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

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

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

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A LONG STANDING TRADITION

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Taking in the Season

Photo: [Rodion Kutsaev](#)

My husband and I have been discussing Christmas traditions, especially the ones that involve our daughter. It turns out that she, at 3 years old, remembers exactly how we decorated last year; she continually brings up the tree and how she's going to help us hang ornaments with the excitement of a kid waiting for, well, Christmas.

This is the first year that my husband and I are being intentional about our traditions. We've decided to adopt the Icelandic practice of exchanging books on Christmas Eve, leaving the rest of the presents for Christmas morning. We're also going to give our daughter one gift "from Santa," something my parents did not do when I was growing up. But, in an effort to curb the expectation that "Santa can bring anything" (as her cousin has been saying), we're going to limit the Santa gift to items in her stocking.

Christmas traditions change and grow. My husband has held a Christmas TV Specials party for our friends for as long as I've known him, but this year, with our packed schedule in November and December, he opted to host a New Year's party instead. I've also hung onto a few traditions from my youth, like not decorating until the First Sunday of Advent, but with the addition of new family members and changing circumstances, I've allowed myself the grace to not hold onto them so strictly.

In this issue on Turnings and Yearnings, we're exploring the balance between change

and tradition, the turning of the old year into the new. Hannah Foulger writes about grief and changing traditions at Christmas through the lens of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, and Ryan Turnbull extrapolates on some new regenerative agricultural techniques as a metaphor for "soil spirituality."

We've got lots of news in the Parish News Round Up, as well as a story and photos from Rick Morgan, Chair of the Mission and Ministry Committee at St. George's, Crescentwood, about his recent trip to Uganda to visit their companion parish. And, in via media, Lynda Wolf draws parallels between dementia and the Book of Lamentations from her experiences as an occupational therapist.

This year, my husband helped my daughter write a letter to Santa, again something I missed out on when I was growing up. But watching her taking in the season with so much excitement has made it fresh for me as well. Whether or not she decides to keep the traditions we pass on to her, this will always be a time we celebrated together with warmth and joy.



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

The Angels' Call

GEOFFREY WOODCROFT

Photo: Dil

I look upon stained glass windows, frescoes, and historical art to see gentle and lovely angel images. But, when I read Luke's birth narrative, I feel shocked by the angels' sudden appearance and their life-altering messages. Heavenly beings rehearsing my future role in the *impossible* makes me so very uncomfortable. The angels depicted in the Book of Revelation are even more frightening to me – speaking, doing, and showing horrific and final things. My heart and mind yearn to remember the gentle stained glass angel images and the “fear nots,” where it was easy for me. Yet the biblical accounts of angels, even with the “fear nots,” are also about God's disruptive presence calling for radical transformation in this life. While some are clearly comforted by the words “fear not,” they are given radical and hard tasks to complete, tasks to change the shape of human existence. Angels of the Christian testament cut through complacency, normality, oppression, injustice, and violence to make known God's mission for love, peace, and justice.

My finite flesh is no match or barrier for angels or their message. I am, in fact, like all God's children, messaged daily, if not moment to moment. So what is the impossible Godly task that angels are offering you and I these days? Were you as startled as I with the blast of the trumpet?

Fear guides some of our present conversations regarding Church health and preparedness; those conversations presuppose that we are running out of resources and people, time and space. The fear feels overwhelming and desperate, a downward spiral if you will.

However, the angels' message in the birth story long ago, and the angels who herald each new day, remind us that God raises the shocking, show-stopping truth that you and I are called away from the clamour, the downward spiral, and the fear that consumes us.

Angels call the Church to continue giving birth to a new Body, to journey from fields of fear toward a stable of a new way, to break from destructive power, and to be rejuvenated and set free in the world

Angels tug at our very souls, drawing us into God's mission, even in the midst of hopelessness. They show the wise pathways to follow and the resources to carry into God's mission.

An angel calls today; she the voice of child poverty. Another angel calls in the wind toward climate action. Several angels sing a chorus of deep truth accompanied by the harmony of reconciliation. Another angel proclaims “you are beautiful, just as God has made you. You are the gift born for the world this day.” Angels of God are constantly around creation, beckoning us out of our fears to the fullness of God's mission. Angels, of course, proclaim to the whole Church, not only to us as individuals, that we might see, dream, and embrace far beyond our finality. With them, we proclaim that God so loves each child of creation.



Geoffrey Woodcroft,
Bishop of Rupert's Land

Dickens and Turning Traditions

HANNAH FOULGER



As we move into Advent, we move into a period of expectantly waiting for the feast of Christmas and the new year, when calendars turn over and a new decade begins. At saint benedict's table, we save Christmas carols 'til the season of Christmas. Advent is a special season at saint ben's, and waiting for the happy celebration of Christmas makes it all the sweeter.

The rest of the world does not wait. With the end of Halloween and Spooky Season comes a brief respite leading to Remembrance Day, before heading into the solstice holidays. With that comes rampant consumerism, Hallmark movies, Christmas Specials, and the endless adaptations of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

I love *A Christmas Carol*. Dickens' moral writing spins language so deftly, examining character through movement and shape. All adaptations seem to fall short (with the exception of *A Muppet Christmas Carol*). The story gets shaped and reshaped into a mockery of the original, losing the sense of the charitable humility that comes with Christmas, not just the feeling of goodwill for the universe.

Dickens' version is dark, whispering a prophecy in a scene often cut from sentimental adaptations in which the feeble and grotesque incarnations of Greed and Want peer out from the bottom of the Ghost of Christmas Present's robe. These incarnations of selfishness are small, wizened children, but in today's consumer-driven Christmas, have become fully-realized giants, as gift-giving seems to outshine all else when it comes to the holidays.

This scene is scrubbed from film adaptations because the downside of Christmas is inconvenient if you want people to buy their way to a Merry Christmas. The classic tale is sanitized to an inch of its life to be consumable on a capitalist scale, much like the Bible itself.



The Ghost of Christmas Present



The Ghost of Christmas Past



Marley's Ghost

Illustrations: J. Leech. Photographed by [John Holbo](#).

The “Christmas Spirit” is hard won through a careful excavation of Scrooge’s soul. Like a dream, he experiences too much for one night, seeming to leave the natural world for a place which doesn’t abide by the natural rules, kind of like Christmas itself.

We crawl through Advent every year to the feast of Christmas. There is so much preparation that goes into a single day, and that day has so much activity and fullness that it resembles no other day during the year. The season has its own music, which, when played at other times during the year, seems anachronistic and wrong. A *Christmas Carol*, and all of the Hallmark movies will tell you, that Christmas time is different. The attitude is different. It requires cheer and a charitable attitude.

“‘Nephew!’ returned the uncle sternly, ‘keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.’

‘Keep it!’ Repeated Scrooge’s nephew. ‘But you don’t keep it.’

‘Let me leave it alone, then,’ said Scrooge. ‘Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!’

‘There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say,’ returned the nephew. ‘Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round—apart from the veneration due to the sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it and be apart from that—as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable pleasant time; the only time I know of in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open up their shut up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe it has done me good and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!’”

Christmas time makes its own rules. Time may be an illusion, but the day of Christmas, if you are fortunate to share it, always feels like a week as opposed to a day. And the days leading up to it seem to stretch out to take up more room than any regular week. It has its own songs, its own clothing, its own food. The holidays change everything from Starbucks cups to the meridian of Portage Avenue.

Christmas always feels set in stone. These are the things you do, the people you see, the food that you eat. I’m more mindful of the change of the past year around Christmas than I am at any other time.

When I was growing up, my mother would sneak into our rooms at night on Christmas Eve with our stockings, which were usually some of my dad’s old long socks. My brother, sister, and I would wake up in the morning, take our stockings into our parents’ room, and sit on the bed to open up our stockings one by one. At no other time of the year would all five of us clamber onto my parents’ bed.

As a single person, I’m the only one left to crawl on my parent’s bed Christmas morning. My sister has her own kids, who come to her bed with their own stockings to open them. But, the



The Ghost of Christmas Future.
Illustration by Ronald Searle,
Life Magazine, 1960.

first year after my brother died, it felt wrong for him not to be there on Christmas morning. It felt wrong that he wasn't there opening presents, sitting around the table, or wearing his Christmas crown. But, most of all, I missed crowding onto my parents' bed, to the point where my dad would shift to make room almost to the point of falling off. I remember my brother every year as we open our stockings, and I will remember him every Christmas I ever see.

When the Earth turns around and we find ourselves in the same places, sharing the same special activities we do once a year, the empty spaces are a reminder of what was, what isn't, and what will continue not to be. Christmas is a season that forces us to remember what we can't have again: "These are but shadows of the things that have been," said the Ghost. "They have no consciousness of us."

For the past 15 years or so, I have gone to the Cambridge Vineyard Church for Christmas Eve. It's the one night a year I see my two closest friends from growing up, Dan and Amanda. We make the pilgrimage home, like Joseph,

spend Christmas Eve at a church we have outgrown, and then have dinner together after. But all traditions must come to an end. This year, Dan and Amanda are likely not returning home, and Christmas feels ruptured, with an unknown future. New traditions will have to be formed. The world goes on, Christmas arrives, but we are not the same.

"You may—the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will—have pain in this. A very, very brief time, and you will dismiss the recollection of it, gladly, as an unprofitable dream, from which it happened well that you awoke. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!"

[Belle] left him, and they parted.

'Spirit!' said Scrooge, 'show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?'"

As lonely as the world can seem at Christmas, as destabilizing as the endings of relationships or traditions can be, Christmas morning marks the beginning of a time of reset. Yes, there are Christmases past that you cannot return to, as much as you may try, but come the morning, there is something new. The year runs out, we turn to one another, and this year we turn to a new decade.

As the year runs out, the world turns over and continues on, Christmas can be beautiful and wonderful, but it marks what we have and what we have wanted to gain. Yet, that's into the end, and, as we wait for Christmas, the bells ring again. Scrooge can buy the prize goose and send it to the Cratchits.



Hannah Foulger is a British Canadian theatre artist and writer. Her disability poetry has been published in Blue Mountain Press' *Disabled Voices* anthology and performed in Sick + Twisted Theatre's *Lame Is...* cabaret. Her plays *Clink* and *My Frozen Heart: A Comic Tragedy* have been produced at the Winnipeg Fringe Festival. She lives on Treaty 1 Territory in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

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A Tale of Two Fields

RYAN TURNBULL

Photo: Ivan Bandura

This is a story about a pair of fields I used to know. The first field, or rather, a corner of this field, which sat on my dad's land, was one I drove by every day growing up. On the South and East sides of this field was a gravel road. To the Northwest was a small poplar bush, but for the most part, this field was wide open to the prevailing West winds that determine so much of the weather of the Parkland region. For years, this field had been conventionally cropped with a standard rotation of crops for that area. But, with the combination of road, trees, and a bit of a dip in elevation, the corner of this field inevitably spent a great deal of the early part of the season under water. This caused the soil to become quite alkaline and, as time wore on, this field grew nothing but a white layer of salt.

Eventually, the farmers of that field stopped cropping it, and, instead, sowed it to pasture. Still, the corner grew nothing. Over the years, cattle were over-wintered on this field and fed with copious amounts of round bales. Eventually, the saltiness disappeared, covered over by a rough assortment of weeds, mostly fox-tail barley. As these regenerative grazing techniques continued, the weeds slowly gave way to grass. It's still a low point. Water still drains there in the spring. But because of the improved organic matter in the topsoil, much of that moisture is held in the humus rather than leaching out, leaving infertile, salty soil.

The second field I used to know was cropped by my family for several years. But this field bordered a valley pasture that we also used. I spent

many hours building and maintaining the fence-line that divided this bit of land with not much else to do but observe my surroundings. Since the field was on the edge of a valley, the soil was quite sandy, which, coupled with the slope of the land and decades of conventional cropping, caused large patches of erosion to open at various points along the edge. While the location and soil composition of this field left it open to an increased erosion risk, it was immediately obvious to me, as I walked the long way around the eroded patches of field, that the constant chemical cultivation of the cropland caused the real damage. This was juxtaposed by the fence-line, at which point native prairie grasses took over, holding the soil in place and keeping erosion at bay. Even the colour of the soil was different. The soil on the cropland was grey and quite fine textured. The soil on the other side of the fence was darker and held together in larger particles.

It might be tempting to conclude, from these descriptions, that soil health is negatively impacted by the way we grow crops and positively impacted by grazing animals. Cropping involves the annual extracting of nutrients, organic matter, and minerals from the soil through an essentially extractive harvest. What little material we put back in the form of chemical fertilizer keeps yields artificially high while the soil itself continues to deplete and erode. Indeed, the influential soil scientist Hans Jenny, in his landmark book *Factors of Soil Formation*, points to soil health studies in a parcel of land

which originally had identical soil characteristics, favouring the soil make up of fields kept as hay pasture over land which was cropped for 60 years.

But this would be too simple a conclusion. While it's true that careful cattle management on the first field helped heal some mismanaged land, the valley pasture was resilient despite our efforts, not because of them. I spent more hours than I care to remember pulling burdock out of that pasture by hand until one day my dad had the brilliant idea that we should do a controlled burn of that corner of the pasture and get rid of it once and for all. One thing led to another and, by the end of the day, seven fire departments had responded to try and put out the fire that had, by this point, spread to most of the valley. Within a few weeks the burdock was back, and all our efforts had done was knock back the competition and give that plant a head-start. So much for a "well-managed" pasture.

In *Factors of Soil Formation*, Jenny attempts to give a mathematical equation that can account for the factors of soil formation. He expresses it this way:

$$S = f(\text{cl}, \text{o}, \text{r}, \text{p}, \text{t}, \dots)$$

Translated, it means that **S**oil is equal to the **F**actors of **C**limate, **O**rganisms, **R**elief, **P**arent material, and **T**ime. Notice, however, that he also includes an ellipsis. This is a reminder that there are always potentially more, unknown, or unobserved factors influencing the formation

of soil. Human interventions, particularly in our contemporary circumstances, are a major factor, but we are never the sole, nor even always the most significant one. As my tale of two fields makes clear, while we can and do act in ways that are positive and negative in terms of local soil formation, it is not at all clear that the logics and practices we apply to one field are at all appropriate to the unique set of factors that another field requires.

Soil is a subtle teacher. In "Dramas of Love and Dirt," published by *The Cresset*, theologian Norman Wirzba has noted that, even at the end of his life, Hans Jenny was still not entirely sure what soil was: "He preferred to describe soil not as a thing but as a web of relationships that goes through varying states of fertility and infertility. It is, finally and irreducibly, a mystery because so many processes and elements and creatures come together to create the diverse conditions in which life can flourish."

Perhaps that's where the grace of it all is. We live in that complex web of relations that give rise to the mystery that is soil. We don't always know what we're doing. We can identify plenty of factors, but there is always the ellipsis, inviting us to discover new factors, partners, opportunities, and painful lessons. Perhaps what the Church needs today is a "soil spirituality," an invitation back out into the fields where we can observe, act, respond, learn, and grow.



Having grown up on a cattle ranch in western Manitoba, Ryan Turnbull has a deep interest in the intersection of theology, ecology, place, and friendship. He currently lives in Birmingham, UK, where he is pursuing a PhD in theology at the University of Birmingham, focusing on Christian theologies of place.



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Parish News Round Up

Anglican Grow Hope 2019 Report

The harvest is in! And what a harvest it is.

First, the money raised: \$19,814.18 has been deposited in PWRDF's account at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. This money will go to feed people, to help small hold farmers diversify and grow better crops as well as enhance their livelihoods. Our diocese – through individuals, parishes, and multi-parish events raised \$7,462 (or 38 percent of the total). The sale of the canola grown by Chris Lea generated: \$5,909 (or 30 percent of the total). Events largely in the Pembina Hills area of our diocese raised \$5,151 (or 30 percent of the total). Finally, Nancy Howatt raised a calf for auction and that generated \$1,292. Everyone's generosity is fabulous, and all our gifts large and small add up to fewer people being hungry in our world!

Secondly, our relationships: Over this season, there have been six multi-parish events that we know about. Two parishes in Winnipeg: St. Mary Magdalene and St. Peter's, organized and hosted wonderful musical events in support of Anglican Grow Hope. St. Luke's, Pembina Crossing hosted our June Rogation Service and lunch, and St. Thomas, Morden hosted our September Thanksgiving Service. In addition, Manitou United Church hosted a Grow Hope service at which both Chris and Nancy spoke; and Chris, Leianne, and Jonathan welcomed a Winnipeg group for an August field day and pot luck picnic. People all over our Diocese have come together in prayer, song, and fellowship to share in the work of kingdom. Each event was unique and represented the power of the Spirit to create community.



And it is important to note that this has been a particularly hard year for our farmers and cattle producers. The wet, cold fall weather has seriously compromised the harvest, but in addition Chris writes: "the farm gate prices on all commodities have been less than stellar this year due to all the trade issues. I am thinking there might be some farm operators quit due to financial reasons, especially in the interlake and eastern regions. The rest will have to do some serious financial restructuring..." Nancy Howatt has also described the struggles facing cattle producers and has said "it will be a long winter for some, who will be short of feed." Please pray for everyone involved in agricultural production in our Diocese. It is a very difficult time for the farmers and cattle producers in our midst.

Everyone involved with Anglican Grow Hope thanks you for your contribution in making 2019 such a success.

- Your prayer,
- your participation,
- your financial donations

have all made a difference and will extend well beyond our diocese to the most vulnerable around world.

For stories of hope, please head to the [PWRDF](#) and [Canadian Foodgrains Bank](#) websites. – Cathy Campbell



This page of the Parish News Round Up is sponsored by Richard Rosin. For more information, see his ad on page 9.

Advent Open House

Come visit the staff at the Anglican-Lutheran Centre (935 Nesbitt Bay) on December 12 from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Installation of New Ministry

Tyler Gingrich has left his position as a member of MNO Synod Staff to accept a call as pastor of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, in Winnipeg. He will be installed at Gloria Dei on December 7 at 3:00 p.m., with refreshments to follow. Everyone is welcome to attend!

Grant Writer Needed

St. Thomas, Weston, a small inner-city parish, is looking at possible ways of renewing their community. One way is to apply for grants to help in this process. Unfortunately there is no one in the parish who knows how to do this. Therefore, they are appealing to our diocese for assistance. Is there anyone you know who might be able to help by searching for grants and then making application? If you might be able to assist please contact the Venerable Gordon Payne at 204-642-9895 or gordon.payne3@gmail.com.

St. Thomas runs the Kreative Kids program, where children can learn with and express their creativity. The Weston area does not have much in terms of free recreational programming for children. With Kreative Kids, families have a place where they can send their children to socialize and let them express themselves creatively.

CoGS Highlights

Council of General Synod members gathered at the Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre in Mississauga on November 10, 2019. A report from the Council is now available. You can [download the pdf here](#).

Canadian Foodgrains Bank

Canadian Foodgrains Bank has been named one of Canada's top ten impact charities by Charity Intelligence for the second year in a row.

Charity Intelligence is an independent, third-party research organization that examines the impact a Canadian charity makes per dollar spent. After analyzing 203 Canadian charities this year, they have determined the Foodgrains Bank is once again among the top ten for return on investment.

Canadian charities provide an average of \$2 in social benefits for every dollar donated. Charity Intelligence notes that charities in the top ten list like the Foodgrains Bank provide an average of \$7 in social return for every dollar donated.

"This is a reassuring endorsement of the impact of our work together with our members," says Foodgrains Bank executive director Jim Cornelius. "We've always known these efforts are making a difference and this independent validation reaffirms this."

According to Charity Intelligence's website, the organization works "for donors, not charities, to shed light on the giving landscape and provide donors with the knowledge to make informed giving decisions."

"Our donors put a lot of trust in us to use their dollars wisely," says Cornelius. "Our work to end global hunger isn't something many of our Canadian supporters get to witness firsthand, so it's great to have Charity Intelligence confirm their dollars are making a true impact on the lives of people experiencing hunger overseas."

Foodgrains Bank member Mennonite Central Committee Canada was also included in Charity Intelligence's sub-list of top ten international impact charities based in Canada. – *Shaylyn McMahon, Communications Coordinator*

Call for Applications: 2021 Assembly of the World Council of Churches

The Anglican Church of Canada has been invited to send delegates to the 2021 Assembly of the World Council of Churches, scheduled for September 8–16, 2021 in Karlsruhe, Germany.

The theme for the 2021 Assembly is: “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity.”

The Assembly is the “supreme legislative body” of the WCC and meets every eight years. The formal purpose of the Assembly is to review programs and determine the overall policies of the WCC, as well as to elect presidents and appoint a Central Committee which serves as the chief governing body of the WCC until the next assembly.

The planning committee has described the 11th Assembly as “a place of listening to each other, building trusted relationships, discerning together the way forward, encouraging each other to work together for change, and celebrating Christ’s gift of love with gratitude and joy.”

The WCC website notes that “Alongside the committee work and business sessions for the delegates, assemblies are also times of celebration and sharing for the many thousands of other visitors at the event. A central element of assemblies for all participants is the worship life, where the community gathers for prayer and meditation, drawing on the diverse spiritual experience of the churches around the world.”

[Click here](#) for more information on the Assembly.

Applications to serve are being accepted through December 15, 2019. [The form can be found here.](#)

Applicants may be clergy or lay and must be at least 18 years of age by September, 2021.

There is no cost to a delegate to attend.

For questions or more information, please contact: [Eileen Scully](#), Director of Faith, Worship, and Ministry.

Christmas Cards and Calendars

PWRDF has [Christmas Cards](#) available for purchase, featuring two new designs. A minimum donation of \$25 per pack of 12 cards is required to receive an official tax receipt. You can also now order them online through PayPal.

The **2020 Canadian Church Calendar** is also available to order through [the Anglican Church of Canada](#). The 2020 Canadian Church Calendar presents images and texts that explore the light that begins and ends the day.

A Performance of Handel’s *Messiah*

Covenant Church (653 Knowles) will be hosting two fundraising performances of Handel’s *Messiah* on Friday, December 20 and Saturday, December 21 at 7:00 p.m. With Nathan Poole serving as conductor, Monica Huisman, Kayla Jory, Aaron Hutton, and Ben Kroeker as soloists, and a chamber orchestra accompanying a choir formed from over 100 volunteers within the Winnipeg community, this event is sure to be remarkable!

Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased through [Covenant Church](#). All proceeds from the event will be going towards replacing worn bedroom furniture at [Forward House Ministries](#), a Christian home in Elmwood for 25 men and men with children who want to start a new life free from addictions, mental health struggles, or criminal activity.

Looking Ahead: Dialogues in Dementia

St. Peter’s Anglican will be holding a workshop, “Dialogues in Dementia: Personal concerns and experiences along the journey,” on February 8, 2020.

Read more in Lynda Wolf’s piece on dementia and Lamentations on page 15.

Companion Parish Connections in Rupert's Land and Uganda

RICK MORGAN



The Diocese of Rupert's Land and the Diocese of Central Buganda have had a "companion diocese" relationship for about 20 years – the most recent covenant covers the period 2017–2021. St. George's, Crescentwood is partnered with the parish of All Martyrs, in Ndoddo, Uganda. Like all partner parishes, we pray for the people of All Martyrs regularly, and they remember us in their prayers.

A few years ago, I joined St. George's Mission and Ministry Committee and started fairly regular email correspondence with the Rev. Andrew Kafeero. After his departure, Bruce Jasper Kalibbala (age 30) became our contact person. Over the past year and a half, our correspondence became very regular and we started to get acquainted with each other. As a result, I wanted to travel to Uganda to get to know the people and the parish for whom we have been praying these last 15 years.

So, on September 30, I left Winnipeg for Montreal and Brussels, landed in Entebbe, Uganda, and then took a taxi into Kampala, Uganda. It was a very long journey from Winnipeg (about 26 hours with an eight-hour time change). I stayed in Kampala for three days, where Bruce Jasper joined me.

During my visit, I headed to Kasaka, the location of the Bishop's home and the Cathedral of St. John. Bishop Michael Lubowa and his wife were away in England, so they had kindly offered that I could stay in their house, which I did with their son, Rev. Grace Joram Kavuma, and Bruce Jasper.



The All Martyrs church building.

I joined All Martyrs for morning Eucharist one Sunday. It was a joyous service led by the Rector, Rev. Noah Kabuye, and hearing everyone singing in harmony was great! They said they needed a piano – but their music was wonderful with only human voices and some drums. Their enthusiasm for and commitment to their faith is so evident. Their faith dominates all aspects of their lives, everything they do and say!



Rick stands with Bruce Jasper in his shop, located in Bulo, Uganda.



Rick stands with Rev. Noah Kabuye (left) and Rev. Grace Kavuma (right) at All Martyrs.

I also had the honour of preaching the sermon that morning – not something I am used to doing! In the afternoon, Bruce Jasper's newest son (he has two others) was baptized, and I was made one of the godfathers – an honour indeed. Afterwards, we celebrated the occasion with a big lunch, as well as a tree planting.

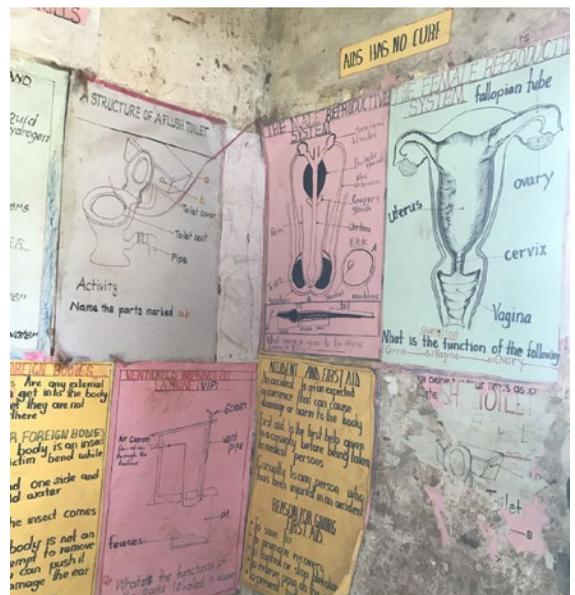
The next day, I visited some local schools, including the Kewerimiddle Primary School, the St. Peter's Nursery School in Kabulasoke, the Ndoddo Primary School, and others, where I distributed some donated school supplies. There are so many students in these schools – including some Muslim students. I was impressed to see that these church schools seem to be teaching about Christianity, Islam, and traditional religions (based on posters on the walls). There were also posters on the walls that explain everything from how a flush toilet works to the male and female reproductive systems! Students are all learning English.

St. George's has supported the parish of All Martyrs in a few different ways over the years. Between 2003 and 2005, we funded a water project that brought potable water to Bulo (a nearby village where many All Martyrs parishioners live and/or work). Recently, St. George's committed to providing funding for two years to enable a parishioner at All Martyrs, Irene Nangendo, to complete primary teacher training at Namasuba College in Kampala. She started her course in September 2019, and when she is

done she will return to the Ndoddo area and teach in one of the local schools.

St. George's also is raising money to buy about 300 pairs of shoes so that students don't have to walk to school barefoot. The first dozen pairs were purchased with funds I had with me. So far, we have raised funds for at least another 100 pairs, so we still have a way to go.

The diocese is planning some travel to Uganda in 2020 and 2021 and looking for people who might be interested in joining the trip. My days in Ndoddo were quite unforgettable, and I am looking forward to visiting again in the future.



Posters hang on the walls at Nddodo School.



The students and staff of Nddodo School.



Rick Morgan is the Chair of the Mission and Ministry Committee, organist, and Director of Music at St. George's, Crescentwood.

All photos by Rick Morgan

Lamentation and Dementia

LYNDA WOLF

Photo: Annie Spratt

They said he was born lucky. His body grew tall and strong, and he excelled in sports. His mind was quick, and he learned effortlessly. People liked him, and he progressed easily in business. He married his high school sweetheart and their children were their pride and joy. His business did well, and others asked his advice, took it, and thanked him for it later. Then things changed.

He became forgetful. He missed appointments and one day couldn't find his office. It became evident something was wrong, and his partners eased him into early retirement. The doctors said he had early onset dementia. After a car crash, he lost his driver's license. He began to forget his children's names, and the neighbours pitied him. One day, his wife found him sitting on the floor, his pant legs wet with urine, his car keys in his hands. She sank down beside him, and they both wept.

This weeping couple presents a not uncommon picture of the pain and apparent injustice of losing all that is meaningful because of dementia – the seeming absence of hope and restoration. The Old Testament also speaks of this kind of loss and hopelessness. The people of Jerusalem experienced nearly complete devastation following their defeat to the Babylonians in 587 BC. Their city and temple were destroyed, and most of Judah's inhabitants were sent into exile.

The cries of those left behind are recorded in the book of Lamentations. However, there is a significant difference between the mourning couple in our story and the mourning of the people of Judah and Jerusalem following their war with Babylon. The books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel are filled with unrelenting warnings that God had given up on the Israelites as they

continued to break the terms of the covenant. Because of their arrogance and sinfulness, they were held responsible by God for the destruction of their city, their country, their political, economic, and social systems and the eventual threat to their very survival. They were to blame, and God had finally turned against them.

Not so the man with dementia and his wife. There is no blame associated with their overwhelming loss. But, like the poet who wrote Lamentations, they also cry out with no evident answer to their dilemma. These people, those of vanquished Jerusalem and the modern man with dementia and his wife – lament.

The lamentations of God's people have a place in scripture – in the book of Job, in the Psalms of lament, and in the book of Lamentations itself. In the New Testament, these cries are echoed by Jesus during his crucifixion. Pain and loss without apparent hope are real. Scripture testifies to this and confirms that crying out is a necessary and legitimate thing to do, even when it is not clear that God hears or is even listening.

In the five chapters of the book of Lamentations, the poet-writer spares us no details about the conditions in the city following its destruction. Young women have been violated, young men have been brutally killed, the priests sit in dust in the streets, their temple destroyed. Children go hungry, staggering under the weight of heavy loads of wood. Some are eventually cannibalized. We are spared no details. As Christopher Wright writes in *The Message of Lamentations*, "But Lamentations simply makes us listen to the voices of the sufferers – in the profusion and confusion of their pain... And if in the midst of these voices there is accusation against God, Lamentations lets us hear that too."

However, in the third and middle chapter of the book of Lamentations, there is a suggestion of hope – a reminder of God’s eternal goodness: “Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.” (Lamentations 3:21–24, NIV)

The situation does not change, but the poet’s perspective shifts. The poet looks to God, and although his prayer for deliverance is not answered by the end of the book, he is still reminded of God’s faithfulness and abiding love.

As Christians living our faith, we are led to hope. We have evidence that God never gives up on us through the New Testament’s story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This is the promise of our salvation. As Christ’s servants, we can also serve as a reminder to others of God’s continuing love and concern for each of us.

For the man with dementia, there is no cure. However, as Mary Holmen, Pastor of Parish Caring Ministries at St. Peter’s, Winnipeg, reminded me, a lack of cure does not mean

an absence of healing. As members of Christ’s church, we can develop the skills to serve as healers (and helpers) for those with dementia and their families. We don’t need to study medicine or become psychologists. Instead, we can learn appropriate communication skills so that we are comfortable speaking with persons with impaired cognition. They can cry out their lament, and we will know how to listen and acknowledge their pain. We will know how to enable the person with impaired cognition and communication abilities to tell their life stories, and relive past accomplishments and good times, while rejoicing in a present, however fleeting, moment of remembering.

We can also become helpers. As Beth Helliar of the Alzheimer Society, and a member of Church of the Way in Winnipeg puts it, we can become “the hands and feet of Jesus” by offering to perform simple tasks such as taking a person with dementia for a walk, helping an elderly caregiver with household tasks or helping them complete application forms and other paperwork.

The paradox is that we in turn are blessed. I am an occupational therapist, who worked for many years with persons with dementia. Some of my best moments were spent listening to these remarkable people and acknowledging their remaining abilities and courage. There is little to compare with the affirmation of someone with severe dementia voluntarily reaching out and taking your hand. We encounter the love of God through such gestures if we learn how to stop, how to speak, and most importantly, how to listen.

Read more about St. Peter’s upcoming workshop, “Dialogues in Dementia: Personal concerns and experiences along the journey,” on page 12.



Lynda Wolf is a non-practising occupational therapist and a member of the parish of St. Peter’s Anglican Church.

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