



TURBULENT TIMES QUARTERLY
Update on ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL
JUSTICE
at CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL
SUMMER 2020

In this issue: [Explosion in Lebanon](#), [Pride 2020](#), [Refugee Claimants Victory](#), COVID and Refugees, Black Lives Matter, Healing of Memories, National Aboriginal Day, Just and Green Recovery - Guaranteed Livable Income, [Quebec Interfaith Response to the Climate Crisis](#); [Christians, COVID and Biodiversity Loss](#), [St. Columba and Iona: A Pilgrimage Postponed](#).

One of my oldest and dearest friends, a chemist, used to say that keeping up with certain, rapidly evolving, topics was like trying to hold onto a handful of mice. Never has this seemed as true to me as during the past four months, when every day brings a significant new development, or initiative, or resource, or thoughtful discussion, each of which sheds new light on the points of intersection among faith, social justice, and our current environmental crises. Since our last Quarterly appeared in April, racism, COVID, and the environmental crisis have continued to be the focus of ecological and social justice activities at Christ Church Cathedral, and indeed, throughout Canada and the world. The horrible toll that COVID has taken on indigenous, black and Hispanic communities has drawn attention to systemic racism, but also specifically to environmental racism. We are being reminded that if we are going to save the environment, we have to root out the implicit racism that guides our economic policies. It's complicated, and very concerning. This is why it is such a blessing to belong to a community of people, at the cathedral and around the world, care about these things, and who believe that our Creator cares about them too. I expect I am not the only one who has been reminded, recently, of the story of Jesus speaking to the city of Jerusalem through his tears, wishing that his beloved city knew the things that would make for her health. Simply belonging to a community of Christians who are struggling to learn and act upon these things is in itself a comfort. And it is a further comfort to realize that, all over the world, people are becoming aware of their membership in the broader earth community of all living things that has supported us and continues to support us, at this critical moment in our history. For many of us, this is a lifeline in these turbulent, exciting, often heartbreaking times.

Standing with the People of Lebanon.

The cathedral's Social Justice Statement notes that "Many of the world's structures are unjust, creating inequalities, oppression, and violence." There is a good deal of discussion, right now, about the possible role of such structures in the horrifying explosion that has devastated Beirut. Underlying causes will no doubt reveal

themselves over time. For now, however, relief is urgently needed. The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF) was created for just such a contingency.



Invitation to Action: PWRDF is sending funds to Lebanon through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. The Canadian government will match these donations dollar for dollar until August 24th!

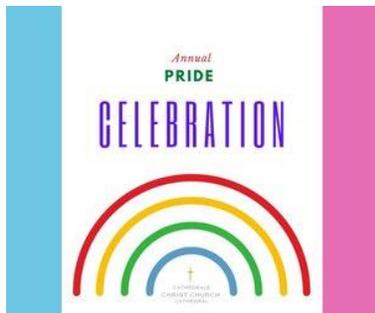
Donations can be made in the following ways:
Online Please visit our online donation page at pwrdf.org/give-today and make your gift in Emergency Response, indicating Beirut Explosion

in the message box.

By Phone Call 1-866-308-7973 toll-free (please leave a message and we will return your call), or 416-822-9083 to speak immediately with someone who can process your donation over the phone.

By Mail Please make cheques payable to PWRDF, Beirut Explosion and send to: The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund The Anglican Church of Canada 80 Hayden Street Toronto, Ontario M4Y 3G2

La Fierté numérique / 2020 Digital Pride Celebration



The annual Pride service at Christ Church, held this year on Sunday August 9th, is joyful, prayerful celebration of diversity – a celebration of God's love for every unique human person. It is a reminder that God loves us, not in spite of our differences, but because of them. This sense of celebration, of loving acceptance, was beautifully captured in our choir's delightful interpretation of Draw me a Rainbow, and in fact, pervaded the whole service, which can be watched on YouTube.

As theological Cornel West put it, Justice is the face that love wears in public. As an expression of our love for one another, and God's healing love for us all, our annual Pride service is also a justice statement. It is an expression of solidarity with (and within) the LGBTQ+ community. Why this solidarity remains important is explained in a moving way in a reflection that Nancy Greene-Gregoire wrote originally for her home congregation of St Thomas' in NDG. We are grateful to Nancy for sharing this reflection with our Pride team, and for her permission to include it in this newsletter.

Standing Up in Jesus' Name – Reflection by Nancy Greene-Gregoire – Aug 11, 2020

Being a White woman married to a White man means I am not subjected to

much (any?) racism or slurs against the way I live in this world.

I was called degrading names once. I was at a bar after work with some friends from work: a person from Iran who I was going out with, a person from Iraq, a person from Pakistan. We were joking about how the two from Iran and Iraq got along so well even though their countries were at war. This was in 1981. I was 23 years old. And then some White man we didn't know started to speak right to me calling me all kinds of names that I don't even remember. I just remember the hurt and shock of it, and the people I was with telling me to ignore him. I was crying. They were used to hearing this kind of talk. I wasn't. Did it hurt less if you were used to it? I don't think so.

Flash forward almost 40 years to the Digital Pride service held Aug 9, 2020 by Montreal's Christ Church Cathedral. This was my first pride event. I hadn't really felt drawn to attend any parades or services before, even though I support the LGBTQ+ community. This year was easy. It was Sunday night and all I had to do was sit down at my computer, find the zoom link and connect, which I did. There was a waiting room and I was let in. The first song from the choir was under way and it was beautiful. Someone was talking over it: I heard the N-word, and some talk about this being a church so what was going on and some talk against gay couples. I was shocked. I was surprised. I felt helpless. I didn't know what to do, but I wanted to stay and be present. My video was on. I realized that my presence as a witness, along with the 70 or so other people, was a powerful stand. Each of us were present because we believe we are all God's children and that we each have the right to be who we were born to be, and to love who we love. We were much more than the 2 or 3 voices of hate who didn't even show themselves. The Digital Pride team quickly removed the hate-filled speakers from the service. They apologized for the disruption and acknowledged how upsetting talk like this can be and we moved forward.

After the beautiful service, we stayed around to process what had happened. Bishop Mary said that if any of us who are white and cisgendered had any doubt about the importance of Pride, we now know why our support is necessary, and this really made it clear to me.

Jesus showed us when he suffered on the cross, died and was resurrected, that love conquers all. The power of love is as great now as it was then. God loves us for who we are. And love is love. So to me, my job in the world is to continue Jesus' work, to stand up for the rights of each of us who has been made by God in our own unique diversity. I knew this before, but now I know it in a new way.

I will support the LGBTQ+ community with my physical presence and not just some nice thoughts in my head. I will be more intentional in expressing my views in writing and in conversations. This is the good

that has come out of this experience. It is the least I can do, and I do this because Jesus tells us that love is the basis for all we do.

Watch the service here! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wTxRobWsro>
(no disruptions were recorded)

Fortunately, the messages of love and affirmation that pervaded the service were exactly what was needed to counter the hate-filled taunts of the Zoombombers. All the same, anyone who is feeling shaken by what they heard is urged to reach out to a member of the cathedral team. <https://www.montrealcathedral.ca/leadership-team/>.

There are also two LGBTQ+ help lines to which you can turn for immediate support. Both provide service in English and French.

Interligne 514-866-0103
1-888-505-1010
interligne.co/en/chat
interligne.ca/clavardage
[Accueil - Interligne](#)

[Aide aux Trans du Québec](#) (English and French)
Ligne d'écoute
Ligne d'écoute 1-855-909-9038 #1
11ecoute@atq1980.org
Sans frais : 1 855 909-9038 #1

Refugee claimants: Breaking News, and a Huge Thank You

Ever since President Trump began to crack down on asylum seekers, human rights organisations have been urging the Canadian government to terminate an agreement with the United States government that designates the US as a “safe third country”, to which refugee claimants can be sent back with a clear conscience. Members of the



cathedral have been involved in this issue in a number of ways – directly, by signing Amnesty International petitions urging our government to end the agreement, and indirectly, as members of the Canadian Council of Churches; and as church home to the executive director of the Canadian Council for Refugees, Janet Dench (left) who, as many of you know, played a leading role in the founding of (E)SJAG.

On July 22nd, this activism bore fruit. The Canadian Federal court ruled that the Safe Third Country agreement is unconstitutional, because the US treatment of returned

refugee claimants violates their right to liberty and security of the person. This ruling confirms that the US is in no sense “safe”, and does not conform to minimum human rights standards. This court challenge was brought by Amnesty International, the Canadian Council for Refugees and The Canadian Council of Churches, alongside several individual litigants.

Invitation to Action: This federal judgement, while significant, is subject to appeal – and the judge in the case also gave the government a six-month grace period before its implementation. Although there is not yet any official campaign to this end, it would be helpful if as many of us as possible let our MPs know that we are counting on them to implement the court ruling as quickly as possible, and without the delay of an appeal.

More information is to be found in [this interview with Janet Dench](#), which addresses, not only the present crisis for refugee claimants, but also the questions of systemic racism with which we have been grappling over the past few weeks in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement

COVID and Refugees

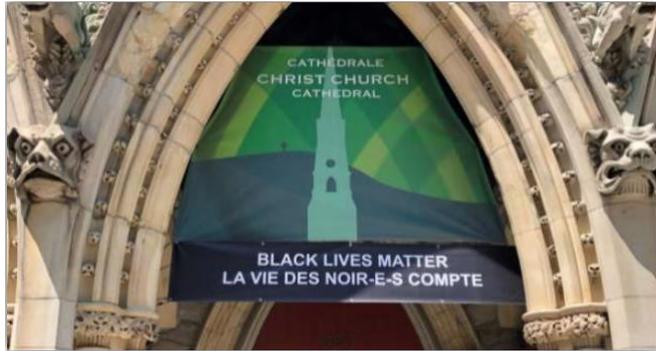
Although the conditions of their detention are not comparable to those in the United States, refugee claimants in Canada nevertheless are exposed to high levels of stress and danger as they await the processing of their claims. In time of COVID, those in detention centres are even more isolated than usual, and at higher risk for contracting the virus. At the same time, many are unable to contact their families in their countries of origin, many of whom have been seriously impacted by the pandemic. COVID has made it all the more important that the backlog of claims be expedited. More information on this situation is available at <https://ccrweb.ca/en/time-change>.

Invitation to Action: We can support the call to expedite the processing of refugee claims by responding to this call for action: <https://ccrweb.ca/en/special-covid-19-refugee-claimant-measures>

Black Lives Matter

One of the most encouraging things about Christ Church Cathedral is that action for social and ecological justice is not confined to any one specific group but rather permeates the whole cathedral community.

An inspiring example of this was the way in which current cathedral task force on racism in Montreal came into being. On Pentecost Sunday, thousands of Montrealers took to the streets to protest police racism and brutality in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. During the two weeks that followed, ideas, resources, and proposals spread like wildfire throughout the cathedral community. From the reading group to the music committee, almost every organisation was involved. Discussions culminated in a meeting dedicated to the issue of systemic racism, which many participants described



as “the best Forum yet”. At that meeting it was decided to form working groups to and address various facets of systemic racism in our community. And a banner was ordered, and hung, as a pledge of our commitment to action and to change.

The Cathedral Reads: In anticipation of comprehensive

recommendations in the fall, resources continue to be shared among CCC parishioners. We have been challenged to read at least one of the following books over the course of the summer. In English: Waking Up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race (recommended for those who are new to this topic), or Desmond Cole’s The Skin We’re In, and/or Ibram Kendi’s How to be an Anti-Racist. In English or French: Une colère noir (Between the World and Me) by Ta-Nahisi Coates and Tant que je serai noir (Heart of a Woman), by poet and activist Maya Angelou. Kendi’s book is scheduled to appear in French translation on September 9th, as Comment devenir Anti-raciste. Ann Elbourne has provided more details about these books on the July 31st issue of the [Cathedral Newsletter](#) – posted on the home page of the cathedral website. Reading groups are planned for the Fall to discuss a) Cole and Kendi, and b) Coates and Kendi.

On behalf of the Reading Group, Ann has also shared this list of books related to Black Lives Matter, with a short description of each.

https://westlibcat.org/iguana/uploads/file/2020_BLMlist.pdf?mc_cid=abd3921d8e&mc_eid=e522d38099

Michele Rattray-Huish shared this poignant and succinct (six-minute) video on the development of white supremacy in the United States after the abolition of slavery.

https://twitter.com/eji_org/status/1272950020589879297

Responses to the challenge of racism in Canada from within the Anglican Church of Canada can be found on the Anglican Church website, in this letter from [the Primate and Bishops](#) ([French version](#) here), and on our own cathedral website, where the sermons of June 28th and July 5th address issues of structural racism and Christianity. We particularly comment Jonathan White’s powerful sermon, followed by a very moving

recording of “I wish that I knew how it feels to be free.”
<https://www.montrealcathedral.ca/sermons/amazing-grace/>



Within the cathedral community, conversations continue. One of the questions that continues to trouble a number of people is whether perhaps specifically supporting Black Lives Matter shows a lack of sensitivity to the racism experienced by other visible minorities, particularly indigenous people. In wrestling with this question, it may help to know that Raven Trust – one of the strongest indigenous advocacy groups – issued a letter of solidarity with Black Lives Matter.

<https://raventrust.com/2020/06/03/9978/>

The Healing of Memories

In another recent conversation, one of my cathedral friends, originally from East Africa, told me last week that the events of the past few weeks have left her asking herself about the role of forgiveness, if indeed it still has a role.

Her question reminded me of the work of Michael Lapsley, an Anglican priest who suffered horrendous injuries from a letter-bomb attack by the Apartheid regime in South Africa, whose Healing of Memories workshop with Inuit we voted to support with our outreach donation for 2019. In the introduction to his book, *Redeeming the Past*, Fr. Lapsley raises these questions:

- What is healing?
- Will the wrong that has been done to us ever be acknowledged?
- What do we do with the terrible memories?
- What is the role of faith?
- Should we forgive?
- And can forgiveness be reconciled with the struggle for justice?

It is not clear, now, when Michael Lapsley will in fact be able to travel to Canada, or whether his Montreal visit will have to be made via Zoom as a result of COVID related travel restrictions. In the meantime, though, his book provides a very great deal of food for thought during these troubled but hopefully transformative times. It is available in both paper and Kindle versions, in both English and French. (Version française: *Guérir du passé*.)

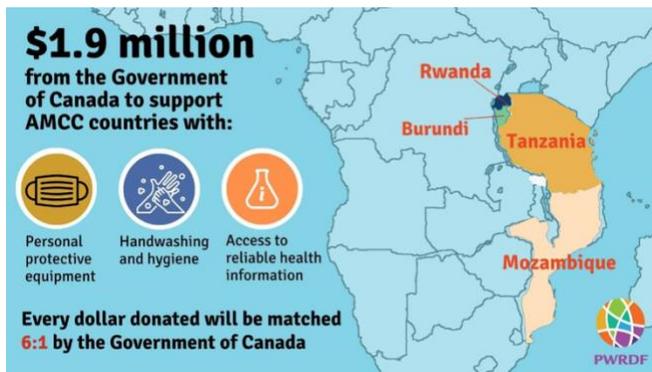
Invitation to Action - In Quebec: Amnesty International invites us to [personalise a letter](#) to our Premier addressing the issue of systemic racism in the police force. Amnesty will send your letter directly to M. Legault.

In Africa – Six to One Matching, an Exceptional Opportunity

Like many black and indigenous communities around the world, our prayer partners in the Diocese of Masasi, in Tanzania, have been particularly hard-hit by the pandemic.

On June 25th, the Government of Canada awarded PWRDF a \$1.98-million grant to extend the work of the All Mothers and Children Count (AMCC) programme in that region. The grant reinstates the 6:1 match that greatly augmented the impact of our PWRDF outreach donation for last year.

This means that the work we have supported over the past four years through the [All Mothers and Children Count programme](#) will continue. The funds will be used to ensure physical distancing, access to clean water, soap and disinfectant, acquisition of PPE and dissemination of reliable health information. The 12-month extension will also allow our partners to maintain the important gains in food security and maternal, newborn and child health that have been made, thanks to AMCC.



Montreal PWRDF has suggested that, as individuals, we might direct some of the money we might otherwise have spent on summer travel towards this programme. Because of the 6:1 matching, the cost of one tank of gas (assuming your tank holds 50ish litres) could provide \$300 dollars or more to a hospital in a vulnerable community. Bearing in mind that this sum of money goes much further in Tanzania than it

does in Canada, this is an opportunity to make a very big difference.

Here are ways to contribute:

- Visit the PWRDF online donation page and make your gift in Emergency Response, indicating COVID-19/ All Mothers and Children Count in the message box. <https://pwrdf.org/give-today/>
- Call 1-866-308-7973 toll-free (please leave a message and they will return your call), or 416-822-9083 and they can process your donation over the phone.
- Write COVID-19 in the memo field of your cheque and mail to PWRDF, 80 Hayden Street, 3rd floor, Toronto, Ontario, M4Y 3G2.

National Aboriginal Day

The groundswell of support for Black Lives Matter takes place against a background of other, related, challenges. In Canada, since April, nine aboriginal people have died in interactions with the police, several during “wellness checks”. And according to a recent presentation from the faculty of medicine at McGill, the disproportionate toll that COVID 19 has taken has impacted aboriginal people in the United States even more severely than it has affected other people of colour. While the world is focused on these horrors, the RCMP presence in Northern British Columbia enables Pacific Gas Links to continue to cut through pristine forest without having passed the BC environmental review. And extraction companies are buying the support of indigenous communities by offering social and community supports contingent on their acceptance of pipelines and dams –

and using government money to pay for those benefits. The offers of benefits from extraction companies are difficult for First Nations Communities to refuse, given that the present government is challenging in court the earlier ruling that they provide funding for schools and healthcare for indigenous children that is equal to that provided for non-indigenous children.

Christ Church Cathedral has a history of activism related to all of this. In 2012, to mark the first anniversary of Canada's ratifying the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Kairos Canada organised an ecumenical cross-Canada train trip to Ottawa, where groups from across the country made a circle around the Parliament Buildings, reminding the government of their failure to honor their promise of equal funding for indigenous and non-indigenous children. The Cathedral and Diocesan representatives in Ottawa were the Reverend Gwenda Wells and Taddy Stringer.



This photograph of Gwenda and Taddy holding our eagle banner (whose feathers are handprints of CCC parishioners) was republished three years ago in a Kairos newsletter article that took up, once again, the need to incorporate the UNDRIP into Canadian law. I can't find the 2016 reprint, and so have gone with the imperfectly archived original, from the Anglican Journal.

Eight years have passed since the "Roll with the Declaration" train pulled into the station in Ottawa. Since that time, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings highlighted again and again the need to honour UNDRIP, to provide equal funding for indigenous education and health care, and to recognise indigenous people's claims to their traditional lands. Many cathedral parishioners attended those Montreal hearings as witnesses, and some of us also travelled to Ottawa to attend the grand finale of the TRC process. When the report of the commission appeared, CCC parishioners voted on which of the TRC Calls to Action we would take on as a community. We chose Call 62, which called upon ministries of education to ensure that the history of Canada's indigenous peoples was honestly represented in history curricula. In 2015, (E)SJAG mounted its first "mini-conference", a full day event focusing on Call 62. Our presenters, all indigenous, were cautiously hopeful that the TRC would make a lasting difference. In 2016, many of us participated in an inter-church session on UNDRIP, spearheaded by in Montreal by the Church of St Andrew and St Paul, and KAIROS.

Unfortunately, in the intervening four years, half measures and court challenges on the part of the government, combined with continued encroachment of extraction companies on indigenous lands, have largely extinguished that hope. Romeo Saganash's motion to incorporate UNDRIP into Canadian Law (which many CCC parishioners petitions in support of) died in the Senate in June of 2019. And although

BC government did in fact vote in favour of its implementation, its failure to intervene in the early morning RCMP raid on the Unistoten (Wet'suwet'en) Camp in BC on Feb 6th of this year led to a widespread cry among indigenous peoples that "Reconciliation is dead."

This is the historical context in which, on National Aboriginal Day, June 21st, the Anglican church joined other Christian denominations in observing a National Indigenous Day of Prayer. Bertrand began the Sunday services with an indigenous-inspired opening prayer, and Jean-Daniel Ó Donnóada preached on the dismal history of racism against indigenous peoples in North America. He concluded with some practical advice. When we wonder what we can do to help, we need to ask indigenous friends and acquaintances how we can best stand with them as an ally. He emphasised the importance of letting them lead.

What else we can do: Personal connections are immensely important. But it is also possible to find out how indigenous communities would like us to stand with them by reading the briefs and the appeals, and watching the videos, that First Nations and Inuit have published online and even in the print media.

We can support indigenous groups, even when these may inconvenience us – and we can inform ourselves and our friends of the reasons why such actions are sometimes unavoidable. We can begin by listening to the series of podcasts entitled [Sacred Teachings](#), produced by the Anglican Church during the month of July.

We can also continue to circulate the Bishop's joint letter of support for the Wet'suwet'en to our Anglican, and perhaps our non-Anglican, friends. We can learn about the delays and obfuscations and delays in implementing UNDRIP and in responding to the TRC Calls to Action, and about the history of police brutality and killings. This is help us understand why indigenous groups have become disillusioned with reconciliation, and why, as Canada Day approached, Idle No More and other indigenous groups are staging protests. We can learn why, as July approached, some even urged us to boycott ("cancel") Canada Day until the outstanding issues have been resolved, and invite us instead to:

JOIN IN A PEACEFUL REVOLUTION



To honour Indigenous sovereignty
And to protect the land & water & sky

In addition to supporting, or at least accepting the need for, protest, we can also support specific indigenous petitions and support for funding. As Deborah Meister pointed out in her sermon of June 28th, now that COVID has put an end to Wet'suwet'en protests, construction of the CGL pipeline through pristine and sensitive wilderness has resumed under close RCMP protection, and without adequate protection measures being taken against the virus. To find out what the Wet'suwet'en have asked us to do to stand with them, we can go to their website, at <https://unistoten.camp/covid19/>

Or we can support the Unist'ot'en Legal Fund:

<https://actionnetwork.org/fundraising/unistoten2020legalfund>

Other similarly urgent appeals are being made by indigenous groups throughout Quebec, Canada and the world. A list of these was provided to those who attended the Biodiversity conference in May, and can be found on the home page of the cathedral website, under Christians, COVID-19 and the Biodiversity Crisis: Areas for Urgent Action.

[Just and Green COVID Recovery: Guaranteed Livable Income](#)

Indigenous groups are by no means the only groups urging us to join together to ensure that post-COVID Canada is based on green and just foundations. As politicians and health officials discuss the when and how of reopening businesses and restarting the economy, the Anglican Church of Canada and Kairos Canada (of which the Anglican Church is a member) are two of over 150 organisations that have worked together to draw up six basic principles for a Just Recovery. <https://justrecoveryforall.ca/>

When the Canadian Government invited briefs describing their vision for a just recovery, a number of cathedral parishioners did so, as private individuals. Many referred to the six principles for a just recovery in their briefs. There was also an unofficial but significant cathedral presence among the more than one thousand people who attended a virtual rally held on June 23rd by the Just Recovery coalition.

Invitation to Action: As part of this move toward a just recovery, the Anglican and Lutheran Churches have jointly submitted a proposal to both the federal and

provincial legislatures requesting the immediate implementation of a guaranteed basic or livable income. This measure has long been advocated by voices as diverse as Conservative Senator Hugh Segal and Green Party Leader Elizabeth May. Bishop Mary has asked Deacon Peter Huish to lead a response to the proposal within our own diocese, and Peter has drawn up templates for letters to be sent to MPs and MPPs. Anyone who would like a copy of these templates is invited to contact Peter at huish.peter@gmail.com

Climate Change Update: Interfaith Actions in Quebec

Just before the lockdown began, Michele Rattray-Huish gave a very informative and chilling presentation on Climate Change. The Spring Issue of the Turbulent Times gave details of Michele's presentation and also of related initiatives of the Montreal Diocese and of the National Church. What it did not mention was that, here in Quebec, the international, interfaith coalition, Religions for Peace has also taken up the climate challenge, and has published a list of local events and actions we are urged to attend. The latest update of this list (Aug 1st, 2020) can be found [here](#).



Although the climate crisis is still very much on our radar, in June, we shifted our focus from Climate Change to the closely related issue of biodiversity loss and the sixth mass extinction, now underway. The result was an online conference, reported in some detail below. All of the conference presentations are now available on YouTube (links given

below.) We urge you to share them as widely as possible. One possibility would be to watch them with a group of friends, and to invite the presenter to join you (virtually) for a Question and Answer session and discussion.

Christians, COVID and the Biodiversity Crisis: A Conference to Share

In the June 27th issue of the National Observer, the following item appeared: The Nova Scotia government just lost a 16-month lawsuit to a flower, moose, turtle, two birds and a tree, which, it goes without saying, has never happened before.

Such a victory may appear whimsical, even frivolous. So may the recent call to the general public to report sightings of even a single bumble bee to Bumblebeewatch.org. But those who attended the cathedral biodiversity conference last month will understand why the court victory and the bumble bee sighting are far from trivial, and are in fact cause for real celebration in these COVID-clouded times.

A short and grim executive summary of the conference presentations can be found on the home page of the cathedral website, together with the appeals for immediate action referred to earlier in this newsletter. But this summary does not capture the particular mixture of celebration and deep concern, hope and panic, that permeated the conference itself. I have tried to give some sense of this in the more detailed description that follows.

The Biodiversity conference was the second mini-conference sponsored by the cathedral's Social Justice Action Group. The first was held in June of 2015, and focused on the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (See National Aboriginal Day, above). Already at the 2015 conference we heard a good deal about the need to heal the land – particularly from our First Nations, Inuit and Métis presenters. This need has become more obviously pressing with the release of recent reports on the fragility of our ecosystem, and on the connection between pandemics such as COVID 19 and the loss of biodiversity.

So it came about that on May 23rd, the day after International Biodiversity Day, nearly forty cathedral parishioners and friends chose to devote an entire sunny Saturday to exploring the links between Christianity, COVID, and the current upsurge in extinctions and species loss. For each item in the programme described below, a link is included to the actual presentation.

The day began with [Edward Yankie](#)'s acknowledgment of our debt to the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) people on whose unceded land our houses and our cathedral stand, thanking them for their care of this land since time immemorial. This was followed by another kind of land acknowledgement – a "[Greeting to the Natural World](#)" with which the Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk) people begin virtually every public gathering. This greeting is an expression of thanks to all the creatures of the natural world for what scientists are beginning to call the "ecological services" that they provide, as well as the psychological services, including an invitation to health and joy. Ending with a prayer of thanks to the Creator, this Greeting is startlingly reminiscent of Saint Francis' Canticum of the Creatures, a similarity that [Dean Bertrand Olivier](#) pointed out as a challenging reflection on the Christian responsibility to care for creation.



Dean Bertrand began his reflection with the perhaps-startling information that written in stone above the portico of the Royal Exchange (the London Stock Exchange) are the words, “The Earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof”. He rather grimly noted that over the years, the force of this inscription seems to have been lost, replaced, perhaps by a belief that the Earth is the lords’ - the property of the ruling classes - to do with as they will. The latter interpretation, Bertrand pointed out, is sharply at odds with the worldview of St

Francis, and also of Celtic Christianity, as well as the worldview of indigenous peoples throughout the world and throughout the ages. Bertrand reminded us that as Christians we have an urgent responsibility to remind the rulers of this world that creation does not belong to them, but rather that they are part of creation, part of a fragile, sacred web of life that that we humans exploit and desecrate at our peril.

After the Dean’s remarks, [Michele Rattray-Huish](#) drew upon her 23 years with UN Convention on Biodiversity to present a series of stunningly beautiful photographs of species at risk, paired with a series of quite terrifying scientific findings about the speed with which essential species – species upon which our ecosystem critically depends – are disappearing from the face of the earth. Their disappearance, Michele explained, will certainly result in more pandemics – and pandemics of greater severity. But pandemics are only one of the cascading series of consequences we can expect as we enter what scientists are calling the Sixth Mass Extinction. Michele’s presentation gives the details of how species loss will decimate – and ultimately destroy - our forests, crops, oceans, and climate. It sets out precisely what human activities are “drivers” of species loss, and what kinds of government legislation and personal lifestyle changes we need to embrace in order to save ourselves and our fellow creatures. These changes will be opposed quite vigorously by those who have (or believe they have) a vested interest in the status quo. The most recent UN report expresses optimism that vested interests can be overcome by an appeal to the public good. That appeal has to be made powerfully, however. And immediately. Michele concluded by quoting a Cambridge researcher who felt the time had come when we need to close our laptops and go out and lie down in the streets.

Conference participants pondered this information during a haunting musical interlude entitled “[What the trees know](#)”, first played at the cathedral at Nuit Blanche. We are grateful to composer and environmental activist Evan Chambers for sharing the piece, and the poetic programme notes that accompanied his composition. These notes conclude with a word of advice: “If you think the trees aren’t talking to you, go out and listen more carefully.”



After this reflective interlude, Professors [Meg Graham and Peter Brown](#) took us on a tour of an “accidental nature preserve” in south-western Quebec. Their beautifully illustrated presentation recounted their progress in restoring biodiversity to an historic farm, coaxing rare or endangered flora and fauna to return, and helping neighbouring farms to “go organic.” They also explained how their successes are threatened by the heavy pesticide and herbicide use by industrialized agricultural operations such as commercial apple orchards and Christmas tree. They also face threats from outside, including Nestle’s attempt to access precious aquifers, and the city of Montreal’s efforts to fob off contaminated waste on local farmers. In sum, they offered nuanced, situated examples of how the general principles set out in Michele’s presentation apply in specific, local settings. At the end of the presentation, Meg

and Peter Brown echoed the Greeting to all Creatures with which the morning had begun. They reminded us that, in the end, the indigenous peoples hold the secrets to restoring our relationship with the land, and recommended a beautiful video called [The Territories of Life](#) that documents indigenous land preservation around the world. Peter Brown concluded his remarks with an insight from ecologist and Passionist monk Thomas Berry, namely, that “the universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.” He warned against regarding the natural environment simply in terms of resources to be exploited, and urged us to become aware of our kinship and interdependence with all living things.

The work of Thomas Berry was also a major influence on Clare and Nasser Noumena, who were to have been our noon hour guests at the conference. Clare and Nasser’s farm in the Eastern Township came into being when their city garden outgrew the space around their Arlington Avenue home. We had hoped that they would be able to share their story, their wisdom, and their mouth-watering, seasonal recipes over lunch, but a medical emergency obliged them to postpone this encounter. However, it is still possible to find inspiration on their website, <https://www.jardinsdarlington.ca> and to find picture-perfect organic produce at their stall at the Atwater Market, just outside the Première Moisson.

Despite the sobering nature of the information we were sharing, the whole morning had something of celebration about it. This spirit continued in the afternoon, which [Very Reverend Michael Pitts](#) opened with a beautiful reading of a traditional Lakota prayer to the Creator whose voice we hear in the wind, and whose majesty we behold in the sunset. Now in the season of Trinity, I am struck by the resonance with the prayer to the Trinity that we know as “Saint Patrick’s Breastplate”.

This prayer served as an introduction to [Stephanie \(Taddy\) Stringer's](#) presentation on the work that indigenous peoples are doing to protect biodiversity worldwide. Taddy, herself a member of the Métis Nation of Ontario, began by reiterating a startling fact from Michele's presentation, namely, that Indigenous peoples make up only 5% of the earth's population, and occupy 22% of the world's landmass, yet they protect 80% of the world's biodiversity. Taddy shared recent findings that showing traditional indigenous land management practices to be as effective – often more effective – in preserving biodiversity than wildlife preserves specially implemented for that purpose. Relying on traditional local knowledge, indigenous groups are able to protect the biodiversity of their lands while at the same time providing a livelihood for their people. This is the good news – the cause for celebration.

The bad news is that these same indigenous peoples are under active attack by international corporations, many based in Canada, who force the people from their land in order to begin mining operations, oil extraction, or logging. The companies employ local militia to terrorize – and not infrequently to kill – those who resist removal.

Here we come to the place where environmental stewardship and social justice intersect to become ecological justice. It is not simply that those least responsible for the environmental crisis are those most devastated by it. It is worse than that. It is those who contribute the most towards protecting the planet from ecological collapse are being actively targeted, terrorised, dispossessed and killed for doing so.

Taddy shared stories of truly heroic resistance in the face of this brutality. Amnesty International and other ecological justice organisations share stories, on a weekly basis, of indigenous land and water defenders who are facing death threats, imprisonment, and even murder, for refusing to permit the destruction of their ecosystems, and the contamination of their water and their land.

After Taddy's presentation, we returned to consider the cascading consequences of altering an ecosystem – but this time, the cascading consequences lead to healing, rather than to destruction. In anticipation of some younger participants in the conference, we watched a beautiful short video about the restoration of an intricate and complex ecosystem of Yellowstone National Park through the reintroduction of wolves. This film, "How Wolves Changed Rivers," can be accessed directly on YouTube, at



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=ysa5OBhXz-Q>

The conference concluded with a plea by [Archbishop Tutu](#) that we recognise the degradation of Earth's environment as "the human rights challenge of our time." [The Reverend Dr. Deborah Meister](#) then drew together the various strands of the presentations and left us with an urgent reminder: Christians must offer an alternative to the dominant culture and economy that is killing us. In that alternative culture, the culture of the Kingdom of God, essential service providers, human and non-human, are

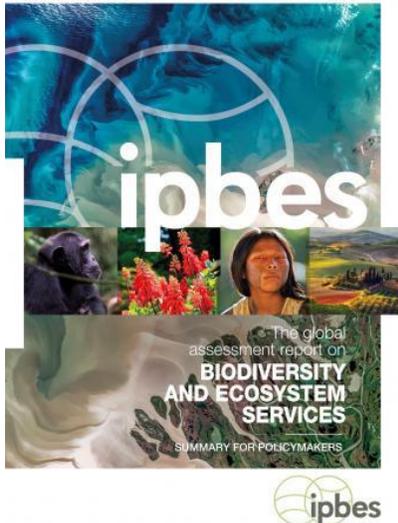
recognised, and valued, and protected. She left us with the command that God gave the people of Israel during their exile in Babylon, to seek the health of the city of their captivity: to establish gardens, and to plant trees.

The exile in Babylon provided a perfect segue to the final musical reflection of the day, a recording of our choir singing Palestrina's [By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept](#), which had recently been posted on YouTube in Patrick Wedd's honour and memory. The beauty and the poignancy of this recording captured once again the dual moods of celebration and mourning that had run through the entire day.

Invitation to Action and Advocacy: The first step toward the healing of the land and all of its creatures – plants, animals, fungi, and even microorganisms on which life depends - is to raise awareness, within the church and within the wider community. This need, and potential role of the church in addressing it, is discussed in the current issue of [The Anglican Journal](#), in an article well worth reading.

In it, Deborah Barretto, director of Resources for Mission in the Anglican Church of Canada, is quoted as saying, "We have to change people's ways of doing things nationally, but also globally. I think if we can play a part in that, that's important.... But I still think we have a long way to go in making people aware of what needs to be done."

There are three kinds of awareness that are crucial: awareness of the extent of the crisis, awareness of the fact that solutions are available, and awareness that it is up to us to ensure that these solutions are implemented – that we cannot rely on the assurances that politicians are all too ready to provide. All three are crucial because if we are confronted with the terrifying facts without being provided with feasible solutions, we may well retreat further into denial or despair. In order to help you spread the word, links to all the conference presentations and reflections have been provided in this newsletter. They are also given in the printable (and emailable) copy of the conference programme that is posted on the cathedral website. You are invited and encouraged to share them with friends, or with groups to which you belong. If you would like one or more of the presenters to view or review a presentation with you, or to lead a discussion, this can be arranged by contacting Michele Rattray-Huish at rattrayhuish.michele@gmail.com or Stephanie (Taddy) Stringer, at taddy.stringer@gmail.com. In addition to our friends and colleagues, it is especially crucial that our MPs and MLAs deepen their understanding of the crisis



that confronts us. Quite specifically, they need to be urged to familiarise themselves with the recommendations of IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) and to insist that their party policies conform to these recommendations. This short IPBES film is easy to share, and makes a good basis for an initial conversation. <https://youtu.be/V-2E6UgtE3g>

Support Indigenous Protection of Biodiversity. We are also urgently called to support the indigenous land and water defenders mentioned earlier in this letter. Support for these groups can take the form of signing petitions, writing letters, making phone calls, or making a financial contribution. Funds to mount legal challenges are urgently needed.

A list of urgent actions is posted on the home page of the cathedral website. But as a place to begin, this petition from Amnesty International draws together many of the concerns explored during the conference. It can be signed online at: <https://takeaction.amnesty.ca/page/63073/action/2>

The Bottom Line. Christians promise, at their baptism, “to strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.” We also promise “to strive to safeguard the integrity of God’s creation and respect, sustain, and renew the life of the earth.” If we fail to do this, COVID 19 will be, as a number of virologists have recently put it, just the tip of the iceberg. We must act now to protect Earth’s remaining biodiversity and to stem the tide of mass extinction, if we wish to leave a just, or even a habitable, planet for our children.

Fr. Michael Lapsley, in a statement issued last week, points out that “in Christian faith communities, some call moments like these Kairos moments. The people... are faced with stark choices about what kind of country and indeed what kind of world they want to live in, and what kind of world they want their grandchildren to grow up in.” The present moment is pivotal. It is a moment that will not come again.

St. Columba and Iona: A Pilgrimage Postponed

Dean Olivier

Originally posted on June 9, 2020 Posted By: Bertrand Olivier Categories: [Daily Bread](#), [Prayer and Spirituality](#), [Social Justice](#)

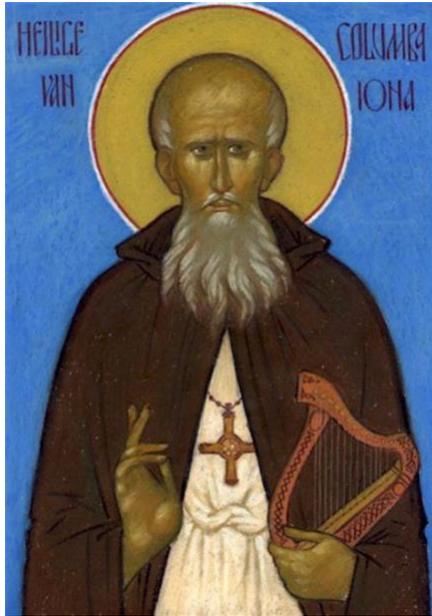


In a week’s time, a group of pilgrims from the Cathedral would have been on their way for a pilgrimage to Iona, a tiny island in the inner Hebrides, off the coast of Mull on the West of Scotland. Seen from here in Montreal,

or even from London England, Iona feels as if it sits on the edge of the world. Even from London, it’s a 13 hour journey, which involves at least two train journeys, one ferry to cross from mainland Scotland to Mull, one coach journey across the Isle of Mull, and then another short ferry ride across to the jetty on Iona. Pilgrimages are as much in the journey as in the destination.

The island, which is famous for its influence on the development of Christianity in Scotland and the north of England, is usually busy with tourists during the day, and quiet again at the end of the day, when the last ferry has gone back. There are about

100 inhabitants on this tiny island, supplemented by pilgrims staying with the Iona Community, in Iona Abbey.



Today (June 9th), the church remembers St Columba , an Irish monk and missionary who made Iona his headquarters after leaving Ireland on his missionary journeys. For him, Iona was not the end of a long journey on the edge of the world. Instead, in the 6th century, at a time when roads were sparse and dangerous, Iona was a very convenient hub from which to hop all around Scotland by boats and coracles, thereby facilitating the spread of the Gospel in a very Celtic fashion – in a harsh landscape where life was tough and where people were at the mercy of the elements. The island – on which the Scottish kings have been buried – continued to be an important centre of Christian spirituality for centuries and medieval Iona Abbey – built in AD 1200 on the site of Columba’s monastery – still stands tall, the point of focus for so many pilgrims.

The project to rebuild the Abbey – which had been semi derelict – was led by George McLeod, a Scottish Presbyterian minister, whose parish was in a poor shipbuilding area on the bank of the Clyde in Glasgow. At a time of high unemployment, McLeod found that the church was having a hard time connecting with the people. There did not seem to be a common language between ministers, however well intentioned. There was little trust between them, and little understanding of each other’s lives and work.

McLeod therefore decided to bring together a number of young ministers hot off their seminaries and a number of builders and craftsmen, in order to rebuild the common areas of Iona Abbey, the place where a now defunct Benedictine community used to live. The project took place over many summers until the rebuilding was complete.

There was appetite for those who had taken part in the project to continue to meet, and the Iona Community became reality, an ecumenical community committed to working to change the hearts of all. Members, of which I am one, do not live on Iona but instead are scattered around Scotland, the UK, and now the world, and continue to live by a rule of life which includes a commitment to prayer and reading the Bible, a commitment to



account for our use of money and our use of time, and a commitment to work for justice and peace and the wholeness of creation.

The Iona Community is a group of deeply committed and prayerful Christians, most of whom are also activists with wide interests in issues of

justice and peace. Attending our meetings can be exhausting because of the breadth of our interests and the many ways in which these are expressed into action.

One of my early learnings in the Community was that – even with the best intentions in the world – it was impossible for me to be involved in every single issue of justice and peace. But even when I thought I was failing somewhere, knew that some of my other fellow members would be deeply involved and active, and therefore together we could make a difference in many different areas in the world, thereby better contributing to building up the Kingdom of God in all its fullness.

At this time, many of us continue to be isolated at home, eagerly waiting for the day when we can be released back into the world and resume life in a way that will look a little more like what it was. Meanwhile, the world continues to show itself to us in all its brokenness. Like the pilgrims of Iona, and all those who, like Columba before them, have needed a place from which to resource themselves in order to map out what our personal Christian calling might be, let us use this time and this place to discern our gifts, talents, and energies, that we may be ready and know how best to offer them to God.

Dean Bertrand concluded his post with a prayer for the Iona Community. It has resonance, as well, for our own community, in these difficult times.

O God, who gave to your servant Columba the gifts of courage, faith and cheerfulness, and sent people out from Iona to carry the word of your gospel to every creature, grant, we pray, a like spirit to your church, even at this present time. Further in all things the purpose of our Community, that hidden things may be revealed to us, and new ways found to touch the lives of all. May we preserve with each other sincere charity and peace, and if it be your holy will, grant that a place of your abiding be continued still to be a sanctuary and a light. Through Jesus Christ, Amen

One final invitation: If you have comments, questions or suggestions arising from any of the articles in this newsletter, you are invited to feel contact ESJAG at espritmontreal@gmail.com