

Algoma Anglican April 2019

“Seeds in a Bundle”

It never ceases to amaze me that when you put soil and seeds, or bulbs in a container, and add water and light, green shoots appear and in time the results are a beautiful flower, vegetable, plant or tree. It's happening again now as I watch the paperwhites which the McShane family gave us for Christmas beginning to bloom. They certainly brighten up a dull March day and send a strong message about new life.



There is a true story about green and growing things that is told by a young man who was travelling in the French Alps in the 1930s, in an area that had been devastated during the First World War. As he walked along he noticed a frail elderly man with a bag of acorns on his back and a four foot length of pipe in his hand. The man was using the iron pipe to punch holes in the ground and once the hole was ready he would drop an acorn into it. The elderly man told the traveller – “I’ve planted over 100,000 acorns. Perhaps only one tenth of them will grow.” “Why would you do this?” asked the traveller – “My wife and my son have died, and I want to do something useful in my final years.”

Twenty five years later the now not so young traveller returned to the area and what he saw amazed him. The whole mountain was covered with a forest of oak trees – two miles wide and five miles long. Birds were singing, animals were playing and wildflowers perfumed the air.

The traveller stood there recalling the desolate area that once was. In its place a magnificent forest stood – all because someone cared enough to plant acorns. (The Sower’s Seeds: Cavanaugh)

Just about two years ago, at our last diocesan Synod, I spoke about the Indigenous practice of the nomadic people who carried items which reflected who they were as a community in ‘sacred bundles’. Because they had to carry them with them as they travelled they could only take the most important or essential items in those bundles. It might have been seeds, a feather, a stone, or leaves from a tree – whatever it was that told the story about who they were. In my Charge to that Synod I invited us to carry the seeds of *Discipleship, Reconciliation, Community Building and Stewardship* in our sacred bundle in the coming two years between Synods.

In my travels around Algoma it’s been great to see the ways in which congregations have taken that ‘charge’ seriously all because someone cared enough about these seeds to plant and grow them.

There are new Anglican Christians in our midst because someone invited them to church to ‘Come and See’. More congregations than ever before are offering regular Bible Studies or small group book studies. Alpha courses have sprung up where there weren’t any before, and there are all kinds of Fresh Expressions like Messy Church, Funtastic Fridays, or Wacky Wednesdays in every deanery. Wardens and church leaders aren’t afraid to talk about generosity in giving and it has made a material difference in folks stepping forward to offer their gifts for a particular ministry. I have seen a huge desire in some congregations to build relationships with Indigenous people, and others are working on mending relationships that are broken. It’s been encouraging to hear about new partnerships that are springing up in neighbourhoods with Anglicans actively looking for ways to be present in them. And because we are really good at eating and working on projects together community building is happening in all kinds of ways.

I would like you to share what you've been doing with others and so I'd like to ask you to do something for me in preparation for the upcoming Diocese of Algoma Synod (May 8th – 11th 2019, in Sault Ste. Marie).

As a congregation I would like you to consider which of the four seeds you have planted, watered, and tended in the garden of your lives together. Here they are again – Discipleship, Stewardship, Reconciliation and Community Building.

You might have grown just one seed, or you might have grown four. Some of the seeds might have grown and flourished, while others might have been sown on rocky soil without enough good soil for the roots to take hold, and they withered and died.

Please share what you've done in your context. We can't wait to hear!

On brightly coloured 8 X 11 paper please complete the following.

Our congregation is St. Anne's on the St. Mary's River in Sault Ste. Marie

In the past two years we grew the seed of DISCIPLESHIP

We met in small groups throughout the year and explored the Gospels side by side. If we are going to talk about being disciples we wanted to feel more comfortable in using the Scriptures. It's been really cool to see where the Gospels tell similar stories and how they vary. We have learned so much and feel much more comfortable about sharing the good news. And that's the Gospel truth!

Please bring the sheets with you to Synod. They will all be placed on the steps of the Cathedral during the Offertory Hymn in the opening liturgy, and then carried over to the meeting room in the hotel for others to read about what your congregation has done. You will be amazed, as I am at how a tiny beginning has accomplished something really wonderful.

In his book, "Wake Up, Church!" the Rev. Dr. Bill Steadman (who will be at Synod leading a Breakout Session), writes this about small seeds. *"Jesus used a mustard seed to represent the kind of faith we need....He was saying in his usually understated way: I am not asking you to have faith greater than the prophets and the religious leaders of this world. I want you to have faith that is hardly measurable in human terms but is clear to God. We do not need a lot of faith to make a difference."* (pg. 41)

As you prepare to share some of the transforming ministries that have sprung up all over Algoma know that others will be eager to hear about them.