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**Cover:** Students from St. Aidan's Christian School are excited to head back to class.



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## NAVIGATING THE BIG MOVE *Allison Chubb*



The day has finally arrived when your News has moved entirely online. For some, this will be a smooth transition; for others, it will be a bit more difficult. In an attempt to make this easier for you, we have posted a short video about how to access and read the online magazine at

[rupertslandnews.ca/reading-online](http://rupertslandnews.ca/reading-online). Please share the video widely with anyone who might benefit from the assistance.

If you know someone in your congregation who is without internet access, please consider printing off a copy of the News and taking it to him or her yourself or letting your parish administrative assistant know. The News is meant to be a connector of Church and community; what better way to connect than to drop by for tea with the latest News in hand? There is an easy

download and print link sent out each month with the online magazine.

To receive the magazine in your email inbox each month, in addition to the RLN Weekly, please subscribe at [rupertslandnews.ca](http://rupertslandnews.ca) or email the editor at [rlnews@rupertsland.ca](mailto:rlnews@rupertsland.ca). There are two ways to read the magazine online: either click the photo and read it cover to cover, or click the download button to save a larger, simpler version on your computer for reading or printing. 

## THANK YOU FROM SASKATCHEWAN

*Dear Friends in Christ:*

Tiniki! The Diocese of Saskatchewan would like to thank Anglicans across the country for the support, prayers, and donations as we have faced some of the worst wildfires in our history. Through PWRDF, the Anglican Foundation, the Anglican Church of Canada, and gifts from individuals and congregations, nearly \$35,000 was raised to support those who were evacuated. Anglicans and Roman Catholics in the communities of the Pas, Flin Flon, and Opaskwayak Cree Nation gathered an entire trailer load of supplies for those who were displaced by the fires. Thanks also to the folks who put on a Vacation Bible School at the



last minute.

With all of these gifts, the Diocese was able to purchase more than \$1100 in water, support evacuees in Ahtahkakoop and Little Red, pay for clergy travel to visit elders, help with some extra needs of evacuees in Cold Lake, and make sure that they had some necessities to make the seven-hour trip

back home to La Ronge. The remainder of funds will be distributed to assist those who lost their homes and belongings in the fires. We are so grateful for your generosity, through which we have felt and seen the presence of Jesus as the fires raged around us.

In Christ,  
+Michael

# FREEDOM IN DEED

*Steve Bell*

Several weeks ago, I found myself an interviewee-in-waiting at the CBC. Talk-show host Ismaila Alfa requested an interview, having noticed I had publicly backed a petition to the Federal Government asking for a firm commitment to the building of Freedom Road, a 27 kilometre, provincial-grade road that would end a century of artificially imposed isolation for the people of Kekekoziibii (Hawk River) — otherwise known as Shoal Lake 40 First Nation.

For reasons that baffle careful observers, the Federal Government is reticent to commit fully to an equal partnership with a willing City of Winnipeg and a willing Province of Manitoba to build the road. Greg Rickford, Minister of Natural Resources and MP for the Kenora riding, was assigned as “point man” in 2010 on the cooperative Shoal Lake road access program. Five years later, during which time the aging systems for removing garbage and treating sewage in the community have collapsed, Mr. Rickford still reasons that he should await a final budget before committing to fix the 100 year old cause of the problem — even though it is common knowledge that provincial-grade road-build-

ing on similar terrain costs roughly a million dollars per kilometre.

Mr. Rickford assures detractors that the one million dollars the federal government has previously committed to a design study should show good faith enough. However, to the people of Shoal Lake 40, “design only” sends quite a different message. They have already suffered two federally funded (and subsequently abandoned) studies for a water treatment facility, and are now heading into their 18th year under a boil-water advisory. They are feeling far from assured.

When it was time for my interview, Ismaila smiled and pointed through the window to the church across the street. There, posted in large red letters on Elim Chapel’s street sign, were the words, “We support Shoal Lake 40 Freedom Road.” It was all I could do to keep from tears, and I interviewed as a proud Christian.

Later that day, I phoned my sister, Dorothy Fontaine, who serves as Director of Mission for Mennonite Church Manitoba. I was curious if she knew of any church groups organising to support Shoal Lake 40. She informed me of a group gathering that evening



△ *Steve Bell is a singer-songwriter who attends st. benedict's table.*

and invited me to attend. ChurchesForFreedomRoad.ca was formed that night, and within a week a website and public awareness campaign were launched. In only a few weeks, over 40 churches (across several denominations, cities and provinces) have posted pictures of their street signs supporting Freedom Road, making a public statement that this is a Christian concern.

New photos come in almost daily as education and awareness grows. For now, the photos and

various church-leader commendations are collected on the website, but they will eventually be gathered onto one poster and sent to every Member of Parliament.

It came somewhat as a surprise when outgoing Conservative MP Joy Smith phoned me to ask if I would join her on a trip to Shoal Lake 40 to meet with Chief Erwin Redsky and experience the community and the situation first hand. I've written elsewhere what we learned on our tour (see [blog.stevebell.com](http://blog.stevebell.com)), but suffice it to say that I left with any and all reservations about the rightness of the cause removed.

In the midst of that information-rich visit, Ms. Smith, from whom I've otherwise heard words of solidarity and respect for her party and its leader, lamented, "I don't understand this... this is beneath us. This road has to get done. It's simply the right thing to do."

Returning home, Ms. Smith called a press conference to announce her unreserved support for Freedom Road. Greg Rickford was informed days in advance and invited to attend to make a commitment, but he didn't show. Instead, he waited until moments after the conference to email a brief statement:

"We support the construction of the Freedom Road in principle. That is why we are funding the de-

sign of the Freedom Road."

Well... it's ambiguous, but perhaps slightly less so than the day before. A victory? Certainly not. The Winnipeg Free Press was less kind, calling Rickford's 22 word response, "bloodless... finely tuned... doublespeak and obfuscation."

I choose to be more hopeful. Mr. Rickford knows that the entreated commitment has an informed, projected price tag and an urgent start date that other levels of government have already agreed to in order to not lose a critical winter building season.

While reflecting on all that has transpired up to now, I came across a quote from Augustine: "Remove justice... and what are

kingdoms but large gangs of robbers." I'm not accusing Mr. Rickford of thuggery. But unquestionably, over the sad century of Canada's relationship with Shoal Lake 40 First Nation, thuggery has been afoot; and indifference has allowed it to continue.

I so wish Mr. Rickford's statement had been different. I so wish he had announced, rather, a commitment to justice "in principle" and to a road... in deed.

Perhaps he yet will. 

[ChurchesForFreedomRoad.ca](http://ChurchesForFreedomRoad.ca) will remain vigorously active until funds for Freedom Road are fully committed and construction has begun.



## DISCOVERING VOCATION

*Kirsten Pinto Gfroerer*

One day when I was twenty, I found myself sitting in the sunlight on the kitchen floor, deep in conversation with my brother. I am not sure if we were arguing or simply exploring a thought. However, in the midst of the dialogue, I unwittingly said the words that have shaped my life since. Sometimes the simplest lines, when they slip from your tongue, can revolutionise everything. I said to my brother, "Well, if we are created by God, we are created to worship him; this is the whole purpose of existence. This is our only purpose for existence."

What struck me so profoundly that day in the sunlit kitchen was that simply assenting to belief in a creator makes me responsible to respond to that creator with my existence. In other words, assenting to belief in a creator means believing that I have a vocation. That day, I saw for a brief moment that I had two choices: not to believe in the Creator God, or to live like I did by living my life with meaning and purpose, by discerning my vocation and by participating in his glory. There was from that moment no way to opt out of a vocation with any intellectual integrity unless I was to become an atheist. Since I would be a

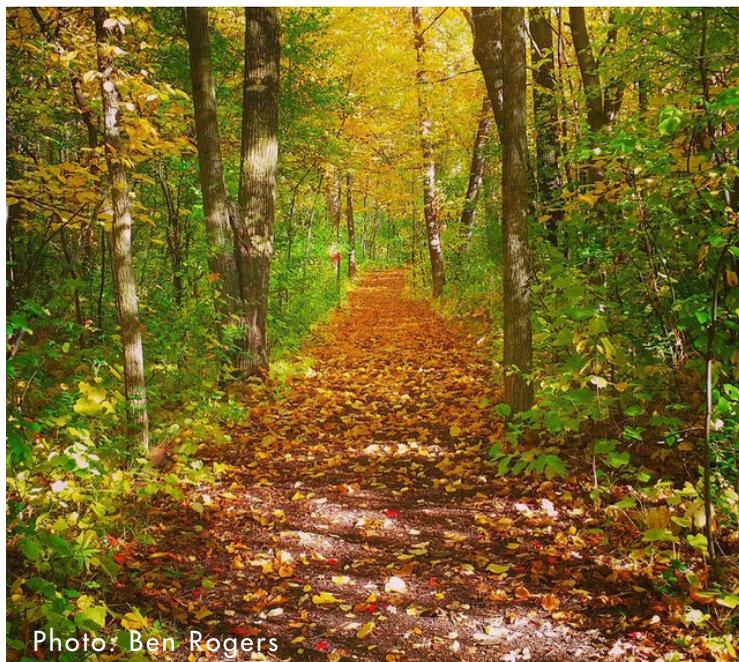


Photo: Ben Rogers

very pathetic atheist, I have spent the last 20 years trying to understand what a vocation is and what my own vocation is.

Vocation comes from the Latin word *vocatio*, which means a call, a summons. The term vocation originated in the Christian tradition, and its definition is deeply rooted in Christian faith. To believe in Creation means to believe that we are given our life. Without that gift and without the giver who summons *vocatio*, we would not exist. Our personhood, our character, and our self originates, exists, and ends in the giver. Our human task, then, is to receive the gift.

The creation account in the first chapter of Genesis

conjugates the Hebrew word "to create" in the completed mood. That is to say, in the original Hebrew the word "create" means that whatever God is creating "has been created, is created, and will be created until its fulfillment" (Paul Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon: A Theology of Beauty*, 1990). God has completed his work of creating, but he has also given us time and the potential to do our part within his work. We are called to become.

However, we have proven unable to respond fully to this call. From creation, we fall; we take a fundamental turn away from the call of life, and we turn to the possibility of nothing. Thankfully, there is one who perfectly

received the gift and gave it back to his Father on our behalf. The Gospel teaches that Christ takes our fallenness into himself. He carries us in his body through death into resurrection, which is participation in the life of God, the life of infinite possibility. There he holds our vocation: "Our life is hidden in Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1).

Therefore, we seek the form of Christ and his body, and our own part in it. We are all incorporated into his body in Baptism and each has a particular life to live in the world and for the world. To have a vocation is to grow and flourish within the particularity of our own being and within life's conditions and limits, including marriage, children, parents, religion, national identity, education, biological limitations, and personality.

Vocation cannot be limited to a career or primary occupation; it is definitely

not limited to what we do for money. To limit vocation in this way is to reduce our personhood to a commodity and to limit our lives to the sustenance of our material body. Vocation embraces all of the conditions of life, including our suffering, and pulls us beyond the limits of our being and into the realm of infinite possibility. Life is this interweaving of circumstances. Everything that happens in our life, good or bad, success or failure, are ways through which God calls to us.

When confronted with limits or suffering, life does not stop; it deepens. This doesn't mean that suffering is good, but rather that suffering is never meaningless. Our limits and suffering are not necessarily barriers to our vocation, but may become its building blocks.

Recognising one's vocation is a process of discernment and integration.



△ *Kirsten Pinto Gfroerer is the Lay Pastoral Associate at St. Margaret's, Winnipeg.*

Because it is a gift, it is not something that is possessed. It is something in which we participate through intuition, thoughtfulness, and attention. Our task is to be awake, to look, to act, and to become. We are created in the "completed mood": we have been created, we are being created, and we will be created until our fulfillment. rin

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## BACK TO SCHOOL: ST. AIDAN'S DOWNTOWN

The happy laughter of children is a common sound to come ringing through the halls of Calvary Temple on a Sunday, but to hear it on a Monday morning feels a bit unusual. St. Aidan's Christian School opened its second campus at the downtown, Winnipeg, church three years ago with only a handful of students. Today, they fill the classrooms and spill out into the hallway, with upwards of 90 students expected for classes.

But being based in a church isn't the most unique thing about this school. It only takes a minute to notice that classroom after makeshift classroom if filled with eager young newcomers to Canada. Nearly all of these children have arrived from

war-torn parts of the world, primarily Africa, many having lost years of education to refugee camps. Some are working hard to learn English for the first time.

A small girl runs in late and Francine Wiebe, St. Aidan's Vice Principal, smiles and calls her by name. It is clear that the children have found a home here. Unlike the School's first campus, which only runs classes for grades six to ten, the students here range in age from four to 21. Because they are all at unique places in their education, teachers have to be patient and flexible as they cater their classes to meet each student's needs.

Like any flourishing community, St. Aidan's newest campus began with

a dream. Francine was working as an EAL instructor when the funding was cut for some of the children in her care. She realized that not only would those six students drop out of school, but they were particularly at risk for being recruited into gangs. One boy had his first gang tattoo at just 11 years old. Desperate to find a way to keep them in school, she taught the children out of her living room for a year before beginning a partnership with St. Aidan's School in North Winnipeg. The following year, the little group was invited to move their classes into Calvary Temple.

For two years, Francine wasn't paid for her teaching. Her work was fueled by her love for children, education, and the hope that through St. Aidan's, her students could have the second chance their parents dreamed of for them. The teachers now working alongside her are equally passionate about their work, accepting just 70% of a normal teacher's salary and longer hours in exchange for small classes and a family-like community.

The birth of the new campus is brimming over with stories of God's provision and human compassion. Francine tells of the day a Hutterite woman came to her living room window as she was teaching in her

▽ *Corrine Plett assists a St. Aidan's student with his schoolwork.*



converted storefront home, looking for a thrift store. Instead, the woman found six children gathered around their beloved teacher, each learning at a different level and in a way which fit their needs and gifts.

The woman, Francine explains, began to cry. Her community had been praying for just such an opportunity to support new refugees in the city, and God had answered their prayer. That chance encounter was the beginning of an indispensable relationship between the school and seven different Hutterite colonies.

As the little community grew, so too did its needs. Francine has always been committed to feeding the children in her care, so churches and other communi-



△ Children from St. Aidan's join kids from st. benedict's table for the drive to a summer day camp outside the city in August.

ties had to be found to make lunches and drop them off. Often, when it felt like there wasn't going to be enough, the Hutterites would show up with food and supplies,

reminiscent of the miraculous provision for George Muller's English orphanages. One year, a colony worked together to make a quilt for every child in the school.

Today, Francine describes the need for people to fill in the gaps in little ways: volunteers to spend three hours picking up lunch and helping with cleanup, grandparents to come in and read to the kids, tutors to help in particular subject areas. Because the children are far away from their larger families and traditional communities, they often lack the gentle care of older adults. 

*Would you or a group from your church be interested in becoming a small part of these children's education? You can be in touch with Francine Weibe at [francinewiebe2@gmail.com](mailto:francinewiebe2@gmail.com).*

# Roger Watson

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## LAUDATO SI: POPE FRANCIS ON THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

*Anthony Waterman*



Photo: Jeremy Royall

*Anthony Waterman addresses Laudato Si, the papal encyclical on the environment and human ecology. It can be found at [laudatosi.com](http://laudatosi.com).*

"The Ecological Society of America commends Pope Francis for his insightful encyclical on the environment... The Pope is clearly informed by the science underpinning today's environmental challenges. The encyclical deals directly with climate change, its potential effects on humanity and disproportionate consequences for the poor, and the need for intergenerational equity" (29 June 2015).

Laudato Si (24 May 2015) met with an international chorus of approval, of which the ecologists' response above is typical. Dissent in the USA came chiefly from the coal and petroleum industries and from

their allies: fundamentalist climate-change deniers in the evangelical wing of the Republican Party. Canadian response, whether welcoming or hostile, has been more moderate. I shall try to summarise the content of this very long encyclical, then offer a few comments from an Anglican standpoint.

There are six chapters: I. What is Happening to our Common Home? II. The Gospel of Creation, III. Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis, IV. Integral Ecology, V. Lines of Approach and Action, VI. Ecological Education and Spirituality.

The first chapter is indeed "informed by the science underpinning today's challenges," and may be the only part most people read. Pollution, waste and "the throwaway culture", climate change, water shortage, and the loss of biodiversity seem incontestable. So does

"global inequality." "Decline in the quality of life and the breakdown of society" is more contentious, but still plausible.

But "Why," the Pope asks, "should this document, addressed to all people of good will, include a chapter dealing with the convictions of believers?" It is because "science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality" can enter into a fruitful dialogue. And it is obvious that anything the Church has to contribute must rest on its unique spiritual authority. To the scientist, the universe is to be explained, but to the believer (who could be one and the same person) it is a mystery to be pondered in faith.

"Human Roots" includes "Technology: Creativity and Power", something called "The Globalisation of the Technocratic Paradigm," and "The Crisis and Effects of Modern Anthropocentrism." But despite hideous jargon, there are many true observations and sound recommendations in this chapter, especially "The need to protect employment."

"Integral Ecology" appears to mean "a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis," and is "inseparable from the notion of the common good."

The fifth chapter calls

for a “global consensus” on environmental problems, recognising how hard it is for democratic governments to incur short-term political costs for the sake of long-run economic benefits, and suggests that “the time has come to accept decreased growth in some parts of the world.” The final chapter offers Christians “a few suggestions for an ecological spirituality grounded in the convictions of our faith.” (492)

There is much in this encyclical that all people of good will can assent to and learn from. Producers should incur the full costs of their production, including those of environmental pollution, all too often externalised onto others. There is need to establish a legal framework for environmental protection, and corrupt bureaucrats and regulators must be subject to the Rule of Law. Economic development may be better achieved by small, local entrepreneurs and cooperatives than by massive government programs or international private corporations. “The family is the heart of the culture of life.” Though perhaps unaware of it, the Pope’s recognition of the benefits of a no-growth economy was powerfully argued in 1848 by John Stuart Mill, the most influential free-thinker of his age. Related to this, and perhaps most important, the Pope reminds us that the traditional religious disciplines of temperance and abstinence can liberate us from our current “obsession with consumption.”

Yet mingled with many true and persuasive insights in this encyclical, we find some serious misconceptions which weaken the force of its overall argument.

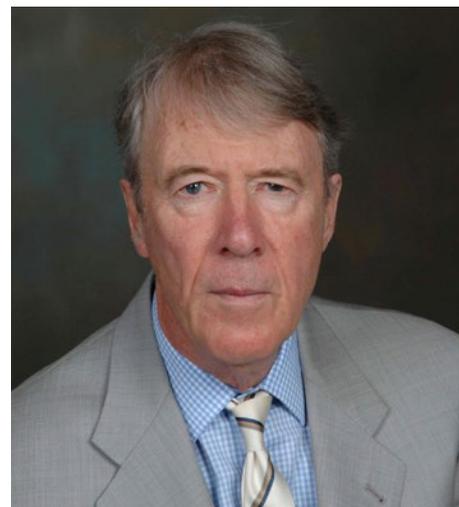
The most misleading of these is a romantic and pre-scientific vision of “Nature.” The “harmonious ensemble of organisms existing in a defined space” is in fact the outcome of a never-ending struggle for existence. “Defined space” implies limited food resources. Natural fecundity drives each species to its maximum sustainable population. Each species is in competition with others – though in some cases cooperative survival strategies evolve. And in the same species, the strong prey on the weak.

This is where Anglican understanding parts company with Papal Social Doctrine. The most influential Anglican thinker since the Reformation, the Rev’d Robert Malthus (1766-1834), showed that human populations, like those of every other species, expand to a limit at which average incomes are so low that disease, starvation, and war bring growth to an end. Darwin acknowledged his debt to Malthus, and modern ecology incorporates his insights.

Because of the Industrial Revolution, many resources needed by humans became increasingly abundant from about 1800, real incomes rose, and world population suddenly began to grow. In 1800, it was one billion.

Now, it is seven billion. Almost all of the environmental evils described in Chapter I of this encyclical can be traced to population increase. This the Papacy flatly denies. All discussion of population control is taboo.

But we don’t go to the Pope for science; what we seek from him is spiritual wisdom. And in Chapter IV, almost in passing, Francis brings us to the heart of the matter. “What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us?” Unless we have convincing answers, we have no ethical response to the tough-minded question: “Why care about the environment at all?” Science, technology, politics, and economics give us no help here. The Pope’s questions are metaphysical and ethical. If answers are to be found anywhere, they lie in the domain of Christian theology. 



*Anthony Waterman is Professor Emeritus of Economics at St. John's College. *

# PARISH NEWS

## ROUND UP

### ▷ African Children's Choir

The Choir returns to Winnipeg for concerts on September 4 and 9 at Immanuel Fellowship and Crestview Park Free Methodist Churches in Winnipeg. The concerts are at 6:30 and 7:00 p.m. For more information, [please see the events calendar](#).

### ▷ St. Peter's, Winnipeg

St. Peter's is having its annual garage sale on Saturday, September 19, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Donations for the sale will be accepted during the two days before the sale. Please call (204) 488-8093 for more information.

### ▷ West Broadway Community Ministry

September 26, WBCM is hosting its first fundraising walk, "Walk a Mile in My Shoes." Teams, families, and individuals can register for the walk by visiting [westbroadwaycm.org](http://westbroadwaycm.org) or calling (204) 774-2773.

### ▷ Pet Blessings and Fall Suppers

Is your parish hosting a pet blessing or a fall dinner over the next couple of months? Be in touch with the editor to add your event to the lists on the website.

### ▷ PWRDF

Anglicans across the country are invited to join the Primate's Fund in its annual Ride for Refuge on October 3. Last year, over \$18,000 was raised to support refugees in South Sudan, including that raised by our own Jeanne Bryan, from the parish of Ignace. This year, funds are being raised for Refuge Egypt. Let's get more Rupert's Landers out on their bikes in 2015! Visit <http://pwrdf.org/2015/world-refugee-day-ride-for-refuge/> for more information.

### ▷ Stewardship Education

The Episcopal Network for Stewardship (TENS) invites you to the annual viewing of "Creating a Culture of Generosity" at St. John's Cathedral, followed by group discussion, September 12 or 15 and 16. For details, contact Geoff Woodcroft at [geoff.woodcroft@mymts.net](mailto:geoff.woodcroft@mymts.net).

### ▷ St. John's College

Bible and Breakfast resumes this fall with Maylanne Maybee speaking about the book of James on September 19 at 9:00 a.m. Join the College for theological education and discussion over a splendid hot meal. RSVP to [allison.chubb@umanitoba.ca](mailto:allison.chubb@umanitoba.ca).

### ▷ St. Margaret's

The Ecclesial University Project is offering a new course this fall in conjunction with St. John's College and Wycliffe College entitled, "Pastoral Theology". For information about how to take the course for audit or credit, visit [rupertslandnews.ca/hungry-for-theology](http://rupertslandnews.ca/hungry-for-theology).



## SUMMER LEARNING WITH EMMANUEL MISSION

Emmanuel Mission was pleased to offer their summer learning program again this year, held at Mulvey School in Winnipeg. The program, which ran for seven weeks over the summer and had over 80 children registered, began two years ago as a way to bridge the language and culture gap between South Sudanese Dinka children and their parents. Now, it has blossomed into an enrichment program for both Dinka and other area children.

The day camp was run by volunteers from Emmanuel Mission and supported by five youth hired by the Winnipeg Green Team in addition a \$5000 grant from the Diocese of Rupert's Land.



Tutoring, math and language supplements, teamwork, sports, and singing filled each week. For kids who might otherwise have spent much of the summer bored and indoors, the camp was a welcome source of stimulation, exercise, and friendship.

Meals were also provided for the children, many of whom come from low

income families. While funding for the camp is always a challenge, it is important to the organizers that only the healthiest options are provided for the children. Volunteers from the Church spent many long hours over the summer cooking, cleaning, and meal planning at the school.

The church dreams of one day having a 15-seater van to be able to pick up children whose parents can't get them to camp. Many other day programs have such a service, explains Abraham Thon Duot, a camp coordinator and member of Emmanuel Mission's vestry. For working parents and those without vehicles, dropping the kids off on time can be difficult. Would your church or community be interested in partnering with the Church to find a vehicle to expand their dream of keeping kids engaged over summer?

Congratulations, Emmanuel Mission, on this incredible accomplishment and work of service for our neighbours and these little ones! 

## Faith Horizons

October 16-17

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or call (204) 992-4200.

# IT IS FINISHED!

*Donald Phillips*

"It is finished!" These are the final words of triumph that we hear from the crucified Jesus in John's Gospel. (John 19:30b) They were also the words that flashed through my mind when I opened an email from Durham University, in June and read that my thesis examiners, "Are recommending that you now be awarded the PhD... Congratulations!"

More than eight years of what seemed to be unending work had finally produced the desired outcome. I think I even shed a few tears as feelings of immense gratitude – toward God and the grace that I had so abundantly experienced – and toward my family and colleagues throughout the Diocese who had so faithfully supported me and patiently accepted the preoccupation this had placed on my life.

So I have earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Theology. What's it really mean? One person I know joked that the initials P.h.D. stood for "pile higher and deeper"! When I enrolled in Durham University in the fall of 2006, I attended an orientation for all new PhD students. The words that I remember the presenter telling us were, "This will be the most difficult thing you have ever done in your life." Without a doubt, I can affirm this statement in my own life.

Completing this degree is, by far, the most difficult thing I have ever done.

I suspect that it is like the mental and emotional equivalent of the Iron Man Triathlon. Like that ultimate test of physical endurance, it is not just about the end result of the race. It is also all about the journey (training) that gets you to that ultimate challenge. When it is all over, you are not the same person you were when it began.

To what end? At least my thesis work has direct relevance to the 21st century Church in Canada and how we can effectively equip our membership to communicate the Christian faith in ways that make sense to the people they share their lives with the other six days of the week.

The word "philosophy" comes from an ancient word that means "love of

knowledge" or "pursuit of wisdom." The prefix "doctor" suggests that one has obtained the highest level in these categories. In the Bible, God praises Solomon for his desire for wisdom. The book of Proverbs tells us that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Yet from a spiritual perspective, it is not the attainment of a degree (and the initials behind one's name) that matters. It is who one is and what one does with the transformation that has taken place that matters! Is that "doctor", by their presence and their learning, able to witness to, and help bring about, loving transformational change in the world – the fuller realization of God's Kingdom? This is the real challenge for all who pursue education and attempt to use it for the betterment of God's world. For this, I ask God's grace. 

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# ANCESTORS OF THE FAITH: RICHARD HOOKER *John Stafford*

Many Anglicans will have read some of Richard Hooker's writings, although he is now mostly known by reputation (1554-1600). His major work, *The Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*, was published over a period of years beginning in 1593. Hooker was a complex, brilliant theologian and widely read. Born in Exeter, Devon, educated at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, Hooker trained under the Puritan scholar John Reynolds. He was a tutor in Hebrew and one of the preachers at the Temple Church in London. It is somewhat ironic (or strategic) that it was to Hooker that the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Whitgift, turned to rebut Puritan dissent. The result was the *Lawes*.

A few things need to be kept in mind: Puritanism during the Reformation period existed on a wide spectrum, but Hooker does not generally discriminate between the shades of Puritan opinion. Interestingly, many of the later Puritan theologians sound a lot like Hooker. During Hooker's lifetime, there was no Anglican Church; there existed the Church in England but no Church of England. The English Church of the late 16th century was highly varied, but the Puritan ideal was a purified English Church modelled along rigorous Calvinist

lines which varied in intensity (purified that is, from Roman Catholic influence and practice).

Hooker's response to this involved a defence of Prayer Book theology through his vast learning in Aquinas, Augustine, the later Fathers, and a comprehensive biblical mindset that was as dynamic as that of Calvin. His concern was that Genevan reform in England was extreme and actually more Calvinist than Calvin, for whom he had respectful admiration. By way of example, Hooker understood predestination much as Calvin did, with the exception that while Calvin thought predestination should be preached, Hooker did not, because he saw the doctrine of election as one of pastoral comfort rather than a veil over divine inscrutability.

Although modern Anglicans have learned that Richard Hooker was an original shaper of an Anglican mindset, they may also need to unlearn a few things about him. "Scripture, tradition, and reason", a triad often used to characterise a comprehensive Anglican identity, was never used by Hooker. Rather, he discusses "scripture, nature, and experience", a very different conflation of ideas. Hooker is really asking how the Church can think



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through difficult issues, but in each case, nature and experience are subordinated to Scripture. In doing this, Hooker took on the Puritans at the level of their favourite subject: biblical interpretation and antagonism toward Rome.

At a time when the Pope was suspected of being the antichrist, Hooker's toleration of Roman Catholics as actually being Christian at all speaks to a measure of acceptance not apparent across the English ecclesiastical spectrum. Hooker was and was not a man of his times. The debates and quarrels of the 16th century may seem very remote, but

there is much to learn from them. Above all, Hooker addresses major questions theologically. The Anglican tendency has been to situate the elements of the so-called triad in equal relation, yet Hooker never does this. For him, reason and experience constitute the means by which Scripture is studied so we can perceive the “mystical participation” that joins us to Christ.

Still, Hooker was a Calvinist. The common view that Anglicans represent a via media between Canterbury and Rome is not true — this is a much later representation of Hooker which fails to read Hooker’s context. The English debate was how far Genevan reform could be allowed to progress in England; the commitment to Calvinist reform in England was already established, and Hooker himself was committed to it, though with restraints. The tensions lay between Canterbury and Geneva, not Canterbury and Rome. Hooker’s polemic with the Puritans was framed consistently around the role and interpretation of Scripture.

The status of Scripture was of deep importance to reformation thought, both at the level of its inspiration, and interpretation. For Hooker, Scripture was self-evidently of divine origin. He declares that “we have no word of God but the Scrip-

ture”. Its capacity to transform human action derives from its attendant character as “intuitive revelation”. God speaks in Scripture and the human imagination can be drawn to that voice because the order of nature is susceptible to the actions of divine grace. Scripture is revelation in that we could not come to such knowledge without it. As Hooker describes it, the first sense of divinity persuades us, but it is reason that moves us toward God by virtue of God’s spiritual action in baptism and Eucharist. By “reason” Hooker does not mean our mere capacity to think — rather, he means redeemed reason. Reason is not mere natural intelligence (which in itself can actually lead to the sort of pride that causes us to flee God).

In Hooker’s mind, Puritan suspicion of nature as being so corrupt that nothing in it can aid human knowledge of God was excessive. We were made to probe and understand the natural order and also Scripture itself; in this respect, Hooker does not approach Scripture prescriptively, but understood it as God’s way of teaching us to think theologically. Prescriptive readings of Scripture make faith inaccessible to inquiry. The study of Scripture can complicate matters, but joyfully so. Hooker knew the orders of nature and grace

to be distinct but connected by the same God who brought both into being, and so, mystically, conjoined in Christ. Scripture cannot speak to all questions any more than natural science can, yet it speaks to our situation as humans in relation to the natural order, and to God in a way which nature alone cannot.

Any reading of Hooker calls forth some serious theological and biblical energy. He is a major figure whose achievements have been appreciated by Christians of many different persuasions. If we have forgotten how to debate and think theologically, we can learn from Hooker how to do so once again and achieve the sort of ecclesial community that Hooker imagined. [rln](#)



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