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**What's Inside**



Three generations of the Leslie family celebrated Mother's Day at the Trinity United Church ham buffet dinner. More on Page 5.



St. Joseph's School held a Slave Day this week. More on Page 11.



Robert Little school's play Canada Goose played to appreciative audiences last week. More on Page 4.



Acton Horticultural Society's spring plant sale was another success. More photos inside.



From lawyer to woodworker this rural Acton resident is enjoying his new business. See Page 6.

# Four Acton churches looted

By FRANCES NIBLOCK  
 The New Tanner



**JUST LIKE THIS:** Acton's Caitlin Dagleish, 5, gets some help from her ballet instructor Susanne Keith of the Acton School of Dance as she poses for the school's photographer on Saturday at St. Alban's Church. The dancers will stage their annual recital at Acton High on June 6. - Frances Niblock photo

Local church officials feel violated and police are baffled following break-ins at four Acton churches and one in Hornby overnight on Sunday. Blasphemous thieves pried open doors and stole televisions, VCRs, CD players and \$390 cash, some of it pennies collected to help build new churches.

"If it was just Acton I'd say that it was local kids looking for cash," explained Halton Detective Bob when asked about the break and enter spree in an interview on Tuesday.

"The church entry in Hornby suggests that somebody from out of town was targeting churches in this area on Sunday night to go after their collections," Andrews speculated.

Between 10 p.m. Sunday and 9 a.m. Monday someone pried open doors at Trinity United, Knox Presbyterian and St. Alban's, the Evangel Pentecostal Tabernacle and Hillcrest United Church on Trafalgar Road at 5 Side Road. Offices were ransacked as the thieves looked for valuables and cash.

Reverend Bob Matton said he can forgive the thieves who broke into Trinity United Church and his office, taking a television and VCR, but he has a question for whoever is responsible.

"Why? I have a sense of being violated and that the sacredness here has almost been somehow violated," Reverend Matton said on

Tuesday, noting 20 years ago churches weren't victims to disrespect and crime.

"Twenty years ago we didn't lock the front door of the church doors and something like this is a sad testament to our society," lamented the Reverend Mark Tiller at St. Alban's Anglican Church.

"It looked much worse than it was here at St. Alban's because five or six doors had been jimmied open and the whole place was ransacked," Rev. Tiller said in an interview on Tuesday.

"We were lucky because they left behind a television, cellular phone, sound system and actually moved my guitar to get into a cupboard. They were thorough," Rev. Tiller said.

At Knox Presbyterian Church a CD player valued at \$190 was taken and a doorframe slightly damaged when thieves jimmied it open. A VCR and \$390 was taken from strong box at the Evangel Pentecostal Tabernacle after thieves pried opened the back door.

The police investigation continues.

## High school teachers latest to be laid off

The worst fear of many Acton teachers - that provincial education spending cuts would hurt children - is a reality in at least one Acton school.

"Teachers are seeing program being whittled away," McKenzie-Smith Bennett Principal Nancy Johnson said on Monday. "They see all of these cutbacks starting to affect kids and that's what we afraid of all along," Johnson said, reacting to yet more layoffs and program cuts by the Halton District

School Board which is struggling with a \$4 million provincial funding loss.

In a third round of layoffs the Board announced on Friday that 135 secondary teachers - just over 118 full-time equivalent positions - would get pink slips this week. Last week two thirds of the Board's 420 instructional assistants, including nine positions in Acton, received layoff notices.

While no teachers at MSB will be laid off Johnston said the mood is mixed because

the new funding formula has effectively forced the Board to cancel design technology and family studies - shop and home ec. - programs for Grade 7 and 8 students in September.

"We also won't have a guidance councillor here next year and we don't know what the implication of the library cuts will be," Johnston said, adding that teacher preparation time is decreasing to 140 minutes a week from 160 and allocations for English as a second

language and special education will also decrease.

While Johnston is happy with the teacher-pupil ratio of 1 to 25 Johnston said that the loss of the guidance counsellor at MSB would be "really significant because these students really need emotional support at this age level."

At Acton High, Principal Joyce Bradley said that specific teachers who will be laid off won't be identified until the end of the month but that they expect cuts in non-class-

room spending including guidance, special education, library administration and headships.

"We're being forced to focus strictly on what happens in the classroom and I don't think that there's anything wrong with that. It's just that schools in Canada, North America and Ontario have focussed on the student as a whole and not just what happens in that 60 or 75 minutes that they are in front of a teacher," Bradley said.

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