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RLN exists to explore issues at the intersections of faith and life. In doing so we solicit and publish a range of opinions, not all of which reflect the official positions of the Diocese.

We acknowledge that we meet and work in Treaty 1, 2, and 3 Land, the traditional land of the Anishinaabe, Cree, and Dakota people and the homeland of the Metis Nation. We are grateful for their stewardship of this land and their hospitality which allows us to live, work, and serve God the Creator here.

RLN welcomes story ideas, news items, and other input. If you want to be involved in this media ministry, please [email the editor](#).

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## God in the Garden

Photo: Markus Spiske

Before she moved to Winnipeg, my grandma had the most beautiful garden in her backyard. She grew almost all of the produce she and my grandpa needed, and she often gave me and my cousins gifts of homemade salsa, jam, and pickles (the latter of which we have literally fought over because they were so good). I have fond memories of peeling apples with her to make applesauce and shucking peas with her on the back porch.

I've kept a small garden for many years. It's no where near as large as my grandma's, but I've enjoyed the time I've spent cultivating my green thumb. Few things give me satisfaction like picking a bunch of green beans one afternoon and eating them for supper that evening, or cutting up and grating mounds of zucchini to freeze and then roast over the winter months.

Last year, I got to introduce my daughter to gardening for the first time. She was so excited to dig in our garden boxes and help me plant our bean stalks, pepper plants, and raspberry bushes. Throughout the summer, she helped me pull weeds and water the plants, and she had fun doing it. I can't wait to do it all over again with her in just a few short weeks.

In this issue on God in the Garden, we're getting our hands dirty and exploring encounters with our Creator, our communities, our neighbours, and our land. Nora Hogman writes about tending the community gardens at St. Margaret's, and how they have impacted the neighbourhood. Lydia Carpenter and Wian Prinsloo, from Luna Field Farm, explain how pasture-based farming practices benefit both land and animals. In an interview, Elder Velma Orvis talks about the significance of harvesting medicines. And, in via media, Ryan Turnbull challenges the Church to adopt an integral ecology: a relationship that interconnects humans with nature, rather than separating them.

In the coming months, as the weather warms up, we'll be out in our gardens and our communities. Let's be the Church out there too.



Kyla Neufeld is the editor of *Rupert's Land News*.

# Bloom and Flourish

GEOFFREY WOODCROFT



They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. —John 19:40–42

Does anyone remember Carey Landry’s 1970s *Bloom Where You’re Planted* LP? Just the title of the album and the song sets my imagination free-forming. John’s account of the Burial and Resurrection do exactly the same thing for me: in so few words, the concept instills such dreaming.

The grave is a gift, it is a dignified home, a living memorial of life lived, and a birthing place of growth. The body, laid to rest by gifting hands and loving hearts, is not some perverse object, a residue of what was. Rather, it is the seed of hope for all humanity.

The Jewish day of Preparation might be imagined as a day to avoid profane and dead things, however, I am not convinced that is what God intended for us to think; it is the day to prepare for God’s presence with us here. I imagine a seed sown, earthed-over, prepared with spice and balm, and made ready to grow. Then I imagine something new to emerge from the winter crust, something bold and tender, something physically different yet recognizable, something that draws you and me closer.

To be the Body of Christ is to experience dying, preparation, and rising. On a good day, we individual members of the Church can bend

our understanding around this; we see how we must experience little deaths everyday, like leaving behind an old way of thinking or apologizing because another is hurt regardless of our actions. Releasing what we may have held dearly yesterday, we rest in transition, remorse, and hope, knowing that we will transform and live again. But, as a Christian body, we find it much more difficult to wrestle with the various deaths the Body experiences daily, so we choose not to rest, thus eroding our capacity in transition, remorse, and hope. This is to say that, as many individual members, we have found it difficult to put aside our personal political, temporal, and spiritual leanings, thus making it sometimes impossible to rest and listen as One Body in solidarity.

“Bloom where you are planted,” God says to the Church. *I sent you into the world, so the world may be freed from slavery, hunger, estrangement, and fear*, I hear God calling us. I think that we are called to be the germinated sprout that cracks through concrete.

So I ask you, Body of Christ, you who have been faithful through generations: will we be faithful to our call to bloom where we are planted? Will we allow the little deaths, and will we allow the Church to be planted for rest in transition, remorse, and hope? You are stunningly beautiful, amazingly gifted, and blessed with the strength of being One with another. We are poised to flourish in Creator God’s garden.



Geoffrey Woodcroft,  
Bishop of Rupert’s Land



# Community Gardens Remove Fences

NORA HOGMAN


Photo: Benjamin Combs

God has left fingerprints on every inch of the garden. Anywhere I put my foot, the Creator has already been. He touches me with warm sunshine; I can smell him in the glorious mingled scent of soil, plants, and water; and he inhabits the expanded light feeling in my chest that comes from gazing at plants that are growing. At times, I am sure I can see God peek out from the flash of colour as the butterfly passes by.

Children are often the first to spot him there. They are less distracted than adults and much more observant to their surroundings. Their keen eyes see, and their sharp ears are attuned to the music of his voice on the breeze. One of my earliest memories is sitting in the dirt beside a tomato plant and tasting the sun-warmed fruit. I was obviously comfortable, even then, in the solitude and peace of a garden.

Gardening is often a quiet reflective time for me. My mind wanders to lessons from nature and scripture. The stories that Jesus told as he walked his dusty path on earth resonate as my hands are busy with the very object lessons he described to the crowds. Thoughts of the fallow ground of my heart being tilled and prepared for the good seed; reminders that the husbandman prunes with love and great care; and that the sowing and watering of seed is necessary, but ultimately it is God who yields the increase. Such lessons come to life in a garden.



When we moved to Winnipeg in 2013, I feared that I would have to forfeit the pleasures of gardening for the duration of our time lived in the city. I pined for a patch of earth. Then a friend from St. Margaret's Anglican introduced me to her friend who needed a partner at a community garden. Bingo!



## What If I Got Hit By A Bus?

(or not able to communicate with my family?)

Presented by Margaret Meush  
and sponsored by the  
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and Richard Rosin



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People who love to garden seem to find one another. At St. Margaret's, I soon heard about their gardens. Years ago, this forward-thinking church adopted what might now be termed Hospitable Landscaping. They took down fences and dug up the parking space directly beside the church building to create a garden plot to grow food for people in the neighbourhood, especially those who did not have access to fresh vegetables. By removing barriers and reaching out to vulnerable people, they became more approachable.

In 2010, A Rocha Canada piloted a program at St. Margaret's called Just Growing. At the heart of their plan was the foundational concept of creation care. By supporting the practical work of producing and sharing food with those in need, they encouraged parishioners and community residents alike to be aware of creation and work together to preserve and protect the local flora and fauna. In a sense, they were encouraging people to seek God in the garden.

I was drawn to this beautiful approach to loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and loving your neighbour as yourself. A Rocha was no longer involved when I came on the scene, but St. Margaret's continued Just Growing and sharing food with those in need. Before long, I was at the helm and loving it.

We brought some raised beds that we had out in the community back to the church because they were in the way of a building project. The neighbours along the back alley became very interested, and some offered garden soil from their yard, while others cheered us on as we set up the gardens and began to plant. With the soil improved and the building radiating heat, the gardens were vibrant.



Photos: Nora Hogman

**The garden beds at St. Margaret's.**



People are beginning to recognize the benefits of gardens in fostering better mental health. In an article entitled "[Antidepressant Microbes In Soil: How Dirt Makes You Happy](#)," Bonnie L. Grant explains how certain microbes in the soil serve as antidepressants that stimulate serotonin production. Serotonin, sometimes called the happy chemical, not only reduces stress, but may also increase cognitive ability and induce better concentration. The thought that the Creator incorporated this ingredient into the soil delights me.

God's image is stamped on each person who stops by to talk while I work in the gardens. He gazes out from their eyes, asking to be seen. Some ask questions, some make small talk, and many have their own stories and experiences to share, but almost all mention what a joy it is to walk by these gardens and absorb the beauty and peace that emanates from them. The lonely have found solace and a purpose. If they wish to, they are welcome to take part in the enchanting discoveries.

One year, we planted peanuts early under a greenhouse cover that we later removed. Word got out that there were peanuts growing in Winnipeg, and soon there were people stopping by regularly to keep tabs on their progress. Even the City crews who were out checking trees for disease found an excuse to walk down the back alley and take pictures. The crop was small, but we learned so much from the experiment and we connected with so many new friends.

In another area of Winnipeg, newcomers to Canada are gardening in [Rainbow Community Gardens](#), operated by the Immigrants Integration and Farming Worker Community Co-op and funded by Food Matters Manitoba. They are finding, as I did, that there is a patch of earth for them to grow the food they love. Instead of paying a high price to have it imported, they can grow what is familiar to them and teach their children traditional gardening practices in the process. These gardens were established in 2008 and provide many families from all over



Photo: Nora Hogman

### **Peanuts growing in Winnipeg!**

the world the opportunity to meet and learn from one another.

In Malawi they say, "God is as the wind which touches everything." Sometimes I think about Adam and Eve in that first garden, and I wonder how God walked in the garden with them. When I feel the breeze against my cheek, I wonder if perhaps it isn't God brushing a smudge of dirt off.



Nora Lynn Hogman lives with her husband in Winnipeg and attends St. Margaret's Anglican Church.

# From Tree to Tree: An Interview with Elder Velma Orvis



*I had the chance to sit down with Elder Velma Orvis and ask her about harvesting medicines. Below is our conversation. – Kyla Neufeld*

## What plants do you harvest for medicines?

On the Medicine Wheel we acknowledge four plants. We start in the East with the tobacco. At one time it was just wild tobacco, but now we make our own. And then sage in the South and cedar in the West, and sweetgrass in the North. So we can use those for smudging.

Usually when we are working with women, we just use sage because that's mother's medicine. And women that are on their time, when we have the full moon, they can smudge. So, with women we don't really use the other three too much.

Those four main medicines are what we smudge with. When I worked at Stony Mountain I used all four because, of course, it was all men.

And then there's other medicines with muskeg tea that grows under the cedar. There are so many. Different people use different medicines for different ailments. When you use medicines you should always use two for balance.

## What is the significance of the four directions?

On the Medicine Wheel, we always start in the East because that's where Grandfather Sun rises. We can go around the medicine wheel for healing, but we have to go many times because we can't just go once and then we're healed for the rest of our lives.



Photo: Eli Sagor

**Sweetgrass flowers.**

## How are medicines used in ceremonies?

We have the Sharing Circle and we have four dances, like the Eagle Dance in the spring, the Sun Dance in the summer, the Warrior Dance in the fall, and then the Ghost Dance. So those medicines are all used. The only difference is the Eagle, the Sun Dance, and the Ghost Dance are all done in the day. But the Ghost Dance, sometimes they'll dance all day and evening, so they will use those medicines for smudging.



## How do medicines contribute to emotional and spiritual wellness?

Things like sage, it brings balance. So, when people are having a hard time they'll smudge with sage. It's calming, very calming.

We have to be careful how we pick it too, not to take the root, because once you take the root, there's no more growth. It's gone.

Some medicine is in the water. Some people will use the waterlily, a certain waterlily, the root for heart medicine. And there's a medicine called wikay, that grows amongst the bulrushes, that's very good for colds and headaches.

Anytime you go out to gather medicine you have to offer tobacco, say a prayer, or thank the Seven Generations that came before us that picked carefully so there would always be medicine for the next generation. So we are always mindful of the Seven Generations that are coming. Just like when you pick cedar you don't just strip the tree. You have to go from tree to tree. We wear our ribbon skirts when we pick medicine as a sign of respect.

## How have you seen the impact of using medicines in your own life?

I find it very healing, and I really believe in it. I haven't taken prescription drugs since the '60s, and I don't buy over the counter either. I get a sore throat, I just chew wikay, and it's gone in a few hours. I haven't had a cold for years.

## Can harvesting medicines be used to teach Indigenous youth about their own culture and heritage?

Oh yeah, it does. I know with the [Ndinawe program](#), I'm sure they take the kids out, and they have different youth programs. They will offer to take the kids out to learn how to pick.

## Can teachings about medicines foster reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and Settlers?

I think so because we both have to give. We both have to give, and we both have to forgive. Teaching is part of sharing. And also the four colours of people are on the Medicine Wheel: the yellow in the East, the red in the South, the black in the West, and the white in the North. So we are all equal in the eyes of God; it's only us that make the difference.

I am a Red River half breed, because to be Metis you have to have French blood, which I do not have. Lord Selkirk made an agreement with Chief Peguis to bring Scottish farmers over here 200 years ago. So I am Scottish Cree and Ojibway, plus English. So the protestants were farmers and had their own language, which was *bungay*, a mixture of either Cree and Gaelic or Ojibway and Gaelic, and was spoken by many people along the Red River. We had Upper Fort Garry and Lower Fort Garry, and the Metis had Fort Gibraltar on the east side of the Red River. They lumped us all together in the '60s, and now people believe we are all Metis, which we are not.

For reconciliation to happen, both parties have to be able open up to give. I think Rupert's Land is very fortunate with Geoff as the bishop because he's very open. We have a mixture of traditional and Christian, and it really blends well together. That's all we have to do: be open.



Photo: [antefixus21](#)

**A smudging shell with with sage, sweetgrass, cedar, and tobacco.**

# Prairie and Pasture

LYDIA CARPENTER AND WIAN PRINSLOO



Neither one of us grew up on the farm. Both of us, growing up in cities thousands of miles away – Lydia in Winnipeg and Wian in Pretoria South Africa – dabbled as children in urban agriculture ventures. We could have hardly imagined that we were going to end up ranching on the Canadian Prairies.

Wian emigrated to Canada from South Africa at the age of 15. From a young age, he knew he wanted to farm and so pursued farm employment and land rental arrangements where he could raise pastured poultry shortly after he graduated from high school. We met in 2009 in Winnipeg while I was just starting my graduate studies at the University of Manitoba. We had mutual interests and were both drawn to farming/ranching by a desire to manage a working landscape. We were both interested in livestock management, plant and soil biology, food production, and socially responsible, community-focused entrepreneurship.

As first generation farmers, in order to make farming work for us, we knew we had to venture into low capital enterprises. By 2011, we had moved out to southwestern Manitoba, where

we leased 80 acres of land. We did not have the funds available for machinery or anything that lost value over time. But, we knew that if we worked within the laws of natural systems, used renewable resources, and invested in things that produced a yield year after year (livestock), we had a chance of making it. We also knew we would need a good measure of determination and that we were going to have to work hard. Farming in North America has become a very capital and input intensive endeavour. The smaller (and even medium) sized family farm is disappearing from the landscape, but we wanted to find a way to make it work.

We wanted to raise healthy animals, produce good food, and improve the health of the soil and the land. We knew that, if we could use the sun's energy, photosynthesis, and the potential of grazing ruminants in a multi-species grazing system, we might be able to overcome some of the challenges that exist for farmers today, namely high land, machinery, and input costs. We were interested in producing food and feeding people, not producing commodities to be traded as stocks and bonds by a handful of



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We are the conductors of an orchestra of diversity of life.

Photo: Lydia Carpenter



global multinational corporations. We felt that growing food, and/or procuring local foods was one way to foster responsible land stewardship and nurture resilient communities. We moved several times as our land needs changed and as we required more secure tenure; by 2014, we were both employed full-time on the farm with much of our income coming from direct market sales of cut and wrapped meats.

Today, we farm on several hundred acres of grazing land in southwestern Manitoba. We harvest the sun's energy to grow grass to feed ruminants, namely cattle. We often refer to ourselves as a pasture-based livestock farm. That is the simplest way to describe what we do, but for so many who are at least a generation away from farming, the miracle that happens between grass and grazer and the ecology of our grasslands and grazing systems has been largely forgotten.

Pasture refers to land covered with grass and other low plants suitable for grazing animals including cattle, sheep, and goats. Healthy pasture relies on the energy of the sun and the process of photosynthesis, along with various biological processes including those that occur in healthy soil such as nutrient cycling, water cycling, and carbon sequestration. Our focus is on creating healthy soil, healthy pastures, and healthy animals by promoting the growth of healthy perennial polycultures. We do this through how we manage our livestock.

We employ management intensive grazing techniques in a multi-species grazing system. Throughout the grazing season, we move our cattle to new pasture every day, focusing on long pasture recover times, essentially mimicking (in much smaller numbers) the way the bison would move over the prairie landscape. We integrate poultry and hogs into this pasture-based system to help cycle nutrients and to take advantage of the other benefits of pasturing animals, namely natural parasite control (with frequent pasture moves) and added fertility via periodic disturbance and the manure deposits on pasture.

Our major infrastructure investments in this system are electric fences, piped water, and

labour. The work is enjoyable. We spend lots of time outside and are the conductors of an orchestra of diversity of life, not just that of our livestock, but by supporting the existence of a grassland agroecology that is home to many species of birds, insects, and small and large animals.

Intact grasslands and savannahs are our most threatened and greatly reduced ecosystems around the globe, as well as locally on the prairies. The extermination of this ecosystem is so complete that it is no surprise that some believe the native flora of the "prairies" are wheat and canola.

For thousands of years, grasses evolved together with grazing animals. The microbes of the rumen are the prairie's way of cycling nutrients. The miracle of the interaction among grasses, ruminants, and rumen microbes is how the energy of the sun is used to build and maintain our prairie soils and grasslands. Photosynthesis is enhanced when animals graze growing plants, which then subsequently feed the soil life below through their roots and their exudates. Grasslands, when grazed using short graze periods and long rest periods, produce healthier plants that literally feed the soil through their root exudates. There is the potential to pump tonnes of (atmospheric) carbon per acre directly into the ground using these natural processes. We can infer that healthier plants and soils, rich in available nutrients, will make for healthier animals and thus more nutrient dense food.

Pasture-based farming takes the animals out of buildings and integrates them into an agro-ecological system with a more holistic approach. We are incredibly excited to be a part of this symbiosis by farming and ranching in this way.



Lydia Carpenter and Wian Prinsloo run [Luna Field Farm](#), a multi-species grazing operation south of Belmont, Manitoba. They currently run cattle, sheep, hogs, and poultry.

# Parish News Round Up

## Anglican Foundation

The Anglican Foundation of Canada invites you and members of your congregation to the Annual General Meeting of the Anglican Foundation of Canada.

All are welcome. Parishes who have received grants or persons who have benefited from bursaries are particularly encouraged to attend this gathering.

### AFC’s goals for 2019:

- Showcase the Foundation’s role in the life of the Church as the Visionary Sponsor for General Synod 2019.
- Disburse \$1 million in grants and bursaries this year and to reach \$100,000 in gifts from the Kids Helping Kids Fund.
- Increase the number of contributing parishes from 650 to 850, and individual donors from 300 to 500.

Please help the Anglican Foundation of Canada help us all work together for the benefit of all. [You can read the AFC Spring Update here.](#)



## Goldeyes Faith Night

Faith-based groups throughout Manitoba are invited to spend an exciting evening at the ballpark cheering on your Goldeyes. Gather before the game (6:15 p.m.) to hear from Goldeyes players as they speak about how faith affects their lives and baseball careers.

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For more details, contact Arden Raaen at 204-954-8947 or [arden@goldeyes.com](mailto:arden@goldeyes.com).

## Evensong

The Evensong schedule for May is:

- **May 5:** All the King’s Men (St. John’s College), 7:00 p.m.
- **May 26:** St. Luke’s Anglican, 4:00 p.m.  
All Saints’ Anglican, 4:00 p.m.



This page of the Parish News Round Up is sponsored by Richard Rosin. For more information, see his ad on page 5.



## Emerging Perspectives on Ministry II

An ecumenical learning and friendship building opportunity with Anglicans, Lutherans, Mennonites, Ukrainian and Roman Catholics, United Church folk, and others.

### Tuesday, May 7

1:00–4:00 p.m.: Ted Talk-style presentations.

Be inspired by 12 diverse ministry practitioners and theologians as they share what is exciting them about their work, ministry, or research. This takes place at Canadian Mennonite University Chapel (600 Shaftesbury Blvd.)

7:00 p.m.: *Grateful: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks*

Free Public Lecture at Eckhardt Gramatté Hall, University of Winnipeg (515 Portage Avenue) by Dr. Diana Butler Bass, award-winning author, speaker, and independent scholar specializing in American religion and culture.

### Wednesday, May 8

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.: *Going Deeper: A Workshop with Dr. Diana Butler Bass*

Canadian Mennonite University Chapel (600 Shaftesbury Blvd.)

Registration: \$40.00, which includes May 7 Ted Talk-style presentations and May 8 Going Deeper Workshop with Diana Butler Bass. Visit [cmu.ca/emergingperspectives](http://cmu.ca/emergingperspectives) to register.




Dr. Diana Butler Bass

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MAY-JUN 2019

## Grow Hope

Chris Lea, a farmer and priest in the Pembina Hills parishes, has dedicated 15 acres of his family's land to growing canola for Anglican Grow Hope this year. Grow Hope is a Rupert's Land Primate's World Relief and Development (PWRDF) initiative that raises funds for the PWRDF account at Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Canadian Foodgrains Bank uses the monies in this account to respond to drought- or famine-stricken parts of the world and activate organizations within those countries. The Canadian government matches these donations, sometimes up to four times the amount, depending on the situation and the need.

Chris Lea and his wife Leianne have been married almost 40 years, and have been farming in the Pembina Hills throughout that time. They have 1100 cultivated acres and 65 head of cattle, and they are passionate about growing connections between rural and urban parishes.

"Farming is my lifeblood, my passion," says Chris. "I always wanted to do missionary work in the developing world, however I haven't been able to because of my health. Anglican Grow Hope is my way of giving back." Lea was also the farmer who donated 15 acres for last year's Grow Hope project. Spring wheat



was planted in May, tended for months, and harvested in late August. The grain was sold and, combined with donations from many Rupert's Land parishes, contributed over \$10,000 to the PWRDF Canadian Foodgrains Bank account.

"There are very few committee meetings I have attended where I experienced such a high level of positivity [as the Grow Hope committee meetings]," says Chris. "We are so excited – it all just came together so quickly. Urban and rural parishes working together for the common good [is powerful]." Chris, Leianne, and various extended family members hosted a Rogation service and barbecue lunch in June last year for any and all who wanted to come visit the acreage and learn more about farming. The family is just as passionate about helping others understand the important role of farming and food production as they are about building rural and urban connections.

There are various events supporting Anglican Grow Hope. St. Peter's Anglican Church is holding Jazz Vespers on Saturday April 28 at 7:30 p.m. St. Luke's Pembina Crossing, one of the parishes Chris Lea is connected to in his role as priest, is hosting a Rogation Sunday Service and Blessing of the Grow Hope Acreage on June 9 at 11:00 a.m. Follow the Rupert's Land PWRDF Facebook page for details on these events and other opportunities to support Grow Hope and connect rural and urban parishes. –Tanis Thiessen

[Rupert's Land PWRDF Facebook page](#)

## Thorvaldson Care Center

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# Humans and Humus: In Search of a Christian Ecology

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Photo: Dhruva Reddy

The history of humanity is the history of the *adam*. God took good dirt (*adamah*), and from it, fashioned very good humans (*adam*), Adam and Eve. These humans were free to eat and enjoy God's creation but were given limits. This history is the history of a creature that could not abide by the given limits of God's creation, the consequences of which are spelled out in Genesis 3. There was enmity between humans and other creatures, and the ground refused to yield its bounty. The humans' efforts to overcome this curse by force of will or technological prowess did not prevail.

Eventually, some of the humans of Genesis were known as the Children of Israel. The covenant relationship between God and Israel, far from being an abstract legal arrangement, was to be the restoration of humanity in a particular place on earth. The relationship between God and Israel was to be in the Promised Land, a place where the rain would come, and the crops and livestock would grow according to the grace of God, not the technological impositions of empire. Life in the land of God's covenant love was to be characterized by care for creatures, rest for the land, mercy to the marginalized, and inclusion of the foreigner.

Unfortunately, the realization of this covenant was never to be achieved. Israel slaughtered the original inhabitants of that land, oppressed the poor, and feared and mistreated the foreigner. In the end, Jeremiah could only cry out in despair as he looked upon this blasted

land, and "lo, it was waste and void" (Jeremiah 4:23).

According to a recent study, "[Earth system impacts of the European arrival and Great Dying in the Americas after 1492](#)," the Indigenous population of the Americas was around 60.5 million in 1492. Over the next century, 90 percent would die of disease, warfare, and slavery, leading to a general societal collapse. This act of genocide had a surprising side-effect; with the sudden collapse of anthropogenic activity on the land, new plant life quickly established itself and carbon was sequestered in the soil at unprecedented rates. By the turn of the 17th century, this mass removal of carbon from the atmosphere triggered a two-degree period of cooling at the beginning of the Modern Period called the "little ice-age."

In 1750, the Industrial Revolution began in earnest, and with it came a massive release of carbon into the atmosphere. By the turn of the 20th century, scientists began wondering if the earth was beginning to rapidly heat up and if that warming was due to human causes. By the end of the century, a broad consensus had been reached that yes, the earth is warming at a precipitous rate, and that it is largely human activity driving it.

There's a lot of ecological discourse that leans on concepts like "untrammelled wilderness" and dichotomizes between nature and culture. In this discourse, humanity is separate from and antagonistic to "pristine" nature. This

discourse hides the great act of erasure I noted above, the mass genocide of Indigenous peoples who were deeply implicated in the life and well-being of these lands for millennia prior to settler contact. Calls to “let nature take its course” are the result of a fragmented ecological perception that has first secured an ugly ditch between humanity and the earth, and then closed its ears to the crying voices in soil that are the blood of our siblings (Genesis 4:10).

Considering these missteps, Pope Francis’ advocacy for an “integral ecology” in his 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, is an invaluable resource for the Church today. Francis notes that, when we speak of the environment, “what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it” (Francis, §139).

Francis’ call for an integral ecology is nothing less than a fresh articulation of the ancient wisdom our scriptures have for us. Humans are deeply implicated in the life and well-being of all created things. This is not, as some have assumed, because of some paternalistic obligation humans have to other creatures. Rather, we are implicated precisely because from the humus come humans. We are creatures of this earth, our relationship with the other creatures of this earth is deeper even than our shared DNA. The history of our sin is the history of our denial of our place within this integrated creation. As Paul Kingsnorth notes in his article, “Life versus the Machine” in *Orion Magazine*, our sin is to declare that “we are as gods, but we have failed to get good at it, and now we have run out of time. And we are not the gods we thought we would be. We are Loki, killing the beautiful for fun. We are Saturn, devouring our children. We are Moloch: come, feed your newborn into our fires.”

We have run out of time to be gods, but in Christ we have all the time in the world to be humans. Humanity seeks to overcome its own placed particularity, but in Jesus, all the glory

of deity is clothed in fleshly intimacy with creation. Jesus’ life does not take place just anywhere, it takes place precisely in the hill-country of Galilee. Jesus does not minister in general, but appears to this woman, at that well (John 4). He appears to those disciples, on that road (Luke 24). Jesus is intimately present within the limitations of creation in exactly those ways that humanity violently rebels against.

For the Church to adopt the integral ecology of *Laudato Si’* is to learn to consider the sparrow of the field and the lilies of the field. It is to greet Sister Moon and Brother Sun with thanksgiving. But it is more than this; it is to acknowledge that the way we treat our young is tied into the logic of how we regard the health of our soil. That caring for the old is related to how we care for our forests. That recognizing Indigenous sovereignty and creating room for new immigrants is reflected in our decisions around managing our watersheds. That the “wild” places of this vast country represent home for an interconnected web of plants, animals, and people.

Our ascent to divinity failed, but divinity came down and gave us a chance to live humanely again. To live humanely is to accept the limits of creation. It is to learn the grammar of “enough.” It is to draw our attention to the presence of absences, the bees that have stopped humming, the birds that have stopped singing, and the people who have been silenced, excluded, or erased. A Christian integral ecology is an invitation into a life of creaturely intimacy made possible in the fleshly particularity of Jesus of Nazareth.



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