

BLESSINGS

The Blessings Edition

March 2023

Editor's Note: In January, I sent out a call for help. After having cataract surgery and facing a second one, my ability to chase down stories was temporarily limited, so I enlisted readers' help to fill the March and April papers.

I used my email contact list to send a mass message: could you write a short article about a memorable time in your life when you were blessed?

Readers did not disappoint! Here are some of the responses, with more to follow in the April paper.

Thank you to all who responded. You have saved the day, and I trust, blessed others with your wonderful stories! I know they certainly blessed me!

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When my family moved from Fredericton to the village of New Maryland in the mid 1960s, I joined a group known as CGIT, affiliated with the local United Church.

The letters stand for Canadian Girls in Training and our leader, Kaye Neilson, is the focus of my blessing.

Kaye was a kind, caring, well-organized, energetic leader to a group of 20 plus teenage girls from New Maryland and the surrounding communities. I was privileged to be in CGIT from age 12-17 and Kaye's leadership inspired me to become a leader when I had completed my "training."

I was blessed by this amazing person who volunteered her time and talents week after week, month after month, year after year. My life was enriched by fulfilling the CGIT purpose which she taught us, and I can still quote from memory:

As a Canadian Girl In Training, under the leadership of Jesus,

It is my purpose to cherish health, seek truth, know God, serve others, And thus, with His help, become the girl God would



have me be.

Bible stories, community service projects, sleepovers at Kaye's, weekend camping trips, performing in variety shows, mother-daughter banquets, whipping wax to make unique Christmas candles, serving guests at a Japanese tea dressed in a traditional kimono, and the highlight, the Christmas vesper service all helped us fulfill the purpose.

I treasure every memory from those years. Kaye was my mentor, and I will forever be grateful for the blessing she was in my life.

**Nancy Robinson
Woodstock**

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Ian's Gift

Two years ago the little congregation at St. Peter's in Wickham, Queen's County, realized the church's window frames were rotten. And, as everyone knows, one renovation job on an old building always leads to others.

So, what to do? A young man was contacted to see if he could help. Over the winter months he hand-crafted wooden frames, installed the trim and fitted new glass.

All of that led to new siding on the church's exterior, and the replacement of panelling with tongue-and-groove boards on the inside walls.

But that's not all: there was still an elephant-in-the-room — the sagging east wall.

A friend milled and donated the lumber, and the young man cut out and replaced all the rot.

And then, over the Altar, he added the finishing touches: four stained glass windows that tell the story of the English Church.

These came from the Church of St. John the Baptist (Mission Church) and St. Clement's, and were given to God's glory and in loving memory of Elizabeth Dardina Vincent; Malcolm Stuart Rowell; George H. and Mildred K. Hamilton; and Donald G. Stewart.

The young man donated all his labour and richly blessed the congregation and the community. Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. (Psalm 118.19)

**The Rev. Canon Chris VanBuskirk
Parish of Moncton**



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When I was in grad school in Maine in April of 1972, I was interviewed for a teaching job here in New Brunswick.

I was offered the post with the understanding that I had to be certified in New Brunswick (at the time I had no certification anywhere).

I was told that if I could be certified in any US state, they would certify me here. I, therefore called and made an appointment in Augusta to see about Maine certification the next day.

Upon arrival, I was told the woman with whom I had spoken the previous day



Hank Williams, pictured in black

had been in a car accident so I was referred to another person.

I explained that while I had no student teaching, perhaps they would allow me to include the teaching I was doing that year, three times a week, while working on my Masters in teaching degree.

The man asked how much time that involved and I said an hour a day, three times a week. He doubted that would be enough.

Just then, the phone rang and he excused himself to take the call. While he spoke, a voice in my head said, "Ask about the two years you worked in the language lab while doing your BA."

I assured the voice that it would be foolish to ask that, but it kept insisting so I threw caution to the wind and when the man hung up the phone, I asked, "Do you think I could count the time at my job in the language lab during my undergrad degree?"

He asked, "How much time and what did you do?" so I replied that I had worked seven and a half hours a week tutoring students in French, Spanish and German who were doing lab work for their required language courses.

He asked, "How long was that for?"

"Two years," I said.

He then answered, "Well, that sounds like quite a bit of experience. Why not? Let's count that. You are now certified."

This was the ultimate Holy Spirit event of my life, and I

have always resolved to listen that That Voice!

Hank Williams, verger emeritus, Christ Church Cathedral

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My wife, Christine, and I remember very well a time when we were blessed.

In my second year of seminary at Wycliffe College in Toronto, we were living in a basement apartment in East York.

At that time we had two children, aged 3.5 and 6 months. It was a challenging time financially, and at one point we had a little under \$20 in the bank, with far too many days to go until any money came into the household.

And we needed diapers — immediately.

There were many other things on the list as well: food, TTC tokens, and so on, but math is math, and the math told us that the diapers would run out well before we'd be able to afford to buy more.

Of course, the Good Lord had been at work already in this situation. When the mail arrived the next day, we found a card and a cheque from the ACW group in the Parish of Newcastle-Nelson-Hardwicke.

Their note explained that they simply felt we could use some help.

Of course, that idea had been in their heads and on their hearts well before our need became apparent, and the card, too, was mailed before our need became so stark.

God, and that ACW group, had blessed us mightily, in many more ways than just diapers!

We are thankful for that group, and for their following of God's lead, ever since.

**The Rev. Chris Hayes
Parish of Salisbury & Havelock**

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Forever thankful, always grateful, abundantly blessed: The Most Rev. Harold and Edith Nutter's move to Ontario

Fifteen years ago, my parents started to think about moving to Perth, Ont.

They knew they were going to need more support and care in the coming years. We welcomed this, so the process started.

Over the next couple of years we checked out real estate and finally bought a condo on the Tay River.

The next priority was to get them a family doctor and to access local social services.

Then the planning could begin in earnest.

We held a family meeting with Mom, Dad, my husband, and my two sons to talk about how we could make this work, and what each of us could do to make their new life as full as their life in Fredericton had been. No easy task!

The first three years were reasonably normal. My parents took daily drives to get to know Perth. My sons took them on day trips. Mom and I did a lot of shopping!

Dad and Paul bonded at the hardware store with lunches at the pub after.

Fortunately there were seven retired clergy in St. James Parish. Dad occasionally preached at Sunday services. They loved the local theatre, restaurants, and Sunday dinners here.

Christmas and birthdays were great fun. My sons always bought Dad a silly hat, which he loved to parade around in. Lobster was a definite part of celebrations.

In year four our lives shifted to caregiving. My father went into a nursing home close by. Mom and I visited daily if we could.

Mom eventually moved into a retirement home after Dad's passing. We were very blessed that many of their NB friends visited during this time.

The death of my father in 2007 was definitely not a blessing. I was blessed with a great father and his loss was difficult.

The blessing came afterwards in developing a closer relationship with my mother. Prior to this I would drop by to visit a couple of times a month. Now I started to call daily to see how she was coping with life alone.

Those daily phone calls carried on for years and provided me with an opportunity to know her better.

In 2016 she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's which, again, was not a blessing. She was placed into a special care home and about two years later she moved into a nursing home.

I was blessed that she never once asked to go "home." She accepted her new situation with a grace that made it so much easier for me.

She and I are both blessed by the loving, caring staff that look after her now. I am blessed that she still enjoys working on crossword puzzles and jigsaw puzzles.

A life-long Scrabble player, she is thrilled that I will now actually play it with her — because finally, after all these years, I have a chance to win! And we are both blessed that she can't remember when I actually do!

Susan Jack
Parish of Lancaster

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In 2020, my son Tim and his wife gifted Mom with her first great-grandchild.

She always wanted to see a great-grandchild before she died. She adored Gavin. She passed a year later knowing there was another great-grandson on the way.

The 11 years that they lived here were filled with blessings and challenges. We grew together as a family, developed a deeper love, mutual respect and faith. All true blessings.

Patricia Nutter, Perth, Ont.
NOTE: The photo was taken when Edith Nutter's home was in lockdown for almost 1.5 years on and off. She was desperate to see Gavin, and the photo aptly tells that story, said Patricia. Rachel Kubacki photo

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Reflections from a winter snowshoe walk:

So many blessings

Blessings of space where so many live in crowded places, Of wilderness where so many only see manufactured structures, Of quiet where so many hear only discordant noise, Of clear sunshine and bright stars where so many do not see light in the sky, Of fresh winter air where so many breathe only dust and fumes, Of time for a walk where so many must continually strive for the basics of life. Why am I so blessed to live in this place at this time? My heart is truly grateful, Lord.



But I also remember the greatest Blessing, which all are invited to share:

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour."

Cheryl Jacobs, secretary to the bishop

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I am so blessed that my driveway was plowed and that I have a driveway to plow! I am so blessed!

Someone called me today to check on me. I am so blessed!

I finished a jigsaw puzzle today. I have my vision. I am so blessed!

I have a medical test next week. I have health care. I am so blessed!

I know what day of the week it is. I am so blessed!

I am able to pray for others. I am so blessed!

I have the blanket of grace that covers my broken life. I am so blessed!

Cindy Derksen, Parish of Richmond

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My life took a wonderful turn in January 2020 when David



and I married.

Prior to our marriage I had attended St. John's (Stone) Church, in Saint John, for 38 years. It was a blessing to be a member of the same parish for so long and I will always consider Stone to be my "home" church.

However, once our marriage took place, I knew I wanted to travel with David on Sundays.

While there is a downside to not attending one parish, what I have discovered is that there is a huge blessing in being a member of the entire diocese.

It's a joy to witness and experience the many varied forms of Anglicanism present across the diocese.

The often slight but sometimes quite significant differences are fascinating, and it has made me realize that we don't have to be exactly the same.

The other blessing I have experienced during these past three years is how very welcome I have been made to feel everywhere we go. I thank you for your hospitality and gracious acceptance.

I look forward to seeing again those of you I have already met and going to visit the few parishes I have not yet been.

Debbie Edwards, wife of Archbishop David Edwards

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Within the New Testament fold of abundant and overflowing grace, there is a Greek word transliterated into English as "charidzomai."

It denotes the divine bestowing of blessing upon a believer's life, becoming rooted in one's being.

It is derived from the root word "charis," meaning grace. Here there is a definitive outpouring of favour and redemptive mercy upon those who receive by faith.

During this past summer, Vivian and I, once again after

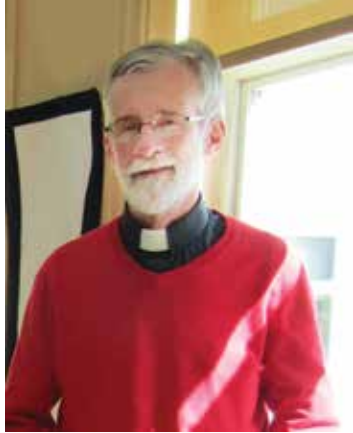
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so many years of blessing on family and ministry, felt this bestowal from our God.

Having come to the point of needing to move out of Saint John due to the air quality affecting Viv's breathing, and due to my own need to be more free for family, a move became necessary.

We were able to catch the last shreds of a seller's market in the real estate business and received a good price for our house. It was only on the market three days before it sold, and the buyers were Christians attending St. Luke's in the north end, which we saw as another sign of divine providence.

Then came a move made easy by family and friends helping us out, and we were able to secure an apartment in Fredericton ideally suited to our needs, just before they were all spoken for.

So we have settled into the Parish of Douglas and Nashwaaksis and are able to help our daughter and son-in-law with child care, which they badly needed.

In gratitude for His blessing, we are open to any future ministry which we may be able to fit into our lives at this point. Truly He gives us all that is needed for life and service.

The Rev. Canon Keith Osborne, Fredericton

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The year I turned 12 was a very difficult one for me, especially at school. I was mostly miserable.

One night at bedtime, desperate, I knelt beside my bed



and prayed, "Oh God, please help me."

Suddenly, light fell all around me, like a tent, and with it came a feeling of extraordinary peace – truly extra-ordinary peace, peace that I felt my world could never give, which must have come from God.

There were about three weeks left in the school year, during which that feeling of inner peace and being surrounded by protection never left me.

Since then, whenever I have felt doubt regarding God's existence and/or presence — and I am a doubting sort of person — I have recalled that childhood experience.

Noeline Alston, Parish of St. Philip's, Moncton

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Blessed to be chatty!

While serving as warden during the COVID crisis, I felt the need to contact a lot of the parishioners and ask outright, "Are you coping okay?" during isolation and lock-down.

To my surprise, instead of saying, "Oh yes, we are just doing fine," there were a lot of responses of, "I'm so glad you called."

To these people I would come back with, "Can I drop off an NB Anglican or order of service from last Sunday?"

If I knew the person at the other of the phone was musically inclined, I would also drop off CDs of hymns or inspirational selections, assuring them it was okay to take

their time listening and to pass them along to a friend if they wished.

During the same time, our PAC was on the search for a pastoral leader, so there were in-coming questions about when the candidate was coming, and were we doing the right thing in establishing a ministerial team.

I responded with lots of generalizations, trying to be positive about all things the Lord had placed before us.

A matter of 18 months later everything came to be — isolation slowly lifted, increased full-time spiritual guidance, increased church attendance, and at the same time driving around with our new member of the new leadership team to rural congregation members, and not being at all shy about it!

I was not alone in this mission, and huge kudos go out to all vestry members and a lot of parishioners for their support. My personal outreach to our parish, I think, was one of the most rewarding events I've attempted in my life.

It really was a blessing from on high!

**From My Heart,
Robin Turner
Parish of Sussex**

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The Stool

When I was a youngster, me, my two older brothers and my parents lived with my grandparents. We occupied a portion of their huge rambling house referred to as the ell.

It is my understanding, that on my third birthday, we moved into our own house across the road from my grandparents.

I don't remember my birthday that year; however, I do remember moving into the



new house.

From this time on I remember the Saturday morning visits to my grandad's. We would sit in front of the fireplace and he would add some lumps of coal to the existing fire so we would stay warm.

I would climb up on his knee and grab a hold of one side of the paper. He held me and also the other side of the paper. It was always opened to the comic strip page.

I remember laughing and enjoying my time with Grandad. Sometimes I did not understand the joke, but because Grandad laughed, I did too.

As I got older and Grandad became frail, I moved from his lap to a small stool. The stool was positioned so that I could still hold my edge of the paper and be very close to Grandad.

I inherited that stool — a tiny hand made piece of love with a multi-coloured woven top.

The laughter, the life learnings and the love of my grandad are only a few of the wonderful blessings I received whilst sitting on that stool.

Those blessings I have proudly passed on to many!

The presence of that stool with all its implications is a huge blessing to me!

**Jill Stewart
ACW diocesan president
Parish of Newcastle-Nelson-Hardwicke**

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One of my most blessed friendships of life was with a gentleman with a developmental disability.

He lived some 30 years of his adulthood in an institution before living and being supported in the community.

I was with a group called The New Dawn Community. I met him and we struck up a friendship.

I started to take him out for day trips to record stores, for breakfasts out, lunches at my place, and out to movies.

There was one particular breakfast where I told him that my now late and beloved wife was sad because her best friend



**George D. and his best friend,
Rick Larder**

had moved to Halifax and she missed her so much.

My friend listened intently and was so supportive. It led me to naively ask him who his best friend was?

Without a moment's hesitation, he said that I was. His surprise comment touched my heart.

Sadly, this fine gentleman passed away a year or so later from cancer. I was privileged to do his eulogy at his funeral service.

I shall always think fondly of my late and wonderful life friend, George D.

**Rick Larder, Stone Church,
Saint John**

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**The highway between Eldoret
and Kapsabet in Kenya.**

Gisele's request for a blessing story came on the same day I wrote a letter to Bishop Mark Ashcroft on his retirement as Bishop of Bolton in the UK.

Mark was the Principal of St Paul's Theological College in the Diocese of Eldoret where this diocese sent teachers in the 1990s.

Gwen and our three very young children were the first to go. I recalled this story for Mark:

We arrived in Nairobi, Kenya at the same time the Ashcrofts were heading to the coast on a break. They got us settled in at a local hotel so we

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could learn some Kiswahili while they were away. Well, the Kiswahili went OK, and we were able to get the use of a car.

But the accommodations for some reason terminated. We were able to find a place at the church's guest house but that also did not last. I swear it wasn't because of our rowdiness!

So we landed a place at the Methodist guest house out of town and I managed the standard transmission car on the left side of the road, roundabouts included, to get to the language course. But then those arrangements came to their end.

We got back into the Anglican guest house in time to hear that our sponsoring bishop, the only person we actually knew in African, Bishop Alexander Muge, had been killed in a very suspicious car accident.

The motive might very well have been political and the news was on all the front pages.

Since there had just been a political riot in Nairobi the month before, no one felt safe. The advice given us was go up country to Kapsabet where the college is.

We packed up the whole works and were preparing to drive away with no idea exactly where we were going. We didn't even know it was a four-hour drive in the best of conditions.

Before I relate the blessing, let me say that later in the fall when we were at the college, we heard Mark tell the students in a sermon that what happened was one of the most dramatic coincidence-miracles he had ever seen — he said we would never have made it.

It just happened, unexpectedly, because of the Bishop's sudden death, that Mark and his family drove into the guest house driveway precisely as we were about to pull out.

In the end, we drove up in tandem and arrived safely.

As I wrote to Mark this morning, that still makes the hair go up on the back of my neck even now. I can tell you those hairs got a lot of exercise that year in Africa!

The Rev. Canon Richard and

*Gwen McConnell
Miramichi Bay, NB*

I'm blessed to be a part of an amazing community in which the church and the town blend well.

I've watch as God increases my faith by His amazing faithfulness. He gives us ideas and direction and then we wait on Him and watch Him bring it about.

It's impossible to not stand in awe of His goodness!

St. Mark's in the town of St. George has been watching with blessing as God opens doors and brings leaders and members of our community in to join us as we open our doors to be a hub for our town. I'm in awe.

This past weekend, our mayor, town council members, RCMP, and community members joined together at the church to open as a warming centre to those without a place of warmth to come in and be fed and be warm.

The donations that came for this were faith building! Wow! I am so thankful to be a



part of a ministry that has no boundaries, where you cannot distinguish the lines between church and community because we are all one group coming together to care for and support our town.

His blessings abound in so many ways. We are now teaching seniors how to use the internet and have several laptops available for students and anyone in the community to come in and use.

Exciting times and so many more things I could share. This is my God story of abundant blessings!

*Joni Richardson
Parish of St. George*

Two youths headed for pilgrimage of a lifetime, continued

Holy Land continued from page 1

the other 17 participants, and a meeting with Archbishop David Edwards and parish development officer Shawn Branch.

Shawn, having travelled to the Holy Land, gave them tips, and the diocese offered financial and prayerful support.

FUNDRAISING

"My church has been very supportive," said Hailey. "They've been helping me."

She also held a fundraiser at a bowling alley her grandfather runs, and anticipates a spaghetti supper fundraiser at St. Mary and St. Bartholomew in March or April.

"I was fortunate in my parish (WWPA) back home and the Parish of Andover and New Denmark — they gave me funds to go," said Chase. "They're awesome, and I feel very blessed."

AIMS

"I'm hoping to have my eyes opened," said Chase. "I have no doubt about my faith, but



SUBMITTED PHOTO

IN MAY, HAILEY COLWELL, above, and Chase McLean, right, will travel with organizers and 17 other Anglican youths to visit the Holy Land.



MCKNIGHT FILE PHOTO

I think this will encourage me to play more of an active role in my community and in the Anglican Church. I'm just ready to go there with an open

heart."

For Hailey, she's looking for more connections to strengthen her relationship with God.

"I'm hoping I can grow in my

faith," she said. "I'm not always sure what to believe or how to believe. I hope it will help me. I want to connect back to the bible — what I read to what I am seeing and experiencing."

The history aspect has both Hailey and Chase excited.

"I really like the history, of being in the footsteps of Jesus," said Hailey, who is an early childhood educator in Saint John.

Chase has a slightly different take on the history of the Holy Land. He is finishing a Masters degree in archeology and works as an archeologist for the Province of New Brunswick. The thought of visiting one of the oldest civilizations on earth is overwhelming.

"I'm looking forward, figuratively and literally, to walking in the footsteps of Christ and the disciples," he said. "That's going to be surreal — living in that moment in history, being immersed in this ancient culture and birthplace of our spirituality."

He's particularly hopeful of visiting Jericho, one of the earliest continuous settlements in the world, dating back to 9,000 BC.

ITINERARY

Some of the highlights of the trip will be a tour of Jerusalem's holy sites, the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized, Bethlehem, the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.

Both have been advised, by organizers and by Shawn, to take a journal to record the highlights, sights, sounds and feelings they will experience.

"I can't wait to see how other people live," said Hailey. "I have an open mind."

Both are looking forward to meeting other like-minded Anglican youth with whom they can build relationships.

"I want to connect with young people who are active in the church from across the country," said Chase.

The two fly to Toronto May 1, where they will meet up with the other delegates and organizers. Then they fly to Tel Aviv, where their spiritual adventure awaits.

For more information on the pilgrimage, visit <https://www.anglican.ca/gr/provinces/jerusalem/companions/pilgrimage2023/>