



5 We Carry On

8 Holy Disruption

**12 Practising
the Sixth Promise**

15 The Work of Mourning

Publisher | [Bishop Geoffrey Woodcroft](#)
 Editor | [Kyla Neufeld](#)
 Accounting | [Bernice Funk](#)
 Advertising | [Angela Rush](#)
 Layout & design | [cityfolkcreative.ca](#)

Editorial offices:
 Anglican Lutheran Centre
 935 Nesbitt Bay
 Winnipeg Manitoba, R3T 1W6

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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](#).

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Creative Disruptions



In the marketing world, the term “Creative Disruption” is used to describe the desired break in target audiences’ existing patterns of behaviour in response to new, creative messages. Some of the goals of Creative Disruptions are developing memorable marketing messages that consumers will act upon; creating new business ideas that lead to new innovations; and disrupting traditional marketing strategies, thus making them obsolete. The idea is to break away from the mediocrity of the norm.

Creative Disruptions present themselves in life, and it’s up to us to respond to them accordingly. If the norm of the Church is bodies in pews on Sunday mornings and a full-time priest who takes on all pastoral duties of the congregation, then what happens when a church doesn’t have a full-time priest?

If the norm of consumer culture is an erosion of resources and an increase in pollution and waste, how do we respond to environmental degradation?

If the norm of our lives is to hold on to them with everything we have, how do we mourn when the time comes?

This issue has four articles that offer their own takes on Creative Disruption.

Heather McCance writes about parishes that don’t have full-time incumbents. We’ll hear from All Saints’, Whytewold, St. Matthew’s, Winnipeg, St. Helen’s, Fairford, St. John’s, Pilot Mound, St. Michael’s, Victoria Beach, the Shared United Church/Anglican Ministry at Red Lake, and the parishes of Pembina Hills about how they worship and partake in ministry. We also have the story of a parishioner from St. Mary Magdalene, who experienced many upheavals in his life and ultimately found himself in Canada. For Earth Day, Beverley Eert offers six lists of actions that Rupert’s Landers can make in their homes to help care for creation. And, in via media, Jane Barter reflects on *The Work of Mourning* by Jaques Derrida and her own work as a “professional mourner.”

Let us remember that disruptions in life are nothing to be afraid of; sometimes we just need to get a little creative.



Photo: [Neil Thomas](#)



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

Are We Open to God's Agenda?

GEOFFREY WOODCROFT

Photo: Zane Lee

Much of the way I think and process information, events and relationships comes from the way I developed over the years. I still surprise myself to discover just how predictable I am in most situations. I suspect that you are discovering that about me. Some amount of predictability is probably a good thing, but dependency upon it, at least in my case, is not. There are some things that folk expect in a leader, and two of them are to be ready to listen and to be empathetic.

I am a person of privilege and stubbornly stuck in my ways. I know it, and when I forget it, God reminds me. God disturbs me! God puts things in my way to cause me to trip, always back to the Body of Christ.

In every meeting I have attended in the last four months, I have become more acutely aware of the spiritual presence of God creating some agenda for which I had no prior knowledge.

I met a couple of disciples in a coffee shop one evening, where we prayed with one another and discussed their committee's agenda. There was a sense of urgency, as they saw that the nature of their mandate was becoming vague, and they needed direction and clarity. As I listened to their agenda, there was a moment where I thought *they want me to fix something, give direction and clarity.*

As we listened to one another and shared experiences, we grew in excitement. Clearly, something was happening; we were connecting the dots that led to other people's stories about God, ministry, and mission. Our beginning

direction was high-jacked by God, and no matter what I think of myself, no one was asking me to fix anything. The ideas we discussed had direction and clarity, but also a profound sense that we were being drawn into something far less predictable.

God thwarts my vain attempts to assert my own agenda, to *fix* everything, by placing other people or things around me who and which do not want my fixing. God invites me into the heaven of God to participate in a much broader and richer conversation. In many ways, the Church behaves as I do, because "That's the way we do things here." Predictable, and perhaps even complacent. Yet, each of us is a vehicle of God's voice, ears, hands, and healing; God continually thwarts our agendas to find that place of health and wholeness for the Body.

Do we have the patience to listen for God's agenda, especially for those with whom we struggle and quarrel? I am more convinced every day that I need to be patient and open to God through every disciple. God calls us to renew our relationships daily so that we might wrestle with, be disturb by, and find comfort within the vast heaven of God within which we are invited to dwell.

Today is a good day to be shaken to the core.



Geoffrey Woodcroft,
Bishop of Rupert's Land

We Carry On

HEATHER McCANCE



When many people think of a church, they think of people on a Sunday morning and a full-time priest leading worship. Yet for over 60 percent of the congregations in Rupert's Land, that isn't the reality. I asked some people from some of these churches what difference it makes in worship when there is no full-time priest in the parish.

A retired priest travels to All Saints', Whytefold from Winnipeg twice a month to lead Holy Eucharist. On the other Sundays, Lay Readers lead Morning Prayer services, including preparing and preaching the sermon. The Lay Readers have learned to adapt some services in the Book of Alternative Services that assume a priest will be present, like Ash Wednesday or Good Friday, so that they can lead. "All Saints just seems to adapt to changing preachers and circumstances!" says Lay Reader Lois Graham. Lois also notes that the Morning Prayer service in the Book of Alternative Service leaves a fair bit of room for customization. A previous priest had developed a Service of the Word for use at

All Saints' and at St. Bartholomew's, Winnipeg Beach (their neighbouring parish), but today "we now do our 'own' service from the BAS."

Dianne Pertoci of the Red Lake Shared United Church/Anglican Ministry agrees about a congregation learning to adapt. "Not having a full-time priest or minister has made the congregation members very receptive to the different leaders and appreciative of their efforts," she says. In Red Lake, a team of parishioners, both United Church and Anglican, has come together to organize and lead worship. The congregation uses the United Church worship resource "Gathering" as a guide for prayers, readings, and hymns alongside the Anglican Morning Worship format (with no communion) for most Sundays.

Three members of the parish take turns preaching, and the congregation invites a local pastor from Grace Community Church to preach once a month. On alternating months, United Church Minister Judy McEwan travels from Dryden to lead services and Archdeacon

Red Lake Parish



James Dugan makes the more-than-three-hour trip from Kenora to lead the congregation in Holy Communion. "It is very noticeable that our service on the Sunday that Jim Dugan visits is more elevated – prayers seem to mean more and the whole service seems more special. And I have heard from other Anglicans that they miss having communion at least once a month."

At St. Matthew's in Winnipeg, the Rev. Gwen McAllister serves as part-time incumbent. She presides at Holy Communion most Sundays (although a retired or visiting priest will preside once a month), but the congregation is also "experimenting with a service that is in the same form as the Communion liturgy, but has a renewal of Baptismal vows and a blessing with water in place of Communion. This service could be used on rare occasions and allow our deacon to 'preside,' even when no priest is present." Because Gwen is not full-time, she often invites others to preach, both members of the parish and guests from outside. "One of the gifts of this is that we hear different voices and theologies and, frankly, different favourite phrases, and that expands the parish's theology and understanding of God and our faith tradition."

The Parishes of Pembina Hills are five churches lead by a Ministry Support Team using the Local Collaborative Ministry model. The Team is comprised of locally-raised and trained lay people and priests, who together lead the ministry of the churches as volunteers. The priests take turns leading worship and preaching at the churches in Pembina Hills, and some of the lay leaders preach as well. Deacon Mona Blackburn from St. John's, Pilot Mound notes that each priest has a different approach "and we go along with each one. We are very appreciative of having our clergy and the time they give. We are all volunteers."

So not having a paid, full-time priest means that congregations hear different voices, both ordained and lay, leading worship and preaching. It also often means that the form of liturgy needs to be flexible to account for the needs of the particular congregation. These can be advantages, but there are drawbacks, too.

"We miss having a full-time priest because that gives us a sense of continuity," notes Joan Merton, a Lay Reader at St. Michael's in Victoria Beach, where they have been without an incumbent for some time. St. Michael's is currently led in worship by a combination of visiting priests providing sacramental ministry, and Morning



St. John's Pilot Mound

Prayer is led by Lay Readers.

Deacon Cathie Clow leads Morning Prayer and preaches once a month at St. Helen's, Fairford. The Rev. Steven Martin from the Diocese of Brandon also visits once a month to lead Holy Eucharist. "The lack of having a full-time priest has given the impression that the services are not important," says Cathie. "The same with only having two services per month. The younger people stay away because they are not



St. Michael's Victoria Beach

getting their ‘spirituality,’ so [they] attend the Pentecostal church, which does have services every Sunday.”

Still, in a tradition that has often been seen as too clergy-focused, churches without full-time priests bear witness to a different way of being the Body of Christ in worship.

Diane Pertoci in Red Lake says, “The time spent together and worshipping together is valued by everyone present. We leave church on Sunday with a message and a ‘feel good’ outlook.” Joan Merton reminds us, “We just carry on at St. Michael Victoria Beach; we do our best with the talents God has given us!” Gwen McAllister suggests that “it feels like a group effort to ‘make church’ every Sunday. It’s a positive and empowering feeling; we don’t need to be perfect, only flexible and open. Sunday mornings are literal *practice* living our theology.” With a variety of preachers and styles, Cathie Clow notes, “you never know what you are going to get, *but*, no matter – one does get the Good News of God.”

And, as Lois Graham notes, “The people come. We worship. We share together. We carry on with God as our guide, strength, and wisdom,

for he is the reason we come and worship each Sunday and continue on as his disciples.”

That is the shared theme from all of these churches. With the advantages and disadvantages to not having a full-time priest to lead them in worship week by week, these communities of disciples have learned to be flexible with liturgy. Regardless of who might be standing at the front of the church, they gather for worship, to hear God’s word proclaimed, and to celebrate the sacraments (when and how they can). They are the Body of Christ in their communities, gathered for worship and the work of God’s mission, and they know it.



Heather McCance is a priest who serves as Diocesan Ministry Developer for Rupert’s Land. When she’s not working, she might be at the gym, curled up with a good novel, or leading the 13th Winnipeg Brownies.

Holy Disruption

HEATHER BIRTLES



Abid Munir is an active member of our congregation, serving on vestry and representing the parish of St. Mary Magdalene at PWRDF meetings in the diocese. On a recent visit to our church, Bishop Geoff asked him to share his story and he agreed.

Abid was born in Peshawar, a city in Northern Pakistan with a population of two million people. It is an ancient city close to the border of Afghanistan. Abid's parents are Christian and value education, working hard to see that all their children would go to school. His early education was in Christian schools. When he reached Grade 10, he was able to earn money to help himself and his family. Later, he became a "homework teacher" at an elite school, where the remuneration was good. As a member of a minority group, he was always aware of some discrimination against Christians, but only began to experience it seriously when he attended university. He worked hard to obtain a Bachelor of Commerce degree and continued his studies in the same field.

In 2001, many things changed, and the terrorist attacks of September 11 in New York made the greatest difference. The U.S. increased their military presence and, along with other allies, brought humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. There was great disruption in all aspects of life in Pakistan and at the University; examinations were put on hold for many months. When he finally graduated with his Master of Commerce, Abid obtained an NGO job, running a program for Afghan Refugees. He was helped by a friend to obtain employment in Kabul, working for an NGO. He continued in the areas of development, relief, and aid for eight years, working in finance and administration for different agencies. In his work and travel back and forth to Kabul by road, there was often extreme danger. More than once he and his travelling companions were caught in the cross fire between the Afghan troops and the Taliban.

Abid met and married his wife Rashida in 2008. They decided to raise their family in a safer and hopefully more accepting environment, and made an immigration application under the skilled worker category to come to Canada. When this was finally made possible in 2012, their three sons had been born.

In Canada, he first found work through the help of a Christian friend as a machinist. While grateful for the job, in time, Abid began to look for other opportunities suited to his skills. After obtaining a project management diploma from University of Winnipeg, he began working for the TD Bank in Financial Services.

Abid has always prayed and shared his specific hopes and a dream with God. He has a heart and passion to help the underprivileged people around the world, and having experienced many spirit-filled moments in his journey so far, he is hopeful for the future despite his constant concern for family and friends back home.

Heather Britles worships at St. Mary Magdalene, where she is also the co-editor of The Magdala News. She enjoys her roles of sister, mother, grandma, and friend.

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Parish News Round Up

Agape Table

Agape Table is happy to introduce Jim Steep as the new Executive Director. After serving for two years as Agape Table's Board Chairman, Jim brings to his new position a great understanding of the values and mission of Agape Table, as well as a heart full of compassion for guests and community.

2018 was a season of change for Agape Table, having moved from its long time home of All Saints' Anglican to Waves Church. Jim was an active participant in all aspects of the transition, and was instrumental in making sure that even under all the pressures of such a huge undertaking not one meal was missed.

The Board of Directors, staff, and community are all very excited about 2019 and all that it holds under Jim's leadership.

As well, on Saturday April 13, Agape Table is partnering with the Exchange District Pharmacy for a Free Exchange District Pharmacy Inner City Health Fair and BBQ.

This event will provide an additional meal for a community in need, and also an opportunity for any attendee to get valuable one-on-one time with medical practitioners, such as family physicians, specialist physicians, surgeons, pharmacists, and more.

Volunteers are needed, as well as financial support. Please [contact them](#) to find out how you can get involved.



From the Ground Up

PWRDF has been working with a Uganda-based NGO called St. Jude Family Projects, which works with farmers, women, youth, and children. It was founded in 1997 by Josephine and John Kizza Aliddeki, teachers-turned-farmers, just looking for a way to support themselves and their family.

"Uganda is an agricultural country, and the people who do most of the farming are women," says Josephine. "And they suffer, especially around here where the neighbouring district was very affected by HIV and AIDS. Many women were widowed or sick with HIV and AIDS but without food. We are training them to grow food in their gardens using simple methods that they can teach their children."

[Click here to read their full story.](#)



St. Saviour's Anglican

The fourth annual Gifts of Grace Fundraising Dinner is coming up on April 13 at St. Saviour's Anglican. This event will feature a multi-course Pakistani dinner.

Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Dinner begins at 6:00 p.m.

Tickets: \$25, available through St. Saviour's office 204-667-0336 or Campbell McIntyre 204-339-3690. ([poster](#))



This page of the Parish News Round Up is sponsored by Richard Rosin. For more information, see his ad on page 15.

Blessing of Oils and Renewal of Baptismal and Ordination Vows

Bishop Don has been appointed to conduct Reconciliation of a Penitent for any who wish to make a private confession. This will be available one hour prior to the start of each ceremony. A light lunch will follow.

- **Sunday, April 7** at St. John’s Cathedral (135 Anderson Avenue), 7:00 p.m.
- **Wednesday, April 10** at Grace St. John (80 2nd Street SW, Carman), 11:00 a.m.

St. John’s College

Food for the Journey, St. John’s College’s monthly breakfast series, is coming up on April 6. Heather Barkman will be presenting on “From Mother to Martyr: Woman Martyrs in Early Christianity.”

This event begins at 9:00 a.m. with morning prayers, a delicious breakfast, and this thought-provoking presentation and discussion.

Cost is \$12 per person, except students, who attend for free. Please [RSVP to Amy Craddock](#) at 204-474-8531. ([poster](#))

St. Andrew’s-on-the-Red

Enharmony will be performing at St. Andrew’s-on-the-Red on April 6, to help celebrate St. Andrew’s 170th anniversary. This concert is just the first of many celebratory events. Enharmony is a group of singers who are selected from the Winnipeg Youth Chorus.

Tickets are \$10 and available at the door. Refreshments will be served.

For more information, contact Barbara Gessner at 204-338-7483. ([poster](#))

Ministry Opportunity

The Anglican Diocese of Calgary is seeking applications for the new full-time position of Ministry Developer. The Ministry Developer will partner with specific lay-led congregations to empower the people and equip lay leaders for their mission, witness, and ministry in the Church and out in the world. The Ministry Developer is a new position, working under the leadership of the Rural Missioner and in collaboration with the Emotional Health Facilitator as a key member of the Rural Ministry Team, which also includes a part-time Administrative Assistant for Mission. This new position is but one sign among many of a transformation that has been happening in the diocese over the past several years. A Spirit-led paradigm shift has profoundly changed how we perceive rural congregations, and how we seek to support rural lay leaders. What was once a fringe concept now enjoys wide support among the laity, clergy, and officers of the diocese. As such, the Ministry Developer will be working in a highly supportive team environment.

Interested candidates to send their application to [the Rev. Clara King](#), Rural Missioner, Anglican Diocese of Calgary. The posting will remain open until filled; only successful candidates will be contacted.

[Read a letter from the Diocese of Calgary here.](#)

[Full job description here.](#)

Evensong

The Evensong schedule for April is:

- **April 7:** All the King’s Men (St. John’s College), 7:00 p.m.
- **April 14:** St. Luke’s Anglican, 4:00 p.m.
- **April 28:** All Saints’ Anglican, 4:00 p.m.

St. Mary Magdalene

There will be a Pub Night at St. Mary Magdalene, Saturday, April 13, 2019, featuring the Narwhals and Bishop Geoff, as a fundraiser for Anglican Grow Hope.

Doors open at 7:00 p.m. Music begins at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$10. [Email Marlene](#) for tickets. Or, preferably, have one person from your parish contact Marlene with the number of tickets you need for your community.[\(poster\)](#)

Earth Day

Reminder: The Creation Matters Working Group would like to encourage parishes to celebrate Earth Sunday, either on Easter Day, April 21, or the following week, April 28. They are inviting parishes to sing “All Things Bright

and Beautiful” as part of the celebrations.

The final verse of the hymn says, “God gave us eyes to see them / and lips that we might tell.” So what do we need to do about the devastation of creation? As Anglicans and stewards of creation, we must first acknowledge earth’s losses. We must use our eyes to see and our lips to tell, our fingers to write to all levels of government, our hands to plant trees and gardens, our feet to walk and march, and our hearts and minds to pray. *How great is the Creator, who has made all things well.* It is up to us to ensure that it recovers and remains well.

Please celebrate Earth Sunday and take some small action every day to combat climate change and extinction.


The Creation Matters Working Group is a working group of the Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice coordinating committee of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Anglican Journal

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With every blessing,



Michael Thompson
General Secretary,
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MAJ-JUN 2019

Practising the Sixth Promise

BEVERLEY EERT



Will you strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation, and respect, sustain and renew the life of the Earth?

I will, with God's help. –The sixth promise of The Baptismal Covenant

By far, the most frequent creation care question asked by Anglicans is "What can I do to care for creation at home and in my parish?" In the face of environmental degradation and rapid climate change, there is tremendous desire to take action, but a lack of direction as to where to begin.

Over time, scribbled notes and references in my Creation Matters file have evolved into a growing list of things we can do. Possible actions seem to fall into six general areas of concern. Within each of these categories, I have loosely arranged suggestions according to perceived difficulty and/or cost. A good way to start might be to check off all the things you are already doing and then tackle a new one. Or, if you are really eager, take on one from each of the six lists.

However you choose to use this resource, God's creation will benefit. You will be keeping your baptismal covenant. And your children will thank you.

Energy

Starting Out

- Put reminders near light switches to turn off the lights when not in use.
- Open blinds and drapes during the day and close them at night.
- Replace standard light bulbs with LEDs.
- Install programmable thermostats.
- Use dishwasher only when full, on light wash and air dry.
- Remove dust from refrigerator condenser coils.
- Wash laundry in cold water and hang to dry when possible.
- Lower hot water tank temperature to 49C (120F).
- Replace furnace filters every two months.

Getting Better

- Install movement detectors on lights in bathrooms.

- Eliminate standby loads by using power bars to turn off entertainment and office equipment.
- Install a hot water tank insulation blanket and insulate pipes within three feet of the tank.
- Caulk and weatherstrip windows and doors.

Doing More

- Install outlets with switches so you can cut entire circuits at night.
- Buy energy-efficient appliances as need arises.
- Upgrade insulation: attic to R40 and basement to R18.
- Replace windows with triple-glazed low-e argon units.
- Install a grid-tie mini-split heat pump for both heating and cooling.
- Install a grid-tie solar array.



Transportation

Starting Out

- Keep up-to-date bus schedules handy.
- Carpool; pair riders with drivers for Sunday services.
- Avoid idling.

Getting Better

- Keep engines tuned, air filters clean, and tires properly inflated.
- Post an "Idle Free Zone" sign.
- Ride the bus.
- Install a bike rack at church.

Doing More

- Buy a bike and ride it.
- Buy a hybrid vehicle or, even better, an all-electric car.
- Drive 85 kph on the highway.

Water

Starting Out

- Use water only after sunset when watering your plants and gardens.
- Avoid hosing down driveways and walkways.
- Stop using bottled water.
- Keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator, perhaps with lemon or cucumber.
- Fix leaking faucets, pipes, and hoses.
- Turn off water while brushing teeth.
- Take shorter showers.

Getting Better

- Use a drip hose for watering.
- Use mulch.
- Use low-flow shower heads & faucet aerators.

Doing More

- Install trickle irrigation.
- Install low-flush toilets.



Waste

Starting Out

- Replace all disposables with reusable materials, like saran wrap with beeswax wraps.
- Carry along your own water bottle and coffee mug.
- Keep shopping bags and reusable produce bags by the door or in the car.
- Always make double-sided copies or avoid paper copies altogether.
- Donate used clothing to a thrift organization.
- Properly recycle ink cartridges, cell phones, batteries, oil, and paint.

Getting Better

- Reduce packaging by buying from a bulk bin and using your own container.
- Organize a church garage sale.
- Put recycling bins in handy locations.
- Learn about composting.

Doing More

- Buy or build a composter.
- Keep a compost bucket in the kitchen and post a list of compostable waste.



Landscape

Starting Out

- Replace pesticides and chemical fertilizers with natural solutions.
- Use sand or grit on icy pavement instead of salt.
- Program outdoor lighting to turn on at dusk and off at midnight.
- For painting fences and walls, use recycled or low VOC paint.
- Plant perennial native vegetation instead of annuals.

Getting Better

- Plant trees to celebrate occasions.
- Plant vines on the south side of the building.
- Install light shields to direct outdoor lighting to the ground.
- Put up and maintain a bird feeder.
- Put up a bat box.
- Sow a bed of wildflowers for the bees and other pollinators.

Doing More

- Buy an electric lawn mower.
- Replace lawn with low-maintenance ground cover such as clover or thyme.
- Install a gravel-filled trench beside driveways and parking lots to drain water naturally.
- Use permeable paving stones or plastic matrix instead of solid pavement for your driveway.
- Leave a wild area untouched at the back of your property.



Food

Starting Out

- Buy as much local produce as possible.
- Buy organically grown produce whenever possible.
- Buy Canadian wine for communion.

Getting Better

- Eat meat less often.
- Organize a 100-Mile church dinner.
- Buy or make organic bread for communion.
- Serve fair trade coffee and tea.
- Buy/sell fair trade chocolate.

Doing More

- Plant a vegetable garden.
- Plant fruit trees.
- Construct a greenhouse.
- Organize a collective garden on church property and share the produce.



Beverley Eert is the Creation Matters Working Group representative in the Diocese of Brandon. She has a degree in Architecture from the University of British Columbia and ran her own design and building company in Vancouver before retiring to Manitoba.

The Work of Mourning

JANE BARTER



*Pastoral Reflections on
Jacques Derrida's
The Work of Mourning.*



In his beautiful series of reflections on the deaths of his friends and contemporaries (figures such as Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Sarah Kofman), Jacques Derrida writes of the work of mourning. It is work of sorts because we must bring to it the judgment and the skills that we have acquired in the course of a life of preparing for our own and our loved ones' deaths. In another sense it is not a work, because the more we try to control or define mourning, the more elusive it becomes.


Derrida castigates his own tendency within his eulogies for his friends to remake them in his own image – to offer a final *trompe-l'oeil* to foreground his own work. As he writes, he finds within himself a tendency "still to maneuver, to speculate, to profit or derive some benefit,

whether subtle or sublime, to draw from the dead a supplementary force to be turned against the living."

As a priest, I have tended to enough deathbeds and presided at sufficient funerals to recognize the moral peril that Derrida describes. How easy it is to succumb to a sense of heroism as one "selflessly" attends to the dying and the bereaved. And nowhere is the falsification of speech more tempting and more inevitable than in a eulogy, for a eulogy invites us to distort the life of the dead as though all their secrets had been given up, as though they are now, upon death, immediately and finally transparent to us, which is, of course, patently untrue.

And yet we can take comfort in the fact that Derrida has written a book such as this one, in spite of mourning's snares and dangers. For mourning is by its very nature not simply a private act, but also a public and a linguistic one. In spite of the dangers of mourning, we nevertheless must mourn. And we must do so through our particular and public work, which in the case of ministry is the work of language. Just as the gravedigger must overcome rock and ice and clay and forge from the ground an adequate resting place, so too must we ministers, we priests, and all those entrusted to the delicate and fraught work of mourning.



As a priest within the Anglican Church, I have become, like most of my colleagues, a professional mourner. This is so not only because my congregations are aged, but also because my church is dying. The work of mourning goes against all the natural instincts of a professional minister. We are to build churches, to raise up



What If I Got Hit By A Bus?

(or not able to communicate with my family?)

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Credit: Cinzia Giordano

leaders, and nourish faith. The vitalistic metaphors abound. But rarely do we confront the grim fact that most of us are engaged in relentless palliative care. That it will only take the death of one generous matriarch or patriarch, or a rather entrenched squabble to seal our parishes' fate. Everywhere I turn, whether it be in individual parishes, dioceses, or theological schools, the picture is the same. There is very little immediate hope for resurrection.

And so there is another type of denial that we adopt and I believe it is far more dangerous than the illusion that the dying member or the dying parish will miraculously survive. There is also denial of death that clergy fall prey to when death has become too commonplace. When the singularity of the parishioner or the closure of the church is subsumed into a general form of mourning. Derrida warns us against this, too: "One should not develop a taste for mourning, and yet mourn we must. We must, but we must not like it –mourning, that is mourning *itself*, if such a thing exists." Clergy can easily become too familiar with death, too accustomed to its phases and rhythms as though a discrete death were simply a bit part in a larger drama. But of course it is not. Death is singular, not because we each die as individuals (pace Heidegger), but because the dead are always irreducible to the impact of their lives upon others, but equally to any solitary or fixed identity.

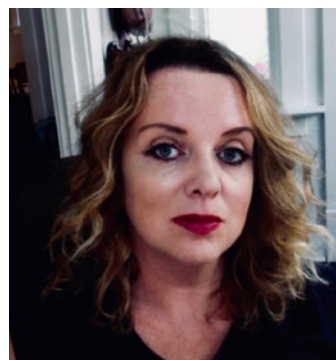
Mourning itself is in a certain sense quite the opposite of work. Because mourning is also something of a gratuitous event. To do it correctly is to set aside all the acquired skills honed

by the professional minister. To do it correctly is to remember the dead in their singularity, in their messiness, in their relationships with oneself and with others. As Derrida writes in his inimitable way:

"In order to succeed [mourning] would well have to fail, to fail well. It would well have to fail, for this is what has to be so, in failing well. That is what would have to be. And while it is always promised, it will never be assured."

The work of mourning is to become adept at failure. It is best done, and can only be sustained, through surrender. Derrida cites his friend, Belgian poet and art critic Max Loreau, who captures something of this. May we, the entirely incompetent mourners that we are, find in this our consolation and our life's work:

"Memory without knowing it opens.... so that the intimate might break through."



Jane Barter is a priest in the Diocese of Rupert's Land, who is currently serving St. Peter, Dynevor (Selkirk), St. Phillip (Hodgson), and St. Matthew (Peguis). She is also Professor of Religion and Culture at The University of Winnipeg.