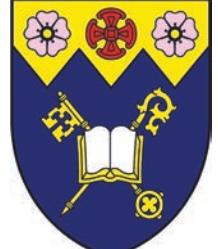




# THE MESSENGER



[www.athdio.ca](http://www.athdio.ca)

FEBRUARY 2026

[www.edmonton.anglican.ca](http://www.edmonton.anglican.ca)



The parish of Christ Church, Edmonton, spent the season of Advent solving an epic mystery. For more on how the Dioceses of Edmonton and Athabasca celebrated the birth of Jesus, see pages 4 and 5.

Image by FO Photography, [www.fophotography.com/blog](http://www.fophotography.com/blog)

## Mission Means Belonging Together

THE REV. NICK TRUSSELL  
Coordinator for Missional Renewal  
Diocese of Edmonton

Our Mission and purpose as a church is so much more than the things we do. Our mission is actually the relationships we make and the communities we build. Those things will certainly have important actions and events and traditions, but those aren't actually the purpose, Christ centered community is. Mission then, is about people, not programs, first. Which means mission moves at the speed of relationship.

Mission is about how we find ways to belong together with those around us and create new opportunities together with the gifts God has given us and as the Spirit is leads us.

A friend of mine, as they were going through a difficult time, asked me how I stay hopeful amid life's changes and challenges and then quickly added "but don't say Jesus!" I was honoured that they would ask me such an honest and vulnerable question. And asked me because of our relationship and even because they know me as a person of faith. But they

clearly had ideas about what "Jesus" and "Church" mean and had already ruled them out as something they could not be part of.

We sometimes reach for "mission" only in response to declining membership and increasing costs. We make innovative events or ministries part of the plan to get what we need, more people and more money. This can make the mission of the church far too transactional. Mission is not a service we get tickets for, but is the action of a community that we belong to.

I told my friend about practices that keep me hopeful, all of which connect to my faith because that's where my hope comes from. I don't have hope because I trust in my own strength or the goodness of the world, but because I trust in the strength and goodness of the God who made us (I stage whispered "God who I know in Jesus"). I don't expect that they will ever join a church or become a follower of Jesus but we do talk about it more often now and it's ok for me to say *Jesus*. Faith community is becoming a live option and a safe place.

Christian communities engaged for mission create spaces for people to be together in relationship, just as they are, and for the

Spirit to be at work in them and through them. How that happens will look very different in every place but will always require prayer, discernment, activating the gifts and passions of disciples within our communities, and connecting with people outside of our own space.

Mission is not a quick or easy answer to address the challenges of being church. Mission is about living out who we are as followers of Jesus with our neighbours in relational and hope-filled ways.

If the Spirit is leading us in mission then it will mean meeting other people and communities outside of our own to ask questions and to listen. Enacting our mission takes leadership, vision and planning, but first it takes connection, relationship and trust to begin doing the work of belonging together.



Vocations Conference p. 2



Christmas Celebrations p. 4-6



News from Buyé p. 8

# Explore God's Call at Awakening Your Purpose

Saturday, February 21, at Good Shepherd, Edmonton

THE REV. STEPHANIE LONDON  
Edmonton editor

**R**egistration is open for *Awakening Your Purpose*, a one-day conference to help participants deepen their discernment of God's call.

God's call is not limited to ordained ministry. The Ven. Jonathan Crane, Archdeacon for Mission and Discipleship, hopes the conference will inspire Christians to understand their whole lives as vocation.

The organizing committee looks forward to helping facilitate a process of discernment that includes guided personal reflection, personal testimony from lay leaders in the Diocese, and time for group conversation, and an opportunity to learn about current discipleship programs.

Following the conference, Archdeacon Jonathan will form a Lenten study group for participants who would like to explore Christian discernment more deeply.

To register, visit [edmonton.anglican.ca](http://edmonton.anglican.ca)



 Purposeful Discipleship

## Lay Evangelist Program Reclaims Source

THE REV. DR. ERIC KREGEL  
Warden for Lay Evangelists, Edmonton

**E**vangelism, in our 21st Century synod, faces several questions: is Evangelism still relevant? Is Evangelism synonymous with Colonialism? Is it just another version of church growth, "selling" our faith? Or is it something more rich, more beautiful, and more akin to the Word of God?

Today, we have plenty of dark, dysfunctional pictures of what Evangelism might be. However, the Bible presents a bigger picture: evangelism can be welcoming, affirming, kind, meaningful, and amazing. We must go back to the original source, abandon what isn't for us, and embrace where God

invites us to go. This is the journey we're on with the Lay Evangelist Program.

The Lay Evangelist Program has undergone a recent change. With the retirement of the Rev. Tim Chesterton, the Rev. Dr. Eric J. Kregel has taken over the program. The result is an expansion of this program while keeping all the core elements.

The Lay Evangelist Program will be exploring these questions in a three-tiered system. To gain a more robust, sincere, and biblically based view of Evangelism, we will be offering several types of engagements: on-line videos, visits, and messages upon these ideas. This will begin in the Summer of 2026.

For those who wish to go deeper, we will offer 1-2 night classes at a variety of parishes

to teach the theology of Evangelism. These will be available soon.

Lastly, if those feel called by God to help lead their specific parishes in Evangelism as Lay Leaders, a two-year class will be available in the Fall of 2026. Rev. Eric will be leading this small group through the curriculum written by Rev. Tim. These will be courses on Saturday afternoons once a month, with breaks for Christmas and Summer. We will create plans that match the needs of each participating parish with the gifting, training, and passions of their student.

If you wish to get involved or have any questions, please reach out to Rev. Eric ([ericjkregel@gmail.com](mailto:ericjkregel@gmail.com)).

 Inviting Witness

Two ways to **CONNECT** with the Diocese of Edmonton

**THE MESSENGER**

- 10 times/year along with the Anglican Journal (national) and updates from Alongside Hope
- news, inspiration, and devotional materials from the Dioceses of Edmonton and Athabasca
- Keep up with A Way Through the Wilderness strategic workplan
- Connect with our wider family of churches
- Hear from our bishops and other ministry practitioners
- Read it online at [edmonton.anglican.ca/blog](http://edmonton.anglican.ca/blog)
- manage your paper subscription at [anglicanjournal.com/subscriptions](http://anglicanjournal.com/subscriptions)

**THE SYNOD SCENE**

- once a week by email
- news, events, prayer requests, and important communications from the Synod Office and around the Diocese
- read it online at [edmonton.anglican.ca/newsletters](http://edmonton.anglican.ca/newsletters)
- email "subscribe" to [communications@edmonton.anglican.ca](mailto:communications@edmonton.anglican.ca) to sign up

# Introducing The Mainline Christianity Project

Christianity is meant to be good news for people. I often say that if it doesn't sound like good news, then it isn't about Jesus. The term Gospel means *good news*. It is the good news that God is love and has come into our lives in Jesus Christ for our healing, wholeness, and salvation.

This year, we are exploring the Gospel through a new teaching ministry in the Diocese of Edmonton called The Mainline Christianity Project. It is meant to help people grow in the faith and spirituality of a Mainline way of following Jesus.

If the term Mainline isn't familiar to you, let me explain. The Anglican Church of Canada is informally part of a much wider group of Christian churches that are often called the Mainline Protestant churches to distinguish them from the Evangelical Protestant churches on the one side and Roman Catholic churches on the other. It is not a judgemental term, just



Bishop STEPHEN LONDON  
Diocese of Edmonton

a way to describe what sets us apart.

The term comes from debates in the 1920s between two groups called the Modernists and the Fundamentalists. Whereas the Fundamentalist churches tended to close themselves off from scientific questions and the larger culture, the Mainline churches historically were open to the idea that scientific inquiry is compatible with the Christian faith on such questions as the age of universe, evolution, and so on. It was

also willing to be part of the larger cultural conversations around equality and justice, whereas the Fundamentalists were not.

Over time, the use of the term Mainline has waxed and waned. I want to reclaim the word for this project because it captures a vision of the Christian faith that is ecumenical and bigger than our Anglican Church of Canada.

It is a way of being Christian that captures the imaginations of those who want to hold a Biblical faith given for all time, and who see this faith as being generous and hospitable. The Gospel we believe is not just for the select few but for everyone. We believe the Gospel is inclusive and joyful. This is a faithful working out of the faith of the Nicene Creed.

This vision of the faith inspires me. Unfortunately, there are not a lot of resources to help people grow in the faith and spirituality of Mainline Christianity. Therefore, we are creating a digital teaching interface and will develop in-person conversational and prayer experiences. This is an exciting and challenging time to be the church. I pray that each of you will take time to explore the upcoming website and consider participating in our faith-building events.

+ Stephen

## The Essence of Evangelism

I don't know why she came to that service. I hope she comes back!

I had remarked to a friend about how nice it had been to see a stranger who had come to our Ash Wednesday service with her young daughter. It turned out she was an acquaintance of his, but not a close one.

"I was telling her about our church as she was curious, but I expected her to come on Sunday when we're much more upbeat! I wonder what she and her daughter thought of it."

Being Ash Wednesday, the service had focussed on ashes, penitence and commitment, and reminding ourselves of the holiness of Lent. It was very quiet, somber, introspective.

"Our services are not for the outsider, but rather for the committed who already know God." I have heard this said before, and to a certain extent it is true. Our services provide such a depth of liturgy that fruitfully engaging can be difficult if you do not understand the meaning underneath.

In the early church this was an explicit practice to the point that after the sermon all non-baptized people were requested to leave the service as they had not yet been taught the full depth of relationship being offered in Holy Communion, which was initiated through baptism. It's like Holy Communion is the



Bishop DAVID GREENWOOD  
Diocese of Athabasca

"Holy of Holies", to which only the properly initiated can partake—and the preparation was intensive. As St. Augustine wrote, "after the sermon the catechumens (students) are dismissed; the faithful will remain."

Our history works against us. Five hundred years ago in England, everyone had to come to church or they would face a fine imposed by the monarch. Being a state church in England, the church was supported

through state endowments, participation was obligatory, and in a way, it didn't really matter what you believed, you just had to attend. Having guaranteed attendance means the muscles of evangelism and discipleship can safely wither—and they did. Whenever those muscles would resurrect, with John and Charles Wesley, for example, Anglican priests who spearheaded the Methodist revival, or William and Catherine Booth, Methodist preachers who formed the Salvation Army, the reaction was often one of rejection and disapproval: "We'll have none of that here!" Hence, the Methodists split from the Anglicans, and the Salvation Army from the Methodists.

We are bearing the fruit of decisions made by previous generations, sometimes hundreds

of years ago. This means, paradoxically, that now is a time of opportunity for us. I have had membership in churches which have grown, and which have declined. When I think of what caused growth or decline, it was not the service (one parish was highly charismatic with much modern music throughout, the other very middle-of-the-road Anglican with traditional music) or anything obviously "tweakable". It was not the people: in both cases, the same core people were present during both growth and decline.

When the parishes were growing, they were meeting people where they were and loving them. That's it. You can take many courses on evangelism, you can make it your life's work to study it, but at its essence, it is meeting people where they are and loving them. As the parishes found, this requires ongoing, intentional, and sometimes hard and tiring, work. It requires integrity and transparency, letting the Christ in you shine through. It enlivens the entire atmosphere of the parish.

Our services are for the committed, yes. If they become worship where people are met and love is experienced, then they are also for the outsider—even if it is Ash Wednesday, even if instruction may be needed. And if you become a person where people are met and love is experienced, you will become an evangelist. May Christ fill you with His guidance and empower you with His love.

+ 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: February 2 for March 2026.

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A \$15 annual donation is suggested.  
Please send donations to the

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# Celebrating the Birth of Jesus



Top: John the Baptist visits St. Thomas, Sherwood Park, on the Second Sunday in Advent

Above, lower right, and far right: Christ Church, Edmonton, ready for Christmas detectives.

Right: A young parishioner at Christ Church looks for clues.

Christ Church photos by FO Photography,  
[www.fophotography.com/blog](http://www.fophotography.com/blog)



## The Case of Christmas: SOLVED

DR. STEPHEN MARTIN  
 Christ Church, Edmonton

**H**ere at Christ Church, Advent became a full-on investigation. A mighty team of Faithful Bible Investigators led by four detectives set out to solve the Case of Christmas.

The case began on the first Sunday of Advent when it was discovered that the nativity set was in disarray and 'file not found'. We collected clues from the Bible: promises from the prophets, a brave "yes" from Mary, a long journey to Bethlehem, and the surprising problem of "no room."

On Christmas Eve, the case board was full, the detectives were on duty, and our team of Faithful Bible Investigators got to work! With help from Detective Ace, Detective Sky, Detective Jo, and Detective Max (plus a few dramatic sound effects), the kids asked sharp questions, followed the evidence, and connected the dots between Scripture and the nativity scene right in front of us.

And then—at just the right moment—the final clue clicked into place: God doesn't arrive at a safe distance. God comes close. The mystery wasn't *whether* God would show up, but *how*: as a baby in a manger—Emmanuel, God-with-us.



## High Prairie Christmas Celebration

THE REV. DEACON PETER CLARKE  
Athabasca Editor

For many years St. Mark's Church in High Prairie has helped the people of the town to get a fuller understanding of the birth of Jesus and the Christmas story by means of a Live Nativity, held outside, whatever the weather on the first Friday in December.

Parishioners and people from the community come together to listen to Scripture, sing familiar hymns of the season and watch as people in costume - often friends or relatives, share the events of that time starting with the Angel Gabriel appearing to Mary and continuing through the journey to Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus with angels and shepherds appearing, before the Magi appear to present their gifts.

It is totally unrehearsed, which can lead to interesting but fun glitches like the time a cow we had in a pen bellowed at the time of a response, causing much laughter. We try to have animals in a pen for the young children to enjoy. This year we had mini horses, in past years we have had cattle and goats - one of which was tiny and would not stay in the pen so walked all through the audience, that helped increase their enjoyment, totally unscripted. This year the weather dropped to -23c quickly which reduced attendance a bit but not the enjoyment.

Bishop David Greenwood started the evening with prayer before we sang Silent Night, prior to the first reading. As this event starts at 7 pm and it is dark we set up lights all around which enables anyone driving by on the main highway beside the church to readily see what we are doing. Often people either stop

their vehicles or pull into the church car park to come and watch.

If people come by the church as we are setting up they will very likely be 'convinced' to be a part of the evening by dressing up in costume to participate. We always get our characters and afterwards we are told just how much they enjoyed taking part. The young children often are very excited. One year the angels appeared to the shepherds, who promptly jumped up and screamed with joy and almost ran to the stable to see the baby Jesus.

At the conclusion of the pageant everyone is invited into the church hall for warm refreshments, this year we also had Pizza and cookies to go with the hot chocolate, tea or coffee. This time of fellowship helps build our presence in High Prairie so that we might share the love of Christ here. We are blessed that the church is in such a prominent location in order that everyone can understand the true meaning of Christmas.

Thanks be to God.

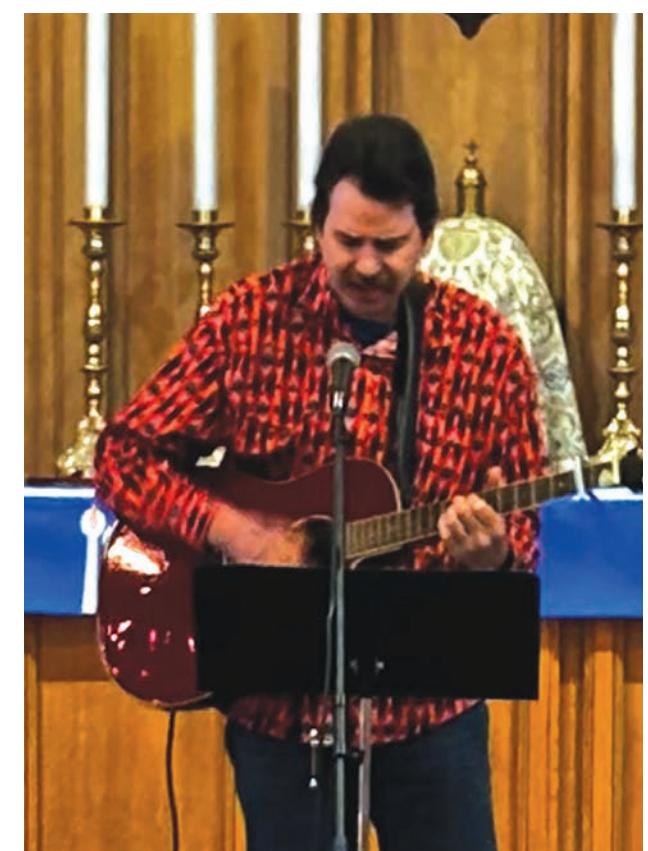


Above right: the angels, Magi, and Mary and Joseph with the baby Jesus.

Right: Bishop David Greenwood and Deacon Peter Clarke join the singing.

## Joyful Worship in Edson

Left and below: The House Band/Holy Trinity Choir, Filipino Community Choir, and Michael Lambregts were some of the musicians who led carol singing at Holy Trinity, Edson



## Carols, Fellowship, and 'Swallowship' at St. John's, Edmonton

DANIEL WESTFALL

St. John the Evangelist, Edmonton

**S**t. John the Evangelist, Edmonton, presented a service of Lessons and Carols on the second Sunday of Advent. Shannon Brink led the choir in anthems and the congregation in Christmas carols, accompanied by Kobie Kloppers on organ and by a Christmas contingent of flutes, trumpets, and brass. "Shannon was amazing, she pulled so much energy from the choir," reported Pearl.

The lessons treated salvation history from the serpent in the garden to the baby in the manger, the Word who became flesh. As the lesson from Hebrews said, "Moses gave the law. Jesus brought grace and truth."

The readers included 8-year-old Sam and retired Brenda, with parishioners of all ages in between. The core SJE choir, which sings weekly at the BCP service, was augmented with volunteers. The children's choir also joined in and performed a couple of numbers.

Chartwell Heritage Valley in south Edmonton, where several SJE members live, sent a busload of visitors as one of their December activities. Some seniors who attend the contemporary service on Sundays said, "It was good to hear the organ and choir, and to sing the older Christmas carols again." For those of us who attend the contemporary worship service at SJE, it was a pleasant change to have a guitar-free, drum-free, electronic-keyboard-free worship service.

Following the service, the Rev. Blessing Shambare invited everyone to lunch: "Join us for fellowship and *swallowship* after—a potluck in the Great Hall." Then he prayed a blessing on the food.

Photo: David Beale on Unsplash



## The Bible Course Inspires Growth

THE REV. LESLEY HAND

St. Augustine's-Parkland

**T**he Bible Course with Dr. Andrew Ollerton drew fifteen eager parishioners and clergy at St. Augustine's Parkland, along with five online participants, for an exploration of the big picture of the Bible. This 8-week video-based course from the Canadian Bible Society guided us from Genesis to Revelation.

The combination of video presentations, small group discussion, and personal reflection gave us a deeper insight into all the books of the Bible, the different genres, and how they fit together to tell God's story of salvation. The course material provided daily Bible readings and prompted us to read them with 3 questions in mind: WHAT did this passage mean in its context? SO WHAT does this passage mean in light of Jesus? And NOW WHAT does this passage mean for my life today?

The course helped us grow as a church community; and, perhaps most importantly, it helped us in our discipleship as each of us discovered where we fit into the bigger picture and how to apply the Bible to our own lives today.

Participants gave overwhelmingly positive feedback both during and after the course. There were lots of "Aha!" moments throughout the 8 weeks. For those who had little knowledge of the Old Testament, it helped them understand how the Old and New Testaments connect. For others, it fostered a habit of daily Bible reading. One participant commented that the course "helped both newcomers and those with years of Bible reading experience to refresh and renew."

Offering the session by live-stream as well as in-person meant that those who have difficulty driving in the dark could join in from home. We soon discovered that live-streaming

also attracted friends of parishioners who lived further away, including St. Albert and south Edmonton. Two online participants decided to phone each other during the small group discussion time to have their own discussion. Initially, including our online participants in a meaningful way was a challenge. However, we became more adept at it through experimenting with things such as passing around a cordless mic during our group reflection so that they could hear our insights. We also began offering a blessing to our online friends before closing with our group prayer time.

The Bible Course was an exciting and enjoyable journey of learning and discovery for all of us, and has left us with the big question, "What next?" We are looking forward to where God is leading us!

*The Bible Course participants in Spruce Grove*  
Photo: Lesley Hand





## Thankfulness and Praise at St. John's, Manning

THE REV. DEACON PETER CLARKE  
Athabasca Editor

**O**n Sunday, December 7, 2025, Bishop David Greenwood presided over the Eucharist at St. John's United Anglican in Manning, where he and his wife were warmly welcomed.

At the beginning of the service, Nora Paulovoch brought forward the Thanksgiving Bottle. Children—and a few not-so-young members—came up to offer donations and share what they were thankful for.

Following the service, the congregation enjoyed a potluck lunch together.



## Buyé Celebrates 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

Canon Dominique Ciza  
Diocese of Buyé, Burundi

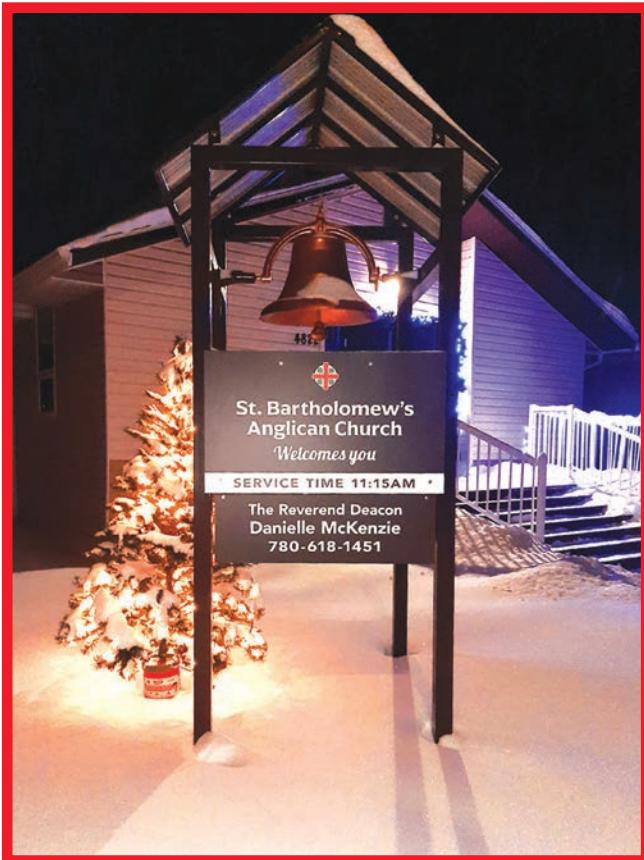
**Y**esterday, we joyfully joined the global observance of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. The celebration was held at Murama Parish in Kirundo Province and began with a one-mile awareness rally.

During the event, we were blessed with the presence of two bishops (from the Dioceses of Muyinga and Buhiga). Their participation added great value to the day. We also took this opportunity to distribute 200 medical cards to vulnerable community members, a gesture that was deeply appreciated by everyone.

It was a truly colorful and impactful day, and the community expressed heartfelt gratitude for the initiative.

*The Diocese of Buyé has been Edmonton's partner diocese since 2008.*





## St. Bartholomew's Celebrates Installation of Bell and New Church Sign

THE REV. DEACON DANIELLE MCKENZIE  
St. Bartholomew, Berwyn/Grimshaw

**M**any years ago, St. Bartholomew's received a special gift from St. Helen's: the bell from the church building in Fairview.

That gift inspired a dream that brought the bell out of storage and prominently displayed for all to see. It took some time, but Dorothy Malone worked diligently to see her dream for a bell tower and a new sign for St. Bart's come true.

The Blessing of the Bell took place on a cool Sunday in November, led by the Rt. Rev. David Greenwood, Bishop of Athabasca. On that day, sprinkling holy water and anointing with oil, Bishop Greenwood dedicated the bell with these words: "To the glory of God Most High, I solemnly dedicate this bell and give it the name 'Mary'.

A new bell for Grimshaw  
Photo: Danielle McKenzie

May its presence be ever to the praise of God and the blessing of those around it".

The Bishop explained that Mary was named "in honour of Mary Magdalene, who demonstrated her deep love by her contemplation of her life and turning to God, her steadfast presence at Jesus' tomb, and in being Jesus' Apostle to the Apostles, the first to declare Jesus' Resurrection".

During the blessing, Deacon Danielle prayed "that the message of this bell may bring joy, penitence, and encouragement to all who seek the truth. In the presence of this bell, may all find peace in their soul".

The people of the Parish of Berwyn/Grimshaw and the congregation of St. Bartholomew's are thankful for Dorothy's commitment to seeing this installation through to completion! We all look forward to celebrating with the people of St. Helen's, Fairview, in the spring.

## Christ in the Corridors: A Reflection from the Life of a Healthcare Disciple

PATRICK SYNNOTT  
St. Paul, Edmonton

**I** do not encounter Christ only in churches or quiet places of prayer. I encounter Him in hallways that smell of disinfectant, in rooms filled with beeping monitors, and in moments when words are few, but suffering is great. I work in healthcare. It is there—within the limits, pressures, and realities of the system—that I have come to know Christ in the corridors.

### 1. The Word Still Becomes Flesh

Scripture tells us: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:14) That dwelling did not end two thousand years ago. Christ still dwells where bodies are fragile, where fear is real, and where hope is often quiet. I have learned that Christ does not always come with dramatic miracles. Sometimes He comes in:

- Patience at the bedside
- Calm during urgency
- Faithfulness in small, repeated tasks

In healthcare, the Incarnation continues—not in theory, but in presence.

### 2. Meeting Christ Without Knowing It

Jesus says: "As you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to Me." (Matthew 25:40) There are moments at work when I am tired, rushed, or emotionally spent. And yet, Christ still meets me there. I have met Him:

- In patients who are afraid but trying to be brave
- In families waiting for news they do not want to hear
- In silence, when nothing can be fixed—only endured

Often, I realize later, that moment was holy. Not because I spoke about God, but because I treated a person with dignity.

### 3. Ordinary Work as Offering

Paul writes: "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord." (Colossians 3:23) In healthcare, much of the work is unseen:

- Documentation
- Cleaning
- Repetition
- Following procedures

I have learned to quietly offer these things to Christ. Charting becomes prayer. Consistency becomes faithfulness. Excellence becomes worship. This is not glamorous discipleship, but it is real.

### 4. Following Christ Within Limits

Healthcare has rules, boundaries, and ethical constraints. I cannot always say what I believe. I cannot always pray aloud. I cannot always explain hope in the language of faith. And yet, Christ Himself lived this way. He submitted to authorities. He walked within systems. He remained obedient without losing compassion. So I have learned:

- Obedience is not the absence of faith
- Silence can still glorify Christ
- Love does not need permission to exist

Sometimes the most Christlike act is restraint.

### 5. Suffering as Holy Ground

Hospitals are places of suffering. And suffering changes you. I have learned not to rush past pain or explain it away. Christ did not do that. He wept at Lazarus' tomb. He stood with the brokenhearted. He remained present even when healing did not come immediately. In those moments, I do not bring answers. I bring presence. And Christ is there.

**C**hrist walks these corridors. He stands at bedsides. He sits in waiting rooms. He works through tired hands that still choose compassion. And He says quietly: "Whatever you did in love—you did for Me." So I continue to serve. Not perfectly, but faithfully. Not loudly, but truthfully. Giving glory to Christ in the place He has sent me.

### Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, You who were cared for by human hands, teach us to see You in those we serve. Sanctify our work, guard our hearts, and let our quiet faithfulness give You glory. Walk these corridors with us. Amen.

*Patrick Synott works as a Nursing Assistant and Health Care Aide at the Grey Nuns Hospital in Edmonton.*



**M**embers of St. John the Divine, Onoway gathered at the Lac Ste. Anne Chateau on December 19, 2025, to celebrate the joyous 95th Birthday of Carol Gonnet. Carol is a faithful member of St. John's and a lifetime member of the ACW.

