



# Gazette

SEPTEMBER 2016

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## Les votes de la délégation de Québec non enregistrés

Par James Sweeny

Pendant la session de clôture du Synode général de 2016, une motion a été dûment adoptée afin que les résultats du scrutin concernant l'amendement au Canon sur le mariage soient immédiatement divulgués aux membres. Le soir précédent, une motion avait aussi été dûment adoptée afin que le vote sur ce sujet soit un vote enregistré; mais les résultats du scrutin n'auraient alors été fournis que dans le projet de minutes, habituellement transmis aux participants longtemps après la conclusion des travaux du Synode.

En examinant les résultats du scrutin, deux membres de notre Diocèse, Pierre Voyer et Ruth Sheeran, se sont rendu compte que bien qu'ils aient dûment voté, leurs votes n'avaient pas été enregistrés. L'enregistrement des votes se faisait par le biais de l'utilisation d'un appareil électronique qui permettait non seulement d'enregistrer le vote du participant mais aussi de reconnaître son statut en tant qu'évêque, membre du clergé ou laïc. Le diocèse d'Athabasca a aussi réalisé que le vote de l'un de leurs membres du clergé n'avait pas été enregistré. Puisque l'adoption de la motion sur l'amendement au canon nécessitait 66,66 % des votes de chacune des catégories de membres, et que l'adoption de l'amendement avait été défait après le scrutin du lundi soir parce les membres du clergé avaient voté en faveur à 66,23 % seulement, les votes non enregistrés des membres du clergé, qui avaient tous deux été faits en faveur de l'amendement, prenaient une importance cruciale.

Les trois membres ont alors informé le Synode de ces erreurs et deux évêques diocésains ont demandé à ce que les erreurs soient corrigées. Tout de suite après cette demande, le Chancelier a annoncé que le vote de l'un des membres du clergé avait été erronément enregistré comme le vote d'un

membre laïc et que par conséquent, le résultat du vote du soir précédent se concluait plutôt avec l'adoption de la motion proposée. Le Primat a alors déclaré que la première lecture de la proposition concernant l'amendement au Canon sur le mariage avait été adoptée et que la motion serait à nouveau présentée pour un vote final au prochain Synode général, devant se tenir à Vancouver en 2019.

Pas besoin de vous dire que tout le Synode était en état de choc! Le lundi soir, 70 % des membres avaient voté en faveur de l'amendement mais la majorité des deux tiers des votes dans chacune des catégories de membres – évêques, clergé et laïcs - n'avait pas été atteinte. La majorité avait ressenti un profond sentiment de regret et plusieurs avaient été déçus de constater que leur Église n'était pas prête à permettre à tous ses membres de se marier religieusement. Ceux qui avaient rejeté l'amendement avaient ressenti du soulagement mais ne jubilaient pas trop car ils savaient que ce n'était que partie remise.

Il faut tirer des leçons de cette bourde majeure. La première bien sûr est que le Synode général devra s'assurer qu'à l'avenir, les scrutins soient menés en utilisant un système qui contrevérifie que tous les votes effectués ont été correctement enregistrés, que ce système soit électronique ou plus traditionnel. Mais la plus importante leçon est que les membres du Synode ont tous appris comment on se sent dans la peau de l'autre. Tous ceux qui avaient pleuré, qui avaient été déçus, offusqués, même ulcérés lors du dévoilement des résultats du vote du lundi soir savaient exactement ce que ressentaient tous ceux qui soudainement, apprenaient, vingt heures plus tard, que le résultat du vote venait d'être inversé.

Lors du Synode général comme au cours de notre Synode diocésain, le

suite à la page 3



Pierre Voyer, Ruth Sheeran and the priest from Athabasca address synod regarding their votes not being recorded Photo: The General Synod, Anglican Church of Canada

## Quebec delegates' votes not registered

By James Sweeny

At the closing business session of the General Synod 2016 a motion was passed to have the recorded vote on the amendment to the Marriage Canon released immediately to the members. There had been a motion the previous night to have a recorded vote but that is only printed in the minutes which are not released in draft form until long after synod finishes.

Upon review of the voting record two members from our diocese, Pierre Voyer and Ruth Sheeran, realized that although they had voted their votes had not been recorded. Voting was done using an electronic clicker that recognized both the voter's vote and if they were a bishop, clergy or lay member. The diocese of Athabasca also noticed that one of their clergy had not had his vote recorded. Given that the motion had required 66.66% in each of the three forms of membership and that on the Monday night the motion had failed as it only had 66.23% in the order of clergy these missing votes, both of which were in favour of the motion, were critical.

The three members brought this failure to the attention of the synod and the two diocesan bishops requested that the errors be corrected. Immediately following this request the Chancellor announced that one of the cler-

gy votes had been mistaken recorded as a lay vote and so the vote had actually passed the previous evening. The Primate then officially declared the first reading of the motion to amend the Marriage Canon had passed and that it will come to the next General Synod, Vancouver 2019, for a final vote.

The synod was in shock! On the Monday evening more than 70% of the synod had voted for the change but it failed to meet the required two-thirds in each of the three houses: bishops, clergy and lay. The majority felt a deep sense of regret and for many disappointment that their church was unable to allow all of its members the ability to have a marriage in the church. Those who voted against the motion were relieved but not overjoyed as they knew that this subject would be before the church again.

There are lessons to be learned from this major gaff. The first is that General Synod has to work on insuring that in any future votes the system is double checked so that all votes cast are properly recorded either by an improved electronic system or by return to a more traditional voting method. The more important lesson was that members of synod learned what it felt to be the other. All those who wept, were upset, angry or disappointed by the results

announced Monday evening could relate and understand the feelings of those who suddenly found out twenty hours later that the results were reversed.

At General Synod as at our diocesan synod most voting is done together but some is done with each order voting separately and requires each order to pass it. There was another vote by orders at General Synod, it was to remove the "Prayer for the Conversion of the Jews" in any further printings of the Book of Common Prayer. That resolution failed when it did not receive the required two-thirds in the House of Bishops. This result was seen by many as a step backwards in our attempts to work with all religious faiths.

When asked what decisions or actions of General Synod do you think will be felt by the members of our churches in the diocese, Scott Potter, our diocesan youth delegate, said: "It's funny to think that most of what we did at General Synod will not have immediate application here in Québec. We began changes to the marriage canon, but so few marry here. We worked to further our relationships with the United Church, Mennonites, Lutherans, and (unsuccessfully) Jews, but this diocese does not have large numbers of any of those populations. In the long run, perhaps our continued meetings with the United

## FROM THE COADJUTOR BISHOP

Much has been said and written about the General Synod's decision in July to proceed to a further stage of discernment about expanding our church's understanding of marriage to include same-sex couples. Much more is still to be said and written about that in the weeks and months ahead, including what it may or may not mean for our diocese.

I'd like to take this opportunity, however, to highlight a few of the other important matters taken up by the General Synod—things which didn't attract the attention of bloggers or the secular media, but which are of at least equal significance to the life and work of the Anglican Church of Canada of which we are a full part.

A full day of the General Synod was dedicated to listening to Indigenous Anglicans. Our church has committed to walking the way of reconciliation with our First Nations, Inuit, and Métis members, and that includes discerning together a means of Indigenous self determination within our structures.

We committed to renew our formal conversations with the United Church of Canada, with a particular focus on common mission. This is especially important for our diocese, where we have historically enjoyed a close relationship with our United Church neighbours through endeavours like Ecumenical Shared Ministries.

We also agreed to begin a new ecumenical dialogue with Christians of the Mennonite tradition in Canada, from whom we can learn much about how to be a church committed to discipleship, peacemaking, and speaking the truth to power.

Throughout the gathering we heard stories about how Anglicans from across Canada are living out their faith through refugee sponsorship, participation in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, care for creation, international partnerships, and reaching out in loving service to the victims of disasters at home and abroad. These stories were hugely inspiring and deeply encouraging. I'm proud that Quebec's Anglicans are involved in every one of these.

Meetings of the General Synod are a real test of stamina, and I'm pleased to say the Diocese of Quebec was well represented by delegates who were present and engaged throughout the marathon six-day gathering. You'll read their own reflections on their experience of the General Synod elsewhere in this issue of *The Gazette*.

The General Synod's work doesn't end when the gavel falls at the last business session. A small but dedicated national staff work to implement the synod's decisions, and the Council of General Synod (to which I have been elected) helps direct the work of the church national until the General Synod meets again in three years.

In your personal prayers and your weekly prayers in your congregation, please remember the life and work of the national expression of the Anglican Church of Canada, especially our Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, and General Secretary Michael Thompson, who oversee it all with dedication and grace.

And, in keeping with the General Synod's theme, pray that all the members of the Anglican Church of Canada might be witnesses to Christ's love across this vast land.

+ Bruce



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Bien des commentaires ont été exprimés et écrits à la suite de la décision du Synode général de juillet dernier de passer à une nouvelle étape de discernement en vue d'inclure les unions entre conjoints de même sexe dans la définition du mariage utilisée par notre Église. Et nous devons nous attendre à ce que bien des choses encore soient exprimées et écrites à ce sujet dans les semaines et mois à venir, incluant l'impact que cette décision pourrait avoir dans notre propre diocèse.

Mais j'aimerais toutefois utiliser la présente tribune pour mettre en évidence certains des autres importants sujets débattus par le Synode général – sujets qui n'ont pas attiré l'attention des bloggeurs ou des médias séculiers mais qui sont au moins d'égale importance à la vie et à l'œuvre de l'Église anglicane du Canada, dont nous faisons partie intégrante.

Le Synode général a consacré une journée complète à écouter des témoignages d'anglicans autochtones. Notre église s'est engagée à marcher sur le chemin de la réconciliation avec nos membres en provenance des Premières nations, des Inuits et des Métis, et ceci implique de discerner ensemble une façon d'assurer l'autodétermination des peuples autochtones au sein de nos structures.

Nous nous sommes engagés à poursuivre nos conversations officielles avec l'Église Unie du Canada, tout en mettant un accent particulier sur notre mission commune. Ceci est tout particulièrement important pour notre diocèse, puisqu'historiquement, nous avons entretenu d'étroites relations avec nos voisins de l'Église Unie grâce à des initiatives comme les Ministères œcuméniques partagés (Ecumenical Shared Ministries).

Nous avons également convenu d'entamer un nouveau dialogue œcuménique avec les chrétiens de la tradition mennonite au Canada, desquels nous pouvons apprendre beaucoup de choses sur ce qu'est une église engagée dans le discipulat et la résolution de conflits et sur comment être une église qui n'a pas peur de dire la vérité aux classes dirigeantes.

Tout au long de la rencontre, nous avons entendu des témoignages d'anglicans en provenance de partout au Canada sur la façon dont ils et elles vivent leur foi à travers le parrainage de réfugiés, la participation aux travaux de la Commission de Vérité et Réconciliation, la protection de la Création, les partenariats internationaux, et le secours empreint d'amour fraternel aux victimes de catastrophes tant au Canada qu'à l'étranger. Ces témoignages étaient extrêmement inspirants et profondément encourageants. Je suis fier que des anglicans du diocèse de Québec aient été et soient encore impliqués dans chacune de ces actions.

Les réunions du Synode général sont un véritable test d'endurance, et je suis très fier de vous dire que le diocèse de Québec était bien représenté par des délégués qui ont été présents et impliqués tout au long de ce marathon de six jours de rencontres. Vous pourrez lire leurs réflexions sur leur expérience du Synode général ailleurs dans le présent numéro de *The Gazette*.

Même après la clôture de la dernière session plénière de travail, les travaux du Synode général ne sont pas terminés. Un groupe d'employés du Synode national, restreint mais enthousiaste et dédié à la cause, travaille à mettre en application les décisions du Synode général, et le Conseil du Synode général (auquel j'ai été élu) aide à mener les travaux de l'Église nationale jusqu'à ce que le Synode général se réunisse à nouveau dans trois ans.

J'aimerais vous demander, dans vos prières personnelles ainsi que dans les prières hebdomadaires de votre congrégation, de vous rappeler de la vie et du travail du volet national de l'Église anglicane du Canada, et de garder tout particulièrement dans vos pensées notre Primate, Mgr Fred Hiltz, et le secrétaire général Michael Thompson, qui supervisent le tout avec dévouement et bienveillance.

Et, en accord avec le thème du Synode général, priez pour que tous les membres de l'Église anglicane du Canada soient des témoins de l'amour du Christ à travers notre vaste territoire.

+ Bruce



### SEPTEMBER 2016

A ministry of the Anglican Diocese of Quebec founded in 1894 by the Rt. Rev. A.H. Dunn

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## A first timer's view of General Synod

By Ruth Sheeran

This was the first time I attended General Synod as a lay delegate. It was an eventful, remarkable, exhausting five days. I was aware that this Synod would be contentious, due to the motion to allow same-gender marriage, but I was surprised by the level of emotion openly expressed on both sides of the debate. It was evident that for some the issue questions what they deeply believe about scripture while for others it questions whether they are fully accepted in the Anglican Church.

In order for the delegates to make a reasoned and informed decision, much time was allowed for discussion and debate of the proposed changes to the marriage canon. On the first day the committee which had studied the matter presented their report, This Holy Estate, and gave an explanation of their deliberations and conclusions. The report can be downloaded at [http://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/Marriage\\_Canon\\_REPORT\\_15Sept22.pdf](http://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/Marriage_Canon_REPORT_15Sept22.pdf) Over the next few days the issue of offering same gender marriage in the Anglican Church was discussed twice in small mixed groups. In carefully moderated sessions, all the participants were able to present their opinions in a respectful and tolerant atmosphere. Regrettably some were not open to tolerating differing opinions and unfortunate things were said. Unpleasant incidents also took place outside the scheduled sessions. In fact, it was necessary for the Primate to speak quite firmly to the Synod members on several occasions about Holy Manners.

Given the apprehension about the outcome, it was unfortunate that there was such confusion surrounding the results. The final vote tally dramatically swung from defeat to acceptance. Those who desired the motion to pass were swept from devastation to joy while those opposed were dismayed when their initial victory turned to defeat. Through both of these stressful and difficult events, Archbishop Fred prayerfully reminded the Synod members that although we have differing opinions we are one Church and must always strive to walk together with tolerance and acceptance.

There were other interesting and informative items on the five-day agenda. Sunday was entirely devoted to presentations from the Indigenous members of the Synod. The day began with a Eucharist service led by the Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald, the National Indigenous Bishop, and members of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples. Speakers included the actress Tina Keeper and Inuit leader Natan Obed who spoke eloquently about the devastating effects of climate change on the Inuit people in the Canadian Arctic. The day ended with a presentation on the proposal to create a self-governing Indigenous province.

A number of speakers addressed the Synod, including, among others, the National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, the Moderator of the United Church of Canada, the Episcopal Bishop of Cuba, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church and the Executive Director of the Mennonite Council of Canada. All are inspiring speakers who spoke compellingly about the issues that affect their members, and they expressed pleasure at working together with the Anglican Church of Canada.

The delegates left the Synod aware that there are many concerns facing our Church. For example, we were asked to actively consider the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as they relate to the many faithful Indigenous members of the Anglican Church. The issue of responsible investment has been successfully addressed at the Diocesan level in Quebec, but we all need to consider the extent of our personal dependence on fossil fuels and whether we are doing enough in our local churches.

Although the proposed changes to the marriage canon passed at General Synod in July, the issue will return for the second reading at the Synod in 2020. In order to participate actively in the continuing debate, the members of the Diocese of Quebec must examine the issue. We need to study the report that clearly outlines the issues and prayerfully consider the implications of the proposed changes. But throughout our discussions we must listen carefully to the differing opinions and remember that we are all members of the same Church, called to walk together with tolerance, acceptance, and respect.

I returned home with many impressions from the 2016 General Synod. Although it was at times contentious and fraught, what I remember clearly is the unifying moments—listening to inspirational speakers, particularly Archbishop Fred, and singing with others during the times of worship. It was those moments that gave me hope that while we may be deeply divided on some issues, there is a positive way forward together.

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scrutin se fait généralement de façon collégiale, mais certaines motions requièrent un vote séparé dans chacune des trois catégories de membres parce que chaque catégorie doit voter majoritairement en faveur de certaines motions pour qu'elles soient adoptées. Un autre de ces scrutins par catégorie s'est tenu au Synode général, proposant d'éliminer la « Prière pour la conversion des Juifs » de toute future réimpression du Livre de Prière Commune (Book of Common Prayer). Cette proposition n'a pas reçu l'aval de l'assemblée quand elle n'a pas reçu deux tiers des votes provenant de la Maison des Évêques. Plusieurs ont interprété ce résultat comme un pas en arrière dans nos efforts de collaboration avec d'autres confessions religieuses.

Lorsqu'on lui a demandé quelles décisions ou quels gestes du Synode général auraient un impact sur les membres de notre diocèse, Scott Porter, notre délégué jeunesse, a répondu : « C'est drôle de réaliser qu'une grande part du travail effectué au Synode général n'aura pas d'impact immédiat chez nous au Québec. Nous avons déjà amorcé les changements au Canon sur le mariage, mais si peu de personnes se marient ici. Nous avons travaillé à créer des relations avec les membres de l'Église Unie, avec les mennonites, les luthériens et aussi (sans succès) avec les juifs, mais peu de personnes de ces diverses confessions habitent dans notre diocèse. À long terme, il est possible que la poursuite des rencontres avec les membres de l'Église Unie ait éventuellement un impact sur nos anglophones pendant qu'il y a encore des anglophones ici, ou peut-être qu'un esprit d'œcuménisme réceptif aux Mennonites peut nous apprendre quelque chose sur la façon dont le diocèse anglican de Québec peut vivre en tant qu'église en marge d'une société en train de devenir de plus en plus laïque. »

Vous pourrez lire d'autres comptes rendus des discussions tenues au Synode général dans la lettre de notre évêque Bruce en page 2 et dans l'article de Ruth Sheeran.

From page 1

Church can make a difference for Anglophones here while there are still Anglophones here, or perhaps a spirit of receptive ecumenism with the Mennonites can teach us something about how the Anglican Diocese



**Ruth Sheeran, Nils Bodtker, Bishop Bruce Myers, Mary Wells (accepting on behalf of David and Susan Tunnell), Hilary and Norman Webster, Stephen Stafford**

Photo: David Oliver

## Quebec Lodge: The Dream Comes True

By John Moses

After years of struggle, disappointments and lots of hard work by a myriad of committed volunteers, Quebec Lodge celebrated its new beginning on Sunday, July 3rd. The Quebec Lodge Foundation hosted a reception for more than 80 donors and volunteers on the site of the new camp. Tours of the emerging camp property and facilities were offered and camp staffers eagerly showed off the new yurt and guided guests down the pathway to the waterfront.

In a tent erected on the camp playing field, refreshments were served and attendees were greeted by Campaign Chairs Ruth Sheeran and Steve Stafford. Both expressed their gratitude to all who held onto the vision for the new camp over many years, and they took special steps to recognize several of the lead donors, presenting each with a painting done by a North Hatley artist. The Rt. Rev. Bruce Myers, Bishop Coadjutor, represented the Anglican Diocese of Quebec which generously donated the 70 acres of land that will serve as the campus for the summer programs.

Other principal donors honored included David Tunnell and Family, the R. Howard Webster and the Eric T Webster Foundations represented by Norman Webster, and Nils Bodtker, who provided initial support for the fundraising effort and, later, additional gifts that pushed the campaign past its goal of \$1.5 million. Accompanied

of Québec can live as a church in the margins of a society becoming ever more secular."

There is further reporting on

by The Reverend Al Salt, who had been camp director when he attended, Mr. Bodtker recalled how much his summers at the camp had affected him both then and throughout his life. He added that he was delighted that future generations of young people will now be able to enjoy a similar experience.

Quebec Lodge Director Brian Wharry and Program Director Duncan Plaunt talked briefly of their excitement about this new venture. Both thanked Bill Crooks, who was instrumental in developing the camp curriculum before departing in the spring to join the Canadian Armed Forces.

Initially the program will be a day camp, with two one week sessions in late July and early August of 2016. The focus will be on environmental and ecological education, with the first week focusing on the role of fire in the ecosystem and the second week focusing on the role of water. In addition to the educational component, campers will also participate in a variety of recreational programs on the site. Mr. Wharry announced that the camp will also provide a week for Syrian refugee children from the Sherbrooke area.

"As this new chapter in Quebec Lodge's history opens, all those who supported and worked for this day are excited and grateful," noted Foundation Chair Ruth Sheeran. "In the years to come, we look forward to erecting additional yurts and to offering a full, boarding and day program."

the many items discussed at General Synod in Bishop Bruce's letter on page 2 and the article by Ruth Sheeran.

# Gleanings

*Gleanings* is a monthly column by Meb Reisner Wright, the diocesan historian, who delves in to the back issues of the Quebec Diocesan Gazette to present us with interesting nuggets of our past.

Things don't change, apparently! In the July issue of the Diocesan Gazette (there were summer issues of the paper in 1916) the Editor—Rev. Charles Revell Eardley-Wilmot—sent out an appeal "to send out more frequently" news of what was going on in the parishes. Unlike today, in 1916 it was to the clergy that this plea was sent, but the Editorial request was a familiar one none the less!

It seems that at the recent Diocesan Synod, held that past June, "a resolution was moved by one of the Lay Delegates, and adopted by the house, in favour of an effort to increase the usefulness of the Diocesan Gazette and its value to our subscribers by the publication of more news from the Parishes." Eardley-Wilmot was trying his best to implement this suggestion right away. Whether as a direct result of this appeal or not, the November issue features a lively, detailed article "from Marbleton and Bishop's Crossing" describing the rather dramatic solution one parish had found to the shifts in population that had affected church attendance.

"The chief item of interest in this Mission this summer," the item begins, "has been the moving of the Church,"—that is, the Church of the Good Shepherd, which had been consecrated 11th December 1877 by Bishop James William Williams—"from Dudswell Corner to the village of Bishop's Crossing [Bishopton]."

"This was deemed advisable," the article explains, "owing to the removal of English families from the Dudswell road, and the necessity for a church in the village. The moving was very successfully done by Mr Morin of Lake Weedon, and the church is in better condition [now] than it was on the old site."

"During the moving the I.O.O.F. [Independent Order of Odd Fellows] Hall was kindly placed at our disposal for services."

The church's reopening took place on of 21st September in the context of a regular Cookshire Deanery Meeting—in 1916 there were four Deaneries in the Townships: Coaticook, Cookshire, Sherbrooke and Richmond. After the routine business of the morning of the second day of proceedings, and the reading and discussion of a paper by the Rev. J.J. Roy on 'Methods of Bible Study', dinner was served at the Parsonage. In the afternoon Dr Banfill of East Angus addressed those attending "on subjects relating to moral and social reform." At 4 pm there was a service for the children. Then, "in the evening, the clergy went to Bishop's Crossing for the formal reopening of the Church of the Good Shepherd. The Church looked very nice with harvest decorations and was well filled. Rev. Ian Alexander Robertson MacDonald [of East Angus and Ascot Corner] preached the sermon. At the conclusion of the service a chicken-pie supper was served in the Town Hall, the proceeds amounting to \$43" [a large sum in 1916. A similar supper the evening before in the Parish Hall had brought in \$25]. "Good weather favoured us, and a very pleasant and we trust profitable session was the result."

A few weeks later, on 11th October, the Bishop held confirmation there and "expressed his pleasure at the success which had attended the moving of the church, and also at the privilege of holding the first confirmation at Bishop's Crossing. Eleven candidates were confirmed."

The same issue features news items from Bury and Portneuf as well as news that the librarian of the Sherbrooke Woman's Auxiliary wanted "requests for books on Missionary subjects." The Editor's call for input from the regions was bearing fruit. May such requests continue to do so!

## Unveiling of a commemorative panel at Grosse Ile North cemetery



Relatives of Willis E. Adcock unveiling the panel

Article and photo by Kim Clark

Under sunny skies on

Sunday afternoon July 10th, about 30 parishioners of Holy Trinity and visitors gathered at the gate of the cemetery at

Grosse Ile North for the unveiling of a panel, erected by The Grosse Ile Heritage Society, depicting some very rare photos of the first Holy Trinity Church. A very short service lead by lay readers Muriel Clarke and Kim Clark and conducted in both English and French, preceded the unveiling. Immediately after the Lord's Prayer, relatives of the late Willis E. Adcock, who traveled from as far away as Nova Scotia, Ontario and even Washington, D.C. for the occasion, cut the ribbon and unveiled the commemorative panel.

# Faithful Reflections

By Louisa Blair

## Already-happendism and other time traps

I spent a few days with friends in the woods this summer. There was no wifi and no cellphone connection. One day, we canoed all day. We crossed Lake Long, Lake Montaubon, and came back to our lake, Lake Nadeau. My canoe-partner and I didn't talk a lot, but we listened, we watched, we portaged, we paddled, we tried to avoid being tipped over by the wake of motor boats. We picnicked on a smooth rock, we swam, nous avons fainéanté – we lazed around. Then we headed for home. As we neared our campsite, we all felt it must be 6 or 7, because it had been such a huge day. Then someone cried out, "It's only three! We did it! We took time!" We had added real tangible time to the day – we all felt it – but not the kind that can be scientifically measured.



Have you noticed that a lot of theological questions and bitter arguments have time-measuring words in them: When was the world created? (creationism vs. evolutionism) When will the second coming happen? (already happenedism vs. will happenism) When precisely do we become who we are? (pro-choicism vs. pro-lifism) What will happen after we die? (resurrectionism vs. death-is-the-endism). We ask and answer questions in time-bound ways because of the language, because to tell a story you need grammar (tenses) and logic (first this, then that), forcing sequential time on us whether we like it or not.

Time-questions are good questions for journalists: we need to know the when of things for the sake of the facts, human accountability, truth and justice. But when it's time for the existential questions, perhaps we should just stay away from questions that have "when", "before" or "after" in them. Perhaps the world was created outside of time. Perhaps paradise and hell are here now, invisible to us for some other reason than because we haven't died yet. Did Jesus know everything that was going to happen to him? Did God fore-ordain everything about our lives and then plan every detail of how it would play out, the way we try to do with Google Calendars? Surely that's our version of what being in control looks like, not God's.

Jesus entered into this kind of time so God could meet us on our own terms. But references in the Bible to God's true relationship to time are all signalled by a breaking of grammatical rules. "Before Abraham was," said Jesus, "I am." And when Moses asked God "But whom shall I tell the people I was speaking to?" God said, "Tell them that 'I AM' sent you." Don't try and pin me down, you time-people you.

We invented time so that we could try to control the brief space between our birth and our death, which is finite. But then we began to worship youth and despise the old, because they are near the end. And we invented things that operate much faster than we do, and that never die (our cellphones die when the batteries die, but then we can resurrect them). They measure and judge and find us wanting if we do not keep up. God is the opposite. God never dies either, but invites to take the other time, equally real, that stretchy untime before and after and in the middle of time in which God holds us, young or old, efficient or disorganized or even demented, in her love unending.

The photos of the church were very kindly donated by a member of the Adcock family. Along with the photos, one can read a brief history of the church, which once stood tall on the hillside overlooking the water of the gulf.

The exterior of the church was built in 1877 but was not completed until 1882. During a strong gale in October 1922, the church blew off its foundation, damaging the floor and structure of the building. It was torn down in late 1923 and some of the material was used in the present Holy Trinity Church, which was built about a mile away.