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Between Anglicans and Lutherans

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TRANSITIONS

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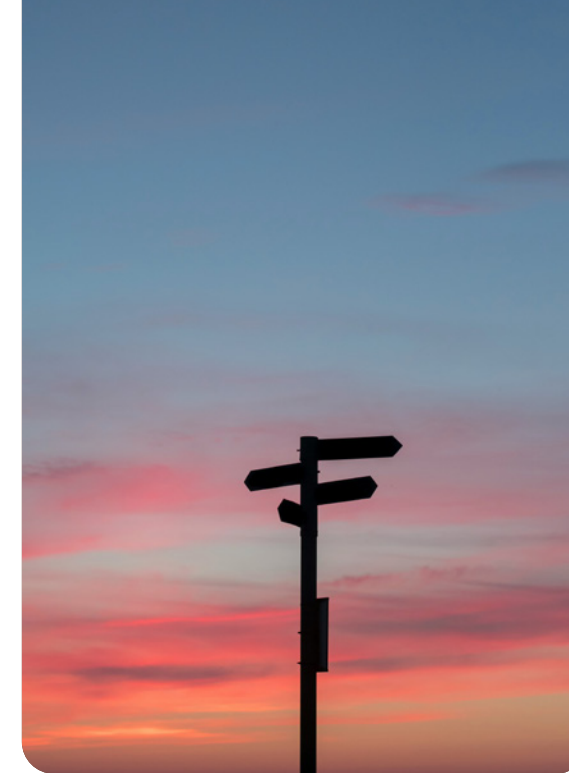
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RLN exists to explore issues at the intersections of faith and life. In doing so we solicit and publish a range of opinions, not all of which reflect the official positions of the Diocese.

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.

Cover: "Textile Design with a Basketweave Pattern and Alternating Rows of Lens-Shaped Pearls," *Unknown artist, 1840, Alsatian*, via [The Met Museum](#)



Transitions

Do not remember the former things

or consider the things of old.

I am about to do a new thing;

now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?

I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

Isaiah 43:18-19

Spring has begun. The winter snow melts and the Red River swells. Ice flows collide into riverbanks dredging up mud. The promise of blooms and new life is all around while at the street corners, sand piles left from de-icing sprinkle the streets. Transitional times can be messy.

I find myself wanting to argue with some scriptural passages. This passage from Isaiah always stuck out, making me wonder, "really, must we forget things that came before?" As a transgender person, I certainly *have* wanted to forget much of the past. Yet the further I've come in my transition, the more I've been able to approach my old self with compassion. That prior time was the condition for my life as it is now.

Perhaps what Isaiah is saying in this passage is to look ahead when we are called to transformation. The

journey may be messy, but we find joy in new possibilities of abundance, rather than dwelling on what has come before.

In this month's issue, an article by Janet Ross from the Centre for Christian Studies shares experiences of transformation from those who've participated in leadership and discipleship training at CCS.

April is National Poetry Month, and we have included a poem titled "Spring Delight in Praise of God (IV)" from the book *Wonder-work: Selected Sonnets of Catharina Von Greiffenberg* co-translated by Joanne Epp, Sally Ito, and Sarah Klassen.

Next, an interview with The Rev. Wilson Akinwale explores his new position as National President and the Board Chair of the Black Anglicans of Canada and his role on the Evangelical Lutheran anti-racism task force. Akinwale speaks to the joys and challenges of these new roles and his hopes for a Black Anglican Church in Canada.

The Rev. Helen Holbrook discusses a recent workshop on change journeys that she led at Holy Trinity aimed at helping parishioners talk through difficult periods of change in their church communities.

The Rev. Theo Robinson shares an announcement of a joint committee struck between Anglicans and Lutherans to respond to rising anti-2SLGTQIA+ rhetoric and provide community support for those within the MNO Synod and the Diocese of Rupert's Land.

And finally, a parish profile on Stonewall Church of the Ascension offers a window into the faith community of this parish which extends far beyond the walls of the church, into the town of Stonewall and beyond.

I hope you enjoy this month's articles.



MISHA PENSATO

Misha Pensato is the editor of Rupert's Land News

God Calls us Toward Something New

Have we, the Church, lost our way? Have we, in the midst of affluence, scandal, primacy of the individual and consumerism, forgotten the story we read aloud weekly? The Anglican Church of Canada geographically dwells in one of the richest nations of this world. Manitoba has a very high philanthropic rate per capita, yet we *feel* poor, unable to make ends meet. To be clear about philanthropy: people give because they want to do so, and because they can, it is actually that simple. Do we spend more time and energy addressing money issues than we do reviving the fellowship of Jesus' disciples for his Body? If we are spending our hope on a Church that no longer exists, if people no longer see a compelling reason to be in the Church, then we need to make fresh our baptismal covenant.

Some Churches are at breaking points regarding their place in God's mission. Some communities lose hope after experiencing declining numbers and thus lose their capacity to dream of a new iteration of Church. While some Churches are able to maintain or grow their fellowship, costs associated with maintaining their buildings continue to rise beyond reasonable means. Many disciples rehearse mathematical equations, calculating the time left before the Church ceases to exist, stipends for clergy and lay folk are publicly debated as if those people do not hear us talking, and mission is considered as a variable in the mathematical scheme. The economy of Jesus speaks none of this. It speaks of Christ's body emptying itself to free the world.

Religious communities across the board have experienced monumental insurance hikes; violent action against Mosques, Synagogues, and Church buildings have made us a higher insurance risk. To live into our new insurance paradigm, many Churches now lock their doors. A locked building can no longer serve the purpose of sanctuary and refuge, the assurance that the disciples of Jesus are here to welcome and provide comfort is lost. Further, governmental legislation impacts the Church much the same as insurance: Road Maintenance Allowances are a mandatory tax for Churches (at least in Winnipeg), food preparation/handling, and mandatory safety regulations



Photo: [Valentina Stepanova](#)

affect the budgets for buildings that house the fellowship of disciples. Gone are tax and legislated exemptions for Church communities that we experienced in the past. My prediction is that the trends of violence that escalate insurance premiums and governmental impacts will only increase in the future.

This can all be taken as GOOD NEWS for the Church if we use it as a moment to open our eyes, see the spirit descending, and perceive God doing something new, something exciting and absolutely vital for the world we live in. We who know Jesus' story can no longer utter "Certainly not I Lord" because we are transforming into Christ's likeness. God calls us toward something new, even if we cannot/will-not perceive its completion. A church that understands evangelism understands Jesus's call, a Church that understands discipleship knows friends and fellowship that gather regardless of the time and space. A church that understands sanctuary understands the presence of God in all people. A church that wrestles with its Christian identity understands its great need for revival and renewal.

If we have lost our way, Christ is indeed finding us. May we trust that with all our hearts.



GEOFFREY WOODCROFT

Bishop of Rupert's Land

Preparing Disciples for the Inevitable Unknown

JANET ROSS

Photo: [Mona Eendra](#)

How do we prepare for what we don't know? We live in an environment of expected and unexpected change in our churches and in our lives. How do we become grounded disciples who can embrace the unknown? How do we let go of our resistance to change, so that we don't miss out on new opportunities? This is what we learn – and practice – at the Centre for Christian Studies.

Equipping leadership for transformation starts with practice. At CCS, we practice change itself: how to prepare for change, how to navigate it, talk about it, learn from discomfort, communicate through it, discern, and do it. This is a key point of the action/reflection model CCS uses for education, for spiritual growth, and for ministry. How do participants learn to learn? How do we learn to change and transform ourselves, and to navigate whatever the inevitable unknown may bring? We start with asking questions.



This altar table is from the Intro course: Learning on Purpose (LoP) 2023 in Winnipeg at CCS. This is a course many use for discernment in ministry. It will be in Montreal this June, and next year back in Winnipeg. Photo by CCS Staff.

CCS uses social analysis to get at the deeper questions – what is really going on at the roots, at the depths? We can easily get caught up in what's happening in front of us, and miss the chance to ask questions and to develop a broader picture. Critical questions consider what's going on underneath: how did we get here, what are the impacts, where are we headed? We practice responding to deeper questions, all the while riding the waves we see and feel on the surface.

Our communities, including church communities, are places of change. Leaders and disciples are constantly navigating changing contexts of 'church.' At CCS, we look at changing sociological trends as well as change at the diocesan level and global level regarding membership, participation, and finances. We consider life-cycles in a ministry context (how do ministries spring up, how do they compost, how do we understand this as part of a bigger picture where composting in one place feeds something else?) Students ask what kind of leadership skills do we need to bring in these places.

Participants also experience dedicated sessions on innovative ministries, particularly what happens when a ministry wants to reinvent itself or partner with other organizations or work with social enterprise. We look at resources within the wider church and para church structures that support these kinds of innovation. We explore how to do this imagining and innovation with support. In their projects, students connect with people who do this kind of work and partner with parishes, congregations, and communities of faith.

A church increasingly on the margins of society needs people trained to be the Church on the margins, living the vision of the Gospel in all places. The CCS program and pedagogy are firmly rooted in the Christ of the margins, navigating the inevitable unknown.



An exercise in theological and leadership analysis with Anglicans and UCC folks from the LoP in Victoria at Christ Church Cathedral. Photo by CCS staff.

How do we navigate? Who doesn't like having north stars? It can be really nice to have whatever we hold onto as our north star. But then the world rotates and changes, and it's

not north any more. We get into a feedback loop where things are not working quite right any longer, something needs to be shifted or adjusted. This is what CCS trains people for – to notice when things shift, to be attentive to how things are shifting, and especially to have the ability and willingness to be moved and changed.

Recent CCS graduate and Diaconal Minister Rev. Karen Orlandi noticed reluctance in her community. Some were reluctant to attend church on Sunday mornings. Others were reluctant to talk about impactful things in life – sex, finances, politics, etc. Karen shifted. She started “Church After Dark,” a worship service held at night which was less formal and included a dialogue time. Each “Church After Dark” service has a specific topic. Parishioners have opportunities to reflect on biblical texts, pose questions, and share wisdom and experiences.

We can’t just prepare for the church and life as it was. We have to also prepare for the church as it is becoming. CCS offers leadership tools to explore options for how the church can be manifest and embodied today in new and differing ways. Students learn and practice how to be particular disciples for particular times.

What are we looking for? When people are in times of transition, are they looking for someone to lead the way? Someone to walk with them? To understand their experience? To affirm their own inner strength to risk change? How do spiritual leaders discern what kind of leadership is needed in any given moment? At CCS, students consider and practice a variety of leadership styles, and how to recognize which aspect of leadership to use when. This means individuals also have a chance to strengthen and deepen self-awareness, and to learn the difference between self-focus and self-awareness. This is one of the starting points for interacting with change and transitions – to know where our hearts are, our values, and to discern what is needed for transitions. When we engage in practices of awareness with one another, we develop wisdom for particular contexts and situations.

Students also ask questions of ‘whose’ awareness. Using critical analysis tools that offer a variety of analysis and a diversity of voices for that analysis, participants recognize power dynamics and the impacts of social location and privilege. Students practice discernment around which voices are necessary for a particular moment, which voices are missing, or why they are not listening to certain voices. We learn in community, so we engage

voices and situations from the past to clarify the present, and can imagine the future more clearly and creatively.

2023 Ministry as Storytelling course. The CCS students in the picture are Lauri Ladd (on the left, from St. Thomas, ON) and Caitlin Smithers (on the right, from Halifax, NS). Lauri and Caitlin are both involved in congregational social justice ministries. Photo by CCS staff.



Why learn in community? Learning in community, students discover they are not alone. They learn how to reach out for support, how to engage with partners, mentors, and how to find who is needed for particular transitions. We know that participants teach each other much more quickly than a single teacher is able to do. Together students challenge themselves and their colleagues, inviting each other to stretch and practice adventure learning, increasing flexibility and imagination. Action/reflection education includes activities about imagining and identifying things that are not visible – from assumptions and biases to the hidden manna of revelation and discovering prophetic courage. In Learning Circles such as “Oppression and Resistance,” participants practice how to speak up effectively, how to advocate, and to respond to injustice. All this can be translated into tools for leadership for change and transition, equipping individuals to navigate transition personally, communally, in relationship, and in society.

As we are called to Life, we are called to change. We are called to be disciples in the inevitable unknown. And as it is said, ‘to come near to God is to change.’

Thanks to all in the CCS community who make learning in community possible, and thanks to those of you who contributed to this article through stories and reflections.



JANET ROSS

Janet Ross is one of the program staff at the Centre for Christian Studies, an Anglican and United Church national theological school for Diaconal education. She and her wife, Orion, live in Winnipeg and actually love the winters.

Spring Delight in Praise of God (IV)

God opens wide the earth, His treasure chest;
the only key: His Word. Its power brings forth Earth’s sprouting,
rooting, greening, blossoming.
It makes the sap rise in the hearts of earth and stars, awakens
Nature to delight and pleasure.
God’s Word is the root-spirit, heart-sap of little grasses, flowers’
breath of life, laden with sweet dew—
in short, it is the peace all creatures crave.

In God’s Word, God shows Himself as in a mirror, and is revealed
to us in all created things:
His beauty beams from every flower garland;
His sweetness flows from fruits into our mouths. Yes, God’s image
is in all that we can see—
how great, rich, generous God is. How lovely, sweet, and good.

CATHERINA REGINA VON GREIFFENBERG

“Spring Delight in Praise of God (IV).”

Wonder-work: selected sonnets of Catherina Regina von Greiffenberg. Translated by Joanne Epp, Sally Ito, and Sarah Klassen.

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Images from a Facebook video showcasing African/Nigerian Anglican way of worship and praises and celebrating the Rev Davies Adetoyese Adebiji at 60 at St. Mark Anglican Church.

“Disrupt, Heal, and Lead”: An Interview with The Rev. Wilson Akinwale

R L N

I sat down to interview the Rev. Wilson Akinwale about his new position as National President and the Board Chair of Black Anglicans of Canada (BLAC). The day before our interview, he also received news of his appointment as the Anglican representative of the board of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada on the anti-racism task force. In our conversation, we discussed Akinwale’s hopes for his new appointments and his larger hopes for a Black Anglican Church in Canada. This is an excerpt of a longer conversation which you can find in full on [RLN’s website](#).

RLN: Can you tell me a bit about the history of Black Anglicans of Canada?

WA: There is a common African saying, “A river that forgets its source dries up in no time.” Our history matters because it helps us to take a look at the past with a view to a new future.

There were several attempts to organize Black Anglicans in the past. First I’d like to pay a profound tribute to a faithful disciple: The Rev. Dr. Romeney Roseley. His brief time in Toronto will long be remembered because of the report submitted to the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada in June 1992. This report, with recommendations, accompanied by a Study Guide, formed the basis for the Church’s Policy on Multiculturalism. It was published two years after his death with the title: [No Longer](#)

[Strangers: Ministry in a Multicultural Society](#). As a result of this work, and with General Synod’s endorsement, many Dioceses in Canada established committees similarly named ‘No Longer Strangers.’ View a tribute to him [here](#)

In 2018, Richardson Consulting was contracted to discuss with Black Canadians in the Diocese of Toronto. The recommendations from that group were similar to [The Union of Black Episcopalians](#): To advocate for justice and inclusion. The leadership team was selected and the vision, the mission, and mandate were developed in September of 2018 with a mission to expand across Canada. Bishop Peter Fenty, Irene Davis Moore, who is also an instructor at Huron theology, Brother Reginald Crenshaw, Lance Wilson, The Reverend Vernal Savage, Pastor Steve Greene, The Very Reverend Stephen Fields, The Reverend Canon Donald Butler, The Reverend Jacqueline Daley, Anita Gittens, Dolares Lawrence, Yvonne Murray, among others restarted BLAC in 2018. Bishop Peter Fenty, the first Black Bishop in the Anglican Church of Canada is our patron. He’s retired now, but still part of the team to ensure that some of the legacy he started lives beyond him. Then in early 2020, there was the COVID-19 pandemic, and then the George Floyd movement. We lost our brother, which was a wake up call to Black Anglicans and for the church in general.

For us in the Diocese of Rupert’s Land, we saw the passing of the final resolutions at Synod in 2022. Although we started in a small way, it gave the national body a kind of a nod/impetus, that “yes, we can do this as well,” because at that time, the national body had not yet made moves for the passage of any motions at the General Synod.

I was contacted by the BLAC from Toronto early last year [and was told] “we’ve seen everything you guys are doing, how did you do it? [referring to the Synod resolution].” From there, I gave some insights about our constructive approach which gave helpful information with guidance of sharing the final copy of our resolutions C2, C3, C4, and C5 with the interim leadership team led by Irene Davis Moore. These motions were then presented at the General Synod last year and were passed. Prior to this, I became the Director of Outreach and Partnership [For Black Anglicans of Canada].

As Director of partnership and outreach, I started connecting with older folks here in our Diocese who started Black Anglicans in the 90s. [People] like Patsy Grant, who was the first Black women national president of the Black Anglicans in 1982.

When I realized all these connections, I started calling the Reverend Dr. Sonia Hinds who was in the Diocese of Toronto and is now in the Diocese of Barbados. I called The Reverend

Canon Donald Butler, who started his priestly ministry in the Caribbean, [then moved to] the Diocese of Toronto, and is retired now. These people are alive, but [we need to] let them know that even when they are gone, their legacies will live on. And good enough, The Reverend Canon Donald Butler is now our Director in-charge of Justice and Advocacy.

There is a need for the new generation of Black Anglicans to take up the mantle of leadership. That was when I made my intention known to be elected as the National President and Board Chair. I was elected by acclamation on January 11 this year [2024] as the national president and the Board Chair of Black Anglicans. In the new leadership team, we also have a member of the ELCIC as our Board Secretary because of our full communion with the Lutherans. This makes our team very diverse and rich with ideas.

RLN: Could you talk about the goals of Black Anglicans of Canada?

WA: Recently, I did a presentation at Huron University College faculty of theology [for a course titled] “Voices in the Wilderness.” I spoke on African languages, culture, and identity. From our perspective, we don’t have enough of that in the northern hemisphere, or in the Anglican Church of Canada. Bishop Geoff seems to understand the dynamics of church culture, language, identity, and faithful discipleship that bring everyone together and hence gave me a copy of the Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion liturgy to study which he believes can be very useful at some point here as a member of BLAC. This is a very good start and I think at some point, we will be using it. Again, remember, this decade as declared by the United Nations is the [Decade of the People of African Descent](#). This has to be reflected in every facet of our



community and in the church of God as disciples. The liturgy has to be flexible in such a way that we can accommodate all the nuances of people of African descent. Before the church makes new policies, we should think outside the box, we should think of people that do not look like them, people that do not speak like them, and people who have accents like me which I strongly believe is part of my identity, of who I am and where I come from. We all have accents anyway.

Beyond that, we need to ask questions at the parish level about how many Black people are part of the vestry? How many Black Anglicans do we encourage at our local levels to chair board meetings?

Since we passed the motion, I must honestly say that I've been seeing changes. For example, we are not talking about a particular set of people or a region of Africa or Africans or our brothers and sisters from the Caribbean but in general. From what I heard recently, at St. Mary Magdalene, the treasurer is a Nigerian who is very active in the life of this parish. At St. Barts where I am now a Rector/Incumbent, the peoples' warden is

also a Nigerian. And at St. Saviour's Anglican Church, I understand there are other Africans who are also active in that community. That gladdens my heart!

Last Saturday [Feb 10], the Bishop and I were at St. Mark's Anglican Church. The priest there is a friend of mine and we've known each other from Nigeria. We did his birthday celebration, the liturgy, and everything in an African way. I preached there and before my sermon, I started with a song. When it was time for thanksgiving, I called him forward and we all danced, we were drumming, we were having fun as we all danced to the altar where our Bishop Geoff blessed us with a prayer. In Africa, maybe you're having a family celebration, birthday, or chieftaincy title in the community, and you want to celebrate: You come to church, you dance from the back and then you dance forward to the altar with your family members, friends and people in the community. When you get to the altar, the Bishop, or the officiant, or the minister will then bless you, pray for you and family with your gifts. That is how we do our things in Africa, and fellow Black Anglicans are already asking me questions when we can start doing this here.

RLN: How do you go about changing people's experience of church?

WA: I grew up as a cradle Anglican and a church boy with my dad being a priest who did full time ministry for over 50 years. At one point, my dad was very conservative, he was very strict to the letter

of the liturgy because he trained in England. But at some point, he started seeing the need for changes, and he wasn't so far away from helpers who were willing and ready to support him. So from music to praise and worship, things have changed the way African Anglicans now worship. The Anglican Church of Canada needs to adapt to change and welcome new ideas in worship. We need to open up a little bit to adapt to the cultural nuances of people who want to worship God as other people do too, and with constructive dynamics that are healthy for the growth of the church.

About 65 to 70% of Nigerians here in Manitoba are Anglicans. Remember, the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) is among the first five countries where we have up to 8 million Nigerians that identify as Anglicans according to [The Pew Research Center](#). Among these numbers there are many new immigrants coming to Canada to make their new home. But if they can't get what they want to assuage their spiritual thirst, they'll go to the Pentecostal churches or somewhere else. We have Nigerian Pentecostal churches here [in Winnipeg]. And from my experience, when I engage some of them people will say "I got married in an Anglican Church in Nigeria," "my dad was a priest," "we grew up as Anglicans." But when they get to Canada, they go [to Pentecostal churches] because the Anglican Church can't give them what they need spiritually here. For these excuses, we need to try or do things differently and the way we worship in the Anglican Church of Canada with the classic and contemporary worship. For example, I'd like you to watch the [Youtube Channel](#) for St. Paul's Bloor Street Toronto and compare it to the way other parishes do church across Anglican Canadian churches. The difference is so clear. You will want to come to church when you experience God in that kind of atmosphere.

I have had a similar conversation with Bishop Geoff. At some point, he had suggested that it would be a very good idea we could have an African/Nigerian Anglican Church in the Diocese. Honestly speaking, that comment has been part of my inspiration. Right now we have many Nigerians thriving and flourishing and this Province with over 7,000 people, and we have many Africans as well who are ready to 'key' into the African way of worship [while] still be involved in the Western/Canadian way of worship in terms of liturgy. My vision is for us to have an African Anglican Church in Canada, all starting from the Diocese

of Rupert's Land with God's help.

I'm trying to share this same vision with folks in Toronto and across ecclesiastical provinces where we have Black Anglicans who are ready and willing to make a difference. At some point this year, there's going to be a national conference of all Black Anglicans Canada to be hosted in our Diocese here. My dream for the Black Anglicans is to have an African Anglican Church strategically located in each Diocese or in each province in Canada so that our church can see the beauty and a more culturally diverse way of worship. Thank God, Canada is so multicultural and allows us to worship with our cultural nuances/inclinations in the way we want with being mindful and respectful of our neighbours.

RLN: What do you need to achieve that vision?

WA: Let me show you the [Declaration](#) of Black Anglicans of Canada:

"We as people of African Descent are commissioned and called to be ambassadors of reconciliation. We are called to create opportunities and space for courage building, healing, fellowship and empowerment. This special calling is both a reminder and a challenge to ourselves and to the whole church that we are no longer destined to just obey, suffer and witness; but to disrupt, heal and lead."

This has been a challenge because we are always obeying, we validate what white folks say because they want us to validate their decisions and actions. We continue to obey at our own expense.

When Jesus came, he started eating with those considered sinners, with those who the religious leaders didn't want to associate with, with those who are hungry, those who are poor. Because Jesus disrupted the system, we are now beneficiaries of the goodness of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that is what it means to go out and preach the Gospel to everyone. Are we going to find it easy? No! That commission [means] that sometimes the established systems and institutions have to be disrupted so that there will be change.

We're not here only to challenge others, but to challenge ourselves. We can do this, we should be part of this, working with everybody, and reconciling with everybody.



Change Journeys at Holy Trinity

HELEN HOLBROOK

While working in healthcare, I attended a one-day workshop on change for chaplains. During the workshop, we discussed the book *Guiding Change Journeys* by Rebba Chan Allen and incorporated spirituality into its teachings. The memory of this workshop inspired me and led me to creating a workshop at Holy Trinity.

On Sunday March 17th, I facilitated a short workshop on change journeys at Holy Trinity Anglican Church. There were 30 participants including members from All Saints and St. Matthew's. The workshop incorporated a tool from *Guiding Change Journeys* in which Chan describes 8 life steps organizations experience in the process of change. These steps were the focus of the workshop on Sunday.

Change workshops are important for any organization, but they are not there to provide a single answer. Rather, they are a way to begin conversation, discernment, and eventual action. Chan's steps provide a language for understanding change and a launch point for discussion. These steps are Inertia, Call, Jump, Trials, Dissolution, Discovery, Integration, and Application.

Many churches, including Holy Trinity, are facing challenges as they experience change. These challenges include aging buildings, smaller aging congregations, fewer volunteers, and increased financial stressors which take away people's energy. Workshop participants did not shy away from discussing these challenges, many of which centered around the decision at Holy Trinity's February AGM to sell their church building. Participants are now ready to *Jump* into changes and finding that they need trust in God and community to pull them through.

Change can be exciting. It is an opportunity to reevaluate, to discover the gifts of community members, to reimagine new roles and possibilities. Change can also bring grief as people mourn the past. The past still plays a role in the present and can be utilized in new and different ways.

Overall, it is natural for organisations to start their processes of change from a place of inertia. Church Inertia is experienced historically. For example: urbanization meant that many rural churches had to close their doors. This also meant many urban Anglican churches became community centres. These centres provided sense of community through programs for children (girl guides, scouts, etc.) and adults sports and social gatherings. Therefore, the churches of Winnipeg are continuing on with seeking how to best meet the needs of this time.

Workshop participants found the exercise beneficial, and it was helpful to share their feelings and their ideas. I emphasized that I would offer a second workshop at Holy Trinity which would review what was shared in the first meeting and explore the next steps in their change journey in detail.

I did hear from others who were disappointed they were unable to attend the first event. Therefore, I will offer another workshop at St John's College on May 11th at 10:00 a.m. Cost is \$15.00 and includes a brunch. For those interested, just save the date and a poster with registration details will be forthcoming.



HELEN HOLBROOK

The Rev. Helen Holbrook works half time as a chaplain at St John's College and as an assistant Priest at Holy Trinity Anglican Church (interim until end of June). Helen has a Masters in Public Administration and Arts Theology. She has worked for over 20 years as a spiritual care provider at Riverview Health Center, Seven Oaks General Hospital (SOGH) where she was a manager, and at Marymount Treatment Centre.

Joint Committee Struck Between Anglicans and Lutherans

THEO ROBINSON

Over the last few years, there has been an increase in attacks on the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Certain persons in positions of power have done and said things that encourage homophobic, transphobic, and biphobic actions and attitudes. Quite often, the arguments against the existence of 2SLGBTQIA+ people claim to be of a scriptural nature, with leaders from within the church frequently heading the attacks on the community. Statements like "Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve" and people quoting Leviticus as well as a handful of verses from throughout Paul's letters are used as bullying and fear tactics to get the public riled up against people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+.

However, there are church folk out there, clergy and lay alike, who are starting to get louder with statements of love, standing in support of minority groups in the name of Jesus, declaring that Jesus called Christians to love, not hate, and that everyone is a blessed child of God.

Two religious groups based in Winnipeg decided to respond to the anti-2SLGBTQIA+ rhetoric by forming a joint committee to address the issues that have been arising around the treatment of those who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+. The Manitoba Northwestern Ontario Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Diocese of Rupert's Land of the Anglican Church of Canada decided to make use of their full communion relationship and form a single committee called the MNO Synod/Diocese of Rupert's Land 2SLGBTQIA+ Committee for Education, Advocacy, and Policy. This committee is made up of a mix of Lutheran and Anglican clergy and lay people and has three pillars of focus:

1. EDUCATION

Usually, the reason people fear something is because they don't understand it. The only way to fix that issue is to provide opportunities for education. This committee will be creating educational resources on everything from pronouns to how to be a good ally, and leading workshops that will be available to all Lutheran and Anglican congregations and clergy.

2. SOCIAL JUSTICE

Advocacy is very important and when a minority group is doing all of the advocacy work, it can be exhausting for that group of people. As Christians, it is part of our baptismal call to stand up for oppressed people through faith and love. Sometimes, it's hard to know how to do that. This committee will be on the lookout for advocacy opportunities. It will share them with the Synod and the Diocese, and will encourage members of both to take advantage of these advocacy opportunities.

3. POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

Both the Synod and the Diocesan policies are long overdue for a review, to be rewritten with inclusive language, and to bring in policies and procedures that reflect support of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. This committee

will comb through policies and canons in the hopes of proposing changes. As well, the hope of the committee is to help parishes who want to be truly inclusive by creating policies as simple as enforcing church buildings to have all gendered washrooms.

Under these three pillars, this new committee desires to provide support for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community within the MNO Synod and the Diocese of Rupert's Land as well as help parishes who wish to become inclusive churches to do more than the words "all are welcome" could ever convey. A committee such as this reinforces both the commitment of the Synod and Diocese to work harder at promoting their full communion relationship and to support the Synod, which is a Reconciled in Christ Synod, and the Diocese wants to provide to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community within and without their parish walls.

THEO ROBINSON

The Reverend Theo Robinson is an Anglican priest serving as a Pastor in the Interlake Regional Shared Ministry with the Lutheran Church of the Manitoba Northwestern Ontario Synod. You can find him on Facebook ([@revthorobinson](#)) and Instagram ([@theconversepriest](#)), and you can follow his blog at [tjrobinson.blogspot.com](#).



Parish Profile: Stonewall Church of the Ascension

INTERVIEW WITH WALTER, JEAN, JOYCE, AND THE
REV. JAMES GOMEZ



Stonewall Church of the Ascension

Photo: RLN

RLN: Could you tell me about the name of your parish?

Jean: We used to have an Ascension Day service.

Walter: The Bishop would come out and we'd have confirmation that day.

Jean: The church was founded in 1884. My Grandmother was a Good and the Good family actually started [All Saints Victoria](#) [in 1877] and Church of the Ascension.

RLN: Who is a part of your parish community?

Walter: It's a local church, people don't just come from Stonewall, they also come from the surrounding area. I'm a newcomer, I came here in 79' [laughs]. If you go through the parish lists there's a lot of parents, grandparents, and great grandparents.

Jean: We do a lot of community events where people from other denominations come out and we go and support their events too.

Our ACW [[Anglican Church Women of Canada](#)] disbanded in 2022 because of covid and because people are getting older. I was heavily involved. We sponsored children from countries all over the world. We used to have two teas and two garage sales per year and that's been cut down by half. We also held an annual pancake dinner which the parish has taken over since the pandemic.

James: People are very conscious about their faith commitments. We're going to have to find ways to maintain this, because it's not just about the church, it's the church spilling out into the community, building relationships within the community. We don't live for ourselves; we live for the community. I think the moment we think only about ourselves as a church we will just die because we will be in self-survival mode.



Photo: RLN

RLN: Can you tell me about Messy Church?

Joyce: In 2016 our bible study group used to meet every Wednesday night during the last quarter of the year. The bible study group was following the [Council of the North study](#). One of the questions that they asked at the end of one session was "What would you like to see differently in your church?" One answer we had was: "Something that will encourage more children and families to attend."

The old Rev James [not the current priest] said that he had read about a Messy Church program, he got some information and shared it with a group of us after church.

Messy Church is based on 5 values: Christ centered, all ages, creativity, hospitality, and celebration.

We held information sessions in our parish, established team leaders and volunteers registered. The coordinators met with Carol Fletcher, the coordinator for Messy Church in Canada.

We also attended three Messy Church events at different churches in Winnipeg. The first year the coordinator's met with the Rev. James to select the themes for the year. The coordinators selected and made the crafts for each theme. Our first Messy Church was held on February 15, 2017. 48 people attended which included 20 volunteers, 18 children, and 10 adults. It continues very strong today, thanks to prayers and our volunteer base made up of parishioners and people outside of our parish.

RLN: Could you describe what worship looks like?

Walter: [Holding up a copy of *The Book of Common Prayer*] It's traditional.

Jean: We're not using the BCP here anymore, but we do use it at All Saints Victoria because it's an older church than here. My sister keeps asking "why don't you use the *Book of Alternative Services*?" And I ask her "are you going to help me haul all those books out there?"

Walter: I went to a couple of local churches in Cambridge England and let me tell you, we're more Anglican than they are.

James: The Church of the Ascension is missing almost two generations of people. It's hard for the congregation who would like to do more but don't have the same energy. That's where Messy Church acts like a bridge.

Jean: We don't have Sunday school anymore. The women are all working now, they're too busy to come to church on Sunday. In fact, it's often the grandparents who end up bringing the kids.

Walter: Our music director gets a choir together for Christmas and Easter.

James: Some members can't come for worship anymore, so we make our services available through zoom and through a radio channel.

Walter: During lockdowns, we'd have tailgate parties. A couple cars would go down to the Heritage Arts Centre to use their car radios to listen to the church service.

James: No one should be left thinking that the church has not been there for them.

RLN: Can you tell me about Parochial Hall?

Jean: Parochial hall was built in 2005. The size of our hall is really good for family functions, when families would get too big for a single home they'd book the hall.

Walter: Our hall serves the town, it's available to the community. We even have the courtroom set up there sometimes.

RLN: How would you describe your church to a stranger?

Jean: It's welcoming, there's always one or two people at the back handing out bulletins. People are usually pretty welcoming when someone new comes in the door. We always have a coffee time after church in the hall.

Walter: We're not really changing. We're welcoming, but Stonewall is in an odd spot. Most places have lots of newcomers from all over the world, but Stonewall hasn't had many people from outside of Canada. We're not keeping up with the times of the country.

Parochial Hall



Photo: RLN

James: We don't have an influx of population. The demography of Stonewall is primarily white with a small number of Filipino and Métis families.

RLN: What does the future of Stonewall Church of the Ascension look like?

Walter: We are part of a ministerial group from different churches in the town who provide spiritual services to the elderly in the community. So, we go to Rosewood Lodge, Stonewood Place, and we also have people in Lion's Manor. A lot of our folks there can't come to church anymore.

Coming back to worship, our pianist has been inviting us to newer songs that we are not used to. Sometimes it's difficult for us because they have actions. This is something new, but it has done well for us.

James: Canada has been talking about multiculturalism for a long time. Coming from India which is an equally - if not more diverse - country, I know we have to be open to receiving people from different parts of the world around us.

When I talk about building the church, I mean building the people not the structure. We have to start talking about what it means to be multicultural: how does it affect our worship, the polity of our congregation? There are so many issues of gender, sexuality, climate change, reconciliation that we don't talk much about - I'd love to see us start talking about this.

The spirituality of this church is one of good intentions towards the other. People here want to be helpful and hospitable which are good core values for every church. These values will stay because families will be nurtured in them. Hopefully, we are able to come together on these difficult questions, recognize our differences, and come out of it stronger together.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.



Photo: RLN