



THE MESSENGER



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Nana Dadson and Andrea Montgomery DiMarco were two of the panel speakers at the Diocese of Edmonton's new conference on vocation and discernment, *Awakening Your Purpose*

About The Messenger this month:

This issue arrives as the church celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This world-changing event is at the centre of our lives as Christians and our vocation as the church.

This month, we are exploring the guiding principle of Vital Congregations in the Diocese of Edmonton's strategic workplan, *A Way through the Wilderness*. This principle calls for every parish to articulate its mission and purpose, and for parishes to look for creative ways to share resources among parishes.

Is your congregation exploring new ways to live as people of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in your context? Share the news with The Messenger! Email us at anglicanmessenger@gmail.com

Awakening Your Purpose Conference Inspires Vocation

THE REV. STEPHANIE LONDON
Edmonton Editor

What would happen if Christians began to see their ordinary lives as inspired by a sense of vocation? This question led to the creation of the inaugural Awakening Your Purpose conference in the Diocese of Edmonton on February 21.

The conference promised an opportunity to deepen participants' discernment of God's call. It began with teaching by the Ven. Jonathan Crane, Archdeacon for Mission and Discipleship. He drew from the Ignatian tradition to speak about vocation growing out of discernment and stewardship of our lives and identities. Through praying with Scripture and reflecting on our lives, we grow in our ability to listen to the Holy Spirit. We learn what draws us to the love of God, and what inspires us to service.

Participants took some time in silence to reflect on their connection to vocation, call, and giftedness. Then, a panel of speakers reflected on their own experience of Christian vocation. Andrea Montgomery DiMarco, Lee Chea, Nana Dadson, James Evans, and Angela Bokenfohr brought insightful and inspirational perspectives. They reflected on God's call meeting them around the world; in ministry with vulnerable people; in serving, teaching

and parenting; in prayerful discernment and examination of their lives.

Lunch, prepared by the ACW of host parish Good Shepherd, provided opportunities to continue conversations or find a quiet space for reflection. In the afternoon, participants gathered in circle to reflect on their own learning and next steps.

Dr. Grayhame Bowcott, Director of the Licentiate in Theology program at Huron University, joined us for the weekend. At the end of the event, he took time to talk to participants about theological education through the L.Th. program. The Diocese of Edmonton has purchased a subscription to the program in 2026, which allows members of the Diocese to take classes tuition-free this year.

Dr. Bowcott was inspired to find "so many gifted and passionate lay leaders, and a wonderful spirit of affirmation, service, and faithfulness." Participants appreciated the time to reflect prayerfully on the different gifts we all have and how we meet Jesus in unexpected ways.

One of the conference panelists later reflected that "I left the conference and showed up to church the next day with a thirst and a renewed strength and desire... It has left me wanting more."



Lee Chea speaks about her vocation as a grade 6 Social Studies teacher, opening young minds to a global perspective. (More photos on page 5)



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Vital Congregations Seek Christ

Ten Days of Fasting, Prayer, and Praise at St. John the Evangelist, Edmonton

GREG HENDRICKS
St. John the Evangelist
Edmonton

From January 8–17, the congregation of St. John the Evangelist Church in Edmonton entered a dedicated season of fasting, prayer, and praise, beginning the new year with intentional spiritual focus.

This call emerged from a shared desire to gather as a community, reflect on our position in Christ, and seek God's direction for our life together. As a congregation, we were seeking deeper intimacy with God, strengthening our unity as the body of Christ, and listening for God's direction in our lives and community.

We realized that fasting, prayer, and praise are time-tested spiritual disciplines at the heart of Christian faith. When woven together, they align our minds, bodies, and spirits toward God's presence. Prayer opens our hearts to God's light and truth. Fasting deepens our dependence on Him and awakens our hunger for the Bread of Life. Praise lifts

our eyes in trust and thanksgiving, reminding us that God is worthy—always.

Throughout the ten days, our scriptural anchor was Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, with the overall theme "The Power of Position in Christ", a text that speaks powerfully about unity, vocation, and the transforming love of God. Each evening, the church gathered for worship marked by prayer, songs of praise, and the proclamation of God's Word. One service included the celebration of Holy Communion, drawing us more deeply into the mystery and grace of Christ's presence among us.

A particularly enriching aspect of this season was hearing from ten different preachers within our congregation. Each offered a reflection on a passage from Ephesians, bringing diverse perspectives and spiritual insights that both encouraged and challenged the community. Many others also contributed to the services, including musicians, scripture readers, AV technicians, and volunteers who supported the gatherings

in meaningful ways. We were further blessed by guest musical leaders from other congregations, including the Edmonton Urban Choir, whose ministry added beauty and depth to our worship.

In addition to those who attended in person, many participants joined online or engaged with service recordings afterward. These ten days were spiritually nourishing for individuals and deeply formative for our community. Gathering nightly strengthened our bonds of fellowship as we prayed for one another, shared life, and grew together in faith.

As we move forward into the year, we sense that God is drawing us closer—to Himself and to one another. We trust that He is doing a new work among us, inviting us to experience His presence in fresh and life-giving ways. With Paul, we continue to pray that we, "being rooted and established in love, may have power...to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Ephesians 3: 16–19).

Vital Congregations Do Something New Together

New ecumenical partnerships forged in Ecumenical Shared Ministry Visioning Day

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

What if we were to step out in faith start something new? Certainly we wouldn't start a new expression or new community all on our own, we would talk with our friends and ask them what excites them about the Gospel where we are and what gifts they can commit to something new together.

This is the question that brought together five Anglican, Lutheran and United Christian communities in Leduc County on a Saturday morning. The lay and ordained leaders from the communities began to talk together about the gifts and blessings each faith community brings to Leduc and where they want to start sharing, strengthening and supporting one another in their shared work of the Gospel.

Each community found great excitement as they shared their joys as well as their challenges and began to imagine how they could work together in new ways. The morning began in prayer together and moved through some exercises to help the group get to know one another and share. Then, we offered stories of shared and renewed ministries from across Canada before concluding with a time to commit to next steps and share a lunch together.

It was only one morning of conversation, but it helped push what people had been thinking and wondering about for years into real and fruitful conversation. One participant reflected that, for a long time as they have observed the trends of church membership, they had been thinking about how they would be able to hold on to less and less. Then, as they came to conversation with other Christian communities, they worried about what they would have to give away. But after having the conversation at this event, they were convinced that we could be more and find new growth together. This shift is precisely what the United, Lutheran and Anglican planners of the event had hoped for. It was truly inspiring to see it happen. The ecumenical group of leaders are already planning for where a similar workshop could take place.

The group decided on a few next steps, including another vision gathering, and began thinking about the leadership required to carry forward and follow up on this new energy to work together.

Relationship building and trust building, through conversation, prayer and action, is the urging of the Holy Spirit that the people in Leduc are responding to. They don't yet have the answers to what a new thing will be, but they trust it is what God is calling them to in some way and is possible as they offer themselves and their gifts, faithfully.



Above: The Rev. Nick Trussell and Canon Scott Sharman with United and Lutheran Church representatives.



Left and above: The event included participants from Anglican, Lutheran, and United churches in Leduc, Beaumont, and surrounding areas.

Canon Scott Sharman reflected later that "It was an amazing time of imagination, hope, and possibility, exploring how to change the narrative from one of decline, and to begin instead to unlock new energy and vitality through sharing gifts and resources for mission and ministry...I truly felt God's Spirit at work like I rarely have before in the ideas and enthusiasm that we generated together."



Living God's New Creation

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! I bring you joyful greetings, my friends in Christ, as we celebrate this greatest of feasts, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

This event we celebrate is the greatest event in human history. It is moment when God's divine 'yes' broke into the world. It is the moment in which we see the vindication of Jesus Christ after his death on the cross. It is the moment when we see in Jesus the victory of God's grace over the ancient law of sin and death that has always plagued humanity. It is the moment when we see the truth of God's promise of eternal life given to humanity, both for this life and for the life to come.

These truths are always important, but they seem especially important to me now as I type these words. As I type, another war in the Middle East has begun, and it remains to be seen if it is still raging when you read these words a month from when I write them.



Bishop STEPHEN LONDON
Diocese of Edmonton

I am praying for peace, and I work for peace when I can. But often peace, especially deep and abiding peace marked by true reconciliation and justice, can seem to be a futile endeavour.

It is interesting for me to note that I came of age between 1991 and 2000. The reason that is important is that, by 1991, the Berlin Wall had fallen, and a year later, the Soviet Union would cease to exist. On the other side of that decade, the twin towers in New York City were destroyed in a terrorist attack in 2001, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq began. For ten years, though, it seemed that a world wide peace was possible. The threat of nuclear war had been eliminated, and democracy seemed possible. In hindsight, this was naive. Even that ten-year period was racked by war and instability, the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 being a prominent example.

I come back to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as the decisive event in human history because I need reminding that even in the midst of all of this, love and goodness and fellowship and mercy and generosity and joy and reconciliation and forgiveness are not only real and good values, but they are the most important of all values.

The Resurrection began the rollout of the New Creation of which we are now a part. We are called to live out the values of God's New Creation even in the midst of the continued destruction of the old order of things. Our Baptismal vows are our way of life. We are called by Christ to be people of reconciliation and peace, not people of destruction. War and violence and abusive power are the aberration in God's eyes, even as they seem overwhelming to us here and now.

When I wake up every morning, I remind myself that my calling is asking the Lord to make me an instrument of God's peace. Our celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus is our annual deep reminder that *God's* world is the true world. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead! Alleluia!

+ Stephen

Our Jesus-Shaped 'Why'

Halleluia! Christ is Risen! We have survived Lent—we have been humbled and are thankful for it. We are thankful for all God has given us, for we realize our utter dependence on God, on God alone.

So, now comes the entire purpose of our faith, what we are all about. We are the People of the Way—and not just any way, but the Way of Christ.

We are the People of Christ: followers of Christ, imitators of Christ, knowing and sharing that Jesus died in truth, and rose to the astonishment of all.

We need not debate how likely this is, or how much sense it makes, for the first disciples did not believe it either (Luke 24:11). We just know it is true for, like them, we have met the risen Christ.

I once had a person say to me, "You believe God became human, died, and rose again. It makes no sense. God would not limit Himself like that." I replied, "You are right—it makes no sense." The facts of our faith depend not on winning arguments, but on the personal encounter of each person with the person of Jesus the Christ. We are the People of the Person. The only purpose of any arguing, if there is a purpose, is to open the heart of another to the possibility of this encounter, this meeting of the heart and mind.

This does not mean that we do not talk and teach and argue (a lot). We are, as Tertullian (~ A.D. 155-225) wrote, "made, not born." We need to learn the Way of Christ.



Bishop DAVID GREENWOOD
Diocese of Athabasca

We need to learn how to effectively communicate with Him. We need to learn the Way to walk with each other as members of a family related through Him. We need to learn why we are here.

The Why of our Diocese could be shortened into "To experience and share Christ's love." That is what we are all about. That requires personal interaction and learning—with Christ, with each other, with our neighbours, and our enemies.

I was asked recently if I could stop commenting on the Why statement for the diocese. This led to a wonderful conversation. Our Whys were not invented; they were discovered through a deliberate process of listening to the stories people shared about why they were members of their parish (or the diocese, in that case). Common elements were captured and then the people together worked through those to arrive at their respective statements. These Whys reflect, in the experience of those who were gathered there, why that parish (or our diocese) are here. Each person can take their Why and be intentional in reinforcing it, so that others can find the same experience as they have been blessed with.

Each vestry or council can look at each of its decisions as it makes them, and ask, "How does this explicitly further why we are here? How does this explicitly further our Why?"



The *Icon of the Resurrection* portrays Jesus standing on the broken doors of hell and lifting Adam and Eve from the grave (15th/16th Century Russian; Wikimedia Commons—Public Domain)

I do this at the diocesan level. When I am thinking about various initiatives, I ask myself, "Does this help us experience Christ's love?" "Does this help us share it?"

In Christ, God became human, died, and rose again. We come to know this not through argument, but through experiencing the person of Christ ourselves, like the first disciples. Our Whys are our local expressions of that ultimate Why, reflecting our experience as part of Christ's body, the church. We are made, not born. Let us pursue our Whys together.

The Lord is Risen indeed. Halleluia! May you be greatly blessed in your ongoing relationship with Him, our Lord and Saviour.
+ 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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My Ordination to the Priesthood

THE REV. CANON PETER CLARKE
Athabasca Editor

On Saturday January 31st at St. James' Cathedral in Peace River I was Ordained as a Priest in the Diocese of Athabasca. It was Winter and roads were icy and bad, with numerous vehicles in the ditch on the 135 km drive to Peace River and even more on the way home.

I was to arrive late for my ordination and got a cheer when I walked in the door of the Cathedral, a first for me and a sign of the joyous celebration that was to follow. Lots of friends from all across this very large diocese. The roads did not stop people driving from Edmonton and Ft. McMurray to attend, good friends wishing to be with me in this journey.

My journey to become a Priest is a long one, over many years, in the course of which I have been involved at all levels of the church from local, diocesan, Provincial and National, all of which have been wonderful opportunities to meet and work with fantastic people of Christ. I have been blessed.

Bishop David Greenwood had confirmed his desire to Ordain me a Priest in December 2025, all we needed was to set a date for that. Thus January 31st seemed an opportune time for this service as it coincided with my Wedding Anniversary. Sadly, my wife had died in August 2025, so this seemed a fitting tribute to our 45 years of marriage.

After arriving at the Cathedral and quickly meeting with clergy and robing, the service



started with the singing of *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*, which was sung with great enthusiasm by everyone. This was to become the norm during the service; every song and response was enthusiastically given.

After the readings, read by The Rev. Canon Terry Leer and Mrs. Sharon Cox from St. Mark's in High Prairie, we sang the Gradual Hymn. That was a favourite that I had chosen from my distant childhood *O Jesus, I Have Promised* (Old Blue 572).

The Gospel for the day, Luke 2: 22-40, was read by the Rev. Deacon Bill Creaser, from the Parish of the Northern Lights Colinton.

The Sermon was given by the Rt. Rev. David Greenwood, bishop of the Diocese of Athabasca. It has been my pleasure to know Bishop Greenwood for more than 25 years, which made the day even more special, since I have seen him move from a lay person, to Deacon, then Priest and finally to be our diocesan Bishop.

After the Nicene Creed, there was my Presentation, where Bishop David asked my Presenters, The Rev. Deacon Danielle McKenzie from Grimshaw/Berwyn, The Rev. Deacon Karen Kovacs from Christ Church Grande Prairie, Mr. Bob Thrall from the United Church and St. Paul's Anglican Church in McLennan, plus Mrs. Colleen Greer and Mrs. Lorene Rose, both Wardens from St. Mark's Church in High Prairie, if they believed that I had been duly selected in accordance with the canons and customs of this Church. Fortunately, they duly certified that to be the case.

The Bishop then followed with the questioning of this ordinand, and after my affirming response, I was escorted to a side table whereupon I signed a declaration to that effect. Then, just like at a wedding, the bishop asked those present, that if anyone knew any just cause why this should not happen, to come forward and make it known. Nobody came forward.

Subsequently, I stood before Bishop Greenwood as he conducted the examination of my will to be ordained a Priest. This was followed by my Consecration as a Priest, then the Ordination Litany.

This was followed by the singing *O Holy Spirit, By Whose Breath* (CP 638), then a period of silent prayer.

I was surrounded by the Clergy from across the diocese as Bishop Greenwood began the Prayer of Consecration and laid his hand upon me, as did the clergy surrounding and supporting me. This led to me being vested as the stole was placed around my neck by Mr. Bob Thrall. I received a Bible from Bishop Greenwood and a chalice and paten.



I was then introduced as the new Priest to the congregation as I proclaimed the Peace of the Lord, prior to the Offertory and Thanksgiving.

I had asked for a favourite of Hymn of my wife for the Offertory, *As The Deer Pants For The Water* (CCLI1431). It just so happens that every winter our large yard is filled with deer and we live beside a creek, so this is a special song.

After Eucharistic Prayer 3, the Lord's Prayer and the Breaking of Bread, people were invited to the Table of the Lord. The Communion Hymns were *Spirit of the Living God* (CP647) and *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say* (CP508).

I then concelebrated with Bishop Greenwood and various Clergy at the Eucharist and was pleasantly surprised to realise that I knew so many of the people in the church that day. I felt truly blessed.

There followed an Anthem sung by the Cathedral Choir, *O Lord Most Holy*, which was beautifully rendered. That led to the Prayer after Communion, the blessing by Bishop Greenwood, and the final wonderful and enthusiastic rendition of *Be Thou My Vision* as the Clergy processed to the back of the Cathedral, to be recalled after for obligatory pictures.

Everyone had been invited to the lunch prepared by people from the Cathedral and St. Mark's High Prairie, in the downstairs meeting area, where my duty was to cut the very large cake before we could eat.

It was great time to meet and fellowship with so many people from across this diocese whom I have known for a long time.

The weather outside might have been terrible and icy, but the love that flowed inside the Cathedral surpassed any concerns about outside. We were one body in Christ, praising and worshipping His Holy Name.

Thanks be to God.

Vital Congregations Seek Justice

Advancing the Work of Disability Theology and Disability Justice in the Diocese of Edmonton

DISABILITY JUSTICE TEAM
Diocese of Edmonton

The Disability Justice team invites you to join us as we engage and animate the ten tenets of disability theology outlined in a resolution passed at the General Synod in 2025. We take inspiration from the resolution to advance the understanding that people with disabilities are prophetic witnesses, gifted with unique theological insights.

Our work is focused on developing a resource package to share with parishes that will raise awareness and opportunities for learning and discussion about disability theology and disability justice in the church and in the community.

The resource package will include a study and discussion guide modeled on materials developed by the Inclusive Church, a Church of England initiative in support of an inclusive, affirming and welcoming church.

The Inclusive Church has produced a study guide that explores the experience of disability in the church. We are developing a similar guide that will include an introduction to the theology of disability as expressed in the ten tenets.

As part of this same project, we are drawing inspiration from author Amy Kenny, and her text, *My Body is not a Prayer Request: Disability Justice in the Church*. Kenny's book is an intense and profoundly insightful text that challenges us all to join in reimagining the church through the work of disability justice, to "value disabled people as image-bearers and learn from the prophetic witness to our numerous gifts."

We plan to visit parishes in person to share this resource package, engage with the General Synod tenets of disability theology, raise awareness and open discussion on disability theology, inclusion, and social justice.

Our team is also looking forward to new collaborations with parishes to offer our version of the Episcopalian Church's Rhythms of Grace service liturgy during a regular Sunday service. Rhythms of Grace is a simple, intentionally inclusive and welcoming liturgy that especially accommodates children, youth and adults with neurodivergence (brain-based differences). Each part of the service is designed to accommodate the many ways that congregants of all ages and abilities worship and celebrate in community.

This inclusive service affirms that we can learn, share, and grow together when we listen to the voices of people with disabilities. As Kenny writes to her readers and community, "May your story and disabled body teach the church what it means to bear God's image."

Team members have experience of disability directly or indirectly – but then everyone does or will have such experience at some point in our lives. We invite anyone who would like to join us on this journey to become a member of our team to advance the work of disability theology and disability justice.

Whatever your time, energy, and talents, the movement for disability theology and justice welcomes your presence and support. Please email team member Wynne Whitten-Holmes at whitten.holmes@gmail.com for more information about the work of the Disability Justice team, add your name to our email list, and join us at our next monthly meeting.

More photos from the Awakening Your Purpose conference on vocation and discernment



Top: Group photo. One participant joined us online from Whitehorse!
Bottom: The Ven. Jonathan Crane teaches on discernment of vocation

Vital Congregations Eat Together

WILLA GORMAN
Emmanuel, Gibbons

We have been having different 'Breads of the World' once a month since November 2025. So far we have had:

Nov. 2/25

Irish - Soda Bread with butter, jam & marmalade
German - Pumpernickel with corned beef

Dec 21/25 Christmas Breads

German – Stollen
Italian – Panettone

Jan. 11/ 26

French – Baguette with cheese
India – Naan with hummus

Feb. 8 /26

Mexican – Tortillas with salsa & sour cream
Ezekiel Bread

Ezekiel bread is a nutritious, flourless bread made from sprouted whole grains. It is a dense, flavorful loaf, known for its high fiber and easier digestibility. It is inspired from Ezekial 4:9 "And you shall take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt; put them in one vessel, and make bread for yourself. During the time you lie on your side, three hundred ninety days, you shall eat it".

Mar. 1/26

Italian – Focaccia with olive oil & balsamic vinegar and mixed olives & lemon (heated in the oven)

Eritrean – Injera

A new Canadian neighbour from Eritrea made our Injera, along with lentils and cabbage & carrots. We also had salad with it. The Injera was brown like a large pancake, smooth on the bottom, but the top was all burst bubbles. It was very soft and spongy. It is made from teff flour.



Top:
From left around the table: Denise, Penny, Chris, Jed, Manny, Willa, Marg, Jelena, Katie, Debbie, Virginia, Patsy
This picture shows the cabbage & carrots in a small white dish sitting on the bigger plate and the olives & lemon just above the bowl of salad.

Right:
(Front) Injera, olive oil and Balsamic vinegar (for dipping focaccia)
(Center) Focaccia, lentils, Peanut Butter Square (we needed a sweet), salad
(Back) More Peanut Butter Squares and focaccia



They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42 (NRSVUE)



Vital Congregations Support their Community

JOANN MONES
St. Saviour, Vermillion

St. Saviour's Anglican Church parishioners support our community in a variety of ways. One focus is stewardship and environmental projects.

Throughout 2025, our small group amassed over 400 volunteer hours within Vermillion and surrounding area. Our dedicated members (and willing friends) gathered garbage, pruned trees, mowed grass, pulled weeds, shoveled snow, volunteered at various local events, put in hours at our local Community Closet, and helped neighbours move or declutter.

We are very familiar with the challenges and high overhead costs of running a

facility. When our local Vermillion Seniors Centre initiated a monthly Sunday pancake breakfast in January 2026, we were very pleased to donate a grill to support this fundraising activity.

In August 2025, FOCUS Society initiated the Vermillion Transit Service for seniors and mobility challenged residents of Vermillion. Operating weekly on Tuesday and Thursday, this service (hop on, hop off) connects high-need areas with key destination stops, ensuring our seniors have consistent access to vital services (Vermillion Valley Lodge, groceries, drugstores, banks, medical centre, hospital, Farmer's Market, restaurants/coffee shops, Senior's Centre) all at a very reasonable cost to the rider. It was a very easy decision for St. Saviour's to support this initiative with a donation towards the operating costs of the transit vehicle.

Our Sunday worship service is at 10:30 am with fellowship following. All are welcome.



Far left: JoAnn Mones, St. Saviour's Vestry Member, presents grill to Karen Grey, Coordinator of the breakfast

Left: Robert Snow, Chief Executive Officer FOCUS Society; the Rev. Fred Matthews; Dawn Riley, MA Director FOCUS Society; and the Rev. Gordon Hills



Vital Congregations Share the Gospel with Every Generation

PATSY HAWRYLUK
Emmanuel, Gibbons

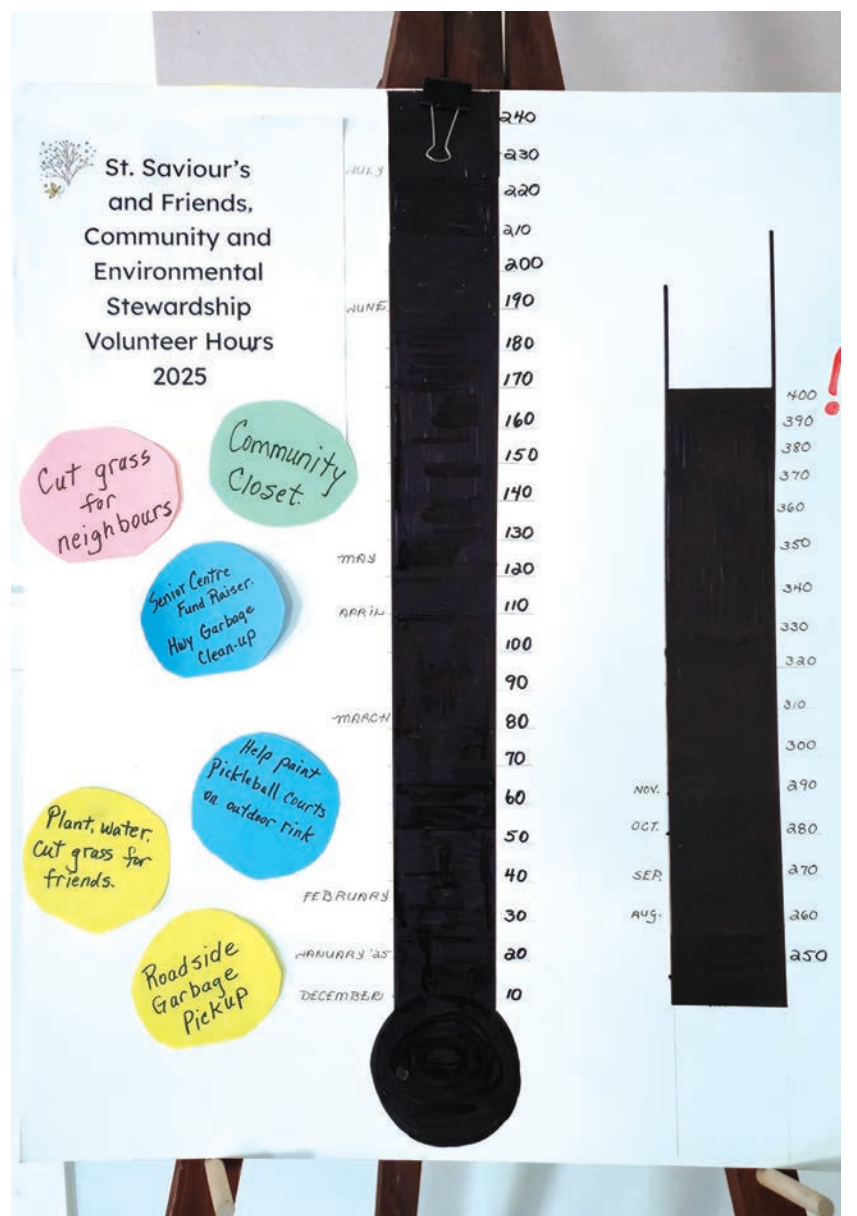
At Emmanuel Gibbons, children old and young get special visitors to help teach the lesson each week! Meet Angel Gabriella and Sister Mary McHoly. Special thanks to Denise LeBlanc-Kwaw for sharing her talent with us!



St. Saviour's, Vermillion, Continued

Above: Yes indeed, many of us were there Sunday following our worship service, to support the Centre and enjoy fellowship over a delicious breakfast!!

God reveals himself, that is, in creation and in Christ, in ways we can see and hear and touch and taste, in place and person. Beauty is the term we apply to these hints of transcendence, these perceptions that there is more going on here than we can account for. Eugene Peterson





Vital Congregations Tend the Heart

St. George's *Heart Circle* provides a space for prayerful conversation and mutual care

MARK BEVAN
St. George's, Devon

Every second and fourth Wednesday of the month at St. George's, members of our parish gather for Heart Circle: a space to reflect on grief, vulnerability, and the shaping influence of our lived experience. It is a simple gathering, grounded in prayerful conversation and mutual care.

Last week, in keeping with our Anglican tradition of embodied faith where symbol and action help reveal spiritual truth, we explored these themes through a hands-on activity: making a needle-felted pumpkin. At first glance, it seemed a modest craft. Yet it quickly became something more.

Each participant began by choosing wool: colours and textures that felt right to them. This became a quiet reflection on the gift of life itself. Before achievement or expectation,

there is simply what we have been given. No two bundles of wool were the same. No two lives begin the same.

With each unique stroke of the felting needle, the loose fibres slowly took shape. As we worked, we began to see parallels to our own stories. The repeated motion of the needle was a symbol of experience, tracing moments of joy and sorrow, affirmation and disappointment, belonging and exclusion. Some shaping felt deliberate; other moments were uncertain or beyond control. What was once soft and undefined gradually formed into something distinct.

Conversation emerged naturally around the table. We spoke about the pressure to "get it right," the fear of being judged, and the temptation to compare ourselves with others. We acknowledged how our earlier experiences continued to influence us long after they had occurred.

Wool holds memory. So do we.

In Scripture, God is described as potter and we as clay. We are not discarded in our imperfections, but patiently shaped and reshaped. The process can be slow. At times it can be uncomfortable. Yet it remains an act of love and care.

There were moments of laughter as we realized how help was within reach, yet we hesitated to ask. We were reminded that Christian formation is not solitary work. We are shaped in community.

At the end of the evening, with our creations in front of us, we noticed every pumpkin was unique. One even unfolded into a flower. None were identical. None were wrong. None better than another. Each bearing the marks of the process that formed it. Each formed but not finished.

Our night was not heavy, but hopeful. There was laughter, honesty, and quiet insight. In the ordinary act of working with wool, something gently sacramental occurred: an outward action revealing inward grace.

Heart Circle continues to be a place where faith and lived experience meet — not to fix one another, but to listen, reflect, and trust that God is at work in the shaping of our lives.

All are welcome.

