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Publisher | [Bishop Geoffrey Woodcroft](#)

Editor | [Sara Krah](#)

Accounting | [Joy Valencerina](#)

Advertising | [Angela Rush](#)

Layout & design | [cityfolkcreative.ca](#)

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[Editorial offices:](#)

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

RLN exists to explore issues at the intersections of faith and life. In doing so we solicit and publish a range of opinions, not all of which reflect the official positions of the Diocese. We acknowledge that we meet and work in Treaty 1, 2, and 3 Land, the traditional land of the Anishinaabe, Cree, and Dakota people and the homeland of the Metis Nation. We are grateful for their stewardship of this land and their hospitality which allows us to live, work, and serve God the Creator here.

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

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New Easter People

Photo: Andrew James

Hello, *Rupert's Land News* readers. My name is Sara Krahn, and I'm excited to introduce myself as your new editor. I'm writing to you from Winnipeg, where my life and work have found their primary expression in the arts community. I am also involved with St. Margaret's Anglican Church, which serves a lush and eccentric neighbourhood in downtown Winnipeg.

As a publication that covers a spectrum of topics, *Rupert's Land News* has the power to explore subjects that intersect the Anglican Church with the wider cultural community. I wonder if a publication like this may be just as important in capturing the communal voice of the Church as our contributions to music, the arts, and academia. *Rupert's Land News* offers our Anglican Communion a unique mode of speaking to the world around and beyond us, and I look forward to gathering our voices, young and old, in a guaranteed address to God.

Caught in the Occasion

In her memoir, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Annie Dillard contemplates life from a place of solitude in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. Dillard's testimony is at once unsettling and mesmerizing as she observes both the savage and the beautiful in nature. She writes, "The answer must be, I think, that beauty and grace are performed whether or not we will or sense them. The least we can do is try to be there."

Over the last six months, it has proven difficult to simply "be there" and witness the grace in nature where it seems there is only cruelty. Yet, in the event of a global health crisis, our Christian community is urgently invited to contemplate the "beauty and grace" in the current nature of our own lives, and our communion with God and each other.

While reflecting on the pandemic, I have found myself thinking about birthdays. In what

are we participating when we celebrate the turning of another age? On these days, when we turn 18 or 30 or 55, we are celebrating the reminder that every single day witnesses our passing through time into somewhere else. Every day testifies to the reality that we are pilgrims on a journey. The spirit in which we celebrate birthdays seems, at least to me, not so different from the will we've been given to reflect amid this pandemic. Both events seem to open occasions for us to contemplate our lives in new ways. As a faith community, we are called to reflect and draw others into communion with God, whether they are our past selves, or our virtually distanced friends, acquaintances, and loved ones.

In September's issue, we're exploring what it means to be people caught in the occasion, observing a crisis through prayer and perseverance as New Easter People. Theo Robinson takes us outside the church building and poses the question over virtual worship being part of the "new normal." Andrew Rampton searches for gifts in spite of loss. Winnipeg poets Sally Ito, Joanne Epp, and Sarah Klassen translate a German poem that reveals the wisdom of a simple flower. And, in via media, Maylanne Maybee observes that, in online worship there is a place for the sacred when we practice a "quality of presence."

My hope is that these voices will offer up the occasion to think and reflect on what it means to be in communion—with God, our neighbours, and each other—in the midst of a world that is as precarious as it is beautiful.



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

To Level the Field

GEOFFREY WOODCROFT



Among the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion, we are called:

*To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
To respond to human need by loving service
To seek to transform unjust structures of society,
to challenge violence of every kind and to
pursue peace and reconciliation (Marks of
Mission 1, 3, and 4)*

A time of reckoning is upon us. Indeed, we are living in a time where our physical environment, our clocks and thermometers, all look the same as ever, even though we know so very much has changed.

I look in the mirror and find something familiar, one more thing reminding me of yesterday, but I have changed irreversibly in these extraordinary days. Figuratively speaking, a time of brushing sacrificial lamb's blood on the lintel of our passageways is upon us, and we hope and pray that this plague will pass over us and those whom we love.

We are living through a time of looking critically at the world which God has placed in our human care. Despite our witnessing of efforts to produce cleaner air and water around the world, the pandemic has found us resorting to the use of disposables for our immediate delivery and consumption, plastics for food and beverage, plastic bags for retail, and hoarding of essential items including medical safety products. It is a western world thing to make privileged decisions, but as Christians, I do not think that we are called to make decisions out of privilege.

For those with *enough*, and those with more than *enough*, the price of staying healthy might possibly be reduced to a choice to remove oneself from harm's way; that is, ride-out the disaster in reasonable comfort, (albeit with the anxious feeling that something has been lost). This luxury to make choices for health (or not for health) has been the substance of much news and social media, and in the midst of it I have observed tremendous

goodness. But I have also seen the erupting of selfish spoiled behaviour into violent discrimination, and, alas, I have caught myself playing the part of spectator.

For those with not *enough*, the price of remaining healthy may very well be incalculable given the circumstances and various realities that plague the vulnerable and unprivileged. The simple search for food, water, and shelter now poses an enormous risk of infection for COVID-19; there is an even greater risk for these people as they navigate their neighbourhood in a spirit and posture of generosity. What limited experience I have with those who are impoverished has shown me a community that is undeniably more generous with friends and neighbours than I will ever be. I am reminded of Jesus' description of a widow at the treasury, contributing her "whole livelihood." The risk of infection is ever present, and so is the risk to the heart that drives a person to be more vulnerable so that someone else may have a modicum of security.

Amid this social disruption, there remains the need for a level playing field upon which the human family may be united. COVID-19, while exposing many of our strengths and weaknesses, has also energized compassion and redemption among our many neighbours. The Body of Christ recognizes God here, amid compassion and redemption, in great empathy. All that we have been taught in this Body has prepared us to meet God as we meet the world before us and share in the responsibility of creating a level field.



Geoffrey Woodcroft,
Bishop of Rupert's Land

Worshipping Outside the Walls

THEO ROBINSON



This pandemic has completely up-heaved our lives. In the midst of it, we have been isolated from friends and family; stores big and small have been shut down, affecting the livelihood of many business owners and their employees; schools have closed their doors so students of all ages have had to finish their year learning in solitude, save for those with siblings (which really isn't the same as being with your friends), and various grade levels have had to miss out on the ever important life-event of graduation.

We long for coffee dates with friends; meetings that don't involve Zoom; visiting loved ones in care homes and hospitals; and simple things like hugs and handshakes. And how many of us miss seeing the random smiles on passersby that are now hidden behind masks? I know I do.

As the COVID-19 pandemic marched through the spring and summer months, we felt increasingly lonely and isolated as our church communities were not able to worship together. We experienced feelings of loss as prayers and hymns were brought to silence and the Eucharist tabled until further notice (pun intended). We engaged in debates surrounding the virtual Eucharist and discussions about what "real church" looks like now that we are worshipping online, at home but also "together."

In Matthew 18:20, Christ tells us that "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." But what happens when those two or three cannot gather? Does that mean that Jesus, and therefore God, is not among them?

What seem to be dying breeds—churchgoers, God-believers, evangelists—are growing exponentially. As more parishes move to online worship services, church attendance is electronically growing. The younger, tech-savvy generation, whom we have struggled to get in a pew on a Sunday morning, is listening online

when and where they choose. The aging generation who can no longer attend worship services in person due to health and mobility issues are now able to tune in via YouTube, Facebook, and Twitch. Those who are searching for a place to worship, but who's social and general anxiety don't allow them to step through the door of a place full of strangers, are, through the joys of technology, able to church-surf without the pressure of going from place to place. Those who have been harmed by the Church, yet long for connection with God, can do so from the safety and comfort of their homes.

Indeed, empty church buildings do not mean that Christianity is coming to a halt, or that Jesus is no longer present in our lives. Rather, the increasing number of online viewers indicates a new way of evangelizing and a growing need for faith and spirituality in a world suffering together.

In January of this year, the *Anglican Journal* published "[Gone by 2040?](#)" by Tali Folkins, revealing some shocking statistics of the decline in church attendance over the last few decades. Parish rolls in the Anglican Church of Canada showed over 1.3 million members (or seven percent of the Canadian population) in 1961 and just above 280,000 (or one percent of the Canadian population) in 2017. While these reports seem to be showing that physical presence in church has become less important in people's lives, I see no proof that God and faith are going the same way. In fact, this time of isolation has revealed that the search for faith and spirituality increases significantly during times of duress.

One parishioner sent me an email of thanks for my blog services, stating "while I do tune in to streamed services when I can, your format offers other advantages, particularly in a rural area where Internet is not always reliable enough for streaming."

Another shared a story about how her family often visits her on weekends and they have chosen to gather outdoors around an iPad to read my blog service and listen to the music that I have included. She states “we found it rather peaceful, birds singing, and just being together to worship.”

I have also been informed by a lay leader within the Interlake Regional Shared Ministry that online services (like the Zoom links for local services and my own personal blog) are regularly forwarded to “her multi-dozen email contacts—many locals plus several others, interdenominational, who live elsewhere across Manitoba and a few out of province as well.” It is encouraging and exciting to witness the services of the Church reaching well outside our local parishes.

A final, notable example of someone exploring all there is to offer electronically is a parishioner who shared with me that she not only reads and listens to my blog, but tunes into the evening services from saint benedict’s table as well as the daily evening prayers led by Rachel Twigg through Facebook Live. The parishioner told me that she “never would have experienced the services at [saint benedict’s table] if the pandemic had not messed up all of our lives... I honestly think it has made me a stronger Christian.”

We will always need physical worship spaces, as being a part of a church community is important for its own reasons, especially when considering the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. But it’s time that we start looking outside of the box, or in this case outside the walls, and realize that our community need not be limited to those who are sitting in the pews. Church is not the building. Church is wherever you are at that moment, whether it be in your car, in your home, or sitting outside enjoying nature. What this pandemic has proven is that there are people out there longing for spiritual guidance but, for whatever reason, have chosen not to sit in the pew. Now that we are aware, the question moves to “what do we do with this information?”

Our Church has moved outside of its

building and our worship looks increasingly more creative. As we begin to worship in-person once again, parishes will have to decide—do we continue what we have started in the online community? The resounding answer should be yes!

While the doors to church buildings have been closed, worship has not ceased, but has rather taken on a new form. In my opinion, the virtual church should become a regular part of our worship. Currently, many clergy and lay-leaders are hurrying to learn the technology, while leaning on those more experienced in recording live worship. Scrolling Facebook and other social media platforms on a Sunday morning, it is encouraging to see all of the parishes that are providing live or recorded video feed or written services that can be used by anyone, at any time, in any place. One no longer needs to be available on a Sunday morning to attend church. Those who have a history with feeling uncomfortable in the physical spaces of the church can worship to their heart’s content in their own homes. Through online worship, the Church is reaching people it never would have before the pandemic.

As clergy and lay-people, we must continue to support this momentum in online attendance. People searching for a safe space through which to explore their spirituality have found it. It is time to engage them, teach them, and lead them into a life with Jesus. The pandemic may have closed our doors, but technology has revealed to us a new way to live out the Gospel. Let’s not allow this opportunity to slip through our fingers.



Theo Robinson is the incumbent at St. Michael’s Anglican Church in Victoria Beach, a pastor in the Interlake Regional Shared Ministry with the Lutheran Church of the MNO Synod, and a spiritual care practitioner in health care. Follow his blog at tjrobinson.blogspot.com. He gives his thanks to the many congregation members across the seven parishes he serves for the feedback that helped him write this article.

Grief and Gifts in the Pandemic

ANDREW RAMPTON

Photo: [Mike Labrum](#)

I remember, as a young person, being given a book filled with short facts about human beings. I admit I can't recall most of them, but the one piece that I do remember was about how people get dressed in the morning. The book observed that most people follow a routine when getting dressed. The routine is different for each person, but one probably always puts either their left or right sock on first. At the time, I had never thought of this and began to pay more attention. Sure enough, I always put my left sock on before the right (still do!). I remember this bit of trivia because it was the first time it had occurred to me that humans are creatures deeply invested in habit and routine, even routines and habits that we don't realize we've created for ourselves.

When our routines are disrupted or ended, it's a difficult thing. Giving up habits that we'd rather not have or instilling ones we'd like to have requires immense willpower and discipline. When routines we enjoy, appreciate and love are suddenly taken from us by circumstances beyond our control—like our corporate worship as a Church being suspended and disrupted by a global pandemic—it's more than difficult. It's a deeply-felt loss and something that we grieve.

Our worship is a series of structured routines. The structure of our offices and sacramental rites, the structure of our liturgical seasons and the sanctoral cycle, even the structure of rites like baptisms and funerals that mark milestones in life, are familiar ceremonies into which we slip, and where we expect to

meet God in particular ways. The familiar structure helps us to readily teach new friends and family of our traditions, but it also offers us a lifeline to hold on to in times of great sorrow, tumult, or joy when we cannot give our entire focus to worship. All the familiarity and comfort offered through these routines of the Church was taken from us in mid-March and, even in those communities where some manner of in-person worship has returned, our services feel like anything but "normal."

The specifics of what we miss and what we grieve are deeply personal and different for everyone. We grieve the opportunity to regularly participate in corporate celebrations of the sacraments and other important ceremonies. There are a great many baptisms, weddings, funerals, and other important events that have been put on hold indefinitely, suspended until a time when the community can gather to properly observe them. We feel the loss of familiar rites of healing, of spiritual nourishment and the many "outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace" that we have come to think of as readily available to meet our needs or desires. We long for our ceremonies.

We grieve the loss of making music together, especially singing. We miss those familiar tunes which so readily recall lyrics that speak of our faith—psalms and songs which speak truths about the lives of the People of God in all times, drawing us into solidarity with all of those who have sung them before us and those who will sing them long after we are gone

from this life. We long to sing together again as the Body of Christ, to create something beautiful through which God is met and the spirits of those who hear are restored.

We grieve our time together, as friends, neighbours, and family. I was recently speaking with an acquaintance whom I asked how they were doing in the absence of regular church services. They replied, “You know, in all of this time away from church, I’ve realized that I’m not as religious as I thought. Not very religious at all, actually. But I really, really miss seeing my friends.” I was a little surprised by this. Not at what they had said, but that they were so very honest about it! However, their comment was a good reminder that church does not end with the liturgical dismissal. It carries on into the greetings in the narthex, the hugs and shaken hands, the exchange of news and well-wishes, the pouring of coffee and sharing of lunch, and spills forth with the people of God out into the world. The commitment of the members of the Body of Christ to one another, exercised in the liminal space of parish hall fellowship after the liturgy, is so important to our formation as disciples. We long for our fellowship.

But these past months have not entirely been times of loss and grieving. We have also discovered gifts, new and old, in our storerooms. Some of us have discovered or remembered the importance of a home prayer

tradition, prayer in the morning and evening and the rhythms of prayers before meals. The rituals of prayer and reading scripture with family members have become more important foci for our lives of faith. These new rhythms of prayer are, indeed, gifts.

As new forms of congregational and diocesan worship are coming to light—the incorporation of recorded and live streaming liturgies, offices, prayer services, bible studies, and discussion groups—we are being pushed us as a Church. We are being pushed to have important conversations about our worship, pushed to have greater visibility (and vulnerability) in the world, and pushed to allow for the possibility of connections in worship with people at great geographical distances. Yet again, we find ourselves recognizing these new forms of worship as gifts.

Our important ministry of intentional connection is being adopted and strengthened by so many of us. Phone calls, emails, Zoom meetings, and physically distanced conversations are being drawn out from the realm of happenstance and made into intentional and interactive moments between members of the Body. These deliberate moves to establish deeper connections—asking “How are you?” as more than just a way of making small talk—are gifts we offer to one another.

The future remains uncertain. We don’t know when things will truly get “back to normal” and there is a real possibility that the new normal won’t be exactly like the days before this pandemic. As we establish new habits and routines, we will grieve that which we have lost. But we must also celebrate these new gifts we have been given, and be reminded that, even in our grief, we are loved by a faithful God who blesses in abundance.



Andrew Rampton is the chaplain of St. John's College and the incumbent of St. Bartholomew's Church, Winnipeg.

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Parish News Roundup

Update from St. Thomas, Weston, Kreative: Kids & Kitchens

COVID-19 has thrown a loop in the plans of many people and many parishes. This has really been a year of change for most, some of it unwanted and some of it needed. St. Thomas, Weston is no exception.

When schools and church buildings officially closed in March, St. Thomas Weston and their outreach programs Kreative Kids & Kreative Kitchens (officially renamed Kreative: Kids & Kitchens) went into high gear.

Our Minister began uploading weekly worship services from her home to Facebook and YouTube, so even though we could not be together in person, we could be together in spirit. In May, when our building reopened, we continued this practice. Our services are broadcast every Sunday morning from our beautiful chapel, filled with enchanting live music, scriptures, prayers for all, and sometimes even science experiments. We have also joined the digital age by setting up [online giving through Canadahelp.org](https://onlinegivingthroughcanadahelp.org), as well as with etransfer, and by reworking our website: www.stthomasweston.ca so it is easier to find and navigate.

Food insecurity has always been a growing problem in our community of Weston, and with the pandemic it became even more so. So Kreative Kids and Kreative Kitchens combined forces to start the Takeout Meal Program.

The Takeout Meal Program is for anyone who needs a little extra help with filling their cupboards and their bellies. Our target area is our home neighbourhood of Weston, but if you sign up and live elsewhere, we will not turn you away. To participate in our program, we ask that you message us (by email, phone, or social

media) and let us know how many meals you will need and if you have any allergies. Then once a week, at a designated time, you can come to our building and pick up your healthy hot meals, a bag of groceries, and a crafting bag to keep those minds busy.

We started with just 11 families the first week and then, as word got out, we grew to almost 60 who join us for dinner each week, letting us know that a program like ours is greatly needed in the area of Weston.

In order to make this happen, once a week a team of volunteers make over 200 meals, pack over 50 grocery bags, and put together over 60 crafting/activity bags for the families who have signed up for the program. We have been able to do this with some generous donations from individuals, the Second Harvest Organization, and Safeway/Sobeys Canada, by signing up for a biweekly trip to Winnipeg Harvest and by a grant given to us by the Government of Canada and the United Way.

When or if things get back to normal, we plan on continuing this program for as long as we can fund it.

That's what St. Thomas Weston has been up to. If you would like more details, please check out our website: www.stthomasweston.ca or our social media: [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/stthomasweston) or [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/stthomasweston).

—Courteney Robinson, Kreative Kids Director



This page of the Parish News Round Up is sponsored by Richard Rosin. For more information, see his ad on page 11.

The View from Here: New Play Debut at FemFest

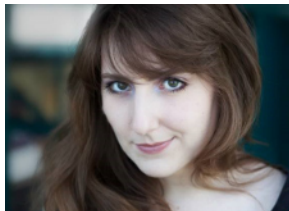
Founded in 2003 by Sarasvati Productions, FemFest presents the work of both established and emerging artists from across Canada. The festival's mandate is to produce one-act plays by women and showcase women theatre artists.

This fall, local audiences can enjoy diverse talent from across Canada during the 18th annual FemFest. The festival, which runs from September 19–26, features local talent as well as nationally-regarded theatre artists. With an emphasis on showcasing Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC), FemFest 2020: Emerging Talent, is set to be one of the most memorable yet.

"We're really proud to feature artists who are not only great at what they do but are also representative of the diverse communities here in Winnipeg," says Hope McIntyre, Artistic Director. "We chose the theme 'Engaging Community' because that's exactly what we want to do: we want families, community groups, other folks to come out and enjoy the magic of theatre."

Hannah Foulger, member of saint benedict's table, will be debuting her play *The View from Here*, a new piece of documentary theatre about the Grandview School for Girls in Cambridge, Ontario, and the institutional abuse that occurred there.

The View from Here will be showing on Saturday, September 19 at 2:00 p.m. [Check the website for location and price information closer to the showing date.](#)



Upcoming Theology Courses

Two Rupert's Landers are offering online courses this fall.

Christianity and the Plagues

Ryan Turnbull will be teaching this course through Thorneloe University. The class studies Christian plague writing throughout history and uses that to think through issues around COVID-19. Tuition is \$366 and you can [register for Non-Degree Studies here](#).

The class will meet by Zoom about six times over the semester and there will be some online forum discussions to help process the readings. You can [email Ryan](#) if you're interested and he can send you a draft syllabus or help you get registered.

Synthesizing "our" theology: between the local and the global

Tuesday evenings, 6:30–9:30 p.m., beginning September 15, 2020

This course will be taught by Don Phillips. Drawing significantly on the work of Robert J. Schreiter, this one-semester course explores how local theology is synthesized in and from its local context (including the recently-experienced "pandemic culture" of COVID-19) and how that theology then impacts its cultural context. It will include the semiotic study of culture-determining effective ways to describe cultures and their resulting identity and potential for social change. The examples of culture and theology to be explored will not be limited to geographic or national identities. It will include ethnic (indigenous) culture and other social cultures representing minority groups in dominant societies beginning with the 20th century phenomenon of liberation theology. This global emphasis is important because of the interconnectedness of societies around the world and the plurality of Canada and the multi-faith context that accompanies it.

Registration options and tuition information is [available through CMU](#): 3 hour course credit \$864.63 | CMU audit \$471.63

New Podcast from The Anglican Foundation of Canada

The Anglican Foundation is pleased to announce the launch of Foundation Forward, a new podcast about generosity created by Executive Director Canon Judy Rois in response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020.

Hosted by Toronto Musician and Media professional Christopher Dawes, Foundation Forward explores the idea of generosity as a way of seeing the world, giving thanks for blessings, and helping those in need. Each 7–10 minute episode features the thoughts and experiences of a prominent Canadian with a unique take on the subject.

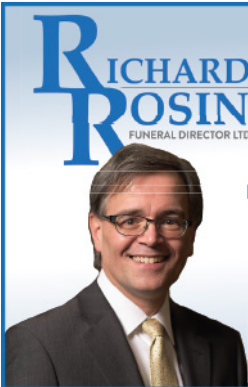
Dawes says of the series, “Foundation Forward will feature diverse voices and a wide range of angles on the topic of generosity: we think it will offer encouragement and inspiration to listeners like you and me to think and act generously – not as a duty or obligation, but as a joyful response to God’s bounty, and a way to make a real difference in the world.” The first episode featuring Canon Judy Rois is now live; episodes featuring Brian Pearson, Michael Coren, Douglas Graydon and others will drop on the first Monday of the month beginning September 7, 2020.

Monthly episodes are available at anglicanfoundation.org/podcasts, or can be streamed, downloaded or subscribed to on Apple/Google Podcasts, Spotify, SoundCloud,

Pocket Casts and other podcast outlets. Podcasts are completely free, and easy to listen to on any smartphone, computer, tablet or other Internet-connected device.

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Season of Creation 2020: Renewing, Repairing, and Restoring



Linda Nicholls, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, and leaders from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Episcopal Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have prepared a series of devotions to observe the Season of Creation 2020, September 1 to October 4.

The season, which begins with the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, is a time to join with the global Christian community in renewing, repairing and restoring commitments to God, to one another and to all of creation. For the four churches, it is also a time for strengthening relationships with one another. Through Scripture, hymns, advocacy and action, the weekly devotions, which begin September 6, invite people to live out their vocation as stewards of creation.

"I pray that these reflections will open hearts and minds to experience our relationship in and with all of creation in new ways," said Nicholls.

In addition to Nicholls, the devotions were contributed by Susan C. Johnson, National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada; Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church; and Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

"We pray that our actions as stewards of God's good creation will continue to deepen not only in this season, but for all time," said Eaton. "Even as our relations as churches are not bound by national or ecclesiastical borders, neither is our witness to the One who came to redeem all of creation."

In the opening devotion, the leaders stress the significance of a collective responsibility in caring for creation. "Waking up to matters of climate justice and environmental stewardship are among the most important callings people have today. Over many years, through many voices, our churches have come to a growing conviction that loving our neighbour includes loving Mother Earth as a neighbour."

"It is timely, relevant and exciting for our churches to join together in prayer, worship and reflection during the Season of Creation," said Johnson. "With open hearts, minds and souls may we discern new actions and practices to show love for God's creation."

"In this season of activism as we seek God's liberating, life-giving love for all, may these prayers and devotions inspire us to care for a world in which all creation can flourish," said Curry.

The relations among the four churches have moved more closely toward "mutual recognition," bringing into mutual relation the two churches of "Called to Common Mission" in the United States and those of the Waterloo Declaration in Canada. One notable feature of the agreement is that it cites the experience of Indigenous people "not divided by national borders established by colonialist power" as grounds for expanding shared life among the churches. A Memorandum of Mutual Recognition (MMR) was approved by both the Anglican Church of Canada and the ELCIC in July 2019. The 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly adopted constitutional changes embracing the Anglican Church of Canada, and in November 2019 the ELCA Church Council adopted the MMR. Once The Episcopal Church acts, the mutual recognition of the four churches will come into full effect.

The Season of Creation devotions are available here as [single pages](#) and [double spreads](#).

The Poetry of Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg

Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg (1633–1694) was an Austrian-born poet of the early modern period whose devotional sonnets blend technical skill with vivid imagery and intensity of feeling. Her first and best-known book, *Geistliche Sonnette, Lieder und Gedichte* (*Spiritual Sonnets, Songs and Poems*), published in 1662, contains 250 sonnets as well as many lyric poems.

Winnipeg poets Joanne Epp, Sally Ito, and Sarah Klassen began translating a series of seven sonnets for Holy Week. The Holy Week of 2020 was unusually fraught and difficult because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the work of translation became a life-line for them. They decided to continue with Greiffenberg's sonnets for Easter, Ascension, and beyond, as well as her other lyric poems. You can read more of the translated poems [at their blog](#).

On the Familiar Little Flower, Forget-Me-Not

Lovely little flower, your color points to highest Highness
as if to say "Forget me not, you who are so in love
with earthly vanities that in the end will only trouble you."
Know this: whoever remembers me can live content."
This secret we can learn from you, little moral-teacher.
Your petals, five in number – my memory, using
its five senses, leads me to contemplate
the five most-precious Wounds that point the way to Life.
Your foliage and green stems teach that we should hope:
God will not forget us, though we on earth
must endure misfortune and many a cross.
He will bring us to Himself.
Oh, forget me not, Creator! Help even me!
Does not my hope spring from your word?
In you lies much wisdom, little flower, though so small.

Über das kleine wolbekandte Blümlein: Vergiß mein nicht

Schönes Blümlein! deine Farbe / zeigt des Höchsten Hoheit an /
als spräch sie: vergiß mein nicht / du / dem also hoch beliebt
dieser Erden Eitelkeit / die doch endlich nur betrübet.
Wisse / daß man / meiner denkend / wol vergnüget leben kan.
Von dir kleinem Sitten-Lehrer lern' Geheimnus jederman.
Deiner Blätlein fünffte Zahl / in mir die Gedächtnus übet
ihre fünff ergebne Sinn / und sie durch betrachten schiebet
in die fünff hochwehrten Wunden / welche unsre Lebens-Bahn.
Deines Krauts und Stängels grün lehret / daß wir hoffen sollen /
Gott werd' unser nicht vergessen / ob wir wol auf Erden seyn /
unter manchem Creutz und Vnglück / werd auch bald zu sich uns holen.
Ach vergiß mein nicht / O Schöpffer! deine Hülff' auch mir erschein'.
Ist doch meiner Hoffnung Safft / her aus deinem Wort gequollen /
in dir liget grosse Weißheit / Blümlein / wärstu noch so klein!

Joanne Epp is a poet who serves as sub-organist at St. Margaret's Anglican in Winnipeg. Her first book of poems, *Eigenheim*, was published in 2015, and her second will appear in 2021.

Sarah Klassen is a Winnipeg poet and fiction writer. Her seventh poetry collection, *The Tree of Life*, will be released in fall, 2020. Her first novel, *The Wittenbergs* was published in 2013.

Sally Ito is a poet and translator of poetry who lives in Winnipeg. Her latest book of poetry was *Alert To Glory*, published in 2011. Her latest book is a cultural memoir titled *The Emperor's Orphans* published by Turnstone Press in 2018.



Something Like Manna

MAYLANNE MAYBEE

Photo: Damien Dufour

As we pass the six-month mark since the pandemic struck, we who are Christians, churchgoers, or seekers are discovering different ways of gathering and worshipping. During this time, we have been battered and shaped by sudden confinement, fear of infection, illness or death, and a radical departure from our known ways of worship.

I am aware, writing from Montreal, that our collective experience of COVID-19 is rather different than in Manitoba. While Winnipeg has had some of the lowest rates of infection and death of any province, Montreal has been the epicentre of the virus in Canada and among the most affected cities in the world. Our two dioceses are now in quite different stages of re-opening, with Montreal churches still meeting exclusively online as this goes to press, and Rupert's Land allowing in-person worship, albeit with no singing and communion allowed only in one kind, with sugar tongs, on paper napkins, and six feet apart.

When visiting the websites of churches I knew while in Winnipeg, I noticed a range of patterns of worship and community throughout the months of confinement. Some churches like St. Luke's or saint benedict's table videotaped and posted their services, conducted in the sanctuary with a handful of clergy, readers, and musicians all appropriately spaced apart. I notice that St. Margaret's live-streamed their services, but did not post recordings of them. And All Saints' adopted the practice of distributing the reserved sacrament so parishioners could consume the consecrated host during the online liturgy.

My home parish of St. George's, Canada Place, in Montreal began holding virtual services through Zoom, using a form of Morning Prayer or Ante-Communion. We have been following the services on a PowerPoint that provides the text along with images of the interior of St. George's, and video recordings of various choirs in the Anglican Communion, including our own, singing canticles and familiar hymns. As long as we are muted, we too can sing along "lustily and with good cheer."

These services have involved laypeople more fully than previously—not only as readers, but also as greeters (using the chat room), as antiphonal reciters of the Psalm, as leaders of the Prayers of the People, and as "the voice of the people," saying the response while those who are online are muted and able to chime in from their living room. At the end of the service, we are put into breakout rooms for a virtual coffee hour, where I have met and heard stories from people I never spoke to on regular Sundays.

During Holy Week and Easter, I followed the services of the monastic community of Society of St. John the Evangelist—from the chapel of their Boston monastery, and later from their country retreat at Emery House. Being in the "bubble" of their own community meant the brothers could worship side by side, without masks or physical distancing, and share their communal worship by means of Facebook Live with people like me. It was easy to imagine being there, and seeing the names and comments of others joining in from different cities, countries, and continents made me feel

like I was a part of the communion of saints.

These virtual forms of worship remind me of the question the Hebrews asked in the wilderness when they found manna in the morning—something like bread but not quite. Manna, meaning, “What is this?” We are finding that our virtual services are something like what “normal” Sunday worship used to be, but not quite, and are asking ourselves, “What is this?” What are we trying to preserve or replicate in our virtual worship?

Like the Hebrew people in the desert, we at St. George’s are being fed by virtual worship, and for now it seems enough. For my part, I have been able to deepen a sense of connection with my fellow parishioners. I have rediscovered the riches of dwelling on the Liturgy of the Word and grown in my appreciation of the monastic offices—not only Morning Prayer Sunday by Sunday, but also Evensong or Compline day by day.

I have been wondering what makes our online worship work so well. I believe it has to do with creating a quality of presence, which is, after all, what worship is about: being present to God and to one another. How do we convey that quality without the aid of our church sanctuaries or choirs, without the taste of real bread and sweet wine, the touch of a handshake, the eye to eye contact?

What matters for me are the facial expressions of those who officiate, read, or preach, their tone of voice, the pauses between phrases and prayers, the silence after the readings and sermon. There is a difference between reading aloud a text and creating an atmosphere of prayer, listening, and worship. It’s not unlike what I’ve learned about online teaching: you can’t just post a digital recording of a classroom lecture and expect students to stay focused. It takes intentional preparation of both content and delivery. Well, I think leading worship is similar. It is worth taking the time to design, review, and tweak the service, and to rehearse it in advance with worship leaders both behind and in front of the camera and

microphone.

It matters to me too that I am participating and not just watching. I’m not sure how that is done when services are videotaped. I think viewing the service in real time helps, and I think being able to join in with whatever is done on screen is important. Watching others receive communion when I’m not able to makes it difficult to feel involved, though words that acknowledge the presence of others and invite them to make spiritual communion certainly help.

Whatever the experience and preference of others over these past six months, I am surprised to realize that for me, abstinence from the Eucharist hasn’t been an entirely bad thing. I consider it abstinence rather than fasting—refraining until we find a way to celebrate that is safe, inclusive, truly sacramental, and not so antiseptic that what we touch and consume no longer resembles real bread or real communion.

Rebecca Widdicombe, in one of her [blogs on the St. Margaret’s website](#), borrows the from language of writer Arundhati Roy, and likens our experience of the pandemic to a being on a pilgrimage—not an accomplishment, not a set of goals, but a walk in faith, a journey on which we discover gifts and surprises as we go. Like the Israelites in the desert, even if we are hungry for former times, for place and presence and real bread, we are finding ways to be fed by manna, ways to pray and worship, knowing that God sees and knows our hunger and longs to satisfy the desire of every living thing.



Maylanne Maybee is an Anglican deacon, now living in Montreal, where she is the Interim Principal of the United Theological College and an honorary assistant at St. George’s, Canada Place. She is an educator, social justice activist, ecumenist, and writer on the diaconate and ecclesiology. She lived in Winnipeg from 2011 to 2018. While there, she served as principal of the Centre for Christian Studies and an honorary assistant at St. Luke’s.