect Workshop series is the primary means of training youth leaders throughout the diocese. Sessions on these topics are coming up :

Healthy Boundaries: A review of SafeR Church policy, provincial regulations regarding working with youth and vulnerable people, and theological reflection on what all this means for us as peoples of faith.

Best Practices of Youth Ministry: An exploration of - you guessed it - best practices for youth ministry in your parish or at diocesan events. Will cover discussion facilitation, leading reflective debriefs, and the importance of building community.

Engaging Youth in Social Justice: We will take a look at what the bible has to say to us about social justice and explore different ways and resources to engage youth in social justice and in the work of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund.

To find out where and when these sessions are happening, and to sign up for them, go to [www.sharenspei.ca/connect](http://www.sharenspei.ca/connect)