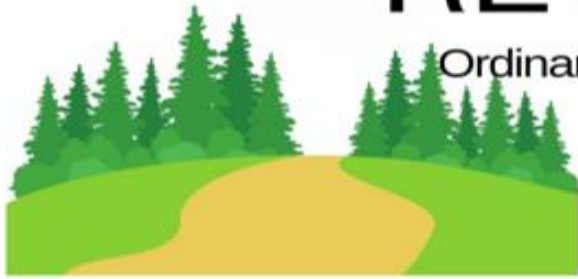


REVELATIONS

Ordinary People Learning to Follow Jesus



Editor – Jean Ostrom
Assistants – Naomi de Repentigny
Marie Zettler

Spring 2022
Volume 22 Issue 2

Revelations Clergy Letter -- June 2022

We have just celebrated the feast of the Ascension and then Pentecost Sunday in our liturgical calendar and in doing so we have been reading passages from the Book of Acts. Following the Ascension, we are given an account of the first few steps taken by that small group of Jesus' followers and believers, just before the day of Pentecost and I must confess that it is a description that fits very well with my comfort level when I think about the way the Church should operate.

The apostles begin by rejoining the other believers in Jerusalem and they establish an orderly and secluded community life centered on prayer. Peter efficiently takes the necessary steps to replace Judas, thereby mending the circle and establishing the correctness of his own leadership. Things seem to be proceeding in a methodical fashion, right up through the opening verse of Acts 2 and I, too, love to have things orderly and methodical. In my mind there is nothing better than taking things one step at a time and having a very clear and well-articulated plan for the future. As the first chapter of Acts draws to a close it looks like the Church is destined to quietly and systematically ride off into the sunset.

In our reading from Acts on Pentecost Sunday, however, something happens that breaks down all our comfort zones, as chaos and pandemonium breaks forth! Sound overwhelms the room. Tongues of fire reach out to seize people and all kinds of different languages are spoken and understood. As one commentator puts it: "The walls cannot contain either the people or the Spirit that moves them. With an instantaneous shift of venue, the believers are thrust into public view, and the first chapter's image of order is shattered forever."

We have been living through some very challenging days of chaos and hardship ourselves during these two years of the pandemic and if you are like me, you have had your own

experience of pandemonium in one form or another. I certainly had a sense of chaos all around me the day I raced down to Ottawa in an ambulance with all the lights flashing and the sirens sounding. I don't believe, personally, that in most cases God creates the chaos and the moments of hardship, no more than I think that God would have given me a heart attack. I do believe most sincerely, though, that God uses these moments to draw us out of our comfort zones and to further the work of the Church and to empower us for the ministry of participating in God's mission for the world.

This is particularly meaningful for me these days as I look toward my retirement at the end of the summer because you and I were taken out of our comfort zones when we first met, four years ago and established this wonderful Parish of the Valley. At times very little seemed to be orderly or methodical as we tried to imagine and make plans for how we would take stock of our resources and bring them together to form a community that is so much stronger than the sum of its parts. What an amazing and profitable journey it has been!

The miraculous events that we celebrated at Pentecost, that established forever the life and mission of the Christian Church, reminds us that what God calls us to do and to be can sometimes force us out of our comfort zones. It can sometimes force us to take risks and go beyond what is normal or status quo, and it may be anything but orderly or methodical. Thank you, dear friends, for your prayers and kind messages over the course of my recent heart attack. Thank you also for your support and for your willingness to journey with our clergy team as we have remained faithful to that divine calling in so many ways. May God bless you and bless this ministry in the days and years to come.

Bishop Michael Bird



BISHOP OF THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF OTTAWA

May 26, 2022

The Area Parish of the Valley
c/o Holy Trinity Anglican Church
68A Renfrew Street
Pembroke, Ontario
K8A 5R6

Dear Friends,

Grace and peace to you in the name of the risen Christ.

Please arrange for this letter to be read at services of worship in you parish on Sunday May 29, 2022.

I write to advise you of two important transitions. First of all, I am announcing that Bishop Bird will retire from full-time ministry on September 30, 2022. His last day of work will be August 31, after which time he will be on vacation until his retirement. I join with you and all the clergy and people of our diocese to acknowledge and thank +Michael for his ministry with us: as a bishop who, fortuitously, gave essential pastoral leadership to us all when Bishop Chapman fell ill; as an incumbent, who gave wisdom and vision to a new creation called the Area Parish of the Valley; as a seasoned partner in ministry, acting as the archdeacon of a wide territory; and as a dear colleague and friend of many. We are deeply grateful, and we wish +Michael and Susan every blessing—conscious that he will still live in the parish and may well help out as time unfolds.

I also write to announce that, with the hearty endorsement of your lay leadership, I appointed The Reverend Matthew Brown to be your Incumbent Priest, effective May 13, 2022. Matthew is well-known to all of you, and will provide continuity and strong leadership as the ministry of your parish moves forward. I am very grateful to him for accepting this appointment and I have every confidence in his ability to work closely and creatively with your clergy team and lay leaders.

It will be a pleasure to visit your parish in a few weeks, sharing worship and time with you as we celebrate the Feast of the Holy and Blessed Trinity.

With kindest blessings,

Yours in Christ,

The Right Reverend Dr. Shane A.D. Parker
Bishop of Ottawa

SADP/hnp

Copy: Bishop Michael Bird
The Reverend Matthew Brown
The Venerable Patrick Stephens
The Venerable Linda Hill
Territorial Archdeacons

Diocesan Senior Staff
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Diocesan Archives
Crosstalk

THE RIGHT REVEREND SHANE A. D. PARKER
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ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA · L'ÉGLISE ANGLICANE DU CANADA

Pastoral Care Emergencies

As we have undergone some clergy team transitions in the last few weeks, we wanted to ensure that all members of the Parish of the Valley know that in case of pastoral emergency, you are welcome and encouraged to reach out to any member of our clergy team. We all continue to be available to any member of the parish experiencing a pastoral emergency. Members of the clergy team will continue to take primary pastoral leadership in specific geographic regions of the parish:

For parishioners in Pembroke, Petawawa, South Alice, and Beachburg, please contact Rev. Matthew Brown (613-687-9123). Rev. Matthew is away from May 30th through to June 20th. During that time, please contact Rev. Rick Durrett (613-720-5710).

For parishioners in Whitney and Barry's Bay, please contact Bishop Michael Bird (613-401-8976).

For parishioners in Eganville, Killaloe, and Tramore, please contact Canon John Wilker-Blakley (613-291-4543).

For parishioners in Stafford, Micksburg, Rankin, and Cobden, please contact either Bishop Michael Bird (613-401-8976) or Rev. Rick Durrett (613-720-5710).

The members of your clergy team will ensure that either they or another member of the team responds to you in a timely manner.

Musings from Your Editor *(submitted by Naomi de Repentigny)*

I hope that you've been enjoying spring so far! We've already had a week of hot, summer weather, and a sudden destructive storm keeping us on our toes! We complete our summer gardens hoping for a successful growing season. I am reminded of our granddaughter, only 4, who works beside her mom, digging and planting small ever-bearing strawberry plants which will hopefully produce some yummy fruit. She says that she may give me "one" when they are juicy and red. She is just learning, and beginning to appreciate the circle of life, and the joy of different seasons. My granddaughter has also observed the birds, and the comings and goings of robin parents as they attend the fledglings in their nest on the rafters of our carport. She watches the father robin search for worms, before carrying them to the family. She is beginning to ask questions about God, Jesus, and I tell her about our celebration of the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. She has already

experienced God's presence around her in the beauty of nature.

In this issue, you will read contributions from members of the Parish of the Valley. We will read about happenings in our Valley, hear about Wings of Hope from Wanda Hiltz, and read a lovely poem by Kristina Lovenmark. We will read a letter from Bishop Shane, and hear about his visit to Holy Trinity. We are thankful for Bishop Michael's recovery from illness, and plans for his retirement. We are grateful to hear about Rev. Matthew's appointment as incumbent, and pleased to hear about the birth of Thomas James, little brother of Lily! We are reminded to be thankful for what we have, and to support each other in happy and difficult times.

I wish you a safe, and healthy summer season. Take some time to enjoy the colours of the outdoors, feel the breeze on your face, breathe in some air. Take some time to enjoy what God has given us! God bless!

Holy Trinity Pembroke Warden's Message

We want to congratulate and rejoice with Lily and her parents, Rev Gillian & Rev Matthew on the safe arrival of her brother "Thomas James". Now your days will be quite full of excitement and diapers.

Congratulations to Rev Matthew on being appointed as the Incumbent of The Parish of the Valley by The Bishop and at the same time we wish Bishop Michael Bird a healthy and relaxing upcoming retirement in September.

Perhaps it will soon stop raining long enough for all of us to be able to enjoy our Summer and the many activities we have that don't involve shoveling or snow blowing.

George Hodgkinson (Rectors Warden) on behalf of Charles Cheesman (People's Warden) and Lorna Sibley (Deputy Warden)

Update from All Saints'

Submitted by Louise Doran and Marion Lemottee

We had our annual rummage sale (after a two-year hiatus) on May 7th. It was a great success thanks to the hard work of our ladies' group.

After several years of dedicated work on the All Saints' and Central Parish accounts, our treasurer Chris has stepped down because he and his family are posted to Trenton. He and his family will be missed – Chris was not only treasurer at All Saints' but also a regular reader and he administered the chalice. Melissa was active with the ladies' group helping out wherever she could. Noah and Alia were regular servers at many services. Alia and

Noah even served and carried the cross on Rev Gillian's last Sunday prior to her maternity leave. We wish them well in their move.

Coffee hour has resumed at All Saints'. Thanks to a dedicated few led by Marion we are able to enjoy socializing again!

We heard about the Ukraine Shoe Box initiative that Zion Lutheran Church in Pembroke was running and decided that we would take part. Thanks to everyone who took part – we contributed 16 boxes.

Bishop Shane will lead a service at All Saints' on June 12th at 2:00 to formally rededicate the bell and bell tower. The bell replacement project was completed late last year and the bell rung for the first time on our feast day of All Saints' 2021. The bell tower project was made possible because of the generous, kind donation from Gordon Welsh, one of our parishioners.

Welcome Thomas, our newest member of the Parish of the Valley. We send our love and prayers to Matthew, Gillian, Lily and Thomas at this exciting time!

Spring Greetings from St. George's!

Wings of Hope Ukrainian Fundraiser.



Our work crew at the BBQ

It has been a very busy spring raising funds for Ukrainian Diaspora Support Canada. This group purchases airline tickets, provides billeted housing, medical, legal and psychological support to make Ukrainians feel welcome here as long as they need to stay. Our goal was to raise \$6000 to bring a family of 4 to safety in Canada. We held several barbeques and through the wonderful support of the community raised \$4300. A challenge was issued to the Parish of the Valley to join our fundraising initiative. Several generous donations helped in reaching our \$6000 goal. The challenge ends June 30th. It has been inspiring to see the community come together again.

We would also like to congratulate Gillian, Matthew and Lily as they welcome baby Thomas to their family.

Have a safe and happy summer.

Building community through Food, Friendship and Faith

Parish Profile – St. Stephen's Anglican Church, Micksburg, ON

(submitted by Naomi de Repigny)



If you travel along Highway 41, and take a left at Micksburg Road, you will come across a quaint country church just past Ross Road at 2785 Micksburg Road. You may be impressed by its neat appearance and sense of welcome you find, if you approach the main entrance. If you happen to arrive on the 2nd or 4th Sunday of the month, about 9:00 am, you will be invited in to share a service with a close-knit group that are part of St. Stephen's history.

St. Stephen's was the first Anglican church in Renfrew County, and was built in 1858. When it was first constructed farmers in the area wanted the log building set square with the survey lines, putting it on an angle. Rev. William Henderson insisted that the church be built traditionally with the door in the west and the altar in the east. A year after it was built, the church was jacked up and swung around to the position that Rev. Henderson requested! Later, a new stone church was erected under the leadership of Rev. R. James Harvey (1879-1887). When that church was outgrown, a cement block structure was put up in 1907. Unfortunately, an acetylene gas explosion occurred in 1909, injuring several people, but the following year, St. Stephen's was reconstructed. On May 5, 1912, the church was consecrated by Bishop Charles Hamilton. Electricity did not arrive until 1948. Since then, many repairs have been made over the years to keep St. Stephen's up to date.

Over the years, St. Stephen's has hosted "Noah's Ark" Vacation Bible School, and many church dinners as fundraisers. Now, that the pandemic is receding, hopefully these activities will continue.



Pat Leach and Jennie Mick are members of St. Stephens Anglican Church in Micksburg. It is a small parish with a lot of history. Pat and Jennie are 2 long term parishioners who make St. Stephen's Church of Parish of the Valley their home. They represent the "people" of the church, the ones who help to bring life to their community. They want to see the church continue, and to grow. They represent the people of the past, hard workers who helped the area to thrive over the years. They stand to see what's worth fighting for in their community.

Pat Leach has been a member of St. Stephen's all of his life. He is the fifth generation attending St. Stephen's since 1850's. The current register goes back to 1953. At that time, about 60 people attended. (PJ Hobbs' father was the priest when the basement was put in.)

Pat has one son, and two granddaughters. He lives close to the farm where he grew up. Pat worked at M&R Feeds in Pembroke for many years before retiring. He now helps on the farm that his son runs, and plows driveways in the city of Kanata during the winter, sometimes working eighteen hours when there has been a big storm. Pat and his wife Lorna enjoy spending time with their 2 grand-daughters who are in their late teens. At St. Stephen's, Pat and Lorna look after the cemetery. Pat is on church council, and has attended Synod several times in the past.

In the late seventies, the parishes of St. Stephen's Micksburg, St. Patrick's, Snake River Cobden, and St. Thomas Rankin, amalgamated as the result of declining attendance. Today, St. Stephen's alternates services with the other churches which are usually led by Bishop Michael Bird.

Pat is concerned about the longevity of St. Stephen's as attendance has decreased over the years. The recent pandemic was especially difficult for the 3 churches.

Jennie Mick is a younger adult from St. Stephen's. She grew up in the area, and attended St. Stephen's from

birth. Jennie's great grandmother Eileen Black attended St. Patrick's, and her mom sang in the choir. Jennie's father worked on Renfrew County roads for many years. When she was little, Jennie attended Sunday School at St. Stephen's with her brother and sister.

At present, Jennie's dad and brother keep 30 beef cows, and 6 heavy horses for working in the bush and offering the odd sleigh ride. Jennie attended college at Sir Sanford Fleming College and became an educational assistant at Horton Public School before returning to college to become Communicative Disorders Assistant. Jennie has been with the Renfrew County Board of Education for 24 years and works with children with speech and language difficulties. Jennie is a faithful member of St. Stephen's and serves as treasurer.

Each week the parishioners from these churches gather to worship together and to support each other. I think Jennie is a good example to other young people who have maintained the tradition of church membership within a community of shared values.

These two parishioners are examples of the "people" in the church community. They are long standing faithful members of our Parish of the Valley. They are part of a long history and legacy which is part of Renfrew County. They are close-knit members of a "family", with shared history and values, and common goals for worship in the community.

Happenings Around the Parish

Wings of Hope

We're Off to a Great Start! The Anglican Church Women of Holy Trinity, in association with St. George's Alice Wings of Hope campaign, are fundraising for Ukraine with free will offerings during Coffee Hour after 10 a.m. Sunday services. Our campaign will run to the end of June. A goal of \$1,000 has been set and we are very close - since May 1 we have raised \$956. To help with this endeavour, Sunday lunches were planned on May 29 and June 26; Maggie Jacques convened lunch on May 29 and Yvonne Twa will host on June 26. Your free will offering will be gratefully received. We have also launched a silent auction that will conclude on June 26. Thank you to all who have already assisted and contributed to this most worthy cause. With continued help we can reach and, God willing, overreach our goal.

Lynne Dunn Holy Trinity Coffee Hour Convenor

Trinity Sunday

June 12 was a busy day for Bishop Shane as he gave the homily and celebrated Eucharist at both Holy Trinity, Pembroke and All Saints' Petawawa. In addition, at Holy



Wendy Cayen, Bishop Shane, Jennifer Cross, Thérèse Narbonne, Lorna Sibley, Bev York, Rev. Matthew

Trinity, three new lay readers received their commission, Wendy, Jennifer and Lorna and two who have been serving for many years, Therese and Bev, were rededicated. At All Saints, Bishop Shane dedicated the renewed bell and tower and the presider's chair. The bell tower was repaired using a generous donation from Gordon Welch. The presider's chair was refurbished in memory of Flo Storey by her husband Ralph.

We were happy to welcome our diocesan bishop for the first time since he was named bishop. In true Valley style, a sing-along was led by the Intermittents at the end of the service at Holy Trinity.

COVID-19 Protocol Updates Diocese of Ottawa moves to "Green" on June 1st

On June 1st, 2022 the Diocese of Ottawa moved to the "Green" stage in our Diocesan COVID-19 Plan.

What this means for our parish is that masking is now optional in all spaces. Please follow your own comfort level, and respect the comfort level of others. We are committed as a parish community to showing gracious respect for everyone's mask wearing choices. Masks will continue to be made available at the entrances of our churches for anyone who wishes to wear one. In addition, all those attending a service in the Parish of the Valley are reminded to self-assess before coming to worship and, if experiencing any COVID symptoms, are encouraged to stay home and participate online.

As of June 1st, all congregations in the Parish of the Valley will return to using the altar rails for the administration of Holy Communion, with the exceptions of Holy Trinity Pembroke (Sunday 10am) and St. George's

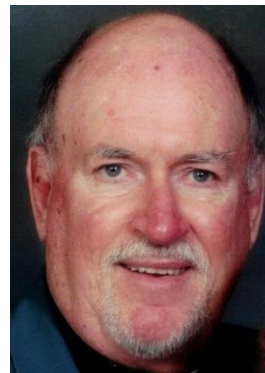
South Alice which will continue to employ standing stations for communion for the time being to increase physical distancing. Please remember that communion "in one kind" (bread only) is considered full communion in the Anglican Church and no one is obligated to receive from the common cup.

At this time, congregations may also resume passing the offering plate if they choose, and capacity limits in our churches are lifted. In many parts of our parish, coffee time has returned. Safety protocols for fellowship times vary church-by-church based on the physical space and location.

If you have any questions about these guidelines, please be in touch with any member of our clergy team or your local churchwardens.

Remembering Reverend Canon David Lethbridge (1933 – 2022)

(Excerpted from The Valley Gazette, written by Katrina Boguski)



Remembered for being down-to-earth, Rev. David Lethbridge was a well-known figure in Combermere. In the community, he wore many hats, and knew many people from his various circles of influence. To some, he was a history buff and the backbone of the Mission House Museum,

to others he was a nature lover and proprietor of Seasons in the Sun farm. Still, others knew him as a minister - the former pastor of St. Paul's Anglican parish in Combermere. To those in the Anglican church, he was "Reverend Canon David Lethbridge," known for being an exemplary role model for many values; to others he was a neighbour, a travel companion and a friend. He was a grandfather to many and to Timothy and Maryanne, he was simply Dad.

A graduate of Bishops University, Lethbridge married Phyllis in July 1959 and was ordained an Anglican priest in April 1960. The 60's were a time of turbulence, social change and adaptation both within the church and in broader society. Lethbridge was ahead of the curve on many issues that once sparked debate, but now seem widely accepted.

After ordination, Lethbridge served at several parishes in the Diocese of Ottawa. These included, All-Saints Westboro, Parish of Combermere, Navan, North Gower, St. Barnabas, Deep River and St. Marks Ottawa. He also assisted several Bishops with various projects and affairs in the Diocese of Ottawa over 37 years...all of which he thoroughly enjoyed. He continued to serve the Diocese of Ottawa in many positions after retirement including taking services when needed.

Lethbridge enjoyed working with children. He had a quirky way about him and frequently called children up to the front of the church where he would talk to them. He also visited the Sunday school classes. In both of these settings, Lethbridge was known to offer "church mouse ministry," where he would use stuffed toy mice as though they were puppets. The mice caught the attention of children and adults alike and were a memorable part of Lethbridge's ministry.

After retiring, Canon Lethbridge began showing great interest in history. He cared about the old rectory ...as it was about to be demolished and turned into a parking lot for the hall and Church. No way would he have this happen! After many meetings, hard work and renovations, the Mission House Museum opened in May 2006. He was President and David Kelley is the Curator. It was a joy to have a conversation with him. His presentation of local history was well-grounded in research and richly delivered through engaging stories. We learned a great deal about "All our relations" through well-researched articles Canon Lethbridge wrote for Revelations.

Perhaps the best way to honour David Lethbridge would be to continue on in a way that demonstrates we are all the richer for having known him.



**Thomas James
Hoyer Brown**

Born May 30th, 2022

Rev. Gillian, Rev. Matthew, and Lily are delighted to introduce you to the newest member of their family. Thomas James Hoyer Brown was born on Monday, May 30th at the Pembroke Regional Hospital, weighing 8

pounds 15 ounces. Mum, Thomas, Dad and "big sister" Lily are all doing very well. We are so very grateful as a family to the staff of the Pembroke Regional Hospital and

to the Madawaska Valley Midwives for their exceptional support and professional care. We are also grateful to all of you across the Parish of the Valley for your tremendous love and prayers as we begin life anew as a family of four. We're looking forward to seeing you all again soon! In Christ's love, Matthew+, Gillian+, Lily and Thomas

Cemetery Services

Our annual Cemetery Memorial Services are returning this summer. A number of services have now been scheduled, with more to be scheduled in the coming weeks.

All are welcome to join us for Cemetery Memorial Services at the following churches and chapels:

- St. Stephen's, Micksburg, Sunday, June 26 at 1:30 pm
- St. Thomas' Rankin on Sunday June 26th at 2pm
- St. John's Tramore on Sunday July 10th at 9am
- Holy Trinity Pembroke Cemetery on Sunday July 24th at 2pm
- St. Clement's Chapel Clontarf on Sunday August 28th at 2pm

More cemetery services will be scheduled in the coming weeks. Please watch our e-news and Valley Bulletin for dates and times.

My Soul Sings

Crossing open waters
in a loaded canoe
hearts free to soar
distant islands emerge on western horizons
Paddle dipping into oncoming waves
bobbing merrily; hips rolling
water splashing over our bow
your smile lights my path
Shore lunch and a rest
floating on tanned backs in cool gentle waters
loon surfaces nearby
greeting us with a wavering tremolo
Tent door securely zipped
campfire coals glowing white
nestled on a shore of warm granite
stars sparkling in the night sky
you slip your hand in mine
my soul sings

Kristina J. Loevenmark

Psalms 365: Develop a life of worship and prayer:

3 volumes by David Kitz *(An Interview submitted by Hilda Young)*

1. I am reading again your book Psalms alive! Connecting Heaven and Earth. You are fascinated with the drama in the Psalms!

Yes, that's true. I also love the poetry and imagery in the Psalms.

2. What gave you the idea of writing a three-volume book about the Psalms?

Psalms 365 did not begin like most of my other books. It began as a blog. I attended a Write! Canada workshop at the 2013 Word Guild Conference. The workshop presenter urged all of us to begin blogging. At first, I resisted the idea. But after I returned home, I relented and decided to give it a try. But what should my topic be? After trying a few things, I settled on blogging my way through all of the Psalms.

3. Why did you decide to divide it up in three parts? How did you decide on the divisions?

The publisher decided to break up the manuscript because in its original form it would have resulted in a book of nearly 800 pages. The divisions fell very conveniently at the end of Psalm 51 and Psalm 104.

4. Are all the three books about the same length? All three books are about 265 pages in length. The print is quite large for easy reading.

5. How long did it take to write and research? From start to finish the raw manuscript took about two years to complete. Typically, I would write one devotion each workday of the week. Polishing the manuscript and finding a royalty paying publisher took much longer than the actual writing.

6. Have you been asked to do any presentations about the bible study aspect of the book series?

Yes. I led a Zoom Bible study of Psalm 51 just this morning.

7. Has covid restrictions made an impact on your ability to promote the books?

Yes, restrictions on travel and church gatherings have made promotion much more challenging. Fortunately, many obstacles can be overcome through online events and social media activities, but I miss the in-person gatherings.

8. Do you have a favourite Psalm?

I have many favourites, but at the top of the list is Psalm 103. It gives me a full all-encompassing view of God and calls me to a higher level of worship.

9. I notice on your blog that you feature a different Psalm every day with a photo and commentary. Does the cross pollination of the blog and the books help increase book sales?

Absolutely. I admit not every regular blog reader is going to want a hard copy of my book, but some do. Also, some purchase the book(s) as gifts for loved ones. The blog also gives the book a broad international reach. On a typical day my blog has 120 views with about twenty of those views coming from in Canada. The rest of the readership comes from fifteen or more countries scattered around the globe.

Nearer God's heart in a garden



An avid gardener, my mother Evelyn Williams, cherished her granddaughter, Alia, above all her other beloved flowers. Photo: Leigh Anne Williams

This reflection first appeared in the May 2014 issue of the Anglican Journal. Reprinted with permission by the author, Leigh Anne Williams. "Thank you for sharing with us!"

Every Canadian gardener knows the rule that it is not safe to plant anything before the Victoria Day weekend. That's particularly true on the prairies, so my family's annual trip to the outskirts of Camrose, Alta., to the greenhouses to buy bedding plants was a spring ritual that I eagerly anticipated while I was growing up. It was so wonderful to follow my parents down the hothouse aisles, breathing the warm, moist air, heavy with the scents of flowers and green things, and admire the bursts of colour when spring was still just getting started outside. My mother loved flowers, and I learned their many names, as they dropped regularly into her conversation. We would drive home, our trunk full of red and pink geraniums, bright marigolds, an array of petunias and begonias, purple and white lobelia, spiky dracaena and silvery-soft dusty miller to mix into planters.

At home, Dad would get out a small rototiller to churn up the beds around the house, stirring up the

smell of the black earth and avoiding the peony shoots, while I helped Mum with the fun part of planting.

The rest of the spring and summer were intimately connected with the welfare of the garden. There was joy and satisfaction when plants flourished, impatience when cold weather stunted them, concern when heat wilted them or a hard rain pelted the blooms down into the mud. The worst was hail. Many a time my mother ran out into a shower of small ice pellets to pull the baskets and planters into a sheltered spot. A particularly terrible hailstorm that tore the leaves off the trees and wreaked havoc with the plants nearly ruined her summer a few years ago.

When I moved to Halifax to go to university, I reveled in the verdant abundance of plants, trees and flowers that grew in the more temperate east coast climate.

"There's a peach tree in the yard," I excitedly told my mother by phone, eager to share the wonders of my new city. I often detoured through the public gardens to walk or sit among the huge rhododendron bushes, azaleas and bed after bed of tulips and roses. Gardens for me, like her, were places to seek peace, solace and joy amidst the beauty of what was green and alive.

Hot Toronto summers, I found when I moved again, had their own exoticism. "Mum, I can grow jasmine and hibiscus and bougainvillea!" The Victorian Garden at the Cathedral Church of St. James offered another welcome refuge from the slings and arrows of everyday life. I loved to read the quote from a poem by Dorothy Frances Gurney, inscribed on a plaque: "One is nearer God's heart in a garden/Than anywhere else on earth." My mother shared my wonder on a visit, admiring the English-style gardens and huge trees. "You've got to see the magnolia trees," I told her, raving about that brief springtime window of a week or two when those big, delicate waxy-pink blooms cover the trees.

Two years ago, my mother came to help me care for our year-old daughter, Alia, while my husband was abroad. It seemed like the magnolia timing was right. She was here for the beginning of spring, but an unusual warm spell that March moved everything far ahead of its proper time. The magnolia buds were starting to open when a hard frost came. Almost all the flowers were ruined. We were both disappointed but told ourselves there would be other springs, other magnolia seasons.

Soon after, though, our own hard frost came. My mother told me that the doctor had found a tumour. Since she had no symptoms, no pain, I told myself it was early and all would be well. There was a surgery, and we hoped and prayed. But five weeks later, Mum was gone, torn from our arms so quickly we were all left frozen in shock and disbelief in the icy wind of February.

Not much grew on our balcony last summer. Maybe I didn't have the heart or the energy to put into container gardening. I had to reserve my time and energy to tend one precious flower, the one that Mum loved more than any other - her only grandchild, Alia, whose middle name is Jasmine. "Take care of Alia," she told me when she was in the hospital.

"I wish Grandma could go back to Grandpa's house," Alia said to me one day last winter.

"I wish she could, too," I said, "but she can't come back from heaven, sweetheart."

"Is heaven far away?"

I faltered. How far is it?

"God is always with us, and Grandma is with God, so maybe she is close by," I said. "Maybe she can see us."

"Does heaven have a window?" Alia asked.

"Yes, maybe it's like that," I said.

I often think I am still frozen. I have been reminded that no season is truly safe, but I lifted Alia up the other day to touch the big fuzzy buds on our neighbour's magnolia tree. And I'm watching to see how the big trees in the park, so broken in December's ice storm, will begin to grow again. I think of the last stanza of Gurney's poem: For he broke it for us in a garden / Under the olive trees / Where the angel of strength was the warden / And the soul of the world found ease.

Maybe this spring, I will begin to plant again.

God's Garden

*The Lord God planted a garden
In the first white days of the world,
And He set there an angel warden
In a garment of light enfurled.
So near to the peace of Heaven,
That the hawk might nest with the wren,
For there in the cool of the even
God walked with the first of men.
And I dream that these garden-closes*

*With their shade and their sun-flecked sod
 And their lilies and bowers of roses,
 Were laid by the hand of God.
 The kiss of the sun for pardon,
 The song of the birds for mirth,—
 One is nearer God's heart in a garden
 Than anywhere else on earth.
 For He broke it for us in a garden
 Under the olive-trees
 Where the angel of strength was the warden
 And the soul of the world found ease.*
Dorothy Frances Gurney

Where Has Your Handbag Been?

Have you ever noticed women who set their handbags on public toilet floors, then go directly to their dining tables and set it on the table? Happens a lot!

It's not always the 'restaurant food' that causes stomach distress. Sometimes 'what you don't know **will** hurt you!'

Mom got so upset when guests came in the door and plopped their handbags down on the counter where she was cooking or setting up food. She always said that handbags are really dirty, because of where they have been.

It's something just about every woman carries with them. While we may know what's inside our handbags, do you have any idea what's on the outside?

Women carry handbags everywhere; from the office to public toilets to the floor of the car. Most women won't be caught without their handbags, but did you ever stop to think about where your handbag goes during the day?

'I drive a school bus, so my handbag has been on the floor of the bus a lot,' says one woman. 'On the floor of my car and in toilets.'

'I put my handbag in grocery shopping carts and on the floor of the toilet,' says another woman, 'and of course in my home which should be clean.'

To find out if handbags harbour a lot of bacteria, some were tested at Nelson Laboratories in Salt Lake, and then we set out to test the average woman's handbag. Most women told us they didn't stop to think about what was on the bottom of their handbag. Most said at home they usually set their handbags on top of kitchen tables and counters where food is prepared. Most of the ladies we talked to told us they wouldn't be surprised if their handbags were at least a little bit dirty.

It turns out handbags are so surprisingly dirty, even the microbiologist who tested them was shocked.

Microbiologist Amy Karen of Nelson Labs says nearly all of the handbags tested were not only high in bacteria, but high in harmful kinds of bacteria.

Pseudomonas can cause eye infections; *staphylococcus aureus* can cause serious skin infections and *salmonella* and *e-coli* found on the handbags could make people very sick. In one sampling, four of five handbags tested positive for *salmonella*, and that's not the worst of it. 'There is faecal contamination on the handbags' says Amy. Leather or vinyl handbags tended to be cleaner than cloth handbags, and lifestyle seemed to play a role.

People with kids tended to have dirtier handbags than those without.

So the moral of this story is that your handbag won't kill you, but it does have the potential to make you very sick if you keep it on places where you eat. Use hooks to hang your handbag at home and in toilets, and don't put it on your desk, a restaurant table, or on your kitchen countertop.

Experts say you should think of your handbag the same way you would a pair of shoes.

'If you think about putting a pair of shoes on your countertops, that's the same thing you're doing when you put your handbag on the countertops.' Your handbag has gone where individuals before you have walked, sat, sneezed, coughed, spat, urinated, emptied bowels, etc! Do you really want to bring that home with you?

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