

# THE LYCHGATE

## December 13, 2020

Parish Newsletter of  
The Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields



### From the Rector's Desk

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

*He who dwells in unapproachable light, and holds all things together in his inexpressible compassion, is born of a Virgin, as a child is he wrapped in bands of cloth, and in a cave, is laid in cattle's manger. Speed us to Bethlehem, to worship him with the Magi, to bring our gifts, the fruit of good works.*

Close to St. Martin's, just down the street on Glenlake, there is a most amazing house. The building itself is not at all amazing; it is the decorations that astound. In the garden, on the walls, on the roof, every square inch is covered by lights and figures, all glowing and gleaming to attract our attention. A Nativity scene jostles with Santa and his reindeers and the Grinch who stole Christmas. The whole effect is overwhelming.

In some ways, this house seems to reflect the strangeness of modern-day Christmas celebrations in which secular and sacred images vie for our attention with excess being the keynote throughout. Yet, in this time of COVID-19, when we are forced to curtail so much of our usual celebrations, perhaps we are being given a chance to return to the heart of Christmas, to focus the eyes of our hearts on the sublime mystery that we celebrate on this feast.

The words printed in italics above, taken from one of the liturgical texts sung at Christmas by our Orthodox brothers and sisters, speak to that mystery. The One who dwells in unapproachable light, who holds the whole universe in being, this One has come to us, born of a virgin, a tiny child tightly bound in swaddling cloths, laid in an animal's feeding trough. And why should this One leave his throne of glory to take on our flesh, our vulnerability? The text answers this clearly, it is because of God's inexpressible compassion.

It is that inexpressible compassion, that love that pours forth from the One who is Love, that takes human form in the Babe of Bethlehem, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, that we cling to in these difficult times. As we struggle with restrictions and lockdowns, as we experience both fear and frustration, as we contemplate our own weakness and mortality, God speaks to us, not just in words but in **THE** Word, the Word become flesh, Jesus. God shows the depth of his compassion for us by entering into our condition through his Son, by becoming one of us, by becoming that vulnerable tiny child who will become that incredibly vulnerable man, stretched out and dying on the cross for us. That is the love that we celebrate this Christmas, that is the God whom we worship.

And just as God demonstrates his love for us in action, in the coming of Jesus, so the Orthodox hymn calls us to reciprocate, to show our love for God in the fruit of good works, by reaching out in love to those in need in our families and in our world, to connect with the lonely, to help the homeless, to support the refugee, to embody God's compassion for others.

This Christmas, in these strange times, we give thanks once more for the amazing compassion of God, shown to us in the gift of his Son, Jesus. May the light of the Christ Child touch each one of us at this special time, to make us shine with the glory of God, to make us sparkle with God's joy, to make us bearers of Christ's light and life to the world.

Every blessing this Christmastide,  
Fr. Philip

## Church Directory



The Church of  
St. Martin-in-the-Fields

151 Glenlake Ave.  
Toronto, Ontario M6P 1E8

[www.stmartininthefields.ca](http://www.stmartininthefields.ca)

Church: 416-767-7491  
Fax: 416-767-7065

**Incumbent:**

The Rev'd Canon Philip  
Hobson OG

**Honorary Assistants:**

The Rev'd Canon  
David Luxton  
The Rev'd James  
Decker  
The Rev'd Canon  
Harold Nahabedian  
The Rev'd Canon  
Alyson Barnett-Cowan  
The Rev'd Alison Hari-  
Singh  
The Rt. Rev'd Victoria  
Matthews

**Organist & Music Director:**

Jack Hattey

**Church Wardens:**

Jonathan Gentry  
Eilonwy Morgan

**Secretary:**

Margaret Allen

**Property Manager:**

Mark Kolberg

## Christmas at St. Martin's

**Thursday, December 24**

7:00 p.m. Virtual Christmas Pageant on Zoom

9:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Eucharist on  
Livestream

**Friday, December 25**

11:00 a.m. Christmas Day Eucharist on  
Livestream

4:30 p.m. Zoom "Cocktail Hour"

**Sunday, December 27**

11:00 a.m. Christmas Lessons & Carols with  
Eucharist  
on Livestream

**Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday,  
Friday**

**of Christmas Week (Dec. 28 – Jan. 1)**

11:00 a.m. In-person Eucharist (register through  
Eventbrite 10 max. each service)

**Sunday, January 3**

11:00 a.m. Epiphany Eucharist on Livestream

**About *The Lychgate* Newsletter:** *The Lychgate* is published four times a year. Parishioners and friends are encouraged to submit news and articles to the editor, Ian Greene, at [iangreene0766@rogers.com](mailto:iangreene0766@rogers.com). For digital access to *The Lychgate*, including colour photos and links to web sites, go to <https://stmartininthefields.ca>.

**Since September  
27, 2020, from the  
Parish Registers:  
Weddings:**

None

**Baptisms:**

None

**Funerals:**

October 30 –  
William Weir  
December 1 –  
Jane Finnan



Nativity Scene in St. Martin's

**NOTE:** You can opt to go paperless and cancel your mailed copy of *The Lychgate*, and in future receive it only by email after the church re-opens, by emailing *The Lychgate* volunteers at [Lychgate1111@gmail.com](mailto:Lychgate1111@gmail.com).

## Do Not Be Afraid: A Virtual Christmas Pageant

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By Ali McIntosh



Christmas Pageant 2019

Adapting our beloved traditions during COVID-19 has been a continuing challenge for churches all across the world, but it is exciting to try innovative ways to share the Gospel with new

technology. We did a lot of brainstorming this year to think about how to bring the Christmas story to life for all generations of St. Martin's and decided on a virtual Christmas pageant.

We will certainly miss the excitement of Advent pageant rehearsals and gathering in person on Christmas Eve, but a virtual pageant presents new opportunities and advantages. Families from all over can join in and participate, and they can invite their loved ones to tune in and watch. No one has to memorize their lines, and set design is way easier since you can just change your background on Zoom!

This year's pageant includes a bit of humour about quarantine and our virtual reality, while still telling the traditional tale of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus in the manger. We are excited that so many people have already expressed an interest in making this event special. We still need a few more kids to be involved – if you are interested email our theological student Ali McIntosh at [ali.f.mcintosh@gmail.com](mailto:ali.f.mcintosh@gmail.com).

## Christmas Dinner

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By Fr. Philip

Because of the pandemic restrictions, we are unable to offer the parish Christmas Lunch which has been so popular in recent years. Instead, the parish Outreach team is offering to prepare and deliver Christmas dinner to individuals and couples who may be alone this Christmas. The dinner would be delivered Christmas Day afternoon. Please contact Father Philip should you be interested. There will be no charge, but

donations will be gratefully received. We are also looking to hold a Zoom Christmas "Cocktail Hour" at 4:30 p.m. on Christmas afternoon for all who are interested.

## Christmas Cheer

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By Fr. Philip

Again this year we are asking for financial donations to support Christmas Cheer. The money received through the parish's Christmas Cheer program goes to purchase Christmas gifts for refugees at Romero House, Christmas gifts for our parish shut-ins, and food cards for those in need in our neighbourhood. To make a donation, please send a cheque made out to St. Martin's with "Christmas Cheer" written in the memo line, or you could use Canada Helps or E-transfers (please go the parish web site for links) but please ensure that you put "Christmas Cheer" in the special instructions. Thank you for your support.

## A Reminder From the Envelope Secretary

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By Nicholas Bell

Please be aware that in order to receive a 2020 tax receipt, all donations to St. Martin's must be received at the church by Thursday, December 31<sup>st</sup>. Cheques can be sent to the church by mail, or you can donate by using E-transfers or donating through Canada Helps (see the parish web site for details). Thank you.

## Follow the Story

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By Ben Tshin and Ali McIntosh



Photo Courtesy Patty McKnight

Christian Education on Zoom continues in January with a four-week series on "Christian Narrative", presented by our theological students, Ali McIntosh and Ben Tshin. Over the four Wednesdays in January (6, 13, 20, and 27) Ben and Ali will help us to look at the topics of Narrative and Story, Jesus and his Parables, Biblical Narrative, and Liturgy as the Embodiment of



Christian Narrative. As with previous Christian Education events, we will close each session with a service of Compline. Please set aside these times to join us! Zoom details will be shared early in the New Year.

## St. Martin's Virtual Christmas Market

By Roseann Barry, Lee Jeffrey, and Kathie Wagg

The Christmas spirit is alive and well at St. Martin's! Thanks to all who donated and all who purchased at our Market, we raised \$9,322 – well above our expectations!

When it became obvious that holding the annual Nutcracker Fair was not to happen, Parish Council explored various options to raise the much-needed funds for our on-going operations. Lee Jeffrey and Kathie Wagg agreed to co-chair the event. Originally, the Christmas Market was going to be a scaled down version of the Nutcracker to be held outside in the garden. But current provincial restrictions made even that impossible.

So, what to do? Go virtual, of course. And we did. Roseann Barry has run virtual auctions before for a charity she works with in Hamilton, so she agreed to handle that portion of the Market – and to share her expertise with Lee and Kathie. It was a real learning experience for us. But your response, and the response of non-parishioners who visited and purchased, took us over the top.

The weekend of December 5th when donations were delivered and purchases picked up offered a challenge as well to keep our inside and outside numbers to 10 each. But everyone cooperated and it worked. Thanks so much to those parishioners who donated their time on those days. And a special thanks to Philip Conliffe for monitoring and recording the numerous e-transfers received over the week of the Market.

Will we do this again after COVID-19? We can't answer that right now. Let's look forward to a real Nutcracker Fair with all of us contributing in 2021.

## Housing Matters Advocacy Campaign

By Judith Kidd

Last year I was out of town for Christmas. The homily I heard included stories about people who were homeless. The first story was about a refugee family who had lived in the area for some time but the husband had recently lost his job. His wife was pregnant, and they were trying to get to another

community where there were friends who could help them. They had reached out to the local Anglican priest for some assistance in getting lodgings. The second story the priest told was about that young couple in Bethlehem who were also looking for accommodation and the innkeeper found lodging for them in a stable. It was warm and safe.

Housing matters are still with us. This year, especially because of COVID-19, the need for housing is becoming more and more acute. Many people have reduced income because of job loss or reduced hours because of the pandemic. Changes

to the landlord-tenant legislation have left many low-income tenants at risk of eviction. Those without housing have to choose between the increased risk of COVID-19 infection in congregate settings and the dangers of the elements when living in an open encampment. And, just today I heard of the plight of migrant workers who are not able to return to their own countries because of the pandemic. They are totally underhoused for the winter in accommodation only suitable for warmer times. (Think of an unwinterized summer cottage.)

I assume, you've heard all this before! Why put it in a newsletter? I wonder if you're thinking, "What can I do about it?"

Bishop Andrew Asbil has invited Anglicans across the diocese to advocate with provincial and municipal leaders for a moratorium on residential evictions, support for people living in encampments and the creation of rapid re-housing options for people without shelter. The Diocesan Social Justice and Advocacy Committee has prepared a toolkit to make advocating easier. Links to the material on the diocesan web site follow or can be found in the Social Justice and Advocacy section of the website ([www.toronto.anglican.ca](http://www.toronto.anglican.ca))

- [Housing Matters campaign backgrounder \(PDF\)](#)
- [Housing Matters provincial government template letter \(Word\)](#)



Photo Courtesy David McKnight

• [Housing Matters municipal government template letter \(Word\)](#)

Please consider using these templates to write a letter to Premier Ford, Minister Clark and your local MPP and another to Mayor Tory and your local councillor. Thank you in advance — you will make a difference.

If you require more information please contact Judith Kidd at [jdthv39@gmail.com](mailto:jdthv39@gmail.com).

## Parish Profile: Okechi Nwamaka Okojie

By David McKnight



**Okechi and Daniel**

Her faith and the Anglican church have always been important to Okechi Okojie. She was born to a Christian family who lived in Aba in south-east Nigeria,

the fifth of seven children. Both parents were lay readers and very involved in the active church life of All Saints Anglican church — at that time a large parish, but now a diocese! Her father began the building of a new church closer to where they lived. He was a businessman with many interests including hotels, import and distribution, and the supply of palm products for soaps and cosmetics. Her mother had been a teacher but gave that up when the children were born and joined with her husband in business.

The Anglican church in Nigeria is very active. Numbers are large and churches have many services each Sunday. Dancing is part of worship; for example, at the Offertory everyone dances up the aisle to drop their offering. Commitment is more than attendance on Sunday; there are activity groups, prayer groups, and social groups, and everyone belongs to at least one. In her large parish there were eight priests who lived in houses adjacent to the church. One annual fund-raising event was a large bazaar during harvest thanksgiving. People would donate items related to their occupations — even cars from auto dealers — and those would be auctioned. There were also food stalls and other activities.

Sadly, her father died of complications of diabetes when Okechi was in first year university studying accounting. Her mother kept the businesses going and Okechi finished her studies. The church her father was

building was not finished at that time, but it is now a beautiful church in active use.

When Okechi graduated, she did her required year in National Youth Service in the Federal Capital Territory

Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, in the accounts department. She then got a job in banking and was very involved in customer service, developing skills that she uses now.

While visiting her sister in Lagos, she went for a walk and struck up a conversation with a man she recognised from the local church. He was from a different part of Nigeria and spoke a different language, so they spoke in English. You can see where this is going — Okechi and Daniel were married in 2012, first in a traditional ceremony, then a court wedding, and finally in a church wedding in the Archbishop Vining Cathedral in Lagos. Daniel had trained in engineering and had a business that Okechi joined. They eventually decided to move to Canada and arrived here on December 24, 2015.

Okechi missed her Nigerian friends and in their frequent video calls her mother urged her to find a church. They looked online for nearby Anglican churches — Okechi and Daniel were living on Symington at the time — and found St. Martin's website. Okechi spoke to Father Philip and joined us in 2016. Her mother urged her to get more involved than just Sunday attendance, so on the recommendation of Adrienne Beecker she got involved in the Altar Guild where she met people who have become very good friends.

Okechi greatly values her friends at St. Martin's, many of whom call her Amaka, short form of her middle name used by family and friends. They were supportive during her struggles to have a baby, finally successful after surgery, and after Lisa's birth in 2018. (Now Ted has joined the family in 2020.) Friends were helpful when a flood forced the family out of their place on Symington and aided in finding a new home even closer to the church. Friends were particularly



**Okechi, Lisa and Ted**





Daniel, Adrienne Beecker, Okechi, and Lisa

supportive when her mother died unexpectedly in 2019 and Okechi was buoyed by their prayers and phone calls in a time of grief.

Changing countries comes with challenges. When banking jobs proved unavailable, Okechi used her skills developed in customer service for volunteer positions. She volunteered with Black CAP (Coalition for AIDS Prevention) providing materials and education to people at risk in downtown Toronto. She also volunteered for Sick Kids Foundation and Toronto Social Services, helping people find employment, and worked with the Rexdale Women's Centre which provides services for abused women, seniors, youth, and immigrants.

Okechi has enjoyed learning her whole life and decided to study social service work at Humber College where she expects to graduate in 2021. She had a placement at Loyola Arrupe Centre for Active Living (for adults 55+). Her current placement as an immigration case worker is at TAMOGO Foundation, where she works with clients virtually through Zoom. She is applying for the Master's program in social work at U. of T. for September 2021.

Church has always been important in Okechi's life and it remains so, centred in St. Martin's. She is grateful for the companionship and support of her St. Martin's friends and has high praise for what Father Philip has done. She is glad for the livestreaming and the Zoom coffee times that reduce the sense of isolation when we are physically apart. This is very important for her because, as she says, "I cannot tell my story without St. Martin's."



Lessons and Carols St. Martin's 2019

## Our Blessing Box

By Kathie Wagg – for the Missional Team

Many of you have been asking "what happened to our Blessing Box"? Where has it gone? Will it be coming back? I will answer those questions and maybe a few more.

When COVID-19 hit us last March, we had to close down use of the Box at the same time as the church was closed. Had we left it operating, we were risking the health and safety of our community users and our parishioners who were filling and emptying the Box. We could not guarantee that everything put in the Box or taken out of the Box was fully sanitized – or that the Box itself was COVID-19-free.

So we put up a sign advising the closure – with reasons – and tried roping off the Box. But eager users removed some of the ropes and continued to use the Box and eventually 'disappeared' the sign. The only answer, then, was to remove the Box entirely. But it is safely stored inside the church building, waiting for a time when it will be safe to install it again because *the need is still there!*

In addition to the original purposes of the Box, these items will be added when safe:

- A free library for adults and children
- Non-perishable food and household and personal supplies for those in need
- Cold weather hats, mitts, gloves, scarves, sweaters, etc. for those in need

The Box has become a drop-off location for the neighbourhood for used clothing and household items. These we would take to a store run by Stonegate Ministries, a non-profit organization serving families and individuals in lower income brackets. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 shutdown also forced this group to close operations. The store has now re-opened, but they are still not accepting donations.

Even though we do not have the Box available, we need to be conscious of others in our community and neighbourhood who are less fortunate. Many of these people are suffering more under the health emergency as regular services they have been used to in the past – such as Out of the Cold – have also been suspended by government restrictions.

What could you do to help these less fortunate folk? Perhaps you could keep a small supply of cold weather clothing on hand and give some to a person in need that you see. Or maybe leave some hanging from a tree in the park with a little note saying “If you need it, TAKE IT”. You could do the same with non-perishable food items.

Remember the words of our Lord: “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

## An Experience of Faith and Work at St. Martin-in-the-Fields

By Philip Savage



In October, I was invited to take part in an online discussion among parishioners about the role of faith in my professional work life. This involved a Zoom call on October 14<sup>th</sup> to discuss how education and faith work

together – in my case my role as teacher and researcher at McMaster University.

It all started with an email from Mary Conliffe, Chair of the Christian Education Committee at St Martin's and with an idea for a series, “Faith in the Workplace” on Wednesday evenings using Zoom. Here's, in part, what Mary wrote:

“Greetings! I am writing to you today as we have been busy planning events for the coming year that can use Zoom technology. Last spring, our “conversation and compline” series was very popular, averaging 30 people per week, so we are hoping to do something similar this fall. Starting after Thanksgiving, we plan to run a series on “Faith in the Workplace” using different fields and/or industries, on Wednesday

evenings using Zoom. We are wondering if you would be interested in being part of a panel discussion with other people who work in your field of education.”

The other two educators that evening were Ian Greene and Phil Snider, and they had as much if not more to say about this topic than I did. But perhaps because I wrote out my answers – and because Ian Greene encouraged me to, I am happy to share the responses to the questions that indeed forced me in this perilous time to think more fully about education and faith in my life, and in others’ as well.

*How does your faith inform your work, and how do you do it?*

The short answer is: it's complicated, and indeed it's mysterious (to me at least). It does happen. It probably has a lot to do with that astounding dynamic in the Christian tradition of ‘grace.’ This means not directly proclaiming my Christianity in my teaching – or at least not a lot – but being ready to accept the moment to listen, to talk, and to be helpful in my community of learners (often of many faiths or none at all).

I draw on three sources for my response to faith in education – a sister, the father, and a gardener (and it's no joke; they do not all walk into a bar).

The **sister** is Mary-Jo Leddy and I was thinking a lot about her concept of Radical Gratitude, on which Father Philip preached on a Sunday in early October. Leddy wrote that “we awaken to another way of being, of grace in which each person is of infinite value and worth.”

The **Father** for me is ABBA, and in this case it is the Swedish band and one of their most well-known songs, and number 1 with a bullet in 1978, “Take a Chance on Me.” I think about that when I teach the undergrads and grads in Communication Studies and Multimedia at McMaster University. I hope that with some grace I am able to let my students and colleagues be part of a space in which they can trust, share ideas, and be there for each other. With undergraduate students I have found they may have very different ways of learning or getting excited about the astounding possibilities of learning and applying knowledge. I ask them to share with me and with other students. Take a chance on me, and on each other.

The **gardener** is found in the great film starring Peter Sellers as the gardener-savant in *Being There* (1979). He is helpful by just ‘being there’ and often in the oddest circumstances. My Catholic background growing up

meant you were always there at Sunday Mass (and for forty days in Lent!). As a prof, I try to be very present in the lectures, exercises, and applied communications and research projects. I hope in class and outside the lecture hall to talk about issue of faith, broadly.

*To what extent are you able to bring your faith into the workplace - publicly or privately?*

I apologize but I will draw on another piece of fiction for this: *Clouds of Witness*, written by Dorothy L. Sayers in 1926. This remains my favourite “whodunnit” by Sayers, a brilliant novelist with some significant religious overtones. I won’t go into the theological meanings of the various references in the Bible to “cloud of witnesses” (e.g., Hebrews 12:1) – Old and New Testaments – but the very concept of a cloud of witnesses connects with my faith and my teaching perspective: hoping that in my interaction with fellow educators, students, and our wonderful administrative folks at the university, that I am part of a group that helps us to appreciate each other and work together for shared and mutually outcomes.

I’ve had that experience in my own education and spirituality, which was most deeply felt while I worked on my PhD in the early 2000s and felt support for finishing my work from colleagues at the CBC, numerous fellow students, professors, and parishioners. In that last group, many of them participated in this forum. They literally and spiritually were there for me as I defended my PhD thesis at York University. Ian Greene and Fr. Philip were actual in-person witnesses to my PhD defense.

In the subsequent years I have often found the cloud of students who are willing to talk about religion, are as likely, or more likely, to be students of faiths other than Christian. Sometimes my Jewish, Sikh, Islamic and Hindu colleagues are the most adept at talking about the divine in their life and comparing it with my sense of grace. They take the approach of simply sharing their interests in the value and mysteries of the divine.

In the recent pandemic months, teaching and learning have become more difficult in the digital cloud (and the cloud of Zoom witnesses is not my most sacred place). But, like others, I have been learning a lot (and being taught a lot) with the students with whom I work. They are my very real cloud of witnesses in the current crisis.

*Can you think of a time where your faith was directly impacted on how you did your job or how you interact with someone at work?*

Dr. Susan Vajoczki, Professor of Geography at McMaster, reached out to me as I was still learning the ropes of university teaching in the mid-2000s. She encouraged me to start doing teaching and learning research in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. The punchline in a lot of work in this area is: “It ain’t about *your* teaching but it is about *their* learning.” This, by the way, seems very much to me like the notion and practice of radical gratitude among the cloud of witnesses. In other words, to quote St. Francis: “It is in giving that we receive.”

Dr. Vajoczki was taken by cancer eight years ago, but she is still an important guide for me in that cloud of witnesses.

## Giving During Health Emergency

By Eilonwy Morgan and Jonathan Gentry, Churchwardens, and Peter Chauvin, Chair of Stewardship

Everyone is facing financial strains during this unprecedented health emergency. As a result, some may not be able to give to St. Martin’s at this time. But for those who can, their donations mean a great deal to the life of the parish so that we can continue to offer pastoral care, cover salaries for clergy and staff, and pay for necessities such as utilities.

Contributions may be made by mailing cheques to the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, 151 Glenlake Ave., Toronto ON M6P 1E8. Alternatively, contributions can be made by Interac e-Transfer to [cw-stmartininthefields@toronto.anglican.ca](mailto:cw-stmartininthefields@toronto.anglican.ca). Donations can also be made by clicking on the donations button on the web page for St. Martin’s, which is here: <https://stmartininthefields.ca/donate/>. As well, there is the option of enrolling in PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance). If you would like to learn more about PAR, please contact Nicholas Bell by telephone at (437) 345-0659, or by email at [nicholas.tnt@hotmail.com](mailto:nicholas.tnt@hotmail.com).



Photo Courtesy David McKnight