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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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"I'm interested in how human beings invent things and how those creations end up shaping us in return," says science writer Ainissa Ramirez in [an interview with Mary Hynes](#) about her book *The Alchemy of Us: How Humans and Matter Transformed One Another*. Ramirez goes on to discuss various human inventions and the ways in which they have changed human experiences, from electric light and photographic film to steel rails. She cites one of the first experiences she had with automatic water faucets: "I was in a bathroom and wanted to wash my hands, and I put my hand in front of the first automatic faucet and it didn't work, so I tried the one to my left and it didn't work. Then, a woman who was not African American and had a light complexion used the faucet that I'd just used, and it worked. I said 'Aha!' So, I went back to that faucet and opened my hand to the lighter side of my palm and the water came out."

As somebody with a "light complexion," I admit that I've rarely had this experience with automated faucets. I certainly would never have imagined such simple technology to house a built-in bias against darker skin. Of course, one doesn't immediately expect new technology to house built-in biases. Ramirez's observation highlights that we are often unaware of how even the simplest human inventions have the power to shape our understanding — or lack of understanding — of ourselves.

During this physically distanced year, digital technologies have been invaluable for keeping our parish communities connected. We have relied on platforms like Zoom, Twitch, and Facebook Live to continue our worship safely. But it's been a difficult year for the Church, to say the least. A level of reverence for our liturgical practices is missing from online worship; our on-screen parish communities are sorely lacking body language and eye contact.

Yet, the virtual Church has also found within it some unexpected joys. People who've felt

uncomfortable attending church in person are now attending online. Many of these digital platforms also provide chat windows that allow for meaningful discussions between people both inside and outside of the church.

Is there a "chat window" equivalent during in-person worship? As churches begin to reopen, how do these new technologies fit into the life of the Church? How will they shape our worship in a post-pandemic future?

In September's issue of RLN, we're exploring these questions. Erik Parker, the pastor of Sherwood Park Lutheran Church, eloquently writes about the tension between embodied worship and online spaces; Doug Cameron from St. Paul's Fort Garry shares the parish's new digital media strategy and makes a strong case for hybrid-style worship. Then, on page eight, we're treated to "Zoomin," a sketchpad drawing from talented local illustrator Jonathan Dyck. On page 11, we come up for air in a feature interview with Krystal Payne, the new Archivist for the Diocese of Rupert's Land. And finally, as a slight indulgence but remaining under the umbrella of "New Media," I've reviewed one of my favourite albums of the summer.

Digital media in worship can be a tool for inclusivity, storytelling, and compassionate listening. But it can also be a source of alienation and exhaustion. How will we bring awareness to the ways it's actively shaping our Christian communities today? This discernment is our new responsibility as the post-pandemic Church.



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

The New Media of God's Love

GEOFFREY WOODCROFT



Over the summer months, many of us have been plodding along through the books of Samuel in both daily prayer and the Sunday Eucharist lectionary. The Books of Samuel hold a sacred and noble role for Anglicans, as they have found regular public hearing throughout the year. Samuel, if you permit me, is our signal to renew God's love by whatever means are at our disposal.

"The word of God was rare in those days; visions were not widespread" (1 Samuel 3:1). This narrative verse precedes the news that the eyes of the priest Eli were growing dim and is, perhaps, the most pivotal line in the entire two books. Certainly, we ascertain that Eli is fading; but we might reckon that he is sad because his own people have lost the capacity to look, listen, and yearn for God. His priestly sons, Phinehas and Hophni, have normalized the corruption of authority to make themselves powerful, whilst forgetting the people they are meant to serve. This causes Eli immense suffering, which, in turn, allows God to be heard. The same pattern is rehearsed throughout the two books; immense suffering brought-on by the unjust leaders, priests, and powerholders is mediated by God through the voices of those who love.

We might think of God's love as the media that knows no bounds. David, a king of profound power, had the gifts and grace to heal the divisions between people of the northern and southern kingdoms. David, however, idolized his power, choosing ambition and ego over God's purposes in his leadership. Consequently, he failed those for whom he bore responsibility. Not until we hear David weep for Absalom, "My son, my son" do we see the broken king start to understand his blame and failure.



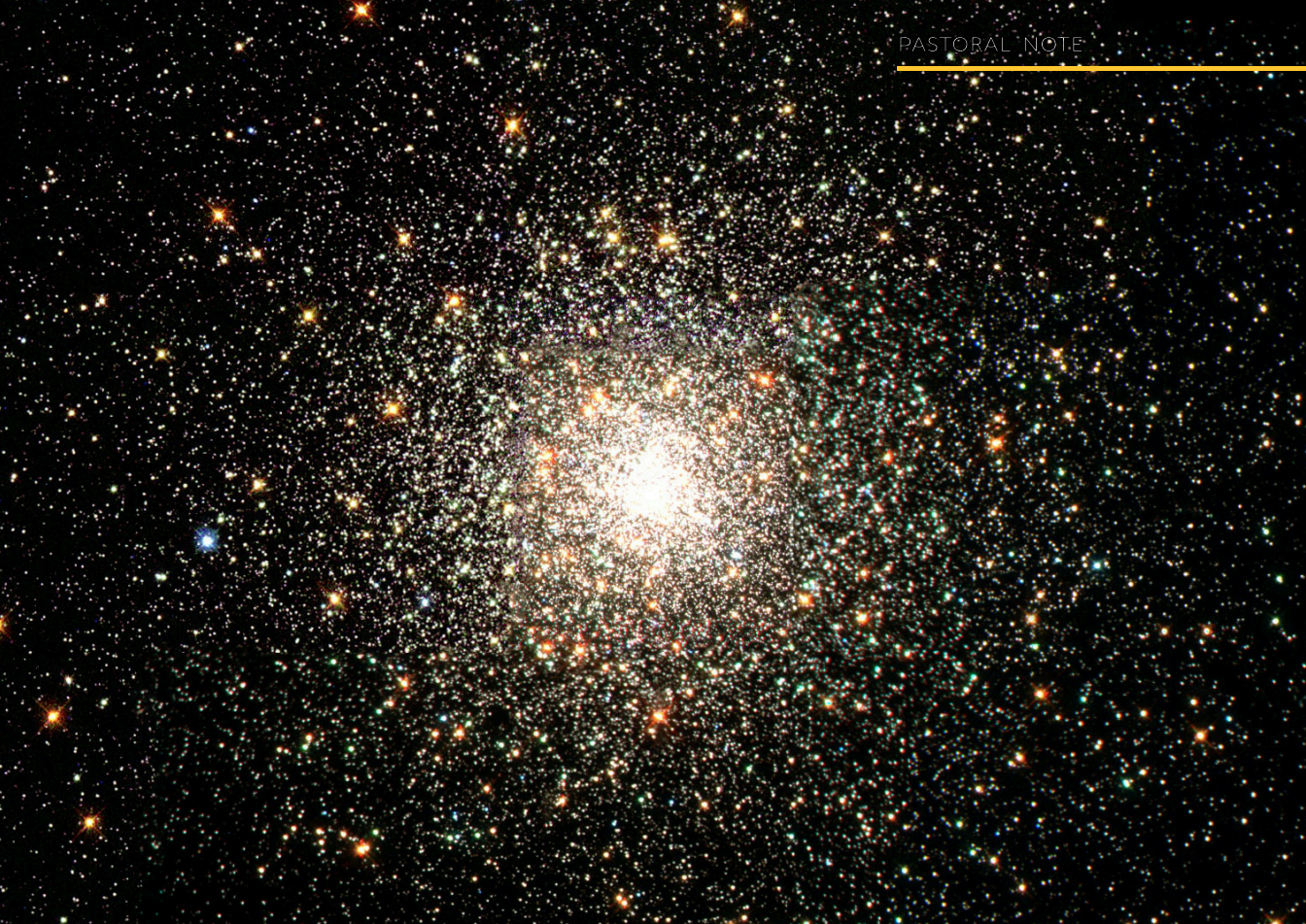
Image: James Tissot, The Voice of the Lord

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The word of God is not rare. It is our hearing God speak that remains rare. God chose to speak through a *child*, a *youth man*, and a *servant* to the corrupt leaders who were trapped by idols of their making. The voices of a child, a youth, and a servant continue to reverberate through the Church to this day because we know those truths are for us. God's love is the media we employ; the Baptismal strategy, Shema prayer, and Marks of Mission are our microphone, camera, tablet, and pen.

But how does our leadership and structure encourage the child, youth, and servant to proclaim the word of God?

We have been granted wisdom through our liminal excursion these past 20 months. It has emerged awkwardly and raw, and as something distinct from our last three decades of pre-COVID experiences. Many leaders, in our case priests, have been pushed beyond the normal boundaries of fatigue to communicate and pastor. In developing little known or used methods for this, they unlocked the gates, doors, and pews for fresh voices, new

expressions, and the wide sharing of knowledge and experience. People were also heard in digital public forum—through platforms that exposed other views, other localities and neighborhoods, and new opportunities to reckon God in our midst. We as leaders began to check our Baptism, Confirmation, and Wedding registers to revisit those people whom we promised to *do all* in our power to nurture in their life in Christ.

And so today, again, we hear the word of God waiting for us in children, youth, and the unassuming lay people of the Church.

Now, and into the foreseeable future, that gift of wisdom—that new media of God's love—must not be hidden. We must recklessly spend it on the beautiful world God made.



Geoffrey Woodcroft,
Bishop of Rupert's Land

Embodied Worship & New Media

REV. ERIK PARKER

Photo: [Debby Hudson](#)

Ahead of Sunday March 21, 2020, the call went out from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) National Office for photos of adapted worship spaces. It was the first Sunday that nearly every church was suspending in-person gatherings. The week prior on March 15th, I had used a small tripod to clip my phone to the front pew at Sherwood Park Lutheran Church in order to crudely livestream our service to our Facebook Page. This was our last in-person gathering.

I snapped a photo of our worship space for that first Sunday of suspended gatherings—a few mic and music stands facing the vast emptiness of our pews. I would have never imagined that this would be my view of worship for nearly a year and a half to come.

Though it can feel like those chaotic weeks of late March 2020 pushed the church into something completely new and unexpected, I believe that we have been on this path for a while. Using new means of reaching worshippers and connecting with parishioners in new ways is something that the church has been doing for a long time.

The pandemic did not completely change our course, but merely accelerated us in a

direction that we were already headed. There have been congregations and parishes out there that have been including online aspects to their worship for years now: livestreams, hashtags, photo sharing. A parish I served ten years ago in Camrose, Alberta has been broadcasting their services on the local cable access television station for decades for the residents of the many nursing homes in that city. My grandfather, who was also a pastor, preached radio sermons in the '50s. We have been laying out prescribed orders of worship in hymnbooks for centuries. Scripture itself contains descriptions of prayers, hymns, and liturgical practices that have invited the faithful into worshipful and worship-like experiences for millennia.

And so, though it seems like worship through new media is a new experience for us, Christianity has been conveying its worship and delivering the good news of the gospel using different mediated forms since its beginning.

Prior to March 2020, I had periodically considered live-streaming worship. I have been a blogger and active social media user since I attended seminary 15 years ago, and I could sense that live feeds, podcasts, and videos were

the direction that social media was going. A decade ago, a church having a website was as necessary as being listed in the phonebook. Five years ago, having a Facebook Page or other social media presence became necessary as these were the first places where people would seek out our congregations, our “front doors” so to speak. Live-streaming seemed like an obvious next step. The ELCIC’s conventions have been live-streamed for a decade, as well as Anglican Synods. Finally, in the past few years the technology has become more accessible as well—as easy as pulling out your phone and pressing record.

So when COVID lockdowns began, and parishes needed ways to convey worship to worshippers who could not come to us, the ideas that a few of us had bouncing around the back burners of our minds became the most pressing matters of the day. Worship began appearing on Facebook, YouTube, Twitch, and of course, Zoom. During those early pandemic Sundays, you could bounce around services from across the time zones of Canada.

Back then, it all seemed so novel and exciting. I think most of us had the sense it was temporary, too. We envisioned doing this fun “online” experiment and then returning to worship and liturgy as we knew it.

A year and half later, with several in-person false starts in between and cumbersome COVID protocols limiting what in-person worship can be, online worship is no longer “temporary.” Clergy and parishes are being forced to step back and consider what online worship actually means for us. What does it mean for the gathered assembly to be dispersed? What does it mean to proclaim the gospel, to confess and absolve sins, to hear the Word of God, to confess our faith, share the peace and pass the offering plate through a computer screen? What does it mean for our understanding of the Eucharist?

And what will the future bring? Hybrid worship experiences with some in-person and some online: who becomes the gathered Body of Christ where Jesus is present?

As we step into an uncertain future, my

hope is that there are, at least, two lessons that we can bring with us.

The first lesson is that moving worship into online spaces has opened us up to connections with unlikely people—people we might never have imagined would walk through our doors. Our public witness to the gospel has become more open and accessible than it has been in a long time.

The second lesson teaches a more cautionary tale. It reminds us of the limits of mediated Christian community and worship. There is something about being together that is important to the worship life of a community—the embodied gathering of the Body of Christ connects us like nothing else can to the life of the Trinity. Joining together as the worshipping assembly makes manifest the primary symbol of God’s presence in the world—the Church. The primacy of the assembly is why Paul did not mail bread and wine along with his letters. It is why hymnbooks are not the act of worship themselves, but simply instructions on how to join in with the heavenly chorus. It is why radio sermons and televised services have always been supplemental to in-person gatherings with our siblings in faith. And it is why the online worship which has carried us through this pandemic will not replace our live gatherings.

Our in-person, embodied gatherings are reflections of the God whom we worship:

The God who brought life into being with the Word and with dirt.

The Christ who joins in our fleshliness allowing us to see and hear, touch and feel the divine with our own bodies.

The Spirit who connects us across great spans and distances, also makes us one, shoulder to shoulder in the pew, at the communion rail and on our way out into the world.



The Rev. Erik Parker is the Pastor of Sherwood Park Lutheran Church in Winnipeg. His blog and podcast can also be found at [The Millennial Pastor](#).

Are we Tired of “Zooming”?

A Journey into Digital Media at St. Paul’s Fort Garry

DOUG CAMERON

Photo: Aleks Marinkovic

Role and impact of digital media

The Pandemic has given churches pause to think about new ways to stay connected to their parish communities, and as a result many churches have been sharing Sunday services via numerous Internet platforms including Facebook, Zoom and YouTube. At the same time, parish meetings and communications employ email, websites, blogs and on-line conferencing; parishioners have become accustomed to connecting with their church communities via digital media in all its forms.

During the 18 months of broadcasting worship services at St. Paul’s, we learned the importance of employing effective digital communications within and beyond our parish community. As parishioners are now beginning to experience the joy of re-uniting in-person on Sunday mornings, many church leaders will be faced with assessing the value of continuing on-line services, and their ability to do so. St. Paul’s has decided to continue to offer on-line worship based on a number of factors: viewer response to pre-recorded and live-streamed services was positive (average range 90-140 views per service), shut-ins were able to be part of worship services, parishioners who were away from the city were able to tune in, and the services were shared and connections made beyond our parish community.

A worship service broadcast does not provide the same experience as in-person worship, but nevertheless has significant value to enable people to feel connected even if less participatory, to receive the same message as in-person worshippers, and to view and respond to the service on their own time.

What have we learned?

During the pandemic, St. Paul’s broadcast a combination of pre-recorded and live-streamed worship services. We learned that it’s possible to produce an on-line service with a minimum of technology and modest expertise, and that the quality and complexity of the on-line presentation can be gradually improved as expertise is gained, and investment in equipment is made. All the services we produced so far have been done with a computer and a cell phone. Currently, our services are live-streamed on Facebook using a cell phone mounted on a tripod; the video is subsequently uploaded to our YouTube channel so that it can be viewed at any time. The quality of the audio and video is marginal in terms of video sharpness and audio clarity. We have also learned the importance of making the service text and song lyrics available on-line so that viewers can follow along using a separate device or printed copy; this is particularly

important given the current capabilities of our live-stream quality. Finally, we have learned that it will take a significant investment in equipment in order to produce a high quality live-streamed product. That being said, I believe each church community may find solutions unique to their situation that require varying amounts of investment.

Pathway and solutions

At St. Paul's, worship revolves around the use of creatively sourced liturgies, thoughtfully focussed music, and strong lay participation; this emphasis became the heart of our on-line services during the time that in-person services were cancelled. There were three key players who operated in a "bubble" to make on-line services successful, well-coordinated endeavours: our priest, Karen Laldin, our music director, Rachel Cameron and the video technician/editor (myself). As well, during this time, a great variety of parishioners provided video readings that were included in the pre-recorded services. It was indeed challenging and rewarding, and I felt privileged to be part of this experience. I gained new perspectives and greater understandings through my "behind the scenes" role in this unexpected, and in many ways unique, expression of worship. I believe the decision to continue to live-stream services is absolutely the right thing to do, although it will mean a significant investment in equipment and the development of expertise in order to produce a high quality result.

St. Paul's has decided on a multi-stage plan to gradually add audio/visual technology, with the goal to end up with a system for a live-stream that has:

- high definition (HD) output,
- two cameras — one with remotely controlled Tilt, Zoom, Pan (TZP),
- a separate audio mix, integrated with existing audio consul and microphones, and
- a video switcher that integrates multiple inputs — Internet, PowerPoint slides, cameras, text, photos and graphics.

While this might seem complex, our goal is for the live-stream set up to be fully integrated with the audio/visual technology currently employed for in-person worship, and to be user friendly for the worship technician.

Final Thoughts

When thinking about the option to live-stream worship services, here are some things to consider:

- What audio/visual technology do you own that can be part of a live-stream operation?
- What can you afford, and what will it buy? Can you build a system in stages? Get an expert in to assess needs and wants and provide a quote.
- Do you have sufficient Wi-Fi Internet speed to live-stream? If not, a cell phone with an unlimited data plan is a good start!
- What expertise do you have to set-up and operate a live-stream?
- Do you have a music copyright license that enables on-line broadcasting?
- Do you have a media release form for all those who will appear on-line?

We live in an age of ubiquitous digital media, and I believe that church communities need to take best advantage of this resource as a way of connecting their parishioners, and to have a presence in the wider community. If worship is an active expression of our faith, then let us ensure that all in our community and beyond can partake of this meaningful expression in whatever way they are able. Live streaming offers another pathway for this to happen.



Doug Cameron is a retired teacher and long-time member of St. Paul's Fort Garry.

Who is our new Archivist?

An Interview with Krystal Payne



The Diocese of Rupert's Land hired Krystal Payne as the new Archivist back in Spring 2021. I was delighted to be able to get to know her a little bit over a Zoom chat we had back in May.

- SK

Hello Krystal! Thank you so much for meeting with me. I'd like to start by asking you about your background prior to becoming the Archivist of Rupert's Land.

First off, thank you for reaching out for this interview! So, I spent about ten years working as a community health educator. I worked in sexual and mental health education, and substance abuse education. I went into archives after about ten years because I was really tired of working in a system where I was limited in the help I could offer—I felt like I was constantly putting bandages on big gaping wounds. I had a friend who worked in archives, and they suggested I might like it, as it involves tangible work. And here I am!

Do you have a love of history? Why would the jump from community health to archives seem like the right path for you?

My undergraduate is an interdisciplinary degree in History, Religious studies, and Political Science. I mainly studied human rights and law frameworks. So, I did have a background in history going into this field. Also, when I was working in community health, I had a job working with youth at [Klinic Community Health](#) in their Teen Talk programs. I travelled around the province doing health education with these programs and whenever we were in small communities outside of the city (mainly Indigenous communities), youth would continually say that knowing their history and culture was extremely important for their mental health. This wasn't something we typically heard from kids in the city. Those connections to culture and history were not something that city



kids seemed to connect with mental health. So, going into Indigenous communities and hearing it come up a lot, archives seemed like a natural place to move to connect with communities, history, and culture. At the time, I was burnt out of community health, but I still wanted to work with communities and connect with community wellness.

So, tell me about the work of an archivist? What would distinguish an archivist from, say, a librarian?

Archivists work with unpublished materials and primary sources. This is a significant distinction between an archivist and a librarian. Some people call it the "day-to-day" records of a government, organization, or people. There are government archives, institutional archives, and personal archives. Really, it's preserving those records that showcase the day-to-day functions of people and organizations. A lot of it is not always riveting stuff.

But you do enjoy it, no?

I do enjoy it! But more for the idea of what people can do with the data afterward. It's amazing what can be done with some of those primary sources. Often, archivists are charged with keeping the records for legal reasons, or institutional reasons. I'm more interested in working with organizations and helping them keep the things they need to keep. For legal reasons, often, but also so that they're able to look back on what they've accomplished and retain all

the records they need for functioning. I'm very interested in what communities can find from those records. I like working with community historians and genealogists as well.

What interests you about doing archival work for the Diocese of Rupert's Land?

The Anglican Church in general has an interesting history with archives—a long history of *keeping and respecting* history. You'll often find that Anglican churches are very good with record keeping and have been for a long time. The Diocese of Rupert's Land has a very long history itself, predating even the province of Manitoba. Being able to work with some of those back-reaching records is really interesting.

During one of my first days as editor last summer, I toured the archives room at the Diocesan office, and I remember being stunned by the collection of old church records—I felt like I was in a gold mine of history!

Yea, it's pretty cool. Even just being able to answer peoples' questions when they call about a great grandparent wondering if we have records about that person. It's amazing to be able to do that work with people. This is also where it's important to have excellent knowledge of the administrative system.

This is another similarity that archivists have with librarians. If you're in a library and you don't understand the administrative system, it's going to be difficult to find the book you're looking for. You'll need to know how to filter your search through the library's system. Archivists work to answer those "filtering" questions—refining the search to locate exactly what somebody is looking for.

I can't imagine you rely purely on the "software of your mind!" What kind of software do you work with to help with record-keeping?

At the Diocese we work with something called MAIN, which stands for [Manitoba Archival Information Network](#). It's an online database where you can search several different repositories at the same time. One of these repositories is the Diocese of Rupert's Land. If you wanted to, say, search through your parish records, this is where you would look.

What role does the Archives Committee play in your work? Do they offer hands-on support or strategic guidance?

They do both! I'm still navigating my relationship with the Committee, but they've been invaluable so far in answering my questions and helping me settle into my new role. Canon 28 specifically lays out that the Committee assists in the policy operations of the archives. Although I do have Committee members helping with record-keeping as well.

What kind of work are you most excited for in the upcoming year? Where do you "want to get your hands dirty" in the Diocesan archives?

Most archives have a backlog, which is basically just the term we use to describe those records that have not been catalogued yet. Currently they're sitting on a shelf, waiting for us to describe them and make them available for people to see. I'm interested in digging into this backlog and learning more about what's in those records!

Fun summer facts about Krystal

What was your favourite activity or adventure embarked on over the summer?

My family bought a small, treed cabin lot on Treaty 5 territory (near Manigotagan) and it has been lovely learning about the history of the place. Being close to such a rich diversity of wildlife is also such a beautiful privilege.

The best book you read or show you watched in the last two months?

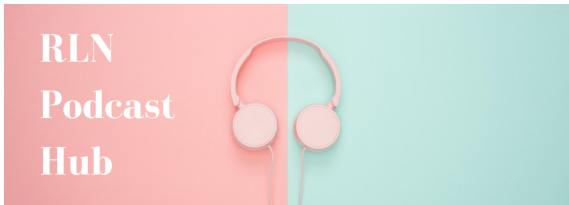
Moon of the Crusted Snow by Waubgeshig Rice. It's a post-apocalyptic novel set in a northern Indigenous community where power has recently gone out. It is beautifully written, and more hopeful than not. One of the few books my pandemic ravaged brain could focus on!

Your favourite summer meal?

Maybe a bit cliché, but slices of fresh garden tomato on toast.

If you have a question about parish records, a deceased ancestor, or anything archival related, you can reach Krystal at the Archives Office: (204) 992-4203 or archives@rupertsland.ca

Parish News Roundup



Introducing the RLN Podcast Hub!

[The RLN Podcast Hub is a fresh new platform](#) for discovering fascinating and topical podcasts in Rupert's Land and beyond! This new RLN page, accessible through our website, seeks to represent those podcasts that are exploring the intersection of faith, religion, culture, and politics. The purpose of the hub is to create a kind of "anthology" of podcasts that may be of interest to Rupert's Landers. Each week we will feature an Editor's Pick in the RLN Weekly, recommending a podcast episode offering a fresh perspective on a topical matter!

The following are a selection of podcasts featured in the page's Podcast Archives:

From the Narthex

A podcast from St. Thomas Weston. Have you ever questioned your faith or had pressing questions about the church? "From the Narthex" is a podcast designed to tackle those questions with you. Host Ryan Turnbull interviews a range of guests from both inside and outside of the diocese. Ryan and his guests explore questions of faith, be it forgotten or renewed, and discuss aspects of the Anglican Church along the way. "From the Narthex" is [available through Spotify](#).

saint benedict's table Podcasts

saint ben's has been podcasting since 2006 and now has close to 500 episodes available online. The parish operates as a publisher of multiple digital content channels. Each channel carries different thematic content. Check out the [selection of channels here](#).

The Millennial Pastor's Podcast!

The Millennial Pastor podcast is hosted by Lutheran Pastor team Erik and Courteney! The podcast is an audio extension of The Millennial Pastor blog. Many of topics discussed on the blog are translated into this audio space. It's a medium that is a little more conversational and little less staring at a screen! Pastor Erik and Pastor Courtney talk about doing ministry in the 21st century, about the cultural commutes between generations, and what it means to be "new puppy" leaders in the church. [Listen here!](#)

If there's a podcast you feel more people should know about (maybe it's your own) please let us know! We're always looking for fresh podcasts to feature on the page.

Contact the RLN Editor: rlnews@rupertsland.ca

You're invited to Rupert's Land Wechetowin

Monday, September 20, 7:00 p.m.

[Zoom Meeting ID: 614 045 9038 / Passcode: 909636](#)

Rupert's Land Wechetowin (People helping People) has been busy over the summer! Please join us on Monday, September 20 at 7:00 p.m. as we continue to work together, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people supporting each other, and adding to the work of healing, wellness, and reconciliation. Our hope is to have people from every parish in the Diocese involved. All are welcome.



Anglican Foundation raises \$110,000 for post-pandemic children and youth ministry

via *Anglican Journal*

The Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC) says it has raised 10% more than it had targeted in an appeal for money to fund post-pandemic ministry for children and young people—and has issued its largest-ever request for proposals, aiming to disburse all the proceeds this fall.

The foundation's Say Yes! to Kids campaign launched on April 5, with the goal of raising \$100,000. By the time it officially ended on June 30, donations topped \$110,000—and more gifts were expected to come in, says AFC executive director Canon Judy Rois.

"The fact that we wanted to reach out and help kids—recognizing that they would be really having a rough time with this pandemic—I think it just struck a chord with people, and they were willing to donate," Rois says.

Donors spanned a wide range of ages; the first donor was 14, and one of the last was 90 years old.

The foundation is now looking forward to receiving proposals of projects to fund—and wants to make sure Canadian Anglicans know it.

"One of our big challenges is spreading the word that this money is available," says AFC

development consultant Michelle Hauser. "We don't want people to miss the window of funding."

The money raised by the campaign will fund projects for the year 2022, intended to help children, youth and young adults flourish. There are two categories of grants: Category A, of up to \$5,000, for local projects; and Category B grants of up to \$15,000 for ministries across cities, dioceses or regions. The grants will not be part of the maximum of three now permitted per diocese, and the scope of the projects, Hauser says, is broad—anything having to do with the health and well-being of children, youth and young adults. Grants may go to existing or new programs.

The deadline to apply is Oct. 1, with winning proposals announced in December. Proposals will be accepted starting Sept. 1—but anyone with an idea is welcome to approach the foundation at any time if they have questions or need help putting their application together.

"Anybody who thinks, 'Hmm, I have an idea but I don't know if it's fully cooked'—they're absolutely encouraged to reach out to us," Hauser says. "We actually really work with people to make sure their applications are successful, and we're doing that right now."

[Read the full article here.](#)

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The Wistful Wisdom of Lucy Dacus

SARA KRAHN

Like many adolescents with an appetite for angst and idealism, I documented my teenage years with a diary. My diary included confessional material such as grievances with my sisters, lamentations over crushes, and my frustrations about being a benchwarmer on the varsity soccer team. It would be nothing short of a nightmare to publicly share any of those dreary, sub-literary musings let alone turn them into an album. But singer songwriter Lucy Dacus has done just this. The result is her brilliant, evocative alt-rock memoir *Home Video*.

Home Video is a fervent recollection of Dacus' years growing up as an evangelical Christian in Richmond, Virginia in the early 2000s. Right from the opening lines of the first track, Dacus beckons us into her world of subdued nostalgia as she sings "Being back here makes me hot in the face / Hot blood in my pulsing veins / Heavy memories weighing on my brain / Hot and heavy in the basement of your parents' place."

It's the opening track and we're already in the basement of her teenage crush. But Dacus is just getting started, and it's quickly apparent

that she's not just interested in pining after teenage romances. *Home Video* is less inspired by nostalgia than it is an effort to excavate and find a "home" for some of Dacus' pivotal early memories. Many of the songs offer visceral snapshots of memories, from confusion over love and religion to fierce feelings of affection she carries for her friends. And Dacus' ability to tell a good story makes many of these moments feel like they happened yesterday. As listeners, we're drawn in, and can't help feeling like we're there too, dancing along with Dacus and a friend after midnight "at the five and dime."

I first encountered Lucy Dacus in the six minutes of cutting lyrics and scorching guitar lines that make up "Night Shift," the first track on her 2018 album *Historian*. "Night Shift" alone was enough to convert me to Dacus' visceral and yet ethereal style of indie rock. There is a surprising power in it, one that is apparent from the moment Dacus' voice cuts into the track. Those dense vocals combined with her strong, compelling lyrics and steady, atmospheric guitar riffs are unlike anything you've heard from her twentysomething peers

(many of whom are following Taylor Swift in the trend towards acoustic folk and Americana). As a life-long fan of alt-rock, I'm relieved that Dacus is adamant to stay in this lane (she's too cool and smart to be anywhere else).

Home Video is Dacus' third album, and she recalls a spectrum of childhood memories with a wisdom you'd expect from someone much older than twenty-six. In 'VBS,' the album's stand-out track, Dacus writes about attending an evangelical bible camp: "In the summer of '07 I was sure I'd go to heaven / But I was hedging my bets at VBS." For those of us who also grew up attending summer bible camp, this song jangles and rings true like the bell for snack-time. "In the evening everybody went to worship and weep / Hands above our heads, reaching for God." Memories of altar calls and fellow campers giving teary testimonies are difficult enough to navigate, but Dacus overlays them with her budding feelings for a fellow cabin mate. 'VBS' engages sexual confusion in the context of religious upbringing and is written as a dark love letter to a friend. The endearing lines "Your poetry was so bad / It took a lot not to laugh" take a raw and existential turn as Dacus sings "You said that I showed you the light / But all it did in the end / Was make the dark feel darker than before."

But Dacus' writing has a way of making the darkness accessible. Even in the chilling,

stripped-down ballad 'Thumbs.' Here her voice drifts along over a calm river of a synth as the lyrics reveal a near psychotic sense of empathy for those close to her. The memory is of a day in college spent accompanying a friend to reconnect with her estranged father. Dacus confesses to her own unravelling over the course of the encounter and gradually admits to fantasies of murdering the man as she confesses "I would kill him / quick and easy / Your nails are digging / into my knee." These lyrics are shocking and yet Dacus sings them tenderly, because the song is about her love and concern for a friend. The effect is heart-rending.

Although *Home Video* is an attempt to rub against the rough shoulders of the past, the album is anything but abrasive. Dacus' unabashed look into the angst and frustration of her adolescence is a reverent embrace of those earlier experiences that have continued to evolve with her. The album also succeeds because it is less fixated on the egoic voice of self-pity, often manifest in childhood memories, than it is on the songwriter's intense affections for the people in her life. Dacus' song writing on the album is distinct because it seeks to "befriend" her childhood experiences from the vantage point of who she is now. In an [interview with NPR](#), Dacus said that feeling this level of intense compassion did take some time. "Compassion is really easy from many steps away. Maybe what I felt in the heat of the moment was confusion, and I wanted to feel compassion; now, I actually can."

This reflective distance is what lies at the heart of *Home Video* and accounts for its remarkable power. It's an album that radiates a wisdom acquired closer to the end of one's song writing career; but let's hope Lucy Dacus is nowhere near the end of hers.



Sara Krahn is the Editor of Rupert's Land News. She is also a classical pianist and has vowed that one day she will learn to play the electric guitar.

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