



**6 On the saints**

**8 For All The Unknown  
Canadian Indigenous Saints**

**15 Rivers**

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## Thorvaldson Care Center

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## All Hallows

Photo: Kym Mackinnon

I did not grow up with the saints. Like many protestant and non-religious kids, the closest I came to rubbing shoulders with the history of saints was dressing up like my favourite fantasy book characters or pop culture icons and trick-or-treating on Halloween. And then, in the conservative Mennonite town in which I grew up, Halloween was considered a demonic celebration by some, and consequently divided the town into two camps: those who hung skeletons in their doorways, and those who taped signs on the inside of their screen doors with foreboding messages of the end-times.

In fact, Halloween, originally *Hallowe'en*, is the Americanized name for All Hallows Eve, which precedes the Feast of All Saints' on November 1 and All Souls' Day on November 2. Together, the Triduum makes up Allhallowtide, which is the Christian season for commemorating the dead, or, less solemnly, celebrating the lives of Christians past.

In the Anglican Communion, All Saints' Day is a principle feast in the church year. It typically incorporates into it the commemoration of All Souls, honouring all Christians "who are unknown in the wider fellowship of the church, especially family members and friends." (Donald S. Armentrout, *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church*).

In his introduction to *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints*, Donald Attwater's characterization of sainthood resonates with me: "Sainthood—or any other degree of truly

Christian life—is not achieved by anyone's own unaided efforts. It may be consciously taken as an ideal to be aimed at; it cannot be adopted and pursued as a 'career.' Men and women become saints by living 'in Christ,' in whatever state of life to which they are called."

Indeed, I am intrigued by the world of the saints, and their significance to our understanding of God. What constitutes a saint, and how is their significance implicated in our own lives?

The day before my grandmother died, four years ago, I had an odd dream. I dreamt that I was in her tomb, preparing the dining room table with candles, centrepieces, and a gorgeous cutlery set in anticipation of having dinner with her. She never did show up in the dream, and the next day she passed away. Obviously, this dream stays with me. My grandma was a hard-working and rather judgmental woman, who held high standards and strong opinions. She preferred the garden to the kitchen, and was a masterful seamstress with an eye for fashion and high-quality things (an alienating passion if you're a Mennonite). While many decisions in her life were motivated by practicality, she also lived strongly by her faith and firmly believed that it would guide her to know love—in my grandpa, in her family, in her grandchildren, and ultimately, in God. After my grandma died, there were decisions I made in my life that she would have never supported (or so I presume). Reflecting back on my dream,



however, there was a peace I experienced in anticipating her arrival (the arrival of her soul?), as if all of the differences between us held no weight. Could it be that, in her passing, my grandmother revealed something to me of God's communion with us in the world? If I'm being honest (and I am), I'd like to think of the person of my grandma as a kind of conduit, or saint, for me in my life.

I recently listened to a podcast episode on the Virgin Mary from a [series](#) hosted by Robert Pogue Harrison, a professor of Italian Literature at Stanford University. In the episode, Harrison and his guest, fellow scholar Bissera Pentcheva, expound on the character of the Blessed Virgin as highly paradoxical. Highlighting her antithetical nature, Pentcheva recites the Prayer to the Virgin in Dante's cantos:

**“Virgin mother, daughter of your Son,  
more humble and sublime than any creature,  
fixed good decreed from all eternity,  
you are the one who gave to human nature  
so much nobility that its Creator  
did not disdain His being made its creature.”**

This central saint of the Christian Church who is both “humble and sublime,” the “Virgin mother, daughter of your Son,” is a bit of an oxymoron. She is both the mother of humanity and a virgin, a cult symbol and a figure who is deeply personal.

The historical reception of the Virgin Mary in the Church also highlights the complex nature of her sainthood. While the Virgin is a venerated saint in Catholicism and honoured with a feast day in the Anglican Communion, her commemoration is avoided in many Protestant traditions and understood as borderline idolatrous. Without the human elements of her character—her personhood—the Virgin is diminished to a cult icon, and ultimately loses her meaning as a saint; saints, in fact, are people like us.

The rich symbolism of mystery and contradiction offered in the lives of the saints is also famously captured in the portrait of St.

Bartholomew. In [the best-known work](#) by Marco d'Agrate (1504–1574), St. Bartholomew is depicted as having been flayed and skinned alive (securing his membership in the club of martyred saints). D'Agrate's sculpture portrays the saint standing with his tissues exposed, his own skin slung over his forearm. What does this depiction of St. Bartholomew offer us on the nature of saints? In the afterlife, St. Bartholomew carries a legacy that is immaterial, a fame that says nothing about the person he actually was in his lifetime. Yet his human skin remains with him, draped over his arm and shoulder like a cape. This iconic imagining of St. Bartholomew exposes the person in the saint, who is recognizably fallible and human.

The following issue meditates on all hallows; that is, on all the saints and souls of the Church. In ‘On the saints,’ Jamie Howison meditates on the dual natures inherent in the lives of the saints, and proposes that their stories are just as present in our own communities as in the worlds of history. Christopher Trott examines the history of the Anglican mission in Canada, and calls for the acknowledgment of our country's Indigenous saints, whose stories can no longer remain untold. In a reflection piece, I find my soul rejuvenated in a familiar landscape; and, Kyla Neufeld's poetry speaks to the landscape of the soul.

Whether in the realm of all saints or all souls, I'm sure you'll find yourself somewhere.



Sara Krahn is the editor of Rupert's Land News.

# The Souls of The Righteous

GEOFFREY WOODCROFT

Photo: [Tim Mossholder](#)

*But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,  
and no torment will ever touch them.  
In the time of their visitation they will shine forth,  
and will run like sparks through the stubble.*  
(Wisdom 3.1 and 7 NRSV)

Wisdom 3.1 and 7, lifted from Jewish Testament appointed for November 2, fills my mind with rich and difficult images. In one section of my imagination I sense great comfort for the righteous in God's protection and care, and in another, a sense of smallness and finitude in this life and what I perceive of the next. In another image, I sense the joy and certainty of souls moving freely and purposefully upon some plane, and conversely, I get a sense of souls out-of-control, like sparks in stubble.

In First Corinthians, St. Paul tells us that as a child he thought, spoke, and acted like one, but when he matured, he put away childish things. Read in the literal sense, it may appear that Paul is replacing Judaism with Christianity; but I think that Paul used his Jewish faith and teaching to make the case for Jesus. Scholars, particularly N. T. Wright, make the point that Paul was always Jewish, constantly developing faith in the One God, believing that God was fulfilling the Law and the Prophets in the incarnation—Jesus. St Paul introduced us to a rich and diverse world of adult food, which includes sitting at the feet of teachers, becoming aware of the living world around us, and yearning to see, feel, and hear God moving about us in the world.

I am moved and shaken by the image of God's hand, by the *souls of the righteous* and their freedom (*like sparks in stubble*), but the

image does cause disparate reactions in me. The result is a development in my theological thought. As a child I thought of heaven as a *destination* by the stories that were told to me; while I do not demean my earlier understanding, I needed time and a matured sense of space in order to make sense of the images formed by the stories. Of course, the stories also excited my imagination, and caused me to question what I actually believed, and what others believed God to be about.

As you and I are called to proclaim that God's kingdom has come near, that it is at hand and can be felt within, we proclaim as we are mature in Christ. The kingdom is at hand, and the souls of the righteous are in God's hand. You and I know this and recognize it every day in the life around us. There is a hunger and thirst for hope in our neighbourhoods, especially in these frightening, awkward, and extraordinary days. Our hope comes from the One God who loves. As we proclaim by word and deed, let us continually seek the activity of the *souls of the righteous*, moving freely and swiftly through the stubble, and then assure our neighbourhood of God's activity, and our hope. Although only in fleeting moments, we do see the *souls of the righteous*, in moments of remembering, in sharing of wisdom and kindness, and in the powerful unspoken language of lament rising in this age. You are a chosen and called disciple for this very moment—may you be blessed in this ministry.



Geoffrey Woodcroft,  
Bishop of Rupert's Land





Photo: Viktor Talashuk

# On the Saints

JAMIE HOWISON

In my library I have two books on the lives and legends of saints in the church: David Hugh Farmer’s somewhat staid *Oxford Dictionary of the Saints*, and Richard Coles’ considerably more playful volume, *Lives of Improbable Saints*. Where Farmer’s book aims to distinguish what is historically verifiable from what is legend about any given saint, Coles revels in the more spectacular stories associated with his subjects. For example, in his detailed entry on St. Benedict, Farmer focuses largely on Benedict’s monastic Rule and its impact in Europe. He gives but brief and passing mention to the miracle stories set down by St. Gregory the Great a half century after Benedict’s death. Coles, on the other hand, delights in Gregory’s stories about Benedict, marked by things like a miraculous axe head and a life-saving raven.

If I’m looking for an historical treatment of any given saint, I will turn to the *Oxford Dictionary of the Saints*. However, Coles’ *Lives of Improbable Saints* is a good deal more fun to read, and not only because it is wonderfully illustrated by the cartoonist Ted Harrison. Coles’

book speaks to the very human character of these saints of the church, as it is their crankiness, emotional complexity, and eccentricity that often draws his attention. Sure, there are many characters in his book who are more than just a little improbable—St. Rumwold, for instance, who was said to have preached a sermon on the Trinity at the age of just three days, and then promptly died. But even this unlikely life invites a very human question: what was it about the world of 8th century England that led people to so want to tell and retell this story of Rumwold?

As Anglicans we haven’t formally canonized any of our own saints in the years since the Reformation. Our calendar does, however, include memorial days and days of commemoration for people whose lives and deaths have borne strong witness to the claims of the Gospel. Such days are designated for an array of people, including Dietrich Bonhoeffer, John and Charles Wesley, and Florence Nightingale. I think rightly so.

That said, I believe that the most fitting

feast day for Anglicans is the Feast of All Saints.' This feast day has been in existence since the late 300s, and its great wisdom is that it celebrates all Christian saints, both known and unknown. This means not only the big league, stained glass sorts of saints after whom most of our parishes are named, and it extends well beyond the more obscure figures of questionable provenance such as our dear St. Rumwold. Indeed, it is a festival of *all* the saints.

Biblically, the saints—in Greek *hagios* or “holy ones”—are those who follow Jesus, including both the living and the deceased. In his greetings at the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, Paul writes, “To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are *called to be saints*,” (Romans 1:7), and then later in that same epistle writes of the need to contribute to “the poor among *the saints at Jerusalem*” (15:26). We are “called to be saints” in Paul’s words, or maybe called to be numbered by God amongst the holy ones, in spite of the sometimes unsaintly and unholy character of our lives. In Eucharistic Prayer 2 in the *Book of Alternative Services* we are claimed as God’s “holy people,” and maybe some Sundays one might stop and think, “who me?” Or maybe, “Who her? Him? Holy? Really?”

But then again, if you read the New Testament with your eyes truly open, you will have to agree that even Peter and Paul were not without their failings and foibles. Paul could be hard-nosed—which is sometimes the other side of faithful—and it is clear that he and Peter had a serious falling out over the matter of whether or not Jewish and Gentile Christians should share meals together. Paul also had a falling out with Barnabas, and that was over whether or not they should give young John Mark a second chance after he’d failed to come through for them once in the past. Barnabas affirmed the second chance, while Paul said not a chance, and so the two parted ways. Saints?

These two are, of course, numbered among God’s holy ones, in spite of the sometimes less than holy character of their real lives. No matter how long a list of saints you might generate, there is not one of them who will be perfect, completely integrated, or without sin. This is

true whether you are naming the upper case “S” ones found in the stained glass or the lower case “s” ones that have never quite caught the attention of popes and prelates. This is another way of saying that there’s not one of us who comes without our own complexities, failings, wounds, blind spots, and sin. As soon as you begin to acknowledge this truth, the next step is to say that our church has to be a place where it’s okay to be a broken person. Because these are precisely the people God declares, by sheer grace, to be both beloved children and numbered with the *hagios*, or saints.

Returning to St. Rumwold, Richard Coles doesn’t actually believe that a three-day-old baby preached a sermon before dying. I’m entirely with him on that count. I do, however, believe in the importance of remembering the lives and witness of our saints. These include the official ones like St. Benedict—whose work in laying the foundations of the Western monastic tradition is more than worthy of celebration—the “commemorated” ones like Bonhoeffer, and the ones whose lives will fade quietly into the mists of time, but who in life embraced the call to number themselves, by grace, with God’s saints. The latter ones are all around you, some living and some dead, as a great cloud of witnesses, as a great cloud of all the saints.



Jamie Howison is the rector of saint benedict's table in Winnipeg. He was ordained a deacon in the Diocese of Rupert's Land in 1987, and a priest in 1988, and has remained in his home diocese ever since, ministering in parish contexts, as well as in campus and institutional chaplaincy. Jamie is the author of a number of books and articles, and will see his latest book - "A Kind of Solitude" - published in early 2021.

# For All the Unknown Canadian Indigenous Saints

CHRIS TROTT



A quick survey of the Anglican Church calendar in *For All the Saints (revised)* reveals that of the 136 non-biblical commemorations listed, 18 of them are specifically Canadian. Of these, four acknowledge Indigenous contributions to the Anglican Church of Canada: Henry Budd (Cree), Mollie Brant (Mohawk), Robert McDonald (Anishinaabe/Metis), and Simon Gibbons (Inuit). Without prejudice, I also note that five of the 18 commemorations are people associated with St John's College of which two are Indigenous.

The formation of the Church Missionary Society in 1799 led to an increased interest in bringing the Gospel to Indigenous peoples around the world. The CMS was very strategic in its operations and through its relations with the Clapham Sect sought to place its sympathizers on the HBC governing board. Until this time the HBC had resisted missions in the Rupert's Land territories for fear that the missions would change the trapping way of life of the First Nations (they were right). With the emergence of the Red River Settlement, and the Selkirk settlement, the CMS sympathizers on the Board were able to convince the Honourable Company to send out a missionary in 1820, John West. All along it was a bit of a dodge because they knew very well that most of the English-speaking employees of the Company were Scots Presbyterians (the French-speaking and Metis who were just joining the Company from the merger with the NorthWest Company, were Roman Catholic). This is an old colonial trick to only provide clergy from the official state religion and impose it on the dissidents who had moved to the colonies to avoid the religious repression at home. John West's mission was pushed towards Indigenous missions in part because of the recalcitrance of the Presbyterians.

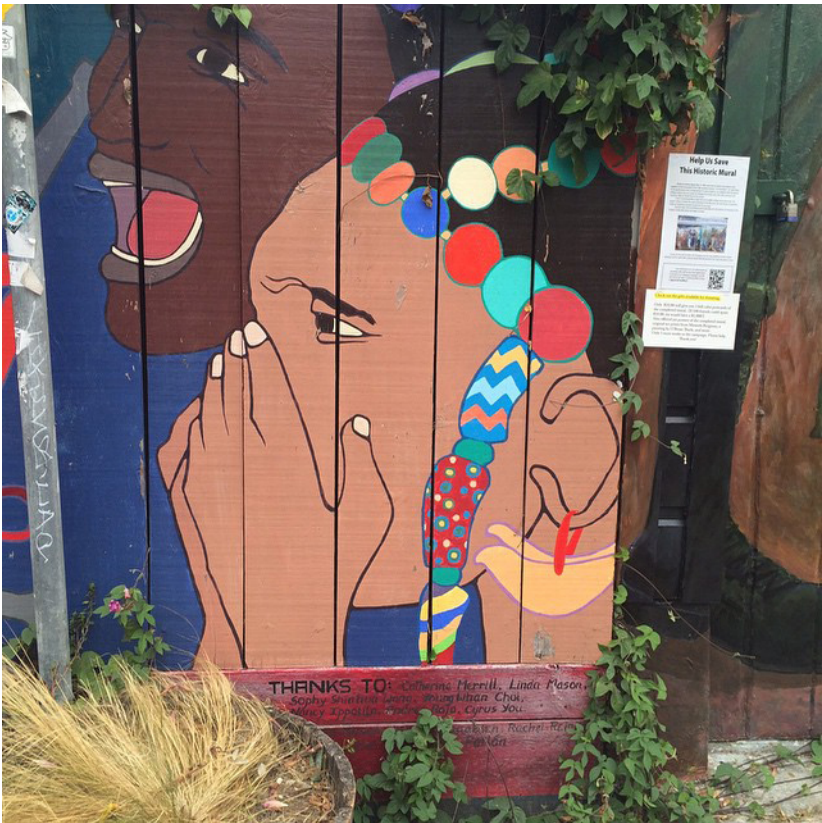
By 1860, the CMS had 26 Indigenous

people working in the Western missions, of whom only three were ordained ministers. The remaining 23 were catechists and school teachers. We have very little information about these people, who they were, where they were trained, where they worked and yet it is clear to me that they were the people who were actually in the front lines doing the real work of preaching the Gospel. Since they had to support themselves, they lived much closer to the lifestyles of the various communities where they worked and spoke the local languages. They were key in the translation of many of the Scriptural and liturgical texts and yet their influence has been erased by history.

Our calendar upholds Henry Budd and Archdeacon Robert McDonald as pioneers but there are other Indigenous clergy who broke ground in Rupert's Land: James Settee, Charles Pratt, David Jones, Thomas Vincent, and John Mackay. Keep in mind that missions with Indigenous peoples in the West did not reach outside of the Red River Settlement until 1839. Although many of these men trained early in the 19th century, they could not be ordained until after the first Bishop of Rupert's Land arrived in 1849. We must keep in mind that all of these clergy faced deeply entrenched colonialism and racism in the course of their work. They were paid half of what the non-Indigenous clergy were paid; there were battles in the Red River Settlement over whether Indigenous teachers could teach the children of the HBC elite; they were never recognized for their ground-breaking work while the non-Indigenous missionaries swanned in afterward and received the heroes' glory.

From my knowledge of mission fields elsewhere in Canada, especially the Arctic, the patterns we can see in the Rupert's Land story are not unique. Early in the mission process some Indigenous person grabbed on to the





**'Grief' by Unidentified Artist**

Gospel and literally ran with it. We do not know why the particular people that we can trace took hold of the Gospel, and to be honest we do not know exactly what they grasped. But they ran with it, all the way home to their kin and people to whom they told the Gospel story. Rarely were these people ordained, although some later went on to be ordained, and even more rarely were they commissioned or authorized by the European missionaries. Before the arrival of other Indigenous catechists and school-teachers, a seed had been planted which these more authorized and mildly more educated folks could nourish into what became recognizable mission stations. Only once all this had happened did the heroic white missionary arrive to “convert the natives.” The early part of the story is largely hidden from historians who

begin with the diaries of the missionaries.

Even today, a short conversation with Archbishop Mark MacDonald will reveal that Indigenous Anglican communities across Canada continued to be served by a small cadre of (unpaid) clergy and large numbers of catechists and lay readers. It is time that, as a Church, we recognize those Indigenous workers in the Gospel over the past 200 years. Let us call for a commemoration day to be inserted in the Anglican Church Calendar for All the Unknown Indigenous Saints.



Christopher Trott is the Warden of St. John's College.

# Parish News Roundup

## CCS Fridays

CCS Fridays are online conversations facilitated in order to help us respond faithfully to emerging issues in local contexts. These workshops are open to anyone who might be interested. Each session will be on a Friday from 12:00 to 1:00 CT and in the form of a Zoom workshop. There will be a presentation that will be recorded for future viewing, plus opportunities to engage with ideas in small groups.

Sessions are free, but registration is [required](#).



### Watch out for these upcoming discussions:

**November 6** — *Queer Biblical Interpretation: seeing Scripture with new eyes.*

12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m. Central Daylight Time

**December 4** — *Apocalyptic Christmas: A theological exploration of what the apocalypse might have to do with Christmas in a pandemic.*

12:00 noon – 1:00 p.m. Central Daylight Time

To find out more, visit [ccsonline.ca](https://ccsonline.ca) or email [info@ccsonline.ca](mailto:info@ccsonline.ca)

## Bishop's Letter

*A Letter from the Bishop and Companion Diocese Committee*

Dear Disciples of Rupert's Land,

Our Companion Diocese Committee has received an urgent request from Bishop Michael Lubowa of the Diocese of Central Buganda. The government in Uganda has allowed the churches to reopen in October but only if they are able to meet certain protocols. One such protocol is that each parish must obtain a thermometer gun as a safety measure against COVID-19.

Bishop Michael Lubowa of the Diocese of Central Buganda has informed the committee that there are currently 33 parishes that are in need of this device (29 parishes and 4 mission parishes). We have been asked to help our Companion Diocese in this regard so the people will be able to meet together again for worship. Having this device will also help the people feel more comfortable meeting together.

Each thermometer device will cost around \$60 CAD, a total approximated need of \$2000 CAD, which is a demand that our brothers and sisters in Uganda are not able to meet.

I ask that you prayerfully consider financially supporting this initiative in this difficult and extraordinary time. Your gift may be sent directly to the Diocese of Rupert's Land, c/o the Director of Finance, clearly marked for the Diocese of Central Buganda Reopening.

If you have any questions, please contact the chair of the Companion Diocese Committee (Chris Barnes) @ 204-489-3390 or [staidans.missioncoordinator@gmail.com](mailto:staidans.missioncoordinator@gmail.com).

Yours in Christ,  
The Rt Rev. Geoffrey JJ Woodcroft

## Companion Diocese Uganda Report 2020

In February, three members from the Diocese traveled to Uganda to visit our Companion Diocese. Together they have written a report compiling and sharing about their experiences, alongside some suggestions they have for our partnership moving forward. The report is especially important because it speaks to our partnership in the midst of COVID-19.

*Report by Pat Stewart and Colleen Woods*

### Preparation (Pat)

What excitement and anticipation! The prospect of a visit to the Companion Diocese of Central Buganda in February 2020 appeared as a blessing five months after the death of my love, Fletcher. I had joined with 18 others from Rupert's Land in 2007 to visit our Companion Diocese. I hoped it would not only be an opportunity to renew friendships, see the completed health centre in St. James' link parish which we had a hand in constructing, but also be a distraction from mourning and assist me in returning to the flow of life.

The objective of the Rupert's Land Diocese was to assess the environment of our Companion Diocese and make recommendations re: further visits from Rupert's Land to Central Buganda and what activities might shape such a visit.

During preparation in early January, the three of us—Rev. Alvin Jacobs, Colleen Woods, and myself—met with our Companion Diocese Committee for a potluck and prayer.. We had already booked air tickets. Alvin was leaving in mid-January, returning mid-March, whereas Colleen and I were leaving February 12. I was returning two weeks later and Colleen was being joined by her husband Mike for another two weeks of travel in Africa. Colleen and I had collected some medical supplies and clothes which we could take in the second bag allowed on our tickets and so we packed hockey bags with the supplies.



The total trip, including three airport stops, was 30 hours. Colleen and I were on the same flight out of Montreal. We arrived in Entebbe late on Feb. 13, met by a driver and Alvin, and went to the DianWill Hotel. The next morning we were able to get currency exchanged and local SIM cards for our phones by a helpful church volunteer who lived in Kampala. Then we were driven to Kasaka, the central meeting place and location of the cathedral and offices for the Diocese. I noticed great improvements in the road system since my 2007 trip. We were provided with hospitality by Bishop Michael and his wife Janepher for the two weeks we were there. An itinerary had been planned for us; however there was great flexibility to go with the flow and our requests were met. The Bishop had two cars and drivers available.

[Read the full report here.](#)

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## Celebrating a Holy Alliance

Congratulations to the Church of St. Stephen and St. Bede (99 Turner Ave.) as it celebrates its 50-year partnership of worship in the Silver Heights community.

For those who aren't aware, St. Stephen's is a Lutheran congregation, while St. Bede's is Anglican, and they have successfully shared their place of worship for the past half-century.

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church relocated to Ness Avenue in 1960 (currently home to the Silver Heights Seventh Day Adventist Church). St. Bede's Anglican Church first opened its doors in 1964 at the corner of Turner Avenue and Mount Royal Road. Little did they know at the time that they would become more than just neighbours.

In 1970, the parish of St. Stephen's made a difficult decision but one necessary to the survival of its congregation. They left the place they had called home for 10 years with heavy hearts and were welcomed by the neighbouring parish of St. Bede's with open arms. A mere 500 metres down the road was their new home of worship.

But to say they just shared the space would be a massive understatement.

In 1996, the decision was made to hold joint services, and, in 2004, a worship service was developed that included the best of both practices. The amount of research, paperwork and hoop-jumping must have been astronomical. Churches do not make change quickly but change was necessary for both congregations to thrive. This truly was the work of visionaries.

Since then, the youth and Sunday school programs have grown together. Both flocks have grown together to develop a unified prayer body while respecting each other's traditions.

I was invited to the commemorative service and symbolic walk on Oct. 18 — the same 500 metre walk that was taken in 1970. Even some of the traffic on Ness Avenue got in on the action by honking support as the contingent travelled the short distance from its original

Ness Avenue parish site to its current home, once again welcomed by the Anglican celebrants.

The Church of St. Stephen and St. Bede is a true foundation of the community. Congratulations.

— [Wanda Prychitko](#), Community Correspondent for St. James-Assiniboia



**Participating celebrants at the commemorative service of the partnership of the Church of St. Stephen's and St. Bede were Bishop Jason Zinko (left), of the Manitoba-Northwestern Ontario Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada; the Rev. Canon Murray Still, pastor/incumbent (centre); the Right Rev. Geoff Woodcroft, Bishop of the diocese of Rupert's Land. Missing is intern minister Andrea Grozli.**

**Is there something exciting  
in your congregation others  
should know about?**



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for the Parish  
Roundup! [rnews  
@rupertsland.ca](mailto:rnews@rupertsland.ca)**

## Reflection: Walking Sole to Soul, Assiniboine Park

On a grey Thanksgiving Sunday back in October, I embarked on a Sole to Soul walk in Assiniboine Park with Krista Waring and her partner, Pierre. I have been advertising the Sole to Soul walks as part of the [Learning Journey](#) events for 2020, and I figured, with this particular walk planned close to my home, it would be fun to do some “onsite investigating.”

Krista, the event organizer, had given me instructions to look for her in a bright orange raincoat, and aside from this practical piece of information, I set out to meet her with no real expectations. I spotted her jacket near the park entrance at Corydon, and, after hanging back idly for a bit, introduced myself to Krista and Pierre. The three of us began our walk, facing East in the Direction of Hope, with this prayer:

**Creator, awaken in us with each day, new hopes, new dreams of colours, love and joys never before imagined. Fill our bodies with your breath; invigorate us. Carry us to our destination with you. May we reach out to you boldly to grasp the miracles that are given birth with each new dawn.**

The greater intention of the Sole to Soul walks (from what I’ve gathered) is the practice of acknowledging the land, the indigeneity of its history, and our presence now held within and guided by its form, by the shape of its terrain. In walking the landscape, we practice attending, or as Krista describes it, “walking with intent.” Each route must chart the four directions, and lead you through a loop back to the place where you started. At the point of each new direction, you recite, in this order, a prayer to creation, to yourself, to others, and to the Creator. Indeed, this is not merely a walk in the park, but a walk that involves meaningful preparation and attention. You are required to show up.

Admittedly, I nearly didn’t show up. An hour before the scheduled walk, my spouse and I had been driving home from my parents’ place in



the country. I was tired, irritably bloated from a weekend of eating, and it was starting to rain. Not to mention the looming COVID situation, which hardly supports meeting up with strangers. It would’ve been easy and justifiable to cancel.

I decided to go anyway.

Conveniently, Assiniboine Park is located less than a block away from where I’ve recently moved, and I find myself navigating its geese-ridden paths on my runs almost every day. It’s a wonder how these familiar spaces can, through the presence of other people, transform into places that feel fascinatingly new. I experienced this during my walk with Krista and Pierre.

The three of us traversed the park together, at a leisure pace, and giving each other the appropriate space. In some moments we made small talk, and in others we quietly observed the landscape: the still green expanse of the cricket field, the old Zoo gate, and the botanical gardens decaying into their fall colours.

As we circled the Leo Mol Sculpture garden, Krista commented on a couple having their photo taken at the edge of a fountain. “I





themselves, before an officiant, to the event of being together. Perhaps, our own company of three really was playing the unassuming witness to a modest wedding?

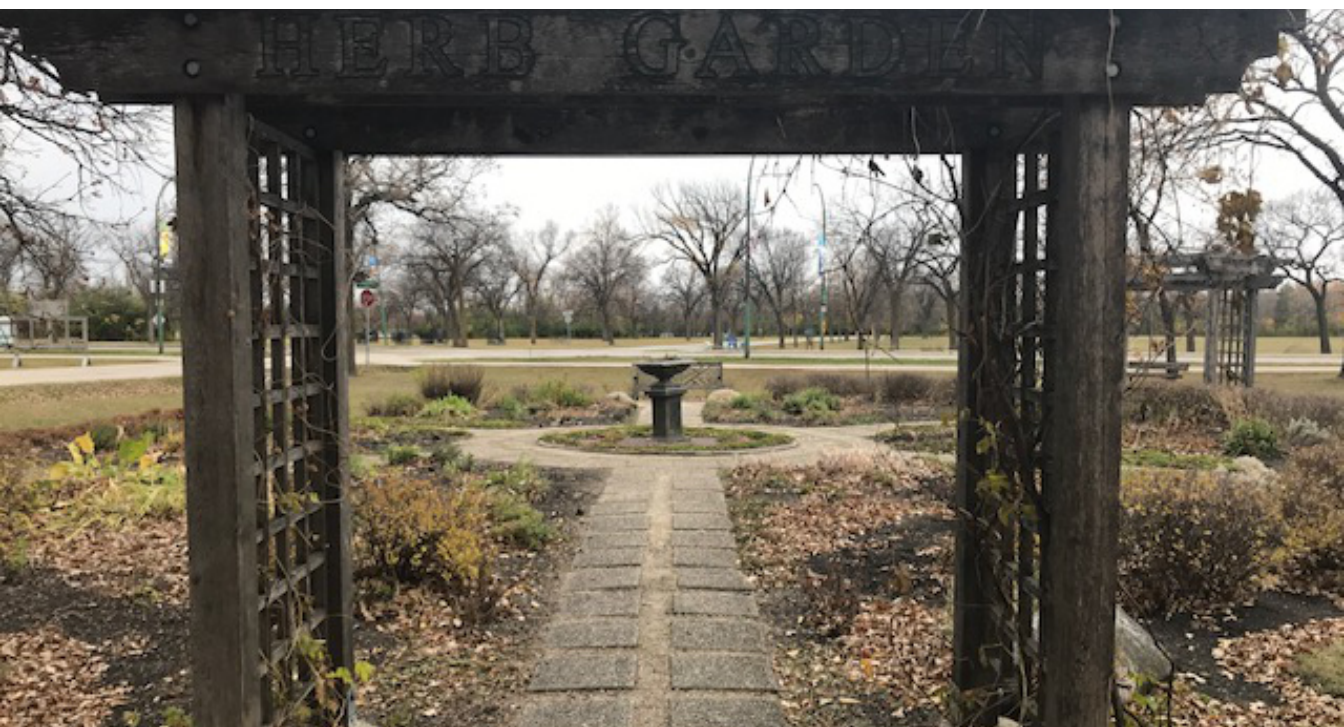
Regardless of what we witnessed in the botanical garden, what was revealed to me in those moments, walking in the rain with my new acquaintances, was a kind of wedding between ourselves—our souls—and the land beneath us and surrounding us. During each pause and prayer, I found an invitation to contemplate familiar scenes, encountered in a park I've often taken for granted, with renewed intrigue and tenderness.

Here is the closing prayer from the walk, meant to be recited when you return to your initial starting point:

wonder if it's a wedding," she said. I laughed at the comment—the couple was clad in jeans and sweaters and clearly not getting married. However, as I reflect back on her quirky remark, I find something striking in it. I think back to that scene—the couple pressed close together with their arms linked, the photographer standing a couple of metres away, angling his phone camera for the desired shot—and to the onlooker, the ensemble does appear as a kind of formal arrangement. It had been set up like a ceremony for two lovers who were committing

**Creator, teach us to walk softly on your lands, to use with care your gifts, to love with tenderness one another because we have all been born of your goodness. And when the day comes that you call us back to you, may we return to you as your own, to find ourselves embraced, encircled, enfolded in your arms. Amen**

– Sara Krahn







*Peace comes in the generosity of water.*  
—Mary Oliver, “Swimming with Otter”

*Peace like a river, says the song,*

like a river that curls  
through prairie grasses  
and cuts through valley slopes  
to meet a new beginning  
at the ocean’s mouth,

like a river, cool refuge,  
that guides weary explorers  
and soothes my feet now  
after a long hike under the Sun,

like a river that cracks the earth  
through the slow passage of time.

Today, I need peace  
like that, so fully encompassing  
I can swim in it.

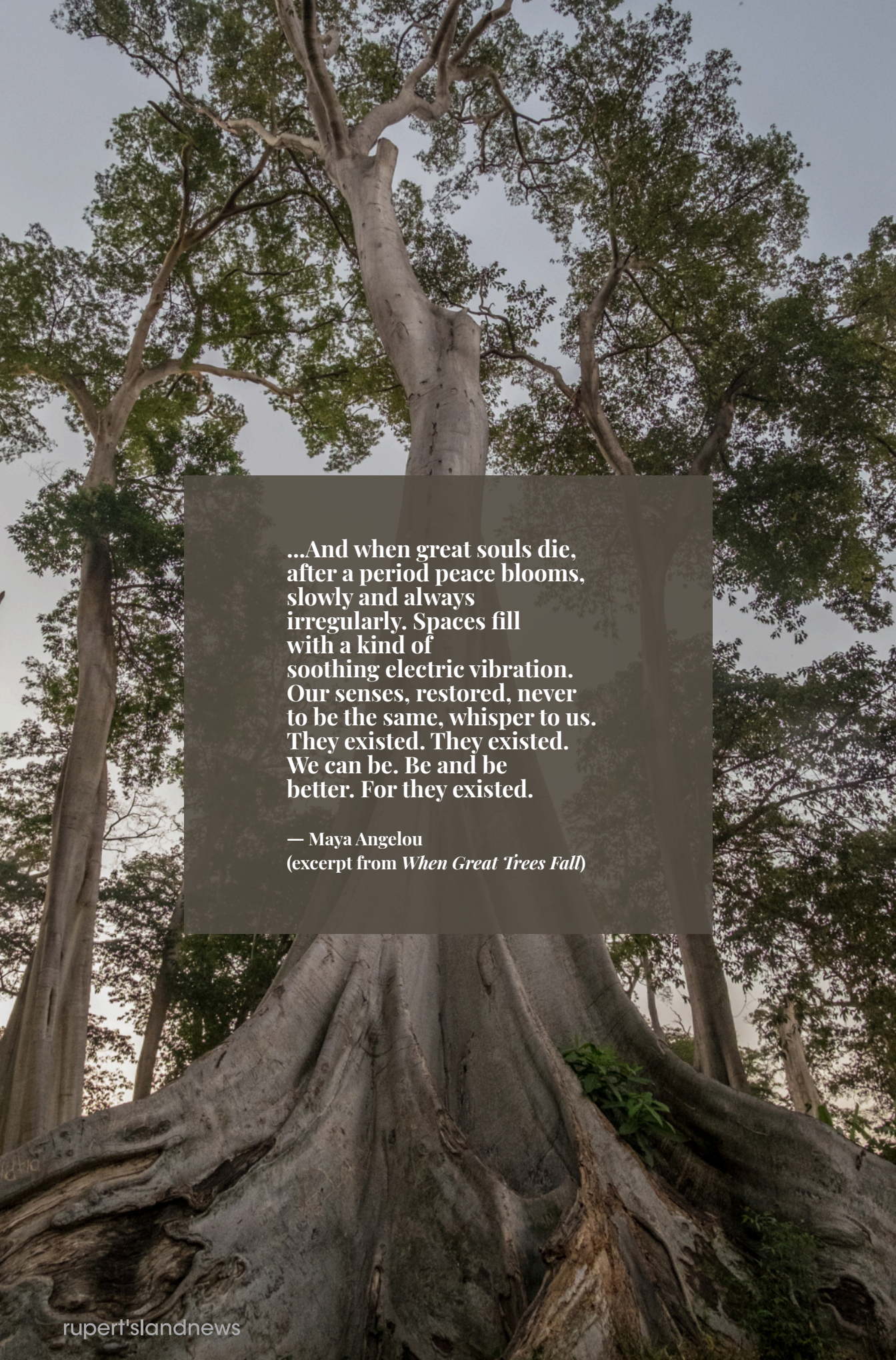
Tomorrow, I will give it away.

*This is from “The Shape of Our Life,” poems for saint benedict’s table, written during Kyla’s artist residency in summer 2019.*



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...And when great souls die,  
after a period peace blooms,  
slowly and always  
irregularly. Spaces fill  
with a kind of  
soothing electric vibration.  
Our senses, restored, never  
to be the same, whisper to us.  
They existed. They existed.  
We can be. Be and be  
better. For they existed.

— Maya Angelou  
(excerpt from *When Great Trees Fall*)