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# The Mustard Seed.

A PUBLICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF BRANDON • A SECTION OF THE ANGLICAN JOURNAL • DECEMBER 2025

## BRANDON REPS AT ALONGSIDE HOPE

*By Debbie Clevett  
Diocesan Representative*

The Alongside Hope national gathering was held in Toronto October 23-25, 2025. It began informally on the evening of October 22, when Diocesan representatives, Mapping Exercise facilitators, and some Youth Council members met for dinner. It was an opportunity to meet both incoming and returning members. After dinner, Alongside Hope staff staged a fun-filled game show event as an (re)orientation session for Diocesan reps.

Thursday began with an opening worship led by Reverend Terry Frances, Diocese of Athabasca. His message reflected how Jesus shows us how to look after all creation. Although today's world is not so perfect, our purpose is to make a difference; we care, and we are not alone; our help comes from God who gives us strength to follow his will. Given the overwhelming events of our times, we may ask how can we make a difference? Terry reminds us that "helping one person may not change the world, but helping that one person may mean all the world to them."

Much of the morning was spent reviewing the Alongside Hope website. Janice Biehn reviewed

the communications resources and in particular, the Connections Newsletter and the Under The Sun publication.

Carolyn Cummins, Fundraising Director, shared a number of ways to raise funds locally that can then be sent through Alongside Hope to global projects. Rather than shipping goods overseas from Canada, which is very costly, can undermine local markets, diminish people's dignity and sometimes attaches aid or gifts to hope or expectations of religious conversion, a Diocese might gather

and give out coats, scarves, and mitts locally and donate globally money for each item distributed; or donate locally to food banks and match funds for nutritional supplements for malnourished children globally.

We received a report from three of our members who attended the Canadian Food Grains Bank, Hunger On The Hill event who spent several days meeting with 4 or 5 MPs each day to discuss hunger in Canada (3 out of every 4 Canadian families cannot afford a nutritious diet) and the world (720 million people in the world do not get enough to eat each day). Hunger is preventable. Canadian aid makes a real impact for people living in poverty around the world. Canadian aid helps improve livelihoods, builds stronger, local and global economies and contributes to a more stable and peaceful world for us all. As a global leader in agriculture and food, Canadians can write to the Honorable Randeep Sarai, Secretary of State for International Development asking that Canada help communities dealing with rising food prices, climate issues, and conflict by prioritizing support for agriculture and food systems.

Su McLeod, Supporter Relations Director, provided an overview of And It Was So, the National Youth Project. This is a joint project of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) in collaboration with partners like Alongside Hope, Canadian Lutheran World Relief and the Food Grains Bank. Our Youth Council delegate, Stella Kukurudz will provide further information about this project.

The next day we moved into intentional discussion around the

94 Calls to Action that came out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Dawn Maracle, Animator, Indigenous Justice, ACC) presented an overview of where the Anglican Church of Canada has come from, and where it is at present. The definition of reconciliation used by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is this: "reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in this country. For this to happen, there has to be an awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes and action to change behaviour."

An area for future involvement is engagement with the Ralph Rowe Survivors Network. Ralph Rowe was an Anglican priest, former Ontario police officer, and Boy Scout leader, who engaged in rampant sexual abuse of young boys. It is estimated that he victimized more than 500 First Nation youth in Manitoba and northern Ontario in the 1970s until the mid-1980s. However, he has been charged with more than 50 charges of child sexual abuse and served no more than five years in prison because of a plea bargain. He now lives in the community of Lake Cowichan on Vancouver Island. The 2015 film, "Survivors Rowe" is a 30-minute documentary that chronicles lasting effects on the young men affected. The Men's Advocacy and Advisory Council for Healing, established at the Sharing Circle in 2024 serves as an advisory board for pilot projects related to family and child welfare.

An All Parties Table has been established in response to Call to Action #46. (Action is based on the four values outlined in the Two Row Wampum tradition: peace, friendship, respect, and

non-interference in each other's lives). This was a mutual treaty agreement, made in 1613 between the representatives of the Five Nations of the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch government in what is now upstate New York). Part of the work includes reputation of concepts, like the doctrine of discovery and reformation of the laws, governance and policies within our system that continue to rely on such pre-concepts. The takeaway from this session very clearly tells us that."Reconciliation is not a spectator sport!"

Archbishop Chris Harper, Rev'd Roslyn Elm (Coordinator, Indigenous Ministries) and Rev'd Travis Enright (ACIP, the Anglican Council of Indigenous People) spoke of the ongoing development of the Indigenous Anglican Church in partnership with the ACC. The process to reimagine governance is underway as the current Ecclesiastical Province representation is unbalanced and there have been many groups not represented, including urban centers where incarcerations, 60s scoop, child welfare, and alcoholism effects are very explicit on city streets. The challenges are to be people based versus institutional based, looking not at cartography, but at environment, traditional lands, trade routes, language, culture, waterways and where Indigenous Anglicans actually are. Movement is progressing toward the development of 12 spiritual Council Fires that will each select one representative to ACIP.

We are reminded that nothing changes until the “head table”, the leaders embrace change. Elders Andrew and Esther Wesley remind

# A Word from the Bishop

That time of the year has come when the world would have us believe that Christmas is here. After all, we have been listening to Christmas songs and carols at the Mall since Remembrance Day! However, we all know the truth that this is truly the season of Advent – a season of preparation for the awaited coming of Christ – and not simply the season of preparing for the baby Jesus at Christmas. This month of December, or at least most of it, provides us with the opportunity to prepare our hearts, minds, and lives for the return of Christ to our world. And so, I invite you to enter into a long-held “Christmas” tradition that is quite fitting for our Advent world: The Twelve Days of Christmas.

My sister’s birthday is the twelfth of December and when I was a child we would decorate our Christmas tree on her birthday, which was twelve days before Christmas. For the longest time I honestly believed that the twelve days of Christmas began on my sister’s birthday and ended at Christmas Eve, in preparation for the “big day.” It wasn’t until I was in seminary that it occurred to me that the Christmas Season was in fact twelve days, beginning with Christmas and ending with the Epiphany. That naivete and learning have held me in good stead to recognize that there is always a time – and a season – to learn something new or begin re-learning an old thing again.

This Advent-leading-into-Christmas month, I would like to invite you to think about those Twelve Days of Christmas, and their song, in a new way, or simply in a renewed way. Let’s explore that old ditty and see what it might bring to mind for all of us.

Before we begin I want to add a note about myth. Until our recently created and needed tool of “Snopes,” which is a tool people can use to discover if items on the world wide web are actually factual, there was an understanding that the song “The Twelve Days of Christmas” was a code for Christians in a time of persecution of the Roman Catholics in England during the Reformation. When they were unable to speak openly about their faith, they created ways to pass on the knowledge and traditions of their faith community. It seems that Snopes has debunked



that myth, but I prefer to live in that place where facts are information, and truth contributes to a way of living. So, with that said, I present to you the “hidden” meanings of the gifts in “The Twelve Days of Christmas.”

Like stained glass windows and children’s tales, metaphor and symbolism go a long way in solidifying truth and meaning in the minds of our children. Each of these symbols – all twelve – are good reminders to us all of who we are as Christians and what we need to remember in Advent, Christmas, and all year long.

- A partridge in a pear tree = Jesus Christ
- 2 Turtle Doves = the Old and New Testaments
- 3 French Hens = the three theological virtues: Faith, Hope, and Charity
- 4 Calling Birds = the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
- 5 Golden Rings = the Pentateuch – the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy
- 6 Geese A-Laying = the six days of Creation
- 7 Swans A-Swimming = the gifts of the Holy Spirit or the seven sacraments. The Gifts are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. The Sacraments are: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Confession and Absolution, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders.

- 8 Maids A-Milking = the Eight Beatitudes (Matthew 5.3-10)
- 9 Ladies Dancing = the nine fruits of the Spirit – love; joy; peace; patience; kindness; goodness; faithfulness; gentleness; and self-control
- 10 Lords A-Leaping = the Ten Commandments
- 11 Pipers Piping = the eleven faithful disciples
- 12 Drummers Drumming = the twelve points of Doctrine in the Apostles’ Creed

This list of explanations of the parts of “The Twelve Days of Christmas” always helps me to keep in mind all the reasons for the Season. Life can be hectic, especially at this time of the year. Our world is becoming increasingly secular, and it is becoming easier to not talk about or share our faith. However, because the world is what it is we have been given an even stronger mandate to both know what we believe and share it with others. This Christmas Carol is a wonderful place to start. It is also a good reminder that we need to learn to speak the language our society can understand as we share our faith. We must learn to speak truth to them and not merely wait for them to understand our language.

How might you “rewrite” a Christmas Carol or song so that the people in your life might better come to understand and share your beliefs? If you do compose a “new” song, please share it with all of us that we might have the chance to reach a new world with our old and eternal truth. Happy Advent and Merry Christmas!



## The Mustard Seed

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The Mustard Seed is circulated ten times a year (from September to June), as a section of the Anglican Journal, to all supporting households in the Diocese of Brandon.

Contributions to the expense of the paper are normally requested each March but donations are accepted anytime. Changes of address can be made directly with the Anglican Journal. Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Bishop or of the editor.

**Deadline for submissions:**  
The first day of the month preceding publication.

2025 PUBLICATION DEADLINES	
Issue	Deadline
Sept 2025	Aug 1, 2025
Oct 2025	Sept 1, 2025
Nov 2025	Oct 1, 2025
Dec 2025	Nov 1, 2025

*Please note:* All submissions are subject to editing for clarity, timeliness, appropriateness, or length. Submit writing to the Editor in Microsoft Word file format or in the body of an email. Photographs must be large, high resolution jpg files. Please ensure you have permission from parents or guardians of all minors who have their photos or names published in The Mustard Seed. If including a photo, please send a name of who took the photo along with it, so the Editor can give proper credit!





# Alongside Hope...cont from Page 1

us that we are living in Isaiah: prisoners of hope but that we need to become “Nehemiahs”, builders. We need to recognize that we are all being colonized by the 1%; and if you don’t believe that, take a look at your grocery bill today compared to two or three years ago (Rev’d Ros) and “to clean a mess, you need to make a mess” (Rev’d Ros). “If we are to be partners, you need to know me and I need to know you.” (Esther Wesley, Elder). In relationships, there is responsibility. Reconciliation is Kingdom work. To know each other, we need to know each other’s stories. Rev’d Ros, lead us in an exercise to tell our stories to each

other. She talks about storytelling as sacred knowledge, revelation of something greater than ourselves, not conversion. In storytelling, we share our beliefs, and we build our knowledge of each other; what do we have in common and our differences. Storytelling helps us to decolonize and to heal. She had us write our stories in 6-8 sentences, to identify those pivotal influences that have placed us where we are in our journeys and to share this with each other.

The final morning discussion was about “where do we go from here?” we discussed hopes, aspirations, steps to a plan for future, living

into right relationships activities, work, collaboration, and accompaniment. We talked about education, building relationships within the body of the church, doing things together, recognizing that we are all walking in the same direction, but may, and are likely at different points in our journey. We need to continue sharing our stories, being open and accepting, and to remember that hope is still meaningful, and that it is a practice. We need to continue to build, to be the best that we can with all that we have, to persevere. In many ways, we need simply to show up: attend ceremonies, participate in advocacy events related to

accessible housing, water, living, wages, justice, hunger, and food security. PROGRESS IS NOT PERFECTION! (Will Postma).

We concluded our Gathering with a Eucharist service. Archbishop Chris gave a short but meaningful sermon saying “the best sermon is the one you live out daily. Do the people in your circle know that you are a Christian? Do they know this by how you speak, share, and do? Do you model peace, hope, love and forgiveness? Do this as you live out every day.”



## Anglican Fellowship of Prayer

Anglican Fellowship of Prayer  
Diocese of Brandon

Let Us Pray Advent 2025

### Advent Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas. We who have so much to do and seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day, we who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us. We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom. We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence. We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light. To you we say, “Come Lord Jesus!” Amen. - Henri J.M. Nouwen

December 15th – The Season of Advent: As we enter this season of Advent, we are pleased to be welcoming back the Lieutenant Colonel Judson Bridgewater who spoke to us several years ago. Padre Judson will bring to us his thoughts on “Life in all its fullness: Prayer from Sea to Sea to Sea” in relationship to the situations he faces and those he serves as a military Chaplain.

Join us at <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89192823143>

Zoom Meeting ID: 891 9282 3143

For more information call Barry+ at 1-204-647-0400 or email [barrykn@zoho.com](mailto:barrykn@zoho.com)



# News From the Diocese and Cathedral

The Rev'd Canon Robert Parker  
Project Manager, Anglican Centre

**Diocesan Centre Update**

Well, as of this writing the majority of the construction has been completed on the new Diocesan Centre. We are still waiting on the windows to arrive and be installed and that is delaying the move in. There is also some more work needed in the Bishop's office. However, from the photos below you

can see what a good job our contractor, JCJ has done, as well as Wheat City Electrical and Four Seasons. I have it on good authority, that once the move is complete, Bishop Rachael intends to hold an Open House for anyone who wishes to see the transformation. More details to follow.



**The New Diocean Centre.**

- Top Left: Exec Archdecon office and Bishop's door.
- Top: Bishop's office looking out to the EAD office.
- Top Right: The newly lit stairwell.
- Right: The EAD office.
- Below: The Bishop's office.
- Left: Bishop's office.

Photos by Canon Rob Parker





# Update from the Diocesan Decision-Making Bodies

The work of your Diocese is supported by each and every congregation, all of whom are represented on the Diocesan Executive Committee by representatives chosen triennially at our Diocesan Synod. The Executive Committee, with a smaller group of representatives which form the Finance and Property Committee, constitute the group of people who make decisions on the property, finances, and sometimes personnel concerns between Synods.

The Executive Committee also, from time to time, strikes other working groups who prepare reports, take on tasks as needed, and facilitate the work of the Diocese on an ongoing basis. Some of this work is the review and suggested revisions of Canons and Constitution, and the Policies and Procedures, which are then brought to our Synod for ratification and implementation. The Canons and Constitution group is currently at work on a new Safe Church (or potentially to be renamed “Safeguarding”) policy, which will ensure that our Diocese is in line with the Province of The Northern Lights

and National Church Safe Church policies. We have asked that this review and revisions be made as we become more aware of the need to be vigilant in creating environments in which all people who come into our churches or who participate in church activities will have the real expectation that we are looking out for their best interests in keeping them safe from physical, emotional, and spiritual harm. The Safe Church work will initially focus on such concerns as establishing a more robust policy and procedure for protecting members from all forms of assault – sexual or otherwise. Once these documents have been created, approved, and implemented, the Diocese will then continue to expand our understanding and expectations of what safeguarding in our Diocese might look like. It should be noted that we can never eliminate all risk, but we can do our best to mitigate it whenever and wherever possible. As this work unfolds, we will continue to bring you updates through The Mustard Seed.

Our Diocesan Executive has begun experimenting with

different models of gathering. IN recognition of the work done and shared with the Executive by the Finance and Property Committee, the F&P group has begun meeting approximately one week before Diocesan Executive. This allows sufficient time for the work done by F&P to be shared ahead of the Executive meeting, which in turn frees up time for more in-depth conversations and planning time when the Executive meets.

One of the Bishop’s requests of Executive meetings is the opportunity to find time and enthusiasm for visioning, listening to the realities of Parish ministry as presented by Deanery reps, and an environment in which the bigger conversations for our Diocese and communities can be shared with integrity and understanding. A few of the topics which will need to be considered in the next triennium will be how our Diocese, and clergy and laity, grapple with MAID (medical assistance in dying); the pastoral needs and concerns of our communities writ large with respect to LGBTQ2S+ realities; the changing political world around us and the role

of the Church. While these have been conversations we have not openly addressed, we all need to acknowledge that to hold credibility as an institution in society means that we need to grapple with the real concerns that are in the world surrounding, and impacting, our institution. As these will not be easy conversations to negotiate, you are asked to (1) take time in prayer to invite the Holy Spirit to open your heart and mind that you will be open to participating in these discussions in a generous and non-judgemental manner; and (2) take time in prayer for the same for your Diocesan Executive Committee representatives.

As we prepare for our own Diocesan Synod in early October of 2026, please do consider how you might be called to serve, and encourage those who already do! We are being called to be bringers of the Good News to ALL the world and we need every single one of you to help us do just that.



# Fair Share, the National Church and the Diocese

We are all in the season of preparing for gift-giving at Christmas and preparing for those end-of-the-year tasks we know we have to squeeze in before midnight on New Year’s Eve. Our congregations and vestries are no different. The Diocese of Brandon is also in that time of decision-making and preparations for the old year well-ended and for the new year to come well-started.

Many of the congregations in our Diocese have been working hard to submit their Fair Share gifts to the Diocese, which then allow the Diocese to offer our gift to the National Church. Our diocesan gift contributes to such things as ministries enabled by our Council of the North grants.

Without the significant gift from the National Church, and hence from the other dioceses in the Anglican Church of Canada, we would not be able to fund many of the Northern Ministries and Camp work that is a vital part of who we are as a diocesan Church.

The Bishop is asked often about what Fair Share does for the congregations at the local level. That is a valid question. Your Fair Share contributions fund our Chief Financial Officer Greig Scott and the incredible work he does for the Diocese and for every single congregation. For instance, did you know that Greig has created a computer program which helps you complete your CRA returns

report? This may seem like a small thing but for most of our parish treasurers this is the gift that keeps their work simple and straight forward. Your Fair Share also allows the Diocese to maintain the archives so that congregations and individuals can seek copies of baptismal, marriage, and funeral documents. Fair Share also covers all the costs of the Bishop’s visits to your congregations. This is the foundation of her job description, and when every congregation contributes their Fair Share, it makes it that much easier for Bishop Rachael to do her work!

As you prepare to appreciate your clergy and volunteers this upcoming Christmastide, and as you wrap

up your year-end paperwork, please do give serious prayer and attention to sending in the remainders of your Fair Share contributions for 2025. Together we will keep the Gospel in the hearts of our communities. And for those who have already lived into their Fair Share commitments – thank you so very much. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.





# News From Around the Diocese



### Harvesting Green Hubbard Squash

Growing up in New Brunswick, each fall we would have green or golden Hubbard squash. I really enjoyed the taste so my mother did not have to work at getting me to eat it, matter of fact, she had no trouble getting me to eat anything.

Several years have gone by and I always wondered if this squash were still available. This spring I hunted all of Brandon and outlying towns and finally found them.

I asked a friend at Neepawa if he would plant these seeds as part of his gardens. He agreed and my daughter Debbie planted one hill of seven (7) seeds.

It was great seeing the plants grow and ended up covering a very large area plus climbing a wire fence.

It was such a joy to harvest these squash at different intervals. Our first harvest gave us a twenty five (25) pounder along with another five (5) which averaged 15 – 16 lbs.

A couple of weeks ago I asked Brad, owner of the acreage, if there might be a few on the vines and he responded there were some and a giant one. I thought he was kidding until I saw it. It weighed 46 lbs. I wanted to take a picture of it with Pat, my wife, in it so we could get a better appreciation of it's size. We are so happy to share this picture with you as we feel truly blessed with a total of 383 lbs. from just 7 seeds.

Thanks be to God.

The Rev. Deacon Leon & Pat Morehouse

St. Mark's, Minnedosa, was a-buzz on Sunday, November 2, as preparations for their Fall Supper were in full swing. The community pulled together to serve about 150 people in-house, with another 40 hot meals being delivered around town. They also have 50 frozen meals that will be ready for pick up at the time of writing. All proceeds will go toward some new windows for the church.

Local entertainer and Legion President, John Cullen, entertained waiting diners with his incredible, one-man, classic country band: playing guitar, using a backing track and sometimes even playing a harmonica.

Like a well-oiled machine, the workers moved seamlessly in the lower hall, serving, offering beverages, preparing meals for delivery, restocking food, and waiting for orders to deliver. The decorations were understated and beautiful. And, of course, the food was plentiful and delicious.

Congratulations to the crew at St. Mark's for another successful dinner!

### Picture #1:

John Cullen entertains the waiting diners in the church nave.

### Picture #2:

Very capable dishwashers, Don Morrison and Carl Landrie, share a laugh as they work in the kitchen. (Do take note of the writing on their aprons: *St. Mark's Dishwashing Manager*, *St. Mark's Dishwashing*

*Assistant Manager*)

### Picture #3:

Lynne Tolton takes a moment from her work to ensure that Grant Kukurudz is indeed eating his veggies.



Left: Picture One  
Below: Picture Two  
Top: Picture Three

Photos by Archdeacon Cheryl Kukurudz





# Advent Activities 2025

**Support a cause that supports the health of the earth**

**Tape some money on a vending machine**

- Read Luke 1:39–45
- Read Luke 2:1–20
- Read Luke 3:1–6
- Read Luke 3:7–18
- Read Luke 21:25–36
- Watch a film version of the Gospels, like *The Chosen*
- Study the life of Jesus written by scholars

**Go an entire day without criticizing anyone**

**Listen more; talk less**

**Be kind to unkind people**

**Listen for God's voice in music.**

**Set aside time and place to hear the Holy Spirit.**

**Pray for every neighbour on your street.**

**Write a gratitude note to a friend or family member and hide it in their pocket.**

**Give a treat to a community helper**

**Write a list of who and what you are thankful for this year**

**Smile and thank someone who serves you**

**Take a shut-in to lunch.  
Read to a child.**

**Reflect and record how much joy this Advent season has brought you**

Prepared by Gisele McKnight, Diocese of Fredericton

"LET'S APPROACH CHRISTMAS WITH AN EXPECTANT HUSH, RATHER THAN A LAST-MINUTE RUSH."

ANONYMOUS



# More News from Around the Diocese



On Saturday November 1st, 2025, Bishop Rachael joined the people of St. Andrew's, Deloraine for a service of deconsecration. Afterwards, those attending, (around 60), enjoyed a reception with a very large cake.



On Sunday November 2nd, 2025, Bishop Rachael joined the Rev'd Jen Morgan and the people of Birtle in the Pelly Plains Parish for thier regular Sunday worship.

### Also from the Pelly Plains Parish

#### Lessons and Carols Services:

- St. George's Birtle - Dec 14th 5pm Potluck, 7pm Service
- St. Matthew's Binscarth - Dec 21st 11:30am
- Christ Church Russell - Dec 21st 5pm Potluck, 7pm Service

#### Christmas Eve Holy Eucharist Services:

- St. James Solsgirth - 3pm
- St. Matthews Binscarth - 5pm
- Christ Church Russell - 7pm
- St. George's Birtle - 7pm



A blessed advent and a very Merry Christmas to you and all those you love and pray for.  
From the staff for the Diocesan Centre.  
Bishop Rachael Parker, Archdeacon Cheryl Kukurudz,  
Greig Scott, Canon Rob Parker, and Macenzie Kukurudz