

Northumbria Regional Newsletter

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The Questioning Church

You've heard the complaint, there are more questions than answers in the Church? The good news is that it has always been so!

We search the scriptures for answers to meet our needs, to help us grow in faith, to draw nearer to God. Often it seems there are more questions than answers. Is questioning a good thing? Are there good and bad questions?

We know that Jesus asked many questions; questions that He obviously had answers for. It appears that He only directly answers 3 of the 183 questions that He posed to others in the four Gospels! His questions tend to be confronting, unnerving, transforming; questions that challenge us to look at things differently, to move in new directions, to be risk-takers, to walk with Him in faith.

Matthew 5:13: You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored?

Matthew 5:46: For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

Matthew 6:27: And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?

Matthew 7:3: Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?

Matthew 8:26: And He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?"

The problem for us seems to be the need to pose the right questions at the right time.

At an Anglican Churches of Pictou County Faith Gathering in 2005, we were challenged not to ask the question: Why are we experiencing a decline in attendance? Why so many empty

pews? Instead the theme question for the event was: If we continue to do the same things in the same way, we can expect the same results – is that what we want? A second question that we pondered was: "What are the seven last words of a dying church?" For that one, we had the answer: "We never did it that way before!"

As St. George's entered a new millennium it became increasingly rare to hear a child's voice. We were fast becoming a white hair/no hair congregation. The questions we asked were: Where are the children? Why are they not in church? Perhaps better questions might have been: Where are the parents? Why are they not in church? And perhaps even better questions might have been: What are we doing to attract younger families? What facilities, programs, resources do we have in place to attract and sustain the needs and interests of children?

We live in 2009, the age of the church shopper; denominational loyalty is not always a drawing card. As we anticipate the shopper, what is our marketing ploy? What questions do we need to ask?

1. Will someone from the church warmly, enthusiastically, sincerely greet the newcomer or will someone shove a book in their hand and say 'Good-morning'? Will it matter where they sit?
2. How long will the newcomers sit in the pew before a parishioner greets them; someone who is not an official greeter?
3. Will anyone in the congregation know the shoppers are new?
4. Is there a plan to welcome newcomers?
5. What is the follow-up plan, a telephone contact? A visit? By whom?

Sometimes we need to ask the tough questions. If those of us who are faithful attendees enjoy what is happening, but there are too few of us ~ what can we do to attract others who apparently don't enjoy what we are doing, otherwise they would be in church with us? Why would we want to change what we enjoy for the sake of others who apparently don't care? Does the Church exist for those who attend or for those who do not? Would Jesus want us to be proactive or reactive, to accept the status quo or challenge us to think outside of the proverbial box? Perhaps the ultimate question for church attendees is: Do we really want to follow someone as radical as Jesus?

An Invitation to the Northumbria Region:

Anglican Churches of Pictou County are Sponsoring a Refugee Family

The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. In celebration of this event, the board decided to encourage more refugee sponsorship among Anglicans throughout Canada. The Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island supports parishes who choose to undertake this ministry.

There are a number of ways in which refugees can be sponsored. When the documentation is complete, A.C.P.C. will be participating in a J.A.S. (Joint Assistance Sponsorship) with the federal government. This means that the government provides financial support when the refugee individual or family first arrives in Canada. The sponsoring group is responsible for helping the individual or family get settled. Typical tasks are finding an apartment, getting it furnished, setting up a bank account, getting a job or furthering education, and so on.

There is *no* financial obligation on a sponsoring group with a J.A.S. sponsorship. However, if we decide to donate some apartment furnishings (chairs, pots, and all the things we typically use in Canada), that can save the family money. There is no obligation, financial or otherwise, after an individual or group has been in Canada

St. George's New Glasgow invites you to join us for any of our special fall/winter events, programs, services.

Saturday, Dec. 12th – 7pm – Variety Concert and Dessert Buffet – Fundraiser for PWRD \$7

Saturday, Dec. 25th – Christmas Day, 12:30 and 2pm – Christmas Dinner for those who might otherwise be alone and/or those who because of work responsibilities might not be able to enjoy a festive meal (Tickets which are free are required).

Sunday, Dec. 27th – 7pm – A Service of Lessons and Carols with Fellowship

Our Resource Centre is open Monday through Friday, 9 am until noon; you may review our online catalogue from our web site: www.stgeorgesng.com.

for a year. However, often strong friendships develop, which continue after the year's sponsorship.

To be a sponsoring group, there needs to be a commitment of a minimum of five individuals. In A.C.P.C., there is a core group of six who report to A.C.P.C. Council. Most of the work is when the individual or family first arrives, and gradually tapers off as they spend more time in Canada.

Most refugees are very motivated individuals who have gone through very difficult personal circumstances. They cannot go "home," or do not dare to go "home," because of a well-founded fear of persecution. Refugees typically come from United Nations refugee camps, and are screened thoroughly before an application is processed.

It tends to be a long-term process. A.C.P.C. would prefer to sponsor a small family, perhaps with a single parent. It will likely take some time to make a "match," and then there is further medical and (since 9/11) security screening, before a family can come to Canada. Contrary to the impression given in some news reports, it

is quite difficult to be sponsored as a refugee, coming to Canada.

We encourage others in the region to consider refugee sponsorship. It is very rewarding.

PWRDF 50 Leaders Programme

One of our St. FX students, Kujang Kandar, has been selected as one of PWRDF's 50 Leaders. Here are her thoughts after the orientation weekend in November:

Through 50 leaders I saw the need to re-examine the leadership roles I intend to take later on in life but with a new twist to it, by adding my faith to it. My vocation should therefore involve the church in one way or another, for it is the church I will represent once I begin my service. My spirituality is also important part that requires growth and nurturing and I'm hoping to grow through the 50 leaders programme. God bless.

Diocesan Ordinations (including the Rev. Melissa Frankland of Liscomb-Port Bickerton)

On the commemoration of St. Francis Xavier, December 3rd, fellow Anglicans from all over our diocese – including a good contingent from our region along with a group of ecumenical guests from the Sherbrooke area gathered at the Cathedral Church of All Saints to witness, pray, and celebrate the lives of seven transitional Deacons being “captured” into the Holy Orders of a Priest.

The preacher for the Ordination was The Rev'd Dr. Paul Friesen, rector of St. Paul's in Halifax and Anglican Professor at the Atlantic School of Theology. In his sermon, the Rev'd Dr. Friesen transported us back to the early church. He spoke in light of how the early church Fathers saw their ordinations. He used the image of being captured, or locked in chains – as was the case with St. Paul during his ministry. The early church Fathers carried that image with them and Dr. Friesen used Clement of Alexandria as an

example of one who literally carried chains to each of his services.

All seven Ordinands were captured that night, through the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God through Christ Jesus, symbolized by the laying on of hands. They have now been set forth to their respective parishes and each have celebrated their first of many Eucharist's and other sacramental ministries to which they were called.



“It is not the actual physical exertion that counts towards a man's progress, nor the nature of the task, but by the spirit of faith with which it is undertaken.” -Saint Francis Xavier

Your prayers and presence are requested for the Parish of All Saints by the Sea, Canso, and the Rev. Darroch Fagan as we prepare for the Celebration of New Ministry on Sunday, January 3, 2010 at St. James the Martyr Church, Halfway Cove at 7 p.m.

Personal Profile: The Rev. Darroch Fagan (Canso)

I am the eldest of five children born to Ralph and Cynthia Fagan of Kelligrews, Newfoundland. My earliest recollection of attending church was going to the 8 a.m. Sunday Holy Communion service at my home church, All Saints. Dad and Mom would get us ready and we'd all parade into the church before the service began. Then we'd go home, have breakfast and go visit Mom's parents an hour's drive away.

I met my wife-to-be, Margaret, in Junior High School. We became best friends during that time but never dated until after we graduated from university, even though many of our classmates tried to get us together on different times.

I graduated from Memorial University of Newfoundland in 1978 with a Bachelor of Science degree and went to work with the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, first in St. John's and then in Corner Brook, NL.

Margaret and I married in June 1982. We have two children, Selina and Joachim.

I was never actively involved with liturgy except in the congregation until I moved away from home. When I moved to Corner Brook, NL, in 1981, I became more and more involved with the congregation of the Pro-Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. At the Annual Congregational meeting at the end of the 1982 year, my wife led the Girl Guide company the church sponsored in some activities. In the meeting's business side, the rector suggested that the congregation "see what I could do" based on my wife's activities. I was elected as a Synod delegate and parish representative to Deanery Council (similar to the regional Council here). From there, it was onward and upward.

It was here that I first started thinking that God was calling me to "more". In the *Anglican Journal* of the day there was an Annual Educational Supplement. I'd look at it with some interest but then throw it into a corner. Somehow, it would always come back up to the surface, and I'd look at it again. This kept going on for a few years.

After a couple of years, we moved back to Conception Bay South and re-attached ourselves with All Saints (our "home" church). We both became involved with parish ministries such as PWRDF/Mission and Outreach, Greeters, Readers, and Eucharistic Ministers. My "looking at" the Educational Supplement became more intentional and I started to write theological schools about requirements. Eventually, I realized that I needed to learn more about the "Church" and that I needed to act on it. Our friend and rector had challenged me to "learn more" by sponsoring me to make my Cursillo in 1989 and also by becoming involved in the "Teens Encounter Christ" movement in 1992. When I approached him in 1992 about changing my direction (talking to the Bishop about ordination), he asked Margaret if she wanted him to talk me out of "it". She said, "No." I then met with the bishop and started the necessary paperwork for a new journey.

I officially "changed fisheries" when I started training for ordination in August 1993. I graduated from Queen's College, St. John's in May 1996 with my M. Div. Degree. I was ordained a deacon on Nov. 4, 1996 and took my first appointment in the Diocese of Central Newfoundland at the Parish of Fogo Island. In April 1997, I was ordained a priest in the Church of God. I remained in the Parish of Fogo Island West until August 2000 when I moved to the Parish of Bonavista. From there, I moved to the Parish of the Holy Spirit in the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador where I served for almost 3 years.

I'm looking forward to my new ministry in the Parish of All Saints by the Sea, Canso and pray that I'll be a blessing to some people there as they will be blessings to me.

Don't Miss the Bus

June 6: Plans for 2010 Celebrations at Exhibition Park, Halifax, are under way. I have gotten some quotes for buses to take anyone interested in going that day, but I need some numbers to know how many buses. The buses would leave from Antigonish and New Glasgow, the cost is between 30.00 and 40.00 dollars per person. No worries about driving or parking. I have heard rumours that there are quite a few buses already booked, and they are having fund-raisers to pay for the bus expense(something to think about). Please e-mail Vickie at paulkeith@ns.sympatico.ca or let your Regional Rep. know ASAP. Lets not miss the bus for this wonderful chance to celebrate 300 years of Anglican worship with people all across Canada and beyond.