



# Contact

A Newsletter for the Council of the North

Easter 2018

*Responding to God's Call to mission and ministry in the northern regions of Canada*

## NEW THIS YEAR!

### Placemats from Council of the North

See p. 4 on how to order

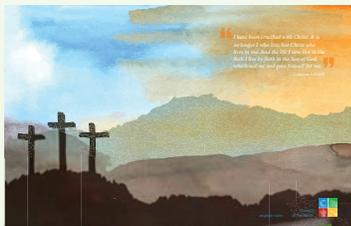


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

*A train derailment seven months ago, near Churchill, Man., leaves a rural community isolated. The government and the company that runs the train have been squabbling in court. Little solution seems imminent.*

## Seven-month-old railroad derailment continues to vex Churchill, Manitoba

ABOUT seven months ago, a flood washed out the sole rail connection to Churchill, Man. That connection allowed resources to travel north (including fuel and food) and people to travel south (including those with doctors' appointments). In the intervening nine months, OmniTRAX, the company that operates the railroads, has argued that responsibility for replacing the line rests with the federal government, saying it is a proviso of the constitution. The Prime Minister's Office counterclaims that legislation under NAFTA requires OmniTRAX to repair those same lines. On October 13, the federal government gave OmniTRAX 30 days to replace the tracks. Months after that ultimatum, the rail has yet to be replaced or repaired.

From the very beginning, Churchill has been caught in a mess of railroad and challenging construction hurdles. The first railroad was built over a 50-year

period, beginning in the late 1880s, with the station finally finished in 1929. The landscape, with rocky outcroppings and spongy muskegs, explains some of this extended timeline. (With global climate change, much of the permafrost has become boggy, exacerbating the already unstable muskeg.)

For almost 80 years, the railroad has not only provided a material connection to the rest of Canada, it has helped provide an identity for northern Manitoba communities. Being caught between the government and large corporations makes the delivery of goods and services impossible, and further isolates these towns.

Bishop William G. Cliff, of the diocese of Brandon, sees this as a pastoral emergency. His congregants are in obvious distress. Speaking to him, he is understandably frustrated by this seemingly intractable fight. Cliff wrote to

See Derailment on p. 4

**Contact** is produced by the Council of the North

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Stories by General Synod

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The Anglican Church of Canada

# ECUMENICAL CONFERENCE

## *Roman Catholic and Anglican priests tackle tough challenges*

LAST fall, 25 Roman Catholic and Anglican clergy travelled from all over northern Alberta to attend what they hope will become an annual ecumenical meeting. The meeting addressed concerns about how to work together in the North and how to be better Christians to newcomers. The Anglican area bishop, Fraser Lawton, described the meeting as a “conversation about the things they had in common, and a good start.”

The conference asked questions about missions: what missions now look like, who is called to be a missionary, and how best to support those who are called. These introductory conversations made for a solid footing for deepened mutual understanding. Lawton discussed the central goal of these questions as a kind of fellowship. The Bishop wished that those present would be “taking up time with people’s concerns, and connecting to each other.”

The connecting with each other

focused on the similarity in challenges shared by Anglican and Roman Catholic priests in Athabasca. The mission work concerned itself with both outside congregations and with local parishes. The concerns brought forth included issues of lay engagement. Lawton noted that both Catholic and Anglican churches continue to be concerned with how little people know their faith, and by extension, whether the clergy have “done a good job with catechesis.”

The question about what a catechetical good job looks like also encompassed the clergy. They noted that people in their dioceses were less interested in active parish life than they once were. Lawton described the problem as partly “being in competition for people’s time” and how to make church life a priority again.

There are other factors, which are slightly more of an issue for the Roman Catholic population, as a large

number of their priests are from outside Canada. This intersects with populations in places like Grand Prairie, where immigrants in the service industry have made towns much more diverse. These concerns about newcomers, and people who have been in parishes for as long as Alberta has been a province, means that there should be a number of solutions for what could be a tricky problem. Lawton balances questions of Anglican engagement with hearing how Catholic partners in faith can “carry out ministry and are able to help” with mutual mission work, catechesis, and community building.

These concerns and challenges can often be met by open and honest communication, and through explicit planning. These are the ongoing goals of the Anglican diocese of Athabasca, and also of their fellow Christians. The conference is the first step in opening an ecumenical process that will hopefully bear much fruit. 



**THE COUNCIL OF THE NORTH** is a grouping of financially assisted dioceses, supported through grants by General Synod, that serve sparsely populated areas in the Arctic, Yukon, Northern and Central Interior British Columbia, Alberta, northern Saskatchewan, Manitoba; and northern Ontario. Specifically:

- Diocese of the Arctic • Diocese of Athabasca • Diocese of Brandon • Diocese of Caledonia
- Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh • Diocese of Moosonee • Diocese of Saskatchewan
- Territory of the People • Diocese of Yukon



*The village of Ivujivik*

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

## Arctic Travels December, 2017

by **Melanie Delva**

Reconciliation Animator for  
The Anglican Church of Canada.

THIS past December, I had the honour of traveling the Eastern portion of the Diocese of the Arctic with Bishop David Parsons, Esther Wesley (Coordinator of the Anglican Healing Fund) and the Rev. Victor Johnson (Regional Dean of Ungava Deanery). We traveled both the Hudson and Ungava Coasts of Nunavik, including 9 communities ranging in size from 200 to 1,000 people. The only way to access the villages is by plane, so we traveled mostly by Dash-8 and Twin Otter planes—a first for me! Anglican Mission in this area began in 1882. A couple of the communities have clergy, but most are led by dedicated and unpaid lay ministers who serve as everything from preachers of the Word, to nurses, counsellors and church building managers.

Everything was new and exciting for me—from my first visit to the local Co-op general store which sells everything from milk to rabbit skins, to the ski-doos whipping up and down the street through the towns. The first thing that really struck me though, was the quality of light in the North. It is very hard to describe. The light that time of year was low, but striking and the sky radiant with sun dogs. I couldn't possibly describe it properly but it took my breath away everywhere we went.



PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

*St. Columba's Church*

The learning and “take-aways” for me from the trip are complex, and I am still working through them. I learned a lot from the people, the land, the travel itself. I was incredibly inspired by the faith of the people. It is brilliant in its immediacy—God is seen and known everywhere and in all things and people. I was humbled as well—humbled by what I take for granted, my consumerism in comparison to what is available and valued in the North. Finally, I was humbled by the weather—vicious blizzards that brought everything to a standstill and had us trapped in our little hotel for days. I tend to think I am “in charge” of my life and it really reminded me of Who is really at the helm! I am awash in gratitude. To my travel companions who taught me so much and were so great to travel with, to the people we met who were unending in their kind welcomes and hospitality, and to God, whose grace in giving me the gift of this experience is above all to be praised. Ω



### New Dean announced

THE leadership gap in Athabasca has been filled by an excellent candidate, with first-rate skills and a deep understanding of the region. Athabasca is a deanery in north-central Alberta, going as far west as the British Columbia border, as far north as the Northwest Territory border, as far west as Saskatchewan, and almost to Edmonton in the south. The new dean, the Very Rev. Jason Haggstrom, was installed on September 17, 2017. He has a wide range of plans, including starting new ministries and continuing successful ones, and desiring for wider communities, especially in local Cree and Métis communities.

Haggstrom has a long history in remote Western Canada. He grew up in a small town between Smithers and Terrace, in the northern interior of British Columbia, earning his first theology degrees in the Okanogan. This experience gave him some context for his new deanery. However, he has experience outside of the region. For example, he moved around quite a bit after graduation, working 15 years with the Church Army, an evangelical and mission group founded in the late 1920s. Haggstrom's work with the Church Army included social service and general outreach work, and involved travelling throughout southeastern Ontario. He looks forward to spending the next decade in Athabasca, until his retirement.

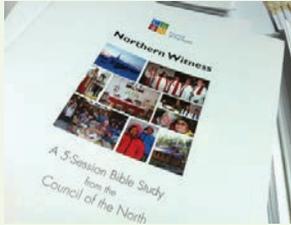
Though he is new to the parish of St. James' Cathedral, he talks of the diocese being filled with tightly knit communities, with a small-town intimacy. Part of this knowing is especially common among the Cree and Métis people. In these parishes, the discussion around reconciliation centres on a yearning for authentic community.

Haggstrom enjoys the challenges of reconciliation and community building. The cathedral is a busy

See Dean on p. 4

# Resources from the Council of the North

These resources are available free of charge. View, order and/or download at [anglican.ca/cn/resources](http://anglican.ca/cn/resources)

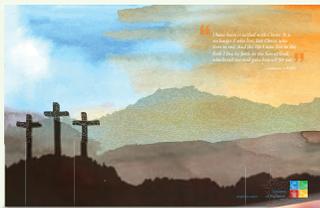


## NORTHERN WITNESS: A 5-Session Bible Study from the Council of the North

Using themes of Solidarity, Mission & Service, Trust & Treasure, Healing and Partnership, this 5-module study uses stories of northern ministry to help illuminate the chosen Bible passages. Each module also invites you to deepen your partnership with us in the Gospel.

Order FREE colour copies from our resource order form page: [anglican.ca/cnorder](http://anglican.ca/cnorder)  
Download a PDF copy of Northern Witness: [anglican.ca/cnnw](http://anglican.ca/cnnw)

### Lent/Easter



### NEW!

## Placemats from Council of the North

Two new placemats are available for order.

1. Lent/Easter
2. Every Occasion

Place your order through the Council of the North website at [anglican.ca/cnorder](http://anglican.ca/cnorder)

### Every Occasion



# Dean

Continued from p.3

place, filled with child care, food banks, and related services. Haggstrom also runs a prison ministry, visiting members of his flock who are incarcerated. There is also an attempt to extend communities of clergy. He notes a new retreat for clergy, who come together to discuss the spiritual needs of the parishes they mentor. This occurred for the first time in autumn 2017, but the hope is that it will be at least an annual event.

This does not mean that the community is not without its hardships. This year could be considered economically difficult. The region where Haggstrom is dean is more about agriculture than resource extraction, though he notes the economy rests on each. This year was hard on both the farmers and the oil riggers. Canola is the



PHOTO: MHALIFU/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

*The Cathedral Church of St. James.*

major cash crop for this region, and many of his parishioners depend on it to make a living. There was a canola blight, which affected most of the crops. This combined with a worldwide depression in oil prices, so that according to Haggstrom, “People cannot live as high as they did when oil

# Derailment

Continued from p.1

Prime Minister Trudeau in September, asking the federal government to “get on with it.” He received a note back in October, with vague reassurances of a forthcoming solution. The note was the last time he heard from the office. Cliff sees no solution but to build the line.

There are companies willing to build the line, both in a larger financing sense, and with workers on the ground. The multi-national rail conglomerate Fairfax has shown some interest in possibly building those lines, for example. The holdup is due to the ongoing battles between OmniTRAX and the federal government. Bishop Cliff tells us that he has “no inside information—I am on the outside, banging my fist, wanting to be let in.”

The metaphor of wanting to be let in is a poignant one. The challenges of those who live in the North are often poorly understood, and people feel caught under heel. But there is some hope, given that communities like Churchill have fierce advocates with clergy like Bishop Cliff. Ω