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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 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 at:
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I've been calling this issue "Expressions of Anglicanism." The Diocese of Rupert's Land is made up of a unique mix of parishes: we have urban and rural, high church and low church, neighbourhood parishes and mixed ministries. We have

people of different nationalities, different orientations, different socio-economic backgrounds. But, we are all Anglicans and we all worship as one Church.

I wanted to highlight and celebrate our differences and similarities in this issue. So, we'll hear from Jamie Howison about what brings us together, and then from three Rupert's Land parishes about how they worship and what makes them unique among Anglicans: St. Michael & All Angels, our resident Anglo-Catholics,

Pinawa Christian Fellowship, which is practising ecumenical ministry, and Epiphany Indigenous Anglican Church, which was established one year ago in February 2017.

You'll also find an image and short reflection for Lent. And, in via media, we have a piece about what the Gospel of Mark can teach us about living with difficult questions and uncertainty.

What makes your parish unique? Let me know by [sending me an email](#). I'd love to hear from you! 



△ *Jesus Ministered to by Angels*, by French painter James Tissot (1836–1902).

IN A POST-DENOMINATIONAL WORLD, WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT ANGLICANISM?

Donald Phillips

In our contemporary post-modern world, some religious sociologists claim that Christian denominations are becoming irrelevant – that those exploring the Christian faith are not interested in denominational labels.


While it is true that denominational loyalty has greatly diminished in the last 60 or 70 years, the characteristics and norms that make up a particular denomination's expression of Christian faith are still hugely important. This is easily demonstrated by the resistance to certain kinds of change within a particular denomination. If a proposed change appears to alter the fundamental identity of their Church, people struggle to accept the change, if in fact they ever do (i.e. ordaining women; accepting LGBTQ persons and their relationships).

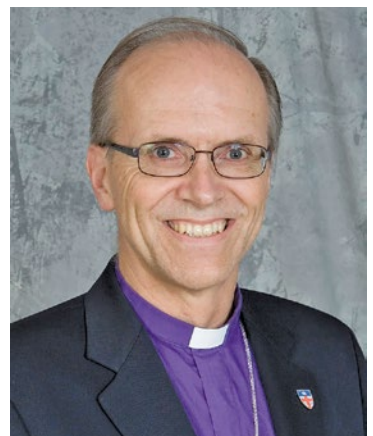
What are some of those fundamental beliefs and practices that characterize Anglicanism around the globe? Most Anglican churches would point back to something called the "Lambeth Quadrilateral," a statement agreed to at the (worldwide) Lambeth Conference (of bishops) in 1888. It should be noted that the initial impetus for the statement was to define the essence of the Anglican Church to

help it participate in ecumenical discussions with other Churches – attempting to find common ground and perhaps even amalgamation. The basic statement upholds the Old and New Testaments as being the rule and standard of faith; ratifies the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds; affirms the Sacraments – Baptism and the Lord's Supper – ordained by Christ Himself; and supports the Historic Episcopate, adapted to the needs of the people.

Of course there is great diversity across our Church and not every member would place the same importance on each of these statements. But I would claim that most of our members, even if they have never heard of the Lambeth Quadrilateral, would:

- Expect that the bishop of their diocese would exercise loving care of all of the parishes and members, offer theological reflection on contemporary issues, and use the authority of the office to maintain the health and well-being of the Church.
- Expect to hear several Scripture readings in Sunday worship;
- Expect to hear at least one of the Creeds recited in Church and taught to those preparing for Confirmation or learning about the faith;
- Expect that all persons seeking membership in the Church would become baptized and that there would be regular celebrations of the Eucharist;

So while many members would not consciously reflect on these fundamental characteristics, they most certainly take them for granted and would find their experience of church lacking if they were not present. The label "Anglican" may be less important, but the approach to being the Christian Church under that name remains vital. 



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

WHAT UNITES US?

Jamie Howison

I venture to say that the question put to me by the *Rupert's Land News* editor – what unites us as Anglicans, even if our worship styles differ? – would have been an easy one to answer 60 years ago. To walk into any parish in the diocese on a Sunday morning in 1958 meant worship according to the rites of the *Book of Common Prayer*. To be sure, there would have been variations across the Diocese, ranging from the Anglo-Catholic ceremonial of St. Michael & All Angels to the decidedly low church commitments of parishes such as Holy Trinity, Winnipeg or St. Andrew's, Woodhaven. Feathers would ruffle (and occasionally sabres even rattle) over matters such as candles on the altar, coloured vestments, and the frequency of communion, yet what was held in common was the *Book of Common Prayer*. Of course, in 1958 that book would still have been the 1918 version of what was then known officially as "The Church of England in the Dominion of Canada," as the edition we now think of as being the "old" *Book of Common Prayer* was only approved for experimental use in 1959.

It has often been suggested that the 1959/62 Prayer

Book came into being 20 years too early, as its release coincided with the beginning of a period marked by a heightened interest in liturgical renewal and innovation.

A shared commitment to a simple form of daily prayer and reading might just help us to remember who we are.

Within the decade, many parishes and dioceses were beginning to experiment with new rites and ceremonies, which in time led to the authorization of the *Book of Alternative Services*. The introduction of that book was not uncontroversial, and some readers may recall the 1989 convening of the church's Supreme Court of Appeal to consider arguments about the validity of the *Book of Alternative Services*, including questions of whether ordinations and even marriages conducted according to its rites were valid. Those were not easy days for the Church, with both individuals and parish communities often planting a flag in either the *Book of Common Prayer* or *Book of Alternative Services* camp. Needless to say, this question of what united us was foremost in the minds of many.

While some did leave the Church over the matter

of liturgical renewal, in time the dust more or less settled, leaving a pattern in which some parishes made exclusive use of either the *Book of Alternative Services* or the

Book of Common Prayer, while others moved into a practice of using both books for various liturgies. That sort of middle ground settlement was actually quite true to the deeper Anglican tradition, and in a sense reflected the Elizabethan Settlement of the late 1550s, which drew the circle sufficiently wide to make room within the Church of England for those of both catholic and protestant leanings. In the case of that settlement, the common element was in fact the *Book of Common Prayer*. The pressing question in our day has to do with articulating the common element(s) when there are not only two books, but also an array of approved supplemental material and any number of local innovations.

The simplest answer is that it is the bishop who unifies us; that all of the parishes in this diocese are under our bishop's authority

and direction, and, because our bishop is in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury, we are all members of the Anglican Communion. That's fine and good, but it doesn't really go all that far in terms of a shared identity.

Unfashionable as it may sound, I am of the opinion that we do well to look to the genius of the Book of Common Prayer and to some of the key commitments of its chief architect Thomas Cranmer. In spite of the fact that for the better part of four centuries you were likely to encounter sung Matins

on a Sunday morning in the average parish church, widely and regularly receiving the Eucharist was key to Cranmer's project. Equally important was his insistence that communion be received neither too lightly nor continually deferred due to some burden of guilt or unworthiness. That's the force of the Prayer of Humble Access, with its insistence that, while we may well confess that "we are not worthy," we are coming into the presence of a God, "Whose property is always to have mercy."

Prayer of Humble Access [from the 1662 Prayer Book]

We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. *Amen.*

A second key part of Cranmer's vision was for a biblically-literate church, such that not only is the Prayer Book itself shot through with Scripture, its lectionary for daily morning and evening prayer is dense and thorough. Closely related was

his desire that the daily office be prayed not only by clergy and in the chapels of the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, but by all who were able to read. Thanks to the invention of the printing press, books were more widely available and

literacy was on the rise, and so Cranmer was able to envision a praying church soaked in the Bible.

We could certainly do worse than to have an Anglican Church united around Eucharist, a heightened level of biblical literacy, and a commitment to daily prayer in our churches and our homes. It might not look like the daily offices of the *Book of Common Prayer*, but a shared commitment to a simple form of daily prayer and reading might just help us to remember who we are.

To this I would want to add one more point, this one inspired by the Anglican writer Kenneth Leech in his little book *Subversive Orthodoxy*. The churches of the 21st century will need to be what he calls "communities of rational




inquiry," with "a spirituality of struggle, of interrogation, a community of debate, a zone of truth seeking." In such a community, space is made for dissent and for alternate views, precisely as a gradual way forward. I believe this, too, is in our DNA as Anglicans. It is clearly visible in our synodical model of governance, in which clergy and elected lay delegates are expected to vote according to conscience and even encouraged to voice views that may not be neither popular nor widely held.

Yet this goes much deeper than the relatively recent deliberations on same sex unions and proposed changes to the Marriage Canon, and can fairly be traced back to the aforementioned Elizabethan Settlement. It is a

spirit given expression in the oft-quoted saying, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity," cited by the Anglican Puritan writer Richard Baxter in his 1670 book, *The True and Only Way of Concord of All the Christian Churches*. It is given expression in the existence of movements so varied as the evangelical Clapham Sect – which laboured for both the extension of "foreign" missions and the abolition of slavery – and the Oxford Movement, with its more thoroughgoing Anglo-Catholic and ritualist heirs. Not that there weren't times when some of the bishops would have wished that the circle wasn't drawn quite so widely – this was certainly true in the case of the Anglo-Catholic socialist

and activist Stewart Headlam, who was inhibited from functioning as a priest by two successive bishops of London – yet such exceptions to the rule that space can and should be made for dissent and alternate views are in fact relatively few.

Still, I confess that this may all be wishful thinking, and more prescriptive of what could define us than descriptive of what currently unifies us. Yet the vision of being a Eucharistic, biblical, thinking, and praying church is one that is both true to our heritage and promising for our future. 



△ *Jamie Howison is the founding pastoral leader of saint benedict's table in Winnipeg. He is the author of God's Mind in that Music: Theological Explorations through the Music of John Coltrane (Cascade, 2012), and the co-author of I Will Not Be Shaken: a songwriter's journey through the Psalms (Signpost, 2015).*

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RITUAL AND BEAUTY

Tanis Thiessen

St. Michael & All Angels Church, or SMAA, is the only Anglo-Catholic church in Winnipeg. I came to be a parishioner by marriage, and have spent more than a decade being actively involved in this church. So what makes SMAA different from other Anglican churches? What does it mean to be Anglo-Catholic? Perhaps a better question to answer in this short article is "what does it mean to me to be Anglo-Catholic?" The shortest answer I could give to all these questions is to say that our theology is in line with the Anglican Church (Church of England), and our practices are more in line with the early church – the Nicene creed, the keeping of Feast days, the use of incense throughout the mass, icons, bowing our head at the name of Jesus, genuflection towards the presence of Christ in the sacrament. Our church continues to practice traditions dating back to early Christianity, that allow us to worship with all our senses – sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste.

What brings further meaning to worship, for me, is the knowledge that we are practising a ritual that has been done for hundreds of years in the Christian church.

From the moment when the sacristy bell is rung and we all rise, to the purging of the congregation through the asperges, the censing of the altar, the singing of the Kyries, the Gloria, the Bible lessons, everything through to the Angelus at the end of mass – I feel the presence of those who have gone before us and walked their faith through the centuries.

Speaking the Nicene creed together at every mass grounds us in the tenets of our faith. Surrounding ourselves with images of the saints (through icons and stained glass) ties us to our past. Lining the nave with the stations of the cross and walking those stations during Lent reminds us of the path Jesus took to the cross. Seeing the priestly vestments change colours and images to match the seasons visually reminds us of the story behind martyrs' days, Advent, Lenten practices, and feast days.

When I asked Father Kevin to respond this question, he said, "'Anglo-catholic' means different things to different people. For me, the key word is 'continuity' – that the English Reformation did not throw everything out and start a whole new church, but simplified and realigned



Photo: Tanis Thiessen

△ *Worship at St. Michael & All Angels*

the already existing Church of England. In many ways, what happened in England in the 16th century was what happened in Rome in the mid-20th with Vatican II.

A second important concept is 'beauty.' What we believe about God is reflected in the way we worship."

rin



△ *Tanis Thiessen is a public school principal, wife, daughter, and aunt to 16 awesome nieces and nephews. Her passions are education, baking, marketing, and lake life.*

A TAPESTRY OF NATIONS

Vince Solomon

"All the nations that you have established will come and worship you, my Lord. They will honour your name."
– Psalm 89:6

Many different peoples demonstrate praise in celebrations of worship that come from within their cultures. This unique cultural richness, which God has placed in all the nations of the earth, make up a glorious sound that echoes into the Holy throne room.

We at Epiphany Indigenous Anglican Church, along with all the saints throughout the nations of the world, have become a part of this wonderful tapestry of praise within the Anglican Communion. We celebrate the gifts of the one true and triune God, who is revealed in creation, scripture, and in the person and work of Jesus the Christ. This is expressed throughout the liturgy, music, and indigenous imagery in our common and personal worship.

The liturgy we use, with the Bishop's permission, is an amalgamation of prayers of praise and petition from the Book of Alternative Services, the Disciples Prayer Book, and a Eucharistic Prayer adapted from The New Agape. We also read from

Holy Scripture and confess our faith in the Apostles' Creed.

For worship, we use a guitar, hand drum, and sometimes a rattle. The use of these three instruments, though not limited to these, expresses and characterizes our identity, which is rooted in the land and our belief in our Creator, and has shaped us as Indigenous Peoples throughout our collective history.

We draw on and include the vast depth of Indigenous Art and ceremony, mitigating the western import of the Church and shaping a worship that is wonderfully Indigenous and Anglican.

The nations that worship at Epiphany are diverse. These include people from the Cree, Ojibwe, and Inuit Nations, as well as many people from settler countries. Because of this, we simply allow ourselves to be truly unique in our worship in the freedom and leading of the Holy Spirit.

Our community is united because of our love for one another. We are building, at our core, a faithfulness that is shaped by the invitation of the Divine to enter into the life of the Holy Trinity; we strive to live this life out in all the places we go and with



Photo: Vince Solomon

△ *Worship set-up at Epiphany Indigenous Anglican Church.*

all the people we meet. All of our people have come as invited guests and those who have stayed add their voices and "nation" to the tapestry of praise that emanates from our sacred space each Sunday evening. [rin](#)



△ *Vince Solomon is the Urban Indigenous Ministry Developer for the Diocese of Rupert's Land.*

ECUMENICAL WORSHIP IN PINAWA

Rob Murray

In 1963, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited established a National Research Laboratory and the brand new town of Pinawa in the woods of Eastern Manitoba. A group of future residents met early that year in Deep River Ontario to make arrangements to hold worship as soon as new residents began to arrive. If they were to work and live together, it seemed only natural that they should also worship together.

Those pioneers negotiated with representatives of six denominations and received assurance that the new congregation, called Pinawa Christian Fellowship, would be recognized and supported by the Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Mennonite, Presbyterian, and United Churches. Congregants were encouraged to retain their denominational identities while sharing one congregation with one service of worship and one mission to the community. All these years later, we are still worshipping and serving together. We're a multi-denominational shared ministry, *not* a non-denominational Community Church.


We have a full-time ordained minister, but no building and, therefore, no debt. We rent storefront space in the mall for meetings and

worship space from the school district. Together, the members of

Pinawa Christian Fellowship support the regional and national mission of four parent denominations (the Baptists and Lutherans are no longer part of the shared ministry). At last count, about 20 of our 115 members claim to be Anglican.

Worship is planned by a committee with representation from the four denominations. We follow the Common Lectionary, sing the Psalm, and stand for the Gospel. We sit to pray (too many knee replacements as the congregation has aged!). We have developed a shared form for the Eucharist. Wine in the common cup, as well as wine and grape juice in individual cups, are available for folks to participate in the way that is most meaningful for them. Baptism and Marriage follow the forms of the family's denominational preference. Pinawa Christian Fellowship also has an active choir with 15 voices, two co-directors, and three musicians to support the singing. There hasn't been a traditional Sunday School for a decade now, but we offer short-term Christian Education events, study groups, and programs for

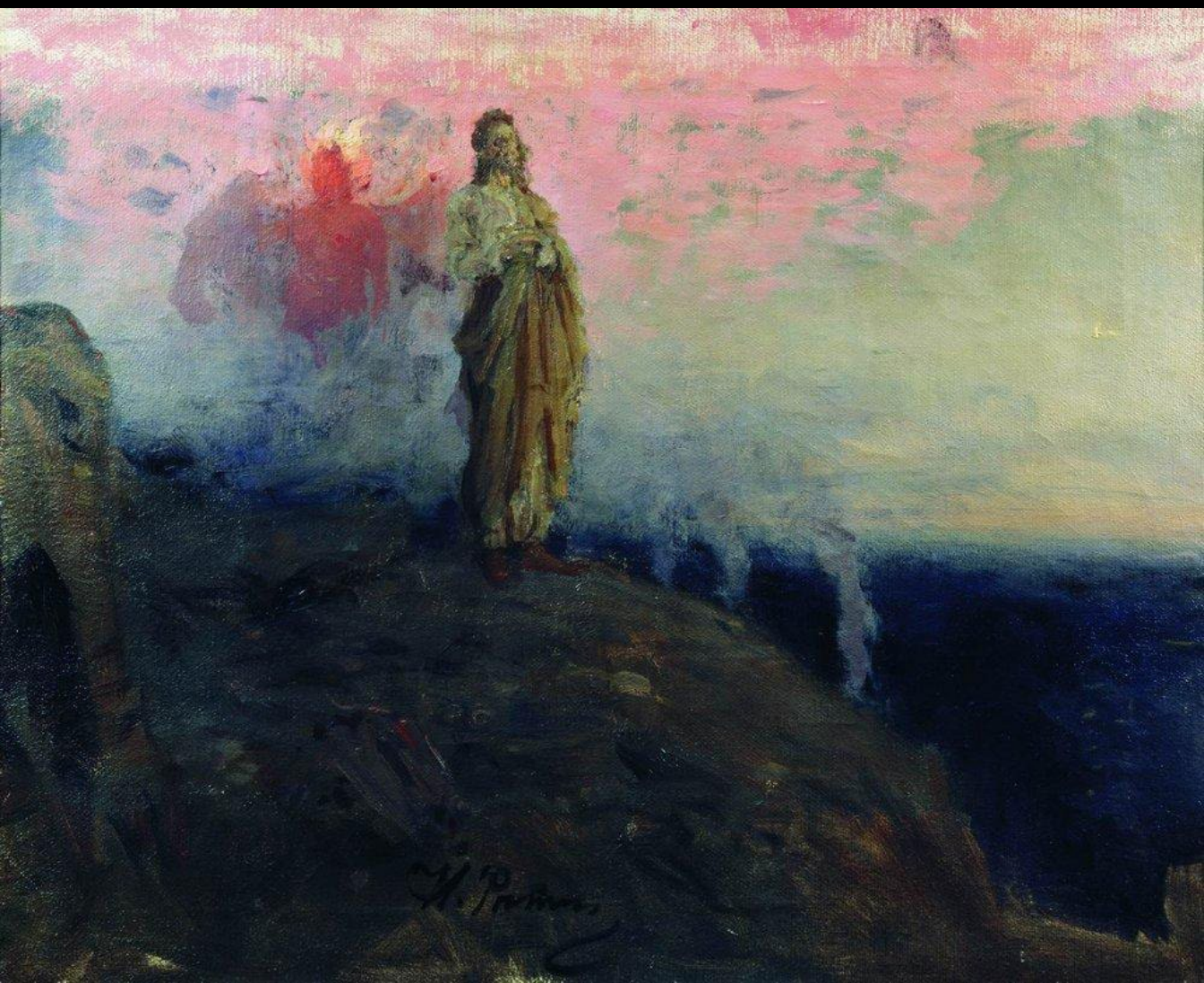
children and adults during the week or after worship.

Pinawa Christian Fellowship was intended to be an experiment that might eventually be replaced by conventional congregations as the town developed and grew. But, with the decommissioning of the Whiteshell Nuclear Research Establishment, Pinawa has begun the transition to Retirement/Resort community, and the "experiment" of Pinawa Christian Fellowship has become an adaptable and enduring form of church. 



△ *Rob Murray is a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Canada; he has been serving the ecumenical shared ministry of the Pinawa Christian Fellowship since 1996. You can learn more about Pinawa Christian Fellowship at their [website](#).*

FOR THE BEGINNING **OF LENT**



Follow Me – Satan (Temptation of Jesus Christ), Ilya Repin 1903.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for 40 days and 40 nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God’.”


Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone’.” Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’.”

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him’.” Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

– *Matthew 4:1–11*

Lent begins on February 14 with Ash Wednesday. It is a season during which we commemorate Jesus' journey into the desert, where he fasted for 40 days in preparation for his ministry on Earth, by fasting ourselves or giving up something for the duration.

We are all tempted as Christ was tempted; but where he resisted we often give in. As we enter the season of Lent, we take on the posture of self-examination and repentance. The Collects for this season ask God for mercy and forgiveness for our sins, but they also ask for

grace, strength, and joy – a reminder of what we find in Christ through his sacrifice and example. Whether you are giving up something small for Lent or taking on a new contemplative practice, may the peace of Christ find you and keep you this season. 

PARISH NEWS **ROUND UP**

▷ St. Michael's, Victoria Beach and St. Jude's, Grand Marais

The congregations of St. Michael's and St. Jude's said farewell to Rev. John Giroux, who has accepted a position at St. Mary's Anglican Church in Charleswood, Winnipeg.

Three members of the FireHeart Women's Drumming Group in Selkirk helped convey the best wishes of the congregations with a traditional "goodbye" performance. Each song is a prayer, which has been passed down through generations and used for particular occasions.

The FireHeart Women's Drumming Group has a membership of over 20, spanning several generations. With guidance of the elders, the traditional crafts and designs are being preserved; each drum is gifted by an elder to a member of the next generation. The FireHeart Women's Drumming Group is a place to belong, to be nurtured, and to carry on the traditions of the Indigenous and Metis.

The congregations of St. Michael's and St. Jude's would like to thank the members of the FireHeart Women's Drumming Group for taking the time to travel from Selkirk and join them in saying goodbye.

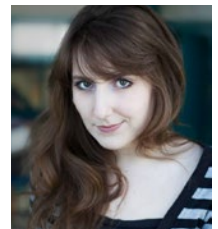


△ Aaliyah, Walking Black Bear, Carla, Four Birds Woman, and Marlena, Yellow Thunder Bird Woman from FireHeart Women's Drumming Group.

▷ saint benedict's table

There is a new Artist-in-Residence for 2018 at saint benedict's table: playwright Hannah Foulger, who is interested in the intersection of disability and faith. She says, in her [introductory blog post](#), "The art I aspire to make... is a juxtaposition of ideas that forces confrontation. The jamming of Christian mysticism, relationships, and cancer is one of my current juxtapositions. At the crux of these themes are questions about identity and existential belief. Some of these are questions I am consciously putting into the work, and some will arise on their own. It's the journey that makes all the difference."

She also wrote for RLN's March 2017 issue on Disability; you can [find her article here](#).



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Peace and blessings,

Richard Rosin
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▷ Creation Matters Working Group

The Creation Matters Working Group is promoting the "Give it up for the Earth" challenge for Lent through Citizens for Public Justice. In this faith-in-action campaign, participants are called to commit to making changes in their lives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for the 40 days of Lent. [Click here to get involved.](#)

They are also encouraging Diocesan publications across the country to focus March's issue on the 5th Mark of Mission; as such, RLN will be including a spread in March's issue devoted to that.

The CMWVG wants to know about the exciting things your parish is doing in support of the 5th Mark of Mission. Please send your news to [Beverley Eert](#).

If your parish would like to host a presentation about energy conscious construction and solar power production, contact Bev. She and her husband Will live off-grid and are eager to share what they have learned.

▷ Stronger Together



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"Joining the Foodgrains Bank has allowed for truly ecumenical work to respond to global hunger," says Naba Gurung, PWRDF's humanitarian response coordinator.

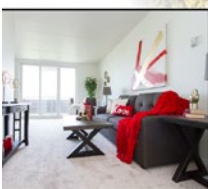
Over the past 10 years, PWRDF has received over \$1 million through Canadian Foodgrains Bank.



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UPCOMING ISSUES

▷ **March's** issue of RLN is about **Worship**. We'll be looking at how worship informs mission, the liturgy, and theology.

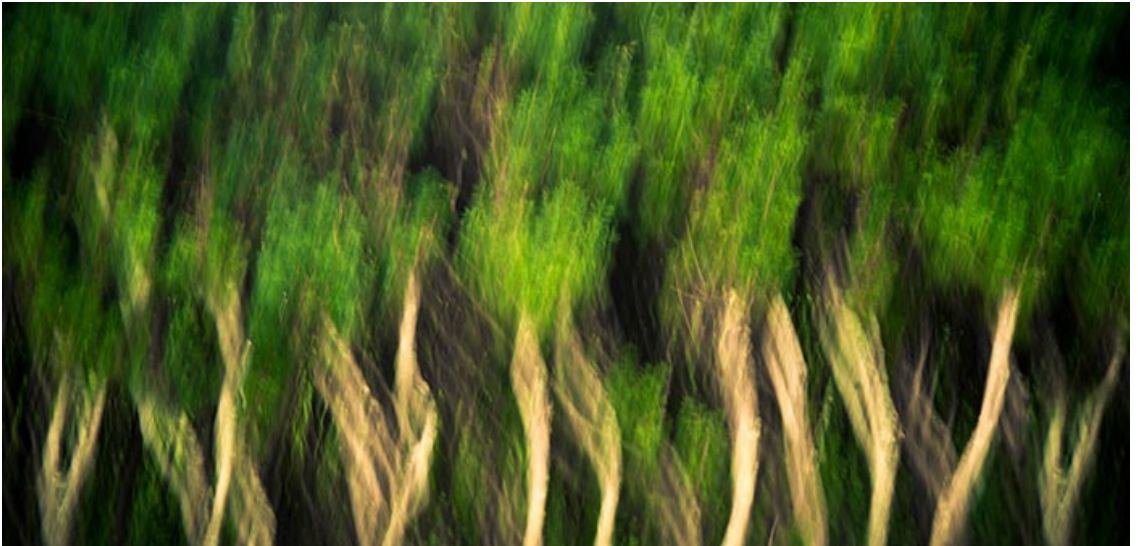
▷ In **April** we'll be exploring how to be good caretakers of faith and land in this issue on **Stewardship**.

Rupert's Land News is always looking for writers and artists! If you'd like to write for RLN or submit some artwork, [please send me an email](#) with your name and the topics on which you'd like to write, or samples of your artwork. In particular, I am looking for people who might be interested in writing reviews of books, movies, or CDs. You can also send me an email if there are any themes or topics you'd like to see in future issues of RLN.

– Kyla Neufeld, Editor

NOT “LIKE TREES, WALKING”

David Lappano



In the Gospel of Mark the disciples are often depicted as perplexed by the meaning of Jesus’ parables and deeds. There are several miracles of transformation – represented by deafness to hearing or from blindness to sight. And there are two miracles of abundance – feeding 5,000 and then 4,000 people. For each situation, Jesus needs to explain to his inner circle the social and theological meaning encased in his teachings. The crowds are rarely privy to these explanations, and several times Jesus prohibits people from speaking about what they have experienced, as if to deliberately prevent the disclosure of his divine identity or social significance. Whether the obscurity in Mark is due to lack of understanding from disciples or concealment by Jesus, the

result depicted at the end of each story is amazement, silence, and fear (Mark 16:8).

When Jesus warns of the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod he becomes frustrated with how those closest to him seem unaware of what they are hearing and what they’ve been witnessing. Jesus exclaims, “Do you still not perceive or understand?... Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear?” (Mark 8:18). When Jesus asks his disciples why they fail to hear or see, I suspect the gospel is reflecting our anxiety about comprehending the meaning of events that don’t correspond with our expectations or with the existing order of things. I have frequently doubted my ability to comprehend the meanings of what takes

place in the gospels. But if we focus too sharply on intellectual understanding or disability and ability, then I think we miss the artful way Mark’s narrative beckons its audience away from those anxieties and toward active religious life.

How does Mark do this? Certainly these questions are for Jesus’ disciples, for the first century audience hearing the gospel of Mark narrated to them, and they’re for us. But what are we being asked to hear and see?

We can ask ourselves the riddle implied by the gospel: What has ears but does not hear? And what has eyes but does not see? Whether the audience was Jewish or mixed Jewish-gentile, they would have caught the connection to idols, images, and likenesses. And from the perspective of Jewish tradition,

an idol is a simulation of life, lacking genuine spirit – a counterfeit double.

By associating the disciples with the image of an idol, Mark is drawing attention to the difference between simply being alive – by appearance – and living with the spiritual and emotional integrity that faith requires. Like the prophets before him, Jesus is trying to awaken people from a spiritlessness that grips society. To his Jewish community, Jesus is constantly pointing to the depth of spirit and the call to justice that their tradition proclaims. To the gentile communities, Jesus assures them that they too, as creatures of God, are exemplars of faith and full participants in divine life and love.


A very peculiar event in Mark's gospel makes more sense when we consider this distinction between a spiritless idol and a spiritually animated person. When Jesus restores the sight of the blind man at Bethsaida, it takes him two tries (Mark 8:22–26). First Jesus puts saliva on his hands and touches the man's eyes and asks him, "Can you see anything?" The man replies, "I can see people, but they look like trees, walking." Then Jesus touches the man's eyes again and the man's sight is fully restored. Apart

from the theologically awkward (or humorous) problem of Jesus' inability to heal on the first try, we have a condensed tale of a process of transformation. The lesson is not the miracle, but what the man recounts. First, the disciples are likened to a lifeless (wooden) idol, then we are given this image of people who are not quite static, lifeless carvings, but also not yet truly alive – they are like trees walking. The full transformation or awareness can be said to come in the next passage when Jesus asks, "Who do you say that I am?" and they respond with faith.

Simply hearing or receiving the gospel is apparently not enough, as we learn from the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1–9). People who truly experience the divine (who receive the word) must be animated by what they receive – like the seed that falls on good soil and bears fruit. The question being asked by the eighth chapter of Mark is: Are you animated to respond to the divine life with all your humanity or do you remain unmoved like an idol or ridged and aloof like trees walking?

Interestingly, hearing and seeing are emphasized in Mark while speech is often discouraged. After Jesus asks

his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" and they say he is the messiah, he sternly orders them not to tell anyone about him (18:29–30). But showing caution around speech is not the same as restricting communication. The purpose of this concealment and perplexity is not to obscure the divine life. Rather, I believe the purpose is to encourage a creative, animated, even passionate, response.

The gospel author is saying, "Who do you say Jesus is? But don't say it out loud! – say it to yourself *inwardly*, and go and communicate your answer *outwardly* by who you are becoming through your actions (now that you are receiving Jesus' message) and by how you are with others." 



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