

Meet the archbishop's  
new secretary

4

Farraline Place  
has new leadership

7

Highlights from  
Diocesan Council

8

Nancy Stephens'  
take on the  
Advent Retreat

10



# THE NEW BRUNSWICK ANGLICAN

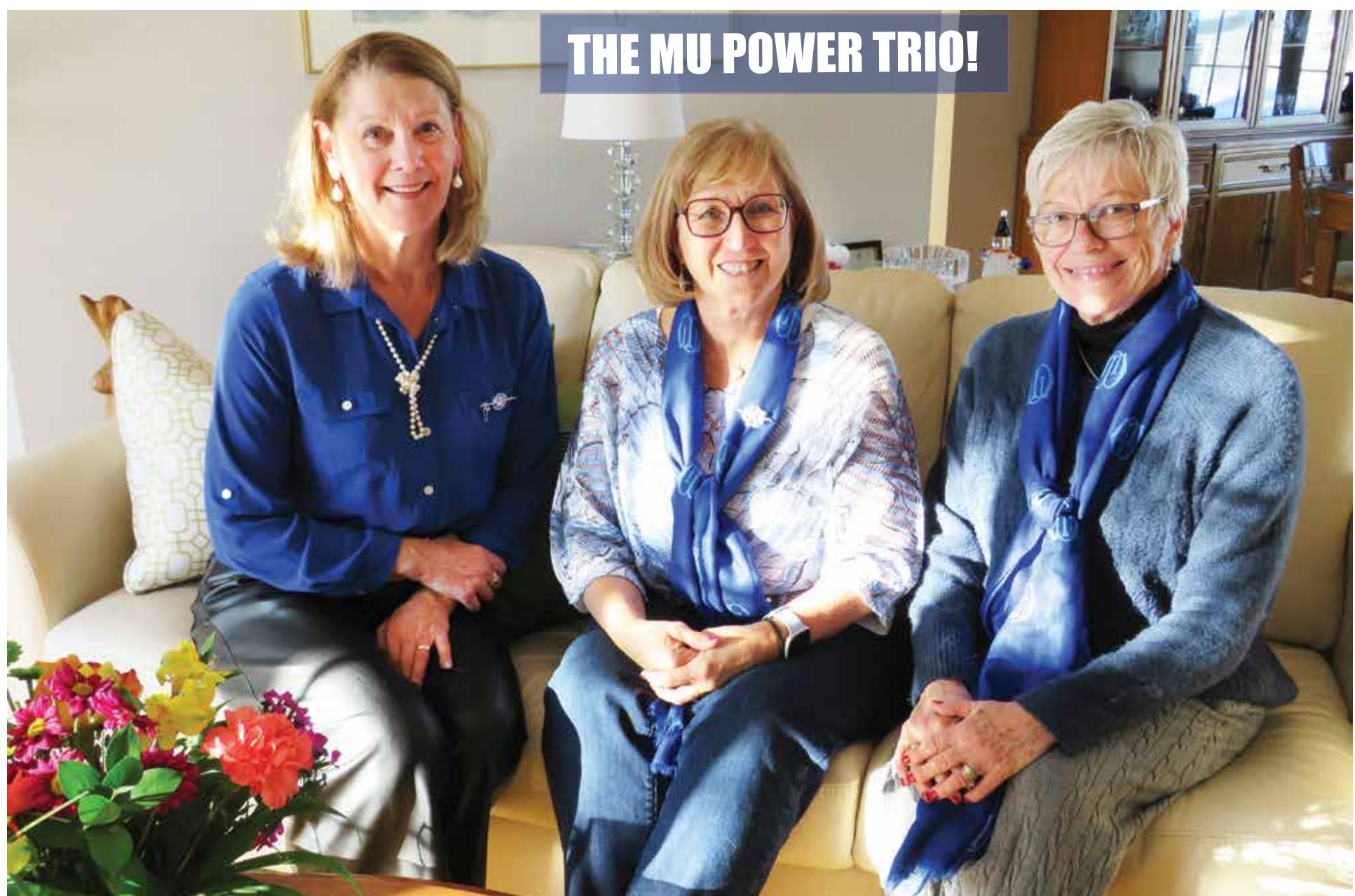


A SECTION OF THE ANGLICAN JOURNAL

FEBRUARY 2026

SERVING THE DIOCESE OF FREDERICTON

## THE MU POWER TRIO!



MCKNIGHT PHOTO

**MOTHERS' UNION** has a unique concentration of leaders at its Cathedral Branch. Kathleen Snow, at left, is the worldwide president of Mothers' Union. Susan Watson, centre, is the president of the Canadian province of MU, which oversees the entire country. And Lillian Ketch, at right, is the diocesan president of MU. All three have been MU members at the Cathedral for decades and have held various leadership positions, but for the past year, the diocesan, national and worldwide presidents have been from Fredericton. See the story on page 5.

## Save the dates!

Saturday, April 18  
Special Session of Synod to discuss the  
future of Christ Church Cathedral.

Saturday, Nov. 7  
Regular Session of Synod.

Watch for further details, locations and Greater Chapter meeting dates.



## Letters to the editor

### To the editor:

Seeing the ad for Bishop Harold Nutter's memoir has led me to recall the years I spent as his executive secretary when the Diocese was preparing to move the Synod Office from Saint John to Fredericton.

When he announced his retirement in 1988, I resigned the position. I truly was 'working for the man.'

Shortly after his retirement in 1989, he and his wife, Edith, moved to a home on my street, so I had him for another 20 years as a good friend and mentor. We had a very special relationship.

In those 20 years, we gardened together, made wine together, shared a lot of meals and special occasions together, and like all good friends, we were there when we needed each other. Our friendship was on a par with no other in my life.

He was my mentor, and besides my husband, was the greatest male influence in my life — as much a father as he was my dear friend.

Both Edith and Patricia became

good friends of mine, and his son Bruce, also an Anglican Priest and world traveller, would often pop in for a chat with me with his Dad when he was visiting Fredericton.

As a bishop, he dictated most of his correspondence for transcription, but chose to write his memoirs by hand, a unique way for him to record his thoughts.

Remarkably, he rarely chose to reword or revise what he had written.

I had the privilege of putting them in print, as I was one of the few who could translate his handwriting, I was so familiar with his 'style.'

At that time, the heading of what he was recording was, "Things I have done and things I should ought not to have done." (I know this may not be grammatically correct but that is what he chose as the title, archaic language that he thought appropriate.)

He became a good friend of my husband's, too, so when I took on the job as a financial advisor with Sun Life, he took over.

Joe turned over the sub-

scribed jumble of papers to him when he finished, some time before he and Edith left for Ottawa to make a home with their daughter, Patricia, and her family.

So, of course, Joe and I want a copy of the finished product in print. It will not only be a treasured Christmas gift to each other, but a cherished family heirloom for my children, Dale and Heather, who had a close family bond with "the Bishop," too.

*Lynda Wood  
Parishoner, St. John the Evangelist Church, Fredericton; board member, Farraline Place seniors' residence*

• • •

### To the editor:

As I lay here following a broken molar extraction and reading the Diocesan eNews, I remembered the first few times I saw the painting of Bishop Harold Nutter at Memorial Hall.

I was waiting for a cataract surgery and was amazed at this 'new to me building.' I saw it with fresh but damaged eyes and was thankful for what this building had

been used for and would be used for in the future.

My aunt, Donna Wallace's 90th birthday was one event I attended there. As well there were Bishop's Day with the Layreaders and others.

One visit there I commented on how the Bishop Nutter painting fittingly included a lamb. As we know, bishops lead God's sheep to fulfil their individual callings.

My comment was turned back to me as an astonishingly pointed comment to look closer — as there wasn't a sheep in the painting.

My eyes saw the sheep looking up for leadership from one of our shepherds but the painter had shown only a rocky road for the Bishop.

Now that I see the rocky road and not the sheep, I still like to look at the sheep and know that I can learn from my God and my leaders. Squint and I see that sheep — to remember we are the sheep and we can look up and see our God.

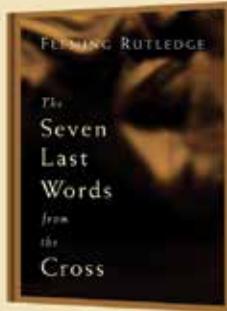
*Marilyn Wilson  
Parish of Richmond*

*Letters  
to the editor*

We welcome them!  
Send yours to  
gmcknight@diofton.ca



## 2026 Lenten Book Study Resource



Fleming Rutledge's  
'The Seven Last Words  
from the Cross'

ISBN-10: 9780802827869  
ISBN-13: 978-0802827869

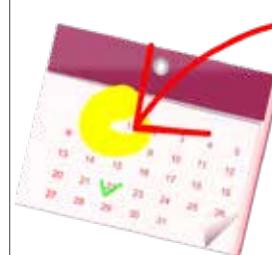
Archbishop David recommends Fleming Rutledge's *The Seven Last Words from the Cross* for reading and consideration this Lenten season.

In seven short, powerful meditations, Rutledge reflects on Jesus' final words from the Cross, weaving together Biblical insight, theological depth, and contemporary relevance.

This book offers a rich space for contemplation, honest questions, and renewed connection with our Saviour's journey.

Available wherever you buy your books.

Join the Diocesan Lenten Book Study group:  
[nb.anglican.ca/LentStudy2026](http://nb.anglican.ca/LentStudy2026)



DEADLINE for news and photos  
for the March edition of the New  
Brunswick Anglican is Feb. 1.  
Send submissions to  
gmcknight@diofton.ca

## THE NEW BRUNSWICK ANGLICAN

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

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESAN SYNOD OF  
FREDERICTON; A SECTION OF THE ANGLICAN JOURNAL

The Most Rev. David Edwards      Archbishop and Publisher

Gisele McKnight      Editor  
Cheryl Jacobs & Ben Bourque      Proofreaders

Published 10 times per year. Price of subscription \$10.00

Please send news and photo submissions to:  
12 Spruce Street, Sussex, N.B. E4E 1L9  
Phone: 506-459-1801, ext. 1009; E-mail: [gmcknight@diofton.ca](mailto:gmcknight@diofton.ca)

Please send subscription renewals and changes of address to:  
The New Brunswick Anglican, c/o Anglican Journal Circulation Dept.,  
80 Hayden St, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 3G2  
[circulation@national.anglican.ca](mailto:circulation@national.anglican.ca) OR 1-866-924-9192 ext. 259

Printed & mailed in North York, Ontario  
By Webnews Printing Inc.

Opinions expressed within are not necessarily those of the Synod.

# The future of Christ Church Cathedral

**A**s I gaze out of my office window across the snow-covered green, I see standing at its heart our majestic cathedral church.

It is a building that predates Confederation, and was the brainchild of our first bishop, John Medley.

If you enter the building and face the north wall, you will see an enormous painting featuring Medley. In the background there is a sketch of his Cathedral.

It is very definitely Medley's building. It was designed with a purpose in mind. He was a member of the Tractarians, also known as the Oxford Movement, whose members wrote a series of pamphlets called "Tracts for the Times," between 1833 and 1841.

These advocated "High Church" principles emphasizing the centrality of the sacraments, apostolic succession, the authority of the Church and liturgical rigor.

The group included John Henry Newman, Edward Pusey, John Keble and Richard Hurrell Froude.

Our cathedral was built to house this type of liturgical worship. The addition of a chancel, the decoration, the high roof and the neo-Gothic windows, amongst many other features, point to this intention.

It was the first Neo-Gothic building in North America, so it has great architectural importance.

In the City of Fredericton, it stands in a prominent position and is often used in photographs to represent the city in its publicity brochures and electronic media.

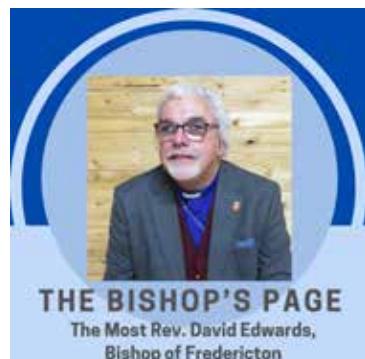
It is a beloved structure, and the cityscape would be very different without it.

It has stood for more than 170 years facing cold winters and hot summers. These have taken their toll on the building, as did the fires of 1911 and 2006.

As you have no doubt heard, we face major decisions about our cathedral and its future.

Although it has recently been established that the building and surrounding land belong to the Bishop of Fredericton (the corporation), I believe it is necessary for me to seek the advice of people from across the diocese and beyond about the future.

To that end, I have called a special one-issue session of the diocesan synod for April 18<sup>th</sup> this year to discuss the matter. This will be preceded by



a series of open Archdeaconry meetings in March as preparation for delegates, but anyone can attend.

More details can be found on the Synod website, but here are some broad strokes about what we know.

In 2022 the Cathedral Bishop and Chapter received a report from Heritage Standing Inc. (HSI) concerning the state of the building. It suggested urgent and other repairs at a cost of circa \$10 million. Source Alliance, a fundraising company based in Moncton, was then engaged to visit stakeholders to try to establish what monies might be available.

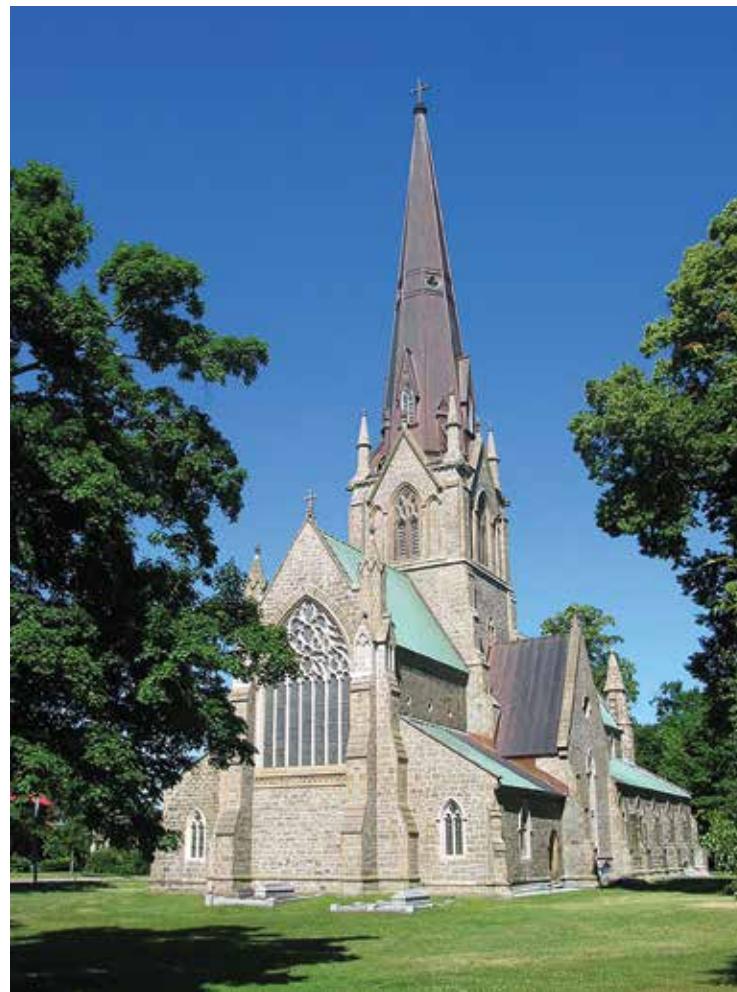
They concluded that within Anglican circles, around \$6-8 million might be raised, whereas circa \$12 million or more might be raised if external sources were added. One of the big issues is that as a "religious building," accessibility to government grants and other trusts is, at best, limited.

Source Alliance made three proposals concerning the way forward:

- First, the status quo. Continue to use the building, making minor repairs as we go, whilst accepting it will become unusable at some point.
- Second, appeal to Anglicans in New Brunswick and elsewhere seeking money to restore the building.
- Finally, establish a foundation totally independent of the church, to which the building could be donated. An occupancy agreement would be reached with the congregation about their future use of the building.

I called a congregational meeting for November 2023 to establish which option the congregation favoured. With regret, they felt — and still feel — that the foundation option is best.

With the assistance of a lawyer, with a specialty in company law and a fondness for the Cathedral, the Fredericton Cathedral Foundation has been



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**THE FUTURE OF** Christ Church Cathedral will be the topic of a one-issue special session of synod to be held April 18.

established, and it can be fully implemented if a decision to move forward with this option is made.

Fredericton City Council was at first reluctant to place a representative on the Foundation board, but did so near the end of 2025.

As we are all aware, the COVID-19 pandemic and US tariffs have affected building costs. We have recently reviewed the estimated cost of construction and it has risen to \$21 million as calculated in 2030 dollars.

It is generally agreed that an additional \$5-6 million should be raised to provide an endowment to meet future needs after the restoration project is completed.

The intention is that, as well as continuing as a place of worship, the building should be available for rent for exhibitions, banquets, arts performances and so on.

Such events are unlikely to make the building fully self-sustaining, hence the need for the endowment.

A memorandum of understanding will be established with the Foundation, that in the event the Foundation is not able to raise the funds for the building or fail to continue to sustain it,

the Bishop/Synod of Fredericton will be given the first option to take it back.

If we do not want it, then the City of Fredericton will be given second option, and if this is refused then the Foundation can offer it for sale. Each option would include the grounds.

As you can gather, we face a very complex issue. It requires much prayer and discernment.

We have made several proposals to develop buildings on or around the Green, but the current Fredericton City Centre Plan limits this. It indicates an objective to "Preserve the complete integrity of the green space surrounding Christ Church Cathedral."

David Edwards is  
Diocesan Bishop of Fredericton.

**NOTE: You can read more about this issue in the Diocesan Council highlights story on page 8.**

## PRINCIPAL ENGAGEMENTS

**February 8**  
**St. John's, Gagetown; Church of the Good Shepherd, Parish of Cambridge & Waterborough**

**February 15**  
**Church of the Good Shepherd, Parish of Lancaster**

**February 26**  
**Diocesan Council**



**Saturday, Feb. 28 in a city near you:**  
• walk • fundraise  
• volunteer •

**Anglican Energy, the Synod office team, is walking in Fredericton to support the John Howard Society.**

**'Simply Loved' Kids Club, an Anglican team in Sussex, is walking in support of the Sussex Sharing Club.**

**All Saints St. Andrews parish team is walking in St. Stephen to support Neighbourhood Works.**

**To donate: [cnoy.org/home](http://cnoy.org/home) Search for an Anglican team or you can form your own.**

## SYNOD STAFF

# Meet the archbishop's new secretary, Donna Beek

BY GISELE MCKNIGHT

Donna Beek is the new archbishop's secretary, having begun work in early December. She follows Cheryl Jacobs, who was promoted to synod executive officer after Canon David Peer retired.

Donna lives in Oromocto, and has spent much of her career in administration and logistics, much of it with the Canadian Armed Forces.

Donna has worn many hats: Army Reserves veteran, entrepreneur, single mother, Silver Cross Mother, and doctoral candidate at Tyndale Seminary in the field of thanatology, the study of death, dying, grief and loss.

But something she's never done is work for a religious organization, although she's long wanted to.

"This part of my life is to be spent in service to God and the church," she said. "I like being in a supporting role. By being here, I can help people and help the churches. I like learning how the church works, not just my own, but the diocese."

## EARLIER LIFE

Donna was born in Trenton, Ontario, where her father worked as a civilian on the base. She married a soldier and worked in administration for the military from 1983-2008, in Trenton, Baden-Soellingen (Germany), Gagetown, and Shilo, Manitoba.

Her time in Germany included a world-changing event.

"I witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall!" she said. "It was the 29<sup>th</sup> of November, 1989. It was an incredible thing to witness."

At the age of 43, she joined the Army Reserves, serving from 2008-2010. She worked full-time at the Canadian Forces School of Military Engineers in Gagetown, in charge of personnel awaiting training. This included launch-



MCKNIGHT PHOTO

**DONNA BEEK WAS CHOSEN** as the new secretary to Archbishop David Edwards and began work in early December. Donna has spent a good part of her life working for and serving in the Canadian Armed Forces.

ing court martials and trials when necessary.

Donna endured another life-changing event in 2009 when her son, Corey Hayes, a soldier serving in Afghanistan, was killed. A year later, her marriage failed.

## ON HER OWN

From 2010 to 2020, Donna lived in Toronto.

"I began my own business: tailor for the military, RCMP and the York Regional Police. I had 15,000 clients."

You might think she'd have

needed a fleet of assistants, but no, it was just her.

"It was busy. It was escapism. I was trying to outpace the grief."

Seeking an outlet to work, she enrolled in Tyndale Seminary and earned a Masters degree in Theological Studies with a concentration in spiritual formation.

"I wanted to redirect my energies," she said, adding she continued working at the same pace during her studies.

During the pandemic, she closed her business and returned to New Brunswick, to be closer to her children and three grand-

children.

She began work as a very overqualified pandemic-era Commissionnaire, "keeping people out of buildings!"

Still with the Commissionnaires, she ended up working at Base Gagetown, coordinating the training and safety of soldiers doing dry and live exercises.

In 2023 she decided to retire and return to Tyndale, studying for a Masters degree in Divinity, with a specialization in thanatology.

Did her son's death influence

her field of study?

"Yes, 110 per cent!" she said.

But she will not finish that degree, because in May she will enter Tyndale's doctoral program, which is almost entirely online.

Her research will focus on the concept of moral injury as it relates to soldiers, who could be the perpetrator of a moral injury in a theatre of war, or the victim of moral injury.

"My research is to build a pastoral care template for military chaplains to use with soldiers suffering from moral injury, attributable to military service."

## ANGLICANISM

Donna attended the United Church with her parents until she was 14 and they stopped going. So she began attending a Roman Catholic church with her grandmother and eventually converted.

But in her 30s, she became disenchanted with her chosen denomination, specifically on the issue of transubstantiation.

"I said 'I can't do this.' It freaked me out and I left the church. I didn't go to church for a year."

But she found her new home in Anglicanism when she attended a funeral and fell in love with the liturgy, the prayer book, and the people.

"Everything I liked in the Roman Catholic church was there, but all the things I rebelled against weren't there. The spirituality is pure here."

She attends Christ Church Cathedral.

In a unique and wonderful twist of fate, she recently learned that her new colleague, Ben Bourque, is married to a friend of her son Corey's, Jenna.

Jenna felt so strongly about her friend's untimely death, that she and Ben named their second son Hayes, after Corey's last name.

Welcome, Donna!

**Lucy's Sewing Group**  
at Christ Church Cathedral  
Fredericton . NB . Canada

white-on-white embroidery for all your liturgical needs  
purificators palls corporals veils credence cloths  
baptismal and lavabo towels  
and fair linens custom-fitted to your altar

hand-sewn on quality Irish linen

contact lucyssgcc@gmail.com to order, receive our price list, or ask for advice .

Catch up on what's happening in the diocese. Subscribe to eNews today!

eNews is a weekly newsletter sent to you each Tuesday. You'll find a new story, diocesan and parish events, announcements and much more!

[nb.anglican.ca/subscribers/news](http://nb.anglican.ca/subscribers/news)

Did You Know?

SHARING HOPE & HELP

# Mothers' Union leadership centred at Cathedral

BY GISELE MCKNIGHT

Is it mere happenstance, or something more that has led to the leadership of Mothers' Union in the diocese, in Canada and in the world all based at Christ Church Cathedral?

It didn't occur to MU Worldwide President Kathleen Snow until the Rev. Isabel Cutler mentioned it late last year.

"Isn't it amazing that we have these three roles in our little Cathedral branch. Why is that?" asked Kathleen.

Lilian Ketch is the diocesan president of MU, now into her second year. This is her second time in that role.

Susan Watson is the president of the Canadian province of MU, which oversees the entire country. She too, is in the second year of her term.

Kathleen was elected worldwide president in the summer of 2024 and was commissioned in London in March 2025. She has a three-year term, with the possibility of an additional three years to serve; most worldwide presidents serve two consecutive terms.

Kathleen previously served as a worldwide zonal trustee of MU, representing the Provinces of Canada, USA, West Indies and South America.

All three women worship at the Cathedral.

"It's interesting how this has come about," said Kathleen. "We have very strong Mothers' Union leadership in our diocese."

"I think it provides us with a unique opportunity to really work together and communicate well on all levels," said Susan.

Kathleen is a founding member of the Cathedral branch of MU, beginning in 1988.

Lilian was commissioned on Mothering Sunday, in March 1987 in the Parish of New Maryland, but later moved to the Cathedral.

Susan was commissioned in April 1989 at the Cathedral.

## 150 YEARS

MU will celebrate its 150th anniversary this year. It will hold two gatherings, one in the UK in June, and one in Durban, South Africa in September.

"I'm really looking forward to the 150th anniversary," said Susan. "I'm shepherding a little flock of 21 members to London in June. Most are from the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**SEVERAL MOTHERS' UNION MEMBERS** from the area attended Kathleen Snow's commissioning as worldwide president in March 2025 in London, UK. They are seen here, from left: Gael Page (NS & PEI), Alice Kennedy (Hampton branch), Michele LeBlanc (Cathedral branch), Susan Watson (Cathedral branch and Canadian Provincial president), Kathleen Snow (MU worldwide president), Shara Golden (Fredericton Junction branch and past vice-president of Canadian Council), and Lilian Ketch (Cathedral branch and diocesan president).

Edward Island."

All three women will attend the Durban conference.

### KATHLEEN

Since her commissioning almost a year ago, Kathleen has visited various MU dioceses and Branches in the UK. As well, she met the new Royal Patron of MU, HRH Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh.

Last May she was invited to Rome to attend the International Union of Sisters General, a group of 1000 nuns from around the world who work on-the-ground in parishes, fighting for causes close to the heart of all MU members.

She was back in the UK in June last year to visit the Province of York MU groups and attend a Britain and Ireland leadership conference. In September she returned to attend the consecration of the Bishop of Doncaster.

She will be just as busy in 2026, attending the Diocesan Synod of the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf, to be held in Bahrain in February. Of course she will attend the two anniversary conferences as well.

### SUSAN

As Canadian president, Susan attended a Provincial gathering in Antigua last year and was part of a discussion panel on the future of MU.

"The things you don't ever expect to be doing!" said Susan. "I didn't even know what a discussion panel was!"

"It's an exciting role and a bit adventurous," she said. "I'm meeting a lot of people from across Canada and around the world."

During her presidency, Susan plans to visit areas of Canada that have had branches in the past, and areas that have never had a branch — all in an effort

to bolster the membership and impact of MU.

### LILIAN

Lilian attended Kathleen's commissioning service in London a year ago and is looking forward to the Durban Worldwide Gathering later this year.

"I find that when a member gets outside the box and sees how Mothers' Union works at the diocesan level, even the global level, you really get a feel for how big Mothers' Union is."

Lilian is the conference coordinator for the Canadian Council of MU, which will meet in late June at Villa Madonna in Rothesay. It's a business meeting but with more activities, which will see branch members gather from across Canada.

### CONCLUSION

While there doesn't seem to be a definite answer to the question of the Cathedral leadership of

MU, Kathleen is certain that encouraging each other has played a role in all their lives.

"It was Alice Kennedy who pushed me to first put my name forward," she said. "And one day I said to Susan, 'you need to put your name forward for Provincial President.' It's people who plant the seeds. We encourage each other."

"We know each other's strengths," said Susan.

The MU mandate is to support and grow strong families and work for change to address social injustice.

The three pillars of the MU movement are to end poverty, end injustice, and end violence against women. Mothers' Union has about four million members in 84 countries. Membership is open to both women and men.

## AROUND THE DIOCESE

# Naomi & Ruth facility is changing women's lives

BY GISELE MCKNIGHT

Women from the Naomi & Ruth Women's Wellness Centre were the guest speakers during the Dec. 14 service at St. Mark's in Sussex Corner.

The congregation heard three women's testimonies of how the centre had changed their lives — from drug and alcohol addiction to sober and clean practicing Christians.

The centre was founded in 2012 to help women recover from addiction and incarceration. They have a large house in the Shediac area where, over 12 months, life skills, scriptural study, counselling, healing, and transformation take place.

Dr. Stephen Hart, who worships in the Parish of Douglas and Nashwaaksis, is the president of the board.

Residential services director Lauretta Charters was the main speaker.

"They go from spiritually broken to spirit-filled," she said of the women. "They gain the skills needed to go on with life. This is what God has called us to do."

Lauretta arrived at Naomi & Ruth 11 years ago as a client, and now she passes on her lived experience to the women.

Since it opened, the centre has helped more than 400 women regain their purpose in life. Some have gone on to become pastors, teachers and tradespeople.



MCKNIGHT PHOTOS



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Lauretta Charters, at right, mans the information table while chatting with Donna Stuart, and Shelley talks with parishioner Anne Anderson (in red). Mary talks with Bill Coleman, while in the background, Katlyn and Nancy Coleman have a chat after the service. Lauretta Charters during her presentation at the Dec. 14 service at St. Mark's in Sussex Corner.



## KATLYN

Katlyn, 39, grew up with an alcoholic mother whom she could never please. Katelyn left home early, ironically finding safety and security in mental health and other government-mandated facilities.

She found out on her 16<sup>th</sup>

birthday she was pregnant. She got clean and had two more children, but eventually fell back into addiction.

She is amazed to hear her youngest child tell her she is proud of her.

"I believe I have a purpose for being here," she said.

## MARY

In her 50s, Mary is from Inuvik, NWT. She became addicted to drugs and alcohol, was homeless and spent time in psychiatric wards. Her family grew tired of supporting her, only to be used.

She has been with Naomi & Ruth since February 2025.

"It's time to live a beautiful life," she said. "The greatest gift is loving yourself so your light can shine."

"I look forward to having my family back."

## SHELLEY

Shelley grew up in the only Black family in Gagetown, N.B. and suffered discrimination and bullying. Her mother left the family when Shelley was 12.

Shelley had periods of addiction and sobriety, and suffered from intimate partner violence. She eventually lost her children to government care.

Now she is a new person, thanks to Naomi & Ruth.

"The love and joy I feel is amazing," she said. "For the first time in my life I love what I see."

I'm finding my identity in life."

She and her twin boys were recently baptized.

## THE HOME

Lauretta looked at a large home for sale for eight years, praying and hoping that someday it could be theirs. That day came last July, when they left an over-crowded five-bedroom facility for the 14-bed home with a huge yard.

The group has launched a capital campaign, hoping to raise \$1.5 million to pay for the home and its ongoing upkeep.

Donors can sponsor a woman for \$35 a month; two women for \$70 a month; and three women for \$100 a month. Donors can also make a one-time gift.

Naomi & Ruth relies solely on donations to operate. You can learn more at their website: [naomiandruth.ca](http://naomiandruth.ca) or call (506) 305-4225.

After the service at St. Mark's, parishioners had time to visit with the women during coffee time.

 **Missional Initiative Fund**

The Diocese of Fredericton has dedicated funds in the budget for New Missional Initiatives. These are intended to be small amounts needed to get the initiative going.

If you have an idea or proposal, we want to hear from you!

**Applying is Simple - 4 things are needed:**

1. A short summary of the idea/proposal;
2. Proposed Project Budget;
3. How is it Missional?
4. How is it New?

Send your proposals and/or questions to:  
Shawn C. Branch at the Synod Office  
[sbranch@diofton.ca](mailto:sbranch@diofton.ca) or 506-459-1801 ext 1008.

# Farraline Place has new leadership

BY GISELE MCKNIGHT

There is new leadership at Farraline Place, the ACW-affiliated home in downtown Fredericton.

In late October, Chelsie Ogden began as the director of care and operations, replacing the long-serving administrator Judy O'Donnell.

Chelsie is from Fredericton Junction, graduated from UNB and worked as a registered nurse for several years.

"Then life took me in a different direction," she said.

Since then she's worked for various agencies caring for vulnerable people. When Farraline was looking for a new director, they wanted someone with a care component in their background, which Chelsie had as a nurse.

It's been a bit of a learning experience for Chelsie, getting used to managing a large seniors' home, but she's happy with her new role.

"It's a bit overwhelming at times, like any new job," she said. "It's very busy, especially being December with lots of things to plan, but I absolutely love it. I feel like it's home — a comfortable, warm feeling."

She has been relying on the Rev. Dr. David Mercer, the chair of Farraline's board of directors, for guidance.

"Honestly, I don't think I could be more supported," she said of him.

## PLANS

Chelsie has lots of plans for Farraline Place, many of which involve the maintenance of the building, and will rely largely on donations to come to fruition.

A kitchen renovation, including a new dishwasher, as the home has only a sanitizer, is on



MCKNIGHT PHOTO

**CHELSIE OGDEN** is the new director of care and operations at Farraline Place, the ACW-affiliated seniors' home in Fredericton. She has replaced the long-serving Judy O'Donnell, who retired last fall. Chelsie has lots of plans for the home and is excited about her new role there.

her mind.

"The housekeepers are hand-washing for 60 meals a day," she said.

She'd also like to have some interior walls painted, as well as tackle a few other jobs.

There is the ongoing fundraiser for new carpeting throughout the home, which ACW branches and executive are supporting. That goal is \$10,000.

Her nursing background has

prompted her to create a new medication chart, and she has been busy updating files digitally.

She also wants to update the menus and offer more diabetic-friendly foods for residents.

And another item on the top of her to-do list is finding efficiencies in order to save money. The budget is always tight and when there's a vacant room, it eats away at their revenue.

"I'm looking for ways to save

money to give residents a better quality experience," she said.

While Chelsie has lots of plans for change, she's also aware that too much change might not be welcome.

"I'm still trying to keep everything pretty similar for the residents," she said. "I want to make sure everyone's happy."

The summer garden party and the annual fall gala fund-raising dinner will continue.

One thing she will be looking

for is more comfortable seating for residents. Many of the chairs are too low for them to easily get in and out of.

"I am going to be calling around the Fredericton area to ask for donations from furniture stores for furniture that is more fit for seniors," she said. "This is their home and they deserve to be comfortable."

## THE HOME

Farraline Place is next to the NB Legislature on Queen Street. It has 19 private bedrooms and one respite room. Some rooms have a private bath, and some are furnished. The rental price varies.

The residence is for independent seniors in reasonably good health who might need some supports.

The home offers all meals cooked onsite, plus weekly housekeeping and laundry services.

Residents enjoy daily activities, including exercise and bingo. Holidays and events are celebrated with parties and services. Dean Geoffrey Hall offers a monthly communion service.

As of mid-December, the home had two vacant rooms and an empty respite room. It also was seeking a casual cook, with up to full-time hours.

For information on the rooms or the job vacancy, contact Chelsie: [farralinehome@rogers.com](mailto:farralinehome@rogers.com) or call 506-455-6443.

Farraline has a staff of nine full-time, one part-time and one casual position.

"I see a bright future here for the residents and myself," she said. "Even now I can tell who's coming to my office door just by their footsteps."

**GOT PARISH NEWS?**

**SHARE IT WITH READERS OF THE NB ANGLICAN!**



- Confirmations
- Baptisms
- Special events
- VBS
- Parish picnic
- Special services
- Anything that's not a regular Sunday service

Send your large format photos (with captions) and articles to the editor:  
[gmcknight@diofton.ca](mailto:gmcknight@diofton.ca)



**The Synod Commons**

The Synod Commons is a regular, open, online forum for clergy, parish lay officers, staff and others who are interested in meeting with Synod staff on a variety of topics. First Tuesday of the month, 12:10-12:55 p.m. Learn more at our website: [nb.anglican.ca/commons](http://nb.anglican.ca/commons)



## DIOCESAN COUNCIL

# DIOCESAN COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

**Held Nov. 29 at Camp Medley**

BY GISELE MCKNIGHT

Diocesan Council's final meeting of 2025 was held Nov. 29 at Camp Medley.

Archbishop David Edwards opened the meeting with a Eucharist and a short homily based on the beginning of the Advent season.

"We are called to be alert, to be aware through the Advent season to who God is in our lives," he said. "Part of the difference is we tend to treat Advent as a run-up to Christmas, but we're not looking toward the first arrival of Christ, but the second coming."

He encouraged everyone to prepare by setting aside time to concentrate on the coming of Jesus.

"He will draw us in during this time," he said.

## BUSINESS MEETING

Archbishop David welcomed the Ven. Maria Shepherdson to her first Diocesan Council meeting as the new archdeacon of Woodstock. He also announced the hiring of his new secretary, Donna Beek.

Secretary of Synod Cheryl Jacobs gave a report on the new initiative called the Synod Commons, a regular online gathering hosted by the Synod Office to shed light on a variety of topics.

She noted the diocese is now accepting donations for the Diocese of Ho high school project. Design work has begun on the pool project at Camp Medley.

Council approved a motion to set a date for the next regular session of Diocesan Synod, to be held Nov. 7, 2026.

## LOWER WEST SIDE REPORT

Director of mission and ministry Shawn Branch highlighted the report from the Rev. Rick Cunningham, a bi-vocational deacon researching missional opportunities in the Lower West Side of Saint John, a priority



MCKNIGHT PHOTOS



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Richard Crowe and Archbishop David Edwards during the presentation on Christ Church Cathedral; Heather Hughes was a guest at the meeting, speaking on the Hope House Maternity Home project; treasurer Philip Shepherdson gives his report, with Geoffrey Hall, Jim Knight and Rob Montgomery at right; the lunch line with, from left, Julian Pillay, Rob Montgomery, Mike Briggs and Chase McLean; Nominating Committee chair Trevor Fotheringham; small group discussion, with Mike Briggs, Maria Shepherdson, Harold Boomer and Brent Ham.

SHAWN BRANCH PHOTO

neighbourhood near the Harbour Bridge.

Rick is doing follow-up work that began with the Westside Anglican Mission (WAM) outreach about a decade ago.

Rick spends six to 10 hours a week there, meeting people, being a Christian presence, helping where he can.

The only formal Christian presence in the neighbourhood is an elderly Roman Catholic priest and a part-time Presbyterian pastor.

"Rick's going in without expectations, just getting to know people," said Shawn. "I make sure he's got a well-stocked Tim's card."

Rick visits the food bank, even if it's to help a single mother carry home groceries.

"This is what it looks like to replant a church there," said Shawn. "But it's infantile right now."

Archbishop David told council the neighbourhood has 43 per cent of its residents living below the poverty line, including 32 per cent of children.

"It's an area very much in need of support," he said.

## HOPE HOUSE MATERNITY HOME

Guests Heather Hughes and Deborah Kantor made a presentation on Hope House Maternity Home, a project of the NB Right To Life Association.

In 2024, the board launched a campaign to create a home for expectant mothers who have no place to turn.

"Their situations are complex, and housing affordability has added a new dynamic," said Heather. "Housing is difficult to find and often unattainable."

The mission is to provide a faith-based, safe and supportive home with high quality care and spiritual growth, said Heather.

She cited examples of pregnant women in Fredericton who were homeless, living in tents, and the group having nothing to offer them.

After researching the issue, they found no Christian-based housing in

the province for women not wanting an abortion, so they decided to shift their focus and try to fill that need.

Hope House would be a residence for six to 10 women and offer shelter, support and life skills. The initial cost would be around \$300,000, with \$25,000 needed each month to operate.

"Please pray for the establishment of Hope House. I think it's really needed. You can help be ambassadors for us by spreading the word."

## CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL DECISION

Archbishop David, together with Richard Crowe, lay chair of the Cathedral Archbishop and Chapter, gave an update on the ongoing issue of Cathedral maintenance and structural issues, the cost and the next steps.

"The new estimate from Heritage Standing Inc., in 2030 dollars, is \$21 million, which was shocking to me," said Archbishop David, adding the 2022 estimate was \$10-12 million.

One of the most daunting tasks is finding artisans well-versed in the restoration of stone masonry.

"Trying to find companies with skilled labourers is difficult," said Richard. "A lot of buildings are abandoned because of it."

Masonry work accounts for just over half of the project estimates, he said.

Since 2023, the Cathedral congregation has debated the issue, looked at the options and chosen the formation of an independent foundation as the best way forward, noting it was not ideal, but necessary to open avenues for funding not normally accessible to religious buildings.

The Fredericton Cathedral Foundation has been created and the Cathedral corporation is ready to negotiate an occupancy agreement and hand over ownership to it.

The archbishop asked council to discuss, in small groups, if members' preference was for a spring synod gathering on the sole topic of the Ca-

thedral's future.

"These ideas are very welcome," he said. "What we cannot do is place unrealistic burdens on the dean and the Cathedral congregation."

One of the issues made clear to Bishop and Chapter by the City of Fredericton has been the unique heritage and placement of the building on The Green, the space next to the St. John River/Wolastoq along Waterloo Row and Queen Street.

Revenue streams used in Europe to fund cathedral restoration are off the table, as far as the city is concerned.

"They want the Cathedral to continue to look as it looks," said the archbishop.

After much discussion and a volley of ideas, members agreed on the need for a special gathering of synod, to take place most likely in April after Easter.

"I wholeheartedly endorse a special synod," said the Ven. Perry Cooper. "The Cathedral is for the whole diocese."

ing in a less-than-forecast deficit.

"I am reasonably confident we will achieve close to a break-even position for the full year compared to a full year deficit of \$217k," he said in his report.

Philip noted that one third of diocesan revenue comes from parishes, while investment income makes up the other two-thirds. Investment returns stand at about five per cent.

Council voted to approve the 2026 diocesan budget.

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Trevor Fotheringham reported that the executive committee of Diocesan Council is short one clergy person with the recent retirement of Canon David Peer. Maria Shepherdson volunteered, which was accepted.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Philip Shepherdson reported that revenue for the first 10 months of 2025 was slightly ahead of predictions, while expenditures are in line, result-

## ADVENT RETREAT

# Advent Retreat gave new insights into prayer

BY NANCY STEPHENS

The 24-hour Advent Retreat at the Villa Madonna has become an annual tradition for the Diocese of Fredericton.

In 2025 it was held on Dec. 5-6. Many of the attendees this year were regulars. Some were first-timers, including me.

Most were overnight guests, though a few who lived locally chose to sleep in their own beds.

Shawn Branch, director of mission and ministry and the main organizer of the weekend, gave us a warm welcome. He then asked a series of penetrating questions to help us prepare our hearts.

**How are you arriving?** I thought of the concerns that I have for my family and my church.

**What expectations have you brought? What are you hoping for?** I thought of my hope for spiritual refreshment and a sense of God's touch.

**Is there anything you need to lay down?** My phone! Confession: I'm a news junkie, so I determined not to check my phone for news.

**Is there anything you're longing for God to whisper into your life?** I really wasn't sure what to say to that.

**Lord, how do you want me to arrive this weekend?** I sensed he wanted me to be open to him and others.

Following a delicious roast beef dinner, the retreat began in earnest. Bishop Stephen Andrews, former principal of Wycliffe College in Toronto, led us under the theme "Praying Our Way through Advent."

His meditations were based on the Gospel of John, my favourite book of the Bible. He explored the topic of prayer under several headings: The Ground of all Prayer, Prayer and Doubt, Prayer and Ignorance, Prayer and Fear and Three Aspects of Prayer.

I found his meditations to be thoughtful and deep. I felt that we were being fed the "meat" of the word, not just milk.

Meat takes time to digest. Pardon me if I mix my metaphors, but at times it felt a bit like drinking from a fire hose! I took copious notes, so that I could capture it all and have a record to look back on.

The highlight for me was his meditation on Jesus' prayer in John 17, often called Jesus' high priestly prayer.

Most likely prayed in the



NANCY STEPHENS PHOTOS



**TOP:** Many people gathered on the first weekend of December at Villa Madonna for the annual Advent Retreat.

**LEFT:** The Rt. Rev. Stephen Andrews, former bishop of Algoma and retired bishop of Algoma, was the retreat leader.

**ABOVE:** Gathering in the dining room for food and fellowship.

Upper Room, it expresses Jesus' conviction and passion for his purpose and mission.

Bishop Andrews called this a perpetual prayer that continues to find expression in Jesus' intercession for us. The conversation he had with his father then, he has now as he prays for us.

We took time to compare John 17 with the eucharistic prayer in our liturgy and found common themes of glory, mission, unity, and so on.

Bishop Andrews pointed out that Jesus' prayer focused on

God's will and his glory. God chose to reveal his glory in the shame and humiliation of Jesus' death on a cross.

What is so glorious about the crucifixion? The glory is the shining forth of God's love and Jesus' self-giving, the mark of true love.

During the retreat, we gathered in the Chapel for worship several times: compline Friday evening, Morning Prayer on Saturday, followed by Holy Communion after breakfast.

There were opportunities for

personal reflection, times to chat with friends, go for a walk, catch a brief nap or just sit and/or pray in one of the lounges. Of course, there was lots of good food, and I enjoyed sharing a table with friends old and new.

Bishop Andrews' final meditation on Three Aspects of Prayer was a fitting way to challenge us all in our prayer life.

Do we pray with confidence? Do we persevere? Do we have an attitude of submission?

Asking in the name of Jesus is a way to align ourselves with

his will. Not my will, but thine be done.

As I mentioned above, this was my first time to attend the Advent Retreat. I came away refreshed and with lots to ponder.

I will not be surprised if I become a regular attendee in the future!

**Nancy Stephens worships in the Parish of Douglas and Nashwaaksis and is a regular contributor to the NB Anglican through her column, View From The Pew.**

## AROUND THE DIOCESE



## MISSION IN MOTION: community



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** A cozy scene at St. Mark's in Sussex Corner on Dec. 20 as people gathered to hear the Christmas story told in a slightly different way than they might have been used to; Catechist Tyler McKenna was one of the narrators; the large wooden tree formed the backdrop of the shadow boxes that told the story of Christ's birth in pictures; Karen Boyd was busy handing out hot chocolate, cookies and candy canes through the hall window; a fire pit was a focal point for many keeping warm on a crisp night during the presentation at St. Mark's.

## ‘ILLUMINATION’ REPLACES THE LIVING MANGER

BY GISELE MCKNIGHT

After 30 years of presenting a live Christmas nativity called The Living Manger, the parishes of Waterford, St. Mark and Sussex decided it was time for a change.

On the evening of Dec. 20, they presented a re-imagined program called *Illumination, The Light of Christ Has Come*, and by all accounts, it was a hit.

The changes came about because of the labour-intensive nature of The Living Manger.

“We had one man in his 80s cutting all the greenery,” said the Rev. Canon Paul Ranson, vicar.

“We have a lot of people who are getting older. They were willing, but not necessarily able.”

Last spring, the parishes met to discern what other ways they could present the Christmas story.

“So we asked, ‘how can we do this in a more sustainable way?’”

They found three focal points to bring to the new plan.

“We said, ‘what do we love about it? Telling the story of Christ, being outside, and giving a gift to the community,’” said Paul.

Blair Marks came up with the idea of using shadow boxes, so they built a giant tree with three tiers of boxes that illustrate the story of Christ's birth.

Each box lit as the narrator recounted that particular part of the story: the journey to Bethlehem, the birth, the shepherds.

Now that the set is built, and they've learned a few things, next year will be much easier, said Paul.

It was just a couple of weeks before the event that Sussex held its annual Old Tyme Christmas evening. Parishioner Paul Kilpatrick saw that the town had a very popular fire pit at the site of the farmers market.

That led to a fire pit at *Illumination*, which was definitely a focal point for the 100 or so people who attended.

The *Illumination* presentation differed in that there were no costumed characters and no live animals. There was also just one show instead of two. The story was told using narrators and the choir.

There was no trailer of straw bales to sit on, which could be slippery in poor weather, but people brought lawn chairs and blankets instead.

This pared down Christmas story drew a good crowd, and it involved a lot more congregational singing. And by the end of the final carol, *Go Tell It On The Mountain*, there was clapping and cheering.

Everyone was invited to line up at the side window for hot chocolate, cookies and candy canes, complete with the legend of the candy cane.

Gary Morris was in charge of sound, while his wife, Tammy, led the choir. A free-will offering was earmarked for the Sussex Sharing Club food bank.

After the show, Paul Ranson was happy with the results of the first ever rendition of the parishes' new Christmas offering to the community.

“I think it was great,” he said. “It went well, and we learned a few things to tweak for next year.”

### “SHARING HOPE & HELP”

## AROUND THE DIOCESE

# From Trunk or Treat to Christmas, it was a busy fall in the Parish of Fundy & The Lakes

It was a busy fall in the Parish of Fundy and the Lakes.

In October we held our first ever Trunk or Treat, organized by Christie Duplisea with help from Victoria Whitenect.

Approximately 50 people took part in this event, many of whom were from the community. There were almost as many adults taking part in this event as there were children.

There were treats to be collected and games to be played. There was also a festive fall photobooth for the participants and the community to enjoy.

In November parishioners from both churches collected items and the Ladies Group took ownership of the Coverdale project and invited other women from the parish to help fill the purses.

These purses will offer some practical items for women accessing the women's homeless shelter operated by the Coverdale Centre for Women. The ladies filled 25 purses and had enough items left over to fill a large plastic bin of much-needed items for the women.

The ladies are now collecting items for the Saint John Seafarers Mission in support of their Santa At Sea campaign supporting seafarers who are away from home during the holidays.

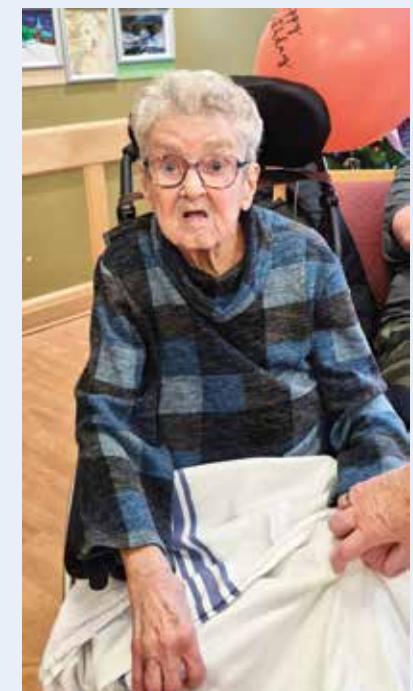
Throughout the Advent and Christmas season we had a festive Christmas photobooth for parishioners and the community to enjoy.

One of the families from our parish sponsored a family from Hestia House for Christmas, and parishioners have been helping collect items from the family's wish list.

Hestia House is a transition house that supports women and their children who are facing domestic violence.

Along with family and friends, we celebrated the 99th birthday of Dit MacDonald, at the Loch Lomond Villa "The Village." Dit is the oldest member of our parish.

*Submitted by the Rev.  
Rob Pitman.*



SUBMITTED PHOTOS



MISSION IN MOTION: community



**TOP ROW:** Trunk or Treat was a big success at Christ The King Church in the Parish of Fundy & the Lakes. Family and friends celebrated with Dit MacDonald on her 99th birthday.  
**MIDDLE ROW:** The Ladies Group collected purses and filled them with everyday necessities for delivery to Coverdale House in Saint John. The whole congregation got involved in helping a family in Hestia House for Christmas.  
**BOTTOM ROW:** Parishioners and the community enjoyed using the Christmas photo backdrop at Christ the King Church. The Rev. Rob Pitman during his delivery of purses to Coverdale House.

# Parish planning with purpose

## Getting your legacy program off on the right foot in 2026

As vestry season unfolds, many parish councils and stewardship committees are taking stock of the year behind them and planning faithfully for what lies ahead.

For some, this is the moment when a familiar refrain is heard: "We should really do more about legacy giving."

It's an area of stewardship that many churches aspire to strengthen but rarely find the right moment—or the right tools—to begin.

Resources from secular charities don't always translate to a faith-based context, and conversations about wills and bequests can feel awkward or out of place in the life of a congregation.

"We often hear from parishes that they want to start the conversation about legacy giving, but they're not sure how," said Michelle Hauser, Development & Communications Officer for the Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC).

"That's exactly why we created the Legacy Talk Parish Toolkit—to make it easier, more natural, and more spiritually grounded."

Rather than focusing on financial targets, Legacy Talk connects legacy giving to gratitude, discipleship, and hope for the future of the Church.

Each seasonal toolkit aligns with the rhythms of the liturgical year, offering clergy and lay leaders reflections, bulletin

inserts, sample messages, and practical templates that can be adapted to any parish setting.

### Begin with Vestry Season: Planning with Purpose

Annual Vestry Reports and planning meetings provide a perfect opportunity to integrate legacy giving into the parish's financial and spiritual vision.

For example, the Vestry Season Toolkit offers a Parish Council Checklist—simple, concrete steps that can help normalize legacy giving as part of a parish's ongoing stewardship practice: Add legacy giving as a standing item in stewardship conversations; Include a legacy paragraph in the vestry report; Ensure your website or bulletin mentions bequest options; Publicly thank legacy donors when appropriate.

"For many churches, the checklist is a great place to start—it helps parishes move from 'we should do something' to actually feeling confident about making legacy giving part of their spiritual DNA."

### From Lent to Christmas: A Year of Gratitude, Growth, and Faith

Across the seasons of the Church year, Legacy Talk offers practical ways to weave legacy giving into parish life—always grounded in faith rather than fundraising.

During Lent, parishes are

invited to reflect on what they treasure and why, exploring legacy giving as a spiritual practice rooted in love and intention.

The Easter to Pentecost toolkit celebrates growth and gratitude, encouraging churches to see legacy gifts as seeds of faith—planted today to bless the Church of tomorrow.

In Ordinary Time, the focus shifts to steady, everyday stewardship through simple reflections and conversation tools that keep faith communities engaged year-round.

As All Saints' approaches, parishes are encouraged to remember, honour, and plan—giving thanks for those whose generosity built the Church we inherit and asking, "What legacy will we leave?"

Finally, Advent and Christmas offer a natural moment to express gratitude and hope, reminding us that every generation helps "prepare a place" for those who will follow.

"It is our hope that using Legacy Talk as a guide will help parishes build a rhythm of gratitude and generosity," says Hauser, "and that 2026 will be the year more church communities feel inspired to take that next faithful step—turning good intentions into lasting impact."

To explore or download the full series, visit [anglicanfoundation.org/legacytalk](http://anglicanfoundation.org/legacytalk).

## CHRISTMAS IN MCADAM



MARGARET LAKING PHOTOS



**THE PARISH OF MCADAM**  
crèche outside our church, St. George's Anglican, has been a treat for residents. This crèche was hand-carved and painted some years ago under the direction of the Rev. Wendy Amos-Binks and parishioner Hazel Gass. The Christmas tree at left is outside McAdam Railway Station. Each year businesses, churches, and others are invited to trim a tree for Christmas. This is all part of Christmas in McAdam — a village that truly comes alive at Christmas.

## The Companions Program

September 2026 – June 2027

**Residential Companions** program is an immersive opportunity to experience a contemporary monastic community rooted in the Benedictine tradition. It is open to women aged 21 and up regardless of Christian denomination.

Companions live, work, and pray alongside the sisters, learning from them but also sharing each companion's own gifts with the sisters and their ministries. They will:

- ↳ Learn to cultivate peaceful and creative ways of living in a diverse intentional community
- ↳ Appreciate silence and solitude as well as community and service for a healthy life
- ↳ Put down deep roots of spiritual intimacy with God and each other
- ↳ Develop a personal path to ongoing spiritual growth



Application start & end (both programs):

January 1, 2026 – May 1, 2026



Cost:

Residential Companions: sugg. \$150/month.  
Companions Online: sugg. \$100/month.  
If cost is a hindrance, assistance is available.

Open to women of all Christian expressions, **Companions Online** is an opportunity to become "monastics in the world," living a Benedictine rhythm of prayer, work, study, and recreation. Online Companions learn to develop practices that support and nurture their spiritual life from the comfort of their homes.

They meet regularly for classes and discussion groups, and commit to times of personal prayer at home. They share in book studies, participate in online worship and sometimes screen a film relevant to spiritual growth and self-understanding. Online Companions also develop spiritual disciplines that follow the liturgical year.

To learn more about either program, or to apply, email:  
Canon Sr. Elizabeth Rolfe-Thomas, SSJD, at  
[companions@ssjd.ca](mailto:companions@ssjd.ca), or phone St. John's Convent:  
416-226-2201, ext. 304

## The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine



## NEW DIOCESAN SUBSCRIPTION

### LICENTIATE IN THEOLOGY COHORT

Huron University's Licentiate in Theology Program is pleased to announce a new partnership with the Diocese of Fredericton.

Through this new subscription service, all students from the Diocese of Fredericton can join our network of Canadian Anglican Leaders and Learners and access all courses in Huron's Licentiate in Theology Program - free of charge! Huron's LTh courses are hosted, virtually, outside of the 9-5 workweek to allow greater accessibility for student engagement.

Check out: <https://huron.ca/programs/theology/life-long-learning/> to begin your journey of theological education and vocational discernment.

**OUR CALLING IS TO EQUIP YOU TO ANSWER YOURS!**

ANGLICAN FOUNDATION OF CANADA

HURON UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF THEOLOGY



For more information, contact Canon Shawn C. Branch  
(506) 459-1801 or [sbranch@diofton.ca](mailto:sbranch@diofton.ca)

# Some Thoughts on Loving God

February 14th, Valentine's Day, takes up most of the oxygen for the month, at least commercially. Millions of dollars will be spent on flowers, restaurant meals and chocolate, all intended to show love to someone special.

But I'm thinking of a different kind of love – our love for God.

When asked which was the greatest commandment, Jesus quoted from the Jewish Shema found in Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark 12:29-30)

These words capture the core of the Jewish religion. The Jews were God's chosen people.

Unlike the nations around them who worshipped many different gods and idols, they were called to worship the one, true living God who created heaven and earth. There is no other god



above him and God alone is worthy of their love.

So, too, followers of Jesus are called to be a distinct people who worship the one, true living God. Our worship liturgy reminds us that, like the Jewish people, we are called to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

I don't think we are meant to parse the four areas referenced, as if one could love God with all their heart but, at the same time, not love him with all their mind.

Rather, I think the phrase

simply means that we are to love God with our whole being.

I've often wondered how that is possible. My heart is so fickle at times — feeling love for God at one moment and then forgetting all about him the next!

I've concluded that loving God is not really about my feelings at all. The real test of whether or not I love God is found in my willingness to surrender to him and to obey his commands.

As Jesus said, "Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them." (John 14:21)

Obedience implies submission to a higher authority. That's where the surrender part comes in. I express my love for God by surrendering to his authority to be the one in charge of my life.

I lay aside my own plans and agenda and allow him to lead.

How this works out practically is best described as a "mystery." For example, I ask God to lead, and he closes one door, only to open one I did not expect!

Or I ask him to lead and then wait...and wait...and wait... until I sense I just need to make a decision and trust that he will use it as he sees fit.

Looking back, I can see how he's been faithful to do that.

Obeying God's commands does not come naturally! It's the result of his Spirit's work in our hearts.

It's important to understand that obedience is not a way to earn God's love. Rather, it's a way to express our love for him.

Recently, I was encouraged by 1 John 2:5. The New International Version translates it as, "But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them."

The New Living Translation reads: "But those who obey

God's word truly show how completely they love him."

Loving God with all our being is certainly a tall order. Thankfully, we can rely on God's love for us and his patience when we fail.

I think of Peter who denied Jesus three times and yet could also say to the Lord, "You know that I love you." (John 21: 15-17)

Jesus not only forgave him, but he also called him into further service. That tells me that God is not going to give up on any of us who truly seek to love him.

• • •

*Nancy Stephens, originally from Blackville, served with OMF International for over 30 years, including 12 years as a missionary in Thailand. Now retired, she resides in Fredericton and worships in the Parish of Douglas and Nashwaaksis.*

# Hospitality as resistance

Hospitality is not a new idea. In many cultures, and especially in churches, it's something we value deeply.

We talk about welcoming others, being friendly, offering coffee after worship, or greeting newcomers at the door.

But true hospitality, the kind we see throughout Scripture and especially in the life of Jesus, is far more radical than being polite.

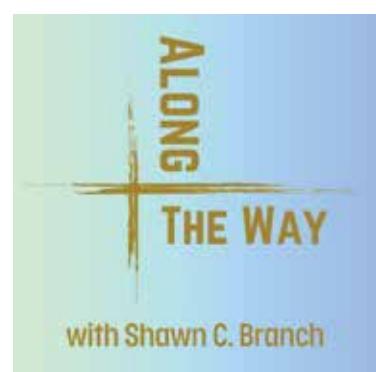
It's not just about hosting a dinner or shaking hands on Sunday. It's a posture of the heart, and it has the power to disrupt the status quo.

In a time when the world feels increasingly divided, suspicious, and fast-paced, hospitality is more than a nicety. It's a form of resistance.

We live in a culture that often tells us to stick with those who are like us, to protect our time, to draw clear boundaries around who is "in" and who is "out."

But the gospel calls us in a different direction. Again and again, Jesus chooses proximity with the outsider, the stranger, and the socially unacceptable.

He dined with tax collectors. He talked with women no one



else would acknowledge. He let children interrupt him. He welcomed people others had already written off.

And perhaps most telling of all (and hardest for me, personally), Jesus receives hospitality, too. He allows others to welcome him, feed him, and anoint him.

Hospitality in Jesus' life is not one-directional. It's mutual. It's human. It's relational.

The early church understood this. The book of Acts is filled with stories of homes being opened, meals being shared, and people creating space for one another.

It wasn't just about food. It was about belonging. These were communities formed around

shared life, not just shared beliefs.

Hospitality, at its core, is about making room — physically, emotionally, and spiritually — for someone else. And in our current world, that act alone is deeply countercultural.

It means being willing to be inconvenienced.

It means not always being in control of the outcome.

It means saying, "There's a place for you here," even when the person sitting across from you sees the world very differently.

In many of our churches, hospitality has often been reduced to Sunday niceties: coffee, cookies, greeters, and a handshake at the door.

These gestures matter, but they are only the beginning. Missional hospitality invites us to ask harder questions:

Who is missing from our tables, our pews, our conversations?

Who are we unconsciously (or consciously) excluding?

When was the last time we really listened to someone whose story made us uncomfortable?

This kind of hospitality is not always easy. It asks something of

us. But it's also incredibly powerful. Because when people feel seen, safe, and welcomed, not just as guests, but as neighbours and friends, it opens space for transformation.

And not just for them. For us, too.

In our day-to-day lives, hospitality can take many forms. It might be as simple as inviting someone over for a meal without stressing over how clean the house is.

It might look like asking thoughtful questions instead of offering quick answers.

It might mean making room for someone new in our routine — or being willing to be the newcomer ourselves.

Sometimes it means showing up for people who can't repay us. Other times, it means letting someone else serve us, even when we'd rather be the one in control.

Hospitality is not about impressing. It's about *making space*.

This February, many people will be talking about love, Valentine's Day cards, special dinners, or kind gestures. That's all well and good.

But for followers of Jesus, love is more than sentiment. It's

action. It's welcome. It's creating a seat at the table for someone who wasn't sure they belonged.

That kind of love, the kind rooted in hospitality, can change lives. And it often begins in ordinary places: front steps, kitchen tables, park benches, office hallways.

So as we move through this month, here's a question worth carrying:

**Where might God be inviting me to make space?**

In my schedule.

In my home.

In my conversations.

In my assumptions.

We don't have to overhaul our lives or host a banquet to begin. We only have to start with what we have and be willing to let someone in.

Because when we practice hospitality, not just as a task, but as a way of life, we reflect the very heart of the gospel: a God who made room for us, and calls us to do the same.

• • •

*Canon Shawn C. Branch is the diocesan Director of Mission & Ministry, supporting the missional life of the diocese and vocations.*

## MUSIC COMMENTARY

# A hymn for all times, yet somehow kept to Christmas

**H**ere in the Epiphany season, the Church, like the world around it, has more or less “put away” Christmas by now.

Gone are the decorations, the carols, and the glad tidings of Christmas.

Epiphany rightly focuses now on Jesus and His revelation of the heavenly kingdom through his teachings, and miracles, and before too long at all, Lent will be upon us.

The seasons move so fast! The music of the Church marks these seasons as much as the themes of the Scripture readings, yet one hymn curiously can speak to all of these times and more, yet we most often confine it to one season: Christmas (OK, maybe in Advent, too).

Let's think about “It Came Upon The Midnight Clear.”

In our *Common Praise* hymnal of 1998, it is found in the Christmas section (#141), but in the older *Book of Common Praise* hymnal of 1938, the hymn is found in the section, “For Our Country and For Peace!”

Why is this?

Perhaps it has to do with the fact the there is no mention of the Nativity story in the hymn at all — no shepherds, no baby



Jesus, no Bethlehem.

What we do read, instead, are more general references for a desire for peace and good will.

But wait a second, you might be saying! Are not the themes of peace and good will a part of what we wish each other at Christmastime?

Of course they are! And we can wish them at any time of year!

The author of the poem-turned-hymn, Edmund Sears, was writing such things into his work in reaction to wars that had been happening around him. He was a Unitarian minister in Massachusetts, in the mid-1800s.

At the time, the US-Mexican war had just ended, revolution was rampant in Europe, and Sears's own mental health was



**ATLANTIC UNION COLLEGE**, Lancaster, Mass. The plaque in the foreground reads: “Site of the Parsonage of Rev. Edmund Hamilton Sears, Minister of the First Church of Christ 1840-1847, Author of the Christmas Hymn ‘It Came Upon a Midnight Clear’.”

Lancaster Historical Commission/wikimedia commons

not well, as he thought about all this fighting amongst each other, “full of sin and strife,” rather than living out the message of Christmas, and the gift of the Saviour.

So there is a connection to Christmas, though not in the text itself.

Maybe the connection to Christmas can be found in the opening section, where the words of the first angel appearing to the shepherds are referenced: “Peace to the earth, good-will to men.” [A newer version renders this line, “Peace on the earth, to all good will”].

Angels appeared to people in

the Scriptures at many times and places, not just at Jesus's birth.

Speaking of the text, Sears's five stanza poem has a strong lyrical quality to it. Its message can be broadly summed up like this: the first two stanzas speak of the angels coming with their song and message of peace.

The third stanza bemoans the suffering of war, keeping us from hearing peace. Stanza four describes suffering and burdens, while the last stanza looks to a future time of peace.

All these things are experienced by some people at Christmas, and at other times of the year as well.

Final verdict? It's a good hymn or carol, and it is useful at any time of the year.

Traditionally, this has been sung only at Christmas, as one of the well-known “traditional carols” of the Church.

Yearning for peace? Needing some comforting words when conflict rears its ugly head? Or are you ever in need of a vision of a future time better than the present?

Think of “It Came Upon The Midnight Clear,” and sing it any time you wish.

*The Rev. Canon Chris Hayes is a musician as well as a priest serving in the Parish of Salisbury and Havelock.*

## *It Came Upon The Midnight Clear, by Edmund Sears*

*It came upon the midnight clear,  
That glorious song of old,  
From angels bending near  
the earth,  
To touch their harps of gold;  
Peace to the earth, good-will  
to men,  
From heaven's all-gracious  
King.  
The earth in solemn stillness  
lay, To hear the angels sing.*

*Still through the cloven  
skies they come,  
With peaceful wings unfurled;  
And still celestial music  
floats  
O'er all the weary world;  
Above its sad and lowly  
plains  
They bend on heavenly  
wing,  
And ever o'er its Babel  
sounds, The blessed angels  
sing.*

*Yet with the woes of sin  
and strife  
The world has suffered  
long;  
Beneath the angel-strain  
have rolled  
Two thousand years of  
wrong;  
And man, at war with man,  
hears not  
The love-song which they  
bring; O hush the noise, ye  
men of strife, And hear the  
angels sing.*

*O ye, beneath life's crushing load,  
Whose forms are bending low,  
Who toil along the climbing  
way, With painful steps and  
slow;  
Look up! for glad and  
golden hours  
Come swiftly on the wing;  
Oh, rest beside the weary  
road,  
And hear the angels sing!*

*For lo! the days are hastening on,  
By prophet-bards foretold,  
When with the ever-circling  
years  
Comes round the age of  
gold!  
When peace shall over all  
the earth  
Its final splendors fling,  
And the whole world send  
back the song  
Which now the angels sing!*

## TWO MINUTE INTERVIEW



### Chelsie Odgen, new director of care and operations, Farraline Place

**Favourite book of the Bible** - John

**Birthplace** - Fredericton

**What you love most about God** – His unconditional love

**Favourite place on Earth** - Under the stars in the country

**Farthest you've been from home** - Dominican Republic

**Favourite meal or dessert** - Anything Italian

**Biggest fear** – Growing old without having a family of my own

**Hidden talent** – Anything crafty

**Favourite movie or book** – *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* by Mitch Albom

**Your hobby** – Gym

**Three things always in your fridge** – Hummus, parmesan cheese, chili crisp



## Episcopal Announcements

**The Rev. Robert Salloum** has been appointed interim priest-in-charge of the Parish of the Six Saints.

## PARISH NEWS



## RIVERVIEW ACW CHRISTMAS PARTY

**MEMBERS OF THE PARISH OF RIVERVIEW** ACW put on a great Christmas party on Dec. 9. The theme for the event was "No room at the Inn." Members displayed various kinds of Nativity sets with each one having a special story behind it. The ladies sang along to Christmas carols, enjoyed lunch together and engaged in some fun activities.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS