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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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Transitions

Photo: [Damien Dufour](#)

There is a list of terms that I don't think I'll ever use again once this pandemic is over. It includes: new normal, pivot, unprecedented, upheaval, strange times, trying times, and speaking moistly. These are among the buzzwords that are frequently used to describe the current pandemic reality of our global society, and all of them (with the exception of "speaking moistly") indicate a time of great change. One word that I've heard less often in secular society, and more often in a religious context, is "transition."

Of course, our secular world is experiencing transitions, in its politics, its economy, and perhaps, in the way it understands ideas of solitude and togetherness. But our secular industries also tend to approach transitions as disruptions, or hurdles that must be overcome.

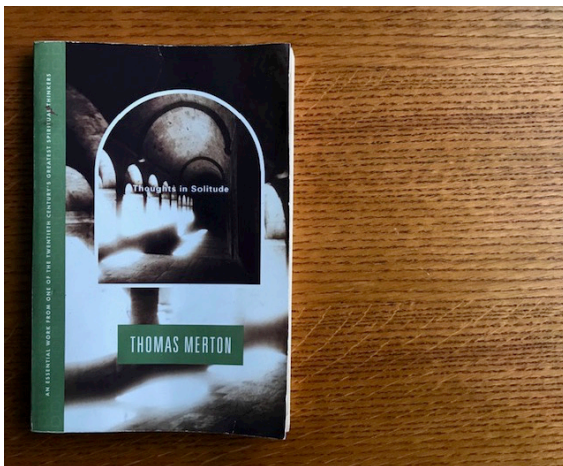
How might we understand transitions within the context of the Church? Is there tension between the Church as an institution versus the Church as a movement?

The practice of waiting (Advent), and exile (Lent) form the foundations of the Church calendar, and how the Church understands herself in time—as that liminal space between the birth of Christ and the anticipated second birth of Christ. The Church as an institution mediates and sanctifies this anticipation in her attendance to holy offices, ceremonies, and ministries; in every sense of herself, the Church is always in transition.

Then, can disruptions be felt within the Church? Absolutely. But disruptions should be understood as necessary for the Church to grow in her communion with God, feeding her understanding of her own transitory nature, and the truth about what it is that she anticipates. Indeed, the main event of the Christian faith—that of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ—is itself the pinnacle of disruption.

In *Thoughts in Solitude*, Thomas Merton writes a series of prayers and short reflections on the transitory nature of faith and the Christian understanding of God. Merton embraces the uncertainty experienced in a life of faith as he prays,

“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.”



What Merton is describing is the truth of his desire to know God, which puts him into a perpetual state of uncertainty as God can never be fully known to his human self. Merton goes on to write, “But I believe the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.” To say it differently, if we are to truly live in our faith, we must accept that we live in the realm of not-knowing.

In the first feature of this issue, Heather McCance, Ministry Developer for the Diocese of Rupert’s Land, talks about three parishes in the diocese who have gone, or are going through significant transitions in leadership. Faced with

losing their priests, lay persons and postulants have stepped forward to collaborate as leaders in their parishes. They have done this in the midst of profound loss and uncertainty, motivated not by the desire to replace or usurp former leadership models, but because, to put it simply, their church and ministries *must go on*.

This January, RLN is putting a spotlight on what it means to be the transitory Church, asking: how does change and transition amplify the faith and life of the Church, and feed our desire to please God in all that we do?

Immediately following Heather’s piece is an interview with Deb Buxton, one of the Transition Coaches in a brand-new Transition Ministry in the diocese. Deb discusses what inspired the Ministry, why it is a vital asset to our diocese, and how it plans to grow from here. Then, Josh Ward from 1JustCity and St. Matthew’s Maryland Community Ministry laments the loss of physical closeness and proper supports for our city’s most vulnerable populations. Finally, Alex Jackson ponders the question of what a radical Anglican Church should look like in the 21st century: “What is changing, the transition we are seeing and participating in, is our mindsets and worldviews. Our foundational beliefs—unconditional love, radical caring, and deep compassion—stay the same, but our understanding of how best to express this in action in the world as the body of Christ is growing...”

You may find that the voices in this issue pose more questions than they do answers about our strange world and the challenges that come with living in it; but if we are to be people who live by faith, perhaps we should just accept this as our M.O.



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

The Holy Story

GEOFFREY WOODCROFT



Holy stories require holy listening; and holy listening requires holy attentiveness. The story of God's holy and timeless birth in time takes the attentiveness of a disciple's entire being.

From the angel's presentation with a few humble people, through Jesus' non-stop journey from birth through death to resurrection, disciples learn to be awake, to seek illumination, to hopefully and unremarkably become the story itself. I have to warn myself now and again that my parents, albeit visited by many angels, were not harassed and threatened by governments; that many of my baby gifts, like Canadian silver dollars, were preserved in frames and see-through pouches never to be used for selfless purposes. Jesus' timeless birth in time happens today as it does every day, smashing the mountains of privilege to rubble and filling in the valleys of despair.

The holy stories with angels flitting about are the stories that signal huge shifts and changes; yet those whom the angels call upon appear almost helpless. A couple of senior citizens, a young carpenter, a pregnant teen, a collection of nomadic laborers and a few international star-gazers are visited by God's angels and told to make simple, yet life-altering changes. All are asked to risk their livelihood and lives to challenge unjust structures, redistribute wealth, and organize the human family to rise as one to help God heal the planet.

The holy story reveals to the attentive listener a privileged, silent tongued generation waiting for the birth of God's liberation for us from human sin and tyranny. Revealed also are loving parents-to-be upon a geo-political human migration which could cost them their lives and that of their unborn child. Labourers

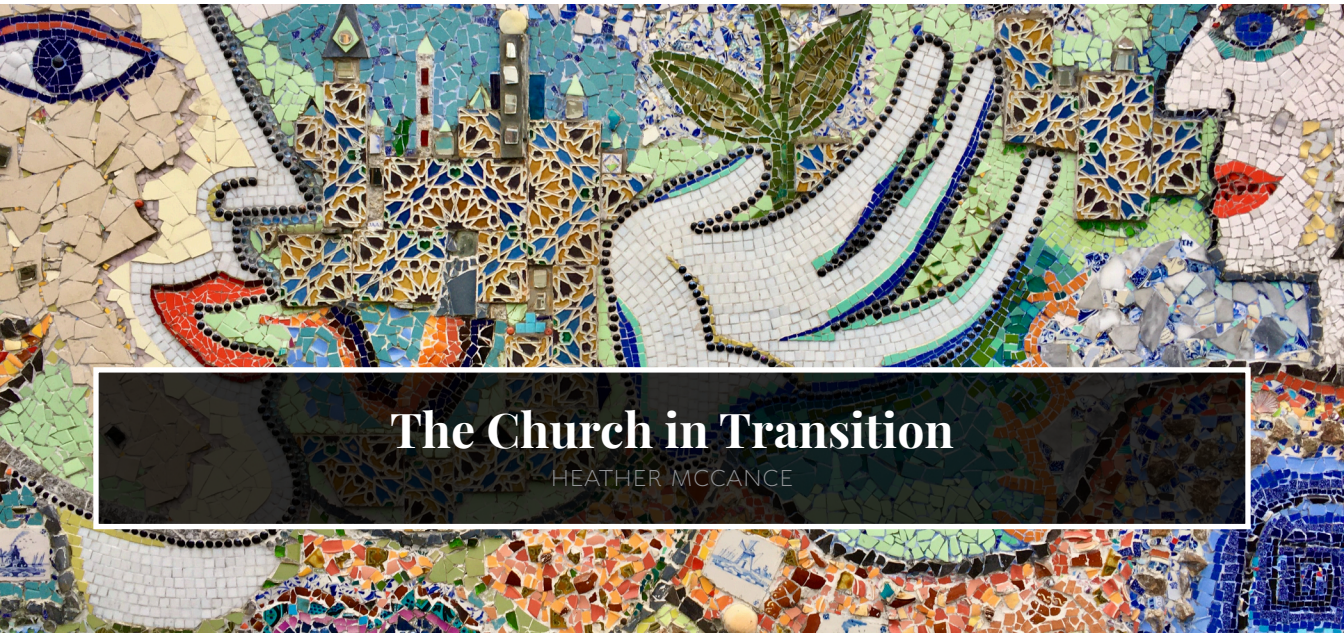
are directed away from their work, which they lavishly risk in order to see the plan that God is laying out for them. All eyes, including those of tyrannical leadership are now trained upon star-gazers from the east world, who bring outrageous gifts of wealth.

As I immerse myself in the story, I become aware of God calling upon the Church to humbly recommit in its call to serve. I consider displaced humans continually migrating from geo-political threats. I am ever-more cognizant of the plight of those impoverished by economic greed: human trafficking, child exploitation, gender inequality and so many others for whom any move out of economic prison would probably mean losing what little they have. In an individualistic and consumer driven world, lavish gifts of wisdom and kindness are overlooked for the reception of knowledge and commodities. All this I have mentioned are told by Elizabeth, Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, shepherds and star-gazers.

2021 births us into a world which has undergone rapid transition, accelerated by a pandemic, but a transition long foretold. Perhaps the Church which has repeatedly rehearsed this Jesus' story is presently on the hook to again fulfill God's mission. Shall the Church free and lead the frightened and vulnerable from economic and social prisons? Will the Church have courage and stamina to lead all people to vaccination, kindness and peace? Let us attentively listen with great anticipation to the holy story.



Geoffrey Woodcroft,
Bishop of Rupert's Land



The Church in Transition

HEATHER MCCANCE

Photo: [Giulia May](#)

It is no secret that the global pandemic has transformed the Church in a myriad of ways. Pastoral care is now offered by phone call or Facetime, worship by podcast or Zoom, and after decades or more of saying that the church is not the building, we are now really having to learn what it is to be the church without gathering in our buildings.

Yet from my perspective, disciples and parish communities across the Diocese of Rupert's Land were going through significant transitions before any of us had ever heard the phrase "COVID-19," and will continue to go through such transitions long after vaccines and public health measures have removed much of the danger of the novel coronavirus.

Parish membership is shrinking, disciples in the pews are aging, and budgets are in trouble. None of this is news to anyone. What might be news, however, are the stories of hope emerging from a number of our parish communities. In these parishes, disciples have chosen to risk moving forward into an unknown future instead of trying to restore a past that is, it seems, un-restore-able.

I think of St. Thomas', Weston in Winnipeg. This parish has long been in the vanguard of experimenting with new models of ministry, having been a place where Local Collaborative

Ministry was established early with a dedicated team of faithful disciples joining together to lead ministry and mission. That team disbanded two years ago, and new leadership has arisen. These leaders are younger than in many parishes, and have structured St. Thomas' ministry around their mission in their neighbourhood. For example, Kreative Kids offers free programs for children; Kreative Kitchens includes community meals, teaching, and food distribution. A Mission Team comprised of postulants for priestly ordination are assisting with leadership, pastoral care, and worship.

I think of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Atikokan. For many years, the Rev. Ruth Ivall served in this small-town parish as their non-stipendiary priest. Ruth had to step back this past fall, and for a while it looked like the parish might disestablish, as tired and aging leadership simply couldn't face going on. But instead, a new energy started to emerge, with people stepping up to share in ministry and mission to the community. As the parish moves forward, these new leaders will share in responsibilities for leading worship, and running community outreach initiatives like the regular rummage sales that allow local folks to purchase gently used clothing, with the money raised

going back to community initiatives. While we’re not sure yet where this is going, there is a renewed hope for the future of their parish’s mission and ministry.

I think of St. Mary’s in Sioux Lookout. For many years, this remote community has been without a priest. Instead, the members have come together and shared in ministry. The parish leadership team chose to pursue a Local Collaborative Ministry model, and are currently working with a mentor, a retired United Church minister who lives in town. The team engages in bi-weekly training and study, learning everything from themes in the Gospel of Matthew to how to conduct pastoral visits. With each member of the ministry team claiming her or his gifts for mission and ministry, they’re partnering with the United Church to run Messy Church for families with kids, welcoming students living in town from northern First Nations communities to attend high school, and offering pastoral care to those in the regional hospital. Last year, a local Christian bookstore gave a bouquet of flowers to one of the team members during “Pastor Appreciation Month.” When the member told the bookstore that she isn’t an ordained pastor, they informed her that, although they knew this, the flowers were to recognize all the ministry that she and the St. Mary’s team have done for the Sioux Lookout community.

William Bridges is a well-known thinker and writer on the subject of transitions. He notes that, during times of change, human beings, groups, and organizations don’t move directly from point A to point B. Rather, between A and B is what Bridges calls the ‘neutral zone.’ As an example, he offers the time that the children of Israel spent in the wilderness between escaping slavery in Egypt and entering the land of

Canaan. In this wilderness neutral zone, people have to come to terms with what they have lost in the past, even if that past doesn’t seem all that attractive (remember the former slaves complaining that at least in Egypt they had food?). In this time-between, there is confusion and lament to work through. Yet there is also return to a deeper understanding of the group’s core values—that which makes us who we are—and out of those values an openness to re-imagining what might be.

Susan Beaumont has written about the needs of leaders in what she calls ‘liminal times.’ In *How to Lead When You Don’t Know Where You’re Going*, Beaumont notes that today it’s pretty common for communities of faith not to know where “point B” even is. We enter neutral zones without any sense of where else to go from here. We must look at who we are and who God is calling us to be, so that we can take the next step, and then the next one, and move forward in faith (with perhaps a little fear, too).

I suspect that if you asked them, the leaders in the parishes I’ve named here would tell you that they don’t really know where they’re going. They do, however, know who they are. They can tell you what’s important to them as disciples of Jesus and as ministering communities. They know there are no guarantees, and they know the future will not look much like the past did. They have let go of any attempts to recreate anything that resembles their past, and are moving into liminal space where little is clear. Yet, they are continuing to serve their neighbourhoods, continuing to nurture and grow one another in the faith, and continuing to worship God and follow Christ together.



Heather McCance is the Diocesan Ministry Developer for the Diocese of Rupert’s Land.

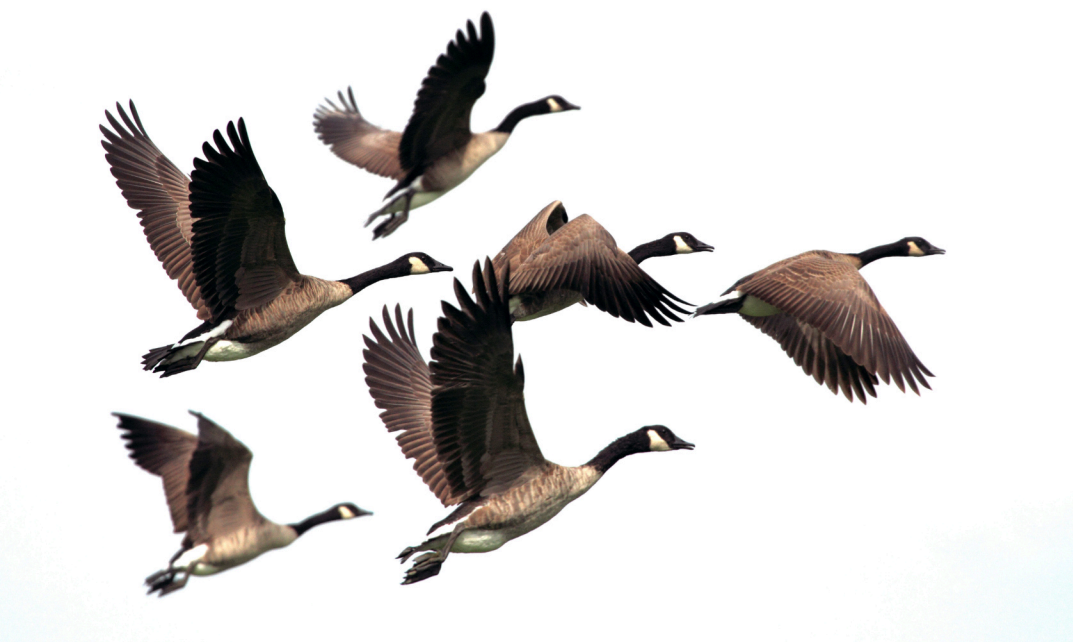


Photo: [Gary Bendig](#)

Interview with Deb Buxton

Deb Buxton is the Peoples' Warden at St. George's Anglican Church, Transcona, where she has served as a volunteer for many years. With a career background in change management, Deb has recently been appointed as one of five transition coaches in the Diocese of Rupert's Land. This Transition Team is a brand-new ministry in the diocese, designed to shepherd parishes through the complicated process of loss and change. I had the opportunity to sit down with Deb over Zoom, and discuss the new ministry and its important role in the diocese.

– Sara Krahn

What is your background, both in terms of volunteer and career work?

I am a faithful member of St. Georges, Transcona, where I volunteer in many areas. I am the Peoples' Warden, coordinate the music ministry and Sunday School and assortment of other jobs. Professionally, I am retired currently but I have retired several times and I am still not sure if I am done. I spent 30 years as a nurse at Children's Hospital in a variety of areas including the Burn Unit and Operating Room and PICU. I switched careers and went into the world of Healthcare Information Systems where I worked for 10 years in the project world, mostly in the change management areas.

Where did the idea to start a Transition Team ministry in the diocese come from?

The Diocese of Rupert's Land recognized the challenges parishes face when going through the process of transitioning from one incumbent to another. This whole team and ministry are brand new for Rupert's Land. Heather McCance and her husband Dave Robinson are the ones spearheading this mission. They come from the Diocese of Toronto, where one of Dave's projects was developing the transition coaching ministry. Dave was one of the key founders of that ministry, which, over the course of 20 years, has become a successful volunteer-driven ministry with 70 coaches! After moving to Rupert's Land, Heather and Dave identified the same need for our diocese. After discussion with the leadership team, it was decided to develop the transition support team for Rupert's Land. This is a huge undertaking, and the Diocese of Rupert's Land is only now in the early stages!

How did the ministry come to fruition, and what is your involvement?

In January 2020 I was contacted by Heather, who asked if I wanted to be involved with the new ministry. The team was officially formed in March 2020, so it's only ten months old. There are four coaches, plus Dave and Heather. The team is comprised of coaches with a variety of professional backgrounds ranging from change management, engineering, human resources, and education. I come specifically from a background in change management. Transition coaches are volunteers who participate in ongoing training with the ministry developer.

Can you walk me through the role of this ministry? How does the Transition Team work with the parish going through a transition?

The transition process is a demanding one that involves emotions and logistical details. The process has several steps to follow, from the time a vacancy is announced to the actual placement of a new incumbent. The transition

coaches are the bishop's representatives assigned to different parishes who are in the transition process. Transition coaches will work with parishes, assisting in managing the work of transition. They may help monitor and determine the emotional climate of the parish. They may assist in organizing parish-wide events or consultations of various kinds, events that will serve the dual purpose of moving through the emotions of an in-between time and gathering data that will become part of the parish profile. A significant part of the process of discerning whom God is calling to be the next incumbent of any parish is the creation of a parish profile. This document is created by the parish transition team, who work with parishioners and others to gather and compile the needed information so that prospective incumbents can get a sense of who the parish is and the kinds of gifts they seek in their next incumbent.

Tell me more about the Parish Profile!

The parish profile is a key document that is used to attract a new incumbent to work with your parish. A parish profile includes a realistic picture of the demographic, financial, missional and spiritual state of the parish; and a reflection of the parish's core values and aspirations. The profile should include preferred leadership qualities of the new incumbent. This is a massive document (and the output of the transition team process). The document is what the diocesan office uses to advertise the position. The coach's goal is to keep the parish team on target for getting this task done. The coach will not provide any input into the content of the profile. One of the difficult things about writing the parish profile is the tendency to skew it towards reflecting what you think people want to read, as opposed to reality. The church needs to outline the expectations for the incumbent, and in order to do this properly it needs to have a clear vision of itself in the future. The hope is for the new incumbent to match the vision. And in order to craft a proper vision, the church needs to be honest with itself

about its current circumstances. Once the parish profile draft is completed, it goes through an extensive review process. The parish profile is reviewed by Heather, after which the Archdeacon approves it, and then the Bishop does the final read. Finally, the diocese will post the parish profile as the tool to advertise the vacancy.

Why is it important to employ an outside perspective in change management?

In my experience, the process of change or transition needs someone to provide an objective perspective on this. Someone with an outside, objective view is able to see things from a different perspective. When you're the one going through the loss, there's much more emotion involved, and this sometimes impacts or clouds your ability when making decisions about your future.

What sorts of tools does the ministry offer to parishes?

As transition coaches, we've been focusing on learning the tools that Heather and Dave have effectively employed in their experience with the Toronto Diocese, in order to gain confidence in our own ability. It is important to understand that the role of a transition coach is not to provide the solution, but to help the "client" through the process of change. There are many tools and schools of thought on working with groups in a transition process. The Transition Coaches team is developing a toolkit and roadmaps that will be available for parishes to use. Tools include things like surveys, in-person focus groups, and appreciative inquiry. Losing a parish priest is a difficult, grievous situation even without the added conditions of a pandemic. Our job is to equip parishes with the *right* tools, and guide them through learning how to use these tools effectively.

What is the vision for the future of this ministry? And what kinds of skills and qualities will we look for in future coaches?

The hope is that this ministry will grow. The idea is that there'd be a set number of volunteer coaches that would be assigned to a specific parish. The timelines on parish transitions are not all the same. They range from months to years. There are also various interim stages of the process that look different depending on the needs of the parish. The current group of five coaches is our starting point. For skill set, it is so important to have group facilitation skills, as well as strong interpersonal skills. These are the skills that, as we've seen so far, are effective. The desire is for the Transition Coaching ministry to be accepted as a resource for parishes traveling down the transition path. And to grow this ministry we will work in creating awareness in the diocese that this support model is available and encouraged to be used.

Any closing remarks?

One of the questions we're asking right now is how can we make this ministry a "household name" in the diocese. We would like to debunk the fear that our team's mission is to take over the transition process in the parishes. We're not going to take over and tell you what to do, but we will be an available resource to assist your parish through the process, should you feel you need it. Right now, there's a comfort level missing on everyone's part. Not to mention that many are feeling overwhelmed by the pandemic. It's quite the time to roll out a brand-new transition team, and so we are doing our best to be sensitive to the circumstances of each parish we're working with.



Deb Buxton is the Peoples' Warden at St. George's Anglican Church, Transcona, where she has served as a volunteer for many years. With a career background in change management, Deb has recently been appointed as one of five transition coaches in the Diocese of Rupert's Land.



Together at a Distance

JOSH WARD

Photo: [Ev](#)

St. Matthews Maryland Community Ministry, a part of 1JustCity, builds community in partnership with individuals and families in the West End of Winnipeg. Every day we welcome people who are hurting and who are often hurting alone. We serve people experiencing homelessness or unsuitable housing, people with mental health issues and/or addictions, people who face racism and oppression, people living in social isolation, and more. All are welcome here.

I've been serving here for the past five years, and in that time, I've seen how the programs we offer - food supports, drop-in lunch, art programs, family groups, and so much more - are not really about what they may appear to be on the surface. There is no question in my mind that, though the physical supports accessed through our programs are valuable, it is the spiritual support found therein that is the real treasure.

Indeed, the true value of our work can be found in the construction of a community of love and support. People come to our door when they are hungry, but they stay because they find meaning. Our programs bring people

together, and help them to develop identities that are rooted in more than poverty and addiction. We are proud to have been facilitating this kind of transformation in our community for nearly 50 years.

But COVID-19 has robbed us of this work - the *soul* of our ministry and the heart of a community.

When COVID first hit in mid-March, there was no thought of closing our doors entirely. But we knew that things needed to change. We suspended all of our programs and asked our team of amazing volunteers to stay home and stay safe. Our staff gave up on their usual jobs and became full-time sandwich-makers and lunch sack fillers!

Our ministry became laser-focused on providing food support, which we knew was one thing we could continue without putting our community and our staff at undue risk of contracting COVID. Instead of running our community building programs, we passed out bagged lunches and food hampers from the door of our building. Demand for this support skyrocketed quickly and we began seeing line-ups around the block daily. The urgency of this

need, coupled with the long lines (not to mention all the PPE we were wearing!) made it very difficult to connect with people in the way we are accustomed to. Instead of building community, we were operating a food line. It was important work, but it hurt to lose that deeper connection with our community.

Without a question, our community felt that loss as well. People would linger at the door after being handed their food and try to start a conversation with us about what was going on in their lives—we would have to cut them short because of the hundred people in line behind them. Outside of our doors, we had to encourage people to stay on their social distancing markers. Don't get too close to one another! We saw the community we had worked so hard to build being fractured before our eyes.

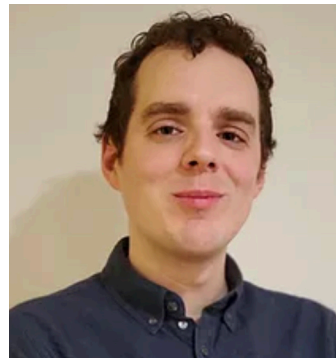
One sign of great hope though, was the strength and generosity with which our community bore these difficult changes. People didn't lash out or get angry as things continued to change constantly; they demonstrated great understanding, and treated each other with kindness and our staff with gentleness. To us, this was a powerful affirmation that our work truly makes a difference in this community.

Regardless, what we've seen is a transition from a strong and vibrant community that gathers daily to support and love one another, to a community that lines up on the street and waits for two minutes at the door to receive their lunch bag. People are lonely. They ask us every day "when will things go back to normal?" Of course, we can't answer that. We say "soon, we hope." People show up to our door needing one-on-one support for the myriad of traumas and pains that they are experiencing that aren't related to COVID, and we just don't have the time to engage with them in the way we have in the past. They have no one else to talk to...

Still, as COVID has stretched on, the creative power of the Spirit has moved in our hearts and minds and shown us ways to keep connected. In the summer months, when case numbers were low in Manitoba, we were able to host many community BBQs, and resume some of our regular programming on a small scale. Folk were able to gather (socially distanced of course) and reconnect for a little while. At the end of the summer, we even hosted a powwow in a local park! It was one of the few powwows that happened all summer long in Winnipeg, and it was such a joy to be able to gather and celebrate together.

As fall came and COVID numbers rose quickly, we had to lock things down a little more again. But we have now established a winter warming fire outside of our building where we can gather, at least a few people at a time, to check-in and offer support. This too has been a joy, and it has felt really good to help people come together once again.

At this time, we are very limited in what we can offer. We continue to pass out hundreds of lunches and food hampers weekly, we have our warming fire, and we welcome a few people at a time inside our doors if they have nowhere else to go to keep warm. (At time of writing it is -23°C outside!) We still see loneliness, but we also see strength and determination. Though we all feel pain over the loss of connection and the loss of the soul of this ministry, our community is holding strong and will resiliently carry on until things can go back to normal. We will continue to come together in the knowledge that during this difficult time, the community that we have all worked so hard to establish did not fall apart.



Josh Ward is the Community Minister at St. Matthews Maryland Community Ministry – a part of 1JustCity.

Parish News Roundup

A Thank You Note to Our Volunteers!



To all those in the Diocese of Rupert's Land who volunteer their time and gifts to the ministries in their parishes and in the diocese, we want to say thank you.

Thank you for your dedication, kindness, and compassion. Thank you for your skill and creativity.

Your work, and the spirit in which you do it, are a gift to the diocese and all of the offices within it. As you work "behind-the-scenes" to provide counsel and care, support and healing, music and art, and beauty and functionality in worship, know too that you are a testament to the overflowing love of Christ, continually presencing itself in our parishes and communities today.

You are the life force of this diocese, and so we cannot say it enough: thank you, thank you, thank you.

– *Rupert's Land News, on behalf of The Diocese of Rupert's Land.*



A Letter to Friends of the Bishop

To the Friends of the Bishop Fund Membership.

Dear Friends in Christ,

Greetings in Christ, who journeys with us through extraordinary times! I am filled with gratitude each day as I remember you and our diocese in prayer.

Last year at the annual Friends of the Bishop dinner we were given the opportunity to reflect with Archbishop Ronald Cutler, upon the work of the Church in new and uncertain times. Little did any of us expect that Ronald was speaking prophetically and that as March 12, 2020 dawned upon us, we began to live-out Church life much the way he predicted.

This year, I am so very disappointed that we will be unable to meet in person to celebrate the work of the Friends of the Bishop Fund, and for me to convey my heartfelt thanks to you; together we raised \$16,025. In only two, but very long years, I have been left in awe as I hear your stories of ministry, mission and care. Thank you, good and faithful disciples.

The work of the Fund is to enable me to fund innovative projects, emergency contingencies, and provide relief for lay and ordain leaders of the diocese. These funds have been instrumental in providing security for clergy applying for and extending work visas in the diocese.

Would you please prayerfully consider offering your support to the Fund this year. Together we ensure the strength of the Church serving God.

Your gift may be sent to The Diocese of Rupert's Land by e-transfer (finance@rupertsland.ca), cheque, cash, and visa. Please, by all methods, note that your gift is for the Friends of the Bishop Fund.

Thank you for your on-going support and discipleship, with you we flourish!

Yours in Christ,

The Rt Rev. Geoffrey JJ Woodcroft

Thank you from St. Matthew Maryland Community Ministry

The Christmas Store is a big deal! It's an annual tradition here at St. Matthews Maryland; and people start asking us about it in September! This year was no different; except perhaps that the questions were re-framed: "Is COVID going to cancel the Christmas Store this year?"

We answered: "YES! The store is going to happen!"

We knew you would never let us down, and you didn't disappoint!

On Thursday December 10 the gifts came, and in greater numbers than ever! Staff who've been here for more than one Christmas Store agree, this is the largest number of gifts we remember receiving! In addition, many of you made cash donations which we used to purchase toys, food, and gift cards from local coffee shop Scout Coffee + Tea.

The store itself ran on Saturday December 12, and it was a huge hit. It felt different from past years, more business than party as we enforced strict social distancing requirements and safety protocol. But by the end of the day, we had provided gifts and gift wrap supplies to 64 families, representing 276 children and grandchildren.

Once more, thank you for making it happen!

Advent Prayer Vigil: A Reflection

On behalf of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer, I want to thank all the churches and congregations that participated in the Prayer Vigil on November 28 from 8 a.m. to November 29 at 8 a.m. - The Eve of Advent. We appreciated the support of Bishop Geoff and his committing to praying for four hours on Saturday afternoon. I was grateful to our congregation of St. Thomas, Morden who was able to do the entire 24 hours, with the help of two retired clergy. There were other churches in Morden who also joined us. It was great to hear

reflections from some of the participants and I thought you would enjoy this one from our Sunday School teacher, Claire Goertzen.

– Diane K. Guilford

I set my alarm for 6 a.m. as I didn't want to sleep in. My time was 6 a.m.-7 a.m. However, as I was making my coffee, I realized it was 5 a.m.!!! I set the alarm incorrectly! Oh well, more time to sit in the peace and quiet.

I settled down in my front room in front of the Christmas tree, with my journal and my coffee and turned on some soft classical music.

I began to pray. I felt so peaceful and then a wave of emotions flooded my soul. After I took time to cry and release my fears and prayers to God, I settled down and focused on the moment and my thoughts.

As the music played and the Christmas lights were glowing, I heard some little footsteps...Luke was up and came into the room.

"Can I join you as you pray Mom?" He whispered...

I had told Rob and the kids what I was doing.

"Of course, you can" I replied. Luke climbed onto the couch and we snuggled together. Then I noticed he was crying.

"Why are you crying?" I asked him.

"I'm thinking of Nanny. And all the people with Covid"

We talked and cried a little and asked God to be with us and with all the many people who need his strength.

We decided to write down a list of things to pray about.

The time in prayer with my son was so powerful I can't even tell you. I knew God wanted me to be part of the vigil, and now I know why. Thank you for letting me be a part of the prayer vigil.

– Claire Goertzen



The Radical Church

ALEXANDER JACKSON

Photo: [Itay Attias](#)

I am wondering these days about what a radical Anglican Church looks like. The 21st century has had many hard lessons for us about the meaning of being a Christian, and the nature of truly unconditional love. In every change movement there has to be a moment when critical mass is achieved and the radical outliers—hardcore resistance voices in the wilderness—become the mainstream. Then the hard-fought community reformation and renewal happens. There is a crisis in our local, national, and world communities. Poverty of all kinds is growing. Front-line service workers, treating the symptoms and working in desperately under-resourced situations to remedy the causes, are calling out for support. Let's listen.

We operate in an interrelated ecosystem of service delivery. Today churches generally occupy space with non-profits, charities, and NGO's, somewhere outside private enterprise and public government service. This year, our society's collective inability to meet the needs of our most vulnerable community members has been made very clear to all of us. An economy that fosters neglect reflects the underlying human interactions that bring such an economy into being in the first place. Lifestyle drives our economy and lifestyle change is one of the hardest changes to bring about in ourselves, and with others. Christians have spent over two thousand years learning how to build caring, compassion, and unconditional love into the systems we use in the world.

From a human perspective, that is a long transition from what came before towards what will be. So today we find ourselves in this moment of what is, and there's an undeniable sense of immediacy and urgency. Something in the world is crying for change. Circumstances beyond our control and understanding are manifesting. It is radical to approach uncertainty with love. The revolution is to care for others as ourselves, no matter who anybody is or where we come from. Rebels have faith there is a teaching within every experience and something good always comes from transformation.

Advocacy and activism are in the foundations of our ministries, our roots. We are radical change agents for a more loving world and a radical Church needs radical members. This is no call to violence but to peace and the relief of suffering. Leaders are called to guide hearts and minds in the Spirit and the Word, service and the work of a servant to meet and pray together in a humble place of faith. Today this means interrupting and interrogating power structures, even ones we built ourselves, to lift others up.

Metaphorically society is a big machine, with lots of inertia. Unless we perceive a crisis and are willing to respond, not much gets done to change how we live. Life will continue on as it did before. There is even active resistance when change is needed. We are now witness to, what I hope is, a general consensus on the need

to work for a healthier and happier world. The presented alternative is not a world I want for my children, elders, family, friends, or neighbours.

What is changing, the transition we are seeing and participating in, is our mindsets and worldviews. Our foundational beliefs—unconditional love, radical caring, and deep compassion—stay the same, but our understanding of how best to express this in action in the world as the body of Christ is growing and maturing. What it means to be a radically caring and loving person is slowly (to our perspective) becoming more refined and focused. I don't feel particularly sad about the economy. People will continue to pursue livelihoods and wealth. I know these are financially uncertain times for our families, I get that, so let's find a better way to help by interrogating systems that leave families at risk when a crisis occurs. I also understand how deeply the systems we built to care for our elders have failed. Our systems to mediate the circumstances of poverty are wildly inadequate. The systems we use to educate our children are facing massive shifts and shortfalls, and the systems we use to care for our sick and injured are becoming overwhelmed.

There is an opportunity to shift our actions to match our spoken values, and realign our relationships with each other. Within the Church we are caregivers to all of Creation, a big job,

and when need is laid bare, we care by working to meet and resolve those needs. We know our neighbours are doing the same for us. That is at the heart of our faith. We are created for each other.

Life is always changing, which means we can and must adapt, adjust, find some way to fit into the new order and either modify our expectations or make our new circumstances into a manifestation of hope. There's always a transition while relationships are built and awkward moments as everyone finds their way. Connections motivate us to stay engaged and keep doing the work we are called to do. They help us balance through uncertain footing, make peace with what's been lost, and prepare the way to accept and celebrate the new present and future.

Little pieces add up to something big—small steps on a long journey. Those unstable, uncomfortable moments in between need to happen. It's how the plan rolls out. Nobody really welcomes losing their sense of balance, falling down, getting hurt, and looking like a fool. Yet sometimes it's what we're meant to do, or often what we bring on ourselves. Not only do we cause it, we actively prepare and even seek out these "interesting" times.

Transitions, however unexpected, uncomfortable, or unwelcome are so important that we must try to practice or anticipate them. There are rules, processes, and procedures to follow so we can try to ensure seamless continuity in our bureaucracies and organizations. Social systems are built to provide stability and services but if we find no love, no caring, or compassion there, we are called to bring it, and if that transition can't happen, be radical. Rebuild with peace and love.

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