

Summer Fruit for Souls

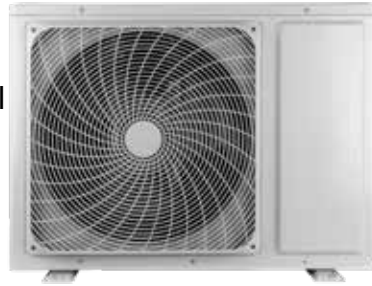
Lay Readers return to first in-person summer conference since COVID-19. Exploring Indigenous Four Directional Thinking with Bishop Riscylla Shaw, prose and poetry of George Herbert with Rev. Canon Dr. Barbara Robinson and 'our vocational calling' with Bishop Michael Oulton



▶ 4

Cold climate heat pumps: are they right for your church?

Newer heat pumps provide highly efficient and economical methods to both heat and cool your church



▶ 2

Environmentally Friendly burials

Looking for ways to reduce your impact on the environment even after you're gone? Rev. Bill Morrow invites you to explore green burials as a way to minimize your environmental footprint



▶ 5



FALL 2023

Dialogue

A Section of the ANGLICAN JOURNAL

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Eccl. Province concludes investigation

Archbishop Anne Germond and Bishop Michael Oulton release statements on August 2 regarding provincial investigation into allegations against Bishop-elect William Cliff of the Diocese of Brandon. ▶ 3

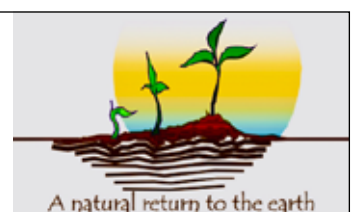


KINGSTON. Bishop Riscylla Shaw, suffragen bishop in the Diocese of Toronto and of Métis background, was the plenary speaker for *Summer Fruit for Souls*, the annual Lay Reader conference. Bishop Riscylla's theme for the week was 'Four Directional Thinking on Our Christian Journey and Incarnational Experience'. *Photo-Mark Hauser.*



A Natural Return to the Earth: An Introduction to Green Burial

Presented by Sue and David Lyon at St. James Anglican Church, Kingston. September 17, 2023. 2:30-4:00 pm. In person and live-streamed



Controlling temperature in church buildings

Rev. Dr. Ian Ritchie
Diocese of Ontario Green Group

As part of our commitment to help members of our diocese be better stewards of God's Creation, our Diocesan Green Group has recommended each congregation acquire a professional energy audit, or where that seems beyond reach, contact us for a visit from one of our members trained in the use of our thermal imaging camera. We have thermal imaged six churches in winter 2023.

A crucial factor to consider before spending any money, is your minimum set back temperature during the week in winter. During the pandemic we realized that any church where the building is not used 163 out of the 168 hours in the week, (think rural churches) then 97% of the heating bill comes from hours when no one is present in the building and human comfort is not an issue. 94% if you have a mid-week meeting. But even with four midweek meetings the lion's share of your heating bill comes from hours when no one is there.

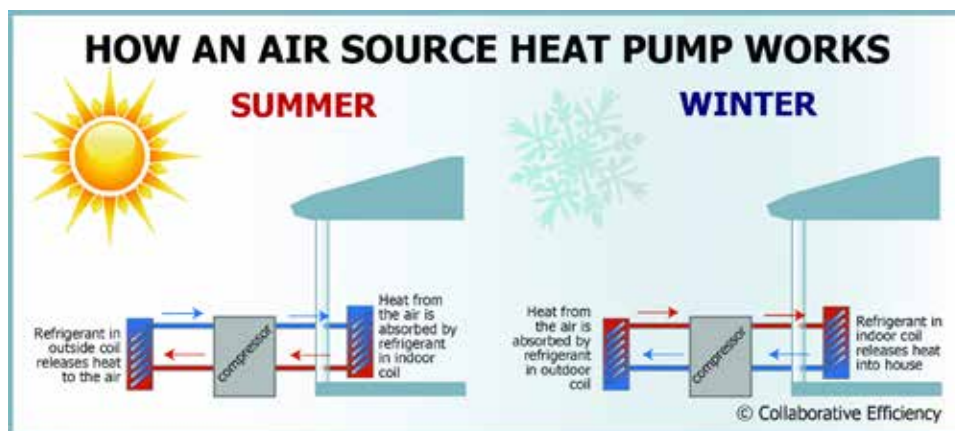
A brief survey revealed a range of setback temperatures in churches of our diocese, ranging from +5° at St. Matthew's, Marlbank, +6° at St. Philips, Milford, (the nave of Church of the Redeemer, Rockport is not heated during the week) to +15° at several urban churches, with an average of +10.5°. While those responsible for church heating plants often maintain it's necessary to keep heat at +10°, the reasons are not always clear, or appropriate in context. 19th century churches were not heated

at all during the week. Many had organs, but no damage resulted. It may be that weekly heating for Sunday services dried the air enough to prevent mold buildup. Mold can grow when there is excess moisture buildup: at around +6°. St. Philips, Milford heats with electric baseboard heaters, which produce dry heat. For them a +6° setback temperature has caused no damage over the past twenty years, nor has +5° caused damage at St. Matthew's, Marlbank.

In summer 2020 at St. Luke's, Camden East (my parish), a professional energy auditor performed an audit producing a detailed 20 page report with pictures, and clear information. By winter's end 2021, we had added insulation in basement doors where there had been gaps allowing cold air entry. Following quotes from three companies and an electrical panel upgrade (with help from a young electrician who donated his time), we installed a five-ton cold climate heat pump May 2, 2023, for \$11,783 installed. Our unit uses the building's existing hot air ducts, by inserting the hose from the outdoor unit into the existing plenum of the old oil furnace. Night temps were -2° to +5° then, allowing us to test how well the new unit worked. In May-June furnace oil consumption dropped to zero.

Another advantage of heat pumps is that they are also air conditioners in summer. We were happy to use it for cooling during a funeral on one particularly hot day in June!

Fossil fuel use is both warming the climate dangerously and getting disastrously expensive.



TOP: Cold climate heat pump installed at St. Luke's Anglican Parish in Camden East.
BOTTOM: Diagram of how a heat pump works. Photo-Rev. Dr. Ian Ritchie.

Baseboard electric and radiant heaters are relatively inexpensive to buy, but raise monthly electricity bills, (though still less than furnace oil or propane). Cold climate heat pumps (air source) strike the best balance between economical decarbonization of church heating/cooling and the easiest way to finance it.

Heat pumps come in both ductless and ducted varieties. For churches with air ducted heating

systems it makes sense to use them and insert an air source heat pump. For buildings with hot water radiators water source heat pumps are the most efficient solution. The type called "Geothermal" requires extensive digging of trenches and are still very costly. A less expensive alternative is air source to water heat pumps. One brand called "Arctic" has a good reputation for its relative affordability

and adaptability to your existing hot water heating system.

Government rebates for homeowners aren't available for churches, but prices of cold climate air source heat pumps have come down so much that rebates make less difference now.

We invite you to start a church "green team" to research best practices for your context. Then start a fund raiser towards better Creation care!



Dialogue

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Greening of our diocese

A gathering of everyone
interested in promoting
green initiatives in our
diocese

Guest speaker:
Bishop Michael Oulton

Potluck lunch

September 23, 2023
11 am - 3 pm
Christ Church Cataraqui
990 Sydenham Road, Kingston
RSVP: greengroup@ontario.anglican.ca



Dialogue Deadlines

Fall issue: **July 15**
Winter issue: **October 15.**
Spring issue: **January 15**
Summer issue: **April 15.**

Submissions:
Articles - 600 words max.
Letters - 300 words max.

Questions or information:
mhauser@ontario.anglican.ca

Bishop-elect Cliff to be installed as 13th bishop

Investigation determines allegation not supported by evidence



Bishop Michael Oulton

Following the election of Bishop William Cliff on April 29 to serve as the 13th bishop of our diocese, an allegation against Bishop Cliff was received by our Metropolitan Archbishop Anne Germond. The result of that allegation paused the concurrence process and necessitated the commencement of a formal investigative process undertaken at the Provincial level. Bishop Cliff was placed on an administrative suspension, known as an inhibition, a normal step in such circumstances pending the outcome of an investigation.

A full and thorough investigation of the matter over the ensuing three months has now concluded, with a definitive finding that the allegation against Bishop Cliff is not supported by the evidence. The findings were clear

and unambiguous. The concurrence process has now concluded, and I will begin discussions with Bishop Cliff regarding his translation and installation to serve as our next bishop.

While I feel immense relief that this matter has come to conclusion, I find little cause for rejoicing. Lives have been turned upside down, especially that of Bishop Cliff. The pain of these three months will not be erased simply as a result of this finding, but it will begin the process of healing. Your ongoing prayerful support will be a key component of that healing for all involved, as it was throughout these past months.

I want to extend my deep thanks to Archbishop Germond for her leadership through this time, along with our Provincial Chancellor Bryan Finlay and the members of the Safe Church Response Team whose professionalism and commitment was exemplary.

May the Spirit who has promised to be the light for our path and a lamp for our feet, guide us forward in the days ahead.

Yours in Christ's Service, Bishop Michael Oulton.



Archbishop Anne Germond

On May 1 of this year, following an allegation against the Rt. Rev. William Cliff, I suspended the concurrence process of the Ontario House of Bishops which is a canonical requirement for Bishop Cliff to be the bishop-elect of the Diocese of Ontario. The election of the 13th bishop of Ontario took place on Saturday April 29 at St. George's Cathedral in Kingston, Ontario.

The Church at every level -national, provincial, diocesan, takes the safety and rights of all seriously as part of our baptismal covenant and commitment to respect the dignity of every human being.

In response to situations in the past, the Province, and each of its dioceses put a response team into place to investigate allegations which are more complex.

An investigation into the allegation against Bishop Cliff ensued. During the course of this investigation Bishop Cliff was inhibited in the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario and in Rupert's Land where he presently serves as the Bishop of Brandon.

The allegations against Bishop Cliff have been thoroughly and professionally investigated by members of the Safe Church Resource Team (SCRT) of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario over the last three months. The members of the SCRT in Ontario were trained and resourced to conduct the investigation which was undertaken in a manner which is consistent with best practices and with the principles of Natural Justice. The investigation was overseen by the Chancellor of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario. There was no other involvement by leadership.

The investigators concluded that the evidence did not support the allegation.

On Tuesday August 1, I resumed the concurrence process of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario House of Bishops and have received confirmation in the affirmative from all of the bishops. The Rt. Reverend Bishop William Cliff is



Bishop William Cliff pictured at his episcopal election on April 29, 2023. Photo-Mark Hauser.

officially the bishop-Elect of the Diocese of Ontario.

There is now no impediment to Bishop William being installed as the thirteenth Bishop of Ontario.

Bishop Cliff's inhibition in the Ecclesiastical Provinces of Ontario and Rupert's Land are immediately lifted, and Bishop Cliff is able to resume his duties as the Bishop of Brandon.

Bishop Cliff and Bishop Oulton will begin working on the transition within the Diocese of Ontario, and a date for Bishop Cliff's Installation as the 13th Bishop of Ontario will be worked on in the coming weeks.

The report of the investigators is

confidential and will not be released, respecting all those involved in the investigation. The findings are clear, and the conclusions have been communicated with all parties.

As this challenging time draws to a close, I invite your prayers for all those who have been affected or involved in the events of the last months that all may know the peace of Christ and themselves as beloved of God.

May the grace and peace of our Lord be with you,

Archbishop Anne Germond, Metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario

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Summer Fruit for Souls 2023

Lay Readers Association returns to in-person annual conference

Pat Gillis

Excited to reunite with old friends and make new ones, twenty-two lay readers and lay leaders from the dioceses of Ontario, Huron, Toronto and Moosonee gathered in person and online for our annual Summer Fruit for Souls conference. We were warmly welcomed to a new venue for us: the residence, dining hall and conference facilities of St. Lawrence College in Kingston. Our first time together in person after COVID-19, we were happily joined by about a dozen others whose faces we could see online on the big screen in front of us.

Our first morning started appropriately with Rod and Lisa Brantfrancis, Anglican rectors of the parish of Tyendinega. After a Mohawk greeting, they had us pray traditional prayers facing the four points of the compass. This segued beautifully into our first plenary session with Bishop Riscylla Shaw who is of Métis background and the suffragen bishop of the Toronto area since 2017. Using the Medicine Wheel sacred to many Indigenous nations, Bishop Riscylla's theme for the week was Four Directional Thinking on Our Christian Journey and Incarnational Experience. After she taught us the accepted indigenous classifications for each quadrant of the Medicine Wheel (colour, season, animal, medicinal herb, heavenly body and stage of human life), she continued for the rest of the week to show how each section of the wheel can pertain to our Christian lives. Using many Biblical portions, Bishop Riscylla interspersed these with the Iroquoian thousand-year-old Thanksgiving Address, the Seven Grandfather Teachings and quotes from many outstanding poets and religious thinkers.

Bishop Riscylla led us into several heart-felt

discussions around our tables. And she ended each morning session with the reading of hilarious Coyote Tales, a children's story book by Thomas King.

The folks at St. Lawrence College served us delicious meals and the residential facilities were comfortable with air conditioning and a bathroom in each room.

For the first three days, following lunch, we were treated to a workshop by Rev. Canon Dr. Barbara Robinson, entitled "Prose and Poetry of George Herbert" (1593-1633).

Rev. Barbara went to great lengths to paint for us the background of times and ideas that contributed to George Herbert's voluminous output. Herbert was a strong proponent of Esthetical Theology, the organized study of spiritual teaching to help Christians attain holiness. Rev. Barbara showed us Herbert's effect on and relation to the formation of the Book of Common Prayer, the culmination of Anglicanism. She opened our eyes to the designation of Common Prayer, not as ordinary or usual prayer, but as prayer said in common, in a regular, visual way, a reaction against the very individualistic type of spirituality being espoused on the Continent at the time.

Our second workshop each afternoon was led by Bishop Michael Oulton. Titled his sessions, "Our Vocation? Our calling? Hear the Spirit," he based his talks on a six-week video series by John Ortberg called IF YOU WANT TO WALK ON WATER, YOU'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THE BOAT.

Every night after supper we had a short time of worship. Our Evening Prayer services were led by Julie Case, Lynn Wilson (who had to attend online and was represented by Laurel Dempsey) and Jennifer Palmer.

Tuesday night we had



TOP: Lay readers gathered at St. Lawrence College for the 2023 Summer Fruit for Souls conference. BOTTOM-LEFT: Bishop Michael celebrated the closing Eucharist. BOTTOM-RIGHT: Lay Reader Paul Hutt makes notes during a plenary session led by Bishop Riscylla Shaw. Photos-Mark Hauser.

a mime show, games and Compline led by Paul Hutt. Wednesday night we watched a very controversial CBC documentary concerning the stand-off between certain cottagers and their indigenous neighbours. After a heated discussion, we were led in a Compline service by Karen Brown. Thursday, Ted Guthrie and Lloyd Younger

brought their guitars and equipment all the way from Brockville to lead us in a lively singalong, with old-time gospel hymns.

Our times of worship were very special to us. After breakfast each morning we had the service of Morning Prayer led by Bev Box, Doug Green and Pat Gillis on their respective days. We enjoyed singing hymns to the keyboard

accompaniment of Bob Burkholder. Our last afternoon together Bishop Michael led us in a closing Eucharist, most likely our last with him at SFFS.

We are grateful for the leadership of Mary Raddon and our registrar, Alison Bentley, for making the myriad arrangements necessary for the smooth running of this conference. And we could not have

functioned without the tireless efforts of Dave Bell dealing with all the technical necessities both on site and online. We also appreciate the ministry of Rev. Nancy Beale, our chaplain. Above all, we praise God for a beautifully successful Summer Fruit for Souls.



ACW RETREAT

September 27, 2023
Glen House Resort, Gananoque

Retreat Leader: Rev. Margaret Johnston-Jones

\$71.50 includes luncheon and refreshments
Registration deadline: August 30, 2023

More info: Margie Mulvihill: margiemulvihill@gmail.com

Quarterly Grant Application Deadlines

Mark your calendars!

- January 1
- April 1
- July 1
- October 1

ANGLICAN
FOUNDATION OF CANADA

Environmentally friendly green burials

Natural burials minimize impact on local environment and contribute to land conservancy, greenhouse gas reduction and ecological sustainability

Rev. Bill Morrow

The Season of Creation (September 1-October 4, 2023) recognizes that humanity has been entrusted with the care of the earth. It presents the church with new opportunities to reflect on the meaning of our embodied lives and how they can positively impact this world that God loves. In the present day, some people are asking themselves whether we can continue to care for the earth even after our death. The growing interest in natural, or green burial offers a response to this question.

Green burial is as simple and environmentally friendly as possible. It returns bodies to the earth covered in natural fabric shrouds or in a coffin made of biodegradable materials, such as cardboard, wicker or light wood. Chemical embalming fluids are not used, nor do non-biodegradable concrete, steel, fiberglass, or plastics go into the grave. Burial grounds can be meadow-like places, with indigenous species and wildflowers making them publicly attractive. Rather

than a headstone, green burial involves having a modest, natural stone or a communal marker for the graves. Nevertheless, relatives can easily find a grave, because the place of each one is registered by the cemetery and often trackable through GPS coordinates.

Many environmentally sensitive people choose cremation rather than burial today. But even the most responsible single cremation releases between 300 to 600 pounds of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere — more than what an average gas-powered car emits in a month! That is a significant contribution to greenhouse gases.

The focus of natural burial, however, goes beyond this. Natural burial also contributes to land conservancy. It fits in well with a theology that celebrates embodied life. Our bodies can be a blessing, not a blight, on the earth. As they decompose over several years, they release rich nutrients into the soil, replenishing it for growth on the surface. Research has shown that this restores natural habitats and contributes to land



A natural burial in Glenwood Cemetery, Picton. Photo-Bill Morrow.

conservation, maintaining green on the urban fringe, or supporting forest adjacent to conserved land. As well, some biologists argue that natural burial's potential for encouraging biodiversity and preventing loss of species is considerable.

And it is not just about earth care. Green burial

can also be an occasion for community — for family and friends to be directly involved with deathcare. Aileen Stewart is a deathcare guide in Kingston, Ontario. In her role of helping people plan for death, she points out that “we can still speak to our families now about what matters most to us

for our after-deathcare.” In this respect, natural burial presents a unique opportunity for families to be involved in the care of those they love at the end of life. Have you considered the environment in your plans for how your family will say goodbye when your time comes?

Presently, sites for

natural burial in Ontario are not common. Within the Diocese of Ontario, however, there are sites available at Glenwood Cemetery in Picton. Moreover, the City of Kingston has recently approved plans for green burial to take place in its Pine Grove Cemetery. These are local manifestations of a movement that has been steadily growing over the past decades in North America and Europe. In fact, what green burial represents is not simply a commitment to the future but also a return to a venerable past. In most times and in most cultures, as our indigenous brothers and sisters can tell us, natural burial has been the most common way to return our bodies to the earth.

An introduction to natural burial will take place on Sept. 17, 2023 from 2:30-4:00 pm at St. James Anglican Church, Kingston. All are welcome to come and learn more.

More information is available through Green Burial Kingston <https://greenburialkingston.com/> and through the Natural Burial Association <https://naturalburialassociation.ca/about-natural-burial/>

National Youth Campaign Raises \$80,000: Napanee's St. Mary Magdalene one of 17 successful Say Yes! to Kids fundraising teams

AFC Communications

The Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC) is celebrating the success of its 3rd annual Say Yes! to Kids (SYTK) campaign, with 17 fundraising teams in 8 dioceses having raised more than \$80,000.

“Two thirds of the Say Yes! to Kids teams reached or surpassed their goals,” says Michelle Hauser, development and communications officer for AFC, “and the remaining third achieved between 50% and 80% of their targets.” Hauser says each team received a \$1,000 AFC Angel Donor match thanks to this year's \$25,000 matching sponsor. “And many others benefited from the growing friends of the SYTK community which includes diocesan ACWs and the Ecclesiastical Provinces of Ontario and Rupert's Land, whose gifts were shared among the

teams campaigning in their regions.”

Of the 17 teams in this year's campaign, more than half were returning participants, like St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church (SMMAC) in Napanee. “Like many Anglican churches across Canada, SMMAC relies heavily on fundraisers for our core youth program,” says Anne Alkenbrack, Chair of the Children, Youth & Family Ministry Committee. “This was our 2nd Say Yes! to Kids campaign. We raised \$5,000, an increase from last year's campaign, and thanks to Say Yes! to Kids we can fund both our annual youth retreat and launch The Ben Rose Memorial Scholarship.”

The scholarship award was established this year in support of local High School students who are pursuing post-secondary studies in music. “There



Chris Yeomans (left) presented the first slate of Ben Rose Memorial Scholarship Awards to Napanee District Secondary School graduates Spencer Green, Ethan Stein, and Isaac Tanner. Photo-Mark Hauser.

were three applicants,” says Chris Yeomans, churchwarden, and SMMAC Grants Committee chair. In the end, Yeomans says, the Committee voted unanimously to award a scholarship of \$1,000 to each applicant.

Yeomans explains all three applicants were involved as student mentors in the Harmony Lounge and Music Club, which is a community program of SMMAC that provides free music lessons

and an after-school drop-in program to area youth between the ages of 12 and 16. “Our student mentors were so incredibly helpful in launching the church's music outreach program last year—we could not have done it without them.”

The scholarship was named in memory of Benjamin (Ben) Rose, a former organist and music director, who was known to many as the ‘Piano Man’ for his dedication to sharing his love of

music. “We are grateful to all the parishioners and many other people in our community who gave so generously to this year's Say Yes! to Kids (SYTK) campaign so that we could raise the funds that enabled us to establish this scholarship,” says Yeomans. “It gave Ben great joy to help nurture the musical talent of young people and he would be so pleased to know his music teaching legacy continues through this scholarship.”

Elsewhere in Canada, music was also a theme for other SYTK fundraising teams as well. The Diocese of Edmonton, which had the top fundraising team in the country, raised just over \$10,000 for their Diocesan Children's Choir. “Established in 2021, with the help of Say Yes! to Kids, this choir is thriving and singing at worship services and liturgical events across our diocese,” says the Ven.

Susan Oliver, Archdeacon for Children, Youth, and Family Ministry. “In addition to the musical and choral knowledge, we often hear from parents that our choristers experience improved self-confidence and an overall sense of well-being and belonging. It is important, for many reasons, that we make this choir a sustainable part of our worship life in the Diocese of Edmonton.”

Since it was launched in 2021 SYTK has provided over \$710,000 to more than 100 unique beneficiaries and fundraising partners in support of youth-focused ministry and outreach from coast to coast. If you would like more information on becoming a Say Yes! to Kids sponsor or partner for the 2024 campaign, please contact Michelle Hauser at mhauser@anglicanfoundation.org.



Stewardship Reflections

Based on the Revised Common Lectionary - Liturgical Year A

The following reflections are intended to encourage individuals and parishes to think about holistic stewardship and serve as guideposts along the way of our faith journey. Bless you throughout the lengthy season of Pentecost as we covet anew the Holy Spirit to enable us to take care of all entrusted to us: the gift and practice of faith; our relationships; Christ's church; our local communities; the wider world; and God's creation.

SEPTEMBER 3, 2023

A prayer for Labour Day

SEPTEMBER 10, 2023

A prayer for the Season of Creation

SEPTEMBER 17, 2023

A prayer for the Season of Creation

SEPTEMBER 24, 2023

A prayer for the Season of Creation

OCTOBER 1, 2023

A prayer for the Season of Creation

OCTOBER 8, 2023

A prayer for Harvest and National Thanksgiving

OCTOBER 15, 2023

A reflection based on Philippians 4:1-9

OCTOBER 22, 2023

A reflection based on Matthew 22:15-22

OCTOBER 29, 2023

A reflection based on Matthew 22:34-40

NOVEMBER 5, 2023

A Prayer of Offering for today

NOVEMBER 12, 2023

A reflection based on Thessalonians 4:13-18

NOVEMBER 19, 2023

A reflection based on Matthew 25:14-30

NOVEMBER 26, 2023

A reflection based on Matthew 25:31-46

Season after Pentecost

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: Almighty God, creator of the world, we give thanks for the gift of stewardship and work. Deliver us, in our various occupations, from the service of self alone, that we may do our work in truth for the common good and receive fair compensation and treatment in our labour. (Source unknown).

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST: Source of all life, we give thanks to you for your wondrous creation made manifest in the environment that surrounds us; strengthen us in the mission of stewardship and care towards nature, the work of your hands, encouraging us to preserve life in all its precious forms. All this we ask through Jesus Christ. (Source: Reverend Luiz Coelho, Episcopal Church of Brazil, 2018)

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST: God of unchangeable power, when you fashioned the world the morning stars sang together, and the host of heaven shouted for joy; open our eyes to the wonders of creation and teach us to see all things for good to the honour of your glorious name. (Source: New Zealand Prayer Book).

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST: O God, you have created the universe by your eternal Word, and have blessed humankind in making us stewards of the earth. We pray for your world, that we may share and conserve its resources, and live in reverence for the creation and in harmony with one another. (Source: Church of England Common Worship)

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST: God, the creator, give us grace to be wise stewards of your creation. Christ, the redeemer, inspire us to go out as labourers into your harvest. Holy Spirit, whose breath fills the whole creation, help us to bear the fruit of love, joy and peace. (Source: Diocese of Guilford)

NINETEENTH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST: All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above, so we lift our hearts to you, God, in praise and thanksgiving. The abundance of the harvest is a symbol of the abundance of your love in our lives. May we live in a spirit of gratitude to you and generosity to our neighbour. (Source: Canadian Foodgrains Bank).

TWENTIETH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST: Faithful stewards are ever mindful of and responsible for our own needs as well as those of others. Thank you for your loving service!

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY OF PENTECOST: Faithful stewards know that everything belongs to God, and yet we may say "no" and "mine." Does our stewardship indicate our faithfulness to give to God what belongs to God?

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY OF PENTECOST: Faithful stewards joyfully share our talent, time and treasure with our neighbour. Who are we called to serve this year and next?

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY: God of all generations, as we worship today, we offer ourselves to you, all that we have and all that we are. Like your saints who have gone before us, we pray that you will help us be bold in our mission and in our witness. May we who have been given so much give freely, ministering in your compassion to the multitudes near to us and far from us; so that one day we may stand amidst the multitude that gathers at your heavenly throne. (Source: The United Methodist Church).

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST: As 2023 winds down and we anticipate the year ahead, we are at a time to discern and follow God's will for the church. What is God calling us to do next year?

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST: Saint Matthew's account of the talents is a clear example of faithful stewardship, using God's gifts with prudence and wisdom. What are some ways that we offer our talent, time and treasure to further God's mission to the world? Bless and thank you for doing so!

LAST SUNDAY OF PENTECOST: We reach the final week of this church year and prepare for Advent and a new church year. How will we covenant to feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the needy, visit the prisoner and tend the sick? There are so many opportunities for compassionate care at home and abroad. Bless and thank you for the ways that you are taking care rooted in Christian love!

Artificial Intelligence, algorithms, autocorrect, the church, and spirituality

Rev Canon Dr. David Robson

Once while typing “The United States of America” I found autocorrect completed my words. Autocorrect is an algorithm driven by artificial intelligence. The passage read, “The Ignited States of America.” Given the situation where rewritten history says American slaves were lucky to learn useful skills, and where many recent gains in gay and women’s rights are being reversed, I thought that “the Ignited States of America” was perhaps not a bad autocorrect.

However, we rely on autocorrect, artificial intelligence, and algorithms (the 3As) more than we realize. We see and accept their many benefits but are perhaps blind to the social issues they cause. They affect our society, religion, and our spiritual selves.

For example, a few decades ago when preparing sermons preachers took time, effort, and discernment diving

into resources. Today, the new God – “Google,” on the Internet does those tasks. In nanoseconds, more information and data than can be ever used is before us. Human involvement in time, effort, and discernment is diminished.

Many try to convert massive Google resources into knowledge from data and information. Others simply use the “supplied” resources as definitive conclusive answers with little discernment, effort, or reflection. Many use the offered resources to “cut and paste.” Some may revert to plagiarism. A few years ago, an American cleric was fired when it was discovered that the weekly sermon was simply a download from another cleric’s weekly posted sermon. For shame! We cut and paste because of haste. We are conditioned to believe we are always needed elsewhere so we deal with matters quickly.

Nowadays the “infallible” Internet supplies millions of pieces of information – all of which is theologically



David Robson cautions against using online ‘supplied resources as definitive conclusive answers with little discernment, effort, or reflection’. Photo-Shutterstock.

correct (sarcasm) and freeing us from deep discernment and thinking. Ponder this.

Artificial intelligence and algorithms are so incredible that even after “listening” a bishop, speak just a few words, the bishop’s voice can be very accurately duplicated. So, if a bishop personally phones and asks you to donate funds, be dubious! It may

be “Big Brother,” not one calling on behalf of the Son of God.

The 3As do much of the thinking for us. But where are prayer, silence, meditation, and essential human face-to-face interactions? In the 1950s, German philosopher Martin Heidegger foresaw this new reality and noted that the looming “tide of technological

revolution” could “so captivate, bewitch, dazzle, and beguile man that calculative thinking may someday come to be accepted and practiced as the only way of thinking. This “frenziedness of technology,” he said will “entrench itself everywhere.” He was right. Read this paragraph again.

Are we unwittingly entrenched by the 3As?

Where is the solitude, silence, and prayer that was essential for Jesus today? Is it valued? Our phones are the new Bible. They give us ALL the answers. Through much of Christian history and perhaps to some degree today, people believed God lived in the clouds. That must be right because we now store data, information, and knowledge, (can we add wisdom?) “In the cloud.”

It is essential to look at how artificial intelligence and algorithms are embedded in all aspects of life. But we sorely need to autocorrect ourselves and be guided by the Holy Spirit. 3As do much for us. But we should step back from the fixed historical models of thinking, acting, and ministry practices they now influence. They direct us to where they want to be! We need to re-consider the risky practices of Jesus by asking many questions and how he described life. The 3As offer people 3A prescriptions. Ponder these things.

Day by day

Diana Duncan-Fletcher



Unique experiences can provide moments of life changing epiphanies says Diana Duncan Fletcher. Photo-Shutterstock.

Two close friends of mine, Lina and Elias, are pastors in an evangelical church. Our families have been blessed to know each other for almost fifty years. Part of their ministry has taken them, and their family, to Uganda and India. There, they worked with the poorest and marginalized as missionaries. They wrote letters throughout this period to my family. We kept them in our thoughts and prayers and encouraged them by sending care packages of supplies not found where they were living. It created a strong bond of love, continued to this day.

Their years in Uganda were just after the Idi Amin regime. They lived in a house riddled with bullet holes which had been completely trashed. They made it liveable. It was a scary time for anyone surviving in the midst of chaos, a life of fear and unrest. One day a child stopped at their gate with a tin cup and asked for some water. They had been

warned against letting anyone into their compound, so the request was denied. Almost immediately Lina greatly regretted it. And, just as Peter denied knowing Jesus, and afterwards wept bitterly, (Luke 22: 55-62), she remembered the words that Jesus spoke in Matthew 10:42 - “And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.” That biblical passage changed their lives, I believe for the better.

Each one of us has at some time had a lightning bolt experience which created a change in life for the better. In my case, as a single Mom, I felt I had reached rock bottom. I prayed for forgiveness and help to start again. I literally felt a huge load lift off my shoulders. So, in spite of everything, I survived. Now each morning I say a prayer taught to me by the nuns of The Community of the Sisters of the Church

at St. Mildred’s College in Toronto in the early 60’s:

“O Lord I ask you to help me this day in all I think, and do, and say,

Come into my heart and live in me that I may live to glorify Thee, both now and in eternity.”

Saying this prayer doesn’t make me perfect—far from it—but each morning I ask to be led to those who need help. I find that often these connections result in my being blessed. Some years ago I remember a chaplain at the Ottawa Civic Hospital telling me that each day when he visited the patients on the Cancer Ward, he was ministered to by them. It humbled him.

Heed the words in Hebrews 13:2(b) “...for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.” This is something to seriously consider as you begin your day. Thanks be to God! dduncanfletcher2@gmail.com

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