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[Rupert's Land News](#) is published 10 times per year (September - June) by the Diocese of Rupert's Land, in the Anglican Church in Canada. It connects churches and communities from Portage la Prairie, MB, to Atikokan, ON, by offering news, events, opinions, and ideas to 4,000 readers per month. RLN is available in a variety of formats:  
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RLN exists to explore issues at the intersections of faith and life. In doing so we solicit and publish a range of opinions, not all of which reflect the official positions of the Diocese. We acknowledge that we meet and work in Treaty 1, 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.

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# A LONG STANDING TRADITION

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# “The Runner’s Wave”

Photo: [sporlab](#)

I had my first taste of what it means to have a simple, soulful experience when I took up running in my teens. It was my mom—herself a runner—who coaxed me into being her running buddy. Initially, she and I would run together on the grid of mile roads that stretched beyond the village where I grew up. As I got older, however, I began traversing the bald prairies on my own and gradually began to discover that running connected me to both a larger sense of myself and the world that existed beyond. My adolescence spent growing up in the borderlands of Southern Manitoba is marked by this ritual of running—an exercise that has followed me into my adult life. Over the years I have realized that, for me, “going for a run” means both an excuse to get fresh air and an intentional re-centring of myself in the face of life’s chronic uncertainties.

Now, in the midst of social isolation and a work-from-home lifestyle, I am once again reflecting on the importance of running in my life. It adds structure to my day and fills a sliver of that missing coworker camaraderie in the form of “the runner’s wave” (a gesture that, though simple and wordless, offers a sense of casual kinship). It also restores my sense of momentum and *aliveness* where the rest of my day can leave me feeling stagnant and passive in the face of circumstances beyond my control.

In light of the pandemic and the ensuing loss of our physical communities, many of us have turned towards rituals and intentional practices as a form of rescuing our lost sense of connection with other humans, with ourselves, and, perhaps, with God. Where we used to gather together in shared ceremony and celebration, we must now seek alternative, physically-distanced methods of building solidarity as a community.

This May, we’re meditating on the idea of both ritual and spiritual care, and rituals as a

*form of spiritual care* during the pandemic. I am excited to feature contributions from four spiritual care workers, reporting on both the stresses and delights experienced this past year in their practice as professional care-givers in the Winnipeg community. In ‘Dance Then, Whoever You May Be,’ Chris Salstrom reports on the coronavirus outbreak that occurred in her long-term care unit, and the spontaneous ritual that sprang up out of this highly stressful situation. Joan Crabtree, who works as the Lead Spiritual Health Practitioner at Misericordia Hospital, speaks of ‘compassion fatigue,’ a term coined by Hungarian-Canadian physician [Gabor Maté](#) that refers to a care-giver’s denial of compassion for themselves. Joan refers to rituals of self-care as essential for our ability to show care and compassion for others during difficult times. In ‘The Gift of Ritual,’ Helen Holbrook reflects on the idea of ritual more generally and the importance of creating new rituals during times of grief and uncertainty. On page 14, Helen suggests some DIY ideas for creating rituals at home. And, last but not least, Paul Peters Derry serves up a dish of his own version of PPE (no, it is not a bowl of disposable face masks and he is not serving it in a hazmat suit), that is, Paul’s Pandemic Egg-bake!

Though rituals by themselves can appear as simple gestures— “the runner’s wave,” a routine dance to an old standby tune, a meal prepared in the same manner every week—it is these small intentional acts that have the power to carry the faith of an individual and an entire community.



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

# Fire-tending

GEOFFREY WOODCROFT

Photo: [Roya Ann Miller](#)

I am interested to know what sort of rituals we have developed since March 2020. Many of us have experienced losses over the past year, but I do not think that for one minute we have sat idly-by, even in the midst of times when it felt as though this was exactly what we were doing. I think that we humans are quite adaptable when it comes to performing in new situations and paradigms, even when we may not wish to be doing so.

Since September 2020, I have taken to lighting weekly fires in my backyard fire box. Bundled up in three layers of clothing, I routinely venture outside with newspaper and matches every Thursday or Friday. Gradually, I have come to discover that this “fire time” is also my personal retreat time—it is where I do the work of connecting heart to mind, issues to reckoning, and my day to God. I have prayed out loud, read out loud, ranted out loud, made peace out loud, and of course lol’ed, or *laughed out loud*.

Although ritual in and of itself is a just thing—an action of a *strange neighbour*—my new ritual of fire-tending has put me on a certain course that I need to tell you about. I began to set my schedule around when I wanted to have my weekly burn, even planning meals to accommodate the ritual. I soon realized that my fires were a natural act of coping with the losses I have experienced in these wilderness days of COVID. When I discovered that I had been speaking out loud, as mentioned above, it became clear to me how much I was missing in-person discussions, word-plays and prayers. I had lost my comfortable mode of communication with others, and I was struggling to be myself on Zoom, on which I

remain painfully awkward, fidgety, ill-prepared, and physically unable to reckon myself on screen – *how can I be there, if I am here?* (Allow me to add that I remain entirely thankful for the electronic communications that have provided all of us with new opportunities, skills and relationships.)

I did not, at the start of the pandemic, set out to build a new ritual, and so I have been quite surprised to discover that I have done so. In light of this, I would like to raise questions in the Church where our practice and desire for ritual has been radically curtailed in a relatively short frame of time. First, what other rituals have emerged in which we participate, either alone or with others? Looking back on the past year, what rituals have each of us personally developed? And lastly, what do we hear God telling us through these dedicated times that we have facilitated?

God is speaking to each of us individually and to the whole Church, out of our yearnings and losses, and into God’s vast abundance within and around us. Perhaps we have realized that we are not so different from one another in our need to learn again to listen to God, and again to hear what God is saying to us personally and as a gathered Church. Today I am planning my next fire, and I am also planning how I might better listen with my beloved community.



Geoffrey Woodcroft,  
Bishop of Rupert’s Land





## Dance Then, Whoever You May Be

CHRIS SALSTROM

Image: Russian Dancers, 1899, Edgar Degas

I am a Certified Spiritual Health Practitioner (SHP) working in long-term care. In this age of COVID-19, I have never felt so needed and so helpless all at the same time. We, as SHPs, have the privilege of working in the homes of the people we serve. Our residents allow us into their most personal places. They welcome me both into their physical spaces and their most vulnerable inner spaces. I am present at the time people enter our facilities and when they leave them; I am often welcomed into their most sacred moments. My colleagues and I regularly offer or are part of the rituals that are offered at the facilities that we work at, both in Long Term and Acute Care.

For me, COVID-19 became all too real when outbreaks occurred in some of my units, and I was unable to offer even the barest of

“normal” rituals. I could not transport people to the lounge to watch televised church services while appropriately distanced. We could not gather in small groups to pray, not even groups of two or three to talk about spiritual matters. How then could we have rituals to calm fearful residents who were very ill or afraid of becoming sick?

I struggled. I stood in doorways wearing all of my personal protective equipment shouting at people who strained to hear and who could not see my shielded lips. For people with dementia to whom I had to reintroduce myself daily, I cannot imagine what I must have looked like, wearing the required goggles, mask, and the “gorgeous” yellow gowns and gloves. (I must confess, yellow is *not* my best colour!) Many residents who were already disoriented

by the change in routine became more confused by my 'doorway visits.' I was only permitted inside the rooms to attend and pray with the imminently dying or the already deceased.

The outbreak was beyond what I could have imagined. In one unit, most residents were affected. To me it felt like a war zone. Staff became more frustrated and anxious. I felt even more helpless and useless.

I prayed for guidance. As I meditated upon the question, my gaze dropped to my hands, feeling their heaviness and the emptiness. I opened them praying that they would be filled. My eyes were drawn to something peeking out of my bottom drawer. Upon investigation I realized that it was my fifteen-year-old iPad that had been languishing under a pile of file folders. My spirit experienced an immediate sense of knowing. I had a plan in place for the residents, for the staff, and for me. I grabbed the device, hoping it would still work. I knew that there were hymns loaded on the ancient tablet. I added a few others, found a small speaker, and was off!

After taking a deep breath, I began with a resident for whom I knew music was an essential part of life. I yelled through the distance and the mask, "Would you like to hear a hymn?!"

"What?" She yelled back, squinting to hear me better.

I shook my head and laughed inwardly. I put on a hymn I knew she loved.

"Oh! How'd you do that?!" She exclaimed, not really caring.

I explained while dancing to the hymn. Why not go all in, I figured? Hymns were music, and music was made for dancing!

It didn't take long before the residents and staff alike took to watching for me and my digital hymnbook. Some staff people looked forward to my visits almost as much as residents. Nurses told me their stories too, or offered hymn requests. Health Care Aids danced with me. Housekeepers stopped by before their shifts. I heard how frightened people were and I prayed with them. I took prayer requests for others. I said a lot of prayers

for families, especially for their children.

This became my COVID ritual of choice during the outbreak.

There is something about music that opens people up, that takes away the rest of what is happening for a moment or two. This offers the "peace that passes all understanding" for me. I hope it does for the people I serve as well.

As we moved past active outbreak (hopefully for good), I have kept up the ritual of bringing music to residents. I know the value of music for aging adults. I know the statistics about how it helps dementia. What I was not prepared for is how much it helped everyone else. I was also not aware of how much I needed it.

COVID and the trauma that we are feeling in healthcare (in my experience) is sometimes beyond what I can put into words. It is sometimes beyond what the staff can put into words. Thus, it comes out in other forms of prayer. It comes out as tears of prayer, praise of prayer, dance of prayer or sometimes all of the above...at the same time!

The dancing ritual of prayer has been the most joyful for me. When I come to God with praise and dance, God always lifts my heart into a better place. I am left knowing that there is hope even in this time of difficulty and sorrow. I am given strength to face anything in my path. But the greatest gift of this ritual is the change that I see in the residents and staff around me. For they change in front of my eyes. I see in them sparks of hope, joy, and possibility. I see life. I see the beauty and love of God springing forth from people who are badly overworked and overtired, or whose living situation is quite unimaginable to most of us.

When a ritual can achieve all of these things, I, for one, think it is worth keeping long after the pandemic ends.



Chris is a Certified Spiritual Care Practitioner, a Spiritual Care researcher and a DMin (Doctor of Ministry). She is a lifelong Anglican who is curious about how God works in people.



## Compassionate Care or Compassion Fatigue?

JOAN CRABTREE

Photo: [Earl Wilcox](#)

In recent weeks, there have been a multitude of articles and podcasts related to the mental health effects of this relentless pandemic. Terms like exhaustion, burnout, stress leave, and compassion fatigue are commonly used in the headlines, particularly in articles dealing with front-line health care workers. As a spiritual health practitioner in a health centre that provides care to people in both long term and acute care programs, these terms resonate with me, and have been of increasing concern in recent months.

Front line staff have been pushing themselves to provide compassionate care to people who are in a vulnerable stage of life, and many of these workers have gone over and above what is expected of them. I have witnessed staff members giving haircuts when hair salons are shut down, donating clothes to a client in need, volunteering to help put up a Christmas tree in the chapel after working an overnight shift, or taking some of their break time to sit with a dying resident. These acts of kindness contribute to an atmosphere of care and compassion where people enjoy their work, and the residents and clients feel well-cared for and respected.

For many people, these acts of kindness are life-giving rituals of care. They help us feel

good about ourselves. They provide meaning and purpose to our lives. For some, it is in loving others that they feel they are contributing to the greater good, and making the world a better place. Isn't this what we are called to do as Christians?

Micah 6:8 tells us that God requires Christians and the Church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly. Social justice issues are often lifted up in the media, and are an important part of working together in Christian communities. Kindness is a lovely value. Most of us enjoy being givers (and receivers) of kindnesses and can list numerous times when we have witnessed them. But walking humbly is an area that I find more difficult to live out with purpose and vision. It is not that I struggle with pride or arrogance more than others do, but I have had to put more thought into what it looks like to "walk humbly." I have recognized some habits of mine that contribute to fatigue, and some of which could even be considered arrogant. Given these realizations, I believe a lack of humility can be a direct contributor to compassion fatigue.

I recently attended an online webinar with [Gabor Maté](#), a respected speaker and best-selling author, on the topic of Compassion Fatigue. One important piece of wisdom I took



from that webinar was that compassion fatigue is a misnomer. It should rather be labeled “lack-of-compassion fatigue.” Care-givers can be very good at denying compassion to themselves.

Offering compassion to others, like giving a kindness, does not cause fatigue. In fact, it is often life-giving, helping us to share in the amazing gift of God’s love, and to feel a part of a community. Acting on values such as kindness, mercy, and justice can give meaning and purpose to our lives. It can bring us joy and revive our spirits when we offer a small kindness to another. But we should also extend these kindnesses to ourselves. We are, first of all, responsible for our own well-being.

**When we feel that we are the only ones who can meet a certain need or when we frequently push down our boundaries of time, energy, and responsibility without replenishing these resources, we are not demonstrating humility. Rather, we are giving in to a form of pride and arrogance.**

This attitude demonstrates a lack of dependence on God as well as interdependence on one another. It is easy to understand how we can become run-down when we think that we are the only ones who can fulfill a certain need. We exhaust ourselves when we try to do things on our own, or when we don't take the time to reflect on our limitations and seek guidance from the Source of all Life.

In order to offer care and compassion to others in trying times, rituals are essential. Rituals can be defined as habits with a spiritual purpose. They feed our soul and help us connect to the Holy One. They are tangible, measurable acts that restore our energy and give us direction and guidance. It is essential that we recognize these rituals as key contributors to our spiritual and mental wellbeing.

There are times when my life feels busier than usual; when the responsibilities of work, home, family, and social life seemingly demand

more of my time than I can give. Sometimes, this is when I am tempted to put aside my self-care practices and just do the things that have a more recognized value. Stresses can distract me from what I know is self-compassion. I might give up a walk to attend to the demands that are shouting louder. I might consider cutting short my morning quiet time to complete the tasks which others might notice. Or, I might turn on the television late in the evening instead of going to bed when I am tired. These habits, while they don't really take any physical energy, do not help me feel rested. Instead, they drain my energy and contribute to compassion fatigue.

I recall a particularly difficult time when it felt like my life was being turned upside down. It was the rituals of Bible reading and prayer, of walking every morning, and of spending time with good friends that kept me going. Intentionally tending to my spiritual, physical, and social needs enabled me to continue caring for my family, pursue the work I enjoyed, and stay involved in the ministries that were important to me.

In my work in spiritual health, I sometimes meet individuals who have well-established habits they find meaningful. Sometimes these rituals involve religious pursuits, but they may also involve interests in music, the creative arts, physical activity, poetry, gardening and creation care, or finding ways to express their love to members of their family. Recognizing the value of intentionally making time for these activities can protect us from compassion fatigue and remind us that our strength comes from God. And, if we do make time for these activities on a regular basis, they can sustain us, help us to feel alive, and enable us to care for those people in our world who need it most.



Joan Crabtree serves as People's Warden at St. Peter's Parish. She also enjoys working as the lead spiritual health practitioner at Misericordia Health Centre, and sometimes struggles to fit in all of her important rituals of self-care.



# Gloria Romaniuk, Archivist for the Diocese of Rupert's Land Retires



Gloria Romaniuk, Archivist for the Diocese of Rupert's Land over the last 10 years, retired in January of this year. She will be missed, and we thank her for her many contributions over the course of her time with the Diocese of Rupert's Land Archives.

Gloria was responsible for acquiring records, arranging and describing them and making them accessible to Diocesan staff, committees and researchers within and outside of the church. She also participated in and hosted meetings of Diocesan and General Synod Archivists from across Canada and has been an active member in the Archival community in Manitoba.

Amongst Gloria's many accomplishments was the West End Commons Oral History Project. Gloria applied for and administered a grant from the province of Manitoba in 2017 to document for posterity the groundbreaking transformation of the Parish of St. Matthews from worship space to a combined space for parish activities and low-cost housing to support the community in which it is positioned.

Several years ago, Anglican archivists from across Canada were asked to search through their holdings, copy and submit records which illuminated the history of residential schools for submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Some 300,000 digitized pages were submitted. Approximately half of those pages were from the General Synod Archives and the remainder 150,000 pages were submitted from 30 Anglican archives across the country, of which the DRLA was one. The work of compiling the submission for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was enormous and challenging. Copies of the DRLA's records documenting residential schools now form part of the archives of the National Centre for Truth

and Reconciliation at the University of Manitoba.

Gloria and her volunteers have assisted with numerous parish closures by facilitating the taking of inventories and the transfer of records and other items to the Diocesan Archives.

The DRLA serves as a clearing house to redistribute "Holy Hardware" to parishes that could use the items.

Gloria has applied for numerous grants to extend limited resources and was instrumental in getting the microfilm copies of the parish registers of baptisms, marriages and burials digitized to improve access to them and reduce handling of the fragile originals. She also initiated the compilation of an index for the Rupert's Land News and worked with a handful of parishes, assisted by The Reverend Brian Ford, to create a searchable database for sacramental registers created today.

A sewer back up event and space pressures threatening the physical security of records in recent years at the Diocesan office has required coming up with creative short-term solutions for off-site storage and assessing longer term needs. Gloria has been instrumental in facilitating those conversations while taking steps to protect the records.

Through all of this, Gloria has been supported by a small dedicated team of volunteers who have assisted in many aspects of the Archives operations and have enjoyed having the opportunity to work with her.

We wish Gloria well in her retirement and are grateful for her passion and commitment in supporting the DRLA over the last decade.

*- Submitted by the Diocese of Rupert's Land Archives Committee*



**Gloria Romaniuk**

*Coming up in June's issue, RLN will feature an interview with the new archivist, Krystal Payne.*

# The Diocese of Rupert's Land Archives Establishes an Endowment Fund with The Manitoba Heritage Trust Program



The Diocese of Rupert's Land Archives (DRLA) operates under the authority of Canon 28, providing the Diocese of Rupert's Land with the mandate to collect, arrange, describe and preserve archival records and related papers of the Diocese and non-current parochial, congregational and mission records, including the registers of baptism, confirmation, marriage, and burial. The DRLA also responds to requests for access to the records from committees and groups of the Diocese, Synod office staff, clergy, and parish staff and researchers.

The history of the development of the Diocese is linked to the early days of the formation of the Red River Settlement with records dating back from 1813 to the present day. The records are foundational in documenting early missions, the development of the church, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions in Manitoba and beyond. They also have national significance in documenting the Anglican Church in Canada. For example, one of its early Archbishops, Robert Machray, was the first Primate for all of Canada.

The Canons of the church require that non-current parish registers are transferred to the Diocesan Archives once complete for permanent retention and access through the Diocese of Rupert's Land Archives. With

periodic transfers of records from individual parishes over the years to comply with this canon and through numerous parish closures that have taken place, the capacity available at Anglican-Lutheran Centre to provide secure store and manage the records has long been exceeded. A portion of the holdings are now being stored off site through rental agreements.

There is a critical need for the Diocese of Rupert's Land Archives to build capacity both in secure storage and in hours to employ professional staff to manage the records, make them accessible, and oversee volunteers to assist with operations. Toward this end, a decision was made early this year to establish an endowment fund with The Winnipeg Foundation in order to attract donations. Once sufficient capital is built up, revenue distributions from the fund will support DRLA operations.

[Read the full article here.](#)

To make a donation please visit [The Winnipeg Foundation/Endow Manitoba website.](#)

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## Parish News Roundup

### AFC Calls for “Courageous, Creative, Response” For Children & Youth

The Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC) is using the 10th anniversary of the Kids Helping Kids Fund (KHK) to launch Say Yes! to Kids—a campaign to raise \$100,000 to fund post-pandemic programs for children, youth, and young adults in Canada. Scheduled to run from April 5 to June 30, the campaign will be supported by a variety of fundraising initiatives including an online peer-to-peer program designed to engage youth advocates nationwide.

[Read more about the campaign.](#)

To join a Say Yes! to Kids fundraising team, or to make an individual donation to the campaign, visit [www.anglicanfoundation.org/kids](http://www.anglicanfoundation.org/kids).



### Farewell Service for the Reverend Canon Donna Joy

Sunday, May 16, 2021 10:30 a.m. via Zoom.

Please join the Anglican Parish of St. Peter in a farewell service to celebrate Donna's thirty years of dedicated ministry, and to then send her off into a well-deserved retirement.

All are welcome to attend.

Please email for the Zoom link: [adminstrator@stpetersanglican.ca](mailto:adminstrator@stpetersanglican.ca)

### B'nai Brith Canada Announces New Online Book Shop

B'nai Brith Canada is thrilled to announce the launch of their [new online book shop](#), where you can purchase our new series of books that explore important and timely themes of diversity and inclusion. These beautifully illustrated and engaging hard-cover books are perfect for children (ages 3-8).

Celebrating and embracing diversity are really important for kids. By reading books that weave in meaningful themes and celebrate our similarities and differences, kids make connections, build empathy, and learn to respect and appreciate others.

In a country as multicultural as Canada, it's vital to expose our children to values that instill a sense of acceptance for everyone.

Shop the [online store here](#).



## The Gift of Ritual

HELEN HOLBROOK

Photo: [Brooke Lark](#)

In 2002, I took part in a one-day workshop on ritual as part of my chaplaincy training at the Ottawa Civic Hospital. The workshop was over 19 years ago, but it still impacts me to this day. In the workshop, I was encouraged to utilize my imagination and creativity, and draw awareness to how transitions in our lives are marked by ritual. Workshop participants were asked to create a ritual to mark a situation that might occur in a hospital. For example, one group created a ritual for the discontinuation of dialysis treatment; another group created a ritual around the decision to stop chemotherapy. Many of us were teary as these groups shared symbols and prayer to represent change and loss.

### How do we use rituals?

The use of ritual is fundamental to the human experience, because it is our way of expressing deep spiritual and emotional connection to the Creator. Rituals speak when we do not have the words or when we want to augment our expression of thankfulness and praise of God. Pilgrimages to Stonehenge, for

example, demonstrate how important it was for the ancient druids to mark changes in the seasons, gather as community, give thanks to God(s) for the harvest, and remember those who had passed.

But how do we mark the changes, losses, and hopes of our community in the midst of a global pandemic, when gathering together is unsafe? There are many possible methods to fill this gap, but one needs to be intentional, and make time for the ritual, even if it is only for five minutes. These five minutes might be the most meaningful parts of our day and connect us to something greater than ourselves.

### Rituals & Creativity

Art, music, food, and other expressions of our creativity are at our disposal for any ritual. For example, years ago I worked with youth at risk, and there was one student who used to visit me often. During one particular visit he expressed to me his desire to mark the death of his grandfather. I invited him to use my art supplies to create a memorial. He picked a piece of wood and glued a cross onto the



platform; then he decorated it with colourful flowers and a gentle stream. As he created his little tableau, he also shared with me memories of his grandfather. When the student had finished his project, he seemed more at peace. He told me that every morning he would now be able to look at it this memorial and know where his grandfather was. This young student had created a morning ritual, and his creation gave him a place to remember his grandfather.

The above example is a demonstration of how one person, with the help of another participant, can create a very personal ritual of remembrance. And though, during these COVID times, rituals may need to take different forms, they are still possible to create. Larger communities, such as the University of Manitoba, can use virtual tools to enact rituals. At the University, the chaplains recently worked together to create a one-hour ritual to mark the one-year anniversary of COVID and the restrictions that resulted in the transition to on-line learning. Elements such as music, prayer, poetry, a candle lighting ceremony, and reflections from a diverse group representing students, faculty, and administration, worked together to mark losses and share hopes for the future.

### **Rituals of Mourning**

Community ritual can occur online through various digital platforms, but for those isolated in hospitals or nursing homes, creating a space for remembrance requires assistance from a spiritual care provider, or recreation therapist (if they feel comfortable). For example, in my work, if a resident wants to remember a deceased family member, we may work on a memorial by picking the music, prayers, and poetry; then I will bring a candle and conduct the service in their room. Bereavement rituals are guided by the person's faith, belief system, and whatever is meaningful to the griever.

Bereavement rituals are also important to staff. In nursing homes, blessing the room of the deceased is a mourning practice for staff and a way of preparing for a new resident. Staff will often cut out the obituary and place it on a

bulletin board to encourage remembrance and mourning.

Emergency rooms, also, have their own rituals. Here, staff will share a moment of silence when a patient dies, and then offer a statement of gratitude for the deceased one's life, as well as remember their family and friends.

### **Rituals of Celebration**

Not all rituals mark sad events. There are also rituals for life transitions that require celebration and acknowledgement. For example, the student council at St. John's College created a virtual graduation ritual that included speeches, grad gifts, entertainment, and conversations via break out rooms. This graduation was entirely online. It was full of energy and it marked the transition in an uplifting way. I have also witnessed events, such as birthdays, being marked with large signs and sometimes even a parade of cars driving by the home of the celebrant, honking their horns in celebration. Indeed, new rituals are being born from our need for community in COVID times!

The creation of new rituals, as well as an increased attention to traditional ones, have and are continually occurring in the midst of the ongoing COVID restrictions. Advent wreaths on people's social media pages include pictures and prayers instead of treats. I, myself, have been using prayer and candles to help me with my own personal reflections as symbols of hope in uncertain times. At various times during the past year, candles were a rare commodity and I wondered how many people had incorporated them into their home-based ritual in daily practice.

Personal rituals under COVID have, indeed, increased and this should grant some comfort to individuals who wait for a day when they can reconnect face to face with family and community. Though rituals cannot necessarily replace the social connection that our spirits crave, they can do the work of holding us for now. And God willing, we will once again be able to gather in support and celebration as a community.

**Create your own ritual! Here are some activity ideas that Helen talked about in a presentation she gave on Ritual.**

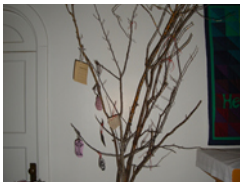
- 1** Use candles to name the emotions you are feeling at the time you are performing your ritual.



- 2** Paint or decorate a candle in honor of someone you miss and incorporate it into a ritual.



- 3** Create a memory tree and write on leaf cut outs someone or something you miss and incorporate into a ritual.



- 4** Decorate crosses in remembrance of someone you have lost, to be incorporated into a ritual of remembrance.



*Below is a reflection from the COVID commemoration ceremony at the University of Manitoba COVID day of reflection.*

## Unknown losses

Here we remember the unknown losses  
Like the unknown soldiers who died, we do not know their names  
We can not name all our losses this year  
We may have forgotten, or they may be too many to bear  
The unknown losses have no market value  
The unknown losses are bitter to taste  
The unknown losses can wound the heart  
If we look, we search with our hearts then we can see  
See the losses are unable to push us down with despair  
Despair has no friends, but we do  
Despair does not share love, but we are cherished and cared for  
Despair leaves hope behind, but hope resides in all of us  
There are many losses, but we are not broken by them  
We will learn, we will engage in empathy, we will honour the losses.



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## PPE—Paul's Pandemic Egg-bake

PAUL PETERS DERRY

Photo: [Caroline Attwood](#)

I call it PPE—Paul's Pandemic Egg-bake—and it has become a regular part of the Sunday morning routine in the Peters Derry household. PPE helps answer the question, "What makes this day different?" and provides both a therapeutic, and even spiritual practice that refreshes and renews me for another week.

I start with getting our son Zachary to mix up some eggs. Zachary has special needs related to Down Syndrome, and with his regular day program having been on hiatus for over a year now, he's eager (and so are his parents) for some regular routine activities. I start chopping some veggies (onions, peppers, mushrooms, perhaps some black olives). Then, along with whatever else I might find in the refrigerator (maybe some bacon, ham, or something else), I sauté these ingredients, and arrange them in a large rectangular Pyrex dish. Finally, I pour the egg-and-milk mixture over the veggies, pop it in the oven, and in roughly an hour, brunch is served!

Paul's Pandemic Egg-bake has become such an integral part of our Sunday mornings, that when things ever get back to normal, I'm not sure I will want to let go of the new family tradition.



**"PPE," fresh from  
the oven on a  
Sunday morning.**

COVID-19 has made so much of our lives more cumbersome, affecting our individual, communal, and professional life. It has impacted even the simplest of activities within my work as a spiritual health practitioner and supervisor-educator of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) learners in the hospital context. Similarly, in November 2018, when I began to discern a vocational shift from ordained ministry within the United Church context, to exercising ministry within the Anglican Communion—most specifically, within our Diocese of Rupert's Land—I couldn't have imagined that plans for an ordination to the transitional diaconate would be complicated by considerations for physical distancing or figuring out some hybrid of in-person/virtual format. Despite having received my COVID vaccination early, as a front-line healthcare worker, I still feel a need to be



**Zachary in the  
kitchen  
whisking up  
some eggs for  
Paul's Pandemic  
Egg-bake.**

exceedingly cautious about in-person gatherings, and similarly about walking into Home Depot.

In *Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church is Transforming the Faith* (2016), Diane Butler Bass remembers the opening day at a church revitalization conference where she was the keynote speaker. The day began with an exercise of centering prayer, but for Bass, it just did not work. Bass explains, "As the priest tried to center us in prayer, I wondered if we instead needed to be de-centered, to be more realistic about the current state of affairs and imagine what possibilities God might have for us."

Those words offer remarkable resonance for living through the predictable unpredictability of a global pandemic.

As I consider the possibilities God might have in store for us, and look back over the past year, part of what continues to help me cope is paying attention to my own anxieties. I attend to that stab of anxiety as I drive by the Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI) location turned into a drive-through COVID-19 testing centre. Likewise, I recognize that even though the Reh-Fit Centre is an exceptionally fine, clean and safe fitness location, I was not ready to venture back last summer, and that is okay. Instead, I did cardio workouts by cycling to work along the new Rapid Transit active transportation path. Then, last fall, as temperatures began to plummet, I invested in an Indo-Rower—a rowing machine that requires you to pull against a paddle located in a larger cylinder of water. I am an unabashed and unapologetic extrovert, and I do miss my exercise buddies. That said, working out to an audio version of Barack Obama's *A Promised Land* or Michelle Obama's *Becoming*, or even the [saint benedict's table podcast](#) is pretty fine nonetheless.

It is also important for us to acknowledge the changes, griefs, limitations, and losses. Each of these are real, tangible, and undeniable.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) has been standard operating practice for over a

year now. Most of the time, I admit that I have found it to be astonishingly beside-the-point in the practice of spiritual care (though not always). At the end of a workday, I will sometimes feel that my eyes are more tired than they used to be, perhaps owing to increased empathetic communication with the part of my face that is not masked.

Indeed, I am increasingly mindful of how the world we inhabit is a "trackless, hostile wilderness," to borrow a phrase from another one of my favourite prayers. It is a prayer by Glen E. Rainsley and found in *The United Church of Christ (USA) Book of Worship* (1986). And it is with gratitude for grace and mercy, and with hope in the unfolding of God's promises—even and especially during these times—that I conclude with this prayer:

*O God of love,  
we are wayfarers in the world,  
prone to erratic changes of course, to losing  
sight of our goals,  
to becoming so discouraged by the journey  
that we will hitch a ride on anything that comes  
along.  
Help us on our way. If we change our course, let  
it not be in self-interest,  
but in order to share your love with another  
sojourner.  
If we lose sight of our goals,  
let our quest bring us as your curious people to  
honest searching of our faith.  
If we become weary and discouraged and  
forget you are with us,  
let it lead to recognition  
of our need for you.  
As we travel in a world  
that all too often seems a  
trackless, hostile  
wilderness,  
we ask that your Spirit  
sustain and surprise,  
encourage and excite,  
and enable us to go on.  
AMEN*



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