

Anglican Highway

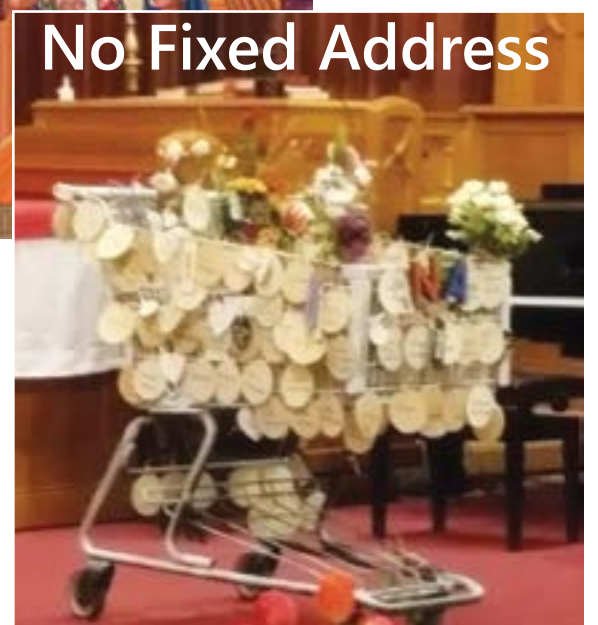
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Summer Edition



Swanson, John August. *Story of Ruth*, from *Art in the Christian Tradition*, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=56561> [retrieved April 26, 2026]. Original source: Estate of John August Swanson.

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WORSHIPPING OUTSIDE!

By The Right Reverend Dr Lynne McNaughton



Rievaulx Abbey, Yorkshire, UK



Riasc Monastery, Ireland

When Gerald and I led Pilgrimages to Holy Sites in Europe, we would often hold worship outside: In the ancient ruins of Riasc, a sixth century monastic community on the Dingle Peninsula in Ireland, overlooking the ocean. In the ruins of Rievaulx Abbey in North Yorkshire with swallows darting in and out of the windows as we sang hymns. On the beach of Iona with gulls hovering in the wind. Singing psalms standing in the ocean waves of the North Sea off Holy Isle, as St. Cuthbert used to do.

Always on the pilgrimage evaluations, peoples' favourite thing was worshipping outside! Why, I wondered, don't we do that more often? People in Kootenay recall fondly worshipping outside during Covid. St. Mary's East Kelowna worshipped in a parishioner's orchard, and the smell of blossoms pervaded like incense, the bees hummed joyfully. One of the cherished memories of Camp OAC, was worship in the outdoor chapel, which miraculously escaped the fire and is awaiting campers worshipping anew this summer.

Bishop Sydney Black, a Blackfoot Elder of the Siksika Nation in Southern Alberta, and his wife Melva, came with us on a pilgrim-

age in Northern England. He had never been in a Gothic Cathedral. When we stood inside the entrance to Durham Cathedral, with its massive pillars and arches, as we let our eyes adjust to the light, he leaned over and said to me: "I see why the missionaries thought we had no places of worship on the prairies. But this, (he motioned to the high ceiling towering above us) — this is just trying to imitate what we already have — Sky!"

Many people connect immediately with the Holiness of Nature, with our Creator, and find it easy to pray when surrounded by natural beauty. I realize it takes more effort in some ways to gather a community to worship outside: travel, set-up, seating, making sure people can hear. I remember having to hold the bread onto the plate in the wind during one outdoor worship. I think, however, that the minor inconveniences are outweighed by the benefits, the freshness of insight into God's presence. My experience is that people are more alive to God and to each other. They are good humoured about disturbances.

There was laughter when my stole blew away at one service on the beach, or when the canopy over the altar lifted off in the wind and

had to be held down at the Park on Kootenay Pass, or when the passing motorbike drowned out my sermon. The Holy Spirit is refreshing, enlivening wind. Other creatures worship with us in bird song or trees swaying.

We bring flowers into our indoor worship spaces for beauty, How might we occasionally take ourselves out into beauty when we gather to pray together?

In Kootenay, there have been meaningful and memorable worship gatherings on ski hills, on lakesides, in church grounds. As we live into our Diocesan value of "Whole-hearted Worship," I encourage you to worship out in God's good creation!

+ Lynne McNaughton

Column

Wondering Together as a Province Inbox

Provincial Summit Convenes in Kelowna



By **Andrew Stephens-Rennie**

Canon Andrew Stephens-Rennie is the Director of Missional Renewal for the Diocese of Kootenay



In July of this year, the Provincial House of Bishops and Provincial Council are gathering in Kelowna, BC, to discern faithful next steps in sharing work and witness throughout the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia and Yukon.

This work began in earnest with a Provincial gathering in November 2023.

When we gathered in Vancouver three years ago, participants imagined we would speak about efficiencies and shared services. However, it was vital to each of us to start from a different place. We knew that whatever steps were taken at a Provincial level, it needed to connect people with God and each other, to empower all God's children to faithfully proclaim and embody the gospel in our rapidly changing communities.

Participants asked: "How might we harness provincial and diocesan structures to more effectively and efficiently

support local Anglicans, congregations and ministries in their worship, work, and witness?" The church's ancient wisdom grounded us. We anchored our gathering in prayer and deep listening for God's words of invitation. We gathered to deepen trust amongst all the baptized: lay leaders, deacons, priests, and bishops alike.

As we attended to God's invitation and how God was stirring within and amongst us, several commitments emerged.

A province-wide Bible Study was born. Lay and ordained leaders across the Province formed the Provincial School for Congregational Development. While practicing skills in developing and growing congregations, participants build relationships and share learning across geographical lines. Work is underway to develop a Province-wide, trauma-informed safeguarding policy.

Three years later, this work is reconvening in Kelowna.

The work of the 2023 summit took several first steps in discerning God's presence and invitation. The 2026 gathering can build on this foundation. What more can be done together to support local communities as we seek to embody and proclaim the Gospel today? What emotional, spiritual, and practical work will help us to step boldly and expectantly into God's future?

While I don't know exactly how this group will move forward, having participated in the first gathering, I do have my hopes.

First, I hope we will dream big. The gospel of Jesus Christ is good news in communities like ours that are full of despair. We are so used to thinking about dwindling attendance and resources and yet I wonder what it would look like to depend on a God who is bigger than our bank accounts, volunteer capacity, or our ability to ask or imagine.

Second, I hope that we will continue moving from theory into practice. We've taken a few tentative steps. This is good! Let's identify the gifts that exist throughout our Province, and find ways to better share them in the service of God and God's world.

Third, I hope we will set goals and be accountable to one another. If we envision a functional model for shared administration, governance, policy, or Episcopal Ministry, let's set a goal and a timeline. If we light upon new ways of funding ministry, let's identify the next steps in that process.

Finally, let's depend on God and on Christ's body, the church, praying ceaselessly for one another, offering, and asking for help.

Anglican Highway



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Column

Revisiting The Book of Alternate Services

By Norene Morrow

Norene Morrow is the music director at St George Anglican Church in West Kelowna.

You may be asking yourself, “Why is this columnist writing about the Book of Alternative Services? It has been around for so long.” Answer: Because it has been around for so long... 41 years to be exact. Many more people have joined or grown up in the Anglican Church since its publication and only know it as that green book used to follow weekly Sunday services in most congregations. My assumption is that the average parishioner has never really explored it and doesn’t realize what a great resource it can be for everyone, not only worship leaders. It is much more than a service book.

The BAS was created to provide contemporary and flexible liturgi-

cal alternatives to the 1962 Book of Common Prayer (BCP) that originated from England in 1549. It was created to meet a demand for modern inclusive language, a renewed emphasis on the Eucharist, and to incorporate liturgies that offered more pastoral flexibility. Published in 1985, the BAS is the culmination of 14 years hard work on the part of the Doctrine and Worship Committee. 1971-1985 marked a period of experimentation, evaluation and change. It is not surprising, then, that the committee experienced a lot of growing pains with emotionally charged moments of tension along the way. After all, the church was embarking on a liturgical reformation! Change is not always easy and liturgical change has often been treated as a phenomenon, unique only in its present time. We forget that Anglicanism emerged from the reformation period of 16th century England, which was characterized by even greater liturgical change than our own. When the BAS was introduced it was controversial. Some welcomed it immediately while others met it with such intense resistance that they formed the Prayer Book Society, which contin-

ues to support the sole use of the BCP to this day.

Following is an overview of the BAS, highlighting content that might be of interest and even useful to the average parishioner.

- The Introduction, pp7-13 – provides in depth information about the creation of the BAS, with liturgical and theological insights.
- The Calendar of the Church Year, pp14-33 - explains how the church year works and outlines Feasts and Holy days.
- The Daily Office, pp 36-143 – discusses the daily prayer and worship practices of the early Christians with formats for morning and evening prayer, the Penitential Rite along with the use of scripture readings and the use of music.
- Holy Baptism and Reconciliation, pp146-172 – cover the baptism of infants, older children and adults, conditional and emergency baptisms, the reception of those seeking membership in the Anglican Church, reaffirmation of promises, and reconciliation of the penitent.
- The Holy Eucharist, pp 174-260 – provides Eucharist service formats in BCP style with traditional language (p 230) and contemporary style (p185), offering 6 Eucharistic prayer options. There is also a format for *Communion under Special Circumstances*, used for those who cannot attend church due to physical limitations.
- The Proper of the Church Year, pp262- 524 – covers prayers and readings for every Sunday and Holy Day in the church year.
- Pastoral Offices, Episcopal Offices, and Parish Thanksgiving and Prayers, pp 526-695 – focus on marriage services, ministry to the sick and dying, funerals, interment of ashes, thanksgiving for the gift of a child, the blessing of oils, confirmations, ordinations, anniversary of a parish, and home prayers.
- The Psalter, pp707-909 – is the complete Book of Psalms

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By David Tiessen

David Tiessen is the Dean of the Cathedral Church of St Michael & All Angels, Kelowna

“Will you strive to safeguard the integrity of God’s creation, and respect, sustain, and renew the life of the Earth?”
(from *The Baptismal Covenant, The Book of Alternative Services, p.159*)

There are so many and various ways in which creation care is possible, and yet also so many and various ways in which it feels like an overwhelming task in a world that is constantly advancing the new, departing from the old, and leaving heaps of waste behind.

The scale of human impact upon the earth is strikingly depicted in films such as “Anthropocene — The Human Epoch” — <https://theanthropocene.org/film/>

The Anglican Communion Environmental Network traces such matters in its

regular newsletter: <https://www.anglican-communion.org/network/anglican-communion-environmental-network-acen/news-digests/>

One of my own areas of interest has been to recognize the value in resisting a throwaway culture in the world of technology.

I became particularly aware of this in 2006 when the jump from Microsoft Windows XP to Windows Vista meant that millions of computers would be left behind by the new hardware requirements. E-waste is an ongoing massive problem, with global implications – ‘recycling’ often means shipment to another country where it is dismantled by hand by workers sitting on the ground surrounded by piles of discarded electronics containing heavy metals, and working without proper safety equipment.

Due to a combination of that concern, and being a student at the time relying on hand-me-down computers, I got interested in alternatives – and discovered the world of the Linux operating system: an open-source, community-built system created by Linus Torvalds in 1991, and built with the ongoing input of many programmers and developers around the world. Today Linux is the backbone of the Internet and cloud computing, but in 2004, South African computer entrepreneur Mark Shuttleworth founded an organization to freely distribute a Linux-based operating system called “Ubuntu.” Those of you with African roots, or familiar with the writings of Archbishop Desmond

Tutu, will recognize the phrase, present in various forms across African languages, meaning something like “I am because we are” or “I am not me without you” as a way to recognize the intertwined nature of humankind, and the call to live with that in mind. Shuttleworth’s inspiration was to apply that to computers firstly in Africa but well beyond – so as to bring outdated and insecure computers forward with a modern, secure, and freely available operating system. Ubuntu has become the most well-known iteration of the Linux system, and has continued to inspire adoption and adaptation in Africa (see: <https://wastalinux.org/home/why-linux/>)

To me, this was the perfect combination of finding community-oriented solutions to problems, creation-care, and modern technology. So I was hooked on Linux.

Fast-forward to 2025: Windows 10 officially ended on October 14, 2025, with paid extended support ending on October 13, 2026. This means many more machines are now becoming increasingly vulnerable to viruses and other security threats, and unable to upgrade to Windows 11, even though they might be perfectly good machines.

Linux remains a wonderful alternative, and offers a path forward for many older machines that are otherwise being left behind (for inspiration, see: <https://endof10.org/>)

Inspired by this, Cathedral parishioner and Rotary member Mark Dixon and I

hatched a plan to partner together to see what we could do. Mark spearheaded gathering a crew of tech-minded people together — both from Rotary and from the Cathedral — and we advertised a “Laptop Donation and Linux Demo Day” as an opportunity to donate old laptops to be securely wiped of data by our crew, and to learn a bit about this alternative. The response was remarkable — in a mere two hours we received 97 laptops! The majority of these are new enough to be refurbished with a new battery if needed and, with a new installation of Linux installed, they are now being sent back out into the community in partnership with Turning Points Collaborative Society and the Seniors Outreach and Resource Centre in Kelowna. Through these organizations, 15 people thus far have come to the Cathedral classroom where our tech crew has set up and introduced them to the new system, and they have taken home a laptop! This, plus the gathering of interested others who are joining the crew to help, is a testament to community at work for the sake of the common good, and is an instance of the spirit of ‘ubuntu’ at work.

Of course, these are small things in the midst of the vast scale of the Anthropocene, but they are things that look to “respect, sustain, and renew the life of the Earth” in our small corner of it!

Around and About the Diocese

Easter Baptisms

St Saviour's, Penticton

Submitted by
Joanne Simpson



During Holy Week, St Saviour's, Penticton, had a baptism on Palm Sunday (Nyah Clarke) with Rev Canon Roger Cooper officiating and Rev. Richard Simpson assisting. Genevieve Lobb was the crucifer.

Photographs by Loretta Cooper, with permission.

Good Friday, with Rev. Canon Roger Cooper and Rev. Deacon Richard Simpson with the cross. Photograph taken by Wendy Stewart.

All Saints, Vernon

Submitted by
Pam Harris

Rev Canon Chris Harwood-Jones baptised Kate Mulikow (adult) on April 4, 2026 and Henry John Hevenar (infant) on April 12, 2026.



Column

Further up, and Further in



By David Burrows

The Reverend David Burrows is the Incumbent for the Parish of Kokanee: St Saviour's, Nelson, and St Marks, Kaslo.

This past month I traveled to Terrace, in the Diocese of Caledonia for my last in-person training for the School for Congregational Development of the Province of British Columbia and the Yukon. Bishop Lynne invited me to take a team from the Parish of Kokanee, in order to learn new models for ministry, and their practical application in this new ministry setting for me, in the Kootenays. I am grateful to Bishop Lynne for her insight, and so thankful to have participated in this process. It has served to inform the development and renewal of ministry in

my current context, as well, has acquainted me with the wider culture and emphasis of ministry in the West.

For those that may not know, or may be considering becoming a part of the School for Congregational Development, it is a two year hybrid training. We spend two sessions (four days each) in September and May of subsequent years, and in between, we have four zoom sessions to continue our work. The aims of the school's program are to nurture:

- Healthy, faithful, and effective congregations to fulfill their calling to be the body of Christ in a particular place and time
- Congregations grounded in a robust identity rooted in an Anglican ethos and spirituality
- Leaders who are more culturally competent, able to respect and support people from a variety of cultures and can foster more diverse, equitable, and inclusive congregations
- Leaders who are more self-aware and who are both self-defined and connected to their communities of faith
- Leaders who make use of a variety of models and facilitate tools to engage people in their congregations to respond to the challenges and opportunities before them
- Leaders who build the capacity of the congregation to discern its future under the guidance of the Holy Spirit

and to take action over time in changing situations

- A common language and community of practice around congregational development in the diocese
- Stronger connections among congregational leaders for the purposes of learning, community, mutual encouragement, and inspiration
- The creation of useful training programs that can be shared freely and used by others in the broader Church.* (from Provincial School of Congregational Development Manual, 2025 ©Episcopal Diocese of Olympia)

In many ways this is a tall order, and the models, processes, and exercises that we participated in were very engaging, allowing freedom of exploration, expression, and context by the participants.

I was reminded by the Bishop very early in the process that many, if not most of the tools and learning I would have encountered before in my ministry back east; my role was to absorb and adapt the material for use in Kokanee Parish and the wider partnerships in my context.

As I immersed myself in this process, I became more aware of the gift and blessing of the church west of the prairies. You are a diverse, resilient church that does not blindly hold on to tradition, nor embraces innovation for the sake of change. The encounters with other leaders, colleagues, and faith

communities has helped me gain a deeper understanding of the beauty and breadth of Anglicanism in the Canadian context, and for this I am profoundly grateful.

Beyond this, immersing myself in this process has enabled me to review and orient my skills and gifts in ministry that I have practiced over some thirty years as a baptized and ordained leader in faith communities. The Bishop's words were true.

Most of the processes, models and methods were familiar to me — I had encountered them previously in other ministry contexts. The reality for me was that I was experiencing them in transformative ways — the memory and experience of my past ministry was being unfolded, reoriented, and embraced in a deeper way.

I likened this to the final chapters of C. S. Lewis' Narnian chronicle, *The Last Battle*.

When the Narnians go through the stable door, they find a new land, one that is larger, more beautiful, more profound than the world they left behind. The call for all those that cross through the stable door is 'further up, and further in.' Here they encounter Emeth (Hebrew word for truth), here they encounter Aslan, here they come face

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Diocesan Council "Meet and Greet" Nelson Administrators

By John Lavender

Bishop Lynne McNaughton along with the Kootenay Diocesan Council participated in a "Meet and Greet" on Monday, April 27, at St Saviour's, Nelson. The mayor and her council along with leaders of Nelson's social agencies were invited to a film-screening and panel discussion of "No Fixed Address: The White Cart Memorial" at St Saviour's, Tuesday, April 28, 2026.

The film was produced and directed by Joshua Black, PhD – Bereavement Initiative Manager, BC Centre for Palliative Care (BCCPC) and Stephanie Laing, PhD(c), MSW, RSW – Director of Operations, Kelowna Homelessness Research Centre (KHRC); Filmography by Paul Cotton Films.

The film interviews people living in Kelowna's tent communities. People who have suffered the grief of being homeless and coping with substance abuse. A white shopping cart symbolizes their grief as a memorial.



Bishop Lynne McNaughton and the Kootenay Diocesan Council meet and greet the mayor of Nelson and members of social agencies at St Saviour's, Nelson.

The Rev David Burrows, incumbent Kokanee parish, led the proceedings.

The program at St Saviour's included the placing of names on a shopping cart. The unveiling of the white shopping cart was followed by the singing of "Song of Lament and Hope" by John L. Bell.

The panel discussion included people who are currently homeless, leaders from social agencies, and the Nelson police force.

The outcome of the panel discussion can be summed up in the words on the program: "simple acts of compassion and remembrance can be transformative."

A panel member remarked that "the filling of this church demonstrates Nelson Cares."

The poem written on the back of the program says:

You were light,
a glow that the world
wasn't enough to hold.
I see you there,
Outshining the shadows that held
you here,
Casting your light,
You are at peace.
A beautiful, misplaced soul,
that finally let go.

Column



By Catherine Ripley



Catherine Ripley belongs to the Spiritual Development Committee, which encourages people to grow ever deeper in relationship with God and to pray. As people across the Diocese pray, the ministries of the church will flourish! Amen.

“... I think worship — good worship — should make you hungry.” This idea from Thomas McKechnie, an M. Div. student at Emmanuel College, stuck with me long after we at Kimberley Shared Ministry had finished up this year’s Lenten study. (Bless Break Share / Recipes for Faithful Living, Alydia Smith, editor. 2025, p. 70)

Wait a second, I thought. Shouldn’t worship — good worship, whole-hearted worship even — fill us instead of leave us hungry? When I leave church, I want to be satisfied, not dissatisfied; full, not hungry. I want to depart, fortified in my faith, full

of God’s love, and ready to serve and “feed” others...physically, emotionally, spiritually. I think I am not alone in this. Certainly, as a lay worship leader, I want to feed the faithful “hungry” who God has brought into the pews or onto lawn chairs or around a kitchen table. That is one reason I try to set a bountiful, healthful and nourishing liturgical table with new (and old) prayers, music, Scripture, the sacraments if possible, homily, and fellowship — all glorifying God. While I do my best to set an abundant table on God’s behalf, filling the hunger of my fellow congregants, of course, nothing to do with me. It has everything to do with God. Our always present God serves just the right dish with just the right amount of spice to fill and fire up each and every belly and soul. Yes, being hungry for our ever mysterious, wondrous, limitless Holy

One is the beginning of whole-hearted worship, isn’t it? If we come to worship already full, then there is no room for God. Our satiety with our concept of God, with our lives, or with ourselves can get in the way of God giving us exactly the “daily bread” we need. After all, God knows what diet is best for each of us. (Unfortunately, that doesn’t necessarily mean three bowls of ice cream; a spoonful or two is likely sufficient!) The question is: will we accept the meal the Lord is giving us? When we surrender our ideas of what foodstuffs might be best for us and let ourselves be fed by God, we trust that we have all the nutrition to live into whatever circumstances come our way. Thanks to the redeeming love of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, each of us are fueled to live righteous lives, live in “right relationship” with the Holy, with each other, with the Earth. Now and in the age to come.

Sometimes (always?) being a little bit empty, a little bit restless, a little bit uncomfortable is part of the meal God serves up. Thomas McKechnie suggests that may have something to do with how we respond to God’s nourishment found in worship: “...when you’re really engaging, when you’re opening yourself to God — to the Divine and to other people, you end up pouring something out, or letting something go, or laying something down, and that space needs to be filled. You need to be nourished after.” And you know what? Remaining hungry, staying a little bit empty, is a reminder that the very best feast is found in God. And blessedly, our God is always ready to feed us all over again — whether in our simpler summer worship services, through our activities, around our picnic baskets. Thanks be to God. ■

Further up, and further in continued from page 6

to face with a deeper reality of their lives, their meaning, their existence. Perhaps you won’t find an opportunity to journey with the Provincial School of Congregational Development this year. Perhaps life may take you on different twists and turns of ministry. Nevertheless, consider it in your future, for you as a leader, and for your faith community. Continue to uphold it in prayer, and uphold the work of the Ecclesiastical Province in providing opportunities for growth and development in the life of the church. ■

Revisiting The Book of Alternate Services continued from page 4

- Music, pp 912-924 – is a resource of plainsong melodies, responses, and acclamations for singing parts of the liturgy.

Considering that that BAS is 41years old you may be wondering if it is still relevant today. I say yes. Of course, since the last century our society, our language and our liturgies have evolved at a much faster pace, and will continue to do so. However, I think it is still an excellent tool for Anglicans to learn about their church, especially new comers. To quote Peter Davison’s 2010 reflection in the Anglican Journal, “The BAS is not ‘the last word in liturgy’ but we can be grateful for the ways in which it has brought us together, and provided a platform for the ongoing renewal of the church.” ■

Bishop Lynne at National House of Bishops



Bishop Lynne attended the National House of Bishops at Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre in Niagara Falls. She is pictured here with the bishops from the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia and Yukon. In June, she will travel to Whitehorse for the consecration of Bishop Elect Vincent Fenga (pictured here second from right) as the 13th Bishop of the Diocese of Yukon.

News & Views

From Around the Anglican Dioceses of Canada

The Incomprehensible Mystery

My brother, Jesse, was the kind of guy who could make friends with anyone. His unconventional perspective and non-judgmental attitude meant he could find ways to connect with others, no matter their age or their background. His inventive and creative spirit kept everyone on their toes, as he found uses for things most of us would consider garbage. He was an artist, a fixer of all things broken, and an imaginer of different worlds.

Just over three years ago, the unthinkable happened. Jesse, who was bravely battling a cancer diagnosis, had an extremely rare and adverse reaction to his treatment. While we knew this was a possibility going into the treatment, we were told the chances of a severe reaction were below one percent, and we were not prepared for this outcome. He died on December 19th, 2022, at the age of 31, three months after his son was born. I write this essay the week of what would have been his 35th birthday.

There is a stark dividing line in my life now. A before, and an after, separated by a hollowness I am still trying to wrap my mind around. When people would ask me how I was doing at that time, all I could say was, "I am trying to figure out what it means to live life in the after." Life kept moving forward, but I was bewildered by the sudden absence of my brother's enthusiastic presence in my future. Pieces of myself that had once felt permanent were suddenly up for debate, and I experienced a radical reorienting of everything I thought I knew about God and the world. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie says it best in her memoir *Notes on Grief*: "Grief is forcing new skins on me, scraping scales from my eyes. I regret all my past certainties." [1]

As I tried to make sense of this experience, I discovered that much popular Christian thought around suffering is filled with shallow theology and trite consolations. When faced with the unthinkable, many want to assure us that "God is in control," or "your loved one is in a better place now," or even "everything happens for a reason." I know people mean well and are simply trying to be kind, but these words still rankle. They feel glib in the face of the worst thing that's ever happened to me.

I think we offer words like these in an effort to make sense of or find meaning in a terrible experience. At a different funeral a few months ago, we sang the hymn *It is Well with My Soul*. I concede that the tune is moving and beautiful, but in that moment, I just wanted to yell, "No! It isn't well with my soul! This is sad! Can you just let us be sad for a moment?!" We are often so quick to move through the desolation towards consolation. We want to skip right through Ash Wednesday, Lent, and Good Friday and get right to Easter. I wonder if this is because grief is uncomfortable and inconvenient. It points towards something that is really wrong in the world. We cannot make sense of a good God who is all-powerful, and yet allows suffering to happen, especially to good people.

One answer to this theological conundrum is that we say it was not God who brought this suffering, but it was caused by sin. When my grandmother was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, a fellow church member asked her whether there was any unresolved sin in her life that had led to her illness. I can't even imagine what must have passed through my grandma's mind in response to this deeply uncaring question.

I shudder to think she might have believed that it was her fault that she had been diagnosed with this debilitating illness.

In all my pondering and theological meanderings, the closest I have come to an answer to the problem of evil is that it is a mystery. I recently learned that theologians have a category for this. They say that "evil is a surd," [2] which means that it is not rational. You cannot reason with it. A surd is a mathematical term referring to an irrational number, like the square root of two. As I consider this analogy, I recall a line my parents wrote in my brother's eulogy: "There is no explanation for Jesse's death. No theological or philosophical reasoning does justice to the incomprehensible mystery we are facing now." Even though this doesn't provide me with a neat answer, I do find a strange comfort in it.

I am like Job, who, in asking God why he suffers, is not given a reason, but is told to consider creation, the storehouses laden with snow, the constellations, and the mighty leviathan. Here, God and creation are beyond human control and comprehension. Here, amidst the wildness, there is freedom from needing an answer. The suffering does not need to make sense. It just is. In creation, I observe that death is an intrinsic part of life, and there is also great beauty. I hold onto both these truths tenderly. When I do, I find that God is there alongside me and all of the groaning-singing creation.

When I was in the deepest part of my grief, the responses that I found most helpful were the ones that said, "This is hard and awful, and I'm with you in this." There's a section in *The Magician's Nephew* by C.S. Lewis where Digory confronts Aslan, asking him to heal his mother, who is sick. In despair, he gazes up to Aslan's face and is surprised to see "great shining tears" in the lion's eyes. "They were such big, bright tears compared with Digory's own that for a moment he felt as if the Lion must really be sorrier about his Mother than he was himself. 'My son, my son,' said Aslan. 'I know. Grief is great. Only you and I in this land know that yet. Let us be good to one another.'" [3]

Like Aslan, the God who chose to become human, who experienced both the beauty and the terror of life, knows what it is to suffer, and walks alongside all those who hurt. I cannot claim to have a good answer to the question of suffering in the world. I can only tell you that in my own journey, I find solidarity with the crucified Christ—a man who wept at the tomb of his friend Lazarus, felt abandoned by friends and forsaken by God at the end of his life. The "man of sorrows... acquainted with grief" [4] sits with us in our suffering and, as the risen Christ, promises "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." [5]

While there may not be an explanation for my brother's death, there is an explanation for his life. "Jesse reflected the kind heart of Jesus with everyone he met," his eulogy concludes, "He didn't die for a reason. But he lived for many reasons. His compassion will live on. His inventive and creative spirit will live on. His love will live on." I hope that I can honour his memory by living out the creativity, compassion, and imagination that fuelled his life in order to accompany others in both the beauty and the terror of being alive. "Let us be good to one another," says Aslan, or as the poet Philip Larkin puts it,

*"... we should be careful
Of each other, we should be kind
While there is still time."* [6]

[1] Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Notes on Grief* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2021), 6.

[2] Thanks to Ryan Turnbull and his Bluesky post on Feb 16th, 2026, for this enlightening idea.

[3] C.S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* (Macmillan, 1955).

[4] Isaiah 53:3 (KJV).

[5] Matthew 28:20 (KJV).

[6] Philip Larkin, "The Mower" Poetry Foundation, 2001.



by Zoe Mattias
Rupert's Land News

We cannot stand by and watch

On March 13, the Ontario government announced it would stop funding for all provincially funded supervised consumption sites, three of which are located in the Diocese of Toronto. Bishop Andrew Asbil wrote this letter to Premier Doug Ford, MPP Sylvia Jones (Minister of Health and Deputy Premier) and MPP Vijay Thanigasalam (Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions), urging them to continue funding for supervised consumption sites in Ontario.

Dear Premier Ford, Minister Jones and Minister Thanigasalam,

It is devastating to learn the news that provincial funding for all supervised consumption sites in the province of Ontario will end.

Since the closure of nine provincially funded sites last year under the *Community Care and Recovery Act, 2024*, we have seen the fallout in our communities: increased public drug use and discarded needles, more overdoses at church- and community centre-run drop-ins, and a sharp increase in the number of paramedic calls to deal with suspected overdoses. In Toronto alone, the number of overdose-related paramedic calls in January 2026 was up nearly 50 per cent from the previous year. The increasing contamination of street drugs with veterinary tranquilizers such as medetomidine, which is not responsive to naloxone, produces overdoses that require more support than community agencies can offer. Supervised consumption sites provided drug-checking services, as well as trained staff and equipment able to respond to such overdoses. Without them, these overdose cases must be referred to paramedics and emergency rooms. Not only does this cost taxpayers more, but it also contributes to increased delay and emergency room wait times, putting the health of all Ontarians at risk.

The province's transition to the HART hub model, which began last spring, was meant to connect people who use drugs with greater access to treatment and supportive housing. Those who work on the

frontlines, in drop-ins, emergency rooms and the few remaining supervised consumption sites, tell us a different story. These promised resources have not materialized. There are still not enough publicly funded treatment services and supportive housing available for those who want and need them. In their absence, people continue to use street drugs and to remain homeless, with even less chance of finding housing and greater risk of criminalization, thanks to Bills 10 and 6.

Keeping actual and suspected drug users homeless and increasing their likelihood of incarceration will not solve either the overdose crisis or the housing crisis, and enforcement and incarceration cost still more than harm reduction, treatment and supportive housing.

In December 2024, Ontario's auditor general released a report criticizing this government for failing to provide an evidence-based case analysis for the proposed HART hub model, and for failing to mitigate the adverse impacts that will result from closing supervised consumption sites. We are deeply grieved that rather than addressing these adverse impacts, this government has doubled down and will now be closing the remaining seven publicly funded supervised consumption sites in the province.

We maintain that supervised consumption sites are an important part of an overall public health response to the opioid crisis. They contribute to public health by reducing public drug use and the transmission of HIV, Hepatitis C and other blood-borne diseases. Not only do they reverse overdoses without putting additional burdens on emergency services, they provide a place where people who use drugs can access other supports without stigma, helping them get to a place where they can choose recovery or at the very least reduce their drug use and other risky behaviours. There is no path to recovery without meeting people where they are.

Anglicans all over our diocese agree. Last year, over 65 per cent of parishes in our diocese passed resolutions urging this government to reverse the planned closure of supervised consumption sites and to lift the ban on new sites. We cannot stand by and watch the remainder of these sites – the last lifeline available to many in our communities – be stripped away.

We urge you to reconsider and maintain provincial funding for existing supervised consumption sites, and to allow the opening of new sites in communities experiencing high volumes of drug overdoses. We would be grateful for any opportunity to meet with you further on this issue.

Yours in Christ,
The Rt. Rev. Andrew Asbil

**The Anglican
Diocese of Toronto**