

THE MONTRÉAL LAY READERS' NEWSLETTER INFOLETTRE DES LECTEURS LAÏCS DE MONTRÉAL

A WORD FROM YOUR EDITOR

by [Michel Gagnon](#), vice-president communications

Welcome to this newsletter, the first for 2023-2024.

This past year has seen many changes: a new executive, new tasks, a rejuvenated Facebook page, a thorough reflection on our activities, etc. And in our daily lives, as well as in our parishes and at the Lay Readers' Association, we have returned to a more normal environment where we can, at last, meet each other in person. For real!

In addition to all these changes, I was also facing new family constraints. In concrete terms, this newsletter suffered. For 2023-2024, we took the resolution to communicate with you more often. We therefore aim to publish three issues throughout the year, issues a bit like this one with news from your executive as well as reflections on your spiritual life and interesting or funny experiences you lived throughout your ministry.

In this issue, you will find a word from some members of your executive. Then follows an article on the **calendar of continuing education activities** for this year (seminars, study day, retreat), and a sermon from Rev. Grace, warden of Lay Readers, which also serves as her "Welcome back" word. Then come three other articles, one on a weird but thought-provoking experience at a funeral, with a few lessons in it; then one on a call to service that may inspire more than one, and finally one on a Lay Reader who will be pursuing his ministry as Vocational Deacon.

Finally, **to make sure this newsletter caters to your need, we need your input!**

Whether you have been in ministry for 30 weeks or 30 years, whether you minister in an urban or rural setting, if you have had an interesting experience or would like to share a prayer or a reflection, please do so! Send your article in English or French to Michel Gagnon at communications@layreaders.org.

With the grace of God, have a good reading!

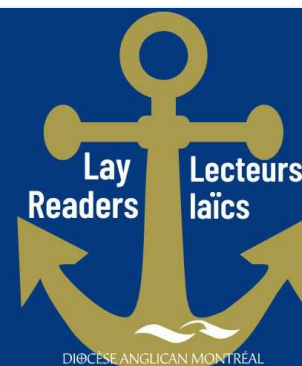
MOT DE L'ÉDITEUR EN CHEF

par [Michel Gagnon](#), vice-president communications

Bienvenue à cette infolettre, la première de la saison 2023-2024.

En plus de tous ces changements s'ajoutaient de mon côté de nouvelles contraintes familiales. Concrètement, l'infolettre en a souffert. Pour l'année 2023-2024, nous prenons la résolution de communiquer plus souvent avec vous. Nous visons donc la publication de trois numéros au cours de l'année. Des numéros un peu à l'image de celui-ci, avec des nouvelles de votre exécutif, mais aussi des réflexions sur votre vie spirituelle, des expériences intéressantes ou cocasses que vous avez vécues...

Dans ce numéro, vous trouverez donc un mot des membres de l'exécutif de votre association, puis un article sur le **calendrier des activités de formation continue** (séminaires, journée d'étude, retraite) et un sermon de la rév. Grace, directrice des lecteurs laïcs, qui fait en même temps office de mot de bienvenue. Viennent ensuite trois autres articles : celui d'une expérience de funérailles plutôt cocasses (après



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MOT DE L'ÉDITEUR EN CHEF (SUITE)

coup, on s'entend) mais qui porte à réfléchir, celui de l'histoire d'un appel au service qui pourrait en inspirer plus d'un, et enfin celui d'un lecteur laïc qui poursuivra bientôt son ministère en tant que diacre permanent.

En terminant, **pour que l'infolettre corresponde à vos besoins, nous avons aussi besoin de vous !** Que vous exerciez votre ministère depuis 30 semaines ou 30 ans, que vous œuvriez en milieu urbain ou à la campagne, si vous avez vécu une expérience intéressante ou si vous souhaitez partager une réflexion ou une prière, n'hésitez pas ! Faites parvenir votre article en français ou en anglais à Michel Gagnon à communications@layreaders.org

Avec la grâce de Dieu, bonne lecture !

A WORD FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

by [Robert McLachlan](#)

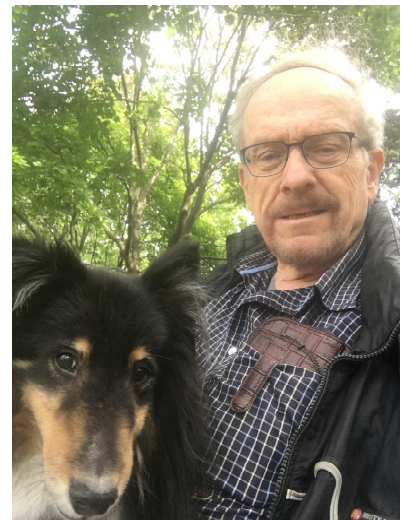
First of all, I want to wish a "Welcome Back Kotter" greeting to all of our Lay Readers and friends from your summer holidays! Hopefully they were restful and fruitful for you and your family, enough so, that you all could benefit from some peace and solitude; both with Nature, and in prayer with our Lord Jesus Christ.

In early September, (after having July and August as our "quiet time") – with our Association's senior Executives (myself, Mark Weatherley and Michel Gagnon), we held several Zoom 2023-2024 planning sessions in order to "kick-start" the season; before actually holding our first full Executive monthly Zoom meeting on September 21st. (less our Warden, Rev. Grace Burson, who would only be back from her four-month sabbatical, on October 1st).

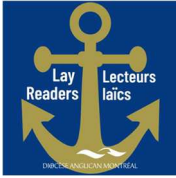
Thus at this full Executive meeting, (using documented input from the 3 senior Executive meetings), we were able to quickly iron-out and prioritize most all potential issues, that everyone felt we would be facing, and have to address, during our upcoming 2023-2024 LRA season for all members. Plus our next full Executive Zoom meeting will be October 12th, with Rev. Grace back and in attendance.

So, for now I don't want to "steal too much thunder" from our other Executives who will be outlining their respective 2023-2024 plans within the remainder of this Newsletter... however there are a few other points which I would briefly like to mention, namely:

- **Dave Blizard**, one of our current Executive Members, **will be ordained by Bishop Mary as a Vocational Deacon, on Saturday, October 14th, at 3:00 pm** at St. Barnabas Church, 95 Lorne, Saint-Lambert. All Lay Readers and friends are invited to attend



*Robert McLachlan, president of the Lay Readers' Association, and Milo
Photo supplied by R. McLachlan*



A WORD FROM YOUR PRESIDENT (CONTINUED)

- Further on within this Newsletter you will find Dave Blizzard’s very interesting article on *From Lay Reader to Vocational Deacon*.
- On Saturday, April 27, 2024, at Montreal Diocesan College, there will be a workshop called “*Being called to ordained Ministry*”. ALL interested Lay Readers will be encouraged to attend. More information to follow later this year.
- On our LRA Website <https://layreaders.org> (which will soon have a “new and more modern appearance”), **you will find ALL the current information we have, concerning: 2023-2024 Workshops, Study Day and Retreat**. It will be updated as soon as we confirm additional information – see please check regularly.
 - Due to the above mentioned workshop “*Being called to ordained Ministry*”, **our LRA Annual Retreat will be held on 3, 4, 5 May 2024**, so kindly book your calendar now! Again, more information to follow later this year.
- For the remainder of 2023, our Executive Team will consist of: [Rev. Grace Burson](#) (Warden), [myself](#), [Mark Weatherley](#) (VP– Seminars and Education), [Michel Gagnon](#) (VP– Communications and Newsletter), [Karen Birkett](#) (Treasurer), [Juliet Komboni](#) (Secretary), [Yvonne Bayne](#) and [Guy Grolimond](#).

For 2024, we shall be looking for 2-3 NEW Executive Team Members, to be trained for and co-ordinate” the following new areas of responsibility:

- a) **Fundraising ideas,**
- b) **Membership list updates,**
- c) **Wellness of members.**

So, if you are curious and would like to find out more as to if one of these areas might interest you, then kindly contact [myself](#), and we can confidentially discuss.

In the meantime, I hope that you do enjoy reading this Fall issue of our Newsletter; and as our Editor will also mention – *we hope to produce them every 4 months, providing that we also can get some input and articles submitted by each and every interested LRA Member!*

Therefore, I wish our Lord’s Blessings and encouragement *upon all of you*, to help your Executive Deliver the Message. Thanks very much!

MOT DU PRÉSIDENT

par [Robert McLachlan](#)

Tout d'abord, je tiens à souhaiter un joyeux retour des vacances estivales à toutes les lectrices laïques et à tous les lecteurs laïcs ainsi qu'à leurs amis. J'espère qu'elles ont été reposantes et vous ont permis de vous ressourcer dans la nature et par la prière avec notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ.

Au début de septembre (après avoir profité du calme de juillet et août, nous avons tenu plusieurs séances de planification sur Zoom avec les vice-présidents de l'exécutif (moi-même, Mark Weatherley et Michel Gagnon), pour planifier et lancer la saison 2023-2024, avant de tenir le 21 septembre dernier notre première réunion Zoom mensuelle avec l'ensemble de l'exécutif (moins notre directrice, la rév. Grace Burson qui sera de retour de son congé sabbatique de 4 mois le 1^{er} octobre).

Ainsi, lors de cette première réunion plénière de l'exécutif, grâce à ces trois réunions préalables de planification, nous avons été en mesure de prioriser nos actions pour résoudre rapidement la plupart des problèmes potentiels auxquels nous serons confrontés au cours de notre prochaine saison, afin de préparer une saison 2023-2024 enrichissante et remplie d'activités pour tous les membres. Notre prochaine réunion Zoom de l'ensemble de l'exécutif aura lieu le 12 octobre, avec le retour de la révérende Grace et en personne.

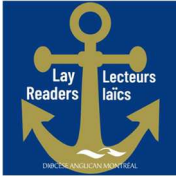
Donc, pour l'instant, je ne veux pas enlever les mots de la bouche de nos autres dirigeants qui présenteront leurs plans respectifs pour 2023-2024 dans le reste de cette infolettre. Cependant, il y a quelques autres points que je voudrais mentionner brièvement, à savoir :

- **Dave Blizard**, un des membres du présent exécutif, **sera ordonné comme diacre permanent par M^{gr} Mary le 14 octobre prochain à 15 h** à l'église Saint Barnabas, 95 rue Lorne, Saint-Lambert. Tous les lecteurs laïcs et leurs amis sont invités.
 - Vous trouverez dans cette infolettre un article très intéressant sur le cheminement vocationnel de Dave : From Lay Reader to Vocational Deacon (trad. De lecteur laïc à diacre permanent).
 - Le samedi 27 avril 2024, le Séminaire diocésain de Montréal organise un atelier intitulé Être appelé au ministère ordonné. Tous les lecteurs laïcs intéressés sont fortement invités à participer. Davantage d'informations suivront plus tard cette année.
- Sur notre site web <https://layreaders.org> (qui sera bientôt rajeuni), vous trouverez toutes les informations à jour sur les ateliers, la journée d'étude et la retraite pour l'année 2023-2024. Cette page sera mise à jour régulièrement à mesure que nous pourrons confirmer d'autres événements. Veuillez consulter le site régulièrement.



Robert McLachlan, président de l'Association des lecteurs laïcs, avec Milo

Photo fournie par R. McLachlan



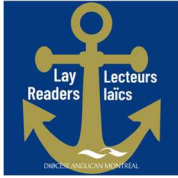
MOT DU PRESIDENT (SUITE)

- À cause de l'atelier *Être appelé au ministère ordonné*, **la retraite annuelle des lecteurs laïcs se tiendra les 3, 4 et 5 mai 2024**. Veuillez donc inscrire ces dates à votre agenda dès maintenant ! Encore là, nous vous fournirons davantage d'informations plus tard au cours de l'année.
 - Pour la fin de 2023, notre équipe de direction est formée de: [Rév. Grace Burson](#) (directrice), [moi-même](#), [Mark Weatherley](#) (vice-président, séminaires et formation), [Michel Gagnon](#) (vice-président, communications et infolettre), [Karen Birkett](#) (trésorière), [Juliet Komboni](#) (secrétaire), **Yvonne Bayne** et **Guy Grolimond**.
- Pour 2024, nous sommes à la recherche de 2 ou 3 NOUVEAUX membres de l'exécutif.** Ces personnes seront préparées à coordonner ces nouveaux champs de responsabilités :
- a) **Idées de collecte de fonds,**
 - b) **Mise à jour de la liste de membres,**
 - c) **Bien-être des membres.**

Si vous êtes curieux et que vous voulez en savoir davantage, et tout particulièrement si l'un de ces domaines vous intéresse, alors veuillez communiquer avec [moi](#) ; nous pourrions en discuter en toute confiance.

D'ici là, j'espère que vous appréciez ce numéro d'automne de notre infolettre. Et comme notre rédacteur en chef le souligne, nous espérons en produire un numéro aux quatre mois. *Mais pour cela, nous avons besoin d'obtenir les contributions et les articles du plus grand nombre de lecteurs laïcs possible.*

En terminant, je vous souhaite la bénédiction et le soutien de notre Seigneur *sur chacun de vous*, afin d'aider notre exécutif à livrer le message. Merci infiniment !



FROM THE DESK OF YOUR FIRST-VICE-PRESIDENT

by [Mark Weatherley](#)

Grace to all of you.

As I approach the end of my second year in this role, the word that is on my mind is **discipline**. Why?

Because this seems to be the key to all aspects of Christian faith and life. Yes, Love may be at the core of our faith and belief but how do we achieve it?

We are encouraged, from our earliest moments as members of a Christian community, to study and reflect on the scriptures. To listen to God speaking to us. To learn to talk with him/her/they.

It starts with services on Sunday when we listen to prayers and repeat some. It starts with the pattern of readings set for each Sunday. A pattern that follows a 3-year cycle. It starts with the songs we sing and the stories they tell.

These things shape who we are. And Sunday practice is a discipline in itself when, on a weekend, we are drawn to so many other non-work demands, and sometimes back to work.

Yet every day is a day with God, so how do you get discipline when the world says the priority is elsewhere?

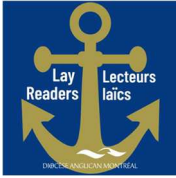
I learned when I was studying to become an accountant, that discipline (even if I had not already appreciated it at boarding school) was essential in order to manage my time between work, looking after my studies, social and sporting activities, church and, if there was some time left, other friends and family.

Later with a young family I discovered again the importance of discipline in the structure of the family, its routines, and activities. All things cannot happen at once and you cannot eat the same meal every day of the week.

Later again a pandemic brought about a need to rediscipline myself to support my health and my wife. Those changes are ongoing as I continue to gain years. I now have a morning prayer routine five days of the week. (*If anyone is interested in joining a group for morning prayer please let me know.*) It suits me to begin the day that way. Once a day is enough. Evening prayer is my cooking time.

More than this though, I learned through my daily walks of my dog through the pandemic that when the early fathers talked of continuous prayer they were not necessarily talking of the words you use and the length or brevity of those words, nor of the English, French, Greek, Latin or Aramean that you may use; rather they were talking about the way you live and walk in this life. They were talking about the completeness of your actions and behaviours as you follow your daily round. They were talking about the care you have for the world, its people and the environment in which you and they live. They were talking about a life where every action and every step become a prayer. For in each action and each step there is an act of love for some part of creation, and thus you are fulfilling your responsibility to God for what was created as a gift for our care.

Paul the apostle is undoubtedly a master of encouraging discipline. And always worth another look. But the message is also throughout the old testaments, starting in Genesis. Take another look.



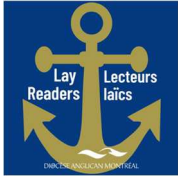
FROM THE DESK OF YOUR FIRST-VICE-PRESIDENT (CONTINUED)

And take another look at the words of an old hymn:

1. Eternal Ruler of the ceaseless round
of circling planets singing on their way;
guide of the nations from the night profound
into the glory of the perfect day;
rule in our hearts, that we may ever be
guided and strengthened and upheld by thee.
2. We are of thee, the children of thy love,
the brothers of thy well-belovèd Son;
descend, O Holy Spirit, like a dove,
into our hearts, that we may be as one:
as one with thee, to whom we ever tend;
as one with him, our Brother and our Friend.
3. We would be one in hatred of all wrong,
one in our love of all things sweet and fair,
one with the joy that breaketh into song,
one with the grief that trembles into prayer,
one in the power that makes thy children free
to follow truth, and thus to follow thee.
4. O clothe us with thy heavenly armour, Lord,
thy trusty shield, thy sword of love divine;
our inspiration be thy constant word;
we ask no victories that are not thine:
give or withhold, let pain or pleasure be;
enough to know that we are serving thee.

Source: [Ancient and Modern: Hymns and songs for refreshing worship #244](#)

So lastly, remember, you are a leader and called to inspire.



PLANNING SEMINARS AND KEEPING YOUR AGENDA STRAIGHT SO YOU CAN PARTICIPATE

by [Mark Weatherley](#)

This is a brief note for all lay readers to update your agendas and plan your participation in the seminars, Study Day and Retreat. For the coming year we have 3 dates with confirmed speakers. The others are in progress. If you have ideas on subjects you would like to see presented or particular people you would like to hear from, please let one of the seminar planning team know (Mark Weatherley, Yvonne Bayne and Karen Birkett). *Alternatively you could volunteer to help without necessarily becoming part of the executive.*

So when will we meet?

- Saturday, September 30, 2023, Seminar, Rev Karen Egan, Sermon preparation for a funeral → cancelled.
- **Saturday, October 28, 2023, Seminar, Rev. Jesse Zink, Sermons and culture**
- **Saturday, November 25, 2023, Study Day followed by Commissioning service**
- **Saturday, January 27, 2024, Seminar, Rev. Jen Bourque, Pastoral visiting 101**
- **Saturday, February 24, 2024, Seminar, Rev. Jesse Dymond, Pastoral visiting, Empathic Listening**

(The final shape of the January and February seminars is incomplete. Our 2 speakers are discussing how the time will be split and coordinated. We will be opening these seminars to any person interested in pastoral visiting. These 2 seminars are but an introduction to a ministry of connection that must be coordinated with the priest responsible for your parish.)

- There will be no seminar in March, 2024 because Easter is March 31.
- **Friday, Saturday and Sunday, May 3, 4, 5, 2024, Annual Retreat**
(please note that this is a week later than our usual end of April date, so we are not in conflict with a Diocesan College event scheduled for April 27)
- The date and timing of the AGM has still to be established.
- There will be no Seminar in June because there will be a **conference Synod on June 6, 7 and 8** in which you are all encouraged to participate as this will be the last of the 3-year cycle on “Racism: Listening, Naming and Reconciling”.

All of these gatherings (except for the retreat) are scheduled for the Church of All Saints by the Lake in Dorval where there is ample parking and bus service close by. Also there is a lift between the floors for those in need of this facility.

PLANNING SEMINARS AND KEEPING YOUR AGENDA STRAIGHT SO YOU CAN PARTICIPATE (CONTINUED)

At this moment I cannot confirm that all events will be online or hybrid. So far as is possible I would encourage you to plan to be present in person, bring a lunch and enjoy the fellowship of your fellow lay readers. Study day in November 2023, the retreat and the meeting for the AGM will be catered.

Carpooling, for those travelling any distance, is encouraged as it benefits the environment and means you don't have to get lost alone.

Most seminars will be better experienced in person, as this permits more flexible dialogue, breakout groups and interaction with the seminar leader.

Generally seminars will start at 9 a.m. and end at 12:30 when those present in person will be invited to eat lunch together before heading home. As mentioned before the study day, the retreat and the day of the AGM will be different.

A Word about Finances

I would encourage you to speak to your corporation and ask them to consider giving you some support towards the costs of your participation. There is no obligation for your church to provide support, but you may wish to remind them that they benefit from your devotion to this work and the education and development you gain for the work that you do.

Lastly, I would remind every one of you that a bursary fund exists to provide support to your education and participation. For information on how the bursary program works and its limitations, please contact [Karen Birkett](#), Treasurer of the Lay Readers Association.



Our up-to-date calendar of events is always online

Follow all the latest news at <https://layreaders.org/events.htm>

And please email [Mark Weatherley](#) if you have any ideas for new seminars.

*Photo by Roberto Hund on
<https://www.pexels.com>
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A SERMON FOR OCTOBER 1, 2023... AND RETURN FROM SABBATICAL

by [Rev. Grace Pritchard Burson](#), warden to the Lay Readers

One of my favourite ways to pray is to sing. It took me a long time to identify some forms of singing as prayer: for a long time I just thought I was a weird person who would have walked down the street chanting Bach chorales if I could get away with it (and sometimes I did it anyway, if there weren't too many people around to give me funny looks).

Given this, it's surprising that it was the afternoon of the second day of my nine-day walking pilgrimage in Norway before it occurred to me that hiking alone in the middle of the woods in Gudbrandsdal was a pretty ideal scenario in which to bellow "He Who Would Valiant Be" (except with the pronouns changed to "she," obviously) at the top of my lungs.

That second day was a Saturday, and I learned that evening from my host at the day's hostel that on Sunday there would be a pilgrim service the next day at a church part way through my planned route. I was looking forward to it: I didn't know whether there would be communion, but I hoped so; and if nothing else, I looked forward to sharing worship with fellow pilgrims. But as I set off the next morning, I discovered that my host had gotten the time wrong: the service was not at eleven, but at ten.

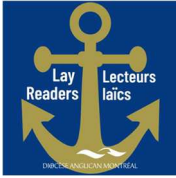
Between me and the church lay six kilometers of some of the steepest terrain I would encounter in the entire walk. I knew there was no chance I could make it in time. But I set off anyway, at the fastest pace I thought I could sustain, and as I trekked up and down I realized that I was once again singing to myself (to the best of my ability, given my need to breathe):

*O food to pilgrims given,
O bread of life from heaven,
O manna from on high ...*

I've memorized a lot of hymns, but at the time that this one emerged from my subconscious I couldn't summon it all right away. The first verse was complete, but I couldn't remember all of the second one and had only the vaguest sense how the third went. But my mind and spirit had assessed two things accurately: I was a pilgrim, and I was hungry. Spiritually hungry for fellowship with other pilgrims, but also hungry in the most basic physical sense: I was walking twenty kilometers a day, burning far more calories than I'm used to, and at the mercy of the pilgrim hostel hosts for my daily bread (and while there are many things I find deeply appealing about the culture and landscape of Norway, I confess that the traditional cuisine is not generally one of them).



Rev. Grace Pritchard Burson,
warden of Lay Readers
Photo supplied by
Grace Pritchard Burson



A SERMON FOR OCTOBER 1, 2023... AND RETURN FROM SABBATICAL (CONTINUED)

I made it to the historic Rennebu Kirke at about ten minutes to eleven. The service lasted for another forty minutes or so. There was not, in fact, Holy Communion, although there had been at least two baptisms before I got there. The closing hymn was “Now thank we all our God”, which was sung in at least three languages simultaneously.

And while my hunger for the body and blood of Jesus specifically was not sated on that occasion, after the service was over the church folks brought out an enormous spread of cake and rolls and cheese and those ubiquitous Scandinavian waffles served with jam, and of course coffee, and I devoured several servings of carbohydrates and a cup of tea. (And then a couple hours later, back on the trail, my regular packed lunch. And then a couple hours after that, an ice cream cone at a trailside café. And then a hamburger, two hot dogs, and side dishes for dinner. Did I mention that hiking seven hours a day makes you hungry?)

I took a picture of the spread inside the church building and posted it to my Facebook page with the caption “O food to pilgrims given...”

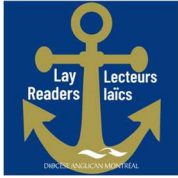
A few days later, I found myself sharing a tiny, adorable cottage one night with a Swiss pastor and his wife, conversing in a chaotic mixture of German, English and French. After dinner, we gathered around an outdoor fire with four other pilgrims, two Norwegians and two Germans. One of the Norwegian women began leading us in Taizé chants, and then we branched out to other songs. I had managed to remember all of the second verse by then (with a little help from Google), and I sang the first two verses. None of the others knew my English words, but they all knew the tune.

The day after *that*, several of the same people sang Taizé chants in a 900-year-old church another day’s hike down the trail.

And a week and a half later, after I had flown from Oslo to Porto and ridden 125 kilometers on horseback through northwestern Spain, I met the Rev’d Anna Noon, Priest-in-Charge and Missioner to Pilgrims at the new Anglican Welcome Centre in Santiago de Compostela.

Participating in a very Roman Catholic pilgrimage like this one, as a female Anglican priest is, for me at least, the source of a lot of cognitive dissonance. At the pilgrim mass in the Santiago cathedral earlier that day, the clergy had been very careful not to say in so many words that non-Roman Catholics were barred from communion. I and my fellow-traveler the Rev’d Laurie Brock nevertheless crossed our arms for a blessing during the distribution.

But in Santa Susana’s, the church where Anna holds services, there was no need to worry. The three of us together gathered round the altar and as Anna spoke the prayer of consecration, Laurie and I extended our hands to join her in celebrating the sacrament. And for our hymn, at my request, we sang, “O food to pilgrims given.”



A SERMON FOR OCTOBER 1, 2023... AND RETURN FROM SABBATICAL (CONTINUED)

I could stand here all day drawing connections between today's scripture readings and my pilgrimage experience, and I apologize in advance for the number of hiking-in-Norway and riding-in-Spain metaphors I'll be using in the next six months or so. But the clearest connection, of course, is to Moses' struggle with the Hebrew people in the wilderness, cranky with thirst and panic as they don't know where their next source of drinking water will be coming from.

*O stream of love past telling,
O purest fountain, welling
from out the Saviour's side ...*

The thing about pilgrimage is that two things are simultaneously true: you're seeking, and hopefully finding, a profound spiritual connection with God, with God's creation, and with your fellow pilgrims; and you are also focused, as you rarely otherwise are, on your basic physical needs. You need to pack water and food. You need to be prepared to treat blisters and sore muscles. You pay close, not to say obsessive, attention to the limits of what you are physically capable of, because you are much closer to those limits than you're used to being; and you probably sleep harder than you ever have in your life.

And given how quickly human beings die of thirst, I can sympathize with the panic! I very much doubt I would have behaved any better than the people Moses was leading through the wilderness under those circumstances. I would probably have been one of the principal whiners. (And I do like to point out that God, when appealed to, did in fact promptly fulfil the practical request for the water the people needed to survive.)

Both our bodies and souls belong to God. We can hunger simultaneously for God's presence in our souls and for something to fill our bellies. And it's the church's job to respond to both hungers in the world around us.

In the few days I've been back, it's been a comfort – though not a surprise – to learn that All Saints' continued joyfully responding to the hungers of the world whether or not I happened to be around. When I saw the headlines about the fire in Garden Crescent, I thought "hmm, I wonder what the neighbourhood will organize to help the people who were affected" – and sure enough, on my first day back Laura let me know that Trevor had already been in touch with Dorval Community Aid to find out how we could help.

Not all of us are formal pilgrims. Most of us, thank goodness, will never spend forty years wandering in the wilderness and not knowing if we can find drinkable water. But we are all on the journey of life together, and we all need both our souls and bodies cared for along the way. I'm glad to be back with you all as we work together with God to care for each other and our neighbours! *Amen.*

UN SERVICE FUNÉRAIRE TRÈS ATYPIQUE !

par **Anne-Claude Geoffrion**

En tant que lectrice laïque, on me demande souvent de présider à des funérailles. Il y a deux ans, pendant la pandémie, j'ai présidé des funérailles des plus insolites, dans des circonstances que j'espère sincèrement ne plus jamais avoir à revivre.

Je devais déjà présider un service funéraire lorsque moins de 24 heures avant la cérémonie, la même maison funéraire m'a demandé de faire un autre service le même jour. J'ai expliqué que j'avais déjà un engagement antérieur avec eux mais ils m'ont dit que celui-ci serait deux heures plus tard au même endroit. J'ai alors accepté à contrecœur de prendre le service.

L'employé m'a simplement donné le numéro de téléphone de la personne contact et, quand j'ai demandé des détails sur le type de service etc., il a dit de les demander à la famille.

Par manque de temps, je suis allée rencontrer en personne la mère du défunt. Elle était bouleversée par les événements et c'est alors que j'ai appris que son fils s'était suicidé. Cela a bien sûr créé une situation très stressante, mais en priant et en invoquant le Saint-Esprit, j'ai pu organiser ce que j'espérais être un service qui aiderait la famille à passer à travers cette dure épreuve.

Le lendemain, quand je suis arrivé au salon funéraire, on m'a dit qu'ils m'avaient donné la mauvaise heure pour le premier service et pire encore, que le deuxième service était dans un lieu différent à une demi-heure de là, ce qui me laissait très peu de temps pour me rendre. Heureusement tout s'est déroulé normalement au premier service.

Lorsque je suis arrivé au deuxième salon funéraire, j'ai été surprise de voir à l'extérieur une grande foule de plusieurs centaines de personnes principalement d'origine antillaise, et c'est alors que j'ai appris que le père du défunt était jamaïcain. Pour avoir déjà vécu dans les Caraïbes, je savais que l'atmosphère serait encore plus chargée d'émotions.

La salle était bondée bien au-delà des restrictions COVID et d'après l'humeur et les commentaires autour de moi, j'ai rapidement réalisé que les émotions étaient à fleur de peau, car beaucoup de gens pensaient que l'ex-petite amie était responsable et avait peut-être même poussé son ex à la mort. (Il y avait une enquête de police en cours.)

L'ex-petite amie était là. Comme je ne l'avais pas rencontrée auparavant, je ne savais pas qui elle était lorsqu'elle est venue au podium pendant la période de témoignages. Elle était très émotive et a commencé à accuser la famille d'avoir causé la mort de « John » (nom fictif), puis elle a commencé à gémir et à crier contre la foule qui l'injurait et la menaçait. Un homme lui a crié dessus et a donné un coup de poing dans le mur au point de le défoncer. La situation se détériorait très rapidement et je voyais que nous étions à quelques secondes d'une bagarre générale. Les employés restaient là à ne rien faire et j'ai réalisé qu'il fallait intervenir très

UN SERVICE FUNÉRAIRE TRÈS ATYPIQUE ! (CONTINUED)

rapidement et je voyais que nous étions à quelques secondes d'une bagarre générale. J'ai donc réalisé qu'il fallait intervenir très rapidement. Je me suis alors approché de la dame et je l'ai encerclé avec mes bras et j'ai réussi à la faire sortir dans le couloir et j'ai demandé à un employé de l'emmenner dans un bureau avec des instructions fermes de ne pas la laisser revenir.

La prochaine personne à se présenter au podium était un proche ami. Il a commencé à demander à Dieu de pardonner à son ami « John » de s'être suicidé. Puis il poursuivait en insistant sur l'horrible péché que ce pauvre homme avait commis, que Dieu ne pouvait pas le lui pardonner et l'avait donc envoyé en enfer pour brûler dans le feu pour l'éternité. Les parents semblaient sur le point de s'effondrer ! Je suis intervenue de nouveau et je l'ai escorté alors qu'il sanglotait sur mon surplis.

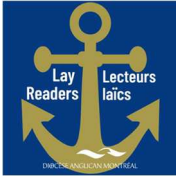
Mon homélie venait après ces moments mouvementés. J'ai dit que Jésus voyait au fond du cœur de « John » parce que lui aussi avait traversé des moments de profond désespoir où il se sentait abandonné, même par Dieu. J'ai utilisé Jean 14, 2-3 à où Jésus parle de préparer une place pour chacun d'entre-nous – incluant « John ». Pendant que je parlais, j'ai senti la tension baisser et les gens se détendre. Merci Saint-Esprit ! Le reste du service s'est terminé assez normalement.

Mais ce n'était pas la fin des péripéties ! Quand je suis partie, j'ai dû séparer la sœur du défunt et l'ex-petite amie qui se battaient dans le stationnement sous les encouragements de la foule. La sœur avait le nez ensanglanté, l'ex-petite amie un œil au beurre noir. Je suppose que mes vêtements liturgiques ont aidé à arrêter le combat mais il m'a tout de même fallu 20 minutes pour calmer la sœur, l'ex était heureusement partie. Mon surplis était éclaboussé de sang et de boue. Les passants ont dû se demander ce qui se passait !

J'ai parlé à une employée du salon funéraire le lundi suivant et je lui ai dit qu'ils m'avaient plongé dans cette situation très délicate et émotionnelle sans avertissement ni informations, que je n'avais reçu absolument aucun soutien et que je me sentais complètement seule lorsque les choses se sont détériorées pendant le service. Sa réponse : le salon ne voyait pas la nécessité d'informer le célébrant si le décès était par suicide ou de nature violente ou traumatique et ils n'avaient rien vu d'anormal ou d'inhabituel pendant le service ou dans le stationnement (où ils ont pourtant des caméras de sécurité), et elle m'a en fait dit que la famille était « satisfaite » du service. Je lui ai demandé si elle avait remarqué le trou dans le mur et elle m'a même répondu « Non » !



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UN SERVICE FUNÉRAIRE TRÈS ATYPIQUE ! (SUITE)

Inutile de dire que je me sentais très stressée à la fois physiquement et émotionnellement et, pour une raison quelconque, j'ai eu mal partout le lendemain. Probablement dû à un choc !

Depuis lors, je m'assure que toutes les informations qui me sont fournies par la maison funéraire sont confirmées par courriel et je vous recommande fortement de faire de même. Après cette expérience, je suppose que je pourrais être prête à presque toute éventualité, mais je sais que je préférerais ne plus jamais revivre une telle situation !

WHY I BECAME A LAY READER

by **Karen Birkett**

Becoming a Lay Reader is something I knew that I was being called to do, but the actual process took place over a number of years; and I would like to provide some background as to how this happened for me.

A seed planted early on

I had been active at St. Stephen's Anglican Church in Lachine from the time that I was confirmed at the age of 13. Our parish was blessed with having a priest who worked very well with the youth. Fr. Bob took a very shy girl and strongly encouraged her to get involved with the activities taking place during service on a Sunday morning. I was encouraged to read the lessons and the comfortable words (BCP) and I was trained as a server.

I am very thankful that this particular priest had experience acting in stage productions. I was taught how to project my voice (there were no microphones then), how to speak slowly and distinctly, and I learned how to breathe properly. All of this was taking place during a time of change within the Anglican Diocese of Montreal, particularly with the ordination of the Rev. Lettie James a few years later.

Over the years, I attended various parishes and during this time felt led to become a prayer leader. My experience and training at St. Stephen's with Fr. Bob gave me enough confidence to take on the challenge of Prayer Leader, writing my own prayers, and learning to become even more comfortable with public speaking.

Being called to become a Lay Reader

I believe that my initial experience at Stephen's set the groundwork for me moving forward and exploring other areas that I would not have necessarily considered. I had some exposure as to what it meant to be a Lay Reader, and in September 2004, I felt that God was giving me a hard push in that direction; something that I simply could not ignore. So... I spoke with my priest at that time, he approved my request, and I was accepted into training with the Rev. Canon Jan Dijkman who was then pastor to the Lay Readers.

WHY I BECAME A LAY READER (CONTINUED)

I am thankful for the training that I received since I was being trained by a priest who was originally from South Africa and who brought with him a beautiful spirituality. What I encountered during my training was the need to make myself somewhat vulnerable, to be well prepared, and to put myself out there, so to speak, and that would challenge my need for a little self-preservation.

Sermon preparation involves lots of research, but I find that I enjoy the research, the exegesis process, and I learn something new each time as I approach a text. I also learned very quickly the importance of feedback from the congregation and from my priest. From my own experience, I have found that preaching requires everything of me, learning when to pause, when to make eye contact and how to use my voice. But much more than this, I learn to trust God in the process.

Would I have thought, 30 years ago, that I would be involved in this type of ministry? Perhaps, but at that time my options were limited, and I still had a lot of growing to do.

My current ministry

As a Lay Reader I am involved in other areas beyond preaching. As mentioned previously, my path has taken me into the ministry of Prayer Leader, as well as being involved within the healing ministry, with the Laying on of Hands in the Chapel on Sunday mornings, a ministry I first became aware of many, many years ago while attending healing services and then through some teaching within the ministry of the Healing Order of St. Luke. All of these areas and experiences have led me to where I am today and to my involvement in pastoral care issues.

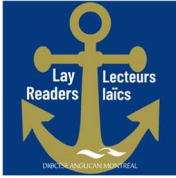
Each Lay Reader possesses unique talents and gifts that the Lord will ask you to use for the building up of his Body and for spreading of his message of love, forgiveness, mercy, and peace.

For those asking themselves if this is something that “I” should do, you will know by the tugging at your heart, and this is a tugging that will not go away, and if you respond in a positive way, God will take you to places that will bring you, yes, out of your comfort zone, but in ways that will bring growth in your personal walk with Him, and blessing to others.

In some ways the role of Lay Reader and the requirements of this ministry are awesome, but you will be blessed in the process, and you will come to know that God’s Spirit is leading you, as you offer up to him your time, efforts and willingness to be a channel for his work in this area. This is what I have experienced and initially it took courage for me to respond but I have grown in ways that I could not have imagined and the more I am involved in this ministry, the more I step back and allow God to work through me.



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FROM LAY READER TO VOCATIONAL DEACON

by **Dave Blizard**

We all travel long and winding roads, in our lives, full of good points and bad points. The one thing that is there is the presence of God and the guidance received. My trip began in 2007 with seeking out what it meant to be a Lay Reader and beginning training sessions.

As this work moved forward so did an interest to know more. With that, I enrolled in a Certificate Course in Pastoral Care Ministry at Concordia University in 2008. Continuing to work and learn, paid off with the receipt of a certificate confirming program completion in 2013. Working with my Lay Reader family learning, sharing and assisting in my church helped the desire to serve others to continue to grow.

In 2019, a push was felt towards the **Vocational Diaconate** and this was pursued by contacting Bishop Mary. In 2020, information sessions began with the Bishop's Commission on Ministry. The COVID year, 2021, placed everything on hold and restarted in 2022 with Zoom meetings together. These sessions, with the Bishop's Commission, continued into 2023. On May 30th, a psychological evaluation session was completed with Southdown Institute which was quite demanding. On June 1st, I went through a follow-up meeting with Southdown, on Zoom, and after the receipt of their written report, I was recommended for ordination. The final steps began with a Zoom meeting with the Bishop's Commission, on June 27th, to review the Southdown session and, later that day, I was advised that I was recommended for ordination.

Can a thought, an idea, a dream come to pass? Yes! I will realize this on October 14th when I will be ordained as a Vocational Deacon in the Diocese of Montreal.