



# THE MESSENGER



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## When They Saw that the Star had Stopped They were Overwhelmed with Joy

Matthew 2:10



Photo: Gerd Altman, Pixabay

## Strategic plan for dynamic, sustainable future vital work of Edmonton Executive Council

MARGARET GLIDDEN  
Edmonton Editor  
*The Messenger*

Members of the Executive Council of the Anglican Diocese of Edmonton met on November 28, at All Saints' Cathedral for their first meeting since the 69th Synod in October.

Between synods, the Executive Council functions as the governing body of the family of churches comprising the Edmonton diocese. Members are elected to represent each of the four regions of the diocese. Because members of the newly-elected Executive Council reside in

Edmonton or the surrounding cities of Sherwood Park and Devon, meetings will be convened in person, except during inclement weather when they will move online.

### Strategic Planning

According to Bishop Stephen London, "the most important issue" this Executive Council is tasked with is the creation of a strategic plan for a dynamic, sustainable future, based on the findings of the first phase of the strategic planning process, a comprehensive environmental scan as presented to Synod by Anna Bubel, Another Way Consulting.

Bubel's report identified an abundance of assets upon which to build, such as: "spiritual dedication, talented people, land and buildings, commitment to community service and diversity/inclusion."

However, she used a health metaphor to underline that although approximately 25 per cent of parishes are "in good health and/or thriving," approximately 42 per cent of parishes are "experiencing chronic health issues," and 33 per cent are "palliative" and "actively dying."

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Bishop in Ft. Vermilion p. 8

## Strategic plan for dynamic, sustainable future vital work of Executive Council continued

Continued from Front Page.

In preparing a summary of Synod's discussion of the key implications of the Listening in Spirit | Shaping Our Future Together report for the Executive Council, the Ven. Jonathan Crane, Archdeacon for Mission and Discipleship, observed an "openness to change," and a "strong interest in creatively moving forward."

The Very Rev. Alexandra Meek added that members of the Executive Council "must move out of the sphere (mindset) of our parish, as we are doing this work on behalf of the 46 parishes of the diocese as a whole."

Amplifying the message of his charge to Synod that this is "a challenging time for the church," Bishop Stephen London directed the Executive Council to review the 40-page transcript of Synod table conversations about the phase one report by February 1 when they will meet for a retreat day at Camp Van Es for discernment and decision-making.

"We will use key areas of focus to write the outline of the Mission Action Plan (MAP) for the diocese," he said.

"We'll all be changed by this process," said Meek.

### 2025 Financial Plan

Shifting focus ever so slightly from visioning to funding, the Rev. John Gee, synod secretary-treasurer, presented the 2025 Proposed Financial Plan for Executive Council approval. He noted a significant decrease in parish apportionment, the largest revenue stream. Apportionment fell from \$836,000 in 2024 to \$774,000 in 2025. As a result, the diocese's operating revenue fell from \$938,700 in 2024 to \$802,000 in 2025.

"Parishes try really hard to honour their apportionment commitments," said Gee.

However, with less funding available, cuts were made to the Indigenous Ministries Team, Social Justice Committee support and the Edmonton diocese's membership in the Greater Edmonton Alliance.

Bishop Stephen London explained that the Edmonton diocese is also expected to pay apportionment to the Anglican Church of Canada based on a formula. Because some dioceses have been unable to pay their full apportionment, the national church is also facing significant funding challenges.

The 2025 diocesan budget includes \$100,000 for strategic planning and policy development from a Strategic Planning Futures Fund created following the closure of two parishes, Holy Trinity Riverbend and St. Stephen the Martyr, Edmonton.

Gee presented a balanced budget by drawing \$179,800 from the Diocesan Development (reserve) Fund (DDF).

"This will no longer be the case going forward," said Bishop London, as there must be a minimum of \$650,000 available in the DDF to lend to parishes.

The 2025 financial plan passed by the Executive Council provides financial stability for the coming year, but, as Bishop London noted, it is of utmost importance to implement a strategic plan to "hopefully, right-size the diocese by 2026."

### Legislative Committee

Chancellor Rob Reynolds, KC, presented the slate of Legislative Committee members for adoption by the Executive Council. He explained that the Legislative Committee proposes (to Synod) revisions of the Canons and Constitution, the set of rules by which parishes and the diocese are governed. Members of the current Legislative Committee are: Reynolds

(chair), Bishop Stephen London, Canon Scott Sharman, Executive Officer; the Rev. John Gee, Margaret Unsworth, K.C., Helen Ward, K.C., the Rev. Robyn King.

### Request for Parish Incorporation

St. Peter the Apostle, the Filipino

## Diocese of Edmonton Executive Council

The current members of the Executive Council are:

The Right Rev. Stephen London, President, Bishop  
The Very Rev. Alexandra Meek, VP, Dean of the Diocese of Edmonton  
The Ven. Chelsy Bouwman, VP, Archdeacon  
The Ven. Jonathan Crane, VP, Archdeacon  
The Ven. Travis Enright, VP, Archdeacon  
The Ven. Jordan Haynie Ware, VP, Archdeacon  
Robert Reynolds, KC, Chancellor  
The Rev. John Gee, Secretary-Treasurer  
Scott Belamisco, Chair, A&F  
Rob Betty, Co-Chair, Social Justice Committee  
The Rev. Canon Scott Sharman, Executive Officer

### East Deanery

St. John the Evangelist, Cold Lake  
St. Mary, Edgerton  
All Saints' Cathedral, Edmonton  
St. Augustine, Edmonton  
St. David, Edmonton  
St. Mark-Jieng, Edmonton  
St. George, Fort Saskatchewan  
Church of the Nativity, Frog Lake  
St. John, Sedgewick  
St. Thomas, Sherwood Park  
St. Mary, Vegreville  
St. Saviour, Vermillion  
St. Thomas, Wainwright

### Mikaela Hanley

Brian Jolly  
The Rev. Ruth Sesink Bott

### North Deanery

St. Mary Abbots, Barrhead  
Christ Church, Edmonton  
Good Shepherd, Edmonton  
St. Faith, Edmonton  
St. Mary, Edmonton

congregation of St. Matthias Anglican Church in west Edmonton, has notified the Executive Council of its request to be incorporated as a parish. This marks the start of a formal process that involves the parish answering a series of questions and consultation with the parish of St. Matthias, Edmonton.

St. Michael and All Angels, Edmonton  
St. Peter, Edmonton  
Emmanuel, Gibbons  
St. Matthew, St. Albert  
St. Philip, Westlock

### Cathy Armstrong

The Rev. Jordan Giggey  
Emily Stephen-Garneau

### West Deanery

St. John the Evangelist, Edmonton  
St. Matthias, Edmonton  
St. Paul, Edmonton  
St. Timothy, Edmonton  
Holy Trinity, Edson  
St. Mary and St. George, Jasper  
St. John the Divine, Onoway  
St. Aidan and St. Hilda, Rexboro  
St. Augustine Parkland, Spruce Grove  
St. Patrick, Whitecourt

### Brian Ault

The Rev. Andreas Sigrift  
Bruce Simpson

### South Deanery

St. Columba, Beaumont  
St. Andrew, Camrose  
St. George, Devon  
All Saints, Drayton Valley  
Holy Trinity Strathcona, Edmonton  
St. George, Edmonton  
St. Luke, Edmonton  
St. Margaret, Edmonton  
St. Patrick, Edmonton  
St. Paul, Leduc  
St. Mary, Ponoka  
Immanuel, Wetaskiwin

### Morgan Cromarty

Suzanne Oswald  
The Rev. Lisa Wojna

## Upcoming Faith and Leadership Courses

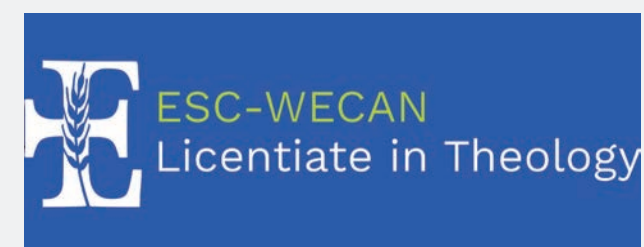
Emmanuel & St. Chad College in partnership with the Western Educational Collaborative Anglican Network (WECAN) of 10 dioceses is pleased to share the following upcoming courses. Individuals may take these courses to: for spiritual spiritual enrichments, tools for ministry or while discerning about a formal vocation.

Register at [esc-wecan.ca](http://esc-wecan.ca)

### Teaching and Learning

Stages of Faith, Education, Nurturing Children in Faith, Learning Styles and Ways of Teaching  
Instructors: Fiona Brownlee and the Rev. Dr. Trish McCarthy

Saskatoon and Edmonton or Online  
Thursday evenings: February 6, 13, 20, 27, Mar. 20, 27, 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. SK time  
Saturdays: March 22 and 29, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. SK time



### Leadership Online

Teachings on Theories and Patterns of Leadership in Ministry: Group Discernment and Conflict Mediation  
Instructors: Bishop David Greenwood Athabasca; the Rev. Dr. Trish McCarthy and LTS professor the Rev. Dr. Kyle Schiefelbein-Guerrero

Dioceses of Athabasca and Saskatoon  
Thursdays: Nov. 6 to Dec. 4, 2025, 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. SK time  
Saturdays: Nov. 15 and 21, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. SK time

## Prayer is daily path. Keep. Showing. Up.

Happy New Year! I enjoy the turning of the year. And every year, I encourage our faithful to take the opportunity to look once again at their personal, daily practices of prayer. This year, I want to do it in a different way, giving voice to simple wisdom I have learned through years of practice.



Bishop STEPHEN LONDON  
Diocese of Edmonton

**TRUTH:** I have found that prayer is *the* most important thing I do everyday. Why? Because there is nothing that has helped me as much to:

- grow in maturity,
- deal with the negative emotions in my life,
- tame my huge ego,
- connect deeply with the source of all that is good and beautiful,
- know deeply that I am a loved child of God,
- be both courageous and kind in my life,
- shape my actions in a Jesus-shaped way,
- center my life,
- be in relationship with God,
- grow closer to those around me I love,
- strive to love those who are unlovable,
- and teach me how far I still have to go in my Christian journey.

Nothing has helped me as much as prayer.

a regular, disciplined life of prayer. There are no exceptions to this.

**TRUTH:** Why? Because none of us has time.

**TRUTH:** Why? Because prayer is about spiritual transformation, and the ego will always resist.

**TRUTH:** Why? Because spiritual freedom is about being set free from the negative garbage in our souls, and this is a battle.

**TRUTH:** Why? Relationships are hard, and prayer is all about our relationship with God. Like any relationship, it takes work.

**TRUTH:** Why? It is easy to skip and not notice.

**TRUTH:** Why? Because on most days, everything else seems so important.



If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation!

St. Paul writing to the ancient church in Corinth, Greece about the heart of being a Christian (2 Corinthians 5:17)

**TRUTH:** I know this, and yet I *still* struggle with having a regular, disciplined life of prayer.

**TRUTH:** A regular, disciplined life of prayer is central to our spiritual transformation in Jesus Christ.

**TRUTH:** All the saints of God have struggled to have a regular, disciplined life of prayer. There are no exceptions to this.

**TRUTH:** Why? Because none of us has time.

**TRUTH:** Why? Relationships are hard, and prayer is all about our relationship with God. Like any relationship, it takes work.

**TRUTH:** Why? It is easy to skip and not notice.

**TRUTH:** Why? Because on most days, everything else seems so important.

**TRUTH:** Why? Because we think we are doing it wrong.

**TRUTH:** There is no such thing as doing prayer wrong. God doesn't need you to say certain words; God just delights when you show up.

**TRUTH:** God wants you to be set free. This is the same thing as spiritual transformation. This happens as the quote above tells us by being in relationship with Jesus Christ. Prayer is the daily path.

**TRUTH:** Spiritual transformation rarely happens quickly, and even when it does, it still has to be developed over years. Prayer is the path.

**TRUTH:** Prayer will always be hard. The call is *only* to keep showing up and trying. Kindness to yourself is essential to growth.

**TRUTH:** When you judge yourself about your failures in prayer, you will stop praying.

**TRUTH:** God loves you and wants to spend time with you. Please consider your life in prayer this year. It is the most important thing you can do.

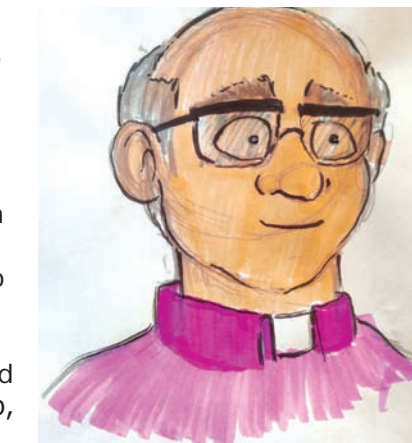
Blessings!  
+ Stephen

## Birth of Jesus gift of starting again

We are starting again. In the space of three weeks covering November into December, we de-consecrated a public worship centre, sold it, and then re-dedicated one which had been rebuilt after it had been badly burnt. Both are signs of change, of grieving and letting go of the old, and celebrating with anticipation the new.

The point of our buildings, and of everything we do, is to envelop, magnify, support, celebrate and love people's lives in the name of Christ. Being faithful with our buildings is a sign of being faithful for each other, and being faithful for Christ, our Lord. In that faithfulness, our household contains great treasure and riches, being a house of the Lord's; a people who take great delight in keeping His commands, full of mercy, compassion and justice.

Our true treasure is that we are concerned for each other, that we seek to help each other out, that we truly try to follow the Lord's message of being trustworthy in handling



Bishop DAVID GREENWOOD  
Diocese of Athabasca

worldly wealth, by using it to help those in need.

The old church building had been a worship centre for almost 90 years. The rebuilt building is literally starting again, almost brand new in every respect. Both buildings have witnessed the faithfulness of those who had worshiped there, and their impact on the community (both secular and the church, for they mix and match and interweave in many interesting ways), sharing the good news of Christ and its meaning in their lives.

As one building passes from our hands to the world's hands, and the other begins its life anew, we shall use what we get from them to build up ministry, to help those in need, to share the good news of Christ, to be faithful for each other and faithful in Christ. Let us use all our buildings, indeed all our resources, in such a way.

We are now celebrating the birth of our



Lord, the incarnation of God Almighty in the world. This is an occasion for great hope and anticipation of our future living resurrection lives with Christ. Each generation we start again. Each year we start again. Each day, we start again. We truly, of all people, are most blessed. Let us hear the word of our Lord, and walking together, follow Him. Let us start again. Amen. Merry Christmas.

God bless you greatly,  
+ David

We welcome letters to the editor, news, stories and book reviews (max 500 words), event notices and high resolution photos (min 1 MB, 200 dpi).

Submissions are due one month prior to the issue for which they are intended, for example: JAN 2 for FEB 2025.

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The publishers and editorial staff of The Messenger value honest, transparent and respectful communication. We seek to provide encouragement and inspiration to all who are building loving, inclusive, Christ-centered communities. We respect the dignity of every human being and endeavour to lift the voices of people who are marginalised. We are committed to the quality of our content. We reserve the right to edit all contributed material. We correct any factual errors in a transparent manner. To report an error, please email [anglicanmessenger@gmail.com](mailto:anglicanmessenger@gmail.com)

# Indigenous/Rural Communities Liaison Urges Small, Consistent Steps on Reconciliation Road

The stereotypes are familiar.

"Lazy, drunk Indians. Why don't they just get over it?"

In more than a decade of ministry as the first Aboriginal and rural communities liaison for the Diocese of Edmonton, Fiona Brownlee, through an intense willingness to understand and share the truth, has worked to dispel these and other racist stereotypes that surprisingly, are still overheard today.

"You can't grow up in Canada without breathing in racism," says Brownlee, a first-generation Canadian settler.

Throughout her ministry to rural and city parishes, Brownlee has not been afraid to talk with settlers about the colonial policies, like the *Doctrine of Discovery* and the Indian Act, that usurped Indigenous lands and diminished but failed to extinguish Indigenous culture. She talked honestly and openly about racist institutions and programs, like residential schools and the 60's Scoop, that tore apart Indigenous families and left them with a legacy of intergenerational trauma.

Although Brownlee pioneered her role with the Indigenous Ministries Team of the Edmonton diocese, creating an invaluable number of educational opportunities and resources for individuals and parishes, significant cuts to the diocesan budget will include her position on January 31, 2025.

Fiona Brownlee joined the Edmonton diocese's Indigenous Ministries Team in the fall of 2014 when her husband the Rev. Hugh Matheson became the rector of Immanuel Anglican Church in Wetaskiwin.

"I walked into (Bishop) Jane's office and said, 'So, I'm here, what are you going to do with me,'" Brownlee recalls.

She was in the right place at the right time. Because of the Reach Campaign for ministry and mission, there was money available for reconciliation work, particularly with the rural communities of the diocese.

Previously, Brownlee had been a communicator for the Council of the North while residing in the now defunct Diocese of Keewatin, an area on the western O.N./M.B. border comprised of mostly small, First Nations communities.

When she and Matheson

joined Immanuel, Wetaskiwin, the parish had recently formed a reconciliation team after attending a gathering on traditional Samson Cree Nation lands to see the Hobbema community change its name back to the original Indigenous name of Maskwacis.

"By the time of the big TRC National Event in Edmonton, in March 2014, our little team was on the ground." That spring, Immanuel's Sunday school children, many of Indigenous heritage, planted their first heart garden in memory of the children who didn't come home from residential schools.

Now a recognisable name and face in the diocese, Brownlee can often be seen wearing one of several ribbon skirts gifted to her by good friend and fellow Immanuel Reconciliation Team member Gloria Rogers. Rogers has made ribbon skirts for the women of Immanuel parish who carry the ministry of reconciliation in their hearts.

"Gloria says the whole time her mother, a residential school survivor, was alive, she never heard her say, 'I love you.' Gloria had to learn how to be a different type of parent and she's a very good parent."

When a parish or ministry of the diocese wants to organise a reconciliation event, they reach out to Brownlee. But building those relationships has taken time.

"I jumped into this ministry by sending a lot of cold-call emails to clergy," she says.

Astutely aware that rural folk take care of their neighbours, she was able to encourage positive relationships between church communities and their Indigenous neighbours.

"Our neighbours include the First Nations people who are living in our communities and who live near our communities," she says.

In the fall of 2016, on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the Immanuel Reconciliation Team led its first Orange Shirt Walk for 15 people. This September, the walk, which is now held in partnership with the Wetaskiwin Heritage Museum, drew more than 150 participants.

"I always tell folks, do not get intimidated. Take small, but consistent steps," says Brownlee. "For example, Immanuel put a small sign



Fiona Brownlee, seventh from left, and members of the Immanuel Reconciliation Team sing the Grandmothers Honour Song on Red Dress Day at the Wetaskiwin Peace Cairn.

next to the chokecherry tree we planted as an act of reconciliation. It's a simple, inexpensive way of telling people we are present on this journey."

Each spring, on the Sunday closest to May 5, National Red Dress Day, members of the Immanuel's reconciliation team, led by Brownlee, Gloria Rogers and Bonny Graham, hang red dresses in Wetaskiwin's Jubilee Park to honour the memory of Missing and Murdered indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQ+ folk.

Communication has been an integral part of Brownlee's ministry. When she and the reconciliation team attend a ribbon skirt workshop, or plant a heart garden or lead a walk, she takes pictures and writes stories to share and, hopefully, inspire others.

At the start of her reconciliation ministry, Brownlee visited St. Mary's in the neighbouring community of Ponoka. In the ensuing years, she has visited churches and schools throughout central Alberta to lead Blanket Exercises, teaching the true history of colonialism from the perspective of Indigenous people.

She has led Messy Church Reconciliation services with the Rev. Nick Trussell, rector of St. Luke's, Edmonton, and preached in Anglican and Evangelical Lutheran churches as far north as Cold Lake.

She has led workshops for Lutheran clergy and diocesan ministries, such as the Edmonton Anglican Cursillo community.



Above top: planting the Heart Garden at Immanuel Wetaskiwin; praying over the children who did not return home from residential school.

Continued on next page.



The Diocese of Edmonton Indigenous Ministries Team, with Cree Elder Russell Auger (center) and Marcus Cruz, lead the smudge ceremony at the 69th Synod Eucharist.

Continued from previous page.

Eight years have passed since Immanuel's first Orange Shirt Day Walk, and "settlers still come up to me and ask, 'So why are you doing this?'"

For as long as she has been teaching, Brownlee has been listening to and learning from Indigenous people.

"Anyone doing reconciliation work better be prepared to listen. Be prepared to have our First Nations neighbours be angry with you when you first approach them," she says. "Indigenous people have every reason not to trust the church."

"We talk to God our Creator in many different ways, and when the smudge is offered (at

the beginning of every diocesan service), do it. When something is difficult and uncomfortable you need to sit with that and pray about it, because that is your heart telling you something needs to change with your way of being in the world."

Being open and respectful in sharing circles helped her gain the trust of Indigenous elders, like Russell Auger.

"Russell and I have a good relationship now," she says, "But I had to show him I want to understand."

"When I was with the Council of the North, Larry Beady (Indigenous Suffragan Bishop of Northern Manitoba Area Mission of the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh) would say, 'Fiona, we stand behind you with our hands on your shoulders.'"

Wearing a ribbon skirt in public is another way Brownlee honours Indigenous tradition, and it has been acknowledged by Indigenous people like the

young man who once nodded to her in a grocery store (she was making a quick stop on her way to an event), as if to say, "I see ya, sister."

It is heartening to see many parishes doing acts of reconciliation, such as including land acknowledgements in their liturgy, Brownlee says. She likes the idea of reframing these acknowledgements as gratitude for the land, a concept she learned during a recent anti-racism course.

She also encourages parishes to make connections with Indigenous people through their local band office.

"One of the things Indigenous folk do upon meeting is they ask each other where they are from and who their family is. So, I start by telling people I was born in West Sussex in my grandparents' home and came to Canada when I was three-and-a-half-years old. It wasn't until I moved to Saskatchewan for university that I began learning Canada's true Indigenous history," she says.

Brownlee recalls many profound moments during her tenure as Aboriginal and rural communities liaison. One in particular, she says, has been an "incredible gift to the diocese."

In May 2021, The Tk'emlups te Secwepemc discovered using ground-penetrating radar the remains of as many as 215 children around the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia's Interior. Since then, many more graves have been located, and we now know that thousands of Indigenous children died at residential schools across Canada.

Moved by the news of these discoveries, Jamie Hurlburt, at the time a licensed lay evangelist and member of Christ Church, Edmonton, reached out to Brownlee about starting a Remembering the Children Weaving Project.

"They had it on their heart to create a weaving to represent all those children who did not make it home," Brownlee says.

Five Edmonton churches hosted Hurlburt's weaving loom, as they, assisted by loom keepers (a name coined by Brownlee with a nod to Indigenous wisdom keepers), taught people how to weave while praying for the children.

Once completed, the textile

was dedicated by the Very Rev. Alexandra Meek, Dean of Edmonton, and the Indigenous Ministries Team, and smudged by Cree Elder Eliza Hilliar during an evening prayer service at All Saints' Cathedral in Edmonton.

"There are 18 passes in each inch of the weaving for a total of 8,000 children: 6,000 (TRC estimate) and an additional 2,000+ from recent grave discoveries...The end of the blanket is left open/unravelling to represent the graves yet to be discovered..." said Hurlburt following the dedication service.

The textile, a "powerful visual," has since been hosted in parishes around the diocese.

Brownlee is grateful for the trust and friendship of the diocesan Indigenous Ministries Team, led by the Ven. Travis Enright, Archdeacon for Reconciliation and Decolonization, and including Fred Matthews, lay reader in charge of Church of the Nativity, Frog Lake.

And she is grateful for Indigenous Anglicans who "want to walk with us because they love Jesus."

Brownlee's reconciliation work will not end with her formal position with the diocese. She will continue to have conversations about racism, and recently completed an anti-racism course with Andrea Montgomery Di Marco, CEO of Flourishing Foundation | Global Women Seeking Change, an organisation she would like to become more involved with.

She is also helping lead a course for the College of Emmanuel and St. Chad in partnership with the Western Educational Collaborative Anglican Network on teaching reconciliation to children.

During the COVID pandemic, Immanuel's reconciliation team created activities for families to do together at home.

"I will miss the conversations and connections I have made; I will miss the creative collaborations; I will miss the lay leaders and clergy who have been open to doing this work; I will even miss getting ready to preach," Brownlee says. "But parishes don't need me, or Travis or Fred to keep having these conversations."

The Edmonton diocese is grateful for Brownlee's heart for reconciliation. Together we will give thanks for her ministry at a diocesan service in the spring.

# Signs of Incarnate Spirituality Behind Every Bush

The Ven. JONATHAN CRANE  
Archdeacon for Mission and Discipleship  
Diocese of Edmonton

The longing and waiting of Advent birth into the celebration of Incarnation. We mark in the church 12, days of dwelling in the theological insistence that the Divine has been enfleshed among us. We gape at the smallness of this revelation. Christ born in a stable. Christ born so small and vulnerable. We are reminded of the tenderness of faith, and also how similar the divine birth is to our own.



We reject the notion that Mary was a superhuman. No, she is like us. God chose her just as God chooses us. She bore a child like every other child is born. The angels acknowledged, nevertheless. Jesus was born human. While we embrace the divine notion of Jesus that many saw/see in him, we are also confronted with his complete humanity. This is so important.

It is so important, because the humanity of Jesus, the humanity of Mary, is the way we find our own space in that stable. The Holy Family becomes a rich image for us of how God acts in the regularity of life. If God is working through them, in a very normal human way, then God may also be revealed in our own humanity.

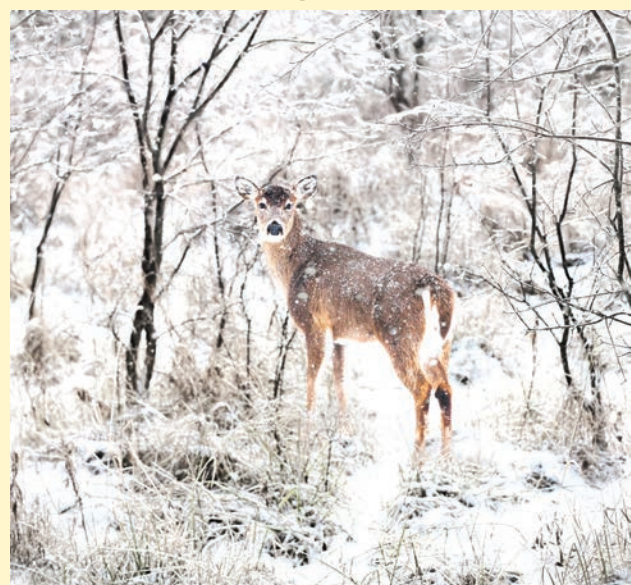
I don't know how much some parts of the Christian world believe this. Do I? I am struck by how easily we are pulled aside by some program, some silver bullet, some quick fix or some empty promise of "church success."

The new book, the new idea, the new thing can be so attractive, but so often missed is the mundanity of the Incarnation. Jesus born in us, in our real life together.

We want church to be super spiritual, liturgically flashy, passionate, firing on all cylinders, all the time, in every moment. We feel we fail if it is not so. But the incarnation would have us approach church and faith at a much more basic level, at a more natural pace. Is your real life so flashy, passionate and energetic? If your life unfolds in more natural ways, then maybe your faith and its expression should look similar.

The incarnation invites us to live church at a natural pace, to just be human together, to be audaciously real about who we are and to welcome others in their reality. You might be thinking, "We do that already," and you might in your context. But I know too many churches, too many stories of folk who have been manipulated into faith practices, steered to become someone they weren't, excluded for who they are. Manipulation is not faithful evangelism, nor are pressure tactics and scheming good reasons to increase church numbers.

Perhaps our greatest teacher of incarnate spirituality and general critic of our societal life is the bush. The natural seasons and rhythms of trees, geese, deer, water, weather, wildflowers and all nature provide a check and balance for the sustainability and realism



of our human behaviour. I often reflect that we pack our busiest program year into the season when most trees and animals are dead asleep or hibernating! We might still choose a different pattern, but it bears reflection and consideration.

I love that our liturgical life exists already in seasons. The ebb and flow of the church year is emotional and theological modulation. In this hemisphere, many of our liturgies match the natural world quite well, down to Candlemas, on February 2, a very important day ecologically when the returning light begins to grow. (It is the midpoint between Solstice and Equinox.)

May we grasp the purpose of God in our own flesh, in our regular life, in our local communities, in our churches. May we release ourselves from burdensome and unsustainable expectations, and rest in the audacious and patient love of God.

# Little White Envelopes Contain a World of Gifts

JEFF HANGER  
Alongside Hope Rep  
Diocese of Edmonton

I am writing this as Canada is in full Christmas swing. The houses and parks are being lit up, family events are being planned, there are mince pies to be eaten, Christmas plays are being attended, and then there is the shopping... Oh, the shopping.

My antidote to all the chaos is attending the Blue Christmas/longest night service at St. Mary's Church in Ponoka; my brief time of reflection to remember my family in England.

My antidote to the gift-buying is to peruse the Alongside Hope *World of Gifts Catalogue*, to see the great work being done in communities around the world. Some of these gifts are put into white envelopes and placed in the Christmas tree to be opened in front of the whole family.

At Christmas, 100 little white envelopes sit within the branches of 100 Christmas trees across Canada. These envelopes aren't significant in appearance, especially against the brightly wrapped gifts, bright lights, traditional ornaments and coloured garland. These envelopes aren't a significant part of the day, having to compete for attention with family, friends, Christmas services at church, the King's speech, eggnog, turkey and all the trimmings. There they sit in the tree, watching the day, waiting patiently to be opened.

But the family knows what this little

**Congratulations to the St. Matt's Fighters for Justice and Peace at St. Matthew's Church, St. Albert for raising more than \$3,000 in their 2024 Wild Ride.**

white envelope represents. Concealing a gift from Alongside Hope's World of Gifts, the envelope represents hope, a brighter future and is a symbol of God's love for His world. A little piece of love from one family to a family thousands of miles away, a family they will probably never meet, yet whose lives they will

significantly change with this gift.

To a small village in Zimbabwe, their gift could bring clean water, or livestock to support their family; to a community in Lesotho, support for rural health; to a family of children with disabilities in the Ukraine, opportunities; to families in refugee camps in Tanzania, food security; to Latin American communities, support for critical work to combat climate change; in Uganda, support for communities combatting gender-based violence; in the Sudan, community movements towards peace; in Columbia, support for projects to preserve traditional seeds; in Canada and around the world, support for critical emergency response.

We can't all be on the ground offering help, but through the World of Gifts program we can express God's love for His people and his world.

Please stay in touch as we plan for our 2025 meetings and events, [Jeffhanger71@gmail.com](mailto:Jeffhanger71@gmail.com).



Will Postma, executive director, Alongside Hope (center); Lois Reid and Jeff Hanger, diocesan reps for Calgary and Edmonton at Hamilton gathering.

# Man Survives Evil to Continue Making Meaning

Those of you who have read *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor E. Frankl may presume that I, like you, first read it decades ago. I had not, and it was a gap in my reading history. I am sure there are many gaps, and I was happy to have this book brought to me. Most of my reading group had been profoundly affected by this beloved book. It had brought comfort to those experiencing challenges, as well as being important to people in their professions.

Viktor Frankl was a survivor of the death camps of the Second World War. His wife and parents died in the camps. He practiced psychology leading up to the war and continued to practice on the other side of the war, developing logotherapy, still an important school of therapy today. Before the war, he had written a book which was destroyed. *Man's Search for Meaning* was published in 1946, and has sold more than two million copies.

In speaking with and encouraging individuals in the work camps, Frankl



MARION BULMER  
St. Thomas, Sherwood Park

observed that those who had a faith, purpose, something they loved, something or someone to live for seemed to have greater resiliency. It helped them survive starvation and torture in the camps. The camps were an experiment unfolding before Frankl's eyes. He observed that those with purpose and meaning in their lives endured and had a greater chance of surviving hardship. They also acted in ways that were more fully human, perhaps sharing bread or acting in other kind ways. The camps tested the humanity of all imprisoned there,



including the guards themselves.

The first part of the book focuses on the dehumanising conditions of life in the camps. The abuse and many deaths at the hands of those in authority, but also the acts of kindness between prisoners and the occasional merciful act by guards.

A Holocaust survivor, Frankl returned to Vienna following the war, where, as a professor, he taught the importance of meaning and purpose in one's life. He married a practicing Christian, and his surviving daughter said he remained a practicing Jew until his death. They respected each other's faith throughout their life together.

Frankl's desire to communicate about how his faith brought him resolve, helped him survive the horrors of the camp. He was determined to share what he had learned about our ability to manage, and perhaps even flourish, while enduring evil. He sought to help and teach people how to recover from their woundedness.

Frankl succeeded in writing a book that is a balm for people's spirits.

# Fighters for Justice Embark on PWRDF Wild Ride

ANGELA BOKENFOHR  
St. Matthew's, St. Albert

When overwhelmed by other's needs and a servant's heart's desire to meet those need, it can be helpful to reflect on the story of a man who walks the beach every day when the tide recedes. With every step, he picks up a stranded starfish and throws it back into the water, likely saving millions of starfish from drying out on the low-tide sand.

One day, a young child asks the man what he is doing, and without stopping, the old man explains that if left on the sand, the starfish will die. They need to be thrown back into the water. The young child then points out there are "hundreds of starfish on hundreds of beaches. How, does this old man really think he can make a difference?" he wonders.

Picking up another starfish, the man looks at it in his hand for a moment. Then, throwing it into the water, he says, "You might be right. I cannot save all the starfish. I can make a difference for this one."

When the St. Matt's Fighters for Justice, a small and mighty group of three women from St. Matthew's Anglican Parish, St. Albert, heard PWRDF's call to action with the Wild Ride, they knew they could do their part to make a difference in the lives of others. They embarked upon the Wild Ride determined to make a difference to as many starfish as they could reach.

Earlier in the year, Heather Leslie, our parish PWRDF (Alongside Hope) rep, gave a talk about the work and value of the PWRDF in the Anglican Church of Canada and the worldwide communion. The seeds planted by Leslie during her talk came to fruition



Heather Leslie, Alongside Hope Parish Rep for St. Matthew's, St. Albert, joyfully wears her Wild Ride shirt.

this past summer with the wildly successful Wild Ride!

Leslie researched the fundraiser in detail and presented the idea to St. Matthew's, seeking others to join her in the cause. In particular, she is motivated to raise awareness of the worldwide refugee crisis. Jenny Stuart joined the Wild Ride team, inspired by (retired) Archbishop Linda Nicholls's visit to a PWRDF-supported well in a community needing safe drinking water. The cause also resonated with Heather Gill and her practice of giving time and resources to people in need. Gill feels called to donate to initiatives that support people in other countries who do not have the same luxuries as people living in Canada.

By asking for pledges to walk and learn another language, our determined Wild Ride team raised more than \$3,000, pulling donations from our parish, friends and family across the country, and a donation from as far away as Panama We were ranked fourth in the nation for donations

raised.

As our assistant priest, the Rev. Rebecca Harris, noted, "It is important to support those who are struggling to survive. I will not ask others to support a cause unless I am contributing to it myself. The Wild Ride was that opportunity."

With the fundraiser wrapping up, the ladies were asked if they would consider doing it again. Their answer was a resounding, "Yes"! Their only regret was not starting on the cause sooner. One team member even alluded to challenging another parish in the diocese to a friendly fundraising competition next year!

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# Bishop David deconsecrates Anglican church in Boyle

The Rev. Canon PETER CLARKE  
Athabasca Editor

**B**ishop David Greenwood led a service of deconsecration at St. Paul's Anglican Church in Boyle, on Saturday, November 24.

The church was full of people who had been a part of the many good times during the life of the congregation. St. Paul's has not been an active Anglican worship space for several years.

During the service of deconsecration, the building and its

remaining contents were remitted back to the world. People shared the Eucharist and their experiences of what the church means to them. They shared more memories and fellowship over lunch following the service.

Many of the objects that were left in the church were gathered and donated to St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Lac La Biche, which was badly damaged by a fire last year. The parish was preparing to re-open on Sunday December 1, St. Andrew's Day.



## St. Luke's Bringing People Closer to Christ

The Rev. Canon PETER CLARKE  
Athabasca Editor

**B**ishop David Greenwood travelled to St. Luke's Anglican Church in Fort Vermilion, on November 16, to hold a workshop with members of the congregation. A continuation of the WHY series of last year, the HOW workshop was for determining ways to bring people closer to Christ.

The talks and activities were positive and encouraging. After the workshop, participants enjoyed a potluck supper.

The following day, Bishop Greenwood celebrated the Eucharist at St. Luke's. The service

was followed by a brunch of pancakes and assorted fixings. A cake in celebration of retired, long-time incumbent the Rev. Canon Hermann Dittrich's 85th birthday, was a fitting dessert. Children eagerly assisted him with blowing out the candle.

Hermann is beloved by the community, and he has a special connection with children. Years ago, he visited our home in High Prairie, while in town to lead a service. (Ft. Vermilion to High Prairie is a 1000-km round trip.) Hermann taught our nieces to 'ski' down the carpeted stairs in bare feet without falling, and to explore the garden in search of worms in the mud.



## St. Helen's Celebrates 10 Years in Fairview Mall

**S**t. Helen's Anglican Church in Fairview welcomed Bishop David Greenwood on a Saturday in November for a community Eucharist at the church located in the Fairview Mall.

The community came together to celebrate the 10-year anniversary



of the church's location in the mall, across from the community food bank, as well as the diocese's 150th anniversary.

Naturally, after the service a dinner was served in an aisle of the mall. Mall vendors and other Fairview community members were invited to partake.

