



# The Church of St. John the Evangelist, Kitchener ON EAGLE'S WINGS

March 29, 2026

Available online at [StJohn316.com/OEW](http://StJohn316.com/OEW)

## A Book Review: Encampment. Resistance, Grace, and an Unhoused Community

Alicia Batten

Helwig, Maggie. *Encampment. Resistance, Grace, and an Unhoused Community*. Toronto: Coach House Books, 2025

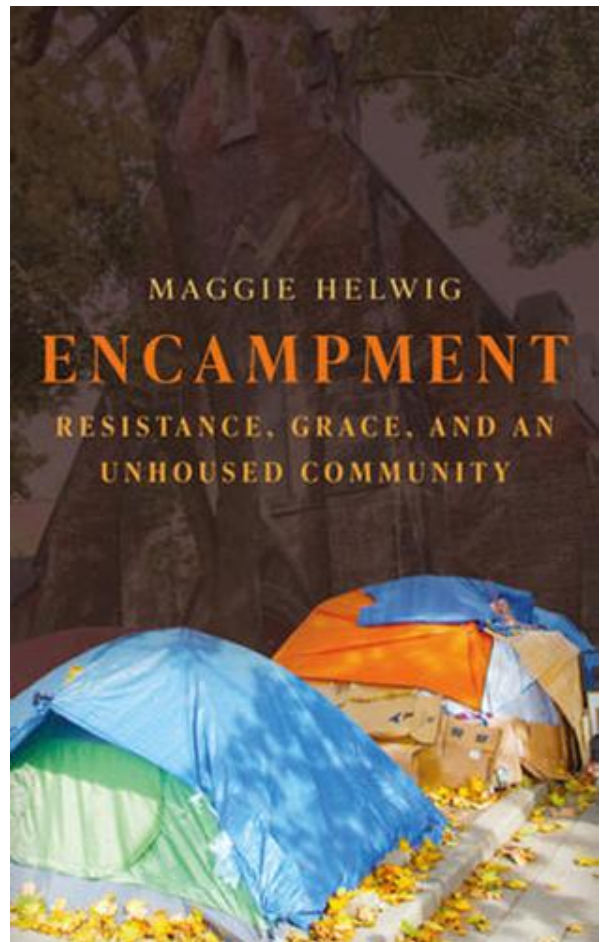
In January 2026, seven SJE parishioners concerned about the plight of the unhoused gathered to discuss *Encampment* by the Canadian writer and Anglican priest, Maggie Helwig. After a substantive exchange, we decided that someone should write a brief review and submit it to *On Eagle's Wings* as other members of the parish might be interested.

*Encampment* begins with a quote from former Archbishop of Canterbury and historian/poet Rowan Williams, who wrote: "It is a secure place, both in the sense that it is indestructible and in the sense that it is safe for the most vulnerable." While reading the book, I found that I repeatedly came back to this image of safety, whether it applied to the church, to God, or to the encampment itself.

Helwig has published fifteen books, including novels, poetry, and essays, and been a lifelong social justice activist. She entered the priesthood in her early fifties and in 2013 became the rector of St. Stephen-in-the-Fields Anglican Church in Toronto's Kensington Market, a parish with a long commitment to the most vulnerable. Although the book provides a brief history of the church and occasionally engages dimensions of Helwig's life, it centres on a period of two years during which people desperate for safe shelter set up camp in the churchyard, beginning in 2022.

With tenderness and occasional humour, Helwig describes the lives and the struggles of the people in the yard, who come from all sorts of backgrounds. We meet men "who were once young and bright and on the verge of a shimmering world, who after decades on the street can be sometimes overwhelmed with grief and rage at what their lives have become" (p.60). Others such as non-binary Robin, begin to feel safe in the yard, even putting up coloured plastic in their tent so it looks like stained glass, and who says, "I think I'm becoming an Anglican, in a way,

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The next issue of *On Eagle's Wings* will be available on  
June 21st, 2026.

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living here” (p.63). What emerges is a picture of a real community, in which the campers not only look out for one another, but for anyone else in need, including Helwig. As she states: “It is the broken people who will run, over and over, to save strangers, when everyone else is too afraid” (p. 65).

The book narrates the continual struggles of Helwig and her parishioners as they engage disgruntled community members (businesses especially), municipal politicians, city workers, and seemingly absurd bureaucratic systems, in efforts to allow the encampment to remain in front of the church. Helwig never encouraged people to camp there, but if they arrived, she would do all she could to assist them, becoming friends with many. Despite frustrations with the city, Helwig does not seek to demonize anyone and recognizes that many government responsibilities have been downloaded to the municipalities, which have the least resources of any level of government. But why, she asks, in a country as wealthy as Canada, are so many people (and the number is rapidly increasing) unhoused and forced to seek refuge in shelters that are unsafe? Helwig is transparent about the struggles, including mental health challenges and addictions, that plague some in the yard, but through her account she emphasizes that these are human beings, and many, perhaps most of us may not be far from a similar predicament. For those on the streets, there is no privacy, and their anguish is on public display, leading people to form all kinds of stereotypes about them. If you imagine your worst day, Helwig said recently in a CBC interview, would you want the whole world to be watching?

In October 2025, the night before the last remnants of the encampment were cleared by the city (with a machine called “the Claw”), Helwig’s book won the Toronto Book Award. While she was grateful for the prize, her greatest concern was for the people who had been evicted from the yard. Now, some are still wandering around Kensington Market, seeking a quiet and safe corner for the night.

If you would like to read *Encampment*, please contact either Alicia Batten or Peter Forget as we would be happy to lend you the book.

## **Bereavement Group**

The Bereavement Group will gather on Sun April 19th in the Fireside Room following the Service. Kim Green will be giving a presentation on the importance of maintaining a healthy living. Any are welcome.

# Alongside Hope

Jennifer Uttley

Currently, I am the parish representative to Alongside Hope, previously the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF). I am still learning about the organization and its partners and funding.

To begin learning, on February 19, I connected to the webinar *Together We Are Stronger: Alongside Hope and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank*. The webinar included two speakers Mary, from Church World Service and Naba, Alongside Hope Humanitarian Response Coordinator. Mary gave a very good report about several projects supported by Alongside Hope, summarized below from the Alongside Hope website. Naba spoke about the Foodgrains Food Bank (FGB) and the different levels of funding depending on the project.

## **Kenya: Kitchen gardens transforming livelihoods in Kenya**

In Katwala, Kenya, where dry soil once dominated, green patches of vegetables now stand under the scorching sun. The smallholder farmer is at the heart of this change. The Integrated Initiatives for Sustainable Livelihoods (IISL) Project, which was implemented by Anglican Development Services East (ADSE) with funding from Alongside Hope, provides a workshop on how to build and manage a kitchen garden in their community. Participants learn how to cultivate crops all year round with locally sourced materials, repurposed containers, and little water thanks to the classes.

## **Tanzania: Planting Seeds of Change at Nyarugusu Refugee Camp**

In the heart of Tanzania's Kigoma Region, the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp is home to more than 137,000 refugees, mostly from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. Despite the challenges they face, hope has emerged through a sustainable harvest project, implemented by Church World Service (CWS) with support from PWRDF (Alongside Hope). This project has not only improved nutrition and food security but has empowered refugees to become change-makers in their own communities.

## **DRC: Emergency food relief supports more than 10,000 people in DRC**

According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), 24.8 million people in the Democratic Republic of Congo — roughly 21% of the population — face high levels of acute food insecurity, driven by conflict, inadequate basic infrastructure and economic shocks, a situation that is projected to worsen in the coming year. Alongside Hope is managing an emergency food assistance project with funding from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and the Government of Canada.

You can learn more about these and other projects on the Alongside Hope Website: <https://alongsidehope.org/news/>

*As we walk alongside each of our partners, supporting, listening and sharing with one another, we embrace and embody the hope of a better world. Thus was born our new name Alongside Hope: Anglicans and partners working for change in Canada and around the world.*

I continue to learn about other projects and am learning more about the funding model. I will follow up in the next newsletter.

# Community Kitchen Cooperative Kitchener Waterloo

Ann Coughlin

Our spring community dinner is approaching! Mark Sunday, April 19, 5-8 on your calendar. The focus this time is on Climate – the impact the changes in climate are having and how we can in our own ways either learn to adapt or to contribute to solutions. Groups ranging for those in the food sector, to water, to housing, and transportation are being invited to have displays. We will again provide a delicious meal, including appetizers during the first hour. There is no charge to attend, but donations are gratefully accepted. Invite friends!! Volunteer to help prepare and/or serve food!! You can secure a spot by speaking to either Al or Ann Coughlin, or to Henriette Thompson.

## Earth Day 2026: HERE AND NOW! Community Dinner

Limited, free tickets available through Eventbrite.

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/earth-day-community-dinner-2026-tickets-820497138027?aff=oddtcreator>

Donations gratefully accepted at the door.



Sunday, April 19, 5pm – 8pm

St John the Evangelist Anglican Church

Corner of Duke and Water Streets, Kitchener

Sponsored by the Community Kitchen Cooperative Kitchener-Waterloo and through a grant by the City of Kitchener.



# **The Bishop of Huron's Anglican Fellowship of Prayer Conference**

**Guest Speaker:**

**The Right Rev'd Todd Townshend**

**FINDING THE FACE OF GOD IN PRAYER**

**Please join us**

**Saturday, May 2, 2026**

**10:00 am—3:00 pm**

**Church of St. Jude's, London**

**1537 Adelaide St N, London ON**

**Cost: 20:00**

**Registrar: Susan Johnson—brlmail2@aol.com**

# *holy week* SCHEDULE

THE SUNDAY OF THE PASSION, WITH THE LITURGY OF THE PALMS

10:00 AM | MAR 29, 2026

celebrating Jesus entering Jerusalem with songs and palms

MAUNDY THURSDAY

7:00 PM | APR 2, 2026

celebrating Jesus's last supper with his friends, including the washing of feet

GOOD FRIDAY

10:00 AM | APR 3, 2026

celebrating the glory of the cross of Jesus

COME TO THE TABLE FAMILY EASTER

4:00 PM | APR 4, 2026

celebrating the resurrection with children and families

EASTER VIGIL

8:00 PM | APR 4, 2026

a contemplative service celebrating the resurrection of Jesus

SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION: EASTER DAY

10:00 AM | APR 5, 2026

a festive service celebrating the resurrection of Jesus

CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST