



THE MESSENGER



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JUNE-JULY 2023

www.edmonton.anglican.ca

Diocesan Children's Choir Gives Final Concert of Inaugural Season



The Diocesan Children's Choir directed by Laura Hawley, and in collaboration with the Cantabo Choir, gave the final concert of its inaugural season in April. "The Diocesan Children's Choir is a new initiative designed to be both a place where children in the diocese can get to know each other, as well as to be a place to learn to make music," commented Bishop Stephen London on Facebook. "Every child who wants to be in the choir is welcome. I loved the concert and look forward to next season."

Social justice committee recruiting passionate activists

The Ven. Jordan Haynie Ware
Archdeacon for Justice
Diocese of Edmonton

Representatives from 10 parishes, urban and rural, encompassing a wide variety of ages and backgrounds, and from each working group, added their voices to a recent conversation about how best to structure the Social Justice Committee of the Edmonton diocese.

The Social Justice Committee has long felt the massive scope and work of justice has the potential to be overwhelming. It is, therefore,

our goal to build strategies and streamline communication to equip and empower champions for particular areas of justice.

Champions of justice currently lead the Anti-Racism Team, Queerly Beloved, the Disability Inclusion Team, and 5th Mark in Action (Environmental Justice), plus other yet-to-be-populated working groups, like Economic Justice. The Anti-Racism Team is building an anti-racist Sunday School curriculum; Queerly Beloved has written a roadmap to help the diocese live into the 68th Synod's resolve to

create safe, inclusive, affirming communities; the Disability Inclusion Team has created a worship service for neurodiverse children and their families.

The Social Justice Committee then, is for people (at minimum 12 people) with the strategic vision to help identify priorities, recruit passionate activists, and liaison between the working groups. We invite anyone who

is passionate about justice to get in touch by email at socialjustice@edmonton.anglican.ca.



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Program nurtures children's innate capacity for contemplation

Angela Bokenfohr
St. Matthew's, St. Albert

Have you ever stumbled across something really, really great and you want to climb to the mountaintop and shout it out to the entire diocese? I am not referring to the best vacuum for sanctuary stairs, or the perfect ratio of scoops of coffee to water to be the "Ultimate Coffee Host." Rather, I am referring to a program called Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

St. Matthew's, St. Albert, with the help of dedicated volunteers Debby Smethurst and Joanne McFarlane, has successfully run the Catechesis of Good Shepherd program for a number of seasons, most recently right before the COVID pandemic.

The aim of the program, co-developed by Sofia Carvelletti and Gianna Gobbi, is to help children discover the Good Shepherd's personal and unconditional love for each person through "an environment which is carefully prepared to foster the religious life of the child." Materials and images



Through the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program, Debby Smethurst and Joanne McFarlane, of St. Matthew's Anglican Church in St. Albert, help children discover the ways God speaks to them. They are offering Level 1 of the program, for children ages 3 to 5, beginning on Tuesday, October 17, 2023.

"help the child to concentrate and reflect; thus, they nurture the child's natural capacity for contemplation." (*Listening to God with Children*, p. 9)

Presentations on "The Parable of the Good Shepherd"; Baptism; and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit bring children the joy of knowing that God loves each one of them. Following each presentation, the children can

choose to work with the two or three-dimensional figures and other objects, e.g. mustard seeds, that have aided in the presentation. This gives the child an opportunity to rekindle the wonder of each presentation. Practical life activities provide the children with opportunities to apply and reflect upon their learnings.

Debby and Joanne are excited to offer Level 1 of the program, for

children ages 3 to 5, at St. Matthew's Anglican, St. Albert, starting on Tuesday, October 17, 2023. The program runs weekly from 9:30 to 11:00 am.

For more information, or to register, please email the parish: stmattscommunication@gmail.com, or check our website: www.stmatt.ca. Please note that registration closes September 8.

Coronation prayer - in service to God and one another

On May 7, 2023, the day after the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III at Westminster Abbey in London, U.K., a special Choral Evensong was held at All Saints' Cathedral in Edmonton. The Very Rev. Alexandra Meek, Dean of Edmonton, led the service which featured a selection of music from the Coronation sung by the Cathedral Choir, and a "Collect for King Charles." Before the March from "The Birds of Aristophanes," played on the organ by All Saints' Music Director Jeremy Spurgeon, the congregation of approximately 70 people sang "God Save the King." The following is the text from Dean Meek's meditation:

This evening we are gathered for prayer, and we join in prayer with others across the globe for His Majesty King Charles III. Yesterday, as he was crowned, the emphasis of the ceremony was on faith and service. As the young chorister welcomed him in the name of the King of Kings, King Charles' response was, "In his name,

and after his example, I come not to be served but to serve."

He then continued with this theme as he prayed with his own voice, in front of all who were gathered, to the God of compassion and mercy for grace to find in God's service perfect freedom, and, in that freedom, knowledge of God's truth. He prayed that he be a blessing to children of every faith and conviction; to help them discover the ways of gentleness and be led in the paths of peace.

We would all do well to remember His Majesty the King's prayer. It is a call to service we must all hear. May we, as we follow the way of Christ, serve one another. May we look for paths of peace. May we be a blessing to all of God's children.

Because it is in the care for the other that we find Christ our Saviour, already present and at work all around us. And it is in this

care that we find our own faith restored.

We read this evening and remember again that Jesus is good news to those in need, to the poor, to those seeking healing, to the oppressed, to the prisoner.

Our faith is not about containing the mystery, or the beauty, or knowledge for a few but, rather, it is about love for one another that changes us and brings new life.

As King Charles was presented the scriptures he was told "here is wisdom, here is royal law. These are the lively oracles of God," because within these words we hear the calling of Jesus Christ, and they are words that call us to action. To live by Christ's strength in service of one another.



Their Majesties are pictured in the Throne Room at Buckingham Palace. Photo: Hugo Burand

May King Charles III be held in these prayers, and may he have the strength to live into their truth. May we also make these prayers ourselves and find in service of one another our faith strengthened and restored. Amen.

Nothing particularly fancy about Christian way of life

Christians sometimes get into silly arguments:

- “Scripture alone (sola scriptura)!”
- “No, we are saved by faith alone!”
- “You’re both wrong – it’s through the church universal.” (Catholic is an old term for universal by the way.)



Bishop DAVID GREENWOOD
Diocese of Athabasca

What is the ultimate way to salvation?

The reality is that Christ is the way -- the only way. Scripture (the bible) points to Christ. Faith needs to be in Christ. The church needs to be pointing to Christ and doing Christ’s will. Christianity isn’t about a book, a belief, or a club. It is about a living relationship with Christ. The book, the belief, and the club are all to generate, sustain, and live out that relationship. We are “the people of the person” -- the person of Jesus the Christ. That relationship is built on love, loving God and loving your neighbour. And you are invited in. But it will cost

you. The cost is how you live your life.

I was reviewing the *Didache* (pronounced did-a-key, meaning “teaching”), an early Christian document. I was struck by its emphasis on basic daily living. It states we can choose to live in a good path, or an evil path. The good path (the path of life) focusses on love of God and love of the other: bless those who curse you, fast for those who persecute you, do not lust, give to those who demand of

you even more than what they force from you, but give your charity only to those truly in need. Do not commit adultery nor fornication, do not corrupt others, do not steal, do not abort or kill, do not covet (yearn for what you do not have), speak the truth... It is a fascinating document. If you want to read it yourself, you can find it at <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-hoole.html>.

The early church emphasised a relationship

with Christ lived out in daily decisions which led to actions of love while continually asking:

- What is most pleasing to God?
- What is healthiest for my neighbour?

There wasn’t anything fancy about this way of life. If anything, it was very ordinary.

As we live our lives, let us read the bible daily, and reflect as we do on how it points us to Christ, and how Christ would have us live. Let us use scripture to generate our relationship with Christ.

Let us have faith in Christ, that He took our sins with Him to the cross, that we shall be resurrected in Him, that we have the hope of the Eternal Life. Let us use our faith to sustain our relationship with Christ.

Let us gather each week in worship and praise, being drawn closer to God and surrounding each other with His love, teaching and encouraging each other. Let us use our church to live out our relationship with Christ.

Day by day, decision by decision, word by word, action by action: living our relationship with Christ. Nothing Fancy.

+David

Outward Focus: the third of our five primary principles

When I was a new priest, I made the rookie mistake of thinking my primary purpose was to bring people into the church. Because I was new, both to the area and to the priesthood, I really wanted to make a good impression. So I worked really hard on my preaching and welcoming skills. Our parish found ways to interact with our neighbourhood, and to help bring new people in the door. And, to a certain extent, our efforts worked. But one day, I was leading a bible study written by a well-known teacher about experiencing the presence of the living God. His words cut to my soul. His simple point was this: God is not just active in the church. God is active outside the church. In fact, God is often *most* active outside the building. Our purpose is not, therefore, to go out and bring people in. Rather, it is to find out what God is already doing in the world, and to go join God there.



Bishop STEPHEN LONDON
Diocese of Edmonton

It is a good thing, of course, to bring people into the church. But it is not our primary purpose. Our primary purpose is to be sent out to join God. God’s mission is not to grow the church.

God’s mission is to heal the world and bring wholeness to human souls. The church is God’s central instrument for carrying the good news of Jesus’ resurrection, and to teach a new way of life. The church feeds people spiritually through the proclamation of the Word and the Sacraments. But then it sends them back out the door. Followers of Jesus have always been a sent people. We sometimes forget that our buildings and

institution are not an end in itself. They give us a base in which to gather as a worshipping community. But the purpose is the mission of God.

I learned this from my mentor Fr. Jarrett who turned the first floor of a three-story house into a chapel. (Three-story houses were common in Connecticut.) He would start every day with prayer, and then visit with people as he walked the inner city of New London C.T. Fr. Jarrett joined organisations that worked to house the homeless. He worked with community groups to help feed the underfed. He advocated with peace groups to work for a better world. He didn’t try to bring

these organisations into the church. He didn’t try to make separate Christian organisations. God was already pouring grace into the world through the work of dedicated volunteers. My mentor joined what was already going on, and he did it for Jesus. That little chapel became an integral part of the neighbourhood. They knew Fr. Jarrett to be a person of God, full of kindness and generosity. Every Friday, he made soup and invited the neighbourhood in to talk about life. Fr. Jarrett had a good nose for what God was up to. And, very often it was outside the front door.

Blessings,
+Steve



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Jesus' teaching invites us to be present to our world

I love the book of Acts. We see the early Church fulfil Jesus' command to be his witnesses in Jerusalem and beyond. Indeed, what looks like a disaster with the death of Stephen, proves to be an effective spread of the Gospel as the church is scattered. (Acts 7)

As the early church spreads, we see Christians grappling with the reality of living out the consequences of what Jesus tells them to do and how they do it. It's all very exciting! But where did they get their ideas of how to be in the world?

Back in Luke 10, we see how Jesus trained them. This is what Jesus says:

"The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore,



The Ven. RICHARD KING
Archdeacon for
Mission and Discipleship
Diocese of Edmonton

pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road." (Luke 10:2-4)

When we stop to think about it, these are astounding verses.

Firstly, Jesus seems clear that the harvest is plentiful. In other words, Jesus suggests there are many who long to hear the Good News of Jesus' redeeming, transforming love. But few go! I think the Church has the same problem today. We are often

reluctant to see ourselves as people who the Lord sends out to proclaim the Good News of our redeeming God.

Then, in verse 3, we see this astounding phrase: "...behold I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves." How does that feel, I wonder? Intimidating? We may well find ourselves intimidated as we seek to be Jesus' witnesses. This highlights, however, that even if we find ourselves somehow threatened or feeling threatened, we are to be unafraid, for the Lord who sends us is with us.

In verse 4, I find something even more astounding! "Carry no money bag, no knapsack, no sandals and greet no one on the road." My goodness! Some versions say, "take nothing on the journey." That's very interesting! Undoubtedly, his directions have something to do with what it is we are depending upon. But I also

wonder, if we are sent into the world to be his witnesses, what might distract us? I realise when I go to a café, I usually have my bag, which might hold my laptop and, most certainly, my phone. While there, I will be using my laptop and phone and, therefore, not present to the people around me.

I experimented in applying Jesus' words. I went to a café and took no bag. I took no phone! It transformed my time in the café! Why? I was present to the people around me. I saw needs for prayer. I prayed about those needs. Someone engaged me in conversation, for I did not have my head stuck in a phone. It was illuminating and deeply enjoyable.

I encourage you to think through what these verses mean for you and your church, to trust Jesus and be present to the task. May God bless you in all your missional endeavours in His name.

Richard

Holy Trinity Welcomes Students During Exam Week

MARGARET GLIDDEN
Edmonton Editor

Eating can sometimes be the last thing on a student's mind when preparing for exams. But, for 10 days this April, students were invited to drop into Holy Trinity Anglican Church to have a bowl of soup or chili and unwind.

Annie Randall, parish coordinator for young adults, newcomers and social justice initiatives, and the Rev. Danielle Key, rector, welcomed students on weekday afternoons for 10 days during Exams Week.

Located 20 minutes by foot or five minutes by bike or bus from the university campus, the parish has communal space with comfy couches and a TV, as well as quiet rooms for studying.

As a mature student and mother of four, Randall who is a choral scholar and sings at Holy Trinity on Sundays, knows that students can struggle with finding affordable, wholesome meals.

"The cost of living is going up, and the cost to stay in dorms, the only option for many international students, is astronomical," she says.

"I thought exam week would be a great time to feed some of these kids who tell me they come to choir rehearsal in the evening without having eaten since morning, and to give them the best possible chance



Pictured above: Annie Randall dishes out a bowl of hot soup in the kitchen at Holy Trinity Anglican Church; below, Danielle Key, Holy Trinity rector, pictured with Randall.



going into exams."

The parish wholeheartedly embraced the initiative by offering to make soup, or donate ingredients

and buns. "The support blew me away. This is a very community-focused congregation," says Key.

Many university students who

have started coming to church are offering themselves in service to help with events like the parish rummage sale, Key says. "This is a beautiful example of how we can give back to them. Whether they need food in their bellies, a safe place to study or to hang out. Whatever they need is what we want to give them."

She adds that any food left over from the drop-ins will be stored in reusable containers. "People can come grab a meal out of one of the fridges, nuke and eat it and throw the container in the dishwasher."

Randall hopes word about the soup drop-in spreads beyond the church's social media community to the general student population. In fact, an ad was spotted on the University of Alberta Reddit page by a student who was not a member of the church. Key looks ahead to the next exam period when she hopes to partner with other churches in the university area.

Meanwhile, Randall planned a young adults' game night in May, and she will continue to brainstorm fun ways to bring young adults of faith together.

"We're finding out a lot of times people just want a safe place to go and hang out," says Key. "We can give them that."

To find out more about the upcoming game night, email Annie Randall at annie@holymtrinity.ab.ca

St. Helen's celebrates Easter; honours members

ELLEN LUPICK
St. Helen's, Fairview
Diocese of Athabasca

Bishop David Greenwood officiated at the St. Helen's, Fairview service of worship on Easter Sunday, April 9. Benita Greenwood kindly livestreamed the service on Facebook.

On May 17, members of the Fairview congregation travelled to British Columbia to honour a former rector. Edna Fix and her daughter went to Kelowna for the memorial service for the Rev. Isaac Graham, a much-loved, former priest.

Members of St. Helen's community were also sad to hear of the passing of Dianne Crayston, a former active member of the church. She continued to be active at St. Mary's and St. George's when she and her husband Richard relocated to Jasper.



Pictured from left: Inez Austin, Vickie and Harvey McKeachie, Bishop David Greenwood, Alice Schwerdt and Benita Greenwood.

Vegreville churches prepare for National Indigenous History month

The Rev. Laureta Blondin
Rector, St. Mary the Virgin,
Vegreville
Diocese of Edmonton

The Christian families of St. Mary the Virgin, Vegreville Anglican Parish and the Vegreville United Church came together recently for their second ecumenical gathering in as many weeks.

On April 23, they enjoyed a wonderful service with Bishop Stephen London presiding at St. Mary's for three baptisms, four confirmations and one reception into the Anglican Communion.

Looking ahead to National Indigenous History month in June, they welcomed Fiona Brownlee, Aboriginal and Rural Communities Liaison Officer in the Anglican Diocese of Edmonton, to the United Church.

Brownlee spoke about the "good and hard work of reconciliation" with our many Indigenous and Métis neighbours, especially those in our rural communities; thus, remembering that Jesus calls us to love our neighbours as ourselves.

With thanksgiving for Brownlee's ministry, and her willingness to travel to Vegreville from Wetaskiwin, the parishes presented her with a quilted, Indigenous-inspired prayer shawl made by the Rev. Laureta Blondin and blessed by the Rev. Pamela Milton. The quilt's design features a center fabric panel entitled "The Journey Home," originally created



Fiona Brownlee holds "The Journey Home" quilt, made by Laureta Blondin using the center panel image created by Karen Erickson.

by artist Karen Erickson.

Erickson painted her piece "Every Child Matters" out of reverence to those grieving the trauma and loss which occurred at Residential Schools across Canada. Her painting depicts two siblings set free when they are discovered at a residential school. Painted holding hands, the children are now reunited as they make their way back home having been torn apart from each other at residential school. A moon and feathers represent the First Nations, Inuit and Métis people joining together to guide them home.

One hundred per cent of the proceeds from sales of the panel, are being donated to the Indian Residential School Survivors Society

and the Orange Shirt Society by Northcott Fabrics, who reproduced the artwork on fabric and distributed it to quilt shops across Canada.

**58th Synod of the
Diocese of Athabasca**

Thursday, September 28, 2023

All Saints', Athabasca Parish

Cathedral supports community with food and fun

The Rev. SHELLY KING
Messenger Staff

The hall of All Saints' Anglican Cathedral was full of colour and celebration during the noon-hour on Tuesday, April 26, as the cathedral hosted a Hawaiian-themed lunch for folks from the surrounding community. About 40 friends and neighbours enjoyed rice, salad, sweet and sour meatballs, tropical punch and colourfully decorated cupcakes for dessert.

Cathedral Dean the Very Rev. Alex Meek, and vicar the Rev. Ruth Sesink Bott recognised the efforts of administrative assistant Darlene Niederhaus who, with a team of

volunteers, organised outreach lunches approximately every two months between December 2022 and April 2023. Always themed and always fun, these celebrations have featured costumes, games and door prizes. Many people who have attended a lunch return for the next one bringing friends and family with them. Some have even joined the volunteer crew. Several "regulars" have stayed after lunch for the weekly game of bingo. Lunches will be taking a break over the summer months.

All such programming is part of the cathedral's ongoing efforts to serve and connect with people who live in the downtown core and,



Regulars at cathedral lunches dress up for the occasion, enjoying a Hawaiian theme on April 26.

especially, those who live right next door in the Cathedral Close seniors housing.

St. Luke's Messy Church a Great Place to Make Friends

St. Luke's, Edmonton hosted its annual Messy Easter gathering again this year. The afternoon event featured an indoor and outdoor Easter egg hunt and two crafts.

Children were invited to decorate a paper container with stickers, drawings and anything else they liked, which they then used to hold their Easter eggs. They were "really creative," says Karen MacDonald, one of St. Luke's Messy Church organisers.

The kids had a blast finding thousands of Easter eggs, donated by members of the parish and hidden both inside and outside the church building.

"While the Holyrood Community League hosted an egg hunt at the same time just a few blocks away, it was this opportunity to gather in the Spirit of the risen



Pictured above: story time at Messy church with Nick Trussell; people of all ages take part in activities around a theme at each Messy Church event. All ages participate together in a style of church different from Sunday morning worship.



Christ that made the Messy Easter celebration a special blessing for the participants," says St. Luke's rector, the Rev. Nick Trussell. He spoke to families about the meaning and importance of Easter and its relationship to the life of Jesus.

Participants also made a cross

and/or an Easter egg designed to look like stained glass, which they could hang in a window.

"One seven-year-old participant said she's always so happy to come to Messy Church because it is much easier to make friends there than at school," says Trussell. "Messy

Church is a unique and approachable way to engage faith without some of the more formal aspects of our worship which some folks find intimidating."

Messy Church friends gather at St. Luke's on the second Saturday of the month September through June.

Intentional community for Christian students re-named

The Rev. ARMAND MERCIER
Christ Church

The former rectory next door to the Parish of Christ Church, Edmonton is now home to Christ Church Mosaic, formerly known as Ascension House. Christ Church Mosaic provides affordable housing to six Christian students from Canada and around the world over the course of the school year. But Christ Church Mosaic is much more than just affordable student housing: it is also an intentional Christian community where young adults live out their faith and their lives together, in an inclusive and welcoming environment, with the support of Christ Church parish.

The change of name, in 2023, from Ascension House to Christ Church Mosaic was done to acknowledge the close connections between this small Christian community and the next-door church, and also to recognise its inclusive and welcoming nature.

Each student residing at Christ Church Mosaic has their own bedroom, with a shared kitchen, laundry room, washrooms and recreation areas. The young Christian adults of Christ Church Mosaic work together to determine a "rule of life" which shapes their experience together over the school year. This shared experience of faith informs the spiritual journey of each member of the Christ Church Mosaic

community.

A group of dedicated volunteers from the Christ Church parish meets with Christ Church Mosaic community members a couple of times monthly for such activities as sharing a meal, praying together, or doing a Bible study. Christ Church Mosaic community members are invited to participate in the life and worship of the parish, but are not required to do so.

For more information or to apply for a spot for the 2023-24 school year, visit christchurchedmonton.org



Christ Church Mosaic sits beside the Parish of Christ Church in the Edmonton neighbourhood of Oliver.

A memorial in light and colour at St. Matthew's

ANGELA BOKENFOHR
St. Matthew, St. Albert

There once was a lady by the name of Jan. Jan Alexander. Jan was a Christian woman who loved reading, cleaning, visiting and gardening. She loved art, music and nature. She was quick to remind people that, in spite of, or even because of challenges, there is reason to pause, express gratitude and laugh. Intentional in her engagement with people and expressing her Christian faith, Jan had an innate way of finding and being with people who were quiet and withdrawn.

What first caught my attention were Jan's classy white hair and infectious smile. She was someone who would arrive early to church to claim her seat: the very last seat in the very last pew. She seemed to know all the prayers, responses and hymns without hesitation. And, no matter where I sat each Sunday, when the exchange of peace occurred, I would feel a friendly tap on the shoulder and turn to see Jan who would greet me with a firm and loving handshake.

When Jan was confirmed in the Anglican Church in her mid-'70s,

she joked about how Jane Alexander, then Bishop of Edmonton, was confirming a Jan Alexander. "Isn't this something?" she asked. "Here I am being confirmed in the church by a lady with just one extra e... how lucky am I?" Her seemingly rhetorical question has resonated deeply ever since. In reality, it was our St. Matthew's family who was truly lucky to receive Jan's joy. She lived her faith with a larger than life attitude and inspired others to do the same.

Jan passed away rather suddenly on August 9, 2018. St. Matthew's has felt the loss tremendously. For all who knew and loved her, the light in the sanctuary seemed momentarily dimmer. The following year, vestry received a touching letter which brought Jan's kind heart to mind and conversation. Jan had endowed money to St. Matthew's and our vestry knew then what it should be used for.

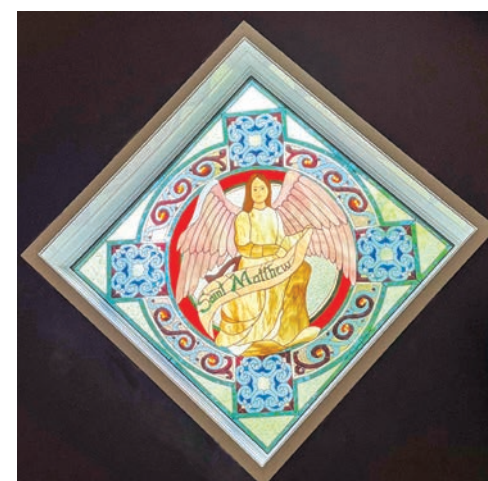
In honour of our friend Jan Alexander, we commissioned Fern,



Pictured above: members of St. Matthew's in St. Albert gather at the dedication of the stained-glass window commissioned for their friend Jan Alexander

from Fern's Glass, to create a stained glass window. Like Matthew, Jan was a devout disciple of Christ and a loving evangelist. They are both symbolised by an angel in Fern's perfect design.

During the morning sunrise, light illuminates the back pew in St. Matthew's sanctuary in a breathtaking array of colours -- a fitting tribute to the love and light that Jan herself once brought to our little family. The window serves as a tangible reminder that she has most certainly, as we prayed, 'risen in glory'!



Themes of family and faith in *Homes: a Refugee Story*

Before the COVID pandemic, I attended a reading by the authors of *Homes: A Refugee Story*, by Abu Bakr al Rabeeah, as told to writer Winnie Yeung. Both Abu Bakr and Winnie were delightful. He was very mature, yet only 16. His older brother, by 10 years, was also there, as were some of his friends. He proudly introduced them and more proudly indicated that his brother Nasar had recently married. By now, his and Winnie's book had been nominated for the Governor General's award for non-fiction. Originally, the book had been self-published. A publisher had picked it up and it was released again in 2018.

Upon first reading, I was captivated by what I felt was a raw, honest account of a young person's experiences fleeing Iraq and spending four years as a refugee in Syria.

The al Rabeeah family left Iraq seeking a safe, peaceful place to live. Abu Bakr's father knew the Arab world was no longer safe,



MARION BULMER
St. Thomas', Sherwood Park

and they came to Edmonton in December 2014.

Abu Bakr and his family were educated, but I sensed their absolute exhaustion as they learned to communicate in English. It was so hard and so tiring for the gregarious teen that he sought solitude in his home.

In general, newcomer children adapt more quickly to their new surroundings and interpret the world for their parents. This new distribution of power can be challenging. Abu Bakr's father Hafedh had owned a business in Iraq. When the family fled to Syria, his wife taught him to bake and he set up a popular bakery, eventually providing work for



relatives. In Canada, like most older refugees, he and his wife struggled in LINC, the federal training program for newcomers in English.

Home was in Iraq; home was in Syria and home was in Canada. In Iraq, they were unsafe. A cousin had been murdered by Shia factions and there

were threats. In Syria, there were bombs; pieces of bodies landing in the yard, snipers, schools being attacked, soldiers at check points, factions fighting.

Although they were not safe in Syria, there Abu Bakr and his family of 10 were surrounded by extended family and friends in their small apartment. The streets were bustling with people. By contrast, they found Canada very lonely, isolating and dark. An older Somali lady whom our church had sponsored in 2019, recounted a similar experience. She was happy to be safe in Canada, but she was

lonely. She could not understand why the streets here are void of people and shops.

Abu Bakr found refuge and joy on the soccer field at Highlands Junior High. In Syria, his schoolmates, family and friends always found a way to play. Two of the young men who had been sponsored by St. Thomas also found solace and friendship in playing soccer.

When Bakr was in grade nine, he told Winnie Yeung he wished to tell his story so others would know what it is like to be a refugee. This is how *Homes* came to be.

I loved the book even more on the second read. What spoke to me this time was Bakr's father's support and love for his son. The strength of their bond helped Bakr survive the traumas of his life. Readers of this book feel the great familial support of his whole clan. The strength of Bakr's Muslim faith also comes through in the book. He acknowledges God's constant companionship in communal, repetitive prayer and the ritual of bowing and kneeling.

*Great Easter Vigil***Diocesan family illuminated by the Light of Christ**

MARGARET GLIDDEN
Edmonton Editor

“Tonight, we renew our commitment to being resurrection people by receiving the grace and mercy of God and by bringing that grace and mercy to others...,” said Bishop Stephen London in his Great Vigil of Easter sermon, on April 8, at All Saints’ Cathedral in Edmonton.

Because “at the end of the day, resurrection is not lived out in big ways,” he said. “It is lived out by everyday people in their everyday lives, coming together in prayer and fellowship and through simple acts of love and kindness.”

The Easter Vigil began with giving thanks for the Light of Christ that shines through the witness of parishes throughout the Edmonton diocese. Members of several parishes gathered around a fire lit in a portable campfire pit outside the cathedral. From the new fire, Bishop London lit the Paschal Candle and asked for God’s blessing on the oil which will be used throughout the diocese as a sign of God’s Holy Spirit and abiding presence, as well as God’s healing love.

Sheltering the flame from the wind, cantor Mark Armstrong led the procession into the cathedral. Members of the congregation were invited to light tapers from the Paschal Candle as the Very Rev. Alexandra Meek, Dean of Edmonton, and the Ven. Travis Enright, Archdeacon for Reconciliation and Decolonization, lit candles for all the parishes in the diocese.

Lay and clergy participants representing many parishes read lessons and prayers. The Holy Gospel, Matthew 28:1-10, was read by the Rev. John Gee, deacon for the cathedral and diocesan synod secretary-treasurer. Cathedral vicar the Rev. Ruth Sesink Bott celebrated the Eucharist.

Praying the Thanksgiving Over the Water, the Rev. Nick Trussell, rector of St. Luke’s, Edmonton, jubilantly walked up and down the center aisle to bless the congregation by waving a palm branch dipped in water. The Rev. Dr. Joyce Mellor, honorary assistant at St. Luke’s, invited members of the congregation to join her in renewing their Baptismal Covenant. Music was provided by All Saints’ music director and organist Jeremy Spurgeon and the Cathedral Choir. The cathedral hospitality committee offered refreshments before the



Clockwise from top: April 8, 2023, Bishop Stephen London, Jay Adams and Mark Armstrong light the Paschal Candle outside the cathedral for the Great Vigil of Easter service as clergy and members of the congregation look on; inside the cathedral, members of the congregation take turns lighting individual candles from the Paschal Candle, the service begins in candle-light; Bishop Steve preaches, calling all present to a commitment to being resurrection people in the light of grace and mercy received.



service.

“Yesterday, I was able to go to the Good Friday Outdoor Way of the Cross...,” said Bishop London speaking about the walk through the streets of downtown Edmonton which, for 43 years, has drawn attention to the Gospel values of Jesus and how they can be applied today.

“What moved me the most about the two-hour walk was that it didn’t just feel like Good Friday; it was much more a profound glimpse of resurrection,” said Bishop London.

“It was a group of Christians from many denominations just being Christian; humbly praying and singing and witnessing to a vision of the Kingdom of God as justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. A kingdom where people are loved and valued regardless of where they find themselves, and a simple vision and hope of everyone knowing the gift of home and belonging.

“Tonight, is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and it is also a glimpse of the resurrection. I feel so blessed to be able to worship

with you, the members of so many of our parishes. We are not just an institution but a family; brothers and sisters, siblings united in Christ for a common purpose: God’s love for all the world in Jesus Christ. I am so glad that we can do this together.

“Alleluia! Christ is Risen! The Lord is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!”

You can read the full sermon text at <https://edmonton.anglican.ca/news/diocesan-family-illuminated-by-the-light-of-christ>