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THE MESSENGER

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Annual Summer Camp

Worship, Learning, and Joy as the Diocese of Athabasca Goes to Camp

PETER CLARKE
Athabasca Editor

The Annual Camp for the Diocese of Athabasca was held at Camp Artaban, north of Peace River from Thursday July 30th until Sunday August 2nd. It was well attended with people coming from across the diocese to be part of the fellowship, learning and times of fun and worship.

The National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop The Most Reverend Chris Harper was once again in attendance and Robin Abrol, the Director of Ministry at On Eagles Wings Ecumenical Ministries, also spoke and took part in the events in the camp, which were thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Photos: Peter Clarke

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Belong to Christ; Be Transformed

Bishop DAVID GREENWOOD
Diocese of Athabasca

At our Synod this month (Oct 15-18; come one, come all!), I intend to discuss: *to experience and share Christ's love in all circumstances and to all people so that the family of Christ, the kingdom of God, is further established.*

The Diocese of Athabasca is seeking to transform Northern Alberta. We are sharing the love of Christ with each other and with all residents so they may experience shalom: health, wholeness, wellness, prosperity, peace, completeness, full relationship with each other and with God, creating communities filled with healthy and vibrant individuals following the Way of Christ. We are the church in action: empowered by the Holy Spirit, embracing all.

This could be a grand program, with goals and objective, measurables and milestones, reports and tracking—but I don't want it to be that. I want it to be our lifestyle, starting with me. My question for myself is, "Am I becoming a person through whom others readily experience the love of Christ?"

This does not mean we don't need to make hard decisions. It does not mean we will avoid disagreements or even attacks. But each time, the question needs to be,

- "What is our healthiest action here?"
- "Given what's actually going on, what can I do that is most likely to make things better rather than worse—for me, for the other person, and for the situation?"
- "What can I do here that will move this situation toward Christ's love, health, wholeness, and peace?"
- "What will show love for God and love for my neighbour here?"

I encourage us to return to our 1st-century roots, when the early church emphasized being a community whose life makes the Gospel visible to all. No coercion, no manipulation, no compelling. Rather, a lived-out-witness, an invitation to community, teaching, worship, moral formation, relationship-building, service, and, frequently, sacrifice to benefit another.

Here is an example: suppose your neighbour is sick. You are a Christian. Everyone else literally moves as far away as they can (the rich would leave the cities during times of sickness) and avoids the sick person as much as possible. The sick were isolated, and the poor, enslaved, and otherwise vulnerable were particularly exposed to dehydration, poor nutrition, and lack of care.

Unlike the rest, you don't run away.
You go to the sick person's house.
You bring food and drink.
You clean them.
You pray with them.
You continue visiting even though you know you might become sick yourself.

Your neighbour asks, "Why are you doing this?" You simply say, "Because Christ has taught us to love one another."

The neighbour isn't hearing a proposition about Christianity. They are encountering a different kind of human being and a different kind of society.

Christianity didn't merely tell people what things were good and godly. It became communities of people who practiced those things.

They weren't trying to *look* different.

They were *being* different.

And that difference became visible.

The early Christian proposition to itself wasn't, "Have a religious experience" or "Look like a Christian."

It was, "Belong to Christ. Be transformed."

In other words, who you say Jesus is shows up in how you live.

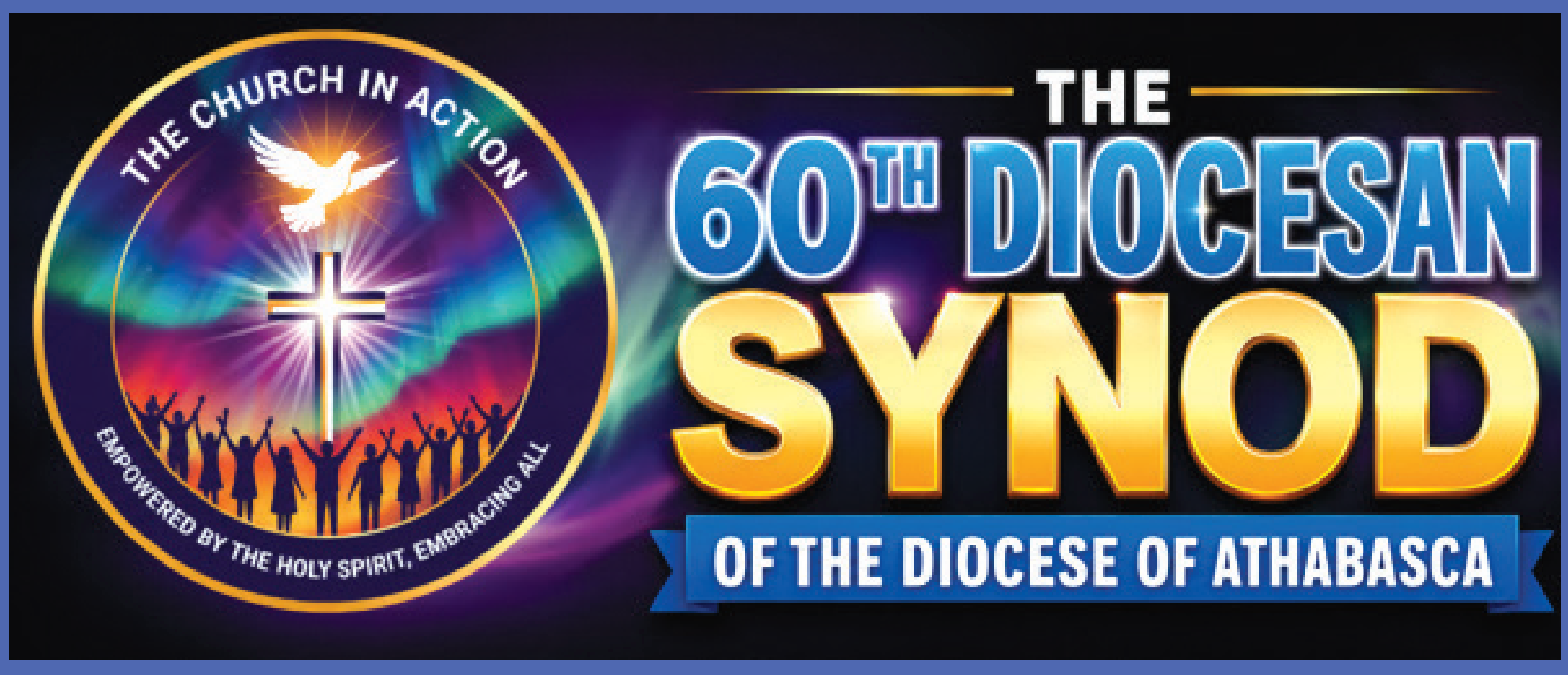
That is the message to myself, and to the diocese. If we are to truly experience and share Christ's love in all circumstances and to all people so they may get a taste of Shalom, then it is something we live, not something we perform. And if we live that life, all northern Alberta, our entire diocese, will be transformed in the Image of Christ as we follow Him.

Let us love those around us.

Join me, will you?

All glory be to God.

+ David



October 15-18
Peace River

At this upcoming Synod, the Diocese of Athabasca welcomes the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Most Reverend Shane Parker, who will speak to us on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

On Saturday, we will offer three workshops: one on a New Definition of Mission, a second on Being a Healthy Small Church, and a third on Contemplation.

Everyone is welcome to attend, even if they are not voting Synod members.

Bishop's Corner: Edmonton

Following the Way of Christ

In just a few weeks, representatives from all our parishes and ministries are going to meet together for the 70th Synod of the Diocese of Edmonton. I always look forward to what I call the gathering of the family.

We will pray together, deliberate together, and we will eat together. From past experience, I know we will laugh together, meet new friends from other parishes, and we will leave with a great appreciation of our common life together as members of our diocese. Because we are also blessed in that our Primate, Archbishop Shane Parker, will join us, we will also leave with a greater appreciation of our common life together with the whole Anglican Church of Canada. This is why I call this a gathering of the family.

Bishop STEPHEN LONDON
Diocese of Edmonton

The word *Synod* holds a deeper meaning. It is not just a name for a business meeting of the Diocese; it is a vision for what the church is about. The word *Synod* is a Greek word that literally means 'together on the road.' To me, it evokes the image of the original band of disciples following Jesus on the dusty roads of Israel. He had called each of them by name.

It is clear from the New Testament that Jesus called together a group of people who were very different, even completely opposed. I appreciate how the miniseries *The Chosen* portrays the disciples as constantly arguing and disagreeing. Yet, over time, Jesus forges this disparate group of individuals into a church. He does this by inviting them to live together with him on the road. They watch him as he proclaims the good news that God's Kingdom is at hand. They live with him as he demonstrates the power of this kingdom by healing people, raising up the poor, ministering to the forgotten, forgiving the fallen, and showing God's love. It takes a long time to forge them together, but they do it by living together on the road: praying together, deliberating together, eating together.

The same image speaks to us today. It is true that we (mostly) no longer live on the actual road, and our church is now much bigger than the first cohort of disciples. We are part of a global church of 80 million in the Anglican Communion, and our siblings in Christ number over two billion. But we can never lose the original image that we are a gathering of people walking together and being formed by Jesus Christ. It is the same for us today as it was then. Jesus is still leading us into the promised land of the Kingdom. We have not fully arrived.

In our Synod, we are not just doing business, but we are doing the work to equip God's people for the work of the church: to proclaim and live the Good News of God's saving love in Jesus Christ. We continue so that people can meet the living God, so that lives can be transformed, so that communities can continue to be formed in love and justice.

October 23-24
Edmonton

I hope you can see why I am so excited to have the family come together for the 70th Synod of the Diocese of Edmonton.

+ Stephen

Delegates at the 69th Synod of the Diocese of Edmonton in 2024. Photo: Margaret Glidden

We welcome letters to the editor, news, stories and book reviews (max 500 words), event notices and high resolution photos (min 1 MB, 200 dpi)

Submissions are due one month prior to the issue for which they are intended. The next deadline is October 1 for the November 2026 issue.

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Courageous Justice

The Rev. Maggie Helwig
Photo: Sandro Pehar

Canon Maggie Helwig to Speak at Social Justice Day

Toronto priest, poet, novelist, and social justice advocate explores suffering and grace in marginalized communities

JENNIFER STEWART
Lodgepole Communitas–Prayerworks
Edmonton

Anglican priest, writer, and social justice activist Maggie Helwig will be the keynote speaker for the all-ages Anglican Diocese of Edmonton Social Justice Day in November. Helwig's keynote address, with a musical opening by Maria Dunn, is on Friday November 6 in the evening, and the Social Justice Day is on Saturday November 7 at St. John the Evangelist in Edmonton.

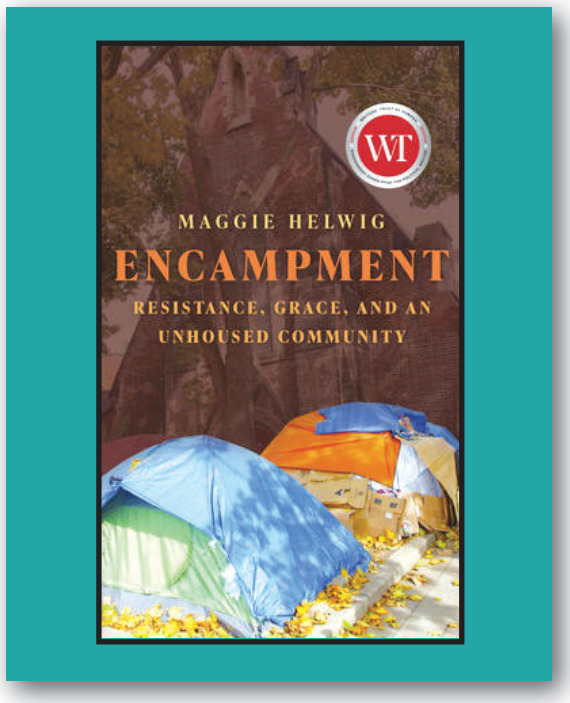
Helwig is the Rector of St Stephen in the Field near Kensington Market in Toronto, and is an activist and writer. Her 2025 book, *Encampment: Resistance, Grace, and an Unhoused Community* is Helwig's account of the encampment of homeless people living outside St Stephen's in the years around COVID and after.

Helwig offers a brilliant, immersive account of the people, the place, and the ways that suffering and grace shaped the lives of those living in the encampment and her own life. It is a moving narrative, the fruits of courage, of love, of never giving up on the call to love our neighbour.

And, as Helwig shows, her courage was fueled by the courage of those whose stories she carefully tends, the people who slept in tents near the church. Helwig reveals vulnerabilities layered on top of each other in these stories – early life trauma, exclusion from education and other systemic failures, disability, mental and physical illness, violence, racism and oppression, incarceration, addictions: complex stories that read like many lifetimes in one life, even for very young people.

A great strength of this text, and of Helwig's storytelling, is that she offers details from the inside, and she is as fair as can be.

Navigating and advocating in the housing, health and mental health care, and social support systems for those living in the encampment required skills, insider knowledge, hope and luck, sprinkled with humour. Helwig illustrates the ways



that local officials sought to make order and impose a narrative arc on vulnerable people and their stories in the encampment. Inevitably there was breakdown because stories and lives defy such structure at every turn.

Defending the encampment as a home to people seeking safety and community, seeking to be known and to be cared for and to care for their neighbours, required patience, love, faith and grace.

There are no simple answers here—only complexity in the history of colonial injustices against First Nations, in the relationships of care, in the details of the gritty day-to-day life in an encampment, the fear, the grief and loss, in the hopes and visions and dreams of the people.

And some things Helwig gets so right that it will make you weep: the way that street family felt like acceptance to Helwig herself. The power of small acts of care that sustained lives. The harsh fact that death and loss are daily realities woven into the lives of people living vulnerable and homeless.

Helwig writes beautifully, including homilies that reflect and shape her text. She calls all of us to '…tell the impossible story. That love is stronger than death… Because without this story, the world is lost." We are called to bring our whole selves to this work of social justice, with all our strengths and frailties, for this is how we are made whole. The calling is the blessing.

We are called to live in hope, to offer safety, friendship, and consolation. Helwig writes, "We are all broken; and only community has a hope of reassembling us."

All are welcome to the community of social justice in the Edmonton Diocese. Please gather with us to welcome Maggie Helwig at our Friday evening event, and to attend the full day social justice event on Saturday.

Registration and ticket details are on the website. Watch for more information in the Synod Scene.

Diocese of Edmonton Social Justice Day

NOVEMBER 6 & 7, 2026

Edmonton Anglicans Join Pride Parade

STEPHANIE LONDON
Edmonton Editor

In a vibrant show of love and solidarity, Anglicans representing eleven parishes marched in the Edmonton Pride Parade on Saturday, August 22nd. Our participation reflected a commitment to affirming that 2SLGBTQ+ people are truly beloved of God.

Anglicans from age 15 to 80+ joined in solidarity and support. Bishop Stephen London reflected, "I love the energy of the parade. Lots of people came up to talk to us and have photos. I am happy we can be a sign of Christ's inclusive love."

Queerly Beloved, a working group under the diocesan Social Justice Committee, organized the Anglican contingent for the second year in a row. Last year, the Reverend Jordan Giggey, rector at St. Timothy's, Edmonton, described the experience as "living out a part of my calling to the priesthood," and a tangible step toward reconciliation with the 2SLGBTQ+ community. "Seeing so many denominations gathered to remind us in the queer community that we too are beloved of God was a powerful testament to the Gospel at work in our city and our diocese."

- with files from the Rev. Mark Vigrass

The Diocese of Edmonton contingent at the 2026 Pride Parade

Photos: Stephanie London

Dunvegan Honours Parish History

PETER CLARKE
Athabasca Editor

Bishop David Greenwood and his wife Benita were pleased to attend a special Memorial Service at the Maples, near the Dunvegan Bridge. The Parish of Dunvegan held the service to honour and remember the many people who, over the years, have contributed to the life, ministry, and history of the church in the Dunvegan area.

The service was led by the Rev. Deacon Danielle McKenzie, who did a wonderful job preparing the service and offering the reflection.

Following the service, the congregation of St. Helen's, Fairview, graciously hosted those in attendance and prepared a wonderful lunch. Thank you to everyone who helped make this meaningful gathering a time of remembrance, fellowship, and thanksgiving.

St. Paul's McLennan Celebrates 95 Years of Service

PETER CLARKE
Athabasca Editor

On Sunday August 16th, 2026, St. Paul's Anglican Church in McLennan celebrated 95 years in the community.

Bishop David Greenwood celebrated the Eucharist in this lovely old church, which has been well maintained by members of the community. Originally, St. Paul's was at another location in McLennan, but the church moved to its present location in the 1940s.

The church has a special relationship in the town, which is evident in its congregation members. Some members are Anglican, whilst others are strong members of the United Church or the Roman Catholic Church, who regularly attend St.Paul's on the third Sunday of the month at 2:30 pm, in order to keep the church active. We were blessed to have a young family join the congregation. The twin boys, now 8 years old, play the pump organ—one pumps and the other plays. They also happily read a Lesson with youthful confidence. Some people often drive over 100km to attend the service, as they feel it is their home church. The church is very welcoming to all.

After the service concluded everyone enjoyed the celebration cakes and refreshments at the back of the church. There is no hall or basement. Ethan and Jonathan, our young musicians, did the honour of cutting the Birthday Cake.

It was a wonderful time of celebration with the hope of future continuance among us.

Alongside Hope

Anglicans and partners working for change in Canada and around the world

"This has been an absolutely resourceful weekend and an eye-opener into what Alongside Hope is doing in the world, and makes us very proud to be Anglican".

"The love of Christ, Christ's compassion for our neighbours around the world, and the spirit of fellowship were so abundant on faces, in words and in actions, that [the event] was a genuinely spiritual delight"

Alongside Hope Parish Representatives Gather in Calgary

JEFF HANGAR
Diocesan Alongside Hope Representative
Edmonton

Volunteers volunteer for a reason; they believe in a cause and they want to make a difference.

It all began when a new Diocesan Rep from Calgary, Lois, and a seasoned Diocesan Rep, Jeff from Edmonton, met at the 2024 National Gathering for Alongside Hope; sparking jokes about the Calgary/ Edmonton rivalry.

What if we took that energy and used it to bring together Parish Reps from all across the province? We then included the Diocesan Rep from Athabasca, Terry, and a meeting took place in Ponoka in 2025. After five hours of deep conversation and hilarious laughter, the idea of a multi-day event for parish reps was born.

Together with the support of the Volunteer Coordinator at Alongside Hope, Kim Umbach, and funding from the Dioceses of Edmonton, Athabasca, and Calgary, the Alberta Alongside Hope Conference came to fruition.

From the Friday evening to the Sunday lunch around twenty Alongside Hope Parish Reps from across Alberta met to seek a deeper understanding of Alongside Hope, and develop their roles as Church Reps.

We had a live Zoom with the staff of the TSURO Trust in Zimbabwe. We heard about the work in Kenya from Lois who had toured the projects and met the partners. We learned the importance of "telling the Alongside Hope story" from Terry, and from Jeff, we learned the universal significance of water. Kim gave us a virtual tour of the website so that we all learned how to get the best from it.

But the real stars were the Parish Reps that took the time to meet, learn, ask questions, build ideas, generate connections, gain understanding, and prepare for their next meeting at their Churches. God Bless our Parish Reps!

A game of Wheel of Fortune (Alongside Hope version), a campfire singalong and our own Eucharist Service wrapped up a good weekend's work.

What did people say about the conference?

- Inspiring, positive, creative, thoughtful.
- Alongside Hope….makes us feel very proud to be Anglican and to be Canadian.
- I Enjoyed the positivity and the 'can do' attitude.
- We learned unique ways to raise funds that don't take a huge amount of skill.
- It was wonderful to meet and chat with Reps from other churches.
- One feels very well equipped to take information, energy and focus back to the parish.
- Lois, you are amazing!!!

What were some of the main commitments/ outcomes/ ideas from the conference?

- Diocesan Reps to get more involved in other Diocesan activities.
- Parish Reps to meet more regularly through Zoom, and try to get Alongside Hope announcements into church bulletins, newsletters and intercessions.
- To partner with other church and community groups, and seek volunteers.
- To promote the World of Gifts.
- To try to incorporate Alongside Hope into Sunday School, sermons, and Prayers for the People.
- St Andrew's in Camrose are initiating a Rocking Chair Challenge as a fundraiser and inviting other churches to join them

As one participant put it:

"The love of Christ, Christ's compassion for our neighbours around the world, and the spirit of fellowship were so abundant on faces, in words and in actions, that [the event] was a genuinely spiritual delight"

Delegates reported that they found the conference so worthwhile that they requested that we do it again, perhaps every two years. Stay tuned!

- Jeff, Lois and Terry

Congratulations!

to St. Mary's Anglican and Vegreville United Church on the first anniversary of their Ecumenical Shared Ministry agreement.

Compassion Camp Brings Neighbours Together

NICK TRUSSELL
Coordinator for Missional Renewal
Diocese of Edmonton

Three Church communities from Edmonton's Holyrood neighbourhood worked together for the second consecutive year to learn compassion alongside the children of the neighbourhood. With the Illustrated Ministry curriculum as a guideline, children 5 to 15 played, sang and learned together about how God provides "what every living thing needs"; shelter, food, water, air and community.

More than making paper airplanes, Pastor Suzanne from the Holyrood Mennonite church, would remind us daily that we were "Peace building". Bringing together children and volunteers from different communities and backgrounds to be together in fun, fellowship and prayer is a profound work of peace and breaking down of the barriers that keep us apart.

Children from the Holyrood Neighbourhood and the different church communities joined together and turned their attention outward to see God at work in the place where they live and worship. Harvesting food from the community garden at the Holyrood Community Church and delivering it to the Food Bank Depot at St. Luke's Anglican Church gave them an opportunity to be part of how the churches in their own neighborhood work together to respond to God's call to love their neighbour. Singing for the residents of the Holyrood Extended Care gave the campers the opportunity to meet another group of neighbours and to bring joy and the hope of the Gospel into their day.

Compassion Camp in Holyrood is small and unassuming. We made lots of fun and impact from a very small budget, home baking, and a stockpile of craft supplies. For many of the participants, it was the highlight of their Summer. It became a place where they could make friends in a way they hadn't experienced at any other camp or program or day care. As the camp theme song says it was a place where we felt safe in the palm, of God's hands.

In addition to a place for children to grow in faith, this year's camp also highlighted the development of youth volunteers. Glory, a youth intern at Holyrood Community Church, developed the communal art project that we worked on throughout the week. Vanissa from the Mennonite Church was able to use the week of camp leadership and the time in preparation as part of her ministry development.

This year, the camp saw several new participants and volunteers, but most importantly, it grew in Spirit. All three church communities worshipped together for the first time ever with the launch of Compassion Camp registrations at Pentecost. The churches were so delighted by the spirit of their worship that they joined together again on the Sunday after camp week. Pastor Janelle Stone from the Holyrood Community Church preached at St. Luke's. She explained the altar frontal that the campers had made depicting the "Peaceable Kingdom" from Isaiah, as lion and lamb lay together, a vision of peace we pursue together because of the life and hope we have in Christ.

God's Spirit has given incredible gifts to these three distinct Christian communities so that together we could have a wonderful time growing in faith and giving glory to God's name in our neighbourhood. Compassion Camp couldn't happen without the three churches working together. After a second year being blessed by the fellowship, we wouldn't want it any other way.

Collaborative Community

Photos: St. Luke's Anglican Church, Nick Trussell