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

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

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Cover: 'Nigredo' by Margruite Krahn (from The Alchemy of Life series)

Seeing in the Dark

Photo: Kym Mackinnon

See darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you.

Isaiah 60:2

I find it difficult to work in the evening. In fact, I find it difficult to be attentive during evenings in general, and I have found this a source of frustration and curiosity about myself. Why is it so difficult for me to be productive during the night hours? In short, because I find little peace there, my mind wanders listlessly – I'm afraid of the dark.

Over the years, I have come to realize that my mind, and spirit, attend to the world best through observation and movement. My daily runs have become essential to my well-being, and are where I do most of my mental work. But, when the sun goes down and the day's movement slows, I am given over to a darker side of my character who resists the solitude, fearful of what she might find there.

As this fear exists within myself, it also exists without.

What does life look like 'After the Plague?' The artwork on the cover of this issue offers another perspective on darkness. The scene invites us to enter a dark wood seemingly inspired by the Germanic forests of a Grimm's fairy tale, or Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*. At first glance, it is easy to miss the odd scene in the left-hand corner of the painting, where a raven holds a small pearl in its mouth before a downward stairwell that has appeared as if from nowhere. It makes us blink. We have to train our eyes against the darkness of the backdrop. What are we looking at? In fact, the symbol of the pearl is one for hope.

The metaphor of darkness serves our understanding of plagues because it paints a startling picture of both our inner and outer fears, our inner deceptions and our outer

blindness. As Lowell Friesen writes in his reading of Albert Camus' *The Plague*: "Sometimes the corruption is in us. Sometimes it is in the world. Christians ought to be particularly attuned to this dynamic."

As we look into our own peculiar darkness experienced over the last six months, we must train our eyes to see through our fears and our false gods, and find the pearl hiding in plain sight in the corner of our lives.

In this issue, you will encounter voices that will make you wonder about what you thought you knew, voices seeking to reconcile the internal dissonance we feel with the external discomfort of our current political predicament. Lowell Friesen reveals the Christian virtues of realism and humility in the character of Tarrou, from Camus' *The Plague*; Janet Ross takes us on a journey through Exodus and the Egyptian plagues, ultimately posing the Augustinian question: What do we love when we love our God?; Jane Barter sets a precedent for political change; and Nancy Phillips reminds us that certain events open up a sacred context, and we may, in fact, be walking on Holy Ground.

While the COVID-19 pandemic may have turned our news cycle into something akin to a wandering alarmist viral vlogger, it has also forced us to situate ourselves in the darkness. How is God speaking to us in the dark? While this question has always been present, it has now pushed itself to the foreground of our present. As Christians, we have been called to ponder God in our heart, and search, always, for the pearl. Our work is before us.



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

God and the Plague

GEOFFREY WOODCROFT

Photo: [Dejan Livančić](#)

Where was I in October 2019? Not a clue, unless I check last year's date book. On the flip side, I can recall most dates and happenings, deaths, cancellations, books read, and Zoom meetings glared upon since March 12, 2020.

I can clearly recall my fear, longing, and uncertainty causing me to lament and suffer—just like everyone I know—during this pandemic. At the same time, this lament has moved the Church to connectivity, daily prayer, new beginnings, rich conversations, and an outpouring of generosity, dedication, and yearning. We are a changed group, and we must continue to seek understanding in the midst of this change.

N.T. Wright's *God and the Pandemic* has helped me to understand various Western world perspectives about these extraordinary days, while providing clarity about how and what the Church is called to do. In Western culture, the Christian response during past crises and plagues was to proclaim that the Kingdom of God had come near. Christians built hospitals, cared for the vulnerable, risked their lives to save others, and acted as a voice for justice and charity in the face of government. Wright goes on to argue that Christian disciples are called to behave likewise at all times, not just during pandemics and world crises. God's mission is not just about COVID-19, nor is it just about us the Church. Rather, it has always been about the joining of heaven and creation in joy and life; God's Kingdom is all those things happening, and so much more.

Paul wrote that the whole of creation groans in labour pain, and the Spirit groans also in sighs too deep for words:

[Paul] is offering a Jesus-shaped picture of suffering, redeeming providence, in which God's people are themselves not simply spectators, nor simply beneficiaries, but active participants. They are 'called according to his purpose', since God is even now using their groaning, at the heart of the world's pain, as the vehicle for the Spirit's own work, holding that sorrow before the Father, creating a context for the multiple works of healing and hope. Such God lovers are therefore shaped according to the pattern of the Son: the cruciform pattern in which God's justice and mercy, his faithfulness to the covenant and to creation, are displayed before the world in tears and toil, lament and labour. That is our vocation at this present time (Wright, 51).

Every day, I hear new stories and reflections from Rupert's Land disciples about God's movement in the world. I hear of rich new relationships, calls for baptism, the sharing of our resources (such as buildings) to enhance community education and health programs, and the continuing dedication of leaders to build the Body of Christ. It is in and through our lives as disciples—and ultimately our one life in Christ—that God moves to proclaim heaven on earth now.



Geoffrey Woodcroft,
Bishop of Rupert's Land

And There Is No Health In Us

LOWELL FRIESEN



With the arrival of the pandemic, there has been renewed interest in Albert Camus' 1947 novel, *The Plague*. It tells the story of an outbreak of the bubonic plague in the Algerian town of Oran. Many read it as an allegory of Nazi-occupied France in the second World War, but it also serves as an exploration of Camus' existentialist philosophy. It is not particularly optimistic, neither does it serve well as entertainment or pleasant distraction. It contains little joy, only resolve in the face of suffering and exhaustion. Is there wisdom to be found in its pages? Perhaps. It exhorts us to shoulder our burdens and to look for the good where it may be found. What it may do best, however, is hold up for us people of empathy and moral humility, firm in their resistance to evil and suffering.

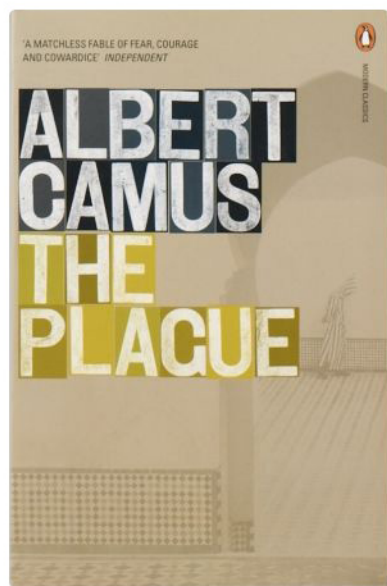
The novel's lone Christian representative is not one of these people. We meet Father Paneloux early, just as the disease is beginning to claim its first victims. He seems to welcome its arrival. Later, when the situation becomes dire and the town's gates are locked, we are given to understand why. He ascends his pulpit and begins a sermon with the following words: "My brethren, a calamity has befallen you; my brethren, you have deserved it." Paneloux, it seems, has been waiting to be the voice of judgment. Suffering, he tells his congregants, is tied to sin and the only way out from under the plague is collective repentance.

But even the preacher is judged. At the height of the plague, a young boy is infected and dies a slow, terrible death. In anger, Dr. Rieux exclaims, "[N]ow that one, at least, was innocent, as you very well know!" Paneloux withdraws, humbled. His next sermon reveals just how much the boy's death has undercut him. "We have to accept what is outrageous," he says, "because we have to choose to hate God or love Him." Paneloux chooses to love God, but the damage has been done. He falls

ill, refuses medical treatment, and dies. His symptoms, the narrator tells us, are ambiguous, and we are left to pity him, suspecting that the plague killed him by shattering his worldview.

In holding up Paneloux as its representative, *The Plague* does not recommend Christianity to its reader and today's Christian may well be chafed by the association. This does not mean, however, that the novel contains nothing of value. Indeed, the opposite is true, and we can find something worth praising in the character of Tarrou.

Tarrou is a steadfast companion to Dr. Rieux in his work, but his character remains mysterious till near the end when he and Rieux spend a quiet evening together. Tarrou recounts how, as



a young man, he witnessed his father, a public prosecutor, argue for a defendant to be put to death. Tarrou is horrified and becomes an activist, devoting his life to fighting the death penalty. But he and his fellow activists also took a side in the Spanish Civil War, and so they too have blood on their hands. Now Tarrou shuns militant activism. He relates his reason for joining Rieux in the fight against the plague.

[N]ow I accept being what I am. I have learned modesty. All I can say is that on this earth there are pestilences and there are victims—and as far as possible one must refuse to be on the side of the pestilence.... If in saying this I become a pestilence myself, at least I am not a consenting one. I am trying to be an innocent murderer. You see, it's not a high ambition. Of course, there should be [another] category, that of true healers, but it's a fact that one does not meet many of those, because it must be hard to achieve.

Tarrou has come to know that efforts to achieve the good, no matter the intention, are often stained by collateral damage. We are all murderers, he implies. The best we can hope is to be wrongdoers who don't intend the wrong.

Tarrou's injunction never to be on the side of pestilence is one we can all embrace, and our world contains no shortage of pestilences. But more than that, the Christian has reason to share Tarrou's realism and humility. Those of us who still pray from the *Book of Common Prayer* are familiar with a line in the general confession: "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us." Modern prayer books remove the last clause, yet it would do us all good to include it in our prayers. Sure, taken as an absolute, even the theologian demurs—we are, after all, created by God and so there must be *some* good in us—but the sentiment certainly applies. There is corruption, much of it,

and it has penetrated deeply.

Precious little we do is unqualifiedly good. Motivations are seldom pure. Wittingly or unwittingly, we pursue one good at the expense of another or introduce one evil in the fight against another. Sometimes the corruption is in us. Sometimes it is in the world. Christians ought to be particularly attuned to this dynamic. We ought to know at least as well as Tarrou that, in refusing to stand on the side of one pestilence, it is all too easy to take up residence on the side of another.

Recently a preacher in our parish drew attention to what he called "the epidemic of outrage." Our social discourse, enabled by social media, is dominated by our proclivity to mount the steps of our Facebook pulpits and preach. Everyone is keen to plant a flag and let others know which pestilences they refuse to be on the side of. Paneloux wanted to be the voice of judgment, as do many of us, and from some angles, these public statements feel a lot like the moral grandstanding of the Pharisee who prayed "God, I thank you that I am not like other people." What person today, weary of our public discourse, does not feel that its tone, and some of its motivations, are a pestilence unto themselves?

Of course, what has been said here in this space is itself subject to the same interrogation. What are its motives and might it also be tinged with moral superiority? Alas, we have all been corrupted. Tarrou again, "[W]e must constantly keep a watch on ourselves to avoid being distracted for a moment and find ourselves breathing in another person's face and infecting him."



Lowell Friesen works as a part-time choir director at Saint Margaret's Anglican Church. He also teaches philosophy at Booth University College and at a number of other post-secondary institutions in Winnipeg.

Plagues and Protest

JANET ROSS



When presented with the opportunity to consider possible meanings and purposes of the plagues of Exodus for RLN, how could one refuse? The narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures are full of twists, turns, power plays, love, betrayal and more; and these ten plagues do not disappoint. But what can be discovered reading this dramatic text in the midst of a pandemic? What can we learn now that we know something of the uncertainty, the unknown, the suspense of living with a plague? With a deep breath, we turn to the story first.

Recap

The Hebrews have been enslaved in Egypt for generations and the situation is only getting worse. Pharaoh, fearing their growing number, responds with impossible expectations for work and production. (Is this a forewarning of racial capitalism? A solidifying of the relationship between harm to racialized bodies and the economic benefit of those in power?) God hears the cries of the Israelites for relief and tells Moses: "Say to the Israelites, 'I am the Lord. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and through miracles'" (lit., "great judgements"). Ostensibly, one people's miracle is another people's plague, and is another God's judgement. Thus, the contest begins between the power and sovereignty of the newly named deity and the power and sovereignty of the vaguely named Pharaoh/Powers That Be.

Note 1: *There is a relationship among hierarchical power, economics, bodies, and oppression.*

A series of plagues commences, from bloody water to frogs to boils to family death. With each plague, the Pharaoh buckles from the discomfort then rallies once the discomfort is gone as his heart is "hardened," a change of

mind that is increasingly attributed to God's doing. This standoff for power and control includes a more personal challenge to the sovereignty of the Pharaoh; that he, in the end, not only has less agency as sovereign, but has less agency over his own emotions and, therefore, of his thoughts and desires.

Note 2: *What can be learned from discomfort? Be wary of choices when the discomfort is gone.*

'Who is Moses?' is a complicated question. The initially reluctant leader, Moses has a chaotic back story: threatened at birth, set sail in a basket on the great Nile, miraculously saved...by the Princess no less, raised in the palace as Pharaoh's family, then has an apparent identity crisis, becomes overwhelmed by anti-Hebrew violence, kills an Egyptian overseer, runs as a fugitive, marries the knowledgeable Zipporah, hears a divine calling, rejects it, agrees to it, then confronts his royal family who eventually threatens him with death. What kind of God does Moses find and hear? One who speaks, one who vies for power, one who experiences emotion. At first glance, Moses' God seems to be much like him.

Note 3: *'What do we love when we love our God?' (Augustine, Confessions)*

As the tenth plague—the most devastating—approaches, we learn the details of the preparation along with the exhausted, nearly overcome Israelites. Choose the perfect lamb, paint the blood over the door, eat all the lamb, keep your shoes on even while you eat, hope and pray your house will be passed over. So your son will not die, so your father will not die, so your beloved brother will not die.

In the description of this final plague in



'Worship of the Golden Calf' by Margret Hofheinz-Döring

Egypt, the death of the first-born, the stakes for who has authority are raised higher as we hear this phrase written in the voice of the Divine: "...and on all the Gods of Egypt I will execute judgments" (Ex. 12.12). Some biblical interpreters see the choice of plague as directly related to Egyptian deities. For instance, the first plague that turns the Nile River to blood is against the River God, "Nilas"; the second plague of frogs is against the Goddess Hathor, symbolized by a frog and representing fertility; the ninth plague of darkness overpowers the

Sun God Ra. Plagues call for discernment about that which we hold most sacred. Which Gods will win out over other Gods? Plagues indeed call us to ask, *what do we love when we love our God?* For this last plague, the one that will finally convince the most powerful person in the land change the story of the entire economic production of Egypt the Pharaoh receives no warning. It is only when grief is felt in every household that the Pharaoh finally realizes what is at stake, what he thought he loved to this point.

What are the purposes of plagues?

Here are a few attempts at identifying possible purposes of plagues. Our hopes and fears come together in discovering meaning in chaos. With another deep breath, let's consider what plagues do.

1. Plagues destabilize the world as we know it, revealing reality in new ways that challenge oppression. This is nothing less than revelation itself. The Exodus plagues unveiled oppression and led to destruction and dislocation, freedom, and disruption. Were the plagues means of political prophecy?

2. Plagues displace people and challenge relationships. Because plagues have a destabilizing impact, in our thinking and in our bodies and in our sense of location, plagues require a reimagining that also destabilizes authority and can move us toward social and political reform. What powers need destabilizing?

3. Plagues ask us: What does it take to convince us to let go? What does it take to leave what is familiar when that familiar thing is harming us or others.

4. Plagues remind us to resist the temptation to return, geographically or psychologically, to the site of our bondage. It didn't take long for the newly freed Hebrews to begin missing Egypt, to try to recreate what they had known and the God/golden calf they had known in Egypt.

In the article "Miracles and Plagues: Plague Discourse as Political Thought," Graham Hammill documents the history of how plagues have repeatedly led to new imaginings of community and politics, identifying the close relationship between plague and protest. Throughout history, plagues became fertile ground for seeding revolution. And like Pharaoh, governments have taken the opportunity to oppress harder, tighten control, and respond out of fear.

Appeals to divine authority as the cause of the plague meant a break between political sovereignty and a claim to divine sanction of the current political power. Naming plagues as divine judgment in the biblical text and in later eras recast the current political power as vulnerable and temporary. This change in understanding—that the current government no longer had divine approval and authority—could then transform the idea of power and agency itself into something revolutionary. In some ways, such a transformation negates the contest between sovereign (government, corporate, dominant) power and divine power as the revolution occurs at the social/communal level. In other words, whether a plague is understood to be God's will or not, the experience of a shared vision seeds and nurtures revolution. Perhaps such shared justice-making is what we can love when we love our God.

Reading the stories of the plagues in Egypt, we can situate ourselves in the story where we choose; whether after the plagues and the escape to the desert, generations later in Jerusalem, or from our place now in the 21st century in Treaty 1 territory. With the plagues in existence today—poverty, oppression, racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and many more inequities that plague us, or a pandemic that further reveals hierarchies of suffering—we find ourselves located somewhere on this side of the moment of transformation. As those who have come before us, we are in the midst of change, and of hope.



Janet Ross works at the Canadian Centre for Christian Studies. Her areas of interest focus on religion and social change, and she is also a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).



Sacrifice and the Glory: On the Renunciatory Gestures of Justin Trudeau

JANE BARTER

Image: 'Coronation of Charlemagne' by Raphael.

On Christmas Day of 800 C.E., Charlemagne knelt meekly before Pope Leo III, who crowned him Holy Roman Emperor. After four centuries of humiliation, the Western church's leap of faith and its resurrection of an old title forged what it hoped would be a new era. The act itself was mutually reinforcing: Charlemagne's gesture of humility before the Pope was reciprocated when the Pope bowed before him, the only Pope ever to do so before a Western Emperor. The Emperor and the church were caught up in a veritable tautology of praise. Charlemagne's act of submission was at once the very ground for his exaltation, and the church's adoration of the Emperor was at the same time, the church's own self-preserving manoeuvre.

Within secular society we like to imagine ourselves as having transcended such spectacle, but what has become clear during the COVID-19 pandemic are the ways in which ritual is not superseded within secularism, but simply transformed. Today, as in 800 C.E., public liturgy seeks to contrive a showy unity between heaven and earth, and to terrible effect.

The politician par excellence of liturgical performance is Justin Trudeau. Every gesture, every word, every cadence—in both official languages—is finely tuned in order to garner not confidence, but devotion. It is as though he had been groomed his entire life for this crisis, in which he steadfastly promises, "[we will get through together](#)." Yet the old symbols of his leadership—his ludic ([appropriate?](#)) style, his verbal flourishes, and his [athletic showmanship](#)—are now turned on their heads, as Trudeau, like Charlemagne, displays, not power, but its secret twin, renunciation. And, judging by opinion polls, his renunciatory gestures—growing hair and beard, studied silence, and taking a knee—are generally met with

reciprocal adoration on the public's part.

Sternly warning the public during March Break that they must "[go home and stay home](#)," Trudeau persistently evoked themes of sacrifice and duty as he traded on Canadians' collective efforts during the two [world wars](#). "The front line is everywhere. In our hospitals and care centres, 2 in our grocery stores and pharmacies, at our truck stops and gas stations. And the people who work in these places are our modern-day heroes," Trudeau stated in his [address to the House of Commons in April](#). His speech didn't just celebrate the "front-line workers;" it presented them as national saints: the selfless martyrs, whom Trudeau was quick both to extol and to emulate. This new piety looked a great deal like an older piety, as the leader of this country appealed to religious traditions now half-forgotten, yet still resonant within the Canadian imaginary.

At the height of the COVID-19 crisis in Canada, Trudeau emerged daily with uncharacteristic and increased scruffiness. Some commentators speculate that his new look was intended to connote greater [authority](#)—as in the stern dad admonishing "[enough is enough](#)" to those who broke curfew. Yet Trudeau's beard and hair were neither coiffed nor managed, and therefore presented an exception to his generally impeccable appearance. In the Western church, the beard was proscribed for most of its history (few Popes wore beards) due to the rigour with which they had to be maintained. Christian authorities feared the beard would promote vanity as opposed to charity and humility. Pope Julius II overruled the prohibition against beards when he temporarily grew his beard to mourn the lost city of Bologna in 1511. Pope Clement VII took on a hirsute form while in exile in Castel

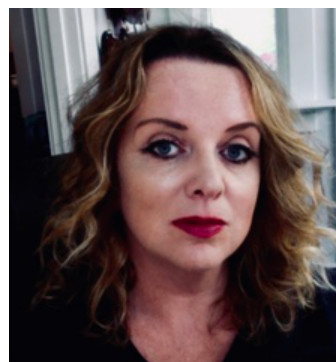
Sant'Angelo after the sacking of Rome in 1527. Similarly, Trudeau's beard became at once a symbol of mourning and of resolve. It foregrounded the exceptionality of this time, a time when even personal appearance needed to be sacrificed for a greater cause.

Another renunciatory gesture that Trudeau evoked during this crisis was his use of silence. Silence has a long pedigree in Western penitential practices. Benedict of Nursia found silence to be so conducive to monastic life that he dedicated an entire chapter of his Rule to it as he enjoined monks to "[be silent and to listen](#)" in all humility. When asked during a COVID-19 briefing about Trump's threat to use military force against the protestors in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder, Trudeau responded in a studied [21-second silence](#). His silence, like his hair, was an exceptional gesture for a Prime Minister renowned for his articulacy. It also appeared as a gesture of humility, an act of deference to racialized persons as he called upon Canadians "to listen" and "to learn what injustices continue"—both in Canada and in the U.S.

This gesture of deference was replicated in the now-familiar image of a masked Trudeau [taking a knee](#) at the "No Peace Until Justice" anti-racism demonstration in Ottawa. To me, his gesture did not at all echo Colin Kaepernick's bold defiance of civil religion. What it did echo is a longer tradition of genuflection, which is penitential in nature. Like Charlemagne himself, Trudeau bent before authority (this time the authority of the crowd) in a calculated gesture of humility. Together with the false renunciatory gestures of the [police in the U.S.](#), it displayed the clear connection between humility and power. Trudeau can speak of and gesture toward humility, but never truly disavow white privilege in any material sense. We know that, given Trudeau's track record on [Indigenous issues](#) or his [refusal to investigate RCMP violence in Canada](#), such privilege will be further enshrined due to these gestures, for such gestures appear to placate justice's demands. As [Rinaldo Walcott](#), Professor of

Black diaspora Cultural Studies at the University of Toronto, put it: "When they take those knees in those public ways at those protests, what they're doing is they're playing to emotion—but they're playing to emotion, minus policy."

In the Western church, the humble Charlemagne is remembered as Rex Mundi Triumphator (Triumphant King of the World). His feast day was January 28, one day after COVID-19 was first identified in Canada. How Justin Trudeau will be remembered remains an open question. It is likely that posterity will regard his COVID-19 performance as the pinnacle of his career. Here, he convinced the nation to fight a battle, even though the battle imagery is dubious to say the least. Here, he called upon all Canadians to sacrifice for the nation even though the sacrifices would be disproportionately borne by those subjects least protected by the nation state. Here, he would bend his knee before a crowd whose suffering he had the power to alleviate, even while he refused to do so. Here, he would restrain his tongue when bold speech was required. Here, he would forego grooming as a glib gesture of mourning and resolve. That Trudeau's reign could go largely unchallenged during this time says a great deal about how citizens come together when the nation is under threat. It also says a good deal about Trudeau's peculiar capacity to manipulate public sentiment through gestures and rituals that are half-forgotten, yet nevertheless efficacious. We would do well to ask what lies behind these sacrificial gestures, to refuse their appeal, and to demand real political change in their stead. These "unprecedented times" have precedent.



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Parish News Roundup

Synod 2020

We ask that you pray for the 117th Session of Synod of the Diocese of Rupert's Land. Please pray for all those involved, the selected delegates and our Bishop Geoffrey Woodcroft, and for their work and discernment leading up to the virtual meeting on October 17.

The in-person meeting of Synod 2020 is being postponed due to COVID-19.

The Synod Agenda Committee, along with the Chancellor, have been meeting over the past months to discuss what to do with the planned Synod for October 2020. The initial thought was to postpone Synod until a later date. However, after reviewing the constitution, it was determined that Synod must be held biennially and Diocesan Council must also be elected biennially.

Numerous options have been explored regarding the best route to take in order to meet our constitutional requirements. Of course, top of mind certainly was (and continues to be) the safety and the wellbeing of the Body of Christ in the Diocese of Rupert's Land.

Synod is a rare and important opportunity for the entire Diocese to get together and network. And so, the plan is to meet virtually, via Zoom video conference on the morning of Saturday, October 17th for the 117th Session of Synod. The session will begin with taking attendance (to ensure quorum), followed by an Opening Eucharist, receipt of ballots previously mailed in (for election of Diocesan Council, Provincial Synod, General Synod, Board on Canons & Rules of Order and Diocesan Court), along with other procedural requirements. Since this meeting format (Zoom) does not lead itself to proper discussion and debates, no resolutions will be accepted from Synod Delegates or committees.



Synod 2018

The Convening Circular has been sent (via email or Canada Post) out to all delegates. In addition, a package containing the registration and balloting instructions, including the actual ballots was mailed to all delegates on September 13. All registration envelopes and ballots must be received by 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 15, 2020.

Detailed instructions on how to access the Zoom meeting will be emailed or mailed to all delegates at the beginning of October.

[Read a letter from the Bishop.](#)
Read the [Protocols for Gathering.](#)

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St. Alban's

What We Tend to Forget

I find it interesting in our day to day round of activities that define our lives, how we're able, in the evolution of language, to forget words or terms that may have been lost because we don't use them a lot.

One word I'm often asked about is "Eucharist." Eucharist is an ancient Greek word that literally means Thanksgiving. (No, I didn't study Biblical Greek, I studied Biblical Hebrew.) But it's also a word that means Communion, the Lord's Supper, and the Last Supper. So, when we celebrate the Eucharist, we're celebrating Communion.

Another word that is being used a lot is the word "Purificator." Traditionally the Purificator is the cloth used to wipe the edge of the chalice between communicants (those of us taking Communion wine). In my first parish, it was literally called "the little napkin." And all of the parts and cloths and pieces that make up what we do to preside at the Eucharist have names, and job descriptions.

At the same time, because of the need to continue to keep us all safe these days, we're looking at the use of "disposable purificators." These can include a napkin, or a small disposable cup of some variety in which the Communion wafer is placed for one to receive and consume as safely as possible. In our case, our Altar Guild went looking for mini muffin cups, and came back with disposable pill containers for us to use and then dispose, during the course of the Eucharist, the receipt of Communion.

Other Communion related terms come up: "In both kinds" and "In one kind." When we're able to receive both the bread and the wine, in the Communion, that's called "Receiving in both kinds." But at the moment, in order to continue flattening the COVID curve, we're only able to distribute Communion "in one kind." In this case, that will be the bread, only.

Now, for as much as we see Jesus' words in the upper room, blessing the bread and the



wine as signs of the New Covenant, or agreement between us and God, receiving just one or the other conveys the same spiritual benefits.

So, as we're able to return to the first attempts at limited in-person worship (8am on Sundays), and as we continue to navigate the changing protocols and regulations to help us continue to flatten the curve. It's good to revisit some of these ancient terms.

Keep Safe,
Everyone!

- Rebecca Graham



50th Anniversary Walk

On Sunday, October 18, parishioners from the Church of St. Stephen and St. Bede will celebrate 50 years since St. Stephen's Lutheran Church walked from their church to bring our two congregations together in Christ Jesus. [say more about the history of these two churches]

The walk will begin at 10:30 a.m., and meet at Silver Heights Seventh Day Adventist Church (parking lot), 2140 Ness Ave (the original site of St. Stephen's Lutheran Church). Lutherans will walk to 99 Turner Avenue, and be welcomed by Anglicans. The commemorative service will begin at 11:15 a.m.

Come out and celebrate!



Photo: From the archives at St. Stephen and St. Bede.

A Learning Journey 2020: Sole to Soul

Sole to Soul is a spiritual discipline and activity as part of A Learning Journey 2020. It is, first and foremost, a walk in the park, your neighbourhood, your parish, or anywhere, really. It's an opportunity to engage in social solidarity while practicing physical distancing.

Sole to Soul can be done once, weekly or anytime you go for a walk. You can do it by yourself or with a group. And if you are in Winnipeg, you are also welcome to join those gathering on Sole to Soul Sundays (see below).

There is no fixed distance and no timer. The route you choose should bring you back to where you started, with three other stops of your choosing along the way.

No matter where you are at in your Learning Journey, Sole to Soul is an opportunity to take a step (or more) on the path toward reconciliation in all our relations. Everyone is welcome.

In Winnipeg, sign up for Sole to Soul Sundays at 4 pm:

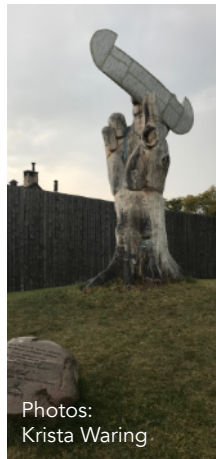
- Oct. 4 – St. Vital Park
- Oct. 11 – Assiniboine Park
- Oct. 18 – Kildonan Park

Contact Krista for details on where to meet, or help with hosting one in your local area: soletosoulwalk@gmail.com

Don't miss these other Learning Journey Opportunities:

- October 13, 7:00 p.m. CT, via Zoom: Book Study Discussion // 21 Things You Might Not Know About the Indian Act//
- November 4, 7:00 p.m. CT, via Zoom: Keynote speaker – Niigaan Sinclair "Beyond the Myths"

To register, email Elizabeth at LearningJourneyCalls@gmail.com



Photos:
Krista Waring



Sole to Soul took its first walk through Whittier Park on September 20th.

Your Podcast Fix

Sacred Teachings Podcast: New Season Launches

"Stolen," the fourth season of the Sacred Teachings podcast, takes listeners on a series of investigations with guest host Peter Downie. This series looks at what has been taken from Indigenous peoples in Canada, who took it and how can justice be served.

[Listen here...](#)

The Living Church Podcast: Church Music and COVID-19

Music opens us to God. But what can we do if it's dangerous to sing or play?

[Listen here...](#)

Weakness and Grace: A Conversation

This podcast featuring a 2001 conversation drawn from the archives of Signpost Music, in which Steve Bell interviews Rev. Chris Vais about living with A.L.S. (Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis), and what he came to understand about life and faith as his body weakened. It also features a conversation between Steve and Glen Soderholm, which includes Glen's recording of his song "Psalm 121."

[Listen here...](#)

Pandemic as Sacred Context

NANCY PHILLIPS

Photo: Ricardo Frantz

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with an unprecedented opportunity to examine and evaluate the daily stuff of our lives. We have been asked to step back from our usual activities and withdraw from life as usual. In the past few months, we may have needed to readjust our occupational work or relationships differently, curtail recreational travel, change the way we access medical and dental care, and envision worship in our faith communities in a unique way. It has brought many of us to a dead stop, faced with the reality of no new plans to fill our time or make meaning in our lives.

This giant pause invites us to pay attention to our essential need for solitude, and stillness. In the silence we can begin to attend to what we really want to shape us, what we genuinely want to give our attention to, and what calls us forward to meaning and purpose. This space of social isolation is a call to begin where we are, to decide what can be jettisoned, what values we want to affirm and what attitudes we want to carry with us into the new reality. Poet and author, Padraig O'Tuama, says, "to begin where you are is not a poor beginning. To begin where you are may take courage, or compromise, or painful truth telling. Whatever it takes, he says, it's wise to begin there."

Our period of pandemic isolation began in the season of Lent, and we journeyed through Good Friday, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost all within the confines of this social restriction. Engaging with the Paschal Mystery offers us an opportunity for transformation within which we are given a new life and spirit. We are led through suffering and death, the gift of new life,

and time spent grieving the old and adjusting to the new. Finally, only after the old life has been truly let go, a new spirit is given for the life we are already living.

For the disciples of Jesus who witnessed his crucifixion, this event must have been a gut wrenching, confusing ending to new promise. The event left them frightened, confused and deeply grieving the joy and possibilities that had ended. During this time of pandemic, there have been many losses, and inadequate opportunities to grieve those losses. The events of the Passion of Christ invite us to name our deaths. Loss may have taken many forms during the pandemic isolation period: the death of loved ones, separation from friends and family, cancelled trip plans, job loss, and compromised health. But beyond our own particular griefs, this period also calls us to become aware of those areas where we have responded inadequately to the greater needs around us—care for the poor, attention to mental health issues, and protection for the environment, to name a few.

Father Ron Rolheiser, Oblate priest, and author, points out that our culture does not give us easy permission to grieve. Its underlying ethos is that we move on quickly from loss and hurt, keep our grief quiet, remain strong, and get on with life. But mourning, Rolheiser says, is vital to our health, something we owe to ourselves. Without mourning our only choice is to grow hard and bitter in the face of disappointment, rejection, and loss. This period of mourning encourages us to wait for the resurrection—to look towards the hope we have

been promised.

The events of the Resurrection described in Mark 16 remind us that the women—Mary, mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Salome—were first to arrive at the tomb to care for Jesus' body. They found the tomb empty. This unexpected and disorienting turn of events evokes a sense of alarm, but also amazement in the women. In his book, *The Passion and the Cross*, Ron Rolheiser says it is no accident that when Jesus rose from the dead he appeared first to women. He wonders if this could be because women often play the role of midwives. Something new is born in the resurrection and women are the first on the scene to witness the birth and become bearers of good news. We have all been called to this event of resurrection by becoming midwives of hope and trust. The struggle of Good Friday, Rolheiser explains, is that Jesus dies in silence. God does not suddenly rise in power to overcome the evil that has befallen Jesus, leaving us wondering where God is in all of this. God's answer is in the resurrection of Jesus and in the perennial resurrection of goodness within life itself. The task of Easter is to give birth to that which we believe and hold to be true within ourselves. The resurrection is the basis for human hope, but also gives a new future to the earth. Christ came to save not only human beings, but the whole existence of creation. This period of upheaval and change inherent in the pandemic is calling us to a resurrection.

The pandemic has been a liminal space for us—a space between the spaces, much like the forty days of wandering the disciples experienced after the resurrection. For the disciples, this extended time of grieving helped them to adjust to the new reality. The pandemic has offered us an opportunity to stop and reflect, and to ponder how we want to emerge. If we see the pandemic as a sacred context, not of our own making, it provides us with a kind of holy ground. We spent the last while wandering this holy ground and now we are discovering ourselves anew. Part of being on a journey is

developing an awareness of what we need to take along with us to survive. But we also must attend to what needs to be left behind. All the emotional baggage that we hoard as a way of justifying how we engage in life may be starting to seep through our carefully guarded personas. We must mourn our limits, our mortality, our concepts of church. And if we engage in this mourning and we are willing to let go, everything will be given back to us in a deeper way.

The event of the Ascension of Jesus reminds us that things have changed. Although Jesus appears to his disciples, they do not experience a return to things as they were before the crucifixion. During the pandemic, we have been called upon to let go of old ways. We may have been asked to do some difficult things: to stay away from relationships that have been lifegiving for us, to let go of old habits, joys, or pleasures. This letting go brings with it the potential of new possibilities. We can ask ourselves: what it is that we should hold with reverence? What is the call that God is placing on our lives? We must learn not to cling to the old, but let it ascend and give us its blessing.

The season of Pentecost invites us to accept the spirit of the life we are, in this moment, living. The event of Pentecost was a time for equipping the disciples with new power, new vision, and new direction. The divine invitation to us during this time of pandemic is to engage in this journey, filled with the renewing breath of the Holy Spirit and the peace that Jesus promised to his disciples: Don't let your hearts be troubled. Don't be afraid. God is at work in you. Peace.



Nancy is a Spiritual Director, Retired Nurse, Grandmother and Retreat Director who finds solace in green spaces. She is currently enrolled in the Forest Dwelling Program, Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, studying the Spirituality of Aging.