A SECTION OF THE ANGLICAN JOURNAL SERVING THE DIOCESES OF ATHABASCA & EDMONTON

THE MESSENGER

www.athdio.ca NOVEMBER 2026 www.edmonton.anglican.ca



Strangers Become Neighbours at Pre-Referendum Events

NICK TRUSSELL
Coordinator for Missional Renewal
Diocese of Edmonton

Neighbours responded to the referendum by gathering across differences and hearing the real stories of one another's lives.

Anglican leaders from parishes in Edmonton and Leduc joined with leaders from other Greater Edmonton Alliance (GEA) members to help coordinate five "civic academies" across the region. Over 200 people took part in these gatherings in their communities. Their purpose was not only to examine the referendum questions, but to get beyond "no and yes" to hear about the real pressures and stories that our neighbours are facing and to build relationships so we can respond to them together.

Each civic academy had guest speakers who spoke from their own perspective about how the referendum questions impacted them. We heard from Indigenous leaders about Treaty. We heard from newcomers about the challenges of making Alberta and Canada home, and the support they came to know from neighbours and agencies. We heard from generational settlers about the communities their ancestors formed and the traditions they brought with them to sustain beauty and relationships. We heard from Indigenous visitors from Australia, where a 2023 referendum to give Indigenous voice to their government failed, and they are now responding to communities divided by racism.

More than just offering perspective on the referendum, the speakers set the example for how the participants would engage with one another. Every participant had the opportunity to share their story with others at their table. People spoke to one another about the real struggles they are facing and what would it mean to be part of a community where they could work to bring change. Many people connected on issues where they had previously felt alone. At more than one event, people shared the reflection that "no one has asked me this question before". This is the power of what happens when we gather with intentionality and with a spirit of relationship-building.

Strangers quickly became neighbours as they listened to one another and heard each other's stories. They did not always agree, but there was a change in the conversation. Being right became less important than being together and being present to one another's struggle. In communities that are so very deeply divided and polarized, it was beautiful to see people connect relationally across differences.

Each gathering ended with two calls to action. First, "Will you commit to voting in the referendum and to sharing what you learned here tonight?" and second, "Will you join in the Nov. 3rd post-referendum assembly?". At the first gathering, a participant committed to voting because they learned at the event that their voice matters to their neighbour. The invitation to the Nov. 3rd assembly is so that the stories collected can be turned into shared action. Rather than only responding to the government's questions, the Alliance members can take action and voice for themselves what matters to them.

This is where change begins, with neighbours discovering their love for one another and their power together.

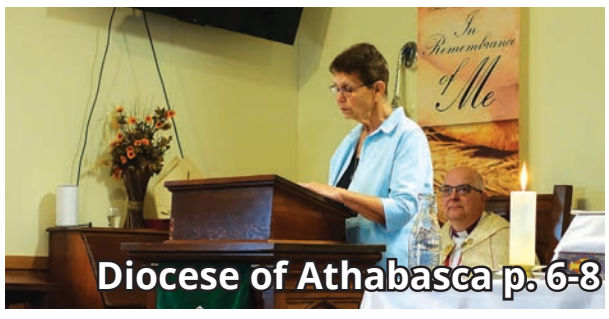
This issue of The Messenger went to press before the referendum on October 19.

For more information on the Greater Edmonton Alliance for the Common Good and to explore membership for your parish, visit www.greateredmontonalliance.org.

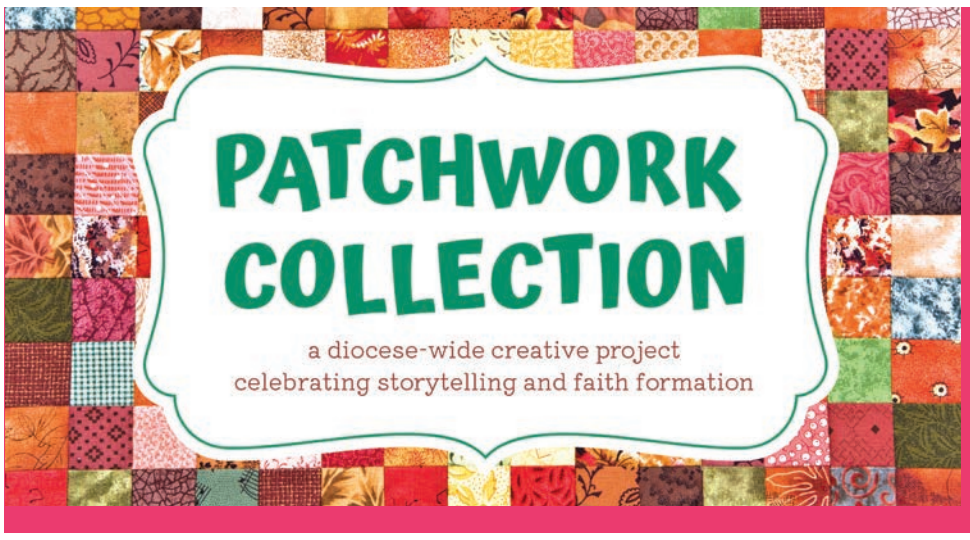
Photos: Nick Trussell, Canva


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Call for Submissions

Creative Project Supports Children's Faith Formation

ILONA BEVAN
Children's Discipleship Animator
Diocese of Edmonton

At our recent Children's Ministry Gathering, participants explored several collaborative ideas for the year ahead. Receiving overwhelming support, we are excited to announce the launch of the Patchwork Collection, a diocesan book celebrating creativity, storytelling, and faith formation.

This collection will bring together original contributions from across the Diocese, including retellings of Bible stories and parables, object lessons, poems, plays, science experiments, crafts, recipes, games, reflections, prayers, photos, songs, artwork, and more. If it helps share the Good News with children and the young at heart, it belongs in the Patchwork.

We invite submissions from all churches within the Diocese: writers, scientists, playwrights, poets, prayer warriors, artists, puppeteers, cooks, crafters, storytellers, photographers, magicians, and songwriters. We hope you'll consider including something families can cherish for generations to come.

To contribute to this unique diocesan project, please contact Ilona Bevan at ilona@edmonton.anglican.ca for information and guidelines. **The submission deadline is January 31, 2027.**



November 9

Godly Play Make-and-Take Social

Have you ever wanted to create some of the storytelling materials used in Godly Play? Many of the parables and sacred stories are surprisingly simple to make using basic, affordable materials.

Whether you're considering using Godly Play in worship, children's ministry, chaplaincy, or another ministry setting, this is a great opportunity to get started. Bring along your materials and create in the company of others. Not sure where to begin? Come anyway, and we'll help you get started!

Date
November 9

Time
10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Location
Good Shepherd Anglican Church,
15495 Castle Downs Rd NW,
Edmonton, AB T5X 4A8

Save the Date: Youth-led Worship on March 29

Purposeful Discipleship

Youth and youth leaders in the Diocese of Edmonton are planning a Youth-led Worship Event on Easter Monday, March 29, 2027 at All Saints' Cathedral. Please pray for them as they prepare.

Do you, your youth group, or any youth at your parish want to get involved?
Contact Nick Trussell at
n.trussell@edmonton.anglican.ca

Heavenly God, in you we live and move and have our being. May your Holy Spirit be present to the youth of our families, parishes, and throughout our Diocese; be the comfort, strength, and hope of the youth who are vulnerable in our communities; and grant guidance and inspiration to the youth and adult leaders as they plan to gather in your name.



Ideas Fly at Children's Ministry Gathering

ILONA BEVAN
Children's Discipleship Animator
Diocese of Edmonton

What happens when you bring more than 430 years of combined Children's Ministry experience into one room? A LOT of ideas, inspiration, and wisdom gets shared!

Our Children's Ministry Gathering for Leaders and Volunteers was packed with conversation, creativity, and connection. We tackled everything from small group discussions about volunteer recruitment and retention, youth programming, curriculum, and ministry start-ups to short presentations on creating welcoming children's spaces and learning about the Diocesan Children's Choir. We highlighted national professional development opportunities, compared and rated the curricula we've tried, and voted on the collaborative projects we'd most love to pursue together.

Wisdom created a whirlwind as we participated in a 10-minute "speed-dating" idea exchange, gathering as many winning children's sermon ideas, crafts, games, science experiments, seasonal and/or intergenerational events as we possibly could! Our day finished with a song promising to "Let our Light Shine" into the year ahead.

Thank you to St. David's, St. Matthias, Holy Trinity, Christ Church, Good Shepherd, St. George's Devon, St. George's Fort Saskatchewan, St. Mary's Ponoka, St. Matthew's St. Albert, St. Andrew's Camrose, and Tammy-Jo Mortensen (Diocesan Children's Choir) for sharing your knowledge and enthusiasm for children's ministry.





Photos: Jonathan Crane, Lisa Wojna (bottom)

Bishops' Corner

Called to Be Agents of Reconciliation



Bishop STEPHEN LONDON
Diocese of Edmonton

As Christians, we live in two worlds. We live fully in the daily world of jobs, paying our bills, getting our kids to school, cleaning the dishes, and so on. We also live fully in the Kingdom of God that Jesus promised.

One way I think about it is that we live by two different sets of rules, but one is higher than the other. On the one hand, we live by a normal set of expectations. We have to show up to work or school on time, we have to work hard, be a productive member of our communities, strive to keep our lives in order, and so on.

At the same time, we also live by a higher way. In Jesus Christ, we are not defined by either our accomplishments or our failures. In God's eyes, our accomplishments are celebrated, but they don't make us better than others, while our failures are forgiven and covered by the grace and mercy of God.

We are defined by the fact that we are beloved children of God. This is our most important identity. This is also the most important identity of every single person we will ever meet. This is why we promise to *respect the dignity of every human being* in the baptismal service.

God's kingdom brings our lives into focus. We may be in dispute with our neighbour, but they are never our enemy. The higher way of Jesus Christ calls us to love everyone because God loves everyone. The vision and goal that God's kingdom gives us is to be reconciled with them, even when it is a struggle to make that a reality.

Even in the church, communities can fracture because both sides are convinced of their own righteousness. Part of being fully in the world is to recognize that we too are broken, and to know we need the healing grace of God found in the Holy Spirit. It is not that the church is better than the rest of the world; we are not. But what sets us apart is that we know this truth: we and all the rest of the world need to be made new in the healing and merciful love of God. My friends, this love is freely given. God is love, which means that there is deeper meaning, truth, and goodness behind all the suffering and pain of life. We can draw on that truth to be agents of hope.

As Christians, we commit ourselves to put our whole trust in Jesus Christ and to follow him all the days of our lives. Every day, we can renew our commitment to be agents of reconciliation and agents of faith, hope, and love in our lives and to the people around us.

+ Stephen

God has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.
2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Persevere in Love



Bishop DAVID GREENWOOD
Diocese of Athabasca

Cheerful November greetings to you.
In our diocese, we have completed our Synod. The Alberta Referendum was held Oct. 19. Hallowe'en has come and gone, and All Saints' Day happened on November 1st.

There are many happenings in the political world which affect us. So much change! The world seems to be changing increasingly radically, with greater urgency. War in Europe (Ukraine), the Middle East (Israel, Lebanon, Gaza, Iran, other Arab States, the US), with economic strife between the US and the rest of the world. AI, with its promise of great help and its threat of great harm, even extinction.

We seem to be accelerating towards a future unknown, with perhaps more trepidation than hope, more fear than assurance.

This reminds me of the early church. War and economic strife were well known to the inhabitants of Judea, indeed to all people worldwide at the time. Immediately before, during, and after Jesus' time, there was great expectation of a coming Messiah to save the Jewish people and bring in the Kingdom of God, which presumably would result in joy for some and anguish for others. The historian Flavius Josephus, in his 20-volume *Antiquities of the Jews* (written A.D. 93-94), documented over a dozen figures who led revolts or inspired movements, calling themselves—or being called by their followers—"Messiahs" (Anointed Ones). It was a time of turmoil, heading towards a future unknown, with trepidation, fear, and hope.

In this world, Jesus came with His message of love, always seeking what most honours God and is healthiest for oneself and others. Despite all the uncertainty, the turmoil, the "Oh dear, what are they doing now?" occurring around them, the early Christian congregations persevered. They joined together to repeatedly accept Jesus into their bodies and souls, to encourage each other, to pray, to hear scripture and deliberate on it. Many of them died for their faith. Many of them sacrificed their wealth, their daily health, their livelihoods. And the church persevered, and the church grew. Its foundation was love—the love of Christ reflecting out through each member.

This has been the church in the world ever since. The church grew strong in the Roman Empire, and then the empire collapsed. The church grew strong in the monasteries, and then the monasteries were attacked. The church grew strong in the abbeys, and then the abbeys were confiscated and overthrown. The church grows strong, and then the world rejects it or attacks it. Like a plant which repeatedly gets trimmed back, the church perseveres.

We are in such a time today. God knows what we are going through, for His body has gone through it many times. He does not ask us to fight the world; He asks us to love it. He does not ask us to fear the future; He asks us to show hope for it. He does not ask us to lash out in anger or frustration or hurt or denial—He asks us to reach out in healing, assurance, and understanding.

Our foundation is love—the love of Christ reflecting out through each of us. May you be filled with that love, know that love, walk in that love, and be reassured by that love.

Happy Advent.

+ David

Print schedule change: From now on, the January and February issues of The Messenger will be combined due to a change in the publication schedule of The Anglican Journal. Please submit articles and photographs for the January/February issue to anglicanmessenger@gmail.com by December 1.

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 December 1 for the January/February issue.

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Stephanie London

A $15 annual donation is suggested. Please send donations to the dioceses of Athabasca or Edmonton, c/o The Messenger.

The Messenger is published under the authority of the Dioceses of Athabasca and Edmonton. Opinions expressed in The Messenger are not necessarily those of the editor or publisher. The Messenger is a section of the Anglican Journal, printed 9 times a year (no issues in February, July and August) by KT Web Printing, 287 Bridgeland Ave. Toronto, M6A 1Z6
Mailed by Elite Bindery and Mailing Services, 1860 Midland Ave, Scarborough, ON M1P 5A1
The publishers and editorial staff of The Messenger value honest, transparent and respectful communication. We seek to provide encouragement and inspiration to all who are building loving, inclusive, Christ-centered communities. We respect the dignity of every human being, endeavouring to lift the voices of people who are marginalised.
We are committed to the quality of our content, reserving the right to edit all contributed material. We immediately correct factual errors. To report an error, please email anglicanmessenger@gmail.com



Above: the pets of St. Thomas, Sherwood Park. Collage: Chelsy Bouwman

Facing page: the Rev. Susan Oliver leads animal blessings at Christ Church, Edmonton. Photos: Scott Vande Kraats

Below: St. George's, Edmonton holds a pet blessing at the Belgravia Dog Park Photos: Jeanette Buckingham

St. Francis Day Pet Blessings

This year marks the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi. In his honour, several parishes in the Diocese of Edmonton offered pet blessings on his feast day, October 4.

Please enjoy this look back at these entertaining outreach events.







Blessing of the Animals

For the past 16 years, St. George's Anglican Church has held a Blessing of the Animals at the Belgravia Dog Park in Edmonton, honouring St. Francis of Assisi.

This year, on October 4, about two dozen dogs (and one cat) appeared with their owners to receive a blessing from Interim Rector Br. Armand Mercier, who wore his Franciscan robes for the occasion. Br. Armand and all attending extended their blessing to the horses and all the other animals who make the river valley their home. This is an event enjoyed and eagerly anticipated by the whole neighbourhood.

–Jeanette Buckingham
St. George's, Edmonton






Roland









St. Paul's, Goodwin, Deconsecrated

SHERRY WATSON
St. Anne's, Valleyview

St.Paul's Anglican Church, Goodwin opened its doors on Aug 19, 1939. As part of Emmanuel Parish of East Smoky, it provided a group of faithful parishioners with a place of worship, faith and community fellowship.

On September 17, 2026, friends and families gathered to share their heartfelt memories and history of the church through the years.

A service of Holy Eucharist was led by Bishop David Greenwood, Bishop of the Diocese of Athabasca. The Eucharist was followed by a declaration of deconsecration of the church.

The building will remain at the junction of highway 43 and the Forestry Trunk Rd, right where it was planted those many years ago.

Its new stewards will be the Debolt Museum Society. We look forward to its reopening as a museum.

Your steadfast love, O Lord,
extends to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the clouds.

Psalm 36:5

HIGH PRAIRIE
St. Mark's Anglican Church


Friday December 4 7:00 pm.
Come and take part, sing,
dress up in costume.
Enjoy the true meaning of
Christmas
Everyone Welcome
Fellowship & Refreshments to follow.
Call Peter @ 523-3722 or 523-8855
if you wish to be an Angel, Shepherd or King
costumes provided.
2026

Partner Diocese News

An update from the Diocese of Ibba, South Sudan

Dear + David,

Greetings from your brothers and sisters in Ibba. Ibba is fine but there is not enough rain here, people are complaining and we don't know what will happen in the next one and a half months.

As you might have heard, we are moving toward elections and the government in the national, states and counties are all dissolved and the government is being administered by caretakers. This is the time the Church should be salt and light to encourage the citizens, so, attached are our prayer items. I want to let you know that we are also praying for your diocesan synod on 15th October.

The best case scenario is that there will be an eruption of peace, and the worse case scenario is that there won't be a sustainable peace in our country soon.

As a Church what we do in Ibba is to promote relative peace in our area by being closer to them through get together meetings and try to encourage other nearby dioceses to emulate what we are doing.

Generally speaking, our country needs prayer for the forthcoming election.

The Rt Rev. Dr. Wilson E. Kamani

The Episcopal Diocese of Ibba









Manning Celebrates Lay Ministries

PETER CLARKE
Athabasca Editor

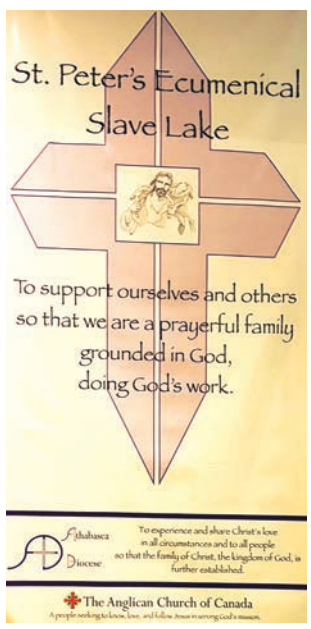
Bishop David Greenwood had the pleasure of joining the congregation of St. John's United Anglican Church in Manning on Sunday, September 20, where he led the celebration of the Eucharist. It was a wonderful opportunity to worship together, meet with members of the congregation, and enjoy a time of fellowship following the service.

During the service, the Bishop recognized the parish's Lay Readers and presented them with their certificates, thanking them for their ministry and service to the church.

The Bishop also had the opportunity to recognize and thank Jean Bradshaw for her generous contribution to this summer's Diocesan Family Camp. Jean lovingly sewed and donated all of the gift bags given out at camp, as well as the little crosses placed in each bag. Her time, creativity, and generosity helped make the weekend special for those who attended.

Following the service, everyone gathered for a visit and time of fellowship—a lovely way to finish the Bishop's time with the congregation.





St. Peter's Ecumenical Church gathers to celebrate fifty years of ministry in Slave Lake.

Photos: Peter Clarke

St. Peter's Ecumenical Church Celebrates Joyful 50th Anniversary

PETER CLARKE
Athabasca Editor

What a wonderful weekend at St. Peter's Ecumenical Church, located in Slave Lake. It was a very joyful celebration, marking the 50th Anniversary of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and the United Church of Canada joining in Ecumenism in Slave Lake.

This long journey has resulted in increasing growth due to the more recent new members from various other denominations, including many with no traditional church affiliations. They are simply listed as 'others' and are now a significant part of this thriving church.

The Celebration started at 5 p.m. on Saturday October 3rd when people signed in at the Narthex and could view slideshows of church activities and many photo albums detailing St. Peter's journey. Everyone who registered received a food ticket for the food truck outside the church, which offered a variety of food choices. About 100 people attended the event and shared fellowship and food at tables set up in the Narthex. It was great to meet up with so many people that I had not seen in years. Many people expressed the same emotion, having travelled great distances to share in this celebration. The fellowship and food lasted longer than planned but nobody was concerned.

The MC for the evening was Ellen Criss. The opening Prayer was offered by Sister Monica Denk, the current half-time incumbent from the ELCIC, who travels from Edmonton for her ministry in St. Peter's. The Chairperson of the Board, Robin-Lee Vance, gave a current report on various aspects of the church activities.



It was then time for music. The Slave Lake Community Handbells performed some lovely music, under the direction of Edith Maddex. It was very well received as the sound filled the large worship space. There was a short video message from the Lutheran Synod Bishop Trish Schmermund, which was followed by Heather Labrie giving a brief history of ecumenism at St. Peter's. Many people in the room had been attending St. Peter's for all of the past 50 years, an impressive achievement.

We needed more music, this time starting with us singing *Come in and Sit Down*. This was a good intro to the Slave Lake Community Choir performing a number of songs for our enjoyment.

I then followed with a Message from the Diocese of Athabasca, as Bishop Greenwood was in Ontario for meetings (he missed some really good food). I spoke of the 152–year history of the diocese and offered encouragement for the future to St. Peter's. We then sang *Dance With the Spirit* and tried to do just that. Old bones moves somewhat less than younger ones.

We heard a message from the United Church Regional Council, delivered by the Rev. Leigh Sinclair, Chairperson of Northern Spirit Regional Council. This was followed by the very joyful challenge to sing *The Body Song*, a fun children's song showing how we are all different in so many ways, but are all people of God. This led into a message from the other denominations, delivered by Amy Wright-Rosche, a very fitting segue.

After Sister Monica Denk offered a prayer for all who had gone before and a closing prayer, the marching out song was *Siyahamba*, after which we all went into the Narthex to visit and catch up once more. This was not the end of the celebrations. It would continue the next day at the Sunday service.

As an Ecumenical Church, the service that was chosen came from the Iona Ecumenical Community from the island in the sea in North Scotland. It resonated well with the celebration. We got to sing *The Body Song* again and learned about a weaving event after the service. A simple loom was set up with lots of varied pieces of textiles for folk to enjoy placing in the loom as they wished.

It was a very joyful service with plenty of singing, praising God, and entering His presence with Holy Communion.

Before we left the worship space, a group picture was taken for memories in many years' time.
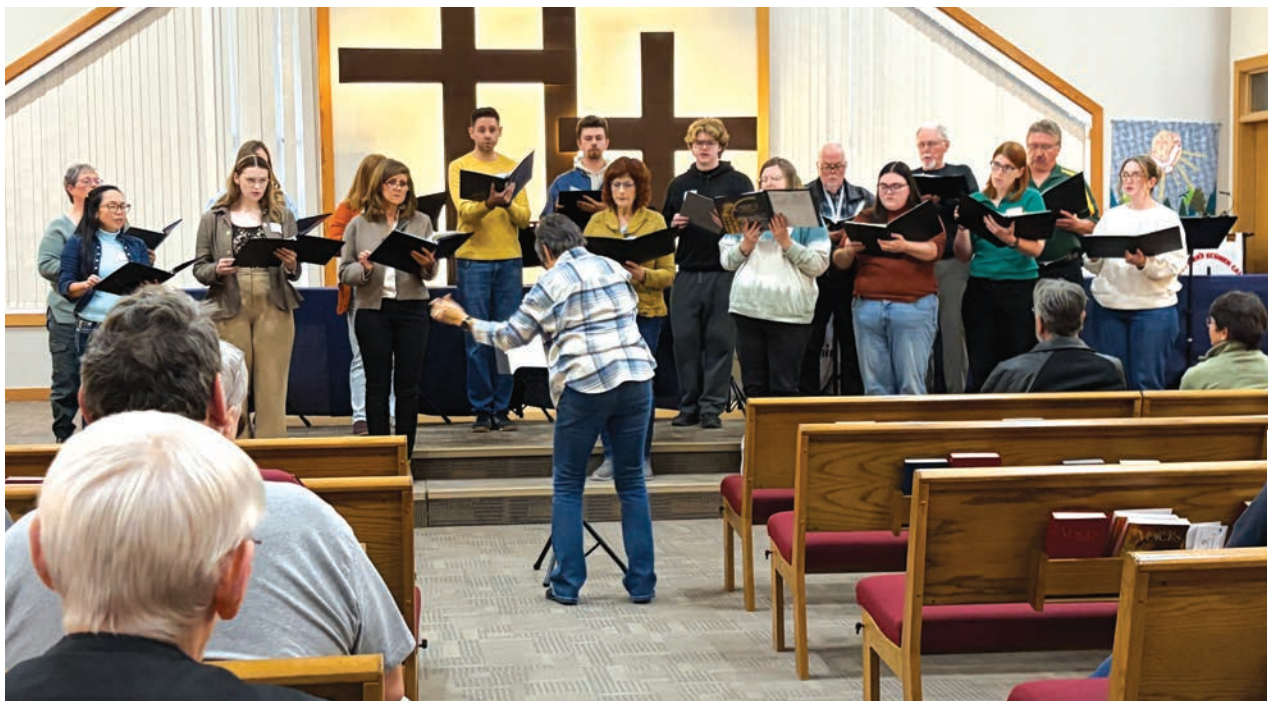
There was a time of even more food and fellowship, with a special cake to mark the event, in the Narthex. It was a wonderful time for the family of God to come together to celebrate this special milestone at St. Peter's.



