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The Anglican

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE DIOCESE OF TORONTO A SECTION OF THE ANGLICAN JOURNAL www.toronto.anglican.ca JANUARY 2026

Primate praises diocese at Synod

'Oak and iron' help light shine, he says

BY MARTHA HOLMEN

OFFERING a hopeful vision for the future of the Church, Archbishop Shane Parker, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, addressed the Diocese of Toronto as a guest speaker at its 163rd regular session of Synod in November.

Bishop Andrew Asbil revealed that the invitation to Archbishop Parker came mere moments after he was installed as primate in June. "Archbishop Shane is no stranger to stepping into difficult situations," Bishop Asbil told the audience. "After the service, I said to him, 'By the by, Archbishop, we've already booked you to be our guest speaker.'"

In his remarks after dinner on Friday evening, Archbishop Parker explored an analogy comparing the Church to a stained-glass window, originally coined by the Very Rev. Henry Chadwick, a 20th-century English theologian.

"The stained glass reflects the light. It's got colours, it reflects the goodness of the gospel, the love and compassion and gentleness and mercy and courage and justice of God," he said. "The stained glass that is the stuff of the Church needs to be held by oak and iron."

In some cases, he said, the Canadian Church hasn't paid enough attention to the oak and iron – its structures and canons – and the stained glass has tumbled to the ground. "In other cases, we've spent so much time thinking about the oak and iron that we've forgotten its purpose. The stained glass is clouded over."

He went on to say that the Cast the Net vision and calls to action, which have guided the diocese since they were unanimously approved by Synod in 2023, have achieved a balance between addressing the oak and iron and letting the stained glass shine.

"You have to look at property and structures, and the way parishes are configured and where ministry is happening, and all of those things that support the stained glass," he said.

He likened the work the diocese has done through Cast the Net to the national church's Creating Pathways document, approved by General Synod last June.

"We have focused too much on ourselves and our Church and keeping it going with these great cumbersome structures, instead of realizing that we may need to cast some of them away," he said. "For years, we allowed ourselves to be changed without responding to what we see around us and realizing we must begin to guide change, to feel different, to look different, importantly to behave differently."

Archbishop Parker encouraged Synod's work in reflecting on the 20 Calls of Cast the Net to discern what God is calling the diocese to do, while not getting lost in either the oak and iron or the stained glass.

"You're called to tell the good story through your structures, through your ministries, through the light of Christ, the love of Christ, the justice, the gentleness, the courage, the forgiveness of Christ," he said. "You're called to make your Church strong and vital and vibrant so you can pivot it to see Christ, and to allow Christ to shine through the stained glass of what God has called you to be."

Archbishop Parker joined Synod in its business session on Saturday, and he spoke near the end of the morning to reflect what he had been observing.

"It's remarkable just to see the diversity in this room, the relationships between individuals, and it's something to be thankful for," he said.

He remarked on some of the tensions that had surfaced over the course of the day, explaining that tension is a creative place.

"It means that something is being shaped, something is being worked on. You are being worked

Continued on Page 10

Synod members gather for the start of Synod, held in Richmond Hill. At right, Archbishop Shane Parker, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, enjoys a conversation. Full Synod coverage begins on Page 7. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HUDSON AND MARTHA HOLMEN

STATEMENT ABOUT ST. ANNE'S – SEE PAGE 5

Displays honour local soldiers

Neighbourhood project grows

BY JANICE BIEHN

IF you were strolling the streets of Swansea and Bloor West Village in Toronto in the week and half leading up to Remembrance Day, your eye might have caught sight of an interesting display installed on the lawn of a school, church or home. The displays included cards with details of soldiers from the First and Second World Wars affiliated with the specific address.

The cards are part of a community project called "They Walked These Streets – We Will Remember Them." Behind this poignant and simple gesture of recognition is a busy network of volunteers and researchers led by Katy Whitfield, a Toronto high school teacher and historian who grew up in the neighbourhood.

Ms. Whitfield started the project in 2020, inspired by journalist Patrick Cain's interactive "Poppy File" map. In perusing the map, she discovered that two soldiers who died had lived in her house. On Nov. 9 that year, fellow teacher Ian Da Silva and his kids planted 13 poppies made from pool noodles in their front lawn to recognize the soldiers who had lived nearby. Ms. Whitfield researched 13 names and created 13 info cards, including details of each soldier's life and death and a QR code linking to their record on the Canadian Virtual War Memorial website. Just in time for Remembrance Day, the cards gave neighbours a place to learn and reflect when pandemic restrictions prevented them from gathering for a remembrance service.

Now in its sixth year, the project has grown a hundredfold to more than 1,350 names in a section of the west end of the city bordered by the Humber River, Dufferin Street, St. Clair Avenue West and Lake Ontario. The project has also moved from homes to public institutions.

"As a teacher, I really wanted to put a collection of names within walking distance to every school," says Ms. Whitfield. After schools and libraries, she realized that churches have memorials. "And they also do remembrance services."

A member of Runnymede United Church, Ms. Whitfield started there, adding Presbyterian and other United churches too. Anglican churches in the area came on board two years ago when St. Paul, Runnymede joined the ranks, followed by St. Martin in-the-Field last year, and St. Olave, Swansea this year. In 2025, there were 13 commemorative displays. Each card included the logo of the church or school the soldier had attended, as well as photographs, newspaper articles and more.

Brothers Leonard and Leslie Dutton both died in the Second World War and were parishioners of St. Olave's. The family who now lives in their home was so moved to learn of this tragic loss in one family that they contacted Ms. Whitfield to ask for a display on their lawn. "They have remained friends with the Duttons' niece because of their wanting to honour these soldiers, past and present," she says.

Ms. Whitfield's passion for military history is palpable. As a former education coordinator for the Vimy Foundation, she led battlefield tours and was a recipient of the Governor General's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2015. Part of the prize was a visit to the Remembrance Day commemorations in Vimy, France in 2017 on the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

But more than those impressive accomplishments, it's the stories that drive her. "This project helps people put a face to the names inscribed on the plaques," she says. "I feel like I am carrying these stories."

Indeed, in our conversation she enthusiastically brings up names of soldiers whose relatives or descendants have contacted her. Every little detail fills in more of the lives lived. As a former student told her, she is "uncovering the history of the neighbourhood."

Ms. Whitfield is open to working with others to replicate the project in other parts of the city, but she also guards the quality and integrity of the research. "It is a real passion project for me."

With the number of living WWII veterans dwindling, we are at a point in our history when their stories may die, too. Thanks to Ms. Whitfield's efforts, they have a chance to find a place in a new living history.

Janice Biehn is Alongside Hope's communications officer and a member of St. Olave, Swansea.

Katy Whitfield (front row, second from right) joins St. Olave, Swansea volunteers in front of the remembrance display at the church. PHOTO BY JANICE BIEHN

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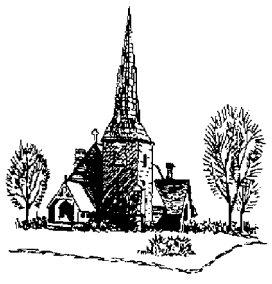

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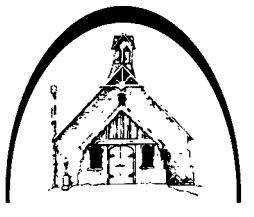

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Grants are available from the Anglican Diocese of Toronto Foundation to support ongoing proposals for new and innovative ways to make connections with people who are not currently involved with their Parishes through the New and Emerging Ministries Fund.

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For further information, contact the Foundation Office:
adtf@toronto.anglican.ca 416-505-6537.

Application deadlines are
April 30th, July 31st and October 31st.

THE FOUNDATION
Anglican Diocese of Toronto

Newcomers event brings deanery together

Resources include map of churches

BY THE REV. CANON JULIE MEAKIN

ST. James the Apostle, Brampton, hosted the North Peel Deanery's first Newcomers Meet and Greet in October, inviting newcomers to Canada and parishioners from churches across the deanery to gather. With many devoted Anglicans coming through our church doors as new immigrants, this event gave an opportunity not only to provide some practical help about settling in Canada but also to forge new friendships.

After an ice-breaker activity, participants of all ages, including families, sat around tables and shared their stories of hopes, dreams and challenges they had faced or were facing. Someone who had arrived from Ghana only a month before spoke with a person who had immigrated from the UK 50 years earlier. Many expressed how their faith – and the church communities that received them – had been anchors during times of transition and uncertainty.

Attendees heard a presentation about the work of Kids Help Phone and received practical information about newcomer services in Peel Region. The Rev. Pam Prideaux from St. Joseph of Nazareth, Bramalea introduced everyone to the churches of the deanery and the ministries they offered. Attendees received a copy of a map called "The Anglican Church Welcomes You," designed by St. James parishioner Warren Bradbury, which included the locations and contact information for all eight churches in the deanery. Everyone enjoyed refreshments as the afternoon wrapped up, and we ended with prayer.

We are grateful for the work of our organizing team and to everyone who took part. We are also grateful for the support of the diocese and our sister churches throughout the deanery.

The Rev. Pam Prideaux with church volunteers and newcomers to Canada at the deanery meet and greet. The event offered practical help about settling in Canada and the opportunity to forge new friendships. PHOTOS BY WARREN BRADBURY

The event gave us the chance to listen to one another, learn from one another and strengthen our shared life as Anglicans, as well as support those making a new life in Canada.

Looking ahead, we hope to continue building connections and serving our wider community. Our next gathering in the spring will also reach out to international students studying at colleges in and around Brampton, many of whom are here on their own.

This was the first event of its kind in our deanery, and we were delighted with the strong turnout and the many positive responses from those who attended. One participant shared: "I enjoyed meeting people with such interesting backgrounds, challenges and dreams, and discovering that we share the same faith regardless of where we were born." Another added, "It was a great opportunity to be here today – please do it again!"

The Rev. Canon Julie Meakin is the incumbent of Holy Family, Heart Lake (Brampton) and regional dean of the North Peel Deanery.

Program mixes food, learning

FLEMINGDON Park Ministry (FPM) has launched new initiative called Farm to Table, a culturally inclusive cooking and food literacy program designed to bring people together through food, learning and shared traditions. FPM is an outreach ministry of the diocese that is supported by FaithWorks

The Farm to Table program responds to a growing need in the Flemingdon Park neighbourhood, located in Toronto, for accessible, healthy meals and practical education for newcomers adapting to life in Canada. Over the coming year, FPM will deliver 24 hands-on cooking sessions featuring guest cooks from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Spanish-speaking countries and Ukraine. Participants will learn to prepare nutritious, affordable dishes while practicing English, improving math skills and building confidence.

Each session provides local ingredients – many sourced from FPM's Common Table Farm – as well as translated recipes, transportation support, kitchen kits and honoraria for community cooks. "Cooking together helps people feel at home," says Maria Reolin, executive director of Flemingdon Park Ministry. "It's not just about food but also confidence, connection and community."

The Common Table Farm grows organic produce distributed to families and seniors in Flemingdon Park. The farm and its programs are part of a network of agencies and community leaders working together for a fairer, more sustainable food system for all.

FPM has been a cornerstone of support for newcomers and families for over 50 years. In the past year alone, it has: welcomed 13,000 community members through its daily drop-in; distributed food to 3,800 seniors; supported 1,200 English learners; and engaged nearly 2,000 volunteers in programs that foster belonging and empowerment.

FPM is seeking to raise $38,000 to fund all 24 Farm to Table sessions. Donations will directly support the purchase of ingredients, translation services, transportation and resources for participants and community cooks. "When people cook together, they share stories, laughter, and hope," Ms. Reolin adds. "That's what builds stronger communities." Those wishing to support the initiative can give a gift at www.flemingdonparkministry.com.

Submitted by Flemingdon Park Ministry.

Volunteers and guests at Flemingdon Park Ministry.

A peaceful winter scene, but for how long? Warming across Canada has been about twice the global average, and three times higher than the global average in Canada's Arctic. PHOTO BY MICHAEL HUDSON

Vestry motion considers climate action

BY ELIN GOULDEN

For many of us in the Diocese of Toronto, 2025 was the year the climate crisis came to our doorsteps. In late March, the ice storm across central Ontario left over a million homes and businesses without power, destroyed hundreds of thousands of trees and resulted in $342 million in insured damages. By August, wildfires were raging in Haliburton and the Kawarthas, fueled by downed trees and drought conditions. People many miles away from the fires experienced negative health impacts from the smoky air. Meanwhile, farmers' crops and homeowners' gardens struggled without adequate rainfall, and Toronto faced six heat advisories – more than double the usual number of days of extreme heat.

Scientists have long warned that a warming climate exacerbates extreme weather events, contributes to wildfire risk and results in more frequent and intense heat waves. Over 80,000 peer-reviewed studies regarding the impact of greenhouse gas emissions on the global climate point to the same conclusion: our addiction to fossil fuels is causing Earth's climate to heat up at a rate that is increasingly dangerous for human and other created life.

Despite the scientific studies, and even the real-world impacts, we are slow to act. Especially for Canada, the world's fourth-highest producer of oil and gas, fossil fuel production and export is seen as essential to our economy, with oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) pipelines promoted as "nation-building projects" in the face of economic threats. Reducing our greenhouse gas emissions is not an easy proposition – practically or politically – when so much of our national economy, including people's livelihoods, is tied up with the oil and gas industry.

Yet Canadians also face existential and economic risks from a changing climate. Warming across Canada has been about twice the global average, and three times higher than the global average in Canada's Arctic. The climate impacts of worsening wildfires, reduced crop yields, loss of biodiversity, damaged infrastructure from severe weather events, lower labour productivity and negative health outcomes must be considered as well. At the very least, we as a nation must do our part to limit global warming, for the sake not only of people around the world but of those here at home as well.

As Christians, we worship a God who created our world and called it good. We follow a Christ through whom all things were created, in whom all creation is held together and through whom all creation is reconciled. Our General Synod has recognized this in adding to our baptismal vows the call to safeguard the integrity of creation and respect, sustain and renew the life of the earth. Called to love God and our neighbour, we must embody this faith commitment with actions that show our care for God's creation and all who depend on it, including those who have most to lose from the climate crisis.

There are many ways for us to care for creation and reduce our own carbon footprint, from reducing excess consumption and ensuring that our homes (and parish buildings) are as energy efficient as we can make them, to protecting our local ecosystems and helping to foster biodiversity by planting native trees, shrubs and wildflowers. The global Anglican Communion Forest initiative has seen hundreds of thousands of trees planted worldwide since it was launched at Lambeth in 2022, and our diocese is starting to take part in those efforts.

All these are good and necessary things to do; but they alone are not enough. We must also call on our elected representatives to take leadership and action on a wider scale, to honour the commitments our governments have already made to reduce emissions and limit the rate of climate change. In 2015, 196 countries adopted the landmark Paris Agreement, a legally binding international treaty on climate change, with the goal of limiting global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, relative to pre-industrial levels. Yet, current global commitments fall far short of this, leading to projections of warming by 3 degrees Celsius by the year 2100.

Canada is the worst performing of the G7 countries in terms of meeting its targets under the Paris Agreement. Although Prime Minister Carney reaffirmed his commitment to meeting Canada's climate targets, recent actions by the federal government to jettison or delay many of the policy tools meant to achieve those targets have left open the question of how we as a nation will accomplish our goals.

This winter, as part of your annual vestry meeting, the Social Justice & Advocacy Committee, with the support of the College of Bishops, invites you and your parish to recommit to our vow to safeguard God's creation and to call on the federal government to enact and implement policies that enable us to meet Canada's climate commitments. Parishes' support of this motion will be tallied and included in our diocesan advocacy efforts, but parishes and individuals may also wish to contact their local MPs to express their concerns. We also hope that discussing and considering this motion sparks a conversation in your parish about how you can live out your local commitment to respect, sustain and renew the life of God's earth, especially in the face of a warming climate. This motion, and our response to it, forms part of our diocesan response to Cast the Net Call #8: "Intensify advocacy and action in response to the climate crisis."

You can find this year's social justice vestry motion and related materials at www.toronto.anglican.ca/vestry-motion. The Social Justice & Advocacy Committee also invites you to submit questions on this year's motion to egoulden@toronto.anglican.ca by Jan. 16, which we will do our best to address in our annual video Q&A.

Elin Goulden is the diocese's Social Justice and Advocacy consultant.

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The Anglican Church

In the Anglican Communion:
A global community of 70 million Anglicans in 64,000 congregations in 164 countries.

Archbishop of Canterbury:
Lambeth Palace,
London, England SE1 7JU.

In Canada:
A community of about 600,000 members in 30 dioceses, stretching from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland and north to the Arctic Ocean.

Primate:
The Most Rev. Shane Parker,
Church House, 80 Hayden St.
Toronto, ON M4Y 3G2 Tel: 416-924-9192

National Indigenous Archbishop
The Most Rev. Christopher Harper
Church House, 80 Hayden St.
Toronto, ON, M4Y 3G2 Tel: 416-924-9192

In the Diocese of Toronto:
A community of parishes covering 26,000 square kilometers. Of the nearly 5 million people who live within the diocesan boundaries, 376,000 claim to be affiliated with the Anglican Church, with about 80,000 people identified on the parish rolls. The diocese is home to many ethnic and language-based congregations, including African, Caribbean, Chinese, Filipino, French, Hispanic, Japanese, and Tamil.
The City of Toronto has a large population of Indigenous peoples.

Bishop of Toronto:
The Rt. Rev. Andrew Asbil

Suffragan Bishops:
The Rt. Rev. Riscylla Shaw and
The Rt. Rev. Kevin Robertson

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Stewardship and the posture of the heart

THE STEWARD

By Peter Misiaszek

There's a story about a wealthy businessperson who attended church one Sunday and heard a sermon about humility and generosity. Moved by the message, he decided to give a large donation to the parish. As he walked out, he said to the priest, "Pastor, I just want you to know, God and I have an understanding – I give, and He blesses." The pastor smiled and said gently, "That's wonderful, but I wonder if God thinks He's part of a deal."

It's easy to turn our stewardship – our giving, our praying, even our faith – into a kind of transaction. We want to be good, faithful, generous people. But sometimes, in the process, we forget why we give, who we give for, and what grace really looks like.

That is the heart of Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in the Gospel of Luke. Luke tells us that Jesus says this parable to some "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt." It's one of those uncomfortable passages where we would prefer to identify with the humble tax collector; yet if we're honest, we probably have more in common with the Pharisee than we would like to admit.

Here we have two men praying in the temple. Both believe in God. Both make time for prayer. But Jesus points us not to what they are doing, but to how they are doing it – the posture of their hearts. The Pharisee stands tall, confident in his record. "I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income." By every outward measure, he is a good man – disciplined, generous, religiously observant. Yet Jesus shocks his listeners by saying that it is not the Pharisee but the tax collector – the sinner, the collaborator, the despised man – who goes home justified before God.

Why? Because the Pharisee's stewardship begins and ends with himself. His giving and his moral record have become a means of self-congratulation. The tax collector, on the other hand, has nothing to boast about. His only prayer is for mercy. He recognizes his dependence on God and casts himself entirely on divine grace.

When we give, we are saying 'yes' to God's ongoing work in the world.

The Pharisee's error is not that he gave, prayed or fasted; those are good and holy things. His error is that he turned them into evidence of superiority. His gratitude was not directed to God but to himself. He thanked God that he was not like other people. He used his stewardship as a mirror of self-righteousness instead of a window through which God's mercy could shine.

How easily does this happen, even in our own lives? Stewardship campaigns can become occasions for pride rather than gratitude. We might compare our giving to others' giving, our service to others' service, our faithfulness to others' failings. We can begin to imagine that what we do for God is what makes us acceptable to God. But the gospel reminds us that our standing before God has nothing to do with the size of our gift and everything to do with the posture of our hearts.

Henri Nouwen once said, "Fundraising is, primarily, a form of ministry. It is a way of announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission." Stewardship is exactly that: an invitation to participate in God's abundance, not a plea born of anxiety. When we give, we are saying "yes" to God's ongoing work in the world.

What does this look like to us today as we begin a new year? It begins with examining the posture of our hearts. Do we give from pride or from gratitude? Do we see stewardship as a task to complete or as a way of life? True stewardship is not seasonal; it is spiritual. It is defined not by a campaign but by a calling. Every act of generosity – whether money, time, attention or compassion – is a prayer of thanksgiving, a declaration that we belong to a God of abundance.

Peter Misiaszek is the diocese's director of Stewardship Development.

Pray for the congregation of St. Anne's

This public statement was issued by the diocese and St. Anne, Toronto on Nov. 23, 2025.

The Anglican Diocese of Toronto and St. Anne's Church on Gladstone Avenue have been informed by the Toronto Police Service and the Office of the Fire Marshal for Ontario that the fire that destroyed St. Anne's historic church building on June 9, 2024, is being treated as suspected arson.

This information was shared with the congregation by a police official at a meeting at the church today. The meeting was held to update the congregation on the investigation as the church awaits the fire marshal's report.

The diocese and the parish are profoundly saddened by the news and will continue to cooperate with the investigation. We offer our thanks to fire and police officials for their ongoing care and diligence in this matter.

"We are devastated to hear that the fire that destroyed the congregation of St. Anne's building on Gladstone may have been deliberately set. As this new reality sinks in, we pray for the congregation of St. Anne's. May they continue to be a light to the community, providing hope and compassion to those in need. We pray for the person or persons who may have perpetrated this act, that they might seek forgiveness and healing," says Bishop Kevin Robertson, a suffragan bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Toronto.

"This has been a very difficult season for the St. Anne's community, and learning this news will add to that pain. The church was more than a building, it was a sacred space that held so many memories for St. Anne's parishioners, our neighbours and outreach community, and people across Canada and beyond. Its loss has been devastating, yet our community is resilient. Our faith tells us that there is hope even in the face of suffering and death, and that new life can spring from the ashes. The church is the people who gather in worship and in service of others, and we look forward to worshipping and serving in this neighbourhood for many more years to come," says the Rev. Hannah Johnston, priest-in-charge of St. Anne's.

For more than 100 years, St. Anne's has been a source of beauty and inspiration, a hub for generous outreach, the home to a vibrant worshipping community, and a place for many arts communities in Toronto's west end. St. Anne's ministry continues on the site. To support its work, visit St. Anne's CanadaHelps donation page, canadahelps.org/en/dn/26603.

The Diocese is on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

To connect, visit toronto.anglican.ca

WITH LOVE

John Joukema, Phyllis Moffatt and Archdeacon Theadore Hunt of Christ Church, Brampton stand in front of a display of poppies that adorns the entrance to the church on Remembrance Day. The display was new to the church this year and was created by parishioners. PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRIST CHURCH, BRAMPTON

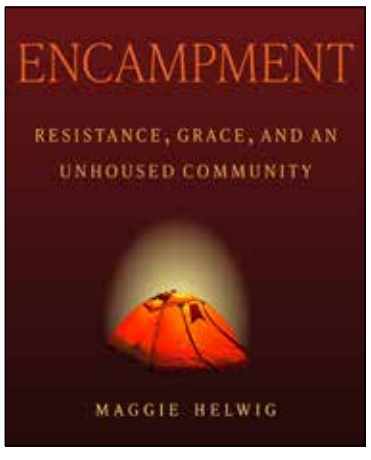
BRIEFLY

Churches celebrate unity week

Two events in the diocese are planned to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, held Jan. 18-25.

Bishop Andrew Asbil and other Christian leaders from across the GTA will gather to celebrate the week in an ecumenical prayer service on Jan. 18 at 4 p.m. at Runnymede United Church, 432 Runnymede Rd., Toronto. Sponsored by the Greater Toronto Area Christian Council of Churches, the service will feature music by the Salvation Army band and choirs from across the region. Bishop Asbil will be the preacher. The service will conclude with a reception, and all are invited.

On Jan. 22, the Fellowship of St. Alban & St. Sergius and the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine will host a gathering on Jan. 22 at 6 p.m. at St. John's Convent, 233 Cummer Ave., Toronto. The evening will begin with Orthodox Vespers sung by members of the choir of Holy Myrrbearers Orthodox Mission, followed by a light supper. The evening's program will focus on the theme "Ancient Faith, Modern Journeys: Christianity in Iran and Iraq and its Diaspora Legacy." All are invited.



***Encampment* by the Rev. Canon Maggie Helwig**

Register through the Convent Guest House at guesthouse@ssjd.ca or 416-226-2201, ext. 305.

Bob Marley Mass starts Black History Month

Black History Month will begin in a special way with a Eucharist at St. James Cathedral on Feb. 1 at 4:30 p.m. The service will be The Bob Marley (Emancipation) Mass, written by the Rev. Canon Dr. Stephen Fields, vicar of the cathedral. The theme will be "One Love, One Heart" and the preacher will be the Rt. Rev. Deon Johnson, bishop of the Diocese of Missouri. Bishop Andrew Asbil will preside. The music will be led by MOKA, a Caribbean fusion band. All are invited.

Bishop Andrew Asbil

Lent book study focuses on homelessness

The Rev. Canon Claudette Taylor and a group of clergy and laypeople from across the diocese, together with the Social Justice & Advocacy Committee, are planning an online Lent book study on *Encampment: Resistance, Grace, and an Unhoused Community* by the Rev. Canon Maggie Helwig, incumbent of St. Stephen in-the-Fields. The study series aims to deepen participants' understandings of the complex issue of homelessness and inspire them, in the light of the gospel, to seek justice for and solidarity with those who are unhoused. It will be held on five Wednesday evenings in Lent from Feb. 25-March 25. All are invited to participate.

The Companions Program

September 2026 – June 2027

The residential Companions program is an immersive opportunity to experience a contemporary monastic community rooted in the Benedictine tradition. It is open to women aged 21 and up regardless of Christian denomination.

Companions live, work, and pray alongside the sisters, learning from them but also sharing each companion's own gifts with the sisters and their ministries.They will:

- Learn to cultivate peaceful and creative ways of living in a diverse intentional community
- Appreciate silence and solitude as well as community and service for a healthy life
- Put down deep roots of spiritual intimacy with God and each other
- Develop a personal path to ongoing spiritual growth

Application start & end (both programs):
January 1, 2026 – May 1, 2026

Cost:
Residential Companions:sugg. $150/month.
Companions Online: sugg. $100/month.
If cost is a hindrance, assistance is available.

Open to women of all Christian expressions, **Companions Online** is an opportunity to become "monastics in the world," living a Benedictine rhythm of prayer, work, study, and recreation. Online Companions learn to develop practices that support and nurture their spiritual life from the comfort of their homes.

They meet regularly for classes and discussion groups, and commit to times of personal prayer at home. They share in book studies, participate in online worship and sometimes screen a film relevant to spiritual growth and self-understanding. Online Companions also develop spiritual disciplines that follow the liturgical year.

To learn more about either program, or to apply, email:
Canon Sr. Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas, SSJD, at
companions@ssjd.ca, or phone St. John's Convent:
416-226-2201, ext. 304

The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine

SYNOD 2025

The Diocese of Toronto's 163rd Regular Session of Synod was held Nov. 7-8 at the Sheraton Parkway Toronto North hotel in Richmond Hill. The theme was "Chosen to tell the good story." (Act 16:10 First Nation Version) Here are some of the highlights. For more information about Synod, including the Convening Circular and other documents, visit the Synod page of the diocese's website, www.toronto.anglican.ca.

DAY 1

Synod starts with Eucharist, Charge

Synod started with a worship service that included a land acknowledgement and the Bishop's Charge. In his Charge, Bishop Andrew Asbil spoke about the diocese being on a pilgrimage since the COVID-19 pandemic. Inspired by John 21 and the Cast the Net visioning process, the diocese and parishes are engaging with the 20 Calls, which were unanimously endorsed by Synod in 2023. Bishop Asbil gave examples of how the calls are being lived out. Initiatives include the Season of Creation's 40 workshops and five Lift Up Our Hearts services; St. George, Grafton providing food and funding to a Habitat for Humanity build; St. Stephen in-the-Fields, Toronto supporting the homeless; the diocese hiring a DEI advisor; hybrid ministry; and regionalization. He thanked the clergy and deacons, Synod Office staff, the chancellor and his wife Mary. "My love for you grows day by day," he told them.

Honorary secretaries announced

The honorary secretaries for Synod were the Rev. Canon Lisa Newland (honorary clerical secretary), Constance Kendall, ODT (honorary lay secretary) and the Rev. Jason Prisley (assistant honorary clerical secretary).

Sponsors thanked

The honorary secretaries thanked the sponsors of Synod, which included The Anglican Diocese of Toronto Foundation, Ecclesiastical Insurance, M&M International, Plan to Protect, Trinity College and Wycliffe College. The sponsors helped to offset the costs of Synod.

New platform explained

JP Copeland from Data on the Spot walked Synod members through Synod's new information and voting platform, a website allowing Synod members to vote, view documents, see the Synod schedule, enjoy Call and Response Moments and more.

Consent Agenda approved

Synod approved the Consent Agenda for the 163rd Regular Session of Synod. It included several non-controversial items that are grouped together. It can be found in Section A of the Convening Circular.

Synod Council reports

The honorary secretaries presented Synod Council's Report to Synod. The report outlines the work done by Synod Council between Synods. It covers activities from July 2023 to June 2025. During that time, the Synod Council had 17 meetings, including one in-person meeting and eight email polls. Highlights of the council's work included: the Cast the Net Working Group has completed its mandate and a new group, the Netminders, has been formed to tend to Cast the Net's vision and its 20 Calls; the Areas and Area Council Working Group continues its work and will make a presentation at this at Synod; Synod Council continued to do its work between Synods – approving Cast and Learn grants, MAF grants and Stretch grants, and continuing to work with the Human Resources, Finance, Risk and Governance and Property committees as they support ministry in the diocese. The full report can be found in Section B of the Convening Circular.

Clockwise from above: youth members of Synod share a table at the start of proceedings; from left, the Rev. Canon Dr. Alison Falby, the Rev. Angie Hocking and the Rev. Sandra Seaborne enjoy a happy moment; Archdeacon Cheryl Palmer thanks Bishop Asbil. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HUDSON

Synod thanks bishop

Archdeacon Cheryl Palmer, speaking on behalf of Synod members, thanked Bishop Asbil for his leadership. Bishop Asbil is now in the eighth year of his episcopacy. "Our love for you increases day by day," she said. Synod gave Bishop Asbil a standing ovation.

Ministry responds to calls

After lunch, Synod enjoyed a Call and Response Moment, which showed how churches and groups in the diocese are responding to Cast the Net's 20 Calls. In this moment, Synod members watched a video about the Durham Region Migrant Workers Ministry.

Reconciliation Land Tithe extended

Synod approved Motion #2, which commits to a continuation of the Reconciliation Land Tithe through Synod 2027. The motion read as follows: "It is moved and seconded that, whereas the Diocese of Toronto is committed to upholding our sacred obligations to reconciliation, we commit to a continuation of the Reconciliation Land Tithe through Synod 2027. With the oversight of the Reconciliation Land Tithe Committee and Synod Council, we will continue to commit the balance of the MAF (Ministry Allocation Fund) tithe (on a rolling basis) for the purpose of Indigenous-led initiatives. The extension of Motion 12 (approved by Synod in 2021) from 2026 forward to 2027 will support Synod Council and the Reconciliation Land Tithe Committee so that, in 2027, a new motion may be presented that embeds permanent funding for reconciliation with Indigenous peoples into the life of our Church." The Rev. Samantha Caravan and the Rev. Leigh Kern of the Reconciliation Land Tithe Committee spoke about the work of the committee and the funds that have been distributed to date. They said the tithe is part of a commitment to address the Church's historic privilege and the imbalance of power. It is a practical expression of restitution for land dispossession and redistribution of wealth, and an expression of a deeper movement for recognizing Indigenous sovereignty and repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery, they said. Their presentation included a powerful video about the Residential Schools and the devastation they caused to Indigenous children and their families.

Church responds to calls

During the second Call and Response Moment, Synod watched a video about Trinity East (Little Trinity) and its Good Food Market, which reflected Calls 4, 5 and 13 of Cast the Net's 20 Calls.

Members' Time raises issues

During a 30-minute Members' Time, Synod members spoke about many issues,

including: personal tithing to Indigenous-led initiatives as a way of reconciliation; affordable housing; creation care and the Communion Forest movement; retired clergy voting at Synod; Anglican, Lutheran and Moravian collaboration; regional ministry; COP 30 and climate change; General Synod's motion on an arms embargo on Israel; refugees; a book on theology and AI; youth speaking about their faith; the sacredness of the Eucharist; churches that attract young people; learn about Israel and Palestine before writing to political leaders.

Brasilia brings greetings

Bishop Mauricio Andrade brought greetings in a video from the Diocese of Brasilia, which is the companion diocese of the Diocese of Toronto. The companionship is now in its second year and will continue until 2031. Before

Continued on Page 10

May God give us the courage to meet

Bishop Asbil delivered his Charge to Synod during the opening worship service.

BY BISHOP ANDREW ASBIL

O God, take our lips and speak through them. Take our minds and think through them. Take our hearts and fill them with love for you. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Mary and I, in May, joined a little group of pilgrims from Church of the Redeemer, Bloor St. to walk the St. Cuthbert Way. It's a pilgrimage that begins in Melrose, just in front of the abbey where Cuthbert began his ministry in the year 650, and the trail takes you through the borderlands of Scotland and England through Northumbria to the east coast to Lindisfarne. It's about 100 kilometres. Every day we began as a little group in devotion. We offered reflections. We picked little names of one of the pilgrims out of a hat. We prayed for that person for the day. And we walked for the first hour in silence – hard for extroverts.

You hope, in fact, on the first day you might ease your way into that kind of pilgrimage, but not so. Straight up over the Eldon Hills. Straight up. It was once a lookout during the Roman occupation. It was a burial ground and a gathering place for ancient peoples. Unlike the Camino, it's sparsely travelled. On that first day, Richard and Audrey, Mary and myself met up with two pilgrims in our first break. They were officers in the Salvation Army. They'd just finished a pastorate and were about to begin another. They were aptly named Paul and Paula. Later that day, as we were having lunch, the four of us, who would emerge on the trail but Paul and Paula, and we had another conversation. Then they went down the trail only to return a few minutes later, as though they had forgotten something. And Paul said to me, "Bishop, it's Sunday morning. Would you pray for us?" As though we had done it thousands of times before, the six of us just formed a circle on the path, held hands, and I offered a prayer. And with the amen, we were off again. At the end of the trail, Mary and Paula were having a conversation, and Paula went back to that moment, and she said, "That moment of prayer was when the pilgrimage began for me."

'My love for you grows day by day,' Bishop Asbil tells Synod. PHOTO BY MICHAEL HUDSON

On a pilgrimage

We have been on a pilgrimage as a diocese. Chapter 21 of the Gospel of John has formed for us a spiritual context to describe where we have been and where we are going. The bewilderment and the fatigue of the disciples fishing all night long and catching nothing mirrors our own bewilderment and fatigue of going through COVID. We lost so many people. We grieved so deeply. We lived too long in isolation. But there were also moments of grace, and our little nets began to fill again when we turned online for worship. And we adapted, and we pivoted, and we wore PPE. And eventually we got onto shore, and we counted our blessings like counting fish in a net. And instead of running back as fast as we could to our old life, we took the time as the diocese to contemplate where God was, to crane our necks, to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit pushing us, encouraging us to move.

That Cast the Net process allowed us the opportunity to see nets in a different way, to see that we were actually being reformed and reshaped and rewoven as a community of parishes and missions – not standalones, but in this work together. And the 20 Calls to action have been infused in everything that we are striving to do. They are like a compass in the hand, giving us a bearing in the way that the Holy Spirit is guiding us. Those 20 Calls infuse the work of the Synod Council. They infuse the work of those who minister from 135 Adelaide, and they call us together in the Synod. And later today, we will be invited into conversation on each one of those calls. Every parish in the diocese is encouraged to adopt one, two, three or four different calls that resonate with the ministry that belongs to you. No one parish can do 20. None of us are that good. But together we can. And that is the nature of Synod. It's the nature of the word. Sun, together. *Hodos*, to travel. To travel together. To pilgrim together. And those 20 Calls infuse my charge today. I'd love to spend time speaking about every one, but I can't.

The one symbol that's emerging for us is that little picture of a fish. Some of you have a pin. At the centre of the fish is the cruciform, the cross, and in the centre of the cross is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And each axis is a direction for us to follow. Renewing our spiritual life, inspiring faith in action, reimagining ministry, transforming our diocesan culture.

Renewing our spiritual life

Spirituality. Calls #1 and #3 summon us as a diocese to prayer, to discipleship, to evangelism. And to respond to those calls, the Season of Spiritual Renewal committee, chaired by Jennifer Schick and Philip Der, and a project so ably coordinated by Judy Paulsen and Jacqui Hance. And the committee itself gathered to create 40 different workshops for clergy and laity to respond to those calls. An Advent series led by the bishops was attended each night by 200-300 people. This year we will run it again, and we invite Bishop Mauricio Andrade to offer one of those evenings to deepen the partnership we have with Brasilia.

For me, the heart of this season has been the five worship services, Lift Up Our Hearts. When we started planning them and saying, "Let's meet on a Saturday afternoon at 2 p.m.," we thought at first that was a great idea. And then as we got closer to that first service, we wondered, was it really a good idea to gather at 2 p.m. on a Saturday? I have to tell you, for me, the moment of walking into an almost full cathedral with you singing with your hearts open is a moment that reduced me to tears and continues to. And the response in that moment was, for me, we are here, we are hungry for the Spirit of God to renew us.

Call to action #3 is to reinvigorate youth and children in family ministry. One of the first steps is that we have embedded in our budget the Youth Ministry Apprentice Program and the five positions of youth coordinators for the diocese.

Inspiring faith in action

For four years, an encampment of homeless and street-involved neighbours found refuge and sanctuary in front of St. Stephen in-the-Fields Church. Mother Maggie Helwig and the community served the needs of that community. More than that, they interfaced with city workers and officials, and they patiently worked with neighbours, those who were with and those who were against. Sadly, that encampment was cleared just a few weeks ago. And on the day of the clearing, I was present for a little while, and Mother Maggie was on one side of the fence and I was on the other. I said, "What can we do?" She simply said, "Bear witness. Be present. Speak truth. Look for Jesus in the moment."

Right across this diocese, in small communities and large, we have watched an increased need for families using food banks and shelter. And there are in every community, large and small, parishes that are tending to that vulnerable community. In Minden, in Peterborough, Barrie, in Orillia, Mississauga, in Don Mills, in Scarborough, in downtown, and all points in between. Since 2019, Synod has been calling us to move and to help solve part of the housing issues. And I would invite you to read the property supplemental in your convening circular that gives us an update on what we've been able to do so far.

Call to action #4 is to participate in the unfolding healing of God in the world. St. George, Grafton wanted to help in their community. At the same time, Habitat for Humanity was starting a new project of building seven homes. The members of the community knew that they were a little bit older for climbing up on a ladder, but they were really well known for hospitality and food. They provided meals and snacks for 14 build days, and they invited St. John, Port Hope and St. Peter, Coburg to participate, adding six more days.

Call #6: strengthen Indigenous ministries. Ten years ago, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report was published. Murray Sinclair once said, "We have described for you the mountain, and we have shown you the pathway to the top. We call upon you to do the climbing." We as Anglicans are called to climb. Two calls that are close to my heart – the first is call 46, described in the land acknowledgement. Read it, mark it, inwardly digest it. I invite you to join with me in creating and renewing relationships with First Nations Indigenous communities within the Diocese of Toronto. Later today, we will have a conversation about call 61. Samantha Caravan and Leigh Kern will describe the work we've been able to do so far in being able to encourage and be a part of reconciliation work through the Land Tithe Committee.

Call #7: take, act, communicate on all actions toward diversity, equity and inclusion. We are pleased to announce that Dilesha Stelmach has been appointed as

the future with hope, dignity and love

our new DEI advisor here in the Diocese of Toronto, who will work very closely with Bishop Shaw and with the Intercultural Committee to help us in this work of deepening our call to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Reimagining ministry

When we went on our pilgrimage, we were well equipped, and we took the advice of many who had gone on long journeys. We took our time finding the right pair of boots. We learned the merits of foot glide, wearing wool socks and wearing layers to meet the spring of Scotland. We had on our backs backpacks full of snacks and water and first aid equipment. And then there were the sticks. I have to admit, I kind of pooh-poohed the idea of the sticks. I said to myself, Really? Do I need sticks? I mean, aren't they really for more mature people? I gotta tell you, thank God for the sticks. They were the only thing actually standing between getting to the top and to the bottom. When your legs are burning, you are dragging yourself up the hill, and when you're trying to get down the other side and your quads are burning, giving that support is all that you need. Those sticks have taught me a valuable lesson. There is no room for pride on a spiritual journey. None. You need help, you ask for it.

We also learned it's just as hard going up as it is going down. For the last 30 years, the average Sunday attendance in the Diocese of Toronto has been going down. It's a phenomenon that's experienced right across the Canadian church and in most denominations. We have listened so long to prognosticators who would say, draw the line and in 2040 it comes to an end. Except for the last two years, our average Sunday attendance has gone up by almost 20 per cent, the first time in years, in large measure because of online worship and engagement – the hard lessons we learned in the wilderness that we continue to apply. We are learning that a virtual community is the same as an in-person community. Forty-one churches in our diocese are growing in number. We need to learn from each one of them. Universal growth is not happening right across the board, but parishes are continuing to learn how to engage so that we can.

At the same time, there are communities along the pilgrim trail that make that very painful decision that it's time to stop. Thomas and Emma Cooper arrived in Canada in 1864. They eventually made their way north and settled near the Black River. In the early 1870s, they built a general store when the lumber mill opened. In 1884, St. George's Church was opened. It was led by a Wycliffe student, and for more than 100 years, ministered to the local community until members dwindled. And in 2009, they closed the door. The altar from St. George's is on this dais. We gather around this table a reminder to us that every parish and community is a vessel of hope and love in faith in Jesus Christ, a community of word and sacrament. And even though the doors shut, their voices echo from the past like a great cloud of witnesses.

Four parishes have closed since we last met as Synod: St. Chad, Toronto; St. John, West Toronto; Christ Church, Waubaushene; St. George, Newcastle. And we remember them. I'd also bring to memory, St. Anne, Gladstone that suffered a terrible fire on June 9, 2024. But out of the ashes comes a new hope from that little community, not working on their own

Synod members listen to the Charge. PHOTO BY MICHAEL HUDSON

entirely, but now walking with Epiphany & St. Mark to imagine a new vision for ministry in their community.

Since our last gathering as Synod, a new congregation has been planted and opened by St. Paul's Bloor Street: St. George by the Grange. One of their parishioners said to me recently, "Do you know, Bishop, that on the first Sunday of September, we had 118 people in church? Hallelujah." St. Paul's Bloor Street has a dream of building, gathering five congregations, new ones, over the next 10 years. They can't do that on their own. It takes all of us. We are one as a diocese. By surprise, more and more laity and clergy from parishes are coming to us and saying, "Perhaps we can help a parish next to us grow again." Let's crane our necks to listen for the leading of the Spirit in this work.

Regionalization is a word that we will become well acquainted with. We will hear from Janet Marshall speak about how communities are coming together, three and four and five, not with one clergy, not with two clergy, but with three or four, to be able to sustain a presence in a local place and to work together as a team. Doing ministry in difficult contexts, coming out of the pandemic, after a fire, in changing and uncertain political and economic times is exactly where the Church has always been called to plant. Just listen to the journey that Timothy and Paul have taken today. They went through the territory of the dry wood, through the territory of the pale-faced people. The Holy Spirit prevented them from going to the land of the rising sun for now. They tried to go into the storming river, but the Holy Spirit wouldn't allow them. It was only when they arrived in Troas that Paul had a vision of a man from the land of the tall people, that the man said, "Come and help us." We need to be strategic as communities in responding to the calls around us as we learn to reimagine ministry today.

Transforming diocesan culture

We are living into a new form of episcopal leadership, moving away from areas and moving away from five bishops to three bishops, five archdeaconries, raising up the profile of regional deans, appointing archdeacons and a canon administrator, and working together in a new way. We have had enough time under our belt to review how that's going, and you have been honest and helpful in your response. We are learning how to fine-tune that new way, but overwhelmingly, there's a sense that we want to keep going.

Investing in our future, call #20. Earlier in the year, we asked M&M International to help us with a feasibility study for a major financial campaign. What we heard from you was many parishes are just still trying to pull it together after COVID. Some parishes say, "We're so small, we can't find volunteers to run it." Others said most of the money needs to stay in the parish because we have capital and ministry needs. And 70 per cent said we're almost there to get started. It's the right thing to do. The timing is almost right. I agree with all that. Most of the money needs to stay in the parish. This program needs to be tailor-made, not an off-the-rack, but a tailor-made engagement with every parish and mission in the diocese. We've already had one parish finish theirs. Others are ready to go. This is an opportunity for us to be able to raise 60 per cent, 70 percent that stays – even more, maybe, depending on how well you negotiate. It stays in the parish. And whatever else is raised always goes back into the parishes too.

A final word

On the beach, Jesus asks Peter, Do you love me, without condition? Peter responds, I love you like a friend. Jesus asks again, Do you love me, without condition? I love you like a brother, Peter says. Jesus says, Do you love me like a brother? Peter says, I love you like a brother. We know the story, that in the end, Peter loved without any conditions. I'm beginning my eighth year as your bishop. And while there are burdens to carry, the overwhelming sense I have day after day is a growing depth of love for you.

I'd like the clergy, deacons and priests, to please stand. I know the burdens that you carry. I know the sacrifices that you make. I know the joy and the gifts that God has given to each of you to proclaim the gospel and to live those calls. And day by day, I am in awe in all that you give to the Church and to this ministry. And my love for you grows day by day. Thank you.

I'd like all those who minister out of 135 Adelaide to please stand. It is a joy for me to work with you, either virtually or in person, day after day after day, and I know the hard work and the dedication that you have for the enterprise of the Church, the long hours, the nightly meetings and the pain that you carry, too, and the joy that you bring to this enterprise. We could not do this in the diocese without you. And my love for you grows every day.

I'd like our chancellors to please stand. Chancellors are on speed dial. and the hours and hours and the weight and the burden that you carry, in helping us to move properly as a diocese and to sustain the legacy of this place. You carry so much, and my love for you grows day by day. Thank you.

I'd like the lay folk to please stand. Sunday by Sunday, we see you. And day by day, you offer your gifts, your time, your talent, and all that you have to the enterprise of the Church. You follow your baptismal covenant, and I am always in awe of how much you give to your local community to bring it to life, and I am so grateful for your ministry. You are the heart of the diocese, and my love for you grows day by day. I am so grateful for you. Thank you.

I'd like Riscylla and Kevin to please stand. It is such a gift to have you as colleague and partners in this wonderful enterprise of ministry. I cannot imagine doing this work on my own. The gifts that you bring, the patience, the humor, it helps us meet every day, sometimes challenging, sometimes beautiful. And my love for you grows day by day. Thank you.

And I'll say to Mary and Jenn: day by day, week by week, you organize, keep everything moving in a pace. The love and the care that you bring to your daily work is breathtaking. Such patience and such joy, never down, always up. I am so deeply grateful for your ministry and my love for you grows day by day. Thank you.

Is Mary in the house? Stand, please. I would not be able to do this without you. And of course, my love for you grows every day. And I love you so much for giving me this cold.

May God keep us. May God hold us. May God give us the courage to meet the future with hope, with dignity, with love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Continued from Page 8

the video, the Rev. Pam Trondson of the Diocese of Toronto spoke about the companionship, which has included monthly online meetings, in-person visits, an online theology day and a priest from Basilia giving the keynote address at the Diocese of Toronto's outreach and advocacy conference in October. Future initiatives will include a visit by people of the Diocese of Toronto to Brasilia in the summer of 2026.

Season of Spiritual Renewal presented

The Rev. Canon Philip Der and the Rev. Canon Jennifer Schick gave a presentation about the Season of Spiritual Renewal, which is Call 1 of Cast the Net's 20 Calls. Their presentation included prayers for spiritual renewal and a video clip showing the Rev. Canon Stephanie Douglas talking about the season's helpful resources. The season, which officially concludes in January, focused on prayer, scripture, worship and evangelism. The season featured 40 workshops, booklets and other resources and five special worship services, which attracted about 1,600 people. The season has provided hope and inspiration to Anglicans in the diocese, they said. They thanked the Rev. Canon Dr. Judy Paulsen, Jacqui Hance, Bishop Asbil and Canon Mary Conliffe for their efforts.

Synod hears about the Netminders

The Rev. Canon Pamela Rayment, the Rev. Yohan Dumpala and Deborah Whalen-Blaize spoke about the work of the Netminders, a group of clergy, laity and Synod Office staff who have been brought together to tend to Cast the Net and its 20 Calls. The Cast the Net visioning process, which was held from 2022-2024, included consultations with more than 1,000 participants and resulted in the new vision statement for the diocese – "Followers of Jesus, inspired by the Holy Spirit, serve the world God loves!" – and 20 calls to action. The vision and the 20 Calls were unanimously endorsed by Synod in 2023. The calls are grouped into four areas – renewing spirituality, inspiring faith in action, transforming diocesan culture, and reimagining ministry – and at the centre of them is the Good News of Jesus Christ. In a 2025 pastoral letter to vestries, the bishops encouraged parishes to engage with a call or two. To help with this, the Netminders created resources, including a discussion guide, a poster and a video, all of which are available on the Cast the Net page of the diocese's website, www.toronto.anglican.ca. After Synod, the Netminders will continue to support and encourage engagement with the calls. "We will amplify, celebrate and share the story of how living the calls is helping us to tell the good story, which is the ongoing work of those learning to follow Jesus," said Canon Rayment.

The Rev. Megan Jull joins Elin Goulden at the Social Justice and Advocacy table. PHOTO BY MICHAEL HUDSON

Breakout sessions focus on 20 Calls

After the Netminders presentation, Synod members went into 50-minute breakout groups to talk about the calls and what their parishes were doing. Most of the sessions dealt with more than one call. The hope was to begin conversations across the diocese about the calls. Highlights from these gatherings will inform the Netminders as they focus on efforts moving forward.

Primate addresses Synod

After a banquet dinner, Synod resumed with Archbishop Shane Parker, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, as the guest speaker. Quoting from Prof. Henry Chadwick, a New Testament scholar at Cambridge University, he said the Church was like a stained-glass window. "A stained-glass window reflects the light, reflects the goodness of the gospel, the love and compassion and gentleness and mercy and courage and justice of God," he said. "But in this world, the same glass that is the stuff of the Church needs to be held by oak and iron, otherwise it will just fall to the ground." Archbishop Parker said the diocese's Cast the Net vision has a good balance between addressing the oak and the iron – the structure, canon law, programs and good order of the Church – and allowing the stained glass of spirituality and justice to shine. He congratulated Synod members on the vision and 20 calls. "You recognized that you have to pay attention to the stained glass, but you also have to look at the oak and iron which supports it," he said. "You have to look at property and structures and the way parishes are configured and where ministry is happening – all of those things that support the stained glass."

Bishop names new canons

The following were made honorary canons of St. James Cathedral by Bishop Asbil. They will be installed on Jan. 11 at St. James Cathedral.

- The Rev. Canon Dr. Christopher Brittain, Dean of Divinity at Trinity College
- The Rev. Canon Kenute Francis, St. Hilda, Fairbank
- The Rev. Canon Daniel Graves, Trinity Church, Aurora and St. James the Apostle, Sharon
- The Rev. Canon Dr. Robert Hurkmans, Trinity, Streetsville
- The Rev. Canon Dr. Isaac Kawuki-Mukasa, St. James the Apostle, Brampton
- The Rev. Canon Dr. Patrick McManus, All Saints, Kingsway
- The Rev. Canon Julie Meakin, Holy Family, Heart Lake (Brampton)
- The Rev. Canon Pamela Rayment, St. Clement, Eglinton
- The Rev. Canon Jennifer Schick, All Saints, Whitby
- Major The Rev. Canon Bradley Smith, St. John the Evangelist, Peterborough
- The Rev. Canon Susan Spicer, St. John, Ida and St. Luke, Peterborough
- The Rev. Canon Michael Van Dusen, St. Aidan, Toronto
- Canon Sister Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas, Sisterhood of St. John the Divine

DAY 2

Synod resumes

Synod resumed on Nov. 8 with a pre-recorded musical reflection from St. James, Orillia and Morning Prayer led by the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine. Cdr. (Ret.) the Rev. Carol Bateman and Major (Ret.) the Rev. Murray Bateman led an Act of Remembrance. Today was Indigenous Veterans Day. The ceremony included the laying of a Remembrance wreath.

Support for Jamaica on way

Bishop Asbil spoke about the devastation caused by the hurricane that hit Jamaica in late October. He said the diocese will work with Alongside Hope and other agencies to provide help, and he encouraged parishes to assist as well. "Please keep the people of Jamaica in your prayers," he said.

Areas and Area Council Working Group reports

The Rev. Canon Jesse Parker and the Rev. Canon Rob Mitchell spoke about the work of the Areas and Area Councils Working Group. Their full report is in Section G of the Convening Circular. The group was formed in 2023 to look at the diocese's former episcopal area structure, which included area bishops and area councils, and to juxtapose that with the new episcopal leadership model, which includes territorial archdeaconries, and to make recommendations based on those changes.

After widespread consultation, the Areas and Area Councils Working Group

Continued on Page 12

'I see a diocese that's poised to thrive'

Continued from Page 1

on by the Holy Spirit," he said. "The tension that I was hearing, and you were hearing as well, is the tension between what is and what can be – what we see before us now and the future perhaps that we have a glimpse of, but we do not fully see."

He implored Synod members to remember the water of baptism. "Remember that you were baptized in the name of the living God, and you reside with the cross and marked as Christ's own forever," he said. "Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. The water of baptism, the sign of the cross, the promise that we are Christ's own forever, says to us that all shall be well."

He praised the diocese for its work of deliberate discernment through Cast the Net. "When I look at you, and I look at this expression of the Anglican Diocese of Toronto, I see a diocese that's poised to thrive," he said.

"You are modeling what every church, every diocese in our country needs to do, which is to do the deep dive and look carefully at themselves, look carefully at what we stand on, and to identify plans and priorities that will allow you to change and to grow into the full stature of Christ," he continued. "To position yourselves so the light of Christ shines through the well-supported stained glass that is the ministry God gave you to conduct. All shall be well."

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Synod sings Shine Jesus Shine.

Warm greetings during the opening Eucharist.

Archdeacon Kyn Barker takes a break. PHOTOS BY MARTHA HOLMEN AND MICHAEL HUDSON

The Rev. Canon Sister Constance Joanna Gefvert, SSJD, and the Rev. Canon David Bryan Hoopes, OHC.

The Rev. Canon Leonard Abbah, OHC, talks to volunteers at the AURA (Anglican United Refugee Alliance) table.

The Rev. Canon Lisa Newland addresses Synod.

Books and other items for sale at the Broughton's table.

Synod members enjoy the lunch break.

Continued from Page 10

recommended the following changes:

- That the diocese not seek to replace the area councils with another analogous structure, such as an archdeaconry council or a deanery council.
- That each of the bishops be provided with a budget to fund parish-based ministry projects that do not meet the requirements of existing grants. The total amount of money would be $54,000 per year. To facilitate the administration of these grants, the regional deans would work with parishes that are applying to ensure that their requests are aligned with the goals of the grants.
- That the FaithWorks funds that each area council could spend on outreach-related ministries in their areas be put back into the overall FaithWorks budget.
- Create a discretionary budget for regional deans of $2,000 per year to use at their discretion to foster collegiality among clergy and to promote ministry and collaboration within their deanery.
- Look at the deaneries as the hubs or the engines of local collaborative ministry. They will be asked to develop collaborative ministry plans and goals that suit the context of their deanery.
- That the regional deans have a job description.

Following a period of implementation, which would begin in January 2026, the recommendations would be evaluated in the early spring of 2027 at a meeting of the bishops, archdeacons, canon administrator and the regional deans. The recommendations would have had about a year and a half at that point to have been lived into, and there would be a chance to decide how it's going and what further changes need to be made. Then at the next regular session of Synod, in 2027, the working group would ask Synod to consider striking Canons 43 and 44 – those having to do with episcopal areas, area bishops and area councils – from the canons, and also that Synod revise Canon 20 (on regional deans) to reflect a more robust job description. At the end of their presentation, it was moved that Synod approve the resuspension of Canons 43 and 44 until the next Regular Session of Synod, as they relate to areas and area council, as recommended for approval by Synod Council and presented in the Convening Circular. The motion was approved.

FaithWorks turning 30

FaithWorks, the diocese's annual outreach appeal, is celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2026. A video showed the work of FaithWorks and interviews with people who are helped by it, agencies that rely on FaithWorks funds, and donors. Since its inception, the appeal has raised more than $40 million.

Priorities and plans approved with amendment

The diocese's executive director, Varun Balendra, and senior accountant, Rebecca Scott, presented the diocese's priorities and plans for 2025 to 2027 and the financial budget. The document Priorities and Plans 2025 to 2027 is in Section D of the Convening Circular, with addendums in the Supplementary Convening Circular. The Priorities and Plans 2025 to 2027 document outlines what the diocese will do over the next two years to help the diocese and the parishes live out the Cast the Net vision and the 20 Calls. The work will focus on the four areas of the vision: renewing spirituality, inspiring faith in action, reimagining ministry and transforming diocesan culture. The diocese is projecting income of roughly $10.2 million for both 2026 and 2027. That's an increase of about $1.4 million compared to the 2024 actuals. On the expense side, the diocese is budgeting $9.9 million for 2026 and $10.2 million for 2027, which represents increases of $1.4 million and $1.7 million respectively over 2024. Overall, this gives the diocese a slight surplus in 2026 and a balanced budget in 2027. Based on the diocese's current financials, it's unlikely there will be a deficit in 2025.

The Rev. Ken McClure prepares to lead a song of praise, accompanied by Aaron Dumpala on keyboard, trumpeter Andrew Mendis and the Rev. Vinaya Dumpala on guitar. PHOTO BY MICHAEL HUDSON

There was a motion to amend the Priorities and Plans 2025-2027 before it was voted on. It was moved by Ellen Briant and seconded by the Rev. Canon Ted McCollum that: "Be it resolved that the Priority and Plan to 'engage all parishes in a diocesan major gift fundraising campaign' be deferred until Synod 2027." The motion to amend was passed, so that the Priorities and Plans 2025-27 and Financial budget motion read: "It is moved and seconded that Synod receive the document entitled Priorities and Plans 2025-27 and approve the priorities and the financial budget contained therein as amended and that Synod Council report back to Synod on this plan." The motion was approved.

Members' Time gives voice

Members spoke on a number of issues, including: the Provincial Youth Council; the book *Encampment*; inviting Muslim leaders to Synod; youth members expressed gratitude for being at Synod; the CLAY (Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth) gathering this past summer; the Anglican Church Cricket Festival; Ontario's Bill C-12 regarding refugees and immigrants; response to the Reconciliation Land Tithe; Sabbath leave for clergy; the challenges and potential of rural ministry; mental health support in the Church; and creation care.

Christian nationalism motion referred back

Due to the limited time left at Synod, a motion on Christian nationalism was referred back to Synod Council for a decision. It will be a different Synod Council than the one that forwarded it with its approval to Synod. The motion – Motion #8 – can be found in the Supplementary Convening Circular.

Members elected to Synod Council

The following Synod members were elected to Synod Council, which generally exercises the executive powers of the Synod between sessions except those of a legislative character. The 25-member governance body meets monthly to carry on the work of Synod.

- The Rev. Canon Susan Climo – Holy Spirit of Peace, Mississauga
- The Rev. Yohan Dumpala – Grace Church, Scarborough
- The Rev. Molly Finlay – St. John the Baptist, Norway
- The Very Rev. Dr. Stephen Hance – St. James Cathedral
- The Rev. Canon Mark Regis – St. Mary and St. Martha
- Lawrence Barker – St. Luke, Burnt River
- Sister Elizabeth Ann Eckert – Reverend Mother, St. John's Convent
- Matthew Neugebauer – St. John the Baptist, Norway
- Susan Schuschu, ODT – St. John, East Orangeville
- Eirene Wee – St. Paul, Bloor Street
- Rae Anne Roberts Perez (youth member)

Members elected to Provincial Synod

The following Synod members were elected to Provincial Synod, which meets and considers matters of interest in the provincial sphere, such as theological education, social issues, government relations, chaplaincies and vocational diaconate ministries:

- The Rev. Dana Dickson – Trinity Church, Bradford
- The Rev. Canon Sister Constance Joanna Gefvert, SSJD
- The Very Rev. Dr. Stephen Hance – St. James Cathedral
- The Rev. Lucia Lloyd – St. John, Bowmanville
- (Substitutes were the Rev. Graham McCaffrey of St. Dunstan of Canterbury and the Rev. Deborah Chapman of St. John the Evangelist, Port Hope)
- Susan Schuschu, ODT – St. John, East Orangeville
- Noah Skinner – St. Michael and All Angels
- Ian Welsman – Trinty East
- Constance Kendall, ODT – St. Stephen, Downsview
- Linus Peasgood (youth member)
- (Substitutes were Lawrence Barker of St. Luke, Burnt River, Finn Keesmaat-Walsh of Redeemer, Bloor St. and Alma Regis, youth member)

Primate reflects

Archbishop Parker reflected on his time at Synod, saying, "When I look at you, I see a diocese that is poised to thrive. You are a resource to the whole Anglican Church of Canada, and you are modelling what churches need to do – positioning yourself as the light of Christ." He described the Synod as "an amazing gathering" and noted the great diversity of its membership. He encouraged the diocese in its work over the coming years. "You are Christ's own forever, and all shall be well."

Bishop Asbil reflects

Bishop Asbil thanked the Rev. Canon Lisa Newland and presented her with a gift, as she was stepping down as honorary clerical secretary of Synod, a position she has held since 2021. Constance Kendall, ODT, and the Rev. Jason Prisley, honorary clerical secretary, were elected for the ensuing two-year term. In his closing remarks, he said, "We leave this Synod as a community knitted and woven together in the presence always of a loving God who calls us to take that journey in faith knowing that God will always listen, will always be present, and can always be found. You are such a rich blessing in every community in which you live and move and have your being, and may God bless and keep you. Know the love that I have for you in this diocese, and I know the love that you have for me. I will pray for you; please pray for me. Pray for our bishops; we covet those prayers, Sunday by Sunday, and we will pray for you." Synod concluded with prayers.

ON DISPLAY

Display tables at Synod provide everything from books and calendars to spiritual retreats and insurance. The display tables are always a popular spot for Synod members. This year's Synod included tables from the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine, Ecclesiastical, the Season of Spiritual Renewal, the Intercultural Working Group, Alongside Hope, Proud Anglicans, On Eagle's Wings, EfM Canada and the Compass Rose Society. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL HUDSON

From less than 50 books in a space shared with a coat closet (top left), Christ Church St. James library has grown into a modern facility with more than 2,000 books, DVDs, CDs, study guides and more. PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRIST CHURCH ST. JAMES

Library grows from humble beginnings

IN 2025, Christ Church St. James in Toronto celebrated 41 years of its church library. While most parishes have small shelves with a few books on them, this library has its own dedicated space, allowing it to flourish with books, DVDs, CDs, study guides and more.

In 1984, it was decided that St. James, Humber Bay (before its amalgamation with Christ Church, Mimico) should have its own library, with the idea that it could help the spiritual growth and knowledge of the congregation. With fewer than 50 books and a space shared with the coat closet, this little library was born.

Over the years it continued to grow, with many congregants joining the library committee to help select, purchase and process new books for the collection. With new technology came new items for the library, such as cassettes and VHS tapes, which gradually transitioned to CDs and DVDs.

In 2010, the amalgamation of St. James, Humber Bay and Christ Church, Mimico was finalized, becoming Christ Church St. James – or CCSJ, as it's nicknamed. With this new parish came the need for new space, and a renovation project to update the building started. This meant the library (now at 2,000 items) had to be packed away and stored in the basement of the rectory next door. This proved challenging, as the team discovered one spring that the basement was at risk of flooding. The boxes of books had to be stacked on top of crates, and dehumidifiers were placed inside to prevent damage to the books.

The building renovation was completed three years later, and the library was moved into its new home. The new library came with taller shelves, new lighting and a beautiful decorative ceiling made using pipe organs salvaged from Christ Church, Mimico after a devasting fire. The library also got an upgrade in technology, as the committee got its first library computer system, which allowed its members to digitize records and say goodbye to the old card catalogue system that had served them well for so many years.

Now, after 41 years, the Christ Church St. James library continues its mission of providing access to all who want to learn more about the Christian faith. The library committee's hard work and love of Christian literature shines as an example of how vital church libraries are to the Christian community as a place to learn, socialize and understand the love of God.

Submitted by Christ Church St. James.

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WINTER WONDERLAND

Volunteers from St. Paul's Anglican Church and Trinity United Church in Uxbridge, shown above, transform St. Paul's lower hall into a winter wonderland for a successful fundraising event on Nov. 15-16, the same weekend as the town's Santa Claus parade. The event included 12 Christmas trees that were decorated by local sponsors and included gift cards and other treats. Other sponsors had a choice of donating a fully decorated Christmas wreath or a gift basket. The tree decorations, wreaths and gift baskets were later raffled off to raise funds for the churches, which split the proceeds 50/50. St. Paul's will use the money for its outreach programs while Trinity for the building of its new church. PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. PAUL, UXBRIDGE

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IN MOTION

Appointments

- The Rev. Canon Dr. Andrew Sheldon, Associate Priest, St. George on-the-Hill, Nov. 1, 2025.
- The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz, Interim Priest-in-Charge, St. Nicholas, Birch Cliff, Nov. 16, 2025.
- The Rev. Theo Ipema, Interim Priest-in-Charge, St. Stephen, Downsview, Nov. 17, 2025.
- The Rev. Jean-Martin Mabozi, Honorary Assistant, Holy Trinity, Trinity Square, Nov. 17, 2025.
- The Rt. Rev. Patrick White, Interim Priest-in-Charge, Our Saviour, Nov. 24, 2025.
- The Rev. Canon Derek Stapleton, Interim Priest-in-Charge, St. Theodore of Canterbury, Nov. 30, 2025.
- The Rev. Karen Hatch, Priest-in-Charge, Transfiguration, Jan. 1.
- The Rev. Canon Richard Miller, Priest-in-Charge, St. Paul, Perrytown, Jan. 1.
- The Rev. Ravi Kalison, Incumbent, Christ Church, Scarborough, Jan. 1.
- The Rev. Edmund Laldin (Diocese of Rupert's Land), Priest-in-Charge, St. Thomas a Becket (Erin Mills South), March 1.

Vacant Incumbencies

Clergy from outside the diocese with the permission of their bishop may apply through the Diocesan Executive Assistant, Canon Mary Conliffe.

Bishop's Direct Appointment Process

- (receiving names):

- St. George, Haliburton
- Parish of Bobcaygeon, Dunsford and Burnt River
- Parish of Churchill and Cookstown
- Parish of Campbellford, Hastings and Roseneath
- Parish of Fenelon Falls and Coboconk
- St. Mark, Midland
- St. Thomas a Becket (Erin Mills South)
- St. Aidan, Toronto
- All Saints Church-Community Centre
- St. Mary Magdalene

Parish Selection Committee Process

First Phase - (not yet receiving names):

- St. Stephen, Downsview
- St. Andrew, Alliston

Second Phase - (receiving names via Bishop): N/A

Third Phase - (no longer receiving names): N/A

Celebrations of New Ministry

- The Ven. Theadore Hunt, Incumbent, Christ Church, Brampton, Jan. 18 at 4 p.m.
- The Rev. Canon Dr. Alison Falby, Incumbent, Christ Church, Deer Park, Jan. 25 at 4 p.m.

Conclusion

- The Rev. Pierre Niyongere concluded his appointment as Priest-in-Charge of Our Saviour on Nov. 23.

Deaths

- The Rev. Canon William "Bill" Rainey died on Oct. 25, 2025. Ordained deacon in 1958 and priest in 1959, he served as assistant curate of Christ Church, Deer Park, incumbent of St. Simon, Highland Creek, rector of St. John the Evangelist, Port Hope, and incumbent of St. Peter, Scarborough until his retirement in 1994. A private family funeral was to be held.
- The Rev. Canon John Whittall died on Nov. 13, 2025. Ordained in 1969 in the Diocese of Montreal, he served in the Diocese of Niagara before transferring to the Diocese of Toronto in 1988. In Toronto, he served as incumbent of St. Wilfrid, Islington. He was Dean of Men at Trinity College from 1981 to 1988. Upon retirement in 2009, he served as interim priest-in-charge of Holy Family, Heart Lake (Brampton), St. Mary Magdalene, Apostles, the Parish of Campbellford, Hastings and Roseneath, and as honorary assistant of St. Mary Magdalene. His funeral was held on Nov. 22 at St. Mary Magdalene.

LOOKING AHEAD

To submit items for Looking Ahead, email editor@toronto.anglican.ca. The deadline for the February issue is January 1. Parishes can also promote their events on the diocese's website Calendar at www.toronto.anglican.ca.

JAN. 1 - The Bishop's Levee at St. James Cathedral, King and Church streets, Toronto, with said Eucharist at 12:15 p.m., receiving line and reception from 1:30 to 2:45 p.m. with the ringing of the Bells of Old York, festive music at 3 p.m. and Choral Evensong with the presentation of the Order of the Diocese of Toronto at 3:30 p.m. Also livestreamed at www.toronto.anglican.ca/levee.

JAN. 6 - Holy Communion for Epiphany (BCP) at 6 p.m., followed by a light supper, then at 7 p.m., the Very Rev. Dr. Stephen Hance will present an illustrated feature talk about The Spirit in the Music, at St. Olave, Bloor Street West and Windermere Avenue, Toronto.

JAN. 10 - Children's Community Choir resumes at St. James Cathedral, rehearsals on Saturdays at 9 a.m., singers ages 8-16 invited, all faiths and backgrounds welcome, free, no audition required. Visit stjamescathedral.ca/childrenschoir.

JAN. 11 - The installation of honorary canons of St. James Cathedral, King and Church streets, Toronto, at 4:30 p.m.

JAN. 13 - Organ recitals resume featuring some of the region's finest organists and the powerful sounds of St. James Cathedral's 5,000 organ pipes, 1 p.m. on Tuesdays, free and open to the public. Visit stjamescathedral.ca/events/recitals/.

JAN. 18 - Bishop Andrew Asbil will preach at the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity ecumenical prayer service at 4 p.m. at Runnymede United Church, 432 Runnymede Rd., Toronto. The service will feature music by the Salvation Army band and choirs from across the region and will be followed by a reception. All are invited.

JAN. 22 - The Fellowship of St. Alban & St. Sergius and the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine host a gathering to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at 6 p.m. at St. John's Convent, 233 Cummer Ave., Toronto. The evening will begin with Orthodox Vespers sung by members of the choir of Holy Myrrbearers Orthodox Mission, followed by a light supper. The evening's program will focus on the theme "Ancient Faith, Modern Journeys: Christianity in Iran and Iraq and its Diaspora Legacy." Register through the Convent Guest House at guesthouse@ssjd.ca or 416-226-2201, ext. 305.

FEB. 1 - Choral Evensong with the choir of St. James Cathedral at 4 p.m., followed by an illustrated music feature about the Rev. George Herbert (1593-1633), with Bishop Susan Bell of the Diocese of Niagara, at St. Olave, Bloor Street West and Windermere Avenue, Toronto.

FEB. 18 - Ash Wednesday Exploration Day in the Cathedral, 10:30 a.m., a day of creativity, faith and connection for ages 8-17. Visit stjamescathedral.ca/exploration-day.

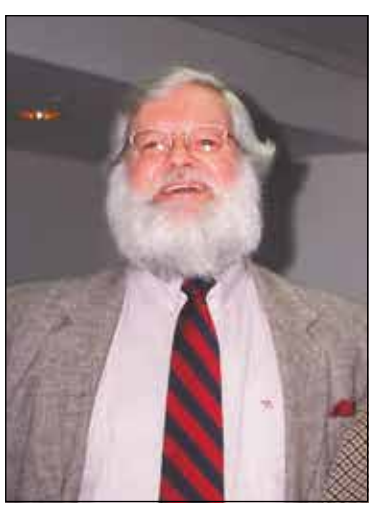
PRAYER CYCLE

FOR JANUARY

1. The Members of the Order of the Diocese of Toronto
2. Ascension, Don Mills
3. Incarnation
4. York Mills Deanery
5. Our Saviour
6. St. Cyprian
7. St. George on Yonge
8. St. John, Willowdale
9. St. John's Convent
10. St. Matthew the Apostle, Oriole
11. New Canons of the Diocese of Toronto
12. St. Theodore of Canterbury
13. The Incorporated Ministry in Flemingdon Park
14. The Momentum Program for the newly ordained
15. All Saints, Peterborough
16. Parish of Apsley
17. The Postulants' annual retreat
18. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
19. Ecumenical Officer - the Rev. Canon Philip Hobson, OGS
20. Canadian Council of Churches
21. Parish of Belmont
22. Parish of Campbellford, Hastings & Roseneath
23. Parish of Cavan Manvers
24. Parish of Ida and Omemee
25. Peterborough Deanery
26. Parish of Lakefield
27. Christian-Jewish Dialogue of Toronto
28. St. James, Emily
29. St. John the Evangelist, Peterborough
30. St. Luke, Peterborough
31. St. Matthew and St. Aidan, Buckhorn

Distinguished organist served in diocese

CANON Dr. Giles Bryant, an organist and choral director of international renown, died on Nov. 29, 2025. Canon Bryant served in several places in the Diocese of Toronto: Grace Church on-the-Hill, St. Mary the Virgin, St. Mary Magdalene, Massey College, Trinity College, Upper Canada College, St. James Cathedral and Royal St. George's College. He was also the executive director of the Kiwanis Music Festival of Greater Toronto, the national president of the Royal Canadian College of Organists and concertmaster at the annual Toronto Star Christmas Carol Concert at St. Paul, Bloor Street. He once described the highlight of his career as conducting the 1,500-voice choir at the diocese's sesquicentennial service in 1989 at the Skydome, now the Rogers Centre. In retirement he served at All Saints, Peterborough. A memorial service will be held in the spring.



Canon Dr. Giles Bryant

Recycle The Anglican. GIVE IT TO A FRIEND.

Fair supports, connects care givers

BY ELIZABETH VOSBURGH

The Rev. Matthew McMillan, incumbent of St. Peter, Cobourg, shares a happy moment with Nancy Marshall, past chair of the parish's health and wellness committee, at the fair. At right, caregivers give and receive resources and share experiences. PHOTOS COURTESY OF ST. PETER, COBOURG

ST. Peter, Cobourg was abuzz with energy and compassion in October as more than 100 community members came together for a caregiver fair, a heartfelt event dedicated to supporting and connecting those who care for others.

Hosted by St. Peter's and supported by local partners, the fair featured over 25 vendors and organizations offering information, resources and encouragement for caregivers of all kinds, from those supporting aging parents to individuals caring for loved ones with chronic illness or disability.

The event provided an opportunity for visitors to learn about local health and wellness services, home care supports, respite options and programs designed to strengthen the well-being of caregivers. Tables were filled with helpful materials and friendly representatives eager to share their expertise and compassion.

Beyond the information booths, the atmosphere was one of warmth, gratitude and community spirit. Volunteers from St. Peter's welcomed attendees, offered refreshments and created a safe, inclusive space for conversation and rest. Many guests commented on how uplifting it was simply to connect with others who understand the unique joys and challenges of caregiving.

Organizers called the fair "a wonderful success" and expressed gratitude to everyone who helped make it possible – vendors, volunteers and attendees alike. "Caregivers are the quiet heroes in our community," said one organizer. "Today was about giving them a moment to feel seen, supported and appreciated."

This was certainly a response to the diocese's call of "inspiring faith in action" and a demonstration to the broader community that the church does indeed care for all.

Elizabeth Vosburgh is St. Peter, Cobourg's parish nurse.

REMEMBERED

Photos of relatives who were in the First World War and the Second World War are on display at St. Peter, Churchill while a helmet, wreath and poppies adorn a window at St. John, Cookstown during Remembrance Day services at the churches in November. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE PARISH OF CHURCHILL AND COOKSTOWN

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