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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: **"Paddlers in Fog"** by *Kenji Dyck*
Two paddlers navigate the fog during a Saint Margaret's Church canoe trip on Shoal Lake, Ontario. This church canoe trip was organized by Manitoba Pioneer Camp.
Date Taken: August 28th, 2021
Camera: Nikon AF, 35mm f/2.8

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Our Common Home

Photo: Sören Funk

One of the most startling pieces I've read this year was a [review](#) of [Fathoms: The World in the Whale](#), a book by Rebecca Giggs. The reviewer, [Verlyn Klinkenborg](#), is enthralled with what he finds in Giggs' book: a scientific and philosophical examination of the "intricate biological web" we belong to, and a poetic exploration of what whales can teach us of the fragility of life. In *Fathoms*, Giggs encounters a dying whale on the coast of her home in Australia and is prompted to confront the polluted conditions of our oceans and the organisms that are going extinct due to human negligence. Giggs' philosophical approach to the environmental crisis moves the reviewer to a more profound understanding of what it means to pay attention to the natural world. Klinkenborg writes,

"The question is how to escape the self-referentiality, the solipsism, of such discoveries, the tendency to end up looking at yourself when you look at nature. This is where Giggs excels. From every paradox and conundrum, from every theoretical labyrinth, she wriggles free to a new act of witnessing, a new attention, in her urge to be present to the whale expiring on the beach before her, and to whaledom itself."

Klinkenborg describes this "new attention" as a kind of "transitory porousness," as attention that recognizes the natural world and its organisms not as other, but as fellow creatures sharing a common home.

In thinking about how to write an editorial on creation care, Klinkenborg's language of "transitory porousness" came back to me as another way to describe what it means to be stewards of the earth. Indeed, the environmental degradation of our planet is a

fact. Depletion of natural resources, shrinking biodiversity, and pollution in the air, water and soil are not abstract concepts we can dismiss. Humans have not been and are not paying enough attention to the home we share with so many other living things, and as such, the earth and its ecosystems are suffering. But how might we pay attention to our common earthly home if we knew that we were polluting not places and organisms, but other *beings*?

Our issue on "Creation Care" grapples with this question, alongside the question of where faith fits into the realities of a dying earth.

RLN Reporter at Large Hannah Foulger reaches out to individuals and ministries in the diocese that are on the forefront of climate action. In a photo essay, Kenji Dyck broadens our perspective of the church in the natural world. Zoe Matties, the Manitoba Program Manager for A Rocha, writes about day camp programs at the Boreal Ecology Centre and reminds us of the importance of child-like wonder. Finally, Justine Backer reports on her research for the Natural Resources Institute at the University of Manitoba.

Questions of faith and climate action are also being explored in a diocesan-wide Lenten Study of Pope Francis' 2015 [encyclical letter](#) *Laudato si'*. The encyclical is a prominent address of our environmental crisis and a call to action. Anyone interested in participating in the study should reach out to their local parish leadership.



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

We're called to be stewards

GEOFFREY WOODCROFT



Photo: [Annie Spratt](#)

I hear the Spirit carried in the wind amidst the evergreens, like the sound of waves. The Spirit's voice assures me that "I Am near. Do not be afraid." I can hear the voice of God echoed through the ages of earth history "from the womb I named and called you into my garden, my home."

Today, as I am outside walking, I can feel Christ's yearning and deep desiring to be the audible Word amidst "the noise, haste and confusion" of the world's conditions. Humans, and not just the Church, are the stewards of the earth, and as stewards we are not above nor outside of creation. Stewards are made in the image of God, and thus we carry a divine responsibility to illustrate, lavishly dispense, and interdependently engage all that God has made. Stewards are set aside for the health and wholeness of the entirety of creation. I believe that God wills stewards to work their craft and receive abundance in this life, but no more than that.

I also believe that Christ's Word is always lifted into the very utterances of disciples. Christ's Word illustrates the home and sovereignty of our Creator, the steward of stewards, who brings understanding and wisdom to the tables of the powerful, and restores vast riches, kindness and hope to those who are stripped of power, voice, and dignity by human greed and prejudice.

Christ's Word, lifted to our own voices, acknowledges with gratitude the stewards of the land and water; acknowledges injustice with clarity and remorse; and laments with the groaning earth and the Spirit who sighs too deep for words over the devastation that humans have wrought upon this planet. Christ's Word, upon the lips of the Church, echos the voice of a loving Creator and works with a mirror image of God's self to heal, sustain, and make flourish all that lives and has being.

We, as a diocese, are now engaged in a Lenten study of Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*. Between us, we have a wealth of human experience to bring to the discussion. In representing the Body of Christ, we must continue to bring the immeasurable power of the One voice of Christ, undivided and unencumbered, to the world conversations concerning Indigenous people, displaced and impoverished people, the challenging of unjust powers and practices, and how we care for the environment and systems we have damaged.

Let us begin with a prayer. "Our Father . . ."



Geoffrey Woodcroft,
Bishop of Rupert's Land

A Eucharist for the Environment: Environmental activism in Rupert's Land

HANNAH FOULGER

Photo: [Xianyu Hao](#)

We are hurtling towards climate disaster. With the rampant rise of heat waves, forest fires, tropical storms and more, we are already in the thick of it and things will continue to get worse. However, there is still hope for change and climate activists are working tirelessly around the world to save our ecosystem from further degeneration. In Canada, the climate movement is spearheaded by youth and Indigenous people. In the past few years, Canadians have watched the [Wet'suwet'en](#) standoff, the blockade at [Fairy Creek](#) and the [Global Climate March](#) in 2019. In Winnipeg, Bishop Geoff Woodcroft asked clergy to attend an ecumenical meeting at the Legislature prior to the march.

"I was invited by a 15-year-old disciple to seriously consider publicly declaring my support for Climate Action," Woodcroft says. "It was important to me that clergy/leadership be encouraged to walk in the spring rally as they represent the Church that understands its

role as stewards within God's creation. We owe it to the world around us to live our vows and promises with integrity."

But does the church really have a role to play in environmental activism? Is it necessary for us to shrink back and let others take the lead? Or does faith offer some basis for participating in political action against climate change and the powers and principalities that continue to defile the Earth?

[Dr. Jane Barter](#) and [Rev. Gwen McAllister](#), and their ecumenical partners in Treaty One Christians for Socialism believe faith offers some basis for participating in action against climate change.

On [August 22, 2021](#), an ecumenical coalition known as [Treaty One Christians for Socialism](#), including Barter and McAllister gathered in front of the TD bank on Notre Dame Avenue in Winnipeg to protest TD's financing of the [Enbridge](#) pipeline. The group had planned a series of events to draw attention to the

problems of investing in fossil fuels and climate change, in solidarity with Indigenous groups.

This action was in response to calls from Indigenous people for support from the Christian communion in environmental activism.

“The Church must stand with Indigenous Peoples and advocate and promote respect for their culture, their Land, and their way of life. In this, there must be a commitment to create a space for them in the World Council of Churches and in the family of nations and peoples around the earth.”

This was the message put forth at the pre-assembly gathering of [Indigenous Peoples](#) at the World Council of Churches, during their 10th assembly.

Rev. McAllister, rector at St. Matthew's Anglican Church and member of Treaty One Christians for Socialism, sees listening as a primary function of being Anglican.

“One of the gifts of being part of the Anglican Communion is being family with people all over the world, people who have different understandings of God and different understandings of what our faith can look like played out in the land we're in, and especially in Canada, and in the Diocese of Rupert's land. If we want to be people with honest faith, we must hear from Indigenous Christians.”

Dr. Barter and Rev. McAllister participated in this Enbridge Action by presiding over a eucharist liturgy, as their Anglican contribution. Dr. Barter, professor at the University of Winnipeg, sees a special connection between the Eucharist and climate justice.

“Eucharist speaks to a kind of abundance and sacrifice. It's not based on a zero-sum game where we are continually depleting, exploiting the Earth, but rather it's an economy of abundance in which there's enough for all,” Barter says. “I found it rather meaningful to be standing outside of a bank and to be talking about an economy where everybody has enough, including the Earth, in which the Earth was not being destroyed because of the kinds of pressures humans were putting on it. The eucharist speaks to that and to the natural gifts



Photo: [Logan Weaver](#)

that God has given—the bread and the wine, the grapes, the grain—and to there being an abundant harvest whereby everybody can partake without an economy of violence.”

In our day-to-day contexts, we can look to youth and Indigenous people to guide our responses to climate change. In the summer of 2021, St. Margaret’s member Iona Taylor, who is also a member of [Manitoba Youth for Climate Action](#), organized a panel on environmental theology. St. Margaret’s rector Bonnie Dowling sees the support of members and activists as part of the parish’s response to climate justice.

[A Rocha Canada](#), a faith-based environmental stewardship organization, is also using St. Margaret’s as a place to develop their new green audit program for churches.

“We’ve been continuing to work with and look for young leaders who are passionate about this issue and trying to fill them up with good books and a lot of time and attention so that they know that the church is behind them and with them, and believes in their capacity to meet, and that we will gladly follow,” Dowling says.



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As we move forward into a precarious, unknown future, it can be difficult not to be overcome by climate anxiety or fear but participating in environmental activism and practicing material simplicity can provide some solace.

“Christians know very well that there is hope, but the Christian faith doesn’t need optimism. It doesn’t need a fatalistic view that everything will work out. It’s deeper than things just being okay. The church has something to teach people about contentment and being content with less or being content with whatever it is that we do have. That is a message that’s going to be more and more important as the world changes.” says Dowling.

This contentment requires a different kind of thinking, an anti-capitalist, anti-colonial kind of faith, like the first generations of colonized Christians had under the Roman empire.

“I hope that the Church will provide a vision and an imagination that comes out of our scriptures and of our tradition [which is not supportive of] capitalist consumption, but that is based in a giving and sharing in having enough rather than the drive to accumulate wealth, land, resources, and to extract a source; a vision of living within our means and in relationship with this land,” McAllister says. “In covenant people with the land, the language of our scriptures, that’s what I hope the church has to give to share that vision. And that requires shedding a lot of identification with institutionalism and with having power and privilege. Having force in society requires, instead, a prophetic voice.”



Hannah Foulger is the Reporter/Writer at Large for *Rupert’s Land News*. She is a disabled British Canadian writer and theatre artist. She is currently an MFA candidate in Creative Writing at the University of Guelph in Toronto.

Faith Perspectives

A Photo Essay by Kenji Dyck

How might we look at the church within the architecture of the natural world? In *Faith Perspectives*, the photographer turns our eye to the physical structures of the church, only to bolster a larger, wilder scaffolding around it. We see the church as enlivened in its earthly environment: summer camp spent on the lake, a neon cross emblazoned against storm clouds, a set of church doors framed in the bounties of spring, a cathedral in the sky. We are also invited to venture inside the church building, where a couple waits for a ceremony to begin.

It is the Easter season, and we are here to remember the death and resurrection of Christ; to attend to creation in its cycle of dying and its promise of aliveness.

We practice our faith in showing up for this ceremony, but our showing up happens both inside and outside of the church building. As we enter the church, we bow our heads and remember the promise, but when we leave, we learn how to look up, how to see. Once outside, we recognize God's promise in the solitary lake or majestic sky; we experience the renewal of life in the continuous unfolding of perspective.

—RLN Editor's Note



Cathedral in the Sky

The Saint Boniface Cathedral stands in the sun.

Date Taken: June 22nd, 2021

Camera: Fujifilm X-T4, 35mm f/2



Neon Cross in Storm

The neon red cross of Misericordia Health Centre shines during a summer storm.

Date Taken: May 24th, 2021
Camera: Fujifilm X-T4, 35mm f/2



Church Doors in Summer

The side-entrance doors of Saint Margaret's Anglican Church during the summer.

Date Taken: June 11th, 2021

Camera: Fujifilm X-T4, 35mm f/2



Couple on Good Friday

A couple attends Saint Margaret's Anglican Church for Good Friday.

Date Taken: April 2nd, 2021

Camera: Fujifilm X-T4, 35mm f/2

Film Stock: Superia X-TRA 400



Kenji Dyck is a freelance videographer, photographer and filmmaker based in Winnipeg, Manitoba.



It Starts with Wonder

ZOE MATTIES

Photo: A Rocha

An hour and a half east of Winnipeg, where the prairie grasses meet the rocky outcroppings of the Canadian Shield, there is a lodge surrounded by forest. A small river, aptly named the Boggy River, meanders along the edge of this land. I walk into the forest beside the river, pausing to admire the soft needles of the tamarack trees and the peaty scent of moss-covered earth. While I have walked this trail many times before, I find there is always something new to discover.

The [Boreal Ecology Centre](#) in East Braintree, Manitoba is a place I have come to love in my time working as the Manitoba Program Manager for [A Rocha Canada](#), a Christian nature conservation organization. It is a living lab composed of 220 acres of forests, meadow, and river where A Rocha undertakes conservation science research and environmental education. A Rocha's mission is to transform people and places by showing God's love for all creation.

Over the past four years of engaging people in the care of creation, I have been asking the question of what motivates people to act on behalf of creation? If it were facts and figures about the dire state of our planet, then we'd be well on our way to stopping the mass extinctions and climate catastrophes happening around the world. We are constantly inundated with information, but it seems as though facts and figures aren't enough.

More than 50 years ago, Senegalese environmentalist [Baba Dioum](#) suggested that a crisis of affection is one of the roots of the environmental problems we face today. To paraphrase him: "We won't save places we don't love, we can't love places we don't know, and we don't know places we haven't learned." Dioum recognized that we are becoming increasingly distanced and disconnected from the natural world. As supply chains lengthen, we are no longer faced with our deep dependence on the earth each day. We no

longer live in direct relationship with the land and the places that sustain us.

Research on adults who care about the environment shows that the single most important factor behind someone who takes action is an emotionally powerful encounter with nature as a child. At A Rocha, an important part of what we do is provide opportunities for kids to be outside and get to know the nature in their own backyards. For the past four years, A Rocha has delivered children's environmental education day camps in partnership with churches in Winnipeg, including [St. Margaret's Anglican](#) and [Many Rooms Church Community](#).

A Rocha day camp starts with an experience of wonder and ends with gratitude. Children are encouraged to build a fort in the forest, taste a carrot straight from the garden, or interact with a special animal visitor. We conduct science experiments, learn about native plants, and cook food together. At the end of the day, the children are invited to reflect on something they discovered or enjoyed. I am always amazed at the children's natural capacity for wonder and awe.

One day, while exploring an urban farm with the kids, a young boy was so excited after tasting a carrot from the garden he exclaimed that he wanted to eat carrots for dessert. Another girl, after spending some time dissecting tiger lilies, became curious about how the pollen stuck to her fingers and nose. She was thrilled by this, and yelled to the group that she had discovered natural face paint. Suddenly all of the children were smearing pollen on their faces!

Sometimes, my first instinct in similar situations is to stop the child, and be frustrated by the mess, but then I am reminded that Jesus calls us to be like the little children (Matt 18:3). Children naturally see the wonder in God's world and love it. As adults, we often overlook or ignore our capacity for wonder, but it is critical to the healing of the earth that we reawaken this sense.



Photo: A Rocha

A child investigating a flower at one of A Rocha's environmental education day camps.

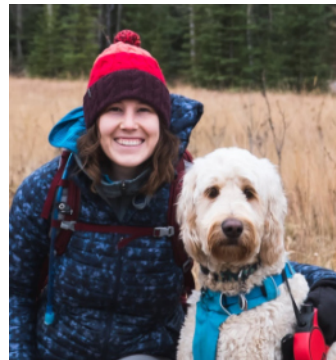


Environmental education day camp at the Boreal Ecology Centre.



Boreal Ecology Lodge in Winter.

I love bringing first-time visitors to the Boreal Ecology Centre on walks through the forest. I have seen many adults reawaken their sense of wonder as we experience the beauty of lady slippers and the mystery of fungi together. Of course, you don't have to leave the city to have these experiences. As the children at camp show me, wonder can come through everyday experiences of the creation that is around us all the time. Are we prepared to listen to, and learn from the delight and love of children and youth for creation? Are we willing to open ourselves up to that love? If we are, then we can begin to build a world where all of creation can flourish.



Zoe Matties lives within the watersheds of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. She enjoys eating veggies from her garden, exploring the woods with her dog, and watching birds. She works for A Rocha helping people of all ages learn to love and care for the places they call home.


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Environmental action in Canadian faith communities

JUSTINE BACKER

In 2019, I completed my Master's thesis at the University of Manitoba. My research focused on environmental sustainability action in Canadian faith communities at the congregational level. I worked with two Winnipeg faith communities to explore what kind of sustainability action and activity occurs within faith communities, how congregation members respond to these activities, and what barriers to action/engagement communities face.

My research

Based on the data collected in 2018, the two congregations that participated in the research, labeled Case Study A and Case Study B, had already established waste management, documentary and film screenings, and presentations/information sessions, among other events, as successful sustainability-based activities. In addition, all individuals who participated in the research said their faith was inherently linked to environmental stewardship.

Most events were organized at a grass roots level by the congregation's sustainability-based committees, which included passionate individuals who organized these activities to engage other congregation members. While both faith communities participated in and supported environmental sustainability, the level of congregational support differed between the two communities that participated in the research.

Case Study A directly supported sustainability by incorporating environmental stewardship in sermons and giving committees freedom to share information and organize events. Participants discussed human and financial barriers to environmental action but found minimal congregation-based barriers. For example, difficulties with retrofitting old buildings, financial costs, and general buy-in from congregation members. Case Study A participants also felt congregational leadership supported and

integrated the connection between faith and environmental stewardship into the community.

Case Study B was more indirectly supported and had restrictions on activity and events. Participants found more congregation-based barriers and discussed the need for more support from leadership and the national level organization. For example, Case Study B had restrictions on communicating events/information within the congregation and had minimal involvement from leadership. Participants also felt that leadership failed to establish the connection between faith and environmental stewardship.

What does it mean?

While both faith communities planned successful activities and had keen individuals organizing events, Case Study A faced fewer barriers, and therefore was able to host more frequent events and incorporate advocacy-based work. The biggest difference in the barriers Case Study A and B faced was the level of support from leadership and the larger organization. While Case Study B participant's faith was inherently linked to environmental stewardship, they did not believe the entire congregation was aware of this link. Participants in Case Study B believed that leadership could do more to incorporate teachings of creation care in the congregation, and if that connection was established, there would be more environmental engagement and congregational support.

While each community is different, this research provided insight into what Canadian faith communities participating in sustainability activity are doing. If barriers to sustainability action are addressed, there is potential to increase engagement and expand environmental endeavors within faith communities.



Justine Backer attended the Natural Resources Institute at the University of Manitoba from 2016-2019 where she finished her Master's of Natural Resources Management. Currently, she works for the Federal Government where she is pursuing a career in policy research and analysis.