

The Montréal Lay Reader Le prédicateur montréalais

MARCH 2014 MARS

The newsletter for lay readers of the Anglican Diocese of Montreal

Le bulletin des prédicateurs laïcs du diocèse anglican de Montréal



Annual Lay Readers' Retreat at Manoir d'Youville, Chateauguay "The Journey Toward an Undivided Life"

May 2 - 4, 2014

with The Rev. Dan Hines

During the retreat, we will be invited into a learning process that involves slowing down, listening and reflecting in a quiet and focused space. At the same time, we will engage in dialogue with others in the circle - a dialogue about things that matter. As this "sorting and sifting" goes on, and we are able to clarify and affirm our truth in the presence of others, that truth is more likely to overflow into our work and lives.



In these circles, which are referred to as 'Circles of Trust', we have found it transforming to commit to touchstones including one of no fixing, advising, "saving" or correcting one another. We are guided by this simple rule, one that honors the primacy and integrity of the Spirit's leading: our inner teacher. When we are free from external judgment, we are more likely to have an honest conversation with ourselves and learn to check and correct ourselves from within.

REGISTRATION FORM ON BACK PAGE

Inside this issue

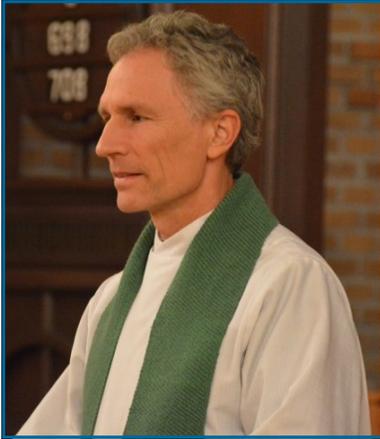
Embracing Brokenness	2
Our Journey through Lent	3
Blue Scarves	3
Where Lies our Hope?	4
The Christian Practice of Discernment	5
Truth and Reconciliation Commission's National Event in Montreal	6
A Lay Reader's Point of View	7
2014 Lay Reader Study Day and Commissioning Service	8
Annual General Meeting and Dinner	9
Annual Retreat Registration Form	10

Dan Hines joins the Lay Readers' community again (Dan was with us for a Lay Readers' workshop in 2010.) Dan comes to us from Kamloops, BC and has served as a ministry developer and priest in the Anglican Parishes of the Central Interior.

SPRING

Embracing Brokenness

Rev. Tim Smart



Shake hands with the pedophile. Pray with the murderer. Sing hymns with the bank robber. Embrace the drug dealer. Not daily occurrences unless you find yourself in a federal penitentiary as a chaplain or a volunteer in the chapel.

We read the barest of details in the newspaper. The crime, the date, the circumstances, the victims, the accused, the sentence. After that, throw the bum in jail and forget about him. Except as Christians, we cannot do that. Jesus said, visit me in prison. And so we do.

Inside the chapel, in our Monday evening circle, we gather inmates and visitors together and open up the scripture; to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church. What we hear are stories of people who have lost their way, people who

have harmed others and have been harmed themselves. We meet a terrible brokenness in the flesh. A brokenness that cries out for healing which can only be found in forgiveness and repentance in a community of inclusive love.

It would be easy to write these men off as hopeless and as being unworthy of our time and attention. But their obvious failings and brokenness invite me to look at my own human condition, my own frailties and brokenness, and my own need for healing.

I often think that our healing is somehow bound up together. That I cannot be fully healed unless they too find healing. Because, like it or not, we belong to one another. We are responsible for one another. Our destinies are bound together.

If there are broken people inside prison, they exist outside as well. If they have lost their way, we too have lost our way. The brokenness that is so obvious behind prison walls, also exists behind the walls of our churches, our homes, workplaces and schools. Maybe it is better concealed, but it is there. Sometimes we glimpse it in the mirror. We are all in this together.

We are all trying to find our way home, hoping the Father won't be angry with us after we have gone astray. Never imagining that he might actually be running out to embrace us.



"If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

(Alexander Solzhenitsyn 1918 -1956)

Our Journey through Lent

Tania Lesack, President

Here we are in Lent again – at church we’ve wrapped the alleluias in tissue paper and put them away carefully to be brought out again at Easter. It’s time to start our spiritual spring-cleaning, getting rid of the clutter that trips us up and stops us from moving forward.

I’ve found that when I talk to others about Lent, the question, “What are you giving up for Lent?” comes up early in the conversation, even with friends who have heard and inwardly digested the words of Isaiah, “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?” (58:5-7)

Bearing the words of Isaiah in mind and attempting to move beyond the notion that giving up what one likes is *the* required Lenten discipline (a notion left over from childhood or picked up from popular culture), I considered giving up sarcasm for Lent. I pondered the idea out loud in the presence of a friend; her reply was blunt, “You wouldn’t last more than an hour”. I thought about it for a while longer and came to the sad conclusion that she was probably right. So this year for Lent I’m giving up whinging; I’m resisting the temptation to less-than-caring verbal responses and building up to giving up sarcasm next year. But all of this is petty picayune stuff, baby steps moving from self-indulgence to self awareness to self discipline but far from the radical transformation of unjust systems to which we are called.

Perhaps we can begin breaking yokes by breaking habits that bind us to modes of thinking and ways of living that stop us from acting. Loosening the bonds that tie us to the first world consumer culture, recognizing that our choices affect many others in our own community and on the other side of the world. Developing new ways of living that are more just. Recognizing that we too are in bondage, and that it is only through Jesus that we can be free.

Just as one never steps into the same river twice, stepping out on the journey with Jesus through Lent is never the same from one year to another. May our journey through Lent open up new vistas, deepen faith and transform us and lead us to a happy and blessed Easter.

Blue Scarves

Please help us to continue to find blue scarves no longer in use due to a retirement or the passing of a lay reader.

Blue scarves belong to the Bishop’s Office and are on loan to a Lay Reader who is licensed as a Diocesan Reader.

Some Lay Readers were given a scarf that was sewn more like a wide shawl. If you are in possession of one of these wide scarves, you may bring your scarf to the Retreat and exchange it for a narrow scarf that may be more comfortable to wear.

Questions about scarves may be directed to Sue Winn, 514-457-0736.



Where Lies our Hope? Sue Winn

'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Matthew 25

As Lay Readers, as Jesus' disciples, we are called to love and care for those whom we encounter in our daily lives. Opportunities abound and we are grateful to God for opening our eyes to the gift of service to others. Every Lay Reader has a story to tell and we look forward to sharing our stories at our Spring Retreat and at our Study Day in November.

Last November our church gathered winter coats and jackets for the International Student Office at McGill University. A chance encounter with a Scholarship student from Kenya led us to invite ten students from African countries to our home on Christmas Day. Eric and I invited strangers into our home and they brought us such joy! We fed and clothed others, and we received the gift of their teaching, their wisdom. We received far more than we gave.

Our world is so fractured, so filled with painful situations. It is easy to feel overwhelmed and helpless. In spite of my concerns for the world I live in, I recently watched the Academy Awards, a show of opulence like few others. I did not expect to be inspired. But the award for the best supporting actress was won by a young Kenyan, Lupita Nyong'o. It was her first acting experience in a film titled, "12 Years a Slave". Her humility and her wisdom brought her audience to an awed silence. She said, "It doesn't escape me for one moment that so much joy in my life is thanks to so much pain in someone else's." She continued her remarks in thank you messages, and then said, "When I look down at this golden statue, may it remind me and every little child that no matter where you are from, your dreams are valid." In the midst of pop culture, this young lady planted hope.

The recent Olympics in Russia gave us hope, and then we experienced the troubles in the Ukraine, even as our paralympians continued to arrive in Sochi. Frightening stories assail us from Syria, Venezuela, Congo, Sudan. Closer to home we struggle with Quebec's sorry political situation and our freezing temperatures in one of the longest winters on record. In the midst of this troubled world we are called to be the salt and the light. Within us is the gift of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, our Hope.

May we all experience a Holy Lent and a Joyful Easter!



The Christian Practice of Discernment

Yvonne Wakeland

Discernment is the intentional practice by which a community or an individual seeks, recognizes, and intentionally takes part in the activity of God in a concrete situation.

God has great plans for us. But, what are they? What does God want us to do?

How can we know for sure? These are life-long questions we ask of ourselves every day and we pray that God will “show us the way.”

We yearn for divine guidance especially when voices within us seem to conflict. How do we tell the difference between God’s leading and self-deception?

What decisions make us cry out for guidance? How do we assess advice when it comes from a culture that also idolizes self-fulfillment?



Prayerful discernment can help us to recognize what God desires of us. However, there is no method that guarantees how the Spirit will be discerned because the Holy Spirit cannot be captured in a formula. We often rely on consensus or “majority rules” as distinctive models for groups reaching decisions. That gets us beyond party interests, personality clashes and power strategies.

Dr. Frank Rogers Jr., of Claremont Theological College says:

“Our decisions and our search for guidance take place in the active presence of a God who intimately cares about our life situations and who invites us to participate in the divine activities of healing and transformation.”

As Christians, we are not alone in the midst of uncertain insights and conflicting impulses. Discernment is more than just a skill or a process. It is a gift from God. Yet, there are skills you can put to use and become better at discerning through training and experience. The aim of discernment is to enhance one’s participation in the work of God, and the healing of the world.

There is a Spirit at work nudging us, leading us, pulling us by the nose helping us to discern rightly. Discernment isn’t a sudden zap from above, but something which emerges from hard work and close attention.

One of the places we often turn to for help in our discernment of what is true and what is false is the Scriptures. We need to cultivate a Christ-centered spirituality in every aspect of life. Our patient, prayerful, steady study of scripture, helps us to discern God’s will. The Holy Spirit acts as a guiding force in our decisions of ministry.

So, let your discernment be governed by love, bringing attention and worship to Jesus Christ, building up the Church and its members, giving it power, wisdom, character, boldness and unity.

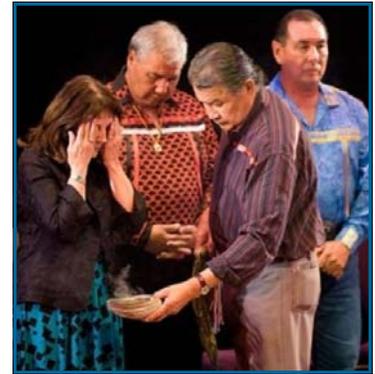
Discerning and acting on God’s will does not mean you will never have difficult days or feel lousy sometimes. But, choosing to live in alignment with God makes you more joyful, compassionate, and peaceful, even on bad days.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission's National Event in Montreal April 24-27, 2013 Ann Cumyn

It is hard to enter into the sufferings of other people. Each person is different and even if your experience is apparently the same as someone else's, the statement "I understand" often receives the reply. "No. You don't!".

When someone has been hurt they want the offender to first recognize the hurt, then to do something about it and finally promise that it will never happen again. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is about all three things. But, the process has to begin with recognition. Recognizing that someone has been hurt requires some understanding of how that person is feeling. It also requires that the person who is hurt shares both the hurt and their feelings about it. At the Commission's session in Montreal many of our First Nations citizens found the courage to talk about their experiences.

It is hard to imagine being a child, wrenched from your family, not permitted to speak your own language and in some instances not able to communicate with your brother or sister. Some of the children went home for holidays, some did not; but even if the child went home there became an increasing incompatibility between the culture of home and the culture of school. As they grew many of the children lost their native language and their cultural inheritance rendering it difficult for them to fit into either culture. Added to all this, most of these children came under a strict and mainly loveless discipline made worse in many cases by physical and sexual abuse.



In many cases the children were sent off happily by their families, only to be shocked by their reception at the schools. Reminders of home and favourite toys, packed lovingly by parents were unceremoniously taken away on their arrival at school.

While the purpose of the commission is the bring reconciliation and some sort of peace for all those that were hurt, there was also a purpose in having the general public present. It is only too easy to read about horror or distress in an academic, intellectual sort of way without really grasping the full import of what is being said.

I attended for a couple of half days. On my first day I began by attending the Commissioner's sharing panel where First Nations people were talking about their experiences. They were supported by family members and a trained volunteer. From an emotional point of view it was difficult to listen to but important to them to share. It needs to be made clear that nobody was forced to tell their tale. All the people who spoke at the open session did so voluntarily, although many broke down when remembering their pain. For those who wanted to talk but just to one or two people, it was arranged for them to meet in private rooms. They could sign up at any time and there would be someone to talk to away from the prying and curious eyes (in their perspective) of the public.

[Continued on next page](#)

Truth and Reconciliation Commission's National Event in Montreal (continued)



One of the other sessions was the Town Hall on Reconciliation, an open forum where there could be an exchange between the First Nations people and the public. The aim of the forum was both to listen and also to see what ideas there might be to a resolution that would bring some peace to those that had been hurt. This was a bilingual session that was characterised by the spontaneity of those who spoke. This forum was continued on the Saturday morning with more emphasis on resolution. More than one person spoke about the need for education in our schools about the history and the culture of the First Nations. Many reminded us that the First Nations people were just

that and that both the French and English were the newcomers.

The thing that stuck me most was a comment by Justice Murray Sinclair, the chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He spoke of the meaning of reconciliation. Following an emotional session in which many participants said that they were having great difficulty with the concept of forgiveness in the light of the wrongs that had been done. Justice Murray said that "reconciliation" did not necessarily require forgiveness. Reconciliation was moving into a state of being able to live side-by-side, respecting both similarities and differences. His hope was that the result of the work of the Commission would lead to the First Nations people in Canada being able to live as valued citizens alongside the rest of the people of Canada to the benefit of all and in mutual respect and understanding.

A Lay Reader's Point of View

I attended a Lay Readers Study Day and Commissioning Service on November 16th, 2013, when Bishop Barry was teaching for the entire day. It is truly wonderful to see the transformation that is taking place in churches across the country, but more especially in the Diocese of Montreal. We had such open dialogue with our Bishop during our Study Day. All Lay Readers had the opportunity to say what they felt they needed to express about their ministry and the churches where they minister. Our Bishop invited us all to be open and discuss whatever was on our minds and in our hearts and what we saw as difficulties in our various parishes. Bishop Barry listened closely to our words and we felt comfortable sharing our personal stories.



We were a group of 65 Lay Readers all together in one room and everyone was able to hear the others speak. This kind of dialogue is something that all churches are aiming for. We are "The Church"; the Church is the people, not the building.

It is a time for change and we cannot be left out of the dialogue. We need to discuss openly what our hopes are. What do we want to see changed? What is important to each of us? How can we move in new directions without hurting those who feel a need to hold on to the past? These are all questions that need to be addressed. I think we are very fortunate to be in these times of change in our churches, and to have a bishop who is open to listen and to support us. Let us all go forward in the name of Jesus and see where he leads us.

Blessings to all,
Irene Martin
Holy Trinity Church, Ste-Agathe

2014 Lay Reader Study Day and Commissioning Service Saturday, November 22nd, 2014 9:00 am until 4:00 pm

Church of St. John the Baptist
233 ave Ste. Claire
Pointe Claire

This year, on our Study day, we will welcome the Venerable Sidney Black, archdeacon for the indigenous parishes in the Diocese of Calgary. Sidney Black is also the co-chair of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples. He is a devout Christian, a man of humility and wisdom, and one of the central leaders at the Sacred Circles.

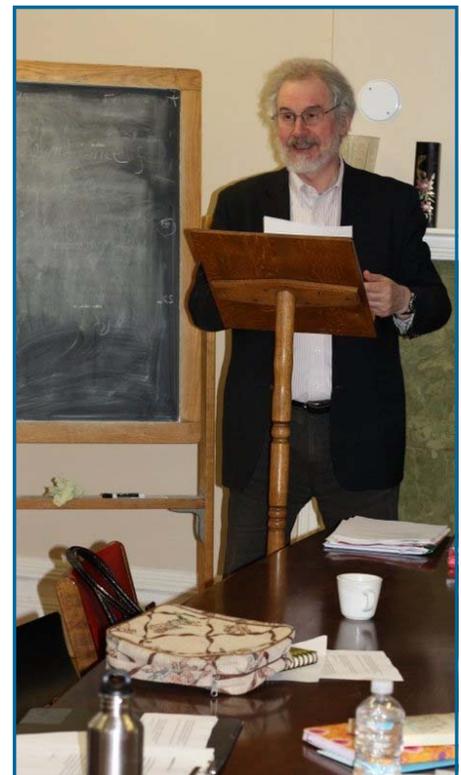


The theme of the day will focus on our Journey with Indigenous Anglicans, and the recent developments within our church: the consecration of Indigenous bishops, a new diocese in northern Ontario, and the Truth and Reconciliation national events. Sidney has been a vital member of the Council of General Synod for a number of years. He has been instrumental in building understanding between the indigenous churches and the non-indigenous churches, facilitating worship for all people. We will be blessed by his teaching and his presence with us.

A fee of \$35 will cover all refreshment breaks, a hot lunch and materials for the day.

The Commissioning Service and Evening Prayer will take place at 4:00 pm, followed by a reception for all family and friends.

John Simons' Lay Reader's presentation on Saturday, January 25, 2014, entitled, "The Church - Who Needs It?"



Annual General Meeting and Dinner Wednesday, May 21, 2014 at 6 pm

Church of St. James the Apostle
1439 Ste. Catherine St.
Montreal H3G 2S6

Mark your calendars now for this time of fellowship, dinner, and our annual business meeting.

6:00 pm Gathering and Registration

6:30 pm Dinner (\$10 for a delicious dinner cooked by the team of Trinity Memorial Church)

7:30 pm. Business Meeting (Annual Reports and Elections)

8:30 pm. Closing Prayer and Dismissal

Please bring your thoughts and ideas for our year ahead!

We look forward to seeing you all at this important meeting!



FOUND! One Lay Reader emeritus on Marco Island February 2014



Constance Middleton-Hope (right) meets a Montrealer for lunch following her volunteer work at a local animal shelter. Connie is as active as ever during her winter in Florida.

Registration Form

**Lay Readers of Montreal
ANNUAL RETREAT
May 2 to 4, 2014**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: : _____

Email:: _____

Food allergies and special requests:

Payment for room (several rooms still available):

Post-dated cheques accepted.

Please contact registrar (information below) for availability.

Single with bath (\$265) \$ _____

Single no bath (\$200) \$ _____

Twin beds with bath (\$175) \$ _____

All six meals, snacks and materials included.

Cheques: Payable to The Lay Readers' Association

Please mail form and cheque to:

The Lay Readers' Association of the Diocese of Montreal
c/o Susan Winn
680 Victoria Drive
Baie D'Urfe, QC H9X 2K2