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RLN welcomes story ideas, news items and other input. If you want to be involved in this media ministry, please be in touch with the editor.

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**Cover:** Zayden makes a craft in Sunday School.

**Correction:** Oops! Ron McCullough worked on the Pinaymootang *Saulteaux* Nation, not *Soto* (Japanese Zen)!

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Honour your loved one  
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the next edition of RLN.  
Suggested donation is \$50  
for a 3" square.

*In Memorium*



## WELCOMING THE CHILDREN *Allison Chubb*



With summer just around the corner, some of us are already preparing for fall, and so it feels timely that the May magazine has several articles with a focus on children's ministry. Practitioners of three alternative and relatively new approaches to children's ministry were invited to contribute: Children and Worship, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, and Godly Play. All three, it will be noted, are built on a Montessori method of learning.


The final children's piece is from a mother whose child was diagnosed with autism at a young age, who tells of her experiences having him in church. The piece is ultimately about becoming welcoming communities for all people with disabilities, not only children.

The RLN advisory committee hoped to have a Burning Bush column this month, debating whether children should be left in the Sunday morning service with their parents or taken out for part of it. However, after speaking with several parents and churches, I could find no parents to write in favour of leaving children

in for the entire service. The closest thing was parents who enjoyed simplified liturgies in which their children are more involved, such as Messy Church.

Some parents advocate the inclusion of older children in the full worship service, but parents of young children still seem to look to the Church for both Christian education and community for their children. As one mom put it, through children's ministry her son is, "realizing that we aren't the ONLY family that believe like this. At school, he has Jewish, agnostic, and Muslim friends, which I think is great, but sometimes he feels alone in Christian faith." If your parish doesn't have a children's ministry, consider joining another group

that has activities through the week, such as Messy Church, Awana, or another parish's unique expression of intergenerational worship.

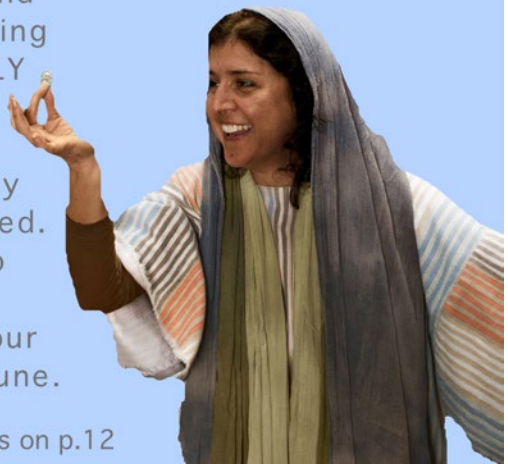
Finally, there is a consensus that Christian education can never be left to Sundays alone. Getting to know Jesus should begin at home, and the best children's programs partner with parents to grow children who meet God in all areas of their lives. 



## We Don't Want to Lose You!

Rupert's Land News is moving **COMPLETELY** online to become more timely and connected. Sign up to continue receiving your News after June.

Full instructions on p.12



# COME LIKE A LITTLE CHILD

*Donald Phillips*

Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child...

All three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) include, in some form, the above text, completed with the sobering words, "will never enter it". While we can't know for certain what attribute of children Jesus was affirming as essential for those who would follow him, most interpretations suggest that Jesus was referring to possessing a child-like openness and trust toward others and the world in general. Likewise, these three Gospels all contain Jesus' positive attitude toward children, in spite of his disciples' stricter approach.

If Jesus reveals to us the nature of God's approach toward humanity and calls us to follow in his way, what should our approach toward children be, particularly children in our faith commu-

nity? Most, if not all, of the parishes that I visit in Rupert's Land grieve the lack of children in their congregation. They are painfully aware of their absence and wish they could find ways to help them "come to Jesus" in the midst of their congregation.

In the last few decades, governments have put in place protocols about how children should be treated. Schools continually work at discovering new ways to help children learn, grow, and mature. How should we, as the Church, support and encourage the children in our congregation and community? How do we, as adults, get in touch with how children think and feel, and discover what their important needs are?

It's not that difficult, really. Robert Fulghum showed us this in his much-treasured book, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. Our children are, automatically, disciples of life. And because, in Jesus, we know the God who created everyone and everything, our children are also disciples of Christ just as we are. Their needs are not much different than ours; they are simply responded to differently because of their particular place in the cycle of life.

Children need to know that they are loved and lov-

able — just as we do.

Children need to have meaningful relationships with peers and with those who are older and wiser so they have companions as well as inspiring guides — just as we do.


Children need to know that what they say and do matters; that they will be listened to and taken seriously whether they are right or wrong — just as we do.

Children need to be (lovingly) challenged to do more, go further, and put more trust in their abilities — just as we do.

Children need to be protected from, or at least warned about, those who are more powerful than they are, so that they are empowered to set and keep healthy boundaries — just as we do.

Within the boundaries of their own safety, health, and well-being, children need to be self-determining, exercising their right to choose, and to cope with the results of their choices — just as we do.

Children need to experience that they have God-empowered lives, as important as anyone else's life — just as we do.

If we can approach every child in our congregation in this way, then we, too, will be prepared to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. 



△ *Donald Phillips,  
Bishop of Rupert's Land*

# EXPLORING CHILDREN AND WORSHIP

*St. Margaret's Children and Worship Team*

Four wooden figures trudge across a vast expanse of sand. They're carrying something special and it needs a special place to be. They also need a special way to come, a holy place in which they can speak to God.

*I wonder how it feels to come close to something so precious as the Ark?*

*I wonder how the great burning lights helped them get ready to be close to God?*

*I wonder how it feels to be close to God?*

Hard questions for anyone to answer, but downstairs on Sunday mornings these are the exact questions that follow our story of a journey through the desert with "The Ark and a Tent for God". There are many answers and even clarifying questions that issue from the mouths of those ages four to seven.

The St. Margaret's

Children and Worship program is based on the program by Sonja Stewart of the same name and uses the Montessori method of learning. Children get to wonder together, ask questions, read scripture, build relationships with one another over snack time, and add their voices to the prayers. As important as it is to have children listen, they most need to be able to come to a space in which they can engage with God and their questions in a way that does not expect anything more of them than to be with God. This is what they are able to do in Children and Worship, as they listen and watch the story with beautiful materials and within a beautiful space.

Another Sunday morning, an enticing gold box is brought forth. I wonder if this is a parable? Some of the children, anxious with anticipation, start to smile because they know if it is a box

wrapped in gold, it must be special; it must be a parable. First comes a seed, then a shrub, and finally, when it has grown, a large felt tree is laid out on the floor with nests and birds adorning its branches.

*I wonder if you would like to put nests and birds in the tree too?*

*I wonder if these birds have names?*


*I wonder if the birds were happy to find such a tree?*

*I wonder what this tree might really be?*

"A House", says one boy.

"Maybe it is a tree outside", says another girl.

"Maybe it is a tree in Heaven", suggests another child.

"Maybe it is a house, or a tree outside or in heaven", says the storyteller as she walks with them through their wondering and exploration of their own lives in Christ. 

▽ *Tracy Curle teaches Mary Jane, Rose, and Jack in Children and Worship.*



## THE SAP OF THE TRUE VINE: CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

*Heather Skublics Lampman*

"When we pray at church, it combines our hearts with God", a child commented as he watched the mingling of the water and wine. Another child answered, "We belong to him. He is strong and we are weak."

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd answered a lifetime of vocational questions for me and become a wellspring for renewal in my experience of God. Who would have thought that the children could open, time and time again, more depths in the simplest, shortest scripture texts or liturgical signs?

The teaching method was born in the joy of children engaging with scripture, and has spread from one apartment in Rome to many countries and different denominations. Rooted in deep understanding of scripture and liturgy and lived out through Montessori methodology, it invites children into the deepest relationship with God, a relationship for a lifetime.

When I was a child, I loved the liturgical year, those special seasons marked by food, song, and ritual. My parents told me that Easter lasted 50 days, so I made my chocolate last. But coming out of the special times back into green always left me glum – until I encountered the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

When I signed my daughter up at age 4, I would sit in for the presentation. It was a homecoming: the direct presentations from scripture with simple figures and presentations of the liturgy fed a deep yearning and enabled profound meditation. I remember seeing the presentation of liturgical colours, with four mini-chasubles on stands, and the simple words of meaning: "Green is for growing time!" Green wasn't a lack, an empty time between special seasons; it was something important and full.

We had chosen to delay baptism for our children until they would remember it. The evening after Gabriella saw the baptism presentation, in which each child receives an Easter candle as a sign of the moment when the light of Christ comes to each of us, she pleaded, "Daddy, can I be baptized tomorrow, PLEASE?"

My eldest, working with the shepherd and the sheep at age five, set aside four sheep and put them under the table when gathering the others in the fold with the shepherd. The catechist asked about them, and he said: "It says, 'there are other sheep that are not of this flock. I will gather them.' Those are the other sheep."

With older children, I presented the Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids and we wondered why the wise bridesmaids could not share their oil. One boy said the oil was like the sap of the true vine – that you could only have it by being connected to the vine.

It is not only the children who are nurtured and given a gift in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. We who work with them and hear their reflections can never grow tired, never think we've "mastered" the content of a parable. The gift of their joy, wonder, and depth of reflection is a wellspring of spiritual life that builds up child and adult together in the love of God. For more information about CGS, visit [www.cgsac.ca](http://www.cgsac.ca) or contact me at [catechesis.canada@gmail.com](mailto:catechesis.canada@gmail.com).

***Heather Skublics Lampman is a catechist at St. Luke's, Winnipeg, and a school teacher.***



◀ *Photo: Heather's son James plays with the good shepherd*



# I WONDER: GODLY PLAY

*Helen Kennedy*

*The result of a lifetime of research and practice by theologian, author and educator The Rev. Dr. Jerome Berryman, Godly Play is a method of engaging what is most exciting about religious education: God inviting us into — and pursuing us in the midst of — Scripture and spiritual experience. Godly Play practice teaches us to listen for God and to make authentic and creative responses to God's call in our lives —godlyplay.org.*

With a group of young adults exploring their vocational paths in the Anglican Church, I watched and was invited to wonder about the story of The Great Family, the story of Abram and Sarai and how they learned that God was in every place. It was mesmerizing to see the sands of the desert be moved about as the story unfolded and the wooden figures made the journey God asked them to take. After this encounter, I was hooked. I wanted to learn about this way of telling the biblical stories that connected with my imagination and my questions, and so to encourage others to imagine and wonder with me. Since that time, Godly Play has been a regular feature in my ministry.


Although the method is primarily intended for chil-

dren of Sunday school age, it is most definitely accessible for all age ranges. Godly Play has been used in our worship service in many ways. We have gathered the children together, in earshot of the congregation, to hear and explore a story together. I have taken 'photographs' of the movements and told the story on a projection screen using power point to display the images for all to see. We have used life-size characters to move around the sanctuary as a story is told. Each time, the congregation is invited to wonder with me about what connected with them in the story. In the wondering time, everyone is invited to wonder and imagine other possibilities and meanings for stories they have heard often.

Judy Steers, Coordinator for Youth Initiatives for the Anglican Church of Canada, is a Godly Play trainer and came to Rupert's Land four years ago to offer training in the method of Godly Play. It was attended by many, both lay and ordained, in our Diocese as well as interested



△ *Photo: Helen Kennedy teaches Ellie about Noah's Ark through play. For an excellent blog about using Godly Play with your children at home, visit [watkinseveryflavorbean.blogspot.ca](http://watkinseveryflavorbean.blogspot.ca).*

parties from other denominations. In those sessions, we learned about the Montessori principles that inform the teaching method and got crafty and made some of the sets that are used in the program. But mostly we learned how to get the best out of the time we have with our young people. As those charged to pass on the faith to our young people, we know that children have an innate sense of the presence of God. The Godly Play approach helps them to explore faith through story, to gain religious language, and to enhance their spiritual experience by entering into the text with wonder and play. It beats the flannel board any day! 

***Helen Kennedy is the priest at St. George's, Transcona, and the youth ministry contact for Rupert's Land.***

# PAIN AND BLESSING: AUTISM IN THE CHURCH

*Kalyn Falk*

*A version of this article was originally published in the Canadian Lutheran.*

As a family living with autism, we've experienced both pain and blessing through the Church, but overall I'd describe the Church's attitude toward disability as "benevolent indifference." There's a general feeling of good will toward people with disabilities and their families, but not a lot of thoughtful reflection going on. When we think about marginalized people, we often think in terms of people "out there" who struggle with poverty; we don't often consider the marginalized within our own congregations.

This has been matched by my own ambivalence. I am not sure what role the Church should play, or what I can ask of it. As I think about what I have needed, I realize it has changed over time and circumstance. Here are four windows into my world to give you a sense of what helped, what may have been helpful, and what I needed.

## DIAGNOSIS

When the diagnosis first came, I was reeling. I felt inadequate and scared for what the future would hold. I was marked as different and felt vulnerable. And I felt like a failure, because having a

disability went against our church's idea of prayer and God's healing.

*What I needed:* I needed stability and inclusion. This wasn't the time for people to helpfully suggest stepping down from committees because "you should focus on your son." I needed the Church to remember who I was and what I could contribute, instead of kindly assuming I was too busy to be anything but a mom. I also needed people who would problem solve with me and help me figure out how to deal with specific behaviours. I appreciated small kindnesses, like a friend dropping off tulips, because there was nothing she could do, but she figured "beauty would help."

One of the most important things I needed during this phase was dignity and confidentiality. When we shared the diagnosis with our church, we realized that one of the children's ministry volunteers had already given him a diagnosis without our knowledge. The Church is a community, and people can sometimes feel like they're just talking to "family," but when it comes to personal health information, we do well to remember professional standards.

*What I didn't need:* There is a time for thoughtful reflection on how God sees

disability and how a person can grow through adversity. Here's a tip, though: when a family is reeling from a diagnosis is not the time. It seemed like everybody wanted to explain God to me. We also had a lot of people talking about miracles: prayer, supplements, diets, etc. While I appreciate and have experienced miracles along the way, what I needed to get through the diagnosis was courage to lean into reality, not avoid it.

## TIMES OF CRISIS

My son, Noah, was hit by a car when he escaped from the house in the middle of the night, almost drowned when he jumped in the river, and accidentally set our house on fire. During these times, the Church was at its best, delivering meals, offering compassion instead of judgment, and offering us furniture as we moved into temporary housing.

I needed to be able to receive meals without an expectation that I would send a thank you or remember which dishes went with which person, and not have to describe the trauma over again, with my child listening. I needed any kind of sign that we weren't alone and, most importantly, someone to ask how I was doing six months later.





*△ Kalyn Falk is a spiritual director and former warden and artist-in-residence at st. benedict's table. Her book, Mother of the Year and other Elusive Awards, was published in 2013. She is pictured here with her son, Noah.*

## MILESTONE EVENTS

Noah isn't going to celebrate many milestone events. There will be no marriage, no children, no job, and thus, no retirement. When my older son turned 13, we had a "transition to manhood" party, where he did one of the readings at church and had a dinner to celebrate his entry into adulthood. When Noah turned 13, I had a long talk with my priest to see how we could mark this very different entry into manhood. He said, "What's important is that we claim him as part of God's family. We can speak for him." So we baptized him. It was incredibly powerful to have the Church stand around my boy and declare him to be part of us.

As the Church, we need to ask these questions: What can we celebrate? What


modifications need to be made? What are the spiritual implications of our inclusion? (We were aware that Noah could not be baptized in our old Anabaptist church, because he would have had to give verbal testimony). Churches need to struggle with these questions, ensuring that each member feels seen, heard, and loved.

## INTO THE REST OF LIFE

The Church is often able to rise to the occasion during short-term crises, but what happens when you are living with ongoing stress and constant need? The biggest gift the Church can offer is to see: to look for opportunities where my son can be involved, to notice my other son who tries desperately to not be a burden on anyone, to remember that my hus-

band and I are individuals with gifts.

I need to know that Noah is a gift to the community, and when he is unable to be in church, it grieves more than just me. When I think about the role the Church has played regarding autism in my family's life, the thing that has struck me most is the church's silence. Autism has been a long trip in the desert for me and, for the most part, a solo journey.

Yet although it's often been lonely, the gift that the Church has given me through its silence is that I've had to lean into God. Church didn't buffer me from the deep and painful work of learning to forgive myself, let go of control, and receive love from friends, family, and strangers. That work has been transformational. Benevolent indifference, too, has been a gift. 

## ST. LUKE'S FOUNDER HONoured AT ASSINIBOINE PARK

*Ted Ransby*

One of the founders of St. Luke's, Winnipeg, Sir Augustus Nanton (1860-1925), was recently inducted into the Citizens Hall of Fame at Assiniboine Park. Sir Augustus, who came to Winnipeg in 1883, was a highly successful businessman and investor. He was on the boards of more than thirty companies, many of which he controlled or on which he had a major influence. These companies included Osler, Hammond & Nanton, Manitoba Cartage, Great-West Life, Hudson's Bay Company, Canadian Pacific Railway, Winnipeg Electric, and Dominion Bank. Directly or indirectly, he was probably the largest private sector employer of his era.

Sir Augustus was also one of the most important real estate developers in Western Canada. There are more than 12 streets named after

him in the West, in addition to the town of Nanton, Alberta.

In Winnipeg, Sir Augustus was quite active in community affairs. He was president of the important Board of Trade, as well as being on some of the first boards of the General Hospital and the University of Manitoba. Besides St. Luke's, he founded or co-founded the Winnipeg Stock Exchange, St. Charles Country Club, and the Winnipeg Hunt Club (at the original site of the Southwood Golf Club by the University of Manitoba).


When the devastating Great War broke out in 1914, he volunteered his services to become chair of both the Manitoba Patriotic Fund and the Manitoba and Western Canada Victory Loan Committee. His committees raised an astounding total of more than \$110 million, the equivalent today of over one billion dollars. It is believed that he personally donated or loaned more than half of his fortune to the cause. In grateful recognition for his service, he was knighted by King George V in 1917.

Following the war, the Crown again turned to Sir Augustus as chairman of the Canada Colonisation Fund to help deal with the large

influx of new Canadians. He reluctantly moved to Toronto in 1924 to succeed his deceased partner, Sir Edmond Osler, as President of the Dominion Bank. Unfortunately, Sir Augustus died only one year later.

His body was returned to his beloved Winnipeg, and he was buried in St. John's Cemetery. The service was held at St. Luke's, and the funeral procession was one of the largest ever in Winnipeg. Employees and the public lined the route all the way to the Cathedral cemetery. All flags in the city along the route were brought to half-mast.

Sir Augustus was a strong Anglican and attended services regularly with Lady Nanton and their family. He was a great Canadian patriot and a person with high integrity. The Nanton family donated the wonderful St. Luke's rood screen, the lectern, and the distinctive tower bells. A plaque on the south wall of the sanctuary is dedicated to Sir Augustus' mother.

The magnificent gate to his estate remains today at the west end of Roslyn Road. 

*Ted Ransby is a parishioner  
at St. Luke's, Winnipeg.*



*Photo: Manitoba  
Historical Society* 

# LIVING A THEOLOGY OF ABUNDANCE

*Geoff Woodcroft*

*One cold day in February...*

Norma is a friend of mine who lives in a long-term care facility. Her hands curl inward with debilitating arthritis; she is very attentive and quite willing to join in conversation. Today we are gathered for our monthly Eucharistic celebration in the tiny board room. We sing songs, pray, and share communion.

Today I came in dishevelled, late, because a train had stopped me for 15 minutes. It was bitterly cold, and my feet felt like chunks of ice. I arrived to find confusion among the residents because the Roman Catholic Mass had been cancelled, and many of our group assumed that our ceremony was cancelled too. My only volunteer had already gone home and I was not in a very good mood.

When we eventually began, I prayed our collect prayer and included a prayer for those who work or sleep outside. I read the scripture and offered a short reflection, asking people to share their thoughts. Folks opened up more than usual, and there were some pretty important thoughts in that

room. However, I noticed that Norma seemed restless, but was not joining the conversation. I thought that maybe I had offended her or made her feel uncomfortable in some way. I wrapped things up, offering folks an opportunity to pray, followed by the Great Thanksgiving. People seemed really happy as we shared the body and blood around the circle, especially Norma.




After it was all over, Norma waited for everyone to leave before asking if I had a minute to talk. We sat together and she told me the following... Four years ago was the last time she had been able to join her community for Eucharist and fellowship. Before that, she had started a knitting group that made hats and mitts for teens at risk. She said that she appreciated my prayers, because she knew that there were a lot of teens living on our streets needing help. I

was looking at her curled-up hands as she said "Every year my goal is to make 40 pairs of mitts and hats. It was Christmas Eve when I finished last year's".

Theologian Walter Brueggeman writes about leaving behind our "theology of scarcity," which says there is never enough to go around, and embracing a "theology of abundance," which says that, in Christ, we have enough and more. Norma's elegant display of abundance is a sign of this: that even in what could be perceived as a place of scarcity, she sees ways to give.

Rupert's Land stewards are called and pulled in many directions. We are a Church, one body, with many members and gifts precisely to handle our many calls as the Body of Christ. Where we decide to place ourselves along the spectrum of "scarcity" to "abundance" dictates how we prioritise our many responsibilities.

My friend and colleague, Iain Luke, once said, "People give because they can. And people give because they want to." This understanding has offered me insight into how many Anglicans function, that is, generously. God's life is our life; and when we are receptive to God, we are completing that life in one another. 

*Geoff Woodcroft is the Archdeacon for Stewardship in the Diocese and priest at St. Paul's, Fort Garry.*



# PARISH NEWS **ROUND UP**

## ▷ University of Winnipeg



Did you miss hearing Cornel West at the Trinity Conference in January? Come hear him lecture on Social Justice and the Public Good on Friday, May 8, 7:00 p.m. in Riddell Hall at the University of Winnipeg.

## ▷ St. Margaret's, Winnipeg

This spring, Winnipeg writer, Joanne Epp, will publish her first full-length poetry collection, *Eigenheim*, with Turnstone Press. *Eigenheim* draws on Epp's rural Mennonite roots to shape and reshape the peculiar characteristics of the idea of home. On Thursday, May 7, at 7:30 p.m., Saint Margaret's, Winnipeg, will host a reading and signing with Joanne to kick off its spring Thursday Night Lecture series. The Thursday Night Lecture series offers weekly lectures, panel discussions, art exhibits, and other events. For more information, visit [www.saintmargarets.ca](http://www.saintmargarets.ca) or call 204-774-9533.

## ▷ Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

Conflict resolution specialist Cathy Morris is the speaker at Gloria Dei's workshop on grief counselling and conflict resolution, part of a series on end of life care. All are welcome to join on Monday, May 25, at 7:30 p.m. More details can be found at [rupertslandnews.ca/event/end-of-life-care](http://rupertslandnews.ca/event/end-of-life-care)

## ▷ St. Francis', Winnipeg

As they approach their two year anniversary, the new parish of St. Francis is celebrating with a "St. Francis Fair" on May 8 and 9. The events include a yard sale, baking, plants, games, books, and more. For details, see their poster at [rupertslandnews.ca/st-francis-fair](http://rupertslandnews.ca/st-francis-fair)

## ▷ St. John the Baptist, Fort Frances

Retired priest Barbara Murray has written a lovely story about the last baptism in the Diocese of Keewatin, at which she was able to baptise her great-grandson. Read the story at [rupertslandnews.ca/last-keewatin-baptism](http://rupertslandnews.ca/last-keewatin-baptism)

*Do you have an event of interest to the wider diocese? The fall deadlines have been shortened because we're moving completely online. Send us the details at least two and a half weeks in advance of the next magazine (for example, a notice to be published in the September magazine is due August 14).*

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## *Saints' Stories: Margaret Ada Etter*

*Remembered by Doreen Belair*

### **"BASIC INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE LEAVING EARTH"**

Margaret Ada Etter, originally from Aulac, New Brunswick, first travelled this part of Canada with "Miss Hazel's Van," setting up Sunday School by post and holding Vacation Bible Schools. She fell in love with Ontario and felt called to stay.

Thus, Margaret came to the Diocese of Keewatin in 1951 at the age of 30. I have been part of her life since then as a member of both her Junior Auxiliary and Girls' Auxiliary groups, where we learned how to be young Christian ladies. We always called her "Miss Etta". Later, as an 18-year-old, I travelled with Margaret in my dad's car, conducting nine week-long Vacation Bible Schools in one summer. I taught Bible stories to the little children, and Margaret taught the older ones. One of my little ones, now a retired teacher at our church, can vividly remember our flannel graph stories. It was fun for us and obviously memorable for them.

Margaret considered Ontario her new home and had a special place in her heart for the people of the North. She loved to fly north in the diocesan plane to take services, start new groups, and meet the people who thought the world of her. This was part of the Aircraft

Ministry, established in Bishop Hives' time.


Also at this time, the diocesan newsletter, "The Keewatin," came into being. Margaret worked diligently as editor, recruiting some of us to help label, bag, and mail it all over Canada. For years, this was her gift to the Diocese, and she loved the work.



As Bishop's Messenger, a title used mainly in missionary Dioceses like Keewatin, she became Secretary to the Bishop and was still allowed to travel the Diocese, teaching and taking services. Her years at Wycliffe College, as well as the Anglican Women's Training College, and her spiritual guide, Desmond Hunt, had prepared her for this. She appreciated her association with several bishops who passed through the synod office during her 40-year tenure behind the desk.

Margaret was determined to fix anything out of the ordinary, including her oil-burning car on the drive home from a Holy Spirit conference in Brandon. Approaching the turnoff to Steinbach, she said, "Let's look at new cars". Before long, we were headed home in a new car, having transferred everything from her old car by flashlight and questioning the colour of the car in the dark. That was Margaret: spontaneous, determined, and also a stickler for protocol. I am privileged to have been her friend!

We, as young people, were taught a prayer to say as we entered our pew, and to this day, it comes automatically to mind on entering any church. "Lord, I am in Thy Holy House. Help me to keep my thoughts on Thee, that I may hear Thee speaking in my heart." At her final home, Pinecrest, she did her best to help others and never forgot her Lord. On the front of her of her coverless, dog-eared Bible, she'd printed, "Basic instructions before leaving earth".

Margaret had been given the honorary title of Lay Canon and held a position that earned her the love and respect of all who knew her. She will be sadly missed but long remembered! 

# DOES SCIENCE DESTROY RELIGION?

*Anthony Waterman*



Photo: Flickr, Turpa500

Protestant fundamentalists think that evolution ought not to be taught in American schools because the Bible trumps science. Scientific fundamentalists — Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and the like — think that science destroys religion. Both are wrong. The Bible can tell us nothing about science. Science can tell us little about religion, and that little tends to confirm religion.

In all save the most anti-intellectual fringe groups, religious practice — including Christian practice — is rationalised and underpinned by certain knowledge claims called “beliefs”. Virtually all Christians, for example, believe in a single, Creator God, understand the risen Christ as a unique, God-man hybrid, and feel that Christ is still present in this world through the operation of what they call the “Holy Spirit”. Without those beliefs, most of the things

they do as Christians — in church or in their families at home — make no sense. What is the cash value of religious knowledge claims? Can they really count as “knowledge”? If so, is it the same kind of animal as scientific knowledge? If not, what is it — and how can we know that we “know”?

First, scientific knowledge. A famous philosopher of the last century, Sir Karl Popper, explored the matter more thoroughly than any of his predecessors, and his analysis was developed and refined by his younger colleagues. Popper pointed out what ought to have been obvious, but had never been noticed before. It is impossible to know if a scientific theory is true. We can only know if it is false. This is because scientists can never be sure that Mother Nature may not suddenly throw something at them that upsets their previous theory. There-

fore, scientific knowledge, said Popper, can only be produced by the method of “conjectures and refutation.” We must be “bold in conjecture, and ruthless in refutation.” We must stick our necks out with a plausible theory that could be refuted if proper evidence appears. But until hard evidence turns up, our theory counts as scientific knowledge. It is only a slight caricature to say that scientific knowledge is the current body of as yet unfalsified theory. It follows that nothing can count as scientific knowledge unless it is falsifiable. Popper had lots of good clean fun with Marxians and Freudians about that. They were not doing “science” as they pretended: they were constructing myth, which of its nature is unfalsifiable.

How do we know that our theory has been falsified? Research scientists continually get “wrong” results: observations that are not predicted by their theory and perhaps even ruled out by it. Do they simply give up and go back to the drawing board? No. They live with these “anomalies” until they get a better theory: one that predicts all the true facts of the old theory and avoids its anomalies, and which also predicts new facts that can be tested.

Falsification is thus the way scientific knowledge



grows and develops. It depends crucially on evidence available to all the world. It is therefore public knowledge. It is produced by the scientific community as a whole, and in a sense is the property of that community. But it is not exclusive. All who so desire, and who master the discipline of scientific inquiry, may have access to that knowledge.

What about religious knowledge? Some theologians and philosophers think that religious knowledge, or at any rate Christian religious knowledge, resembles scientific knowledge to some extent. Many would agree, for example, that if incontrovertible evidence came to light that Christ did not rise from the dead, then Christianity would be false and we should have to abandon it. But most of what we call religious knowledge is not falsifiable in this way and therefore has more of the nature of myth. The Genesis account of Creation and Fall, without which Christian belief is pointless, cannot possibly be falsified. Its truth can only be known, if at all, by faith. What does that mean? It means that we come to know through what we do – as in “Adam knew Eve his wife” (Gen. 4:1).

We can know about an apple by examining it, and by looking it up on the internet. But we can only know what it tastes like by eating it. St Augustine taught that it was through practice of the so-called “theological

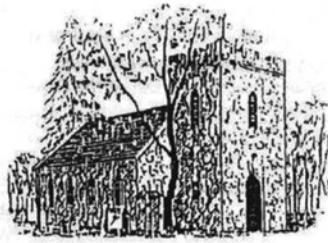
virtues” that we come to know God. Hence, “a man supported by faith, hope and charity... does not need the Scriptures except for the instruction of his neighbour.” He has come to knowledge of, rather than merely knowledge about, God.

Can religious knowledge, direct and experiential as it is, be falsified? Ultimately

yes, but not in the same way as scientific knowledge. Believers sometimes lapse because their faith — however reinforced by hope and charity — no longer makes sense for them, no longer explains their experience of what they used to think of as “God.” This is a subjective and

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private falsification which has no necessary consequences for the faith community they have quitted. But in science falsification is objective and public, and it commits the entire scientific community to a revision of what is to count as knowledge. Religious “knowledge”, therefore, is certain and infallible for those who still believe. But scientific “knowledge” is always tentative and provisional for those who understand and produce it.

It would appear, therefore, that Christian faith can give us no information about evolution or any other scientific theory. Religious fundamentalists who think that it does misunderstand their own religion. It would also

appear that science cannot destroy religion. Scientific fundamentalists who believe it can are confused about scientific knowledge.

There can indeed be a scientific study of religion as a social phenomenon, but this leaves religious knowledge unaffected. And for those like Sir Isaac Newton, who already believe, science may support theistic belief: “The heavens declare the glory of God:

and the firmament sheweth his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1). But science can no more prove that religious beliefs are true than it can prove that they are false. 



*Anthony Waterman is a writer and retired Professor of Economics at St. John's College. His recent works can be found at [amcwaterman.com](http://amcwaterman.com)*

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