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The Hippo Herald

SPRING 2024

LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA

A journey to freedom

Surely I am with you always

BY ALISON GOODWIN

They had other names, but Andrew and Elizabeth were known to the parish of St. Augustine's long before they arrived in Lethbridge. We came to learn the hearts of the Golisons through their regular updates. Read aloud at Sunday morning services, their letters were filled with expressions of gratitude and a burning desire to serve God.

Nearly one year since their arrival, the Hippo Herald had a chance, recently, to speak with Elizabeth and Andrew about their journey and how they are managing the transition to life in Canada.

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you."

GENESIS 12: 1-3



Andrew and Elizabeth at St. Augustine's

"In Iran, if you convert [to Christianity] the sentence is death," Andrew shares in a recent conversation. "Before me so many Christians died in Iran – many Christian leaders from various churches were sent to prison."

In 2009 Andrew helped to establish an underground church in Iran, that offered a place to worship and to study the Bible.

"My activities caused the Iranian intelligence service to investigate me. They wanted to put me in jail for a very long time." Andrew could have avoided persecution by sharing information on all the Christians he knew.

Two weeks before Christmas in 2015, Andrew and Elizabeth fled from their homes to Turkey. Even here, though, they were not safe.

"We lived in fear the whole time as the government in Turkey is friends with Iran. The Iranian intelligence service were actually laying traps to try to have us de-

CONTINUED PAGE 2 >

Golisons, continued...



Andrew and Elizabeth (left) with Christian friends.

ported. One time an agent even tried to plant drugs in our church," Andrew explains.

"It was difficult. We didn't have enough money and we did not know the language." Surviving in Turkey on just a little money of their own, Andrew says they prayed to God for guidance: "OK you asked us to come to this country, what is your plan?" It was two weeks before Pentecost."

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them . . . each one heard their own language being spoken.

ACTS 2:4&6

Andrew and Elizabeth shared many instances where their prayers were answered very specifically. Discernment is truly a hallmark of their journey. Two weeks before Pentecost, the Golisons' prayers were answered when God revealed his will for them to serve refugees from other countries.

In Turkey they met Korean friends who were answering a similar call from God. Through these friends and the Korean church in Turkey, Elizabeth and Andrew became ordained as ministers.

"It wasn't from me. I didn't choose the Kingdom of God," Elizabeth remembers. "The Kingdom of God chose me. It chose me."

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. MATTHEW 28:20

"Jesus said, 'Pick up your cross and follow me," Andrew says, reflecting on their family's experience. "Always, everything is beautiful in Jesus, but in Iran, when I grew into my Christian faith, slowly slowly, I experienced persecution, discrimination and suffering. Sometimes it's so hard to keep your faith rather than give up your faith for a better life; safety, family, better job. Jesus experienced this temptation in the desert; 'if you follow me I can give you money and power."

"In 2015, the Iranian intelligence service gave me an offer: 'Where do you want to work? We can give you a good job, if you leave Jesus Christ and come to Islam again and contribute with us.' It wasn't easy. Christianity, the discipleship of Christ – it was never easy."

"We miss our friends, relatives, people that I served with at the churches we attended. But now Canada has became our home. I see myself as being at home here, accepted by society, our church and we can keep our faith. I can express myself, express my faith, my favourite music – all of these things give me a feeling of home here."

"I miss Iranian people, but I have learned that I should lead with God's call. When I promised to God that I would become his minister, my life has changed. I was moved by God's calling and God protected me. In Turkey, when I was missing my country, one thing gave me joy, happiness, hope; now I am the Lord's plan. It makes us happy that we can close our eyes to our background."

"We do miss the food," they both agreed, "but we can find ingredients here for cooking Iranian recipes. There are Iranian restaurants in Calgary and Edmonton that we go to when we can."

"We keep some Iranian celebrations," Elizabeth shares. "We will celebrate the Iranian New Year, Norowz, in the spring. This reminds us of the resurrection, in the same way that spring resurrects from winter. We celebrate with our friends, and introduce our culture, our foods to them. In this way we can keep a little bit of our culture and learn about Canadian culture too. We've found our family, our friends – a place we can call home."

The Golisons reflected that, from afar, Canada represented a safe haven for them. Now, living here, they continue to be impressed by Canada's embrace of diversity: "People come to Canada from different backgrounds, with different religions," says Andrew. "They can practice their own faith.

This was so amazing to us. We were so happy for this."

"It feels like I've lived here for a long time," Elizabeth shares. "It does not feel new to me. As a member of my church I feel like I have known everyone here for a long time." I DIDN'T CHOOSE THE
KINGDOM OF GOD,"
ELIZABETH REMEMBERS. "THE KINGDOM
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"IT WASN'T FROM ME.

Elizabeth is able to pursue her

work as a sculptor at CASA. Both she and Andrew are attending Lethbridge College for English studies. Andrew is studying Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) 8, the highest level the government will support. Elizabeth is in CLB5. By the end of April, Elizabeth's parents, Joseph and Manizheh, will have finished CLB3 (they came to Canada a year ago with no knowledge of the English language).

Right now the Golisons do not have enough income to cover their expenses. Andrew is currently working at the Lethbridge College library and as a verger at St. Augustine's. He has applied for a position as a research assistant at the college as well as for work at numerous



Andrew and Elizabeth (left) with Joseph and Manizheh (right) at their confirmation in the fall of 2023.

businesses, including Costco, Save on Foods, Maple Leaf Foods and Walmart.

"We are in the discernment process for our future," Andrew says. Both he and Elizabeth wish to continue their

work as ministers. "We have a goal, dreams of going to university, to study theology, for continuing our call. This is not easy due to tuition fees, the language barrier, things like this."

Now that Elizabeth, Andrew, Manizheh and Joseph are physically present in our parish, we have been able to witness their ministries, from shoveling snow to serving coffee to singing in the choir. The warmth and kindness with which they greet their brothers and sis-

ters in Christ is infectious. They are a family that has had to leave everything to follow their faith. An embodiment of so much of what we strive for as Christians, they are a family that continues to lead with gratitude and hope.

"God changed a lot of things in my heart and my mind," Elizabeth reflects. "Before God and Andrew, my life was different. I became a servant of God. I needed to serve God in a different nation, a different culture. It was not easy but by the power of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit I can do that."

Editor's note: The scripture passages above are especially meaningful to Andrew and Elizabeth as they provided support and guidance at different times in the couple's journey. Ω

Focus on Music

The saga of the organ pipes

BY MARY LEE VOORT ORGANIST

Back in November, Jason Barnesley, our pipe organ technician from Calgary, was down for the organ's regular pre-Christmas tuning when he discovered a very significant problem; one of the turnbuckles holding one of the three cables supporting and reinforcing the pipe chest on the south side had snapped. Because we didn't know how much weight those cables were actually holding up, the decision was made to immediately stop all activity in the areas under the pipes until we could get experts in to assess the situation. Fortunately, thanks to Elizabeth Songer and Bruce from RBG Construction, it was determined that it was safe to resume the tuning, but to replace the turnbuckles as soon as possible.

Early in January, Jason returned to proceed with the first step in a major restoration and repair project; de-piping the right side facade box, cleaning the pipes and chests, returning the pipes and re-tuning, and

having our local team replace the cable turnbuckles while the pipes were down. An intrepid team of volunteers undertook the impressive job of helping to remove the pipes, lay them out in order in sorting boxes and on the floor, blow

Pipes laid out in boxes on the floor for sorting and cleaning.

out the dust with an air compressor, adjust the small "wings" to the correct angle, polish each pipe, and then return them (in the proper order!) to Jason, who then replaced them up top.

The trumpet stop pipes on that side were taken to Calgary for cleaning, restoration and the creation of internal dust covers. They will be returned and

reinstalled after Easter. Almost 40 years of dust taken care of, but it wasn't as bad as we'd imagined. (Fun fact: did you know that bricks breathe? They do, and in a dry and windy climate like ours, they emit tiny puffs of brick dust, which affects the tuning of the pipes).

A huge thank you to Garrett D, Andreas G, Allan H, Bill L, Leonard L, James R, and Ron Z who all managed the job in record time and with smiling faces (despite being under the eagle eye of the head supervisor aka church organist – she can be quite intimidating).

Watch for more information on the next step of the pipe restoration in the next edition of the Hippo Herald. Ω



Jason Barnesly (top) assisted by Andreas Gateman.



Thank you for your generosity in 2023.

Financial Update

BY CATHY GILLESPIE TREASURER

2023 FINANCIAL RESULTS

Those of you who were at the Annual Meeting of Parishioners would have heard a detailed review of the church 2023 year-end financial statements. Here is a short summary of the Statement of Operating Revenue and Expenditures. The totals (actual and budget) by major categories are shown in the chart below.

The year ended with a deficit of \$7,013 which was a better result than the budgeted deficit of \$20,000. I am pleased to report that parishioner givings (\$478,863) exceeded the budget amount of \$471,850. Another key objective that was achieved was returning to the level of parishioner givings prior to the pandemic (\$470,336 in 2019). Expenses were very close to budget in total, as the

budget categories that were under budget offset the few that were over budget (most notably the cost of our insurance). A heartfelt thank you to all who contributed to this positive year-end result by giving your treasure, time and talents to the church in 2023!

More detail on the Operating Fund results, as well as the Statement of Financial Position and Statement of Fund Activity, can be found in the Annual Report for 2023.

2024 BUDGET

The Operating Fund budget for 2024 was also presented at the Annual Meeting. The third column of the chart is a condensed version of it. The budget anticipates an increase in total parishioner givings of approximately 4%. We continue to benefit greatly from income from the St. Augustine's Endowment Fund, as the budget includes withdrawing up to \$35,000 (part of Other Income). Expenses are budgeted at amounts that we hope will be enough to support the current cost of staffing, programming, maintaining the church buildings and administration. The budget "bottom line" is a \$15,000 deficit, which would be covered by the accumulated

	2023 Budget	2023 Actual	2024 Budget
Parishioner givings	\$ 471,850	\$ 478,863	\$ 497,600
Other income	<u>53,650</u>	<u>60,763</u>	<u>58,750</u>
Total income	<u>525,500</u>	<u>539,626</u>	<u>556,350</u>
Staffing expenses Administration & apportionment Facility expenses Christian education & outreach Total expenses	\$ 331,200	\$ 326,805	\$ 347,000
	118,100	121,579	120,200
	77,650	79,569	85,000
	<u>18,550</u>	<u>18,686</u>	<u>19,150</u>
	545,500	546,639	<u>571,350</u>
Net deficit	\$ (20,000)	\$ <u>(7,013)</u>	\$ (15,000)

Operating Fund Reserve. We continue to budget for an overall deficit but hope that we will be in a position to end that practice within the next few years. More detail on the 2024 Budget is also available in the Annual Report for 2023. Ω



Focus on Moms and Kids

Children's ministries in full swing

BY THE REV. DR. GILLIAN BRECKENRIDGE

One of our sidespeople came up to me after a recent Sunday 10 a.m. service and looked at me aghast: "Did you know that when I went to do a count in the Nursery during the service today, we had 12 kids in there? And did you know that we had another 30 in the Sunday

I remember the months as we began to emerge from the pandemic and one of the concerns we were facing was that, although

many people were beginning to return to inperson worship, it seemed like many of our families with young children were not yet ready to return. There was so much that was

School?"

unknown during that time and the truth was that we just did not know whether we would return to the vibrant family parish that we had been previous to the lock-down in March of 2020.

Now, under the leadership of Esther Oluwagbemi, we have a flourishing Nursery program with a great team of Nursery volunteers, and we have a bustling Sunday School program coordinated by Stef Collins. In fact, you may have seen in our announcements recently that Stef, our Coordinator of

Children and Family Ministries, is seeking some more volunteers for our Sunday School program. We have a strong team of teachers

already, but our numbers are growing, and it would be really wonderful to have another adult at each of the stations. This role would require no planning and no teaching – just a willingness to step into Sunday School with our

wonderful kids once every 2 or 3 months. Are you a parent who would be willing to step into this role? Or a member of the congregation who could spare a Sunday every now and again? Please speak to me or Miss Stef if you would be interested in this opportunity to help support our thriving Children's Ministry program (gillian@staug.org; stef.collins@staug.org).

Now, let me tell you about another bubble of light and life that is happening weekly in our church community. About a year ago, a handful of us who had young kids began a weekly meet up at the church. We put coffee on and brought toys for the kids to play with. Well,







this group of four or five parents meeting weekly for coffee has just taken off – under the excellent leadership of Trish Bowers, we now have 18 different families connected with the program. Trish tells us: "We participate in various activities in the community, including swimming, play programs at the Family Center, Gymnastics Club & YMCA, interactive play at the Nature Center, and also meet in our church basement for coffee and fellowship other weeks. In the warmer months we meet at various playgrounds in the city."

One of our parents, Gauri Weerakoon told me that she likes coming with her son Kayden because he gets to play with other kids while she gets to meet other parents. "The group is very welcoming and each week there are different activities," says Gauri. "Also, Kayden gets to celebrate special events like Halloween, Valentine and so on with other kids," adding that "sometimes it is helpful to hear from other parents who have older kids about some parenting tips." Another parent, Kemi Odeloye, told me: "While attending the parent and tot group I did not feel alone as a mom and I could spend time listening to other moms while my kids play in a safe environment."

"It's amazing seeing the group grow when moms bring a friend or meet someone looking for a group to be a part of," says Trish. "We have a very diverse group, including some that haven't been to St. Augustine's before, and I love that... The thing I want everyone to know is that literally everyone with younger children is welcome. We have a grandmother who comes when she is caring for her toddler grandson and it is fantastic to have her in our group!"

The Parent-Tot Group meets weekly on Friday mornings. You can find a rolling schedule of upcoming activities in the weekly Parish Pulse emails (to receive them go to the bottom of the homepage on our website) and in the notices that are in our Sunday 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. service bulletins.

Thanks to everyone who is part of creating such a loving and connected community for our families with young children, and thanks to those kids and families who bring smiles and laughter and joy to all of us. We truly are a family! Ω





This month's Big Question

Why is the Eucharist so central to our worship?



BY THE REV. BRO. JASON CARROLL

For Anglicans, the Eucharist is so central because it is an essential sacramental means of *participating in Christ*. That may sound strange, but as those who take the idea of

sacrament seriously, we recognise that for us to know and love God, we must engage him through creation. Our "created-ness" itself is the gift through which God is known and loved. As Orthodox priest Alexander Schmemann has noted: "All that exists is God's gift to man, and it all exists to make God known to man, to make man's life communion with God. It is divine love made food, made

life for man. God blesses everything He creates, and, in biblical language, this means that He makes all creation the sign and means of His presence and wisdom, love and revelation: "O taste and see that the Lord is good." (For the Life of the World)

As a sacrament, then, the Eucharist is an embodied encounter with Christ in the present moment. By re-enacting Jesus's death and resurrection, and then taking and eating the bread and wine which represent his Body and Blood, we engage body and soul with the Holy Spirit who makes Christ known in the depths of our

being. In that moment, by faith, we mysteriously participate in Christ and are made one with him in creation, participating in his death and resurrection, and being transformed into him in the process. Indeed, the rite of the

Eucharist encompasses multiple layers of meaning and significance as it draws the baptized believer into the full arc of salvation history and into all that Christ is in his Incarnation, Baptism, Transfiguration, Death, Resurrection and Ascension.

Think, for example, of how you can remember an event in your life, either good or bad, and how reliving that memory still has an effect on you and who you are. It is a memory,

but it is still *real* and present for you *now*, and it continues to determine your identity and character. Thus, contemplating the full significance of Jesus's command to "...do this in remembrance of me" (Mk. 14:22-24,

BY FAITH, WE tix
MYSTERIOUSLY
PARTICIPATE IN
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RESURRECTION ...

IN THAT MOMENT,

CONTINUED PAGE II >

New Hend Verger ~ welcome Joelle

On the verge of a change

BY RACHEL ROBINSON

and supports.

"Being a verger is a ministry," says Greg Young.

"You're preparing the church for people to use, and then when people come in you're inviting and welcoming them into the space." While many of these people are parishioners, St.

Augustine's also houses many different groups – support groups, musicians giving concerts, the audience attending them, and so on – whom the verger also welcomes

This support happens in a plethora of ways. As well as providing hospitality for people who use the building, being a verger requires regular cleaning of church property, checking emergency lights and fire safety equipment, performing maintenance such as changing lightbulbs and arranging for repairs, and, as Greg puts it, "doing whatever needs to be done."

Thursday February 15 was Greg's last day as verger after almost eight years of performing all these tasks, and many more besides. He has passed the reins of this crucial ministry to Joelle Duda. "Joelle is a hardworking person and has a real sense of humour and a real quick wit. Although she's not as brazen as me!... She's just a great person. She gets things done: sees things, looks ahead to see what's coming up all the time." He has bestowed upon her the title of "The Purger Verger" and would like to warn the congregation that anyone keeping things in church storage that don't have a reason to be there should collect them as soon as possible!

Joelle is also a person who deeply understands ministry. She played piano on a worship team during university (which is where she met her husband, Bryson. They now have two children, Esme and Atlas). For five years she served on the healing prayer team of her church, earning a Christian counselling certificate and meeting with congregants and community mem-

bers to listen to them, ask them careful questions, and pray together, creating space for peace and healing. "God just always showed up," she says.

With interests and talents such as these, it is no surprise that Joelle's background is in psychology. She earned her degree at the University of Lethbridge. Although these days you are more likely to find Joelle hiking in the coulees or reading a book than training rats in the neuroscience building, she remains interested in the workings of the human mind

and its possibilities for healing.

I ask Greg what he will miss the most about his role. "Just working with the staff together. You feel like you're working together for the same purpose... It's like in the Bible where it talks about the many body parts. It's like watching the hands and the feet working together to make the church accessible and friendly and welcoming and do what we're called to do – love your neighbours as yourself and love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul."

We are so grateful to our vergers past and present for being such integral parts of this church body. Thanks for everything, Greg, and welcome, Joelle! Ω



(I-r) Bryson, Atlas, Joelle and Esme Duda



Pause for Reflection

The extraordinary in Ordinary Time

BY PAM UKRAINITZ

The weekend before the Family Day, I broke a souvenir. It was a small piece of pottery

that I had purchased at Predjama Castle in Slovenia. I was so sad, I hadn't even had it a year yet! It was a placeholder, a marker of something that was just so beautiful to me: a day of exploring, friendship and curiosity, laughter and discovery and delight. It was a

day where meaning felt written into the turns of the roads we drove. I had been thrilled by the small token, created by a potter's hand,

reminding me of a magical day.

In a strange turn of my hand, it slipped from my fingers and shattered on the kitchen floor. I felt angry and teary as I swept up those pieces. And I had this thought:

"Now I am down to ordinary memories of that day!" Just photos and impressions of the day, so ordinary. (As I write this, we are well into our Lenten practice. Ordinary Time is a wave on a far out horizon, slowly rolling toward us. It will wash up around our feet the Monday after Pentecost.)

My broken memento and our practice of Ordinary Time have hitched themselves together in my mind. I know that in the liturgical sense "ordinary" does not indicate plain or boring. It means that the days are numbered. But quite candidly, a day that is simply "numbered" feels a little boring to me – plain, in fact. We spend six months of our faith year here.

In our non-Ordinary times of the liturgical

year, we light candles or extinguish them, vestments have a regal touch about them, and (my very favourite thing) we have a responsory to

sing – prayer that we sing to each other as our service begins, reminding each of us we are not alone in our longing for God to pay attention and respond. Who wants ordinary after that!

Yet, I see the beauty in this rhythm of sacred celebration and ordinary days. Ordinary Time invites us to practice the story, to remember, to say to one another: "This happened, this is beautiful, this is true." My time in Slovenia is no less magical, because a small piece of pottery broke. Our days are no less holy, no less sacred just because there is no cantor singing a prayer over us. All these ponderings have left me with the question: The pageantry is leading me through God's story, so how will I live the story?

I leave you with that question and offer a small prayer for us as we head toward our ordinary days:

LITURGY FOR AN ORDINARY DAY

LORD, BE WITH ME.

AS I GATHER LAUNDRY, COMMUTE TO WORK, MAKE A MEAL, GO TO SCHOOL, FILL THE CAR AND CHAT AT THE WATER COOLER, BE WITH ME.

I DON'T KNOW THAT ANYTHING MATTERS MORE, THAN YOUR PRESENCE AT MY SIDE.

LORD, BE WITH THEM THIS DAY.

AND IF IT IS ME, WHO IS YOUR PRESENCE TO THEM, MAY I SENSE THE HOLY GROUND WE WALK TO-GETHER.

MAY YOUR KINGDOM COME BECAUSE WE ARE LOV-ING YOU IN THIS ORDINARY DAY.

AMEN

Dear brothers and sisters, I look forward to the ordinary with you! Ω

Eucharist, continued ...

Mt. 26:26-28, Lk. 22:19-20, I Cor. II:23-25), this mysterious participation in Christ through the Eucharist has been described by the Church as a kind of *remembering*. The technical word is *anamnesis*, and it means a recalling of an event in such a way that it is "re-lived" and becomes *real* again in that moment.

As theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar says, in the *anamnesis* of the Eucharist, the Spirit "makes the Logos newly present." In the act of recalling the life of Jesus, the Last Supper, and his death and resurrection, we "re-live" those events in a way that have a real effect on you as you live it with Him, and which now makes you who you are. The bread remains bread, and the wine remains wine, but by

the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, Christ is really *present* and we are united to Him, becoming like Him through the memory of those acts.

Therefore, the Eucharist rightly remains a central part of our worship as a necessary part of our createdness. Certainly, the Holy Spirit can and does make Christ present to you in a multitude of ways in your body and soul, and in the Church. But the Eucharist is our intentional recollection of Christ's work in fulfillment of our Baptismal vows. It is a deliberate anamnesis, continually drawing each of us, and indeed the whole Body of Christ as the Church, sacramentally into Christ himself. Ω





It just seems to get better every year.

Participation of walkers and donors was very strong leading up to the actual hike on February 24. In total, \$10,347 was raised by the good people of St. Augustine's which will be used to support vulnerable people in Lethbridge.



HERE ARE YOUR CLUES:

A church may be built with one single spire, others to two, three or four may aspire.

One represents the One, True God Divine, two of Christ, perfect God and Man the sign.

Three, symbolize the glorious Trinity; Father, Son, Holy Spirit — one God, Persons Three.

Four are the reminder of the four Apostles through whom God gave the Holy Gospels.

My structure has no spire to draw eyes or thoughts upward to God.

Although tall, I'm less than impressive but to my symbolism don't be dismissive.

I proudly display on my topmost part the symbol that speaks of God's loving heart.

In good times and bad, throughout your life's length I'm a symbol of God's great power and strength.



I must also remind you of times long ago when as now, the Church was beset by foes, who's intent was to cause it very great woes.

Under attack from forces of destructive power the faithful gathered to pray, refusing to cower in abject fear but sought refuge in my \(\subseteq \subseteq



I'm a message to remind you of God's power divine and the Church, His treasure house of symbol and sign.

Can you guess the thing these clues are referring to? The answer is printed somewhere in this newsletter.

St. Augustine's Church

A Church Family in the Heart of the City

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The Hippo Herald is published quarterly by St. Augustine's Anglican Church, Lethbridge.

St. Augustine's is a warm and growing Christian community. We are part of the worldwide Anglican Church, although many of us come from a variety of Christian backgrounds or none. We are located near the centre of Lethbridge, Alberta but our congregation is spread all over the city and region. Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome to join our church family as we learn to follow Jesus.