rln rupert'slandnews

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Rupert's Land News is published 10 times per year (September - June) by the Diocese of Rupert's Land, in the Anglican Church in Canada. It connects churches and communities from Portage la Prairie, MB, to Atikokan, ON, by offering news, events, opinion, and ideas to 6,000 readers per month. RLN is available in a variety of formats:

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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.

Cover: Eduard Militaru. Saint Dunstan in the East Church Garden, London, United Kingdom

Sacred Space

There's a through line of journeying with others in this issue on Sacred Space.

First, Elder Sylvia James recounts her experience of walking from Gatineau, Quebec to Ottawa as part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. For her, the communal experience of walking together and sharing stories of suffering and hope is what enabled many residential school survivors to take those first steps towards healing. As she says her in article, "The walk of 10,000 people made a difference, and it united a lot of us to work towards healing and reconciliation."

Next, there are two pieces about the Camino de Santiago, which is a pilgrimage in Spain. A small group of senior youth from St. Margaret's Anglican will be walking the Camino in the spring, documenting their experience along the way. In this issue, we're introducing who they are and why they're going. And, when they get back, we'll run a follow-up piece about what they learned. Alongside that piece are some reflections by Rachel Twigg Boyce, who walked the Camino in 2015. "One of the most beautiful things about that experience was the immediate solidarity that developed within a diverse group of people because we shared a common purpose and practice," she says.

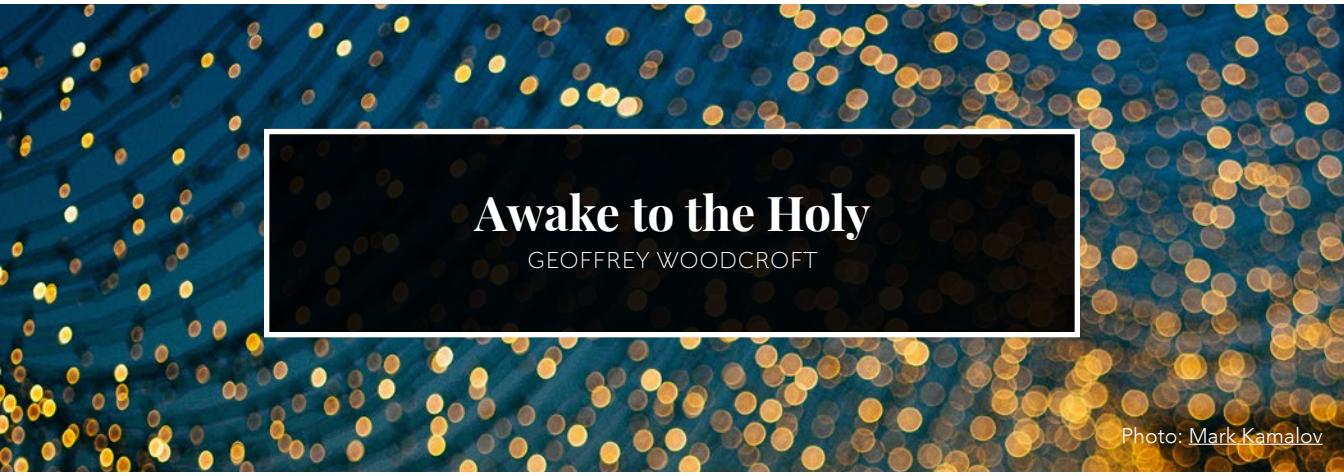
When I first envisioned this issue, I was thinking about how Anglican church buildings lend themselves to the sacred, and I was able to get a really great piece on that from Graham MacFarlane. But, even in his piece, though the design of Anglican church buildings is important, it's the people who join together in worship and prayer who make them sacred.

I'm also excited to have a poem from Joanne Epp about that hush of anticipation right before something significant happens: "The room / settles into stillness that echoes not yet, / almost, not long. Ready for the story / whose telling always ends too soon."

Lastly, in via media, Michael Gilmour writes about a young C. S. Lewis preparing to embark on a completely different journey: one that will take him to the front lines of World War I, "... understandably afraid of what's to come, but also surprisingly resigned."

In this season of Advent, we anticipate the birth of Jesus, who was born in a stable – perhaps the most "unsacred" of locations. But, sacred spaces are the places where we open ourselves up to the Holy, where we journey with others in worship, in prayer, and in solidarity. While our church buildings are important as places of gathering, rest, and fellowship, let's not forget that we are the Church outside of them as well.

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



Awake to the Holy

GEOFFREY WOODCROFT

Photo: Mark Kamalov

I discovered my initial call to ordained ministry at Trinity Anglican Church in Simcoe, Ontario. The high-vaulted ceiling, Celtic Trinity knots on the sanctuary floor, the smell of extinguished beeswax candles, and the war memorial stained glass window are indelibly printed in my memories. Church buildings, holy shrines, grave sites, and sacred art teach God's story, and our place in that story, and that is necessary as they are important benchmarks for the Church. I know that I have experienced God in those places. But, when I leave the *sanctuary* of the Church to explore the world, I am easily distracted by the intensity of our western consumerism, materialism, fear, and hatred –so much so that God needs to interrupt, disturb, and surprise me back into relationship.

In Acts 16:12–14, after several days in Philippi, Paul visits what he believes to be a place of prayer outside of the city, where he encounters women worshipping God. They do not worship in a temple, synagogue, or church, because they are not welcome, nor are they safe, in those places. But, Paul sees God's presence at work in and through them, and he goes on to support, nurture, and ultimately empower them for ministry.

Several years ago, I was invited to provide some music for a community ministry; I was given a time slot, and, if everything went smoothly, I would be out the door 75 minutes later to resume my rigorous schedule. I completed my task of singing and playing right on time, said some sort of thanks, and proceeded to pack up my guitar. I noticed one of the community members, rough looking to say the least, making a direct path toward me. *Oh no!* I thought, *I just want to get out of here.* The man thrust forward his hand and took mine, and quietly said, "God bless you. You have no idea what you have done for us today." I mumbled a sort of thank you, said that *I really must be on my way,* and left. I had only one block to my car, but in that half-minute, I cried so hard that I could not find the lock on the car to insert my key. I never went there looking for God's blessing, but that is what I received. In the midst of the messiness of life, God made that street corner sacred and holy.

It is God who fills all in all, and the most vibrant presence of the Holy has interrupted, disturbed, and surprised me in the most unlikely places and times. As we continually move through the world, God is constantly revealing his holy presence; our job is to be awake.

Geoffrey Woodcroft,
Bishop of Rupert's Land

Sacred Space and Reconciliation

SYLVIA JAMES

Healing takes a lot of courage for an individual person to learn to forgive and to move forward from life's hurtful experiences.

Creator, the Spiritual Being, Kisa Munito, loves all his children regardless of race and colour, and has given us gifts to use when battling each day's daily challenges: the challenges of anger and bitterness; the loss of who we are; the sense of not belonging; the shame of the scars we wear; the lack of self-esteem; the addictions of drinking, drugs, and gambling; the violence and racism that rear their ugly heads in our daily lives; and the way society views us, and other ethnic groups, as invisible.

With so many others, we are thankful to Justice Murray Sinclair, Marie Wilson, and Willy Littlechild, who took on the tremendous responsibility of taking on the Truth Reconciliation Commission Report, which was released at Delta Ottawa in Ottawa on June 2, 2015.

The TRC was successful in bringing the legacy of residential schools from the darkness of Canadian history into the light. This has been a beginning of the journey to healing and reconciliation. The emotional, physical, and spiritual abuse experienced by residential schools survivors had a lasting impact on their lives. Indigenous children were stolen from their loving, caring homes, many taken right of of their parents' arms. Children stolen from the close-knit relationships of their communities, the strong communities that had their own values, beliefs, rich traditions and cultures, and languages.

The legacy of removing children and placing them in residential schools has stopped with my three children and my grandchildren. They did not have to follow the footsteps of their grandpa, Nelson James, his mother, Mary Rose Martin, and 13 of her 14 children, who were forced to leave their home. The use of the residential school system has been severed; we hope and pray that history does not repeat itself in the future.

Healing began outside the Delta Ottawa on June 2, 2015, as a group of Indigenous men stood outside during a break, laughing and hugging each other. It was truly an awesome sight to witness. Such a difference following the release of the TRC report, when residential school survivors broke down. Residential schools had been closed, and yet they still felt the impact of the time they spent in those schools when they were children.

To this day, I feel very blessed to have been in the walk from Gatineau, Quebec to Ottawa's city hall with 10,000 others from all across Canada that Sunday afternoon. Bishop Mark, our National Indigenous Bishop, was with us in the walk, as was Primate Fred Hiltz, who was

Photo: Mack Male

TRC Walk of Reconciliation, Edmonton.

gifted with a hand drum from one of the chiefs leading the walk.

There were those in the walk who asked for help, as they wanted to stop and rest along the way. They felt they were not able to complete the walk. I asked them, "What brought them out to walk? Whom are you honouring today?" They shared their stories of relatives – parents, uncles, aunts, sisters, brothers – who had been in different residential schools, and the impacts of being in those schools; how much abuse was inflicted on them; how some relatives had committed suicide, as they were not able to live with the shame; how some died when they ran away; how physical abuse was showered on survivors and their children.

I, in turn, shared the stories of being married to a survivor and how I learned to survive being in that relationship because of the love I have for my children. I had two older sisters, Julia Head and Matilda Constant, and one older brother, Leo "Chap" Constant, who had been stolen from my parents and placed in different residential schools.

The stories told during that walk were heartbreaking. But, I also heard from others who happily stated that they were going to complete the walk and honour the memory of their loved ones, family and friends, and those who had passed away and were not able to witness this significant part of history. They received a lot of encouragement and strength by sharing their stories as we walked and talked.

In the middle of walking with 10,000 people, healing took place. It was a very humbling experience to listen to them.

At one point, we heard someone shouting and pointing to an eagle circling overhead. The sighting of the eagle told us that we were changing the face of history and changing the stories of residential schools.

We walked forward that day, as did the survivors of those residential schools. Some of the survivors who are still living today have been successful and their spirits have not been broken or destroyed. They are damaged, maybe, but not unable to learn to forgive and move forward.

The walk of 10,000 people made a difference, and it united a lot of us to work towards healing and reconciliation. There is a lot of work to be done yet towards healing. Neither the government nor the churches can tell us how to heal; they cannot give us guidelines or draw up policies to heal. The Grassroots people need to help residential school survivors to heal.

Some healing may happen in my lifetime and in my children's time, but it will take years for the healing to be completed, as it took years for the damage to be done by residential schools. Grassroots people have the knowledge, the experience, the patience and the strength to help the healing.

Despite all the challenges faced each day, we are moving forward to a better tomorrow.

Sacred space is within each one of us: how we see others in a good way and how we treat and respect others. Healing will only happen if both Indigenous and non-Indigenous walk this journey together side by side, learn from each other, and have a better understanding of each other, using the Creator's gifts of strength, wisdom, courage, and love.

Sylvia James is Cree from Opaskwayak, The Pas, Manitoba. She is an Elder on the Rupert's Land Elders Circle and is involved with the urban Indigenous community of Winnipeg. If she had the chance to write a book, she would call it Degree of Life.

A House of Common Prayer

GRAHAM MACFARLANE

St. Margaret's chancel arch.

The main worship space of a typical Anglican church comprises a nave, a chancel, and a sanctuary. The nave is the largest part of the worship space, and contains all the pews, the pulpit, and the lectern. The chancel is the front part of the worship space and often contains prayer desks and choir pews set perpendicular to the pews in the nave. The sanctuary is the furthermost part of the chancel, is usually cordoned off by a communion rail, and contains the altar (or communion table).

By contrast, a typical Catholic church only comprises a nave and a sanctuary. The classic form of a Catholic church is the Roman basilica, which is a nave terminating in an apse, a semi-circular sanctuary often topped by a half-dome. The only Anglican church in Rupert's Land that I know of with a Roman basilica plan is St. Michael and All Angels (1920), which was conceived and built as a conscious turning towards Rome. Lower-church Protestants, including some Anglicans, pointedly refer to the whole worship space as the "sanctuary" to reflect the priesthood of all believers, even if in practice the front part of the worship space is still usually somehow distinguished from the main seating area. But, notwithstanding differences in terminology and a great variety in building styles, virtually every Anglican church in Rupert's Land, large or small, high or low, old or modern, employs the tripartite division of nave, chancel, and sanctuary.

Especially in bigger, older Anglican churches, the nave and chancel are architecturally articulated as distinct spaces, often so much so that they are almost two different buildings sharing a party wall pierced by a chancel arch. Examples of such two-cell churches in Winnipeg include Holy Trinity (1884), St. Philip's, Norwood (1904), St. Luke's (1905), St. Margaret's (1912), St. John's Cathedral (1926), and All Saints' (1927). In any of these churches, when you're sitting in a pew in the nave, you're looking through a prominent chancel arch into the chancel and sanctuary. The Modernist churches in Rupert's Land tend to comprise a single, uninterrupted worship space, but they still demarcate nave, chancel, and sanctuary, even if only with minimal means such as steps or even the play of light. The chancel in St. George's, Crescentwood (1958), for example, is marked by a broad shaft of light coming from a north-facing full-height clerestory window that lines up exactly with the width of the chancel between nave and sanctuary.

In terms of its historical development, the main reason that the rectangular chancel was preferred to the Roman-style semi-circular sanctuary seems to have been largely practical in nature, and determined in part by the close connection between the monastic orders and parish churches in medieval England. Many parish churches were owned and operated by monastic orders, and the monks would occupy the stalls in the chancel that are nowadays occupied by the choir. Fluctuating numbers of parishioners and monks might prompt renovations to either the nave or chancel, and the two-cell church with a rectangular nave and rectangular chancel is extremely easy to renovate and enlarge. Often, a church would be built as a one-cell structure with nave and chancel articulated by a rood screen midway down its length, only to have a second cell added at some later date. And, indeed, we can see examples of this same process in Rupert's Land, where both St. Philip's and St. Margaret's were initially one-cell structures to which larger chancels were later added.

The tripartite division of nave, chancel, and sanctuary is a function of the sacredness of church space. The sanctuary is so called because it is place of the holy Eucharist. But, what is particularly interesting about the typical Anglican church is not so much the distinction between sanctuary and nave, but the survival of the chancel as a distinct space. Extended chancels developed in large part to house monks, and with the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII, extensive chancels became largely redundant.

So why do we still have chancels at all? What seems to have happened is that the chancel was reimagined and repurposed as the place from which the common worship of the parishioners was led. In older times, people in the nave played a somewhat limited role in the liturgy, which was primarily performed in the chancel by the clergy, in Latin. Now with the Book of Common Prayer, the liturgy consisted of a back-and-forth between priest and congregation. The priest led the service from a prayer desk in the chancel, and during the Eucharist was installed in the sanctuary. That is, Anglican liturgy came to consist of chancel/nave and sanctuary/nave exchanges between priest and congregation. Thus, every line of *The Book of Common Prayer* (and by extension the BAS) corresponds to nave, chancel, or sanctuary.

According to Richard Hooker in *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, whatever special dignity attached to churches is a function of their use as houses of prayer, and specifically of common prayer. But prayer can only truly be common – that is, communal – if it has some determinate form so that the community can perform it as a common act: "The public prayers of the people of God in Churches thoroughly settled did never use to be voluntary dictates proceeding from any man's *[sic]* extemporal wit." In order to be public and communal, such prayer must consist of exchanges between a leader and a congregation.

Such is the liturgy laid out in *The Book of Common Prayer*, and it perfectly corresponds to the formal arrangement of the church fabric as nave, chancel, and sanctuary. For prayer to be common prayer, there must be a congregation in the nave and there must be some worship leader at the prayer desk in the chancel or at the altar in the sanctuary. The basic antiphon of our communion is the mutual invocation of divine presence, *the Lord be with you / and also with you*. This is how our churches are sacred spaces, that God makes himself present where his people are gathered to worship him publicly and communally. And, it is the tripartite division of nave, chancel, and sanctuary that allows the people of God to pray *together*, so that the church building may function as a House of Common Prayer.

Graham MacFarlane is Director of Program at Manitoba Pioneer Camp, and rector's warden at St. Philip's, Norwood.

Youth Camino Pilgrimage


Photo: Becky Slater

From left to right: Mark Gareau, Anil Pinto-Gfroerer, Iona Taylor, Faith Nero, and Rebecca Widdicombe pose together after walking 25 kilometres. Not pictured: Becky Slater

Pilgrims were people who figured things out as they walked.
Pilgrims were people wondering, wondering.
Pilgrims were people who tried not to annoy the regular inhabitants.
Pilgrims were people who carried little. They carried it balanced on their heart.

–Anne Carson, "Kinds of Water"

Rebecca Widdicombe

I am a youth leader at St. Margaret's Anglican. It has long been a dream of mine to start a tradition of pilgrimage for the senior high youth group. This spring we will be embarking on the first journey, walking the final third of the Camino de Santiago. Our pilgrimage group is small, but strong, and excitement is already brewing amongst the junior youth for their turn!

These young pilgrims worship together regularly, serve in various ministry areas, and participate in the youth program. They also gather once a month to walk and study the lives and stories of Christians who have walked before them, and to learn something of the pilgrim way of simplicity, fortitude, and faith.

We intend to develop a rhythm of life together on this journey, rising early to prepare and share a meal together before we walk. We plan to end each day with Compline, a liturgy that has become an integral practice in our youth community over the last several years. There will be one camera and one logbook (youth are not bringing their phones!), and we will take turns recording the narrative of the day in image and word. These pictures and journal entries will become pieces of St. Margaret's youth history, passed down to the next group as they prepare to make their way own on the Camino.

Anil Pinto-Gfroerer

This May will bring an exciting event into my life, when I will be travelling to Barcelona. From

there, accompanied by some of my dearest friends and leaders, I will undertake the age-old pilgrimage to the Camino de Compustela, a grand cathedral where the ruins of the Saint James are said to be laid. These ruins are a key feature of the Camino de Santiago and were an extremely important aspect of the Medieval Catholic Church. Relics of such saints and holy figures can be found in many cathedrals and are believed to give protection to the congregants.

I want to live the reality of medieval pilgrims and join in the ancient devotional trek to find God. I have grown up in the Church and have always known that I can find home there, no matter where I live. So, I suppose I should say, I am not going on the Camino to find God; I am going on the Camino to discover God and see him in new ways.

Becky Slater

I am a physiotherapist who has been a member of St. Margaret's for many decades and was a member of the youth group many years ago. I am an experienced hiker, having done other pilgrimage trips in the past, and volunteered to come as a resource and support. I turned 60 this year and thought this was a great time to walk with young people, to enjoy their energy and perspective as they do something like this for the first time. Pilgrimage is always an individual experience, but as a group we will draw inspiration, strength, and, hopefully, faith from each other. I am looking forward to contemplation through physical effort and the communal faith experience.

Iona Taylor

The Camino is a fairly renowned pilgrimage, and it has been travelled for more than 1,000 years. So, one might ask, why is a 16-year-old, smack in the middle of 11th grade, planning on exerting herself many hours a day for two weeks? Apart from yearning to travel and the want to be physically alive, it is on account of my current state and age that I am drawn to it. I am 16. I practise piano and harp. I like to spend much of my extra time with my friends, and I enjoy painting. I am involved in the church community at St. Margaret's. I volunteer, follow the International Baccalaureate program at school, and live as teenager in the 21st century.

Taking all this into consideration, I spend little time with just myself and God. The Camino opens up a span of two weeks in my life where my worn-out body and I will be completely immersed in his abundant creation, and my mind able to wander to unmaterialistic, intangible things in my 16-year-life life. I know that people tend to walk this once they encounter hardships and that I have hardly experienced much of what they have. But, I know enough to believe this experience will ground me, help me love my Lord and all those around me, and prepare me for all the unknowns that lie before me.

Faith Nero

I'm 15 and I attend St. Margaret's regularly. I am excited to go to Spain and walk the Camino to deepen my understanding of myself, God and our relationship, other people, and other cultures. I love to learn new things and see other perspectives of life, and this is an excellent opportunity to do so. I am also looking forward to deepening my friendships, as the Camino is a unique way to get closer to one another. I want to walk the Camino to enrich my life and gain memories I can look back on fondly.

Mark Gareau

After four years as a youth leader, I am beginning to see many of the youth who were once new to the youth group make their way towards graduation. I think it's important that we celebrate the end of this journey by embarking on a new one together: a journey where we will tithe our time to God, walk a path saturated with the prayers of innumerable saints, and add our own prayers. It is my hope that this pilgrimage will instill in the youth an understanding of the greater journey of faith they will walk the rest of their lives. As for myself, I hope that this pilgrimage will help me to fulfill my role as mentor to these youth while also allowing me time to dwell with God and meditate on what is to come.

Solidarity Along the Way

RACHEL TWIGG BOYCE

The museum attendant watched me quietly as I shuffled slowly from artifact to artifact before she gestured and asked, "Peregrina?"

"Si."

Even on a rest day in a large city without my backpack and poles, I couldn't blend in with the rest of the patrons. My telltale shuffle and pain-filled grimace identified me as a person who was willing to do unspeakable damage to her feet. It identified me as a pilgrim on the way of St. James.

I first walked the Camino de Santiago in 2015. I haven't been back – yet – but I was already planning my second pilgrimage on the plane trip home. If you've made the way, you probably understand, but it you're asking why anyone would walk 800 kilometres to go to church once, let alone multiple times, you're not alone.

The history of El Camino de Santiago de Compostela is a mix of facts and legends that sometimes contradict each other. What follows here is my best summary of the story. I leave it to you to decide what is true, what is not, and if that matters.

"El Camino" is Spanish for "the way" and "Santiago" is a word created by saying "St. James" quickly and repetitively in Spanish (San Iago… Sanlago… Santiago). "Compostela" means "field of stars." So "El Camino de Santiago de Compostela" is "The way of St. James under a field of stars."

After his death and resurrection, Jesus told his disciples to go and "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). In order to do this, the disciples divided up the then known world and James was given the area that is now Spain. After about 10 years in that region as a rather unsuccessful evangelist, James returned to Jerusalem where he was captured by Roman officials at the city gates, arrested, and beheaded. James was the first of Jesus' disciples to be martyred.

While he may not have made thousands of converts, he did have some loyal disciples who put his body in a stone boat and then, guided by angels, transported his body back to the western coast of Spain. As they were approaching the shore, there was either a wedding taking place with a groom on horseback or a knight on a horse (depending on which story

Trail markers on the Camino.

Photo: Marcin Bajer


Photo: subherwal

you prefer). The sight of a stone boat being guided by angels spooked the horse and both horse and rider plunged into the ocean. They escaped unharmed, but, when they emerged from the water, both horse and rider were covered in scallop shells. James had performed his first miracle, and the scallop shell remains a key symbol of both St. James and the Camino to this day.

James' body was buried alongside two of his disciples, and he remained largely forgotten for about 800 years. Then, in the ninth century, a shepherd named Paio was out at night doing some star gazing when he noticed a particular star pointing to a particular place. He followed the star and discovered an ancient tomb containing three bodies. He rushed to tell the authorities about his exciting discovery.

The site was confirmed to be the burial site of James and two of his disciples based in part on the fact that someone had thoughtfully labelled the body with a tag that read: "Here lies James, son of Zebedee and Salome." Alfonso II, king of Asturias and Galicia, ordered a small church to be built to mark the spot.

Pilgrims began to travel to venerate the body almost immediately, and miracles began to be attributed to St. James. This encouraged more people to embark on pilgrimage to Santiago, and, in turn, resulted in more stories of miracles. Originally, pilgrims didn't follow a set route: they simply walked out their front door took the most direct route they could find to Santiago, venerated the bones, turned around, and walked back home.

Gradually, roads, a town, and other infrastructure were built to both accommodate the influx of pilgrims and take advantage of this new economic opportunity. Santiago de Compostela quickly became the top Christian pilgrimage site in the world, beating out Jerusalem and Rome for that honour, and St. James became the country's patron saint. In 2017, 301,106 people made the pilgrimage.

I have so many treasured memories and life lessons from my time on the Camino, but one of the most beautiful things about that experience was the immediate solidarity that developed within a diverse group of people because we shared a common purpose and practice. Things which could have divided us like gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, or economic status fell away. If you were walking, you were family. This is what I miss the most from my time on the Camino.

But, I often get glimpses of that solidarity within the Church. At its best, we are also a diverse group of people with a common purpose and practice. In Spain, I knew that my cry of "Buen Camino!" would always be met with a similar salutation, just as now I can enter a room and say, "The Lord be with you," and know that every Anglican in the room will stop whatever they are doing to respond, "And also with you."

I'm excited, and a tad jealous, that a group of young people from our diocese is preparing to walk the Way. I'll be praying for them as they prepare, and look forward to hearing some of their stories when they return. Buen Camino!

Rachel Twigg Boyce is on the staff team at saint benedict's table, serving as a Deacon Associate. When she is not planning her next pilgrimage, she can be found drinking coffee, walking her dog, or doing both at the same time.

Parish News Round Up

Primate's World Relief and Development Fund

PWRDF has put out two Advent studies:

- **Empowered & Empowering Women: An Advent Reflection on Women in the Bible from Eve to Mary**: a collection of daily scripture readings, reflections, stories and prayers that draws parallels between the stories of women in the Bible and the women of PWRDF's programs around the world.
- **Advent Lives and is Changing Lives**, a children's study for Advent. Cows, pigs, sheep, goats and more tell the story of Christmas and PWRDF.

To sign up for the Empowered & Empowering Women study, or download the children's study, visit PWRDF's website.

PWRDF
The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund
The Anglican Church of Canada

Anglican Lutheran Centre

All are welcome to attend an Open House hosted by the MNO Synod and the Diocese of Rupert's Land on December 5 from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Come visit with Bishop Jason Zinko, Bishop Geoff Woodcroft, and the rest of the diocesan staff.

Upcoming Issues

In **January** we'll explore divine mystery in this issue on **Mysticism**.

February's issue takes a look at poverty and the privilege behind **Living with Less**.

And, **March's** issue is about being **Alone**.

Donate to Rupert's Land News

If you would like to support the work of *Rupert's Land News*, please consider making a donation (be sure to indicate RLN).

Donations of $20 or more will receive a tax deductible receipt. We appreciate your continued support and encouragement of this ministry.

Your donations would go towards:

- putting together the Monthly magazine
- putting together the Weekly newsletter
- maintaining the website and social media
- attending and covering diocesan events
- and covering the costs of layout and design by Cityfolk Creative

The Night Before the Pageant

JOANNE EPP

Photo: Ben White

Costumes draped over chairs: white tunics
for angels, brown or striped for prophets,
peasants, shepherds. Feathers and fake fur
to dress creation's extravagant parade.
Blue robe and veil for Mary.
Children have come, said their lines,
sung their songs, and gone home.
In the wake of their leaving, the helpers
put props in order, turn out lights. The room
settles into stillness that echoes not yet,
almost, not long. Ready for the story
whose telling always ends too soon.
And if, this time, the sweetness
of costumed sheep, the memorized "O Come"
won't satisfy, it's only that the children
play their roles too well. Their final "Gloria"
pulls aside a curtain, reveals a heaven
heard around the edge of things, a glory
we long for without knowing.

Joanne Epp is a poet who serves as sub-organist at St. Margaret's Anglican in Winnipeg. Her first book of poems, *Eigenheim*, was published in 2015, and she is currently at work on her second.

C. S. Lewis, the Great War, and an Unwitting Canadian Connection

MICHAEL GILMOUR

It's July 8, 1917. The Great War rages on the Continent and an 18-year-old C. S. Lewis settles into his new life at the University of Oxford. Studies are on hold, the school nearly empty. Most his peers are on the battlefield, many already dead. He himself will reach the trenches of France within a few months, arriving there on his 19th birthday. He will sustain injuries and return to England to convalesce, after which he will resume his academic pursuits and launch his career as a scholar and writer. But not yet, not at the moment he writes a letter to his longtime friend and correspondent, Arthur Greeves, back in Ireland. In this latest missive, he tells of a moving experience from the night before.

These days, he spends most his time at nearby Keble College training for military service, living there in temporary barracks, but returning to his rooms at University College on weekends. Though Irish and exempt from conscription, he serves anyway, entering the army through the University Officers' Training Corps. Military service is, perhaps, an odd fit for him. The teenage Lewis was bookish, by his own admission fat, not particularly patriotic, and seems to have little respect for the army and soldiering. "Write me a nice long letter and help keep up other interests amid all this damned military show," he tells Arthur on one occasion.

He is understandably afraid of what's to come, but also surprisingly resigned. His father is anxious that his son should be in the artillery, assuming this to be safer. Jack (as he was known) is more realistic, seeing the more dangerous infantry to be his fate. He lacks the "advanced mathematics" required for an artillery appointment for one thing, and he is uncomfortable with the idea of his father influencing the army's decision to secure protections others do not enjoy: "It is true that you might get me in by influence. But would it not be very wrong for mere reasons of safety, to push me into a responsible position for which I know I am absolutely unfit?" He later reports his respect for the Commanding Officer of the 3rd Somerset Light Infantry, and comradeship with other soldiers, as further incentives to stay where he is.

With an uncertain future ahead, just months before reaching France, Lewis settles into his letter. "Last night," he tells Arthur, "I wandered

out into the deserted [quad of University College] and, after 'strolling' for some time, went up a staircase where nobody ever goes in these days into the oldest part of the College." There is an artistic flair to his storytelling here, as he establishes an eerie, gothic atmosphere, complete with tiny, ivy-covered windows, gloomy halls and rooms, and a descending darkness. "I walked up and down long passages," he continues, "with locked rooms on each side, reveling in 'desolation.'" Most of the student rooms are locked, but – readers see this coming after the dramatic setup –"by good luck I found one open and went in." He observes the name Carter inscribed on the door.

There is a deep sense of melancholy at this moment. It seems to Lewis "almost sacrilege to turn on the lights in such a forsaken place, but I simply had to inspect it." The furniture is just as its former resident left it, his photos on the wall, his books in place: a copy of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, one of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*. A snapshot of a young student's life, one now in the trenches instead of Oxford's lecture halls. Lewis finds the experience moving and tells Arthur, "I suppose this sounds trivial to you: but perhaps you can picture the strange poetry of the thing in such a time and place. I wonder who Carter is, and if he has been killed yet, and why he left his pile of music so untidily on the dressing table?"

Lewis couldn't have known that the student whose room he visited was Canadian: Mr. Arthur Norwood Carter, who came to Oxford from New Brunswick as a Rhodes Scholar. He survived the war and was awarded the Military Cross on March 6, 1918.

After continuing his evening rambles with a visit to the clock tower with its "cobwebs," he returns to his rooms for some relief, finding the empty school "a bit creepy." And once there, he settles into Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* for comfort, an epic poem of knights in armor, heroism, and service to Queen and country.

Lewis closes this letter, as he often does in correspondence with Arthur, by discussing his literary ambitions, the hope of getting "my stuff" published. (He would eventually release his first book, a collection of poems, in 1919). There's a connection here, I think, between the brief glimpses of Lewis-the-soldier and Lewis-the-would-be-author in letters around this time. To his mind, both careers seem doomed to failure. He tells Arthur, with respect to his longing to write books, "What castles in the air – but still better have a cloud castle than no castle at all."

An intriguing expression. His extravagant, ambitious desire to publish is likely nothing more than a pipe dream, but he recognizes the dreaming itself is what really matters. At the same time, the fat, bookish, unlikely soldier retreats into Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, of all things. Though unfit for the artillery and, in many other ways, a less than ideal candidate for service, this frightened solider on the eve of battle finds comfort in a chivalrous romance about knights slaying dragons and other enemies of the realm. A bit of escapism, yes, but also an embrace of the heroic, as if to say, "My career as a soldier is not likely to end any better than my efforts to publish, but duty calls and I must try my best." Imagination, those castles in the sky, as inspiration. Imagination, sparked by Spenser's tales of the Redcrosse Knight and others, as solace to one about to face his own dragon.

For this letter and other letters of the period, see C. S. Lewis, Collected Letters, Volume 1: Family Letters 1905–1931, *ed. Walter Hooper.*

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