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PHOTO: ACT ALLIANCE

Protesters at a Nov. 15 rally call for action on climate change during the COP30 meeting in Belém, Brazil Nov. 10-21.

## COP30 a mixed experience, priest says

**Matthew Puddister**  
STAFF WRITER

A Canadian Anglican priest who attended the 2025 United Nations Climate Change Conference, or COP30, found ongoing obstacles to climate action—but also inspiration.

COP30 took place in Belém, Brazil Nov. 10-21, bringing together representatives from nearly 200 countries. Bishop of the Amazon Marinez Bassotto, primate of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil, played a major role in a parallel “People’s Summit” to the official conference. Bassotto hosted a *tapiri*—a word in the Indigenous Tupi language meaning a gathering place—at the Catedral Anglicana de Santa Maria on Nov. 16 with ecumenical and interfaith leaders, including Anglicans from around the world.

The Rev. Angelique Walker-Smith, World Council of Churches (WCC) president from North America, spoke on the WCC’s Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action (2025-2034) at the *tapiri*. In June, WCC member churches—which include the Anglican Church of Canada—formally adopted the decade-long commitment, which calls for action to care for creation and protect those who suffer from climate change.

Among those in attendance was the Rev. Emilie Smith, rector of St. Barnabas Anglican Church in New Westminster, B.C. and co-president of the Óscar Romero International Christian Network in Solidarity with the Peoples of Latin America (SICSAL), an ecumenical



▲ The Rev. Emilie Smith, right, shares a moment with Bishop Marinez Bassotto at COP30.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

group that advocates for social and environmental justice. Smith, who travelled to the conference in a pilgrimage starting Aug. 16, described a mixed experience at COP30.

She found cause for optimism in grassroots organizing efforts, participating in an Indigenous-led demonstration on Nov. 15 of tens of thousands of people calling for climate action from negotiators. In contrast, Smith noted the large presence of fossil fuel lobbyists at COP30—one in every 25 participants, according to the Kick Big Polluters Out coalition—and the contradictory actions of leaders, such as Brazilian President Lula da Silva recently approving exploratory oil drilling in the sea off the Amazon.

“It’s really a complicated situation,” Smith said. “But ... what else are we going to do? ... Being the witness to this [COP30] and participating in this is the best we’ve been able to come up with so far.”

In the final agreement that emerged from the conference, negotiators dropped all reference to fossil fuels, by far the largest contributor to climate change. ■

## Federal budget cuts could risk lives, say Anglican advocates for refugees, foreign aid



▲ Prime Minister Mark Carney

PHOTO: UKRPICTURES/SHUTTERSTOCK

**Matthew Puddister**  
STAFF WRITER

When Mimi Merrill fled to Canada in 2003 as a student and refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it was 17 years before she saw her mother again.

Her mother was eventually able to make a brief visit to Canada. However, when Merrill applied for her to become a permanent resident of Canada through the Parents and Grandparents Program sponsorship visa, the application was denied. “I don’t know if I’ll see her again,” Merrill says.

Today, Merrill is refugee sponsorship coordinator for the Anglican diocese of Ontario—and one of many Anglicans across Canada speaking out against cuts to refugee sponsorship and foreign aid in the latest federal budget announced Nov. 4, warning that these cuts will harm humanitarian efforts and even put lives at risk.

The first budget tabled under the Liberal government of Prime Minister Mark Carney, which Parliament passed on Nov. 17, will reduce Canada’s international assistance by \$2.7 billion over four years. It will also see a 30-per-cent reduction in privately sponsored refugees from 23,000 in 2025 to 16,000 in 2026.

### ‘Fewer and fewer that we are going to be able to help’

The cuts are part of the federal government’s plan to cut its operating costs by 15 per cent over three years, including in the departments that handle foreign assistance and refugee sponsorship—respectively, Global Affairs Canada and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. The government has linked spending cuts with the need to reduce the federal deficit, which is estimated to surpass \$78 billion in the current fiscal year.

Alongside Hope, formerly known as the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund, has signed a letter expressing concern over the cuts to international assistance as part of a coalition of more than 100 NGOs, led by Cooperation Canada and the Canadian Partnership for Women and Children’s

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PM# 40069670



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# Anglican agency mulls urging supporters to contact MPs as Ottawa eyes deficit cuts, ‘taking back control’ of immigration

Continued from p. 1  
Health.

Executive director Will Postma says Alongside Hope is looking at encouraging supporters to contact their MPs to speak out against what he calls a “serious reduction” in aid. He also strongly criticizes the reduction in privately sponsored refugees the federal government will allow into Canada. “We’re saddened and we’re shocked by this 30-per-cent decrease in allocations,” Postma says.

## CHURCH AND STATE

Fifteen Anglican dioceses across Canada are currently sponsorship agreement holders (SAHs), meaning they are private sponsors of refugees who also help refugees resettle as new Canadians. Each Anglican diocese SAH has a refugee coordinator, and these meet annually as the Alongside Hope Refugee Network to exchange information and strategize prior to the annual meeting of all Canadian SAHs with the government.

Jane Townshend, chairperson of the Anglican diocese of Huron refugee committee, says the cuts to refugee sponsorship have had an immediate



PHOTO: MUSO HEALTH

**A worker with an Alongside Hope partner in Mali helps administer COVID-19 vaccinations in 2022.**

impact on her work. Speaking to the *Anglican Journal* on Nov. 11, Townshend said she had received eight sponsorship requests from people around the world that morning alone. “We are receiving daily requests from people and it’s fewer and fewer that we are going to be able to help,” Townshend says. The budget document says reductions in the levels of immigrants, including refugees, are needed because the

immigration system in recent years has become more complex and the amount of newcomers has outpaced Canada’s ability to absorb and support them. It notes that the number of temporary residents doubled from 3.3 per cent of Canada’s population in 2018 to 7.5 per cent in 2024, putting pressure, it says, on housing supply, health care and schools. “We are taking back control over the immigration system and putting Canada on a trajectory to bring immigration back to sustainable levels,” the budget says, while claiming that “Canada will continue its long tradition of welcoming those fleeing violence, persecution and displacement.”

Sarah Cooper, coordinator of the diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island’s refugee sponsorship program, says Ottawa’s plans to reduce refugees allowed into Canada have been announced at a time of record displacement for people around the world. More than 122 million people were forcibly displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence and human rights violations at the end of April 2025, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

“It doesn’t really track,” Cooper says. “We’re going down in the numbers we’re accepting to Canada, and yet the crisis worldwide is at a peak.” Parliament passing the budget, she says, “is very disappointing for us as a SAH and more importantly for the families who hope to reunite with their loved ones and the refugees overseas just wanting a safe place to land.”

## Aid cuts mean ‘steep reduction’ in overseas health care: Postma

Cuts to foreign assistance will further hurt efforts by Canadians to help people in other parts of the world, Postma says. In its budget, the government describes its \$2.7-billion cut as “recalibrating” assistance and “leveraging innovative tools while focusing support for countries that need it the most.” The point, the document says, is to return

foreign aid to its “pre-pandemic level.” The move is in line with similar foreign aid reductions recently announced by the United States, the U.K. and Germany. Health may be one of the biggest sectors affected, Postma says. Canada had played an important role in ensuring access to HIV antiretroviral medication in remote and rural areas of the global South, Postma says, as well as support for vaccines and immunization against diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria that people in marginalized areas remain vulnerable to.

“We see this as a steep reduction in care,” he says. Funding from the Canadian government has previously helped support Alongside Hope initiatives such as the “solar suitcases” program, which pays for portable solar power units that provide vital electricity at rural health clinics in Mozambique, Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania. Federal government funds also helped support Alongside Hope’s maternal and child health program, All Mothers and Children Count, from 2016 to 2022. This “highly impactful” program, Postma says, “saved lives, connected health outcomes to food security and strengthened partners and their work with local governments” in the same four East African countries.

Postma says money spent on foreign assistance represents only 0.35 per cent of Canada’s gross national income, according to Cooperation Canada. Foreign assistance, he says, is “about care for those not just who are vulnerable or marginalized, but those who have been made vulnerable and made marginalized by climate change or by the vagaries of our globalizing world.”

Speaking against cuts to refugee sponsorship, Cooper likewise emphasizes community and relationships that link Canadians and people in need in other parts of the world.

“I think God would want us to think of the world as our own people ... Our own is humanity,” she adds. ■

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FILE PHOTO

**Remembering Michele Pollesel**

PHOTO: DANIEL MYTENS

**King Charles the Martyr and modern society**

PHOTO: GENERAL SYNOD ARCHIVES

**Marking the Journal’s 150th anniversary**

**Correction:** The unveiling of a stained-glass window designed by Ningiukulu Teevee at The Bishop Strachan School took place Oct. 6. Incorrect information appeared in the December *Anglican Journal*.



HERITAGE  
BUILDINGS ►

# Arson suspected in 2024 razing of historic St. Anne's

**Matthew Puddister**  
STAFF WRITER

Toronto police and Ontario's fire marshal are treating the June 2024 fire that destroyed the historic St. Anne's Anglican Church as suspected arson.

The Anglican diocese of Toronto said the Toronto Police Service and Office of the Fire Marshal for Ontario shared the information during a Nov. 23 meeting at St. Anne's to update the congregation on officials' ongoing investigation.

"The diocese and the parish are profoundly saddened by the news and will continue to cooperate with the investigation," a diocesan statement said. "We offer our thanks to fire and police officials for their ongoing care and diligence in this matter."

St. Anne's was renowned for its unique Byzantine Revival architecture and contained irreplaceable artwork by members of the Group of Seven. The parish, which plans to rebuild the church as a smaller structure within the ruins of the old building, managed to preserve three paintings



▲ Interior of St. Anne's Anglican Church before the building's destruction by fire

PHOTO: JESSICA MACE

and part of a mosaic damaged in the fire.

The Rev. Hannah Johnston, priest-in-charge of St. Anne's, said officials told the parish that the main evidence suggesting arson consisted of multiple points of origin for the fire around the interior of the church.

"Obviously there's a lot of shock and grief and anger and anxiety that's triggered by news like this," Johnston said, adding that the report had rekindled grief for many parishioners.

Bishop Kevin Robertson, suffragan

bishop of the diocese of Toronto, joined the congregation for Sunday worship Nov. 23 and the meeting with officials, returning the next day to speak with parishioners and offer pastoral care. He said the news followed months of speculation. "There were audible gasps in the room and some tears," Robertson said.

In the diocesan statement, Robertson said, "We pray for the person or persons who may have perpetrated this act, that they might seek forgiveness and healing."

Johnston said the news of suspected arson would not impact rebuilding efforts, which the diocese of Toronto's synod council must still formally approve. She said rebuilding plans brought "a lot of hope and energy and excitement to the congregation," as did Robertson's visit and pledge of diocesan support for ongoing ministry of St. Anne's.

Official investigation into the fire continues. The parish was informed that lab results are still pending for additional samples, Johnston said, and an official report might not appear for at least six months. ■

DIOCESAN  
NEWS ►

## Fired Newfoundland priest reinstated at cathedral

**Sean Frankling**  
STAFF WRITER

The Rev. Catherine Short has been re-appointed to the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, Corner Brook in the diocese of Western Newfoundland, in the position of priest-in-charge.

"After prayerful discernment, consultation with the metropolitan, and in keeping with his determination of June 13, 2025, and a follow up to that, I have invited the Reverend Catherine Short to serve as interim priest-in-charge at the cathedral, effective December 1, 2025," interim diocesan administrator the Rev. Mickton Phiri announced in a pastoral letter dated Nov. 8.

Former Bishop John Organ had fired Short in January. After an investigation last spring, provincial metropolitan Archbishop David Edwards said Organ had not followed proper procedures when terminating her. Organ retired Oct. 1, leaving the diocese without a bishop, and Short cannot be fully reinstated as the cathedral's dean, her former position, until a new bishop is elected.

Short said she was pleased to be returning as priest-in-charge for the moment and hoped she would be fully reinstated when a new bishop is elected.

"Some are a little disappointed that it's not a full recovery, but ... I think we've reached the maximum of what could be done [for now]," she said. Short added she had been feeling the joy of being restored



▲ The Rev. Catherine Short (centre), then-dean of St. John the Evangelist, Cornerbrook, performs a wedding in 2024.

PHOTO: MIKE GOULDING

since she heard from Phiri on Nov. 8, along with some nervousness about what it will be like trying to pick up after a year-long disruption.

In January 2025, Organ publicly announced at a live-streamed worship service in the cathedral that he was firing Short and revoking her license to practice ministry. He said she had exhibited anger management issues and a passive-aggressive style of leadership, and had not responded to his attempts to resolve a conflict he did not name explicitly after an outburst on her part.

Following her firing, parishioners at the cathedral disputed Organ's claims about Short's leadership. Some picketed the cathedral, demanding her reinstatement; many took to social media to register strong objections. Others left the parish. The vestry resigned in protest. Short later filed a safe church complaint against

Organ.

In findings announced in June, Edwards said Organ had engaged in discriminatory practice, emotional abuse and bullying against Short. He called Organ to reinstate her license, apologize and take leave until his retirement. Organ ignored these recommendations at the time, saying he did not believe the process had been fair, but later moved up his retirement to Oct. 1.

Reached by the *Anglican Journal*, Organ said he felt the process had been unfair and had ignored what he believed were legitimate points on his part, including the original reason for the dismissal. That related to a report of bullying that had been made against Short and which he was obligated to look into, he said. He declined to give specifics, citing the privacy of those involved. He says the diocesan legal counsel noted at the time there were procedural issues with the ecclesiastical report, saying it deflected attention from the original complaint against Short.

Asked about the bullying complaint, Short told the *Journal*, "If that's true, this is the first I've heard about it." She added that Organ had not mentioned the complaint during a meeting with vestry members shortly before Short's dismissal at which they asked him about the nature of the problems he said there had been at the cathedral.

Edwards did not respond to the *Anglican Journal's* request for comment. ■



PHOTO: BRIAN BUKOWSKI/ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

**Burns speaks to General Synod on June 24.**

## Clare Burns resigns as chancellor of General Synod

**Matthew Puddister**  
STAFF WRITER

Canon (lay) Clare Burns has submitted her resignation as chancellor of General Synod.

Archbishop Shane Parker, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, announced on Nov. 12 that Burns had presented her resignation two days prior, effective by the end of 2025. Council of General Synod (CoGS) appointed Burns chancellor in November 2023 at the recommendation of then-primate Linda Nicholls.

"I have respectfully accepted Canon Burns'

resignation and wish to acknowledge her outstanding and sacrificial contribution to the life and health of our church at an extremely challenging juncture," Parker said.

The chancellor is the legal advisor to the primate in the latter's role as president of General Synod and chairperson of CoGS. Appointees must be a judge of a court of record or barrister of at least 10 years' standing at the bar.

Burns, a litigator for the firm WeirFoulds, took over as chancellor after serving as vice chancellor for three years. She previously served as the Children's Lawyer for Ontario from 2003

to 2008, overseeing the office responsible for persons under the age of 18 in legal proceedings before provincial courts and tribunals.

Parker praised Burns for helping position the national church to pursue six "pathways for change" recommended by a primatial commission. CoGS and officers of General Synod will work together to identify and confirm a new chancellor, Parker said.

Asked by the *Anglican Journal* about the reasons for Burns' departure, the primate declined to comment. Burns had not responded to requests for comment as of press time. ■



ARCHBISHOP  
SHANE  
WRITES ▶



By Shane Parker

I HAVE SPENT many hours on snowshoes. My first taste of snowshoeing was at age four or five in Fort Nelson, B.C. (Treaty 8 territory). My father was serving there as a member of the Royal Canadian Army Pay Corps and was given training suitable to the environment. One weekend he brought home a pair of snowshoes, and he would balance me on top of his feet as we walked through the deep snow of the abundant forest right across the road from our house (nearly identical to Prime Minister Mark Carney’s childhood house in Fort Smith, N.W.T.).

I lost my father when I was 10 and our family moved to a small apartment during my teenage years. My craving for the forest, despite our lack of resources, led to a few winter expeditions in the snow-laden forests of northern Algonquin Park with my older brother and like-minded friends. We would take a train from the modern central station in Ottawa to a “station” in the park that was no more than a signpost, clambering out into the crisp night air under a dark sky filled with stars, and watching the caboose disappear in the distance.

Fellow passengers thought we were out of our minds, but we were filled with a spirit of adventure. We would travel with packs and snowshoes for several days through the backcountry—by way of frozen creeks, rivers and lakes, carefully



▲ Snowshoeing through winter forests, the author writes, taught him a lot about perseverance—and prayer.

PHOTO: SHANE PARKER

orienteeing through the deep woods—to another station, where the train would (hopefully) stop and pick us up.

Each day would be its own adventure, with variable temperatures and visibility. If the sun was out, contours were easy to see—whether large, like those of hills and valleys, or small, like those of half-frozen creeks (which were easy to tumble into). If the day was grey or it was snowing,

wayfinding was tricky, and it took longer to reach our planned destination.

There is something cleansing and centring about living with only what you can carry in a backpack, often in freezing temperatures, where carelessness could result in very real danger. How important it was to work together, to watch out for one another, and to pay careful attention to choosing the right direction to take, double-checking compass readings against what we could see before us and on our detailed contour maps. Because we were not following established trails, it was always important to be certain of where we were.

Those experiences taught me a lot about perseverance. When you have no choice but to keep moving, no matter what the conditions are, you must adapt and rely on one another to get through.

They also taught me a lot about prayer, especially how it can often be superficial—more about us doing something spiritual than letting our spirits be deeply affected by our conversation with the living God.

Feeling the depth of nature in a remote winter forest is like an extended time of prayer, when things you have been holding inside can eventually be released into God’s hands. The winter forest is so much bigger than you, like God is, and it sometimes draws the truth of your life from you, like God does, so you can see where you are—and where you ought to go next. ■

**Archbishop Shane Parker** is the primate of the Anglican Church of Canada.

FEATHER  
AND SAGE ▶



By Chris Harper

**FEATHER:** Creator God, in whom all have their beginning and end, we your children of creation lift our praise and thanksgiving for this season of renewal and beginning, as we look to the new year before us. Open our eyes to the new vision of your will and design, open our mouths to speak truth and peace, open our hearts to your love and guidance and open our hands to renewal and new strength. Almighty, guide us in the path of humility to truly listen and go forth in your peace, take from us our pride and greed and fill us with renewal and hope that in the year before us all might be one with you. This we pray in the name of the peace bringer, your Son our Lord and Saviour, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

**SAGE:** Revelation Chapter 21 has a few key words: “Behold, I make all things new.” (Rev.



PHOTO: MICROGEN

21:5 NKJV) As we look to the sunrise of a new year in 2026 we look forward to a new hope in all steps of life, one that can only be brought forth through faith in Christ.

In the image of the baby traditionally used to symbolize the new year, we see new life, hope and potential, acknowledging that there is a lot of work and patience needed to raise up this child, and that every step of the way is going to call us to give only our best through love and prayers. And as the year struggles on we see, as in another traditional image, Father Time, old

and weary. We’re miserable and we complain that we have so little in our control and that we work so hard only to get frustrated and diminished, hardly hearing when wisdom and peace whisper our Lord’s words. Matthew 11:25-30 reminds us that only in Christ and the cross can we see and find the hope of renewal and true life. “Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Mt. 11:28 NKJV)

With the new year before us, a new beginning, a new hope, we together pray. May faith in Christ abound to new levels, may all our labours lift high the cross for the world to see, may truth be in our hearts and upon our lips, and peace walk with us all as we step with new boldness in Christ, in whom all things are made anew. ■

**Archbishop Chris Harper** is national Indigenous archbishop of the Anglican Church of Canada.

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## Editor's note

**L**ATE LAST AUGUST, as Journal staff were in the late stages of preparing the October issue, I received an email from a young Anglican named Jess Tunggal. They (Tunggal prefers nongendered pronouns) wanted to write an opinion piece based on their experience coming to Christ—a journey in which witchcraft, they said, had played a vital role. Tunggal told me they had moved on from neopaganism but, at the same time, felt some of the ideas they had found there had, in the end, served to deepen their Christian faith. I was intrigued by the proposal,

and said I'd consider their piece for publication.

I found Tunggal's column original and stimulating. I was struck by the earnestness with which they described their spiritual quest, and I was reminded of the many ways throughout its history that Christianity has been enlightened by its encounters with the other. And so I decided to publish it. It appeared in our November issue ("Three things witchcraft taught me about God," p.4).

Could I have brought to this decision more awareness of the dangers that some occult beliefs pose to vulnerable people, and should I have considered

the many biblical injunctions against witchcraft? Probably, but I was also mindful of the fact that, as Tunggal stated in their column, witchcraft was something from which they had now moved on; the point of their piece was not to draw readers from Christianity to the occult but to spur dialogue and reflection. (I was also mindful of the Journal's mandate, given to it by General Synod, to provide "a forum for the full range of voices and views across the Church.")

The piece generated controversy as soon as it was published; within 24 hours of its appearance on [anglicanjournal.com](http://anglicanjournal.com), I had received a small

number of emails intensely critical of the piece and my decision to publish it. Three of those who were unhappy about the piece—about half the total—were past or present bishops. (It's unusual for me to hear from bishops on Anglican Journal content.) People felt the Journal should not be promoting beliefs and practices condemned by the Bible and that, in their opinion, were often dangerous. Some asked that the article be pulled. There was controversy over the article on social media as well. Not all the response was critical; some praised the article, both online and in correspondence to me. This issue's Letters section

conveys something of this controversy (though all but two of those who were critical of the article asked that their emails not be published).

The Journal's editorial board met to discern a response to this unusual situation, and decided on asking a respected Canadian Anglican theologian to comment on Tunggal's column, with the purpose of clarifying, in a pastoral tone, traditional Anglican theology in response to the piece. The first name that came up was Bishop Stephen Andrews, principal of Wycliffe College until his retirement in June 2025. I was pleased that Andrews agreed. Here's what he wrote for us.

## OPINION ▶



**Of course, spiritual rebellion still takes place in the world. But God's triumph over the elemental powers means that some of them may actually do his bidding.**

# Sometimes God calls us in extraordinary ways

By Stephen Andrews

**C**HURCH HISTORY is a narrative of surprising conversions. In the earliest written strands, we have the dramatic "Damascus Road" experience of the violently zealous Saul where, by means of a supernatural, personal encounter with the risen Christ, he was transformed from a persecutor of the Christian way to a devoted adherent and apostle. Nineteen hundred years later that same Christ would appear to the young Hugh Montefiore, later bishop of Birmingham, who was raised in a family of devout and practicing Jews, and who had never attended a Christian service of worship. But once when he was in his school study, he wrote, in his 1995 autobiography:

"I suddenly became aware of a figure in white whom I saw clearly in my mind's eye [. . . and] I heard the words 'Follow me.' Instinctively I knew that this was Jesus, heaven knows how: I knew nothing about him . . . It was an indescribably rich event that filled me afterwards with overpowering joy. I could do no other than to follow those instructions." Such accounts remind us that Jesus continues to seek people in unexpected ways.

I begin my reflections in this vein because it was as a conversion narrative that I read the recent *Anglican Journal* opinion piece by Jess Tunggal entitled, "Three things witchcraft taught me about God" (published online Oct. 21, 2025). In this article, Jess claims to have found Jesus "in a spellbook." It is an arresting way to begin an essay, and it stirred up some controversy on social media. But Jess assures me that the statement was a figure of speech, and much of the ensuing testimony both in the essay and in our subsequent conversation struck me as an account not so much of how Jess found Jesus, but of how Jesus found Jess.

On the surface of it, Jess's narrative is not so unusual. A young person, disenchanted with the church, finds enchantment elsewhere. Where the church's culture is exclusive and monolithic, a seeker is naturally drawn to a more inclusive, grace-filled community. Where the church's worship is dull and perfunctory, the spiritually hungry are attracted to other offers of transcendence, sometimes through hallucinogenic means or, as in Jess's case, through ritual. What I hope many might appreciate in Jess's



▲ Caravaggio's painting *The Conversion on the Way to Damascus* shows the moment at which Saul was transformed from a persecutor of Christians to a devoted apostle.

IMAGE CARAVAGGIO/  
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

narrative is that somehow, in Jess's quest for connection with the divine, Jesus revealed himself to Jess as the Incarnate Son of God, and the source of both love and salvation through his death on the cross. What makes Jess's narrative surprising, though, is that Jess began to come to this realisation through an experience of witchcraft.

Some people found this narrative more alarming than surprising. And with some justification. For there is reason to be wary about the occult, as not all the supernatural forces at work in the world are intent on serving God. Indeed, the context of the biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation is that there is a cosmic struggle underway, and the Bible condemns any attempt to engage pagan spirits: "Let no one be found among you who makes his son or daughter pass through fire, no augur or soothsayer or diviner or sorcerer, no one who casts spells or traffics with ghosts and spirits, and no necromancer. Those who do such things are abominable to the Lord" (Deuteronomy 18.10-12). It has been suggested that one of the reasons that the divine name (YHWH) is unpronounceable in Judaism is

to prevent people from using it in incantations.

There is nevertheless evidence that practices of divination flourished in first-century Judaism. We read about Jewish sorcerers and exorcists in Acts 13 and 19, and among ancient Jewish artifacts are incantations, curses and amulets. These instruments were used to garner protection, alter fate or even seek revenge. But St. Paul pairs sorcery with idolatry in Galatians 5:20, indicating that the use of magic is in essence a denial of the sovereignty of God's Spirit over all principalities and powers. The truth, he claims, is that Christ has rendered the cosmic powers impotent by his victory over them on the cross (Colossians 2.14-15).

Of course, spiritual rebellion still takes place in the world. But God's triumph over the elemental powers means that some of them may actually do his bidding. Indeed, it was through astrology that a group of magicians from "the East" were led to a manger in Bethlehem. So surely it is possible that through the magic arts and the worship of nature, God might draw people like Jess to a saving knowledge of God's divine Son.

There was, in fact, a book published in the 18th century with the title, *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions*. It was written by the pastor and theologian Jonathan Edwards to describe the religious revival that happened in Northampton, Massachusetts in 1734. The revival began among the young people in the community, and their turn to God was occasioned by the deaths of a man "in the bloom of his youth" and of a young married woman. But what emerges in Edwards' chronicle is the "surprise" that through these natural occurrences, and the faithful teaching of the Church, people would come to a deep conviction of their need for God and for the grace of forgiveness offered them in Jesus Christ. This is the same grace that we receive when we gather around the Lord's table alongside those whom God continues to call in the most unexpected and extraordinary ways. ■

**Stephen Andrews** is a former bishop of the diocese of Algoma and the recently retired principal of Wycliffe College. He is married to Fawna. They live in Quispamsis, N.B., and have two daughters and two grandsons.



LETTERS ▶

The Anglican Journal welcomes letters to the editor. Since not all letters can be published, preference is given to short correspondence (300 words or less). All letters are subject to editing.

Witchcraft is from Satan’s world

I was appalled at the article that promoted witchcraft (“Three things witchcraft taught me about God,” November, p.4). The Bible is clear that witchcraft is not of God. Acts, Galatians and Revelation warn against it. That means Luke, Paul and John all wrote against it and so it is beyond reasoning why you thought this would be appropriate.

This is promoting Satan’s world and is drastically offensive to those of us

who look to God and our leaders in God for hope. The light of the lamp will never dwell in a body that allows this because it is far removed from anything Christian let alone Anglican. I can read about witchcraft anywhere, so why, when I look to this newspaper that should deliver us truthful and inspirational as well as difficult news, do I find such an article?

**Suzanne Jackson**  
Louis Creek, B.C.

Seeking the truth about God from neopaganism is schismatic

It is as absurd for Christians to seek revelation about God through witchcraft and neopaganism as it would be for the Church to sever one of its own limbs and call it union. The Body of Christ is not meant to be dissected and reassembled through the lens of other gods. It is the living witness of the risen Lord—whole, incarnate, and indivisible.

Let us name this moment truthfully: this is schism. Not the kind that divides parishes, but the deeper fracture that separates truth from confusion, creed

from convenience, Christ from culture.

Editors are not neutral observers in such matters. To publish confusion is to participate in it. To platform apostasy is to promote it. The *Anglican Journal* does not stand above the faith it reports on—it stands accountable to it.

There is one Body and one Spirit,  
One hope in God’s call to us,  
One Lord, one faith, one baptism,  
One God and Father of all.

**David Ian Giffen**  
Toronto, Ont.

Tunggal article conveyed ‘heartbeat of Franciscan spirituality’

Reading Jess Tunggal’s article stirred something deeply familiar in me. I, too, wandered through paths outside the Church in my search for the Divine—not out of rebellion, but out of hunger. Like Jess, I sought God in nature, in silence, and in the small rituals that made the world feel alive again. What I found in that journey was not opposition to Christ, but preparation for rediscovering Him.

When I eventually returned to Christianity, I found St. Francis of Assisi waiting for me at the crossroads—the bridge between the mysticism I had embraced in Wicca and the sacramental life of the Church. Francis, who preached to birds and called the sun his brother and the moon his sister, taught me that the language of creation is already a prayer. In him I discovered that love of the Earth and love of Christ were never meant to be separate devotions.

What Jess describes as seeing “the mark of God ... present in creation” is precisely the heartbeat of Franciscan spirituality. The natural

world is not an ornament to faith—it is one of God’s oldest testaments. When we walk gently among the trees, tend a garden, or share bread with those in need, we participate in the same sacred reciprocity that Jess described so well: love given, love received, love returned.

The Church, in its best moments, has always known this truth—from the psalmist who sang of the heavens declaring God’s glory, to the Eucharist that joins heaven and earth in a single act of grace. I am grateful for voices like Jess’s that remind us to listen again to the wind, the water, and the whisper of the Spirit moving through all creation.

Thank you, Jess, for writing with courage and tenderness. And thank you, editor, for giving space to stories that bridge old wounds and invite holy conversation. These are the dialogues that keep our Anglican faith alive, humble, and ever more inclusive.

**Stephen I. Weiss**  
Order of Ecumenical Franciscans  
St. James Anglican Church  
Kentville, N.S.

# February

## BIBLE READINGS

DAY READING	DAY READING
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Micah 6:1-8	<input type="checkbox"/> 15 Matthew 17:1-13
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Malachi 3:1-12	<input type="checkbox"/> 16 Leviticus 19:1-19
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Malachi 3:13-4:6	<input type="checkbox"/> 17 Leviticus 19:20-37
<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Isaiah 58:1-14	<input type="checkbox"/> 18 Psalm 51
<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Psalm 112:1-10	<input type="checkbox"/> 19 Matthew 18:1-10
<input type="checkbox"/> 6 2 Corinthians 9:1-15	<input type="checkbox"/> 20 Deuteronomy 18:1-22
<input type="checkbox"/> 7 Matthew 5:13-37	<input type="checkbox"/> 21 Romans 1:8-13
<input type="checkbox"/> 8 1 Corinthians 2:1-16	<input type="checkbox"/> 22 Romans 1:14-17
<input type="checkbox"/> 9 1 Peter 2:1-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 23 Matthew 4:1-11
<input type="checkbox"/> 10 Deuteronomy 30:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/> 24 Hebrews 4:14-5:4
<input type="checkbox"/> 11 Psalm 119:1-32	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 Hebrews 5:5-10
<input type="checkbox"/> 12 Matthew 5:38-48	<input type="checkbox"/> 26 Deuteronomy 5:6-21
<input type="checkbox"/> 13 Matthew 6:1-15	<input type="checkbox"/> 27 2 Corinth. 5:11-6:10
<input type="checkbox"/> 14 Matthew 6:16-34	<input type="checkbox"/> 28 Genesis 2:15-3:15

READINGS TAKEN FROM THE DAILY BIBLE READING GUIDE 2025 CREATED BY THE CANADIAN BIBLE SOCIETY. USED WITH PERMISSION.

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or by mail to Anglican Journal, 80 Hayden St., Toronto, ON M4Y 3G2.

**Quebeckers may have to act to protect religious freedom**

The political analysis of Bishop Bruce Myers, of the diocese of Quebec, and that of Bishop Victor David Mbuyi Bipungo, of the diocese of Montreal (“Quebec bishops slam proposed public prayer ban” November, p.1), is relevant to the intentions of Premier François Legault’s government. Why target all religious traditions when the objective is to target public prayers organized by radical Islamists? In addition, the issues related to the legal definition of public prayer are well explained. Will Good Friday interfaith marches, blessings of motorcycles, fishing boats, their crews and equipment and the like be targeted by this new law? These are public religious activities that are well established in many communities in Quebec.

In short, if the Legault government intends to use the notwithstanding clause to limit the provisions of the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, I hope that there will be significant mobilization to defend the right to freedom of religion in Quebec.

**Johanne Jutras**  
Anglican Parish of Quebec City

**The John Organ we knew was caring, understanding**

I, together with my wife and a number of other former parishioners of Bishop John Organ when he was a priest at the Church of Epiphany in Gloucester, Ont, have been following the events concerning him as they have been unfolding in Corner Brook, Nfld.

The Rev. Organ during his time at the Church of the Epiphany was nothing but highly sociable, caring and understanding of the needs of his congregation. We therefore find accusations of “discriminatory practices,” “emotional abuse” and especially “bullying” on his part to be so far removed from the priest that we knew that they’re hard to understand and harder to accept.

We are not privy to what went on between the Rev. Short and him but, what we have read about in the news is totally out of character with the John Organ we knew and loved.

**Roy Moffett**  
Church of the Epiphany  
Gloucester, Ont.



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Canterbury is affiliated with the University of Windsor and Assumption University (Windsor).

Please contact us for more information at [cced@uwindsor.ca](mailto:cced@uwindsor.ca) or 519-971-3646. Registration is open now at [www.uwindsor.ca/canterbury](http://www.uwindsor.ca/canterbury) *Canterbury College – Educating Mind, Body and Spirit*

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A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Shane'.

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